Participant: F8

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

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Interview: CFB (I)

Interviewee: Participant F8 (P)

Age: 62

Sex: Female

Foster Carer Years: 4

I: So, as I say it will probably take about half an hour and its generally – I have some prompts and guiding questions – but it’s generally an informal conversation about your experiences really. As it is guided towards challenging behaviour, I don’t know if there’s a child that you’ve looked after that fits more within that

P: Definitely [laughs]

I: Ok, they’re usually is! So if we could focus our conversation around that child in particular to start with, and I’m sure we might go off on tangents and your experience of all the children you’ve looked after I’m sure will come through, but if we focus on that child. But to start off with, could I ask you just to give some demographic details, so age, gender and years of being a foster carer.

P: Ok, I’m 62, was it...age...

I: gender

P: oh gender, I’m female [laughs] and I’ve been fostering for four years.

I: Ok, lovely, so this little one that we’ve got in mind then, can I ask you just to start off by describing them to me? Just generally.

I: I would say that he was a classic traumatised child, he was almost textbook in many ways. His inability to concentrate, because he could only do something, even games, toys, when he first came to us, 5/10 minutes max that he could concentrate on anything. Didn’t trust anyone, wouldn’t allow you to touch him, so there was no sort of emotional response from him whatsoever. He, you could virtually see him before your eyes, girding himself up to face whatever it was that was ahead, whether it was going to school or going to contact, anything like that. He was very negative, never thought he was good enough, and really, y’know it didn’t take much to upset him and to set him off on a downward spiral. He wasn’t, he wasn’t physically aggressive but definitely verbally aggressive, and y’know he’d refuse to do things and just downright awkward really [laughs]. So, yeah, he stayed with us, he lived with us for 15 months. And he was a very, he was a different child, better, but still had a long way to go.

I: Yeah, ok. So you mentioned a couple of things there about the downward spiral and things that would set him off. Could you give some more examples perhaps of some of those behaviours that you might have seen?

P: well, for example, he hated writing, and if you got homework or were doing something that involved any writing, it’s amazing when y’know they’re a 5 6 year old how that actually comes into play and even doing y’know colouring books, if he went over the line it would be “I can’t do this” pencil getting thrown down and then y’know you would see that sort face, his demeanour would change completely and then it would be a case of not speaking, he wouldn’t want to communicate, he wouldn’t want to participate any longer, wouldn’t play any more games, y’know it was like self-destruct mode in some ways. And nothing you said seemed to get through to him. I say seemed, because that’s not the case, but y’know he would give the, he would kindof put that barrier, that barrier up. So he wasn’t, as I said he wasn’t physical but, anything you said to him he would just bite back at you, so y’know if you said, “would you like a drink?”, “no course I don’t want a drink”. Y’know that, as little as that, it got to the nitty-gritty level. Or if he was in the car he’d say “hmpf, you missed that red light”, or y’know “you’re driving too fast”. Y’know, critical to the nth degree of you and himself really.

I: Yeah, so what was your, I guess there were two kind of behaviours in there, of I guess you said self-destruct mode of the “I’ve gone out the colouring lines so I’m just going to give up” and also the kind of critical behaviours. What was your thinking about what was driving those behaviours when they were occurring? Where did you think that was coming from?

P: Well I felt that was coming from his lack of self-esteem originally, and erm, I dunno maybe it was – I don’t know – because we never ever, you never really get any answers in foster caring really, but y’know I think, my impression was he was downed a lot as a child and therefore didn’t think he was up to any good. He would say y’know “I’m not any good, I can’t do anything”. Really really quick “I can’t do it” would come really quickly. And so we had to work really hard on building up his self-esteem, and so the first, the first thing we tackled with him was praise praise praise, any little thing that he did really well he got praise for it, and so that was like a stepping stone to that starting to be more positive, so I think it was his self-esteem that was the biggest problem, but I also think, well, these kids are traumatised because they haven’t been given any self-worth in the first place anyway have they? They’ve been banded from pillar to post and not been the apple of anybody’s eye [laughs]. And so they don’t know that security and they don’t know that self-worth and how to, he did have problems with attachment. There was no doubt about that. He did, I don’t think he does know, but he did have attachment problems.

I: Ok, what did that look like?

P: The attachment issues? Well it would be that he wouldn’t let, he wouldn’t believe you when you said things were things were good. He wouldn’t let you touch him, and it was like he kept you at arm’s length to begin with. When he left, he could get cuddles and y’know he actually did say “I love you” once. And yeah we just loved him, put a lot of love and time, we spent hours with him just playing games, helping him to win helping him to lose, showing him how to lose gracefully, and that sort of thing I mean these things are not over night, they don’t happen overnight. But going back to your original question what was it again I’ve forgotten? How did they, where did I think they came from?

I: Yeah

P: Well, yeah, a lack of being valued I would have generally said

I: In previous placements or with his birth parents?

P: Yeah, from where he’d been. This lad had been in foster care before where he had good foster carers, but of course he was returned back into his family and so he never thought anything good would happen for him

I: Yeah, yeah, ok, that’s tricky. And what, how do you think your understanding of there being attachment problems, or your understanding of it being self-esteem, how do you think that affected how you managed the behaviours or responded to the behaviours that you saw?

I: Well we wouldn’t be critical of them, unless it was entirely necessary, I mean you can’t life not saying “no you...”. I mean it wouldn’t have been “you shouldn’t have done that” it would be a case of “that was the wrong decision” that was a “poor decision” quite often we would say poor actually rather than wrong. We started giving him lots of choices, or shall I say, we started giving him choices. If we gave him too many choices, he couldn’t choose, so it started off really small, so it was a case of it would be one thing or another, so it was a choice of one or another. And quite often “neither” you would get. And we would say “no, it has to be one or the other”, because neither was a cop out. And then when he made, when he started to make choices that it was obvious to us obvious to him that they were good choices, he’d be told, and praised for doing that. and even with his behaviour if he was y’know playing with his toys and things like that, if he was getting fed up with one or starting to get, y’know starting to run around and you could just see that the energy levels were getting too high, it would be a case of “right we’re going to play with two toys, which two is it going to be” and the rest would get put away and then. So y’know we would take away the, cause he had difficulty making choice actually, and I think it was because, our understanding was, it didn't matter what he chose he always lost it. Because my understanding from his background would be, he was given loads of toys, but he never got to keep them, they were always sold again I think to provide money. That’s my guess I don’t know that for definite. so he never had anything of his own that he ever kept, so to him, making a choice was really hard, because it was always, what are you going to lose next, in some ways. Y’know and that then y’know, just from toys, but that went onto everything, even what flavour of juice or what he wanted to have in his lunchbox, y’know it was that bad to begin with. Obviously after a lot of work that changed when he began to realise that that wasn’t going to be the case. And we always made sure that at some point in the day he would be outside – come rain, rain, hail, snow, sunshine, he was outside and the ability to run off, he had a bike, loved his bike, and so we would often use his bike actually to be able for him to go and run off lots of energy. I’ve still not answered that question, have I?

I: no no no you have, you have, you absolutely have.

P: I just wax lyrical about all these kids [laughs].

I: So what was so, why do you think getting outside, why was that so important?

P: Because he had so much energy within him, he needed to be tired out, that if he didn’t run that energy off it would come out in more exasperated forms rather than being more controlled. When he had been out and able to run about and to extend energy, he had much more control over the rest that was left – is probably the best way of describing it – that’s very simplistic but.

I: no, no. I understand. Ok, was there an element that you found most challenging in his behaviour?

P: Oh yeah, when he was defiant. I found that very, very challenging.

I: Ok, talk to me about the defiance then?

P: Because I mean he would refuse to do anything, and personally my character is I don’t like being refused [laughs], so I had to be really careful of my triggers in that and so I found that the most difficult, so when it, again, we turned that around and turned that round into choices, rather than a desperate no, a definite no, it was either, or. Y’know even when it was a discipline of some sort it was “well this can happen, or that will happen” y’know and yeah we had to, I had to do that a lot with him. and the defiance actually, I found that when you started putting the choices in, instead of telling him to do something, which we do to children a lot without realising it, it would be it would even be down to “shall I put your shoes on or do you want to do them yourself?” it wasn’t “right, put your shoes on”, it was y’know, “shall I put your shoes on, or do you want to put your shoes on?” so there was no option to say no, so we took that out of the equation, that’s how I got round that, and therefore I didn’t trigger either on that one. But, I mean that took real effort, because it was down to just the tiny little things with the defiance. And I don’t know why, but – I mean you might be able to tell me why – but when y’know when he didn’t get so many opportunities to say no or to refuse, y’know that wasn’t, erm, it was almost like that was no longer in the vocabulary, and we just found that things became a lot, a lot easier for him and therefore for us.

I: So as in the more opportunities, or the more times you were giving the choices rather than giving the instructions, there were just, from his side there just became, there was kind of no need to do that no.

P: exactly, there was no opportunity to be defiant actually, and so, and then it just didn’t arise and then it just naturally didn’t arise and therefore it just kind of disappeared. He would become defiant. If he went on a meltdown and a downward spiral, y’know defiance would come out. I mean even to the extent that if you were trying to y’know love him, because if he went on a meltdown we would have ‘time in’ so “come here, we’ve got you, you’re ok, you’re safe, everything’s going to be ok”, all of the reassurance, but it would be “get off”, it was almost like [inaudible] “get off”, y’know there was, “just come and sit down, sit down beside us” he would “no I’m not coming”, or he’d want to be chased, actually we didn’t chase him. As soon as he displayed that he wanted to be chased we stopped, we didn’t chase. We just stopped, and left it, it became a game and we took the game out from that point of view. I mean I think it’s good to have games, but not that kind of [laughs], I don’t have the energy! [laughs].

I: well, yeah exactly. Ok, so talk to me about these meltdowns then, so were there particular things that would trigger those meltdowns or?

P: I can remember one particular meltdown that he had and it was around, it was after Christmas and he was looking at the Christmas cards he got from everybody, and he was looking at the Christmas card he got from his, supposedly got from his mum and dad and from his gran. And, they were up on the shelf there, so he could look at them any time he wanted. And erm, he had been reading it and he just became really silent, and you’re thinking ‘oh what’s going on’. And then he started, threw the card away and started all the verbal stuff of not being good enough and “my mum and dad don’t like me” and all that sort of stuff and then it became, he did hit out and lash out on that particular occasion, eventually when I did get hold of him I did exactly that I just held him, he fought me like mad, but I held him the whole time, and then he actually broke down and cried. And that’s something he didn’t do very often, he didn’t cry from emotion, he would cry from frustration normally, or If he wasn’t getting his own way, something like that he could cry like any child, but he never cried from feeling sad. But on that occasion, on that occasion, he did.

I: what’s your understanding at the time of what was going on for him

P: he was, his mum and dad hadn’t turned up at any of the contacts, his nan would keep his mum and dad alive in his head for him because he would meet up with her, but he never actually got to them. And she brought presents from them, but they weren’t actually able to come, so I think it was just that, it was the, the frustration that he never saw his mum and his dad and they had to let him down really. And then the card was there, but of course he hadn’t seen them. And at this stage he hadn’t seen them for quite a number of months. And so, I think it was the realty of that, and missing them. But knowing that y’know he probably wasn’t going to be seeing them a long time later, well they were in prison quite often so they would disappear for long periods of time. So, it was definitely the emotions of his mum and dad, of not seeing his mum and dad that triggered him.

I: and how do you think that understanding impacted on how you kind of responded to him and when he was kind of verbally, well not aggressive you said, but he was putting himself down, how did you...

P: he was throwing things around..well..my [laughs], your natural instinct is just to want to wrap them up and protect them isn’t it? But I knew because we were going on to a meltdown and I knew from the trainings that I’d been to as a foster carer and that in therapeutic parenting, it is a case of reassurance and security. We had to be his safe base, and erm, and so, yeah I did, I did pick him up, and wrap him and hold him, I felt that he needed to feel someone and hear and feel someone who was giving him reassuring words and was being positive about him, that we would look after him and he was going to be ok and we would be there for him whenever he needed us, y’know, just, it was reassurance really the whispering in his ear all the whole time. Didn’t mention his mum and dad, it was all about him, we were just guessing that’s what it was about. But he did eventually, when he calmed down, he just said, “I’m never going to go home”. “I’m never going to see my mum and dad again”. And we said to him – well we couldn’t say “yes you are” but we had to say “maybe not for a long time, but you might be able to see them when you’re older”, because the reality is when they’re 18 they can go and look for them. But there was no point in lying to him, he wasn’t going to see them again. One of the hard things – at that particular point we were able to be more specific, but one of the hard things in fostering is there are no definites, so you can’t make any promises to the kids and say that, oh this will happen or that will happen, because half the time, you don’t know yourself, and that as an adult is really frustrating and difficult to work with, so as a child, I really get how they must be totally freaked out by it.

I: oh yeah.

P: Y’know, the unanswered questions and the insecurity of it all to be honest.

I: Yeah, no I often think that, if you were going to take any adult and think, well you’re going to be moving house and moving who you live with in 6 months’ time, but I can’t tell you who it will be with, I can’t tell you where it would be

P: I know! You’d freak out!

I: you would

P: Yeah, so why we expect the kids to be able to cope with it, I’ve no idea. Have I answered your question?

I: Yeah. Was there anything else that came through that was particularly challenging that we haven’t necessarily touched on at all?

P: Erm, for, for this particular child.... there are so many actually, I’m thinking... he was also really afraid, and when he first came, he was frightened of shadows in his room and things like that. I mean I think that came from visits from the police, strangers in his house, strangers in the garden, all that sort of thing, and that took a long time to be able to settle him down into not being afraid, and it’s only through time that he began to feel safe in the house and that we were there with him. He was, he just was a classic traumatised child, he really was. He was really clever, really clever young lad, but had never been in an emotional place to learn, so he was quite behind at school, and as he settled, you could see the educational side of him catching up. Actually, the news we’ve had from his foster, his adoptive parents is that he now is working at his age level,

I: oh wow

P: in fact, a little bit above, which is brilliant, they’ve done a great job with him as well. But he erm, yeah, so he was, so really, I mean it’s the same for all of them, it’s not any different from any of the other children, they’re not in a place, they’re in a state of shock, and a state of high alert, or he was hyper, he was hypervigilant – “what’s that?”, and he would notice everything, absolutely everything. Even to the extent he would say, oh you’ve put nail polish on. And I just thought, kids at that age do not notice things like that [laughs]. And he was, he was with us for about for a couple of months, and then he was returned to his nan and then he was brought back in again, [pffff (frustration)], and we had deliberately not touched too many things or moved too many things in the house, and then there was a few things that we thought that maybe we had and we thought right we’d put back for when he returned, and he went round the house just checking everything was as he remembered, and if there was the slightest change he would pick it up, his observation skills were phenomenal – but I mean that comes from a learning to be alert, but I mean really “you’ve had your hair cut today”, and y’know when you’ve only had the tiniest little bit trimmed. I mean it was just it was almost anything, he would come in and he said “oh you’ve moved something or other”, I can’t remember what it was because we’re going back a few years now, and we went “oh yeah that’s right we have moved that” and he went “why?” and erm, it would be any slightest noise “what is that? What’s this for?”. He would, in the car, he would narrate almost everything we were going past, and it was exhausting for him, but yeah eventually he, eventually he relaxed, and we got a lot less of that, but the hypervigilance was really noticeable.

I: And did that, I guess your, because I imagine there might be some instances if a child was constantly, doing the whole constantly narrating things in the car or talking through lots of things there might be instances where you were saying like “ok, that’s enough”, but how did your understanding that it was hypervigilance, did that change how you responded?

P: Yeah, because we just went with it, and answered all the questions because I didn’t, well I don’t believe that turning round and saying “oh be quiet” or “right we’ve had enough, off it” he wouldn’t be able to switch off to do that I mean because that way I had an understanding of where it was coming from and I just felt that as long as we gave sensible answers. And sometimes it was “well I don’t know what the reason for that is”, but I would always answer him, “I don’t know why that would be, have you got any ideas?”. Y’know, and we would do it that way, but then I’m quite a chatterbox and I used to do a lot of chattering with my own kids as well, so although it was tiresome, y’know it wasn’t, and it was constant, it wasn’t something that we were unused to, just not in such concentration, if you know what I mean? I mean, y’know, or constantly. But yeah, we just kind of went with it and answered his questions because we felt that was the best way to help him to feel more secure. If, and the other thing, the other thing that I was very much aware of was as a parent I always used to feel that and it was reinforced in some of the training that we got is, especially with therapeutic parenting, they need to know that you know exactly what’s going on and you’re in control. So, all the time, throughout as much as possible it would always be, whether I knew or not, we would always indicate to him, we knew exactly what was going on “that’s not a problem, yep we’ve got that sorted” y’know, so in everything he was given the impression that “no no its all fine, its all, it’s all ok”, I mean it was most of the time. And I tended to do that quite a lot with my own kids as well actually, not until they got older did I show any any weakness, because they’ve got to learn to do things as well but when they’re secure in themselves you can start to say, “well I’m not sure about that”, or something. But, and that seemed to work because the phenomenon seemed to, not disappear entirely, but it certainly, it certainly relaxed a lot more, became much less so. He went back into it again when he went to his adoptive parents, but not to the same extent and very quickly... But he still asks loads of questions. Now his questions are quite often in an attempt to learn things and because he asks so many questions and he remembers because he’s a smart kid, he’s a really knowledgeable kid, because he’s asking questions all the time so he’s learning all the time. So y’know it’s not all bad.

I: No, no absolutely, and on that note, is there a particular kind of memory or theme, something that stands out from the time that he was with you that was particularly positive, something that we can talk about to end on.

P: Yeah, there was lots of, there was lots of positives and most of the positives were just seeing him, seeing him change before our eyes really and settle down. But probably for me the biggest positive was, I mean every night before he went to bed, I would always tuck him in, we both would tuck him in, but I would give him a hug. Took him a long long time before, so the first one was he would return the hug, and I’d say that I loved him, and he did actually respond and say “I love you”, in fact he’s the one, that particular night I gave him a hug and he said “I love you” and that, was a real highlight, a real highlight because from a kid who trusted nobody wouldn’t even let you touch him, for him to get, and interestingly enough – oh I’ve got tears in my eyes – the, his adoptive parents took him to visit my daughter and her husband earlier in the year, actually half term, and his mum said, and acknowledged to my daughter. She said “he really loved your mum and dad and he grieved for them when he left”, that really touched me, because I mean we knew that he loved us in his own way, but it was, but it was quite touching to hear that somebody else had recognised that, and I was absolutely thrilled to bits for them, in as much as, I mean although that’s difficult for them to know, but they they recognised it and saw it and knew what was happening, and I thought “oh theyre going to be so good with him” they get him, they know him, they can see, they’ve obviously observed and analysed and thought that’s because he loved them and he’s grieving and so they had an understanding, and then when you’ve got an understanding you can deal with it and I mean, it’s the understanding bit isn’t it. And we get such good training as foster carers. That that really helped, I mean I was actually on a course when, when he first came to us and that’s when I said he was just classic, because we were always being asked for examples, and he became the example for everybody, I think there was only about five of us on this course, it ran for about 9 err 6 months, so it was a long one, and yeah whenever there was examples needed, yeah, he was, he was there, y’know, oh yes I’ve got. That’s why I said he was just classic, classic traumatised child [laughs]. But, y’know, there’s hope. There is hope.

I: Yeah, it sounds like he’s responded really well to the love and support that he was given.

P: as well as you could expect actually. I mean we were really fortunate that he did respond because you can pour all that love into somebody and they don’t. y’know, but as Christians of course, we pray for him every day every night, so, didn’t stand a chance really [laughs].

I: Oh bless, is there anything that we haven’t kind of talked about or covered that you would particularly want to talk about or you think would be relevant?

P: erm, there was another child that we had and we had him for quite some time, and he was disabled, he was downs syndrome, and he had some challenging behaviours as well, but I think a lot of that maybe came from his disabilities, but when he first, when he first arrived, he would just sit and rock and “mmmmm” just make a noise, that was, that was really hard. Eventually, actually you tune it out and you don’t hear it. He stopped rocking, but the noise never ever went away, but we forgot about it we never heard it, it wasn’t until you would be with other people who would comment and say “why is he making that noise all the time”, quietly y’know to us, “oh yeah I forgot about that”, he was very erm socially unacceptable in some ways [laughs], and I think that that gave me an eye, it really opened my eyes to how difficult it is for parents who have got either disabled or really challenging kids that have got ADHD and don’t do the norm – how isolated the families become, and I don’t know if we recognise that, just how isolated the carers or the families of these children actually become, because of their behaviour.

I: Yeah, in terms of access to even friends and family or going out to different things?

P: Yeah, going out to different places, it’s such an effort, you know people are looking at you, I mean we we noticed that right away y’know, he was erm, he couldn’t walk very far, so he was in a large pushchair, and the looks you used to get ‘a child that age in a push chair’, y’know and that’s just a little thing and I just thought gosh, people who have got disabled kids and challenging kids really do have to put up with a lot of people feeling they’re unsociable and yeah you become very... we found a lot of our friends who were really supportive of us going into foster care, but they disappeared because they couldn’t cope with him, he made them feel uncomfortable. It wasn’t because he had challenging, well he did have challenging behaviours because he couldn’t speak, he was unable to speak, so it wasn’t a challenging behaviour in as much as it was y’know temper or misbehaving or anything like that but it just was unsociable in some ways because he wasn’t able to speak and his only way of being able to communicate would be by trying to get hold of your, and I mean acting out to begin with a little bit, but yeah that struck me just how, how isolated you can become, I mean we didn’t go that many places, and I remember saying all throughout that placement, which was over a year, y’know how isolated we were...

I: I was going to say, was that particularly different between the little boy that we’ve been talking about mostly, and this other one with downs syndrome...

P: Oh yeah

I: ...Was there quite a difference?

I: Big big difference, big difference yeah, because actually people accepted the second little lad, because y’know although he had challenging behaviours most of the time he could be quite perfectly normal and quite delightful and I mean at the end of the day he was like that most of the time so they didn’t see the challenges, they wouldn’t see the challenges so people were quite happy to have you round for tea or, then they sometimes saw them, or to go out and about doing things, or going places with kids, because he was able to do that with them. And actually, he did behave. Y’know he rose to the challenge every time which was great. I mean it takes a while before you get there doesn’t it, but then once you get there, slowly but surely you can start to do these things. But with the other little lad, because of his disability and because of his lack of communication, because people didn’t feel confident to be able to make a, to communicate with him really, basically it was the communication that was a problem, they would, yeah they backed off, it made them feel uncomfortable, so don’t put yourself in that situation. I mean, I got it, I totally got It, and I possibly would have been the same myself, but people backed off, and we did feel isolated and that is, I think that is a huge danger for many many people who have got either, whether they’re fostering or whether they’re their own kids, when they’re disabled or unsociably in some ways and some of the not so good, some of the challenging behaviours are very unsociable, erm, yeah, it’s really tough, really tough, and then you start dealing with it all on your own, you don’t get the support, so that’s hard, that is hard.

I: Yeah, at a time when you possibly need the support the most, then yeah, it isn’t necessarily there...

P: It’s not there because people feel that they can’t do anything. Apart from, yeah, so that’s, that’s quite sad.

I: Yeah, and I think as you pointed out it’s the understanding that’s important and I think sometimes that can be what’s missing sometimes, as you said when you’re a foster carer or perhaps a teacher and you’ve had additional bits of training and input...

P: You know about those things

I: ... you know about those things, yeah, but when you don’t have that...

P: Joe-public has no idea.

I: No, and as you said communication, communication is such as fundamental part of being a social being, humans are sociable people so if you can’t, if you feel that you can’t communicate then that’s, yeah that can become quite a barrier for some.

P: Yeah a massive barrier, especially if you’re, for a child, who’s trying to communicate, that’s so often when the bad behaviours come out isn’t it, because they’re trying to tell you something and that’s their way of doing it, it’s almost a case of trying to say, that’s something we’ve done a lot in foster caring in general, is step back and y’know, don’t look at the behaviour don't deal with the behaviour as such, step back and look at what’s behind the behaviour before you react. And that’s something that you’ve got to teach yourself to do I don’t think we all do that quite naturally; you just deal with what’s in front of you, and instead of stopping and thinking “right what’s causing that”. So, I mean we have learned so much as foster carers, it’s been amazing, you learn so much about yourself, but you also learn so much about other things, and so much more tolerant now of other kids as well. Because you sort of you put the same thing into practice more readily and just think, “well, what’s behind that?”.

I: Yeah, I can see that.

P: But that’s a bit of a, it takes a while to get there. Is there anything else you want to ask me?

I: I don’t think so, I think we’ve covered everything, is there anything else you wanted to share?

P: No, I just thought that last bit when you asked me about something, I just became aware that although I concentrated on one child, there were issues with another of a very different sort.

I: Yeah, yeah, no I think it’s, as I said, even right at the start about how sometimes even children who withdraw into themselves that can still be a challenging behaviour itself. I guess it’s the challenge becomes less obvious and it becomes about, I guess communication again and that interaction isn’t it.

P: well it’s the difference between a physical illness and a mental illness isn’t it. Anything that you can see people are more, it’s really noticeable, they can understand, but anything that you can’t see that’s hidden, people don't even give it a thought. Which is hard. But this, the original lad that we were talking about I mean he really struggled to make friends as well. Because he was quite aggressive.

I: Yes, yeah, that can quite often be a challenge can’t it. We talk about needing the understanding as adults, and children sometimes, when we can understand the behaviours and can move past it and still build the relationship but for children that’s much harder.

P: Although, he went to a local school, and they were brilliant, they were absolutely brilliant, I’ve got nothing but praise for them. They tackled everything head on and they were really really supportive of him and even to the extent that he had 1:1 in the playground to help him deal with erm, with playtime and breaktimes and things like that, because he didn’t deal with that very well [laughs].

I: Yeah, they’re quite hard times typically.

P: Yeah, speaking of making relationships. Interesting thing was, the school that he was in before was quite a rough area, and he didn’t stand out from the crowd particularly as being any different and being aggressive and things like that, that seemed to be the way of things there. But of course, when you come into a more genteel area and the kids are brought up a little bit differently, he stood out like a sore thumb [laughs]. Bless him. But y’know, as I said they were great, and even not being used to dealing with looked after children they came up trumps so that was really good. I mean I spoke to them a lot and we’d meet with them regularly and we’d raise concerns regularly and helpfully and sometimes I’d go in with suggestions, y’know but you don’t want to tell them how to do their job, but we worked as a team, to be able to do it for them, very much so. Which was great, just shows that when you do it can work, it can be successful. Anyway, sorry.

I: No, thank you very much.

P: I could way lyrical for ages

I: no its fine, thank you.