

# EMPOWERING WOMEN

TO BUILD A BRIGHTER FUTURE



**HOME  
START**

FUNDED BY  
**WHITE  
STUFF**



FOR US, IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT SELLING CLOTHES. WE TRY AND STAND UP FOR THINGS WE BELIEVE IN, LIKE CREATIVITY, INDEPENDENCE AND SELF-EXPRESSION, AND TO SUPPORT OTHERS TO STAND UP TOO. WE STARTED WORKING WITH HOME-START UK IN 2020 AND LOVE THE DIRECT, GRASS ROOTS IMPACT THEY MAKE TO COMMUNITIES ALL OVER THE UK. WE ARE VERY EXCITED ABOUT THE EMPOWERING WOMEN PROJECT, WHICH WILL HELP HOME-START UK TO LEVERAGE THE FANTASTIC WORK THAT TAKES PLACE IN THEIR VOLUNTEER NETWORK, HELPING WOMEN BUILD UP THEIR CONFIDENCE, SELF-ESTEEM AND SKILLS.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SUPPORTING HOME-START UK AS THEY BUILD ON THE OUTCOMES OF THIS REPORT.

JO JENKINS

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, WHITE STUFF AND  
TRUSTEE OF THE WHITE STUFF FOUNDATION

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# POWER UP

## EMPOWERING MUMS TO THRIVE



**“Home-Start improves confidence in mums by reassuring, giving advice and praise. We gently encourage them to build their independence and support them until they’re confident to go it alone.” Home-Start New Forest**

Starting in the home, Home-Start’s approach is as individual as the parents we are helping. No judgement, it’s just compassionate, confidential help and expert support. As a family support charity, we don’t just support parents to cope, but to feel confident to thrive in creating the best possible start for their children.

The majority (97%) of the parents we support are women. So finding ways to enable mums to grow, thrive and feel equipped to determine their own future is central to our work. Home-Start wholeheartedly believes that confident, secure and happy mums raise confident, secure and happy children. And we strive to ensure that cycle can go round again and again for the good of future generations.

We asked our Home-Start network to share with us the many ways they empower mums to enable them to overcome the challenges they face through our Empowering Women survey. The survey shows that the challenges are varied and complex, including financial insecurity, debt, isolation, physical and mental health issues, domestic violence, stress and family breakdown.

More than fifty percent of our local Home-Starts shared with us the creative and innovative projects they run to empower women to build a brighter future. Employability programmes, Pram Walk & Talks, yoga and

mindfulness sessions, confidence clubs, parenting classes and gardening clubs are just some of the activities run by local Home-Starts to provide mums with the support and tools they need to lift themselves up.

We want to highlight some of these impactful projects happening in local communities across the UK through the Home-Start network. By sharing some of these successful projects, we hope it will encourage more parents to seek the support of their local Home-Start, raise awareness of the vital work we do and inspire our Home-Start network to test out new activities that their fellow Home-Starts are running successfully.

We’d like to say a big thank you to White Stuff for their support in creating this study to shine a light on how Home-Starts across the UK empower women.

### **SPECIAL THANKS TO THE**

66 local Home-Starts

21 women supported by Home-Start

15 Home-Start volunteers

who shared their thoughts and experiences on how

**Home-Start empowers mums**

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# WE DON'T PRESCRIBE A PATH

THAT'S FOR THE MUMS TO DETERMINE



**“We listen and hear. We are non-judgmental. We share ideas. Together we explore the way forward. We agree a plan. And we proactively support the plan.” Home-Start Northampton**

Local Home-Starts provide practical support, information and resources to help mums move forward in whatever way is right for

them. We empower mums by providing what they need to help them overcome life's hurdles.



**ONE TO ONE  
COMPASSIONATE SUPPORT  
TO BUILD CONFIDENCE**



**CREATING  
SPACE THROUGH  
PRACTICAL SUPPORT**



**BOOSTING MENTAL AND  
PHYSICAL WELLBEING**



**BUILDING FRIENDSHIPS AND  
SOCIAL CONNECTIONS**



**OVERCOMING  
TRAUMA**



**OPPORTUNITIES TO  
EMPOWER OTHERS**



**GAINING  
NEW SKILLS**



**SUPPORT  
FOR DADS**



*“HOME-START LIFTED  
ME UP SO I COULD  
FIND MY POWER.”*

Carene Baxter, supported by  
Home-Start Central Bedfordshire

# ONE-TO-ONE CONFIDENCE BUILDING



**“Volunteers naturally tell women, ‘you’re a great mum, look at all the fab things you do for your children’ - this can be so powerful, as a mum, when you feel that you’re constantly failing, not good enough.” Home-Start South West Devon**

Our Home-Start volunteers are carefully matched with mums. Over time the volunteers build up a friendship founded on trust. Through this trusted relationship, volunteers gradually build their confidence by providing both encouragement and emotional support.

By enabling mums to move forward in a way that feels comfortable for them, we support their pace and praise any achievements, no matter how small.

## HOW HOME-START VOLUNTEERS BUILD UP CONFIDENCE

- Providing reassurance and praising all achievements, no matter how small
- Being there to listen and provide emotional support and encouragement
- Encouraging mums to take next steps, such as taking children to a playgroup or enrolling with a dentist
- Supporting mums with practical things they might need and signposting to local services or support



**Kelly Sims, supported by Home-Start Corby**

**“I was brought up to believe you don’t ask for help. It was only when my midwife and health visitor intervened, did I start to understand I needed support. Debbie has shown me that I am enough. She helped me to find the confidence I need to fight for what’s right and to be the good mum I am and to actually believe it. She empowered me to break the cycle and stand up for myself to save my children’s outcomes in life.”**

**Kelly Sims, supported by Home-Start Corby**



*"HOME-START HAS HELPED ME TO DEAL WITH SITUATIONS AND LEARN NOT TO RETALIATE. THEY'VE BUILT UP MY CONFIDENCE AND HELPED ME TO GIVE THE KIDS A BETTER LIFE."*

**Nicole McCann, supported by Home-Start Corby**





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# CREATING SPACE

## THROUGH PRACTICAL SUPPORT



**“Women who don’t have the stress of knowing how they’re going to feed their children or heat their home will be far more likely to be willing to embark on change. Living in such circumstances depletes self-worth, self-respect, confidence and leaves women feeling unable to consider change.” Home-Start Angus**

For mums raising children in poor housing, struggling to manage the basics, or dealing with mental and physical illness, finding the space to focus on building their own confidence can feel impossible. By working with mums to find ways to provide practical support, we seek to overcome the immediate stressors affecting them to create the space needed for empowerment. This may be by helping them to register for a nursery place, or by providing a small grant for clothing or essential household items.

### **SHE FELT VALUED**

“Very often our mums don’t have that trusting relationship with others, including their immediate family. They don’t want to be told what to do and they are worried about being judged.

“We helped a mother who was partially sighted and needed the aid of a guide dog, to access funding for her one year old baby to attend nursery so that she could go back to work. We supported mum to find a suitable nursery, applied for funding for work clothing and we supported her to find out about suitable travel and travel arrangements. Mum was able to confidently go to work to support the family income, it enabled her to have a social life outside of the family home and she felt valued.”

**Home-Start Northampton**

The majority (72%) of local Home-Starts who responded to our Empowering Women survey said they offer financial support to mums, such as how to access benefits or grants. Home-Start managers told us how empowering this can be for women; to enable them to get the right support in place and ensure they have access to what they’re entitled to. **Enabling women to feel in control of their finances is transformative, especially when facing debt or other complications.**

“One of the most empowering things we do with women is help them to get their finances sorted. While there’s a ton of debt over your head and you don’t have control of your finances it’s very hard to feel confident and able to move forward. We will sit down, talk their finances through and help them get a plan in place that feels manageable, it’s so freeing.” **Home-Start Blackpool Fylde & Wyre**

Mums we spoke to described Home-Start support helping them to build up their own sense of self, beyond being a parent. They also shared how having a helping hand with the small things frees up their head space to think about themselves and their own needs as well as their children’s.

“Home-Start have helped me ‘believe’ in myself again. Not just as a mother but as a person myself.” **Home-Start Supported mum**

# BOOSTING MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

**“I’m definitely much happier. I feel less lonely and believe in myself more. My decision making is better and more thought through now. I thought I needed someone to talk to and now feel someday soon - I will be the person that someone needs to talk to.” Home-Start supported mum**

The majority (95%) of local Home-Starts surveyed see mums they work with having improved mental health, and 89% reported a reduction in stress, after receiving Home-Start support. As well as supporting mental health and wellbeing through our volunteer support, local Home-Starts also have specific programmes focused on mental health and wellbeing. These include perinatal mental health programmes run by professionals and more informal wellbeing courses which are sometimes facilitated by volunteers.

## PROGRAMMES TO BOOST MENTAL AND PHYSICAL WELLBEING

- Wellbeing courses to build self-esteem and confidence
- Mental health drop ins, including for specific groups like teenage mums
- Outdoor walking groups and gardening clubs
- Health & wellbeing classes, such as yoga, baby yoga and mindfulness sessions
- Perinatal mental health programmes
- Antenatal mental health programmes

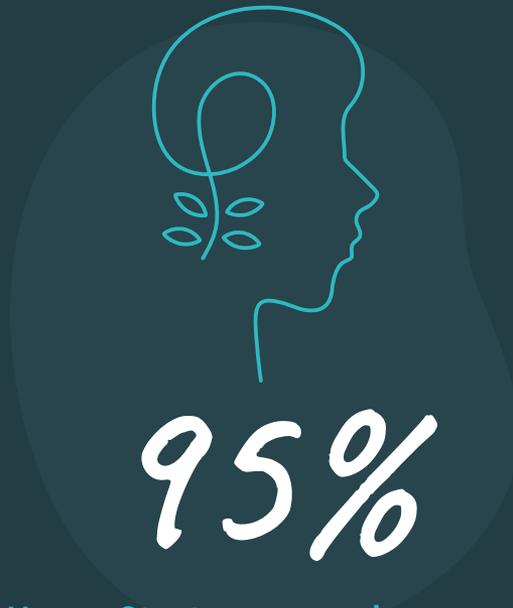


## SPOTLIGHT ON

### STEPS TO EXCELLENCE, Home-Start Glasgow South

**What it is:** “A six week empowerment course run with a small group of five families. It’s all about enabling people to be the best they can, to overcome their limitations and grow in their self-confidence.”

**What’s great about it:** “We’ve had a lot of our refugees and asylum seeking mums go through this programme and they might start off with a lack of self-worth, and feeling like they have nothing to offer. Going through the course takes them deep into understanding where the lack of confidence comes from, looking at and understanding any limiting beliefs, and how to change this from within and shift your mindset. Those who have gone through it have found it really life changing.”



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# SOWING THE SEEDS

## OF EMPOWERMENT

Home-Start Slough's allotment project is designed to provide perinatal support for women living with anxiety and low mood, and encourage them to spend some time outdoors to grow and cultivate vegetables and flowers.

Sarah Harris, Home-Start Slough's allotment volunteer coordinator explains how the project **empowers women through building up friendships and connecting with nature to improve their emotional and physical wellbeing.** "The allotment project encourages the women to spend time outdoors. They are each supported by a volunteer who can explain to them about what to plant, but most importantly they're there to listen.

"Most of the women we support have never gardened before. Some are domestic abuse survivors, some struggle with mental health issues and some feel anxious about being a new mum. **Planting a seed and helping it to grow feels incredibly empowering.** As their plants and vegetables have grown, so too has their confidence. It's been wonderful to see the change in the mums as they connect with each other and realise how much they're capable of."

### AS THE SEEDS GREW MY ISOLATION LESSENERD

Jahseen Foster is one of the mums who is part of the allotment project. Jahseen was referred to the project when she was pregnant with her son. Jahseen explains: "I love spending time outdoors but I've no nice outside space where I live. Going to Home-Start's allotment group with other pregnant women became a sanctuary for me. I love planting and it felt so good to be outside in the fresh air.



Jahseen and her volunteer Liz

"At first I was so ill and weak, I needed someone to help me with planting and weeding. Home-Start matched me with Liz, a Home-Start volunteer. Liz is very knowledgeable about gardening and taught me so much. She is so gentle and understanding. With Liz's support the allotment became my safe place. Soon I was going almost every other day.

"Everything I put my hands on just bloomed. When I planted those very first seeds I was isolated and depressed. As those seeds grew my depression and isolated lessened. Going to the allotment turned everything around for me. Mentally, emotionally, physically and socially - **the allotment group changed my life.**

"When I had my son I brought him to the allotment to meet Liz. It felt like a fitting place to introduce her to my son. Liz and the allotment helped me to get through a difficult pregnancy and navigate the new world of being a mum."

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# EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH FRIENDSHIP



**“As a newly single parent, I was struggling physically and mentally on my own. Since being in contact with Home-Start I cannot emphasise enough how helpful they’ve been for myself and my two kids.**

**From lovely calls just for a chat, helping me get on my feet and find confidence in myself, putting me in contact with an amazing toddler group with lots of mums to encourage me to get out and socialise, I have never felt so empowered and capable in my life.”**

**Home-Start supported mum**

For those who became mums during lockdown, it’s been a particularly lonely experience, with few opportunities to meet with other parents to share experiences and build up supportive bonds.



**The majority (89%) of local Home-Starts who responded to our Empowering Women survey said they seek to empower women by encouraging social connections,** with 66% organising social events.

“Attending the baby group and receiving the support of the staff and other mums has been invaluable to me, particularly as I’m an older first time mum. Being able to get out of the house, meet new people and have fun doing activities that not only benefit my baby’s development but also contribute to my self-esteem and overall health and wellbeing.” **Home-Start supported mum**

**Creating communities around the women we support is a key factor in empowering them.** Through this local Home-Starts enable mums to build friendships to share experiences, give each other strength, make them laugh and share the joys and challenges of parenting.

Having peers they can talk to and meet for playdates help women to feel supported and less alone. This is especially the case for mums who have recently moved to a new area. In Glasgow South, many of the women they support are asylum seekers and refugees. Through Home-Start they are able to form local connections in Glasgow and build up a sense of community and belonging.

“For our asylum seeking ladies who are new to the country, and may have left extremely traumatic circumstances, Home-Start becomes their family. We welcome them in and connect them to the other families in their local area, giving them a community to be a part of. They often stay with us for years, going on to become volunteers, it’s incredible to see.” **Home-Start Glasgow South**

Home-Start managers also gave examples of how connections initially made during structured family groups often go on to continue long after

Emma Junior, supported by  
Home-Start Surrey Heath



those groups have ended. Home-Start Surrey Heath created a Pram Walk & Talk programme to get mums out together in the fresh air when restrictions eased after lockdown. Emma Junior, who has a three year daughter and one year-old twins, describes how tough life was until she started attending the Pram Walk & Talks.

“Attending this group has been a big deal for me. When you’ve had a baby it can be so hard to get yourself together and leave the house. You’re tired, you feel low and you can feel quite lonely. This group took away all that. It’s given me new friends, a support network and it’s encouraged us to get outside. Both mentally and physically I feel so much better. And that’s simply because Home-Start was there to pull me up.”

## SPOTLIGHT ON

### MAMA MEETS, Home-Start Craven

**What it is:** “A weekly meetup between five new mums in a coffee shop. Informal but hosted by Home-Start volunteers or coordinators. Mums are treated to a hot drink and cake, and get to meet other new mums with similar age children. We started it in lockdown so we would get the whole cafe to ourselves and put Perspex screens up between tables so we could safely meet up. At a time when there was nowhere for these new mums to go, it was an absolute blessing for them to be able to get out the house and have someone to talk to. It was such a success we’ve kept it going.”

**What’s great about it:** “The mums who come to Mama Meets are often feeling quite isolated or alone. Seeing the women’s relationships evolve over the weeks is just brilliant – on the first week we find mums might be feeling a little nervous and talk only about their babies, and by the end they are talking about all sorts, having a moan about the difficulties of sleepless nights and sharing more about themselves and their own ideas and aspirations. One mum shared a business idea and with the encouragement from the other mums went on to start that business a few months later.

What’s brilliant is we set up the WhatsApp groups and then we leave the groups at the end but those relationships continue on and then they have someone to meet up at the park with or go for a walk with. It’s through those relationships and having support around them that we see women really growing in confidence. Through running Mama Meets we’ve also been able to expand our reach out to other mums who might not usually find their way to Home-Start, and we can refer them on to other services that might help them.”





*"HOME-START EMPOWERED  
ME BY PUSHING ME TO  
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I THOUGHT I COULDN'T  
WITHIN MYSELF AND AS  
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HELPED ME  
BECOME THE  
BEST MUM I  
CAN BE TO MY  
TWO BOYS."*

**Cody Blake,  
supported by  
Home-Start South  
Warwickshire**

# GAINING NEW SKILLS

Across the Home-Start network upskilling programmes and classes are offered to women to enable them to build their skills and knowledge. Almost half of local Home-Starts who responded to our Empowering Women survey offered upskilling opportunities on a range of topics from cooking skills, financial literacy and parenting skills.



CAMILA HAS A WONDERFUL  
NEW GROUP OF FRIENDS



**Camila Fernandes Mader, supported by Home-Start Portsmouth**

The majority (72%) of local Home-Starts interviewed run baby and toddler groups, with a smaller number (11%) holding antenatal groups. These

settings provide an opportunity for parents to develop their parenting skills by sharing experiences and knowledge in a friendly environment.

Camila Fernandes Mader is a first time mum who moved to a new area just before lockdown. Camila's health visitor referred her to Home-Start Portsmouth's nurturing programme to help her care for her baby daughter.

Camila said: "When my daughter Charlotte was born I felt very alone and was in a bad place mentally and emotionally. I really needed my mum, but she was back home in Brazil.

"With no outside stimulation, as time went by, I felt lower and lower. I wasn't meeting anyone and could go for days with little social contact. My health visitor said it was important for my mental health to go out and meet people and recommended the nurturing programme run by Home-Start Portsmouth.

"I had no expectations of the group and how it would help turn things around for me in such a major way. With each session my knowledge and ability to be a good parent grew and grew. Even simple things like giving my baby options was really helpful. I still use the tips I learnt from the programme. Even now, every time I dress my daughter, I chat to her about what I'm doing and she burbles back!"



*DIVINE IS ON THE PATH  
TO A NEW CAREER*



**Divine Moses, supported by Home-Start Greenwich**

### HELPING WOMEN RETURN TO WORK

When women have children their earning potential takes a big hit - **fewer than one-in-five new mums have a full-time career after maternity leave**, and only 31% return to and remain in full-time work five years after childbirth. The situation is compounded by the burden of childcare costs, with the UK having the third highest childcare costs in Europe (OECD, 2021).

Rising unemployment, falling income and juggling work and caring responsibilities during the pandemic have placed financial pressure on families. As many as 1.1 million additional people – including 200,000 children – were estimated to have fallen below the poverty line by the end of 2020.

Studies both in the UK and globally have shown that **empowering women to work leads to a reduction in poverty**. Almost 20% of local Home-Starts surveyed said they run employability programmes to empower women to gain financial independence through support with CV writing and job applications. This is an area **many local Home-Starts said they would like to grow so they can enable women who want to work overcome barriers to employment**.

Home-Start Greenwich set up a pilot scheme last year as part of its Covid-19 recovery plan. The pandemic had left many families struggling financially so the Job Club was developed to enable families to improve their finances.

Parents were offered support in CV building, interview techniques, career coaching, benefits advice and confidence building. The Job Club also offers parents the ability to borrow laptops and smart work clothes.

One of the mums who joined Job Club was Divine Moses. Divine wants to work in health and social care and was helped to formulate a plan to build a career in this area. Since joining the club Divine has enrolled in a course and is now also training to be a Home-Start volunteer to build up her relevant experience. Divine said: “I was given information on courses that would help me get employment in health and social care and I’m now hoping to start soon. In the meantime, I’ve applied to become a Home-Start volunteer to gain some experience and training working with families. I also accessed the Job Club clothes bank and got some smart work clothes for when I begin my training. This has really helped boost my confidence.”



# RECOVERY FROM TRAUMA



**“We give women survivors the skills to understand their abuse, thus working towards healing.”**

**Home-Start South West Devon**

The prevalence and range of offending and harm against women and girls is a national scandal. Statistics in the Crime Survey for England and Wales estimate of 1.6 million women experienced domestic abuse in the 12 months to March 2020. Across our local Home-Start network we support many women who are domestic abuse survivors. During lockdown a large number of local Home-Starts reported an increase in the number of mums experiencing domestic abuse.

Of the Home-Starts surveyed, **one in three Home-Starts (35%) offer programmes and courses for domestic abuse survivors to help them rebuild their life.** These courses cover topics such as helping women get a better understanding of domestic abuse, understanding that it wasn't their fault, encouraging safety in future relationships and building up self-esteem and self-worth.



## SPOTLIGHT ON

### OWN MY LIFE, Home-Start South & West Devon

**What it is:** “The Own My Life programme is for women survivors of domestic abuse. The aim is to educate and empower women on their experiences. It is a trauma informed 12 week programme, with a feminist underpinning. It encourages peer support and recognises the importance of sharing experiences with other survivors, in order to empower the women to take control of their own lives, and move forward.”

**What’s great about it:** “The biggest thing women get from it is realising that the abuse was not their fault. I think somehow listening to each other’s stories and hearing that others went through a similar thing helps them to realise and understand this. It’s an emotional journey and amazing to watch the bond between women as they open up and support each other to heal. Working through the trauma helps the participants to move past it and look towards the future and what’s next.”



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# “FOR THE FIRST TIME I FELT EXCITED ABOUT THE FUTURE”



“An abusive relationship left my confidence on the floor. I was nothing like how I used to be and couldn’t see how I’d be able to take back charge of my life. We had various social workers in and out of our home, but it wasn’t until my daughter’s nursery referred us to Home-Start Greenwich that I finally felt supported and that there was someone on my side.

“Tina from Home-Start Greenwich helped me to find my strength and to finally start to recognise that me and the kids deserved better than the situation we were in. Tina gave me information on abusive relationships and how it affects the children. She was an impartial shoulder to cry on. I never felt judged and knew I could contact her whenever things went wrong.

“Tina helped me find who I was again and over time I got to a place where I wanted to make a fresh start. My confidence was returning and I felt ready to build a new life. I’d been a waitress for 15 years, but I wanted to do something that supported families. I decided to become a Home-Start volunteer and completed my 12 week training.

“Once I’d done my training I was matched with a mum who was struggling to engage with services or any form of support. It was nerve wracking at first. I wasn’t sure how the mum would take to me. The mum viewed Home-Start as a part of social services and was very defensive. Because of what I’d been through I could relate to her. It took a little while but she began to trust me and we built up a good bond.

“Like me, she had low self-esteem and confidence. I remember once telling her that in order to be able to look after her children she needed to look after herself, including her own mental health. It’s lovely to be able to see now that she’s in such a good place. I’m so proud of her and what she’s achieved. Supporting another mum to help spur them on and make them

believe they can do it feels so nice. And it really showed me how much we are all capable of if we get a little help when we need it.

“Volunteering for Home-Start confirmed to me that I really did want to have a career in working with families. I took part in the Job Club run by Hazel Chawapiwa, head of community and partnerships. It helped me think about all the things I can offer and how to go about building a career for myself. For the first time I felt excited about the future.

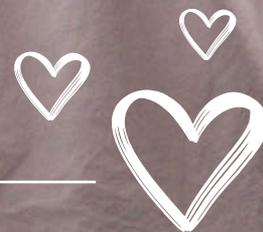
“One day I was chatting to Hazel Smith, Greenwich’s project manager, who said I’d make an amazing social worker. At first I laughed. I don’t have great personal experience of social workers. But Hazel made me realise that my experience would help me to be one of the good ones. She told me I had my whole life ahead of me and that I shouldn’t settle. After that she never missed an opportunity to badger me about Access courses.

“With Hazel’s encouragement I enrolled in an Access course and I’m going to be starting university in September to train to be a social worker. There’s no way I’d be on this path if it wasn’t for Home-Start. Even in practical terms I wouldn’t have been accepted on the course without relevant work experience that I got through my volunteering role. Home-Start is so well respected that universities see it as a real asset when you have volunteered for them.

“The emotional support from Tina, the practice advice from Hazel Chawapiwa and the self-belief from Hazel Smith paved the way for me to begin a new chapter. I’m really excited about going to university. I’d never have imagined I’d be in this position a few years ago.”



**Charlotte Beverley and Hazel Smith, project manager at Home-Start Greenwich**



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# OPPORTUNITIES TO LIFT UP OTHERS

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## **“Cheerleading for another woman is one of the most empowering things you can do.” Home-Start volunteer**

Many of the mums Home-Start support go on to become volunteers themselves. Currently over 1,000 Home-Start volunteers were previously supported by the charity. Having the opportunity to support another family further builds their own confidence and belief in themselves by showing what they're capable of.

**“I've been a stay at home mum for five years and through volunteering I've gained the confidence to apply to do a midwifery degree” Home-Start volunteer**

Beyond training to become home visiting volunteers, a number of local Home-Starts also offer micro-opportunities for supported women to help out, such as helping set up the local playgroup. Micro opportunities like this can provide a gentle way to build confidence and sense of value.

**“We have two board members who were originally Home-Start supported families and came to us as asylum seekers. They have since stayed with us both as volunteers and now as board members. They are amazing women and watching their journey over the years has been incredible.” Home Start Glasgow South**

### **SUPPORT FOR DADS**

**“We run Dad Matters and find that helping the dads to grow in their relationship with their child inevitably helps the mums. They meet up with other dads at the park and by doing so it can give mum some space. We can't talk about female empowerment without looking at the role men play in this too.” Home-Start Blackpool Fylde & Wyre**

Local Home-Starts provide support groups for dads and view this as a fundamental part of supporting women. Building dads' confidence in

parenting and helping them to bond with their little ones helps the entire family. By connecting dads with others who have children the same age encourages them to take more of an active role in parenting. This helps to build up a bond between dads and their children, and is a way for dads to share the responsibilities of parenting.

Mark Davies attends a dads support group run by Home-Start Glasgow South. Mark said: “So often dads are left out or seen as an afterthought, but we are also involved in raising children. My ability to be a good dad is strengthened by attending this group. I feel like I belong and that I have people I can talk to about anything that's on my mind. Parenting is occasionally challenging, but it's also always brilliant. My son brightens everywhere he goes and I love being his dad.”



**Mark Davies supported by Home-Start Glasgow South**



DADS ARE A BIG PART OF EMPOWERING WOMEN TOO! WE WORK WITH DADS TO HELP THEM BOND WITH THEIR CHILDREN AND BUILD UP SUPPORTIVE FRIENDSHIPS WITH OTHERS DADS.

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# OUR WORK CONTINUES...



**“I want the world to know the challenges and sacrifices mums face to give their children the best opportunities –hormones, tiredness, guilt, budgets.”**

**Home-Start Erewash**

Through our Empowering Women survey, and by talking to a number of Home-Starts about their work in this area, we’ve been able to share some wonderful projects that are making a huge difference to families.

We are delighted to shine a light on this work. We hope it encourages other mums and dads to seek the support of their local Home-Start, raises awareness of the vital work we do and inspires our Home-Start network to test out new activities that their fellow Home-Starts are running successfully. This work has also uncovered some areas for further exploration and development.

## **IMPROVING FINANCES AND HELP TO RETURN TO WORK**

**“There needs to be better child care support. Support for working mums is poor and often traps them in the home.” Home-Start Dover**

While facing the stresses that living in poverty brings, local Home-Start managers shared how it’s difficult for women to look beyond their immediate needs for their family. The system makes it incredible hard (particularly for single mums) to increase their income because remaining on benefits is often more profitable than working with the cost of childcare. Parents who have jobs highlighted, in our #BehindTheMask campaign, the **“inexplicable 12-month gap between the end of maternity pay and the start of free childcare”**.

Barriers to returning to employment or studies include lack of suitable childcare, financial implications and lack of flexible hours to work around school times. Local Home-Starts who responded to our survey believe more needs to be done to work with families to overcome these barriers.

**Through our research we’ve seen how a large number of local Home-Starts want to do more to support mums with returning to work.** We will continue to work with mums who want to go back to employment and will look to scale-up this activity.

## **INCREASING SUPPORT**

**“Women to have aspirations, long term goals and not to give up, To live the dream and not believe they don’t deserve it or settle for second best.” Home-Start Kirklees**

While we’ve celebrated some of the wonderful programmes and courses focused on enabling women to reach their full potential, we have heard from a number of local Home-Starts that they simply don’t have the resources to develop programmes like this.

**Local Home-Starts said they’d like to develop training resources around empowerment, confidence building and assertiveness.** Managers said they have the knowledge but not the time or resources to put something like this together. Others said it would be valuable to invest in some mental health training for staff and volunteers.

**“It would be good if we could develop some training along the lines of empowerment, confidence building and assertiveness. The problem is time and funding to be able to deliver this sort of training. We have the skills, but not the time it would need to develop a worthwhile course.” Home-Start Blackpool, Fylde & Wyre**



*"I'D RUN MORE CONFIDENCE BUILDING COURSES AND ALLOW WOMEN TO SEE THEMSELVES AS WE SEE THEM. SO MANY WOMEN HAVE SUCH POTENTIAL AND IT'S JUST A LACK OF SUPPORT, ENCOURAGEMENT AND CONFIDENCE THAT'S STOPPING THEM ACHIEVING ANYTHING THEY WANT."*

**Home-Start Renfrewshire and Inverclyde**

There is a huge opportunity to develop a confidence building and self-belief programme across the Home-Start network where local Home-Starts could potentially tap into existing courses and materials.

#### **EXPAND OUR SERVICES**

Sadly finances place severe limitations on the number of mums we are able to reach. Many local Home-Starts reported having waiting lists and felt frustrated they were unable to support as many mums as they'd like.

"We would like to be able to fund more of the projects we currently offer. We have waiting lists for the MamaMeet, the Yoga and the Sportathons and we know, from experience, that all three have made a huge difference to families' lives. In addition, these projects give us the opportunity to promote our volunteer service to those who might otherwise be reluctant to approach the charity." **Home-Start Craven**

To find out more about Home-Start and how you can support our work please visit [www.home-start.org.uk](http://www.home-start.org.uk)



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*"PAULA, OUR HOME-START VOLUNTEER SURROUNDED ME WITH WARMTH AND LOVE, AND EMPOWERED ME TO BE THE BEST I CAN BE. PAULA TAUGHT ME TO READ AND WRITE, AND HELPED ME TO DEVELOP THE TOOLS THAT'S MADE ME INTO THE PERSON I AM TODAY.*

*"PAULA HAS SHOWN ME HOW EVEN THE LITTLE THINGS CAN MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE TO SOMEONE. I FEEL LIKE EMPOWERMENT IS A GIFT THAT'S BEEN GIVEN TO ME AND ONE THAT I WANT TO GIVE TO OTHERS."*

**Sharena Shiv, supported by Home-Start Exeter, East and Mid Devon as a child**