

## FASD Awareness Day 2020

### Sue's Story



I am a kinship carer to my grandson aged eleven who has foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD). I want to make the case for children and their birth mothers who suffer the trauma and tragedy of severance because of alcohol addiction. FASD occurs when a woman drinks alcohol when she is pregnant. For women who are addicted to alcohol, the situation can be hopeless.

Many women are driven to addiction because of childhood trauma and abuse. Yet, the development of addiction support services has been driven by concerns about crime and public safety, and subsequently shaped around the needs of men. Addiction services designed to meet the needs of women are as rare as hens' teeth.

My daughter's addictions were triggered by having been abused as a child. She self-medicated with alcohol and drugs from a young age and was addicted to heroin at 15. My daughter continued to use a range of alcohol, prescribed and illegal drugs until her death aged 35. She did not find the courage to fully disclose the extent of the child abuse she suffered to agencies until four days before her death. I believe, this was because she never had the appropriate support, despite me relentlessly advocating for her for over a quarter of a century.

My daughter gave birth to her only child when she was 23 years old. It was a difficult birth because she was induced well before term due to deemed risks to the baby. Social services had already told her that her son would be taken into foster care from the hospital, by the Police if necessary. We managed to circumvent that, and my grandson was discharged into my care, but only by me signing a "private agreement" that effectively gave away any future statutory financial support and services.

Despite concrete evidence of the levels of alcohol my grandson was subject to, he was not diagnosed with FASD until age eleven. He already had education and social care support in place due to an earlier Autism diagnosis. Despite his enduring challenges, he is a happy, energetic, and sociable child, with high levels of creativity and curiosity about the world and a love of the outdoors. He is an absolute joy to us!

My daughter loved her son as deeply as any mother would. In the face of criticism from agencies and from my own family, I trusted my instincts and facilitated regular contact between them. Thankfully, my grandson is now left with many happy memories with his mum. The final severance of death would have been far more traumatic for him without those.

The charity [The Open Nest](#) are supporting our grandson to design a sculpture in his mum's memory and develop a resource for other mothers and children who experience the trauma and tragedy of severance as a result of addiction.

If you have been affected by issues in the article or want to find out more please contact:

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