

Summertime blues...

With the summer almost upon us, many parents start to feel the stress of the long summer holidays. Not only in terms of constantly thinking about how to keep their children amused and entertained, but also in terms of the amount of money is now spent on children's activities across the months of July and August.

So spare a thought for the many parents that we support, who are living below the poverty line, in communities right across Greater Manchester. Some of the families that we help, are worried about providing hot meals for their children once schools close for the summer; so the thought of summer day trips out, is un-imaginable for them.

Home-Start believes that every child deserves the right to a happy childhood, it's the most short-lived era of your life, and therefore should be filled with happy memories. It's heartbreaking to think that many children in our communities return to school after the summer break and have no memories of outings and day trips to share with their peers. Unfortunately we are living in a time, where the haves and the have nots are living side by side.

However, our volunteers, who support families in their own homes, are also committed to helping parents find cheap, or free activities for their children to take part in over the summer months. This can range from helping a mum take her children to a local park, or out- door play with children in their gardens. We know that cheap, or free activities are what matter most to parents when school has ended.

One Home-Start parent said: "I grew up in care and have no nice memories of my childhood. I never wanted the same for my own son. But life can be cruel, and when his dad left us, my debts spiralled out of control. All I was bothered about was keeping a roof over our heads. But it was heartbreaking when I would hear my son talk about all the things his friends were getting up to. It crushed me as a parent. I had a Home-Start volunteer who was helping me with my depression, and when she told me that they had a summer trip to the seaside and would I like to go, I jumped at the chance! Home-Start never make you feel like you are being judged, no one at the beach knew we were all there because of a charity. We just looked like a load of families having so much fun. I will never, ever forget the look on my son's face when he saw the sea. I cried. And I was so happy that it had something to tell his friends about when he got back to school."

Home-Starts work tirelessly across the year, fundraising for their summer family trips they offer to parents and children who are receiving Home-Start support. This can be a trip to the seaside, to a childrens' activity centre or to a local farm park. Many of the children we support have never seen the sea before, or have even left their very local community. We couldn't run these trips without generous donations from local people, trusts and foundations and local fundraisers. It's one trip a year, but it makes the world of difference to the children we help.

If you can support your local Home-Start and help put the smiles on the faces of the children they support, or if you just want to make a difference this summer, please contact www.gmhomestarts.org.uk