



Support and friendship
for families

Home-Start Leicestershire Supporting Families with Complex Needs

"It takes a village to raise a family"



Home-Start : A Unique Service

Home-Start offers one-one, personalised support for parents/carers with at least one child under five; reaching out to families at risk of social exclusion, including those who do not engage with other services. The holistic nature of support offered ensures that the needs of the whole family are addressed, including older children and young people in the household.

Home-Start provides a unique service; recruiting, training and supporting volunteers who are 'matched' to individual families to offer informal, friendly and confidential home-based support tailored to the individual needs of each family for as long as the family needs it.

Each locally based Home-Start scheme is rooted firmly in the local community and reflects the uniqueness of the setting which they serve. As a result, many Home-Start schemes have developed a range of family support services in addition to the home-based support including PNI course and groups, family outings and family support groups.

The Home-Start approach is flexible enough for the scheme to respond effectively to the needs of families with young children irrespective of location, political or religious differences, culture, education and income.

All Home-Start schemes are supported by Home-Start UK; a community resource with all the benefits of a strong national organisation.

Home-Start Values

In all external and internal dealings Home-Start schemes work within in and demonstrate the essential ethos of:

- choice
- partnership
- openness
- encouragement
- flexibility
- responsiveness
- enjoyment

All relationships are based on good communication, respect and trust

Nurturing - not judging

Empowering people - not rescuing

The voluntary ethic permeates the whole organisation:

- Each community chooses to develop a Home-Start scheme
- Volunteers choose to work for Home-Start
- Families choose Home-Start support

Reaching Families in Need across Leicestershire

In 2010/11 the 6 Home-Start schemes in Leicestershire supported **743** families with **1,593** children.

During 2010/11 schemes supported families with 40 Children on the CPR Register / subject to a childcare plan. During the year 36 children came off the CPR Register whilst receiving Home-Start support. Schemes supported families with 63 children subject to CAF and 85 children with a disability were supported within families.

Increasing Community Capacity:

458 Home-Start volunteers gave over **65,000** hours to support families and children even at today's minimum wage that's over **£390,000** worth of savings to health and social care and contribution towards supporting families in Leicestershire – **positive outcomes achieved by local people for local people.**

All Home-Start volunteers are professionally recruited and managed by local Home-Start scheme staff. Home-Start has a highly successful and well-developed model of deploying and managing volunteers which has been developed over 34 years and is supported by a comprehensive range of training and guidance resources produced by the national body, Home-Start UK.

Volunteers do not need specific qualifications; it is their life experiences, attitudes and interpersonal skills that matter. Once trained, volunteers are carefully matched to needs of the families. When matching volunteers with families, a number of practical, rational and intuitive factors are taken into account.

Home-Start recognises that regular and effective supervision plays an essential part in both the provision of a high quality and safe service to families and in the management and development of its volunteers. Supervision is regular, planned and recorded, and forms part of the overall framework of guidance and support provided to volunteers.

Many Home-Start volunteers, through their increased confidence and skills, go on to participate in further education or courses, or move into paid employment within the social care sector. Home-Start volunteers come from all walks of life and are representative of their local community; most are parents, some having been service users themselves and many being skilled professionals such as health visitors, retired teachers and social workers.

Governance

*"We recommend that the Cabinet Office Unit which is supporting the growth of the Big Society has an objective to encourage these new organisations. Contracts should also allow for the buying in of services – such as those available from **Home-Start**. Buying in services from such organisations with a track record of working with and alongside the most disadvantaged families will help Sure Start fulfil its primary objective of focusing on the least advantaged families."*

Frank Field Review Page 23

Safeguarding Children

All schemes adhere to the Home-Start Safeguarding Children policy and procedures which reflect current safeguarding children legislation. All staff, trustees and volunteers sign a Code of Conduct and undergo regular Safeguarding Children training both locally and via Home-Start UK. Schemes work closely with statutory and voluntary sector partners and ensure they work in line with locally agreed procedures.

“Organisations such as Home Start UK ... demonstrate the value of volunteers in communicating models of good parenting too. Evidence submitted to the review indicates that their services are well received by parents that are struggling, because specific attention is devoted to those children with complex needs and the support is shaped to reflect the needs of children and families. Volunteers working with children and families require regular and skilled supervision.”

Eileen Munro Report page 75

Ensuring a Quality Service for Children and Parents

The Home-Start Agreement between schemes and Home-Start UK aims to protect the distinctive nature of the Home-Start approach and ensure a consistent and quality service.

Schemes work to a common set of Standards and Methods of practice, and have detailed guidance on all aspects of providing the Home-Start service. All scheme staff, trustees and volunteers receive thorough induction and on-going training opportunities. Before supporting families, all volunteers attend a comprehensive Preparation Course.

Home-Start operates a robust Quality Assurance system, developed with the Charities Evaluation Service based on 12 quality areas. Schemes carry out ongoing self-assessments to ensure continuous improvement, and are externally reviewed on a 3 year rolling programme by the Home-Start UK Regional Team.

Supported by a National Umbrella Body and the Home-Start Network

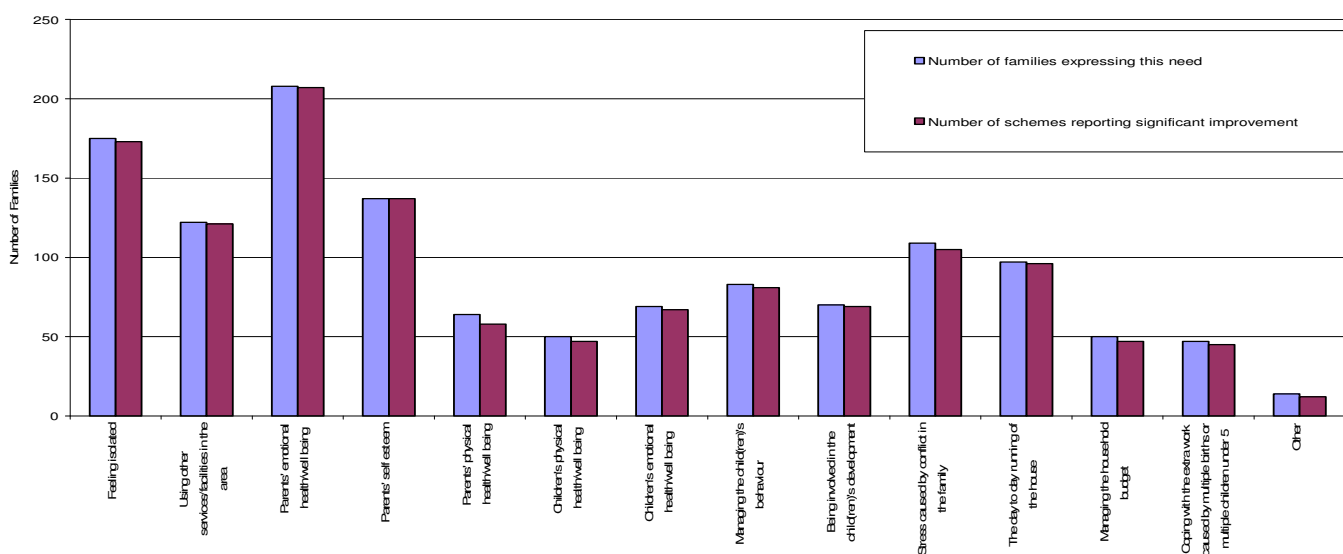
All Home-Start schemes are linked to the national umbrella body Home-Start UK by a National Agreement to which all schemes adhere which provides information, advice, training and policy and practice guidance in all aspects of managing schemes and delivering quality services. All Home-Start schemes are linked via a Home-Start Intranet sharing information, best practice and innovation.

Measuring outcomes

In 2010/11 **98% of families** reported a significant improvement in the difficulties identified at referral

Needs expressed by families	Number of families expressing this need	Number of schemes reporting significant improvement	
Feeling isolated	175	173	99%
Using other services/facilities in the area	122	121	99%
Parents' emotional health/well being	208	207	100%
Parents' self esteem	137	137	100%
Parents' physical health/well being	64	58	91%
Children's physical health/well being	50	47	94%
Children's emotional health/well being	69	67	97%
Managing the child(ren)'s behaviour	83	81	98%
Being involved in the child(ren)'s development	70	69	99%
Stress caused by conflict in the family	109	105	96%
The day to day running of the house	97	96	99%
Managing the household budget	50	47	94%
Coping with the extra work caused by multiple births or multiple children under 5	47	45	96%
Other	14	12	86%

Needs Expressed by Families in Leicestershire 2010-2011 Measurement Outcomes



During 2011 the new MESH system (Monitoring and Evaluation System Home-Start) is replacing the existing monitoring and evaluation system for our work with families, across the whole of Home-Start.

MESH is a system for measuring how well families feel are coping with their identified needs from the initial visit throughout the period of support. The support the volunteer is going to provide to help address particular needs is agreed with the family and how this support is provided is recorded throughout.

In addition to tracking the **individual family's 'journey of change'** schemes will be able to draw up 'real time' statistical reports about the service that is being provided to families and children, which they can use with funders and stakeholders. The system will also allow HSUK to access up to date data regionally, nationally and across the UK to see trends and to analyse Home-Start services locally and nationally.

Building capacity in the community*As part of this Children's Centres should increasingly commission out specific services or provide a platform for voluntary and community groups which can show some evidence of their impact, such as **Home-Start**.*

Frank Field Review Page 64

Parent and Carer Involvement is integral to all our work

- Families' choose to receive service and decide on what they most want help with.
- Families can choose to stop Home-Starts involvement at any time.
- Our service to individual families is reviewed on a 3-6 months basis depending on the complexity of support needs. Reviews are carried out with the parents and when needed adjustments to the focus, timing and level of support are made as a result of these reviews.
- At the end of the support period families are asked to review the service they have received and this is fed back to the Trustee Board.
- Parents are consulted on decisions about social activities and outings for /with their children and HS volunteers.
- Strategic planning includes consultation with families, volunteers (also families living within the community)
- Supported families are consulted directly in the Quality Assurance process to assess our service on a three year rolling programme (See **Appendix 1** for a range of feedback received from families, volunteers and stakeholders during Quality Assurance Reviews conducted by Home-Start UK)
- Home-Start schemes actively encourage and support current and ex-service users to become trustees. Trustee Boards also have active representation from volunteers and representatives from referring agencies as advisors. This is one of the ways in which Home-Start ensures the views and needs of service users remain at the heart of all our services.

At a strategic level Home-Start represent the needs and concerns of parents and their children at a strategic level through Home-Start UK representation. On a Local basis scheme staff and trustees contribute to local forums & networks, local community & voluntary organisations, local statutory services & agencies, local businesses & private organisations.

Home-Start Consultation with Families with Complex Needs 2011

In July and August this year we consulted individually with nine families with complex needs, supported by Home-Start. They were asked to consider both positive and negative influences they felt had an impact on their circumstances and what they felt might have been of greater help to them. To view individual consultations with detailed background please see **appendix 2**.

Key themes and messages emerging from family consultations:

What families we consulted with told us they were exposed/subject to as children:

Their parents' dependency problems

'My mother was an alcoholic – she was never around, didn't care for me – I was brought up by my grandmother'

Abuse/exposure to violence

'My mum was a really violent woman. My partner's mum had loads of different men – they all physically abused him and she let them'

Some had been recipients of bullying, some have been witnesses of domestic violence, and some were abused by older siblings

Becoming carers at an early age

'My mum didn't do a thing. I went to live with my grandmother and looked after my siblings and my grandfather'

Their parents' mental health issues

Chaotic family lifestyles and lack of continuity in their lives – home, family, friends, schooling

'my parents split up when I was 5; both of them married 4 times; my mum went off to live in America for 9 years; I attended 20 different schools up to the age of 14 when I was expelled and then I went into care for 2 years until I was 16'

Childhood spent in care – foster and care homes

'I was put into care when I was a teenager. My siblings were adopted and I haven't seen them since they were little'

Lack of schooling

'Because I was looking after my sister and brother, I missed out on school a lot and I've got no qualifications'. 'When I did go to school I was bullied so I avoided being there as much as I could'

The above reflects experiences common to all .

What the families told us they are experiencing now

- **Mental illness:** Breakdown/severe depression/psychoses/self-harming/long-term or intermittent hospitalisation/post-natal illness – due to unresolved issues from the past
- **Dependency issues**
- **Domestic violence**
- **Living in refuges/safe houses**
- **Isolation and social marginalisation:** A feeling of living on the fringe of society, experiencing prejudice, not valued, living in fear of children being taken away
- **Debt/financial problems:** bailiffs, bankruptcy, eviction/temporary accommodation
- **Family breakdown:** Parents splitting up, chaotic lifestyles – again being moved around the country
- **Lack of consistent help/support:** Support workers changed, having to tell story several times, help lost when child came off CPR, drug and alcohol programmes disbanded due to lack of funding

No one family we consulted with experienced 1 of these – all had multiple issues to deal with.

In addition the individual case studies show how, especially in already fragile families, Incidents can happen that have multiple implications i.e. a terminal or severe physical illness or accident, a child born with a disability, sudden loss of job.

Impacts of the above on the families

Adverse effect on aspirations

- No qualifications
- Low expectations of themselves – poor self-esteem
- Unrealistic aspirations
- Achieving material aspirations via Illegal means
- Resignation/disaffection
- Unemployment
- Becoming parents by default
-

Physical and Mental Health issues

- Poor health/poor diet
- Lack of basic skills around nutritional need/cooking etc
- Mental health issues
- Low resilience to deal with difficulties as they come along ... all of which affect their children

Deep distrust/fear of Social Care

- ‘When I was in emergency foster care, they kept sending me home to my violent mum!’
- ‘Having history with them, I run a mile to get away from them. I don’t trust them. They get all your past history out and make judgements about you and tell you what you’ve got to do. They’re always waiting for me to slip up so they can take my kids away’

Aggression

- Children copy learned behaviour experienced in childhood
- Women with poor self-esteem and low confidence become victims of DV – *'I have no confidence and seem to attract men who abuse me – I fled from one bad relationship but somehow have got myself into another now – my boys hate it.'*
- Unresolved anger can lead to violence: *'my partner's been in prison 3 times for GBH for hitting out at men. This time he's had counselling that helped him see it was his mum's fault for letting all her partners hit him'*

Difficulties maintaining relationships

'After coming out of care, I studied at college, got a job in IT, married and had 2 sons but our marriage broke down. I don't know why, I just couldn't keep the show on the road'

What parents told us they want/ed most

Stability, support, encouragement, and consistency; to be loved, a sense of belonging – home/community/family/friends - a future, prospects. Someone to help them gain – or regain - control of their own lives. Two key factors came through on all consultations:

- 1) A consistent person in their lives who they can **trust**, who can pull all agencies together and who won't end their support as soon as the immediate crisis is over; and
- 2) Someone who will stay with them and build up a relationship with them - providing long-term support rather than short-term fixes.

'People are always coming into my life but they all leave, often quickly- even Home-Start is finishing now my youngest is going to school'

To be listened to and have their needs acknowledged

One of the parents interviewed felt strongly that if she had been listened to either at home or at school about the bullying she was going through, both physically and mentally, her confidence and self-esteem would have been stronger and intact. This would possibly have prevented her from being groomed and later raped which in turn wouldn't have led to her first drink. She feels her need to be liked, accepted and loved has led her into abusive relationships, several house moves around the country and what she sees as a life-time of mental health issues in front of her.

People to do what they say they're going to do and to get back to you: This came through in so many parents' stories.

Freedom from prejudice/social marginalisation

'School don't take me seriously because I'm a single parent with 6 children and a partner in prison – they put everything down to that and don't listen to me saying that my son needs an assessment for his special needs'

Services to work for and not against them: Some parents really want statutory services to understand better how much it actually takes for some people to ask for help.

Have their own needs addressed as well as their children's

This, we believe is at the heart of supporting families with complex needs – each member have their individual needs – all of which need to be addressed.

The Home-Start approach to supporting families with complex needs

Home-Start Approach – it’s all about working ALONGSIDE families – one parent helping another; Being with, not doing to - As one mum said *‘my volunteers are ‘on my side, not on my back’.*

Building trust: This is vital. Families have often been let down throughout their lives. They often test us to see how far they can trust us (eg by not being there to see if we give up)

Being professional and objective: But not formal or distant

Being an advocate: But not taking over

Supporting, Encouraging, nurturing, caring and enabling – meeting some of their unmet needs and respecting them as adults:

- Not saying what should be done/Not being unrealistic or promising the impossible
- Finding and building on strengths/being helpful but never becoming indispensable
- Never thinking we have the answers – never thinking we got it all right and they haven’t – even acknowledging how difficult being a parent is

Having boundaries: But working as creatively as possible within them

Safeguarding: Home- Start’s work is embedded in the need to keep children safe. Building up relationships in the family does not mean collusion. Clear Safeguarding procedures are made known to the family from the beginning of the relationship. Home-Start staff take responsibility for safeguarding procedures to protect, wherever possible, the volunteer’s relationship with the family to avoid the family losing support and ‘slipping through the safety net’.

Being very patient and not giving up: Working alongside families can be very exhausting and sometimes soul-destroying – small steps forward then a mighty knock back. We need to be in it for the long haul alongside families.

Providing robust support throughout: Home-Start Co-ordinators are in the ‘background’ with and overview/knowledge of the needs, of the problems/challenges facing the family and provides:

- (a) Additional support to the family at times of need;
- (b) Extensive supervision and support to the volunteer;
- (c) Continuity of support, filling the gap between volunteers should one need/wish to leave
- (e) Co-ordination with other organisations supporting the family
- (d) Monitoring and evaluation- mapping the journey of change with the family and adapting the support focus as appropriate.

Home-Start has significant experience of supporting families with complex needs

Home-Start has effective working relationships with key agencies

- No organisation can work with families with complex needs alone – you need safety nets and effective relationships when things get tough.
- Home-Start has a history of contributing to inter-agency working. We work with CC staff, Health Visitors, Social Workers, Community Mental Health Facilitators and Nurses, Women's Aid, other Children Centre funded projects; attend Child Protection Conferences and Core Group meetings, as well as Communities of Practice meetings.

Home-Start is cost effective: the more we do, the cheaper we become

We already have existing staff infrastructures within each of the six schemes, the experience, the buildings and skilled volunteers. Like all organisations, building the infrastructure is the costliest element – with that in place, the more the unit cost reduces.

Home-Start brings Additionality

We already harness the culture and passion of the voluntary sector: staff, trustees and volunteers stay, sickness records are good, volunteers become involved in Home-Start and families become volunteers.

AND we access voluntary sector funding pools.

The Home-Start workforce is the volunteers

Home-Start has a pool of volunteers. There will be more within all communities, looking to change/develop their careers who want the opportunity of working with challenging families to access employment or courses.

We know the Home-Start approach works:

'Home-Start is the only service I've every let through my door. Before HS everyone else got the door slammed in their face. Mary (the Coordinator) didn't push me; she told me what help HS could give me if I wanted it. She was friendly, didn't have a clipboard, didn't scare me. I felt relaxed around her. When I said I was fine, Mary could see I wasn't. She knows what she's doing. Others would walk away.

She gave me 2 volunteers who visit on different days. At first I didn't trust them. It's taken me a year to do that, but they don't give in. They don't judge you. They waited for me to accept them. They're really good – they treat me like a friend.'

We believe the Home-Start approach is an appropriate one to engage families with complex needs: We know this because the families have told us; agencies know this because they use us to reach 'hard to reach' families.

Challenges and Opportunities in delivering support to families with complex needs

Evidencing long-term outcomes via short-term contracts

With the possibility of future contracts becoming shorter and /or reliant on securing increased external investment – how can we show we're making a difference in such short time-scales to long-term problems. Just as families need an investment of time, so do the organisations delivering the support.

We're voluntary but that does not mean cost free: Volunteers don't come wholly free. As we have noted, volunteers require an investment of sound training, ongoing supervision and support.

With the likelihood of funding cuts ahead, some Home-Start schemes are having to turn away would-be volunteers due to insufficient funds to run courses and staff hours to support so there is still untapped potential to recruit and develop more volunteers who want to contribute to their communities.

Utilising limited Resources: An every-growing evidence of need v an ever-growing plethora of paperwork demands.

Times are feeling hard for us all – Families with complex needs are at the top of the hierarchy of need and feel the effects of the economic climate most. This may well increase the demand for more intensive support; Sometimes 2 visits a week (or 2 volunteers), often more Coordinator involvement – especially if there is a CAF or Child Protection Plan

Many families tell us there should be no end to support when the last child reaches 5yrs which we as an organisation are taking into consideration.

Home-Start wholly understands the need to monitor and evaluate what we do and what we are achieving with public resources. As funding/resources decrease and we are driven to be more effectively outcome focused which is positive but requires an investment of time /cost. The paperwork required by all funders is increasing (and differs for every funder). This in turn stretches already reduced funds taking resources away from supporting families.

Information sharing and Confidentiality: protocols will need to be established and agreed between organisations working together.

However, information should only be shared with the agreed permission of the family (unless it potentially endangers a child/vulnerable adult to do so).and for the purpose of supporting/benefiting the family.

Dispelling old myths -the third sector does not mean a third-rate way of working: the voluntary sector is highly professional, is informed and driven by the people it seeks to serve – in Home -Start's case families with children and the communities they live in and contribute to. It has its own unique value.

More liaison and working together with other services:

It's important that no one agency 'owns' a family and no one agency works in isolation from the others. We have much to learn from one another and given the opportunity can build on all our strengths to best benefit families and communities.

Contacts for further information: Kate Kendall, Home-Start UK
Email: kkendall@home-start.org.uk

Home-Start Schemes Supporting Children and Families in Leicestershire and Rutland

Home-Start Blaby District, Oadby & Wigston

Contact: Manager - Kay Hewitt

Parker House
254 Braunstone Lane
Leicester
LE3 3AS

Tel: 0116 263 0270

Fax: 0116 278 9071

e-mail: info@home-startblabyoadbyandwigston.org.uk

Home-Start Charnwood

Contact: Manager - Helen Wootton

Regent Wharf
46 Derby Road
Loughborough
Leics. LE11 5BX

Tel: 01509 239786

Fax: 01509 230790

Email: enquiries@homestartcharnwood.co.uk

Home-Start Hinckley & District

Contact: Manager - Jennie Wroe

37a, Castle Street
Hinckley
Leics. LE10 1DA

Tel: 01455 617678

Email: enquiries@home-starthinckley.co.uk

Home-Start North West Leicestershire

Contact: Manager - Pam Moretta

54 London Road
Coalville
Leics. LE67 3JA

Tel: 01530 812327

Fax: 01530 834707

Email: homestartnwl@tiscali.co.uk

Home-Start Melton and Rutland

Contact: Manager - Sarah Marsh

45 Burton Street
Melton Mowbray
Leics. LE13 1AF

Tel: 01664 561247

Fax: 01664 501935

Email: info@homestart-mr.co.uk

Home-Start South Leicestershire

Contact: Manager - Karen Hulett

121 Coventry Road
Market Harborough
Leics. LE16 9BY

Tel: 01858 467982

Fax: 01858 468177

Email: info@home-startsouthleics.org.uk

A few Quotes from Home-Start UK consultations with families during Quality Assurance reviews of Leicestershire Home-Start schemes during the last four years:

"The relationship with my volunteer feels personal, I don't feel there is a stop watch to it and that's really important to me"

"Professionals and family members volunteer their opinions whether I want them or not and I often feel judged. My volunteer waits until I ask for her opinion and I never feel judged"

"Home-Start focuses on me and my children's needs now rather than the circumstances that brought me to Home-Start"

"I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for Home-Start. They were the only people I got close to and felt safe with"

"I see Home-Start like family. They got me through so much and showed me there is a life"

"I only ever used to see thousands of professionals; it was nice to see someone normal"

"Life-saving is the term I would use for Home-Start - it's a link with the real world- I know I'm not alone now"

"The fact that they (volunteers) have been through stuff themselves ...and they've got through it helps"

"They do what they say they will do when they say they will do it"

"Trust is so important and you can trust Home-Start"

"My volunteer has revolved around me, which was so helpful"

Home-Start volunteers empathise with your situation – they don't feel sorry for you and don't judge, it really helps take the pressure off when you need it.

"Being able to talk about how I felt – I realised I'm not the only one – not a freak – not on my own"

"It's a sharing relationship"

Having someone to off load who doesn't interfere and tell you what you should do – just to listen. That's so important.

"Home-Start is give and take – it's flexible and that's what I need"

"Home-Start makes a bigger family – we are all in it together"

"It feels like there is someone there for you – not just for the children"