

APRIL 2012

**Home-Start South Derbyshire
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Home-Start South Derbyshire believes that children need a happy and secure childhood and that parents play the key role in giving children a good start in life and helping them achieve their full potential. It is important to remember that families choose to access our service for this exact reason and stay with us until they decide they no longer require the service or until the child reaches school age.

Home-Start South Derbyshire Volunteers offer friendship and practical support to families with young children.

To Home-Start South Derbyshire every family is special and we respond to each family's needs through a combination of home-visiting support and social events. We do this by recruiting and training local volunteers, who are usually parents themselves, to visit families with young children to offer informal, friendly and confidential support.

Home-Start aims to increase the confidence and independence of the family by:

- Offering support, friendship and practical assistance;
- Visiting families in their own homes, where the dignity and identity of each adult and child can be respected and protected;
- Reassuring parents that difficulties in bringing up children are not unusual and encourage them to enjoy family life;
- Developing a relationship with the family in which time can be shared and understanding can be developed: the approach is flexible to take account of different needs;
- Encouraging parents' strengths and emotional well-being for the ultimate benefit of their children;
- Encouraging families to widen their network of relationships and to use effectively the support and service available within the community.

Home-Start South Derbyshire offers support to families within their home and is available to any families who are experiencing stress or difficulties, who have at least one child under the age of five and live within the South Derbyshire area. All Home-Start schemes use the Hardiker Level of Need to assess the family needs. (Please see attached). As you will see we work with families who range from having difficulties accessing local services due to isolation or low confidence to families where children are placed on a child protection plan. Appropriately prepared and trained volunteers and staff work together with families to build confidence and self-esteem and help create a happy and safe environment for the children to grow and develop in.

We receive referrals from local agencies, professionals and families themselves for all sorts of reasons. We have supported families who have just moved to the area and don't know anyone. Our volunteer will visit the family and take them to local children centres and playgroups as well as providing emotional support – being a friend. This increases the parents confidence and eventually the family are able to integrate in to the community.

We receive referrals for families where the children have a disability or complex needs. A volunteer will again offer emotional support, signpost the family to local support groups as well as transporting/accompanying the family to medical appointments. Sometimes the volunteer will look after the children in the reception area whilst the parent is able to go in to the appointment and be able to listen to what the doctor is saying instead of having their mind distracted by trying to look after the children. This makes the experience a lot less stressful for the family.

We have supported families that have fled domestic abuse situations. The volunteer has been an emotional support which is important for the parent – being able to trust someone and talk in confidence about their experience. The volunteers also help the family to adjust to the new area and introduce them to local services and schools. Volunteers have encouraged the parent to attend support groups such as Next Step and have accompanied the parent to these when needed. This helps the parent grow in confidence, raise their self esteem and help move forward.

Finally we have had a number of referrals where families are on child protection plans. Our volunteers will provide a listening ear and help the family to achieve the actions identified on the plan. This could include encouraging the family to maintain a clean and safe home. The volunteer is able to play with the children whilst the parent attends to household chores. It may be the volunteer models play with the children to encourage bonding or teaches life skills such as cooking and budgeting and the day to day running of a home.

All volunteer support helps the parent to move forward. A volunteer visiting each week, re-assuring a parent they are doing a good job can increase the parent's confidence significantly. A volunteer visit can make the parent feel that someone cares and visits because the volunteer wants to be there not because they are paid. Children reap the benefits by seeing a more confident and happier parent, home becomes a less stressful environment which has an impact on the children(s) wellbeing and the children look forward to the volunteer visits. Many families have commented that over time the volunteer feels like a member of the family or close friend. One family refers to their volunteer as "Nana Ruth".

Support outside the home is offered in response to expressed need. Examples of support outside the home offered by Home-Start South Derbyshire include:

- Social activities held in the local area every school half term including six activities during the summer holidays and a Christmas party.
- **Sustainable Growth & Opportunity, Sustainable (Community) Development, Safe and Secure, Safer Communities and Vibrant Communities:**
Home-Start work alongside of families to help them access local services, attend training/further education and access employment opportunities. Local services signposted to families range from children centres, financial support services, mental health services to the local adult education centre and leisure facilities. Our social activities are based within the National Forest area which enables us to showcase the services on offer to families such as Rosliston Forestry Centre, Conkers, Sharpes Pottery and the Old Post Centre to name a few.

A lot of our families suffer from low self esteem and we find that encouraging them to attend parenting courses such as Peers Early Education Partnership and Living With Children as well as confidence building courses at the Adult Education Centre helps address this need.

We actively signpost families to support services when they are experiencing financial/housing difficulties. An example of this would be contacting the Housing Office at SDDC for advice on behalf of one of our families when facing homelessness. This was due to the mum having very low confidence and was very nervous about talking to people in a formal situation.

We have also assisted a family in reporting a landlord who did not provide adequate housing, to the environmental health department. The family did not know who to contact, we were able to provide a contact name and telephone number for the family to action.

All of this is achieved by offering a comprehensive training programme to all our volunteers. In some instances this has also enabled them to access further education or employment. All volunteers receive supervision and we help them establish a Personal Development Plan which we monitor and support closely.

We also offer peer support. This is where volunteers can talk to other volunteers within Home-Start about their experiences and ask for advice if needed in a confidential setting.

Volunteers have said that without Home-Start providing them with the confidence they needed, they would not have accessed further training and opportunities. Home-Start relies on parent volunteers to deliver its service. Without volunteers there would be no scheme. Due to the increase in demand for our service we are constantly seeking new volunteers.

- **Lifestyle Choices and Healthier Communities**

Home-Start promotes a healthier lifestyle and the social activities we have organised have been health and wellbeing based. We developed a buggy walk last year and also delivered a Garden Gang group. Families learned how to grow their own vegetables and were shown how to cook healthy recipes with the food they had grown. This programme ran for 6 weeks and was very successful and achieved good local press coverage. We have promoted Healthy Harvest to our families which is the fruit and veg bags from CVS, we have even hosted this.

The majority of our social activities are based around active recreation.

Volunteers are able to teach life skills such as cooking healthy meals and encouraging healthy eating. Volunteers have supported families with budgeting and shopping for healthy meals. Our volunteers are local and know which shops offer the best price for ingredients and are able to support families with keeping the shopping bill low and make simple changes to their bills such as buying own labels instead of branded.

- **Children and Young People**

Families are encouraged to attend parenting programmes such as PEEPS which is a course parents and children can do together. Funding from the District Council enables us to organise social activities throughout the year for families to attend. Examples of activities we have provided include pond dipping at Rosliston Forestry Centre, mini beast hunt at Conkers, clay modelling at Sharpes Museum and the now in-famous Christmas party at Rosliston Forestry Centre. We try to show the families what is available to them in South Derbyshire and the National Forest and experience things they would not normally do together as a family. Stress can make it difficult for a parent to engage with their family in the wider community. By organising activities families are able to meet other families in a similar situation and children are able to interact with other children. Without funding from SDDC we would not be able to provide this added value part of the service. Children experience new things and most importantly are able to do something together with their family and have fun.

- **Value for Money**

Home-Start has a strong board of volunteer trustees who govern the scheme. We have implemented SAGE accounting system to improve and strengthen financial control. We have financial policies in place including a reserve account. Budgets are closely monitored and have been reduced greatly during the past two years, while maintaining services. This has been an important element in our plans to ensure sustainability. Our service is value for money as the scheme pays only 3 members of staff (2 part-time) covering the whole of South Derbyshire. Volunteers are paid travel expenses only – their time is given for free because they care and want to support families in their time of need within their local community.

Throughout the year we work on a number of projects/programmes for families and volunteers. Twice per year we deliver our Volunteer Preparation Course. This is an 8 week mandatory course that all volunteers attend before supporting families. This is held during January and again in September. During May and June we implement our PR plan and are actively out and about visiting local nurseries, pre-schools and other family services promoting the service.

An exciting project we are currently working on is in partnership with CVS to deliver a Personal Wellbeing Course to a group of Home-Start families. This is an accredited course over 6 sessions which will enhance parents confidence and build their self-esteem which is a need that we have seen increase during the past year. The course will cover

Understanding Motivation, Team Building, Healthy Lifestyle, Making decisions and Values and Beliefs. This will be delivered by Home-Staff and CVS staff and is completely free for the families.

During the summer holidays is when we deliver 6 social activities (1 per week) then after the prep course in September we are organising another activity and volunteer training course followed by our Christmas Party.

All the families we support are from the South Derbyshire area and 90% of the staff and volunteers are also from the South Derbyshire area.

We currently have 1 full time Senior Organiser (37 hours), 1 part-time Organiser (18.5 hours) and 1 part-time administrator (18.5 hours) and 35 volunteers.

We do not charge for the service we provide, we do pay volunteer expenses and some volunteers donate these to the scheme.

Our turnover for 2010/2011 was £71,530.00 Sources of income for 2010/11 were South Derbyshire District Council - £11,555.00, Derbyshire County Council - £39,200.00, Derbyshire Community Foundation £1,000.00, Healthier Communities - £1,000.00, Woodville Children Centre - £1,000.00 and donations - £1,900.00. South Derbyshire District Council provided 21% of our income for this period.

Last year (2010-2011) Home-Start South Derbyshire supported 76 families throughout South Derbyshire, this compares with 42 families in 2009. Of those 76 families, 46 were supported by a home-visiting volunteer and 30 through our social activity groups. This year (2011/2012) we have supported 86 families, 52 were supported by a home-visiting volunteer and 34 by social activity support. This shows yet another increase and a need for our service.

Home-Start South Derbyshire is very proactive with regards to promoting itself. We have a website, facebook page and twitter account. We are often in the local media such as Burton Mail and parish magazines advertising for volunteers, displaying pictures of social activities we have organised and showing off our new volunteer recruits! We have attended the Overseal Gala for the last 3 years, National Playday at Gresley Memorial Park, Healthy South Derbyshire event this year at Greenbank Leisure Centre, Children Centre open days and the Swadlincote forum meetings. We ensure posters are advertised locally at parks and town centre notice boards, supermarkets and other services accessed by families. The staff often present to local agencies such as MAT teams, SDDC housing team and Children Centre advisory boards. Just recently we were featured on Central News as part of a Home-Start UK campaign. The story was about a family who received Home-Start support and has now gone on to become a Home-Start volunteer. She has also been nominated for "Outstanding Individual Achievement" by Swadlincote Adult Centre for Adult Learning Week. I have attached the family story for you to read, which was written in her own words and I feel encapsulates Home-Start perfectly.