

Case Study Early Years: Connor

Background.

Connor aged 4, was one of 5 siblings and had attended the daycare setting since he was 2 years old. He had always struggled to settle when his mum left him. The family had many complex issues to deal with and had the support of a number of agencies including social care.

Observed Behaviours.

Connor was observed to be a fearful child who was very anxious when separated from his mum. He would always wear his coat and sit near the door by the sleep area watching through the window for his mum's return.

Assessment.

The Thrive assessment indicated that Connor had a Being need. He particularly did not feel safe in the setting and appeared to try to manage this by staying in the sleep area as his safe place and by keeping his coat on. Connor needed to build a secure attachment with a key worker in order to begin to feel safe in the setting before he could access the activities on offer.

Review.

The Daycare manager who completed Connor's assessment took the initial lead in building a trusting relationship with him. She sat close by him in his safe space. She slowly began to talk to Connor, and respond to the sounds and movements he made. She was careful to use a soothing and quiet tone. She occasionally sang nursery rhymes. Connor was able to say No when he didn't want her to talk or sing.

Gradually, the manager moved an emotions display into the sleep area and began to engage Connor in playful face pulling activities using mirrors to gain eye contact that felt safe for him. Through this approach, she was able to attune to Connor and start to build his confidence in his relationship with her. She then included Connor's key worker in some of the activities so that a further attachment could grow.

Connor made huge progress over the following 6 months. He was observed to be more confident and able to enjoy activities, mostly by himself, but occasionally with 1 or 2 other children. He no longer needed to wear his coat during the sessions.

He still liked the security of his safe place and was encouraged by his key worker to use it whenever he felt the need to. She noticed that he checked in with her frequently and then could return to his play. He had made a friend.

Additional Notes

Connor's Being need was significant and most probably linked back to an anxious attachment with his mother as his primary carer. Because of this, Connor was not able to separate positively from her and therefore found attending daycare very difficult. By attending closely to Connor's Being need for safety, the daycare manager was able to help him start to build a secure attachment with her. She used the Vital Adult Child Regulating Functions to attune, validate, contain and calm and soothe him and then PLACE to engage him in playful relationship with her.

In addition to working with Connor, the manager used VACRF to work with his mother. Through attuning to her needs and emotional state she was able to build enough trust with Connor's mother to work alongside her regarding Connor's application to primary

school and to accept accessing Speech and Language support for him. This was very significant as the family had previously refused all offers of help and support. Connor's mum was also able to put a Thrive Home Activities plan into place with him which she sustained over several months.

Finally, work was done with Connor's new school to ensure that his transition was as smooth as possible. This included a Thrive training session for school staff and continuity of Connor's Thrive Action Plan into school.

