



## CASE STUDY 5

# SCARBOROUGH, JULY 2015

### INTERVIEW WITH MOTHER OF JAMES

#### **FAMILY DETAILS:**

James, 6, lives with his single mother who is currently unemployed and looking for work. There is no extended family nearby and no contact with the father. They deliberately located from the South to the North of England for reasons of affordability and for James' mother to have the opportunity to give up work and be a stay-at-home mum.

#### **FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND CLIMATE:**

James' early years took place in a very unsettled environment, which the mother described as "very stressful" with a move to rented accommodation at 6 months, and later a house purchase. This was a busy period but the time spent together was rich, with access to various groups such as Mum and Tots, Church group, etc. Things are now calmer and have been relatively settled since James was 2.

James' mother, who was brought up by working parents, wanted a more hands-on approach, and took a deliberate decision to be with her son and spend as much time with him as possible. She describes herself as a 'late bloomer' who began to grow and

develop once she began work. James and his mother have been a close family unit throughout, with minimal input from others.

Since the age of 3, James has close access to his grandmother with whom he has developed a strong relationship.

The household environment is "quite strict" with good discipline ("not smacking") and consistent rules. "If we say something, we follow it through". There is a strict routine but activities are always based on things which develop James' own choices and interests. Bedtimes, dinner, bath times and story time follow a consistent pattern. Since birth, James' mother has talked to him and given lots of eye contact. Meals are cooked and eaten together and used as an opportunity for sustained dialogue.

#### **CHILD CHARACTERISTICS:**

James has a good sense of humour and a cheeky personality, but is also caring and sensitive underneath the outward confidence he demonstrates. He is described as "a good all-rounder" and school reports say he is polite, has a good capacity to

concentrate and is self-motivated, taking pleasure from his own achievements.

He has a natural love of learning and is happy to do sums voluntarily at home. He has an extremely advanced vocabulary and developed early, both physically and with language, even making up his own sign language to express himself. He was always an exploratory child and he shows excellent powers of concentration and memory.

Generally "he takes everything in his stride" though he can get frustrated when he meets barriers, for example in his reading.

He responds well to discipline provided that instructions and requests are explained to him clearly; reasoning usually works well with him.

### HOME EXPERIENCES AND ACTIVITIES:

He enjoys being in the garden in a sit-in tractor, watering the garden and being physically active. Favourite activities include playing with water, kicking balls, making tents and tunnels, wrestling, tickling, sharing books, cooking and baking, miniature world play.

Mother is aware that he has no male role model and deliberately ensures that they do physical activities together, for example kicking balls and wrestling.

The home atmosphere is one of clear boundaries, set routines whilst at the same time offering a great deal of support and encouragement: "I've taken my lead from him in following his interests".

### PRE-SCHOOL EXPERIENCES AND ACTIVITIES:

From the age of two, James had access to 10 hours pre-school through a children's centre and this was regarded as very important for the mother's health and wellbeing. Pre-school took place in a church hall in a very family-oriented and loving environment. "The ladies were mums and grandmums" and the activities were free-flow, involving computers, music, dancing. Though he didn't settle quickly, he progressed rapidly. "He had

no fear of computers and fixed the pre-school PC!" Progression to preschool was seamless.

During this period, he developed a good relationship with his key person and responded well to the clear behaviour policy. The key person has told his mother "I've taken my lead from him". He progressed rapidly, learning to write his name, etc. but his mother feels that a bigger gain was the space and respite offered, and the interaction with other children. The pre-school acknowledged that he was achieving highly at this stage.

