



**Support and friendship
for families**

A Review of
Home-Start Stoke-on-Trent

October 2010

Features of Home-Start Stoke-on-Trent:

- ✓ 26 years of support to families in the City
- ✓ Highly regarded and reliable service with sound reputation
- ✓ Provides long term support for the most vulnerable families
- ✓ Support for families who do not easily engage with other services
- ✓ Strong track record of partnership working
- ✓ Provides opportunities for people to learn/develop skills and knowledge
- ✓ Provides a variety of volunteering opportunities to enable people to become employable
- ✓ Parents supporting parents
- ✓ Unique Special Agreement awarded by Home-Start UK for the local scheme to work with families where there is no child under 5 years of age
- ✓ Implements the *Think Family* approach
- ✓ Staff qualified to minimum of level 3 and above

Home-Start Stoke-on-Trent has been providing confidential and non judgemental family support services in the City for over 25 years and is now a well established and highly regarded service by partners across all sectors and also very importantly, trusted by families.

Part of a network of schemes across the UK supported by the national organisation Home-Start UK, the local scheme is now the largest scheme in the West Midlands and one of the largest schemes in the UK.

Partnership working is at the heart of the work ensuring the holistic needs of families can be met. Guided by the principles of the *Think Family* model, Home-Start is able to provide a range of services or access to services, to support families as flexibly as possible.

While most services in the City provide time limited and targeted support, Home-Start provides support for as long as a family needs it and is varied in the support that can be provided.

The core service of outreach and home visiting is provided by:

Trained volunteers, all with significant parenting experience themselves, who are supported by Co-ordinators to visit families weekly in their own homes to provide a range of support and practical help as identified by the family. This can include help caring for children, help in the home, signposting to other services, transport, accompanying and hand holding to various appointments and to access services, a positive parenting role model, listening, encouragement and reassurance, a listening ear, respite for parents and children, help with learning and education such as homework, reading and to widen their own social networks to extend their support networks.

Additional services developed over many years and in response to the demands and needs of families include:

Family Learning and Support Groups

Parents attend weekly sessions at the Family Learning and Support Groups whereby they undertake formal and informal learning and training. Each is designed to help increase their confidence and self esteem and also their motivation to help support their children's learning and education. Parents may also choose to use the groups as their time for respite away from the pressures of home life and the demands of children and also to meet others in similar situations for peer support.

Little Stars Creche

Children attend weekly sessions at the Ofsted registered Little Starts Crèche, whereby qualified staff implement the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum to ensure the individual needs of children can be met through observation, planning and assessments and the early identification of a child with additional needs.

The children who attend the Little Stars Crèche are unlikely to attend any other early years setting due to their parents lack of confidence and motivation and, because of the difficulties in their home life, they are likely to experience development delays, speech and language difficulties and delay in their emotional and social development. These children are then more likely to be in the lowest 20% of children's achievement. Children are immediately disadvantaged on starting school and often never catch up with their peers throughout their school life

Family Support Workers

Family Support Workers are available to support families with more complex needs at level 3 of the Guide to Levels of Need. Here many parents experience mental health problems, misuse drugs/alcohol/substances, suffer domestic violence, and their children may be neglected and/or abused. Family Support Workers provide intensive support for a time limited period aiming to resolve many of the issues until a volunteer or place in group becomes available and appropriate.

Service for Children with Special Needs

Over the years we have developed a strong and reliable service to support families where a child has special needs. This began with funding from the Children's Fund and later a partnership with the Early Years Inclusion Team, whereby we supported the early identification of children with additional needs, supported them with their transition into school and helped support the financial, emotional and social needs of the whole family.

More recently this has been funded by the Aiming High for disabled Children Programme in the City and we currently work in partnership with others to ensure children can enjoy and take part in leisure and fun activities, and their parents receive emotional help and practical support from trained volunteers and paid staff.

We have recently recruited and trained a number of young people to work alongside volunteers to ensure children have fun and enjoyment and gain the most from any activities they are involved with. This is also creating valuable opportunities for young people to volunteer and develop their practice and experience for their future employment prospects.

Stay and Play Sessions for Children with Special Needs and their Families

The Special Needs service also set up and ran the first Play and Stay sessions for children with special needs and their parents in the City, at Kemball Special School in the south and Heathfield Hoppers in the north of the City.

Since then we have also set up and now run additional similar services in Penkhull Children's Centre, (Penkhull Pandas), Westfield Children's Centre and Burslem Children's Centre.

Dosti Project

With funds awarded initially by the Home-Office in 2001 we developed the Dosti Project (*a Punjabi word meaning friendship*), a service for families from BME communities including Asylum Seekers and Refugee families. Although specific funds for this are no longer available the Dosti Project has enabled us to provide more culturally sensitive services to families from other cultures which have become trusted and accessible. A specific family group

and crèche still meets for the parents and children. We also provide the traditional home visiting support to families in their own homes. We have worked tirelessly to provide a service that is trusted by many different communities across the City.

Family Support Network

Due to the extensive experience of providing family support, Home-Start provides the Senior Management, Lead Co-ordinator, Family Support Workers and Administrative support for the Family Support Network. Home visiting volunteers have been recruited and trained to provide flexible out of hours support for families in their own homes. The ethos of Home-Start is a core feature of the Family Support Network.

Families

190 families and
492 children were
supported between
Mar 09 and Apr 10

294 families and
744 children were
supported between
Mar 08 and Apr 09

323 families and
814 children were
supported between
Mar 07 and Apr 08

The families supported by Home Start include many who are described as 'hard to reach', who are operating at top end of level 2 and on level 3 on the Guide to Levels of Need and who require more intensive support. Examples of their needs includes drugs/alcohol and substance misuse, domestic violence, mental health issues, childhood neglect and abuse.

Referrals for families come from a wide range of other services who provide only time limited services and cannot offer the more long term support that families at this level need in order to ensure successful outcomes.

Home-Start appears to be the only service operating in the City that will provide support for as long as a family needs it and can be as flexible as possible in order to meet the needs of the families. Volunteers visit and support families in the evenings and at weekends, they undertake such tasks that it would be impossible for other partners to undertake such as transporting families and children and being available out of hours.

Many parents lack the confidence, self esteem and motivation to access other services and an important role of Home-Start is to signpost, accompany, 'hand hold' families to access local services such as their local Children's Centre. This may be required for a number of weeks and is provided for as long as is needed by the family.

The support provided is reviewed every quarter to ensure it is the most appropriate support for the family, to identify any additional needs, and to ensure that a dependency on the service is not being created.

The role of Home-Start is to support families into independence, however long that may take, not to put unrealistic expectations onto families, to work alongside them starting from where they are, and at their pace, understanding and acknowledging their difficulties and pressures.

Home-Start Co-ordinators, Family Support Workers and Crèche staff are CAF trained and Co-ordinators will often initiate CAF's and become Lead Workers, confidently drawing in other practitioners as part of the TAC.

Co-ordinators are also frequently engaged with child protection case conferences and core groups working alongside others including Children's Specialist Services.

Volunteers

105 volunteers supported families between Apr 09 & Mar 10

144 volunteers supported families between Apr 08 & Mar 09

107 volunteers supported families between Apr 07 & Mar 08

Volunteers have significant parenting experience themselves as this is found to be the most important feature of a support workers experience as judged by the families supported.

They undertake a 10 week induction course which is accredited by National Open College and provides 15 credits at level 2. Home-Start Stoke-on-Trent was one of the first schemes to gain this accreditation for volunteers training. For many volunteers this is the first qualification to gain since leaving school.

Many people having been made redundant or looking for a change in employment, apply to work voluntarily for Home-Start as they need to gain valuable work place experience in order to move onto further formal training and /or employment.

Workforce Development

Home-Start is committed to the development of staff and volunteers. All staff have CPD in place and volunteers have an annual review that takes account of their training and development needs. All of which is underpinned by the organisational training and development plan.

All of Home-Start staff are qualified to a minimum of level 3, many have much higher relevant qualifications.

Staff have been undertaking the Artemis Induction Programme. We have 5 licences and so far 3 have completed this with another 4 working towards completion.

All crèche staff are qualified to level 3 and the Lead Crèche Worker is in the final year of the Early Years Foundation Degree.

Funding

City Council Funding is available to support the scheme as follows:

JCU for the core service and support costs	£35,000
Aiming High for Disabled Children	£90,000
2 year old Childcare Pilot Project	£25,000
Family Support Network	£82,000

The JCU funds for the core service and support costs enable the scheme to employ the Scheme Manager and Finance Officer who then secure additional grants and funds from a variety of other sources to ensure a much wider and extended service to families across the City such as:

Big Lottery Funds	£85,000
Lloyds TSB	£16,000
Lloyds TSB /Arch DV project	£16,000
Henry Smith	£40,000
BBC Children in Need	£5,176
Miscellaneous fund raising	£10,000

Partnerships

Partnership working is at the heart of Home-Start's work to ensure the holistic needs of families can be met. These have included a range of partners, some working intensively and frequently over a long period of time with Home-Start, others being one-off and short term partners. These have included:

Education:

Integrate Family Support Workers
Home-School Link Workers
Education Welfare Officers
Nurseries
Libraries
Kings Camp

Health Services:

Health Visitors
Midwives
Paediatricians
Mum to Mum
GP's
Smoking Cessation
School Nurse

Children/s Disability/Special Needs Services:

ASD Team
Portage
Child Development Centre
Early Years Assessment Forum
Early Years Inclusion Team
Education Psychologist
Weston Coyney Rd Disability Team
Speech and Language Therapist
Physiotherapists
Housing Adaptions
Statutory Assessments
Disability Solutions
Parent Partnership

Adult Mental Health:

MIND
Savanah
Dove Service
Parent & Baby Day Unit

Financial and Equipment:

CAB
Family Fund
Rowley Trust
Rowntree Trust
When Project
Frank Buttle Trust

Employment Advice:

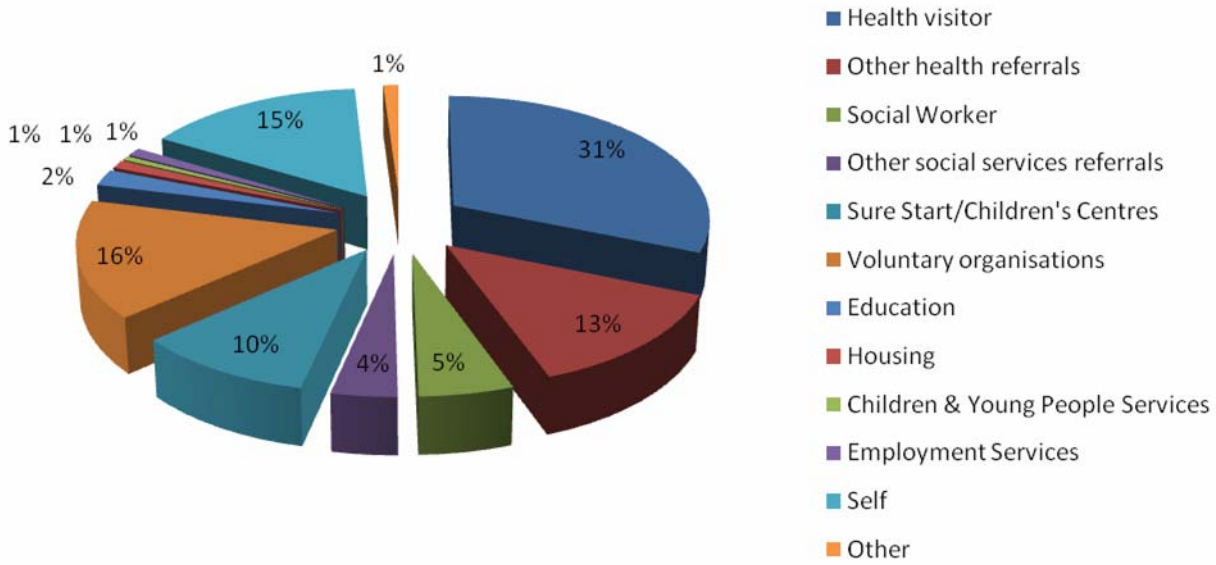
Start Up
Job Centres
STAR Project
Colleges - SoT College
Brighter Futures

Family Support Services:

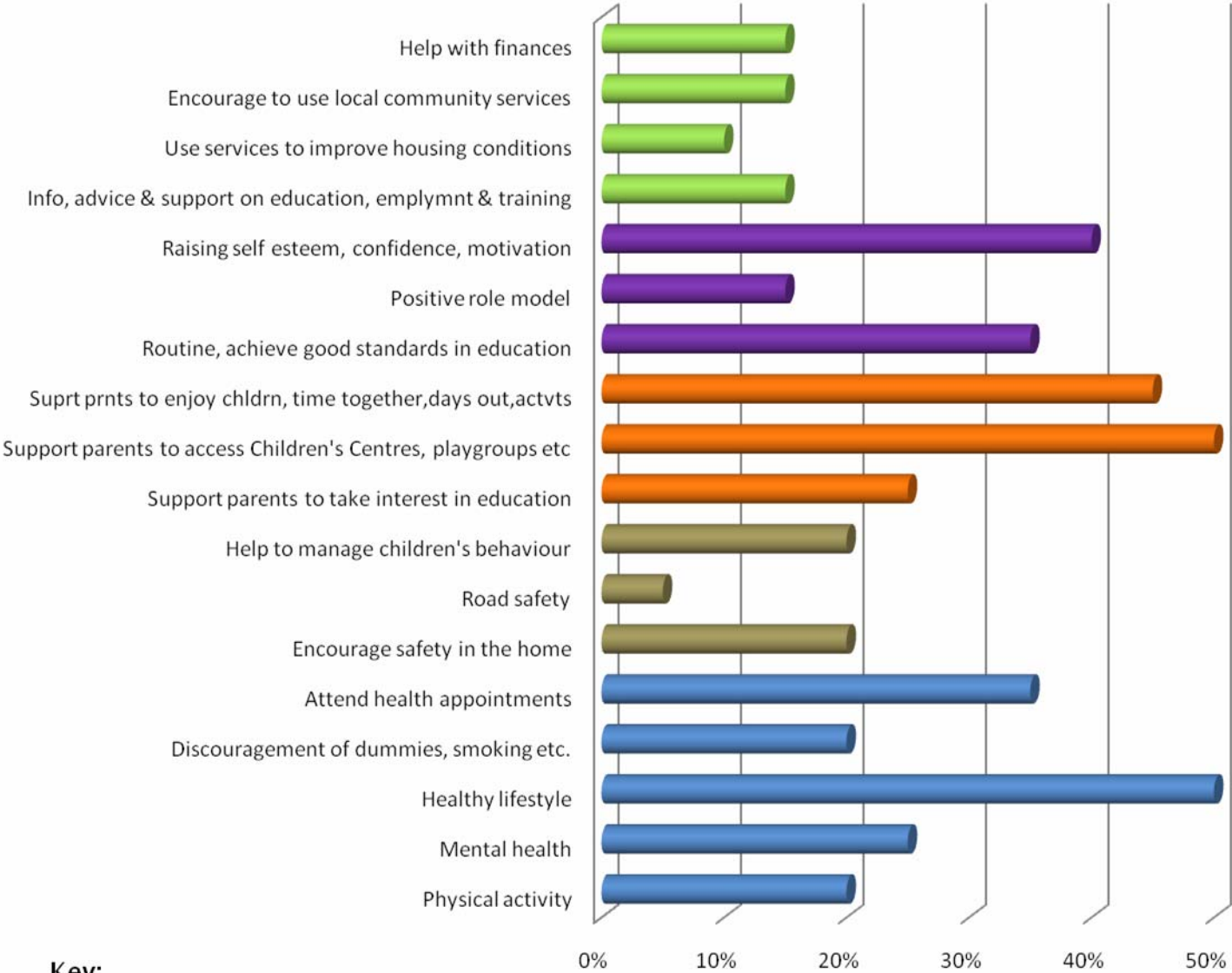
Children's Centres
Specialist Services
Parent Information Service
Domestic Violence Service ARCH
Family Support Network
CAF Team
Army Welfare Service
Community Support Officers
Probation Service

Appendix 1

Source of Referrals for Families supported Apr 09 - Mar 10



Five Outcomes



Key:

- Achieve Economic Wellbeing
- Make a Positive Contribution
- Enjoy & Achieve
- Stay Safe
- Be Healthy

Appendix 3

Quotations from Parents, Children, Volunteers and Referrers

Home-Start have supported me in so many ways. The crèche have really helped both my children with their speech and interaction with others. They have always been there for me if I need someone to talk to and have helped by having my children for me while I go on courses and interviews. They do such a good job for the families and they have done so much to bring my family on. I have really enjoyed my time with Home-start and will really miss everyone there and so will the children.

Parent

Sarah's support has been outstanding regarding my mental health and running of the house. When she arrives to support me each week I feel much more positive and happy. Knowing she will try to help me with anything means the world to me.

Parent

The thing I enjoyed most about our trip to Southport is spending the time with mum, what I haven't had in ages.

Child

Grandma feels better after the visits from Karen and that makes me happy.

Child

Mary is working well with myself, she is trying to stay on top of maintaining the house but sometimes needs a bit more motivation. She is learning how to cook healthy meals for herself and the children. Over the last two weeks there has been a change to how she engages with the children, they look looked after and cared for. Mary is making fun out of meal times and seems to appreciate time with the children more. She has made an effort to try to organise herself and the house before she starts work and I hope she continues.

Volunteer

Debra had the support from Home-Start just when she needed it most. It came just at the right time. It obviously helped her through some of those difficult days and Eileen managed to offer the right balance of support, company and help she most needed. I feel it prevented Debra's mental health deteriorating below a manageable level. Thank you for supporting her so well.

Referrer

The thing I enjoyed most
about our trip to
Southport is spending
the time with mum, what
I haven't had in ages.

Child