



33rd Annual Report 2022/23

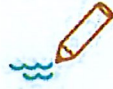


**No child's
future should
be limited**





Chairperson's Report



2022-2023 has proved to be a busy, at times difficult, but ultimately uplifting year for Home Start Down District. The challenges of the post-pandemic world have been many and tailoring our provision in response to these has taken creativity and hard work from everyone.

Mental Health and Wellbeing, Social Development and Isolation continue to be key themes guiding our provision. Initiatives include Family Groups which are aimed at new parents with children under 8 months, Little Explorers for those with additional needs, Breastfeeding Support Groups, Baby Massage and Messy Play. We continue to provide our regular Family Groups and our over-subscribed Incredible Years programme as well as delivering our core programme of home support.

Our Counselling Service is at full capacity and a resounding success which is much in demand. We were also glad to offer support to Asylum seekers in Newcastle.

Underpinning the ability to offer these enterprises is financial sustainability and securing funding remains a constant focus for Trustees and Organisers. The use of a bid writer has proved to be successful and relieves some pressure on the Organisers, but it is an ongoing struggle in the current economic climate.

Fundraising efforts continue in many forms, from Sponsored Toddles to Quizzes and Bingo and we are so grateful for the support we receive from the wider community. Our shop goes from strength to strength and a well-deserved recognition of the teamwork was shown by the fact they won the 'Joint Staff and Volunteer Award' at the Social Enterprise Awards.

Volunteer recruitment is now mainly through Facebook and a new hybrid model of prep training introduced. The flexibility offered by a combination of face to face, and online courses has proved to be successful. Yet another example of using technology to our advantage!

The Trustees are diligent about ensuring the Scheme is compliant with Home Start U.K.

governance requirements and after a review of the revised Home Start Agreement and Brand Licensing documents signed up so we can continue as members of the Home Start U.K. Network. They also continue to review, update and implement new and revised policies regularly, oversee Staff recruitment and exercise financial management. In conclusion I should like to give my heartfelt gratitude to everyone involved in Home Start Down District for their ongoing commitment to the organisation.

The reason we are facing the future with such a positive outlook is due to the dedication and hard work of the Trustees, Organisers, Admin Staff, Family Group and Support workers, Shop staff and all our Volunteers. Each and every one of you go that extra mile and contribute to making Home Start Down District the success story it is. Thank you all!

Fiona Croy
Chairperson



Together with Families



Home-Start's vision is to shape a country where all children have the best possible start in life. We want to make sure that no parent or family feels alone in the critical task of raising children. We want to build compassionate communities for families, parents and children – because childhood can't wait.



Treasurers Report



I have to report, with some regret that the year to 31 March 2023, necessitated our needing to dip into our reserves to the extent of some £60,000. Our revenues at £198774 were down by some £24,500 whilst our outgoings at £259640 were up by some £54000. A difference of £78311.

In our view these figures indicated a) the increasing difficulty of securing funds from the various sources which have been approached, some of which have been exceedingly kind and helpful to us over the years and b) the fact that we have responded to very strong and increasing need in the sector which we choose to serve. This latter has involved higher staffing costs - as well we had agreed increases for existing staff to reflect greater cost of living as well as their untiring efforts and commitment. Our funds at the year-end amounted to £77269. It's clear that we cannot sustain this level of adverse cash flow for long. We've been endeavouring to deal with the issue by tight budgeting and active pursuit of sources of funding with the help of our professional fund raiser - with some success.

Currently our forecasts indicate that we shall increase the reserves to in excess of £100,000 by the end of March 2024 - this will be diminished by the fact that the pension provider, due to their processing glitch, had neglected to collect some £23000 from us being contributions to staff pensions - over most of 2 years. This amount will need to be made up over the next few months.

It now is the norm that there is considerable home working, also zoom meetings of the Management Committee/Trustees.

We have been inordinately gratified by the performance of the Charity shop in Newcastle. Its revenue was £56590 (£47422), outgoings were £47501 (£35242) returned a surplus of £8888 (£11998) in the year - the lower result related in the main to increased staff costs - reflecting the greater

level of activity. The commitment of those involved is admirable. As usual the return on preserving safe investments is disappointing - erratic financial markets.

Again, grateful thanks are due to those (individually and corporately) who have supported us with funds. These have been vital and have made material differences to the lives of many. Again, I have to record unqualified admiration for the commitment and efforts of the Organisers. The requirements of them seem to be ever more complex and demanding.

As ever I must express my pleasure in being associated with my fellow Trustees, Staff and Volunteers.

Peter Smith
Treasurer



What do we do?

Parents supporting parents.

A local community network of trained volunteers and expert support helping families with young children through their challenging times.

There for parents when they need us the most.

How do we do it?

No judgement, just compassionate, confidential help, and expert support.

Starting in the home, our approach is as individual as the people we are helping.

Sharing local expertise to drive national and regional change.

The issue

A child's earliest years are irreplaceable.

Without a stable, loving, and nurturing environment, a very young child will not develop the vital foundations they need.

They will not develop the skills that help with everything from their behaviour, their ability to learn, their confidence or even the some of the most basic things, like being able to go to the toilet by themselves.

Once the chance is missed, making up lost ground in later life is difficult, expensive and often just doesn't happen.

During the year we have supported 390 families and 522 children thanks to the hard work of our dedicated staff and volunteer team.



Reports on the schemes:

Downpatrick Ballynahinch Newcastle

It is my pleasure to present Home Start Down District's 33rd Annual Report.

This will be my last report because I will be retiring in April after 26 years. I have had the privilege of being a part of Home Start Down District for over 28 years starting as a volunteer in the Downpatrick Scheme in 1998, I was then the Newcastle Organiser for 10 years and then the Manager of Down District for the last 15 years.

This year has been another challenging year for Home-Start Down District and in particular the cost-of-living crisis has had a direct effect on the families that we support. This has put pressure on our funding, in-house costs, resources, staff, and volunteers. Despite these difficulties the support the families have received has not wavered, due to the dedication of everyone involved in the Home-Start Down District.

When I started Home Start, our service was primarily centred around Home Visiting. Today, while maintaining our Home Visiting service, we have expanded to include 8 active Family groups in the district. We have also established our inaugural Social Enterprise, a thriving charity shop—and introduced a counselling service. The substantial growth and progress of these initiatives stand as a testament to the unwavering commitment and hard work of our dedicated staff.

A special expression of gratitude goes to Imelda and Sharon for their tireless efforts in developing these programs. A heartfelt thanks is extended to Doreen, the

administrative backbone of the scheme. Acknowledgments are also due to our Family group workers—Maria, Una, Leanne, Aileen and Kirsty—for their immense dedication and efforts in creating happy memories in the lives of the children we serve. Additional thanks are directed to Jac and Debbie, who oversee the charity shop's operations. Their contribution has played a pivotal role in the shop's success, firmly rooting it in the local community.

Thanks to our dedicated team of Trustees, they serve as the cornerstone of our organization. This group of talented and skilled individuals plays a crucial role in governing the scheme. As volunteers, these trustees work tirelessly to manage the program across various areas of operation. Their hard work and expertise are greatly appreciated, contributing significantly to the success of Home Start Down District.

Under the leadership of Sharon, supported by Kirsty and Leanne, the Home Start Newcastle Scheme is experiencing ongoing growth and development. Together, they have taken an innovative approach by spearheading the new Asylum Seekers Hotel Scheme for the Newcastle Area, securing funding that extends the initiative into 2024. Sharon is actively building relationships with Unit T, Sure start, CDRN, DEA, and participating in interagency events.

Furthermore, Sharon maintains close communication with referrers, mentors counselling students, and collaborates with Job-Share workers. She plays a vital role in engaging with volunteers, providing support through reviews, book club activities, planned events, and actively building up the volunteer base. Concurrently, Sharon is pursuing her counselling degree, contributing to the ongoing development of the counselling service for Home Start Down District. The Two Incredible Years program has been successfully delivered, with one session conducted on Zoom in autumn and another conducted face-to-face in all primary schools.



Sharon's multifaceted involvement reflects her dedication and commitment to the comprehensive growth and success of the Home Start Newcastle Scheme.

Our Charity Shop serves as a crucial source of income, playing a vital role in our public relations efforts, volunteer recruitment, and creating a welcoming space where parents can feel heard. Beyond its financial significance, the shop provides work placements, offering full support in a caring and inclusive environment. Customers who purchase or donate directly to our charity shop are aware that their contributions stay within the local area, with all profits dedicated to supporting families in need.

We express deep gratitude for the generous donations and the loyalty of our customers. The tireless efforts of both staff and volunteers contribute to maintaining an appealing and well-stocked shop environment. Special thanks go to Jac, who continues to supervise the shop's operations. Her encouragement led volunteers to return to face-to-face work after the pandemic, fostering lasting friendships.

Jac's creativity shines through in her efforts to enhance systems, including the implementation of a successful pricing strategy. Her valuable contributions have propelled the shop's growth. At present, a fantastic team of volunteers is actively contributing to the shop's success, making it a thriving hub for our community.

The Ballynahinch team, led by Imelda and supported by group workers Maria and Una, focused on crucial initiatives this year as the community emerged from the challenges posed by Covid-19. A primary emphasis was placed on building parental engagement and fortifying the volunteer base. The team initiated informal conversations with families, delving into the effects of Covid on their lives. This dialogue culminated in a survey that garnered 123 responses, forming the foundation for the Scheme's work over the

coming year. That survey is documented later in this report.

Imelda led her team to successfully adapt and expand their group activities, operating safely in diverse venues and introducing programs in new locations. Families, having endured isolation due to the pandemic, collaborated closely with the team to resume a semblance of normalcy. Their joint efforts focused on minimizing the spread of Covid and other infections, ensuring the continued operation of the groups. Recognising how much children had suffered from the lockdowns, Imelda and her team developed high quality, child led play programmes to meet their needs.

Imelda also responded to the emerging needs of families by introducing new and innovative initiatives. A noteworthy endeavour was the extended Summer Family Support Programme, spanning six weeks and providing play opportunities and support to 44 families and 74 children. Additional programs, such as a breastfeeding support group, a pelvic floor group, and a new group for Moms and newborns, were established.

A particularly impactful venture was the Families Together program, an extension of the Summer Programme. This initiative provided afterschool support to 12 families facing various challenges, including domestic violence, relationship difficulties, mental health issues, and the strain of the cost-of-living crisis. Uniquely, the project offered intensive support to entire families in a small group setting, utilizing play and art to foster support networks among peers and provide emotional and practical assistance to parents. The success of the Families Together program was evident in the evaluation, with many parents expressing that it provided a space to build trust with the team, volunteers, and fellow parents. Subsequently, almost all participants went on to access additional services within Home-Start and externally, including home visiting, counselling, and support from external organizations such as Women's Aid, Addiction Services, and Further Education.

A standout moment in the year was the Santa Party, where 100 families visited Santa at his enchanting "cottage" at Delamont. Santa engaged with the children, led rhyme time, and took families on a magical train ride through the forest, creating a memorable experience for all involved.

Undeterred by the obstacles of the past year, Imelda focussed on building and strengthening the volunteer team so that the Scheme could deliver its core objective of meeting the needs of families responsively through home visiting. Notably, Imelda utilized social media, particularly Facebook, to spearhead volunteer recruitment, with one advertisement reaching an impressive 16,422 people and generating 2,125 engagements without resorting to paid ads. Imelda combined the use of social media and an innovative approach to delivering volunteer training through a hybrid of online and face to face training to rebuild a volunteer team decimated by Covid.

The team also actively engaged with the community through networking with organizations such as CDRN, local churches, food banks, and other voluntary groups.

In summary, the Ballynahinch team's multifaceted approach, encompassing community engagement, program development, and volunteer recruitment, reflects a dedicated and impactful effort to support families and strengthen the community in the wake of the challenges brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Dorothy McMullan

Manager



Volunteers



Volunteers are at the heart of Home Start. For over 33 years in Down District volunteers have delivered a face-to-face service to families and have governed our scheme. Without our volunteers Home Start would cease to exist. Volunteering helps build cohesive communities, while building the skills and confidence of those giving their time to families in need. Across the Home Start network there are 10,946 people giving their time as volunteers for Home Start, including 1,306 trustees. In Northern Ireland there are 508 volunteers and in Down District we are lucky to be working with 70 of these special people.

Home-visiting

Having our Home Visiting Volunteers able to support families in their homes has been a great return to normal for the scheme. Our home visiting volunteers understand what parents are going through and provide a listening ear, hand holding, and non-judgemental and practical support to our families – Thank you to our team of wonderful Home Visiting Volunteers.

Referrals

Our referrals have increased dramatically across '22-'23, indicating the increased level of need. Needs range from coping with parent's mental health, child's mental health, anxiety issues, overcoming isolation, financial concerns, and additional needs.





FAMILY SURVEY

We conducted a survey in July and August 2022 with 123 families to assess how well Home Start is doing and to identify any new needs that families may have. The results were:

- Before engaging with Home-Start 70.3% identified coping with children's behaviour and emotions as an issue
- After engaging with Home-Start 95.7 felt that they were coping well or very with their children's behaviour and emotions
- Before engaging with Home-Start 78.9 identified their own physical and emotional well-being as an issue
- After engaging with Home-Start 91.5% felt that they were coping well or very with their children's behaviour and emotions
- An astounding 88.9% felt that they were really listened to by the staff and volunteers at Home-Start

Homestart is always there when you need them, they listen to you and will never judge you!

I received counselling straight away after hitting rock bottom

I can't even express how thankful I am to Homestart. They have been absolutely amazing to myself and my kids. Even forcing me to sit down and talk to other parents, and giving me a break, has been everything

I have recently been going through a stressful time due to complications with my second pregnancy and it is really comforting to know I have a support network and people to talk to if I need to

Time, care and support given has been incredible. Having a team that can support me through the bad days and help me access other services I may need has been invaluable. Thank you so so much.



Continuing Support to Parents

- 1 to 1 practical and emotional support
- Access to foodbanks, oil, baby food, nappies and wipes
- Home Safety Checks
- Benefit checks
- Signposting generally

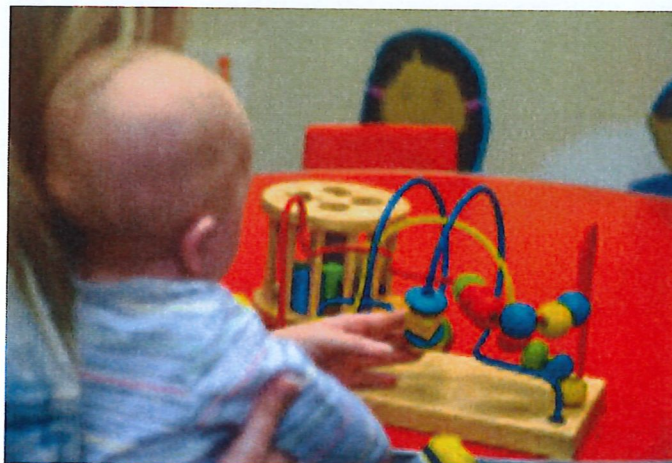




THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS

Without the continued support from our funders, we would not be able to do what we do.
Thank you to all our funders below:

SEHSCT SLA	£	80,590.00
GARFIELD WESTON	£	15,000.00
Home-Start UK	£	1,000.00
HENRY SMITH	£	33,350.00
AWARDS FOR ALL	£	10,000.00
PHA CLEAR	£	6,630.00
PATHWAYS	£	25,000.00
CASH FOR KIDS	£	10,200.00
NMDDC GOOD RELATIONS	£	1,124.00
NMDDC POLICING & COM.	£	1,900.00
Prior year NMDDC	£	2,154.00
HS NEWCASTLE	£	8,888.00
FUNDRAISING	£	2,810.00
BANK INTEREST	£	127.00
	£	<u>198,773.00</u>





Staff

Dorothy McMullan	Manager
Imelda Hynds	Ballynahinch Organiser
Sharon Robinson	Newcastle Organiser
Doreen Belshaw	Administrator
Maria Hynds	Family Group Worker
Una Lynch	Family Group Worker
Leanne McDonald	Family Group Worker
Aileen Burns	Family Group Worker (left July 2022)
Kirsty Cable	Family Group /Support Worker (started September 2022)
Jac Love McNamara	Shop supervisor
Debbie Hall	Shop worker (started August 2022)

Management Committee

Fiona Crory	Chairperson
Peter Smith	Treasurer
Maureen Kearney	Trustee
Bridget Owens	Trustee
Derek McGregor	Trustee
Martin Walls	Trustee
Ms K Otley	South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust
Jane Dinnen	Trustee



Our Services



COUNSELLING SERVICE

Family
Groups



Incredible
Years



Family
Support
Groups



Home visiting
Support



Family Groups

For parents and their children aged 0 to 4

- Ballynahinch
- Crossgar
- Drumaness
- Killyleagh



- Castlewellan
- Dundrum
- St John's Newcastle
- Newcastle PS






Volunteer Recruitment

Home Start Down District
 Published by Imelda Hynds · September 12 at 7:42 PM · 🌐

Mummies with new babies would love a volunteer to come in to help feed or wind the baby, let them get a cup of tea or a quick shower or just reassure them that they are doing a great job and being a new Mum is really hard! Could you give 2 hours a week to support a new Mum? We can promise you that you will make a difference and get great training and support, expenses and lots of opportunities to meet other volunteers and make new friends. We have lots of families across Do... See more

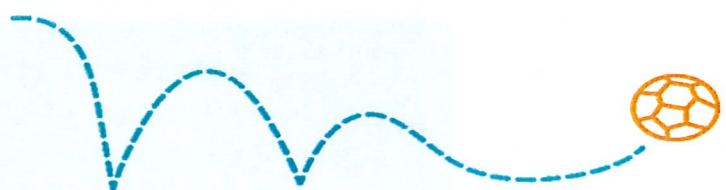


18,422
People reached

2,125
Engagements

↑ +5.1x higher
Distribution score

Boost post





Auditors
M.B. McGrady & Co.
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**Because
tomorrow
starts today**

