

Case Study Early Years: Erin

Background.

Erin was 3 years old and had been attending preschool for one term. She appeared to have settled well and showed no signs of distress on separating from her Mum or her Gran.

Observed Behaviours.

When observing Erin more closely staff became aware that she chose to stay in close proximity to one adult and did not interact with any of the activities or relate directly to other children or adults.

She did not speak during her time in the sessions, although she was observed to be relaxed and chatty with her Mum and Gran.

Assessment.

The Thrive assessment indicated that Erin had a Being need. In particular she needed to feel safe in the preschool setting before she would be able to engage in activities and feel comfortable making wider relationships with other children.

Review.

Erin's keyworker took the central role in supporting her to feel safe. She did this by being available to greet Erin every morning, anticipating her needs and providing for them and focussing on helping Erin feel special and valued.

In addition it was agreed that all staff would take part in greeting Erin warmly, giving her eye contact, smiles and calling her by her name.

Following a discussion with Erin's mum, it was suggested that Erin bring something special into preschool with her to act as a Transitional Object helping to bridge home with the preschool setting. Erin had a collection of much loved glass beads, so it was agreed that she would bring one of these with her each day. Over a period of a few weeks, Erin would arrive with a glass bead which she shared with her keyworker. Initially she would only show the bead whilst her key worker demonstrated her pleasure at seeing it, describing the colour and shape. Erin then began to say odd words about the bead – "Look at this", "It's a star" and eventually began to show the beads to other members of staff. Erin's confidence grew quickly and after her success with adults, she began to talk to some of the children too.

Despite this progress Erin was still reluctant to take part in activities on offer. Staff decided to buy some similar glass beads which they placed alongside activities in the setting such as the small world, role play and in the creative workshop. By doing this Erin's interest was tickled enough for her to start investigating activities independently. She soon began to move around the setting looking for opportunities to find and play with the beads.

As time has progressed, Erin has become less reliant on the beads and is able to move confidently between activities. She has also begun to feel safe enough to relate to other children in a more confident manner.

Additional Notes

Although Erin had a safe and secure attachment to her close family members, she was obviously feeling unsafe and possibly overwhelmed in the new pre school setting. As a result of this her Being needs became uppermost in the setting. Transitions, life events & changes could trigger this for any child. The crucial aspect was that the staff team recognised her lack of emotional safety in the setting and addressed this through her keyworker's attention on building trust and a safe relationship. This was supported by the whole team also ensuring Erin felt special and valued by them.

The use of the Transitional Object reinforced the building of safety by allowing Erin to bring in a sense of safety from home through the glass beads and then having them treasured and valued by her key worker.

When the staff used glass beads in a more generic way in amongst the activities on offer they were able to build on Erin's interest in them to help her engage in play and exploration in a positive and non threatening way.

Quiet children like Erin can often be missed by settings as they are not causing any trouble to anyone. By using the Thrive observed behaviours, staff made sure that Erin's needs were identified and supported.

