

A Town Like Alice: Episode 9

A Diary by Deborah Berkeley

Alice was born in July 2006. Deborah has kindly agreed to keep this diary to report on what has happened in their family life so far and to keep us up to date with developments. Deborah, Vince, Alex and Alice are pseudonyms, but all locations are real.

April 2010

Recent appointments:

- Hospital Appointments in last 3 months: gastro clinic, orthopaedics
- Child Development Centre (CDC): family psycho-therapist, dietitian, vision clinic, developmental paediatrician, physiotherapist
- Specialist teacher and two learning support assistants (LSAs); SALT, OT and Educational Psychologist
- Health Professionals: 11

Clinics to come: orthotics clinic, audiology

Deborah Makes a Big Decision

Last time I submitted my diary, I was still very caught up in the unfairness (as I saw it) of not getting a job at the child development centre. If I'd been successful, I probably wouldn't have thought about moving house. But being cooped up and poverty stricken over Christmas got me thinking. We used to be surrounded by people like us – vaguely artsy, not very materialistic, community-minded. But those families seem gradually to be ebbing away, replaced by (yawn) young professionals without kids, who can afford £55 haircuts at the local salon, or £200 sandals in the new shoe shop. Actually, I shouldn't take the mickey out of expensive footwear. Alice might soon be sporting her own bespoke boots, as she is to be assessed by the orthotics clinic for having feet that turn inwards and cause her to trip. Special inserts would ensure that her feet stay in the right place, if she is suitable.

We've lived in this flat for 15 years. It's cute, a little bit quirky, wonderfully situated for local shops, near a great park, a library, a good school and a thriving club/arts scheme. But it's not a house, and at this stage of our lives, the Berkeleys need something house-sized:

outside space, one extra bedroom, and definitely NO downstairs neighbours to complain about Alice's scruffy buggy in the shared hall or the noise Alex makes on our stairs.

So the decision has been made to put the flat on the market and seek out a home in the borough to the north-east of here, where things are a little less boutique, and the cultural highlight appears to be a second-hand bookshop; but it looks a whole lot more like our budget. If Alex is upset about the idea, he recovered quickly when we pointed out how quickly we could reach his best friend's house (15 minutes by train) and that there would be enough space for a trampoline in the garden. I've also been warned to start sorting out Alice's services before we've even booked the removal van, or face weeks without help.

I'll have to stop being the chairperson of the parent forum, too. After all, I won't be a service user any more. We've worked so hard to get things going, that I reckon I will find it hard to let go. But I have to step down, so that others can get more involved. I'll have the satisfaction of knowing that I set it all up, and I will definitely glance at the website now and again. But I am ready to go. I want a new chapter in my life to start. I have been stuck for too long. I mean that both literally and metaphorically. Having a child with a disability has made me passive, has kept me at home, has delayed my own development. Moving on might just be the way to set myself free.

I'm getting ahead of myself a little. We haven't even had the estate agents round yet. But I'm excited already, looking for schools, thinking about décor, even writing to my old college to see if I can resurrect my counselling diploma. Last time I wrote a diary entry here, I felt like a loser. Now I feel a world of possibilities is opening up. Where will I be next time I write? I can't wait to find out.

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