



Knowsley

Annual Report 2020-2021



Registered Charity No:1107933

Registered Company No: 5197002

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Trustees and Staff
April 2020 - March 2021

Chair - Dr Clare Kenny

Vice Chair - Jackie Sumner

Treasurer - Susan McGuire

Trustee - Louise Johnston

Trustee - Patricia McKnight

Trustee - Alison Russell

Scheme Business Manager and Secretary- Pamela Bowes

Finance Administrator - Andrea Thompson

Organisers:

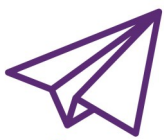
Sheila Denson

Jess Quirk

Sarah Godenho

Breastfeeding Peer Support Worker - Helen Bushell





Chair's Report by Dr Clare Kenny

No-one could have predicted the pandemic or the impact Covid-19 would have on statutory and third sector services but we are proud to have risen to the challenges and supported more people than ever before. Right from the very beginning, the Home-Start team have been active in the community, especially relevant when other services were busy putting together a plan whilst we were out there on the front line, responding to immediate and emerging needs.

We have been innovative and adapted our delivery model to address individual requests for help. Case Studies in this report will highlight some of the types of support we have provided and showcase how creative we have been. By being active listeners, we have prevented crisis for those who were already struggling with multiple issues before the pandemic and many say we have been a lifeline and their first port of call. We understand our communities and they know where to find us which is evidenced by the fact that over half of our referrals are self-referrals. We are unique in Knowsley.

Technology has played a big part in keeping people in touch, especially during lockdowns when our premises has been closed and face-to-face has not been possible. There has been increased telephone support from staff and volunteers, often during unsociable hours when parents have put children to bed and just needed a little reassurance they are doing a good job. Groups and drop-ins have been held virtually and we have all become proficient, 'Zoomers'. We have even managed to provide equipment for those who were digitally excluded which has helped many, especially those who were struggling with home-schooling.

The cook-a-longs and bake-offs have been particularly successful too with over 50 families receiving ingredients to enable them to eat healthier and learn new skills. Feedback from those who were lucky enough to be involved in our Slow Cooker Project was extremely positive and local chefs had better be ready for some exciting competition as we discovered new talents in adults and children.

The Board are extremely proud of the way Home-Start Knowsley have been so effective throughout these very difficult times and applaud the way everyone has pulled together to ensure vulnerable families received continuous support when they needed it most. Well done and a huge, 'Thank you' to all the team.

Dr Clare Kenny



Scheme Business Manager's Report by Pam Bowes

Finding positive solutions for people is what we do at Home-Start Knowsley and we are experts in our field. We have really had to think innovatively this year to ensure our communities got the right support at the right time, in ways that were deliverable and would achieve the best possible outcomes. Pandemic restrictions and the closure of the building resulted in the suspension of face-to-face groups, drop-ins and courses and luckily, the team are proficient with social media. 'Zooming' and 'Closed Facebook Invites' became the norm and there were mad dashes around the borough to deliver ingredients for cook-a-longs (within strict time limits), and other resources and essentials.

Staff have embraced the opportunities to access further training during the year and refresh their knowledge and learn new skills including Baby Massage and Baby Yoga and have planned an exciting timetable for when the building is fully open again. Repairs and maintenance have been carried out, including a lick of paint, and we are fully Covid-compliant and ready to welcome families back.

We have invested in a new monitoring and data collection system which has proved rather more complicated and time consuming than we were led to believe but as Home-Start UK have withdrawn their system so was necessary and we think we have mastered it now...

We would not have been able to provide all the additional support without funding and we have been particularly successful in raising additional funds including Big Lottery – Individually and as part of our Merseyside Consortium, Steve Morgan Foundation, many Crisis Funds and donations. I especially want to mention Andrea, my Finance Manager for her skills in managing 31 different funding streams throughout the year. She has provided proposed budgets and proof of spends for projects-often within tight deadlines, data and outcome evaluations and ensured funds have been allocated and spent appropriately. We have laughed and cried and I could not have done it without her.

Existing partnerships with agencies have been strengthened and new ones developed; especially Northwest Boroughs NHS Partnership's Bosom Buddies, Merseyside Consortium, and Northwood Together.

My fabulous team have juggled home-schooling, self-isolating, working from home, and their own health issues to ensure Home-Start provide active responses to requests for support and whilst we always stress we are not a crisis service, we certainly have been during the pandemic.

I am really proud to have been the manager for the last 10 years and I'd just like to say a huge 'Thank you' to all staff and volunteers who make Home-Start Knowsley so effective.



Report by Sheila Denson

I began working for Home-Start in January 2019 as an organiser and can honestly say I have enjoyed every minute of my time at Home-Start. No two days are ever the same and I feel privileged to have had opportunities to undertake a variety of activities including having a caseload of Knowsley families, attending and delivering training, helping to organise and run parent and parent toddler groups, and heading out on day trips with our lovely families, (possibly my favourite activity!) Home-Start only has a small staff but they are totally committed to providing the best possible outcomes for families supported. I feel very lucky to have been welcomed and supported so well by my manager and colleagues.

I've also had many opportunities to work with Home-Start volunteers, we could not offer families the same level of support without our dedicated volunteers.

It was after very careful consideration and a heavy heart that I retired due to ill health on 31st July 2021. I'd like to send my thanks to staff, volunteers, families and trustees at Home-Start for making my time here so enjoyable, I really do feel part of the "Home-Start family". So much so that I'm back already as a volunteer and trustee! I hope I can still make a positive difference and I feel honoured and privileged to even be considered for these roles. I'm looking forward continuing my journey with Home-Start.



Report by Jess Quirk

This is my sixth year working for Home-Start but it has been a year like no other!

We started off overwhelmed like most people did when we first started following covid restrictions, we felt worried about what we were going to be able to do as a scheme to support families.

Well after an initial couple of weeks of telephone support we had ideas as a team. We ordered 300 new Home-Start bags and my gosh have they been used!!! To start with we made up activity packs for adults and children to occupy them while staying at home. We took out adult colouring books, seeds for planting, bubbles, bat and balls, play doh, stationery and stamps for letter writing.

Our boots had camping chairs and umbrellas in and we became accustomed to sitting outside garden gates to chat to families.

We have obviously been unable to host any groups at our building this year. In response to listening to how much families were missing groups we put activities online for families to engage in. We had party games on a Friday night, baking events where we dropped out the ingredients and they could log in and bake together. We have also hosted baby yoga and baby sensory sessions for which we provided sensory bags for too.

In June time we teamed up with Knowsley Kitchen and started dropping out fruit and vegetable boxes. Families found them extremely useful and enjoyed sending us photos of meals they had made together.

As the number of fruit and vegetable boxes we were delivering got bigger so many people stepped up to help us to get them delivered to families! Volunteers old and new, trustee's and staff all pitched in.



Report by Jess Quirk Continued

Volunteers stayed involved as we launched our 'Cook Along with Home-Start' project. Families received their healthy meal boxes on a Tuesday and then logged on to zoom on a Wednesday morning to follow step by step meal preparation with Chef Keenan. Families all joined a WhatsApp group which was really lively with people sharing their finished meal photo's on.

The amount of donations and funding we have received during in the pandemic has been really heart warming. It has actually ended up been our busiest but most rewarding year!

We had a huge Easter egg donation which meant all the adults and children we were working with got at least one egg this Easter.

Tesco donated phone's loaded with credit and data to help families who were struggling to access online learning.



We had a fantastic donation of brand new books gifted from big companies with a lovely message from the person who gifted it to the recipient.

John Lewis sent absolutely tons of craft sets for adults and children.



Report by Jess Quirk Continued

Heading towards Christmas we got presents donations from CASH 4 KIDS and Asda. We also had some additional funding which enabled us to buy some main Christmas presents for families who were really in need.



“I am so grateful for all the Christmas gifts, it was one less thing to worry about” Quote from Family

The highlight of the year was definitely the Christmas pantomime. We were able to offer 60 tickets for Beauty and the Beast at St Helens Theatre Royal. So many families said what an uplifting night it was after such a hard year. It was a really lovely night with lots of laughing, exactly what everyone needed.



Here is to another brilliant year post pandemic!

“The pantomime was so much fun, I haven't laughed like that for ages”
Quote from family



Report by Sarah Godenho

Wow! What a year!

Flying high off the back of a really successful Out & About playgroup over the February half term I was really excited to start looking for new families to join our ever-growing community and plan for a super Easter club. But, as we all know, something happened which halted all current offers and plans imminently.

Such a strange time for everyone. Working with society's most vulnerable families made us incredibly worried for the extra stress they would now be under and the long-term effects that were undoubtedly going to arise. We immediately began to think about new ways in which we could continue to support these families who were more isolated than ever, the very thing we are trying to achieve the opposite of.

The families I work with have the added problem of having children with additional needs. Children that would normally have specialist care in school during the week and respite for parent/carers in the evenings and weekends. These children had little or no understanding of the world around them and the disruption to their much-needed routines would prove disturbing and upsetting for them and the rest of their family.

My First thought was to try and offer distractions for the families at home, so I sourced and delivered sensory baskets which were enthusiastically received and loved by all.

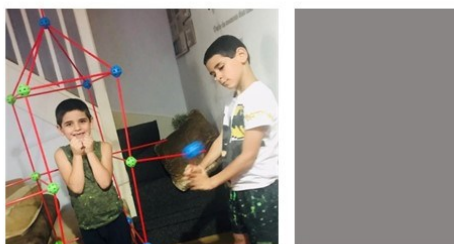


I also wanted to offer a way for the parent/carers to explain to their children what was happening. I found some social stories about the virus, mask wearing and the importance of staying at home which I laminated and delivered along with colouring in pages of people in masks to normalise that aspect of life too.



Report by Sarah Godenho continued

Financial worries and the inability to get to the shops with children in tow was another big problem that our families were facing. We teamed with Knowsley Kitchen and delivered fruit and veg boxes to our families every week along with pantry bags containing store cupboard essentials and bread and butter. Some weeks the boxes contained frozen pies. We handed out cookbooks to give families new ideas of what to do with the vegetables we were giving them. The weekly deliveries also meant we could keep an eye on families and have catch ups on the doorstep with them which a lot of people seemed to prefer to phone calls. Some weeks we took activity packs for the children too and some colouring books and watercolour sets for the adults.

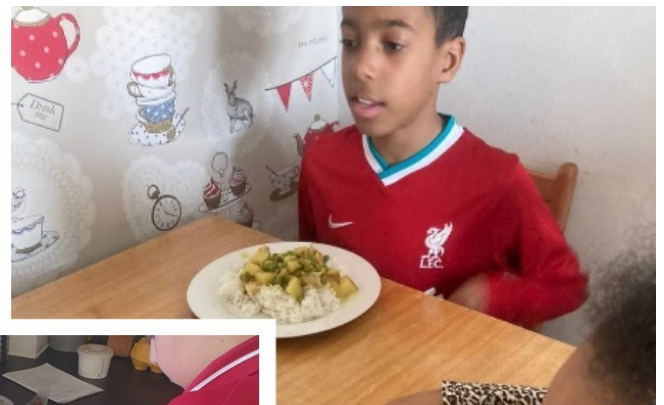


As Christmas approached and another lockdown loomed, we started thinking about the extra things needed over the holidays. We were lucky to receive funding which we could put towards toys and so every family was provided with age relevant gifts for all their children and aromatherapy sets and chocolates for the adults. We took a large group of families to the Christmas pantomime which they all thoroughly enjoyed.



Report by Sarah Godenho continued

New year, new project. We started 2021 with a new cooking project, providing families with slow cookers and weekly ingredients and cook-a-long sessions. The recipes were well received by everyone, and the live sessions were attended every week. All the families involved were great at sending photos of what they had been cooking and also sharing other recipes with each other through a WhatsApp group which became very active. It was a really successful project and great to be a part of.



All in all, I am really proud of how everything we have achieved over the past year. I think we have provided our families with more than we could have imagined, and I can't wait to start getting "back to normal" again and hearing the sounds of happy children echoing around Home-Start Knowsley again.



Report by Helen Bushell

2020 well it's a year we won't forget in a hurry.

How things have changed, and that includes me stepping down from Volunteer Representative and Advisor to the Board and stepping into the office in October to join the rest of the Home-Start Knowsley's team as a Breastfeeding Peer Support Worker. This is a role which I thoroughly enjoy and feel lucky to be able to support families in Knowsley.

I have been supporting the breastfeeding service over the last 5+ years as a Breastfeeding Volunteer here at Home-Start Knowsley and the transition has been very smooth with already having links with Bosom Buddies, the Infant Feeding Team at Whiston and Pippa and Collette at Merseycare.

Phone/text/Zoom have all been ways for us to be able to continue to reach out and support mums across Knowsley. These are mums and families who sometimes have had a difficult start to becoming a parent along with some challenges mixed in with learning a new skill in breastfeeding their little one/s.

We have been lucky that at Home-Start Knowsley we have been able to link in Zoom peer support groups along with baby massage, baby yoga & sensory baby classes virtually which have been welcomed with opened devices by many families across Knowsley.

Looking forward to face-to-face support opening up in the not too distant future and our groups filled with mums and babies once again.

Comments from a few mums, we could have filled the page!

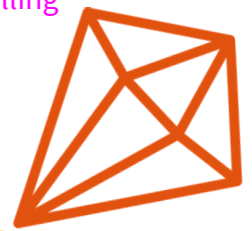
“Lots of educational help and no discrimination” “Lots of ideas and I didn't feel pressure”

“Helen was very knowledgeable and supportive. It was lovely knowing she was calling every week so she could answer any questions I had thought of over the week! Really amazing and made breastfeeding so much easier”

“Having someone to moan to and tell me it's normal and it's ok. All the help Helen gave me kept us going”



Sensory Toys taken out to families so they could participate in Baby Sensory over Zoom



Our Volunteers



Volunteers helping with Christmas parcels

Volunteers donated **1080 Hours** of their time throughout the year to continue the delivery of our service during Covid-19 restrictions.

Volunteers supported families through telephone support, online group support, delivering food parcels, Activities, ingredients and toys for families, just to name a few. We couldn't have done it without them.

Volunteers carry out their roles willingly but it would cost us over **£9600** to employ them.

This year Home-Start Knowsley have provided

41

volunteering opportunities.

Volunteers attend additional training throughout the year

- Safeguarding Training
- LENS Enrichment day
- MBT online
- Shared Reading Training
- Unicef conference

Volunteer Comments

“I love coming to Home-Start, it feels like family”



“Home-Start helped me keep some normality during lockdown”

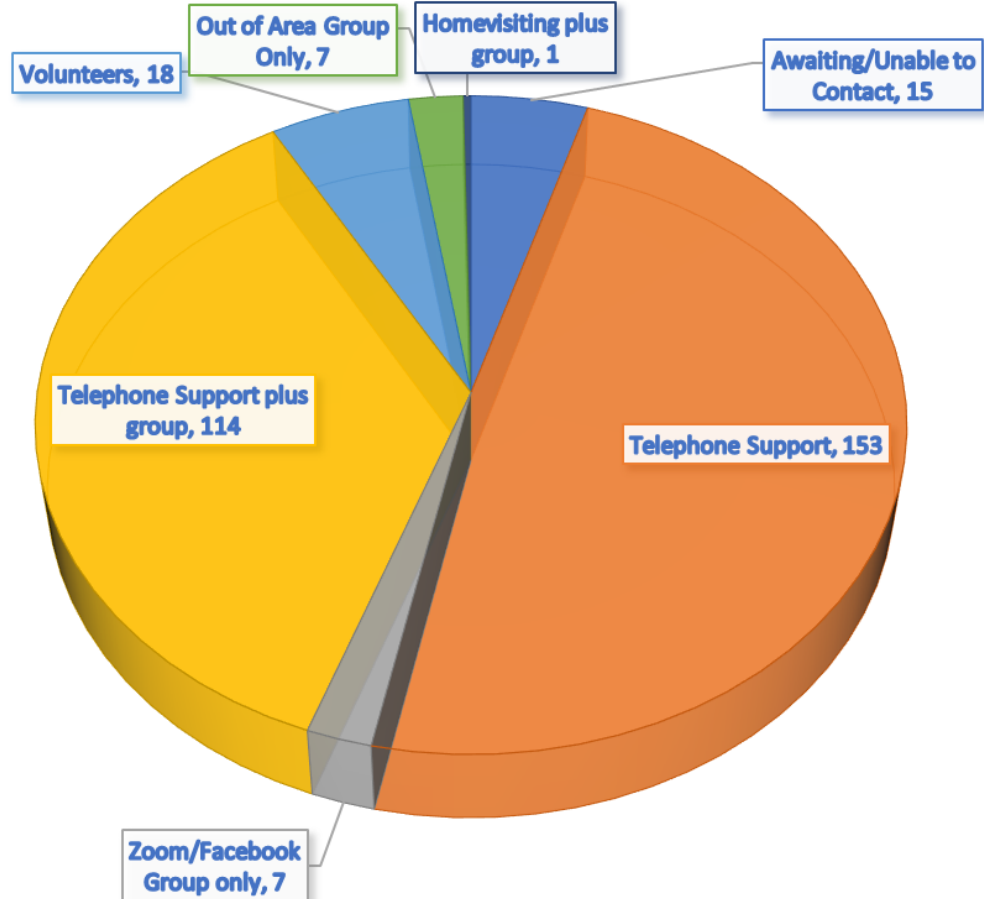
“I enjoyed taking parcels out to families in need during lockdowns, it felt good to help my community”



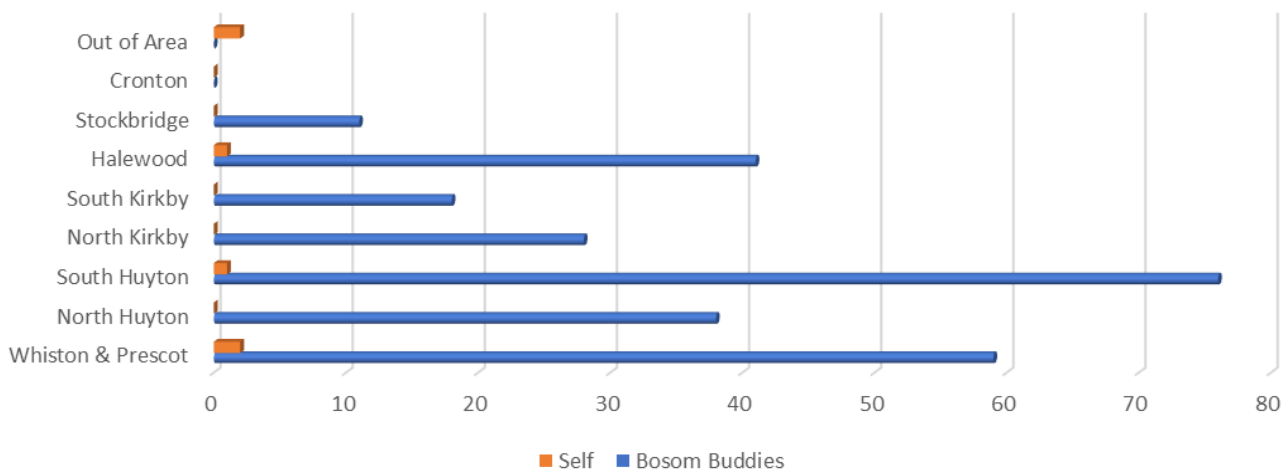
Breastfeeding Peer Support

Home-Start supported **293** new mums breastfeeding in Knowsley between April 2020 and March 2021. An amazing **84%** of 280 mums were still breastfeeding when they were discharged at 6-8 weeks.

BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT 20/21



New referrals by Area



Other types of support offered during Covid -19 restrictions



“We loved attending the Baby Sensory sessions, it feels like our babies have missed out on so much” Quote from parent



Children taking part in the Bake-a-longs

“We all enjoyed the bake a longs, myself as much as the kids!” Quote from a Family

“It's the first time I've ever baked!
The kids really enjoyed it” Quote from a Family



Counselling

As lockdown continued, we noticed that the need for counselling was getting greater for both adults and children. We decided to apply for Government funding through Steve Morgan Foundation to provide counselling for 20 adults and 15 children.

We were ecstatic when we were awarded with the funding and needless to say we started referring adults and children straight over. It is a fantastic opportunity for us to be able to offer counselling to the families we work with without the long waiting lists and it has helped so many of our families already. We hope to continue this service in the future.

Quote from a Parent

“Speaking with Julie helped my confidence. I grew with an abusive mum and went into an abusive relationship. Now I speak my mind, I say ‘No’ to things I don’t want to do and set boundaries. My kids are happier and in a better routine and she was very patient, caring and understanding to my kids being awake during phone calls. I’d recommend her to anybody”

**“Thank you so much,
I’ve seen a huge improvement
in my daughter’s confidence since
having counselling; I’ve got my
daughter back”**
Quote from Parent



Activity Packs for children



What difference has Home-Start support made?

Comments from Families that have received home-visiting support by paid staff or volunteers during this year.

“I really enjoyed the cook a longs, it made me try things I never thought I would eat and start cooking from fresh again” Quote from Cook a long project

“It’s great keep it going” Quote from Cook a long project

“I think it’s a big positive for the community, a project like that can only bring joy and people together, congratulations” Quote from Cook a long project

“A big thank you to the organisers and the whole team for bringing smiles on faces” Quote from Cook a long project

“The children always got really excited when they knew that Home-Start was on their way with a delivery”

“I looked forward to regular adult conversation after home-schooling 3 children”

“The children all loved their activity packs, it gave me a little break”

“Having someone regularly ringing me made me feel like someone cares”

“I met new mums on online Zooms who were in a similar position to me, we still chat now”

“The Children’s party was great, the kids loved it”

“I loved the yoga, it was so relaxing”

“It felt really nice to speak with other new mums”

“Home-Start is amazing!”



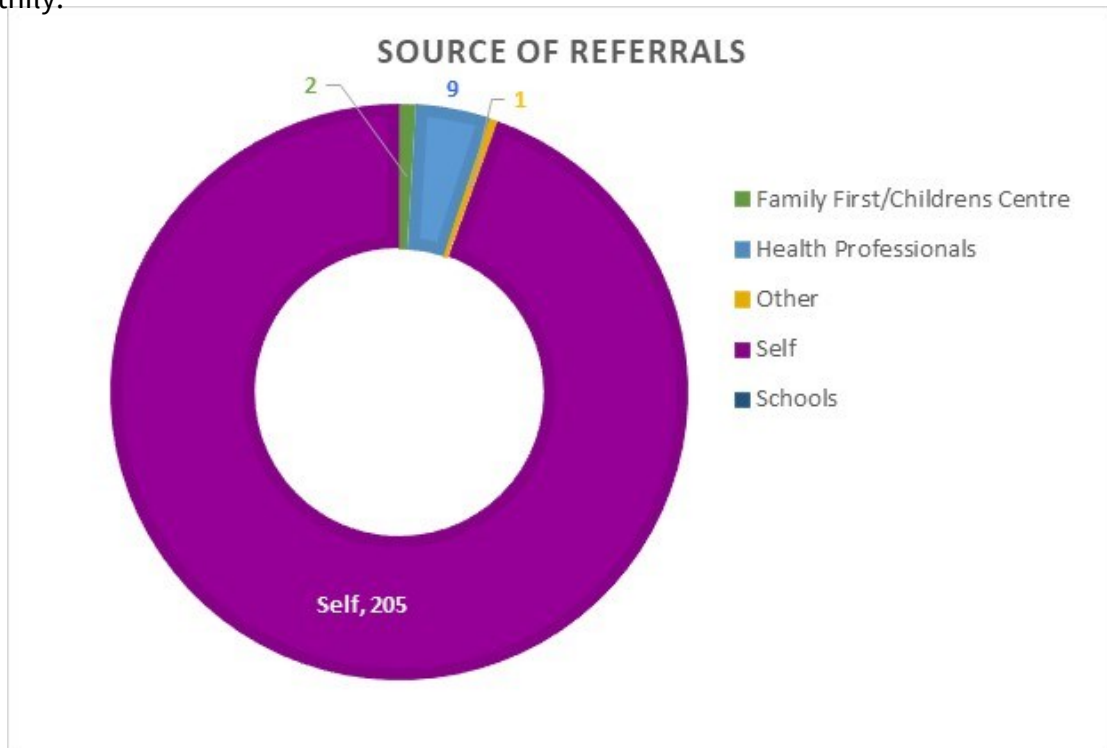
Partnership Working Across Knowsley

Referrals are received from across the borough for families who need a little extra support and although self-referral remains our highest category, we receive referrals from professionals and similar minded agencies too.

Strong partnerships are in place with midwives and health visitors and joint visits take place with Home-Start's Scheme Organisers to ensure families get the right support at the right time. Pathways are in place to ensure new mums get breastfeeding support from our Breastfeeding Peer Support Volunteers as they are transferred by Bosom Buddies at Week 3 and receive phone support and are invited to Drop-ins at 4 venues, led by Home-Start.

Our Organisers and volunteers accompany families to appointments and support them to access their local community e.g. health and dental appointments, Centre 63, Citizens Advice, Job Centre Plus, Housing, and Children's Centres.

Home-Start continue to issue Food Bank Vouchers to families who are struggling financially and donations of food nearing its sell-by date throughout the year from Tesco and ASDA has ensured families have access to fresh fruit and vegetables and enabled them to eat more healthily.



Strategic Partnerships

Home-Start Knowsley is represented on several Boards and committees to offer strategic support and advice and influence positive change at local and Regional level:

- Children's Centre Advisory Board
- NWC Parent Infant Relationship Sub Group
- Knowsley Sexual Health Forum
- Knowsley Family Nurse Partnership Board
- Knowsley Breastfeeding Strategy Group
- Big Local – Northwood Together Board
- Home-Start in Merseyside Partnership Board



What we have achieved this year

This year we supported **307** families , **532** Children and an additional **1468** through awareness raising .

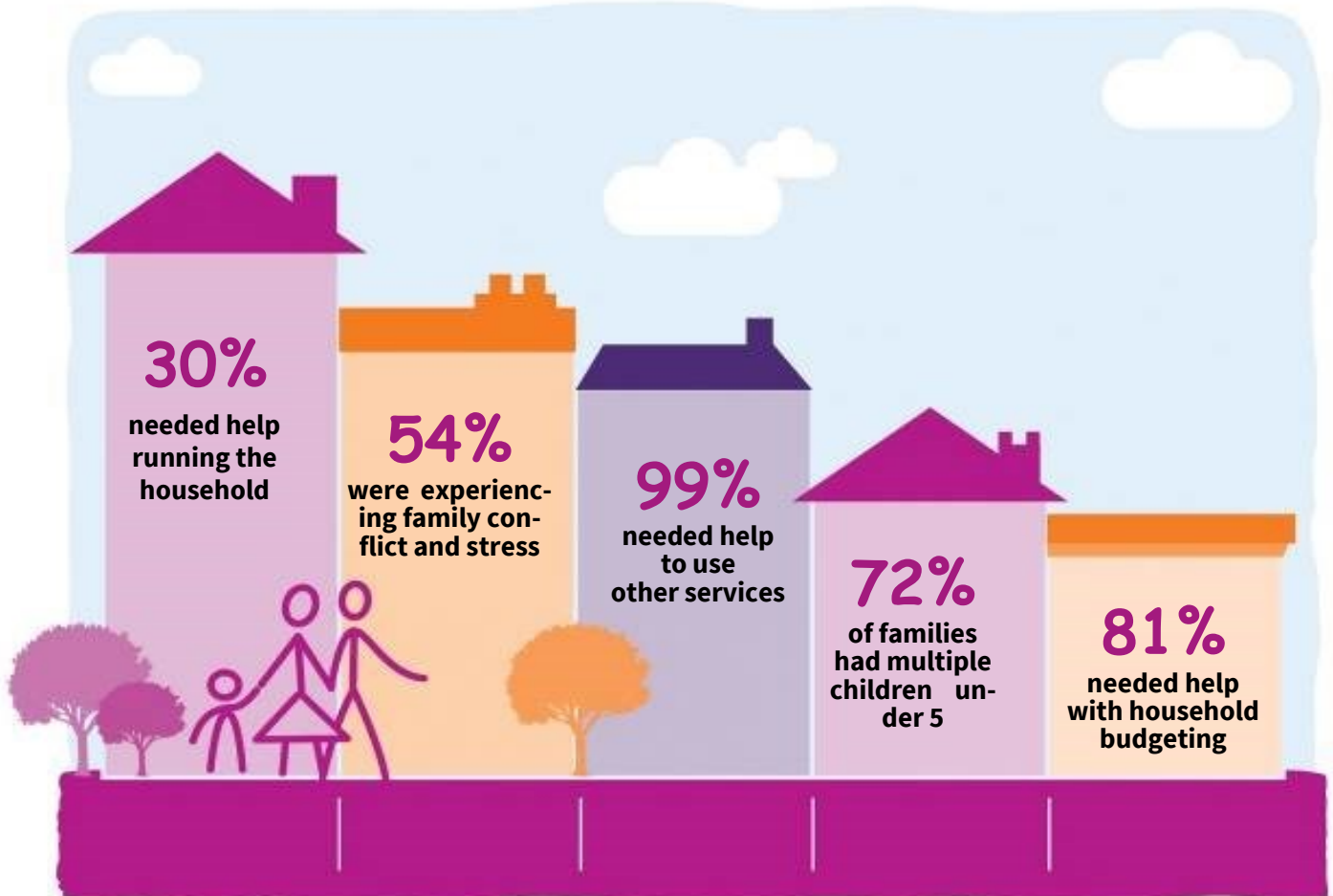


91% of families improved their health & wellbeing

89% of families improved family management

89% of families improved their parenting skills

Below are some of the needs recognised by families at their initial visit

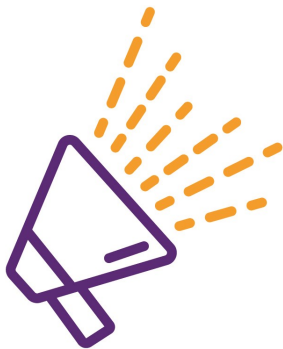


Exciting times ahead ...

Welcome to Amy, our new Rapid Response / Project Worker

Hi, my name is Amy Gent, I have recently joined the team at Home Start Knowsley and have felt really welcomed by all the staff here. I have previously worked in primary schools for over ten years and have had a lot of experience dealing with vulnerable children and families.

More recently, I have completed an accredited course in Solution Focused Hypnotherapy and started up my own business delivering this. I have a passion for helping people with their mental wellbeing as I believe that happiness is everything and everyone deserves a happy life. I live with my husband and three children in St. Helens and my hobbies include reading psychological thrillers and long walks in nature. I am excited to learn new things here at Home-Start and hopefully use my expertise to help vulnerable families.



We have been awarded £299,831 over 3 years from Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund!

This amazing news will enable our scheme to continue to reach families in Knowsley for a further 3 years. We will also be able to continue to offer Counselling to the families we work with which is fantastic news.

The Merseyside Consortium has also been successful with Big Lottery and have secured a further 2 years funding to support Mums with low mental health.

For all of our latest news and updates please follow our Facebook or Instagram page @homestartknowsley or visit our website www.homestartknowsley.org.uk



Case Study

Level of Need: 2

Length of HSK support: 3 months ongoing

Background and Issues:

We received a referral from Mum's midwife. Mum and Dad have five children and have both lost their jobs during the current pandemic. Grandad also lives with the family and is in poor health.

Foodbank called whilst the midwife was present to let the family know they could not continue to attend food bank as often and they are struggling to feed them all with only £19 per week left for food.

Intervention and Support

An Initial Assessment was held by phone call to find out about the family's circumstances. Benefits were checked to ensure the family are claiming all they are eligible for. Shopping vouchers were gifted to Mum the following morning to enable her to get enough food for a family of 8 for a week.

2 weekly Family Feast ingredients boxes and recipes were allocated for the family. Activity packs for the children were delivered and clothes/blankets for the 13 day old baby boy.

Emotional support via phone call continue regularly.

Outcomes:

The family now have 4 healthy meals provided free of charge weekly through the Family Feast scheme. The ingredients come with recipe cards and the family are enjoying learning new skills and cooking from scratch.

The family have been signposted to churches etc who currently offer support with food which has eased the financial burden a bit.

The family have been provided with creative & sports activity packs which has given the children some entertainment. This has taken the pressure off Mum & Dad a little so they have extra time to search for employment.

Mum has been invited to online courses that we are currently running with a focus on developing strategies to cope with stress and setting time aside for yourself.

Mum tells us she feels more positive about the future and the family have more food & less worries.

Mum is emotionally supported during this difficult time.



Case Study

Level of Need: 2

Length of HSK support: 5 months

Background and Issues:

The family were referred by a Family Support Worker at a Children's Centre as part of an Early Help Initiative to bring services together. The family had relocated to England and mum speaks very little English so was very isolated in the community. The family also had housing concerns and needed help to apply for appropriate benefits and also nursery provision for their 2 year old.

Intervention and Support

A home visit was arranged when the eldest child would be present to ease communication. The family were signposted to other services for support with housing, benefits and nursery provision. It was identified that mum especially was very isolated and had poor mental health. She wanted to get out in the community with her 2 year old but found this very difficult. We arranged for mum to attend Summer Holiday Allsorts Activity Days with her youngest child. She had already met a Home-Start staff member and felt comfortable attending. She was welcomed and introduced to other staff, parents and their children. Mum and her son enjoyed activities in the Home-Start setting and also enjoyed a family day out with other families. As mum is attending weekly groups at the Children's Centre and her son is now attending nursery, we agreed to close the family file but to keep them on the group list so they can be invited to holiday activities in the future.

Mum uses Google translate to help communicate and staff also used this when necessary which was very successful.

Outcomes:

Mum's confidence was increased by attending the activities at Home-Start. She is now attending English language courses too which has helped her to communicate more effectively.

Mum and her 2 year old have opportunities to access activities in the community together and to mix with other families.

Mum is more able to cope and adapt to new situations. (Her husband was injured in a work accident and they are managing new routines etc. due to this)

The family no longer need targeted support from Home-Start as they are engaging with Children's Centre and access universal services.



Case Study

Level of Need: 2

Length of HSK support: 18 Months

Background and Issues:

The family were referred by a health visitor. Since the birth of her 9 month old son, mum has moved away from family and partner, become very isolated and agoraphobic and her increased anxiety and distress have aggravated her pre-existing skin condition. This has very much decreased her self-confidence and self-esteem and makes life extremely difficult both mentally and physically. From having a well-paid job and being independent, mum now struggles on benefits and is finding it hard to manage financially. Her son has also had some health issues and mum is very depressed and anxious.

Intervention and Support:

After an Initial Assessment visit it was agreed to place a volunteer with mum so she could have an independent listening ear weekly. It was also agreed that the Organiser would support mum to access the CAB to help with her debts and support mum at a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) Assessment visit. Weekly visits were going well and valued until lockdown. The CAB and successful PIP application helped mum to manage her debts. Ongoing support such as food banks were very useful until all this was in place. The weekly volunteer visits were suspended during lockdown but ongoing telephone support was put into place. Mum also had weekly doorsteps visits when fruit and veg boxes were delivered. She also participated in weekly cook along sessions and enjoyed cooking new recipes. Delivery of food was vital because mum is very self-conscious and anxious about going out. Mum has also recently completed some counselling sessions provided by Home-Start Knowsley.

Outcomes:

Mum has benefitted enormously from interventions which have been put in place and has continued to be receptive to trying out new strategies and services.

The counselling has encouraged her to look for the more positive things in her life and to focus on her strengths and has given her strategies to cope. Her self-confidence has really increased as has her self esteem and she continues to make real progress.

Her son is now at nursery so she has some time to herself and she has reconciled with her partner.

She is looking forward to starting to leave the house more and go to parks and for walks with her son once lockdown has ended.



All the team at Home-Start Knowsley
would like to say a big

‘Thank You’

to all of our funders, whose support has helped us to meet the needs
of families and volunteers in Knowsley

Our Acknowledgements to:



Supported by



BritishRedCross

**The 4th Dimension, LCVS, Cash4Kids, Anwyl Homes,
Liverpool One**



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