

FOETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER (FASD)

Challenges Experienced By Children And Young People With Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

Challenge	Effects
Developmental Challenges	FASD can cause significant delays in achieving developmental milestones such as toileting and hygiene skills, in some cases beyond the primary years.
Medical Challenges	Medical and health-related challenges include organ damage, sleep problems, eating and dietary difficulties, small stature, and vision and hearing impairments.
Learning Challenges	<p>It may be difficult to understand cause and effect, which affects social interactions and the ability to build strong social relationships, and increases the incidence of risk-taking behaviours.</p> <p>There may be speech, language and communication delays or disorders, including verbosity, difficulty comprehending or expressing information, poor social cognition and communication skills, and difficulty using sophisticated language in social contexts.</p> <p>Cognitive difficulties may arise, including poor short-term memory.</p> <p>Poor concentration and inattention may interfere with learning.</p> <p>Understanding abstract mathematical concepts, such as time and money, may be difficult.</p> <p>Frontal lobe damage to the brain, associated with FASD, results in impaired executive functioning, including issues with the ability to organise, plan, understand consequences, maintain and shift attention, and process and memorise data. Executive functioning affects all aspects of daily life.</p>
Behavioural Challenges	Hyperactivity, inattention, aggression, obsessions with people and objects, and agitation can cause anxiety and frustration for children and young people as well as parents and educators. These difficulties, although often seen as behavioural issues, can also be related to sensory processing disorders (SPDs, see below), requiring occupational therapy input
Social Challenges	<p>Difficulties acquiring appropriate social and emotional skills affect the development of friendships, and any activity that requires an understanding of the state of mind of others, and the ability to predict how this might affect their actions and responses. Reading emotions and other non-verbal cues can also be difficult.</p> <p>Children and young people may not understand boundaries and can be frustrated by their own behaviour, seemingly unable to control it, leading to poor self-esteem</p>

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<p>Emotional Challenges</p>	<p>FASD may cause mood swings, which are common and difficult to control. The need to rely on external prompts from adults can result in ongoing frustration.</p> <p>Children and young people begin to identify the differences between themselves and peers (and vice versa), resulting in low self-esteem. They are often bullied.</p> <p>Secondary challenges, such as mental health problems, disrupted school experience, trouble with the law, inappropriate sexual behaviours, and problems with independent living can result from lack of an early identification of needs, and lack of support and intervention when children are in primary school</p>
<p>Vulnerability At Times Of Transition</p>	<p>Children and young people with FASD may be socially and emotionally vulnerable as they move through the education system and times of transition into adult life.</p> <p>There is a need for extrinsic motivation to learn new skills or complete tasks such as life skills, hygiene routines, and school-based tasks, particularly in secondary-school-aged children with FASD, who can spend as little as 40% of their time engaged in learning tasks. They require reminders and refocusing from supportive peers and adults.</p> <p>As they transition through the school years, children and young people with FASD are vulnerable to bullying and other difficulties associated with making and keeping friends due to their poor social and communication skills and the compounding nature of their disability. These challenges can also be affected by co-existing disorders, such as autistic spectrum disorders (ASDs) and/or ADHD.</p>
<p>Sensory Processing Disorders</p>	<p>SPDs is an umbrella term covering a variety of neurological disabilities, and relates to the inability to process and use information received through the senses. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensory moderation problems that pertain to how a child regulates his/her responses to sensations. This may result in a child being over-responsive (hypersensitive), under-responsive (hyposensitive), or sensory seeking, and some children may present all of these characteristics at different times. • Sensory discrimination difficulties include children experiencing difficulty in distinguishing one sensation from another. The eight senses involved are visual, auditory, olfactory (smell), tactile (touch), and gustatory (taste) as well as the three internal senses – proprioceptive (internal sense of body movement), vestibular (sense of balance), and organic (organ awareness). Each of these senses influences the way we perceive and respond to our environment and perceive sensations such as pain, smell, taste, balance and sound

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Emotional Challenges	Children with FASD may have experienced less than secure attachments to a primary carer in the first years of life. A solid attachment with a primary carer is associated with having secure, healthy relationships. Poor attachment with a primary carer is associated with having emotional and behavioural challenges later in life
Executive Functioning Challenges	Executive functioning refers to a set of cognitive processes that helps connect past experience with present action. People use it to perform activities such as planning, organising, strategising, paying attention to and remembering details, and managing time and space. Some children with FASD may have well-developed executive ability in one or more of these processes and others may demonstrate difficulties with some or most of these processes.

Source: Adapted from C Blackburn, B Carpenter & J Egerton, *Educating Children and Young People With Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders: Constructing personalised pathways to learning*, Routledge, London, 2012.

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