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Start



HOME-START WANDSWORTH  
**STRENGTHENING FAMILIES;  
BUILDING COMMUNITIES**



Independent evaluation of Home-Start Wandsworth  
September 2017 – March 2019

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

This independent evaluation was commissioned by Home-Start Wandsworth and was completed by the FSI April-July 2019. The overall purpose of this evaluation was to assess the extent to which the planned outcomes of Home-Start Wandsworth's work have been achieved, to determine the effectiveness in achieving those outcomes, and also to consider what lessons have been learnt that could be taken forward into similar future projects and activities.

Home-Start Wandsworth provides support for families with young children under the age of five, and soon-to-be mums during pregnancy. Their volunteers help parents who may be struggling with post-natal depression, isolation, physical health problems, bereavement, disability, financial hardship and many other issues. There are three services offered by Home-Start Wandsworth:

- **Core home visiting** – one-to-one weekly support for families with children aged 3 months to 5 years old
- **Bump to Baby** – one-to-one weekly support starting from pregnancy and newborn stage;
- **Hubs** – group activities for families

## Evaluation findings

In the period 1 September 2017 to 31 March 2019, Home-Start Wandsworth received 196 referrals into their service. Referrals come from a variety of sources: from Health Visitors, Family Workers, other voluntary sector partners and self-referrals.

### Home Visiting Service

- 59 families were matched to a volunteer and accessed the home visiting service
- 58 volunteers supported the delivery of the service
- Parents accessing the service reported improvements in their ability to **cope with feeling isolated (81%), improvements to self-esteem (74%), accessing relevant services (67%) and better ability to cope with own mental health (65%)**.

### Bump to Baby

- 28 families were matched to a volunteer and accessed the Bump to Baby service
- 44 volunteers were trained in peri-natal support
- Parents accessing the service reported improvements **ability to cope with feeling isolated (70%), improvements to self-esteem (65%) and greater ability to cope with stress caused by conflict in the family (63%)**.

### Hubs

- 53 hub sessions took place, with a whole variety of activities including sewing sessions, arts centre activities, craft sessions, gardening, cookery and mindfulness sessions.
- 28 families attended a hub session
- 11 volunteers supported the delivery of the service.

Parents reported the following outcomes as a result of attending hubs:

- Increased self confidence
- Better able to cope with daily life
- Better able to use a support network to help cope at stressful times

- Feeling better able to offer support to other people
- Greater knowledge about local services available to them and their family
- Reduced feelings of isolation, loneliness and anxiety.

## Home-Start Wandsworth success factors

### Supporting the Five Ways to Wellbeing

The Five Ways to Wellbeing are integral to many activities and have been used in a range of local authority, educational and other wellbeing settings. They are:



The evaluation demonstrates that Home-Start Wandsworth supports the Five Ways to Wellbeing in a number of ways, for example increasing parents' social connections, providing an opportunity to learn, be active, and providing opportunities for parents and volunteers to give their time and input into improving and developing the service.

### Vital early intervention and preventative support

Improvements to parental wellbeing are a foundation stone for wider changes to be felt such as stronger social and support networks, an improved ability to manage children's own behaviour and improved engagement with other local services for families and children. This has an important preventative role which was acknowledged by local stakeholders.

### Complementary services to meet the needs of the family

Home-Start puts the needs of the family at the heart of its support, and volunteers adapt their support to the needs of the family. The expansion of services including Bump to Baby and Hubs has allowed even greater flexibility around the needs of the family. Data from 2018/19 indicates that only 17% of families accessed both group and hub support, with 38% of families accessing only volunteer support and 44% accessing only group support. This demonstrates the value and importance of complementary but distinct services, accessed in a way that suits families.

### Volunteers at the heart

In the period covered by this evaluation we estimate that volunteers contributed over 1,895 volunteer hours to Home Visiting and Bump to Baby services alone. The value of these volunteer hours, applying the London Living Wage, is over £19,700.

Volunteers join Home-Start Wandsworth for a variety of reasons, including to **give back to the community** (97%), to **use skills** (54%), to **learn and develop new skills** (54%) and to **meet new people** (39%). Overall these motivations are met, with 81% of volunteer reporting that their expectations were met 'Fully' or 'To a great extent'. The remaining 19% reported that their expectations were met 'To some extent'.

## Fostering a culture of learning

The feedback from staff, volunteers and referrers demonstrated that Home-Start Wandsworth is an adaptive service, where new ideas to support families are welcomed and fostered. The team has worked hard to encourage families and volunteers to offer their opinion and to give them confidence that their views are respected and important.

## Learning and improvement

Four areas of learning and improvement for future delivery have been identified in this evaluation:

1. **Reaching all the community – diversity and access.** The data indicated that Home-Start Wandsworth was successful in reaching BAME ethnic groups. However the volunteer base did not reflect this diversity, and we recommend that Home-Start Wandsworth consider a targeted recruitment campaign to increase the diversity of its volunteer base.
2. **Managing the ending experience.** Home-Start is not a permanent service, it is designed to deliver additional support around the family at the time they need it. Both volunteers and parents reported that they found the ending experience challenging. Volunteers fed back that they would value more support from the coordinator as they come to an end. Additionally, we recommend reviewing guidance from the NSPCC on 'Planning and Working Towards Endings' which could be incorporated into existing training and supervision.
3. **Enhancing the volunteering experience.** Overall feedback from volunteers was very strong, and many positive steps have been taken over the previous 18 months to enhance the volunteer experience. This could be strengthened by building in a more formal debrief following the initial visit and through buddying and peer support for new volunteers.
4. **Data collection and recording.** Home-Start Wandsworth have tested and adapted question sets to ensure that both the tool and the means of collecting information is suited to the needs of families. Ongoing data collection and recording will be more streamlined with the introduction of a new database from 2018.

## Conclusion

Home-Start Wandsworth has delivered a comprehensive, family-centred service which contributes to the wellbeing of parents, children and the wider family and community system. The planned activities, outputs and outcomes have been met, and in many cases exceeded.

Home-Start Wandsworth's services directly contribute to the Five Ways to Wellbeing, helping families in Wandsworth feel connected, be active, take notice, keep learning, and give. They provide vital early intervention and preventative support, and are a well-respected and important part of the local fabric of support for families in Wandsworth. Home-Start Wandsworth is held in high regard by families, staff, volunteers, trustees and local referral partners alike. Volunteers are at the heart of the Home-Start model, delivering practical, accessible support in a highly cost-effective way.

In the words of Beverly:

***"Thank you to all at Home-Start Wandsworth. You really helped us through the highs and lows, as hard as it was to trust anybody to assist with my difficulties. You put a lot of faith into giving people chances."***

## Introduction

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### About Home-Start Wandsworth

Home-Start Wandsworth provides support for families with young children under the age of five, and soon-to-be mums during pregnancy. Their volunteers help parents who may be struggling with post-natal depression, isolation, physical health problems, bereavement, disability, financial hardship and many other issues. There are three services offered by Home-Start Wandsworth:

- **Core home visiting** – one-to-one weekly support for families with children aged 3 months to 5 years old
- **Bump to Baby** – one-to-one weekly support starting from pregnancy and newborn stage
- **Hubs** – group activities for families.

*We want all children, young people and families regardless of their background, circumstances or start in life to feel that they belong in Wandsworth and are part of their community, so that they learn, grow, succeed and contribute to Wandsworth being a place that is healthy, happy and resilient; in short, they maximise their potential to live fulfilled lives"*

*- Wandsworth Children's Services Strategy for Early Help 2017-2021*

An affiliate of the umbrella charity Home-Start UK, Home-Start Wandsworth is an independent charity focusing very specially on providing services that meet the needs of families in Wandsworth. There are very specific needs in Wandsworth, which is the largest inner-London borough:

- It has the highest migration rates of any London borough and the fourth highest of any local authority in England and Wales, resulting in a transient population often without family or networks close by.
- Approximately 27% (13,200) of children live in income-deprived households, above the England average, and 25% of families are headed by a single parent. The rate of family homelessness is worse than the England average.
- Despite areas of wealth, there are areas of significant deprivation including in Roehampton, Tooting and Battersea. The Winstanley Estate, next to Clapham Junction in Battersea (scene of the 2011 riots), is in the top 1% of deprived areas in the country.
- Wandsworth is seeing an increase in poverty: in 2015-16 the number of people using food banks in Wandsworth rose by 25% compared with a national average increase of 2%. Emergency food was provided to over 4,000 people, with 4 in 10 being children.
- Wandsworth has the highest rates of mental illness of the six South West London boroughs and higher than the London and England averages.

## Evaluation Findings

### Referrals to Home-Start Wandsworth

In the period 1 September 2017 to 31 March 2019, Home-Start Wandsworth received 196 referrals into their service. Referrals come from a variety of sources: from Health Visitors, Family Workers, other voluntary sector partners and self-referrals.

As can be seen in Figure 1, the largest volume of referrals comes from Health Visitors, accounting for 28% of referrals over the 18 month period. This is followed by Social Services and self referrals, both at 18%.

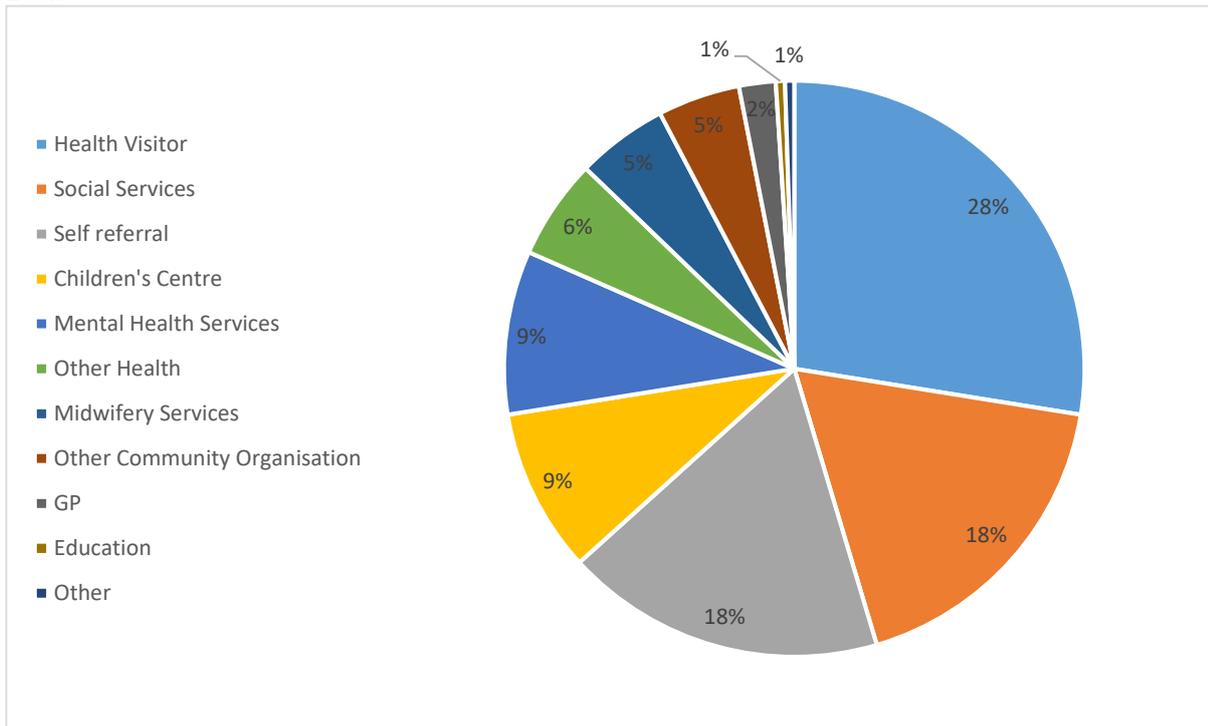


Figure 1: Sources of referrals into Home-Start Wandsworth Sep 2017 – March 2019.

### Profile of families accessing the service

The 2018/19 annual data return prepared by Home-Start Wandsworth shows the profile of families accessing the service over a 12 month period (April 2018 – March 2019):

- 98% of primary caregivers are female
- 73% of primary caregivers are aged 25-44
- 9.5% report a disability
- 79% are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups
- 28% are in social housing

## Core Home Visiting Service

The core home visiting service provides impartial, non-judgmental listening, practical support and sharing parenting support information. Starting in the home, volunteers visit families with a child under the age of five, helping families with a range of challenges. Home-Start volunteers help families facing isolation, the effects of post-natal illness, disability or mental health issues, bereavement, multiple births, poverty or financial difficulties, and a whole range of other challenges.



In the period 1 September 2017 to 31 March 2019:

- 59 families were matched to a volunteer and accessed the core home visiting service
- 58 volunteers supported the delivery of the service

Figure 2 shows that the most common change for parents accessing the Home Visiting Service is in their **ability to cope with feeling isolated** (reported by 81% of respondents who had completed both baseline and second assessment. This was followed by **improvements to self-esteem** (74%), **accessing relevant services** (67%) and **better ability to cope with own mental health** (65%).

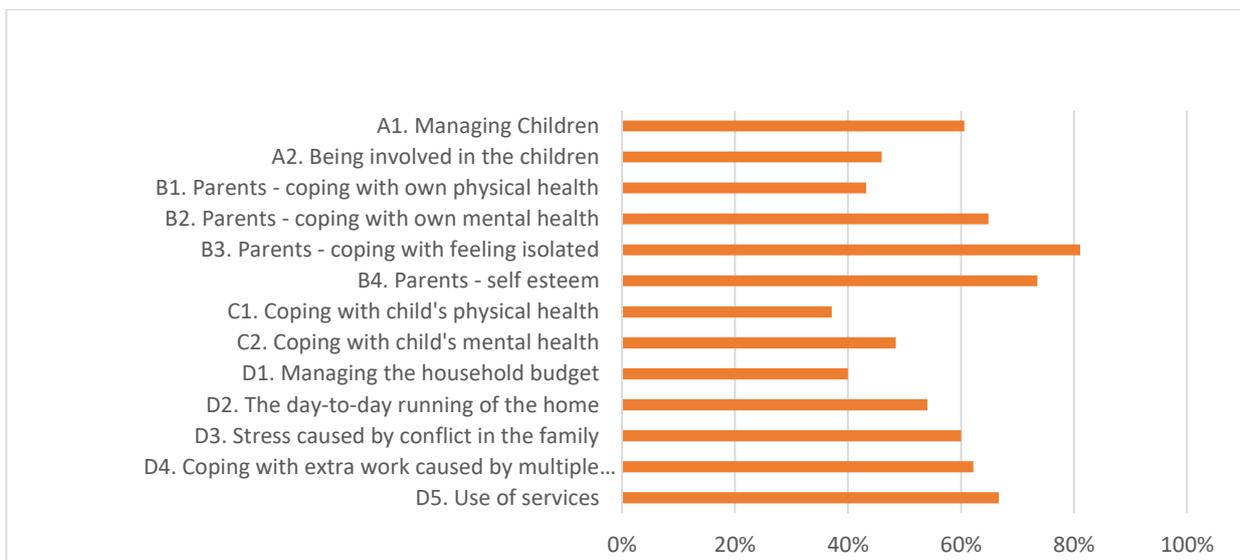


Figure 2: Percentage of families accessing Home Visiting Service reporting an increase from baseline in coping score from first visit to latest visit.

As seen in Figure 3, **improved ability to cope with feeling isolated** was an area that showed one of the greatest amounts of change, with an average increase from baseline to most recent assessment of 0.99 for a score out of 5. **Accessing other services** was another strong area with an average increase of 1.04 out of 5. There was a slight negative change in score in the area of managing household budgets, looking more closely at the individual cases it appears that there were three families who had experienced a change in circumstances, affecting their household income and expenditure. This has reduced the average score across the cohort.

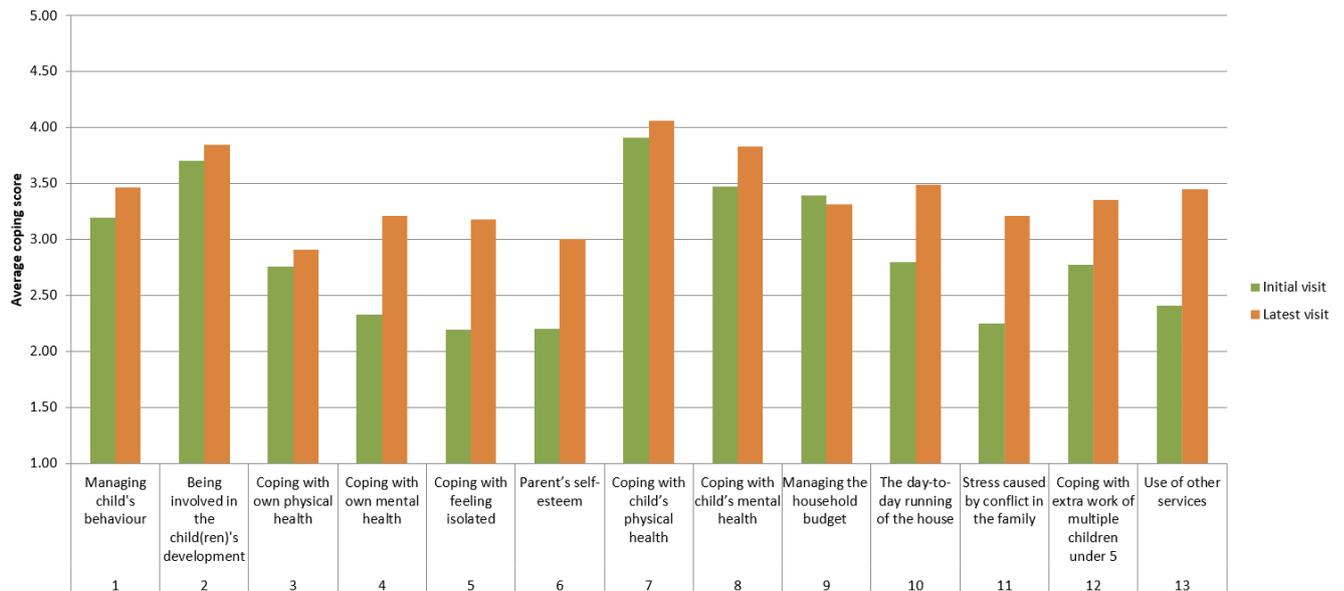


Figure 3: Increase in average coping score across 13 coping measures from initial visit to latest visit for Home Visiting service.

*"My volunteer is like my England 'Mum'. She's helped me to attend appointments, helped me with my family. I've been so exhausted after the hospital visits, I couldn't leave the house and I didn't want to do anything social, it helped that she would come to me."*

*"It was so reassuring speaking to [my volunteer], it was the first time I had heard someone talking about how difficult it is to be a mum. She was so open, I thought I was the only person who thought and felt like that"*

- Feedback from Home-Start parents accessing Home Visiting Service

## Bump to Baby

Bump to Baby extends Home-Start Wandsworth's home-visiting work to support families through pregnancy, the birth experience and post-natally. Support focusses on perinatal mental health, parent-infant attachment and infant development and well-being, helping parents with the transition to parenthood. This aims to help parents lay solid foundations for their child's future.

In the period 1 September 2017 to 31 March 2019:

- 28 families accessed the Bump to Baby service
- 44 volunteers were trained in peri-natal support

Figure 4 shows that the most significant change for parents accessing Bump to Baby is again in their **ability to cope with feeling isolated** (reported by 70% of respondents who had completed both baseline and second assessment). Similarly to the Home Visiting Service, **improvements to self-esteem** were prominent (reported by 65%). Parents also commonly reported a **greater ability to cope with stress caused by conflict in the family** (reported by 63%).

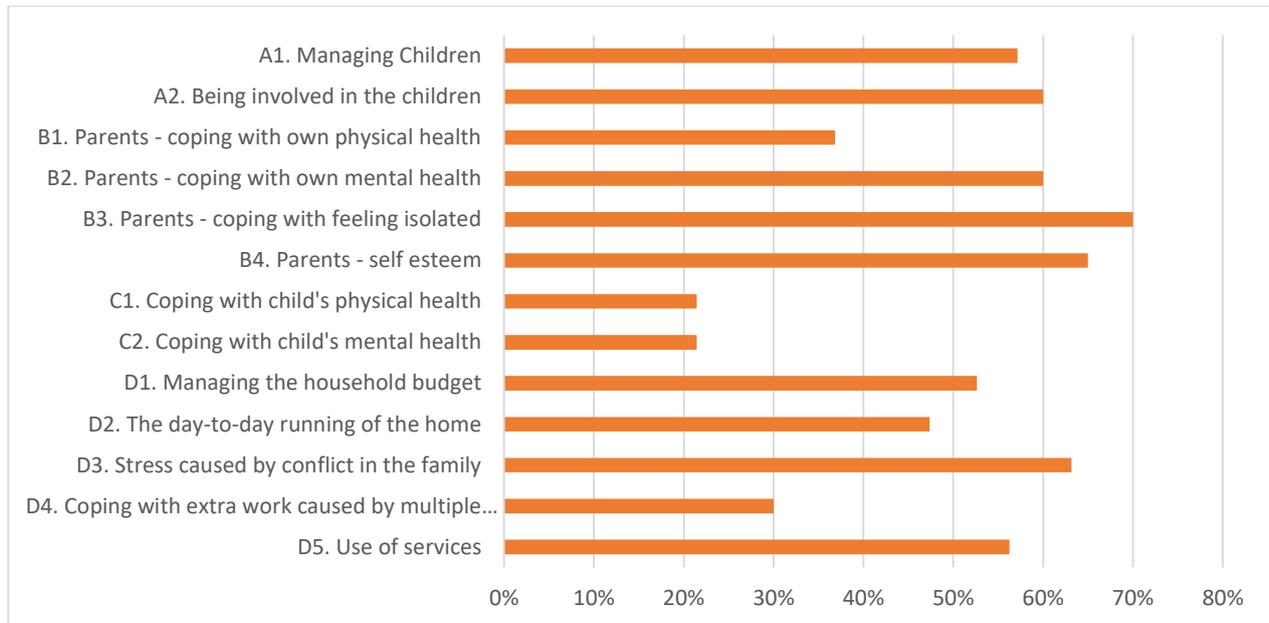


Figure 4: Percentage of families accessing Bump to Baby reporting an increase from baseline in coping score from first visit to latest visit.

### Case Study: Sue

Sue\* was referred by a Health Visitor at a late stage in her pregnancy. She was engaging with the peri-natal health team and was very anxious. In our initial visit, we established that she had been abused as a child and was worried she did not have any good role models in her childhood. She felt she didn't know how to bond with her son and was frightened of going out alone with him.

Sue started seeing her volunteer once a week and quickly formed an excellent relationship with her. Sue finds her volunteer very empathetic and sensitive in helping her go out more with her son. The volunteer gives lots of practical support though information and signposting. Sue's relationship with her baby is now greatly improved.

Sue's confidence has grown over the year we have worked with her, she has started attending Home Start Hubs with her son and has quickly become a regular at our Battersea Arts Centre play session. In the summer we supported her to run a session teaching her art skills to other Home Start families. It was fun for everyone and a great boost for Sue, to be able to share something she loves with other people.

*\*Names and some identifying details have been changed to protect anonymity.*

Figure 5 shows the increase in average coping score, demonstrating an increase in the average score across all of the 13 variables measured. The most significant increase was in **parents' ability to manage the extra workload of multiple children under 5** (an average increase of 1.22 in scores out of 5). **Ability to better cope with isolation** was another strong outcome with an average reported increase of 1.01 in scores out of 5.

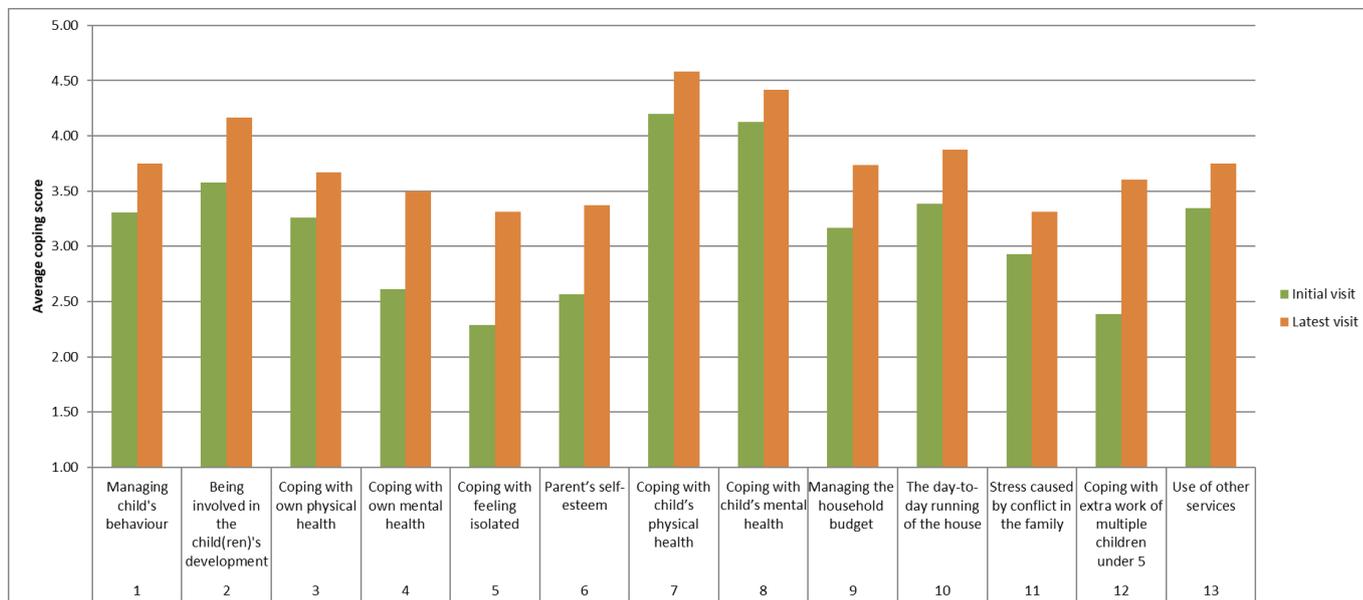


Figure 5: Increase in average coping score across 13 coping measures from initial visit to latest visit for Bump to Baby service.

## Hubs

With funding from the National Lottery Community Fund, Home-Start Wandsworth have extended their successful coffee hubs to provide a chance for families to get out of the house and meet new people in a safe environment. The hubs provide a place for children to play, supervised by volunteers and coordinators so that parents can chat, relax and make new friends.

Over the past 18 months, the Hubs have expanded to include workshops and group activities such as mindfulness, cooking, sewing, and SEN support. In addition, holiday outings have been arranged to provide opportunities for families and children to visit places they may not be able to go otherwise.

In the period 1 September 2017 to 31 March 2019:

- 53 hub sessions took place, with a whole variety of activities including sewing sessions, arts centre activities, craft sessions, gardening, cookery and mindfulness sessions.
- 28 families attended a hub session
- 11 volunteers supported the delivery of the service.



Figure 6 demonstrates that parents and carers attending hubs report the following changes after accessing Hubs:

- Increased self confidence
- Better able to cope with daily life
- Better able to use a support network to help cope at stressful times
- Feeling better able to offer support to other people
- Greater knowledge about local services available to them and their family

Additionally, as can be seen in Figure 7, parents reported **reduced feelings of isolation, loneliness and anxiety** from before hubs to after.

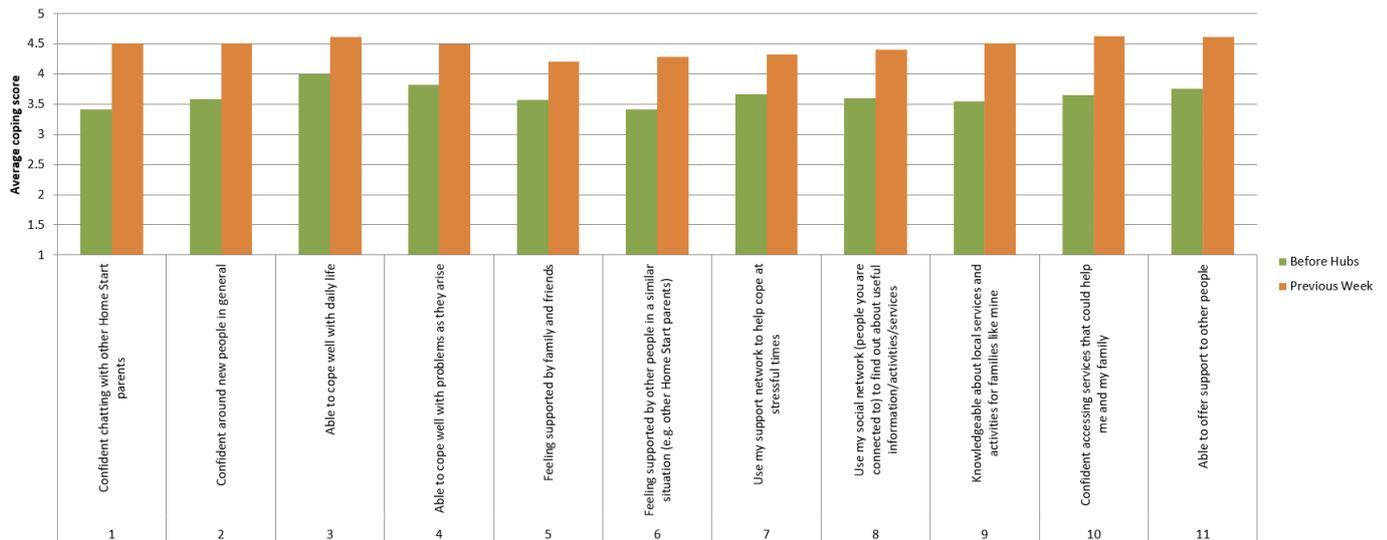


Figure 6: Increase in average coping score across 12 coping measures. Respondents were asked to report on how they felt prior to coming to Hubs and then score themselves again based on how they felt in the last week.

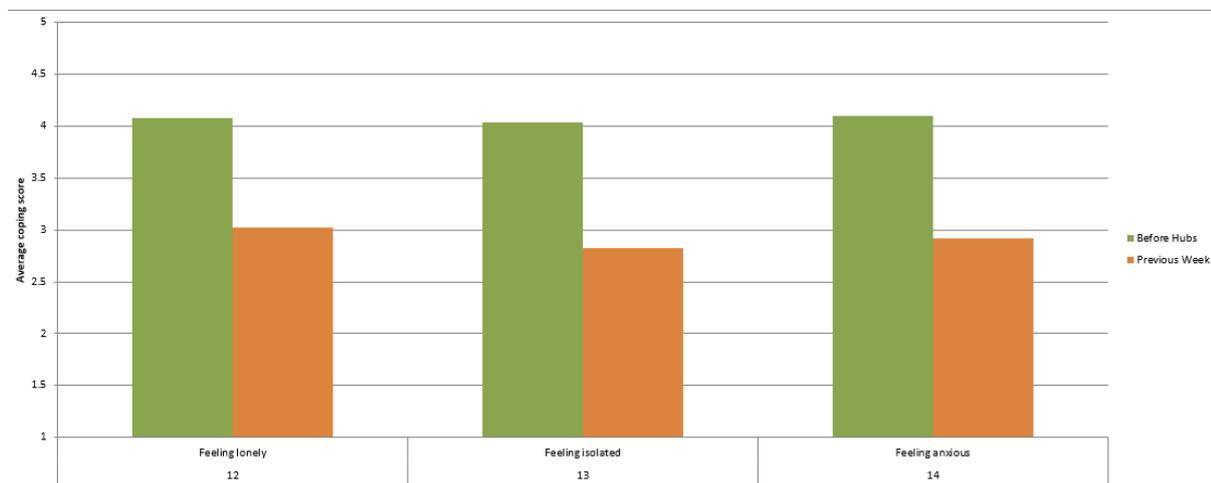


Figure 7: Reduction in negative feelings across three measures. Respondents were asked to report on how they felt prior to coming to Hubs and then score themselves again based on how they felt in the last week

*"The thought of going out on my own was overwhelming, but thanks to [my volunteer] I was able to leave the house for the first time in a long time! It was so good to have adult conversations and meet with other mums. The group were really welcoming, and I felt like they understood, I wasn't the only one. They have really helped me get my confidence."*

*- Hub participant*



## Key themes and success factors

### Supporting the Five Ways to Wellbeing

The Five Ways to Wellbeing is a set of evidence-based actions which promote people's wellbeing, developed by New Economics Foundation and based on the findings of the 2008 Government Office for Science Foresight Report on Mental Capital and Wellbeing<sup>1</sup>, which aimed to develop a long-term vision for maximising wellbeing in the UK.

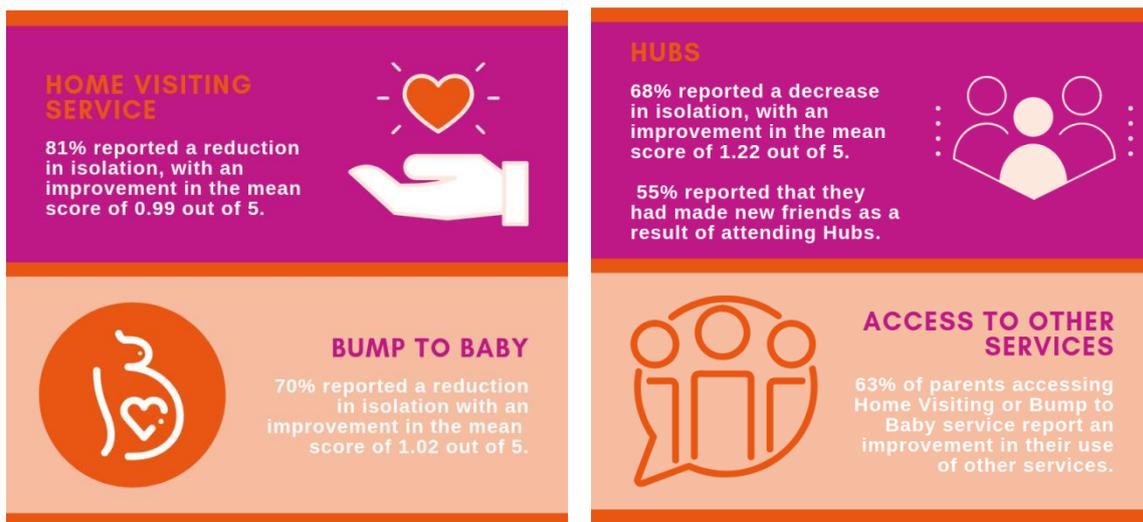
The Five Ways to Wellbeing are integral to many activities and have been used in a range of local authority, educational and other wellbeing settings. They are:



Home-Start Wandsworth supports the Five Ways to Wellbeing in the following ways:

#### Connect

The three services offered by Home-Start Wandsworth offer families an important route to connect with others, whether that be on a group basis or one-to-one. Families accessing the service struggle with isolation and low self-esteem. The outcomes data demonstrates that Home-Start families experience reduced isolation, and strengthened social and support networks. Importantly, families are also better connected into their local communities, reporting greater awareness of the range of services and support available to them.



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mental-capital-and-wellbeing>

## Be active

Many of the activities delivered through the Hub sessions improve activity and play for parents and children alike. Families have had an opportunity to access arts sessions run in partnership with Battersea Arts Centre, participate in wellbeing workshops and activities like cooking and sewing.

### **Case Study: One small step**

Girls just wanna have fun....? Well, toddler Sienna\* did, but her Mum just couldn't manage it. Frequent episodes of disabling joint pain and a split with Sienna's dad had left Zoe\* really struggling to get out. She was a great mum, but found it difficult to let others into her life, and Sienna really needed the social stimulation that her mum shrank from.

Zoe and Sienna were matched with a volunteer who started by accompanying them to groups, appointments and shopping - helping Zoe make that first step over the threshold. The volunteer encouraged her to chat to people wherever they were so mother and daughter could start to interact with other people in a relaxed way.

After ten months, Zoe's confidence had grown and she and Sienna no longer needed the one-to-one reassurance of a volunteer. They were enjoying being part of the Home-Start family so started coming regularly to Hubs, cookery sessions and outings. These events were an ideal environment - familiar faces week in, week out, and the opportunity for Zoe to either engage with the activity on offer or sit it out if she felt overwhelmed or was in pain. Sienna made a great group of friends and loved being part of the 'gang' racing in each week, showing her Mum just how wonderful a friend can be.

Following her daughter's lead, Zoe jumped at the chance to take part in a project offered by Home-Start partners 'Little Village'. This story-telling project gave Zoe an opportunity to express all she had been through, using different kinds of media. Zoe was, for perhaps the first time, truly interacting with other adults as herself. A midwife attending the final showing was so impressed by Zoe she asked her to come and talk to pregnant women about parenting with a disability.

Zoe's journey has been truly life-changing, moving from isolation to imparting knowledge to others. Her Home-Start volunteer and the Hubs understood her need for time and space to develop and have stayed close by as her network and social group expanded.

**"Home-Start makes us feel included which is great when you can feel particularly isolated at times"**

*\*Names and some identifying details have been changed to protect anonymity.*

*"[I've appreciated] accessing services or activities which are within reach financially. I regularly fret as a parent that for the kids to access any sports or skills base is only available at a premium."*

- Hubs participant

#### Take notice

Home-Start Wandsworth encourages parents to pay attention to their thoughts and feelings and to the world around them, which improves mental wellbeing. Through Hubs, specific workshops have been delivered on mindfulness and wellbeing for parents and carers. In a recent survey of mindfulness workshop participants:

75% of respondents rated the workshop as 'Very Good' or 'Excellent' with a further 25% rating as 'Good'. Parents reported benefits in their own words, such as:

- More peaceful with my baby, especially during night feedings
- Being able to reflect and giving myself time in the day.
- It's been an absolute tonic and I've found I'm calmer and more present with my son.
- I tried it at home and it was very relaxing and you can forget your stress for some time.

#### **Case Study: Sofia**

Sofia\* was referred to Home-Start Wandsworth by the Health Visitor. She had a history of domestic abuse and at the time of referral was living in Mother and Baby accommodation. Her housing situation was not good – living in one room, sharing bathroom with rest of corridor and was only able to shower when a friend living in North London visited and was able to watch the children. Sofia did not have any other friends or family in this country.

Sofia had accessed counselling from Perinatal Mental Health Team with good effect. She says she finds the volunteer support from Home-Start Wandsworth invaluable as she can have a proper shower whilst volunteer plays, reads and sings to the children. She trusts the volunteer and really enjoys her company and being able to talk to her about anything.

With the support of her volunteer, Sofia has gone out to the Children's Centre and local park. She was also thrilled to have her garden given a makeover by local volunteers after Home-Start Wandsworth nominated her for the 'Love Balham' initiative. Sofia has particularly enjoyed the 'Nurturing yourself, nurturing your children' workshop on mindful parenting and child development.

*\*Names and some identifying details have been changed to protect anonymity.*

## Keep learning

Parents have been able to access a range of learning opportunities delivered through the Hubs service. This includes classes such as yoga, sewing, cooking, mindfulness as well as practical skills such as baby massage and understanding your baby sessions.



One example of this is the sewing social club led by a Home-Start parent. It offers an opportunity for parents to learn a new skill, craft something practical, all while meeting and chatting with other parents in a small, friendly group.

**Case Study: Make Do or Mend?**

Sophie\* and her toddler son Rudi\* were both struggling in their own ways when we first met them. Sophie was far from home and family support, and Rudi's diagnosis of ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) was making it stressful to get out and about in normal ways, even to the local Children's Centre. Rudi's condition meant she really had to get to hospital for appointments; and so a cycle developed with Rudi and his Mum where they struggled to have a positive interaction with the outside world (hospital waiting rooms never seem to bring out the best in toddlers!). They avoided going out and became more and more isolated.

A health visitor saw what was happening and called Home-Start Wandsworth to see if a different kind of social interaction might benefit both of them. Sophie and Rudi came along to one of the Hubs and both seemed to flourish in the laid back, accepting atmosphere - Rudi could let off steam and Sophie could chat to other mums, knowing that he was physically safe, and neither of them were going to be judged.

But, something had been worrying her for some time, and so after a few sessions, she shared it with the group, who encouraged her to talk about her issues further. Sophie now knows that she has autism, a timely diagnosis, which made her even more determined to do the best she can for herself and her son.

Sophie wanted to push herself, and so shared a talent with the Hub – Sophie is a very proficient seamstress. She was really keen to share her skills, understanding now how chatting and working alongside people was really something that helped her with her autism. Before long, she and the Home-Start Wandsworth Co-ordinator had set up a sewing workshop for local mothers and Sophie visibly glowed with pride as she led the group through the projects. It was very popular (several more are in the pipeline), and some of the chat in this group has led to her initiating another group, this time for parents with SEN (Special Educational Needs) children.

Home-Start Wandsworth has expanded Sophie's horizons, just as they were threatening to close in on her. Her confidence has had a huge effect on Rudi, who made the transition from nursery to school without drama. Sophie continues to stay in touch with Home-Start Wandsworth, tapping into sources of advice and encouragement and has just signed up for an online degree.

*\*Names and some identifying details have been changed to protect anonymity.*

## Give

Volunteering is at the heart of the Home-Start model, and in the case of Home-Start Wandsworth some mums have returned to the service as volunteers. This virtuous circle further enhances participants wellbeing, giving them an opportunity to give back and share their learning.

*"I don't feel like a volunteer, I feel like I am part of a family. I was able to access Home Start when I needed it and now I can teach other parents what I know and share my skills. It is like give and get."*

- Home-Start Wandsworth parent who has gone on to volunteer

Home-Start Wandsworth participants also reported that they valued the opportunity to contribute their views and opinions, another form of giving.

*"I like it when they ask us questions about what we want from the services. Oh and the tea and cake!"*

*"It's good to be able to give my opinion, my volunteer encouraged me to do this by asking me how I feel."*

- Feedback from Home-Start Wandsworth parents

*"We've worked really hard to give parents and carers space to give their opinion and to show that it is valued. We think this is vital, giving parents a feeling of agency and the opportunity to have their say."*

**- Laura Ferrier, Homestart Scheme Manager**

### **Case study: "Everyone needs a little help"**

For Kay\* and her daughter Jojo\*, it was about getting 'a little help' at the right time. It's wonderful when families stay in touch and let us know how they're getting on. Sometimes the impact a volunteer has made stays with the family for a very long time, and it's great to hear about it, sometimes even years afterwards.

When a volunteer's time with a family ends, that's not the end of their involvement, they stay part of the Home-Start Wandsworth 'family' and are welcomed back like old friends on outings, workshops and Hubs.

Kay has done just this for 4 years or so, often coming on trips, and taking advantage of courses and advice, and we've loved hearing about her progress. Kay was a young mum with complex mental health issues and a physical disability which had seen her hospitalised many times over the years. The unexpected arrival of Jojo meant that she had to stop taking medication during the pregnancy and her health visitor referred her to Home-Start Wandsworth so she could start getting support right away. She was matched with a volunteer, and initial visits focussed on getting mother and daughter out of the flat.

It wasn't just that the flat was tiny, it was that Jojo's dad was at home... all the time. With mental health issues of his own, he was finding it difficult to get a job, but wasn't helping at home either. Home-Start Wandsworth matched him with a second volunteer who focussed on trying to get him into work. This took some of the pressure off Kay, who was doing very well with her volunteer - accessing local services as well as participating in fun activities like swimming. Kay also made it clear that she was determined to get back to work herself, so she could be a good role model for Jojo.

Fast forward a few years, and it seems as if Home-Start Wandsworth got involved at just the right moment. Thanks to the the two volunteers working simultaneously with the family, each parent had got individual attention that resulted in them working better as a team. Dad has started work and is managing his mental health much better. He was able to look after Jojo whilst Mum attended training. Just recently, Mum started her first job as a teaching assistant and Jojo started school. None of them could have envisaged this a few years back.

**"I will forever be grateful and remember the angels who helped me through the hardest of times and changed my life. I feel I owe it to them to now go out on my own and prove that all the help and love has really been my changing point and will be my push to change my life for the better."**

*\*Names and some identifying details have been changed to protect anonymity.*

## Vital early intervention and preventative support

Improvements to parental wellbeing are a foundation stone for wider changes to be felt. There is strong and growing evidence of a strong link between childhood trauma and adult mental distress<sup>2</sup>. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study found that the more adverse life events people experience prior to the age of 18, the greater the impact on health and well-being over the lifespan, including poor mental health, severe physical health problems, sexual and reproductive health issues, engaging in high-risk activities and premature death.<sup>3</sup>

Research from Home-Start UK<sup>4</sup> found that children whose parents have had the support of a Home-Start volunteer have a better start in life than those who don't, with more positive changes in parental wellbeing, competence and behaviour during the intervention period in the group of parents accessing Home-Start support. These positive changes are long-lasting beyond the volunteer relationship: at the three year follow up, the Home-Start group showed, compared to the other groups, more improvements in parenting and child behaviour. The research showed that Home-Start services contribute to families experiencing:

- Stronger social and support networks for parents;
- Better able to manage children's own behaviour, having a positive impact in other settings such as schools;
- Access to the wider community and improved engagement with other local services for families and children.

These factors combined can contribute to a reduced reliance on emergency or crisis services for the family.

*"Home-Start Wandsworth is an important preventative service – so many families slip through the net and their needs are not met by social services. I remember one family, mum had Pre-Menstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD) which was having a severe effect on her mental health. The volunteer took time to really understand the child and the whole family's needs – really cheering mum on and helping her recover. If she didn't have that support I'm not sure what would have happened to her, she would have become more and more isolated, we wouldn't have seen her at the sessions and she may have fallen through the net."*

- Family Support Worker and referrer to Home-Start Wandsworth

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<sup>2</sup> Bentall, R., de Sousa, P., Varese, F., Wickham, S., Sitko, K., Haarmans, M. and Read, J. (2014), "From adversity to psychosis: pathways and mechanisms from specific adversities to specific symptoms", *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, Vol. 49 No. 7, pp. 1011-22, available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24919446>

<sup>3</sup> Anda, R.F., Butchart, A., Felitti, V.J. and Brown, D.W. (2010), "Building a framework for global surveillance of the public health: implications of adverse childhood experiences", *Preventive Medicine*, Vol. 39 No. 1, pp. 93-8, available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20547282>

<sup>4</sup> Hermanns, Jo M.A (2013) "Long-term changes in parenting and child behavior after the Home-Start family support program" *Children and Youth Services Review*, vol 35 pp 678-684, available at: <https://www.home-start.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=b40e3080-5de3-4841-8648-b4129b26e92d>

## Complementary services to suit the needs of the family

Home-Start puts the needs of the family at the heart of its support, and volunteers adapt their support to the needs of the family. The expansion of services including Bump to Baby and Hubs has allowed even greater flexibility around the needs of the family. Data from 2018/19 indicates that only 17% of families accessed both group and hub support, with 38% of families accessing only volunteer support and 44% accessing only group support. This demonstrates the value and importance of complementary but distinct services, accessed in a way that suits families.

### Case Study: Home from Home

When the Home-Start team first met Lily\*, she was trying to get her life back on track after escaping a violent relationship. She and her toddler son Jackson\* had to leave home in a hurry, and set up in an entirely new place, far from family and friends. Lily and Jackson found themselves in temporary accommodation in Wandsworth, and struggling to make ends meet when so much had been left behind and had to be bought again. Jackson seemed withdrawn and wasn't talking much, but Lily was able to get out and about a bit with him. She visited the local Children's Centre, and another local charity who were trying to get her the toys and equipment she needed to set up home again.

Lily is very friendly and outgoing, but her interaction with others at this stage of her life often ended with her in tears. That's when Home-Start Wandsworth stepped in, to try and ease her through situations that she found challenging. Initially a co-ordinator went along with her to meetings.

Once all the complex issues of moving had been resolved, Home-Start Wandsworth asked her and Jackson to come along to the Hub at Battersea. The laid-back atmosphere suited her. She and Jackson had met so many people in offices, courts, welfare settings, all of whom needed information from her. It was a relief just to be somewhere she didn't have to justify herself, or fill in yet another form. Here were other young families, who got together every week to just be themselves, and have a bit of fun.

Lily and Jackson became regulars at the Hub and also embraced everything else Home-Start Wandsworth had to offer, like cookery and sewing lessons. Lily blossomed around people she was beginning to get to know and trust. As a result, interaction with external agencies and strangers slowly got easier, and she felt much more able to cope with all the frustrating setbacks she encountered.

Happily, she's now gained enough confidence to realise she has something to offer others and, as Jackson has now successfully settled into nursery, has signed up for volunteering for two local charities.

*\*Names and some identifying details have been changed to protect anonymity.*

## Volunteers at the heart

Volunteers are fundamental to the Home-Start model, their role is to provide support to families, encouraging them to widen their networks and to effectively use the support and services available within the community.

In the period covered by this evaluation we estimate that volunteers contributed over 1,895 volunteer hours to Home Visiting and Bump to Baby services alone. The value of these volunteer hours, applying the London Living Wage, is over £19,700.

Home-Start volunteers go through a rigorous nine-week training programme as well as regular training sessions to keep them up-to-date with issues such as health and wellbeing information, domestic abuse, drug and alcohol awareness, financial management and support, mental and post-natal health awareness, housing issues, and coaching and mentoring techniques.

Volunteers join Home-Start Wandsworth for a variety of reasons, when surveyed the most common responses were to **give back to the community** (97%), to **use skills** (54%), to **learn and develop new skills** (54%) and to **meet new people** (39%). Overall these motivations are met, with 81% of volunteer reporting that their expectations were met 'Fully' or 'To a great extent'. The remaining 19% reported that their expectations were met 'To some extent'.

*"Not only do I use my skills and feel like I'm actually making a difference, but I've also learnt a lot from workshops and from the people at HomeStart."*

*"Although I wasn't necessarily looking to meet new people and make new friends, I definitely have. My experiences have surpassed my expectations"*

-Feedback from Home-Start Wandsworth volunteers

## An essential part of the local community

Home-Start Wandsworth's local presence has grown over the past three years. Feedback from referral partners demonstrated that they are considered an indispensable part of the local fabric of support for families and children. Their family-centred model works well with other agencies in the area and the team have fostered good links and referral pathways across a variety of public and voluntary sector organisations, for example the Health Visiting team and Early Help Pathway team, perinatal mental health team, TALK Wandsworth (general mental health support service).

The team are active in the South London Perinatal Mental Health network and Wandsworth Voluntary Sector Forum and have used these networks to raise awareness of services and reach a wide range of parents. They have also engaged with Wandsworth CCG and their plans for Social Prescribing to explore ways to facilitate more GP referrals for parents who might benefit from Home-Start support.

These strong networks mean the team remain well informed about new developments in this arena that may improve support to local families.

*"There is no other service like Home-Start available locally. This is the only one I am aware of that have volunteers going out to families and supporting them. They come alongside those families so you know they are in safe hands. That's really important – more and more we are unable to do more so it is reassuring to know that Home Start are there. What they do is amazing – we need more of this, where they can work alongside us and support our work."*

- Health visitor and referrer to Home-Start Wandsworth

One referrer described the service as absolutely unique *"there is nothing else like it in the borough, I wish they had more capacity as their work is excellent, I know my families will get what they need"*.

*"I really value Home-Start Wandsworth as a service. As a non-medical, non-social services provider, they don't have the same stigma that other services might. There is great value in the fact that it is delivered by volunteers, people genuinely want to give their time."*

*Home-Start Wandsworth gives a lifeline to some parents who otherwise would be stuck indoors and not coping. It helps parents feel they are part of the community and can meet other parents on the same journey as them. It's amazing to see the transformation – Home-Start is brilliant for Wandsworth."*

- Peri-natal and infant mental health lead and referrer to Home-Start Wandsworth

## Fostering a culture of learning

The feedback from staff, volunteers and referrers demonstrated that Home-Start Wandsworth is an adaptive service, where new ideas to support families are welcomed and fostered.

Throughout the Hubs project, Home-Start Wandsworth have responded to feedback from families when designing their activity programme. For example, in 2019 they will deliver a fuller summer programme. This is in direct response to feedback from families that this is a time when many other services shut down,

and it is difficult to find activities that can accommodate children of a range of ages while older siblings are at home.

Home-Start Wandsworth have worked with families to encourage them to offer their opinion and have confidence that their ideas and opinions are important. They hear from families that they enjoy being asked for their input and seeing that Home-Start Wandsworth listen to their ideas.

The same is true of volunteers, who often contribute important information about family needs. Volunteers are offered a variety of 'top up training' topics based directly on requests from the network. For example, there was recently a well-received training workshop on Autism and ADHD, a topic arising among many referred families over the last year and which volunteers are keen to understand.

## Learning and improvement

Four areas of learning and improvement for future delivery have been identified in this evaluation.

### Reaching all the community – diversity and access

There is a perception amongst the Home-Start Wandsworth team that they are not reaching all parts of the community, and that referrers might have a fixed idea of what a 'typical' Home-Start family looks like. However, family data from the 2018/19 year demonstrate that Home-Start Wandsworth has been successful in engaging families from BAME backgrounds – 79% of primary caregivers in this period identified themselves as a BAME ethnic group.

In our conversations with referrers a recurring theme was that generally it is more difficult to engage BAME groups. This can be a result of cultural norms and practices, or it may be that the families are able to access support from within their own family.

One way to improve the perception of the accessibility of the service would be to diversify the volunteer base. In 2018/19 only 7% of volunteers were from a BAME background whilst 55% described themselves as White British.

We recommend that Home-Start Wandsworth consider a concerted and targeted volunteer recruitment campaign to increase the diversity of their volunteer base.

### Managing the ending experience

Home-Start is not a permanent service, it is designed to deliver additional support around the family at the time they need it. For families with core or bump to baby home visiting, the scheme coordinator and family set support goals together for the volunteer to help with. Progress is assessed on those goals, any new needs and their coping scores at each visit.

At a review visit when the team can see the family are doing better or goals have been achieved, Home-Start will suggest ending within the coming weeks, agree a time to end, and encourage the family and volunteer to decide together how to use their remaining time.

As a way to smooth the transition, sometimes the team will ease off the frequency of visits before finishing, and encourage the family and volunteer to consider doing something special to say goodbye on their last visit. After the final visit from the Coordinator, Home-Start send a letter to the referrer notifying them that home-visiting has ceased. Families are usually invited to continue attending hubs after home visiting, providing ongoing support beyond the volunteer relationship.

Both volunteers and parents reported that they found the ending experience challenging. However, volunteers appreciated that the coordinator managed the process, as it de-personalised it for the volunteer. Some parents found the transition challenging, and volunteers fed back that they would value more support from the coordinator as they come to the end. Additionally, building conversations about endings from early on in the relationship could help make the eventual separation easier. For example asking during review meetings “when do you see yourself no longer needing a volunteer?”. Useful guidance has been produced by the NSPCC, available from <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/publications/planning-and-working-towards-endings.pdf>. This could be adapted for Home-Start volunteers and addressed within existing training and supervision structures.

## Enhancing the volunteering experience

Overall feedback from volunteers was very strong, with 81% of volunteer reporting that their expectations were met ‘Fully’ or ‘To a great extent’. The remaining 19% reported that their expectations were met ‘To some extent’.

Volunteers acknowledged the improvements and positive steps taken so far, with several commenting on improved structure and communication over the previous 18 months. They reported that they felt trusted to negotiate the relationship and establish appropriate boundaries when working with families.

Supervision was valued by volunteers, although there was mixed feedback with some preferring a structured approach with supervision every 6-8 weeks, others preferred knowing the coordinator was there if they needed it could but otherwise get on with it. Some volunteers questioned whether their diary reports were read in advance of supervisions as this was not always apparent or had to repeat information. This came from a desire to use their own time and that of the coordinator to best use.

Volunteers suggested that the initial visit could be strengthened by building in a more formal debrief afterwards, in a location that offered somewhere to sit down. Volunteers were positive about the improvements with communication and training generally and put forward ideas around buddying and peer support to give additional support to newer volunteers.

## Data collection and recording

When designing the monitoring tools, Home-Start Wandsworth piloted established sets of well-being questions with families. They ultimately adopted their own questions in response to families’ feedback that the standard sets felt “negative, judgmental, medical and not relevant”.

The team also trialled paper-based and online surveys methods, and found online to be preferred by many families. Reasons they have included “I can take it home and think about my answers” “I can use a translation app to understand the questions”. The team also felt that paper surveys during the activities sometimes spoiled the relaxed and convivial atmosphere of the sessions.

It is important to maintain proportional and fit-for-purpose monitoring tools that are meaningful to both families and staff/volunteers. Home-Start Wandsworth provides an excellent case study in being adaptive with the tools and methods used. There has been work over the last 12 months to transfer data over to a new database which will make ongoing recording and analysis a more straightforward task.

## Conclusion

Home-Start Wandsworth has delivered a comprehensive, family-centred service which contributes to the wellbeing of parents, children and the wider family and community system. The planned activities, outputs and outcomes have been met, and in many cases exceeded.

Home-Start Wandsworth's services directly contribute to the Five Ways to Wellbeing, helping families in Wandsworth feel connected, be active, take notice, keep learning, and give. They provide vital early intervention and preventative support, and are a well-respected and important part of the local fabric of support for families in Wandsworth. Home-Start Wandsworth is held in high regard by families, staff, volunteers, trustees and local referral partners alike. Volunteers are at the heart of the Home-Start model, delivering practical, accessible support in a highly cost-effective way.

In the words of Beverly:

***"Thank you to all at Home-Start Wandsworth. You really helped us through the highs and lows, as hard as it was to trust anybody to assist with my difficulties. You put a lot of faith into giving people chances."***

## Appendix 1: Evaluation Methodology

This evaluation was completed April-July 2019. The overall purpose of this evaluation was to assess the extent to which the outcomes and of the project have been achieved, to determine the effectiveness of the project in achieving those outcomes, and also to consider what lessons have been learnt from this project that could be taken forward into similar future projects.

Our evaluation sought to answer the following questions:

- To what extent have the planned outcomes and outputs and overall project aim been achieved?
- What additional/other outcomes and outputs have been achieved?
- To what extent has the project met the needs of the proposed beneficiaries?
- What do partners and other stakeholders think about the project?
- How responsive/flexible has the project been to changes and learning?
- What are the key achievements, challenges, learning points and recommendations for future projects?

The FSI used a range of methods to inform this evaluation, key sources of data included:

- Referral statistics from annual returns data covering the period under evaluation;
- Case records and evaluation feedback recorded in Charity Log, MESH and SurveyMonkey covering the period under evaluation;
- Internal records such as funder reports;
- Two family focus groups held in June 2019;
- A volunteer focus group held in June 2019;
- Volunteer survey administered June 2019;
- A staff and trustee focus group held in June 2019;
- Meetings and feedback from the Scheme Coordinator April-June 2019;
- Interviews with referrers into the service administered May-June 2019;
- Case studies, submitted by Home-Start Wandsworth staff.