

Annual Report April 2019—March 2020



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Company no. 5468592

Charity no. 1110632



**The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service**

The MBE for volunteer groups



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Our year ended on a very uncertain note in March, when the Covid-19 crisis hit us. As this Annual Report was being prepared, the country was still under severe restrictions, but like many other organisations, we took quick and decisive action to ensure that we could continue to support our families.

On March 17th, in line with government guidelines we adapted our working practices so as to continue to provide our core service, but maintain the strict social distancing and isolation measures required. Our staff team were all provided with support and equipment so that they could work from home, and, having just moved our administrative system to a cloud based system, this proved a straightforward transition. Aware that the situation around coronavirus would place a great strain on the vulnerable families we work with, who often suffer from issues of isolation and anxiety, we took a number of steps including: weekly text/phone support from their volunteer, monthly text/phone support from their Coordinator, activities, ideas and encouragement for families at home through Home-Start Cotswolds social media, and prepared craft activity/comfort packs to deliver to families fortnightly.

None of this would have been possible without the continued support of our funders, notably The John Armitage Trust, Peter Lang Children's Trust and The National Lottery, who guaranteed to maintain their financial support during the crisis. Many thanks also to Cirencester Baptist Church which has been an ideal base for our office.

Prior to all this, we had of course had yet another very busy, but productive year. You will read elsewhere in the report about the support provided for our families, the local groups that we have expanded upon this year and the fundraising and social events that have been organised.

During the year we also formally joined with two other Home-Start schemes (Stroud & Gloucester and North & West Gloucestershire) to form a new consortium, Home-Start Gloucestershire, which will help improve our profile and give us further opportunities for potential funding applications and joint promotional activities.

Best wishes,

Steve Kaufmann
Chair, Home-Start Cotswolds



The Home-Start Cotswolds Management Committee pictured left to right.
Back row: Mike Hellens, Carla Partridge, Sarah Smithson, Steve Kaufmann, Fiona Blacker, Tony Jones. Front row: Carolyn Ford, Clare Baker, Richard Waller, Christine Hall
(not pictured Hilary Morris and Trish Dodridge)



WHAT DOES HOME-START DO?

As the coronavirus pandemic works its way through our society, Home-Start remains as committed as ever to supporting parents – in their homes and communities – in the critical early years of childhood. Our work builds parental confidence and resilience, enhances attachment, and reduces community isolation. This transforms children’s lives in terms of their health and wellbeing and their emotional, social and educational development.

We do this via local community networks of trained volunteers. Starting in the home, our approach is as individual as the people we are helping. No judgement, it is just compassionate, confidential help and expert support. Across all four nations of the United Kingdom, 13,500 home-visiting volunteers support over 27,000 families and 56,000 children to transform their lives. There are over 200 local, independent Home-Starts working in 71% of local authority areas across the UK.

Home-Start Cotswolds, based in Cirencester, has been supporting families throughout the Cotswolds for over 14 years. Our volunteers are parents themselves and visit the families—who have at least one child under the age of five—at home in the heart of family life to provide weekly support. A child’s earliest years make the biggest impact and they are irreplaceable. We make sure those years count, so that no child’s future is limited.

Families referred to us meet a Home-Start Coordinator who will assess their needs, match them to a trained volunteer and oversee their support. Each year we train up to 20 new volunteers, provide an ongoing training programme to existing volunteers and, as well as home visits, arrange family fun and fundraising events.



Alongside our home visiting support we run a specialised group in the North Cotswolds called Reconnect, targeted at Mums experiencing maternal mental health issues.

Home-Start Cotswolds works in partnership with other statutory and voluntary organisations across the Cotswolds, to ensure that together we can provide the best support a family needs, at a time when they need it most.

‘It was only after seeing an advertisement for a trustee role with Home-Start Cotswolds, that I discovered what tremendous work the volunteers and staff undertake to support young families. As a father of two, I know how tough it can be—especially during the first five years. After meeting the Management Committee in September 2019, I joined as a trustee and became involved in the Profile and Fundraising sub-committee. It is both rewarding and enjoyable to be supporting the work of this important local charity.’

Richard Waller, Trustee



STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION

Trustee Directors

Steve Kaufmann (Chair), Clare Baker (Safeguarding Adviser), Antony Jones (Company Secretary), Carla Partridge (Treasurer), Fiona Blacker, Hilary Morris, Chris Hall, Mike Hellens, Carolyn Ford, Richard Waller.

Trustees are unpaid volunteers from a variety of backgrounds, responsible for governance, financial and strategic planning. The staff are responsible for running the day-to-day operation of the scheme, reporting to the trustees on a regular basis.

The trustees meet bi-monthly with advisors and they form the Management Committee. There are three Sub-Committees (Personnel; Finance; Profile and Fundraising) which meet regularly and report back to the full committee. It is Home-Start policy that a trustee should only serve for a maximum of three years before being subject to an election.

Trustee news

Due to increased work commitments, Alex Yumba stood down as Treasurer at the end of the financial year and is sadly no longer a trustee, but we were delighted that Carla Partridge, who had joined us in June (2019) took on the role. Carla is a qualified accountant with more than 10 years' experience, who, as well as running her own company, already plays an active role in the community through her work with Cirencester Scouts and a local care home.

We were also joined during the year by Richard Waller. Richard has lived in the Cotswolds for over 20 years and is married with two grown-up children. He recently retired as a solicitor and previously was a trustee and Chair of a London based charity. Both Carla and Richard will formally join the Board of Trustees at our AGM in June.

Advisors

Sarah Smithson (Health Visitor)
Trish Dodridge (Volunteer Rep)

Staff

Janice Gibson and Katharine Campbell, Senior Coordinators
Lynn Hurley, Coordinator, North Cotswolds
Danella (Dee) Weir, Office Coordinator
Sally Mason and Gillian Eames, Administrators

All our staff work part-time and their combined hours amount to 2.9 FTE.

Staff news

We welcome Gillian who joined us in January as our new part-time Administrator, replacing Kate Rhodes-Gowland. Gillian lives locally and used to work at Cirencester College.

Pictured left to right: Danella Weir, Office Coordinator; Carolyn Ford, Trustee; Christine Hall, Trustee; Sarah Smithson, Advisor; and Clare Baker, Trustee, attending the Home-Start South West Cluster Day in June 2019, where schemes from the region can network, sharing ideas and best practice.





SUMMARY OF 2019-2020

FAMILIES

During the past year (April 2019—March 2020), Home-Start Cotswolds has supported a total of 58 families. Support was offered through weekly visits within the home, as well as via two 10-week Reconnect groups held in the North Cotswolds. Families either self refer or are referred to us by our partner agencies in the community.

From 14 years' experience working with families, we find that poor mental health is the issue that impacts parents with young children the most. Over 90% of the mothers referred to us had issues regarding their mental health and over 75% were experiencing difficulties relating to social isolation. Additionally, some of our families are experiencing issues such as multiple births, illness, tenancy issues, financial difficulties or domestic abuse.



Above: Ruby enjoying cooking biscuits that her family's volunteer taught her to make.

Home visiting

Our home visiting volunteers spend 2-3 hours with a family every week. As parents supporting parents, our volunteers build a relationship with the family providing regular support within the home. They offer a listening ear; practical help with children; fun play ideas; outings to the park or playgroup; assistance with budgeting and often bake and cook alongside the family. The average length of support is nine months. We aim to help families feel more resilient and better integrated into their community.

'My volunteer has been a wonderful help, giving my daughter attention and encouraging me to sit down and play with her. I feel a better bond starting to form between me and my daughter and I'm realising the importance of taking time out for her.'

Supported Mum

Group work

In 2019 we ran two Reconnect groups in the North Cotswolds, offering support for a total of 16 mums who were experiencing anxiety, depression and low mood. At the 10-week long groups, mums participate in a programme designed to improve their wellbeing, both mentally and physically, as well as to develop friendships and build their confidence in parenting. A creche was run alongside the group to give mums space to focus on their own wellbeing. In 2019, everyone who attended the group reported afterwards that they felt less isolated, less anxious, and more confident as a parent. "Attending the group has been a godsend for both me and my little one. The ladies I've met at Reconnect have similar struggles and we've all been very supportive of each other, it's just a completely different atmosphere to normal playgroups".



Left and right: craft activities are popular with the mums who attend Reconnect group meetings.





SUMMARY OF 2019-2020

Family events and outings

In August 2019 we held our annual party in Northleach, which was attended by over 100 people—including 54 children! There was a bouncy castle, nail painting, craft activities, soft play, an 'Everything 20p' table, garden games and lots of delicious food, including cakes, fruit, hot dogs and salad. It was a welcome, fun-filled, free day out for families in the summer holidays.

Alongside our home visiting, Home-Start secures funding for our families so that they can enjoy a trip out with their children, which they would otherwise be unable to afford. During the year, some of the outings our families enjoyed included Batsford and Westonbirt Arboretums, Cotswold Farm Park, Roves Farm, soft play, swimming and various child-friendly cafes in the area.



VOLUNTEERS

It is due to our wonderful team of volunteers that we can provide weekly home support to so many families across the Cotswolds. Training and supervision are essential to the work we do and our volunteers initially undertake a ten-week preparation course of 40 hours. They are then matched to a family, visiting them for 2–3 hours, once a week, in the home.

Each volunteer is linked to a Coordinator who provides telephone support and guidance, as well as supervision every six weeks. Alongside this, we run an ongoing training and support programme, which last year included:

- 2 x Safeguarding training days
- 2 x Volunteer coffee mornings
- Parent/baby relationship training by Robin Balbernie
- 1 x Peer Support day
- Christmas Lunch for all our volunteers

"I think it is very important to meet and exchange ideas, as sometimes volunteering can feel a bit isolating on your own. We discuss places to go with your families (depending on where they live), how best to support families when you are only there once a week, and had a good reminder about being non-judgemental when you first meet people".

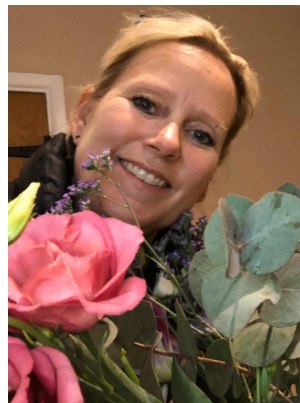
Volunteer speaking about a peer support day in 2019



SUMMARY OF 2019-2020

Many of our volunteers have been with us for a long time and we have been presenting them with gifts as a small token of our appreciation.

Ghislaine, pictured far right, has supported Home-Start Cotswold families for over 10 years, and was given an engraved candle holder. Charlie, pictured right, was sent flowers to mark five years as one of our volunteers.



At the time of writing, during Covid-19 lockdown, our volunteers are unable to visit families, but are offering valuable telephone support to families. They have also provided recipes with ingredients, sent activities for children including seeds to plant, and helped with food shops.

Left: Christmas Lunch for our volunteers at the Thames Head Inn, near Tetbury.

Volunteer Preparation Course

We were delighted to receive a very high number of applications for the 2020 Preparation Course, which began in January and covered topics such as Listening Skills, Child Development, The Role of a Health Visitor, Safeguarding Children From Harm and Encouraging Positive Behaviour.

Unfortunately, the Covid-19 outbreak forced us to postpone the very final session of the course. However, some of the newly trained volunteers will be in a position to start telephone support of families from June.



Trainee volunteers working in break-out groups at the Preparation Course.



Jennifer Samuels from the 2Gether Trust talked to the group about Maternal Mental Health.



HOW IS HOME-START COTSWOLDS FUNDED?

Home-Start Cotswolds is funded mainly by grants from charitable trusts, local fundraising, and donations from businesses and private individuals. We are a not-for-profit organisation and our Directors, Trustees and Volunteers are all unpaid.

In the 2019—20 financial year, our expenditure was £100,488 and our income was £97,075 . There was a deficit of £3,413 which was covered by our reserves.

During this financial year we have benefited from support from the following organisations and individuals. The Trustees are extremely grateful for their support which enables our work in the community to continue:

John Armitage Trust	Notgrove Trust
Peter Lang Children's Trust	Bridget Plant
The National Lottery	Coln St Aldwyns Children's Group
Garfield Weston	Bourton Parish Council
Communities Activities Support Grant	SML Paints & Coatings
Saintbury Trust	Waitrose Community Matters Green Token
Scheme Growing our Communities	

We are also thankful to the people involved in the following events who raised money for us: Hatherop Castle Christmas Fair, Little Faringdon Bonfire Night and the South Cerney Duck Race.

Our popular fundraising Hike was held at in May 2019 at Cripps Barn with a 10k walk across the Coln Valley. Our heartfelt thanks go to Felicity and Mark Henriques, who generously provided the Cripps Barn venue and lunch, as well as Carolyn and Nicholas Ford for all their hard work organising the event—and to everyone who came along and supported us!

The Trustees would like to extend their thanks and gratitude to all those who have made a contribution, financial or in kind, to Home-Start Cotswolds during this financial year.

We retain reserves of 60% of annual expenditure in line with our policy.

The Trustees acknowledge their responsibility to identify, assess and manage risks and ensure we take action as necessary. At this moment we are in unprecedented times and the situation is changing continually for individuals and organisations. The Trustees recognise that measures taken to contain COVID-19 will impact on our activities and our governance, including finances, and will act appropriately to safeguard our staff, volunteers and families.

A copy of the audited Annual Accounts for 2019—2020 is attached to this report.



Trustees Clare Baker, Fiona Blacker and Chris Hall running our stall at the South Cerney Duck Race in 2019



LOOKING AHEAD TO THE COMING YEAR

As an organization we will continue to focus on our core objective of recruiting, training and placing volunteers to work with families in need of support. We expect that demand for our services will continue to increase, especially with the health crisis that we have all been living through and continue to live through.

When our service returns to 'normal', we are hoping to expand our activities to introduce Best Start postnatal groups in three rural towns in the Cotswolds, which will require additional funding to recruit and manage a group worker.

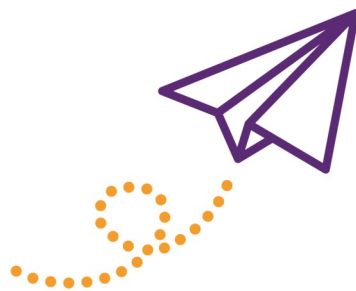
As our work increases, so does the need to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of our services, and so we have introduced a new data collection system which will replace our current MESH system. Using CharityLog will bring many benefits to our scheme, as it will enable us to give more specific feedback on outcomes for specific projects and will simplify data collection (eg. when families are supported by home visits and groups). Furthermore, it is cloud-based, which means that all our staff can input and access data at any time and we hope it will help us use less paper!

Undoubtedly 2020-21 will be a busy 12 months, but with the continued support of our staff, volunteers and funders, we will deliver a service that will make a difference to families here in the Cotswolds.

Steve Kaufmann
Chair of Trustees
For and on behalf of the Trustees
May 2020

'Having a volunteer visit me has helped me feel less alone. I have family and a husband so I'm not physically alone, but in motherhood I feel very trapped and alone and she has helped me feel less so.'

Supported Mum



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Accounts: Independently examined by Owen Accountants, Patch Cottage, Highbeech Road, The Pludds, Ruardean GL17 9UD

Home-Start Cotswolds is a Registered Charity (since July 2005) and a Company limited by guarantee. Charity Registration number: 1110632 Company Registration number: 5468592

As an independent charity we work under the umbrella of Home-Start UK.