

When Home-Start reaches out...

Many people think that Home-Start is a charity that supports only mums', but that's not true. More than ever we are supporting dads across Greater Manchester too. We support dads who for whatever reason as raising their children on their own, we also support dads who may be struggling as first time parents, and who, like many new mums are struggling to cope with poor mental health.

This is the story of one such dad...

"I thought I was prepared for being a dad, I knew it would be hard work, (many friends had told me!) but I was looking forward to it. It's that idealised view that I was keeping in my head- football in the garden, the park, trips out. All that 'dad and lad' stuff.

But, three weeks into becoming a dad, this huge black hole engulfed me. I knew all about baby blues and post- natal depression in new mum's- there's lots of literature about it and it's something that my partner and her friends had discussed. But ironically my partner was doing really well. It was me- I was the one struggling. Maybe it was a mix of sleep deprivation and juggling work- I couldn't exactly blame my hormones! But I just sunk deeper and deeper into depression.

The hardest part was that myself and my partner has agreed to share the childcare, so we both worked part time and each looked after the baby whilst the other was out at work. Six months on and I was heading down a slippery slope.

My partner told me about Home-Start, she'd heard about them through her health visitor. It took a while for me to get my head around the fact I needed support when she didn't. So I agreed to a volunteer coming around to our house on one of the days I was looking after out son.

A year on and I can honestly say I am a different man, well parent! My volunteer was a male volunteer. He'd lost his wife at a really young age and had to raise his two daughters on his own. I think it was the emotional support that I benefitted from the most. He said all the right things, he listened and he just came at things from a dad's point of view, which I needed. I felt totally able to open up to him. That's what is really special about this charity, the support is so individual and tailor-made. My volunteer taught me so many things, how to express my feelings, how to accept support and most of all how to be a really good dad. I really hope that one day I will be able to give back to this amazing charity, because of them, and because of my volunteer, I am the kind of dad I always hoped I'd be to my son."

If you feel inspired and want to find out more about the many ways in which you can support the six Home-Starts working across Greater Manchester, please visit [www.gmhomestarts.org.uk](http://www.gmhomestarts.org.uk)