



**HOME
START**

Banbury, Bicester &
Chipping Norton

2025 - 2026 Annual Report



CONTENTS



ABOUT US	2
OUR TEAM	3
REPORT FROM CHAIR	4
REPORT FROM SENIOR MANAGER	5
REPORT FROM TREASURER	6
FAMILY STORY	7
OUR IMPACT	8-9
FOCUS ON PEEP	10
VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT	11
HIGHLIGHTS	12
OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	13
THANK YOU	14

We are a part of the Home-Start UK Federation.
The four aims of Home-Start UK are:



GROWTH.

A collective ambition to reach significantly more families



VOICE.

Home-Start will stand alongside families to make the case for support



INCLUSION.

Home-Start will advance inclusion and equity in all we do



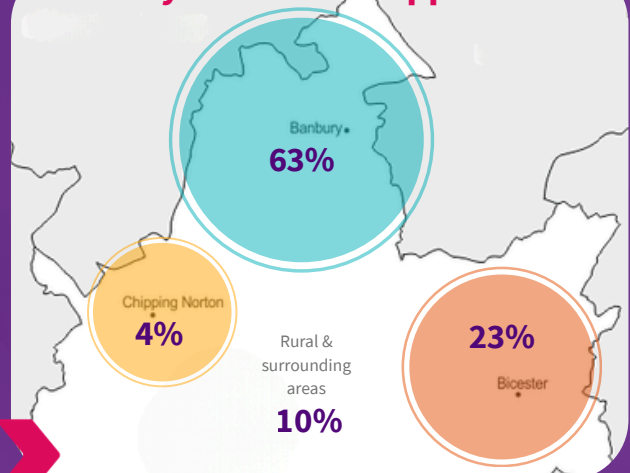
IMPACT.

Local Home-Starts will be stronger together

Working as part of the Home-Start movement, we adapt our local response to the needs of the Banbury, Bicester and Chipping Norton communities.

We connect with other local agencies to widen our reach, and through communications media we aim to raise our profile and extend our involvement with the wider, diverse local community. As part of the Home-Start UK family, we work closely with the Home-Start Oxfordshire consortium to ensure all families in Oxfordshire can access Home-Start support. Together we seek to build our resilience, including access to future sustainable funding.

Locality of families supported:



ABOUT US

Our Vision

No parent should feel alone when parenting young children and should have the support they need to give their children the best possible start in life.

Our Mission

Our mission is to provide support to families and children under the age of five across North Oxfordshire who are finding it difficult to cope with the early years of family life. We work alongside parents as they realise their strengths and worth, build solid relationships with their children and widen their links with the local community - giving families the opportunity to reach their full potential - *because childhood can't wait.*

Our Approach

Children thrive with strong relationships, a nurturing home life and empowered parents. Our model centres on parent-powered support and self-help, tailored to each family's needs. We recruit and train volunteers to work in partnership with families to address challenges, build resilience and ultimately to cope independently. Supported families face a complex web of challenges such as mental health struggles, financial strain, relationship problems, domestic abuse, disability, illness, inadequate housing or being a refugee/asylum-seeking family.

- **1:1 home-visiting support** from a matched volunteer is our core offer. A dedicated, trained volunteer visits a family in their home for 2-3 hours each week providing non-judgemental emotional support and practical help.
- Our Family Support Worker offers **specialist support** for families experiencing more complex situations.
- Our group-based early years provision includes weekly universal **Stay & Play drop-in groups** and invitation **Peep Learning Together Programme** sessions.
- Additionally, we provide various **social events** throughout the year for supported families to enjoy including trips out, gardening sessions, picnics, our annual summer outing and our much-loved Christmas party.

This **holistic approach** enables our volunteers to connect with families. They become safe and trusted partners, empowering families to tackle obstacles that make life feel overwhelming.



STAFF

Louise Sansom / Senior Manager
Angela Esland / Organiser
Karen Mullins-Blyth / Organiser
Kim Wheddon / Senior Family Support Worker
Emma Ford / Fundraising & Communications Officer
Ansa Kausar / Stay & Play Facilitator
Faith Altamura / Administrator (until May 2025)
Debi Miller / Administrator (from July 2025)
Jenny Jordon / Volunteer bookkeeper

TRUSTEES

Nick Case / Chair
Douglas Keir / Treasurer
Chloe Woodhead
John Karslake
Maxine Bennett
Kate Macintyre
Anne Waters resigned Nov 2025
Pete Welply resigned Nov 2025
Laura Peabody resigned Jan 2026

RETIRED VOLUNTEERS

Serena	Marilina
Kylie	Su
Denise	Rebecca
Alison	Sheila
Samantha	Shannon
Fodi	Jacee
Gemma	Beryl
	Erin
	Diana C

VOLUNTEERS

Mary-Jane	Lorrie	Liz
Claire C	Kate	Ann
Emma	Diana S	Nerina
Tara	Laura	Hayley
Hilary	Victoria	Jenny
Jean	Deborah	Wendy
Janet	Fiona	Philippa
Angela	Dimple	Rebecca
Alison	Louise	Kim
Sarah M	Marigold	Faith
Kirsty	Siobain	Susie
Alison	Lynne	Isobel
Maxine	Claire H	Linda
Sarah B	Helen	Lorraine

OUR TEAM



“

I feel I made a friend for life; [my volunteer] genuinely cared about myself and daughter. Home-Start has been a life saver for me when I really needed someone to talk to and allowed me to grow in confidence to take my daughter out to groups. I am forever thankful for the help and support.

”

Supported parent

A reflection of the year from our **Chair**, Nick Case

During the year to March 2026 we continued to strengthen our financial position, for which thanks are due to our fundraising team. Also of course, as always, we couldn't do what we do without our Senior Manager Louise Sansom and her wider team. It is worth noting that, taken in aggregate, our team of seven have over 60 years of service to Home-Start. A clear sign of the devotion and commitment of those working for the young families we deal with.



In the year ahead we will be looking to recruit a new team member as our Community Engagement Lead. Their principal responsibility will be to build our presence within the communities where we currently operate as well as in the wider voluntary sector. By connecting with individuals and organisations less well known to us we hope to attract an increasing number of volunteers as well as funding opportunities. We will be applying for specific funding to cover this post for up to 2 years.

I am pleased to say that the New Articles of Association, approved at the 2024-25 AGM last November, have been approved by the Charity Commission. On an operational level I am pleased to say we received an 'Excellent' rating from Home-Start UK.

As in previous years we had a number of runners in the Oxford Half Marathon who raised over £3,300 for us. We had another very successful Big Give campaign, which raised over £22,000. Special thanks must go to those who generously pledged the first £5,000. This was the vital first target we set, which attracted matched funding of the same amount before our fundraising team attracted the final £12,000. A great result.

We held our regular Strategy + Business Planning Day in March to review the former and set hard targets for 2026-27 and beyond. The restated Strategic Objectives agreed at that session are summarised on page 13 of this Review.

We continue to have challenges with our premises, which are in a poor state of repair. The freeholder, Oxfordshire County Council, have carried out some remedial work but the overall state of the buildings is woeful. We would love to find a deep pocketed sponsor willing to take on the building, and its backlog of maintenance and repairs, so we and the other charities housed in other parts of the building, can continue to offer our services to the communities we serve.

“

Home-Start support has definitely helped me. I feel less isolated now. We are in a better place and on a better path now.

”

Supported parent



A financial report from our Treasurer, Douglas Keir

As in the previous year, the fund-raising team did a sterling job of raising funds, and our income grew by 8% from £241,000 to £260,000. It may be noted that this is almost exactly twice the amount raised only four years ago: a clear demonstration of the real value such a committed team can bring. Within the total income, 2025-26 saw a substantial increase in restricted funding received from non-statutory organisations, mainly Charitable Trusts and Foundations, an extremely competitive source of funds. It is clear that what we do for local families is appreciated by funders, and that our team does an excellent job of communicating this.

Expenses in 2025-26 rose by 5% to £215,000 (24-25: £204,000) largely due to the impact of inflation on the salary bill and other staff costs, by far our biggest expense at 84% of the total. Other costs rose by a similar percentage.

The combined effect of the increased income and the somewhat lower rate of expense increase led to a surplus of £45,000, helping to rebuild our reserves to a resilient amount of £147,000 (2024-25: £102,000), the majority of which is unrestricted. These reserves represent 68% (8 months) of the year's expenditure and provide us with the necessary buffer to withstand any unexpected change to income, as we experienced not so many years ago. We are very conscious of the difficult economic situation in which we live and the increased competition for funds from other Charities.

We really do appreciate all the financial support we receive, as well as the outstanding family and other support provided by the staff and volunteers, always in the face of increasing need and complexity in our surrounding community.



Home-Start Banbury, Bicester & Chipping Norton summary 2025-26

INCOME	
Statutory grant funding	£49,296
Trusts & Foundations	£67,151
Home-Start UK	£11,472
Other contracts/ restricted funding	£126,502
Other income & donations	£5,706
Total	£260,127

EXPENDITURE	
Staff costs	£180,701
Volunteers costs	£4,079
Family events inc Stay & Plays	£4,542
Rent, insurance & general office costs	£11,636
IT costs	£7,817
Fees	£5,310
Fundraising	£1,022
Total	£215,107

SURPLUS / DEFICIT	£45,020
NET ASSETS	£146,999

**Summary based on unaudited accounts*



“It's such a positive experience, helping people during the early years, especially if they are having a particularly difficult time with something.”

Volunteer

FAMILY STORY



“Connection is the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment.” — Brené Brown

I was originally referred to Home-Start in 2023. I was struggling with anxiety and postnatal depression and found it very hard to manage my MS at the same time as looking after my eldest daughter, who was 2 years old at the time. I also self-referred to Home-Start in 2025 after the birth of my second child, as despite being more confident with the practical side of parenting, I unfortunately experienced more severe postnatal depression so reached out for help. I knew I would be ok as time went on but needed a bit of extra help to get me to that point.

I was quite unsure of Home-Start support at first! I mistakenly thought I would need to try to keep my volunteer entertained for 3 hours at each visit and the idea of having to do that made me very nervous! I was also paranoid about how messy my house was and how that would come across. However, my volunteers very quickly showed me that I certainly didn't need to entertain or meet any perceived “standard”.

I am lucky to have been supported by two wonderful volunteers. Jean was my first volunteer and she was an absolute godsend. I'm not sure where I would have been without her support. She was the turning point in my life to overcoming postnatal depression and giving me confidence to parent. We navigated everything from potty training, going to toddler groups, park visits and parenting confidence. She was always quick to reassure me that I wasn't alone in the struggles I was facing. She is still a very important friend of our family and I am very lucky to have been matched with her.

Mary-Jane was my second volunteer after the birth of my second child. She has an infectious bubbly personality and always has a big smile on her face. I loved how she would interact and sing to my youngest daughter at each visit and do whatever she could to help give me a bit of time (even if just a few minutes) during a difficult stage of separation anxiety. She was also amazing with my eldest daughter, always taking an interest in how she was doing at school and playing games with her at the park. In the absence of family support and interaction, these visits meant a lot to me and to my daughter.

Home-Start has helped me through the hardest days of my life, through the depths of postnatal depression and self-doubt. I can honestly say I am not sure where I would be now without it and I am so grateful for the time and effort of the volunteers and staff.



OUR IMPACT

Home-visiting support



79

families received
1:1 support



150

children received
1:1 support

Stay & play groups



190

families attended
our Stay & Play
sessions



237

children came and
played

Our AMAZING volunteers



67

volunteers supported
families and the charity's
work (incl. trustees)



3084

hours of volunteer time
given (inc. trustees)



“Life-saver! I didn't know
who else to turn to.”

Supported parent



An incredible total of **652** individual lives were brightened

“I enjoy my role because I get to meet families and build friendships with them. This means I can give them support in many ways that can make their life better and easier and reduce worry and stress. The children benefit from happier parents which helps them thrive.”

Volunteer

OUR IMPACT

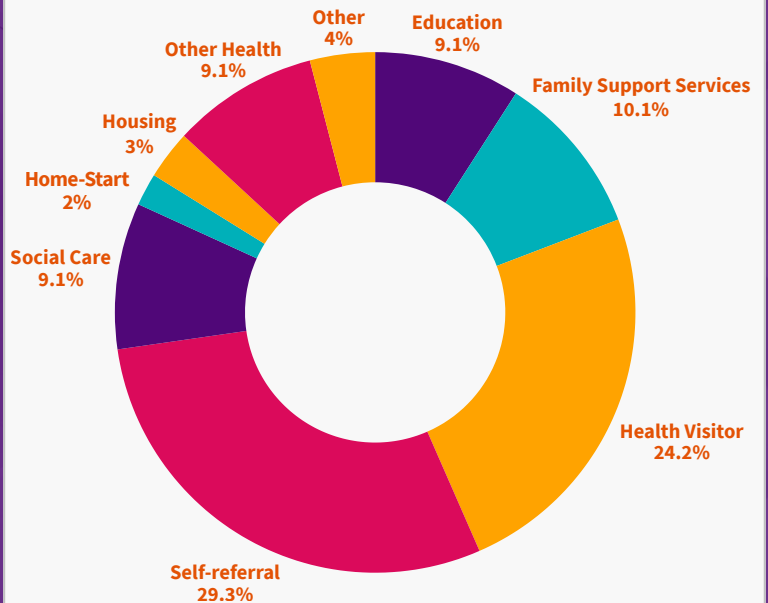
88% of parents reported improved or sustained self-esteem

90% of parents felt better or equally able to cope with their own mental health and isolation

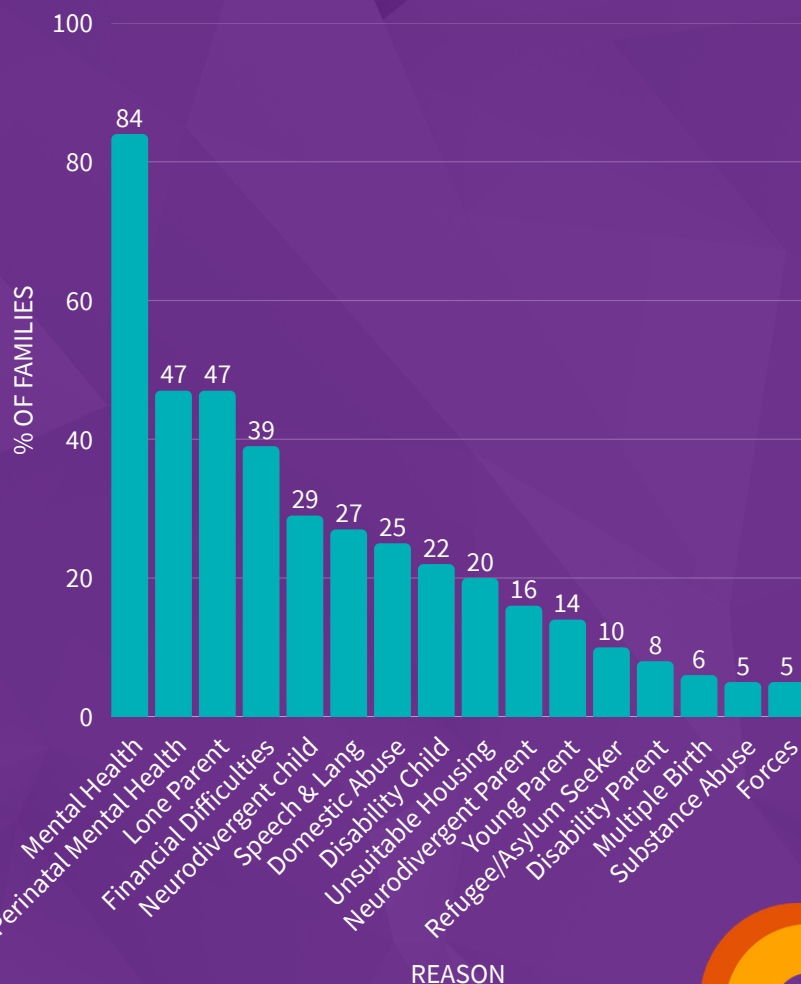
100% of parents felt more or equally as involved in their children's development

100% of parents felt better or equally able to cope with their children's mental health

Source of referrals:



REASONS FAMILIES WERE SUPPORTED



“The support offered by Home-Start was invaluable at a time when [Mum] was struggling with her emotional health and the care of her 3 young children.”

Referrer - Health Visitor

FOCUS ON PEEP



Communication

Literacy

Numeracy

Health

Emotional Wellbeing



Parent/carer feedback from Peep groups:

“ I liked being able to discuss my child in the group and realise other parents struggle so I worry less. ”

“ Peep has been really helpful with encouraging things that will help with K's development. ”

“ It has helped me have more of an understanding on 'teaching' things – letters, numbers, talking together. ”

“ My child liked listening to stories and songs. She enjoyed trying new snacks and playing with other children. ”

“ It's helped me to listen more to what he's trying to say and how to understand him. ”

The Peep Learning Together Programme is an evidence-based early intervention initiative that empowers parents and carers to kickstart their child's learning from birth. Developed by the charity Peeple, the program supports families through five core strands of child development: communication, literacy, numeracy, health, and emotional well-being.

In our Peep groups, organisers and families share ideas and simple, low-cost activities that support a child's learning in everyday life - talking, singing, sharing books and playing together. Peep builds on family's strengths, empowering them to make the most of day-to-day learning opportunities.

Karen and Angela, trained Peep practitioners, along with their much-loved and very popular side-kick PEEP the parrot, have facilitated two 6-week courses this year, and welcomed 7 Home-Start families along to our structured hour-long sessions. These included talking and listening with children, musical movement, maths in everyday routines, all accompanied by drinks, fruit and cake, and of course lots of fun! Our families enjoyed attending Peep and it was lovely for us to see parents and children alike increase in confidence as the course progressed, making new friendships and sharing their experiences with other members of their group.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

“An effort made for the happiness of others lifts us above ourselves.” — Lydia Maria Child



I have always loved being around young children and their families and for many years worked as a volunteer reader and secretary in village schools. When I saw the Home-Start advert for volunteers 10 years ago I had no idea how much this would broaden my horizons and how special being accepted into the homes of young families and seeing them flourish would be.

The Home-Start training was excellent and the opportunity to talk to volunteers about their experiences really helped that first visit to a family. All my families have had very different needs but the constant is the listening ear, encouragement and kindness we offer and the time to play with the children. I take a pink bag of toys I change around and they can't wait to see what's inside each week. There is nothing like the joy you feel when a young mum opens the door to you with a big smile and a hug.

Each visit is different; it might be practical help in the home, signposting to local facilities or help with form filling, which has involved research on my part too and enriched my own understanding of the stress families are under, none more so than my refugee family who are now settled in their new life here.

Several of my families have had an autistic child, all with different needs, and it is so rewarding when you find that game or toy they engage with, or see that first happy smile when you arrive and they want to play with you.

I have been inspired to take part in the additional training courses Home-Start offers especially on play, autism and parents experiences from pregnancy to early years that may impact their own mental health. These have been a benefit to my volunteering and me personally.

As a volunteer I may be giving my time and support to young families, but they give me back so much more.

“*My volunteer is amazing. We get on well. She has taken me to places that I did not even know existed. I feel less isolated now.*”

Supported parent





HIGHLIGHTS

- Volunteer Preparation Courses and Volunteer Celebrations:** 6 new volunteers completed training and plenty of get togethers were held to celebrate our incredible volunteers.
- Connecting with Nature Community Transport Fund pilot through the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership:** Families were able to enjoy some trips out to Deddington Park, Steeple Aston Park and Fairytale Farm as part of this fantastic initiative.
- Banbury BID:** Being selected to participate in the Banbury Beings Project in partnership with the incredible ThomFong and Chiltern Railways. One of our trustees, Anne, winning one of their prestigious 'Golden G.O.A.T' awards. Joining in with the spectacular Banbury Summer Fest parade.
- Family Summer Outing:** Families enjoyed a very special day out at Rookery Open Farm. One parent shared: 'Thank you...for arranging this wonderful trip. We truly enjoyed it and felt so refreshed. I'm really grateful for your kindness and the time you gave us—it means a lot.'
- Slow Cooker Project:** 20 families enjoyed engaging with their volunteers in creating easy and healthy home-cooked meals with slow-cookers they were given.
- Visit from our local MP:** We were delighted and honoured to receive a visit from Sean Woodcock MP.
- Bridge Street Garden Banbury:** This amazing partnership continued to grow and strengthen this year with numerous, enriching nature-based play and gardening activity sessions thoroughly enjoyed by families, staff and volunteers alike.
- Oxford Half Marathon:** Ten dedicated runners took on the Oxford Half Marathon and raised vital funds for us through their efforts while we cheered them on through the streets of Oxford.
- Family Christmas Parties:** Our annual, much-loved Christmas parties always bring everyone immense joy.
- Big Give:** We saw success in not one, but two Big Give campaigns this year with both the Christmas Challenge and Small Charity Week exceeding fundraising targets.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

2026-2028

[1] Provision of quality family support

1:1 Home-Visiting will remain our core activity. We will use feedback from families and referrers to inform and shape our future services. We will develop our wider services including our Stay & Play sessions, more directed groups and regular family events.

[2] A sustainable organisation

We will ensure a highly functioning and efficient staff, trustee and volunteer team. Succession planning and resilience across the team will be built into development plans and our staff team will feel valued. We will monitor referrals to watch changes in demand and/or complexity of need. We will audit trustees' skills and experience to fill any gaps in our board. Volunteer recruitment will remain a priority, with existing volunteers advocating on our behalf, and supported families encouraged to join us after support where appropriate. We will aim to maintain reserves at or above 50% of current annual operating costs. We will continue to diversify our income sources with a focus on securing multi-year funding, increasing local corporate giving and community fundraising events.

[3] Reaching a wide audience

We will continue to expand our profile in the local community. We aim to reach a wider audience to support volunteer recruitment and fundraising. We hope all families in the local community will know of us and how to access our support.

[4] Working with our local community

We will continue to develop our partnerships with the local community. We will improve multi-agency working to ensure better joined-up support for families. We will identify and utilise opportunities for partnerships which benefit the families we support. We will work with the other two Home-Starts in Oxfordshire with an aim to offer a consistent approach.

[5] Efficient operating systems

We will ensure hardware and software are fit for purpose. Our staff, trustees and volunteers will all have the relevant level of access, training and support. We will utilise external specialist support to ensure secure backup routines.



THANK YOU

We most certainly could not do what we do without the incredible support and kindness we receive in so many ways from our community of supporters, donors, partners, referrers, volunteers, trustees, staff, family and friends. Our immense gratitude goes out to all who have been a lifeline to local families this year when they needed us most - together we have truly made a difference!

A big thank you to all the trusts, foundations, councils, local businesses, churches, community fundraisers and individual donors, and our volunteers and trustees who 'donate back' their expenses. Some of these include... **

Sanctuary



Garfield Weston
FOUNDATION



ThomFong



WAITROSE
& PARTNERS
BANBURY



HENRY SMITH
FOUNDATION



BICESTER
TOWN COUNCIL



SGN
Your gas. Our network.

Oxford Health
NHS Foundation Trust



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL



well
together

Thor Vokes
Personal
Trainer



**Not an exhaustive list.

Home-Start Banbury, Bicester & Chipping Norton

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Grove Street,
Banbury,
Oxfordshire
OX16 5DN



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home-start-banbury-&-chipping-norton

Patron: Lady Hayter

Registered Charity Number 1114860

Company Number 05659531

HOME START

Banbury, Bicester &
Chipping Norton

Interested in joining our
volunteer team?

FIND OUT MORE HERE



Looking for other ways to get
involved and support us?

FIND OUT MORE HERE



PLEASE GET IN TOUCH - WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

“

[My volunteer] has been a breath of fresh air for me and my family. Every visit has been something I have looked forward to and she has helped me build trust in her, something I massively struggled with before.

”

Supported parent

