



## CASE STUDIES SERIES

# John

\* Photo and name changed for confidentiality.

“My first impression of John was that he was big in stature and not somebody others would push over. However despite his appearance, he rarely spoke. I found out that English was his second language. He had moved to the U.K. when he was about 6 with very little English and he can remember the struggle he had in his Primary school classes to fit in as he did not understand what was going on. At school, he has had patchy attendance and few friends. When he did speak, he said the minimum with little facial expression and there was no enthusiasm. I checked with him that he had chosen to come and he confirmed it was his choice. He shared: “I want to help kids and to be happier. I want to be a better person and to improve my understanding and my communication with people.”

Initially, John sat back in the group and did not contribute, other than answering minimally. On the first day in nursery, John was approached by a little boy almost instantly and was taken by the hand to the cars. This child has many challenges and special needs and did not relate well to other children or the staff, so everyone was a bit surprised when he went to John and held out his hand.

In the check-in after our first visit, John was beaming. He did not say much but it was clear that he had enjoyed himself. Every session, this boy would find him and together they would ‘huddle’ and enjoy lots of different activities together with the child leading the way. The staff were delighted as the boy would remain calm and involved in all sorts of play when John was there, with no sign of the frequent

shouts, screams and tantrums. It was in the 5th session after nursery that John's enthusiasm bubbled over and he took up about 10 minutes of the check-in talking about what he had been doing. It was like something had been lit. He no longer mumbled. He spoke in short clear sentences with confidence. I think that the change in his energy was this amazing catalyst for everyone else and all of them began to really communicate with each other. John continued to work with the same boy and as friendships in our group were established, other group members would approach John and his child in the nursery accompanied by other children.

There was a gradual transition where this little boy tentatively began watching others, venturing towards them. There was a lot of snatching toys, but John remained by his side and gently explained about sharing. This little boy's social and emotional development benefited from this excellent 1:1 mentoring. John also grew so much and he had become confident in all aspects of the work both in nursery and in our group time. I was touched by how John expressed his gratitude on the last day,



“Helping children in nursery helped me to find skills and qualities I never really knew I had. I am so happy I got this opportunity because I would never have got the chance to improve myself to become who I am now. I have enjoyed this group and I have become more mature and confident, especially speaking. This has changed my life ... it was the best thing I have done”

John may be moving and he wants to get into college in Edinburgh. He knows that he needs to get the grades to do this. He is not sure yet what he wants to do in his life, but he is certain that he wants to get to university and he is happy knowing that he will be able to make friends in the future.”

