

According to a new report, dealing with acute future social problems affecting children and young people in England and Wales costs £17bn a year of public money, of that, £5bn is spent each year on children in care.

That's why here at Home-Start, we believe that Early Intervention is the key to stopping family issues spiralling out of control and reaching the point where statutory services get involved.

Often called 'Troubled Families' or 'Broken Britain', frontline services are called in to address issues that are often entrenched in a family's life or the community in which they live. 'Firefighting', with intergenerational problems such as worklessness, lack of basic parenting skills, neglect....These are costly, reactive services. For many families, you can catch them before they fall, with investment in an Early Intervention approach.

Early Intervention is a proven, cost-effective delivery model. It can prevent crisis and family breakdown. It can protect both a vulnerable child and a parent that's suffering in silence. It paves the way for a mum or dad to parent their child in the best way they possibly can.

In Greater Manchester families living side-side, many will be receiving Home-Start support, but for different reasons. Aside from poverty, there are numerous other issues affecting a parent's ability to cope. And such issues have no bearing on class, culture or social position; domestic abuse, post natal depression, relationship breakdown, these can all have a significant impact on a child's early life and cause a parent to need Early Intervention support.

What our volunteers do, and do well, is support a family long before their problems have become so complex that expensive agencies need to get involved. Home-Start support works because it's tailor-made to each family's needs. It's delivered in a practical and or emotional, non-judgemental way, empowering a family to start make more positive choices for their children.

If more funding and investment is given to charities such as Home-Start, then we may find one day that that £17bn bill of public money may start to reduce.

To find out how you can support local families in Greater Manchester by becoming a home-visiting volunteer, please visit www.home-start.org.uk or call 0800 068 63 68.