

Help us to build better lives and better futures for our children.

Across Greater Manchester, Home-Start is on the look-out for new volunteers. As life gets harder for many parents in our local communities, then the need for a charity like Home-Start increases.

Our volunteers offers emotional and practical support to families in their own homes who are finding life tough, it could be due to poverty, illness and disability or poor mental health.

We want to tell you about one volunteer and his experiences of Home-Start, it comes from a man's perspective, because so many men do not realise how much they can offer a charity like Home-Start.

"I first came across Home-Start when I retired. I'd really looked forward to retirement, I'd worked hard all my life and I could not wait for the chance to sit back and relax. Well, that lasted only a couple of weeks, I started to feel really bored, I wondered what other retired people filled their time with. My daughter emigrated to Australia which meant I only got to see my grandson a couple of times a year. I'd see other grandparents walking past my house to the park, it made me feel sad.

I didn't like golf, hated day time tv and there's only so much gardening you can do in a week. My wife was still working, so the thought of us riding off into the sunset was a long way off!

One day I was flicking through my local paper and I came across this feature about a charity called Home-Start. They'd interviewed a dad who had a Home-Start volunteer, his wife was terminally ill and he needed an extra pair of hands because they had a small baby and twins.

It intrigued me, because the volunteer was male, around my age and retired. I remember thinking, could I do that? Would they want someone like me?

Long story short, I applied, took part in a training course and was matched to my first family. For the first time in a long time, I suddenly felt needed, like I had a part to play in society. I was matched to a young family who had three boys under the age of five. They had moved up from the South due to work and were feeling really isolated with no parents nearby. The amazing thing about Home-Start is it's not rocket science, it's parent to parent support. I'd play football in the garden with the older boys, I supported mum with some budgeting tips and helped with the boys homework. Sometimes all the mum wanted was some adult company for a couple of hours a week. Someone to talk to, she said I was like her 'second dad', that made me feel really proud.

Three years on and I went on to support another two families, a mum who was visually impaired and a dad whose wife had tragically been killed in a car crash, leaving behind a 6 month old baby. That's the thing about Home-Start each family and their needs are so individual. The consistency comes in the form of each week for a few hours, you make a commitment to support that family in their own home.

Two months ago I was invited to join Home-Start's Trustee Board and so I am about to begin my next journey with this incredible. I can honestly say that I have got just as much out of volunteering for Home-Start, as the families I have supported. They saved me from a very long, boring and un-fulfilled retirement."

To find out more about becoming a volunteer for one of the seven Home-Starts across Greater Manchester, please visit www.gmhomestarts.org.uk