



I joined Watford Mencap in June 2000 working at one of the residential care homes and also within the Domiciliary Care Service. I really liked the work and began working full time in residential care, completing my NVQ3 in Health & Social Care but by 2009 I wanted a change. I really liked the organisation and the people I worked with but I needed a new challenge. I spoke to my Manager in supervision and she told me about a development opportunity in our Children & Young People's service.

I met the Children's Manager and agreed to move across as Deputy Manager for 6 months. I received training to help me and began working to develop good working relationships with the Children's Manager, team and the children and families we support. I loved my new role and at the end of my secondment the organisation made my move permanent. As a team we worked hard to develop the services we offered to children and their families and were rewarded with an Outstanding Ofsted rating.

In 2011 the organisation restructured and the Children's services and became part of a bigger team, Learning & leisure with a new Senior Manager. Sadly at the beginning of 2012 the Children's Manager decided to leave. The role was advertised with a focus on any applicant having the skills to change the service into a more personalised service away from just providing respite. I considered applying for the job but didn't feel I had the necessary skills. Unfortunately the organisation was not successful in recruiting a suitable person and I was asked to become Acting Manager for 6 months. I had lots of ideas on how the service could be developed but was anxious about the responsibility with my lack of experience. My Manager explained that she would support me throughout this period through mentoring and coaching and we would meet regularly to discuss issues and progress.

I agreed and together we have made huge changes to the services. My Manager was with me throughout and supported and encouraged me to make changes. I was supported to gain a Level 3 Children and Young people's qualification as well as doing a course in leadership. We have created an environment where everyone can get involved and be part of service.

At the end of the 6 months I felt more confident but wasn't sure I could take on the role. My Manager suggested a further 6 months to enable me to fully develop my skills. She continued to support me and after 5 months I was offered the job permanently. I am confident in my role now, have regular supervision sessions with my Manager who is still very supportive and to help me develop my management skills an experienced residential manager is now mentoring me.

Through Watford Mencap I have been supported to develop professionally and personally and am proud to manage our Children's services which are now focussed on the individual needs of each child and their family.

Sarah Fishwick
Children's Services Manager

"Thank you for providing a great service. My child loves coming to play. And we look forward to new ideas taking place." **Parent**

"It has been great, I have had opportunities to be involved in new experiences" **Staff member**

"As a team we have been involved in decision making which makes me feel part of the team"
Staff member

"The Children's Centre provides a much needed service and the changes already made, are hugely appreciated." **Parent**