

WHAT IS FASD?

FASD - FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER

Our FASD Advisors are available via our Advice line **0300 666 006** (Option 2) (Tues-Friday, 10am to 2.30pm) or by emailing: fasdhub.scotland@adoptionuk.org.uk

FASD stands for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. It can arise from alcohol exposure in pregnancy and affects the developing brain and body of an individual before they were born. FASD is a life-long, neurodevelopmental condition, often referred to as a hidden disability.

Each person with FASD is affected differently. Each person with FASD has both strengths and challenges, they and their families need support to learn FASD-informed strategies to help them prosper. When an early diagnosis is made, the right supports are put in place in education, at home and in the workplace, then individuals are more likely to succeed and achieve throughout life." ('Basics: What is FASD?', FASD Hub Scotland)

FASD
IS A LIFELONG
CONDITION

What is PAE?

Prenatal Alcohol Exposure (PAE) occurs as a result of alcohol exposure during pregnancy.

"There is **no known safe level** of alcohol consumption [at any stage of] pregnancy. Even low to moderate levels of PAE can negatively impact a fetus and these adverse consequences can persist into adulthood" (**SIGN 156**). Alcohol is a 'teratogen' - a toxin that crosses through the placenta to the fetus from the very first few weeks of conception and disrupts a baby's development. As a developing fetus does not have a fully developed liver or metabolic system, it cannot filter out the toxins from the alcohol which cause harm.



#noalcoholrisk

FASD - Key Facts

FASD is the most common yet unrecognised neurodevelopmental condition in the world



FASD is the most common known cause of neurodevelopmental disability and birth defect in the western world.

In the UK, 1 IN 20 PEOPLE COULD HAVE FASD compared to 1 in 94 with ASD

FASD is thought to affect 3-5% of the general population making it more common than Autism or ADHD.

People with FASD may be able to work and live independently

With the right support, and early intervention, skills can be developed which can lead to employment and independent living



FASD is known as a 'HIDDEN DISABILITY'



90% of people with FASD have no distinct facial features

FASD is a 'hidden disability', affecting the brain and body. You cannot tell by just looking at someone if they have the condition. Around only 10% of individuals have the specific facial features indicative of PAE.

FASD Hub Scotland Service

FASD Hub Scotland provide a tiered support service for all parents/carers of children, young people, and young adults with a history of PAE, with or without a FASD diagnosis, living in Scotland. The tiered service enables families to engage and seek support at the point that best suits their needs. Through social media and our website anyone can access resources and information. The service also provides a point of reference and training for professionals who work with and support families (social work, education and other third sector organisations/charities) within Scotland.

The 10 Brain Domains*

There are potentially 10 brain domains (or functions) that can be affected by prenatal alcohol exposure. Because it is a **spectrum condition**, each individual will present differently; no two people with FASD will be affected in the same way and will each face **different challenges** and have **different strengths**.



*(Areas of assessment as detailed in [SIGN 156 Clinical Guidelines](#))



Executive Functioning

Planning, problem solving, transitions, time management)



Motor (& sensory) Skills

Co-ordination, writing, reactions to sensory input



Memory

Following instructions, long and short term memory, daily routines.



Language

Reaching developmental milestones, expressive and receptive language



Adaptive Behaviour

Understanding social cues and personal boundaries, emotional age, empathy



Attention

Sitting still, focusing on a task, impulse control



Affect Regulation

Managing and expressing emotions, adaptability



Brain Structure and Functioning

Brain and head circumference may be small ('Microcephaly')



Cognition

Attention, planning learning, organisation



Academic Achievement

Maths, reading, time, money, comprehension

Associated Difficulties

If FASD is not understood and appropriate supports are not put in place, individuals may experience **associated difficulties, conditions or disabilities**. These can develop over time, often during adolescence, but sometimes earlier. **They can include:** poor mental health; alcohol and drug misuse; social difficulties with peers; inappropriate sexual behaviours; involvement with law enforcement; challenges with independent living and; becoming a vulnerable adult.



Celebrating Success

It's important to remember that although FASD is a life-long condition, there are also **lots of positives**. Individuals are just that, individual. What has happened to one person does not mean the same will happen to all others.

All individuals with FASD have **strengths** and it's important to build a strengths profile for each individual. **Common strengths** may include being: generous, caring, artistic, athletic, friendly, musical, bright in some academic areas, good with animals, non-judgemental and many others!

If an individual is **supported appropriately** and the team around the child **work together**, much more **positive outcomes** are possible.

For people with FASD, it is not unusual for their **developmental age** to be different from their **chronological age**. This is called a **'Spiky Profile'**.

We need to remember that for people with FASD it's often **Stage rather than Age**.

Chronological age and FASD development age



Actual physical age



Expressive language



Reading ability



Living skills



Money & time concepts



Social skills



Comprehension & social maturity



Useful Links:

[Understanding FASD: Information for Parents and Carers](#)

[Understanding FASD: What Educators Need to know](#)

[SIGN FASD Parent, Carer Handbook](#)

[SIGN 156, FASD clinical guidance](#)

[CanFASD, Caregivers Resource Guide](#)

[Key information for parents & carers, FASD Hub Scotland](#)



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