# **Video transcript – FASD support for caregivers**

[birds chirping]

***On screen text: FASD Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder – support for caregivers***

***On screen text: Shearna Brown, social worker***

Kia ora. My name is Shearna Brown. I’m here to talk about my, one of my little girls I’ve been working with. Her name is Lara. She’s 13 years old. Lara was diagnosed with fetal alcohol.

***On screen text: Chapter 1 – ‘5S’ model and resources support home life***

I guess some of my biggest learnings with Lara is definitely the 5S model, with the structure, support, supervision, keep it simple and build on the strengths.

***On screen text: Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder – the 5S model: Structure, Support, Supervision, Keep it simple, Build on strengths (FASD Eyebites)***

The positive thing about Lara was that the Ministry were able to find a really really protective caregiver for Lara, who was really on board to ensure that Lara received all the supports that she needed. And so basically my role was just to facilitate that and provide aunty and uncle with the tools that they needed to ensure that Lara had the structure, had the support, had the supervision, and I think overall that Lara was able to grow up strong, healthy and thriving. So aunty was able to do that really really well.

It was a little bit hard in the beginning because I guess the main thing that I had to try and get through to aunty was that Lara’s behaviours, she wasn’t willingly being naughty but that it was her brain ***[on screen text: Brain not blame]*** and that it was explaining to aunty that it’s almost as if a part of Lara’s brain had been removed and now you’re having to ask Lara to do certain instructions and she can’t understand. So it was also working with aunty and uncle to explain to them that, you know, Lara had to be supervised like a younger child, they had to talk to Lara as if she was much younger and I guess the rules and boundaries that they placed around Lara had to be at her level.

One of the things that I provided aunty and uncle with was the handbook for parents and caregivers of children and youth that have fetal alcohol **[on screen image of the front page of the handbook with the text Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: Prevention for a brighter future]** and for aunty and uncle, that’s their bible.

***On screen text: Chapter 2 – Relationships and understanding are key***

I think the good thing is that they’re really good at putting their hand up and saying ‘I’ve had enough, I’m tired’ – and that’s ok, and I’ve built that relationship with the caregivers for them to have that space that they can vent. **[on screen text: Relationships and understanding are key]**

Now when they say to me ‘I’m tired, I’ve had enough’, I know that they’re not saying ‘I don’t want Lara’, it’s just that they want somebody to vent to and talk to, and I think for aunty and uncle always getting that sense of ‘is it ok if I do this, is it ok’ – because it is a new territory for them, they’ve never dealt with anything like this in their life.

And what I am noticing is that the aunty and uncle are coming back to me less.

***On screen text: Chapter 3 – Support whānau/caregiver to sustain living situation***

Whilst we do need to support our children and our young people, we really need to support our caregivers **[on screen text: Support whānau/caregivers]** because, for Lara, the sustainability of her placement is so very important to her development because what we want to reduce and which often happens and it’s because of the behaviour and because of, I guess, caregivers not understanding the behaviour, not understanding that she has a brain injury is that sometimes our children and youth can go from placement to placement and so I think as social workers, we really need to get behind our caregivers – provide the support, provide extra training. Lara’s going to have a review and, in that review, there is going to be some education and training not just for Lara’s aunty and uncle but also for Lara’s respite caregiver that she often goes to on weekends and school holidays. **[On screen text: Support for all involved]**

I think if you’re able to provide robust support to caregivers, then I think the sustainability of the placement will work out a lot better, which will guarantee consistency and continuing support.

***On screen text: Chapter 4 – Lifelong plan needs network of aroha and support***

With children and young people, especially Lara having FASD, it’s not about bang bang plans, but it’s about a lifelong plan and how the caregivers, which are her whānau, can sustain that plan **[on screen text: Lifelong focus]**. It’s about knowing who can support Lara **[on screen text: Identify the network of support]**. Having the support and tautoko from aunty and uncle but also from myself, I think in terms of her self-esteem, she’s now such a very confident little girl.

***On screen text: Chapter 5 – FASD support for marae, hapū, iwi***

One thing aunty was very clear about was that her own whānau, hapū, iwi don’t have an understanding of Lara’s behaviour and so when they do go back to their marae, Lara’s seen as the naughty girl that has tantrums and, you know, doesn’t listen, can’t follow basic instructions. This is quite, the fetal alcohol is quite a new thing. And the nana was saying ‘I never knew about that’. ***[On screen text: Share knowledge about FASD]*** So I guess, to be fair, it is about retraining, re-educating and that does come back to, I think, us as social workers to provide that because, in the case of Lara, it’s worked really well.

For aunty and uncle, it also came back to being able to educate the whānau, hapū and iwi on how to support children and youth with fetal alcohol. What are the supports out there and who they can talk to because I think the reality is that whilst we need to support the caregivers, that we don’t want to be there forevermore and a day. Lara belongs to her whānau and a whānau can take ownership and I guess accountability then that’s always the best plan.

[birds chirping]

***On screen text: Ki ngā whānau, ngā kaitiaki, me ngā tamariki. Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa. Kia kaha, kia māia, kia manawanui***