



**ANNUAL
REVIEW
2022/2023**

**HOME
START**

**Runnymede
and Woking**

Who is Home-Start?



In 1973 while working as a voluntary worker in the then Children's Department of the City of Leicester, Home-Start UK's founder, Margaret Harrison, developed a growing belief that, as well as volunteers supporting individual children, the families of these children required intense help. Discussions with professional workers in health, education and social work convinced her that this new approach was needed.

Margaret was convinced that volunteers could help families with young children in a variety of settings. They would support the parent as the 'sustaining agent' in the child's life and see the home as the 'sustaining background'. Volunteers would offer individual programmes of support and help, to suit the needs of particular families and given children the best possible start in life.

It was in November of 1973 that Home-Start Leicester was established; the name reflecting the fact that the service was based in the 'home' at the 'start' of the child's life.

Home-Start now operates in towns, cities and communities throughout the UK and in 20 countries across the world and is a network of 182 local charities working with families in their communities, supported by a central body, Home-Start UK.

Home-Start Runnymede and Woking is an independent charity supporting families with at least one child under 5 across the two boroughs.



What do we do?

We provide one-to-one and group support for parents who are struggling to cope in difficult circumstances, such as post-natal depression, isolation, illness or disability of parent or child, domestic abuse, family breakdown and housing problems. Many of the families we help are at risk of social exclusion and include those who are reluctant to engage with other services.

Our trained volunteers and experienced staff offer confidential, non-judgemental, practical and emotional support. They work alongside parents in the family home and in group settings to help them develop the confidence, skills and strength they need to nurture their children.

What impact do we have?

Home-Start works because staff and volunteers understand just how hard parenthood can be and we offer flexible, non-judgemental support to families. Over time our volunteers and parents often develop a deeply trusting relationship which can lead to powerful change within the family. This means more confident parents, happier children and stronger parent/child relationships.

Welcome to Home-Start Runnymede and Woking's

Review of 2022-2023

In 2023 Home-Start is celebrating 50 years since Margaret Harrison founded the organisation with the belief that supporting a family was best done in their home where it can be shaped to meet the needs of each individual family.



Margaret understood that parenting can be hard and “it takes a village” to give children the best possible start in life. Many families don’t have “a village” and this is where Home-Start can help: providing emotional and practical support in the home when times are hard.

Sadly, the work that Home-Start does to support families is needed more than ever. The effects of the pandemic continue to be significant for families, in terms of increases in mental health issues and domestic abuse, greater financial challenges, delays in assessment and diagnosis for children with additional needs and poor social communication skills in young children. All this has been compounded with the cost of living crisis, meaning that many families are at breaking point. It has been notable how many families referred to us have, often multiple, complex needs.

Our mission continues to be to support as many families as possible through their challenging times; providing support, encouragement, skills and specialist knowledge. Most of all, we hope that families know that they aren't alone and that they have a volunteer or member of staff cheering them on as they navigate tough times.

For Home-Start Runnymede and Woking, the last year has been one of challenges and development. Our core support for families is still the traditional Home-Start model of matching trained volunteers with a family to provide practical and emotional support in the home. However, the cost of living crisis hit our volunteer team hard and we had to say goodbye to many who needed to take on paid work or look after grandchildren or elderly relatives.

In order to meet the high level of need with fewer volunteers available, there have been more families supported by staff, either 1:1 or in groups. Co-ordinators have taken on more crisis work and we were also really pleased to host a wonderful student social worker, Emily, who joined Claire and Louisa supporting families 1:1 in their homes. The biggest change for us in the last year was the launch of a number of new groups, targeting particular needs.

The groups that were launched during the year were: Baby Bubble Egham and Baby Bubble Addlestone for new mums and their babies up to one year old, and Play & Learn Plus for families with children with additional needs. We have also continued to run Thursday Tots in Byfleet and Parenting Puzzle courses in Woking. The benefits of our group include: reducing isolation and loneliness, improving children's social and communication skills, improving the emotional wellbeing of parents and providing a space where parents can speak to Home-Start staff and other local professionals about additional support and services that their family can access. Attendance at our groups has grown steadily throughout the year.

A further exciting development has been the launch of Dad Matters Surrey, a pilot project in partnership with two other Surrey Home-Starts. We know that historically Home-Start has been too “mum-focused” and we want to do better, ensuring that all parents get the right support at the right time. The project seeks to support Dads’ mental health in the perinatal period and improve bonding and attachment between Dad and baby. The initiative, originated in Manchester around five years ago, is based on in-depth research that shows how Dads interact with services and seek help. We now have the first Dad Matters’ employee in the South East of England in a network which has already seen significant growth in the UK since inception. We are looking forward to this project growing and supporting more new Dads and Dads-to-be.

We continue to work closely with other local organisations to ensure that the families in our area have the support they need – this includes referrals to food banks, group support, applications for specialist equipment and working in partnership to deliver parenting courses.

Families across Runnymede and Woking have told us how much they appreciate the support provided by our volunteers and staff. We are very proud of the feedback we receive from families and the excellent outcomes that families report as a result of the support of Home-Start volunteers and staff.

Looking forwards there appears to be no signs that the need for our services will reduce. We are working hard to recruit and train new volunteers and are implementing the new hybrid training prepared by Home-Start UK. In a difficult climate for charities with increased competition for grants and reductions in Local Authority funding, we know that we need to find new sources of income to ensure that we can continue to support all the families in Runnymede and Woking who need us. To that end, we have developed and diversified our fundraising strategy and are working hard to deliver it.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the volunteers, staff, trustees, supporters, local partners and funders for your ongoing support. It is a pleasure to work alongside you all with a shared passion for seeing families thrive. We know that the earliest years make the biggest impact and we will continue to work hard to ensure that those years count so that no child’s future is limited. Because Childhood Can’t Wait.



***Sarah Beasley
Manager***



*“You made the right match!
Our volunteer was just perfect and helped our family so much”*
Natalie

During the year

298

Families were supported by Volunteers, Staff and/or Groups during the year

478

Children were supported

93

Families were supported by a home-visiting volunteer with the average length of support lasting 22 weeks

26

Families received support from a staff member in the form of crisis support where a volunteer was not immediately available

52

Families received support in the home from one of our Family Support Workers

173

Families attended one of our groups.

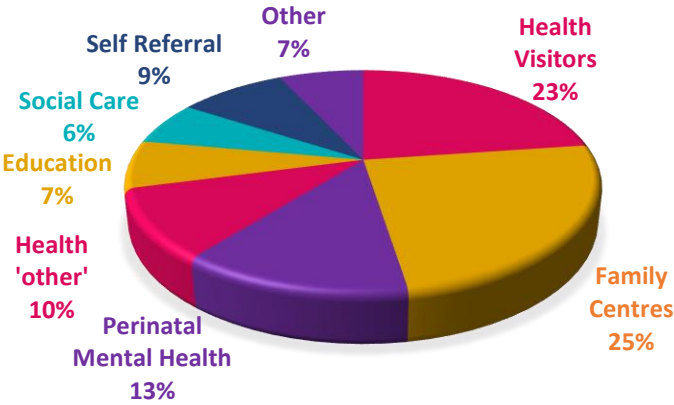
154

Referrals were received for home-visiting support

5

Groups were running to support families in our local communities

SOURCES OF REFERRALS 2022-23



As a result of our support, families reported:

99%



Improved parent wellbeing

100%



Improved child wellbeing

97%



Improved parenting

99%



Feeling less isolated



From Michael Parker Chair of Trustees

Later this year will see the 50th anniversary of the founding of Home Start. The last 12 months have truly brought home to us the need for Home Start if we ever doubted it - not that we ever have done!

Whilst 2021/22 saw record numbers of families and children being looked after by our wonderful professional staff and volunteers, 2022/23 saw those numbers increase by over 100% to 298 families and 478 children.

That required an incredible level of dedication by all concerned and, in addition to our core and vital one-to-one family support, we increasingly provided group support whether around perinatal or what we named our Baby Bubbles in Egham and Addlestone. Those groups have been tremendously popular and have helped many parents who have felt isolated and frankly lonely realise that they are not alone, and many have commented that it is helping to restore their confidence.

To assess how our services are evaluated by families, regular surveys are taken. We need and want to know how we can improve. We are delighted that the outcome in the majority of categories is well over 90% but we are not complacent and are committed to increasing these numbers yet further.

And this has been achieved by recruiting new team members and new volunteers at a time of interest rates starting to bite and the cost of living hitting peoples' pockets. This has also hit our own overheads when the ability to donate to charities has reduced. As a result our reserves have inevitably reduced too. We need to focus more on fundraising whilst we also record our many thanks to those who have been so very loyal in funding us in the past. They are vital to our being able to fulfil our mission.

And we achieve this through a team of professional staff and volunteers with eye-wateringly impressive credentials. They should be very proud of what they achieve year-in year-out and the testimonials they receive from so many families are heart-warming and humbling.

And, finally, may we thank everyone reading our annual review and providing your support in so many ways. It is never taken for granted and it is always received with our gratitude and thanks!



Our Trustees as at 31st March 2023 were:



Michael Parker (Chair), Trevor Pound (Treasurer), Gemma Niebieszczanski (Company Secretary), Mike Griffiths (Health & Safety), Joanna McKenzie (Fundraising), David McKeown (IT & GDPR), Livi Matthews (Marketing), Janice Bibby, and Claire Hamilton-Taylor.



Chelsea's Story:

How has Home-Start helped me and my family?

The biggest and most positive change has been with my confidence. Before I suffered with severe anxiety which meant I found it difficult to leave the house. With the ongoing support and help from my volunteer I can now manage my anxiety well enough to take my children out to play groups, the park or for family days out.

My youngest son has had a lot of medical appointments and assessments to attend and my volunteer has been fantastic at supporting me attending these - giving me confidence and helping me to express what I want to say to professionals, which I wouldn't have been able to do on my own.

My Home-Start coordinator has ensured that I have accessed the right professional services and support for my son who has additional needs. She has helped with onward referrals to services such as Surrey Early Education Service and with accessing the right specialist support at nursery.

My coordinator and volunteer were able to guide and support me through the process of getting my 9 year old son back into school after he had been out of school for a long time. He received extra help with his transition back into school which otherwise would have been a real challenge for all the family.

I would say to other families considering Home-Start support to do it! Just sign up, and even if you receive the littlest bit of support, it's more than you had before. You don't have to feel like you're on your own. There is so much help out there and Home-Start will be able to guide you in navigating and accessing the right services for you.

My Home-Start volunteer is adorable - she has been so understanding, she doesn't push, but gives options and offers practical advice. My volunteer has been a voice for me that I otherwise wouldn't have had, giving me the confidence that I need to support my family to thrive.



The number of families we've been able to help is thanks to the tireless passion and commitment of our team of volunteers. The work we do and the support we are able to offer to families would not be possible without their experience, knowledge, skills and time.



Groups, Courses & Projects

GROUPS



Our hugely successful **Tots at St Mary's** group in Byfleet continued this year. This is a group where all families with children under the age of 5 are welcome. It is a free and informal group with crafts, toys and singing time along with a dedicated area for babies.

During the year our Perinatal Co-ordinator, Kim, launched a new mother and baby group called **Baby Bubble**, in partnership with Runnymede Family Centre. It is a welcoming space to relax, feel at ease, meet other new mums and enjoy time with baby including play time and rhymes/songs. Initially in Egham, a second group was started in Addlestone in January 2023 and there are plans to do the same in Woking in the coming year, this time in partnership with Jigsaw Hub.

Amy, our SEN Co-ordinator, continued her **Play and Learn Plus** group in partnership with Woking Family Centre. The group offers free sensory play and learn sessions for children (0-5) with special education needs and disabilities (SEND), both pre- and post-diagnosis. The sessions provide interactive and specialist play opportunities and a safe space to meet other parents and carers of SEND children.



*"I love coming here, and so does my child!
It's a lovely, well-run group and I feel very welcome"*

In the last year 173 families have accessed our groups

COURSES

During the year we ran a **Parenting Puzzle** course which equips parents with the understanding, skills and ability to lead emotionally healthy lives, build resilience, empathy, self-esteem and support positive family relationships.



OTHER PROJECTS

Perinatal

For mums who have limited support, are feeling isolated or struggling with their emotions and wellbeing we offer a team of trained volunteers who can provide support in the early months and years after baby is born.



Dad Matters Surrey was started in the Autumn of 2022 and exists to support dads to have the best possible relationship with their families. The Dad Matters Co-ordinator provides 1:1 peer support to dads-to-be and new dads, to help build their confidence with forming a close bond with their baby; signposts and supports dads to access services and information (generally only aimed at mums) to help make sense of being a dad and supports dads with anxiety, stress and mental health awareness.

This project is in partnership with Home-Start Elmbridge and Home-Start Epsom, Ewell and Banstead and a launch event in each of the boroughs is planned for late Spring 2023 to which professionals from health and family services will be invited. The aim is to recruit further Co-ordinators and volunteers and to extend the project throughout the whole of Surrey.



Christmas Wrap

We were once again fortunate to be able to host our popular Volunteer Christmas Wrap event whereby volunteers come and choose and wrap a donated new toy or game for each of the children in the family they are supporting which they then delivered to the family in time for Christmas.

We also delivered vouchers, kindly donated by the Children with Special Needs Foundation, for a high street supermarket to families with children with additional needs.



A Volunteer's Story

Why did I become a volunteer?

I became a Home-Start visitor because I wanted to try to help mothers who were struggling to make the first few years of their child's life as happy and secure as possible. A friend suggested Home Start so I became a volunteer.



I have been a visitor for many years now. During that time, I have met a lot of different families. Some have been isolated from a community they once knew, some have had physical or mental health problems and all have needed support through difficult times.

Home-Start not only provides that support but also gives practical help and, above all, friendship. Often the most important thing we can give our families is friendship and the feeling that they are not alone, that there is someone who can empathise with their situation and listen to what they feel they need to improve their lives. Personally, I get a great deal of satisfaction from seeing "my families" growing in confidence and learning to deal with their problems independently.

I am frequently astonished at the burdens the families have to bear and the problems they have to face and it is such a joy to see them develop the skills they need to get them through challenging and often difficult situations. I don't always have the knowledge or the expertise to guide them but there is always someone in the office who does and, with their help, we can usually find a way to solve whatever problems are facing our families.

I feel particularly proud of what my families achieve when I see them making new friends, maybe beginning training for a new career or simply learning how to deal with the day to day challenges of being parents.

What do I get out of it?

My initial motivation for becoming a volunteer was to help parents who were struggling with parenthood to learn how to deal with their problems. However, I get so much from being a volunteer that I feel I benefit more than my families! There is the warm glow from feeling useful, the satisfaction from seeing my families growing in confidence and stepping out on their own to deal with life's difficulties and, most of all, the joy of gaining the love and friendship of the children and their parents. Although the relationship with the family is often quite short-lived, it is lovely to be with the children, playing with them and just being happy to be with them. It is sad to say goodbye to a family but it is good to know that you have done something to help them in those first difficult years.

What have been the highlights?

The best part of being a visitor for me is the close relationships you develop with the families. I love the fact that the parents feel they can confide in me and gaining the affection and trust of the children is a real privilege. The best thing (and also the saddest thing) is to close their front door for the last time feeling that although you won't see them again you have left the family in a better place than they were in before you met them.

Mina

1-in-9
volunteers have previously
received support from
Home-Start

Thank you for your support



We are so grateful to the many funders, trusts, companies, charities and individuals who support our work with grants, donations and equipment for families. In particular we'd like to mention:



**The 29th May 1961
Charitable Trust**



John Bean's Charity

Together with all the individual private donations including the volunteers who choose to donate their expenses.



Because Childhood Can't Wait

Financial Summary

2022/23 proved a more challenging year for the charity from a financial perspective than immediately preceding years. Although income was in line with the prior year, it did not fully cover the costs of meeting the growing demands for our services and the increasing range of channels through which these services were provided. In particular, materially higher staff costs reflected both a higher headcount but also the need to respond to the cost of living pressures. The trustees continue to explore diverse funding sources and review on an ongoing basis the level of contractual obligations that the charity takes on to ensure that these can be fulfilled.

Headline figures for the financial years ending 31st March are as follows:

	2022/2023	2021/2022
Income	£157,134	£157,263
Expenditure	£196,466	£147,775
Surplus/(Deficit)	(£39,332)	£9,488
Reserves	£136,590	£175,922



To make a donation or if you are interested in becoming a volunteer please visit our website:

<https://homestartraw.org/>



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