

## **Changing Lives Involvement in Volunteering – Sure Start**

### **Carol: Sure Start Centre Manager**

I just remember feeling isolated as a new mum myself, 25 years ago. I became a volunteer in a family centre, and I knew the passion I felt about that, the difference it made to me, the difference it made to my children's lives and giving something back to a service that you've received so much support from.

### **Emma: Volunteer**

Honestly, the first time I walked through the door I was really nervous. I was new in every respect. New as a parent, new to the area, new to the Children's Centre. I started to talk to people about how important the Centre had been and how much it had given me and my family, so I just felt like I wanted to give something back. If I could help, if I could give up a bit of time or talk to new parents to encourage them to join, then that would be giving something back to the Centre that really had helped me.

### **Nina: Volunteer**

It was brilliant. The first day I came in, everybody was so bubbly and smiley and made me feel at home. And I've never left since. That was three years ago – nearly four. I came to baby group straight after I'd had the twins. I then came to weaning club and followed on with stay and play and then eventually became a volunteer. I run a session of my own with one of the support workers, which helps with the wellbeing and confidence of mums that may be suffering from low mood or just lacking that bit of confidence where they wouldn't necessarily come to other sessions. I'm quite proud of that group.

I help the children's workers run the sessions, I help with the planning, I help with the observations of the children.

### **Carol**

Well volunteering changes lives, and I do passionately believe that, because you become part of something. The impact it has on the Children's Centre is – you're part of governance. You decide what goes on in your local Children's Centre. It doesn't belong to the staff team, it belongs to the families that use it.

### **Emma**

We were asked to be involved in the planning of sessions and what things we want to see brought into the Centre. That then led in to myself and some other parents running parent-led play sessions on a Thursday afternoon. So we would plan them, prepare for them, lead the sessions. And hopefully, just encourage a few more families to come through the door and benefit like I did.

### **Claire: Volunteer**

The SEQ course was a course put on that I was asked to attend, and it was some parents that were going to do the course and through the course we were going to plan the event, do the event and then do the outcome of the event. So we started getting together, putting ideas together, we had to decide who we wanted to fundraise for which of course we chose Sure Start to fundraise for. Then we had to decide what we were going to do as a fundraiser - so

we decided that we would do an Easter Fayre – and where we wanted to do it. We had to plan it ourselves and decide where we wanted to hold it, what kind of stalls we wanted etcetera. So, we did that as a group.

### **Manager**

What we do for volunteers here, we devise a bit of a portfolio so you put all your training certificates in it, you have supervision, and then when you go to a job interview you can take that with you and say “this is what I’ve been doing in my local Children’s Centre.”

### **Nina**

I was suffering from post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depression. If I hadn’t have had the Children’s Centres here, when I had my twins, I would probably have ended up quite depressed. The Children’s Centre is that manual that you were missing when you left the hospital.

### **Carol**

I would have everybody who walked through the door as a volunteer, because I’m so passionate about it. And as community involvement, and I speak for the district now, we could not do our job without our volunteers.

### **Emma**

When my daughter started nursery, her nursery teacher said something in passing, but it meant so much – and it was that she could tell that Eva had been coming to the Children’s Centre, because she was polite and sociable and she was a great communicator and I could see that just giving her that start was going to impact the rest of her life.