

22nd Annual Report 2009/10

Working together for families



Contents

What Home-Start offers	3
Vision and mission	4
Chair's report	5
Our work with families	6
The volunteer perspective	7
Co-ordinators' report	8
Children's centre perspective	9
Family support worker report	9
Work with families from culturally diverse backgrounds	10
Treasurer's report	11
Sources of income	12
Getting involved with Home-Start	13
Thank you	14
Trustees, staff and volunteers 2009/10	15

WHAT Home-Start offers

- **Volunteers with parenting experience** who are matched with families who have young children and visit on a regular basis
- **Befriending and flexible home-based support** which is tailor-made to meet the specific wishes and needs of a family
- **Emotional support** to help parents find ways to manage and resolve problems
- **Direct support to children**, including playing, listening, having fun, establishing routines, encouraging development and providing opportunities for outings and treats
- **Practical help**, perhaps with getting to appointments, helping with shopping, budgeting, nutrition and meal planning, cooking and making the home safe
- **Outreach and family group work** so parents can get out and meet others and become more involved in their own community
- **Information and links to other organisations** including health and educational services
- **Attendance at meetings and moral support**, especially in relation to dealing with case conferences or solicitors and court cases
- **Access** to parenting advice and parenting skills training

THE UK'S LEADING
FAMILY SUPPORT
CHARITY

Vision

Home-Start wants to see a society in which every parent has the support they need to give their children the best possible start in life.

Mission

To offer support, friendship and practical help to families with a child under five, and particularly families who are vulnerable, isolated or under stress, through home visiting by trained volunteers and other services.

Our purpose is to help children by supporting parents to grow in confidence, strengthen their relationships with children, and widen their links with the local community. In this way we aim, in partnership with other agencies, to foster the development of children, and the health and welfare of the family, and to provide an effective preventative service.



CHair's Report

I am delighted to introduce Home-Start Oxford's annual report for 2009/10. Raising and nurturing young children is an extraordinarily important task, and one which can be lonely and challenging without support. Our role is to befriend and encourage young families who face difficult circumstances, to offer practical and emotional support, and to act as a link to other services where helpful.

Home-Start volunteers visit families on a regular basis for as long as is needed, and often friendships continue long after formal Home-Start support is ended.

On the following pages you can read about our work over the year from the perspective of families, volunteers and staff. The report also celebrates our partnership with other organisations, and in particular with local children's centres; and it records specific areas of work we have developed in partnership with national charitable trusts. We are in the final year of a grant from the J Paul Getty Trust to develop work with families in Oxford from culturally diverse backgrounds; and we are pioneering a new family support role for work with families needing either rapid or particularly skilled and intensive support through a grant from Children in Need.

We act as a lifeline to the families we befriend and we are extremely grateful to the many donors who make this possible. Our income pays for staff costs, volunteer training and expenses, and some small overheads. Inevitably Home-Start has been affected by statutory funding changes and there is uncertainty across the voluntary sector as a whole about funding for next year. Statutory sources account for about half our income and the remainder is donated by individuals, trusts and local

organisations. Over the next year we are likely to be even more reliant on the good will of local benefactors and on fund raising enterprise. We are extremely grateful to everyone who supports us for your generosity and would welcome your skills and expertise in helping us develop sources of income for the future.

I would like to thank everyone who played a part in Home-Start Oxford over the year: staff, volunteers, friends, supporters and partners – and the families we work with for welcoming us into their homes. In particular I would like to express our appreciation to three members of staff who have left us since the end of the year: Chris Courtney, our manager, has led us through the changes and challenges of the last two years; Pat Alcorn, our Oxford coordinator, has been an unfailing source of wisdom; and Chloe Bennett has bubbled with ideas as our administrator. We wish them well for the future. In addition I would like to thank Rosemary Bean, who held our health and safety 'portfolio' for so long, and Lonah Hebditch for all their work as trustees. Finally it is with pleasure that I welcome Michelle Blackstock as our new Family Support Worker and Susie Fellows as our temporary administrator.

It is a privilege to chair a charity with a team of such dedicated staff and volunteers who play an important role in the life of our local community. I hope you enjoy reading our report.

Romy Briant
Chair of Trustees

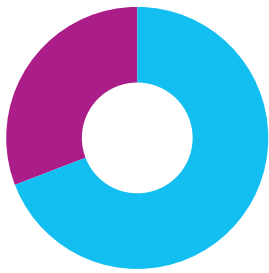
"There are lots of people involved in my life at the moment, all trying to help, but the only one I feel really relaxed with is my Home-Start volunteer. I wish she could come every day!"

Mother

OUR WORK WITH FAMILIES

Total number of families 2009-10

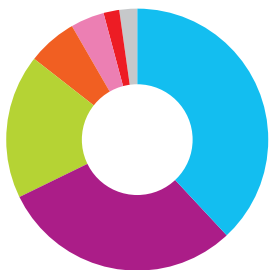
97



Children supported this year (2009-10)

238

- Number of children under five 165
- Number of children five and over 73



Sources of referrals

■ Health visitor	37
■ Self	29
■ Children's Centre	17
■ Social Worker	6
■ Other Health Referrals	4
■ Other social services/social work referrals	2
■ Other	2
Total	97

The needs identified by families referred and how well Home-Start Oxford & Bicester have met those needs

KEY

Need: and number of families expressing this need

At end of support

Need fully met - no longer a need

Things are better - continues to be some need

Things are NO better - continues to be a need

Feeling isolated: 21



Using other services/facilities in the area: 19



Parents' emotional health/well-being: 36



Parents' self esteem: 19



Parents' physical health/well-being: 17



Children's physical health/well-being: 9



Children's emotional health/well-being: 14



Managing the child(ren)'s behaviour: 13



Being involved in the child(ren)'s development: 15



Stress caused by conflict in the family: 18



The day to day running of the house: 16



Managing the household budget: 4



Coping with the extra work caused by multiple births or multiple children under five: 10



Other: 3



THE VOLUNTEER PERSPECTIVE

I knew when I retired that I wanted to do something useful with my time, so it seemed like fate that the week after I left work the local paper was advertising for Home-start volunteers in Bicester. So seven years ago, after attending the preparation course, I met my first family. Luckily we 'jelled' and over the following year we were able to build up Mum's confidence. Eventually, she was able to go out on her own with her two little girls. I still see her as a friend and she says that she can't believe that she was once so lacking in self confidence. She is so grateful to Home-Start.

Since then, I've had four other families, often two at a time and I've been so lucky with all of them. Visits are very varied – cooking sessions with one little boy, being an extra pair of hands to get out and about and playing with the children. For one family, I am a surrogate grandma, both for children and mum. I feel that all the families appreciate having that special person coming to see and help them, and I know they are all grateful to Home-Start. Life for me would not be the same without my Home-Start families, and I am so thankful I read that advert which has led me to so many years of enjoyment.

A Bicester volunteer



Christmas party

I have really enjoyed my time as a volunteer. I remember when my girls were little and times were tough, I think what a difference it would have made to me to have had a volunteer come in and lessen the load for a while, and that is what I have tried to be to the families I have helped - that extra pair of eyes, extra pair of hands or ears to listen, just being there, and being sensitive to the families needs. I will remember these 4 years as very happy positive years.

A Witney volunteer

"She is an amazing lady who has always had the time to just sit, listen, never judge but always be able to offer support"

Mother

Co-ordinators' Report

This last year seems to have passed amazingly quickly as we continue to work with many vulnerable families. We are constantly inspired by the dedication of our wonderful volunteers. As the saying goes, "the best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others". Our strong volunteer team supports families experiencing particularly difficult times throughout our area with enthusiasm and compassion. During the Volunteer Preparation Course, we lay great emphasis on the importance of being a good listener; many parents feed back to us that it is so helpful to have someone who will just listen, probably over numerous cups of tea, without passing judgement but nevertheless helping people to move forward through gentle encouragement. Of course, our volunteers are also there for the children, listening to them, interacting with them and most importantly, having fun with them. Thank you from all of us for your fantastic hard work!

Close working in partnership with Children's Centres has been maintained throughout the year in both Oxford and Bicester. The unique nature of our support, in the home for an unlimited length of time, is the main aspect which complements perfectly the valuable activities taking place within the many centres across our area.

We all recognise that group settings do not suit all. This is only too clearly highlighted when making an initial visit to a tearful mum suffering from post natal depression, who has to make a real effort to get out of bed in the morning, let alone attend a busy drop-in session. We know that gentle, regular support from a friendly Home-Start volunteer will help enormously. This mum may well make it to that drop-in at some stage in the future, perhaps accompanied by her volunteer for a bit of moral support but only when the time is right. We hope that, with our proven track record, we will be able to increase the services we already provide to existing centres and forge new links with other centres across the region in the future.

We look forward to recruiting and preparing more volunteers over the coming year. From the number of requests for support that we receive it is clear that many families would benefit from the services offered by Home-Start. With an on-going effort to raise our profile and funding, we hope to be able to offer a universal service to all families who need it.



A CHILDREN'S CENTRE PERSPECTIVE

Bicester Children's Centre's Brookside / Glory Farm and Home-Start

We offer a seamless partnership supporting families with under fives living in the Bicester area.

Working with Home-Start has ensured that families with identified support needs can access reliable, non-judgemental and high quality support in their homes.

The volunteers often visit the Children's Centre with the families they are supporting. Up until this point many of the families may not have previously engaged with us – having that helping hand/friendly ear makes all the difference. The volunteers offer open ended support tailored to the individual families needs

We refer families to Home-Start for support for a number of reasons, e.g. multiple births, social isolation, lone parents, health difficulties (parent or child).

The Children's Centre and Home-Start also work together facilitating a Stay & Play group at the Glory Farm site for families who do not feel ready/confident to access busy Children's Centre groups. With support over a number of weeks the families are encouraged to start attending more mainstream sessions.

Partnership working has been the key to success. We meet on a regular basis to discuss the impact and outcomes for the families receiving the service.

Home-Start has enhanced Children's Centre services in the Bicester area, and I would highly recommend this initiative to other Children's Centres in Oxfordshire.

Marion Aslett

Co-ordinator, Bicester Children's Centre

REPORT BY OUR FAMILY SUPPORT WORKER

I feel privileged to have been appointed by Home-Start to support families, funded for a year, through a Children In Need grant.

I started working for Home-start in January, working 14 hours per week. Over the last 9 months I have supported 9 families, impacting on 26 children, for weekly or twice weekly visits.

I feel particularly privileged, that I have been allowed to build a relationship with these families with complex needs, built on trust and friendship.

Each family I have visited came with their own individual strengths and weaknesses and had their own individual set of circumstances, including:

- Isolation
- Domestic violence issues
- Mental illness
- Disability
- Parenting skills
- Housing and financial difficulties.

My role allows me to respond rapidly and flexibly to urgent family circumstances or intense needs. By doing so I hope to be able to support families to increase their confidence, identify and build on their strengths and

work together on any problems, so that they can reduce any negative impact on their children.

Many of the families I have supported have been isolated for one reason or another and may have had difficulty in engaging in other services in the past. It is immensely rewarding when you manage to get the families to engage in the services and community provisions around with your support, but even more rewarding when they use these services without you.

The biggest reward though, is when you hear the squeals of excitement from the children when you knock on the door!

It has really opened my eyes as to how alone and desperate some families are, and how important a friendly face is to them.

Home-Start is a fantastic organisation, which has already given numerous families a friendly face, through their devoted volunteer's weekly commitments. Let's hope it continues to develop, and support many more families!

Michelle Blackstock

SUPPORTING families from CULTURALLY DIVERSE backgrounds

BLACK, MINORITY ETHNIC OR REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER (BMER)

One focus of our work is a project, funded by the J Paul Getty Jnr. Charitable Trust, to enhance our support to families from culturally diverse backgrounds. Our volunteers have supported families from: China; Pakistan; India; Bangladesh; Rwanda; Kenya; Somalia; Democratic Republic of Congo; Zimbabwe; Egypt; The Caribbean Islands; Brazil; Venezuela; Indonesia; Albania; and Poland. Over this year we have worked with 32 BMER families and trained a number of volunteers from diverse cultural backgrounds.

We have strong links with agencies in Oxfordshire working with families of BMER background. We have benefited enormously from knowledge and skills shared in multi agency networks. Equally other agencies view Home-Start as making a unique contribution through our outreach and home-based support. Our capacity to befriend and be alongside families and to gradually introduce other resources is seen as an invaluable asset.

While it is important not to over generalise there are some challenges that seem particular to BMER families where Home-Start has a role to play:

- Social isolation can be exacerbated by language difficulties, by lack of familiarity with local customs and organisations, and by fear of appearing foolish. Home visiting and befriending can help overcome language barriers and develop skills and confidence to access services. It also gives families, including children, the experience of being valued and respected, and the opportunity to offer hospitality which is central to so many cultures.
- Mental health and ill-health can be defined and experienced differently in different cultural contexts. This can make it difficult for both families and services to identify need and access/provide help. Whilst counselling and other forms of treatment lie beyond the scope of Home-Start, the support and friendship of a volunteer can be the first step towards a parent becoming confident in seeking specialist help.
- Domestic abuse cross all cultural boundaries but in some communities concepts of honour make it harder to seek help and exacerbate subsequent problems of isolation. Home-Start is part of an integrated

multi agency network working to reduce the risk to victims of domestic abuse and honour-based violence. Through home visiting and befriending we are able to reduce isolation and fear and to reassure and support access to a range of services.

- Families seeking political asylum encounter particularly strong barriers to inclusion. They are unable to work, their insecure status makes it hard to put down roots, and they are often affected by previous trauma. We have supported three families through the asylum seeking process (all single mothers with up to three children aged under five). They have all begun further training/education or started looking for jobs. Two told me they 'would have given up' without the commitment of their Home-Start volunteers.

Through this project we have also expanded the range of cultural backgrounds and languages spoken by our volunteers. This has enriched Home-Start, although it is not possible to generalise about the implications for matching with families. Some families gain in confidence when we can link them with a volunteer from their own culture and religion, other families would prefer volunteers from a different ethnic community, and some white British families have increased in confidence through support from a 'non-white' volunteer.

We plan to develop an enhanced training module for all our volunteers to increase our capacity to offer a culturally sensitive service and make a difference to the families we support. We will also develop a specialist induction for co-ordinators which will include the impact on volunteers of supporting families who have experienced trauma, and of family conflict in different cultural settings.

I look forward to the last year of the project. I would like to thank our partner agencies, volunteers and, above all, families for your help and feedback as we develop our service.

Anna Lørke
Co-ordinator

Treasurer's Report

Uncertainty about future funding is probably a treasurer's worst enemy. Without it, planning is difficult, and making any long-term commitments impossible. Regrettably, it is now the kind of scenario faced by Home-Start Oxford year after year, leaving us facing the risk that short-term financial outcomes move against us. Last year, an extremely difficult year economically for the country as a whole, was one such year.

As anticipated, our income reduced materially, although it did so by somewhat more than we had hoped: from over £170,000 to under £100,000. Big Lottery funding for Bicester, and a three-year Henry Smith Charitable Trust grant funding Family Support workers both came to an end. It was not possible to renew either. At the same time, our income from grant-giving charitable trusts fell from over £40,000 to just over £10,000. No doubt the reduction in investment income of such trusts, as well as an increased demand for funds from all charities was responsible. Private donations also fell somewhat. Despite the reductions in donated income, we continue to be extremely grateful to those who assist us. Home-Start's previous primary source of statutory funds, Oxford County Council, also changed its procurement of services such as ours to the various Children's Centres throughout the geographical area for which we are responsible. While many did enter funded service agreements with us, many were unable to do so. It is worth noting that the Children's Centres themselves generally suffered from uncertainty of income until the last minute, and the outcome for us was that not all the Centres in areas where we were already supporting families were able to fund us to continue assisting with family out-reach work.

In the light of rapidly contracting income, our expenses, of which staff salaries are the dominant component, were also reduced sharply, following the reduction of staff which unfortunately became necessary. It was with a heavy heart that the trustees had to say farewell to redundant staff, as there was ongoing demand for support from local families.

The overall financial result for the year was a somewhat larger deficit, bringing our year-end reserves to undesirably low levels at a time when our future income streams are at least as uncertain as before.

At the time of writing, it is recognised that the general economic situation is neither going to improve dramatically nor quickly, and steps have already been taken earlier this year to further reduce our staff and overhead costs. The trustees, conscious of the necessity of increasing our non-statutory funding, are also very actively focused on seeking funds from all likely sources. The new coalition government has publicly expressed its intention to continue supporting the infrastructure supporting the welfare for young children and we are hopeful that this may lead to somewhat more recognition and statutory support for our unique way of supporting local families.

Details of our income and expenditure for 2009/10 can be found in the Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts 2009/10. Copies are available from the Home-Start Oxford office.

Douglas Keir
Treasurer

"She was just the right volunteer for me, she gently motivated me to do things and was such a great person to talk to – although she was there for all of us, I considered it my time"

Home-Start Family

Sources of income

We are extremely grateful to the following organisations, trusts and people who have made contributions towards the support we provide to local families:

Oxfordshire County Council
 Bicester Children's Centre
 Bicester Rural Children's Centre
 East Oxford Children's Centre
 Florence Park Children's Centre
 Leys Children's Centre
 Marston Children's Centre
 BBC Children in Need
 The Henry Smith Charity
 J.P. Getty Charitable Trust
 Frilford Heath Golf Club: Ladies Section
 Dragon Charity
 PF Charitable Trust
 Boutell Bequest
 Foresters (Isis branch)
 Alchemy Foundation
 Doris Field Charitable Trust
 Balliol College
 St Giles Lodge
 All Souls College
 Estate of the late K. Strong
 Mr & Mrs J.A. Pye Trust
 Waitrose

Nordev Trust
 St James & St Francis Church, Cowley
 Bicester District Scout Council
 Garsington WI
 TSA (UK)
 Easy fund-raising
 Mrs. L Aldridge
 A Booth
 Mr & Mrs Clark
 Mr & Mrs Grebenik
 Mr D. Keir
 Mr & Mrs A. Lacey
 Mr J. Louw
 Mr & Mrs P. Nairn
 Mr & Mrs J. Silver
 Mrs E. Walker
 Mrs R Briant

 Numerous individuals who bought tickets
 for our 2009 AGM raffle

 Other individuals who prefer to
 remain anonymous

"Her help has been invaluable, and her ability to listen and make me see things from a different angle has been so helpful. She has the most wonderful relationship with my daughter too"

Mother

Getting involved with Home-Start



Home-Start Oxford supports local families through the work of local volunteers and relies on local help

If you would like to be involved there are a range of opportunities:

- Become a **Home-Start volunteer**. Usually a volunteer will make a commitment to visit one family in their home each week for up to 3 hours and occasionally longer – to offer support and be a friend to the family.
- Become a **trustee**. Trustees are volunteers themselves and are responsible for the work, staff and resources of the charity. They meet formally six times a year and between meetings contribute in a number of ways to the running of the charity. They are elected at the Annual General Meeting (AGM).
- Support the work of the charity through your skills and talents and advice either informally, or through becoming a **member** of the charity or advisor to the trustees.
- Contribute financially by **making a donation**, helping with our fundraising or nominating Home-Start as beneficiary of a local event. If you are a tax payer you can increase the value of your donation by completing a gift aid declaration form.

We would welcome you joining us in any of these roles!

THANK YOU

Home-Start Oxford would like to thank the many individuals and organisations who have helped us over the past year and whose support has made our work possible.

This includes:

- Home-Start volunteers – who, in addition to supporting families, help Home-Start in a myriad of ways
- All the individuals, organisations and trusts who have made donations and grants and the volunteers who have donated their expenses
- Donors of raffle prizes and other gifts
- Children's Centres with whom we have contractual partnerships
- Children In Need and the J Paul Getty Jnr. Charitable Trust who fund our projects

And the support we have received from:

- Long standing friends of Home-Start including former trustees and volunteers
- Speakers on the volunteer's preparation course
- Oxfordshire County Council Early Years Staff
- Oxfordshire Children's Centres
- Home-Start colleagues in Banbury & Chipping Norton and in South Oxfordshire, Home-Start schemes in the South East, and Home-Start UK
- Heather Alexander, Home-Start Regional Consultant
- Staff of Blackbird Leys Youth and Community Centre
- Refugee Resource
- Oxfordshire Mind
- Asylum Welcome
- Community Emergency Food Bank
- Reducing The Risk and the Domestic Abuse Champions Network
- Citizens' Advice Bureau
- Sarah Smith for her Independent Examination of our accounts
- Kevin Hinton for designing this report and our leaflets and posters
- Susie Fellows and Tolu Olawepo for their substantial contribution to our work - not least in helping compile this report

*"It's our favourite day of the week
when she comes"*

Home-Start Family

Trustees, Staff and Volunteers 2009/10

Trustees

Romy Briant	Chair
Jonathan Louw	Vice Chair
Douglas Keir	Treasurer
Rosemary Bean (to December 2009)	
Meg Fisher	
Lonah Hebditch (to December 2009)	
Anne Youngson	

Staff

Chris Courtney	Manager and Co-ordinator
Pat Alcorn	Co-ordinator
Sarah Harvey	Co-ordinator
Anna Laerke	Co-ordinator
Michelle Blackstock	Family Support Worker
Chloe Bennett	Administrator

Volunteers

Rebecca	Kavita	Judith
Val	Margaret	Suzanne
Rosemary	Linda	Rebecca
Lisa	Jan	Liz
Carolyn	Julie	Jill
Lesley	Annica	Carolyn
Margi	Dee	Wendy
Anne	Britta	Janet
Audrey	Shaune	Shelly
Chrissie	Manja	Anna
Frances	Rosemary	Helen
Meg	Kate	Liz
Joan	Sharon	Sonia
Theresa	Della	Sue
Catherine	Anne	Serina
Trudi	Debbie	Sarah
Kate	Beryl	Sandra
Val	Leni	Zena
Charlotte	Trudi	Nikki
Jocelyn	Meryll	

"The training course for volunteers is very thorough. Volunteers are well prepared for their role in supporting families"

Home-Start Referrer





Home-Start Oxford
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Blackbird Leys Road
Oxford OX4 6HW

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email: admin@homestart-oxford.org.uk