

Karen's Farewell to Home-Start, December 2017

Looking back, I would have been 34 years old when I first started working for Home-Start. I was in fact appointed around this time of year. I know this because I remember bumping into Sonia, my predecessor, in town as she was tearing around getting last-minute things for the Home-Start Christmas party that was happening that lunchtime. She pointed out that I would be doing these things next year ... and, as it turned out, then some! I needed to give two months notice in my previous job so that was how I started in February 1989.

Looking back over the years I feel I have been lucky enough to have had two families - my own blood family and my Home-Start family. Richard was in fact the link between the two. As one of those rare male volunteers in Home-Start (driving the scheme's minibus to bring families in to the family groups) he told me something of the work done by this organisation that I had never even heard of and about the vacancy for an Administrator. Working in Leicester city as I had for some twelve years, I felt initially that this would be too much of a culture shock for me but the idea grew on me and I applied for the job.

And the rest is a very long, very happy and extremely fulfilling history of working with you all, both to support families in need in the Harborough District and to support you as volunteers - in whatever part you play in the scheme - to help strengthen and support the communities in which you live.

And the relationships I have forged with, yes, all of you (and many that have gone before you) have been the force and the inspiration that have kept me here these 29 years: your energy, your commitment, your passion, your kindness and your willingness to look outside of your own lives to offer yourselves to others. These are all things you can feel truly proud of, however long or short a time you have been with Home-Start.

And then of course, there's what for so many years now I've called my Dream Team. Would you believe that, added together, we have 83 years of working and being together in this our Home-Start home. And, if you include other people in this room who have been part of the team, we are extremely close to 100 years. Oh the times we've shared together: the good, the bad; the happy, the sad. I really cannot 'go there' in expressing how important you all are to me, without ending up in a heap upon the floor - I just hope you all know.

I too have been so wonderfully supported over the years, not just by my colleagues but by the Trustees of the Scheme and especially all the Chairs and Vice-Chairs - so many of whom are here today and many of whom have continued their support through the Best Friends group. My thanks to you lie deep within me.

Well, as I am forever saying, 'every beginning has an ending' and I know that this is the case for me now. On a personal level, I have reached the end of the road with living a double life: my one here and my one in Norfolk. Increasingly I have found it emotionally - and recently physically - challenging to transition between these two lives. And on a professional level ... well let me just say what I say in the preparation course: the volunteer who has done her job properly is not the one whose family has come to rely on her, but the one who gets herself to the point when she is no longer needed. And despite whatever anyone tells me, I know that I have reached this point.

This is a good ending - I am incredibly pleased to leave knowing that all the aspects of my job are being divided out amongst all the people you and I already know and who are so very skilled and capable of taking on their newly developed roles and that is a perfect ending for me ... job done.

I would just like to end with, possibly, my favourite quote. It's from Ovid, who was a Roman poet, born in 43 BC. It goes:

'Nothing retains its form;
New shapes from old.
Nature, the great inventor
Ceaselessly continues in all creation.
Be assured there is no ending.
No ending but only
Change and innovation.
What we call birth is but a different new beginning.
An ending is but to cease to be the same.'

And so, for the very last time I say to you all, 'Thank you each and every one of you for all you do and all you are'.

Karen Hulett

A special cake was made to mark Karen's departure from the scheme which was based on the phrase - "It takes a village to raise a child" - a sentiment very close to Karen's heart and one that has formed part of Home-Start's core ethos.



Cake made by Uneedcake and kindly donated by Zoe Ridley, Chair of HSSL.

