

# First Steps Children's Centre

## Michelle McFarlane-Johnson

I first attended the Children's centre in 2006 after the birth of my second son.

I was having some problems with breastfeeding him and was encouraged to attend the breastfeeding support group by a midwife attached to the centre at that time.

I was nervous about attending initially, even though I am usually quite confident and was a second time mum. I had never been to playgroups or support groups with my elder son and wasn't sure what to expect or whether we would 'fit in'.



I had a vision that everyone would be 'mother earth' types and thought I would feel out of place. I needn't have been worried, the staff and the other parents were really friendly and welcoming and made me feel at ease.

I received some invaluable support from the staff and the other mums in that early period and made a number of really good friends. My son and I attended weekly and also began attending other groups held at the centre, we soon had a very busy social life which I was thankful for having come from working fulltime to being at home full time with my son.

## How did I volunteer?

A few months later I was offered the opportunity to train as a Breastfeeding Peer Supporter giving me the skills and knowledge to support other breastfeeding mothers.

I was overjoyed to have the opportunity to give the support I had received and found so precious in those early days to other families.

I completed the course and began volunteering at the breastfeeding group and also on the postnatal ward at the hospital. The Children's centre supported me to do this with supervision and ongoing training opportunities.

## Where am I now?

From the training and volunteering I have undertaken, I have been able to change careers from working in retail to supporting families and am now employed full time as a Breastfeeding Peer supporter.

I love my work and it fits more easily around my family life. I am thankful for the opportunities I have had since volunteering with the Children's Centre, still use the centre with my own family and serve as a member of the Advisory Board.

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