

NEW WRITING

Siblings

Summary

There are two articles: The first is by Ethel (not her real name) who has written a diary over her half-term holiday about life at home with her older brother. The second, written by a Project Worker for a Sibling Support Service, describes support work with children and young people who have a disabled brother or sister.

(i) My life with my older brother

By Ethel

I am 10 years old and my brother is 14. He has Down's syndrome. I kept a diary over half-term. (In the school week, I stay in bed until my brother has left for school so my mum can concentrate on getting him ready and do all the things below, too.)

Monday 11th February 2008 (My brother's Birthday)

- Helped him open his presents
- Got him a drink
- Played with him with his presents
- Made a den with him
- Played with him inside the den
- Put the den away together
- Got him another drink
- Played a bowling game with him

Tuesday 12th February 2008

- I got my brother a drink
- I went to shop and bought him a Crunchie
- Talked to him whilst had hair cut – hates having hair cut
- Ran a bath for him to wash his hair in
- Got him another drink
- Made a den with him
- Got him a glass of milk
- Got him a slice of his birthday cake
- Got him a drink of orange juice
- Played snooker with him
- Watched football scores come in on TV
- Played another game of snooker

Wednesday 13th February 2008

- Played snooker with him
- Got him another drink
- Played snooker again with him
- Helped him play snooker properly
- Got him a slice of bread
- Got him another drink

Thursday 14th February 2008

- Played snooker with him
- Got him another drink
- Got him a slice of bread
- Got him a drink from shop in town
- Played a last game of snooker with him
- Got a puppy!!!!

Friday 15th February 2008

- Got him a drink
- Got puppy out to play with my brother
- (Went out with friend for rest of day)

Saturday 16th February 2008

- Got him a drink
- Got puppy out to play with my brother
- Got another drink for my brother
- Took his breakfast to him
- (He went to football and I went to a friend's party)

Sunday 17th February 2008

- Got puppy out to play with my brother
- Made his breakfast and took to it to him
- Helped my brother hold puppy
- Took his lunch to him
- Played with a birthday present with him
- Got him a drink

(ii) My job as a Project Worker for a Sibling Support Service

Emma Dobson



I am a project worker and sibling group leader for the Sibling Support Service in Hull and East Riding. My background includes caring for teenagers with challenging behaviour in a children's residential

home in the private sector, which I did for 5 years. Prior to that, I worked with elderly people suffering from severe dementia, also in a residential setting. I have my NVQ3 in Caring for Children and Young People, also Therapeutic Crisis Intervention training (4 day course) along with Therapeutic Play training (4 day course). My hobbies include horse riding, swimming, reading and watching most sports (apart from fishing and golf!).

My job is fantastic. I get to meet lots of brilliant children and young people who have to deal with many difficult situations and issues within their families, some of which stem from their brother or sister's disability. I also work with some of the most passionate people I have ever met, meaning we have great fun in the groups which the siblings love.

I've been working for Barnardo's since July 2007. I work as a Project Worker in the Sibling Support Service which offers specialist support to the brothers and sisters (siblings) of disabled children through delivering programmes of group work across Hull and the East Riding of Yorkshire. The Service is managed by Barnardo's and funded jointly by Hull City Council, East Riding of Yorkshire Council and Barnardo's. We work really hard to offer the service we do, though not enough people know about us and what we do so here's a little taster...

The main aims of the service are:

- To support siblings of disabled children who are having difficulties associated with their experience of being a sibling.
- To reduce the negative impact of disability on siblings.
- To encourage the inclusion of siblings when family support needs are being assessed.
- To widen the experiences of siblings on a social, emotional and educational level.

There are certain criteria for a referral to be made to our service. These include:

- Being between the age of 6 and 18.
- The sibling must live in Hull or the East Riding of Yorkshire.
- They must have a brother or sister with a permanent disability.
- The condition may be physical, learning, sensory, communication or a combination of these.
- The disability is having a negative impact on the sibling's life.

At the moment referrals must come through Social Services, so the family need to have a worker involved with them, though this process may be getting reviewed which would enable

many more siblings to access the service through self-referrals.

Our groups aim to help these siblings to be able to express themselves in a safe and secure environment without fear of upsetting their families, build confidence and self-esteem and give them the opportunity to recognise the positive aspects of their family life. We also help them recognise and then find ways to cope with difficult behaviours they may experience at home or within school. This includes being able to answer difficult questions posed to them by friends and curious peers who want to know why their brother or sister is 'different'. This is mostly done through activity based work and group discussion which is aimed at their level of understanding, i.e. teenagers may need a different approach to much younger children to keep them interested.

Half way through the programme we go out and do an activity such as bowling or go to the cinema (which we all love!) and we also use week seven of the sessions as a computer-based information session to enable siblings to use the internet to find out more about the disability their brother or sister has. Incorporating these things into the group-work programme really helps the siblings by offering them diverse ways of learning social skills and increasing that all important confidence so many of our siblings lack.

The positive impact that the groups can have on children and young people can also have a knock-on effect on other areas of the child's life such as school (being more focused), family, extended family and friends (building more positive, meaningful relationships).

We have good links with other agencies such as social workers, school nurses, teachers and other health professionals. This helps us by ensuring good work that we do with children is continued after they have left our service.

