

## **Patricia .... A volunteers story**

I decided to become a volunteer in 2010, the idea of volunteering appealed to me as I wanted to give something back to the community, and to build my own self confidence. I had received a lot of support from different organisations myself and felt it was time to use my experiences to help others.

I have been a volunteer with Home-Start for nearly 6 years now and I keep volunteering because of that warm fuzzy feeling I get when I see a family develop in confidence, start using the services available to them in the community, and develop new friendships with the people they meet. Volunteering has also helped to build my confidence and self-belief which has led me into finding work with families in the community.

When visiting my first family after training, I was nervous but excited to start visiting families. Armed with some information from my co-ordinator, I went into the family home, I could see that mum herself was nervous but I started to talk to the child about his favourite toys (I knew this was a penguin and Scooby Doo) and before I knew it I was sat on the floor making animal noises and inventing stories based around his favourite toys. Mum soon relaxed and we made arrangements for our next visit.

From then on I visited on the same time and day each week, I learnt a lot about myself on those first visits, I was able to adapt and be creative, we made stories up about Scooby Doo and the dinosaurs and involved penguins and super heroes in all our activities whilst mum had some time to herself to look after other important chores she was unable to do with a demanding toddler. This was a short term placement.

I then went onto visiting twins who I stayed with for some time, I became more relaxed and developed a good relationship with the whole family. I attended each week armed with a special bag of colouring books, things to stick and cut out, toy cars and often a musical bus which the twins loved to play with. They called it Patricia's magic bag. Mum would either spend time with us creating some magnificent creation or would spend time talking about things that concerned her that we could work things out together or catching up on some household tasks. Again mum developed in confidence and would do creative things with the children to show me when I visited, mum would also make new friends at groups we attended and learned that there is always help she could be signposted to if she needed it. I would come away from visits worn out but happy that those children had enjoyed some fun quality time and mum was growing in confidence and happiness.