

# Help to care for a child having special needs

by David Lindsay

CARING for a child with cerebral palsy puts emotional and physical pressures on a family but one couple are being given a helping hand by several local support networks.

Lorna Murray, 48, and her husband Joe, 52, were delighted when their "miracle" baby Naomi was born 11 years ago.

Despite being told by doctors that they would never have children, Lorna became pregnant against all the odds.

But during the pregnancy Lorna rarely noticed her baby kicking and in the first few months of Naomi's life she noticed that her new bundle of joy was not learning as quickly as she expected her to.

After several tests, and advice from doctors at Great Ormond Street children's hospital in London, it was confirmed that Naomi had cerebral palsy and the couple had to come to terms with their daughter's diagnosis.

Mrs Murray said: "One in 50 children contract cerebral palsy in the womb, which is quite high. When Naomi was a baby I just thought that she would pick things up later when she didn't the first time."

But, 11 years on, the family are coping with the help of Carers Support Woking and the Genesis Parent Support Group, which is based at the Coign Church in Woking where the Murray family worship.

Naomi attends Portesbery School in Camberley, a school for children with special educational needs, and in the evenings she is at home with her parents, who feed and bathe her and amuse her with many toys.

Mrs Murray said: "We were told we would never be able to have children, not even if we paid for treatment.

"People at our church prayed for us and even the doctors were shocked when I got pregnant.



Naomi Murray with, from left, Anne Farthing of Surrey Heath Carers Support, Portesbery School headteacher Justin Price and Naomi's mother Lorna Murray.

"I don't preach Christianity but I believe my faith got us through this."

Mrs Murray, who works in telemarketing for the Royal National Institute for the Blind, said: "We have a great support network, from people in the church to Carers Support, which is so important.

"There is help and hope out there. You don't have to be on your own."

Carers Support Woking is a charity partly funded by Woking Borough Council, Surrey County Council and Surrey Primary Care Trust.

The group takes Mrs Murray and other carers on trips and offers support five times a month to carers across the borough.

Mrs Murray said: "It is great

to go out with other carers, who know what you are going through."

Sharon Galliford — a carer support worker who works with colleague Shahim Mohamed, who deals with ethnic minorities — said: "Our primary concern is the carer.

"If there are problems with social services we can act as an advocate.

"We do a lot of legwork in the background. People come to us and we can offer help and so much information.

"A lot of people do not appreciate that they are carers. They care for their loved ones.

"But it is knowing where to go for the right sort of help.

"People can have care assessments and it's not a case of judging how well you are cop-

ing, it is much more about what extra help is available. It is about improving what is available to you."

In the next month, the carers group has several events planned, including a visit to the Buddhist temple in Knaphill and a yoga morning.

Mrs Murray, who lives at Goldsworth Park, Woking, said: "They have a sensory approach to education at the school and they are just excellent. There is a team of people who look after Naomi, including a physiotherapist, school nurses and teachers.

"You need help when you have a child with severe special needs."

Naomi was diagnosed with epilepsy three years ago and her family and school have to

be aware at all times in case a fit happens.

She enjoys swimming, music and noisy toys and communicates her appreciation to her caring parents with big bear hugs.

She communicates to her parents using the words 'Dadda' and 'Babba' but has improved over the years and done more than doctors ever thought she would be capable of.

Mrs Murray said: "Naomi is a very sociable little girl and it is the small things you are really grateful for, like when she puts her arms around you to say thank you."

Karen Pugh is a friend of Mrs Murray's and is one of the founder members of the Genesis group at the Coign Church.

They run coffee mornings, family outings and a support group for fathers.

Mrs Pugh said: "The group is open to any family who have a child with special needs and families from every culture, faith and social background."

Mrs Murray praised the support of both the groups and also of staff at Frimley Park Hospital and her GP, Dr Mellor at Heathcote Medical Practice in Woking.

She added: "We would have found a way through without the support networks but it would have been very difficult."

For more information about the Genesis Support Group call 01483 714150 or visit [www.genesis-coign.org](http://www.genesis-coign.org).

To contact Carers Support Woking please call 01932 355500.

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— Lorna Murray