

Two women are killed every week in the UK by a partner or former partner and in Greater Manchester incidents of domestic abuse happen every 8 minutes.

All seven Home-Starts across Greater Manchester support victims of domestic abuse. Sometimes it's this issue that a mum asks for our support for, but more often than not, it's not until they have built up a trusting and confidential relationship with their Home-Start volunteer that they disclose domestic violence.

We see the impact that domestic abuse has on some of the many families we support. Emotional and physical abuse is far reaching and of course affects the relationships parents can have with their children. Women (and men) who have suffered any form of domestic abuse, will often suffer in silence, with their self esteem, confidence and ability to form healthy relationships all affected.

It's a subject that Home-Start cares deeply about. We have strong connections with various domestic abuse support services across Greater Manchester. Because our core aim is to provide emotional and non-judgemental support to families in their own homes, our volunteers are often the first person to whom a victim discloses their problems. In severe cases where a parent when a parent has fled domestic abuse, they have often had to leave their friends and family behind, moving to a safe house or refuge in a new city. Loneliness, isolation and no one to turn to, their problems can escalate, affecting their ability to parent their children.

One mum supported by Home-Start said: "I was at rock bottom before Home-Start. I had suffered years of domestic violence, breaking point for me was the day my four year old son saw my husband hit me. I ended up in a refuge miles away from my friends and family. I was lonely and isolated and when I was feeling low, I began to wonder if I'd made the right decision. But then I'd look at my son, and knew that I had. I was referred to Home-Start by my GP. What I loved about my volunteer right from the start was that she never judged me, or blamed me. I told her everything and over time and as my confidence built, we started to take my son out, to the playgroup, the library and the park. I felt like I had my own guardian angel. That was three years ago, and last year, I became a Home-Start volunteer too. I now support a mum who has been through similar experiences to me. My journey with Home-Start has gone full circle and it's the most wonderful feeling to give back to a charity that has given so much to me."

For more information on Home-Start Greater Manchester, for help or to volunteer, please visit www.gmhomestarts.org.uk