



Support and friendship  
for families

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Home-Start  
Southern Oxfordshire

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Annual Report 2016/17

## Twenty-eight years supporting families in Southern Oxfordshire



## Standards and Methods of Practice

Home-Start works with families who are experiencing difficulties or suffering stress and who have at least one child under five years of age.



Each Home-Start scheme is an independent voluntary organisation which works towards the increased confidence of the family by:

- Offering support, friendship and practical assistance.
- Visiting families in their own homes, where the dignity and identity of each individual can be respected and protected.
- Reassuring parents that difficulties in bringing up children are not unusual and emphasising the pleasures of family life.
- Developing a relationship with the family in which time can be shared and understanding can be developed; the approach is flexible to take account of different needs.
- Encouraging the parents' strengths and emotional well-being for the ultimate benefit of their own children.
- Encouraging the families to widen their network of relationships and to use effectively the support services available within the community.

## Chair's Report

2016/17 has not been without its challenges for Home-Start Southern Oxfordshire, mostly due to the lack of funding! We also experienced quite extensive staff changes: Shari, our Group Worker, left in September, and Katie, one of our Organisers in December. They have both gone on to different roles in education, and we would like to thank them for the time they spent with us, and wish them every success in their new careers.



Our most grateful thanks must go to Janet and Rhiannon, whose commitment to the scheme has always remained paramount in spite of all the difficulties experienced over the last year. Their ability to continue to meet the needs of vulnerable families has been invaluable. Another huge thank you has to go to

Dawn, our Fundraiser, whose enthusiasm and dedication to a very difficult job is wonderful. It is primarily due to her efforts that we now have three-year funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund for a special project, to work with 'military families' under stress in our area.

We are delighted to have welcomed new members of staff to the team: Jacquie Boshell, our Group Worker, joined in January, and comes from a Children's Centre background. Helen Galsworthy our new Organiser, was a Health Visitor, and joined the team in April. Both Jacquie and Helen bring a wealth of experience of working with children and families. We have also very recently appointed Gill Jones to be our new Family Support/Community Liaison Worker, to work on the Armed Forces Covenant project. Gill, too, comes from a Children's Centre background, with lots of relevant experience for the role. We are really looking forward to Gill joining the team. Finally with regard to staffing, Rhiannon was promoted to Senior Organiser in March. Her work while covering the position

was outstanding, and she continues to grow even more into the role each day. We now believe we have a very focused and enthusiastic team in place to take the scheme forward, with the exciting new opportunities we have ahead of us.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow trustees for their outstanding support to the scheme. They have all made such wonderful contributions with their expertise and guidance during a year when we have needed it.



One more very special thank you, to the volunteers who give their time and energy so generously to the families they support. They really do make a difference!

I would like to end with a reminder that Home-Start Southern Oxfordshire has been supporting vulnerable families for the last 28 years. The loss of so many children and family services during recent times means our work is needed more than ever!

Doreen McNulty  
Chair

## Treasurer's Report

The scheme had a surplus of £23,730 in 2016/17. This was an unexpected result, after the similar sized deficit in the previous year. We have to thank Dawn for some excellent fundraising and to whom the scheme is indebted.

We are pleased to report the fantastic support from the Royal British Legion, of £30,000, which has allowed us to support military families throughout our area. This grant is being repeated in 2017/18 to allow us to continue our work with these families. We received further support from BBC Children In Need for our Family Group, and also from two Children's Centres, although this funding has now ended as a

consequence of Oxfordshire County Council cuts. We have received funding from many town and parish councils, as well as many grant-giving trusts, organisations and individuals. We thank them all. The most notable was a grant of £10,000 from the Four Acre Trust, which was dependent upon the scheme finding a matching amount of new funding, which we were, fortunately, able to do.

Expenditure was well within budget thanks to tight controls. We are particularly grateful to Rhiannon and Janet, who were under-resourced throughout the year, as we had not anticipated the level of income we achieved. This led to a reduction in staff costs, as vacant posts were not filled. Fortunately, due to known 2017/18 income, we have recently been in the unusual position of being able to recruit several staff, with the challenges that poses.

### **Reserves Policy**

Our reserves policy is to hold sufficient reserves to cover potential liabilities if the scheme were to close, plus anticipated funding requirements for the forthcoming year, plus a general reserve of no more than 12 months annual income. We had reserves at the financial year end totalling £117,179. This is represented by two reserves: a designated reserve of £41,000 – to cover a Pension Trust liability of £27,906 and potential liabilities from redundancy payments and closing down costs – plus a general, free reserve of £76,177. These free reserves represent 8 months of the budgeted expenditure for 2017/18.

Once again, we offer our sincere thanks to all the organisations, individuals and trusts that have supported us throughout the year. We would especially like to mention those volunteers who not only give up their valuable time but have also been able to generously donate over £1,900 of their expenses back to the scheme. We cannot thank the staff enough for their tolerance and understanding in another year in which, once again, there has been great uncertainty about future funding. We have started this year on a much more positive note, with more secured funding and a higher staff resourcing level.

Colin D. Campbell  
Treasurer

## Fundraising

What a whirlwind of a year that was! Joining the team as fundraiser on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2016, I soon realised that I had been plunged in at the deep end at a time when funding cuts were rife and funding opportunities were dwindling before my very eyes! Having started my association with Home-Start as a volunteer, it was heart-breaking to realise quite how many referrals we were having to turn away but the ultimate incentive was to raise some money.



We have left no stone unturned this year. We approached all the town and parish councils across our area and have been generously supported by some. Next stop - Waitrose stores and their Community Matters green token scheme - a huge thank you to everyone who

has been making their #tokengestures on our behalf! Through this scheme and across three stores we have been well supported this year, receiving a total of £1,447 as a result of public support. It's great to know that people know about us and support what we do.

However, we needed to secure more significant funding and for the longer term to ensure we can continue to support families and accept more referrals and so began a round of big bids to big funders. Unfortunately, our first two attempts for three-year funding failed but we were not to be deterred! We applied to the Ministry of Defence Covenant Grant for three-years funding to support military families across our region. A long day out at the MOD in Whitehall and many hours of evidence gathering, project building and application writing later, we submitted our bid in November. Imagine our excitement on receiving an email at the end of February to confirm we have been awarded just under £100,000 over 3 years!

In the meantime, there were other significant bids in various stages of submission to South Oxfordshire District Council and the Royal British Legion, both of which have been successful and deliver funding over the next four and three years respectively.

Another highlight came in the form of a matched funding opportunity from the Four Acre Trust in November. They pledged to match any donation of £500 or more from a new donor between November and the end of January 2017 to a maximum of £10,000. The race was on to secure £10,000 and turn it into £20,000. I am pleased to report that the furious activity of posting out proposals and social media campaigning paid dividends and we raised £10,000 in time for the deadline. Thanks to the Four Acre Trust, we received an additional £10,000 in March.



Along the way, the Friends of Home-Start have held a book sale in Wallingford's Market Place and been selling books and DVDs online, all of which have raised valuable extra pounds for our wonderful charity! We would really like to be able to do more "Friends" events in the coming year so please do get in touch if you have a fabulous fundraising idea or

can spare time to help in any way.

All in all, it has been quite a year – fun at times and fretful at others; frantic, frustrating, frenetic and full-on; the words that certainly put the "f" in fundraising!

Dawn Robinson  
Assistant Fundraiser

## From a Family

Moving to this area for my husband's work meant that I found myself with two small children and no family or friends locally to help out. My confidence was knocked and I found it hard to motivate myself.

At my lowest point I found it difficult to leave the house, unable to even venture to the park, and with no one to talk to while my husband travelled for work. I was referred to Home-Start who matched me with a volunteer – Mary.

Mary began to visit us for two hours a week. She was immediately a hit with the children and we began to build a strong friendship, while also providing support and advice on a variety of matters.



Mary brought me out of my isolation over the time we have been seeing each other and the kids absolutely love her coming over. I was so grateful to simply talk to someone who genuinely took an interest and cared about my worries and concerns. It was a real shock to have someone, in addition to my husband, that was there to support and guide me for any needs that I had.

Simple things like going to the park or going into town were encouraged by Mary, yet there was no pressure or pushing until I was ready. Eventually she suggested going along to the Home-Start group to give the kids an opportunity to play with other children and for me to mix with other parents. It was really daunting at first, but the environment they create was welcoming, relaxed and the kids really enjoy playing and meeting others – they've come on in leaps and bounds.

Such a support service has made me a different person to the one I was last year. I've gained some of my confidence back and I've gone from not wanting to leave the house to being motivated to consider new things such as driving lessons.

It's the hardest thing to ask for help and we didn't realise we even qualified for anything like the service and support I get from Home-Start. It's amazing to now have Mary and to know I can talk to her about anything and having her helping with the kids has relieved some of the pressure I was feeling – it's been invaluable.

Natasha

## Monday Group



This is a small referral-only group for mums with postnatal illness or those who prefer the support of a small group. We offer a range of activities for mums and children to enjoy together, for example, crafts, drawing, reading, play ideas etc. We have a healthy snack time and finish each session by singing some songs. At Christmas the group went to a local Arts Centre to watch a production of "Emily Brown and the Thing". Adults and children all enjoyed the experience very much.

Feedback from the Group: "The group gives my daughter a chance to play with other children and to increase her social skills as well as to learn through play." "My child gets a chance to play and maintain a regular routine of going out on Monday mornings." "The group gives me the motivation to leave the house and have somewhere to take my child. I enjoy conversations with other parents." "I enjoy watching my son explore and it enables me to gain confidence in interacting with other mums."

Jacquie Boshell  
Group Worker

## First Babies Drop-in Group

This weekly group is for all first-time parents both during pregnancy and after the birth of their babies; babies age from 0–15 months. The group is an opportunity for parents to meet up, swap tips and receive reassurance. It is a friendly, relaxed group with an assortment of resources to encourage social interaction and developmental milestones in babies.

Once the babies reach 15 months, we encourage families to move on to other local groups in the area. We are able to provide up to date information to enable parents to meet their babies' developmental requirements.



The Community Staff Nurse, Janet Porter, visits the group on a regular basis, offering advice and expertise on all aspects of child development. Janet's visits are welcomed by the Group. This year we have been able to offer paediatric first aid training sessions, which the parents have found invaluable. Thanks to securing a grant, we have also been able to offer baby massage sessions at a subsidised rate.

We are very grateful for the help and support at the group by volunteers, Pat and Sandy.

Feedback from the group: "I have made good friends and we meet outside of the group." "Very helpful, welcoming and friendly staff." "Loved attending this group, I will miss it when I

return to work.” “Myself and my baby have absolutely loved coming to this group – the ladies running it are fab and will be missed when we move on.”

Jacquie Boshell  
Group Worker

## Thank You



Home-Start depends for its success on very many people. We would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to everyone who has helped to make this year the success it has been.

We express our sincere thanks to the many volunteers who have visited the families, or given time to the scheme in any other way during the year:

Helen; Anne; Sarah; Gill; Jean; Ros; Janet; Sue; Suzanne; Leo; Caroline; Janet; Hazel; Mary-Jane; Margaret; Liz; Madeline; Nicola; Oriol; Clare; Karen; Jane; Dawn; Sue; Leanne; Nicki; Brenda; Sam; Carol; Pat; Wendy; Sandy; Myra; Renee; Sue; Pam; Maggie; Wanda; Susan; Trish; Mary; Jill; Sarah; Ann; Elaine; Vanessa; Amanda; Claire; Diane; Karen; Roseanne; Liz; Alex.

## Home-Start Southern Oxfordshire is...

### Trustees

Doreen McNulty – Chair  
Gill Bodey – Vice Chair  
Colin Campbell – Hon. Treasurer  
Roy Hobart  
Rosemary Knagg

Barbara Guast – Volunteer Representative  
Helen Conway  
Lorraine Meadows – Health Visitor Representative  
Linda Cheong  
Rob Hufton (from July 2016)



## Staff

Rhiannon McCobb – Senior Organiser  
Jacquie Boshell – Group Worker (from January 2017)  
Helen Galsworthy – Organiser (from March 2017)  
Janet McIlvennie – Office Manager  
Dawn Robinson – Assistant Fundraiser (from May 2016)  
Katie Ross – Organiser (until December 2016)  
Shari Barnett – Group Worker (until September 2016)  
Emma Anderson – Admin Assistant (until May 2016)

## Auditor

Keith Goldsby-West, A.C.M.A.

## Home-Start Safeguarding

Home-Start Southern Oxfordshire is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and expects all trustees, staff, volunteers and members to share this commitment. Our policy on safeguarding is available on request.

## Funders



We would like to thank everyone who has given grants and donations throughout the year:

North and North East  
Abingdon Children's Centre;

**Parish Councils:** Watchfield;  
Steventon; Berinsfield;  
Sydenham; Long Wittenham;  
Little Milton; Great Haseley;

Dorchester; Drayton; Lewknor; Cholsey; Crowmarsh; Harwell;  
Marcham; Checkendon; Benson; Fyfield and Tubney; Upton

**Town Councils:** Didcot; Henley; Faringdon; Abingdon

**Charitable Trusts:** Royal British Legion; BBC Children in Need;  
Dorothy Holmes Trust; PF Charitable Trust; Faringdon United  
Charities; Infineum SMILE; Stanton Ballard; Coutts/Hellianthus;  
Albert Hunt; Alchemy; Robert and Margaret Moss; St. James's  
Place; Four Acre Trust; Wantage Rotary Club; Spalding Trust;  
Kelly Family Trust; Changing Lives, Didcot

**Business donors:** Waitrose Token Schemes; Nationwide  
Building Society

**Groups and individuals:** Nick and Eleanor Hards; Molly (for a  
sponsored silence)

We were very grateful for the gift of some new children's books from the writer of the '*Read it, Daddy!*' blog. These were welcome additions to the bookcase in our family room.

## Facts and Figures

### Source of referrals of all families

Families supported by a home-visiting volunteer	67
Families supported by groups	122
Total families supported:	189
Children supported	277
Under fives	243
Over fives	34
Number of Volunteer visits taken place	610
Duration of visits	1455 hours



## Source of Referrals

Health Visitors	58
Self referrals	66
Army Welfare/SSAFA	7
Mental Health Services	3
Midwifery	2
Other Health	3
Education	5
Social Workers	3
Children's Centre	1

## Quality Assurance

We are proud to be quality assured. The quality of our practice has been assessed under the Home-Start QA System. This is based on a self-assessment against nationwide quality standards. The ongoing development of our services has been looked at, as well as the continuous improvement of all practice areas relating to governance, management and service delivery.

## Public Benefit Statement

The trustees have a duty to report on the scheme's public benefit. They have taken into account the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit in planning the year's activities. This report demonstrates how Home-Start Southern Oxfordshire fulfils its charitable objectives, which are:

To safeguard, protect and preserve the good health, both mental and physical, of children and parents; to prevent cruelty to or maltreatment of children; to relieve sickness, poverty and need amongst children and parents; to promote the education of the public in better standards of child care in southern Oxfordshire.

## Membership of Home-Start Southern Oxfordshire

Membership is open to any person interested in furthering the objectives quoted above, and approved by the trustees. Members are entitled to vote at the AGM and other general meetings. Application forms are available at the AGM or on request from the scheme.

## Risk Management

The trustees have assessed the major risks to which the scheme is exposed, in particular those relating to finances and operations, and believe that arrangements are in place to mitigate those risks.

## Can you help Home-Start? Would you like to support a family?

Come and be a Home-Start Volunteer – help make a difference! Do you have management or fundraising skills? Would you be interested in joining our Board of Trustees and getting involved in the decision making? Do you have skills or contacts that would help us raise much needed funds?



For more information please contact:  
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