

First Steps (Bath) Statement for Cabinet Meeting Wednesday 14th November 2013

Roz Lambert Chief Executive

The point I would like to make is as follows:

The proposal referred to by Liz Hardman that the 5 Sure Start Nurseries should be self-funding (using fees charged to parents and the Early Years Entitlement) will impact on area of high need and prevent families gaining vital support. I will illustrate this with a case study by agreement with a parent who feels so passionately about the prospect of other families losing the support that his family have received that he has come tonight.

Jeremy's children came to First Steps Nursery in October 2011, at the same time Jeremy was serving a custodial sentence and his children were living with their mother with a Child Protection Plan.

First Steps were able to provide emergency nursery care whilst the family moved from temporary accommodation in a house in the local area.

First Steps were able to meet the children and their mum alongside the health visitor. As there were some complex and sensitive issues surrounding the mothers parenting capacity it was felt that meeting them in the family home would enable the nursery staff to gain a bigger picture of some of the issues. This action ensured that the children received a joined up approach to their care at this difficult time.

An outcome on the Child Protection plan was to develop the mother's attachment to her children and to achieve this Flying Start sessions (a series of play sessions in the home – a trained practitioner working with the parent to enhance parental understanding of their child's development and relationships with their child).

There were heightened concerns regarding the children's welfare, mums capacity to parent and her ability to put the needs of her children first. The children were removed and placed in the care of Jeremy's sister. Jeremy was released from prison around this time.

Some of this work is ongoing, however, it is clear that both children have benefited from the input that First Steps has provided and despite such difficult circumstances the eldest child has settled very well into school and is meeting her Early Learning Goals.

As a Children's centre with a nursery attached we have been able to

1. Offer flexible day care that meets specific family needs.

2. Release staff to attend and contribute to meetings, reviews and conferences
3. Write and submit reports for conferences and Looked after Children reviews.
4. Accurately record and pass on concerns to social care and to the court when requested
5. Provide funded day care all year round and access funding for the children to attend in the school holidays.
6. Provide family friendly rooms for contact sessions or review meetings with parents and children.
7. Provide home visits and Flying Start with a trained member of staff what works in the nursery with the children and has a sound relationship with the child. This ensures that the voice of the child is heard.

Finally my question to the Cabinet; how will this holistic, adaptable support be available for families in the greatest need if the nursery has to be self-supporting.

Roz Lambert.