

SCARBOROUGH, JULY 2015

INTERVIEW WITH MOTHER OF CHRIS

FAMILY DETAILS:

Chris is the youngest of four boys, living with their mother. The eldest is six years older and the closest in age is one year older than Chris. Parents are now separated.

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND CLIMATE:

From the mother's viewpoint, because she had always looked after Chris, he was the least affected by her separation from her husband. She felt he had no real relationship with his father. "He was the last of the family so I wanted to hold on to him". The mother opted not to return to work in order to give him time, attending Mums and Tots with him from the age of 2 and spending time with him painting, playing with Play Doh, singing, etc. She was at this time a volunteer at a local church and would join in activities with Chris, unlike other mums. She had always socialised Chris from when he was a baby, and he had no problem in relating to other children. Her main aspiration for Chris was "for him to enjoy himself, doing things he would not be able to do at home, such as messy play, even though initially I didn't like the idea of him

going".

Some sibling rivalry exists amongst the brothers but much less so with Chris, who is the 'baby' of the family. He is particularly close to B, the brother nearest in age to him.

Mother is now studying child-care.

There is not a great deal of involvement from grandparents since the death of his maternal grandma, to whom he was very close, when he was 4.

CHILD CHARACTERISTICS:

Chris is described as a confident, extrovert, sociable and very inquisitive child who continually asks lots of questions and enjoys discussions. He has the capacity to sit quietly and concentrate for a long time on one activity, e.g. playing with a train set, but he can become easily frustrated, and does not like any interference in what he is doing. Equally, he will often move rapidly from one thing to another in a fairly erratic manner.

He began to make friends easily once he started pre-school, usually with girls rather than boys. He demonstrates the ability to be sympathetic to others when they are upset, but his mother is not sure if he is always aware of his

own part in causing upset. He is able to express himself (e.g. "Miss is making me sad and I don't like it"). He has always said what he feels, and needs a lot of time once he has become unsettled. However, "once he knows you've heard him, he's happy".

He struggles with conflict resolution at times and will blow up and hit people, particularly his brothers if they interfere in his games. He always wants to be a leader.

He has a keen sense of humour and uses face-pulling, mimicry and tickling to amuse his audience.

HOME EXPERIENCES AND ACTIVITIES:

At home, there are shelves full of books and the mother read to all the boys from when they were babies, long before they developed language. She was constantly talking to them. The older boys would also position themselves close to Chris when reading their own books. There were always mobiles and music in the house to stimulate. Chris was using a Wii at two, and manipulating the wheel with no problem.

Chris' development was far

ahead of his brothers. Long before starting school, he was able to count to 100, count backwards from ten, write his name, draw realistic pictures, and use phonics. His mother encouraged him on journeys to take part in activities such as counting cars, listing how many of each colour, etc. Her approach is to encourage each child to follow what they like, when they are ready.

He has enjoyed using computers and a laptop from a very early age. Currently he enjoys Mathematics, CBeebies, but is restricted to 30 minutes per session unless he persuades the older children to allow him access. He also loves the trampoline and involves himself in a lot of imaginative play with his third brother, pretending they are in a spaceship, or using teddies in role play. The family enjoys walks around local parks, feeding squirrels and the mother always encourages educational visits.

PRE-SCHOOL EXPERIENCES AND ACTIVITIES:

At pre-school, Chris enjoyed jigsaws, dressing up, playing with the toy kitchens, or the pushalong cars. From the outset, he was keen to start and did not cry at all. Later, he began to miss his mother but the key person liaised closely, putting out toys and books that he would like after discussing with his mother his current interests. A current obsession is with monkeys, and he insists, quite seriously, that he would like to be a monkey when he is older! He will constantly strive to acquire more and more knowledge about monkeys, taking books from the library, etc. The key person will always be prepared to follow his lead and help him to develop his natural interests.

Chris' mother believes that the school is exceptionally good with her son and feels that she has built a strong partnership to deal effectively with his development. She encourages the school to challenge him because she was always aware that he was very bright, and Chris now enjoys the structure of being at school and is extremely happy there.