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Maggi and David's story

As told by Maggi to an interviewer

Maggi and David have been married for three years and, in Maggi's words, 'unusually for where we live we didn't have a child until after we were married'.

Their daughter, Anne, is 19 months old, well advanced in her language development (according to their health visitor) and loves any kind of loud musical toy, wires and keys. Maggi and David moved into their new house two days before their daughter was born. They have a 'loopy' dog called Louise. The couple are both mainly at home with their daughter, although David plans to go into business full-time and perhaps get a market stall when Anne starts nursery.

Maggi and David were planning a trip to New York when Maggi got pregnant. Maggi and David were initially shocked – 'David needed a pint!' – put the holiday on the back-burner and started to prepare for a baby. Neither Maggi nor David had a social worker at the time, but they were involved with KeyRing, a housing support organisation. Their supporter at KeyRing was 'absolutely brilliant'. 'When we told her we were pregnant, she asked if we wanted any help.' She supported them to ask for a social worker (which was a long wait), helped them apply for the 'maternity grant' and put them in touch with Flying Start.¹ The KeyRing supporter continued to believe in them and ensure that they were fully informed on what was expected of them, why there were concerns about how things were going with the baby and how to overcome these.

Maggi and David were also supported by workers from Flying Start during the pregnancy, and an antenatal package of care was planned. However, the early arrival of Anne meant this didn't happen: Maggi had pre-eclampsia during pregnancy and had Anne a month early, weighing just five pounds and two ounces.

After the baby was born, Maggi and Anne's discharge from hospital was delayed, at KeyRing's request, while Maggi and David were assessed on their ability to care for her appropriately.

When they came home from hospital, they were visited by professionals from the Flying Start team twice daily, seven days a week for the first three weeks. These visits spanned both day and evenings, to ensure that support was available when needed. Maggi and David were shocked by the extremely negative attitudes of some of the professionals they came into contact with and the number of 'hoops to go through'. They report being told by one social worker that they 'should have got rid of the baby' and that because they have learning disabilities, their daughter will have too.

Maggi and David have had excellent support from their midwife at the maternity hospital, then from the Flying Start health visitor, as well as from KeyRing and from their large extended family. Maggi is one of six children; David is one of four sons. Anne is the first grandchild on David's side and her paternal grandparents are besotted with her. Extra support from KeyRing and the Flying Start family support worker encouraged the housing department to get the family a house quicker than usual and in the location they needed, so they could support David's parents, who have medical problems.

Maggi describes the hospital midwife as a 'superstar'. She supported them with Anne's feeding, and then liaised with their 'wonderful health visitor from Flying Start', when they brought Anne home from hospital at ten days old. Their Flying Start health visitor helped a number of times with weaning Anne, taking them through from the premature baby milk, to standard baby milk, and then on to solid food. Maggi feels confident to ring her health visitor whenever she has a question or concern.

On the day of the interview for this story, Anne has a virus and Maggi has been in contact with her GP, the Flying Start health visitor and her mum, who is a matron of an old people's home, for advice.

The Flying Start team gave Maggi breastfeeding and other parenting advice using visual aids, pictures, posters and a book to enable the family to establish good routines and ensure home safety. Maggi describes their support as 'ace' and 'worth their weight in gold'. Maggi and David are still involved with Flying Start, and attend a parenting group, which provides contact with other parents, advice and trips out in the summer holidays.

A new package of care has just been initiated, because their needs for support fluctuate as Anne's developmental needs change. The current involvement is around supporting age-appropriate play for six weeks, in the home. However, regular telephone calls and support within the group will continue to provide a wrap-around provision for this – and every – family in Flying Start.

†
A Welsh Assembly Government project providing antenatal, health visiting and other support to families in the most disadvantaged areas of Wales (see page 19 for more details).