



Home-Start Maidstone

Strategic Plan December 2009/2012

CONTENTS		Page(s)
Executive Summary		2
Section 1	Introduction and Background	3
Section 2	Current Approach and Outputs	4- 5
Section 3	Wider Context and Future Trends	5- 6
Section 4	Development Plan	7
Section 5	Strategic Aims	8
Section 6	Resource Implications	8
Appendices:		
A	Action/Operational Plan - 2010	
B	List of Staff and Trustees	
C	Summary of Key Policies	
D	Quality Assurance/Management Framework	

Executive Summary

Home-Start is a voluntary organisation committed to promoting the welfare of families with at least one child under five years of age. Volunteers offer regular, informal friendly family support and practical help to families during difficult times in their own homes, helping to prevent family crisis and breakdown.

Home-Start Maidstone was one of three pilot schemes introduced into Kent during 1987. Now, twenty two years since its foundation, the scheme remains strong and highly regarded within the Maidstone community. Four staff are now employed on a full or part-time basis, and the organisation is registered as a Charitable Company managed by a Board of Trustees/Directors. Kent's Children, Families and Education Directorate remains the primary source of funding, but a valuable grant is also received from the West Kent Primary Care Trust. In the year 2008/9, Home-Start Maidstone has supported 66 families with 141 children of which 91 were under five.

With the Government's significant 'Every Child Matters Outcomes Framework', major reorganisations in social and health services, and the changing needs of the local community, this paper seeks to examine the strategic implications upon Home-Start Maidstone and to outline a detailed operational action plan for the coming year.

It is recognised that if Home-Start Maidstone is to effectively serve the needs and priorities of its funders and of its local community, it must be sensitive to recent significant legislative and organisational changes, and reflect the needs of a changing population. In particular, the Children Act 2004 has far reaching implications for all providers of children's services.

The following key Strategic Aims have therefore been identified:

- 1) To integrate the 'Every Child Matters Outcomes Framework' into the day-to-day working of Home-Start Maidstone
- 2) To continue to meet the requirements of the 'Safeguarding Children Policy'
- 3) To extend Groupwork capability during 2010
- 4) To maintain capability for the support of young parents, promoting and supporting education related to Teenage Pregnancy and Sexual Health
- 5) To meet the family support needs of people living in Maidstone's rural communities and to recruit more volunteers from these areas
- 6) To continue to comply fully with Home-Start's Quality Assurance framework
- 7) To continue providing high quality core service to meet family support needs in Maidstone
- 8) To extend support and awareness of the specific needs of fathers
- 9) To raise the profile of Home-Start within the context of the needs of families in Maidstone
- 10) To extend the diversity of our funding sources

A specific action/operational plan for the coming year is presented as Appendix A.

Section 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Home-Start is a voluntary organisation committed to promoting the welfare of families with at least one child under five years of age. Volunteers offer regular, informal friendly family support and practical help to families during difficult times in their own homes, helping to prevent family crisis and breakdown.

Home-Start (UK) the national body is a charitable Trust that offers effective training, information, guidance and support to each existing and potential Home-Start scheme.

Home-Start Maidstone was one of three pilot schemes introduced into Kent during 1987. Funded at that time entirely through Kent County Council Social Services budget, the scheme's aim was to fulfil a recognised need to enhance and broaden services to young families and this appeared achievable through the objectives for which Home-Start was established:

- To safeguard, protect and preserve the good health, both mental and physical, of children and parents.
- To prevent cruelty to, or maltreatment of, children.
- To relieve sickness, poverty and need amongst children and parents.
- To promote the education of the public in better standards of childcare within the area served by the local scheme.

In the spring of 1988, Home-Start Maidstone was granted charitable status and a steering group of voluntary representatives formally undertook trusteeship as a full Management Committee. Within eighteen months, a full time Scheme Manager and two part-time staff were employed.

Now, twenty two years since its foundation, the scheme remains strong and highly regarded within the Maidstone community. Four staff are now employed on a full or part time basis, and the organisation is registered as a Charitable Company managed by a Board of Trustees/Directors. Kent County Council remains the primary source of funding, but a valuable grant is also received from the West Kent Primary Care Trust.

With the Government's significant continuing 'Every Child Matters Outcomes Framework' programme, major reorganisations in social and health services, and the changing needs of the local community, this paper seeks to examine the strategic implications upon Home-Start Maidstone. It presents an analysis of current activities and an assessment of strategic aims and development plans for the next three years. This Strategic Plan reflects the outcome of a meeting of Trustees/Directors with the Scheme Manager in November 2009. A specific action/operational plan for the coming year is presented as Appendix A.

Section 2

CURRENT APPROACH AND OUTPUTS

Home-Start Maidstone works with families who are experiencing difficulties or suffering stress and who have at least one child less than five years of age. Families are offered support in their own homes for as long as necessary.

Home-Start support is a complementary service working in partnership with other agencies for the benefit of families. These include:

- Health visitors
- Kent Children, Families and Education Directorate
- Maidstone Teenage Pregnancy Partnership
- Breast feeding steering group (PCT)
- YAPS
- Children's Centres
- Domestic Violence Forum
- VCS Children's Services Group
- Multi Agency Practitioners
- Local Childrens Services Partnership
- Kent Library Services

Home-Start works through a team of volunteers, who are normally parents themselves, and who give two to four hours a week to a family:

- Offering support, friendship and practical assistance to families
- Visiting families in their own homes, where the dignity and identity of each individual can be respected and protected
- Reassuring parents that difficulties in bringing up children are not unusual and encouraging enjoyment in family life
- Developing a relationship with the family in which time can be shared and understanding can be developed.
- Encouraging parents' strengths and emotional well-being for the ultimate benefit of their own children
- Encouraging families to widen their network of relationships and to use effectively the support and services available within the community.

Volunteers are carefully recruited from across the community and represent a diversity of ages, backgrounds and skills. They all have in common the ability to:

- Listen with understanding
- Maintain confidentiality except where there are genuine concerns for the welfare of children
- Be committed to the organisation and to the families they visit.

Each volunteer undertakes a comprehensive induction course of forty hours, one day a week over a ten week period. Upon successful completion, volunteers are carefully matched to a family. Volunteers have the opportunity for ongoing regular support and supervision, with facilities for further training as required.

Home-Start Maidstone has charitable company status and is managed by a Board of Directors/Trustees. All are themselves volunteers, and bring broad practical experience from the caring professions, the business world, and family life. The Board also includes two volunteer representatives and meets every six weeks.

A full time Scheme Manager supervises the work of three part-time staff. They all bring considerable relevant experience to the organisation, and direct and support the work of the volunteers. The Scheme Manager and the Trustees share the responsibility for the following activities:

- Core work
- Family support work
- Group work
- Volunteer training
- Recruitment
- Fundraising
- Administration

In the year 2008/9, Home-Start Maidstone has supported 66 families with 141 children of which 91 were under five. Primary funding came from Kent County Council and West Kent Primary Care Trust.

Section 3

THE WIDER CONTEXT AND FUTURE TRENDS

If Home-Start Maidstone is to effectively serve the needs and priorities of its funders and of its local community, it must be sensitive to recent significant legislative and organisational changes, and reflect the needs of a changing population. In particular, the Children Act 2004 and 'Every Child Matters' legislation has far reaching implications for all providers of children's services. We are also aware that opportunities may be afforded to us by the 'Think Families' cabinet paper.

As in many parts of the county, major re-organisational changes have continued within the Social Services function of Kent County Council following the formation of a Directorate of Children's Services. Within the health service community also, Primary Care Trusts have merged, and priorities for family and child support are continuing to be re-assessed. Both these organisations form the core of funding provision for Home-Start in Maidstone, with the formation of local Children's Services Partnerships moving us towards consolidation of funding. Whilst guided by the Home-Start ethos, we must be sensitive to their service needs and to changes in their organisation structure if we are to protect our long standing and mutually beneficial relationship with them.

Although still a relatively affluent area, Maidstone does have specific deprived communities where teenage pregnancy trends are a particular cause for concern. Although the ethnic community in Maidstone remains small, it is changing along with the general population. Wherever possible, volunteer recruitment and family support will be geared towards matching the age and diversity profile of the community we serve to allow us to reach diverse families. It must, however, be recognised that appropriately experienced volunteers are in short supply and high demand in the Maidstone area.

Our desire to reflect the needs and priorities of the local community and our funders in our service provision must of course be validated against the ethos and guidelines of our national Home-Start organisation.

Important drivers, resulting from recent analysis and research at a national level, will include:

- 1) Make Home-Start available to more families and children each year by supporting schemes to develop and expand their service.
- 2) Review the needs and aspirations of families supported by Home-Start and use this knowledge to develop support for them.
- 3) Demonstrate that Home-Start effectively improves parental confidence and well-being resulting in improved outcomes for young children
- 4) Work to make Home-Start a diverse and inclusive organisation
- 5) Promote awareness of Home-Start as the leading provider of volunteer support for families with young children
- 6) Strengthen Home-Start systems and structures
- 7) Increase funding across Home-Start to ensure the continuation of a high quality service to families with young children
- 8) Care for every individual, respect their contribution and promote their development

Section 4

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

With regard for considerations outlined above, work will continue to strengthen family work in cooperation with other third sector agencies. The following specific development plans are proposed:

Groupwork

A major extension of services will involve the creation of a 'groupwork' initiative. This will allow more families the benefit of coming together with others in similar circumstances in a facilitated group environment and will complement the work of the home visitors. This will have resource implications for the scheme as outlined in Section 6.

Pinnacle Project

A part-time Co-ordinator will be recruited to work in partnership with the Kent-wide Pinnacle Project initiative.

Children's Centres

More work in cooperation with the Children's Centres is anticipated (eg groupwork and training of volunteers)

Trustee Board

It is a key development objective to maintain a healthy/mixed ability Board which will bring the right experience and guidance to the organisation. Additional trustees with marketing/fund raising and HR experience will be sought, and consultants will be used when necessary to provide specialist health and safety and safeguarding expertise.

Rural Lead

The need has been identified for a part time Coordinator who can serve as a service lead for Maidstone's rural areas.

Quality Assurance

Service quality is paramount if we are to protect Home-Start's reputation and future. A comprehensive quality assurance framework has been developed at a national level and provides a template for continuing self assessment and periodic formal review. Home-Start Maidstone will continue to fully encompass this quality standard, having successfully achieved compliance with all 16 standards in an audit completed in October 2008. Developmental recommendations resulting from this audit have been progressed. Routine self assessment reviews will continue.

Administrative Support

With the proposed service extension as outlined above, there is a possible requirement for an additional 10 hours/week of administrative support. Office capacity and availability within the Maidstone Community Support Centre will also be reviewed.

Training

Opportunities will be sought to further strengthen the training experience for staff, volunteers and trustees with a review of short and long term needs. With all staff having already attended Solihull training, the scheme manager will attend a 'train the trainer' programme with the aim of bringing volunteers to Solihull approved status.

Section 5

STRATEGIC AIMS

The following key Strategic Aims have been identified:

- To continue providing high quality core service to meet family support needs in Maidstone
- To integrate 'Every Child Matters Outcomes Framework' into the day-to-day working of Home-Start Maidstone, with an awareness of and commitment to the Kent and Maidstone Children and Young People Plan
- To continue to fully meet the requirements of the 'Safeguarding Children Policy'
- To extend Groupwork capability during 2010
- To maintain capability for the support of young parents, promoting and supporting education related to Teenage Pregnancy and Sexual Health
- To meet the family support needs of people living in Maidstone's rural communities and to recruit more volunteers from these areas
- To continue to comply fully with Home-Start's Quality Assurance framework.
- To extend support and awareness of the specific needs of fathers
- To raise the profile of Home-Start within the context of the needs of families in Maidstone
- To extend the diversity of our funding sources

Section 6

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The Strategic Aims and Development Plans outlined above will have inevitable implications upon resources and funding requirements. These are summarised below:

- Staff recruitment for additional proposed family support and groupwork initiatives.
- The need to raise specific additional funds to sponsor these proposed increases in staff.
- Training will be required for new and existing staff to support the proposed extension of service offerings
- Accommodation in terms of places and equipment will be needed to support groupwork
- Equipment (e.g. IT/phones) will need to be extended to support increased activity
- Further funding to resource developmental objectives will be sought
- Trustee skills need to be assessed and possibly supplemented (e.g. with marketing/fundraising and HR capability)
- More volunteers are likely to be required to support extended scope

Appendix A

Home- Start Maidstone Operational Plan 2010

What we need to achieve	How it will be achieved	Who is responsible operationally	By when
Negotiate ongoing funding with statutory funders	Meetings with relevant agencies	Scheme Manager and Board of Trustees	31.03.10
Review service level agreements and extend to include all core services	"	"	31.03.10
Identify and apply for continued funding for Pinnacle project Co-ordinator	Negotiation with local Childrens Services Partnership	"	31.03.10
Identify and apply for funding for Rural Worker	"	"	"
Establish groupwork initiatives in childrens centres and rural areas	Recruitment of group worker	Scheme Manager and Board of Trustees	31.03.10
Identify training needs of Board of Trustees, staff and volunteers and where possible access training	Skills audits and supervision	Scheme Manager, Board of Trustees, Employees and volunteers	Ongoing
Implementation of Quality assurance Individual targets and assessments	Maintaining the time table and working to the guidelines provided by Home-start UK	Scheme Manager and Board of Trustees	Ongoing
Recruit volunteers and run two preparation courses during the year, recruiting at least 15 volunteers	Advertising in papers and collaboration with other charity post outs	Scheme Manager	Ongoing
To be represented at strategic meetings in the district that might enhance the work or the profile of the scheme in light of changes	networking	Scheme Manager	Ongoing
To extend the admin team in accordance with Home-Start UK bench marks	An extension of funding for the Young Families Co-ordinator/group work initiative or rural Co-ordinator	Scheme Manager and Board of Trustees	According to need
Review/Update scheme policies to include all Home-Start recommended policies	Adaptation and adoption of Home-Start UK supplied policies	Policy sub-committee of the Board of Trustees	31.12.10

Appendix B

LIST OF STAFF AND TRUSTEES

STAFF:

Sharon Manning – Scheme Manager

Jackie Honey – Office Manager

Nicola Button – Co-ordinator

Sue Babin – Young Families Co-ordinator

TRUSTEES:

Mike Davison – Business community – May 2002 (Chair)

Carol Crisp – Counselor – Commencement date May 2002 (Vice Chair)

Janet Orton – Social Work – 1996 as SS rep & 2005 as Trustee (Vice Chair)

Bernard Mee – Accountant – May 2004 (Treasurer)

Nellie Adjaye – Community Pediatrician – June 1990

Sarah Roach – Personnel Adviser – June 2005

Lisa de Silva – Solicitor – May 2004

Sue Stille – Education – January 2007

Alex Turner - October 2009

Kate Roome - October 2009

Appendix C

SUMMARY OF KEY POLICIES

Health and Safety – General Policy Statement
Health and Safety – (full) Policy
Equal Opportunities Policy Statement
Equal Opportunities (full) Policy
Confidentiality Policy
Recruitment of Ex Offenders
Internal Financial Controls
Income Held in reserve
Correct Handling/Safe Keeping of Sensitive Documents/CRB Disclosures
Policy on Telephone, Fax and E-mail
Policy for Volunteer References
Annual Leave policy
Grievance Procedure
Complaints Procedure
Safeguarding and Child Protection
Support Outside Home
Responsible Reporting
Workers with a disability
Succession Planning
Promotions
Recruitment and Selection
Volunteer Resting
Harassment
Checking Prospective Volunteers
Staff Appraisal
Supervision Procedure
Internal Appointments
Exit Interview
Model rule of Home-Start
Public Interest Disclosure Act
Expenses Policy
Retirement Policy
Detailed Investment Policy
Data Protection
Model Budget

QUALITY ASSURANCE/MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Summarised below are the principal headings under which the established Quality Assurance Management Framework is operated and assessed:

Governance

1. Governance
2. Planning for quality

Principles

3. Promoting children's welfare
4. Equal opportunities and diversity
5. Confidentiality

Management and administration

6. Managing Home-Start
7. Managing staff
8. Managing volunteers
9. Learning and development
10. Quality and scheme development
11. Managing money and resources
12. Health and safety
13. Monitoring and evaluation

Practice

14. Supporting families
15. Working with other agencies
16. Working in the wider context

The principles - Promoting children's welfare, Equal Opportunities and Diversity and Confidentiality underpin all the other quality areas