

## **New year new start?**

As Greater Manchester's leading family support charity, we are always looking for new volunteers who can help make a difference to local families who are struggling to cope. But a volunteer's journey is also about the difference Home-Start has made to their own life, as well as to the parents and children they support.

Here's what one Home-Start volunteer said:

"I always thought volunteering was something 'do gooders' did, or women with time on their hands. It was never something I'd contemplated. I had a busy life; a husband and two children and a full time job in banking. But within six months, my world came crashing down. My husband has been on his way to take our children to a football match, they had been involved in a pile up on the motorway, all three of them were killed. My life as I knew it ended that day. Months later when I finally returned to work I was called into my manager's office, and was told that I was going to be made redundant.

My husband had made sure that I would be provided for, and so whilst finances weren't my main issue, I had nothing to get up for, nothing to focus on, and I became more and more depressed. Every day I seemed to question- 'what was the point of me'. I had no one to look after, no job. I watched the clock ticking endlessly from one day into the next. I am not ashamed to say, I did think about ending my own life several times.

There was a young mum living down the street from me who had toddler twins and a newborn baby. One day in passing, I asked her how she coped. She smiled and said she had the most amazing volunteer from a charity called Home-Start. She told me how her volunteer would help with feeding, routines, shopping, going to the park and even support her with doctor's appointments. She told me that this woman had changed her life.

I went home and googled Home-Start. The more I read about what they did, the more I thought how amazing this charity was. What had struck me was that I read about a volunteer who had been widowed and how she had supported a mum through her own bereavement. It dawned on me that I had totally pre-conceived ideas of what volunteers did. I had never thought that I could help someone else by sharing my own life experiences.

I contacted my local Home-Start and signed up to their next training course. That was three years ago, in that time I've supported five families with a whole range of issues, from a single dad, to a mum with quads! It's the most amazing feeling, because as much as I know I am helping families, in return they are helping me. These last three years have given me a reason to exist again, a new sense of purpose and a new set of skills. I've even returned to work part time as a family support worker. And that too is because of Home-Start- giving me an insight into career choices that I'd never have thought of before.

I tell everyone about Home-Start, it changed my life and I would not like to think about what might have happened without them."

Here's what some of our other volunteers say, and if it inspires you, why not get in touch?  
[www.gmhomestarts.org.uk](http://www.gmhomestarts.org.uk)

"The prep course made me realise that I could learn again, even though I have been at home bringing up my children....I could even think about more courses."

"My volunteer encouraged me to become a volunteer when my support ended...it was one of the best decisions I made.....I no longer feel on the scrap heap, I think I am now employable."

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