

Ian a Volunteer's story for SSBC

We received a phone call from SSBC when my wife was pregnant to tell us what the Family mentor service was about. My wife and I decided that we wanted to give it a go. Hayley our Family Mentor has been visiting us now for over 2 years. During lockdown last year our baby was born, and we found it hard adjusting to life as it was with covid but even more with having a newborn baby, both me and my wife were extremely anxious around keeping our baby safe but also needed that extra support from external family and were unable to get this due to the lockdown.

Myself and my wife have always suffered with mental health and anxiety and found it extremely hard during lockdown. Hayley our Family Mentor supported us both with the small steps at home programme and provided us with emotional support at the time we really needed it. During the time of Hayley visiting us I have taken part in FRED this is something I wasn't too sure about at the beginning as I've always struggled with reading, but Hayley suggested other ways of telling a story to my baby. I was happy to give it a go and read to my baby every night this helped me to bond with my baby.

From then I have become a FRED champion and would encourage other Dads to do it. We both enjoy the visit from Hayley and the tips and advice she has offered. We have been having Hayley visit now for 2 years and really enjoy the service and have learned so much.

I volunteer at the groups in Aspley. I have supported many groups during the summer, but I mainly support Active play on a Saturday morning which I really enjoy. I help the Family mentors to set up the group, get activities and equipment out. I chat to parents and talk to them about the group and other services that they could access including FRED.

Its great to share my experiences of FRED and having a Family mentor with other parents. I play with the children doing lots of things like playing ball games, football anything that's active. Its good to see parents and children enjoying the group and seeing children really play.

After receiving support for myself and my wife from our Family Mentor this encouraged me to want to do something meaningful and worthwhile. I've always struggled with my anxiety and thought something like this would help me to build up my confidence. After speaking to my wife and other family, who all thought that it would be a good idea to try it, so here I am I am so glad I did.

I really enjoy meeting new people interacting with other parents, and especially seeing smiles on children's faces when they are playing at the group.

I feel so much more confident around new people, and it has helped me build up my self esteem and I do feel less anxious around people and new situations, and this is something that I didn't think I would be saying. I still have my times, but I know that I will get through them.

I have always wanted to set up a local football team for Dads. With the support I have had from different people and me feeling more confident this has helped me to achieve this and it is something that I have always wanted to do. I have made new friends along the way, as well as making new contacts within the community and now I have also become a member of SSBC Dad's engagement team.

I feel that being involved in these things are helping with my own mental health and giving me a purpose too.

I attended the volunteers training and really enjoyed every bit of it. I was feeling very anxious at the beginning, but I learned so much about the role, what to expect and the support I would be receiving whilst volunteering I did start believing in myself. I met other new volunteers during the training which did help me.

I feel that I have learned so much and especially listening and communicating with people more since I have volunteered and do feel that if a parent asked me something that I would be able to point them in the right direction.

I feel that I make a difference as its one parent to another. We can share our experiences of being a parent, receiving support from a Family Mentor and I encourage Dads to be part of FRED. I have talked to Dads about FRED and some of the Dads I have talked to have signed up to FRED, which is fantastic.

All I can say is

“Give it a go and you’ll never look back”

“I feel so much more confident it’s the best thing I have ever done”