Home-Start Warrington & Cheshire

Annual Report

2023-24

Trustees’ Report

Name	Position	Dates
Anne Cleminson	Chair	Co Opted 24 July 2023/Elected 27 November 2023
Gwen Lightfoot	Vice -Chair	Chair 28 Nov 2022 – 27 Nov 2023/ Elected as Vice Chair 27th November 2023
Andy Clare	Trustee/Temporary Treasurer	Elected 27th November 2022
Anne Fox	Trustee	Vice Chair 28 November 2022 – 27 November 2023
Jim Billington	Trustee	Elected 22 November 2021
Anne Bramhall	Trustee	Re-Elected 27th November 2023
Mark Bell	Trustee	Re-Elected 27th November 2023
Matthew Carey	Trustee	Appointed 27th November 2023
David McNicholl	Trustee	Appointed 27th November 2023
Debra Cragg	Trustee	Elected 27th November 2023, Resigned 25th March 2024
Diana Grylls	Trustee	Resigned 27th November 2023
Victoria Glass	Trustee	Resigned 27th November 2023
Karen Rylance	Trustee	Resigned 27th November 2023
Paula Durao	Treasurer	Resigned 27th November 2023

Company Secretary Louise Moran

Principal Staff

Name	Position
Ellie Harrison	CEO
Louise Moran	Office Administrator and Company Secretary
Lucy Glover	Business Development Manager
Carragh Garrity	Family Services Manager
Rachel Richards	Outreach Worker
Leanne Smith	Funding and Finance Administrator
Eva Ross	Family Support Coordinator
Amanda Wood	Family Activities Coordinator
Josie Harrison	Dad Matters Coordinator
Alexis Draper	Family Support Coordinator – started October 2023
Elizabeth Kemp	Family Support Coordinator/Babyzone Ops Officer – started March 2023

Method of Appointment Trustees are elected by the members at the annual general meeting (AGM)

Registered Address The Old School, Fairfield Street, Warrington, WA1 3AJ

Bankers

Co-operative Bank p.l.c. 1 Balloon Street, Manchester, M60 4EP
Nationwide Kings Park Road, Moulton Park, Northampton, NN3 6NW
Yorkshire Bank 30 St Vincent Place, Glasgow, G1 2HL

Independent Examiner

Jane Williams MAAT

Greater Merseyside Community Accountancy Service
St Marie’s, Lugsdale Road, Widnes, WA8 6DB

The Trustees of Home Start Warrington, who are also the Directors of the organisation, present their report and audited financial statement for the year ending 31st March 2023

Chair's Statement

Relationship to Home-Start UK

Local Home-Start Schemes belong to a federation of Home-Starts overseen by Home-Start UK (HSUK).

A requirement of a federated Home-Start is to agree to sign up to the following documents:

Home-Start Agreement: the legal agreement to be signed by the chairperson of each local Home-Start and Home-Start UK, establishing requirements and responsibilities for each party and confirming the membership of the individual Home-Start.

Home-Start Brand Licence: the legal requirements on the use and protection of our brand, assets and intellectual property.

Home-Start Handbook: a guide to responsibilities, standards and practice and the detail of mandatory requirements.

Problem Solving and Dispute Resolution: the procedure for addressing and resolving problems and disputes.

Policies

We have a variety of policies covering many aspects of the organisations operations and functions. These are reviewed in accordance with Home-Start UK guidelines, by the relevant committee or the board of trustees itself (see Terms of Reference).

As a condition of affiliation to Home-Start UK, we must adopt the following mandatory documents and policies: Safeguarding Code of Conduct, Safeguarding Checklist, Confidentiality Policy, Equality, Fairness and Diversity and Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy, GDPR/ Data Protection, Looking after Children in the Absence of Parents, Safeguarding and Protecting Adults, Conflict of Interest, Safer Selection and Recruitment of Staff Policy, Staff Supervision and Appraisal Policy, Recruitment Supervision and Management of Volunteers, Complaints Policy, and Whistleblowing Policy. Home-Start UK also recommends a number of "essential" policies, and we have adopted several of these optional policies that meet the needs of the scheme and help in the management of key risk areas, e.g. Financial Management Policy, Investment Policy.

Quality Assurance

The quality of a scheme's practice is assured by the Home-Start Quality Assurance (QA) System for Schemes – a bespoke QA system. It is a process that focuses on the ongoing development and continuous improvement of all practice areas relating to the governance, management, and service delivery of local Home-Start Schemes. Home-Start Warrington was last assessed on 7 August 2019 and achieved 96%. We undertake a number of internal audits throughout the year to ensure we remain compliant with the defined standards of the HSUK QA system.

Chair's Statement

It is with great pride that I write this statement at the end of my first year as Chair of Trustees. The year 2023–2024 is one that I look back on in awe and appreciation of the difference a dedicated team of staff and a small army of volunteers can achieve in this world when they collectively choose the values of "Accountability, Integrity and Excellence" as their mantra and motivation.

In 2023 we set our strategy for the next three years with the aim of: ensuring our long-term sustainability, enhancing systems of governance to provide assurance of organisational quality, growing and diversifying our offer whilst maintaining services that add value to families, and championing the needs of families.

We have consistently delivered in each of these areas, including the development of a new finance and fundraising strategy that outlines our plans for diversifying fundraising, as some of our long-term grant and funding streams draw to a conclusion in the coming year. Whilst we constantly try to predict our charitable income in a world of funding uncertainty, one thing we are sure about is that our amazing funders and supporters in 2023–2024 have enabled us to continue to provide our services and empower families to make their children's future just that little bit less uncertain.

"Home-Start understands their children's needs well, with staff and volunteers demonstrating patience, flexibility, and a genuine interest in each child's well-being."

We recognise that, for us, sustainability also means having enough people with the appropriate skills to deliver our services. In 2023–2024 we have continued to successfully recruit and retain volunteers, even within the context of a national volunteer shortage. This is, in part, a result of volunteers believing in the importance and value of our service, but it is also a result of the excellent training and support we provide. Our striving for excellence in this area will continue following the launch our new Volunteer Strategy in 2024.

Whilst we have always known our volunteers are superstars, it was wonderful to see one of our volunteers being awarded "Home Visitor of the Year" by Home-Start UK at their Volunteer Awards in January 2024, in recognition of always going above and beyond to support her family. Two more of our volunteers were also recognised with "extra applause" awards in the Trustee and Group Volunteer categories. This level of recognition across all our areas of service delivery is public testament to just how extraordinary our volunteers really are.

The difference our staff and volunteers make to our families is immensely difficult to measure, as the impact is on so many levels and with every member of the family. However, evidence shows that in 2023–2024 our growing range of drop-in groups, the Puddle Project, Wild Tots, Singing Mamas and one-to-one home visits are meaningfully changing lives with families, reporting that "Home-Start understands their children's needs well, with staff and volunteers demonstrating patience, flexibility, and a genuine interest in each child's well-being." In addition, families indicate that their children have benefitted significantly from Home-Start's support, with the reported benefits including improved social interaction, developmental progress and emotional support (allowing children to feel secure and comfortable).

This approach to whole-family support has continued in 2023–2024 with our not only securing continued funding for our Dad Matters coordinator in Warrington but expanding our service for a coordinator in Halton too. Our range of support has continued through outreach services in hospitals, New Dad workshops, and Dad Matters Meet-Ups.

Our efforts for service growth and diversification in 2023–2024 have also resulted in the establishment of a (Home-Start) Parent-Infant Mental Health Outreach Service at the Living Well Hub in Warrington Town Centre. Being a partner provider in this service means we can provide useful interventions for parents at the very start of their parenting journey and also signpost families to the wider range of support groups and services that we provide, and the service is proving to be another invaluable support and safety net.

Our reputation for excellence also resulted in us being awarded the contract for the provision of the first Babyzone service outside London in 2023–2024. Providing a safe and welcoming space for parents and their babies and toddlers to play, learn and connect with other families, we had positive contact with over 120 families in just the first month of its being launched in March 2024. Again, our experience and expertise in providing this service mean that we have been able to identify and signpost families that need our wider services and support. This has been one of our first strategic service partnerships and one which we will learn from in the development of future services.

"Our reputation for excellence also resulted in us being awarded the contract for the provision of the first Babyzone service outside London in 2023–2024."

Finally I need to acknowledge that there will have been many more possible occasions for celebration over the last 12 months that I don't even know about – maybe a mum that found the nerve to walk through the door of a new group and ask for help; maybe a dad that just came for a walk and talk with another new dad and suddenly didn't feel so isolated; maybe a child gained the confidence to leave their parent's side during a playgroup and started to learn the value of relationships with others. For each of those possibilities I must thank our amazing staff, volunteers, trustees, funders and partners for the essential role each of you play in making them a reality. This year, all of you have given a child the chance of a best start, because childhood cannot wait.

Anne Cleminson
Chair
Home-Start Warrington and Cheshire (HSWC)

Recruitment and Appointment of the Trustees

The management of the charity is supervised by the trustees who report to the charity at the AGM. Trustees are proposed and elected by members of the charity on a three-yearly rolling programme at the AGM.

On election, trustees are required to sign the Trustee Declaration of Willingness to Act as a trustee as well as the Home-Start UK Code of Conduct, the Home-Start Warrington and Cheshire Code of Conduct for Trustees and mandatory policies including Safeguarding Children, Confidentiality, Data Protection, Equality & Fairness and Diversity Policies.

The trustees have skills in a variety of fields including governance, business, finance, safeguarding and education. All trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no benefits from the charity.

Trustee Induction and Training

Prospective trustees complete an expression of interest and then meet with trustees for an informal discussion. If after this process they want to proceed, following receipt of references and DBS, they are then invited to observe a board meeting. If they want to continue, they will then be invited to be elected at the AGM. After election, they will be given an induction covering:

- Duties of committee members including presentation of the relevant Charity Commission guidance regarding the duties of trustees.
- Explanation and presentation of the governing instrument
- Presentation of current and projected financial position
- Explanation of all significant projects within the charity
- Presentation of the activities of the charity and how it is organised, structured and staffed
- Details of Home-Start UK trustee Induction training
- Mandatory training
- Refresher training

Ongoing, updating and skills development training is also available.

Organisational Structure

The board of trustees meets every 8 weeks at the charity's offices. The board is responsible for setting strategic direction, financial governance and holding management to account. The board of trustees has identified lead trustee roles for those areas which are statutory requirements or which are considered a specific priority of the charity and include safeguarding, health and safety, data protection and a treasurer.

The CEO manages the day-to-day running of the charity and implements the strategy and policies of the charity. The work of the charity is delivered either through a team of volunteers supported by staff members or directly by staff with volunteers in support roles.

For the year 2023–2024 the board of trustees established the following governance arrangements:

Committees of the boards meet every 8 weeks, are chaired by trustees and have terms of reference approved by the board. Membership set in the terms of reference varies depending on the role of the committee. The board of trustees delegates authority to the committee to:

a. make recommendations to the board of trustees.
b. develop and ratify policies in accordance with the scheme of delegation.
c. monitor and hold to account.
d. identify and escalate to the board of trustees key issues and risks including those related to delivery of the business plan.

The board of trustees also delegates decisions that are not of a significant nature. In practice, what is significant will depend upon the judgement of members, but the committee must refer the following types of issues to the board of trustees. Any issues which:

i) change or conflict with the charity's vision/strategy/aims.
ii) contravene HSWC policy, HSUK policy, government policy.
iii) have significant revenue implications beyond the existing budget.
iv) are likely to arouse significant public or media interest.

Risk Assessment and Internal Controls

The board and its committees receive regular assurance reports related to the delivery of its services, the staff, the organisational strategy and business plan and financial performance. The board and its committees also monitor compliance with policies and procedures which are key mechanisms for internal control.

The board develops an annual business plan based on an assessment of the major strategic business and operational risks that the charity faces for the year, e.g. changes to funding streams, changes by local government, legislative changes, external and internal issues relating to child protection, health and safety. The business plan outlines the development of the necessary systems, processes and internal controls for the coming year that will contribute to the management of the identified risks. Progress with delivery of the plan is monitored at each board meeting.

The treasurer, supported by the business development manager, provides a funding profile to the board of trustees at each meeting which highlights the sources, value and time restrictions on current funding streams.
Internal audits are undertaken on various aspects of the organisation and its services to ensure compliance with Home-Start UK's QA and other legal requirements.

Achievements and Performance

SWC had another transformative year of growth in 2023–2024 whilst continuing to provide an excellent service to our families.

Our biggest project of the year, Babyzone, opened its doors on 7 March at Warrington Youth Zone. We welcomed over 100 families in the first 3 weeks. They have taken part in free baby and toddler classes that include Baby Sensory, Toddler Sense, Gym Tots, Caterpillar Music and Story Stitchers. This has raised the profile of our service in Warrington and helped to deliver services under one roof in partnership with health, the voluntary sector and statutory provision for early years.

Our one-to-one home-visiting service is still an option for families, and whilst the groups are popular, some of our families still need that individual one-to-one support from a volunteer or our outreach worker before they can build their confidence to access groups. Often our volunteers will go with the family to a group to help to empower them to continue this habit after we are no longer involved.

Our Dad Matters service, despite a current funding gap, has supported over 20 dads on a one-to-one basis and we have met over 300 dads during our outreach hospital visits.

We have built on our expansion into Northwich and Winsford and have several long-standing volunteer matches in that area. As well as this we have started two new groups in the area, at Wharton Children's Centre in Winsford and Wild Tots in Northwich. The groups are targeted at our existing families, as they have asked for more groups in their community. Our outreach worker continues to support four families on a regular basis, enabling parents to access local groups and appointments.

Our groups have flourished throughout the year. We now have access to our own minibus, which was donated by the Steve Morgan Foundation and which we share with Burtonwood Community Bus. This has been hugely beneficial to families accessing the Puddle Project on a Monday, which only works due to our team of dedicated volunteer drivers and chaperones that can transport the families to the weekly outdoor playgroup session.

"Our outreach worker continues to support four families on a regular basis, enabling parents to access local groups and appointments."

Singing Mamas continues to be a very successful group for mums who attend every Thursday afternoon at the Old School. Our mums have spoken about how the singing group has a very positive impact on their well-being.

Ellie Harrison
Chief Executive Officer

Families Referred to the Service in the Year

We received 197 referrals between April 2023 and March 2024 which is the same as last financial year. However, in addition to this we have also seen 133 families at our new Babyzone project and spoken to 135 Dads at Warrington Hospital as part of our Dad Matters offer.

Out of the 197 referrals, 141 families went on to receive direct support via volunteers or groups.

Contribution of the Volunteers

To become a Home-Start family support volunteer, volunteers are safely recruited, and once references and DBS are confirmed and they have had an informal chat with a coordinator, they are invited to complete the preparation course.

This is online training which has recently been published by Home-Start UK. Alongside the online course there is a face-to-face presentation which is delivered by the coordinators. This gives the participants the opportunity to meet other volunteers at the beginning of the course, the middle of the course and at the end. It also provides space for participants to discuss issues such as safeguarding and confidentiality. The online and face-to-face course content includes how Home-Start helps families, commitments and boundaries, confidentiality, safeguarding children, children's development and play and equal opportunities.

The volunteers also have a termly support group where they can meet for a coffee and share learning about their volunteering experiences. This included a September lunch with presentations from the Puddle Project. A Christmas lunch and awards ceremony and a spring coffee morning with training events were planned at that session for the rest of the year. They have included paediatric first aid training and more training around autism awareness. Volunteers have also been offered other opportunities within the organisation to enhance their skills, such as those of mini bus driver, chaperone and playgroup assistant. More training will be offered in the next financial year to strengthen those roles.

Our volunteers are regularly asked for feedback, and they talk about how rewarding they find the role of supporting and empowering families to make a positive difference to them and the lives of their young children.

Home-Start also welcomes the support of volunteers in other roles, e.g. fundraising events, such as curry nights, and Christmas Big Give events.

Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

(Including income and Expenditure Account and Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses)

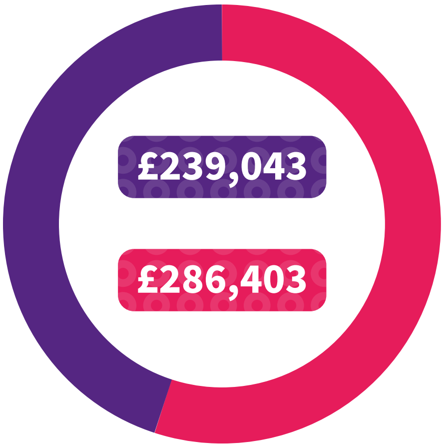
	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2024 £
Income and Endowments from:			
Donations and legacies	11,473	273,576	285,049
Investment income	1,354	-	1,354
Total income	12,827	273,576	286,403
Expenditure on:			
Charitable activities	(77,786)	(232,622)	(310,408)
Total expenditure	(77,786)	(232,622)	(310,408)
Net (expenditure)/income	(64,959)	40,954	(24,005)
Transfers between funds	20,000	(20,000)	-
Net movement in funds	(44,959)	20,954	(24,005)
Reconciliation of funds			
Total funds brought forward	49,110	59,594	108,704
Total funds carried forward	4,151	80,548	84,699

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2023 £
Income and Endowments from:			
Donations and legacies	27,436	211,007	238,443
Investment income	600	-	600
Total income	28,036	211,007	239,043
Expenditure on:			
Charitable activities	(77,780)	(197,725)	(275,505)
Total expenditure	(77,780)	(197,725)	(275,505)
Net (expenditure)/income	(49,744)	13,282	(36,462)
Transfers between funds	4,911	(4,911)	-
Net movement in funds	(44,833)	8,371	(36,462)
Reconciliation of funds			
Total funds brought forward	93,943	51,223	145,166
Total funds carried forward	49,110	59,594	108,704

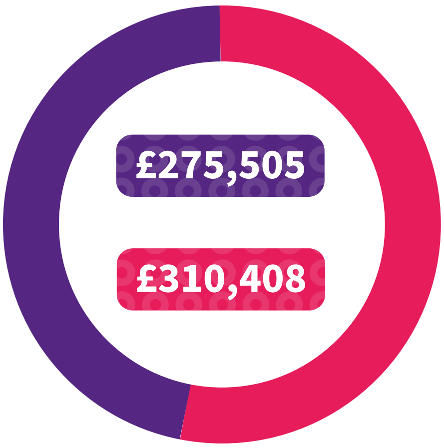
The full accounts can be found on the charity commission website and companies house website

Income and Expenditure

Income comparison for 2023 and 2024



Expenditure comparison for 2023 and 2024



2023 2024

This year we saw a notable increase in total income, reaching £286403 compared to £239043 the previous year. The majority of our overall income continues to come from trusts and foundations which reflects our strong community support.

Looking ahead, our primary goal is to bolster financial sustainability by enhancing funding strategies to balance income and expenditure. Engaging more diverse funding sources and managing costs remain our key strategic actions to ensure longterm resilience and effective service delivery in our communities.

2024 - 2025 Targets

There is a revised business plan for 2024–2025.

1. Values

HSWC have a strong set of positive values that strongly influence the way we work together and how we deliver our services.

2. Growth & Diversity

we recognise the value of the services we deliver but know there is so much more we could do through the development of new services across a wider geographical area.

3. Maintaining Our Services

although we see the value of expanding our offer to families, we know we need to maintain the quality of the services we already provide, as they are essential to our existing families.

4. Quality Assurance

we know we do a good job, because our families tell us, but we need to develop systems that enable us to routinely monitor the quality of our services as well as all other aspects of our organisation.

5. Increasing Brand Awareness

we have a good reputation for delivering quality services, but we need to ensure that more potential partners know what we do and why we do it, i.e. we need to also promote the needs of families as a driver for change.

6. Sustainability, Finance

we currently have a stable financial basis but recognise the need to diversify our fund raising efforts and work with a greater range of partners to ensure our longer-term sustainability.

7. Sustainability, Volunteers

we recognise the difficulty in recruiting and retaining volunteers and therefore the need to adapt our approach to make HSWC a first choice organisation for volunteers.

8. Staff

we understand the importance of meaningful policies that are consistently applied for all staff members.

9. Skills

we have an abundance of skills across our staff, volunteers and trustees. We need to ensure we maintain the skills we have but also develop new skills to continue to survive in the ever-changing context of our organisation.

10. Partnerships

we have a number of important partnerships that enable us to deliver our services in key areas of need; however, we also know there are many more connections we could make that enable us to expand our services to even more areas of need.

11. Physical Space

we understand the impact the physical environment in which we work can have on our ability to function to the best our abilities.

12. Governance

we know that effective governance is essential in ensuring the delivery of our strategy. We want our governance arrangements to drive quality through all aspects of our work.

13. Use of Technology

we recognise that technology can provide us with more opportunities for growth and organisational efficiency, and we need to consider technology as a key principle in organisational development.

14. Communication

we know the difference that good communication makes to how we function as an organisation and the services we deliver to our families. We know we need to consider communication in everything we do.

Statement of Directors' Responsibilities

Company law requires the directors to prepare financial accounts for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company and of its income, and expenditure for that period. In preparing those financial accounts, the directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently.
- make reasonable and prudent judgements and estimates.
- prepare the accounts on a going-concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue as a going concern.
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departure disclosed and explained in the financial statements.

The directors are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and enable them to ensure that the financial accounts comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Approved by the board of trustees on and signed on their behalf by:

Anne Cleminson
Chair

Total income for 2024 was **£286,403**

434 Families Supported

737 Children Supported

1391 Volunteering Hours

791 Home Visiting Volunteer Hours

Contact Us

Homestart Warrington and Cheshire

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