



PRESS RELEASE

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During National Volunteers Week Greater Manchester's leading family support charity is calling out for new volunteers as referrals from families needing support continue to rise

In the last year Home-Starts across Greater Manchester supported more than 700 local families:

- 80% of families reported that Home-Start and its volunteers helped improve their parenting skills
- Almost 80% reported that Home-Start and its volunteers helped improve their parenting well-being
- And 60% said that Home-Start and its volunteers have helped improve their family management

Home-Start is one of the leading family support charities in Greater Manchester, improving the life chances of children in vulnerable families by improving parenting skills. It recruits and trains local parent volunteers to offer emotional and practical support to families in their own homes who are struggling to cope.

Families turn to Home-Start for support for a whole range of reasons including- poor mental health, poverty and isolation and illness and disability.

As life gets harder for many local families, the need for Home-Start to recruit more local parent volunteers has reached an all-time high.

Kate Brooks, manager for Home-Start in Bury said: "We have been supporting parents and children in local communities for almost 17 years. Volunteers are the bedrock of how we support our families. Historically we have always seen isolation as the main reason for families turning to us, but in more recent years we have seen an increase in families needing our support for issues such as poor mental health and financial issues- families really are at tipping point, and things that several years ago they may have been able to cope with, they are now struggling with."

During **National Volunteers Week 2017**, Home-Start across Greater Manchester is calling for local people with parenting experience to come forward and find out more about volunteering.

Shelley Byrne, manager for Home-Start Manchester North said: "Over the years we have been able to track the journey and experiences of our volunteers. It's evident that they get just as much out of volunteering for Home-Start as the families they support. Many use their Home-Start experience as a stepping stone into higher education and employment, others- who may have retired, say that Home-Start has decreased their own loneliness and improved their confidence once more."

One volunteer who has been supporting families in Greater Manchester for over five years, said: "I cannot praise Home-Start enough. I was always a bit dubious about volunteering- my goodness, how wrong was I? Just to know that the two or three hours you are spending with a mum or dad and their children is making such a difference, well, for me that was life changing. It's really not rocket science, you turn up each week, you listen, you talk, you provide a practical pair of hands, and you watch as the family you support, learn and grow in front of your eyes- it's quite humbling and I would recommend it to anyone."

Kathryn Eckersley, manager of Home- Start in Trafford and Salford, said: "Every volunteer attends a training course in their local area before they are matched to their first Home-Start family. The course covers a whole range of things from child protection and listening skills through to dealing with children's behaviour and early learning. Each volunteer continues to have ongoing support and supervision as they continue on their volunteering journey with us."

One dad supported by Home-Start said: "My volunteer taught me to be the best possible day I can be for my little boy. He never judged me, which meant I opened up to him and spoke about my difficulties. Since Home-Start and my volunteer came into my life, my little boy has been removed from a Child Protection Plan."

To find out more about the Home-Start in your area, and how to volunteer, please visit www.gmhomestarts.org.uk

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Notes to Editor-

For interviews, case studies and spokespeople please contact:

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Home-Start recruits and trains local volunteers to offer emotional and practical support to families in their own homes. Supporting families with a range of difficulties and issues from poor mental health and post- natal illness to poverty, domestic abuse and illness and disability. There are seven Home-Starts working across Greater Manchester. They are: Home-Start Bury, Home-Start Bolton, Home-Start Manchester North, Home-Start Manchester South, Home-Start Oldham, Stockport & Tameside, Home-Start Rochdale,