

Volunteering for Home-Start in Greater Manchester can be a stepping stone to a future career.

Across Greater Manchester our home visiting volunteers support 1,700 children; helping their parents to be the best parents they can be, and in turn helping to create better futures for their children. We know that our volunteers make a difference, because our families tell us so.

But, our volunteers tell us that we make a difference to their lives too. Findings show that volunteering can improve mental health, decrease feelings of loneliness and isolation and improve confidence and self-esteem.

A large percentage of the population who volunteer are retired, but in Home-Start's case, there is a different type of volunteer- the younger volunteer who wants to gain skills and experience in order to enhance their own career prospects or a career change.

This is Anne-Marie's story...

"I had my child when I was just 18 years old. I dreaded telling my parents, I knew what their reaction would be. And I was right, both my mum and dad wrote me off, they said my life was over and I had messed up my chances of a good job. I set out to prove them wrong. I had always wanted to be a social worker, and I held on to that dream as my little girl grew from a tiny baby to a toddler and then a little girl starting school. At that point, I knew I had a bit of time on my hands. I had made many enquiries over the years about my career, I knew that I needed a degree, but I also knew I needed hands- on experience. A mum at school told me about Home-Start as she was receiving support from them. She told me that they used volunteers who were trained by the charity- bingo I thought! The training was brilliant- I got to meet an ex social worker on my course who inspired me even more. After my initial training, I went on to support three families and every single training course on offer from Home-Start, I took it. I never lost sight of my end goal. Home-Start believed in me, they encouraged me and talked through all my concerns and my hopes in my support and supervision sessions.

That was six years ago. I went on to graduate from university and made my dream of becoming a social worker a reality. My dad said to me recently that he was really proud of me and how far I have come. I feel that I owe that compliment to Home-Start.

I can honestly say I would not have followed it through had it not been for this amazing charity and the families I supported."

If you feel inspired by Anne- Marie's story and would like to find out more about volunteering for one of the Home-Starts in Greater Manchester, please visit

www.gmhomestarts.org.uk