

Manchester Evening News:

### **Too many children in care**

As one of Greater Manchester's leading family support charities, we were deeply concerned to read the news figures about the rise of children in care in England.

According to the Audit Commission, these figures show a 12 per cent rise in the last four years at a cost of £3.4bn in 2012/13. More than 68,000 children were taken in by social services with 42,000 having suffered abuse or neglect.

The impact of children growing up in care lasts a lifetime. Research shows they are more likely to suffer poor mental health, do less well at school and end up in the care of adult support services as they grow older.

But it doesn't have to be like this for families where raising their children is proving so hard, statutory services are involved.

Home-Start is a leading early intervention charity, working with families before they reach crisis point, stopping issues spiralling out of control. As a front line, service delivery charity, it's a cost-effective alternative to state intervention. Our trained parent volunteers visit families in their own homes, supporting them with a range of issues from poverty and domestic abuse to poor mental health and housing.

On average it costs Home-Start around £1,000 per year to support a family, a drop in the ocean considering the amount of money it costs the state to look after children.

While for some families their problems are so deeply entrenched their children being removed is the only alternative, we want more people to know about the work of Home-Start and with funding, investment and support we can stop even more children entering the child protection cycle.

**Kathryn Eckersley, Manager Home-Start Trafford & Salford  
(on behalf of the seven Greater Manchester Home-Starts).**