



How Stockingford Early Years Centre helped single parent Steve be a great dad

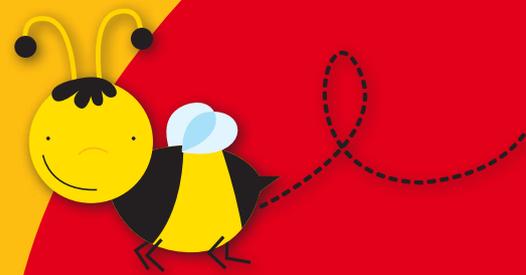
Steve is 27 and a single father to his two-year old son Tom.

Soon after Tom was born, Steve split up from his mum and after a few months it became obvious to Steve that she was having difficulties in bringing up Tom along with her two other children from a previous relationship.

After much consideration, Steve decided that the best and safest solution for his child was to bring Tom up himself and he successfully applied through the Courts to gain custody.

Having never expected to be a single father, Steve knew that it wouldn't be easy so when a Health Visitor told him of the support available at Stockingford Early Years Centre, he didn't wait long before taking advantage of their help.

Since attending Parenting Classes at the Early Years Centre, his confidence has soared and his relationship with Tom has strengthened.



“I’m surprised that other single fathers don’t take advantage of these courses, they would learn so much.”



Not prepared for the challenge

"When Tom started living with me it was all a big surprise. I'd never expected things to turn out that way and I wasn't prepared for the challenges that lay ahead. I'm the youngest of three brothers so I've never had responsibility of a small child before –although I did help with my girlfriend's children when we lived together.

"When my Health Visitor told me about the parenting courses available at Stockingford Early Years Centre, I was relieved and very happy to go along."

Steve lives at home and had a job before he had to take responsibility for Tom, but had to leave work to become a full-time parent. "I live with my mum but she has a full time job in Solihull and I can't expect her to care for my son full time," he explains.

Great support

Steve got great support from the Early Years Centre. "They were so kind to me," he says. "I attended the courses with a group of ladies and although I went in feeling a bit strange about being the only father there, I soon forgot about it and concentrated on learning new skills."

And it's working really well, according to Steve. "Tom was about 16 months old when we started going and I was beginning to be a bit concerned about his behaviour, but they taught me how to talk to him and how not to proposition him. It's really helped me understand him and he is responding so much better as a result. I never raised my voice to him in the past, but now I realise that I probably won't need to because there are other, better ways to get my point across to him."

Parenting Puzzle

The course, called Parenting Puzzle, came along just before the 'Terrible Twos' started, according to Steve, and he's very grateful. "I'm much more prepared than I would have been otherwise."

Steve is so enthusiastic about the Early Years Centre courses that he's about to enrol on a cookery course and says he wants to attend the weekly Stay and Play sessions too.

"I'm surprised that other single fathers don't take advantage of these courses, they would learn so much," he adds.

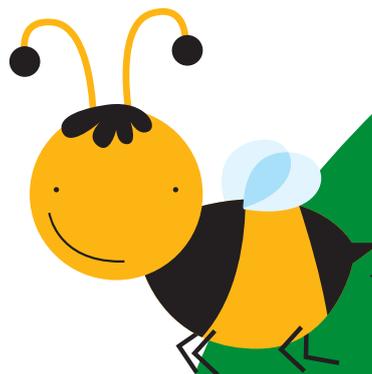
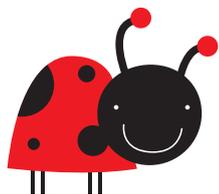
Good friends

Tom sees his mother once a week, and Steve says that he also sees his step-brother and sister, his girlfriend's other children, regularly too. They also live with their father who has now become a good friend to Steve. "It's a bit strange the way things have worked out, but it seems to work for us," he said.

Having established his family and with Tom settled into his home and at the Early Years Centre, Steve is now looking for work in the evenings.

Supporting himself

"Mum is home by seven most evenings so I'm hoping that I can find a job for a few evenings a week. I want to stop being supported by the Government and be able to support myself and my son," he added.



Sure Start Children's Centres



Stockingford Early Years Centre & Library

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