

28th Annual Report 2020/21



**Because childhood can't
wait**

Mission Statement

Home-Start offers a unique service – recruiting and training volunteers who are parents themselves from the local community – to visit families with a least one child under 5 at home to offer informal, friendly and confidential support. Home-Start South West Kent was established in 1993 in response to specific local needs, initially offering support to families in Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells, now offering support in the districts of Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge and Malling as well as parts of the Sevenoaks district. To help give children the best possible start in life, we support parents as they grow in confidence, strengthen and enjoy their relationship with their children and widen their links with the local community.

Our Values

- We offer families **choice**
- We work in **partnership** – with each other, with families and with other agencies
- We work in a spirit of **openness, encouragement and enjoyment**
- We are **flexible and responsive** to the needs of families.

Our Vision

We want all our children to grow up with:

- Safe places to live and play
- Support when their parents suffer from mental illness
- Protection from hunger and poor nutrition

Home-Start South West Kent

Trustees

Dennis Akehurst
Angus Bogle
Claire Hayes - Chair

Lorraine Lander – Treasurer
Wendy McGeachy
Sandy Wheeler

Staff

Sarah Jarvis – Scheme Manager
Leah Jones – Co-ordinator
Lisa Semple – Co-ordinator

Antonietta Spatuzzi – Co-ordinator
Ann Hughes-Wilson - Administrator

Our Volunteers:

Ali B, Ali H, Amanda, Amanda H, Anne, Angela, Ann, Annabel, Avril, Carole, Caroline, Catharine, Christine, Debbie, Diana, Donna, Emma S, Emma M, Eunice, Geoff, Gill, Harriet, Helen, Hilary, Jac, Jan, Jane, Jo, John, Karenza, Kate, Linda, Lizzie, Lizzy, Louise, Maddy, Maggie, Mary, Meg, Mel, Nancy, Naomi, Natalie, Nicky, Pauline, Peni, Penny N, Penny S, Rebecca C, Rebecca M, Rick, Russell, Sally, Sally, Sarah, Sian, Sue, Suzie, Susan, Susanne, Svetlana, Tricia, Wendy, Zoe.

Chair's Report

It is two years since we have been together at our AGM and it has been a very hard time for all of us. Under the leadership of our Scheme Manager, Sarah Jarvis, our Scheme has consistently risen to all the challenges that have been thrown at it with flexibility, dedication and compassion. Our team of Lisa, Leah, Toni and Ann have been remarkable throughout and we are so lucky to have them.

During this difficult time our team has continued to grow with Toni joining us as a co-ordinator. Ann has joined us to provide administrative support and we have also taken on a new bookkeeper, Juliet, to support us in this area. We have a clear strategic plan for how we can support those in need throughout the whole of South-West Kent and ensure that anyone with a child under 5 who could benefit from the unique support that we offer is able to do so. Our financial basis remains secure thanks to the effective fund raising by our independent fund raisers who continue to provide excellent value for money and enable us to concentrate on what we do best.

To be able to rise to the challenges of a global pandemic and continue to provide much needed support in whatever ways we can is testament to the hard work and initiative of our team. They have been supported by our trustees who have, as always, been focused on how to support the Scheme in the most effective way possible. The Scheme is in good hands and we can look forward to capitalising on our sound base for the next year.

Claire Hayes

Chair



Sarah Jarvis – Scheme Manager

2020/21 has been the most unexpected and challenging year. In March 2020 we were training new volunteers in the office, and offering our home visiting service from volunteers to help families at home. Gradually we began to have cancellations due to corona virus contacts or scares. Then when the first lockdown came along we met to plan how to continue offer support to our families. Our only option seemed to be remote support, whether by phone, text, FaceTime etc. (we hadn't heard of Zoom at this point!). We asked those volunteers who were matched with families to switch to phone support and many asked – how will that help? But as time went on our families told us that this regular contact with their volunteers provided much needed support during lockdown.

Our next decision was how to support new families who hadn't met their volunteers. We didn't see that it would be easy to ask a volunteer to call a family they hadn't met – but of course they did it anyway with some really positive results – see the Family Stories page. Our volunteers called, face timed, texted, waved from the end of the garden path, and once restrictions eased, met for walks, met for coffee, did anything they could to continue to offer help.

During the summer, thanks to a grant from Home-Start UK we ordered toys and family activities to help keep the children entertained. At Christmas we delivered Christmas card making kits to the families which were really gratefully received by parents running out of ideas on entertaining the children. These deliveries were also a great way of having a 'doorstep' visit to review how the families were doing.

We continued with our volunteer training throughout the year. We spent some time converting the Volunteer Preparation Course to be delivered remotely via Zoom. We successfully delivered 3 courses (one partly in person) during the year, and feel confident in this method of delivery for the future, if needed.

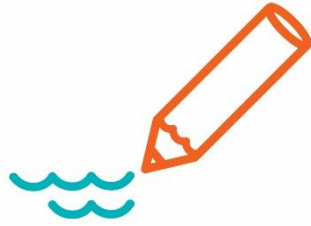
As we approached the end of 2020/21 we were beginning to risk assess face to face meetings at home again for some families and volunteers. Some remained more comfortable meeting outdoors and found it a benefit to get out once a week with the children. We have also found that some families now prefer to receive phone calls or other remote support and so our offer to families is now more flexible.

We are continuing to expand and to recruit more volunteers we feel confident that with our new flexible working practices, and with the learning from this last year, we can continue to function and to offer our volunteer support to families, whatever the next year might bring.

I would like to thank our wonderful staff team for their commitment and flexibility during a time when of course they will have had their own anxieties and challenges at home, and of course our team of dedicated volunteers who as always gave their time and kindness freely to their Home-Start families.

Sarah Jarvis
Scheme Manager

Some Family Stories...



A mum with a learning disability was referred to us by her Health Visitor who explained that mum was very anxious as she was approaching the stage of offering solid food to her baby. Because of lockdown she had no opportunity to attend groups and meet other mums. At the time we were unable to meet face to face and so we offered the mum a weekly phone call with a volunteer. Mum needed a lot of reassurance over how many bottles to give, how much solid food to offer, how to change baby's routine etc. but our volunteer encouraged her gently to make these decisions herself, based on what her Health Visitor had told her. Once restrictions lifted the volunteer was able to meet both parents in the local park and offer supportive sessions encouraging them to interact with the child, and answering those common sense questions that they had nobody to ask. When asked how we had helped, mum said simply

“she tells me I'm doing a good job, and no one else says that.”



An under 25 mum with 3 young children who were living in temporary accommodation with one bedroom. Mum was very isolated and anxious during the first lockdown, she told us the elder child used to close the curtains to 'keep the germs out'. Our volunteer kept in touch with her weekly by phone and text, reassuring her that she could take the children out for walks safely, and once restrictions eased encouraged her to take them to the park. When schools and nurseries reopened we encouraged her to take the children, and to get out and about herself.

This mum told me **“Never had help like this before, she really knew me and knew what to say to give me a push to do things. Even if I was feeling really low she wasn't scared to tell it like it is – making me get up and take the children to school. I was even going out for coffee like a normal person.”**



A mum expecting her first baby in lockdown who was very anxious about the birth and about becoming a new mum. We introduced her to a volunteer for phone calls initially. Once baby had arrived and restrictions eased, they met for a walk once a week. Mum had postnatal depression and was feeling overwhelmed with the responsibility of caring for her new baby. Baby was unsettled and had problems with feeding which added to mum's anxiety. Support continued for 6 months after which mum was feeling much better. She told us

“My volunteer was an amazing listener - non judgemental and very empathetic. Those first few months were really tough and our weekly walks helped me to get out the house (often for the first time that week) and feel human again. She made me feel like I wasn't alone and that brighter days were possible.”



A mum feeling lonely and isolated having had her second baby at the beginning of lockdown.

“It just makes my week to be able to connect with someone outside the family. I just hope I don't moan too much. She is great at listening and understanding. Since (baby) came in March there has been none of the usual support and things are difficult at home.”



Family Support

Home-Start South West Kent's approach is based on the importance of families, volunteering and the community. We work in partnership with other voluntary and statutory agencies and also accept direct referrals from families themselves.



We are parents supporting parents

How we do it: Helping parents be the best they can be. There's no judgement, just compassionate, confidential help and expert support. Starting in the home, our approach is as individual as the families we work with.

64 volunteers helped
84 families with 152
children

100% of parents said that their parenting skills had improved

94% of parents were coping better with their own physical and mental health and were feeling less isolated

100% of families said that their children's wellbeing had improved

92% of parents said that were able to manage better at home



Financial Report

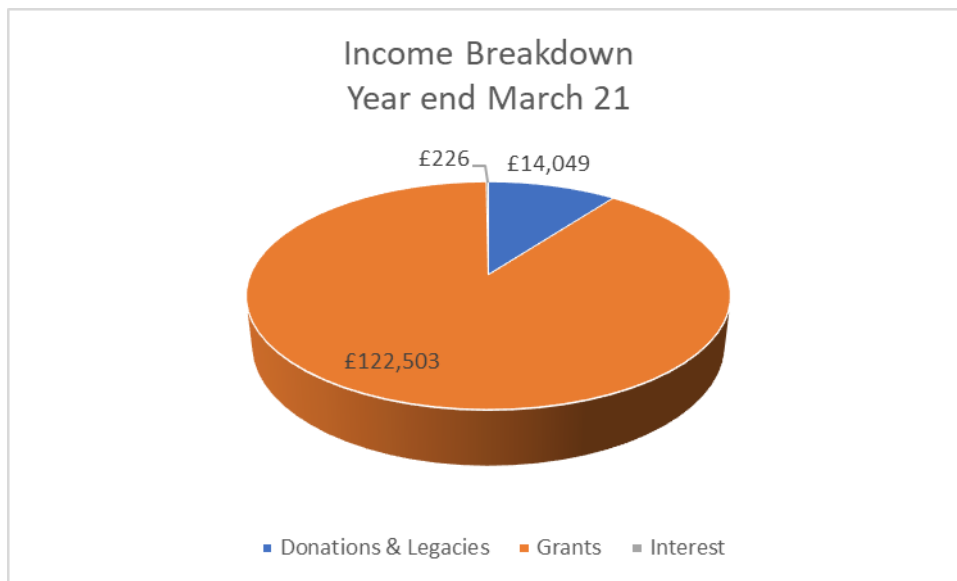
FINANCIAL SUMMARY

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

The financial position of the charity continues to strengthen following another year of very successful fundraising which was an exceptional achievement given the backdrop of the global pandemic. Our income increased to £137k for the year to March 21 which represented an increase of £46k compared to the prior year.

Our income includes funds from Children in Need (£30k) and the National Lottery (£30k) which represented the 1st year of a 3-year funding commitment. We also benefited from on-going support from Colyer Ferguson Trust (£15k), John Swire Foundation (£10k), Kent Community Foundation (£8k) and the Joan Ainslie Charitable Foundation (£4k). We were also supported by the John Lewis/Waitrose national Home Start campaign in December 2020 and also received an increase in individual donations.

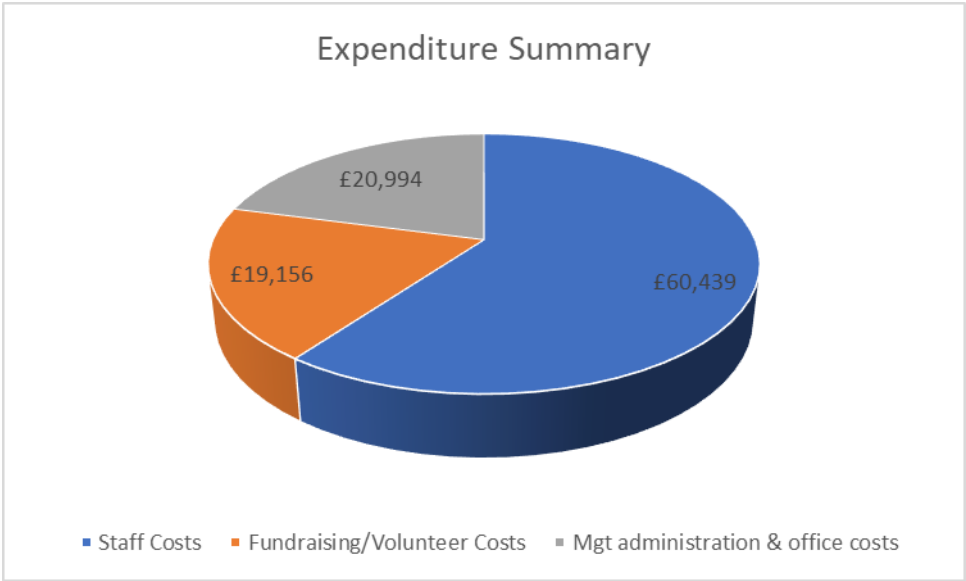
Our income breakdown is show below:



All our supporters are listed on the back page of this report, and we are extremely grateful for their support which has enabled us to increase the number of families that we support.

The expansion in our services is reflected in an associated increase in our expenditure as we scaled up to support more families. All costs were well controlled with close oversight by the Trustees. There was a total cost increase of £22k compared to last year which was driven primarily by staff costs. There was a small increase in our fundraising and volunteer costs. Our office and other business costs increased to £20k to reflect the increased size of the charity.

The breakdown of our expenditure is shown below with full details available within our accounts:



As a result of the effective fundraising, we generated a surplus of £36k for the year to March 21. This resulted in closing reserves at year end of £104k of which £100k related to unrestricted free reserves which represented 10 months of future expenditure.

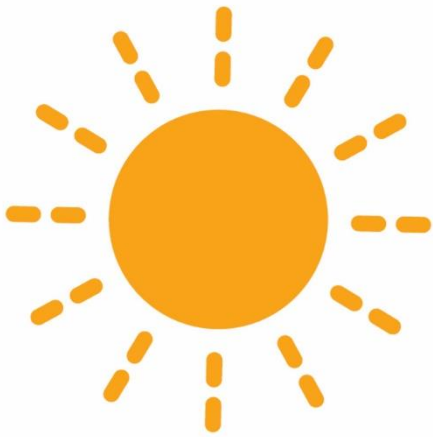
This very strong financial position enables us to continue to expand with confidence during a very uncertain time, especially for the charitable sector. We remain very optimistic about our future fundraising ability and as a result our plans continue to expand the number of families that we support.

Lorraine Lander

Treasurer

November 2021

What the families say...

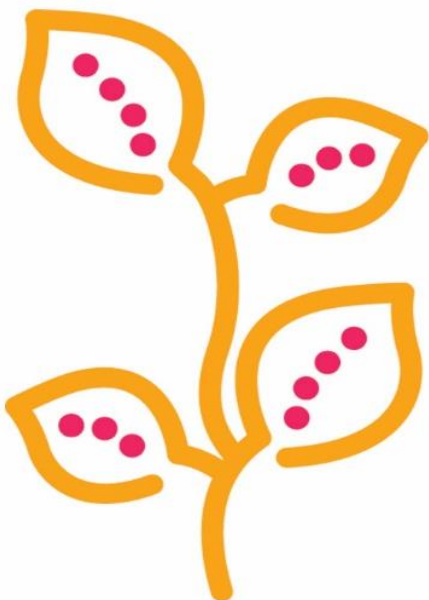


"You and Home Start have been an absolute saviour for me. I felt lacking in confidence and isolated. Then along came Home Start and introduced us to M and everything felt brighter."

"Such a wonderful organisation and group of people. We cannot thank you enough! "

"I can get things organised in my mind, work out what to do when I speak to my volunteer."

"I realised I wasn't failing as a mum."



"Even in lockdown I could call and ask for help when no one else was around"

Thank You



The support of the following organisations and people has enabled us to carry on our work throughout the year.

We very much appreciate this support.

AA Ramus
Aylesford PC
Children in Need
Colyer Fergusson
Cranbrook & Sissinghurst Parish Council
Groundwork UK
Heather Brightwell
Henry Smith
Home-Start UK
Horsmonden Parish Council
Janis Gladwin
Joan Ainslie Charitable Trust
Jo Abnett
John Lewis Partnership
John Swire 1989 Charitable Trust
Kent Community Foundation

M Wildi
Malling District Lions Club
Marsh Christian Trust
Misia Carroll
Mount Fund
National Lottery
Paragon Trust
Plaxtol Parish Council
Rusthall Parish Council
Sayers Butterworth
Sir James Roll Charitable Trust
SMB Charitable Trust
Southborough Town Council
Waitrose
West Malling Parish Council
Whitehead Monckton Charitable Foundation

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