

Meet Eva, mother to a 4-year-old boy, looking to prepare him for school

How did you first hear about the service?

We were visiting all the schools in the area and visited your schools and we loved it. They mentioned a programme for early years run by [BeyondAutism] and emailed me because I was interested in attending.

What contact did you have ahead of attending?

Bernadett [Rankasz, Head of Outreach and Training] came to see me at home ahead of the workshops, to find out a bit more about us, what sort of things they would like [our son] to work on and what the workshop can offer us.

“*[The home visit] was really valuable – it helps the service know the person and understand better what their needs are.*”

What were you most looking forward to getting out of the workshops?

To improve some of [our son's] behaviour and to be able to engage him a little bit more... I was hoping he [would be] able to sit for a task since it's not too far off to go to school now; I thought that would significantly help and that was one of the things that was achieved at the workshop, which was massive for me.

What were your first impressions?

I thought everything was wonderful from the set-up of the workshop, the place, to the staff – everybody was extremely kind and welcoming, very appreciative of the children... We felt very comfortable and at ease, which helps for the learning and development of the child, of the parents, of everybody really. You need to feel comfortable in a place to be able to get the most out of it.

What value would you put on being able to talk to other parents?

Actually, it is comforting... as parents of autistic children we are very short of time, there is not a lot of time for socialising, so you actually find parents that are sort of in the same situation. We were able to have a chat, make each other comfortable, feel part of a group. I hope we helped each other a bit.

What were your highlights?

He is able to sit and I know how to manage a tantrum much better than I did before. But also as a consequence of that he interacts more, he is more interested in everything around him. He used to do a lot of lying down on the floor not doing anything and now he is more into his toys, into his books, all those things are massive for me.

“*...bottom line you want him to be interested in the world around him. I can see the changes in him, being more into his toys, more into interactions with me, with his dad*”

What would you say to other parents thinking of attending the workshops?

Don't hesitate. Because it will help enormously your child and yourself. It is only a few days... but the impact that it has on your daily life from there onwards is really huge. It's a place where they know how to deal with your child and where they can help you interact with [them] better. I would say go for it, if you have the chance, straight away!