

Annual Report

2020-2021



Garioch

**Parents supporting parents
in Garioch and Formartine**



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Registered Charity No: SC022057 Scottish Registered Company No: 280871

Structure and Organisation

Board of Trustees:

Chair: Jackie Loder

Treasurer: Robert Anderson

Secretary: Pam Morton

Trustees: Joe Greener, Angela Gowdy, Lorraine Lee, Sandra McCorry,
Maeve McDowall and Tracey Skene and Gail Winchester

Staff:

Scheme Manager: Mhairi Philip

Co-ordinators: Lynn Davidson, Wendy Paterson & Shona Reynolds

Administrator: Valerie Tennant

Acknowledgements

Our main funders for 2020/2021



We have received donations of time, money and other resources throughout the year. Our warm thanks go to: Charlie and Sandra McCorry, Angela Gowdy, Linda Clinch, Latnem, Ken Brown, Wilma Smith, Alison Allardyce, Carol Wright, Maeve McDowell, Irene Allan, Caity Aitken and Elizabeth Robertson.

Background Information

Home-Start Garioch has been supporting families in Garioch and Formartine since 1995 through their most challenging times. We recognise that the earliest years make the biggest impact. We want to ensure those years count so that no child's future is limited by working with families to build on their strengths and give them the support they tell us they need. A unique service, recruiting and training volunteers, usually parents themselves, to support families, visiting them weekly in their own homes. Parents supporting parents through friendship offering practical and emotional support for parents with young children who are experiencing stress and difficult times.

Garioch and Formartine covers an area of 559 square miles. This represents 23%, almost a quarter of the geographical area of Aberdeenshire. The area has a population of 99015, (2021) a growth of 10% in the past 10 years. The increasing population, and need, has seen Home-Start Garioch grow over the past 24 years from a lone co-ordinator to a team of a Scheme Manager and 3 co-ordinators supporting more than 100 families per year with the support of around 75 volunteers.

Nearly 50 years' ago our Founder Margaret Harrison set up the first Home-Start built on the belief that supporting a family was best done in their home where it can be shaped to the needs of the family.

Since then, Home-Starts across Scotland and the UK work every day with families to build parents' confidence and get them to a more secure place because we know that the very best place for a child to grow up is with their family.

'Where children are safe in their families and feel loved they must stay – and families must be given support together to nurture that love and overcome the difficulties which get in the way.' - The Promise – A vision for Scotland, a change to make sure that all Scotland's children grow up to be "loved, safe and respected" #KeepThePromise



The Promise

Chair's Report

This year has been a period of particularly unusual circumstances. The arrival of the Covid virus meant that every aspect of Home-Start Garioch's working practices had to change. It has been very cheering to report how successfully the scheme was able to adapt and ensure that as far as possible a consistent service was provided to families, volunteers were supported, and new volunteers trained.

This is largely due to the efforts made by our staff to provide safe working conditions so that activities were able to continue. The safety of all concerned was at the heart of the planning. This meant that at periods when indoor contact was not possible arrangements were made for outdoor activities or doorstep meetings, and when physical meeting was not possible staff and volunteers used email, phone, and social media to remain in contact with families. Training of new volunteers continued, again on-line when necessary. This means that numbers of families and volunteers have not diminished despite the difficult circumstances, and as far as possible families' needs have been met.

This has required effort and imagination on the part of the staff, and the results are a testimony to their dedication.

Board meetings and sub-groups have continued via Zoom, and I am grateful to the Board for their consistent support. Despite the circumstances some very innovative fund-raising activities have also continued. I would like to thank Tracey Skene and her team for their ingenuity and consistent hard work in successful fund-raising, which has been outstanding given the difficult circumstances this year. We will miss her enthusiasm and skills when she steps down at this AGM after 14 years of service.

One of our long-standing Board members, Pam Morton, will also be stepping down at this AGM. Pam has been a valuable Board member and has been active in sub-committees for 15 years, a remarkable length of service, and we are very grateful for her contribution.

Overall, Home-Start Garioch has come through the year solvent and in a better state than might have been feared at the beginning of the year. Mhairi Philip's leadership has been essential in keeping everything on track. She has been ably supported by our Co-ordinators and Administrator, and it is thanks to the hard work of all that despite the difficulties Home-Start Garioch has come through the year in a healthy state.

Managers' Report and Home-Start Garioch during the pandemic

In May 2021, Home-Start UK commissioned a report. "Home is where we start from". The aim to shine a light on the Home-Start approach, the issues facing families, the work of local Home-Starts and the voices of families who have been given a lifeline by the work of Home-Start.

Home-Start Garioch sent out links to 63 families asking if they would take part. A staggering 72% did. This is what they told us

- 89% of parents of children aged 0-5 have found parenting more challenging due to the pandemic.
- 94% of parents have experienced challenges relating to their own wellbeing.
- Most of the concerns raised by parents were focused on children's development and wellbeing.

Please contact Home-Start for a full copy of the Impact Report.

The pandemic didn't stop Home-Start Garioch. During the first lockdown we had to change and adapt how we supported our families, volunteers and staff. We continued to receive new referrals and provide immediate support. Support went from weekly for a couple of hours, to more frequently, 2 or 3 times a week, volunteer and co-ordinator, phone calls, video calls, messages. Gradually we could introduce garden visits and outside walks. Home visiting commenced in August with stringent risk assessments put into place. We continued to offer this service during the second lockdown to families whose health and wellbeing we felt would be significantly impaired without their regular one to one support from their volunteer.

Fundraising events were organised, postponed, reorganised, and cancelled. This was a significant financial loss to us as well as the awareness raised at these events. How eternally grateful we are for social media, modern technology (when it works) which allowed us to raise some funds all be it on a smaller scale.

The pandemic made a lot of people reevaluate their personal priorities, so we had a number of volunteers retire or rest, we also had an increase in enquires and so recruited and trained 18 new home visiting volunteers. 3 face to face before the second lock down and 2 zoom during the second lock down.

We have witnessed first-hand the sometimes-devastating impact it has had on individual families, families who would normally be seen as resilient, coming to the end of support. Home schooling, working from home, reduced income caused by furlough or redundancy. Statistics show that Garioch and Formartine are above the average for Median household Income for Aberdeenshire. Many of our families have seen a significant decrease in income were still over the threshold for any benefits. Their income reduced but their outgoings not. Regular support services not available or stopped and if they are it's a phone call or video call. Some families already vulnerable, feeling abandoned. Thankyou so much to all the staff, Valerie, Lynn, Shona and Wendy who battled on throughout. It has been extremely challenging and hard for us all on a professional and personal level. Covid impacted on us all, but we battled through and there is light at the end of the tunnel.



Information on the needs of families

In total we have supported 102 families with 211 children under 5.

Referrals made to Home-Start Garioch

37 new referrals.

- 26 from Health Visitors.
- 2 from other professionals
- 3 from Social Work
- 6 referred themselves.

Needs Identified at the Time of Referral

32 lonely and isolated

34 Poor mental health

26 Experiencing low self esteem

7 poor physical health

14 families needed support with their children's development

10 families needed help managing their children's behaviour

3 had concerns about their children's physical health

3 had concerns about their child's mental health

6 needed help running the household

8 needed help to use other services

8 were experiencing family conflict and stress

6 families with multiple children under 5

1 needed help with household budgeting

So How has Home-Start Garioch Helped?

“I was able to get out. As a carer for my twin granddaughters and with a baby of my own it was impossible to get out without the help of a volunteer.”



“I felt alone and abandoned. This was my first child, and I didn’t know if I was getting it right or wrong. There were no professionals there to help me. Home-Start was, and they introduced me to a volunteer who really supported me, gave me confidence and normalised a lot of my fears.”

“In the months following the birth I was completely suicidal. I felt a failure and could not do anything right. Rather than be admitted to the mother and baby unit my parents moved my husband, baby, and I in with them miles away. I couldn’t dream of coming back up to our actual home if it wasn’t for the support of my Home-Start volunteer. I will never forget the support I have received from Home-Start.”

“I was alone with 3 children, the eldest with ASN. He was struggling without his normal routine of school in addition, the specialist support he receives had stopped. It was making family life hard and impacting on the younger 2 siblings. I wasn’t coping. My volunteer facetimed him for a chat, they talked about his favourite things, pizza toppings, snacks at the cinema, movies etc. The next night, the doorbell rang and sitting in a box was a pizza, popcorn, strawberry laces and a dvd of his favourite film. I have no words. He cried because he thought everyone had stopped caring because he wasn’t seeing anyone and didn’t understand. That gesture allowed him to open up, me to understand what was going on for him and as a family work through it. Home-Start, priceless!”



Fundraising Report

An interesting year as COVID 19 began to effect planned fundraising events. The group put their heads together for alternative ways to raise some funds.

Technology allowed the annual quiz, an online sing- along session, and an online Tropic Party added to our portfolio.

Various Hampers were put together



Mill Stone Hill kept Sandra Mccorry and husband Charlie fit with 26 trips up.



HSG staff sewing and knitting skills were put to the test, mask making and woolly things



Volunteer cooking skills with jam and chutney added more to the fundraising pot.

The family photo session went ahead under strict COVID restrictions.

Despite our regular large annual events all being cancelled we still managed to scrape together an incredible £4200

On the plus side, as all our fundraising events were online, we reached out to an audience of people we may never have had contact with before. There is always a silver lining in every cloud!



