

“My 26 year old daughter Lottie is now living in supported living with her best friend and has a very happy and fulfilled life.

Lottie was diagnosed with a partial deletion of her 16<sup>th</sup> chromosome when I was referred by an obstetrician to the genetics department at Guys when 3 months pregnant with my son to try and find some answers to Lottie’s developmental delays and learning problems.

Not having another child with the same deletion left us very scared and very lost but I was put in touch with Beverly Searle at Unique. She kindly and practically answered all the questions that nobody else seemed to be able to answer for us. She was sympathetic to my emotional state at coming to terms with my little girl having a lifelong condition and was able to speak to me as a mother too as Bev’s lovely daughter Jenny was the inspiration of her getting involved with the fledgling Unique.

Our main issue with Lottie was her extremely challenging behaviour. Thankfully we were referred to a learning disability behavioural specialist nurse when she was aged 2. It is not an exaggeration to say that he transformed our lives. He worked alongside us and showed us how to use really simple behaviour techniques.

My son George was a doddle to bring up! I used the techniques I was shown with Lottie with positive parenting and enjoyed every bit of his babyhood and childhood. He has turned out to be the most incredible, caring young man and has a fantastic relationship with his sister. The days of George and I getting into the playpen to escape one of Lottie’s huge melt-downs are thankfully behind us.

I want to share Lottie’s story as I wish I had known when she was little that it would be possible for her to live such a happy life. You find the most caring people supporting you along the journey into adulthood. Lottie now works one morning a week at a nursery with young children which she loves. She is part of the team and is included in the Christmas parties and end of term celebrations. She also access some amazing day services as well as enjoying holidays, meals out with friends at a fortnightly disco!

The disabilities team at social services have been very supportive and encouraging Lottie to be as independent as possible. She still needs round the clock support but Lottie and her housemate keep their own little house clean, cook for themselves (and sometimes each other!) and enjoy the independence of life away from home.

Lottie changed so much in a positive way for us. I continue to enjoy working with children and young people with learning disabilities so much and I even changed career and started my own business 17 years ago offering music classes to pre-school children which I now franchise. Lottie taught me everything I know about the importance of positive reinforcement and the simple methods and techniques I use in the classes. I gain much pleasure from seeing the little ones and their parents have a great time enjoying their children. I felt very isolated and sad when Lottie was little and I never want any parent to feel the way I did.

I was scared for Lottie's future and was sad at the life I thought she would have but she is thriving and we enjoy seeing her reach independent milestones we thought she never would.

There have been massive changes in attitudes towards disabled people I feel over the last ten years and Lottie is included and supported by her community. I am incredibly proud of both my children.

Thanks Unique for all you continue to do. It has been a challenge and I am sure that life will still throw a few curved balls our way. I love my unique girl but we are all unique really aren't we?"



