

## Carer Story -

### Richard Ian Banner

Richard and his partner Gemma have four children under the age of 14.

Youngest daughter Phoebe, is 5 and has Spina Bifida. Phoebe needs a lot of care and needs regular trips to hospitals all over the North East; including Middlesbrough, Newcastle and Sunderland.



Trips to and from the hospital were difficult, Gemma was the only driver and worked part time. There were no regular or reliable bus routes that passed through their small village of Coxhoe and, even with the limited public transport available, it was hit or miss whether they could get on the bus with the wheelchair or not “often we would wait for a bus and one would come along and there would be pushchair or two on and there was no room for the wheelchair. We would be left with the choice of waiting for another hour or giving up altogether”

Richard had started to learn to drive over 10 years ago but, with 3 young children at the time, there was always something else that needed paying for and driving lessons were becoming increasingly more expensive, not to mention the cost involved in running a second car, so the lessons were put on the back-burner until Phoebe came along.

Richard and Gemma had always ‘just managed’ with Phoebe, they had never heard of the Carers Centre previously. It was while online searching for help with driving lessons early this year that Richard came across the Carer Break Fund.

Richard registered with us in January last year as Phoebe’s Carer and successfully applied for driving lessons. After regular lessons with Graham Price Driving School of Newton Aycliffe, Richard passed his test in October 2014.’ Because, in the telling of the tale the sequence of years has been muddled up from ‘this year’ in the previous paragraph, to: passed his test in October 2014.

He says ‘It has meant a great deal to us both, it means that Gemma doesn't have to take time away from work to take Phoebe to appointments. I’m now able to take Phoebe and the other children to the park and for other days out during holidays. It will take the pressure off Gemma as the only driver and will mean we can share the responsibility between us,”

“We are extremely grateful to Durham County Carers Support and to the Carer Break fund.”