



Because Childhood Can't Wait



HOME-START LAKELAND

ANNUAL REPORT 2023 - 2024

Charity Number: NIC105854

How Home-Start Lakeland helps families in our community

For the past 24 years Home-Start Lakeland has been offering one-to-one personalised home-visiting support for parents with children under five. Our volunteers provide non-judgmental, practical and emotional support to help build the family's confidence and its ability to cope at a time when they are dealing with issues such as isolation, bereavement, mental health difficulties, post-natal depression, illness, disability, multiple births or just finding parenting overwhelming. In many cases we manage to reach families that won't engage with other services.

Home-Start Lakeland believes that children need a happy and secure childhood and that parents play a key role in giving their children a good start and in helping them achieve their full potential. Home-Start wants to see a society in which every parent has the support needed to give their children the best start in life and focuses its support on the early years – the most crucial time in a child's development.

Home-Start Lakeland places trained volunteers alongside parents. Support is provided on a weekly basis for as long as a family needs it. Volunteers are managed and supervised by the local scheme which in turn is given support and guidance by Home-Start UK. Home-Start is a local community resource with all the benefits that come from being part of a strong national organisation.

What Home-Start brings to the Fermanagh Community

- Outreach to families through home-visiting support.
- Partnership working and local expertise to enhance family support.
- Trustees: local people selected, trained and guided to run a local service.
- Volunteers: local parents selected, trained and supervised to provide support to other local parents.
- Added value: local and other funding and resources brought into the Fermanagh community



Home-Start Lakeland Trustees 2023 – 2024

Our Trustees are also volunteers, giving time, knowledge and experience to direct and oversee the work of the scheme.

Position	Name	
Chairperson	Gerry Hegarty	
Vice-Chairperson	Maeve Murphy	
Treasurer	Christine Carty	
Members	Jenny Thompson	
	Mabel Greaves	
	Anne Harte	
	John Cathcart (retired March 24)	
	Maureen Hassard	
	Ruth Coalter	
Staff	Co-ordinator:	Diane Noble
	Administrator:	Claire Steele



Chairperson's report

Another busy year for Home-Start Lakeland has ended, with much good work completed. On behalf of the trustees I wish to thank the staff and volunteers, not just for the achievements that are listed in this report, but for the ways in which their work was carried out.

It is a privilege to be invited into someone's home, whatever the circumstances, but especially in times of difficulty, when tactful support can make a great difference. It requires skill, sensitivity, and determination to provide this type of help. Our volunteers have these qualities and of course, invaluable experience of parenting. They are well equipped to deliver the support that builds the confidence of parents and improves their practical skills. At a critical time for the family, they provide much needed guidance and friendship.

Children deserve the best possible start in life. It is the desire to provide this that motivates volunteers to offer their time to Home-Start. We are grateful to them for their generosity in coming to us and for taking part in the demanding training that they must complete before beginning home visiting. Without volunteers, we would not have Home-Start.

We are equally grateful to Diane and Claire who manage all parts of this organisation efficiently and promptly. The requirements of the many statutory agencies who supervise our work must be always met and our staff are mindful of this; something that makes the work of the trustees much easier. In addition, the staff work with enthusiasm and cheerfulness, with a welcome for all who call on our service.

Families of the World is a new group set up this year to provide support to families who are new to our area and who feel very isolated. The acute problems that isolation causes were recognised through the family visiting work already being carried out. The new group becomes part of the range of services offered to families, joining the Amazing Multiples group and the training programmes already being offered.

The demand for support continues at a high level so the need for additional volunteers is great. The types of difficulties that families experience is changing, and to provide the best support, Home-Start works alongside other local agencies. Our staff have responded well to the new challenges they have met.

We continue to work closely with the WHSCT. The Trust's contract is vital to us financially and, as it is supervised closely, it provides us with an additional incentive to maintain the highest standards. Raising the other funds we need is becoming more difficult. We are very appreciative of all from the local area who contribute. Our funding from the Henry Smith Foundation has ended after three years and we are now applying to other funders.

This year we were joined by two new trustees, Maureen Hassard and Ruth Coalter. We welcome them and the contribution they will make to our work in future. John Cathcart retired as trustee as his other work commitments increased. We are grateful for what he did for Home-Start during his time as a trustee. I thank all the trustees for their commitment to the work of Home-Start.

We look forward to continuing to support those families who look to Home-Start for support.

Gerry Hegarty

Co-ordinator's Report

It has been another busy year in Home-Start Lakland with a similar number of referrals to last year but a 10% increase in the number of supported home visited families with 49 families receiving support this year. This puts an ever-increasing strain on our greatest resource – our volunteers, but thanks to the 26 committed individuals who provided home visiting support to families in Co Fermanagh we continue our proven track record.

The cost-of-living increases and the after effects of the global pandemic continue to effect families. Our covid born babies have started nursery and school and only now will we see the true effects the pandemic had on our children. Rising costs of fuel, food and insurance put ever increasing strain on families and requests for second hand clothing, equipment and requests for fuel grants continued to increase and add to the work of the scheme this year.

We took a slight step back from online programmes this year, but 12 families were supported through an online pre-recorded Baby Massage programme giving parents the opportunity to access these classes on a day and at a time that suits them. A donation of BookStart packs from BookTrust allowed us to distribute books and resources to Home-Start Families. Fourteen families attended our 3 BookStart events held in the libraries in Irvinestown, Lisnaskea and Enniskillen and those who were not able to attend received their packs from volunteers and staff.

Our Amazing Multiples group were able to partake in some great activities at their monthly meet up thanks to funding from the Halifax Foundation. We had 23 families registered for the group that meets monthly September through to June.

Referrals from families who were new to the Fermanagh area increased and it was difficult to meet the demand through volunteer support. These families cited poor mental health, isolation and lack of support. They didn't always feel welcome at other groups and so we decided to launch our new family group in February 2024, 'Families of the World' with 15 registered families. The group is continuously growing and hopefully with grants applied for, we will be able to extend the numbers and activities.

There are many people who make my job easier and more enjoyable. Thank you to the volunteers who give of their time so unconditionally. Additionally the Trustees who are also volunteers and do what is mostly unseen but very important work. Lastly, I have to mention our Administrator Claire Steele, whose dedication and tenacity to her work are of huge benefit to the scheme.

Home-Start Lakeland have a long history of providing family support in Co Fermanagh and I am proud to be part of all we have achieved. I look forward to 2024/2025 and all that it brings.

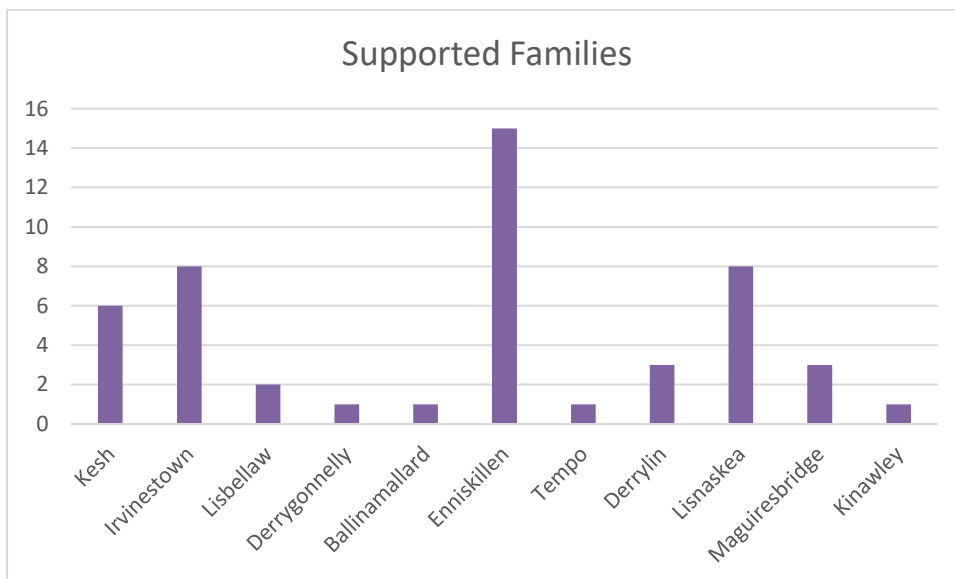
Diane Noble

2022/23 Statistics

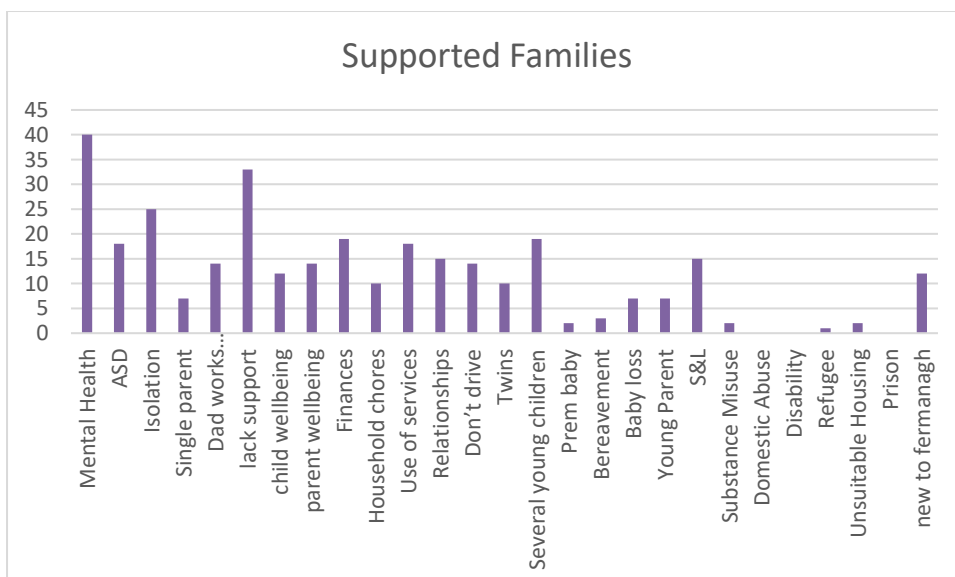
Families Supported

Home visited families	49
Children in home visited families	118
Amazing Multiples Group	23
Families of the World group	15
Online Infant Massage programme	12
BookStart Events	14

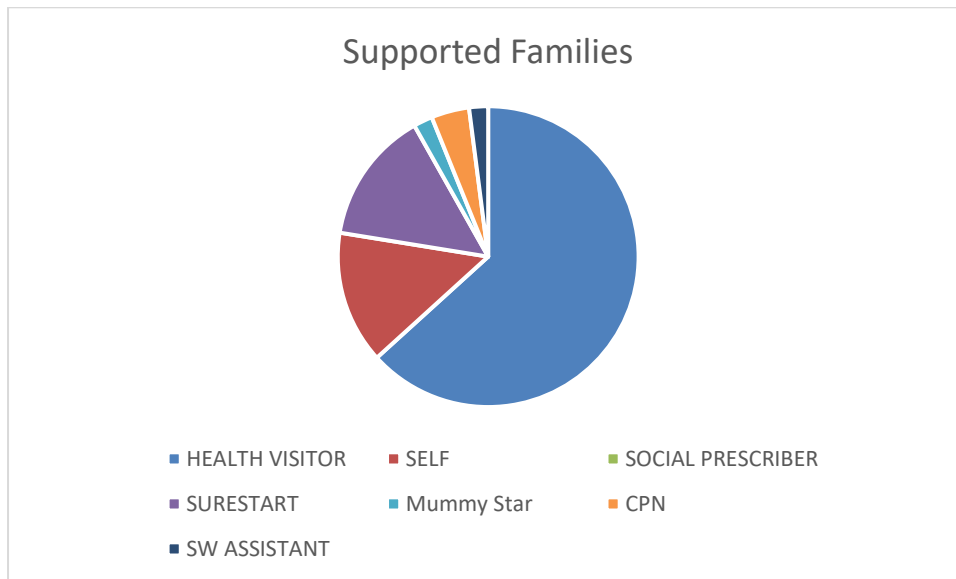
Areas families live



Issues Faced by Families



Source of Referral



What Our Volunteers Do

Our volunteers support families in many different ways. They visit the family weekly for 2-3 hours. The type of support they offer is dependent on the skills of the volunteer and the needs of the family but could include:

- reassurance and someone to talk to
- confidential and friendly support through difficult times
- practical help with feeding babies, household chores, shopping, cooking
- looking after children so parents can attend appointments
- opportunities for children to play, read, have fun or get out to a park
- transport to medical appointments or to shops and services
- signposting and links to other services

Our volunteers this year have been: Anita C, Carol, Catherine, Chrissie, Christine, Eileen, Eoin, Francis, Heather H, Heather J, Hilary P, Hilary G, Jennifer, Kelly, Lisa L, Louize, Mabel, Mary McB, Mary M, Mia, Patricia D, Patricia H, Patricia M, Patrick, Sinead, Ursula

Volunteer Training

As well as our Home-Start Preparation course, we offer our volunteers training on an ongoing basis. Some of this training was offered online this year, and some face to face, on subjects such as:

- Safeguarding Refresher
- Autism Awareness Training
- Introduction to Attachment & Aces
- Domestic Abuse
- Cruse Grief Training
- Paediatric First Aid

We also celebrated and thanked our Volunteers with a guided tour of Castle Coole House during Volunteer Week in June, Christmas Crafts and Christmas Lunch.



Volunteer Story

While browsing through Facebook one day last year I saw a plea for volunteers for Home-Start. We had recently moved to Enniskillen, and I had been looking for a way to meet new people and to use my time after recently taking an early(ish) retirement. I called the number and spoke to Diane who sent me the necessary paperwork and I was soon on a training course.

The training course was interesting and comprehensive giving a flavour of the type of situations that may be encountered, as well as thinking about the role of the volunteer, meeting the needs of children, attachment and the purpose and history of Home-Start. The hybrid system of online and face to face learning was helpful, the hospitality at the in-person sessions was plentiful and as well as meeting new people I was introduced to Fifteens which have now become a favourite!

I was matched with a family soon after the training ended and have been with them for about 9 months. The information and introductions at the beginning were useful and helped to establish a relationship with the family and set boundaries. I have enjoyed my weekly two hours, talking with Mum, and occasionally Dad, playing with the little ones and sometimes going on an outing. I am about to finish with this family and am looking forward to the next experience.

The regular supervision that I have experienced has been helpful in talking through the issues that the family face and being able to think out loud and being given tips for signposting the family. It has also given an opportunity to explore training needs that I have, and I have undertaken paediatric first aid training and attended a session held by Women's Aid.

I have also become involved with one of the groups, giving the opportunity to meet more young families and spend time with them. I have met other volunteers at times throughout the year, including a lovely Christmas meal.

Home-Start has fulfilled my hope to meet people and to use my time and skills as we settle into a new life in Enniskillen. Everyone has been very welcoming and supportive, and I have learnt that the support given to families by Home-Start is an invaluable resource.



Family Story

I'm K, married to my wonderful husband M and we are parents to our gorgeous ray of sunshine, O. We are a happy, confident, flourishing and thriving family, and that is largely due to the help and the support that we received from Home-Start over the first 18 months of being new parents.

M and myself had been trying for a few years before finally falling pregnant. Despite the initial excitement and giddiness, over time, doubts and intrusive thoughts began creeping in. My mental health has been a long standing issue, I've been on a variety of medication and had thought I had found the correct prescription. Yet, the feeling of depression and anxiety was there.

My family live in England. Relations with parents were ever changing. My sister was always there at the end of the phone, but having a young family of her own, was unable to fly out. M's family, again, relations there were never constant and I personally felt uncomfortable around them at times. So there definitely was a feeling of loneliness, which was enhanced due to my mental health.

Throughout the pregnancy, I would panic at the thought of people being near or looking after the baby. These thoughts were because of past trauma that I experienced, and they were becoming frequent and overwhelming, which, mixed with everything else I was feeling, made me really miserable and unable to fully enjoy what is supposed to be, one of the most wonderful experiences.

O entered the world via an unplanned C-Section. It wasn't something that I had envisioned but ultimately, it was the best decision. O was healthy, beautiful and ours! Despite not being able to move, keep on top of my own personal basic needs or pick up O, M and I were on cloud nine.

After 3 weeks, M had to go back to work. My mental health started to deteriorate further. I did try and rationalise with myself: I'm a new parent, I'm tired, this is normal?! But I started to experience panic attacks at the thought of being alone with O, I felt like I couldn't cope, that I couldn't be the mum that O deserved and that I was a failure. It was so bad that I actually looked up adoption. I couldn't leave O or ask for help, as I didn't trust anyone. With all these negative and worrying thoughts, some contradicting themselves, which in itself was maddening, M had to take sick leave to help and support me and O. When O was 2 months old, I was diagnosed with Postnatal Depression and ongoing anxiety.

The Health Visitor who was privy to all of this, put me in touch with Home-Start. Initially, this did add to my feeling of failing as a parent, but after talking to them in our first meeting, those feelings were put at ease. They explained what would happen, the help that was on offer and most importantly, I wasn't the only person with these sort of feelings, and that, with time, things will get better.

The most wonderful lady, A, would come to my home for weekly meetings. I cannot praise A enough! She is patient, compassionate, practical, approachable, caring, encouraging, the perfect person to have by your side. During our meetings we would talk about everything and more. I never felt judged or that I was a burden. I felt listened to and heard, and genuinely cared for. A

would play and engage with O, an experience I thought I would never allow or enjoy, but I was absolutely thrilled.

During really low times, washing wasn't even in my thought process, A would gently encourage me to do so. She made me feel safe, made me realise that O would be safe and that I would feel good completing and looking after my basic needs. This may sound like a small task, but for me, it was huge and it was a positive feeling completing these kinds of tasks.

A made it known that I was able to contact her, day or night, and that she would be in touch as soon as she could. This, added with all the help and support A was giving, made me start valuing myself as a person and as a mum, and feeling that my emotions and experiences were valid.

A encouraged me to go to various SureStart programmes, mainly baby groups. Whereas before these weekly meetings, it would have been a flat no. But knowing that I had support and knowing the progress I had made, I felt able to give it a try. I have made some fantastic friends through these baby groups and have experienced so many wonderful moments with O. My confidence also grew.

A huge milestone for me is when O was 8 months old. I took her out for lunch, on my own. Just me and my little daughter enjoying ourselves, out and about. I can not express how proud I felt. I called A as soon as I got home to share the wonderful news!!

As our weekly visits were drawing to a stop, I could feel my anxiety starting to rise. A also noticed this and it was decided that, although I had come so far from our first meeting, I wasn't ready for them to stop yet. So A continued to visit for a further 4 months.

During that time, with the ongoing help and support, the talking and listening, the advice and caring, my confidence grew further. I was becoming increasingly capable and absolutely loved my role as mummy. After the extra 4 months, I felt ready to do this.

I do sometimes meet with A for a coffee and a chat, which is lovely. A has made a huge positive impact in mine and my family's lives.

I think in total, A was part of our lives for 15 months and what a difference she and Home-Start have made. I know that I couldn't have coped without their guidance and support. I can't thank them enough.

I was assured that if I needed further assistance, it would be offered. I receive updates about the various support and services that are on offer to me and although I feel as though I don't need to attend them, it's reassuring to know that they are there.

What Families say:

- Having (the volunteer) visit every week was something to look forward to, it broke my long week in the house up, simply having someone to talk to
- A service so under appreciated until you are desperately in need, it has been beyond what words could describe. A service I didn't know existed but needed to get me and my family through the difficult and hard times. I am so grateful for it.
- It was a great help to have someone look after 2-4 kids so I would have less pressure & stress & I was able to go to appointments I otherwise wasn't able to go to.
- This service is invaluable. It has helped me and the kids in so many ways.
- I found it very beneficial and looked forward to the volunteer coming out. It was a great help.
- Very grateful for all the help and support
- (Volunteer) was brilliant in helping around house without being asked. She was amazing with (child) reading and playing. She was brilliant in helping me open up and talk about things.
- (Volunteer and Co-ordinator) were brilliant in giving advice about services available.
- (Child) loved having (volunteer) play with him weekly. He counted down the days until she returned.
- The service has been amazing and such a massive support.
- It really helped me get over my fear of leaving my daughter with other people. I really appreciate the support I've had and would recommend the service to other new Mums.



➤ AMAZING MULTIPLES

Amazing Multiples is a group for Fermanagh parents of twins and more. It was established in 2013 to offer peer support and practical guidance for parents. The group meets once a month and new families are always welcome, including antenatal parents and their supporters. 23 families were registered for Amazing Multiples this year. Thank you to the Halifax Foundation for Northern Ireland who part funded the group this year.



Amazing Multiples offers:

- A time for play
- Support & a chance to link with other parents of multiples, to share ideas and experiences
- Signposting to other services
- Information and practical advice
- Refreshments and a chance to chat
- A chance to meet up with others before your babies arrive

➤ FAMILIES OF THE WORLD

Home-Start Lakeland have seen an increase in referrals from families who have moved into Fermanagh from other parts of the World. These families reported feeling isolated and experiencing low mental health. We developed a group called 'Families of the World' which began in February 2024. The group meets once a month and celebrates a different culture, festival or holiday each month with activities for the children, refreshments, opportunities to chat and relevant speakers and support services.



The Big Community Paddle

Home-Start Lakeland had a stand in the volunteer village at this community volunteer event at Enniskillen Castle on Monday 8 May 2023. It was a great opportunity to share our work and recruit new volunteers.



King Charles III visits Enniskillen

Co-ordinator Diane Noble and Chairperson Gerry Hegarty were invited by Fermanagh and Omagh District Council to have the pleasure of meeting King Charles during his visit to Fermanagh and were able to share information about Home-Start Lakeland. He asked us to pass on his well wishes to our volunteers who Diane told him were the people Home-Start were most indebted to.



Our Funders

A big thank you must go to our funders, supporters and community fundraisers who have contributed so much to Home-Start Lakeland this year.

Funders:

- Western Health and Social Care Trust continue to fund core costs & we thank them for their recognition of the early intervention support we provide.
- Henry Smith funded our Staff salaries as part of a 3-year grant. This grant ended in July 2023
- Fermanagh & Omagh District Council part funded Office Rent.
- The Halifax Foundation for Northern Ireland funded volunteer expenses, volunteer training and our Amazing Multiples group.

Fundraising and Donations

The Soroptomists have been long term friends of Home-Start Lakeland and kindly made us one of the recipients of money raised at their Breakfast event.

Tesco also regularly support us and this year we were the recipients of their book sale for a week.

We saw a return to Bag Packing after a break due to covid. Thank you to B&M for the opportunity to raise money in store and to the volunteers who gave up their time to bag pack.

Thanks to Dunnes Stores who permitted us to share information on Home-Start Lakeland and collect money in their foyer.

We were very lucky to win £1000 through the Ecclesiastical Fund who regularly give money to nominated charities.

Thank you to the customers of shops across Fermanagh who regularly fill our collection boxes. We also have a small number of regular donors who donate to us on a monthly basis.





Christmas & Easter Donations

Thank you to the staff of BT who donated gifts to the children and parents of Home-Start families at Christmas and Easter Eggs at Easter.

Enniskillen Foodbank donated Food Hampers which we delivered to Home-Start families in time for Christmas.



HOME START

Lakeland

Do you have parenting experience? Would you share this experience? Could you spare 2-3 hours per week?

If so, we really need your help.

Training, support & expenses provided

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact:

Home-Start Lakeland

Belmore Mews,

Enniskillen BT74 6AH

028 6634 6818 info@homestartlakeland.com

**For parents when
they need us most**

