

Contact our dedicated FASD Advisors via our Advice Line 0300 666 0006 (option 2) (Tues-Fri, 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 GIRFEC and what does it mean for children with FASD/suspected FASD?

All public services involved in supporting a child/young person whether in education, social care or health, work within the **GIRFEC** framework (Getting It Right For Every Child). This does not just look at learning needs, but also wellbeing needs. It is **child/young person and family centred**, so the needs and views of the family should be at the core. It is based on **tackling needs early** and should ensure **that everyone supporting the child/young person** is working together in a co-ordinated way. Within GIRFEC is the Curriculum for Excellence, which Scottish Schools use as a framework for learning. Its aims include children and young families being supported to be Successful Learners, Responsible Citizens, Confident Individuals and Effective Contributors.

Some children/young people with FASD/prenatal alcohol exposure (PAE) are of average or borderline academic ability and school staff may not think that they qualify for additional support because they aren't academically weak enough. However, GIRFEC clearly states that **wellbeing is paramount** to learning and progression. **Learners with FASD/PAE may need additional support for social, emotional and behavioural reasons, not just for help with academic learning.**

A child/young person with FASD/PAE who is disruptive in school or who shuts down and does very little is communicating that something is wrong in the **learning environment**. A child/young person who *masks* at school and *melts down* once he or she is at home is demonstrating that his or her levels of stress and anxiety are unacceptably high in school. A teenager with FASD who is going 'off the rails' in school may well be doing so because the environment is a poor fit for his/her stage of development. In all of these examples, the child/young person needs additional support to address wellbeing concerns. Coming to understand this may well involve staff needing to learn more about the challenges faced by a learner who has FASD/PAE.

Within the GIRFEC framework used by schools, there are eight wellbeing indicators that are used to assess how a child is progressing and if there is a need for support. The indicators state that all children should be: **Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included**. These indicators are often referred to as the 'SHANARRI' indicators and are shown as a wheel. It is worth noting that both the SHANARRI indicators and the GIRFEC framework put value on the views of both the child/young person and his/her carers. **Your voice and opinion as a parent or carer must be included and must be presented at any GIRFEC meeting.**



Image reproduced from <https://www.gov.scot/publications/shanarri/>

What are the qualifying criteria for additional support in school?

The **Additional Support for Learning Act (2004)** states the qualifying criteria as being anything that prevents the child/young person from accessing learning and making progress in his or her education. This can include, but is not limited to, the following:

Disability

Which prevents the child/young person from accessing learning (this disability can be visible or hidden - neurodevelopmental conditions count too). N.B: FASD is specifically mentioned as a condition requiring additional support in note 21 of the ASL Statutory Guidance 2017.

FASD Hub Scotland provide a tiered support service for all parents/carers, living in Scotland, who are parenting individuals with FASD/PAE, and professionals working and supporting these families.



www.fasdhub.scot

Family Circumstances

Such as poverty, homelessness, drug or alcohol use in the family, domestic violence, if a parent is in the armed forces in a conflict zone, if a parent is in prison, if a child/young person is a young carer.

Care Experienced

If a child/young person is Looked After by the local authority, school must assume that additional support is required and do an assessment of needs before deciding that the child or young person does not require additional support. 'Scotland's Promise' gives adopted children equal status to Looked After Children, as they have experienced similar developmental trauma.

Further Information:

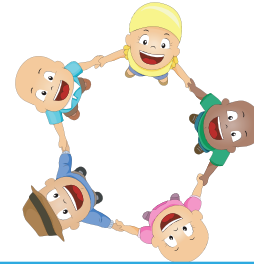
Additional Support for Learning Act (2004, amended 2009)

The Promise

ASL Statutory Guidance

Enquire Factsheet on Rights

GIRFEC



Asking for additional support in school

As a parent or carer of a child/young person with FASD/PAE, you will probably already have experience of advocating for your them. The tips below could help you prepare and feel more confident about attending school meetings.

Prepare

- Be clear about the areas that are causing you concern. You may wish to think about the strategies you use at home and how these could be adapted for school. Making notes and using concrete examples can be really useful when talking about your child's/young person's struggles.
- Seek advice if you need it: to talk through FASD related concerns, call the FASD Hub Scotland Helpline or email the service. To talk through rights connected to additional support needs, call Enquire Scotland.
- Look out any documents you have that might help – health assessments, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) reports, psychological assessments, social work paperwork. It can be useful to share recommended reading and resources relating to FASD and trauma, for example the '[FASD: What Educators Need to Know](#)' guide.

Contact the school

- Find out who your child/young person's named person is. You can do this by contacting the school office. In primary school, this is usually the head teacher or a depute head. In secondary school, it can be the head teacher, a depute head or a guidance (Support for Learning) teacher.
- Email the school office marking it FAO the named person and class teacher. You may wish to Cc other professionals if they are involved with the child/young person (e.g., social worker, CAMHS doctor). Keep the email brief, polite and clear. Outline your concerns and request a meeting to discuss support.
- Follow up with a call if you haven't heard anything within a couple of working days – schools can be very busy places!

Meet with the staff

- This can be a daunting prospect, but you know your child/young person the best, and focusing on working in partnership is in everyone's best interests. You can choose to take someone with you for moral support if this would help.
- State your concerns. Be clear either that your child/young person a) has a diagnosis of FASD or b) is at risk of FASD and that this is a neurodevelopmental disability which can affect many areas of brain function. State that your child/young person needs accommodations to allow them to access learning / reduce their anxiety / regulate their emotions / support them with decision making. These accommodations are a legal requirement following the Equality Act 2010.
- Be as clear as you can be on what you would like from the school. Assessment of child's needs? Support for Learning input? Referral to other professionals such as Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language, CAMHS?
- Signpost to FASD Hub Scotland resources for teachers. The Hub can also provide training for education staff.
- Request a Child Planning Meeting to begin the process of formalising support, creating a support plan and request an Assessment of Need.

For our full range of FASD Education factsheets, visit: www.adoptionuk.org.uk/fasd-hub-scotland



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