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

May 2017
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 play and 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."

"Family life was noisy, a lack of boundaries and difficulties between siblings and enforcing household rules. I learnt positive 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!"

"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 and 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 my baby boy. So a big thank you to Emily at sure start reford."
In our own words...

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 a creche 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 make 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."

Fun Event

"My 4 year old daughter loved it! Lots to do and get involved in..."

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 talking about babies and their routines. 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 one 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 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 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 me. 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 lifestyle to myself and others."
In our own words...

**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 etc... From there it was recommended by our family support worker as my eldest had behaviour issues (only when at home). This course from time to time and how to handle it and not get drawn into an anyone who has an issue with their children. Don’t be put off by the consultant hadn’t insisted we do the ‘sleep tight’ course I would recommended both these courses to the term ‘family support worker’ as I was initially and refused help. If never have sought the help from Sure Start as I saw the title as being course and got to know the Family Support Worker that this was not their background (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😊."

**Breastfeeding**

"We have come 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 a whole range of issues not just breast feeding. The team were particularly helpful when my milk supply reduced when Amelia started sleeping through. They gave me lots of different ideas about how to 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."

**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 my son’s 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 her help we have had a long time now I can wake up in the morning knowing what makes my son the happiest we have been in a long time now."

**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 2’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 both of us."
**Incredible Years Parenting Programme**

"I wanted to write 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 Abi - I personally - which has turned out to be an absolute godsend. I came to it because I found a lot of work to do but you’ve given me the tools to do the biggest job of them all: 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 time - you ladies have had a shining light! Thank you for your honesty, you’ve never pretended to be the perfect parent and the perfect children, it’s nice to know even the pro’s have problems! Thank you for your patience, 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 – previously. I try to find other approaches to my child’s negative behaviour. I look for my child positive behaviour. I wording concise and to the point. Understanding and accepting my child’s behaviour. Remaining calm in situations 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..."

**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 him 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 of 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 the night 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.""

**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 son’s 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 baby’s name (even when there are 20+ babies!) the best way to feel personally part of a truly special group."

**Fab Plus Project**

"...I spoke a lot with... 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 through the small door in the incubator. Looking back, I truly believe this is how my eldest son grew to love him through the small doors in the incubator. Looking back, I truly believe this is how my eldest son grew to love him through the small doors in the incubator..."
In our own words...

**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 nervous wracking I didn’t know what to expect. We sang a hello song to time I remember asking myself. As the weeks went on and the activities changed I began to feel more at ease and personal favourite bubble time. I began to hear O. say words I hadn’t heard before. He grew in confidence and so this experience I would definitely recommend the programme to others as there was nothing I didn’t like. Being a realised that no I haven’t been doing anything wrong I was just rusty on my techniques and ideas. Now my son 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 signed up to my local children’s centre and allocated a family support worker as we were just finding our way to have any positive networks. Having piloted the Health, Education and care plan, finding manageable method to get happier and confident. My with my youngest daughter also getting a much more her focused social development independence and understanding that her brother is different. All the work we did with support from my children’s 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 on 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.”