



## Family childcare stories

### Sam

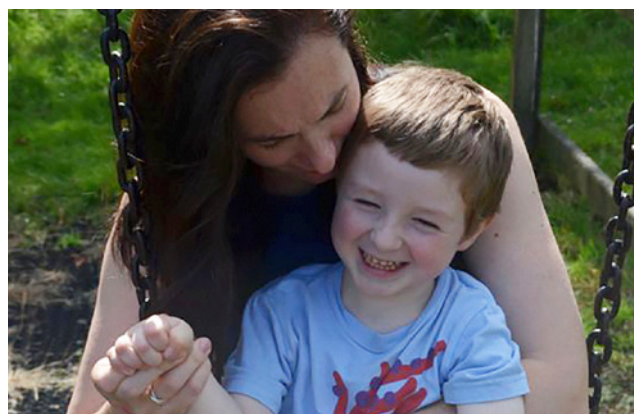
Sam, who is now five loves stories, music, swimming and joking with his younger brother. Sam also has cerebral palsy. He communicates with his eyes and through making noises. His sleep is still very disturbed, he is fed via gastrostomy and he continues to require numerous meetings with professionals.

#### Finding childcare for Sam

When Sam was about 10 months old, his mum, Jess decided that it would be beneficial for all the family if he were in childcare for some of the week. This would give Sam the opportunity to be around other children and adults in a stimulating environment and would give Jess some respite from the constant care and medical meetings and enable her to return to work.

Their local nursery is local authority run and was the second setting Jess spoke to. They were very happy to have Sam for two days a week and whilst they didn't have expertise in Sam's specific needs, they were experienced in taking children with a range of special educational needs and disabilities. They were also very used to working with other professionals such as occupational therapists, speech and language specialists, physiotherapists and nurses.

***...the nursery had a very enthusiastic staff team with a positive attitude...***



#### Leaving Sam with other people

Jess was very nervous about leaving Sam with other people. He was vulnerable; wasn't sitting unaided and his feeding needs were quite specific. However, the nursery had a very enthusiastic staff team with a positive attitude who were willing to listen to Jess about how to support Sam. He had the same staff to care for him regularly on his two days and whilst they didn't have previous expertise in his specific needs, they were willing to learn from Jess and health professionals.

Jess and Sam had a few weeks of uncertainty when the council restructured all the children's centres and a number of his key workers were made redundant. Because of Sam's needs, his parents took the decision to take Sam out for a few weeks until they were certain that the new staff team could provide the level of care that Sam needs. This did all work out for the best but it raised serious concerns about the council's lack of commitment and understanding for children with complex needs.



## Funding and support in nursery

Sam's parents have had to fight for certain things like one to one support funding in order for Sam to continue to attend nursery once he had a part-time place at school. Whilst the nursery didn't charge the family extra for his care, he needed one to one support from trained staff. Initially funding the additional costs of trained workers for two days a week was problematic but the council SEN department agreed for term time funding to support him in nursery and Jess applied to the Social Care panel who agreed to fund some holiday care.

## The benefits for Sam and his family

Sam has gained so much from being in nursery. He has become used to being in a large, noisy group and, as a child with serious startle-reflex this has been a really positive development. He loved the messy play, sensory equipment and singing songs. He has learnt to be comfortable with other people caring for him and most of all, when he transferred to reception class, he settled within a week.

For Jess, good nursery care has been a life saver. She was able to work two days a week, have a professional life away from home, feel more able to give Sam the care he needs on her non-working days and to spend time with her younger child.

Jess writes a blog about Life with Sam which you can read here: [www.storieswithsam.com](http://www.storieswithsam.com)

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*For further information about childcare and family services visit: [www.familyandchildcaretrust.org](http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org)*

