

# Irene didn't know there was an answer to the problems she faced at home until she visited Sure Start Whitley Children's Centre



Irene Davis lives in Whitley with her two children, Cameron, five and Alex, three.

## A wonderful discovery

When it was first suggested to Irene that she visit Sure Start Whitley Children's Centre with Cameron, she was surprised: "I'd always thought it was a place for childcare for parents who were out at work," she says. "I had no idea that there were so many other things to it, but for me it's been a wonderful discovery."



## Problems and solutions

Irene took Cameron to some of the Stay and Play sessions and there she found out about a Computer Course which was being run. "I signed up straightaway as my knowledge of IT was out of date and I thought it would be useful for me for when I want to get back to work. Cameron was able to go into the crèche, so that made it easy for me."

Apart from wanting to brush up her computer skills, it was also a break for her as far as looking after Cameron was concerned. "We don't have a diagnosis yet, but Cameron is hyperactive and his behaviour can be very challenging," explains Irene. "I found it difficult to cope with him sometimes and I was really glad that the staff at the Children's Centre could see that there was a problem. I was assigned a Family Support Worker, and the Family Visiting Team came round to my house to see what they could do for us."

One of the worries Irene had was the importance of making her home a safe environment for Cameron, who was likely to hurt himself if not watched every minute. In addition, she was pregnant with Alex and restricted in what she could do by herself. "The Family Visiting Team arranged for a Health and Safety assessment to be done, and then after I had Alex, they offered to put both children in the crèche for a day and between us we worked on the house, making it safe and getting gates and locks fitted. I couldn't possibly have done it without them."

## A different approach to parenting

Irene had taken a Parenting Course at the Children's Centre in an attempt to better understand and address Cameron's behavioural issues, and she found it so useful she decided to do another. "It was very useful and gave me all sorts of ideas on how to help and encourage him; he needs a different approach to Alex and I've learned how to get him to do what I ask without risking a tantrum. It's slow going, but we are definitely getting there little by little."

## Help with speech development

Another thing which Irene was concerned about was Cameron's speech, and through the Children's Centre she was referred to a Speech and Language Therapist who

worked with him until he started school. "He was able to see the Therapist at the Children's Centre and then they referred him on to another one, nearer to his school, but Alex still has therapy sessions at the Children's Centre as we were concerned he may have picked up some of Cameron's speech habits and wanted to make sure he progressed properly."

## Friends, interests and a new life

With no family nearby, Irene had found herself at risk of isolation at home, and she is amazed at the difference the Children's Centre has made to her life. "I grew up in the countryside so we didn't really mix much with other people," she says. "Living in a town is very different and I didn't know where to start, although I was quite lonely. Since I have started going to the Children's Centre I have met so many other people and it's lovely to recognise people in the street now and there always seems to be someone to have a friendly chat with."

"The most valuable things for me are having found something to interest me and to get me and the boys out of the house, and also the funding I was offered for nursery places. If it weren't for Sure Start Whitley Children's Centre I'd still be sitting at home going slowly mad, so it really has been marvellous find."



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