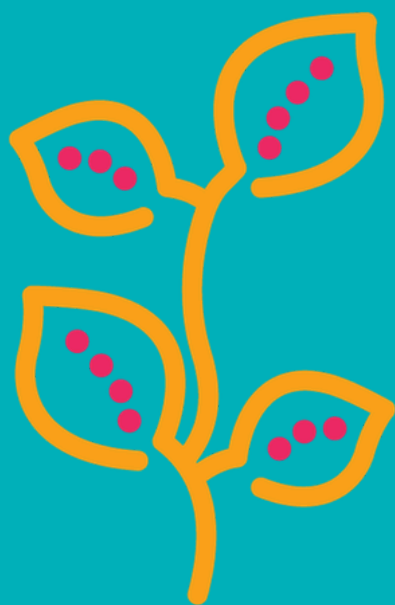


ANNUAL REPORT

April 2025 - March 2026



Helping parents be
the parents they
want to be and the
parents their
children need

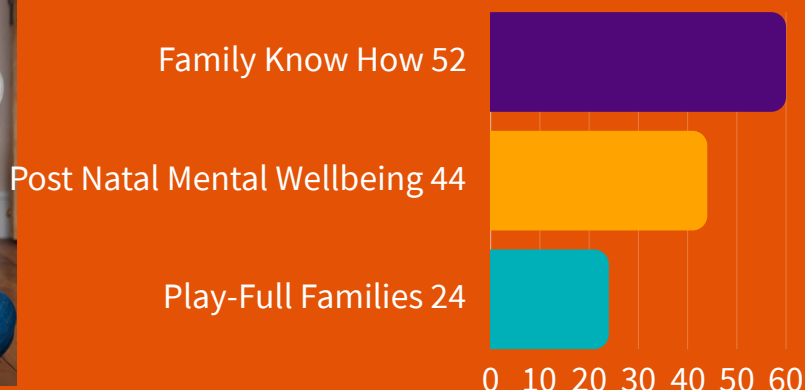


Supporting families in the Harborough District since 1984

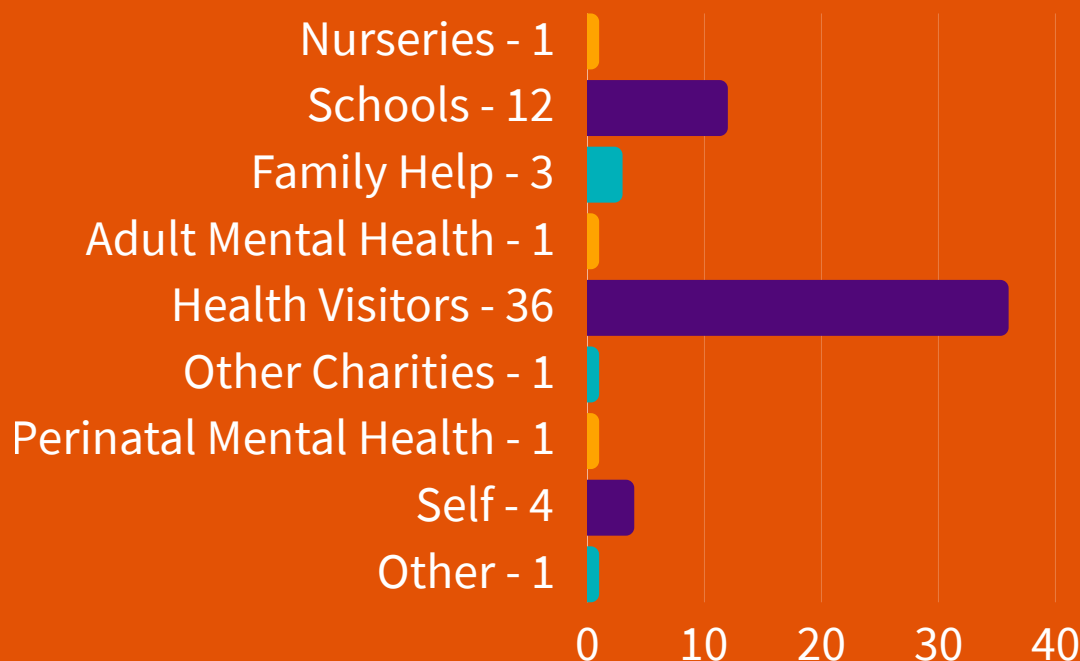
A total of 120 families (with 241 children) have been supported in 2025-26



Families supported by project



Source of referrals



Services we provide

- Home Visiting Volunteer support
- Family Know How & Post Natal Mental Well-being groups
- Family Know How Healthy Lifestyle and Post Natal Mental Well-being courses
- Play-Full Families parent workshops
- Play-Full Families parent & child sessions
- Signposting, information & coordinator support



Chair's Report



This year Home-Start South Leicestershire has continued its core work of supporting families with at least one child under the age of 5 through our Family Know-How Project and the Family Post Natal Mental well-being Project. In addition, the Play-Full Families Project has entered a new phase, delivering workshops for parents and their children funded by a new grant from the National Lottery Community Fund. Through these projects we have been able to support 120 families this year across the Harborough District.

Nevertheless, as we are all aware, these remain troubled times and funding has become a burgeoning issue for charities like ours. I would like to thank all those who have donated to us over the last twelve months and to everyone who is working so hard to help us explore new possibilities to secure the funding we need in the future. To release more time to explore these, we have made some changes in our staff structure by appointing Emma Pickering as Operations Co-ordinator. This has given Stella more capacity to focus on the fundraising, strategic planning and networking aspects of her role, with help from our Assistant Fundraiser Lizzie Keenan, and we are grateful to them for their committed and effective delivery.

Marbeth Tobin, our Patron, continues her long lasting commitment to our charity by proposing ideas and effecting introductions to potential donors, for which we are very grateful. We would also like to thank our new "Charity Champions" who have already demonstrated their flare as our newly created community fundraising team with a hugely successful coffee morning in Market Harborough.

Naomi Teagles, our Marketing and Communications Assistant, remains central to the growing public awareness of our work and has continued to produce brilliant publicity for us this year.

This sounds as if HSSL is all about money – of course it isn't. The charity's main focus remains the families and children who need support in the District. Our talented staff continue to be central to everything we do. Julie Rogers, our Senior Co-ordinator, has taken on more responsibility for all aspects of Safeguarding in the charity and additionally coordinates the Family Know-How Project. Sarah Green coordinates our Family Post-Natal Mental Wellbeing Project, and Becky Cave co-ordinates the Play-Full Families Project for primary aged children. Both projects for under 5's are additionally supported by Nicky Bell's creative flare for activities and themed play. And, of course, thank you to our brilliant volunteers, those matched with families for bespoke home visits, those supporting the family groups and the volunteers in the essential creche support for our parent courses. Thank you everyone - you are doing an amazing job.

Thanks also to Charlotte Sandford, our Finance Manager, and Rebecca Cowman, our Treasurer, who remain calm and efficient at all times to ensure that our accounts are in order, and not forgetting Kate Mbariti, our Charity Administrator, who works indefatigably in the office to ensure that things run smoothly, and is the producer of this impressive report.

Finally, thank you to our Board of Trustees for their invaluable support in ensuring that Home-Start South Leicestershire remains in the best position to carry on supporting families across Harborough District.

Board of Trustees

Judy Hartland

Chair

Alison Dyke

Vice Chair

Rebecca Cowman

Treasurer

Darren Carter

Individual Member

Margaret Kallow

Individual Member

Keith Chaffer

Individual Member

Anna Buckle

Individual Member

Tess Newman

Individual Member

Sarah Saltinstall

Volunteer Representative

Advisers to the Board

Barbara Armstrong

Clare Bottle

Natasha Winnard

Laura Wilding

Kay Bayliss



Judy Hartland

Chair



Family Know How Project

Helping parents to build a healthier and happier lifestyle for all the family - building confidence, skills and resilience, and helping children thrive.



52 families with 73 children under 5 supported in the year

We asked families for feedback...here are some of their quotes:

“Thank you for trying for us Julie...me and the kids are so very grateful to have had you and {Volunteer} this year...you have made the unbearable a little easier for us and I don't think I'll ever be able to thank you enough... we love you and you're always welcome to visit for cake. December 2025”

“I used to be anxious about other parents but everyone's really nice there (group), I feel really comfortable and the adults (volunteers) are all nice too. January 2026”

“Thank you so much for everything you have done and continue to do for us, I dread to think where we'd be if you didn't pop into our lives a few months ago! July 2025”



“The course today was epic, it's the highlight of my week, I'm going to be miserable next Friday now as it's ended. June 2025”



Some family outcomes from the project

Of the families supported this year (who identified this as a need):

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

98% of parents had improved relationships with their children

100% of children had improved mental well-being

98% of children had improved their physical wellbeing

Family Post-Natal Mental Wellbeing Project

Helping families struggling with mental well-being after childbirth - aiding recovery, reducing isolation and improving parent / child relationships.



44 families with 67 children under 5 supported in the year

We asked families for feedback...here are some of their quotes:



“ This course has changed my life, I feel it should be called the inspirational course !!!
January 2026 ”

“ Just wanted to say thank you, you ladies are so amazing, supportive and non-judgemental. You have given me the confidence and support to be myself and not to be ashamed for being myself. April 2025 ”

“ Initially I was nervous & extremely anxious, especially about leaving my baby, although baby was in the other room & I had access, I was still anxious. I was reassured by Sarah & team here. The environment was warm, welcoming & comfortable. I am glad I'm here. September 2025 ”



“ I won't ever forget how safe and validated you made me feel when you came to see me and I wish we could always stay in touch. May 2025 ”

Some family outcomes from the project

Of the families supported this year (who identified this as a need):

97% of parents had improved relationships with their children

82% of parents had improved mental wellbeing

95% of children had improved mental well-being

79% of parents felt less isolated

Play-Full Families

Project

Helping families to play together more, using therapeutic play techniques to create or restore positive relationships. In partnership with local Primary Schools



24 families with 41 children age 5 to 12 supported in the year

We asked families 'WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT THE PROJECT / HOW DOES IT HELP?'

“After the sessions there has been a positive change in {Child}'s free choice learning/play, which was previously independent, seeing her initiate play and lead games more often.
May 2025”

“I can see a massive difference in {Child}. He is interacting more in class and so much more confident. April 2025”



“It has really made me think about how I communicate with {Child}. I think I am being really clear with her but maybe I am not. Play is at the forefront of my mind more.
July 2025”



“I noticed a vast improvement in his behaviour - he was open to using strategies he'd learned during his sessions and was more open to telling me when he was about to get angry rather than waiting until it was too late and he was unable to calm down. I think it's made my relationship with him stronger, and I feel like we both enjoy spending time together much more than we had in past times. We were struggling quite a bit before. April 2025”

Some family outcomes from the project

Of the families supported this year (who identified this as a need):

100%

of parents felt more involved in their children's development

92%

of parents felt more confident

100%

of parents had improved relationships with their children

88%

of children had improved mental well-being

Family Story



One of our Post Natal Mental Wellbeing families has kindly agreed to share their Home-Start journey with us, here it is...



My journey with Home-Start began during a particularly difficult period in my life. As a parent, it can feel overwhelming to manage everything while being fully present for your newborn. Reaching out for support was not easy at first, but it turned out to be one of the most positive decisions I have made.

From the outset, the support I received was consistent, non-judgmental, and genuinely caring. Whether through group sessions, courses, or one-to-one conversations, I felt listened to and understood. The welcoming, calm environment made it much easier to open up and connect with others facing similar challenges, helping reduce feelings of isolation.

The postnatal illness course was especially valuable and had a significant impact on my health and well-being. Sarah and the team delivered the course with real compassion, expertise, and attentiveness. It was well-structured, clearly delivered, and thoughtfully paced, which made the information easy to understand and apply. It helped me make sense of what I was experiencing, greatly reducing anxiety and uncertainty. I also learned practical, realistic strategies to manage symptoms, pace myself, and prioritise both my mental and physical health without feeling guilty. The course provided not just information but reassurance that what I was going through was valid.

The volunteers also played a vital role throughout, offering patience, kindness, and encouragement at every stage. Their presence made the sessions feel warm and personal, and they consistently worked to ensure everyone felt included and supported. The consistency and care shown by the entire team helped me rebuild confidence, establish healthier routines, and regain a sense of stability and control.

The evening sessions for partners and supporters were also very beneficial, offering both guidance and reassurance that I was not alone. They helped my partner better understand what I was experiencing, which strengthened his support for me and made me feel more secure and confident in the postpartum period.

Having a volunteer was the best thing ever!!! Their visits brought so much warmth, reassurance, and positivity into my home at a time when I really needed it. It felt like a real lifeline to have someone consistently check in, listen without judgement, and offer support in such a calm and caring way. The connection that was built over time made each visit feel meaningful and personal rather than formal or clinical. I always felt heard, understood, and valued. It was definitely the highlight of my week. It brought so much joy, and I was left feeling happy and always looked forward to the next meeting.

“ I will always be deeply grateful for the support I received. ”

Sarah deserves a special mention for the way she delivered support throughout the course and wider sessions. What stood out most was her genuine commitment to supporting families. She was not only knowledgeable but also incredibly compassionate and attentive to people's needs. Her encouragement helped build confidence over time, and I always left sessions feeling more grounded, reassured, and better equipped to cope. Overall, Sarah played a key role in making the experience so positive and meaningful, and I am extremely grateful for the support she provided throughout.

Home-Start has had a lasting and meaningful impact on my well-being and confidence, and I will always be deeply grateful for the support I received.



Family Interview



We initially met one of our Family Know How families through outreach on a local permanent Traveller site a few years ago. We asked a few questions about their time with us:

Can you tell me how you first heard about our charity and the support we offer to families?

I think you or someone came onto site and found me. You've been around for a long time, so we remember you (speaking about Coordinator in historical roles)

What was happening in your life at the time?

Four years ago, a lot of bad stuff, I'd had cancer, got divorced, moved back to my Mam's plot. I was fed up, anxious, depressed.

“ You and Nicky and the volunteers made me feel very welcome. ”

How did you feel before attending the group for the first time?

I was worried, I thought you or the others would tell my child off but thank god you all knew about Gypsy children and that they are not as calm as non Gypsy children and that we don't like other people telling them off. You and Nicky and the volunteers made me feel very welcome. You always involve everyone and help our family with problems but don't tell everyone. I feel like when we need help, I can call you. I think everyone must think that, 'I'll just call Julie'.

What activities have you enjoyed most?

I liked the cooking course, but not the beef stroganoff. I still meet up with a girl from there. We meet for lunch sometimes.

What would you say to other Gypsy / Traveller families who were thinking of joining one of our groups?

Come to the group, bring the children, let them mix. They have to go to school, learn to drive, read.



What difference has the support made to you and your family?

(I'm) more confident, less anxious and depressed. I feel like I know how to mix with other people now, non-Travellers. My daughter became kinder and learnt 'kind hands'. We wouldn't have moved to a house without you and Beacon Care helping us get the house and with getting everything for the house. We would have ended up in the hostel they wanted to put us in, that was awful!

How would you describe the staff who have supported you?

You're all very helpful, we'd be lost without you.

What do you think makes our charity different from other services?

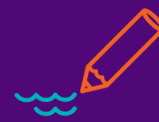
You actually help, not judge. Others don't like the way we bring our kids up and we watch so much TikTok about Gypsy parents getting their kids took off them; it makes us scared. But they wouldn't be taking the children without reason, would they? Its social media & watching too much!

If our charity had not been there to support you over the last three years, what do you think life might have looked like for you and your family?

We'd be homeless, my daughter would still be with me and not in school. She loves school, she has loads of friends, she is the most popular, she can say the alphabet backwards, write her own name and count up to 25 now.

“ You're all very helpful, we'd be lost without you. ”

Volunteer Stories



Julie and Karen have been volunteering with Home-Start for a few years and have kindly agreed to share their Home-Start stories.

Julie...

Volunteering with Home-Start has become one of the most rewarding parts of my week. I help at the weekly Family Know How sessions, where parents and carers can come together in a welcoming, friendly environment while their children enjoy playing safely with other children.

At first glance, it may look like a simple play session, but it is so much more than that. For many families, it is a chance to get out of the house, meet other parents who understand the ups and downs of family life, and feel supported without judgement. Friendships are formed, confidence grows, and families realise they are not facing their challenges alone.

As a volunteer, I hopefully help to create that welcoming atmosphere by chatting with the families, encouraging the children as they play, and provide drinks and snacks before everyone heads home. It is amazing how much difference a couple of hours can make. Sometimes, all someone needs is a listening ear, a friendly smile, or the reassurance that there are people who genuinely care.

One of the things I enjoy most is seeing children grow in confidence over time. A child who was once shy and reluctant to join in is suddenly running off to play with friends, while their parent is enjoying a conversation with other adults. Seeing those small but significant changes reminds me why these sessions are so valuable.

Home-Start's belief that every child deserves a happy, secure childhood really resonates with me. Parenting can be incredibly rewarding, but it can also be challenging, and even the most devoted parents sometimes need support. Being able to play a small part in helping families feel more connected and confident is a privilege for me.



Knowing that by giving just a couple of hours each week I can help create a place where families feel welcome, children can laugh and play, and parents can find friendship and encouragement makes volunteering with Home Start incredibly worthwhile. I always leave the sessions feeling that I've gained as much from the experience as the families have.

Karen...

As Julie said....plus volunteering for Home-Start has deepened my appreciation and understanding for different backgrounds and cultures. I've met some vulnerable families who just want the best for their children and to be good parents. It's wonderful to see the parents and children thrive as they become more confident and less isolated. In the Family Know How sessions we listen carefully to and also have a good laugh with the families.

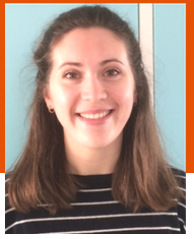
On a personal note, apart from the first class training opportunities e.g. safeguarding and first aid, volunteering for Home-Start has enabled me to develop my own sense of worth and to feel that retirement from paid work has opened up new opportunities, allowing me to put to use my previous teaching skills. In the Family Know How group other volunteers have become new friends.

“I always leave the sessions feeling that I've gained as much from the experience as the families have.”



Treasurer's Report


Rebecca Cowman
Treasurer



I am delighted to present my Treasurer's report for Home-Start South Leicestershire for the period from 1st April 2025 until 31st March 2026, another year where the charity was able to deliver strong results despite an unpredictable economy. Total income of £276,113 was secured, after much hard work from our fundraising team and the continued generosity of our donors. Our income has reduced for another consecutive year, from £301,007 reflecting a 8% decline, highlighting the continued difficulties in obtaining funding easily due to tightening restrictions alongside fewer funding options available.

As a result, it is necessary that our income is made up of a wide range of grants and donations. The most notable were grants from The National Lottery Community Fund and Harborough District Council. Additional support was also received from The Everard Foundation, Wates Group, Cadent and The Howard Watson Symington Memorial Charity, all of which enabled the continuation of the vital projects in place - the 'Family Know-How' and 'Family Post-Natal Mental Wellbeing' projects, as well as the 'Play-Full Families' project.

We are so thankful for the continued support and generosity from our local community, our volunteers and those involved in the fundraising/donations which we are very glad were able to remain high for yet another year. Additional grants came from a wide range of Trusts and Foundations, and we remain grateful for the unsolicited support from The Na Mokulua Charitable Trust, a local family Trust. Generous local support has also been received from Dorte Kjaerulff Photography for another year running, who hosted "Bump Hour" events by photographing mums-to-be with their bumps, raising £1,150.

Local groups and organisations to thank this year include

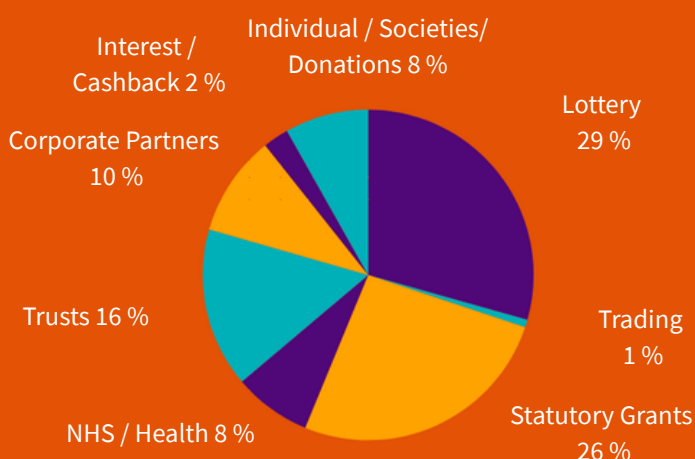
St Vincent de Paul Society, Theddingworth Congregational Chapel, Market Harborough Twenty 12 Lions and The Rotary Club of Market Harborough. The latter ran a successful Swimathon and awarded us a grant of £500 from the proceeds raised.

Significant donations from individuals came from Mr & Mrs Taylor who have repeatedly supported us, and we continue to be so grateful to our regular monthly or one-off donors via our on-line donation route, Local Giving. As always, we thank all those who have contributed to support our Charity, via funding, volunteering time as well as kindness via donations.

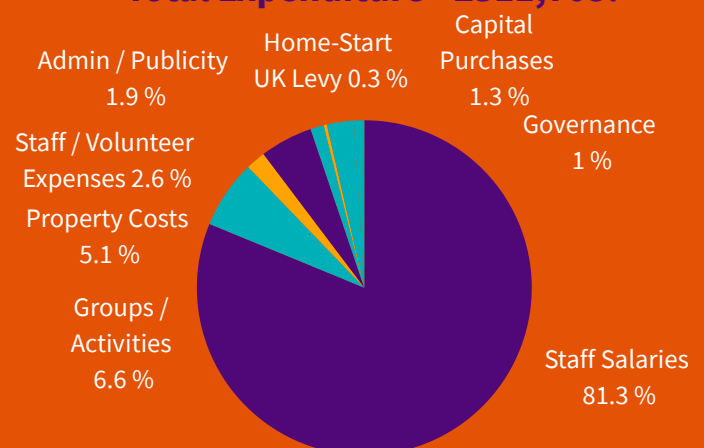
Our accounts show a deficit of £(41,396) for the year, which is inclusive of depreciation on our premises and other assets, and in part is reflective of the timing of funding received despite expenditure remaining in line with our expectations. Our free (unrestricted) reserves at 31st March 2026 are over £130,000 and are maintained at around 6 months' worth of our total budgeted expenditure for 2026/2027. This, alongside some significant grants secured for 2026/27, means that we are in a secure position at the start of 2026/27 with more fundraising required throughout the year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Finance Manager, Charlotte Sandford, for her continued dedication to our Charity. I also want to thank Stella Renwick, our Charity Manager, and Elizabeth Keenan, our Fundraising Assistant, for their continuing success in ensuring we meet our financial targets. Additionally, thanks to our Marketing and Communications Assistant, Naomi Teagles, who has been vital to our success in support received from individual donors.

Total Income - £276,114:



Total Expenditure - £311,705:



Thank you...



to everyone who helps us to help young families in the Harborough District

The Trusts / Grants / Corporate partners / Societies and Individuals who have given major donations to our charity during 2025-2026:

Barbara Bedford, Howard Beeken, Deborah Bennett, Business Owners Anonymous, Burton Latimer Ukelele & Drum Group, Marina Brook, Cadent Gas, Mr K Chaffer, J Reginald Corah Foundation Fund, Karen Damon, Dorte Kjaerulff Photography, The Everard Foundation, The Florence Turner Trust, The George Ernest Ellis Foundation, Hannatu Gentles, Henry Hummert, Gilmorton WI, Harborough District Council, Harborough Lotto, Stephen Hewitt, Howard Watson Symington Memorial Charity, Holland Family Law, Howfleet Ltd, Donations in Memoriam - Margaret Howe, Caroline Jack, Jo Johnston, Kibworth Mother's Union, Erika Lucas, Leicestershire County Council, Market Harborough Building Society, Sir Timothy Brooks Fund, Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust - Getting Help in Neighbourhoods, Market Harborough Conservative Club, Market Harborough & The Bowdens Charity, Market Harborough Twenty 12 Lions, Market Harborough & Welland U3A, Market Harborough WI, The Mary Robertson Trust, Rev Andrew Murphy, Na Mokulua Charitable Trust, National Grid - Community Matters Fund, The National Lottery Community Fund, Platform Housing, Claudia Plock, Estella Prince, The Rotary Club of Market Harborough, Donations in Memoriam - Christine Sidey, St Peter's Chapter, St Wilfred Lodge, St Vincent de Paul Society, Mr J & Mrs M Taylor, Theddingworth Congregational Chapel, Thorpe Langton Townland Charity, Marbeth Tobin, Wates Family Enterprise Trust, Warburtons Community Grants, Natasha Winnard, UK Government - Shared Prosperity Fund

Thank you also to those who have:

Donated to us through our Local Giving Page whether by monthly Direct Debit or one off card donations

www.localgiving.org/home-startsouthleics

Bought tickets through The Harborough Lotto selecting us to be their charity to benefit

<https://www.harboroughlotto.co.uk/support/home-start-south-leicestershire>

Shopped on-line using Easy Fundraising to generate donations to us from shops

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/homestartsouthleicestershire/>

Our full Annual Accounts are printed separately and are available on request.



Staff Members - as of 31st March 2026



Buisness & Management Team - LtoR: Stella Renwick (Charity Manager), Charlotte Sandford (Finance Manager), Lizzie Keenan (Fundraising Assistant), Naomi Teagles (Marketing & Communications Assistant), Kate Mbariti (Charity Administrator & Company Secretary)



Operational Team - LtoR: Julie Rogers (Senior Coordinator), Sarah Green (Family Coordinator), Nicky Bell (Assistant Coordinator & Family Play Facilitator) Becky Cave (Family Coordinator), Emma Pickering (Development Coordinator), Bob Renwick (Caretaker & Gardener)

Home-Start South Leicestershire

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**We have supported
4,270 families and
8,523 children since
we began in 1984**



**If you would like to know
how to get involved as a
Family Volunteer, Trustee,
or Charity Champion, we
would be delighted to hear
from you.**



We believe that helping children and vulnerable adults stay safe and secure and be healthy and happy is really important. We also believe in treating everyone fairly and giving a warm welcome to all. We work to make sure that this is at the centre of everything we do and the way that we do it.

Registered Charity No 1107504 Company Limited by guarantee No 05299096

Registered in England & Wales

Local Patron: Mrs Marbeth Tobin MBE

OUR PARTNERSHIP OF LOCAL HOME-STARTs IN LEICESTERSHIRE

Home-Start North West Leicestershire Covering North West Leicestershire

Home-Start Horizons Covering Leicester, Charnwood, Melton & Rutland, Blaby, Oadby & Wigston

