

When parents can't cope children suffer, the impact of which can last a lifetime

For over 40 years Home-Start has led the way in family support. At the heart of everything a Home-Start volunteer does is support a parent; mum or dad.

Many of the parents that are helped across Greater Manchester say that Home-Start has encouraged them to become the best possible parents they can be for their children, by helping them overcoming challenges, be that help with mental health problems, physical illness, poverty, isolation or multiple births, the list is endless.

But what about the children? How do they benefit from Home-Start support? Over the years Home-Start has developed many projects, and volunteers support children in a variety of ways that help children flourish and look forward to positive futures.

Volunteers also support parents who are finding parenting a challenge to encourage activities that put a smile on their children's faces- it could be going to the park, (difficult for parents who are socially isolated), swimming, (difficult for parents who may have multiple births, or several young children), or giving them one to one attention- (crucial for some children whose parents are going through difficulties).

One parent supported by Home-Start in Greater Manchester said: "I knew that I needed to get some support when I was diagnosed with Post Natal Depression after the birth of my daughter. At the time, I knew that Home-Start was a charity that did an awful lot of work with mum's suffering from depression, but what I didn't realise until much later was that Home-Start has a profound impact on children too. At the time of my baby's birth, I also had a two year old son. Sinking deeper and deeper in to depression meant my eldest child lost his mum for a bit. I couldn't play, read, or interact with him. I stared out the window, waiting for 6pm for my partner to return. I was wracked with guilt when friends would knock on my door to go to the park and I would make excuses. Looking back I could weep thinking how much my son missed out in socialising with his peers. Depressed, anxious and now feeling like the world's worst mum, I self-referred to Home-Start. Sally, my volunteer changed my life forever. She did all of the things with my little boy that I was meant to be doing, but she never judged me, she listened, she understood, she just knew... Over time I grow to trust Sally so much, and my son adored her. He associated Sally with great fun, the park, trips to the library, playing out in the snow. Seeing him laugh with joy was one of the best things during the worst time of my life. My son's now at school and Sally moved on to support another family who needed her. But I will never forget what she did for me. She gave my son memories, happy times, she gave him a childhood."

If you have parenting experience and feel that you could support a family who needs some help, please consider volunteering for one of our seven Home-Starts across Greater Manchester. You can find out more by visiting www.gmhomestarts.org.uk

