

## **Thanking all of the mums out there.**

With March being the month that we celebrate Mother's Day, we wanted to take the opportunity to thank not only the mums that we support, and the 'mum' volunteers who provide vital support to hundreds of families across Greater Manchester, but to raise the issue of how many young families we support are having to cope without their own mums.

Across Greater Manchester our volunteers are supporting many parents who are dealing with the bereavement of losing their own mums, and also dads, who may have lost their partners in childbirth or illness, and are having to raise their children on their own.

Over the years we have heard countless stories from the families we support, saying things such as- "My volunteer is like the mum I never had", or "My volunteer provides my children with a female role model that would have been their mum, if she were here today."

Losing the mother of your children is something that no dad ever wants to contemplate. Sadly it is situation that many Home-Start families have found themselves in over the years.

Here's what one dad said about the support he received from Home-Start:

"When you find out you are having a baby, you start to plan. You plan for everything, the baby's name, the colour of the nursery, I'd even thought about local schools! What you do not plan for is losing the mother of your baby, in childbirth.

My partner had a really healthy pregnancy, no morning sickness, no complications. So when she went in to labour, we had no reason to worry, it was our first child, and we certainly didn't know what to expect, but what we didn't expect was the horrendous experience that followed. My partner suffered a major stroke whilst in labour, and a couple of hours after she gave birth to our beautiful little boy, she died. She held him for just a few precious minutes.

The days, weeks, months that followed went by in a blur. My own parents lived in Australia, and I had no brothers or sisters. Friends were great, but eventually they had to get back to their own lives. And I was literally left holding the baby.

I'm ashamed to say this, but I feel like I missed all his major milestones, none of it seemed to matter without his mum being there to see them too. His first word, his first step...

When he reached two, something in me just clicked, his little life was passing me by, and I felt like I'd let his mum down so much, as well as him.

Amazingly it was my mum who told me about Home-Start, she said that they had the charity out there in Australia, but that she knew it had started in the UK. She found the Home-Start local to me, and urged me to call them.

What was so refreshing was to hear that my situation was not all that unusual, (it had always felt that way to me). It really comforted me to know that other parents had gone through the same horrific experience as me, and had come out of the other side.

I can honestly say that Home-Start and my volunteer kept me from going over the brink. Home-Start support is all about small steps, it's about listening, it's about just being there. And my volunteer had suffered a similar bereavement- her own husband had died in his 30's, leaving her to raise their three children on her own. She had a complete empathy of my situation. But not only that, I realised how important it was to have a female in my son's life. She just brings that's extra special something- to him and to me.

I cannot thank Home-Start enough. And I know that one day, I will become a volunteer myself, I really want to give back to a charity that saved my sanity.

If you feel inspired by what you have read and feel that you can spare a couple of hours to support a local family, please visit [www.gmhomestarts.org.uk](http://www.gmhomestarts.org.uk)