

Annual Report

April 2024-March 2025

H&ME START

Cotswolds

Celebrating
20 YEARS in 2025



HOME-START COTSWOLDS
c/o Cirencester Baptist Church
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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

As I reflect on the past year, I am filled with immense gratitude for the incredible dedication and passion shown by our staff and volunteers. Their commitment to supporting families in the Cotswolds during challenging times has been nothing short of inspiring. Despite the ongoing difficulties we've faced with funding and resources, their resilience and unwavering belief in our mission has kept us going strong.

It is with both pride and sadness that I share this was my final year serving as Chair of Home-Start Cotswolds. I have truly loved being part of this wonderful charity, and although I continue to enjoy my role immensely, I have made the decision to step back temporarily due to some health concerns. I am, however, delighted to remain involved as a trustee and will continue to support the charity in any way I can.



Carla Partridge, Chair

I am also very pleased to announce that Richard Waller has accepted the role of Chair going forward. Richard, a retired lawyer and part-time sheep farmer, has already proven himself to be a vital part of our team. His wisdom, calm presence, and pragmatic approach have been invaluable, and I am confident that the charity remains in capable and compassionate hands.

Looking ahead, 2025 marks a special milestone for us; the 20th anniversary of Home-Start Cotswolds. Back in 2005, four remarkable individuals recognised the need for a Home-Start branch in our region and took the bold step to make it happen. We are so grateful to those founding members and to all who have supported us since. Their legacy lives on in the work we do, and we look forward to honouring them in our celebrations throughout the coming year.

Thank you once again to everyone who makes Home-Start Cotswolds the incredible organisation it is. I feel truly privileged to have been part of this journey and excited for all that lies ahead.

With warmest thanks,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Carla'.

Carla Partridge
Chair of Trustees

WHAT WE DO

After 20 years in the Cotswolds, providing volunteer support in the home remains our core work. It is a tried and tested model, and we know it works! Our community of amazing volunteers visit families (with children under 5) at home, at the heart of family life, to provide weekly support. Alongside home visiting we run free local postnatal and maternal mental health groups across the more rural towns of the Cotswolds.



The first Home-Start logo by
Quentin Blake

Home-Start Cotswolds was formed in 2005, and is one of around 180 Home-Starts nationally. This year, in 2025, we are delighted to be celebrating our 20th anniversary.

Looking back through our records we can see that a steering group meeting on 31st January 2005 marked the start of Home-Start Cotswolds, and later that year we were officially entered onto the central register of charities and given our charity number. The four founding members became our Management Committee - with the responsibility of governing and steering the charity's objectives. Twenty years later, two of those original members are still working with the charity; Tony Jones as Company Secretary and Clare Baker, a Trustee up until 2024, now a member of staff. There have been 26 Trustees during the past 20 years, and there is no doubt that the enduring success of our charity is in large part thanks to these amazing volunteers.



Our first volunteers, trained in 2006

Our first funding grant came towards the end of 2005, when we received an award from the Big Lottery Fund (National Lottery), meaning we could employ a Family Coordinator, and in early 2006 the job was filled (as a job share) by Katharine Campbell and Sarah Mais.



Clare Baker, presenting at one of our first AGMs

Katharine and Sarah quickly got to work and our first group of volunteers were trained in the summer of 2006. By the end of that first year, 11 families were receiving weekly support from volunteers, 35 children were benefiting and we had another 11 new volunteers signed up, ready to be trained.

A notable moment in our journey was the expansion of our family support in 2021 to include a group programme that runs across the more rural areas of the Cotswolds. Four years later, we run 9 groups annually in 5 different locations!

Another key milestone was moving buildings to Chesterton Lane 8 years ago, we are grateful to Cirencester Baptist Church for their enduring support and for providing us with office space located so visibly within the community.

We are honoured to have helped so many families in our local area and it is amazing to think some of the children we supported in 2006 will soon be parents themselves. By the end of our 20th year, we will have supported 1000 families, positively impacting the lives of over 2000 children.

We have plans in place to celebrate this milestone with our many supporters in the coming year.



STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION

STAFF

Katharine Campbell - Service Manager

Kate Prowse - Operations Manager (Joined in July 2024)

Liz Wilkinson - Family Coordinator, North Cotswolds

Clare Baker - Family Coordinator, South Cotswolds

Sophie Holland - Group Coordinator (Left in August 2024)

Emily Boston - Group Coordinator (Previously Group Worker)

Hannah Morrison - Group Worker (Joined September 2024)

Karen Roberts - Office Coordinator

Sally Mason - Administrator (Retired April 2025)

Ivan Lambert - Administrator

All our staff work part-time and their combined hours amount to the equivalent of **3.9** full-time workers (FTE).



Back row left to right: Karen Roberts, Katharine Campbell, Sally Mason, Kate Prowse, Clare Baker. Front row left to right: Emily Boston, Liz Wilkinson, Hannah Morrison

STAFF CHANGES



Hannah, Sophie and Emily

In August, we were sad to say farewell to our Group Coordinator, Sophie. Sophie was instrumental in setting up our group work back in 2021, and was our very first Group Coordinator. Sophie delivered our initial Baby & Me group in September 2021 and then went on to run many, many more! We are grateful for Sophie's wonderful energy, compassion and her creative approach to all that she did at Home-Start Cotswolds; and we wish her all the best for the future.

Emily, our Group Worker was offered the role of Group Coordinator and we recruited Hannah Morrison as Group Worker in September 2024 to complete our group team.

In April 2025 we said goodbye to our long-serving Administrator, Sally. She worked in the office with us for 14 years and kept the admin running through 14 volunteer prep courses, an office move, the move away from paper records, covid, plenty of staff changes and has been patient, organised and brilliant throughout. Staff and trustees gathered to celebrate Sally's dedication to Home-Start and the start of her retirement. From all of us, past and present, we'd like to take this opportunity to say a big 'thank you' to Sally for all she did!



Sally and Katharine

STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Carla Partridge - Chair
Tony Jones - Secretary
Steve Kaufmann - Treasurer
Carolyn Ford - Trustee
Richard Waller - Trustee
David Pointet - Trustee
Katie Wilson - Trustee (left in December 2024)
Claire Holmes - Advisor (joined January 2025)



Our Trustees, who make up our Management Committee, all dedicate their time and skills to Home-Start Cotswolds on a voluntary basis. They come from diverse backgrounds, each bringing their own experience and expertise to the team. Their role is to oversee the governance, finance, and strategic planning of the charity and in order to do this effectively, the Management Committee meet every two months. In addition, there are three sub committees; Personnel/HR, Finance, and Profile & Fundraising. These sub committees convene regularly and report their findings to the full committee.

Our Home-Start policy states that trustees are elected for terms of three years, up to a maximum of 12 years.



“ I am passionate about the work of Home-Start and I’m excited to have the opportunity to contribute to such an important service for children and their families locally. ”

Claire Holmes

Home-Start Cotswolds is part of the Home-Start network. As well as giving us access to specialist support and collective influence, our membership ensures we are assessed under the Home-Start Quality Assurance (HSQA) Standard. This year we have submitted QA Self-Assessments in 3 areas: Protecting Families, Governance and Leadership and Family Support. To date, we have received constructive feedback on 2 out of the 3 assessments and we were informed by Home-Start UK that our submissions were ‘robust’.



ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

FAMILIES

This year, Home-Start Cotswolds has supported **157** families through our various support streams. We offer a range of support to families, including:

HOME VISITING: **62** families were supported through weekly visits to the family in their home

Baby & Me Postnatal Groups: **83** families attended our eight week groups for parents and their babies aged up to 6 months

Reconnect Perinatal Mental Health Groups: **12** families attended our ten week mental health support groups

Dad Matters: Part of the Home-Start Gloucestershire Consortium, Dad Matters supports Dad's across the whole of Gloucestershire with 1-2-1 support, volunteer led groups and hospital drop-ins. They supported around **10** families from the Cotswolds this year.

Throughout the year we signpost families to other support services, for example: The Food Bank, P3 (support with budgeting & debts), Household Support Fund (financial help), GDASS (domestic abuse service), Perinatal Mental Health Teams, Health Visitors and other NHS services, Citizens Advice, The Grace Network (Long Table, Bike Drop & Kids Stuff), sleep consultants and local playgroups. Our volunteers encourage and enable families to access these services.



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

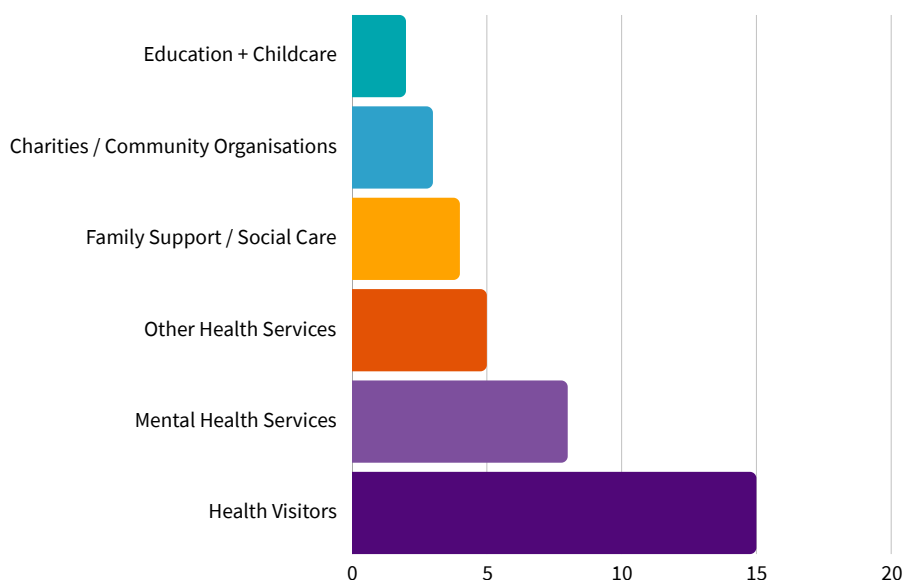
★ represents the locations of our Groups

Families' circumstances at referral for Home Visiting:

- 83%** needed support with their mental health
- 26%** needed support with their finances or debt
- 29%** needed support with their physical health / had a disability
- 20%** were a young parent aged under 25 years
- 26%** were a lone parent
- 14%** had unsuitable housing
- 3%** had refugee / asylum seeker status

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

We work in close partnership with our referrers keeping them up to date with our new groups and our volunteer availability. This year **29** different professionals referred to us from the following services:



“Cirencester Opportunity Group work with a high number of families living in deprivation and social isolation; many move to the area for safety, leaving friends and family behind. With very young children in the home, we turn to Home-Start to come along side us and work with the family who have often been left traumatised and frightened after surviving domestic abuse.”

Vicky Chase, Cirencester Opportunity Group

We receive a small number of self referrals for our home visiting support (11%), in contrast to the 86% of self referrals for the Baby & Me group.

Throughout the year we received a number of referrals for families who were open to Children’s Services and our staff attended multi agency meetings as required. We supported **13** families who have experienced domestic abuse who have often recently relocated into the area.

HOME VISITING

62 families received support from a home visiting volunteer this year. This included **117** children. Parenting is a challenging journey that can make people feel isolated, frustrated, and overwhelmed. Our supported families often face significant life challenges, including illness, anxiety, relationship breakdown, financial difficulties, domestic abuse, bereavement, neurodiversity and adjusting after a relocation.

When Home-Start receives a family referral, we carefully match them with a volunteer who visits for up to three hours weekly, establishing a relationship built on trust and support. Our volunteers support families to address their specific challenges. They provide companionship, a listening ear, creative play, help and motivation to tackle finance and housing issues, encouragement and support to engage with their local community, and connections to specialist organisations.



ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Each family we work with is unique and we aim to tailor the support to their needs in a way that will be most beneficial to them. To this end, our home visiting families complete a self assessment form at their initial visit with a Family Coordinator. They record how they feel about issues such as their mental health, isolation, parenting skills and finances. This form is completed again at review visits in order to create a picture of the family's needs over the time of support. Data from the self assessment forms is recorded on CharityLog, our GDPR compliant, cloud-based CRM, and from this we can extract reports on the impact our home visiting has had on families.

For example, throughout the time of home visiting support we can see a consistent improvement in parents' confidence, mental health and feelings of isolation. For those parents who are struggling with managing their children, we see an improvement in their parenting knowledge and skills. We also collect feedback from families at their reviews about how much they appreciate their volunteers and the difference their support is making. Over 60% of the families receiving home-visiting support reported:



“ It was lovely knowing my volunteer was coming on a regular basis so that I could have some time for myself which has greatly improved my mental health. She was so easy to talk to and it was helpful to listen to her knowledge and experience when I was struggling. ”

GROUP WORK

95 families attended one of our groups this year. As planned, we have extended our group work and now hold regular sessions in Bourton-on-the-Water, Moreton-in-Marsh, Fairford, Lechlade and Tetbury. In May 2025 we plan to run an additional Reconnect maternal mental health group in the South Cotswolds area (Tetbury).

In order to measure the impact of our group work, parents fill in a feedback form at the last session of their group. This form uses an adapted version of our home visiting assessment. The data is recorded on CharityLog.

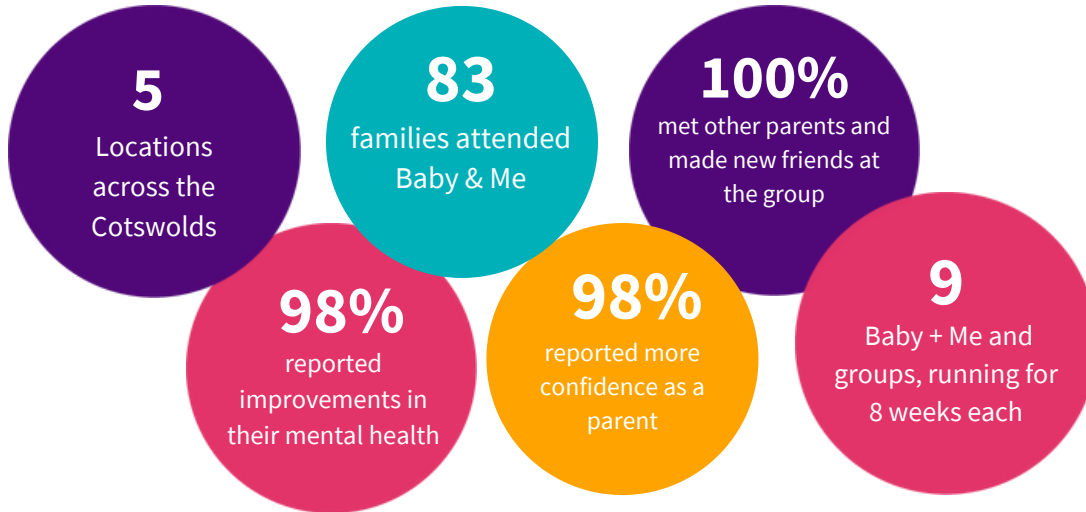


ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

BABY & ME

Our Baby & Me groups cater specifically to new parents with babies aged 0-6 months. Over our comprehensive 8-week programme we cover many essential topics including child development, interactive play, nutrition and weaning, emergency first aid, baby massage techniques, home safety practices, healthy sleep habits, and maternal pelvic health.

“The group has improved my knowledge and understanding of my baby’s needs, whether it be emotionally, developmentally or physically. The group provided a platform for key speakers to share their knowledge which in turn has given me ways I can bond and understand my baby’s needs. I’m more patient and confident as a parent and this is reflected in my bonded relationship with my baby.”



RECONNECT

Our Reconnect Group supports mothers experiencing mental health challenges. A creche is run during sessions, creating a dedicated space where mothers can fully engage in discussions without interruption. This year we have started to run the creche internally, ensuring the volunteers and staff running it have been fully trained to understand the additional reassurance and time these mums need to confidently leave their children during the group. This has been appreciated by the mums and we have seen an improvement in consistent attendance at this group as a result. The group covers topics including parental identity, self-awareness development, nutritional wellness, evidence-based mindfulness and relaxation techniques. All attendees reported an improvement in their mental health and well being and a positive impact on the children who attended with them.

“It was so helpful getting support from other parents in similar situations and it made me feel less alone in my struggles. I also found the workshops really helpful and I’ve found new ways to cope through the group work. Emily was so supportive and helped get me in touch with a sleep consultant.”

VOLUNTEER UPDATE

Home-Start Cotswolds has **54** trained volunteers, including **14** new volunteers who were trained this year. Our volunteers generously give up their time to support parents who are struggling with the pressures of family life. In any given week our volunteers will be offering over **80** hours of support to families, either by visiting them at home, supporting a Home-Start group or helping in our newly formed creche.

What our volunteers do to help families is very simple, but the family situations we work in can be very complex. Providing a regular weekly visit, enjoying a cup of tea together, listening to the ups and downs of the past week can make such a difference to someone experiencing poor mental health or escaping a domestic abuse situation. Volunteers help families access groups, accompany them on medical, housing or legal appointments, enable families to enjoy days out in the holidays, support with budgeting and paperwork, help make phone calls, go for walks and visits to the park. They are there offering gentle encouragement for whatever aspect of family life is proving difficult.



There are a variety of reasons why our volunteers have joined the team but a recurring theme is that they know how hard it is being a parent and they wished there had been support for them. Every volunteer has had a different parenting experience of their own and that helps us to provide the right ‘match’ for a family situation where a trusting, supportive relationship can be built.

“ *Becoming a volunteer for Home-Start has been a huge full circle moment for me. After attending a Baby & Me group myself in 2022, with my son, while struggling with post natal depression, it gave me a sense of purpose, added structure to my week and made me realise I wasn’t alone in how I was feeling. Helping mums that may be feeling how I was in those early days of motherhood, or just being there as a listening ear and allowing them to drink a hot cup of tea, became something I felt I needed to give back - to show them there is light on the other side!* ”



New Volunteers completing their training in March 2025

“ I love volunteering , it’s one of the highlights of my week. It’s wonderful to have the opportunity to build a relationship with another Mum and their children. I come away feeling lifted and with a real buzz each week. ”

VOLUNTEER UPDATE

TRAINING & SUPPORT

All our volunteers complete a 'safer recruitment' process and attend a 40 hour training course over 8 weeks, to prepare them for working with families. Volunteers are then supported by regular one to one supervision and a programme of ongoing training.

Over the course of the year, we have held a number of peer to peer support sessions. These meet-ups allow volunteers to get together and share experiences and knowledge in an informal setting, and usually with a cup of tea in hand!

More formal training sessions have included annual Safeguarding, Neurodiversity and 'Multi Agency Support' where we heard from the Charity P3 and the perinatal mental health team, as well as one of our own volunteers who had supported a family to get a better hold of their finances.



“My volunteer has been so helpful with my debt. She has helped me realise that it's ok to face things rather than bury my head in the sand and that I'm very capable. I would always get so nervous and anxious having to make phone calls to people but my volunteer would sit next to me and help me. Now I make phone calls on my own. I feel so comfortable with her and she has really helped my confidence.”



Volunteer training

At Christmas we invited our volunteers to join us for lunch. It was a great opportunity to thank them for all of their hard work over the year. We have such a wonderful community of volunteers and we would like to thank them all for their dedication and commitment, we hope they realise what a difference they make in their local community.

“My volunteer has helped us to declutter our flat so that we have more room for when the baby arrives. She has taken things to the tip and the charity shops. Knowing she is coming has made a huge difference as we have really lovely chats and she helps us to see how we can organise everything.”



Volunteers (left picture) Christmas Lunch at Cirencester Baptist Church, (right picture) Christmas Lunch at Cotswolds Farm Park

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

EVENTS

Our annual family party is a real highlight in our calendar and this year was no exception. The weather wasn't quite on our side but that didn't stop the fun! The families we work with are invited to join us and we always hold it in the summer holidays when they will really benefit from a free day out. We had a great morning with some amazing games, bubbles, crafts, soft-play, home-made snacks and ice-cream! It's a wonderful day, bringing together our families, volunteers, trustees and staff for a much needed play and celebration.



COMMUNITY SUPPORT

It's always heart warming to receive the support of local individuals and organisations, and we've seen so many supporting us in the past year. There are too many to mention here but some wonderful examples include:

- Home-made knitted blankets and quilts from The Linus Project, and The Kemble & Ewan Craft Group
- Multiple fundraising initiatives from the team at The Bear Inn, Cirencester, including a quiz and crafts
- Free or discounted family visits to attractions such as Mini Mudders, Cotswold Farm Park, Batsford Arboretum and Westonbirt Arboretum
- Donations from Cirencester Singers Christmas concert
- Table Top Sale and tombola stall run by supporters of Home-Start
- The Barn Theatre donating tickets for families to see their Christmas production
- Tesco in Cirencester donating food and provisions for our family party
- Christmas gifts and donations from North Cotswolds Community Awareness
- Christmas presents from the Salvation Army and food parcels from the Round Table in South Cotswolds
- Amazon Christmas Wish List for lone parents (the list was sold out in a matter of days)
- Katharine, our Service Manager, cycled 100 miles in the 'Ride London' event
- Donations from Little Farringdon Bonfire Party

...and many more! These acts of generosity and kindness make a huge difference to our work.



GRANTS

John Armitage Charitable Trust
Peter Lang Trust
The National Lottery - as part of H-S Glos Consortium
Notgrove Trust
Clinical Commissioning Group (ICB)
Helping Hand - North Cotswolds Rotary
Bourton Parish Council
Tesco Stronger Starts
National Benevolent Charity
Gloucestershire Community Fund
Garfield Weston Foundation
Jack Lane Charitable Trust
The Albert Hunt Trust

INCOME:
£147,643

EXPENDITURE:
£145,248

Thank You!

To everyone who
has supported us
during the year

DONATIONS

Coln St Aldwyns Fete
The Bear Inn
Blockley PCC
Bagendon PCC
Rotary in the Rissingtons
Barnsley Village Festival
Little Farrington Bonfire Night
Dawson Wedding
Cirencester Singers
The Inner Wheel Club

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Cirencester Baptist Church for providing us with our brilliant office space, as well as additional rooms for meetings and training.

We annually review the risks to our organisation and our systems to manage and mitigate those risks. As part of this the reserves policy has been changed to having at least 4 months expenditure in reserve.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2025-2026



As I pass the baton to Richard Waller, I remain genuinely excited about the future of Home-Start Cotswolds and our commitment to supporting families in new and meaningful ways.

We have a full programme of Baby & Me postnatal groups scheduled, including sessions at Fairford, Tetbury, Moreton-in-Marsh, Lechlade and Bourton-on-the-Water, which we hope will continue to offer new parents the support and community they need during those early, often overwhelming, months. We are also introducing our Reconnect Group to a second location, allowing us to reach more families struggling with their mental health.

We're thrilled to report that our staff team is now complete and stronger than ever. Kate Prowse has taken on the role of Operations Manager, and we warmly welcome Hannah Morrison, who has stepped into the position of Group Worker following Sophie's departure. Ivan, who was previously working over three days, now works over five days, which brings greater continuity to our office.

With this fantastic team in place and Richard at the helm, we are confident that Home-Start Cotswolds is ready to grow and thrive. We look forward to continuing to support local families with compassion, expertise, and hope, just as we have for the past 20 years.

Carla Partridge
Chair of Trustees
For and on behalf of the Trustees, May 2025



Office address: Home-Start Cotswolds, c/o Cirencester Baptist Church, Chesterton Lane, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 1YE

Registered Office: As above

Bank: Lloyds, PO Box 1000, Andover, BX1 1LT

Accounts: Independently examined by Monahans, 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.