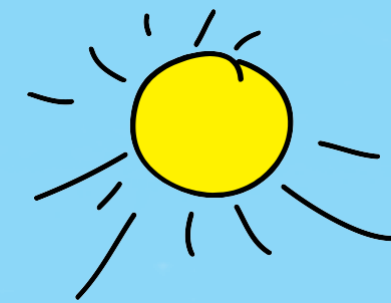


# We're Making a difference...



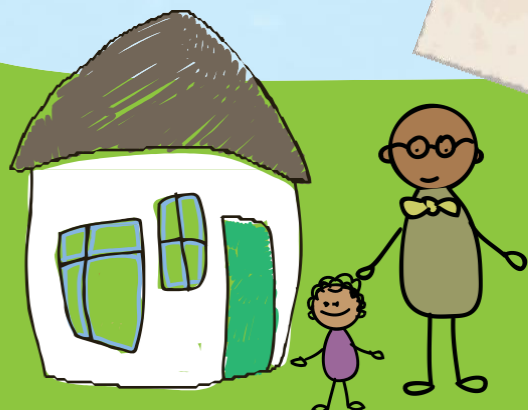
Nottinghamshire Children's Centre Services

## A collection of stories, comments and quotes showing the impact of Children's Centre Services

May 2017



Commissioned by:



## In our own words.....



All the stories, comments and quotes included in the booklet have been written in the words of parents themselves ..... no editing, no correcting ..... they are as they are, in the way that we received them.

"My local Sure Start has helped both me and my child develop so much in the past few years it's unreal. When I was a new mum I was shy, nervous and felt lonely really. Attending Sure Start has helped me become a bright and confident person now, I have attended stay and play groups, adult learning courses and even became a volunteer, all while my child was able to play and develop as well! Highly recommend to any parent to try out their local Sure Start. The staff are amazing! So friendly and supportive with any problem, not just child related! Love them all!"

"I'm a grandma, came today with my 2 year old grandson whom doesn't really see other children on a daily basis. He does not speak yet or interact with people he does not see every day. It was a pleasure to see him interact with other little people and the staff. He has loved it and it's made me happy to see him mix with others; I will be bringing him on a weekly basis so he can meet different people other than in the family unit."

"I moved to Retford not knowing many people at all...I had fled a very abusive marriage.... I was referred to SureStart by my health visitor, I was very nervous with meeting new people but after meeting Emily (support worker) I quickly became comfortable in chatting to her, I had become very isolated at home and felt so alone, Emily encouraged me to go to toddler group with my little boy and also had walks out with me to our local park....She got me a referral for home talk as my little boy was late with his speech. ...She visited quite regularly and also told me I could pop to the office and see her if/whenever I needed to...Which I did quite often in between my appointments....She gave me emotional support and also helped me gain my confidence back, it was hard going but I felt she was there for me every step of the way...I can't thank her enough for being there for me and little boy over the past 4/5 years...I really don't know where I would be if it wasn't for the support she had given me....I've suffered from depression, PTSD, anxiety for many years...And she has made a massive difference to mine and my little boy's life...Always felt very welcome by all the staff at the children's centre and my little boy loves to go there....Emily kept me up to date with all upcoming courses that were available, Early years programme, 123magic....Which I attended and enjoyed it's helped me be a better parent and also I got to meet new friends....I would highly recommend children's centres to every parent I know if ever they needed support or just to access toddler groups/upcoming courses....Fantastic service and I'm forever grateful for the support they have given me and still do today...."

"As a man in a predominately female environment it is always slightly intimidating and possibly uncomfortable however all the staff and a lot of the other mothers are lovely and welcoming I don't feel like an outsider because I'm a man. I feel just as included as everyone else. All the staff makes me feel a part of everything that goes on and nothing is an issue to them. It is a genuinely lovely environment and atmosphere. That being said it's not about me it's all about my son and he loves it, so that is what is most important. I would still come even if I felt uncomfortable because it is beneficial for him. He enjoyed the session today as much as any other, he loves the singing especially "row row" thank you to all the staff for how welcoming they are!"

## In our own words...



### Quote from Freedom Programme

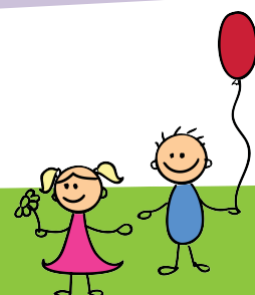
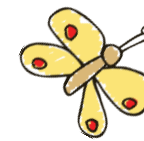
"I have finally done it, I have left him. I started to feel poorly and knew I needed to look after myself and child. I wanted to let you know and to say Thank you"

### Parent Post Course Feedback

"Family life was noisy, a lack of boundaries and difficulties between siblings and enforcing household rules. I learnt positiv play/praise, how to set boundaries, house rules, how to listen more. I have a calmer home, more respect, calmer children. I am calmer, know how to deal with situations or step back and listen. Play more :)"

### Family Support at Home

"Start of my pregnancy I was in debt, had social involved and was in a bad situation with my living conditions (had damp in my flat). I felt I wasn't in a good position to start a family and was worried and stressed about it all. My friend told me about Emily her family support worker and that she helped her out a lot so I applied and thankfully Emily was my worker as well. Thanks to Emily we are now sorting debts out, in a new home with no damp so it's ok for my baby to live in and social has closed our case. No more worrying and stress, can focus on looking after by baby boy. So a big thank you to Emily at sure start retford."



## In our own words...



### Family Learning / Healthy Eating & Exercise

"This course was amazing for me! I lost 9 pound in weight during the 7 week course. The course was balance your body and I met some really nice mums that was in the same situation as me wanting to lose a bit of weight and get some new ideas on what to do with my family with food. What shocked me the most during one of the weeks the course was all about sugar and the amount sugar we should have. It made me realise that I was having way too much and also my children. Over the weeks we started our own walking group with the other mums and their children, we started to meet up in the evening to have a quick walk around our own estate with the children, funny enough my children started sleeping better because of it I was convinced it was working for us all. It's started making me feel loads better. Me and some of the others have joined the local Gym to go together when we can. I'm so hoping that I can keep losing weight and keep motivated. It's really the first time I have attended any of the Children's Centre courses and I really enjoyed it and will more than likely do something again."

### Fun Event

"My 4 year old daughter loved it! Lots to do and get involved in - great fun! We really enjoyed the drumming and looking round the fire engine. The crafts were creative and fun. Great morning with plenty to do. They loved the clown and the outdoor play area. The children really enjoyed exploring in the garden (a large open space). They joined in with the drums and got involved. Good that water is provided! Really lovely day. Staff very welcoming. My daughter loved the crafts and meeting Fireman Sam and my son loved playing the drums and dancing. Everyone loved the fire engine. We have enjoyed the whole of the day especially the craft stalls. I liked the jewellery making - before today I assumed my daughter was too young to do anything like that but will get stuff like this to do at home. Thank you! A very well organised event. The staffs were always on hand when needed. The entertainers were great. Keep up the good work. Thank you. Amazing! So wonderful that this service is available to the families of Newark."



### Paediatric First Aid course

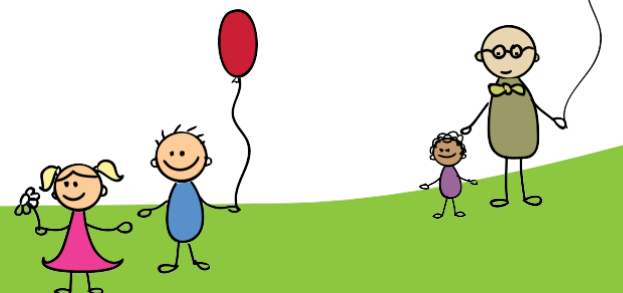
"It was a 6 week Paediatric First Aid course run at SureStart. The course was brilliantly run and it helped having crèche available too. The trainer was very approachable and used a range of teaching methods i.e practical, visual, written and quizzes, to help us all learn and made it fun. It covered other areas of First Aid too i.e. for adults and older children which was very useful. I really enjoyed the course and think that I now feel more prepared and able to deal with situations."

## In our own words...



"I am a first time single mum daunted by the thought of coming somewhere new and starting a new class. I thought it would be 'clicky' and felt like I would be judged. I finally plucked up the courage to attend a class called Baby Business at Butlers Hill and Broomhill Children's Centre; straight away I was welcomed in and felt at ease. I sat down with my daughter with the other parents and staff that took the class they made sure that nobody included myself and daughter were made to feel awkward or out of place or forgotten about. Staff made a point of everyone introducing themselves and their babies to encourage people to talk to each other. Staff also took time to inform me of other classes were available and ones around my local area. I soon realised that the thought of being stuck at home with a new baby was going to be a thing of the past! :) The atmosphere and structure of the classes has helped me interact with my daughter, I feel more confident when playing with her. My daughter has been given the opportunity to explore new and different things..... I felt confident to allow staff to take my daughter and play with her in the sand and experience it. I wouldn't be able to do any of this at home because I don't have a garden. It wasn't long before I was attending lots of classes, baby business, baby massage and even baby weaning. In all of the classes I have been in the staff are always very happy and welcoming to see us. They are Energetic and put their all into making the classes fun and enjoyable for everyone. Staff 'checked in' with parents including myself to see if they can improve or develop any class. Staff have discussed setting up a baby sign language class and this is something I was interested in and looking forward to going to. Whilst the summer holidays were here some of the classes had changed or even stopped. I felt confident enough to organise groups meetings with other parents to keep the routine of the groups going. We were advised and welcomed to use the drop in area as this is a mutual place we all knew and it had the facilities to accommodate us all. Even though this wasn't a structured run class staff around the centre were happy to help and checked to see if we were aware of the sensory room and how to use it. Being able to attend these classes has helped me become a better parent. I am able to chat to other parents about any issues or concerns regarding my daughter growing up. We are made to feel part of something. MOST of all this has bought routine, structure and a sense of purpose to our lives. It also gets us out of the house!!!! This is something I hear time and time again from other parents who come and join us for their first time. If I have ever had any issues or concerns about anything I know I can approach any member of staff and no matter how busy they seem they always have time for us. I feel like this service and people I have met are an extension of my home and family. I DEFINITELY state that places and services like this is a lifeline to myself and others."

"The children's centre has really helped me since I had both my children. When I had my first child I suffered with postnatal depression, I still suffer with depression. I had never heard of or knew exactly what sure start did. One of the staff members came to visit me at home and explained all about the centre. I still wasn't sure about going as I was shy and not confident at all, but the staff member reassured me and even offered to meet up and go together. I managed to pluck up the courage and go alone. It was very daunting at first before I entered as I didn't know what to expect and thought people would judge me, thinking that I wasn't good enough to be a mum. Everything seemed to change when I walked through the doors, the staff were welcoming, friendly and didn't parade me round as a newbie (you know like they do at school, stand you at the front of the class where you had to talk about yourself). Even the parents welcomed me with open arms and once I got speaking to them I realised I wasn't doing this parent thing alone and some of the mums we're going through similar to what I was experiencing. My first child was displaying behavioural problems which became an issue when his brother was born. I found it hard to cope with and wanted to help him and myself. The centre allocated me a family support worker. I'm glad I asked for support as it has helped all of my family and realised that my eldest might need extra help and support with regards to his behaviour. The centre worked as a team and involved me and my husband whilst we went through the process and I know that I can still go back for moral support and for a friendly chat. The centre has really helped me, I am more confident I have achieved a lot by volunteering at the centre, being part of the parent's forum and doing adult learning courses that have helped me to be where I am today. I could write pages and pages of all the wonderful things that I have done and what the centre and its staff have done for me and I can truly say that if it wasn't for all this then my life and probably my children's life would be a different story."





### 1 2 3 Magic & Sleep Tight

"As a course wasn't due to start for some time and due to the age of my youngest both courses were delivered in the home. As we have 2 children, our youngest has had problems sleeping since birth as is under the hospital for this. His consultant advised we needed to do the sleep tight course. This was so beneficial and has given us the tools to address his lack of sleeping, wind down time etc... From there it was recommended by our family support worked that I now did the '1, 2, 3 Magic' course (again delivered in my home) as my eldest had behaviour issues (only when at home). This course has improved our relationship so much (although we both have blips from time to time) and how to handle it and not get drawn into an argument etc. I would definitely recommend both these courses to anyone who has either issue with their children. Don't be put off by the term 'family support worker' as I was initially and refused help. If the consultant hadn't insisted we do the 'Sleep Tight' course I would never have sought the help from Sure Start as I saw the title as being associated with Social Services. It was only when I started doing the course and got to know the Family Support Worker that this was not the case. They are there to help all people with children whatever their backgrounds (we both work full time)."

### Stay & Play

"I started going to our children's centre in 2011 with my son, going to stay n play. Once I got to know the staff I started doing courses, at one point I was doing 3 a week because I trusted the workers to take care of my son in crèche. This helped prepare my son to go to school, he has lots of confidence and socialises well with other children. Then I started volunteering in crèche and other sessions. I then was asked if I wanted to do childcare level 2, when I completed that 5 month later I started my level 3, the staff were amazing to me, supported me when I was struggling n ready to quit. I carried on and completed it, when job opportunities came up they are always there to help whether its practice interviews or just someone to talk to. They have always had so much faith in me and believed in me. I am so grateful to each member of their team, thankyou 😊."

### Family Support at Home

I would like to say a big thank you to Kerry for all the help that she has given me and my son. If it wasn't for Kerry I would still be having bad days and not knowing how to deal properly with my child's behaviour. During the process of the help she told me it will take time and my first thought was that I needed every week and with that support it helped me get through the tough times and now me and my son are the happiest we have been in a long time now I can wake up in the morning knowing now I'm going to cope with my child's behaviour throughout the day because Kerry helped us with a routine. If I could carry on having her as my support worker I would but she has given me lots of confidence of doing it on my own which I never thought I would have. I'm very sorry that she is not going to be around no more but I'm also very happy at what we have achieved and for knowing that if I need any help or support she is just a phone call away. We will miss you x x

### Sure Start Groups

"I'm a grandma, came today with my 2 year old grandson whom doesn't really see other children on a daily basis. He does not speak yet or interact with people he does not see every day. It was a pleasure to see him interact with other little people and the staff. He has loved it and it's made me happy to see him mix with others; will be bringing him on a weekly basis so he can meet different people other than in the family unit."



### Breastfeeding Peer Support

"It was recommended I do the peer support course for my own personal development due to me already volunteering in my local under 1's group where lots of breastfeeding mums are attending. Before attending the course breastfeeding wasn't really an important topic for me and I didn't feel it played a big part in becoming a mum, but now, I am truly a breastfeeding supporter the knowledge I have learnt and working with the breastfeeding mums have made me understand and believe that breastfeeding is actually the MOST important part of becoming a mum and giving your baby the best start in life you possibly can and if I had my time again with my son I would defiantly give it my all to achieve a successful breastfeeding journey for us both."

### Breastfeeding

"We have been coming to this group for 6 months now since Amelia was 4 weeks old. The support I have received has been exceptional throughout the whole time. I have been given advice on a wide range of issues not just breast feeding. The team were particularly helpful when my milk like supply reduced down when Amelia started sleeping through. They gave me lots of different ideas about how to do increase my supply & were very supportive through this difficult period. They were always on the end of the phone between groups to help. The also referred me onto the breast feeding nurse specialist when everything they had suggested didn't help. Without this group I would have given up breastfeeding at 5 months, so I am extremely grateful to be still feeding at 7 months."

### Adult Learning & Volunteering

"I didn't want to attend the course because I thought it wasn't for me, the staff convinced me to come along and bring my little boy to play. The course was all about "Low Cost, No Cost" play activities to keep my child entertained throughout the school holidays. On the first week I realised I knew one of the other mums of my estate and we got chatting. I soon realised that it wasn't as bad as I thought and that I may make some new friends and my little boy will be able to play too. Each week me and my boy made something different - we made a kite, a busy bag with speech and language activities inside. The best week was when we made a healthy pizza and a fruit snack thing. Both me and my boy have never done any cooking together before and this gave me boy has also tried new things that he wouldn't have tried on his own. I think it because other children where there and they were trying new things too. The course was amazing and it has encouraged me to do more courses for my confidence and I think it has made me think about how much I play with my boy and also the ideas what we can do cheaply."

"I have been volunteering at Mansfield Woodhouse Children's Centre since Sept 2014 and helped in Stay and Play and the local library session, while my son was in nursery. I applied for a Midday meals supervisor job at local schools and was supported by the Children's Centre with references and interview techniques. I started there on a temporary basis in Jan 2016 but still attended the Children's Centre to offer support in clinic and big adventures group. The staff have been supportive, worked with me to develop my confidence and recently helped me apply for a permanent post within a different local school. I feel I have been really supported to move on with my life, earn money and to get a permanent post. It's almost been a two year journey but I am really pleased to have come this far."





### Incredible Years Parenting Programme

"I wanted to write you a note because I'd probably get all emotional saying this to your faces! I can't thank you enough for everything you've done for me and my family during Incredible Years. This course came along at a particularly bad time for Abbi I personally - which has turned out to be an absolute god send. I came to the group with a few hopes but not really any expectations. And I'm leaving with more positivity than I thought possible! I know I've still got a lot of work to do but you've given me the tools to do the biggest job of them all, being a good parent. Not only that but you've actually helped me in a way the course isn't really designed for...keeping me sane! During these last 3 months, those 2 hours a week I've spent with you both and the rest of the group have been the best anti-depressant ever! I've been able to leave the house, socialize and know my little girl was safe and having fun in the meantime. Things are looking so much brighter now but it's been a very dark time - you ladies have been a shining light! Thank you for your honesty, you've never pretended to be 'the perfect parents of the perfect children,' it's nice to know even the pro's have problems! Thank you for your patience, guidance and endless supply of coffee and biscuits! I feel very lucky to have had this opportunity for learning and will be forever grateful. Thank you again and HAPPY CHRISTMAS!"

"This is what I learnt after attending the incredible years parenting programme at Warsop Children's Centre - helped me a lot with my child: I reflect on my own behaviour. I feel time with my child is of a higher quality than previously. I try to find other approaches to my child's negative behaviour. I look for my child positive behaviour. I chose to listen to my child and his needs. I try to lessen the amount of shouting, talking unnecessarily and keep wording concise and to the point. Understanding and accepting my child's behaviour. Remaining calm in situations while remaining firm with my child when necessary. Accepting my own flaws and behavioural faults/traits and trying to find a way of improving this."

### Freedom Programme

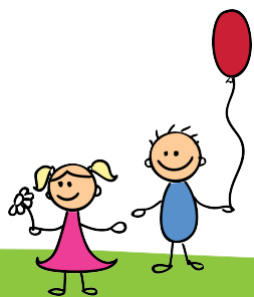
"I was in an abusive relationship while doing the course and had to get out. Freedom gave me a lot of support, advice and telephone numbers."

"I feel much more confident about being a single Mum and I no longer feel embarrassed about what happened to me. The Freedom programme is very supportive and I would recommend it to anyone who has been in an abuse relationship."

"since attending the programme I will not minimise abuse and I have ended my relationship with abuser."

### Baby Business

"Baby business- gains a lot from the group, lot happening, good range of toys, talking to other parents and getting support. Made friends with other parents, babies take notice of each other and watch each other. Really helpful staff, friendly and offer good support. Member of staff really good, Tracey! Always includes everyone and goes out of her way to make us feel welcome..."



### Breastfeeding

"Bumps to babies run by the SureStart centre is more than just a baby group. I have been as a 'bump' and returned many times since in my sons 6 month life. It is always so welcoming and well run. I have 2 particular experiences that stand out where the support has always been fantastic. The first was when my 3 month old was refusing to breastfeed. To have a session specifically to support mums breastfeeding locally is just amazing. Many times you hear of mum's stopping breastfeeding because of a lack of support. This group provides a vital need in this way. I turned up a sleep deprived, very emotional mum and left feeling calm, cared for and having enjoyed myself. The second time was when my son had started weaning and had dropped all milk feeds! Again was given such sensible and calm advice. I stayed for the rest of the session and as soon as I got home my son demolished his milk! The group is very popular, well run. My son adores the sensory room and as a fussy baby this provided us with many ideas we have replicated at home to entertain him! The singing at the end is always a highlight. Everyone I speak to is always amazed by the incredible way that the lady who leads it always remembers every babies name (even when there are 20+ babies!) the best way to feel personally part of a truly special group."



### Sleep Tight

"My son is 3 years old and hadn't had a full night's sleep. I was at my wits end fed up of coming into our room then me ending up sleeping in his bed with him. I had no free time. His bedtime became my bedtime. I spoke to nursery who recommended sure start sleep therapy. Amy was fantastic so understanding. We devised a sleep plan and began working on it straight away. The first week was hard but by the end week of consistently doing the same thing and introducing a gift from the sleep fairy a little tiny egg for sleeping in his bed. It began to work. The first night he slept through he got lots of praise and then looked forward to going to bed waking up to see what he would find under his pillow. This has now changed to his own figures and leaves a different one each day. We still stick to same routine regardless of time if we go out. I'm so happy with the results Amy was truly a life saver and no matter how hard the nights were the results came in I would recommend to anyone and only wish I'd have known about the course sooner."

"I'm a big boy now." "You can go downstairs mummy." "I'm not frightened anymore."



### Fab Plus Project

".....I spoke a lot with J and in the early stages she helped me to understand that although our baby is in hospital, I am his mother and there is a lot I could do to help him. She told us about containment holding, placing one hand on his head and one hand on his tummy. This was the first time I had touched him and I felt the bond start to grow. She helped me see that just by being there beside him he would benefit from hearing my voice, smelling me and holding my hand. She even gave me books to read to my oldest son to help him understand why his baby brother was in the hospital ..... I recommended a few activities that I could do with my oldest boy inside the hospital, like reading books and singing songs, to help him bond with his new brother in his incubator. Instead of being frightened, he started to enjoy his visits to his new little brother and continually spoke to him through the small doors in the incubator. Looking back, I truly believe this is how my eldest son grew to love his brother so much."





### Home Talk

"Having O. referred to home talk made me feel even less confident than I had felt before. I knew I was doing something wrong! Meeting Cris (+Jack) was nerve wracking I didn't know what to expect. We sang a hello song to begin with as well as introducing ourselves. O. being O. was very shy and didn't really participate. "Am I wasting my time" I remember asking myself. As the weeks went on and the activities changed I began to feel more at ease and I saw progression yes progression with O. We played with farm animals, went on walks, and had messy play and O. s personal favourite bubble time. I began to hear O. say words I hadn't heard before. He grew in confidence and so did I. (being a single parent I lacked this) Cris helped me feel this way and that's something I'll never forget. After this experience I would definitely recommend the programme to others as there was nothing I didn't like. Being a single parent I thought I was doing something wrong but after having been part of the home talk programme I have realised that no I haven't been doing anything wrong I was just rusty on my techniques and ideas. Now my son knows 200+ words and has ample of confidence. So if you're a parent who thinks you're to blame for your child's delayed speech. DON'T there is always help and I assure you home talk is one of them."

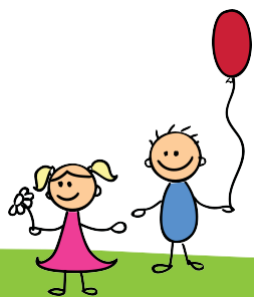
"We have seen an immediate improvement in his speech. He now confidently speaks new words and is linking words together. He is far more confident. This has been a very useful service and we are very grateful for the support received. "

"We move on to Haworth and Bircotes area shortly before my son was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. I signed up to my local children's centre and allocated a family support worker as we were just finding our way to the area. When my son started at nursery, it was too much for him I was really lacking in confidence and did not have any positive networks. Having piloted the Health, Education and care plan, finding manageable method to get my son communicating, social vocational support out of school and now, he is doing great at school and so much happier and confident. My with my youngest daughter also getting a much more her focused social development and her time as having a special needs child in the house is hard enough for any adult, it gave my little girl her independence and understanding that her brother is different. All the work we did with support from our children's centre and family support services. Without this support we would have been another number on the list without a diagnosis. I am now upgrading my skills to help and support others as I feel it is a crucial service."

### Babies Who Lunch

"I have learnt a lot today about when is best to start weaning my little girl, and what types of things to give her."

"Lots of leaflets with recipes and information."



### Forest Schools

"Ellie used the saw to make her medal. She listened to safety instructions and watched with fascination as she made 'fairy dust' that blew onto her tutu in the wind. Her older brother helped her drill a hole into her medal so she could wear it. Ellie concentrated for a full half an hour to make her medal from sawing the wood, to drilling the hole, to decorating it and then threading the string to wear it around her neck. Ellie used lots of colours "pink, orange and yellow" and wore her medal with pride."



### Perinatal Footsteps Befriender

"I have been supporting local parents suffering from anxiety and low mood by doing home visits to families with babies (under 12 months).

I started out my journey with the childrens centres as a shy unconfident first time mum. Baby group was vital to me in the first few months to get me out of the house and get more used to being a parent. I was recovering from an emergency c-section and had complications resulting from birth that meant I found it difficult in those early weeks. I was very worried I would develop low moods and anxiety because I had suffered depression related illness before becoming a mother. Although I had not suffered postnatal depression, attending regular groups helped to break up the time I felt alone with my baby, and having people around me I could share concerns about my and my sons health really helped me to adjust and feel more able to cope.

Eventually I went on adult education courses (including confidence and first aid) to lift my self confidence and mix with other mums in a similar position to me. After the courses finished I felt I wanted to continue with the centre so went on a volunteering course to see what I could do next. I had a mind that I would like to do something with the centre to support families in the way I had felt supported by them. It was suggested that I put myself forward for the Perinatal Project and it seemed a natural fit.

I visit parents with babies under 12 months to befriend them and try to tackle mild to moderate low mood and anxiety. I usually visit them in their homes and spend on average 45 mins with them to discuss their situations. I am fully supported by my amazing mentors who are Childrens Centre Family Support workers, as well as the awesome Volunteer Coordinators. My mentors introduce me after careful preparation work with a view to have me visit on a weekly basis. As well as this I am put forward for relevant training such as domestic abuse awareness and safeguarding.

During the visits I try to let the parent lead me into being able to discuss the topics that are causing them concern such as feeding or sleeping, family relationships, housing etc and where necessary signpost the parent to sources of further support such as breastfeeding peer supporter, or a GP. I have been performing visits over the last 12 months and the experience has been incredibly rewarding.

It is a real privilege to be let into the lives of these beautiful little babies and see the love grow in their families. Every family has their own difficulties and worries and my work with them and with the Children's Centres has certainly enriched my own family life. Taking time away from my own toddler each week to speak with other adults has definitely helped my own mental health balance, and I cant wait to continue my volunteering visiting more families to continue this work."