

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) Awareness Peterborough City Council

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Introduction & Sensitive Content

You can't go back and
change the beginning,
but you can start
where you are and
change the ending.

C.S. Lewis



Cause – Prenatal Alcohol Exposure

FASD can result when prenatal alcohol exposure affects the developing brain and body. FASD is a spectrum. Each person with FASD is affected differently. FASD is at its core a lifelong neurodevelopmental condition. All people with FASD have many strengths. Early diagnosis and appropriate support are essential, especially for executive functioning

Diagnostic criteria – There is no mild FASD (DHSC Sept 2021)

Prenatal alcohol exposure &

Evidence of **pervasive brain dysfunction**, which is defined by **severe impairment** in three or more of the following neurodevelopmental domains

Motor skills

Cognition

Memory

Neuroanatomy/neurophysiology

Academic achievement

Language

Attention

Executive function, including impulse control and hyperactivity

Affect regulation, adaptive behaviour, social skills or social communication

❑ SIGN 156 (2019) children and young people exposed prenatally to alcohol



FASD is an Educational Issue

The government recognises that foetal alcohol spectrum disorder can have a significant impact on the early years development of children and on their life chances.

As a result, schools must use their best endeavours to make sure a child or young person gets the special educational provision they need, this includes monitoring the progress of pupils regularly and putting support in place where needed, including arranging diagnostic tests where appropriate.

Catherine McKinnell Minister of State (Education) Feb 2025

Looked After Children prevalence (England)

27% according to the DHSC FASD Needs Assessment Peterborough data (Sept 2021)

416 in care of Peterborough (March 2025 ONS)

112 with FASD

Adopted 0 (75% PAE)

All children Peterborough

2021 Census data shows **53,772**
Children in the City

Between 2% & 4% have FASD

Therefore

1,075 to 2,150

The Time is Now

Decades of
official
indifference

2021 1st UK
gold-standard
prevalence study

2022
NICE Quality
Standard on FASD

2020-
1st
DHSC
FASD
Grants

2021 DHSC FASD
Needs
Assessment
for England

Decades of advocacy

2020 PHE
Maternity
High Impact
Area Report

2019 Scottish
SIGN 156 Guideline

2016 CMO
alcohol-free
pregnancy guideline

BMA
2007, 2016

CLA Health
2009

Tipping point

DHSC FASD Needs Analysis England

September 9th 2021

- 'The needs identified for this population group focus on:
 - a lack of robust prevalence estimates in England
 - the importance of multi-sector working to support individuals through the life course
 - better training and awareness for health professionals
 - better organisation of services to improve accessibility
 - a need to develop innovative approaches to support those living with the condition'

NICE FASD Quality Standard England & Wales

March 16th 2022

- Five key areas that all Trusts need to improve on:
 - **Advice on avoiding alcohol in pregnancy**
 - Fetal alcohol **exposure**
 - **Referral for assessment**
 - Neurodevelopmental **assessment**
 - **Multiagency management plan**
- Emphasis on FASD Awareness and training and Multiagency working for children and young people



Our Children are

Probably some of the most vulnerable children and young people in the UK.

They can't always remember things and they can't easily control response and behaviours with out appropriate support

Especially those without any easily visible disability.

Have an acquired lifelong disability significantly influenced by the relationship that our society has with alcohol.

Many are suffering from a hidden / unrecognised disability and as a country there is no certainty of how many families are affected.

Some behavioural challenges

- ☐ Working memory
- ☐ Short term memory
- ☐ Planning and organisation
- ☐ Receptive language
- ☐ Obsessions
- ☐ Hyperactivity, fidgeting
- ☐ Inattention
- ☐ Lack of social understanding
- ☐ Impulsivity
- ☐ Can't learn from negative experience
- ☐ Lack of judgment
- ☐ No understanding of consequences
- ☐ Central nervous system damage - pain, hunger, temperature, toileting
- ☐ Concepts - time, money, maths, ownership
- ☐ Relationships - over-friendly, appearing to have attachment issues

Multiple diagnoses are common

Over 425 co-occurring conditions

Overlapping Characteristics & Mental Health Diagnoses	FASD	ADD / ADHD	Sensory Int. Dys	Autism	Bi-Polar	RAD	Depression	ODD	Trauma	Poverty
Easily distracted by erroneous stimuli	X	X	X							
Developmental Dysmaturity	X			X						
Feel Different from other people	X				X					
Often does not follow through on instructions	X	X					X	X	X	X
Often interrupts/intrudes	X	X	X	X	X		X			X
Often engages in activities without considering possible consequences	X	X	X	X	X					X
Often has difficulty organising tasks & activities	X	X		X	X		X			X
Difficulty with transitions	X		X	X	X					
No impulse controls, acts hyperactive	X	X	X		X	X				
Sleep Disturbance	X				X		X		X	
Indiscriminately affectionate with strangers	X		X		X	X				
Lack of eye contact	X		X	X		X	X			
Not cuddly	X			X		X	X			
Lying about the obvious	X				X	X				
Learning lags: "Won't learn, some can't learn"	X		X			X			X	X
Incessant chatter or abnormal speech patterns	X		X	X	X	X				
Increased startle response	X		X						X	
Emotionally volatile, often exhibit wild mood swings	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Depression develops often in teen years	X	X				X			X	

Reframing expectations

Acting like a child ↔ Is a child
Won't ↔ Can't
Lazy and does not try ↔ Exhausted with trying
Does not care ↔ Does not understand feelings
Refuses to sit still ↔ Over stimulated /needs contact
Forgets everything ↔ Can't remember
Fussy, demanding ↔ Hypersensitive
Steals ↔ Does not understand ownership
Does not get the obvious ↔ Does not learn from experience
Calculating and sly ↔ Does not understand social norms

The damaged brain is working harder, its going to take longer Much longer

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES ?

- **'Brain based approach'** rather than a 'behavioural approach' **is most appropriate.**
- **'Conditioning'** in an attempt to progress skills or manage behaviour (in simple terms, the use of reward and punishment) **is generally unhelpful.**
- **Psychodynamic approaches** to behavioural support **are general not useful**, including play therapy and emotion focussed approaches

Raja Mukherjee 2025

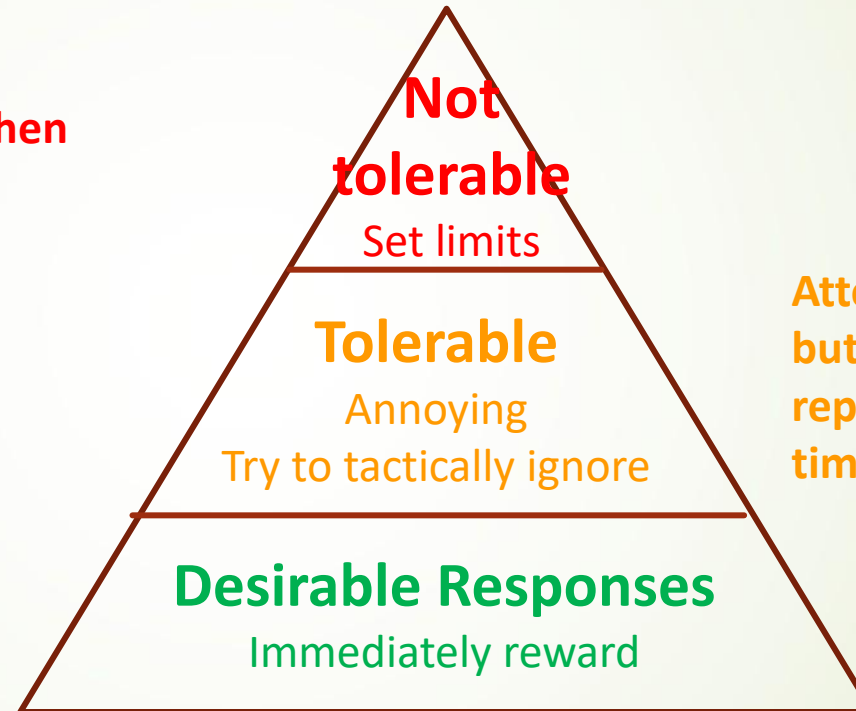
Remember they can't remember

Pick your battles

Be consistent

De personalise & when
calm make sure the
consequence is
understood

Needs to be valued
at the time
Use to provide
alternatives to
intolerable



Attempt to minimise
but expect to be
repeated time and
time again

Sources of support



www.nationalFASD.org.uk



www.FASD.me



www.preventFASD.info

Locally



Peterborough & Cambridgeshire
Family FASD Support Group



PETERBOROUGH
Virtual School

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