

Annual Report April 2021—March 2022



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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

As I embark upon my fourth year as Chair it is incredible to think that this year's AGM is the first one since 2019 that we can attend in person, rather than via Zoom.

Although Covid restrictions gradually eased over the year, we still faced continued high rates of Covid, the threat of lockdowns, restricted meeting size, self-isolation concerns and family and volunteer visits being cancelled. Yet despite all this, we continued to provide a high level of support to many families in a variety of ways, as you will read throughout this report.

In June 2021, we were delighted to welcome Sophie Holland as Group Coordinator. She has been working hard to establish a number of groups supporting new Mums and Dads, as well as developing our mental health support groups across the region. We look forward to consolidating these over the coming months.

Earlier this year, Home-Start Gloucestershire (the consortium formed in 2020 consisting of ourselves, H-S Stroud & Gloucester and H-S North & West Gloucestershire) received funding from the Pears Foundation to facilitate countywide strategic planning in terms of training and development, funding and investment and communications. This is exciting work that we look forward to putting in place over the next couple of years.

Once again, I must thank our staff and volunteers who have worked incredibly hard in difficult circumstances over the last 12 months and continue to do so. I must also thank Cirencester Baptist Church who provide us with such superb facilities in a great location.

Of course, our work would not be possible without our generous funders and donors. We are extremely grateful for the support we continue to receive from The John Armitage Trust, Peter Lang Children's Trust, The National Lottery and national fashion retailer White Stuff, who have named Home-Start as their chosen charity for 2022.



Above: Steve Kaufmann, recruiting volunteers in White Stuff, Cirencester

Steve Kaufmann

Steve Kaufmann
Chair, Home-Start Cotswolds

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Home-Start Cotswolds is part of a national network of over 180 Home-Start schemes who all share the same objective: to safeguard, protect and preserve the good health—both mental and physical—of children under five and their parents. Last year, Home-Start supported 56,000 children in 27,000 families across the UK.

We provide support through a local community network of trained volunteers and expert support. Helping families with young children through their challenging times, we are there for parents when they need us the most, because childhood can't wait.

At the heart of our work is home visiting volunteer support. Our volunteers work alongside parents in their own homes, to help them cope with the stresses and strains of life and make sure they have the skills, confidence and strength they need to nurture their children. No judgement; just compassionate, confidential help and expert support.

Families supported by home visiting in 2021-22

17 Lone parents

11 Families with child safeguarding issues

39 Families with support for their mental health

22 Families with physical health difficulties or disabilities

9 Mums who had experienced domestic abuse

11 Families with significant financial issues

In 2021-2022 we aimed to: train 15 new volunteers; deliver ongoing training to existing volunteers; provide home support to families across the Cotswolds; introduce postnatal and mental health support groups to rural towns in the area; re-start family events (which have been on hold since Covid) and attract the required funding through grants and fundraising events.

We also commit to working 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.



New Volunteer Preparation Course, February 2022

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 and David Pointet.

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) that 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

In March, we were sad to say goodbye to Fiona Blacker, who has been with us for five years and was a member of our Finance sub-committee. We are very grateful for the time and expertise she has given to us over that time.



Left to right: Steve Kaufmann, Chair; Carla Partridge, Treasurer; Tony Jones, Company Secretary; Chris Hall, Trustee; Richard Waller, Trustee.

Staff

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

All our staff work part-time and their combined hours amount to 3.4 FTE.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE 2021-2022

FAMILIES

This year Home-Start Cotswolds has supported a total of 106 families. We offer a range of support to families which includes:

- **Home Visiting** Weekly volunteer visits for families in the home
- **Baby & Me Postnatal Groups** Eight-week support groups for new Mums and Dads
- **Reconnect Perinatal Mental Health Groups** Ten-week mental health support group for Mums
- **Dad Matters** 1-2-1 and Group support for Dads

Home Visiting A total of 53 families, including 99 children, were supported by home visiting volunteers during the year. As many of us know, being a parent has never been easy; it can be lonely, frustrating and overwhelming. Often, our supported families have suffered from life changing events, experiencing illness, anxiety, relationship breakdown, financial worries or domestic abuse.

When a family is referred to Home-Start, a volunteer is matched with them and will visit for up to three hours each week, building a trusting, supportive relationship. Our volunteers work alongside a family helping them to overcome the challenges they are facing; offering a listening ear, friendship, encouragement to go out, ideas for play and signposting to other organisations.

'When supporting families I have helped with lots of listening, a house move, managing financial affairs, birth of a new baby, a child's operation, hospital and doctor appointments, shopping, support groups, emotional support during challenging life events, family days out, home necessities, food supplies and of course, Covid! Every family will have different needs but fundamentally, someone just turning up and showing that they care will go such a long way to helping them through difficult times. As a volunteer, before you know it, you have helped out in more ways than you could have imagined.'

Becki, Home-Start Volunteer, May 2022.

Baby & Me Postnatal Groups

In September 2021, we held our first Baby & Me postnatal group in Tetbury. We have since introduced these groups in Fairford and Bourton-on-the-Water and have now held a total of eight courses supporting 41 new Mums/Dads.

Focussed sessions are held on topics such as feeding and weaning, baby massage, play and home safety. Parents benefit from peer support and signposting to other services. They also receive a beautiful handmade quilt (donated by Cirencester Charity Quilters) and a photobook from their time at the group.



'It helped build my confidence. I learned a lot talking to other parents and realised a lot of things I was going through were normal, like loneliness and anxiety.'

Mum from Baby & Me group, March 2022

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE 2021-2022

FAMILIES continued

Reconnect Perinatal Mental Health Group

We have held two Reconnect groups in Bourton-on-the-Water since September 2021, targeted at Mums in the North Cotswolds who are experiencing mental health difficulties. Twelve Mums have attended the ten-week course. Home-Start fund a creche to run alongside the group, so Mums can have space away from their children to focus on their own mental and physical wellbeing. Whilst sitting around a table engaged in craft-based activities, our Group Coordinator introduces topics for discussion which help Mums consider ways to relax, the benefits of healthy eating and exercise. Many also share their experiences as they support one another. External speakers provide sessions, such as a Life Coach, Sound Gong Bath and Lechlade Craft Barn.



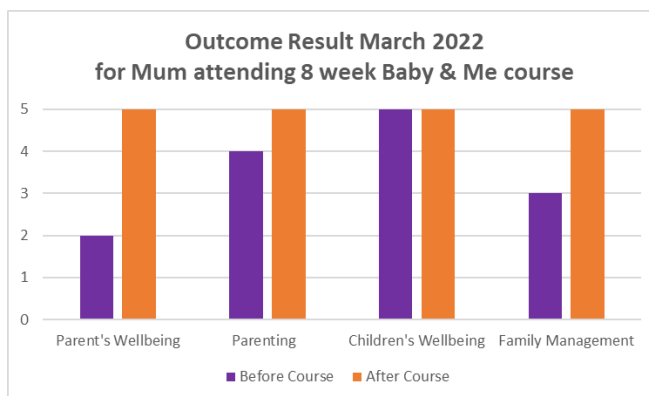
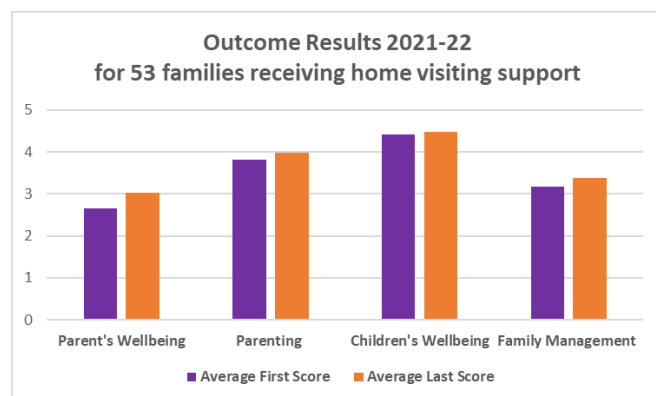
Dad Matters Gloucestershire

Funded by the Tudor Trust, Home-Start offers Dad Matters support to Dads across the county, to help them have the best possible relationship with their families. This is provided through groups both online and in person, run by a growing team of volunteer Dad Champions. For more information, please go to <https://dadmatters.org.uk/gloucestershire/>



Family Outcomes

It is important that we measure the effectiveness of the support we are providing for families. We use an outcome measurement tool that asks parents questions, to help them assess how they and their family are coping with different areas of family life. For home visiting, this assessment is completed at the beginning of support and then at each review visit. For Group Work the assessment is completed at the beginning and end of the group. Below are two examples of our outcome results...



We also collect anecdotal evidence, which is shown on page 9 of this report, to help us gauge the effectiveness of our support and improve our service delivery to families.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE 2021-2022

VOLUNTEERS

At the time of writing, we have 49 trained volunteers. Our volunteers have parenting experience, are DBS checked, have attended an eight-week preparation course and agree to work within our policies and procedures. Home visiting volunteers make weekly three-hour visits to families and on average they support a family for nine months.

Our Group work is new for this year and we have used some of our volunteers to support groups by providing refreshments, helping design and prepare craft activities and offering parents emotional support.

Throughout the year we have continued to support our volunteers with regular supervision, and peer support groups. Our 2021-22 volunteer training programme included: Life Skills, Child and Baby Sleep, Infant Mental Health, Dad Matters and Safeguarding.



'When my children were younger, I went through some difficult times when I wanted emotional and practical support, but there was nothing there. Now I have time on my hands I felt it was important to train as a Home-Start volunteer so I could give help to other Mums who were struggling'.

**Julie, Home-Start Cotswolds
volunteer since January 2021**



South Cotswolds Volunteer Christmas Lunch
December 2021



North Cotswolds Volunteer Christmas Lunch
December 2021

Volunteer Preparation Course

Sixteen new volunteers attended our 8-week preparation course which began in January. Fortunately, at the last minute it was confirmed that we could hold the weekly sessions face-to-face. Sessions covered confidentiality, parenting, healthy relationships, child development and safeguarding. We were very thankful to our guest speakers Kit, from the Perinatal Mental Health Team and Kate and Harriet, Health Visitors.

'I think the course was run extremely well. Folders given at start, email links sent with reading material and YouTube links. Coordinators and speakers were very knowledgeable and friendly.'

New volunteer feedback, Jan 2022

HOW IS HOME-START COTSWOLDS FUNDED?

Home-Start Cotswolds is mainly funded 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 2021-22 financial year, our expenditure was £110,610 and our income was £138,558. During this financial year we have benefited from funds from the following organisations:

John Armitage Trust	NHS Gloucestershire CCG
Peter Lang Children's Trust	Notgrove Trust
The National Lottery	Barnwood Trust
Gloucestershire Community Foundation	Tesco Bags of Help

We are also very grateful to the following individuals and organisations who made donations or raised money for us during the year: Barnsley Village Fete, Ben Miller (appearing on Celebrity Catchphrase!), Sir Edward Horsfall, Vanessa Arbuthnot, Little Faringdon Bonfire, Bibury PCC, CHEQS, Woodroffe Benton, Hatherop School, Lady Bathurst, Stratton Football Club and Spot On Supplies.

Since early 2020 the pandemic has restricted our fundraising efforts and the demand on the available charitable funds has grown. We are especially grateful to the trusts who have recognised these pressures on our charity and have continued to support our work.

How thankful we were in September 2021 to be able to hold our fundraising hike in the beautiful Windrush Valley (see pic below). Around 80 people joined us for the walk, culminating in refreshments at Stone Barn. Our thanks go to Felicity and Mark Henriques for letting us use Stone Barn, to Carolyn and Nicholas Ford for their tireless energy organising the event and to Relish Food Events and Waitrose Cirencester for the refreshments. We were delighted to raise over £1,500!

The Trustees acknowledge their responsibility to identify, assess and manage risks and ensure we take action as necessary. We retain reserves of 60% of annual expenditure, in line with our policy. A copy of the Annual Accounts for 2021-2022 is attached to this report.



Fundraising in Cirencester Park
L to R: Chris Hall, Trustee; Dee Weir, Office Coordinator; and Carolyn Ford, Trustee



The weather was kind to us for our Hike in September through the Windrush Valley.

LOOKING AHEAD TO THE COMING YEAR

No one could have foreseen the events of the last two years and the ongoing effect of the pandemic on the mental health of parents and children. Coupled with the growing cost of living crisis one thing is certain: the need for our services will only increase in the coming months and we are all committed to continuing to support and help parents in any way we can.

As we look forward into 2022-23, we will work in close partnership with other statutory and voluntary agencies across the Cotswolds to ensure a consistent, joined up provision of support to families who are facing challenges.

Together with our Home-Start Gloucestershire consortium partners, we will be exploring the opportunity to work closely with other providers to offer family support services from the Family Hubs being launched across the County, as well as looking to explore other initiatives that can only improve and extend our support to families in need.

Steve Kaufmann
Chair of Trustees
For and on behalf of the Trustees
May 2022

‘Home-Start support has improved my mental health and gave us support during a difficult time in our lives. My volunteer has been amazing, she was at some points during the pandemic the only person I would see other than the people in my household. We always had something to talk about and she kept me company through what was the loneliest and most difficult time of my life.’
(Mum of baby born with heart condition.)

‘My volunteer was very amazing! She made me feel more confident. I can catch the bus now with my two babies. She spent time playing with the children, going on walks, she baked cupcakes with us. She helped me book medication online, to make phone calls to the hospital and to fill out forms for pre-school. She took us to the park and for walks.’
(Mum for whom English is her second language.)

‘I feel less isolated because I know someone is there and that they will get in touch if they haven’t heard from me. I felt it was always me who made the effort for everyone else, but now it is good to know someone is checking on me. It is good to know there is someone out there who cares.’
(Mum who experienced domestic abuse.)

My volunteer has been amazing, she is so lovely. She has become a bit like a mother role to me. She texts me during the week to see if I am ok. She helps me feel human, gets me out the house, allows me to vent some of the weeks frustration. It is really helpful for me to be encouraged to go out and so good for my mental health. I am now confident enough to go out with both children on my own. Dad said "I see the difference in Mum when her volunteer has been round".
(Young Mum who has been in care.)

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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.