



Referrers' guide



We believe that everyone deserves a happy and secure childhood and that parents play a key role in helping children achieve their full potential. That can be challenging when life throws difficulties in the way, and especially when one problem stacks on top of another.

This is where we come in, supporting parents as they tackle practical issues, widen their links with the local community, grow in confidence and strengthen their relationships with their children.

We've been helping Reading families with at least one child under five since 1984. In addition to our amazing volunteers and trustees we have a small team of paid staff, but all our services are provided free of charge.

How we help



Our core services are:

- **Home visits**
Each family is matched with a trained volunteer who will visit them for two to three hours once a week to help out in any way they need. Each volunteer has the support of one of our Home-Visiting Co-ordinators.
- **Family Groups**
Families can join with others at weekly sessions in Whitley and Tilehurst, run by our Family Groups Co-ordinator and Play Leaders.

When funds allow, we also provide additional targeted group support. For example:

- Mums in Mind – supporting mums' mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Being Dad – preparation for expectant dads
- Understanding Your Pregnancy – prenatal parenting course

The support we offer is not a substitute for statutory services but complementary to them. We know we can achieve the best results for families through working together with other agencies in active partnership.



The difference we make

Through our support we help to:

- reduce family isolation and increase social support networks
- strengthen parent/child relationships
- improve parents' physical health and emotional wellbeing
- help people appreciate the joys of parenting and improve their parenting skills
- equip parents better to deal with admin, budgeting and accessing the services they need
- improve children's health, wellbeing and development

See the testimonials on pages 3 and 4 for first-hand accounts of how our support has helped.

Qualifying families

To qualify for our support, families must:

- have at least one child under the age of five
- be going through a difficult time or facing challenges
- live in the borough of Reading
- agree to the referral



Government funding cuts have led to a significant increase in demand for our services. In order to manage this, we cap the number of families we support who have ongoing involvement with social services and are subject to a Child Protection Plan or Child in Need Plan. If this applies to a family you are considering referring to us, please contact us before filling in the referral form to check our capacity. Either email office@home-start-reading.org.uk or call 0118 956 0050.

Why have confidence in our services?

- The national Home-Start network has been running since 1973 and we're committed to following Home-Start UK's established standards and methods of practice.
- There is on-going research into the Home-Start model and the lasting positive impact it can have on families.
- All our volunteers have at least 30 hours of initial training. They also have ongoing training, including full children's safeguarding training every three years.
- Home-Start Reading has a strong staff team with the support of a growing number of trustees. Our trustees bring with them a broad range of qualifications, skills and experience.
- We have a full set of policies and procedures in place, which we follow and update regularly.
- We go through a Home-Start Quality Assurance review every three to four years and hold the Reading Voluntary Action Safe and Sound quality mark.
- We are fully insured, with Employers' Liability, Public Liability, Professional Indemnity and Trustee Indemnity cover in place.

Testimonials

From families

Home Visiting

“Talking with my volunteer is really helping me. I was feeling low and my volunteer suggested the NHS Couch to 5K App. I never thought I was a runner – but I am really enjoying it and am on week 4! She has emailed me some really helpful links, including one about raising a bilingual child.



“I have had a lot of anxiety and depression, and CBT didn’t really help. I thought I would try the support from Home-Start, and talking with my volunteer has helped me just so much.” (02/21)

“I loved it when Sara would hold J for me and give me a rest. Having Home-Start support has helped me to care about myself more! I have just felt so supported, and I just loved how you would always remind me of the positive things that I had done – it’s just what I needed.” (11/05/21)

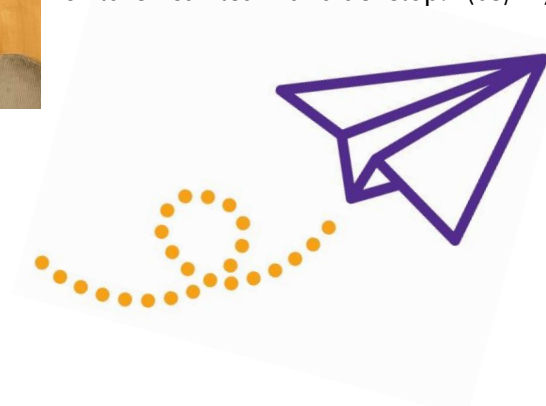
“You always do a good job, listening and advising. I’ve never seen any weakness and don’t know what more you could do. I will never be able to thank you enough for everything you have done!” (05/21)

Family Group



“Home-Start is more than a play group to me and my family – it helps me to help my children.

“You have helped me so much with family life and given me information when I need it. Home-Start is like a wider family; a place that you won’t be judged; a safe place to talk; a place that our children can learn and develop.” (05/21)

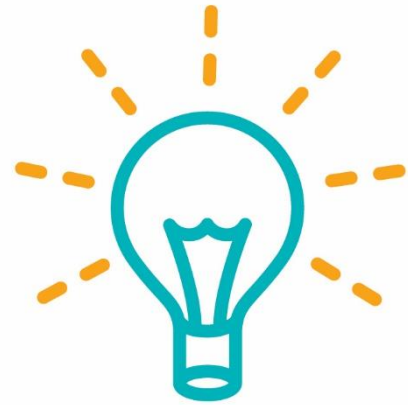


Mums in Mind

“Before the course I never used to talk to the children and used time out. Now I talk, talk, talk with them and really try to engage with them. I have seen a real change in the behaviour of my oldest son.” (03/21)

“Hearing other mums, and listening to their stories meant I felt I was not alone. I thought I was going crazy and the only one. But now I know that it’s normal – just my hormones sometimes!” (03/21)

“I have gained more control of myself. I am more understanding of myself. I have more calm in my soul.” (03/21)



From volunteers



“It was wonderful to see L this morning – I will miss her. I get the sense she feels well supported, and that your phone calls have been beautifully timed, so she feels the continuity with you.

“Home-Start has been so rewarding and I've learned a huge amount. I've felt so well supported myself all the way through (even and especially in the pandemic!) – so thanks again to you and all the team for that.” (05/21)

“I have always felt very supported as a volunteer, and have felt that you have always been at the end of the phone for me. Thank you.” (05/21)

“As I am now giving up my role as volunteer for Home-Start, I just wanted to say how much I have enjoyed working with my fantastic supervisors and the team. It has been a great bridge for me between work and retirement.

“Even when circumstances were challenging in the families I supported, I always felt energised and that my presence was beneficial. I got a lot out of supporting and understanding the sometimes complex needs of these families as well as playing with and developing the skills of their delightful children. I am a strong believer that the child’s experiences in the first five years of their life are vitally important and can shape their future prospects.

“Keep up the good and vitally important work in these strange and difficult times. Best wishes to you all.” (09/20)

Please fill in our [referral form](#) to start the process of referring a family to us.