

**HOME  
START**

**Reading**



# Annual report 2022-23





# CO-CHAIR REPORT

**Home-Start Reading has had a positive year 2022-2023, with a few staff and trustee changes but in general the stability of the wider team has been welcomed by all.**

In the aftermath of Covid-19 the funding landscape continues to be a challenge for many small charities, and we are no exception. Without any statutory support the constant search for funding is even more critical as we reach the end of multi-year funding from both the Big Lottery Fund and Children in Need. However, the board remains positive and regularly reviews the financial position, recognising that we may need to draw on reserves to ensure a balanced financial position is maintained for 2023-24.

During the year the board of trustees said farewell to Naiya Patel and Katie Poole. We wish them all the best for the future and thank them for their valued contribution to the board and the charity. Chinelo Onyewuchi and Ian Caren were co-opted as trustees during 2023, pending formal appointment at the AGM in September.

We continue our efforts to expand the skills and capacity of the board to add value to the service we provide. We recognise the constraints on potential trustees' time due to caring and work responsibilities but would still welcome the opportunity to discuss how we can work together for mutual benefit. Please do make contact via the office if you would like to know more.

In September 2022 the team said goodbye to our administrator Karen, and we wish her every success with her new endeavours as a trainee midwife.

We were delighted to welcome Katerina Vlckova as our new administrator, bringing a fresh set of skills and enthusiasm for her role. Katerina has settled in really well with the team and has made great strides with reporting data.



At the end of the financial year, we launched our new three-year strategic plan following a series of trustee and staff workshops led by Anna Vorster. The plan for 2023-26 aims to enhance our service by setting ambitious but achievable strategic objectives, recognising that in an increasingly challenging economic environment, any planned activity must be appropriately resourced and financially viable.

We have seen that as referrals continue to increase, the circumstances affecting families are increasingly complex. Although we strive to support as many referred families as possible, our capacity to manage additional Home Visiting volunteers and group activities will inevitably be subject to appropriate funding.

We are proud to demonstrate through this report that Home-Start Reading has made a significant impact on the lives of many families this year. This would not have been possible without the passion and dedication of all those who have contributed as volunteers, staff, and trustees. We'd especially like to thank our Manager Kelly Dadd and her marvellous team for their positive attitude, continuing care for the families and volunteers we support, and their understanding of the challenges we sometimes face.

Next year will be Home-Start Reading's 40th anniversary. We look forward to celebrating everyone's success over the years and we aim to take the opportunity through this positive publicity to seek further financial and practical support to take us forward for many years to come.



**Sue Biggs & Catherine Troup**  
**September 2023**



# ABOUT OUR FAMILIES

In April 2022, referrals were frequent and demand remained high. In November we made the very difficult decision to halt referrals in order to manage the increased waiting list. Despite our referral pathway remaining closed until after Easter 2023, we still accepted 106 new referrals over the first half of the year.

## Where our referrals come from

### Health services

- Health Visiting team
- Midwife / Poppy team
- Perinatal Mental Health team
- Community Mental Health team

### Other

- Social prescribers
- Talking Therapies
- Homeless Prevention
- Berkshire Women’s Aid
- Alana House (PACT)
- Other local Home-Starts
- Launchpad Women’s Project
- Your Way
- Coffee & Craft
- Red Cross

### Brighter Futures for Children

- Social Work team
- Early Help team
- Family Work team
- Children’s Centre clusters

### Self referral

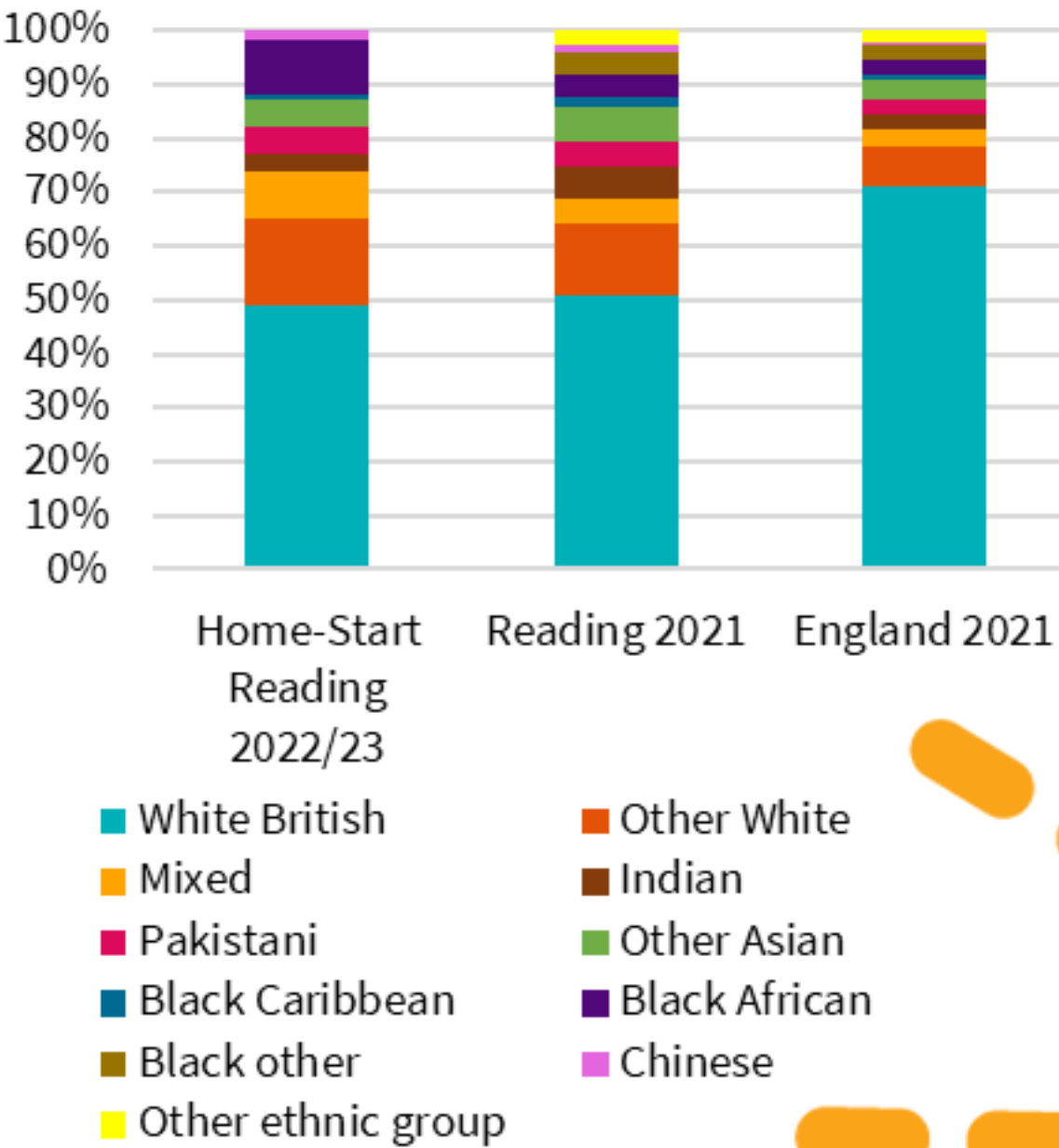


Where our supported families live in Reading



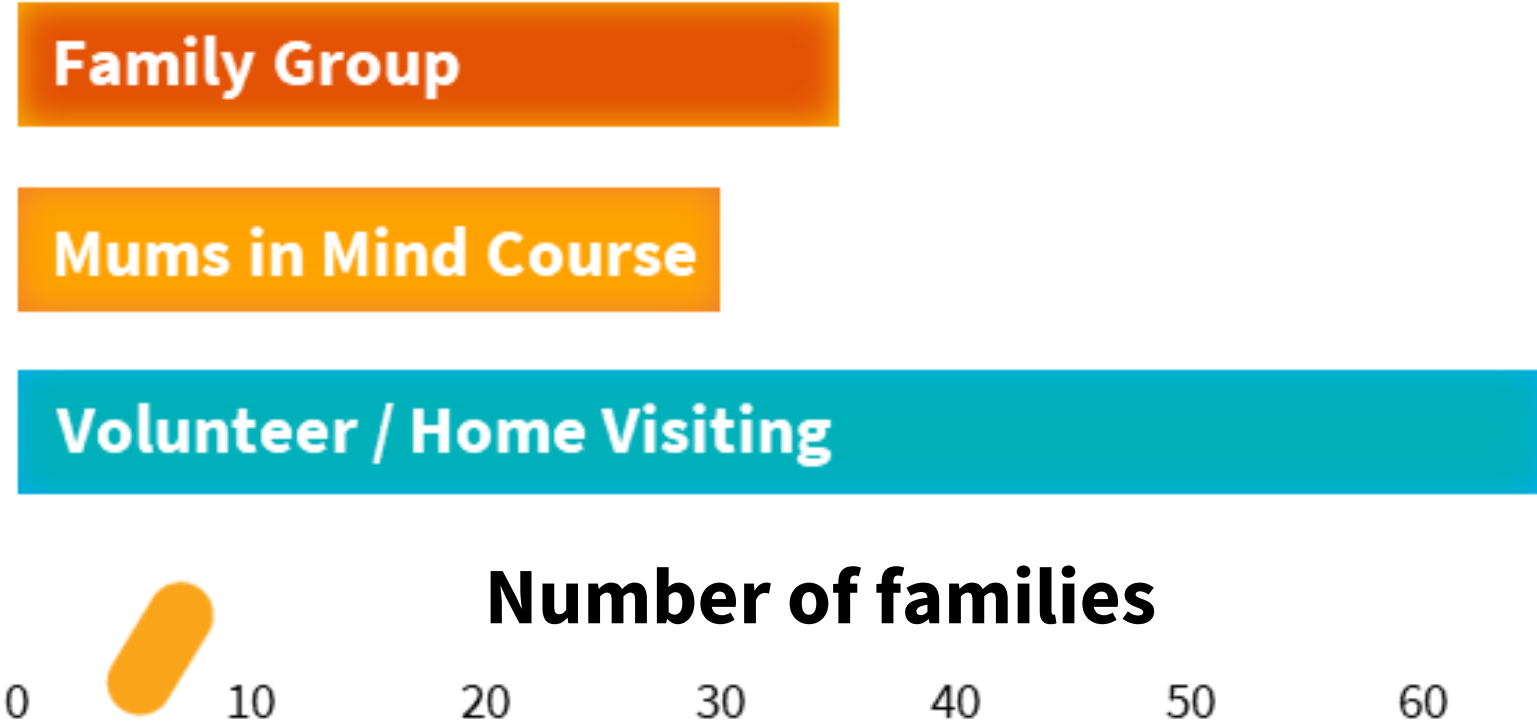
# ABOUT OUR FAMILIES - ETHNIC MIX AND SERVICE USE

## COMPARISON OF ETHNICITY DATA



This graph illustrates the ethnicity of the families we supported last year. It tells us that the ethnic diversity of families was reflective of the profile of Reading.

## SERVICES



These are the three main areas of support we provided for families last year. Where their needs are multiple or complex, more than one service is often beneficial. Overall we provided 130 services to 105 families.

**49%** of the families we supported were single parent households



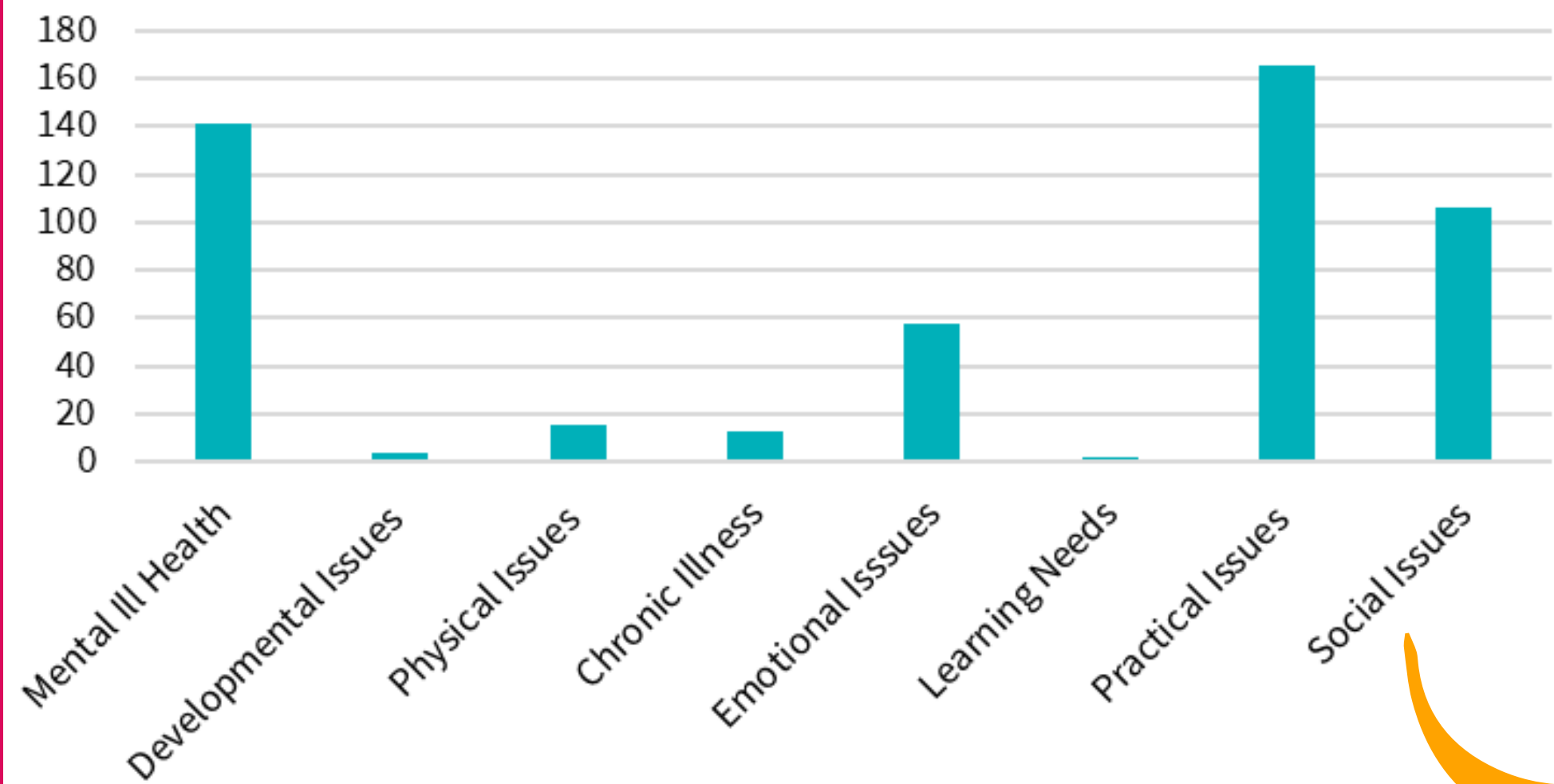
# ABOUT OUR FAMILIES - WHY THEY NEED SUPPORT

Many of the families we support identify as having multiple needs. The most common of these is practical issues followed closely by mental ill health. We know these two areas are commonly linked, as is the case with other key issues. With our support, families can start to experience progress across the board.

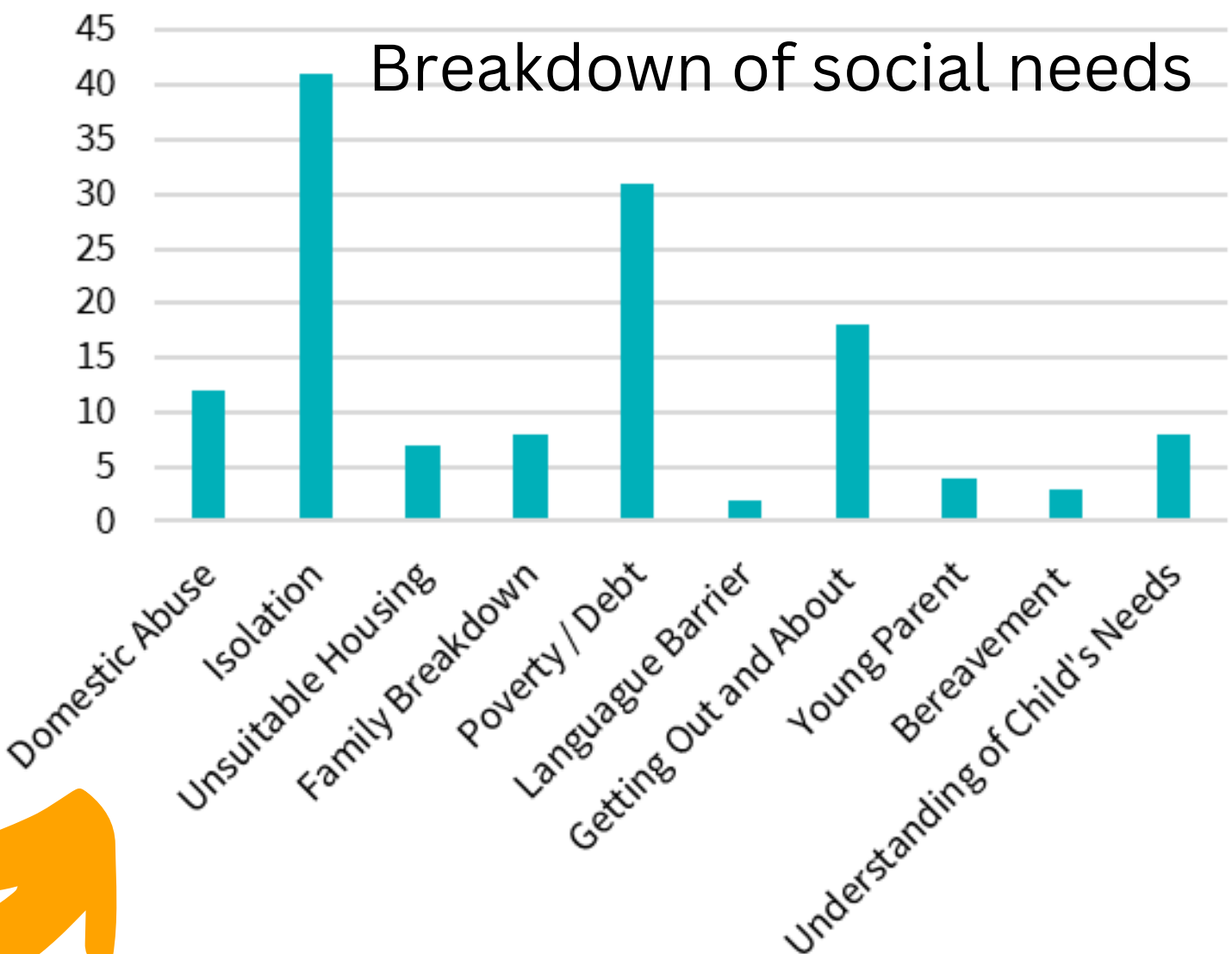


Social issues was the third most commonly recognised area of need. The diagram below illustrates the 10 social needs most often identified by families.

Adult needs



Breakdown of social needs





# ABOUT OUR FAMILIES - THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKDROP

At Home-Start Reading we recognise that families come in all shapes and sizes. Although a lot of the challenges are similar for everyone, we know that each family is unique in the issues they face and the strengths they possess.

Our team have the skills and resources to support a broad spectrum of family needs and we continue to respond to the current socio-economic conditions, including the chronic ripple effects of the pandemic, global conflict and the energy and cost of living crises.

## Why deprivation matters

It is widely accepted that deprivation or being in a position of relative disadvantage is associated with poorer health, including mental health.

According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019), Reading as a whole is the 141st most deprived out of 317 local authorities in the country. Reading is notable for the disparity within its local area. Five of 94 areas in Reading are ranked in the 10% most deprived nationally and 24 areas fall within the 30% most deprived nationally. Last year, a third of the families we supported lived in these 24 most deprived areas.

## Some of the situations families we supported last year were facing...

34% did not have English as their first language

Some parents were seriously ill or caring for very poorly partners or children

51 were single parent households

Eight parents had neurodevelopmental disorders including autism and ADHD

57 children were identified with emerging or diagnosed special or additional needs, physical disabilities, poor mental/emotional health and other chronic conditions

Three families had a parent in prison

54 families had received Early Help support and half of those had previously been subject to or were currently under a Child Protection or a Child in Need plan

Some were refugees seeking asylum from other countries. Others were fleeing domestic violence from other towns and cities in the UK.



# KEY STATS FOR 2022-23



**105**  
Families supported

**332**  
Children supported

**29**  
Active volunteers

**12**  
Volunteers recruited

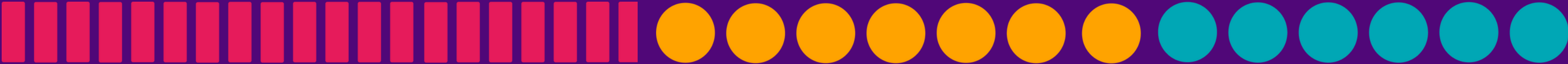
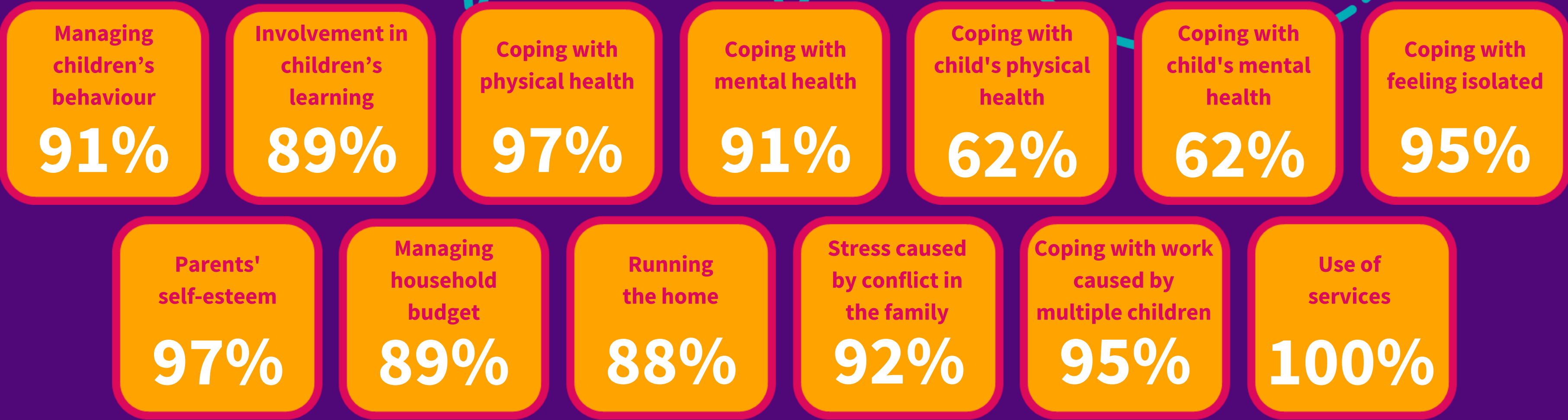
**30**  
Mums in Mind attendees





# THE IMPACT WE MADE

How many of the families we support saw an improvement in 13 key areas...



# THE YEAR AT A GLANCE - FIRST HALF

## April, May and June

Pathway to  
Parenthood course

Easter egg  
distribution

Next Steps training  
for volunteers

Easter craft  
fundraising at  
Tesco Reading  
West

Reading Half  
Marathon

Paediatric First  
Aid course

Shoes donated by  
Russell & Bromley

Mums in Mind  
course

Reading Family Aid  
trip to Odds Farm

## July, August and September

Mums in Mind  
course

Reading Family Aid trip  
to Bournemouth

Reading Family Aid  
trip to Caversham  
Lakes

Volunteer tea  
party

Face-to-face  
volunteer training

Circus Starr  
family trip



# THE YEAR AT A GLANCE - SECOND HALF

## October, November and December

John Lewis  
Magical  
Christmas

Mums in Mind  
course

Kenton Theatre  
pantomime trip

Festive mingle for  
staff, volunteers  
and trustees

AGM

Room2Reward prize  
awarded to our  
volunteer Alison

Reading  
Family Aid  
pantomime  
trip

Gift, book and  
food voucher  
deliveries

Face-to-face  
volunteer training

Volunteer  
interviews

## January, February and March

Waitrose food  
bag deliveries

Mums in Mind  
course

Mums in Mind  
Outreach course

Spring  
Celebration

Face-to-face  
volunteer training

One Reading  
Spring  
Marketplace

Family Information  
Service overview  
of new website



# HOME VISITING

**62 families received home visiting support from us last year, with 103 children benefitting overall. 65% of these were under 5 years old.**

Despite closing our referral pathway for five months and an increase in complex cases, we increased our Home Visiting support to 62 families from 45 the previous year.

Our Home-Visiting Co-ordinators worked really hard to reduce our waiting list and recruit new volunteers. We also implemented our Case Duration and Exit Strategy, where we adapted and reclarified our processes around closing cases. This has been a challenge as we have had to manage the expectations of the families and their referrers, but we believe we have managed to increase our efficiency without compromising our effectiveness.

We held preparation courses for new volunteers in October 2022 and January 2023. Both courses were delivered using the hybrid approach, where potential volunteers were able to work through modules online, at a time and pace that suited their individual needs. We decided to keep three face-to-face sessions to conclude the training, as we believe this helps to cement relationships between volunteers and co-ordinators as well as encouraging peer support among the group.

## VOLUNTEERS HELLO AND GOODBYE



**A warm welcome to...**

|               |                 |                |                |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Nicole</b> | <b>Rachel</b>   | <b>Marion</b>  | <b>Fiona C</b> |
| <b>Liz</b>    | <b>Fern</b>     | <b>Fiona H</b> | <b>Jane</b>    |
| <b>Sara</b>   | <b>Philippa</b> | <b>Lisa</b>    | <b>Meena</b>   |



**Farewell and thank you...**

|                 |              |                |                 |                  |
|-----------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| <b>Sonia</b>    | <b>Sharn</b> | <b>Alex</b>    | <b>Joanne</b>   | <b>Charlotte</b> |
| <b>Rushelle</b> | <b>Linda</b> | <b>Manuela</b> | <b>Aishling</b> | <b>Melanie</b>   |



# HOME VISITING - WORDS OF APPRECIATION

The following quotes are a small selection from the comments made by the families we support. They illustrate the powerful impact our volunteers make...

[Volunteer] brought me out of my comfort zone, when I needed it, but she also made me feel comfortable. She listened to me - it's hard to find people to talk to. She showed me how to play with the children. I've always wanted to be a mum, but in the busyness of it all I forget the small things I can do with them. I will feel lost without her. It was such a great experience

**January 2023**

A big thank you to you and my volunteer. I feel as though I couldn't have got out of my depression and grief without your support. Just being able to go to the park with my volunteer and to get to know her made a big difference.

**November 2022**

[Volunteer] was very kind and I felt at ease with her. She gave me such a good sounding board which helped me reach decisions about my life that I would have struggled with otherwise.

**April 2022**

Absolutely amazing. You did a brilliant link. My volunteer was so friendly and supportive. She built my confidence up. Getting that extra support from you during such a hard time meant that I was able to go to a local group - something I could never have done on my own due to all A's medical equipment.

**May 2022**

I enjoy having someone to talk to that doesn't judge me. [Volunteer] has been through similar experiences to me and can identify with how I feel.

**June 2022**

[Volunteer] is the one that makes me feel normal. I really do enjoy her company.

**Apr 2022**

It was so easy to talk to [volunteer], and I loved being able to get on with something knowing that M was safe with [volunteer] looking after her. She was so natural with how she played with M, and M really liked her. On a Sunday evening, I loved knowing that [volunteer] was coming Monday morning - it was the one day of the week that I didn't need to worry about.

**August 2022**

# FAMILY GROUPS



**Our two Family Groups went from strength to strength last year.**

In its final year of the latest round of Children in Need funding, this project has supported 35 families, with 52 children under 5 regularly attending. Because of the nature of our ‘whole family’ approach, 81 children in total benefitted, with practical, financial and emotional support from our co-ordinator, help with referrals, signposting, advocacy and more.



## What the families say

Without Home-Start’s support and C being there I’m not sure where I would be today. Especially with ongoing or new problems emerging, nothing is ever brushed off and I am listened to and heard. G gets the chance to do messy play, mixing with other children and I get comfort and being able to talk to other parents and C about anything that bothers me.

I wanted to attend a group where the children can play and I can relax a little. I am happy there are other twins in group.

A safe relaxing place.

My own time, knowing I’m not judged and K can play safely.

It’s been very welcoming and I’m sure once I’m less shy I will be OK.

The boys are enjoying playing with others and I’ve met some new people to chat to. The change in crafts have been great so more messy play is perfect. By coming to group I get sanity and self confidence.

Last year, we continued our successful formula of balancing our provision with consistency and new experiences delivered within a calm, kind and nurturing setting while modelling respect and routine. We offered the families new learning experiences and the children explored, tested boundaries and took risks in a safe environment. We expanded our sensory resources and developed our special sensory area.



Our Play Leader told us: “Our observations of the children’s play and behaviour highlighted several children showing sensory-seeking behaviours who we felt would benefit from a quiet space to retreat to with a variety of sensory resources to enjoy. We identified a gap in our resources and the need for more sensory provision. The children are enjoying this space each week, exploring the resources and benefitting from a calm space to relax in and enjoy some quiet time away from the busy play session. Quite by chance this has also increased the opportunity for children’s interactions with each other as they enjoy the resources. We are noticing an increase in communication, sharing and turn taking as the children share the space together.”





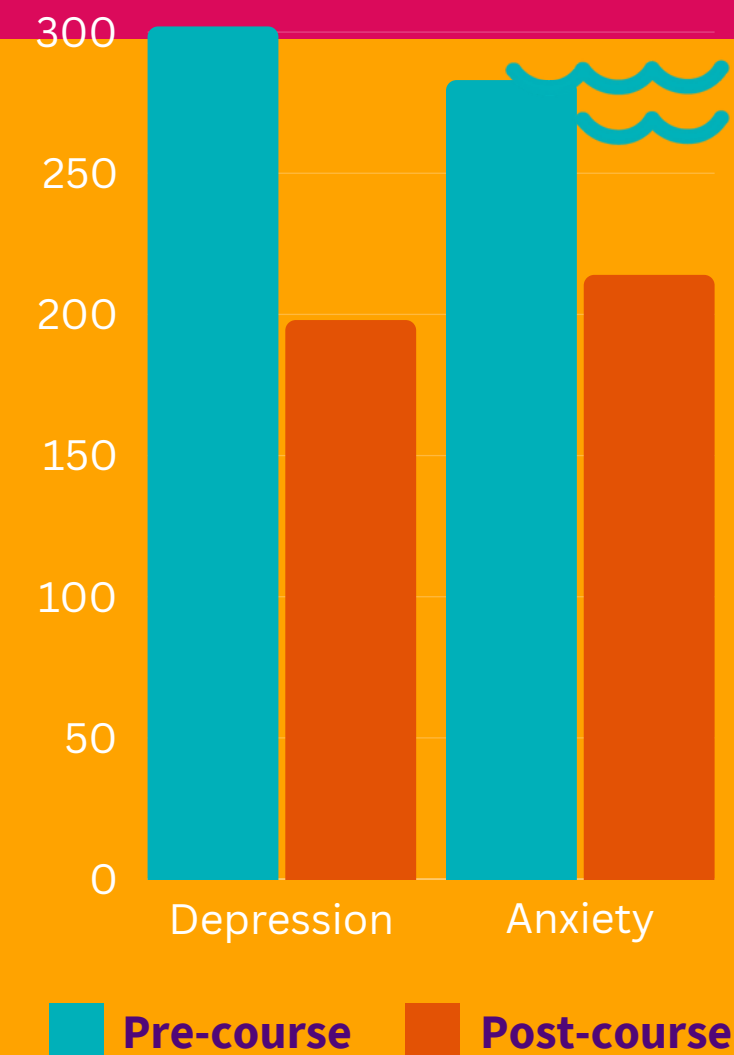
# MUMS IN MIND

**We delivered four Mums in Mind courses in total last year - two under the National Lottery Project, one from a local authority grant and one in partnership with Coffee & Craft as part of a Levelling Up project.**

In total, 28 mothers completed the course with the majority of their children accessing our crèche.

Pre- and post-course scoring strongly identifies the improvements those attending experienced, and this is further evidenced by feedback we received. By the very nature of why referrals are made to this service, these mums must overcome huge emotional obstacles to attend. We know that our approach maximises the chances of attendance and of being able to make a start on feeling better.

Our parents often express the wish that the course was longer. We also observed that group relationships tend to start blossoming as the course comes to a close. We find that despite wanting to, these mums need additional support to sustain continuing contact. It is unfeasible to continue at this intensive level but this year we have trialled various approaches to help the group continue to bond and develop. We are continuing to offer a safe space for an additional six weeks to encourage peer support, with successful outcomes so far.



**This table represents the impact of the course based on answers to questions from clinical screening tools designed for use in psychotherapy to gauge levels of depression and generalised anxiety disorder. The figures show the pre-and post-course scores from 28 attendees, calculated as an average, to illustrate the general trend across the board.**

It was an amazing supportive experience - I enjoyed meeting the other mums. I struggle to form new relationships so this was quite a challenge - but it felt a safe space. I feel I am better able to express my emotions and take more time to breathe when I feel overwhelmed.

My husband didn't understand that I needed help - MIM helped me to explain it to him, and then he helped me.

I want to say a big thank you. Yes - it helped me massively. It took away so much of what I was struggling with. To be offered such a service was amazing. I liked how relaxed it was, I had the freedom to leave and check on my baby whenever I needed to - that really helped at the beginning of the course.

# MUMS IN MIND OUTREACH (HONG KONG FAMILIES)



We were approached by Coffee & Craft, who had received a grant to support families resettling in Reading from Hong Kong. They identified that many of the mothers were struggling with anxiety and depression on top of the understandable overwhelming feelings that one would expect following a move to a new country. Having knowledge of our previous Mums in Mind work, they asked us to adapt and deliver our course to meet these needs. They organised a creche and an interpreter to support the delivery of the project.

I have made new friends – we live near each other. My new friend brought me to the course today.

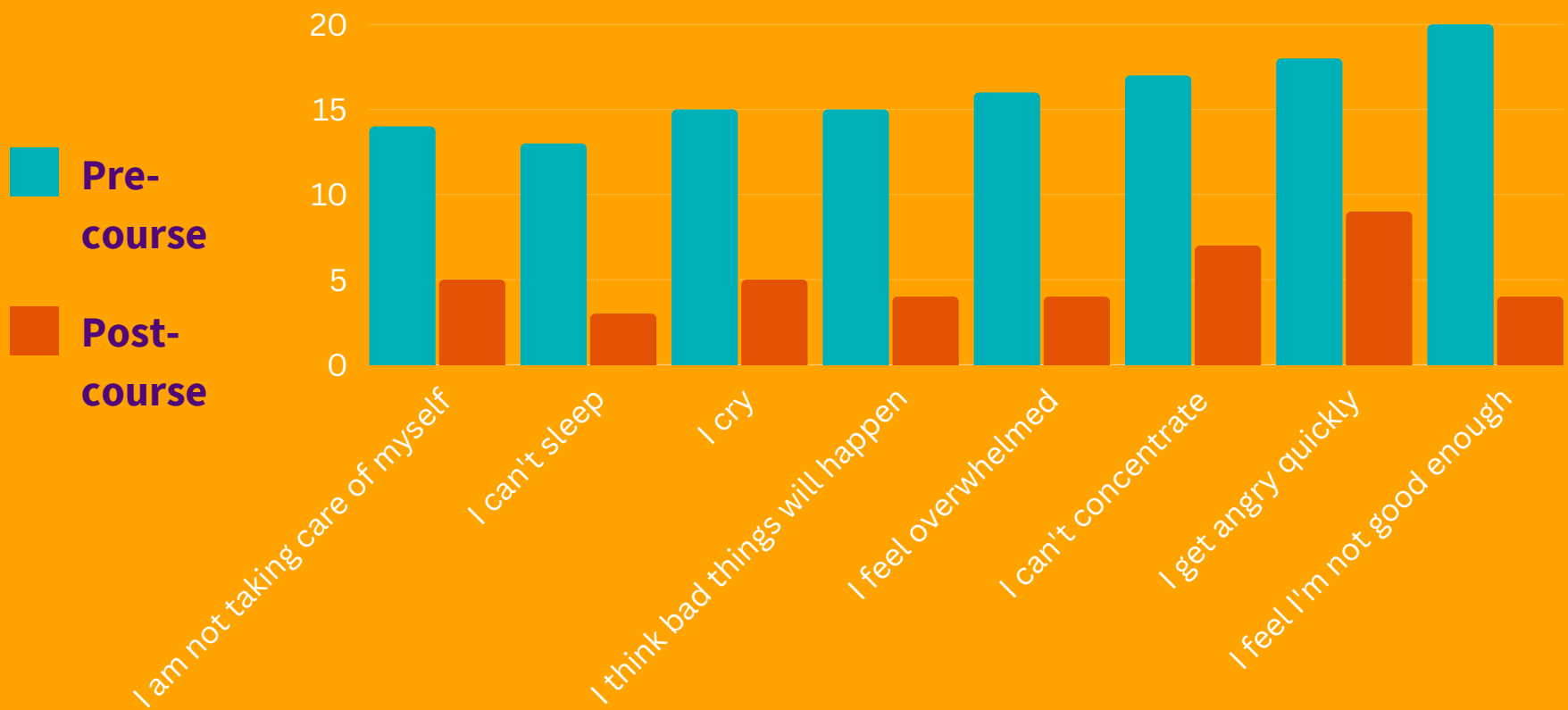
M and K are very friendly and cheerful. Make me happy to share. I feel relaxed every Friday and I do enjoy the group a lot.

I will try to breathe when I'm angry.

The best way to make friends.

It make me feel relaxing. I have understanding of myself. You are perfect.

I feel safe to share my problems in this group.



We asked eight mums to rate a number of statements based on how often a week they felt they applied. The higher the number of times they experienced the feelings, the higher the score.

This was a challenging and daunting project but one that was enormously successful, not least for the eight families that attended. We explored key differences with these parents around culture, learning styles and expectations but also observed similarities with the difficulties that British mums and indeed mums around the world face. We also learned a great deal about ourselves, and we believe that the changes we made to adapt to this group will help us with future delivery, especially with other mums where English is a second language or for those who have learning difficulties.



# OUR SPRING CELEBRATION





# OTHER SPECIAL MOMENTS DURING THE YEAR



Reading Half Marathon stars -  
Alan, Frankie and Liam



Story time at Family Group



Easter eggs donated by  
The White Building



Reading Family Aid  
Odds Farm trip



Bournemouth beach



Proud new volunteers



Reading Joggers  
fundraising handover



Books and cookie kits from  
Tech City Teams



Carol singing at Reading station



A special visitor at Family Group



Mums in Mind Outreach



Appreciation





# MONEY TALK



## Cost of living and practical support for our families

We are lucky to be able to offer lots of fun opportunities throughout the year and lovely gifts at times such as Christmas and Easter. One of the most impactful types of support that is needed, however, is with day to day essentials.

Ella’s Kitchen has continued to support us with our operational costs. Recognising the importance of the core work that we do and the financial considerations of delivering it, they appreciate that their contribution towards the costs of running our organisation is the best way to help make a positive impact on families.

Ella’s Kitchen also wanted to be provide direct support to those families most in need and we were able to identify specific needs and respond accordingly. John Lewis have also provided many items for our families and we have also reached out to other local charities - First Days, The Cowshed and TPLC in particular - to source a variety of essentials and household items, including:

- School uniform
- Cooking utensils
- Bedding
- Cleaning equipment
- Slow cookers
- Curtains
- Gardening tools
- Fuel vouchers
- Microwaves
- Data vouchers
- Heated airers
- Laptops

## FINANCE SUMMARY

### Key figures for 2022-23

|                                   |          |
|-----------------------------------|----------|
| Total income                      | £151,000 |
| Expenditure                       | £149,000 |
| Excess of income over expenditure | £2,000   |

Any excess is used to fund future activities. The full accounts are approved by the trustees at our AGM and are available on request.



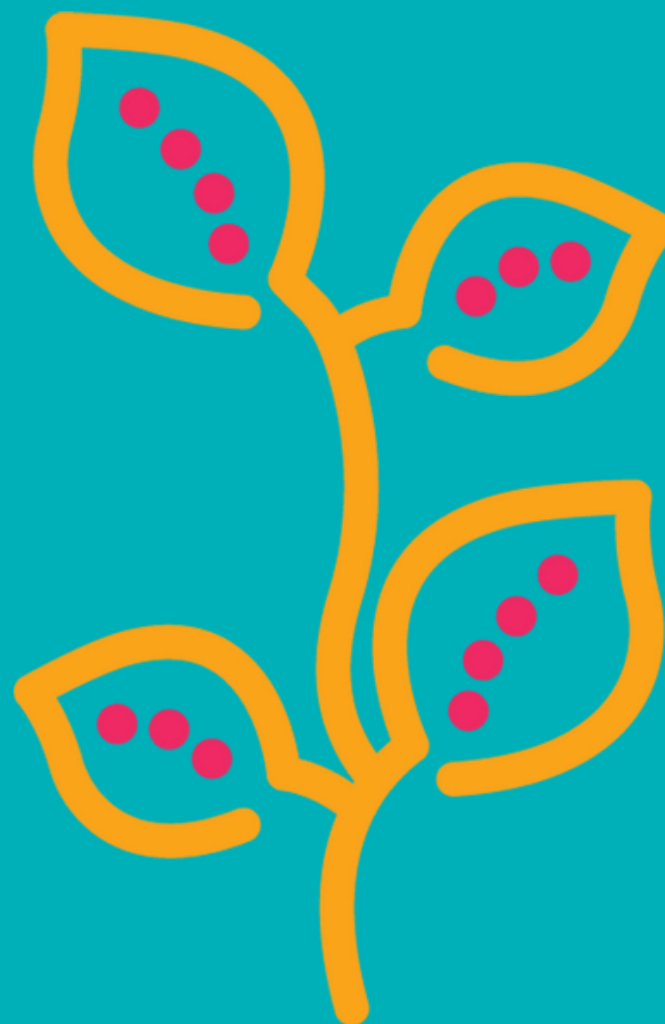
# STAFF UPDATE AND NEXT STEPS

In September 2022, Karen Mitchell, our Administrator, left the team to start training to be a midwife. Although it was a sad farewell, we were really pleased that Karen had the opportunity to realise her dream and wished her all the best with her new career. We were very happy to welcome Katerina Vlckova as our new administrator. Kat settled in quickly and has made the role her own.



Our Family Group Play Leader Hannah Taylor started her maternity leave and gave birth to a beautiful baby boy at the beginning of November 2022.

Catherine Bishop, one of our fantastic volunteers, stepped up and hit the ground running. Catherine has been instrumental in helping us improve our outcomes for family group and we want to thank her for her dedication and support.



## What next?

We are coming to the end of a couple of large funded projects. We are hoping to extend this funding so we can continue with this valuable work and also source new funding streams to help us do more for families in Reading.

We're investing time in improving our data collection to help us get a clearer idea of our areas of strength and any gaps.

In the meantime, we're recruiting new volunteers and looking forward to the next face-to-face training sessions in November 2023.

Home-Start Reading has been making a difference since 1984 and we are excited to celebrate our anniversary next year after 40 years of positive impact on local families.

# THANK YOU!

## We're grateful to all the individuals and organisations that supported us during the year...

Amazon Europe  
Amy Jennings  
Andy Hawkins – Kuehne+Nagel  
Ann Briggs  
Ann Dally and Richard Tredgett (Money Matters)  
BBC Children in Need  
Benevity  
BT  
Caversham Heights Society  
Charities Trust  
Chris Dobby  
Circus Starr  
Cowshed  
Don Dobby  
Easy Fundraising  
Elizabeth Brown  
Ella's kitchen  
First Days  
First Friday Club  
Free Cakes for Kids  
Garfield Weston Foundation  
Gifted Boutique  
Hexham Road Community Centre  
Home-Start Bracknell Forest

Home-Start Slough  
Home-Start UK  
Invesco Cares  
Jill Lake  
Jo Rado  
John Lewis  
Kate Angwin  
Kathryn Deacon Burgoyne (Coffee & Craft)  
Kenton Theatre  
Lee From BT Openreach  
Localgiving  
Mark Lewthwaite and Sue Biggs  
Miss E McHugh  
Mr J E Crosfield  
Neill Hendry  
Patricia Saunders  
PB Nandra  
Project Linus  
Queens Anne's School  
Rachel Paton  
RC Evans  
Reading Borough Council  
Reading Community Lottery  
Reading Family Aid  
Reading Joggers

Reading Station and Network Rail  
Rich Gibbs  
RM James  
Rupe Dadd  
Sally Dilley (in memory of Mary Tigewell)  
Sally Hamilton  
St Laurence's Church  
Sue Boxall  
Susannah Randall  
Tech City Teams  
Tesco Reading West  
The Oracle  
The Salvation Army  
The Weller Centre  
The White Building  
Tina Panting (TDP Photography)  
TK Maxx and Homesense Foundation  
Tubman House, Leighton Park School  
Twyford & District Round Table  
Waitrose Caversham  
West Reading Children's Centre



Garfield Weston  
FOUNDATION



# THE HOME-START READING TEAM

## STAFF

- Kelly Dadd** Manager
- Marion Mortimer** Volunteer Co-ordinator
- Julie Hitchcock** Volunteer Co-ordinator
- Claire Abery** Group Co-ordinator
- Hannah Taylor** Play Leader
- Katerina Vlckova** Administrator
- Kathryn McCann** Communications & Engagement Co-ordinator

## TRUSTEES

- Catherine Troup** - Co-chair
- Sue Biggs** - Co-chair
- Mark Lewthwaite** - Treasurer
- Chris Guy**
- Chinelo Onyewuchi**
- Jacqueline Burrage**
- Lottie Pheasant**
- Anna Vorster**
- Ian Caren**



As at 28 September 2023





# PLEASE SUPPORT US



## **DONATE**

[localgiving.org/charity/hsreading](https://localgiving.org/charity/hsreading)



## **GENERATE DONATIONS AT NO EXTRA COST WHILE YOU SHOP**

[easyfundraising.org.uk](https://easyfundraising.org.uk)



## **PLAY THE LOCAL LOTTERY - 50% OF WHAT YOU PAY COMES TO US**

[readingcommunitylottery.co.uk](https://readingcommunitylottery.co.uk)





# CONTACT US

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