

Lending a helping hand to families in need this Christmas

Christmas can be a really hard time for many families, not just because of the financial costs, but also because of the isolation and loneliness that many parents face. We all know that the media, marketing, and society paint Christmas to be a 'family time' but that can put so much pressure on families who for whatever reason may not be spending time with their loved ones this year.

At Home-Start, we sadly know only too well that Christmas is also a time that so many of the families we support, dread. They cannot afford the food, the presents and all the Christmas treats that so many of us take for granted.

So it's this time of year that Home-Starts across Greater Manchester will be looking at planning Christmas parties and Christmas dinners for the 500 families we support. And we could not do this without generous donations from local people, businesses and corporates.

For instance one of our local Home-Starts has a partnership with a local church and Lloyds Banking (who provide volunteers to help on the day). They provide a two-course traditional Christmas meal for all the Home-Start supported families. It's a rare opportunity for our families to be waited on and to be together to share a meal. We hope that by modelling this we encourage parents to do the same on Christmas day and on other days across the year.

However, due to poverty, many of the families just don't have the financial means to celebrate Christmas traditionally. So we make sure that each child also receives a gift from Father Christmas and the Lloyds staff do lots of fundraising running up to the event to help pay for it.

It's a lovely example of the church, a charity and the corporate sector working together for families and for strengthening communities at what can be the most joyful but also difficult time of the year.

To support any one of the seven Home-Starts across Greater Manchester this year with their plans to make Christmas a happy time for families, or to find out how to volunteer please visit www.gmhonestarts.org.uk