

## **TURNING LIVES ROUND WITH HOME-START**

Louise, 26 was often left to cope alone and isolated, without her partner, who spends a lot of a time away from the home, and with no friends or family to turn to.

She suffers from a physical condition (Mitochondrial myopathy) which compromises her mobility, including her ability to pick up her baby. Both of her children aged 5 and 1yr10m have the same condition and the youngest child has other medical conditions talapeis, spina bifida, high palette which mean frequent irregular but probably at least fortnightly and at three different hospitals, Burton, Derby, Birmingham hospital visits and spells as an in-patient. All of this pushed the family into a very bad situation.

When a Home-Start volunteer was matched to the family through a Children's Centre referral things were in a very bad way, resulting in both children being put on the Child Protection register. The domestic situation of the family and the conditions at home were cause for real concern at a series of case conferences involving a number of different agencies, and the Home-Start volunteer faced the daunting task of helping the family get itself out of a dire situation.

2 years later Mum has turned things around with the help of her Home-Start volunteer Ruth. The children are now classed as CIN (Children in Need), but only because of their disabilities. Mum's relationship with Ruth, 70 has developed so that she has become something of a 'grandma' figure. And they do a lot together, including planning and cooking nutritious food and knitting clothes for the children. "I had none of this myself" says Louise "Home-Start has changed our lives – 2 years ago we were in a very bad way – now things are so much better."

"Ruth has been an absolute lifeline and when I am in hospital quite a long way away she is usually the only person who comes to visit me."