

Moving from abroad, Sylvia faced many new challenges but has overcome these and more because of support from an East Reading Children's Centre



Sylvia and Samuel Jamfi live in Reading with their children Rosetta, Samantha, Ezekiel and Steven who are eight, five, four and two respectively.

A welcome alternative

When Sylvia moved to the UK from Ghana to join her husband Rosetta was just a baby and with no other family or friends in England, Sylvia was homesick and lonely. Wanting to get out and meet people, she took Rosetta for walks and to play in the local park but this wasn't the answer she was looking for and it was with relief she discovered that East Reading Children's Centre was a welcome alternative.

"I wanted Rosetta to have somewhere to play and to make friends, and I wanted some company, too," she says. "The Centre was perfect, with so much for Rosetta to do and other children to make friends with. Everyone was just so friendly and kind and the staff were amazing with the children, providing activities, toys and a lot of fun; Rosetta used to cry when it was time to go home."



**East Reading
Children's Centres Team**
A place we play and learn together





Loving every minute

Since that time, Sylvia has regularly taken all the children to two or three groups each week and believes that the social interaction together with the stimulating environment have greatly enhanced their overall development. "They have learned such a lot in every way," she says. "The singing and dancing sessions help with their speech and language and their motor skills and being with other children encourages their social skills. The best part of it is that they love every minute so I feel I am doing absolutely the right thing by all of us."

Helping hands

Sylvia has made so many friends she now feels completely settled in the UK, and is currently awaiting full British citizenship. There were, however, some

legal issues to be addressed along the way and in this she was grateful for the assistance she received from staff at the Centre. "There were so many official forms to fill in and questions to answer and it was all quite complicated, but the staff were so helpful and more than willing to sit down with me to go through everything. They couldn't have done more and never made me feel that I was a nuisance, just wanted to make sure I got everything done right."

Ladies who lunch!

One thing Sylvia particularly tries not to miss is the weekly Lunch Club, where she can meet with her friends for an affordable meal and the children have something to entertain them at the same time. "It's really good to have somewhere like this where the children are welcomed and the food is very good but not expensive – the jacket potatoes are gorgeous! It wouldn't be practical to take them to a restaurant or cafe, and it certainly wouldn't be as much fun, as there is always someone I know to sit and talk with."

Network of support

Moving to a new country can be a challenge for anyone but especially for a young mum with no local knowledge and no support network and Sylvia credits the Centre with helping her not only to integrate into the area but to thoroughly enjoy her new life. "It is something to focus on and that I know I can rely on," she says. "It has been a marvellous find and I don't know what I would have done without it. Having a circle of friends and somewhere so lovely to meet up with them is just what I needed, and it means that the children are also establishing a social network. There's nothing wrong with playing in the park but that's not somewhere you get to meet people; at the Centre it's impossible not to sit and chat with someone. And you don't get wet there on a rainy day!"

A second home

Aside from the physical, emotional and mental stimulation her children are offered, Sylvia most values the friendly atmosphere of the Centre which she describes as her second home. "That is what it feels like, a home from home for me and for the children," she says. "I would be lost without all the things it has given us."

For further information contact your local Children's Centre:

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