

Julie's story....

As the year begins and the seven Home-Starts across Greater Manchester are all looking for new volunteers, we'd like to share a story with you of just how much of a difference our volunteers make to the lives of parents and children living in the local communities in Greater Manchester.

This is Julie's story...

"I was suffering in silence with a new baby. Everyone told me that being a first-time mum was the best feeling in the world, not for me. I cried, I was sleep deprived and I could see no way out of this very dark tunnel. I was wracked with guilt. I'd look down at my beautiful baby girl and feel no love for this tiny bundle.

For a very long time I tried to hide it, from my partner, my parents, my friends. Then one day my partner's mum knocked on the door. It was the middle of the day, the house was a tip, I was still in my pyjamas and I hadn't washed my hair for days. She's quite straight-talking, and she looked at me, and said- "You're not coping are you?" I broke down and sobbed and sobbed. She made me a doctor's appointment and came with me. I was diagnosed with post natal depression. I'll never know to this day if this was fate, but in the reception area of the surgery was a poster advertising a family support charity called Home-Start. Something on that poster resonated with me and when I got home I rang them.

A couple of weeks later, Home-Start sent me Maggie, a volunteer who had spent years supporting parents like me. Maggie just got it. She just said all of the right things, she listened, she never judged and slowly but surely she got me out of the house and into the world again. We went to the park, we went for walks, sometimes we'd just sit and talk. Maggie made me realise that I was not on my own, I could open up and talk to someone who wasn't as close as a family member.

That was almost a year ago, and Maggie has now move on to another family who needs her. She and Home-Start came into my life just at the right time, they helped me be the kind of parent I am today, the kind of parent that I have always wanted to be. I will never, ever forget the kindness Maggie extended to me. And when it's my daughter's first birthday in a couple of weeks, Maggie will be there too, celebrating our first milestone.

What Home-Start and Maggie showed me that even in my darkness days, I could get through it, and the day came when I did see that light at the end of the tunnel."

If you feel inspired by Julie's story and want to find out more about becoming a Home-Start volunteer, please visit www.gmhomestarts.org.uk