

# Annual report



Page 2	Contents
Page 3	Co-Chair's welcome
Page 4 and 5	Scheme Managers overview
Page 6 and 7	Statistics
Page 8	Fundraising
Page 9 and 10	Finance
Page 11	Core work in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire
Page 12	Family and volunteer events
Page 13 and 14	Aspley Family Mentor Service
Page 15	Thank you
Page 16	Family experiences
Page 17	Contact details



“Someone to talk to that don’t judge me and wants to help me” ..... a family

Welcome to our 2024 Annual Report!

A big thank you to everyone involved with Home-Start Nottingham. We are so grateful for all the time, commitment and donations, without which we could not do what we do. Our team gives so much to those families in need, through our staff in Arnold and Aspley, our Family mentor workers, our family volunteers and our trustees. None of this would be possible without the grants and donations we receive, from large organisations to individuals giving us small regular donations. All of it is much appreciated!

We are undergoing tremendous change, with a lot of work over the past year, to replace the groundbreaking Small Steps Big Change 10 year programme in Aspley ward, which finishes in March 2025, with a new city wide Family Mentor service. This will be in conjunction with our partner The Toy Library in Bulwell and will incorporate all the best bits from what we have learnt. There is change in our service in Arnold, where we are finding it increasingly difficult to find volunteers who can commit to the regular support needed. The staff team have been very busy assessing, implementing and learning how we can best meet the growing demand from struggling families across our 4 boroughs, as well as the city.

Given all the changes we are undergoing, we have decided now is not the time to look at moving from Arnold. So we will be staying put there for now. It is not known yet where the new Family Service will be based, there will be a number of options depending on need.

We have welcomed new volunteers, staff and trustees, and are grateful for everyone's support and help. Our trustee team has undergone some changes too. Our previous chair Mike Scott has stepped down, and we thank him for successfully guiding us through some turbulent times over the past few years. Recognising the toll it takes as a chair, we have put in place an exec team of co-chairs, and we will see how this works out. We are always looking for more family support volunteers and trustees, so do contact us if you are interested.

There is a lot of uncertainty, but with currently healthy finances, the can do/ learning approach from our team and commitment to do the best we can for our families, we are confident for the year ahead. There are many challenges facing us as an organisation, but one of things I am mindful of, is that however hard we think it is, our families are facing much greater difficulties. So it is beholden on us to do whatever we can to support those families.

**Caroline Stephens**  
Co-Chair of Trustees



This annual report outlines our considerable achievements during the last year and highlights the strategies we have employed, and the continued efforts required to support families across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.

The past year has been marked by significant challenges, both for the families we serve and for the scheme. As the cost-of-living crisis deepens, families with young children are finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. The rising costs of essentials such as food, housing, utilities, and childcare have placed unprecedented financial strain on families, leading to increased levels of stress and uncertainty. These economic pressures have a direct impact on the well-being of children, as parents struggle to provide basic needs and maintain a stable environment.

Home-Start Nottingham, along with other schemes and voluntary sector organisations, faced its own set of challenges. One of the most pressing issues has been the declining number of active volunteers and the difficulty in recruiting new ones. Volunteers are the backbone of our core operations, providing essential support and services to the families we help. However, the pandemic and economic instability have led to a significant decline in volunteer numbers. Many potential volunteers are juggling multiple jobs, dealing with their own financial hardships, or hesitant to commit due to family commitments and their own health concerns.

Together we strive to overcome these hurdles and continue making a positive impact on the lives of the families we support, ensuring that Home-Start Nottingham remains a pillar of support for families across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. We have adapted to the changing needs of our community by introducing new enhanced or expanded services, which were designed to alleviate the pressures faced by families and provide additional resources for their well-being. These initiatives include:

**Enhanced Family Support:** Introducing a dedicated family support role, allowing us to offer short term, bespoke and focused support to families facing multiple and complex difficulties.

**Citywide Family Mentors Service:** Due to valuable and timely support from the Integrated Care Board (ICB) we have been able to expand our Family Mentor Service across all wards of Nottingham City, offering this unique and groundbreaking approach to those families who want additional help and support.

**Emergency Relief:** Providing immediate assistance with food and basic essentials, and financial management guidance and support to families most affected by the cost-of-living crisis.

**Social Connections Initiatives:** Developing our focus on mental wellbeing, we introduced family support group sessions in different locations across the patch to increase social connections and reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation. The groups enable families to become more integrated into their local community.

This year, we have worked with other family mentor service providers and SSBC partners to ensure we end the 10-year program effectively while also considering options to highlight the lasting impact and explore the continuation of the Family Mentor Service. We recognise that continuing the Family Mentor Service beyond the SSBC contract requires a combination of strategic planning, partnership working, and developing flexible approaches to service delivery. Together with our colleagues at SSBC, we have secured the support of the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) and thanks to they're The Health Inequalities and Innovation Investment Fund, we have been able to roll out a focused family mentor service across Nottingham City.

Our sincere thanks go to our amazing volunteers for their unwavering dedication and relentless efforts. Our team of volunteers help us in a variety of different ways, supporting families in the home or groups, fundraising, measuring our impact, IT support and being an ambassador. Whatever their role, they have selflessly devoted countless hours to supporting families and the scheme, which has been the backbone of our achievements.

Furthermore, our heartfelt gratitude goes to our Board of Trustees, for their constant dedication and support. Their commitment to Home-Start Nottingham has been instrumental in driving our mission forward. Their insightful guidance, strategic vision, and tireless efforts have significantly contributed to our continued success and growth. The time, expertise, and resources they generously give are deeply appreciated by everyone at the scheme.

A special mention goes to Mike Scott, who stepped down this year after being Trustee and Chair for many years. Mike's contributions and leadership have had a significant impact and left an indelible mark on our organisation. Mike's vision and guidance was pivotal in steering us through numerous challenges over the years, including the pandemic. We are sincerely grateful for his service and commitment and thank him for his unwavering belief in the Home-Start approach, our ambition to offer more support to families in need, and for the countless ways he helped to make them a reality.

The exceptional talent and hard work of our workforce has been instrumental in transforming our visions into reality. The expertise, creativity, and perseverance of our Family and Volunteer Co-ordinators, Family Mentors, Senior Management Teams and Admin and Support Staff, have ensured that we meet and exceed our goals, overcoming challenges and continuously striving for excellence. I want to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude for all the hard work and dedication each of them brings. Their commitment, enthusiasm, and positive attitudes make a significant difference every day. It is truly inspiring to work alongside them every day, and see how they all contribute their talents, skills, and warmth to achieve our common goals. Their teamwork and professionalism are the mainstay of our success, and I am incredibly proud to be part of such an amazing team.

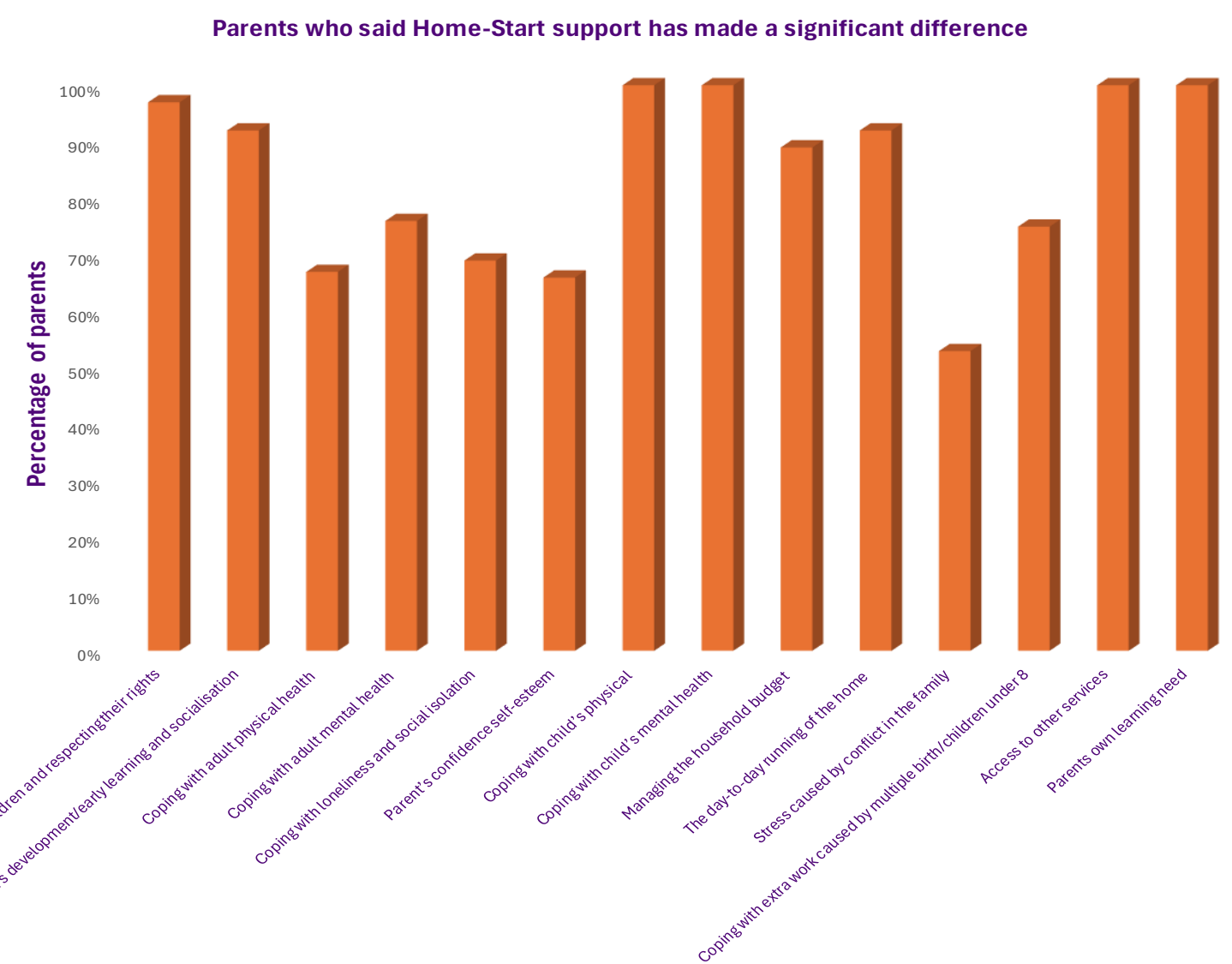
Lastly, we cannot overlook the vital role played by our supporters, commissioners, funders and donors. Their constant commitment and generous contributions have provided the necessary resources and encouragement needed to sustain our efforts.

Together, this incredible combination of dedicated volunteers, trustees, skilled staff, and loyal supporters has paved the way for our remarkable accomplishments this year, setting a solid foundation for future success in the years to come.

Jo Hallam  
Scheme Manager



**A total of 399 children received Small Steps At Home visits**





## Fundraising

### Christmas fair

We held a Christmas Fair, organised by our wonderful fundraising team which was another successful event. There were stalls, refreshments, tombola and of course a visit from Mr and Mrs Claus! We had around 80 people attend and raised £380. Children's activities included face painting which we think staff enjoyed just as much!

Pete, one of our trustees attended alongside the jazz band he is part of which added lovely background music. I am sure we will be asking them again to our future events!!!! Comments from people that attended included **“Good selection of stalls “ “lovely atmosphere” “lovely people”**

Thank you to everyone that attended and look forward to seeing you again at our next one!

### Miss Galaxy UK

We were contacted by Miss Galaxy UK to support our charity. She came to our office and gave us lots of party bags to give out to families, these included banners, toys and even cake mix which were very popular. We wish Miss Galaxy well in her future career.

### Sponsored walk

Gail, one of our co-ordinators wanted to raise funds for Home-Start Nottingham and thought, what would be the easiest way? She had forced her husband to get involved with the three peak challenge the year before so she felt she had to do something! A 26 mile walk of course! easy peasy especially for someone that is not fit at all (Gail's words!). How wrong she was!! Gail completed it with her friend Helen and they managed to raise an amazing £659. Thank you to Gail and everyone that supported her.

### Car boots

At Home-Start Nottingham we love to do our annual car boots! Catherine and Cesca were invited by Hucknall Baptist Church to attend their car boot. It was lovely to meet and chat to people to tell them all about us. The church always supports us by providing toys/clothes and equipment for our families when needed—a huge thank you for their continued support.

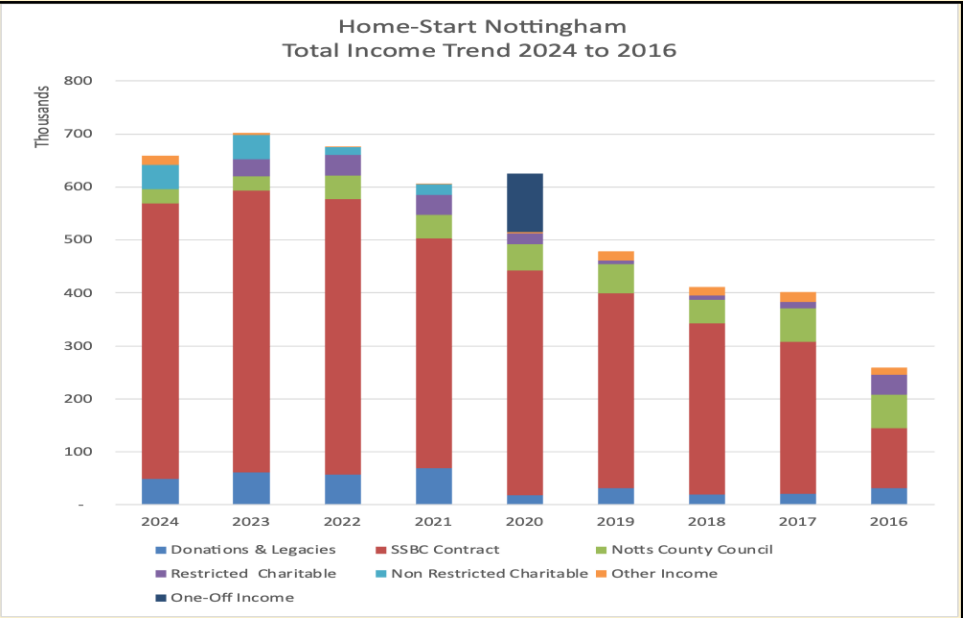
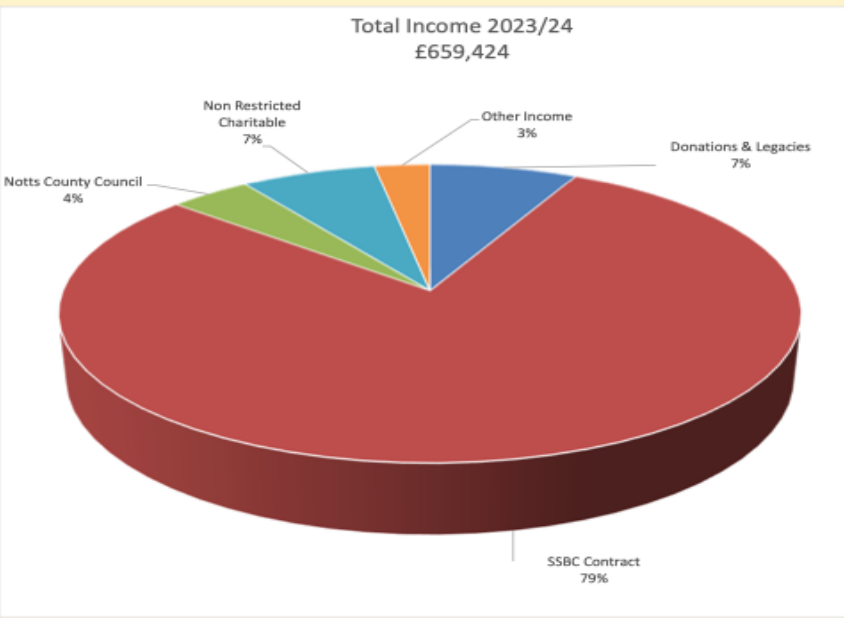
Sara and Gail went to Calverton car boot on 14<sup>th</sup> May who support us every year to attend free of charge.



## Finance

### Treasurer's Report

In the financial year ended March 31, 2024, Home-Start Nottingham experienced yet another good financial performance. Total income received for the year 2023-24 was £659,424 (2023: £701,962). Although a decrease on the previous year of 6%, this decrease was expected as the Charity entered the penultimate year of its 10 year commissioned services contract with SSBC and services began to run down towards the end of the year to March 31, 2024. In addition, the three year restricted funding of supporting families in the City of Nottingham ceased on March 31, 2023. The total revenue comprised £546,803 of restricted income (2023: £591,371) and £112,621 of unrestricted income (2023: £110,591). Expenditure totaled £635,361 (2023: £617,220). This increase in expenditure despite a reduction in total income is largely a result of the impact of high inflation experienced in the UK & World economy during the financial year especially the rise in the Living wage. The Charity continued to take decisive action wherever it could to control its cost base without jeopardising the essential services that families depend on us to provide.



It should be noted that the commissioned services SSBC contract in its present form will cease at the end of March 2025. Currently it is uncertain as to what services, if any, will remain post March 2025. It can be seen above that the SSBC contract makes up a significant proportion of Home-Start Nottingham's revenue and as such the loss of revenue on this scale is likely to have a major impact on the operations of Home-Start Nottingham.

## Finance

The resultant net income of £24,063 (2023: £84,742) although reduced on last year is nevertheless seen as a very positive result.

### Reserves Policy

The good financial performance detailed above resulted in year-end total reserves increasing to £652,169.

The Trustees confirm and review annually the policy in respect of reserves held by Home-Start Nottingham, considering the risk, activity and commitments of the charity. Trustees have agreed to retain a level of free (unrestricted) reserves amounting to three months running costs, excluding costs incurred and consequently covered by the commissioned services contract with SSBC. This amounts to approximately £42,000 as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

The Charity's cash flow in the year was also strong, generating an inflow of £45,474 (2023: £107,649) which increased the balance at the bank at the year-end to £791,741.

The strong year end cash and reserve balances provide the trustees with confidence that despite the following uncertainties

- The uncertain future funding landscape including the ending of the Small Steps Big Changes project in March 2025 eluded to above
- The continuing cuts imposed by Government on local services
- The impact of the continuing cost of living difficulties being experienced by local families

Home-Start Nottingham will be able to continue its activities and provide ongoing support to families for the foreseeable future.

### Bob Paton

Trustee Treasurer



## Core work in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

### Core Home-Start work in Ashfield, Broxtowe, Gedling, Rushcliffe and the City

This year Home Start Nottingham has supported 78 families through home visiting. Recruitment of volunteers is becoming increasingly difficult and we are always reviewing how to recruit volunteers, we are actively using various community pages on Facebook in all the areas we cover to promote our volunteering opportunities.

We have also sent out a link with a questionnaire to all our existing volunteers to gain a sense of what we do well and how we can do better in terms of recruitment. Unfortunately we have been unable to deliver a face to face preparation course despite our best efforts, rooms have been identified but due to low numbers we have had to cancel courses.

As co-ordinators, we now have allocated working patches, this has been a positive step in regards to getting our name out to more communities and it has enabled us to support the volunteers that have come through by ways of offering the online hybrid course and 1:1 face to face preparation training.



We have had to move a few volunteers between us to ensure we have an even workload and the volunteers have been so accommodating with the changes.

Due to the fact that volunteers are getting harder to recruit, as a team we have had to start thinking 'outside the box' we have been supporting families ourselves in their homes, we also have some new initiatives that we are trialling such as community forest fun sessions, baby massage & ready for nursery support sessions.

We also ran a 5 week support group in Arnold that focused on health and wellbeing through creative sessions.

We have been rolling out mandatory Safeguarding training to all the volunteers on various times/dates over the past couple of months, with a view to do an on-line evening one to capture volunteers that cannot do daytimes. Coffee and Cake meet ups are still popular and it is lovely to see everyone.

**And finally, thank you to all the volunteers for all their commitment and great work they do with supporting families, because without these wonderful volunteers there wouldn't be a Home-Start Nottingham.**



## Family and volunteer events

We've had a lovely year continuing some of our established events like 'pressie wrap' and a family Christmas party, as well as introducing some new events which have been received really well.

During the summer 2023 we hosted several family gatherings in parks around Nottingham, this was an alternative to one large family trip and meant that travel was less of a concern for families. We heard that families enjoyed meeting one another and where possible linked volunteers also attended with their family.

In the lead up to Christmas volunteers came together to wrap gifts to deliver to their Home-Start family. We held this at the Mapperley Plains Social Club, in the larger space we were able to have a game of bingo with lunch, and finish up with pass the parcel!

Nottingham Playhouse kindly gifted us 50 tickets to their pantomime and we were able to offer these to both Home-Start families as well our volunteer team and their own families. The 'magical horse and trap' captured us all!

We celebrated the festive period with families at a party that we hosted in Forest Fields, entertainers brought a bubble machine and sensory play, with biscuit decorating to keep everyone topped up.

Forest Fun sessions have been a hit this year for families including pine cone bird feeders, mandala painting and hammer bashing printing. We look forward to continuing this into next year along with many other opportunities for volunteers and families. Thank you to everyone who has attended events throughout the year and helped make them a success.



## Aspley Family Mentor Service

We had a really positive year as we excelled in many ways - 399 different children received Small Steps At Home (SSAH) visits during 2023-24, that's over 3000 contacts with families! 2600 of these contacts were face to face and incredibly in quarter four we saw 100% of the children on our caseload, our highest recorded number of visits in any previous quarter - which is very impressive!

Our 'in house' management of SSAH consent calls significantly improved our conversion rate. We demonstrated that a single call to families by someone on the ground delivering the service was beneficial. This resulted in a 30% increase in the antenatal ladies signing up for SSAH and engaging with a Family Mentor!

During SSAH visits our Family Mentors have completed an incredible 93% of Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ's) with parents, helping them to understand their child's development. Behind the scenes our team did some work to improve the quality of completions to ensure the ASQ process adds maximum value for children and families. Where children have needed additional support to achieve their development milestones, Family Mentors have given activity ideas, revisited with parents and worked with the child's Health Visitor to ensure the right support is in place. Our community groups have seen a 59% increase of children attending, compared to the previous year with 1500 'in ward' attendees (including repeat attendees).

Our Messy Play sessions have been particularly well attended, we've seen some lovely friendships formed by parents who attended Baby Massage and we responded to parents requests by arranging for Nottinghamshire Fire Service to deliver a one off First Aid session.

Parents have learnt some valuable skills and enjoyed sharing healthy foods with their children during our Cook & Play sessions and Story and Rhyme time has been popular with both in and out of ward families. We continue to work well with our colleagues at Early Help to co-deliver Triple P discussion groups.

### Our families said –

"It has been good to have someone to speak to and feel I have been heard."

"I really enjoyed the Baby Massage that we learnt today."

"All of the Family Mentors are amazing...Thank you for everything you done and the support you have given me. I don't think there is a big enough medal in the world that I could give you!"

All in all, lots of fun has been had! We look forward to the 2024-25 year and beyond!



## Aspley Family Mentor Service —Volunteer Co-ordinator

I have had the privilege of working with volunteers for over 20 years and working with volunteers on SSBC programme for the Family Mentor Service in Aspley for nearly 5 years. Volunteers come from all different backgrounds but they all have the same ethos of wanting to support families and to make a difference in the community. The Volunteers offer their time and commitment to support the Family Mentor service in any which way they can, from supporting the family groups, helping out at events, admin tasks in the hub or supporting family mentors on home visits.

Volunteers always say that they really enjoy supporting the groups and playing with the children, providing emotional support to parents and feel that they are part of one big team. Many volunteers find it rewarding to provide support and build trusting relationships with families

It's great to see volunteers enjoying what they do. Volunteers often comment that they feel more confident, gain valuable work experience and feel that they are making a difference in the community

It's great to see how the volunteers have worked with the family mentor team to support with various activities and has continued to support our services to families. **Thank you volunteers you are truly amazing.**



I found it rewarding providing parents with a listening ear, time to talk, and to build a trusting relationship with parents"

Volunteering has made me feel more confident and feel that I am making a difference and supporting people who really need it

Volunteers have supported Family Groups and Events and have contributed 323 hours



## Huge thank you to .....



**And also to all those other organisations and individuals who have made donations to us this year and helped us make a huge difference to families lives in Ashfield, Broxtowe, Gedling, Rushcliffe and Nottingham City.**

**“Rewarding to help others gives myself a boost” ..... a volunteer**

**“Knowing I make a difference” ..... a volunteer**



Families experiences

Sadly, Rachel’s mental health had recently started to deteriorate again. She was having difficulty coping with her daughter’s anxiety and the maintenance of her house and garden was becoming overwhelming. She had been told that Home-Start was now willing to accept clients who had children under 8 – rather than under 5 as previously – so decided to get directly in touch to ask for some more support.

Rachel was matched with a volunteer called Jill. Rachel feels that they were well matched. Even though they have different personalities [Rachel describes Jill as having a lot of “get up and go”] they have the same core values – a common sense and family centred approach to life.

Jill became a real friend to Rachel and her visits made “a massive difference” to her. Jill was able to adapt to Rachel’s particular needs on the day of the visit. Sometimes Jill would provide practical help in the house and garden - because of Rachel’s mental health she was finding these difficult to cope with. Very often they would just talk - Jill was able to help Rachel talk through her issues so that she was able to reach a conclusion about how to deal with these. Occasionally they would go out for a walk to get some fresh air and exercise.

Rachel was very sad when Jill’s visits had to end. However they have stayed friends and Jill will occasionally visit Rachel which she looks forward to enormously.

Rachel would “absolutely” recommend Home-Start Nottingham – and has done. The visits made her not feel alone when she was having great difficulty in handling life by herself. She remains very grateful to Home-Start Nottingham for helping her on the occasions when life was extremely difficult.

Emily was finding motherhood overwhelming. She had had two babies quite close together and her youngest son was suffering from chronic eczema and wasn’t sleeping. She discussed how she was feeling with her husband and they decided that Emily should self-refer herself to Home-Start Nottingham [Emily’s aunt had volunteered with Home-Start so she was aware of it’s work].

After emailing Home-Start Nottingham and completing a form Emily was contacted by a co-ordinator who matched her with her volunteer, Kellie. The first visit was from both co-ordinator and volunteer. Emily felt that Kellie and herself were extremely well matched.

Kellie’s visits made a huge difference to Emily. She was able to “off-load” some of her problems which made a real difference to her mood, patience and tolerance levels in the days following Kellie’s visit. Kellie would also help with the children which gave Emily a chance to catch up with household chores. Kellie became a friend who was a very good listener. She helped Emily to process and consider the issues that she was facing so that she could take steps to address these.

Volunteer visits ended after 10 months by which time Emily was coping much better. Emily would definitely recommend Home-Start Nottingham – and has done. The most important thing that the volunteer did was to listen to her needs and respond to these.

16

Contact details


IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BECOME A HOME-START VOLUNTEER OR IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS OUR WORK PLEASE CONTACT US AS BELOW:


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17