

## Supporting parents through bereavement

Something that we are extremely proud of at Home-Start is the fact that as a frontline family support charity, we meet the needs of local families regardless of the problems they need support with.

But there's one problem that none of us want to contemplate, either in our own lives, or that of the families we support. And that's terminal illness.

A dad who received Home-Start support after his wife was diagnosed with terminal cancer said: "My world fell apart the day I sat in the hospital consultancy room and heard that news. A million thoughts raced through my head. I am ashamed to admit this but I was so angry at my wife. I was thinking; how could you do this to me, to our boys? Had there been some hope of treatment, I would have found some strength from somewhere. But my wife had a rare form of aggressive cancer and her prognosis was 3-6 months. The day we got the news, she was 33 years old.

After she died, for a short while my boys lost their dad too. Our home became a house, no laughter, just tears, and plenty of them... Then one day, my wife's mother came around and told me to pull myself together- she'd lost her daughter too! I knew she was right, but I'd always been a working dad, I had no clue about bath times, and bed time routines.

My mother in law told me about Home-Start. Her friend was a volunteer at a Home-Start down south, but she knew there were Home-Starts up in the North West. I needed someone who would bring some stability and routine to our sadness and chaos.

The day my boys and I met Joy, our volunteer, our lives changed forever. Many months later, I'd laugh with her, saying that she's brought 'joy' into our lives too.

She's such a matter of fact woman; she rolls up her sleeves, gets on with it, and always guided me and the boys in the right direction. She gave me strength I never thought I'd have, and she got the boys their dad back. Not by being a miracle worker, but by being a consistent support, week after week. I'd see her walking down the drive and breathe a sigh of relief.

Joy stayed with my family for nearly two years; she was there the day my youngest son started school. Then came the day when I thought, there's another family out there needing 'Joy' in their lives, and I knew it was time to let her go.

Nothing will ever come close to the lives that me and my boys had before my wife died, but Home-Start made those darkest days a little bit brighter. And that's the reason I am sharing my story. So that anyone else going through what I went through, knows what this amazing charity can do in putting a broken family back together again."

For support, or to volunteer please contact [www.home-start.org.uk](http://www.home-start.org.uk) or call 0800 068 63 68.