

## Taking the stress out of the school summer holidays

It's that time of year that many parents dread- the school holidays. Many days and weeks stretching out ahead of them with children claiming to be bored and mums and dads worrying how to keep them entertained.

Not all children in our local communities have the opportunities of holidays abroad or in this country. But that doesn't mean that parents cannot create special days and treats for their children whilst off from school.

As a family support charity we urge parents not to get into debt in the school holidays by feeling the pressure of needing to provide expensive days out across the entire summer. If you think a bit creatively children will definitely engage with your ideas. The park, the library, often there are free events put on across the school holidays.

Children thrive on using their imaginations, and because of the influx of technology and social media, sadly their imaginations are often not as stretched as they should be.

One mum supported by Home-Start said: "I used to dread the school holidays, the guilt I would feel about not taking them on holidays abroad, or holiday camps. I couldn't afford weekly trips to the cinema, and I knew that my boys friends were up to all sorts! I had a Home-Start volunteer to support me with my youngest child who has autism. One day in passing, I told her what a rubbish mum I felt. She sat me down and together we drew up a plan of things that I could do across a whole week, so that I wasn't waking up each morning wracking my brains, coming up with activities for my boys. She helped me budget my money so that I knew that at least one day each week I could take my boys out. Swimming, the local farm park, a couple of fetes. The rest of the time, I would create things that I remembered were fun from my own childhood. Water fights in the garden, we built a go kart from some old pram wheels, face painting (using my old makeup!) and we went strawberry picking. I will never forget when September came, my boys turned to me and said they'd had the best summer ever. And that's when it dawned on me, it was all about creating happy memories, and money is not always needed for that."

To find out more about the work of Home-Start in Greater Manchester, please visit [www.gmhomestarts.org.uk](http://www.gmhomestarts.org.uk)