

## **Supporting families to cook healthily for their children**

At Home-Start, we are only too aware of the difficulties some parents face in the summer holidays when it comes to providing healthy, nutritional food for their children.

For many families across Greater Manchester, where they are struggling financially, the thought of their children not being provided with a school dinner over the summer months can cause anxiety.

We have seen many parents turning to cheap, convenience food during these months, and as a result lots of children lack a healthy balanced diet. This can then impact on their weight, and potentially future health problems as teenagers and even into adulthood.

But it doesn't have to be like this. Our volunteers will work with parents to build up their confidence in cooking cheap, but healthy dinners from scratch. Some of our Home-Starts run slow cooker projects- providing families in poverty with a slow cooker, ingredients and recipes and work with that family to build on their skills in cooking for their children.

All seven Home-Starts in Greater Manchester will also work alongside families in food budgeting and money management, so that families who really don't have a disposable income, can make their money go further, and at the same time have enough ingredients to cook meals across the week.

One family supported by Home-Start said: "Before Home-Start, I'd think nothing of feeding my children takeaways every night. In my mind, I was feeding them, but in reality I was storing up future health problems. One of my children was diagnosed as obese. That's when I turned to my Home-Start volunteer. I trusted her, knew she wouldn't judge me, and I just cried, telling her that it was all my fault I had an obese child. She literally rolled her sleeves up, took me into the kitchen- and got me started with a family meal. That was six months ago now, and every single night of the week my children eat a fresh cooked meal. It's certainly cut down on my shopping bill, and my youngest two children even get involved in preparing the meals, which is great. It also means that my children are getting an education in how to eat properly-which as a parent I see as an investment in their future."

To find out more about Home-Start support, or to become a home visiting volunteer for one of the seven Home-Starts across Greater Manchester, call 0800 068 63 68.