

Boy who lost ability to speak is now thriving



SUPPORT: Rachael Barnes with her sons Adam (left) and Jack, from Rogerstone

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THE parents of a teenager from Rogerstone, who mysteriously stopped talking 12 years ago, are happy he is now thriving in secondary school.

Fourteen-year-old Adam Barnes was progressing normally until he was three years old, and gradually lost his language and communication skills.

His mother, Rachael Barnes, 47, said he is doing better than ever, but doctors still have not officially diagnosed the Bassaleg School student.

"He would be fixated on things and wouldn't make eye contact," she said. "We were told it was probably autism, but there were no further investigations".

Mrs Barnes described that time in her life as one of the most stressful.

Since then, Adam has been undergoing Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) therapy to help regain his language skills, and become more sociable and conversational.

ABA is a system of autism treatment based on behaviourist theories, which, simply put, state that desired behaviours can be taught through a system of rewards and consequences.

During primary school, the therapy was funded by the family, and their caring assistant at the time would do ABA for free on the weekends for them.

Over time, enough evidence was gathered to go to a tribunal and fight for support in

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ABA therapy, and after seven months and £10,000, they got the result they wanted.

Mrs Barnes also does one-to-one therapy with kids, teens and autism families and is hoping to go into schools to talk about mental health.

Adam will be supported by the school until he is 16, and it was a fight to get him support until 19, after which Mrs Barnes said there is no suitable placement.

She is currently looking for a suitable property to open her own school, perfect for the former teacher, to provide the facilities needed for young adults, like Adam, to progress into working life.

"A fear for a lot of parents is what will happen to their child when they die," she added.

"This is why I want to start this facility".

Adam loves school and often asked to go there in the summer holidays. His brother Jack, 11, who goes to the same school, is very protective of his brother and finds it difficult when people stare.

"There's not a lot in place for autism siblings in terms of coping with social disapproval," said Mrs Barnes.

But Bassaleg have recently started a young carers support



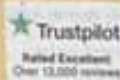
group. The school have been amazing".

Despite the triumphs, one thing that has been hard to accept for Mrs Barnes is that Adam might not be able to read again. Despite doing phonics and cards, he is still finding it difficult.

Adam is currently on the waiting list, since October 2018, for an MRI scan to find out why an eye is starting to turn, before he has surgery to fix it.

He has a Facebook page, managed by Mrs Barnes, called Adam's Adventures Through Autism, where they share their experiences of being an autism family.

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