



Kelly

'I became pregnant when I was 18. I was four months into a relationship and it wasn't planned. At eight months, my baby, Ricky, started showing signs of challenging behaviour and things became quite a struggle. Ricky can't cope with routine change, such as not watching a certain television programme at a certain time, and he also has problems concentrating. This makes him upset and frustrated and his behaviour becomes difficult, with a lot of tantrums.

'I had received an activities list from Action for Children Seagulls Children's Centre in the post and thought I'd give it a try. Seagulls were really good with Ricky. They gently encouraged him to do different things at different times in the nursery and he went along to craft sessions. He gets his own time and attention from people three times a week. And I get some time for myself and some support.

'I had a real lack of confidence. I joined the Feel Good Group at Seagulls, which worked on my low self-esteem and taught me how to cope with the stress of having a young baby with challenging behaviour. I started to feel better about myself and didn't struggle

as much as I had in the beginning. I also took part in a parenting group, which allowed me to talk to other mums and dads going through similar things. I learnt methods to deal with motherhood. More than anything, they were good listeners. Sometimes you don't need to hear anything, you just need the chance to talk and be listened to. It has really helped our family overall.

'My partner and I argued a lot after Ricky was born, but we have overcome that and barely argue now. In spite of our son's problems, we are a happy little family. My brother has special needs and I've always wanted to set up a day centre for children of all ages with challenging behaviour. Having my son has made this seem even more important. I currently work part time as a care assistant for people with disabilities and have Level 2 in Health and Social Care so I'm getting good experience under my belt.'

Action for Children Seagulls Children's Centre supports parents and children in their local community

as long as it takes