

Calling all non- grandparents!

The volunteers who support our families across the seven Home-Starts in Greater Manchester come from a whole range of backgrounds and walks of life.

Some are families who once received support themselves, some use their volunteering to gain experience in the family support field (to enhance their career prospects) and others are newly retired, who have acquired time on their hands.

We have found over the last few years that a large group of volunteers that once supported our parents and children have now become grandparents, they may even be supporting their children with childcare, and can no longer spare time to support Home-Start families.

This is such a shame because it means we cannot support all the families who need us.

But, we also know that there are many people out there, male and female, who do not have grandchildren, or if they do, don't get to see them very often, and we are calling out to them to lend a hand, a listening ear and a shoulder to cry on.

Margaret is one such person, and this is her story.

"I have two sons. One lives close by but has no desire to ever have children, and my other son has given me the gift of a grandchild, but he lives in New Zealand so I rarely get to see them. I used to envy those grandparents you see in the local park or just out and about with their grandchildren. It was always something that I'd hoped for later on in life. I was pining for those little people who bring so much joy to your life. My friend whose a GP told me about Home-Start and I gave them a call. Before I knew it I had completed my training course and was matched to my first family. A young mum with a four year old and newly born triplets. I just remember rolling my sleeves up and getting stuck in! I would give the four year old some one- to- one time, reading with her, playing in the garden, just talking to her, and other times I would help with the military operation that was feeding the triplets! I was often just that extra pair of hands that meant the mum could actually get out of the house with all of the babies. Four years on and the triplets are now at school and I have since started to support another family. But I will never forget what my first Home-

Start family said to me on my last visit. She said: 'I will never be able to thank you enough for giving me back my sanity, a little bit of me time and some quality individual time with all of my children.' And I replied, 'I can never thank you enough for allowing me into your lives and giving me the chance to be a little bit like a grandparent for a couple of years.'"

To find out more about volunteering for one of our seven Home-Starts in Greater Manchester, please visit www.gmhomestarts.org.uk