Participant: Foster Carer

Title: How do foster carers and teachers attribute the challenging behaviour of Looked after children?

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Location: Participants House

Interview: CFB (I)

Interviewee: Participant F3 (P)

Age: 31

Sex: Female

Foster Carer Years: 8 years

I: Can we start off just with the simple straight forward questions of, how long you have been a foster carer, age, and how long you’ve had your current children placed with you.

P: Ok, so we started fostering in, we were approved by panel in 2011, June of 2011, and, the current children we’ve had came in 2013.

I: oh wow ok, so long time then?

P: Yeah they came as emergency, but they are long term now so we’ve gone through all the processes to get there. I’m 31 years old, I started doing it when I was 22 ish, 23, I think I’d just turned 23, so long time.

I: Yeah yeah, awesome. I think for the purpose of the interview, obviously I’ll be asking you various questions, but if possible, I know it will be tricky and we don’t have to stick to it rigidly, but to pick one to talk about more than the other, just so that it’s a little more straight...

P: a little bit more cohesive with the answers.

I: Yes, but as I said, we go off on tangents, have other conversations, so it’s fine if we end up bringing in the others. Is there one who you feel you get more challenging behaviour from because that might be the one...

P: Yes, definitely yes.

I: that’s a definite yes! That might be the one to talk about then?

P: yes, that’s fine.

I: Yeah, because that’s slightly more of the focus, thinking about the challenging behaviour and that sort of thing. In that case, can I just ask you to start off just by describing that child just generally, not necessarily the challenging behaviour but generally.

P: Ok, she is nine, she is a bit of a livewire, she’s quite a character very bubbly can be very sociable if she’s in the right mood, she has several difficulties with learning and social interaction that mostly stems from early neglect. She’s got a couple of diagnoses that go with her everywhere, and we’re in the middle of chasing some more. So, she’s quite a complex child, and she’s lovely with it, she really lights up a room, she walks in if she’s in a good mood, she walks in and it’s just like someone’s switched a light on. It’s amazing, she’s such a lovely person, and yet when she’s in a bad mood or she’s struggling with something, she’s quite the opposite. She walks in and it’s like someone’s shut the curtains. Like a sink hole. So, yeah, she’s quite difficult to balance and judge in that way, but she’s adorable.

I: what sort of things does she like to do?

P: She likes to play on the iPad, she likes imaginative play, so she’ll set her iPad up filming and then she’ll run around and play a game and you can’t necessarily see her on the film, because she’s set it up and she knows it’s going so in her head its following her around like a movie camera. So yeah, she just gets up and plays and runs around. She quite likes being outside, outside is like her chill zone. So, she’ll come home from school and go straight into the garden. She just does laps of the garden playing little games muttering to herself and talking. She’s really, she’s quite a solitary person, but she’s very happy to be in other people’s company. She loves reading, she’s a real bookworm. She’s only just learnt to read, in this last year I’d say we’ve gone from spot goes to the park, right up to horrid henry, in a year.

I: Oh wow, that’s impressive.

P: really impressive, somethings just clicked and she’s suddenly enjoying books. She’ll sit here and she’ll laugh while she’s reading, it’s really lovely.

I: really lovely, that can often be the key with reading really and reading progress, that actually if you enjoy it...

P: ...then it starts and then it’s like, a drive to get better. So yeah, she’s done really well with that really proud of her with that.

I: That’s lovely. I hate to draw us away from that side of the conversation.

P: no, it’s fine.

I: but, can you talk to me a little bit about some of the more challenging behaviours that you might see?

P: Yes, erm, so if X is having a bad day, generally starts with sleeping in late, and that generally happens because the night before she hasn’t slept, which is generally because she hasn’t had her tablets, because she’s on melatonin. Erm, so, there’s a domino effect for her, if you get her in the wrong mood first thing in the morning the whole day is done. When she’s really really struggling, she finds transitions hard, and that’s any transition from, she’s reading a book and you say “it’s going to be tea time in 5 minutes you need to come and set the table please while I plate up” that means that she has to leave the book, move rooms, change activity, that’s too much for her to process, on a bad day that will result in a meltdown. And a meltdown for X looks like screaming, throwing things, she bites herself, she pulls out her own hair, hits herself with things, she’ll hit the dogs, she’ll throw things at the baby, she’s full on out of control. There’s a lot of screaming, a lot of stomping, she can’t stomp very well on this floor because it’s quite solid so she’ll go upstairs to her room which is over here and she’ll jump two feet off the floor to shake, to make, that real like point that she’s upset about something. Erm, generally calming her down - its leaving her alone. Because she’s, when she’s at that point, everything is overstimulating, absolutely everything, so, I mean we’ve tried everything you can think of, but she’s got sensory processing disorder, so every little input is massive for her and when she’s in that moment, what she needs is nothing. Absolutely nothing, so it’s great that she goes to her room to stomp about and scream and shout and throw things, erm, and then it stops, and then leave it for another couple of minutes, and then go and move around upstairs but not go and directly interact with her so that she’s aware that we're there and she chooses to come out of her room or she starts going up again in which case we come back downstairs and leave her to it because she just can’t manage anything else.

I: How often do you get those sorts of meltdowns.

P: erm, 4 or 5 times a week.

I: do you get, would it tend to be a couple in a day if it’s a bad day, or

P: if it’s a bad day they’re kind of one after another, because she comes out of one and the next issues tarts, the next, like assault on her senses starts and her ability to cope is already maxed out and then she’ll go into the next one. So, they’re not related but they do tend to happen one after another.

I: Yeah, I know that makes sense. you talked about how often the bad days will start with laying in because she hasn’t slept because she hasn’t taken the melatonin, what tends to trigger not taking melatonin is that just....

P: it’s usually from a bad day, so she’s tired and she doesn’t want to conform, she doesn’t really do well with instructions, she’s at the minute we’re going through the diagnosis of getting ASD and once that’s diagnosed then as a sub diagnosis we’ll get, what’s it called, pathological avoidant disorder...

I: PDA

P: PDA, yeah, yeah pathological defiance disorder. Erm, yeah, so she has these, but she doesn’t have them like ticked into the boxes yet because we’re still on the road.

I: it’s a long road

P: it’s a *long* road, so, but yeah she just, you cannot give her an instruction, you have to be very playful with your interactions with her and very suggestive and kind of plant a seed rather than give her a task.

I: is that even when she’s having a good day, is that all the time.

P: Yes, that’s all the time. There has to be a lot of build-up to things there has to be a lot of coaxing and coercing into things and even then sometimes it still doesn’t happen, depending on her capacity on the day. So yeah, it’s tricky she generally if its she doesn’t want to eat. So she’s got an eating disorder and if she doesn’t wanna eat what’s been put on her plate she will then fire herself up and go into a tantrum which then escalates into a meltdown, so she’s in control of it to start off with and then she loses self-control. And she tends to decide she’s not going to eat what’s on her plate, and it might just be one aspect of it, but then she can’t eat any of it because it’s all on the same plate. And then, because she’s hyper aroused over stimulated and struggling to cope with big feelings, she then doesn’t want to do anything and then if you put a tablet in front of her it’s not going in, nothing is going in by that point so she won’t take her tablet. Because it’s not just a refusal to eat it’s a refusal to consume anything as well, so she won’t have a drink she won’t do anything. You can’t get a milkshake in her or a protein bar, nothing. So, yes, so then she doesn’t take her tablet, and then she doesn’t sleep, and she really doesn’t sleep, she will pace in her room, and she might nod off for like 20 minutes at a time, but she never gets a full sleep cycle in. and then she’ll get up and she’ll wander around she comes downstairs and we just have to keep putting her back in her room.

I: how often do you get that sort of being awake during the night behaviours.

P: probably two or three times a week.

I: Oh ok, gosh that’s quite a lot.

P: Its quite a lot, yeah.

I: How do you find, I’m going off on a tangent now but I can’t help myself, how do you find the, because often with children when they’re up in the night then the impact the next day like, how do you find school manage that and cope with that...

P: Badly, they do, to be fair she’s in a specialist school and they do very very well with her. But, she is hard work and she does take one to one on those days, they’ve noticed that actually they can’t stretch her because of her PDA, she cannot be pushed because the slightest little thing that’s difficult or the slightest kind of this is how you do it just shuts her off. And then socially, she’s probably functioning at about three of four years old so although she’s nine and a half she’s not, she’s just not capable really. Academically she’s clever enough she can do the work, but physically being able to come and sit at the table to do the work, the attention span is not there the social abilities not there and this sort of defiant ‘will do the opposite of what you’ve said just because it’s the opposite of what you’ve said’, even if she wanted to do, because you’ve suggested it she now won’t do it. Yeah, so all of those things add up together to make it very very difficult for her to participate in school.

I: What’s your understanding of where some of those behaviours have come from...

P: There is a multitude of ideas, it’s all nature/ nurture, she was three when she came to us, but she was severely disabled. Completely nonverbal in nappies doubly incontinent, she had no, she couldn’t withstand eye contact and physical touch, if you spoke to her, she screamed at you, she was really very very profound. And we assumed at this point that she was gonna be extremely autistic; she’s going to need an immense level of care probably for the rest of her life. You know, hopes of her being able to speak was where we were going to, just to communicate in some way. She didn’t say her first word till she was 5.

I: so that’s two years of kind of being in this environment.

P: of being in this nurturing, therapeutic environment with two very calm parents, vey settled, very structured, and all of her needs being met consistently before she spoke. And yeah, part of that I think is the upbringing beforehand obviously, she was severely neglected she was taken out of the cot and strapped into a buggy and then taken out of a buggy and dumped in a cot, and that was her day. So, she couldn’t walk because of the way that her muscles had formed in the seated position, she couldn’t physically stand up. Her legs wouldn’t straighten like that because of the tension. And she didn't have any strength in them there was no control over them either so she, she would crawl, but it was like a commando crawl, it was all upper arm strength. She could climb really well, which we found out the first week because she climbed up, the first couple of days, she pulled the highchair across from the kitchen table to the counter, climbed up on it and eaten the bananas off the top of the microwave, she ate a whole handful of bananas, skins, everything. And the bits of like, it looks like twine that’s left once you’ve chewed all the skins up, she put back down the back of the microwave I didn’t find them for a couple of days. I was doing that thing where you know “I’m sure I bought bananas, but they’re not there” and there’s no skins in the bin, I haven’t eaten them, X hasn’t eaten them, maybe I just didn’t buy them. I did buy them, yeah, I found them when I was cleaning a couple of days later. And she was like that with everything, but she couldn’t eat in front of people. There was a real real fear of I don’t know what, but she would steal food, she’d eat, she’d go and hide under a coat and eat there, but she wouldn’t take food that I’d left out for her, she wouldn’t come and sit at the table, that was a no, she wouldn’t manage if I was in the kitchen and food was on the table, she wouldn’t go to the table to take it to leave, she would wait until I wasn't in the kitchen. So, some severe trauma response activities that she was partaking in and sort of learnt behaviour for an unsafe environment. but then on the flip side of that she has a duplicated chromosome, so I don’t know there's a potential that that could cause some of the issues, it’s the chromosome that does all your circulatory systems, so that could deal with her development and lack of oxygen moving around as much, there’s so many different problems that that could cause, it’s hard to say if she would have been the same as she is if she had been here the whole time.

I: Yeah, and how do you think all of those kinds of, I guess, competing or possible explanations for the behaviour, how does that impact on how you manage the behaviours. So, or like, how do you manage them...

P: we have very different parenting skills depending on the children in our care, so we’re very adaptive, it’s not a one shoe fits all kind of household and I think you have to be like that to be a good foster carer, you have to adapt around the children's needs and it’s not just a case of oh well she’s in nappies so I’ll change nappies now, it’s about how you interact with them as well, everything changes. And for this particular child its, she needs a very therapeutic approach, very calm, very consistent, expectations are set, but there’s a lot of build-up to things there’s a lot of very careful planning towards things. If we, say for instance we’re going out and I need her to put her shoes on, I will start half an hour before we go planting a seed. “ok, so we’re going to go out soon and I’m going to ask you to put your book down and come and put your shoes on” “you can read your book now but in a few minutes I’m going to ask you to put it down” “ I know you’re really enjoying your book, but in a moment I’m going to ask you to finish reading it so you can put your shoes on because we’re going to go out”, go away and come back “just so that you know, I’ve got your shoes out ready to put on, could you finish the page that you’re reading so that we could put them on your feet because we’re going to go out”, go out, come back, “ok, I’m going to take your book now, can you finish that word, well done, pass it to me, we’ll put a book mark in it, I’m going to put it away and lets go and put your shoes on because we’re going to go out”. “well done for putting your shoes on, we’re going to go out now”. Then we walk out the door. Everything is a process and she needs that build up, you can’t just go “oh by the way we’re going out and can you put that down lets go” she can’t cope with that, that we won’t leave the house, that’s the day done. So, it’s really, whereas some children need like, come on come on come on let’s go go go, and that kind of whoosh out and she doesn’t she needs very very careful paced correct interaction that fits with the way she understands things. Whereas her older sister in contrast is a “we’re going out” du du du du, shoes on, “where are we going?”. Erm, so, two very very different approaches, within the same house.

I: how much would you say your erm, your, how much of your behaviour management would you say is almost preventative and pre-emptive rather than reactive.

P: 90%, 90% for her, she needs a very, it’s very proactive and not reactive, she needs very carefully planned days very structured, lots of routine, lots of forethought, I can’t just say “do y’know what we could go to the zoo today, shall we? Come on we’ve got nothing else to do let’s go to the zoo?” Can’t do that, she needs to know. we get to Monday night putting her to bed on Monday night and she asks what we’re going to do at the weekend. And then Tuesday morning, have we got any plans for the weekend, what are we going to do at the weekend. On Saturday, what are we doing? Because the structure of the week is a known entity but the weekend isn’t, and so, already once she’s done one weekend, she wants to know what’s happening at the next, because she can plan the week and she knows the week, but the weekend is an unknown entity and that upsets her, that kind of, but something else could happen, we could be going somewhere we could be seeing someone we could be not going anywhere we could have people over, people might be sleeping in our house, people might not be sleeping in our house, we might have visitors, we might be taking the dogs for a walk, we might be going away for the weekend, there’s so many different things that could happen and they’re all going around in her brain so she needs that kind of “oh ok, well on Saturday we’re going to be doing this, but I’m going to be doing this, so you’ll be doing this with this person” and she kind of needs a map of what everyone’s doing to calm her down. Yeah.

I: Why do you think that’s something that she needs, like where does that come from?

P: I think a lot of it is the worry of not being provided for. I think a lot of it is the, I think she’s scared of not knowing what’s going to happen next, because not knowing puts her straight into a bad place, that unpredictability of adults is what she had beforehand and that was a scary place to be. And she doesn’t remember the ins and outs of it, but she remembers the feelings of it, she still carries all of the emotion that she felt at the time, and its big for her. So, not knowing what’s going to happen, brings all of that back up, that feeling of worry and that kind of trepidation almost is immediately there, that lump in your throat of I don’t know what’s happening now. You know if someone stuck a blindfold on you and put you in the back of a car, that’s how she feels when she doesn’t know what’s happening. And I think it’s just because she’s had such very very very early on, so much movement and so much inconsistency and unsure-ity, I think that's what’s caused it. She’s kind of always off kilter there’s always just a little bit of something not quite right in the back of her mind.

I: can I ask you to think of a, it might be recent or not, but like a specific incident of challenging behaviour that we could kind of speak to in more detail maybe.

P: ok, what sort of thing.

I: Anything that you feel has been particularly challenging, because I guess that’s different for everyone...

P: and you want a flashpoint incident or...because there is so much with her, like I could focus on the food, it’s been quite a long drawn out process of trying to get her to eat.

I: maybe, yeah like you said, a flashpoint kind of...yeah...

P: Ok, erm, most recent one was yesterday when I asked her to put her toys away, in here, so all of those black boxes under the TV are toy boxes and we’ve got some sensory toys in the coffee table, just like the mat that you can walk on makes noises and then there’s a treasure basket with holistic play in it. And she had everything out, *everything,* and in the like, tent thing there, that’s all cuddly toys, everything, all of them, everywhere. And I was in the kitchen I’d made the dinner, and I came through and said, wow, you’ve done a really good job of making a mess, but could we put some of theses things away now because it’s gonna be teatime soon. And she kicked off, she did not want to tidy up, she didn’t want to do anything, she wouldn’t pick up a single thing, not a thing. You couldn’t see the floor, this is not a small room, you could not see the floor, she’d loaded that up with blankets that erm, like a whole sofa and box to make a den, naturally, and then she’d got all the teddies out and they were all the wildlife animals and erm all of the implements that she decided to scatter on the floor, turns out they were part of the wood that she was in. so that’s why she didn’t want to tidy up, but we didn’t unpick that until this morning. When I’d tidied it all away and she came down and was “why have you ruined my woodland and all my creatures are gone and my den’s gone” and I was like ooh ok that makes sense now, I get it now, but at the time, yesterday, uhm. So, I said to her, can you tidy up please, no I don’t want to, I need you to pick up some things, lets pick 5 things to put away, you choose 5 or I’ll chose 5 and we can do it together. No. ok, one, one thing, I’m compromising, which one thing could we put a box, I wonder if you could find one thing that you know where it goes, and you could put it away for me. I’m going to see, I’m going to walk out of the room and when I come back in, I’m going to see if I can work out what it is that you've moved. Still no, even being really playful and keeping it really light, absolutely refused. And I said, ok, take your hand, put it onto a toy, curl your fingers around, lift it up, and she went “I KNOW, WHAT I’M DOING” and I was like, ok but I don’t need you to shout at me, I’m just asking you to put some things away. “I’M NOT GOING TO DO IT”, and then she threw it at me. It was a little wooden, semi-circle thing and she threw it at me from over there, that way. Please don’t throw things at me that’s really not kind and you might hurt me, you might break it, you might miss me and hurt somebody else, we don't throw things, do you think that you could try again and put your hand on a toy – I’m just asking for it really aren’t I? – anyway, she then screamed at me, she’s got a really high pitched scream. Yeah and she just arrghhhh and her hands went up to her head she started ripping her hair out, she’s got very very erm almost receding hairline because she pulls her hair out in these corners here, she puts her hand up like that. So, yeah where she’s just pulled it out and it’s all like fine little baby hairs and so now it comes out really easily as well, so yeah she just pulled out clumps of hair and was screaming at me and so I came over and moved her hands down and put them by her side and said please don’t hurt yourself like that it makes me really really sad and you’re going to make your head very sore. And she went “I DON’T CARE I HATE YOU” and then moved her arm out and started biting her hand, erm, and then, ran out of the room and upstairs and was jumping in her room and throwing things around and banging about, erm. Yeah and I just sort of cleared a space on this sofa and sat down and felt very defeated by the whole thing.

I: Yeah, it sounds tough.

P: It is, but it’s not uncommon which I think makes it harder.

I: yeah,

P: because of the consistency of it, I think if that sort of thing happened once a month it would be like woah ok, this is, I’ve done something here that’s not working. Today was a bad day kind of thing, but its, it can happen 3 or 4 times in a day she’s like that, she’s so over-stimulated and over-aroused all the time. Yeah, that’s there you go, flash point.

I: yeah, absolutely, and what were you, what were you thinking at the time when that kind of, that, I guess, when that at first as you said you’d come in and quite nicely “ok, we’re going to put some of this away”...

P: ...let’s try tidying up a little bit, you’ve got to keep it really light and playful, you have to be playful with her...

I:...yeah, what were you thinking when it just kinda went like...

P: ...like that, it does, like that, from nowhere, well seemingly nowhere. Erm, I’m kind of used to it now so I knew it was coming, as soon as I walked in and saw the carnage that was this room, I thought, oh no. My first thought was, is what’s in the oven gonna last for another 10 minutes while I deal with this or do I need to go out and reset the kitchen for me not being in their a little bit longer, and then I’d already turned the hob off and the oven was just on stay warm, so it was fine, but that was my first thought when I saw the room is can I leave what I‘m doing to deal with this or do I need to prep before I start this interaction.

I: because you knew that it was going to be...

P: I knew that it was going to be a long one, or a very short, very sort of energetic one, but it’s going to take all of my attention and I can’t be thinking about a pan. So yeah that’s the first thought and then, how am I going to get her attention without firing her up immediately. And then how are we going to approach the fact that this is not ok. The room cannot stay like this, and I’m not putting every single toy we own away. Erm, yeah. So that was my initial kind of two second flip round in my head and then yeah, just saying to her, keep it light, just keep it playful, always always be playful with it, always try and give clear instructions, keep it concise don’t overload it, not, y’know, if I’d come in and gone “oh my goodness what a mess, could we put this away please look at all these toys this is ridiculous, right you need to pick this up now, I want all of that put away, I need all of these toys off the floor, look at the state of the sofa, come on now we don’t do this. Which is what a lot of parents would naturally do...you can’t do that with her, you just can’t, it’s an impossible task if you do that. The other one, her older sister, if she’d have done that I would have literally gone in and gone “no, no, this is, no, can you move, I’d like my living room back ok, you’ve got ten minutes” and walk out, fine, and she would do it, begrudgingly, but she’d do it. You can’t do that with X, it’s a very different interaction.

I: what’s your kind of understanding of where that kind of difference comes from in terms of how you can respond in that kind of example to the two siblings.

P: I think part of it is to do with their social capabilities. So the older one is 11 but she is 11 in herself, and she was a parent child when she came to us, she was 6 but she, they came in, and obviously the younger one totally nonverbal needs all of this support and structure and is going to be very very challenging and the older one came in and did a full reccy on the house. She literally walked through the door and said “oh hi, we’re going to be staying at your house now”, that was the whole of the eye contact “oh hi’” and then started scanning “have you got dogs, I can hear dogs, how many dogs have you got, where are they can I let them out are they allowed out of the kitchen, are they in the kitchen, is this the kitchen this way I’m just going to go in here”. “where are the bedrooms, do you have an upstairs, I’m going up stairs I’m just going to have a look, wow this is a nice room who’s room is this, do you sleep in here, where are we going to sleep” Full on. Completely, she literally did a reccy of the house, top to bottom, everything. “oh, you’ve got a cat” she was out at the time but she’d seen the cat food, like she’s so observant and completely completely parented the younger one, so yeah, they came in, I made some beans on toast which neither of them ate. And she then told me how to make a bottle, with formula milk, like scoops and water and everything, how to test it, the lot. She’s 6 at this point. So she was completely self-sufficient and very vey grown up and she’d kind of had to assert herself in a very adult situation most of the time in order to keep herself safe, so socially she’s much more capable and she’s much more grown up than her years because she’s had to be to survive. Whereas the younger one has done the other thing where she hasn’t learnt any of it, because she hasn’t, if she keeps at that lower level then she’s safe and she doesn’t learn anymore. So, I think that’s the contrast.

I: that’s interesting.

P: yeah, the older one gets a lot of sarcasm, she really really gets it, you know when you say something over the top of children and you can get a look from another adult, she’ll be in the corner giving you the same look like ‘I get ya’, she’s just so in tune and very very grown up, but not, she’s very innocent with it, we’ve managed to keep her young as it were you know some of them they come in and they’re immediately adults and you have to kind of “you’re not going out with mascara on you’re nine”, but she’s not at all she’s still, she likes doing cartwheels in the garden she likes singing in her room, you know we’ve really reclaimed that childhood for her which I’m quite proud of doing to be honest because it’s a very difficult thing to do when you get someone that precocious, so yeah that’s her, so I think that’s the difference that the survival instinct initially was to grow up for her whereas for the other one was to not.

I: I’m curious, because you were talking about with the woodland toys...

P:.. yes, the woodland scene which I walked in on yesterday...

I: how did, when she this morning revealed oh this was a woodland scene, that whole “what have you done” thing, how did that kind of extra piece of information of “oh this wasn’t just toys...

P: a mess

I: .... everywhere, yeah, like this maybe meant something to you, how did that change your understanding of what happened last night, the way she kind of exploded. Or did it? Or, was it just oh that’s an extra piece of information?

P: It was a little bit of an insight but to be honest that’s how she is, there's always a reason there’s always some kind of round about logic to what she’s doing and the change in that is what causes her flare ups, so there is always, I knew that there was going to be a reason to it, there’s always like logic in the chaos, but it doesn’t change the fact that I need my living room back, it doesn’t change the fact that she has to tidy up, that it is a game, and games finish and when they’re finished they need to be tidied away, so the fact that it was a woodland scene was like “oh well that's really nice, you could have told me that and we could have maybe picked animals to put away and which trees shall we tidy up, it would have changed my wording, but it wouldn’t have changed my approach,

I: yeah, so the outcome would have been the same in that you would have made progress to tidying up the room but it’s just how you would have gone about it and as you said the language...

P: ...the language would have change, if she’d have verbalised what was going on for her, that would have changed my interaction in as much as the language but everything else would have stayed the same, because the response to her I guess yeah the response to her verbalising what was going on for her is just a change in language. My parenting with her is still that consistent sort of pace parenting, it’s not, I wouldn’t have changed that just because it’s a woodland scene. It wouldn’t be “oh ok, well we’ll leave it then” oh in that case, you can do that I’m just going to clear a little space so I can sit down later, but we’ll keep it as it is. No, it would still have the same outcome. Just maybe a little bit more empathy because you can then kind of share that with her, “we’re going to put this tree away, we’re going to move this rabbit, lets tidy up this teddys bears picnic sort of thing” if you know what’s going on and what they are you can re-word it and you can relabel things so that they’re a little bit more relatable for her and she feels a little bit more like you get it, but we still tidy up.

I: Yeah, makes sense. Do you have, I mean I’ve got a final question before we wrap up, but before then, do you have any thoughts, is there any additional thoughts that you have just about I guess just the challenging behaviour that you see and your experience with that, or just I guess anything else that kind of stands out as we’ve been talking, or anything...

P: erm, I think, as an overview of all children, challenging behaviour generally comes from communication needs, if the communication needs aren’t being met then the behaviour is reactionary to “you’re not understanding me”, and that that is the same for people in general. if you have a conversation with someone and you think “they’re just not getting what I’m trying to say, you’re not understanding me here” the frustration builds and you start to get a little bit snappy and a little bit short, but with children they don’t have the resilience to kind of take a step back from that feeling, and they don’t necessarily understand that feeling and then if you add into that a disability, a speech and language issue, a social issue and then put them into the care system where they’ve got this sort of pre-existing trauma, neglect, abuse whatever it is so that their reaction to you is going to be based on previous understandings, they’ve maybe got trigger words that you don’t know and actions that you don’t know and so the communication becomes this massive chasm between you, that behaviour is never ever gonna get better if you don't try and bridge that gap. That is what it all stands on for every child I’ve ever looked after, its communication. So, if you adapt your interaction around their level of need then it gets easier, I mean it’s still hard, she is still a whirlwind of a child, but she is so much better with that consistent sort of definite communication. That makes all the difference, definitely.

I: Makes sense, yeah, thank you. The last question, really to wrap up, it just to ask you to share like a positive memory or kind of event that’s occurred, or just something positive to end.

P: something positive, ok, erm. So she has got in her head about six different people that she plays with. So, she’ll be doing solitary play but there’s other people that she’s talking to that aren’t there. And they’re always the same people and they always have the same sort of reactions, if she’s in a bad mood, its one person that she fights with, it’s always the same person. If she’s feeling a bit airy fairy it’s another one, if she’s feeling very mothering and she’s doing tea parties and putting babies to bed it’s another one, and the mothering one is called XX. And she has written a little, I’ve got it, I’ll show you actually I’ve got it in the office....[leaves to retrieve it]...just a little note, so my daughter is called XX and she’s nearly 2, but when XX was born she wrote this note and drew this picture and it says “to XX, how you doing, year, I’m coming to your house today, excited, love from XX” and a little picture of XX with a rattle and XX being a princess and bringing a picnic.

I: aww, that’s so sweet

P: she leaves these little notes just on the floor and you just find them when you’re going around. Just little things like that she’s so thoughtful and for her, when she brings XX to play it’s like this real homely fun you know they pretend to do cooking and she makes picnics and they put dolls to bed and they dress things and you know that real girly homely play. And yeah, when we brought XX home she left that note for us, she’s really thoughtful she’s such, she’s just such a lovely child she’s so, she has her issues and she has her moments but she’s really innocent and she’s really really adorable and she really cares about other people, always always thinking about other people.

I: that’s so nice.

P: so yeah, there you go.

I: That’s really sweet, that’s lovely, ok thank you. Is there anything else that you wanted to share or add before I go?

P: No, I don’t think so, I’m a talker, I’ll waffle on for hours, so

I: that’s the risk isn’t it?

P: there is, we could be here all day,

I: no, that’s fine, if there’s nothing else I’ll turn the Dictaphone off.