

July 2021-June 2022

IMPACT REPORT



**HOME
START**
Wandsworth



Our work

Families today are facing unprecedented challenges. For families that were already struggling, the global pandemic and economic turbulence have acted as magnifiers, exacerbating existing challenges and creating additional pressures. We are witnessing first hand the rising levels of mental illness, financial hardship and social isolation with three quarters of families feeling cut off from friends and family¹.

The first five years of a child's life are the most important in shaping their future. During this time, children need nurturing care from their parents and caregivers. The quality of the relationships that surround children, and a positive home environment are key to promoting wellbeing, healthy relationships and school success later in life. Parents are worried about lost opportunities for their children and are anxious about the detrimental impact on their child's development.

Our experienced staff and trained volunteers work alongside families with children under the age of five, providing practical and emotional support tailored to the individual needs of the family. We support parents to grow in confidence, strengthen their relationship with their children, and widen links with the local community to alleviate isolation.

We offer three key areas of support with families able to access one or a combination according to their individual needs and preferences.

Core home-visiting: we match each family with a trained volunteer who visits them in their home for 2-4 hours every week to provide practical help, guidance and emotional support.

Bump to Baby: one-to-one weekly home-visiting support during pregnancy and the newborn stage from a volunteer trained in perinatal mental health, bonding and attachment.

Group activities: structured weekly group activities for families supported by trained volunteers and Staff Coordinators. Our weekly meetups enable families to come together, chat and relax in a safe environment. They give parents an opportunity to try new things and make friends. The warm and welcoming environment helps them feel less isolated, more confident around new people and better able to cope.

¹ Home is where we start from <https://www.home-start.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=1cb9d1b2-6253-478e-a939-db5d8e06899d>

Support in numbers



Giving
195 children a
brighter future

114
families
supported



36
Bump to Baby families

68
families
supported
through groups



73
volunteers

55
group
activities



24 online
group
workshops

Data July 2021- June 2022

"I think the support came at exactly the right time. You were there even when other services were unavailable or ended their support."

"It's been an emotional journey, but I feel I'm ready to move on now. Before I was feeling too vulnerable and would say 'no'. I am now able to say yes to support and get the help I need....I am grateful that Home-Start stayed with me for as long as you did. I'm so thankful this service exists. I am recommending it to other mums that are struggling."



Marsha's story

Feeling isolated, overwhelmed and struggling with low self-esteem and confidence, new mum Marsha was matched with Home-Start Wandsworth volunteer Maddi.

With no other mums to talk to, Marsha felt incredibly lonely, and just speaking to Maddi gave her "something to do that day." Knowing that she would be met without judgement, Marsha felt comfortable confiding in Maddi, sharing the highs and lows of parenting.

The emotional support Maddi gave has been fundamental in helping Marsha combat the anxiety and loneliness she was facing but it goes hand in hand with the practical help that she also needed. Maddi introduced her to a number of baby groups and signposted her to additional support services. With Maddi's support, Marsha started taking her baby swimming and to sensory play sessions, decreasing her own isolation but also enhancing her baby's social and physical development.

Marsha's confidence has soared since Maddi came into her life. She now feels empowered to make her own decisions and is confident to reject advice or information that isn't helpful or undermines her own opinions. The transformation in Marsha is apparent and for the first time since her baby was born, she is relishing being a mum and her baby is thriving. Her view of parenting is more realistic and she feels that she is more in tune with her baby's needs. With renewed confidence and sense of worth, Marsha has returned to work and remains close to Maddi.

Our impact

We measure the impact of our work for every family we work alongside. This report tells the stories of some of those families whom we have worked with during the last year and includes some of their own words which is the most powerful demonstration of the difference we make. We hope that you enjoy our latest report and that it will inspire you to continue supporting us so that more children have a brighter future.

We evaluate each family's progress by recording where they are on a coping scale of 1-5 throughout their support (1 being the lowest level of coping and 5 being the highest.)

The chart below shows the progress of families who had low scores at their initial visit. For all areas evaluated, families' coping scores improved after Home-Start support. The improved scores below show very clearly how families are benefitting from the services of Home-Start Wandsworth and where they would be without that support.

Issues facing families

Loneliness & isolation



1 in 2 families

Poor mental health



69% of families

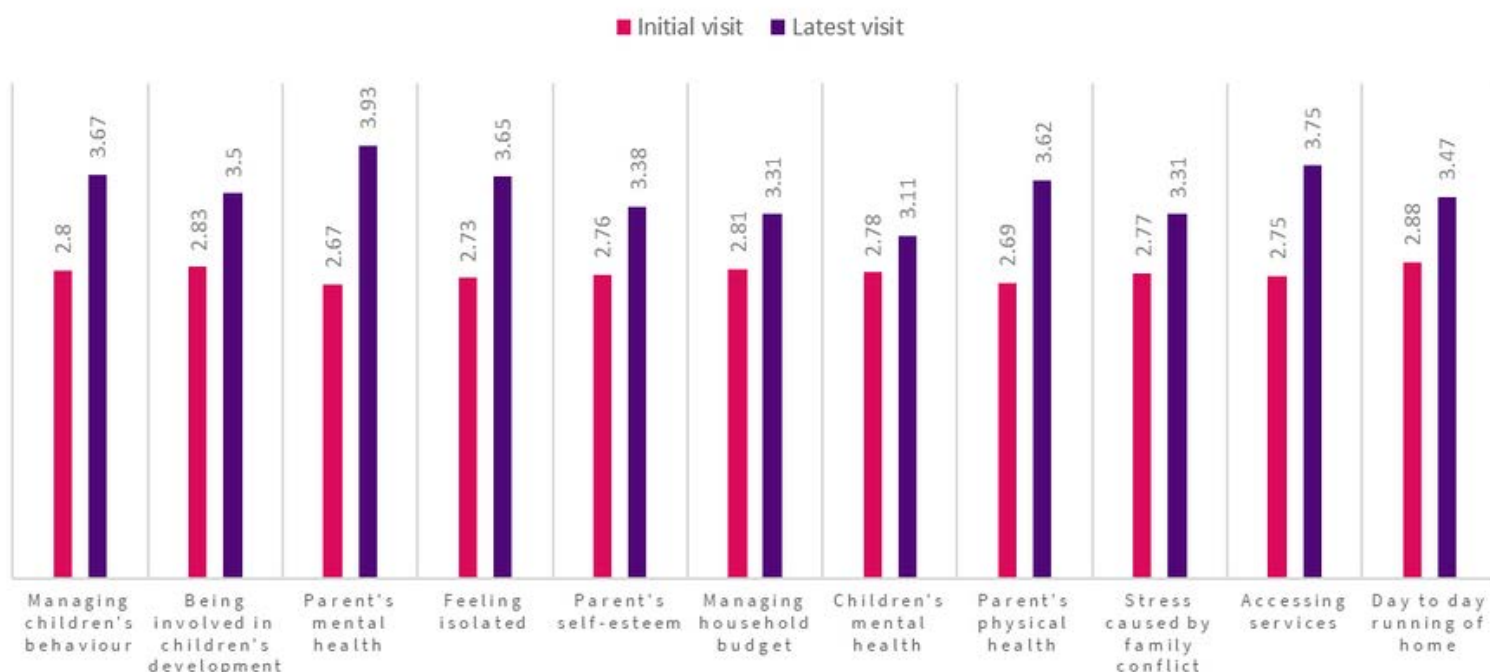
Lack of support network



60% of families

Data July 2021- June 2022

Average coping scores before and after Home-Start support



Data July 2021- June 2022



Reducing isolation

Becoming a parent is a life-changing experience and whilst it can be a joyful time it can also be a lonely one, over half (56%) of parents with children under five feel lonely².

With a noticeable decrease in support services, parental loneliness nearly doubled³ during the pandemic with families being forced into social isolation. Whether fleeing domestic violence, living in temporary housing or having no friends and family nearby, loneliness and isolation affects many Home-Start families.

Through compassionate, non-judgemental support, our staff and trained volunteers build long lasting relationships and help families build vital social connections within the local community. Our programme of group activities; including buggy walks, a weekly lunch club and day trips, brings families together, reducing isolation and improving wellbeing.

“As a solo mum I often face being with my own adult company and it brings emotions which are not easy to deal with. As human beings we are eager to connect to others. That is what Connect@Home provides for us. No matter how isolated I have been throughout the week I'm not alone there. I make friends, I share difficulties, I am part of a community which supports each other. That day I'm not by myself at lunch. We eat together as a family.”



² <https://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/loneliness-blog>.

³ Ipsos Mori & Royal Foundation (2020) State of the nation: Understanding public attitudes to the early years.



Improving parental mental health

In the wake of the pandemic, health care professionals are warning of a global mental health crisis. Cost of living concerns are also exacerbating poor mental health, with three out of four parents stressed and anxious about whether they can afford to pay their household bills⁴.

It is currently estimated that one in four children are being exposed to maternal mental illness⁵ and research shows that children of parents with a mental illness are likely to experience greater emotional, psychological and behavioural problems than other children.

Our volunteers help to rebuild trust, confidence and self-esteem, enabling parents to acquire expertise and resilience that they can use in the future. Home-Start helps families to access specialist support services and counselling. Weekly group activities also provide a safe environment for families to come together, relax and chat creating a sense of community and belonging.

“Motherhood is lonely and tough on my mental health, the group (Connect@Home) has provided me with a safe, welcoming space for others in a similar situation. I’m still finding my feet in the area so it has been such a good space to meet mums, and I have already made a few friends as a result of the group, we sometimes even go for walks afterwards.

The staff and volunteers are very accommodating and provide a helping hand which is especially appreciated on those tough days. Without the group, I would most likely be at home with my baby on my own. Sometimes I don’t talk for hours on end, I’m just in my own head. I miss adult conversation and the group is my one guaranteed time to speak to others.”

⁴Cost of living survey Home-Start London 2022.

⁵[https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lanpub/PIIS2468-2667\(19\)30059-3.pdf](https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lanpub/PIIS2468-2667(19)30059-3.pdf)



Rena's story

We first met Rena after the birth of her fourth child. Following an abusive relationship she was crippled with anxiety, low self-esteem and her post-natal depression made it difficult for her to leave the house. She was struggling to juggle the demands of having a newborn with those of her older children who suffered with ADHD. With limited support from friends and family, she felt isolated and lonely.

Rena was matched with volunteer Naz and they soon formed a close friendship. Naz provided Rena with emotional and practical support, helping her to combat the anxiety and loneliness she was facing, and introduced her to other support services.

Feeling overwhelmed, Rena was struggling to keep on top of her finances and her debts were escalating. Knowing that she would be met without judgement, Rena confided in Naz and together they were able to find a solution. Naz helped Rena manage the household budget, and encouraged her to approach the council's housing officer to improve the family's housing situation, which had been causing her considerable stress. The family now live in more suitable accommodation.

Rena's older children still enjoy taking part in the weekly football sessions introduced by Home-Start and Rena hopes to be able to attend more family activities during the school holidays.



Improving family circumstances

Following the cut to Universal Credit, spiralling food and energy prices, families are at risk of suffering from the biggest reduction in living standards since the 1950's. New research by Citizens Advice⁶ reveals one in ten families - equivalent to 3.2 million households - are facing financial crisis this winter forcing many families to choose between eating or heating. 28% of children in Wandsworth are living in poverty⁷ demonstrating the severe financial pressures being placed on families in the borough.

50% of Home-Start Wandsworth families are struggling to manage the household budget and many are forced to turn to donations, food banks and benefits to provide the basics for their family. Home-Start volunteers and our experienced staff work alongside families to identify the level and type of support needed to help them improve their financial situation. We also help families access funding or donations of essential items of furniture, supermarket vouchers and white goods.

“Thank you for the washing machine. I know it’s just a washing machine but the fact I woke up today and washed their clothes.... I felt like less of a failure as a mum. I can’t explain in words what you have done for us!”

Sabine’s story

After leaving her abusive husband, Sabine was living in a small, cramped single room in a hostel with her one year old daughter when Home-Start first met her. With no family or friends in the country, she was afraid and isolated.

Due to covid restrictions, Sabine was not able to access any children's centres or other activities for her daughter. She tried her best to get out every day to escape the confinement of her tiny room in the hostel but it was difficult. Sabine’s mood was understandably low, she felt overwhelmed with ongoing legal battles and stressed with her poor housing situation.

Sabine was matched with a Home-Start Wandsworth volunteer, Lauren, who provided her with a listening ear and encouragement to continue along the difficult road ahead. During their weekly walks in the park, Sabine would confide in Lauren and together they were able to work through the mountain of paperwork needed to help the family move into more suitable accommodation.

With very few personal possessions of her own, through an emergency fund, Home-Start Wandsworth bought a washing machine for Sabine and helped her source donated furniture so that she could furnish her new flat, and an iPad to help her feel connected to family and friends overseas.

Having spent most of her life isolated from the rest of the world, Sabine’s daughter found it difficult to interact with other children. Home-Start introduced the family to the local Children's Centre. Sabine and her daughter now look forward to the centre's weekly play sessions and they have helped Sabine’s daughter’s emotional and social development. Accessing Home-Start’s Learn to Love to Read early literacy programme has enabled Sabine to meet other mums as well as improve her daughter’s literacy and language skills.

With her volunteer’s support, Sabine’s confidence grew and she is now content in her new cosy and comfortable flat which she calls home. She is able to see an exciting future ahead and hopes to join more Home-Start activities so that she can make friends with other local mums. Sabine sees Home-Start Wandsworth as her second family and she feels that she really would not have ‘survived’ the past year without their support.

⁶<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/about-us1/media/press-releases/three-million-families-facing-crisis-as-cost-of-living-crunch-bites/>

⁷<https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/data/boroughs/borough-data-sources-and-methods/>



Nurturing children's development

At Home-Start we understand that play provides a gateway for parents to understand children's behaviour better, learning how they communicate their needs, emotions and interests. The bond and attachment between children and their parents are especially powerful in laying the foundations for future learning, health, behaviour and relationships.

“I only found out how creative she was after attending the session. I can't explain in words how happy I feel when I watch her making art pieces at such an early age. I love it when people praise how good she is!”

We work alongside parents to ensure that they have more happy days with their children and are more attuned and involved in their child's development. Through our partnership with Learn 2 Love to Read, early literacy workshops are easily accessible to families. Messy play sessions and our weekly art group at Connect@home encourage children to be creative.

Our fun days in partnership with Open Air Fit and day trips to Kew Gardens and the seaside provide children with the opportunity to run, climb and explore new environments, which is vital for children's physical and mental health.





Our volunteers

Home-Start volunteers work alongside families to give compassionate, non-judgemental, confidential support, tailored to each family. Our volunteers usually visit a family in their own home for 2-4 hours once a week.

They help families regain their confidence and empower them to build connections with other support services and the wider community to reduce isolation. The work of our volunteers makes a lasting difference to the families we support.

In the last year 11 volunteers successfully completed the volunteer preparation course. We have also run a number of training workshops covering topics like suicide awareness, toddlers behaving badly and managing debt.

People choose to volunteer for Home-Start for a variety of reasons. For many, it offers the chance to give something back or make a difference to a local family.

“My volunteer will not be forgotten in our house. I don't know how you manage to pair the right volunteer with the family so well. She was so easy to talk to and open. She was gentle and never judgemental. Her mannerisms and the way she encouraged me was so helpful.”

For others it provides an opportunity to develop new skills or build on existing experience and knowledge.

Our volunteers are critical to the success of Home-Start Wandsworth. We hear from families time and time again that their Home-Start volunteer is often the only dependable, regular help that they receive. They can trust and rely on their volunteer. There is no judgement, no risk, no uncertainty.

We would like to thank our volunteers for everything they do for Home-Start and the countless hours of their time they give to supporting families.



73
volunteers



1,220
home-visiting hours



Over 700
hours at group
activities

Our partners & supporters

Home-Start Wandsworth works collaboratively with local voluntary sector networks, health and social care providers, and other family support services to tackle the issues together that affect vulnerable families. We receive referrals from health visitors, GPs and social prescribers as well as those involved in mental health services and early years. We work closely with a number of other local charities and services like Little Village and Wandsworth Food Bank to ensure that no family is forgotten.

We would like to thank **Learn 2 Love to Read** for providing early literacy sessions, **Open Air Fit** for hosting our family fun days throughout the year and **Forest Freedom** for enabling Home-Start children to experience the great outdoors. A special thank you to Meg and her team at **Home Cafe** for hosting our weekly lunch and art club and providing delicious home-cooked meals.

From donating gifts and money during the Christmas period to raising awareness of our services, our national and local partners **White Stuff** and **John Lewis & Partners** have gone above and beyond this year in helping us support families. Our families created some exceptional pieces of artwork for the Peter Jones Jubilee art competition. The artwork was displayed in the store and winners received some lovely art prizes.

We are grateful to all our funders and donors both big and small, who play a crucial role in enabling us to continue our work.

Thank you to **Savills**, **Metis Wealth**, **SDS London** and **Bellevue Law** for sponsoring our fundraising events over the past year. In May we hosted our 2nd May Ball, raising a phenomenal £100,000, thank you to everyone who attended and contributed to such a successful evening.



1 in 5 families were referred by mental health services



9% self-referrals



13% health visitors



10% perinatal mental health



10% social services

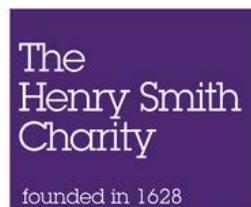


10% community organisations



8% midwifery services

Data July 2021- June 2022



WE NEED YOUR HELP

During these difficult times, our families are struggling more than ever and we need to ensure that we are well equipped to support families in the future. Like many others, one of our biggest challenges in the current climate is securing the income we need to continue our vital work. We can't do it alone. We need your help. Your donation could make a difference that lasts a lifetime. Please donate [here](#) or scan the QR code.

For more information about sponsorship, corporate partnerships and fundraising opportunities, please get in touch by emailing:

melissa@homestartwandsworth.org.uk



GET IN TOUCH

To find out more about the work that we do and volunteering opportunities :

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W: www.homestartwandsworth.org.uk

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