

HARLOW

**Home
StART**

**Support and friendship
for families**

**Annual Report
2014 - 2015**



Home-Start Harlow

Home-Start Harlow
Unit 19B Latton Bush Centre
Southern Way
Harlow
Essex
CM18 7BL

Patron: Robert Halfon

All Home-Start schemes have a common constitution and share the same standards and methods of practice:

- * To offer support, friendship and practical assistance to families with children under five.
- * To be available to families who are experiencing frustrations or difficulties.
- * To visit families in their own homes where the problems exist and the individual's dignity and identity can be respected.
- * To develop on a one-to-one basis a relationship in which time, flexibility of approach and understanding can be shared with the other parent.
- * To encourage the parents' strengths and emotional well-being in order that these may be transmitted to their children thus enhancing their development.
- * To encourage families to widen their network of relationships and to use community support and services effectively.

For more information on Home-Start Harlow visit www.homestartharlow.org.uk and view the video about our work on the website.

Home-Start Harlow is a Company Limited by Guarantee (England and Wales). Registered Charity No. 1110722. Registered Office as above.

Staff

Manager	Val Evans
Co-ordinator	Claire Strudwick
Family Group Coordinator	Donna Osborne
Administrator	Alison Tarling
Family Group Assistant	Pat Boyd
Relief Family Group Assistant	Sue Hewitt

Trustees

Chairperson	Donna Elliot
Vice Chairperson	Corinne Lewis
Treasurer	Lynn Petts
	Monica Smith
	Lance Spring
	Bev Rogers
	Jackie Holman
	Shilpa Bharambe
	Tracey Tooke
	Barry Rogers

Volunteers

Our wonderful and dedicated team of hard working volunteers are the backbone of Home-Start and the service we provide to families. They give up their time each week to visit a family to offer them non-judgemental and confidential friendship, support and practical help.

I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank each and every one of you for what you do. You really are such special people and you make such a difference to the lives of the families you are visiting!

So a HUGE "thank you" to: Betty Billington, Jenny Cox, Pam Murphy, Gillian Pasquariello, Sarah Rix, Elaine Kelly, Jackie Holman, Bev Rogers, Carol Tillotson, Carol Sands, Tracey Tooke, Debbie Deacon, Sue Hewitt, Rebecca Gregory, Corinna Cranch, Sarah Karanja, Patricia Okere, Annette Dean and Carol Clasper.

If you, or someone you know might be interested in volunteering for Home-Start, please contact the office for more information.

What HomeStart do

Home-Start Harlow helps families with young children deal with whatever life throws at them. We support parents as they learn to cope, improve their confidence and build better lives for their children. The benefits of our support include improved health and well being and better family relationships.

We provide one-to-one support for parents. Our volunteers visit the family's home for a couple of hours every week. They tailor-make their support to the needs of the parents and children. Volunteers are very committed and will keep visiting until the youngest child turns five or starts school, or until the parents feel they can stand on their own two feet. Parents and volunteers often develop a deeply trusting relationship which can lead to powerful change within the family.

Enabling families to access facilities and services in the local community

Reducing stress

Increasing self esteem and confidence

Reducing isolation

Improving family life

Increasing self-reliance

The impact we have

- Prevention of family breakdown
- Safer homes, safer children
- Reduced need for statutory intervention
- Improved mental health
- More confident parents
- Stronger parent/child relationships
- Increased coping strategies for families
- Increased community involvement
- Better use of services and fewer missed appointments
- Families become less isolated, horizons widened
- Children have fun and additional opportunities to value and enjoy new experience.

Chair's Report

Last year I wrote about the struggles we face every day in terms of funding. The 'Recession' may be over technically, but it has been quickly followed by the new 'Age of Austerity'. These labels are created by the media and do little to actually describe the effects on everyday life for those parents and children facing ever tougher lives in our community.

Organisations like ours should be ramping up in the current environment. We should be channelling ever more support as the cuts bite, and yet the same austerity that affects families and individuals, hits Third Sector organisations every bit as hard. Local authority funding has diminished yet again over the last year and is not being replaced with voluntary giving from other sources at a rate that has enabled us to deliver our service to all of the families in Harlow that need us.

Like many household budgets, we continue to tighten our belts in order to survive because our work is vital to so many people. I thank you all for your continued commitment to the struggle to keep Home-Start Harlow financially stable – I thank you personally and on behalf of every child whose life chances are improved by our work.

When I say you, I very specifically mean you! Every reader of this report is a part of our family. Each member of our dedicated staff, our tenacious Board of Trustees, our wonderful frontline volunteers, our active and committed Patron and every one of our generous supporters. My sincere thanks go to you all for the enthusiasm, commitment, hard work and hard cash that you have given over the past year.

For my part this will be the last Chair's report that I file. My past 10 years with Home-Start Harlow have given me the opportunity to meet and work with some truly inspirational people and it has been my privilege to do so. There are certainly challenges ahead but I hope that Home-Start Harlow can rely on the support of the people it serves to continue to deliver the work that Harlow so desperately needs.

Donna Elliot

Coordinator's Report

It has been a challenging yet amazing year. Challenging due to the uncertainty around funding and the finance for our scheme. Amazing, in that we continually witness the dedication of volunteers, staff and trustees to bring the very best to the families which we support.

I have been Coordinator with Home-Start Harlow for just over two years now and my passion for what we do as a scheme does not cease. Supporting volunteers and families is just the most rewarding role.

In the past year we have run the Parenting Puzzle, a 10 week programme to help parents experiencing parenting difficulties. Home-Start Harlow supported 10 families during the programme. In addition, the families had the choice to be additionally supported by a home visiting volunteer. This proved very effective with benefits evidenced by all families in attendance.

We look forward to continuing the support, we as a scheme, give to families and volunteers.

Claire Strudwick

Volunteers Comments

"Being a Home-Start volunteer has been such a rewarding and worthwhile experience for me and I feel honoured to be part of the team that makes Home-Start Harlow such a worthy place to be."

"I have to say that I have found volunteering for Home-Start both rewarding and fulfilling. It is great to feel that you are able to help someone else who is not as fortunate as you and in my case, to assist with language difficulties that arise as well. I know we have a long way to go before the Mum I am visiting will feel confident enough to manage without support but I hope I will be there to help her and her young daughter for as long as she has needs, particularly when her new baby arrives later in the year."

Family Group

The group has had another busy and successful year and makes a real difference to our families. Each week in Family Group we have two members of staff and three volunteers on hand to offer emotional and practical support for children and parents with the activities offered. The family's love the journey books that we have introduced for each child in which we put their pieces of work, photos and comments on their progress.

The team really do enjoy working in Family Group, there are no two weeks that are ever the same. We never know what we are going to be faced with when our families walk through the door but one thing is for certain, the team listen, talk and empathise with our families and most of the time are able to get our children and parents smiling again.

We had an amazing Christmas party and as this coincided with the 25th Anniversary of Home Start Harlow we invited past families as well as current families.

During the summer holiday we held an activity day where parents could bring older siblings to join in a variety of arts and crafts. This was very well received due to the lack of organisations in the area that cater for both under 5's and school age children.

HomeStart Harlow would like to thank Sue, Betty and Elaine for their dedication to supporting our families within Family Group by volunteering each week.

Donna Osborne



Treasurer's Report

This last year has been a challenging one as we have explored new ways to fund our work.

During the year to 31st March 2015 we received a total of £55,136 from grants and donations which was only 50% of the income we have been receiving in previous years. We did, of course, maintain a close check on all the expenditure during the year which totalled £103,083 and was within the budget that had been set. Since the end of the year staffing levels have reduced further and this has cut overheads significantly.

We have only been able to continue our work supporting families in Harlow by drawing on our reserves but, sadly, this has reduced our reserves from £67,491 to just £20,475 at the end of March 2015. As a responsible Board we should always keep enough in hand to pay our operating costs for the next three months and this is a situation that we are monitoring very closely.

The Trustees, Staff and Volunteers have been doing a tremendous job but we need to involve more people in publicising the work of Home-Start Harlow in order to generate income from fundraising to replace the statutory funding that we have received in the past. This means approaching local businesses, individuals, trust funds and other organisations. Fundraising through events is very rewarding although often entails a lot of hard work!

We believe that working in partnership with other local organisations is the way forward as more and more charities pursue the same sources of funding. The aim must be to utilise the limited funding available as efficiently as possible to benefit the many families in Harlow who need our support.

Lynn Petts

Elpitha

Elpitha (meaning 'hope' in Greek) is a unique 6 week support group for parents experiencing low mood, post-natal depression and anxiety. Home-Start Harlow work in partnership with two amazing local Health Visitors, Pat Alexander and Helen Elia, to deliver this compassionate Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) based group to the community.

Parents learn techniques to relax, strategies to help them respond more effectively to stressful situations, and how to be kind to themselves. The outcome is that parents feel accepted, reassured and empowered, which leads to them feeling secure and safe. This not only enhances the parent's lives but that of their children too, as their self-esteem and confidence increases. Elpitha continues to go from strength to strength.

Here are some thoughts from a couple of the mums who benefited from the group.

"Thank you for helping me love myself again at such a difficult time in my life. Post-natal depression was the scariest time I have ever faced and I will always have gratitude that Elpitha was there for me at just the right time."

"I am so thankful of being invited to attend. This has helped make me feel a lot more confident in myself as I know it will others in the future."

Claire Strudwick

Families and referrals

From 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015 Home-Start Harlow supported a total of **117 families**. 41 of these families were already receiving support during the previous year and continued to need our service and 76 were new referrals. The 117 families we supported had **280 children**. 160 of the children were under five year's old and 114 were over five.

Families	
Total Families	117
Already Supported	41
New Referrals	76
Children	
Total Children	280
Under five	160
Over five	114

Referrals came from a variety of sources:

- Health Visitors 58
- Other health professionals 10
- Social care 4
- Self-referral 12
- Other agencies & organisations 33

We are all very proud of this achievement and the positive contribution that Home-Start has made to support local parents and their children in Harlow.

Our vision

Home-Start wants to see a society in which every parent has the support they need to give their children the best possible start in life.

Our values

- We offer families choice
- We work in partnership – with each other, with families and with other agencies
- We work in a spirit of openness, encouragement and enjoyment
- We are flexible and responsive to the needs of families.

Why it matters

The five years between birth and school are vital for a child's development. What goes on inside a family during these years strongly determines the opportunities and life chances children have. Children who are raised in a stable, loving, family environment are more likely to have a positive and healthy future. But being a parent isn't easy and sometimes life can get in the way. Circumstances throw you off course and everything else can take a back seat. A young child caught up in this can miss out on the love, routine and stimulation that are so vital for their future.

Home-Start works because our volunteers are parents and they understand how hard it can be. They work alongside parents, in their own homes, to help them cope with the stresses and strains of life and make sure they have the skills, time and strength they need to nurture their children.

Children learn what they live

If children live with criticism
they learn to condemn

If children live with acceptance
they learn to be tolerant

If children live with hostility
they learn to fight

If children live with recognition
they learn to have a goal

If children live with fear
they learn to be apprehensive

If children live with sharing
they learn to be generous

If children live with ridicule
they learn to be shy

If children live with honesty and fairness
they learn what truth and justice are

If children live with jealousy
they learn what envy is

If children live with security
they learn to have faith in themselves
and in those around them

If children live with shame
they learn to feel guilty

If children live with friendliness
they learn that the world is a nice place
in which to live

But if children live with encouragement
they learn to be confident

If children live with praise
they learn to appreciate

If children live with serenity
they learn to have peace of mind

If children live with approval
they learn to like themselves

If children live with love
they learn to love.

Acknowledgements

We would sincerely like to thank our funders and those who have supported us with donations, fundraising, contributions and the giving of their time, including:

Essex County Council
Community Initiatives Fund
The Mulberry Trust
Harlow Health Centres Trust
Synthomer
The Hare Pub

We would also like to thank those we have worked in partnership with, including: Home-Start UK, Harlow Health Visitors, Families and Children's Social Care Team, Children with Disabilities Team, Community Mental Health Team, Harlow Children's Centre Network, Rainbow Services, Pre-School Learning Alliance, Longwood Primary, Potter Street Primary, Little Parndon Primary, Cooks Spinney Primary, Burnt Mill Academy (Secondary).

