

Annual Report

April 2023-March 2024

**HOME
START**
Cotswolds



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

The MBE for volunteer groups

Company Number: 5468592
Charity Number: 1110632

MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

This year marked a significant personal milestone for me as it was my first time serving as chair of any charity. As a qualified accountant, my prior volunteer work had always been as a treasurer. I must confess, stepping into the role of chair initially filled me with trepidation, but it has been a thoroughly enjoyable and enriching experience.

It has been a very interesting year for Home-Start Cotswolds. We experienced staff changes, including departures, new arrivals, promotions and re-shuffles. Yet, through these changes, we managed to make it another successful year. A highlight was welcoming Katie Wilson to our board of trustees. Her experience in HR has been invaluable, especially during our period of staff transitions.

We also had a busy year filled with significant events. Our charity's profile was notably raised by a well-attended event featuring honourable guests including the Mayor of Cirencester, the High Sheriff and the Deputy Lord Lieutenant to name a few. Debbie Holland, one of our volunteers, gave a wonderful talk at this event, providing great insight into the life of a volunteer and the families we assist. I also had the opportunity to share some impactful numbers: in 2023, we supported 145 families and raised the required £140k, thanks to the support of our funders. We are incredibly grateful for every donation, big or small.

Looking ahead, we are excited about the opportunities that lie before us and we are confident that with your ongoing support, we will achieve amazing results. We also recognise that the success of our charity is not just measured in the milestones we reach but also in the lives we touch.

We invite you to stay engaged with our cause. Whether it is through volunteering, advocating, or continuing your financial support, your involvement is crucial to our success.

Thank you once again for your unwavering commitment to Home-Start Cotswolds. Together, we are making a difference.

Carla Partridge
Chair of Trustees



Carla Partridge at the AGM 2023

“ I feel confident when referring to Home-Start that families are going to get the support they need. Home-Start keeps us well informed and we have good connections with the team which reassures us that families will benefit from their support. I feel privileged to be able to refer as a professional, as I, myself, benefited so much from Home-Start support during my postnatal period.”

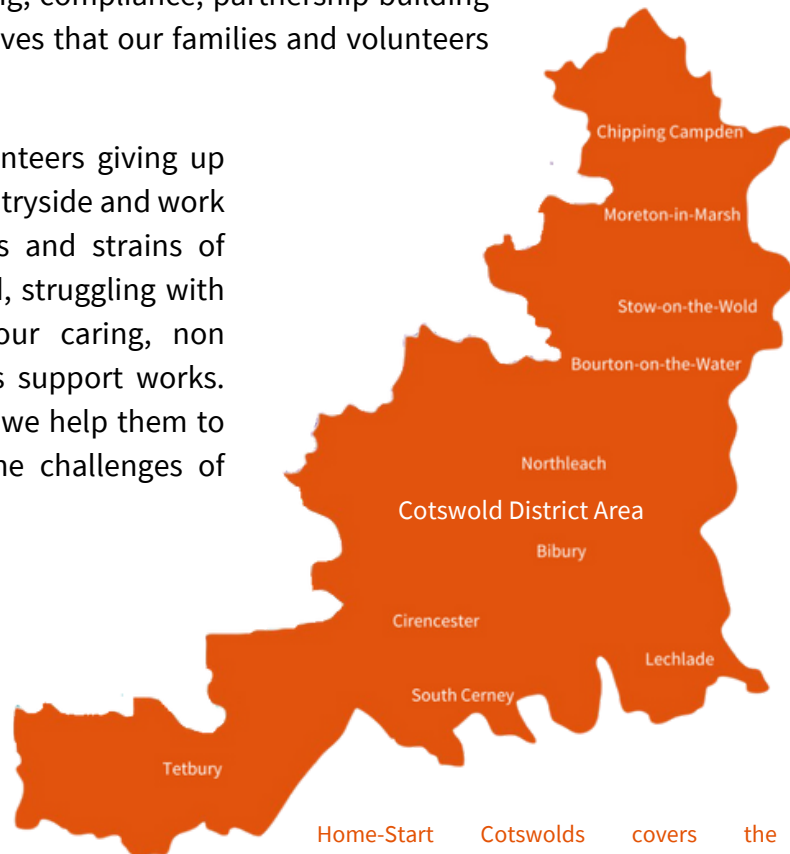
Nat Flight, Community Support Worker,
Perinatal Mental Health Specialist
Community Team (April 2024)

THE HEART OF HOME-START

Home-Start Cotswolds is a family support charity, helping families with young children through their toughest times. As we work on fundraising, compliance, partnership building and report writing we are continually reminding ourselves that our families and volunteers come first and are at the heart of Home-Start.

Every week of the year you will find our trained volunteers giving up three to four hours of their time to drive across the countryside and work alongside their allocated family, sharing the stresses and strains of family life. As we seek to help a parent who is isolated, struggling with child behaviour or suffering from acute anxiety, our caring, non judgemental relationship is paramount to ensure this support works. Engaging with a family for an average of nine months, we help them to rebuild their confidence so they feel able to face the challenges of everyday life.

Our Group work complements the home visiting service, providing postnatal groups across rural towns in the area. Despite the excitement of being a new parent it can come with challenges and our postnatal groups provide a safe space for parents to meet and share their anxieties and learn about the development of their new baby. We also run a maternal mental health group in the North Cotswolds.



Home-Start Cotswolds covers the geographical area of the Cotswold District Council, as represented above



Each year we aim to help around 140 families, aligning our support to suit the specific needs of each family. We belong to a Home-Start network of charities who all share the same objectives to safeguard, protect and preserve the good health – both mental and physical – of children and their parents. We are part of the Home-Start Gloucestershire Consortium, meeting quarterly with the other Home-Start charities in our county to make sure we offer a streamlined service.

“A child’s life is like a piece of paper on which every person leaves a mark”

Chinese Proverb



STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Carla Partridge (Chair), Tony Jones (Company Secretary), Steve Kaufmann (Treasurer), Carolyn Ford, Richard Waller, David Pointet, Katie Wilson (joined Oct 23) and Chris Hall (left June 2023), Clare Baker who stood down as a Trustee to become a temporary member of staff in September 2023.

Trustees are unpaid volunteers from a variety of backgrounds, responsible for governance, financial and strategic planning. The staff are responsible for the day-to-day operation of the scheme and report 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 only serves for a maximum of three years before being subject to an election.



L-R: Steve Kaufmann, Tony Jones, David Pointet, Richard Waller, Clare Baker, Carla Partridge and Carolyn Ford



In June, we were sad to say goodbye to Chris Hall, an active and dedicated Trustee for many years, having joined us in 2006. Chris was a very valued member of the Management Committee and we are all so thankful for her years of dedicated service to Home-Start Cotswolds.



In October, Katie Wilson joined as a new Trustee, bringing HR expertise to the Management Committee. We were delighted to welcome Katie and have already benefited from her extensive HR experience.

“For a long time, I have wanted to do something for a charity that I felt passionately about. Home-Start was the obvious choice. I was on my own with my daughter for eight years of her life, from the age of two until ten. It was tough on my own and I wish I had known about Home-Start then. The thought of someone helping would have been amazing - parenting can be a real challenge. After working in HR for over 15 years I also felt my skills and experience could be put to great use within the role of Trustee. I am so happy to have joined the team at Home-Start, such amazing, inspirational people. I can't wait to help be a part of making a difference to so many peoples lives.” Katie Wilson, New Trustee

STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION



L-R: Karen Roberts, Ivan Lambert, Liz Wilkinson, Clare Baker, Sally Mason, Katharine Campbell, Emily Boston and Sophie Holland

STAFF

Katharine Campbell, Senior Coordinator
Liz Wilkinson, Family Coordinator, North Cotswolds
Sophie Holland, Group Coordinator
Emily Boston, Group Coordinator
Karen Roberts, Office Coordinator (since Jan 2024)
Sally Mason, Administrator
Ivan Lambert, Administrator (joined Jan 2024)
Danella (Dee) Weir, Office Coordinator (left Dec 2023)
Janice Gibson, Senior Coordinator (left Feb 2024)



All our staff work part-time and their combined hours amount to **3.7 FTE**

In February 2024 we said goodbye to Janice Gibson, Senior Coordinator and former volunteer. Over the fourteen years she worked with us she brought so much energy to this role, managing staff, visiting families, training volunteers, and developing our group work. We would like to thank Janice for her commitment and dedication to expanding the work of Home-Start across the Cotswolds.



Janice Gibson, front right at her leaving get together, joined by current and past staff and volunteers



Dee Weir, pictured right, with Katharine Campbell at our Fundraising Hike, May 2023

We also said goodbye to Dee Weir, who worked as our Office Coordinator for six years. During her time at Home-Start, Dee worked tirelessly to transform our marketing efforts, particularly on social media and we are so thankful to her for raising our profile across the Cotswolds. Dee's passion for environmental issues helped us all to examine the impact of our charity on the world and to adopt better procedures and practices.



ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

FAMILIES

This year Home-Start Cotswolds has supported a total of **138** families. We offer a range of support, which includes:

Home Visiting: Weekly volunteer visits to families in the homes

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: Support for new Dads in Gloucestershire

HOME VISITING

62 families (**102** children) received support from a home visiting volunteer 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, such as 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 the families, helping them to overcome the challenges they are facing by offering a listening ear, friendship, encouragement to go out, ideas for play and signposting to other organisations.



Referral circumstances for families supported by home visiting:

23 Lone parents

9 Families with safeguarding issues

47 Families with support for their mental health

21 Families with physical health difficulties or disabilities

10 Families who had experienced domestic abuse

21 Families with significant financial issues

11 Young parents aged under 25 yrs

3 Parent care leavers

Throughout the year we are continually referring or signposting families to other support services, such as: Food Bank, P3 (support with budgeting & debts), Household Support Fund (financial help), GDASS (domestic abuse service), Perinatal Mental Health teams and local playgroups. Our volunteers also help families to access these services and to attend medical appointments.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

MEASURING FAMILY OUTCOMES

It is vital that we record and measure the effectiveness of the support we are providing for families. We use CharityLog, a cloud based CRM, to record data from assessments carried out with parents on 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.

Here is a sample of the type of feedback we collect in order to explore the impact of our work. This is taken from a family supported by home visits during 2023-24.

“*Home-Start has changed my life. My volunteer has helped me get my life back together. She helped me with the children, encouraged me to declutter the house, gave me the confidence to go out on my own and took me out to The Cotswold Farm Park. She became a friend to me and I loved her visits. I feel I can do anything now.*”

Mum who received home visiting support

In a comparison of scores given at initial review versus end review (12 months later), Mum reported a **significant positive increase** in her:



In addition, Mum noted that she **felt less isolated**, had **increased parenting knowledge**, enjoyed **better quality time with her children** and was **better at the day-to-day running of the home**.

“*When we first met, Mum reported that she felt anxious about parenting her young children and was suffering from low self-esteem. Following twelve months support from a volunteer, she now feels she has a close bond with them all and manages to have 1:1 time with each of them. Mum has made fantastic progress since being supported by Home-Start and now feels contented, more confident, independent and is happy. She has started to attend new groups and is now volunteering within her local community, in fact, she is hoping to become a Home-Start volunteer when all of her children are at school. She feels she is finally in ‘parenting mode’ rather than ‘just surviving’.*” Family Coordinator at End of Support Review

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

GROUP WORK

Our Group work is expanding and after research and planning we will extend it to two new towns, Lechlade and Moreton-in-Marsh, in the summer of 2024. This year the team have focussed on improving both our Baby & Me and Reconnect programmes to reflect the views of parents and the Group Coordinators. The new programmes have received excellent feedback from parents and we continue to record very positive outcomes. **76** families have attended a group in the Cotswolds this year.



Baby & Me Postnatal Groups

9 Baby & Me groups (8 weeks each) were held in 2023-4 with **69** families attending over the year. These were held in Bourton-in-the-Water, Tetbury and Fairford.

Reconnect Maternal Mental Health Group

Our Reconnect group (10 weeks) was held in Bourton-in-the-Water with **7** families attending.

Our Reconnect Group is for Mum's facing challenges with their mental health. We provide a creche facility so there is some undisturbed time for Mums to talk and get the most out of their time together. During the course of the year we have updated our Reconnect programme to include discussions around identity, sense of self as a parent, nutrition and mindfulness/relaxation.

“It was really useful to just be able to talk openly and honestly about the harder parts of being a new mum, and the Group Coordinator is so fantastically supportive. I felt understood.”

Our Baby & Me Groups are for new parents and their babies aged 0-6 months. During the 8 weeks we cover lots of different topics such as Child Development, Play, Weaning, First Aid, Baby Massage, Home Safety, Sleep and Pelvic Health.

“It was great to meet other parents. Every class was relevant, informative and enjoyable. It felt like an incredibly safe space to be honest, to share and ask questions. A brilliant resource for parents and babies - I have really enjoyed every session and can't express how valuable it has been.”

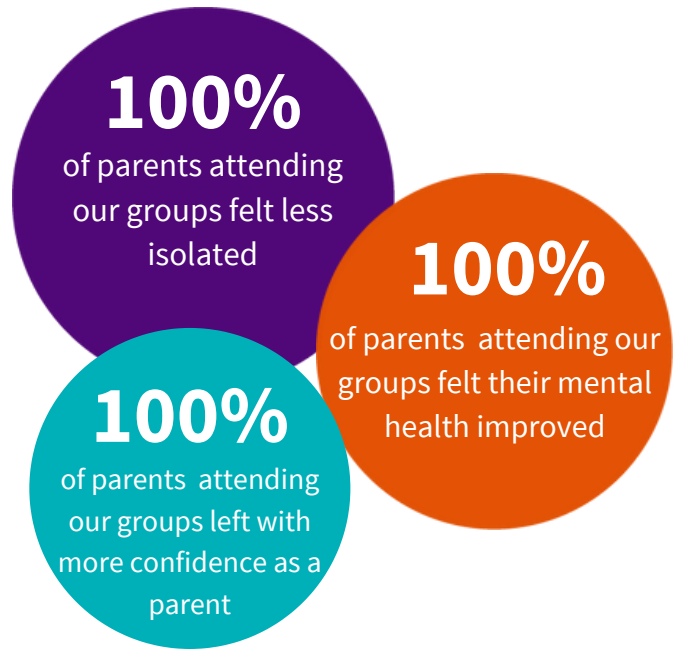


ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

MEASURING GROUP OUTCOMES

Just as we do for our home visiting, it's essential that we record and measure the effectiveness of the support we are providing for families through our Groups. The parents who attend our Groups are all asked to complete a feedback form, to enable us to monitor the effectiveness of the sessions and learn what is working well and what needs to be adapted.

“*I find it difficult to come to groups and make friends but coming here has helped my confidence and helped me to make friends.*”
Mum who attended Baby & Me



“*As someone with social anxiety, leaving the house with baby is such a huge task, it was great to start doing this more regularly and to know that I'd be arriving at an understanding group. Through the group I've made some connections and have already had coffee mornings that I'd never have had without going to your group, it's been a brilliant way to grow a social and support network. Without a doubt the group supports mental health and emotional well-being for new parents and thus ultimately supports our children's outcomes. The first aid course was also really helpful. Thanks so much and please keep running these courses for parents.*”
Mum who attended Baby & Me

In September, we were delighted to be presented with the BBC Radio Gloucestershire 'Make A Difference Award', winning in the Community Group category. Our Group Coordinators, Sophie and Emily were at the award ceremony to collect the award. It felt particularly meaningful as we were nominated by parents who had attended our Baby & Me Groups.



VOLUNTEER UPDATE

TRAINING & SUPPORT

Our amazing volunteers, who are all parents themselves, go the extra mile to support families. A volunteer visits their matched family for 2-3 hours per week and visits normally continue for between 3 months to a year. Our volunteers provide non judgmental, confidential, practical and emotional support and will often help with things such as attending appointments, accompanying a family to a group or activity, cooking, play or simply providing a listening ear for emotional support.



Newly graduated volunteers completing their Preparation Course, March 2024

“I signed up to volunteer for Home-Start after hearing such positive things about this wonderful charity. Having completed the training, I can honestly say that the whole process from the initial call to getting my course certificate has been fantastic. The training was great, engaging and interesting with a variety of people coming in to provide great insight to what we can do to help as volunteers. A real highlight for me was hearing from a mother who came in to talk about her experience of having a Home-Start Volunteer and the difference it made to her life. I now look forward to moving on following my training and being able to make a positive difference to peoples lives, however small. Thank you Home-Start for making this possible.” Gemma, New volunteer, March 2024

Our volunteers undertake an 8 week preparation course which covers areas such as safeguarding, listening skills, family scenarios and child development. Once graduated, we match volunteers with a family, taking into account their their own experiences to provide the best support for families.

We currently have **40** active volunteers; **14** of whom have recently completed our volunteer preparation course that ran Jan - March 2024. Volunteers are supported through regular 1-1 supervision with a Coordinator, as well as receiving peer support at volunteer coffee mornings and ongoing training throughout the year. This year our volunteers have received Baby First Aid Training, Loan Shark Awareness, Safeguarding training and a GCC interactive workshop on the subject of 'Building and Maintaining Healthy Relationships as Parents'.

Without the commitment and dedication of our volunteers, we simply wouldn't have a service to offer and we are extremely grateful for all that they do at Home-Start Cotswolds.



VOLUNTEER UPDATE

VOLUNTEERS

Our volunteers support us in many ways. As well as weekly visits to families, they also offer their time to support our Group work. By offering a cup of tea, a friendly face and support for the Mums attending, they really make a difference to our Groups. Volunteers also help us to spread the word about the amazing work they do. Recently one of volunteers, Debbie, shared her experience of supporting a local family at our Business Networking event at Roots & Seeds, attended by local funders and businesses.

We are fortunate to have access to some local outings that our volunteers can accompany their families to, such as Cotswolds Farm Park, Mini Mudders at Kiftsgate Court Gardens and Westonbirt Arboretum - these make wonderful trips out for families who may not usually get the chance to visit.

In December, Home-Start Gloucestershire was awarded 5 places at a Westminster Abbey Carol Concert, hosted by Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales. The invitation was extended by Edward Gillespie OBE, Lord-Lieutenant of Gloucestershire. Two very long standing volunteers were selected to attend from Home-Start Cotswolds, as thanks for their dedicated service.



Debbie, who gave a talk about being a volunteer at Home-Start Cotswolds



Volunteers attending the Royal Carol Service at Westminster Abbey, December 2023

“It was wonderful to represent Home-Start Cotswolds at the Royal Carol Service hosted by The Princess of Wales at Westminster Abbey in December. There was a lovely programme of carols and readings along with a number of short films to illustrate the importance and different issues relating to Early Years. The Princess, who founded the charity Early Childhood, cares deeply about these issues, and was joined at the Service by Prince William and their young family as well as other members of the Royal Family. Many thanks to the Lord-Lieutenant of Gloucestershire, Edward Gillespie, who nominated Home-Start to attend the event.”

Carolyn Ford, Trustee

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

EVENTS



FUNDRAISING HIKE

In May 2023 we organised a 'Hike' around the Coln Valley. We secured special access to footpaths not usually open to the public and were hosted most generously at Cripps Barn. Our hosts kindly provided much needed refreshments and lunch for those who wanted to stay after their walk. We were blessed with glorious sunshine and over 100 walkers (and their four legged friends!).



ROOTS & SEEDS

In February 2024 we ran a Business Networking event, very kindly hosted by Roots & Seeds Kitchen Garden in Cirencester Park. Around 80 local supporters, funders, volunteers and staff were treated to drinks and canapes provided by the venue, along with the chance to network and hear more about our work at Home-Start Cotswolds.



ANNUAL FAMILY PARTY

In August 2023, during the summer holidays, we held our annual family party. Families receiving home visits, as well as those attending our groups were all invited to share a morning together - enjoying some soft play, outdoor games and home-made refreshments. It's always a wonderful way to get our families, volunteers, trustees and staff all together for a celebration.



HOW IS HOME-START COTSWOLDS FUNDED?



Once again we would like to extend our thanks to Cirencester Baptist Church, who provide us with an amazing office space and use of professional meeting room facilities.

We have reviewed on an annual basis the major risks to which Home-Start Cotswolds is, or may be, exposed and have established systems to identify, manage and mitigate those risks. This is an ongoing process and included within our management and operational procedures.

We retain reserves at 60% of annual expenditure, in line with our policy. A copy of the audited Annual Accounts for 2023-2024 is available on our website.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2024-2025



After 18 years of supporting families in the local area, we know that Home-Start Cotswolds is a well recognised local charity in the district, impacting the lives of over 130 families a year. To ensure our relevance, we continue to review our projects, taking into account the specific needs of families and we endeavour to work seamlessly with other VCSE and partner agencies with our provision of support.

We look forward to the following changes for 2024-25:

- We have reviewed our senior staff roles and the responsibilities of our previous Senior Coordinator post will now be held by two p/t posts; Service Manager (Katharine Campbell) and Operations Manager. At the time of writing, recruitment for the Operations Manager is underway and we hope to have someone in post by July 2024.
- In May 2024 we are extending our Baby & Me postnatal groups into the new areas of Moreton-in-Marsh and Lechlade. We also plan to include a new Reconnect maternal mental health Group in Tetbury during 2024-25.
- In September 2024 we plan to run a recruitment drive to grow our number of Trustees. We currently have a wonderful, cohesive, hardworking team of Trustees who volunteer to keep the governance, planning and financial aspects of our charity in order. We would like to increase the Management Committee by another 2 members and would specifically like individuals with experience of fundraising, IT and family work.

Most of all in 2024-25, we aim to make a positive and lasting impact on the families we support in the Cotswolds.

Carla Partridge
Chair of Trustees
For and on behalf of the Trustees, June 2024



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Registered Office: As above
Bank: Lloyds, PO Box 1000, Andover, BX1 1LT
Accounts: Independently examined by McGills, Oakley House, Tetbury Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 1US

Home-Start Cotswolds is a Registered Charity (since July 2005) and a Company limited by guarantee.
Company Registration number: 5468592
Charity Registration number: 1110632
As an independent charity we work under the umbrella of Home-Start UK.