



First Steps Bath

October 2013

Key Message From a Parent.

- If I didn't have the children's centre, I would have had nothing.
- It provides so much more for the whole community; it is a whole support system.

My Name is Gemma, I'm a mother of four, my oldest is 12 and my youngest is nearly 2.

I have been using the Children's Centre for over 6 years. I had a really hard time when my second child was born, me and my partner split up and I had post natal depression. My life crashed down round my ears, I worried about being a single parent. I discovered First Steps and their services at this time; they were easy to access and local for me.

I went to the 'stay and play' group. The staff were friendly and welcoming. They always noticed if I was not ok. They were always there to speak to. I wouldn't have asked for help but they seemed to know when I needed it. Now I can talk to them whenever I need to.

Depression never goes away completely but I recognise when I feel it coming back and the support is as strong as ever.

Stay and Play is the place that I see my mates, we can talk about things together. We discuss each other's problems from potty training to violent relationships and anything in-between.

Some of the mothers use the groups as a social outlet for them as well as their children, for some this is the only time they get out.

As well as 'Stay and Play' groups my children have and currently are using the First Steps nursery which my son spent nearly two years at before he moved onto infant school.

He thrived there and moved from nursery to school smoothly with the help of the staff, he is now exceeding his targets at school. I believe he wouldn't be achieving this without the exceptional start he was given by First Steps; I wonder where he would be now if he didn't have this support in his pre-school years.

My 3 year old daughter is due to start the same nursery in the next few weeks as I believe my daughter has and will benefit from the First Steps nursery and other services.

As a parent I always feel listened to and my point of view is always taken on matters concerned with the groups I attend. Just recently myself and other mums took part in interviewing candidates for a position within

First Steps and our feedback helped towards someone suitable being appointed.

This is something I feel passionate about and I'm sure mine and my children's lives would be very different if it wasn't for First Steps.

As well as myself I speak for all parents and carers that use the First Steps services when I say that taking away even a small bit of support, groups, advice and services they offer would impact the First Steps community as well as the local one.

So many, including myself rely on First Steps, so any cuts to services would eventually break down the "social network" that has been built up over the years.