

Tim, 4 years Admission

Tim is a 4 year old boy referred by the local child protection agency following reports that he is at risk of harm. Neighbours have raised concerns that in the last couple of weeks Tim is being verbally abused and hit by his mother and her boyfriend. They also say that he has been having severe tantrums. Child Protection has previously investigated a report that Tim is neglected and wanders the area unsupervised. Tim is a small child, unkempt, active and poorly focussed in play. His mother feels he has “ADHD” and finds his behaviour increasingly difficult to manage. When Tim was 2 years old, his mother took him to early childhood services because he was having tantrums and very oppositional. At this time, she failed to complete a behaviour management program she was encouraged to attend. Around this time Tim’s GP noticed that Tim had delayed language development and fine motor skills, his language skills remain below what is expected.

Tim’s mother admits that she has resorted to hitting him. Tim’s behaviour has been deteriorating over the last six months since the birth of his sister. Tim’s mother sees him as ‘jealous’ and says that he pinches the baby and says he “hates” her. Tim has prolonged tantrums and sometimes hits and scratches himself, especially when his mother drops him off at preschool. Tim finds games and sharing difficult and he tends to become over-excited. He is easily frustrated and finds waiting very difficult. Tim is easily angered and has been increasingly aggressive towards other children. During playtime at preschool he has had to be stopped from kicking and pulling the hair of other children. As a result of his behaviour and his refusal to use the toilet, instead defecating in play areas, he has recently been asked not to attend preschool and in the past had been asked not to attend day care. He is a poor sleeper and at his mother request, the local GP has prescribed 0.25 micrograms of Clonidine at night. Although Tim’s mother is not satisfied that this medication is effective and he requires something more or different, preschool teachers indicate Tim has been drowsy in the morning but becomes much more active in the afternoon. Tim is a fussy eater, eating irregularly and ‘hoarding’ food. He requires significant prompting to wash and dress. He is unable to tie his own shoelaces.

Tim has erratic contact with his biological father (Dave), who left when Tim was four months old. His mother has had a series of brief relationships until becoming involved with her current boy friend 2 years ago. Tim is very close to his grandmother who often cares for him. However recently she has stopped visiting because she dislikes Tim’s mother’s current boyfriend and his aggressive behaviour. Tim’s Mother admits to previous problems with alcohol and substance use but denies regular use currently. She describes her boyfriend as having ‘temper’ problems because of his use of amphetamines. There is no indication of substance use in relation to Tim. Tim’s mother and boyfriend have a chaotic relationship and separate frequently. Tim refuses to sleep in his own bed.