



# WHY I donated...



**...to Busy Bees Wollaston Pre-School: because It was a lifeline for me and my autistic son and its loving and dedicated staff deserve more funding for their amazing work, says Debbie Hodgson**

**I have twins - George and Isabella - but when they were 18 months old my son suddenly went silent and began to flap like a little bird. The health visitor said there was nothing to worry about but I knew different - having twins means you notice developmental differences quite dramatically. This was the start of a two-year fight to diagnose him with autism.**

A year later I approached my local pre-school Busy Bees with trepidation, fearing they would turn George away, but when I walked in it was like being given a warm hug. They just said, "don't worry, we will look after him", and it was such a relief because as the mother of a special needs child you often feel very alone.

What's more amazing is that they committed to having an extra member of staff to give him one-on-one care before there was any funding in place. I know many children like George who have been turned away from pre-schools because their child isn't financially attractive.

Busy Bees invested in George. He had a lovely lady called Claire dedicated to him and they sent her on autism courses and brought in a speech and language therapist. Whatever he needed he got, so I knew he was 100% safe and loved.

George lives in his own little world, although he's the happiest boy going! He has his interests - like Fireman Sam - which he'll engage with but he can't have conversations and he thrives on a rigid routine. At Busy Bees they say every child's fascination should be met. George loved

water and I'd often arrive to pick him up and find poor Claire soaked through, but they were always smiling!

During George's first year at Busy Bees the staff helped me work towards his diagnosis, sending reports and helping me gain an education, health and care plan so that he could go straight to a special school. So many children like him are forced to enter mainstream schools and fail dramatically, often being excluded.

The twins are eight now and the difference between them grows greater. It's heart-breaking knowing they are on such different paths but George is the most loving, giving child you could meet. He's always smiling, he's full of energy and he surprises us every day!

When he was three and a half we were told that George would never speak, live independently or work. But we proved that doctor wrong because he does speak. He often asks for his sister and he turned to me the other day and asked "do you think this was the perfect day?"

Busy Bees is still based in the village hall and the six ladies that work there have to set up and pack up every day. They aren't highly paid but they are so good at what they do that I've seen them move an OFSTED inspector to tears!. Like many other pre-schools, Busy Bees is a charity which relies on donations just to open its doors and Covid-19 has made fundraising even harder. George's school is amazing but nothing will replace Busy Bees so they will always get my heartfelt gratitude and support. ♥

## Contribute to a good start

Early Years Alliance represents 14,000 early years providers in the UK, including pre-schools, and helps them to deliver care and learning to over 800,000 families, as well as giving Covid-19 support. [eyalliance.org.uk](http://eyalliance.org.uk)



GEORGE & ISABELLA GRADUATING

**69% of early years providers expect to operate at a loss over the next six months \***

**25% of early years providers say it's likely they will be forced to close within the year \***