

Case Study 5

A Helping Hand



A single mother with four children came along to our 'It's Your Child's Life' programme in an inner city school. She was desperately trying to support all four children in the best way possible with very limited resources. Her eldest son had special educational needs and had become a bit lost in the school system. He was also very vulnerable and was being targeted by other local youths and this was starting to get him into trouble. Her second child was getting into fights with boys another local area and she was becoming increasingly stressed about where this trouble would lead, given the old standing rivalry between these two gangs.

She told us that the boys did no sport, and did they go to any clubs as her hands were full with the youngest two children. Taking them to places in the evening was not possible as it clashed with the little girls' bedtimes. She had no support network and was becoming very isolated yet she remained positive hoping things would get better for them.

We mentioned to her the fantastic activities that are available in a nearby Youth Centre just a ten-minute walk from her home. Here her boys could take part in all sorts of activities such as sport, music, martial arts, cooking, crafts and games. One of the dads in the group told us that he was a volunteer there teaching drums and that other volunteers taught guitar and keyboards. The mum said that her second son had always begged her for a drum kit which of course she couldn't afford or fit into her home. Between them the group came up with the solution to get her second son to come along with one of his friends to learn how to play the drums.

For this mum, our 'It's Your Child's Life' programme became far more than just parental engagement programme. As well as learning how best to support her children both in school and with their home life, she also developed close friendships with other parents, who then became a small, but growing support network for her. When her second son joined the youth club with a friend, her eldest son wanted to join too. He began attending the club, a participation project for young people with additional needs. Here he was safe and he learned to socialise better with others, making new friends and trying new things including sports and drama.

The mum told us that when their local 'Pirate Ship' play area was burned down by vandals, her two little girls had been so broken-hearted that she had gone out and bought a swing and see-saw set for her own front garden. The problem was that she had neither the time nor the capability to put it together safely for the children. It had been left unpacked in the box for weeks with the children asking her each day when they could play on it.

We told her that this was something we could easily help with. The following weekend we called to her home as arranged and her swing and see-saw were put together securely. Now her two little ones have lots of fun at home and her two older ones are busy having fun at the youth club. This lovely mum said that she never dreamt that going on a course at school could help improve family life in such a positive way.