

## **FASD Awareness Day 2020**

### **Catherine's Story**



Hi! I'm a foster carer for a young person with foetal alcohol spectrum disorder or FASD for short. I want to help spread the word about the dangers of drinking when pregnant, but also to encourage parents / carers to seek support if they feel their child may be affected by FASD.

FASD occurs when a woman drinks alcohol when she is pregnant. There is no safe limit of alcohol to drink when you are pregnant. Drinking in pregnancy does not affect all babies, but the more you drink the greater the risk. Women who consider themselves social drinkers can have a child affected by FASD.

Alcohol passes across the placenta, it can damage the developing brain and can result in difficulties with learning, concentration, memory, behaviour, emotional regulation, as well as birth defects that can affect other parts of the body. It is a spectrum, some children are more affected than others. Imagine ADHD, autism and a learning disability all rolled into one and that is often FASD.

Our young man is a joy to have in our family, he has many struggles and difficulties, but also many talents. He loves acting and music, has a great sense of humour, has boundless energy and will have a go at anything.

He struggles with learning, school and friendships. He has problems with short term memory and needs reminders at school and at home to do things that other children take for granted. Learning new skills is difficult, despite repeating something many times it just doesn't seem to stick. He struggles to make and keep friendships, despite being very friendly and wanting friends. He struggles with his own emotions, quickly becoming angry and upset if things go wrong. He also gets over excited quickly, its like he often only experiences extreme emotions. He's either really happy, really sad, really angry, or really excitable, there is very little middle ground.

The good news is he was diagnosed with FASD, and I made it my mission to learn all I could about the condition. I contacted **FASD Network UK** who were really supportive and provided information about the condition. All of a sudden his difficulties and behaviours made sense. I got advice about specific parenting strategies that help him, and how to avoid the emotional meltdowns we had experienced in the past. Parenting him has been difficult, and challenging, but also very rewarding. With the correct support he can do anything, and that's my plan for the future, to ensure he has the right support to be successful at whatever he wants to do.

If you have been affected by issues in the article or want to find out more please contact:

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