What we do?

Home-Start is a voluntary organisation where volunteers offer regular support, friendship and practical help to young families under stress, helping to prevent family crisis and breakdown, and emphasizing the pleasures of family life. We provide breathing space for parents and elbow room for many professional workers who refer families with at least one child under school going age.

The first five years of a child’s life are fundamentally important. They are the foundation that shapes a child’s future health, happiness, growth, development and learning achievement at school, in the family and community, and life in general. Providing a stable, loving, family environment during this time is vital. But being a parent isn’t easy and sometimes the struggles of life can become too much for parents to cope with. A young child caught up in this can miss out on the love, routine and stimulation that are so necessary for their future.

Home-Start volunteers are parents. They understand that parenting is hard! They work alongside parents, usually in their own homes, to help them cope with the stresses and strains of life and make sure they have the skills, time and strength they need to nurture their children.

Volunteers are carefully selected by professionals and receive training (approved by Home-Start Worldwide) to work alongside vulnerable families for as long as the family needs them. They are managed and supervised by the local Home-Start scheme which in turn is supported by the national Home-Start office.

FAMILIES CHOOSE TO BE WITH US AS VOLUNTEERS CHOOSE TO BE WITH FAMILIES
Home-Start Worldwide

Home-Start was founded in the UK in 1973 by the late Margaret Harrison. Home-Start International (now Home-Start Worldwide) was started in 1999.

Helping thousands of children every year!

Each year supports approximately:

- **20,000 Volunteers**
- **40,000 Families**
- **80,000 Children**
Home-Start Worldwide

23 countries

North America 1
Europe 14
Africa 5
Asia/Oceania 3

Australia
Burundi
Canada
Czech Republic
Denmark
France

Greece
Hungary
Ireland
Japan
Latvia
Malta

Netherlands
Norway
Poland
Romania
South Africa
Sri Lanka
Sweden

Tanzania
Uganda
Zambia
United Kingdom
Home-Start Worldwide is a membership organisation of independent family support organisations providing Home-Start services in 23 countries. Home-Start Worldwide partners with national organisations in these countries, ensuring that the service provided at local level adheres to the international standards set by Home-Start Worldwide, facilitating exchanges between Home-Start countries, sharing good practice, organising international training events and advising on policy and practice. Home-Start Worldwide also supports Home-Start development in new countries.
Who would benefit?

Just a few examples:

- Parents who are struggling with the emotional and physical demands of a baby, young children, twins or triplets.
- Families who are new to an area and don't know how to access local community support.
- Parents who are feeling lonely or isolated.
- Parents who are finding it hard to cope due to their own illness or the illness of a child.
- Parents caring for a disabled child who need emotional and practical support and would benefit from being connected to local community services.
- Parents who are struggling financially and may need help in managing a household budget.
- Mothers with post-natal depression.
- Families struggling with marital problems or domestic violence will benefit from having Home-Start support and can be connected to professional help and support groups.
- Parents facing life challenges which are threatening to overwhelm them - to help them understand the importance of getting help to reduce the risk of impact on their children.
- Families struggling to come to terms with the bereavement of a loved one.
- Parents in need of practical help: addressing healthy eating for children, child safety at home, time for a sleep, or simply in need of an extra pair of hands for a few hours.

The Home-Start team would generally meet with the parent/parents once a week for a couple of hours sharing experiences and working alongside with them, rather than doing things for them.
How our volunteers add value

. Our volunteers are parents themselves so they offer their own experience of parenting.

. Our volunteers are trained to Home-Start Worldwide standards to help parents find ways to manage and resolve problems.

. Volunteers provide direct support to children by playing with them, making sure that their environment is safe and secure.

. Volunteers will help mothers to establish feeding and daily routines and assist with outings and treats.

. Volunteers will accompany parents to access grants, doctors appointments, etc.

. Volunteers and their Coordinators work closely in partnership with families and with Government and non-Government services to maximise the reach of support offered to parents on the programme.

. Volunteers and parents build up a relationship of trust and friendship which is powerful in creating meaningful change in families.

Referrals can be made directly by families themselves or via educational services, social support services and healthcare services.

ENCOURAGING CONFIDENCE AND INDEPENDENCE AND HELPING PARENTS TO BUILD A NETWORK OF FRIENDS AND SUPPORT SERVICES
Home-Start can...

- Reduce social isolation
- Increase social support networks
- Improve emotional wellbeing & physical health
- Strengthen parent and child attachments

- Help parents get more joy out of being a parent
- Improve the home environment
- Increase a child’s safety and protection
The Home-Start cycle of support for families

- Peace and quiet
- A listening ear
- An extra pair of hands
- Time-out
- Encourage independence
- Increased self-confidence
- An everyday breathing space
"What our families say"

"You are brilliant at making it 'ok' to feel like you are not coping and that it is ok to accept help. My volunteer is wonderful, she helped me through a very dark time. She was reliable, easy to get on with and it is amazing that she would give up her time like that for me."

"We were provided with help and support during a challenging time with our twins, one of whom is deaf. An extra pair of hands was invaluable and the support priceless. The girls formed a very special bond with our volunteer and so obviously enjoy their time with her. We are very grateful to Home-Start and that such a great organisation exists - thank you."

"Given me get up and go - self esteem to get back into the world again."

"My volunteer Emma never judged me but tried to see my point of view. There was a time when she helped me change my relationship with my mother and even accompanied me to get further help. In fact, now I'm glad to say that my relationship with my mother is a much better one. Without judgement she very patiently helped me to understand the concept of handling money and to build a better relationship with my son. Now that my life situation has improved, Mary shall not continue to visit me every week. I always knew that this day would come since there are other families that might need more support than I do. Mary says that she will continue to visit me occasionally. I shall really look forward to these meetings as I shall miss her."

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"I could not have coped without Home-Start - it has been invaluable."

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"Home-Start makes dealing with a special needs child a little bit easier especially as I have no family close by."
"My hope for the future is to continue to volunteer for Home-Start and to start an advisor course. My aim is to work with people from various backgrounds and with all different problems in life. I feel that Home-Start has opened up this door for me."

"I have been a volunteer for 2 years. I am still supporting the first family that I had been assigned to. The mother is withdrawn. She seems to have a low self-esteem and rarely goes out. She lacks parenting skills. So I help out by accompanying the mother for hospital and other appointments and support her in her day to day routine. During my visits to her home, I am regularly passing on parenting and personal skills in an informal manner, careful not to be imposing.

We have built a good relationship. Notwithstanding the difficulties that she faces, some minor changes have been observed. Upon my encouragement, she does her best to take the children out to play. She also started to keep her appointments, which was a big step forward as she used to find it hard to leave her house."

"Home-Start helped me turn my life around and gave me my self confidence back. To volunteer for Home-Start and to help get a family back on their feet is a wonderful experience."

"I would say to any family needing support, don't stay at home feeling isolated, contact your local Home-Start. No one at Home-Start is judgmental, the volunteers are there as friends, they are a supporting shoulder to lean on."

"I have found that when I give some of my time to someone else who appreciates, it gives me a lot of satisfaction. It also helps me within my own family as it makes me appreciate and give more to them.

Home-Start has helped me grow as a person and has made me face a reality that I had previously been unaware of."
WHAT EXPERTS AND KEY PEOPLE SAY

"Improvements in parental wellbeing, parenting and child behaviour seem to progress after the intervention, again, suggesting that families regained self-regulative capacities and that the intervention enabled them to deal with new challenges in new developmental stages."


"In all four domains of family life (parenting skills, parental well-being, children's well-being and family management), the families had higher coping scores at the end of Home-Start support than at the beginning of it with the largest change in coping with feeling isolated."

Prof. Joyce Kenkre and Elizabeth Young (2013)

"Results show that Home-Start enhanced the growth in maternal sense of competence"


"Home-Start is an important organisation, providing valuable services to families and children in the early years"

Gordon Brown, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (from speech when Chancellor of the Exchequer)

Volunteers are typically perceived by clients as more accessible and less threatening than professionals, which may result in people feeling more at ease, leading to increased responsiveness to the intervention and less dropout.


Home-Start was awarded the status of best practice by the experts of the European Platform for Investing in Children, an EU initiative. This status is awarded to practices that have demonstrated their effectiveness through rigorous research.