



Support and friendship  
for families

# Making a Difference for CHILDREN and families

## Home-Start's SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT 2014



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## WHY Home-Start is needed:



A CHILD'S parents are their first care giver and their first and most important teacher. There is now an overwhelming body of evidence that a nurturing, loving and stable family and home environment strongly influences a CHILD'S future life chances.

# Introduction

**Having a secure, loving bond with a parent and their encouragement and support to develop good social, emotional and cognitive skills gives children a secure base from which to explore, learn, relate to others, and flourish.**

But being a parent isn't always easy. Children whose parents are struggling to cope with problems such as illness, disability, poor mental health, poverty, homelessness and domestic violence, can all too often miss out on the love, routine and support that are so vital for their future.

**More than 100 children and families are referred to our service every day.**

The families we support often have complex and long term needs which create multiple risk factors for the children's development.

## Our services

Home-Start has a range of home and community based services for families, tailored to their individual needs and circumstances:

- Home visiting support from volunteers with parenting experience – usually on a weekly basis
- Emotional support to help parents find ways to manage and resolve problems
- Direct support to children, including playing, listening, having fun, establishing feeding routines, encouraging development and providing opportunities for outings and treats
- Practical help, perhaps with budgeting, nutrition and meal planning, cooking and making the home safe
- Outreach and family group work so parents can get out and meet others and become more involved in their own community
- Information and links to other organisations including health and educational services
- Attendance at meetings and moral support, especially in relation to dealing with case conferences and dealing with solicitors and court cases
- Access to parenting advice and parenting skills training

## Home-Start can:

- change how parents think and feel about themselves
- help them cope with the challenges they are facing
- support them to provide good early parenting

We offer a universal service, to all families whatever their background and need, with a particular focus on families who are socially excluded and not engaging with other services. Support is delivered through a UK-wide network of self-governing local Home-Starts.

**Our services are rigorously quality assured through a Charity Commission endorsed system.**



## OUR APPROACH to EVALUATION:

Home-Start is committed to providing real evidence of the difference we make for families.

Over the last few years, we have invested in a range of research and evaluation tools in order to better understand the effect of our services on children's and families' lives.

Three years ago, we introduced a new on line tool to help local Home-Starts measure change in every family they support. This has enabled us to capture a wide range of data on children and family needs, the collective nature of support local Home-Starts provide and on the journeys of change that families go on during the time they are supported by a Home-Start volunteer.

This monitoring tool focuses on four core areas critical to family health and well being:

- Parenting skills
- Parental well being
- Child well being
- Household management

It provides real evidence of the positive difference that family support from a Home-Start volunteer makes to parents and children, among families who have complex and long term needs. It also demonstrates the highly challenging family contexts within which volunteers are operating.



## DOES WHAT WE DO MAKE a DIFFERENCE for the better?

Yes: Home-Start HELPS parents build better lives for their children.

Independent research published in 2013 after three years studying families showed:

- Children whose parents have had the support of a Home-Start volunteer have a better start in life than those who don't.
- Children are still benefiting up to three years after their Home-Start volunteer has stopped visiting.

Separate research into how well each family is coping and how resilient they are tells us families supported by Home-Start are less isolated, more resilient, show improved mental and physical health, see improvements in children's behaviour and well-being and have less stress and conflict in the family.

- The proportion of parents rating themselves as coping 'most of the time' rises from 29% at Home-Start's first visit to 45% after our support.
- Home-Start's support increases families' capacity to cope with the issues they are facing. At the beginning of support, the average level of coping for a family was 2. At the end of support the majority were coping at level 4 or above.

More detail about all the findings on this page can be found in the following pages, specifically pages 13, 19 and 21.

We hope that future Social Impact Reports will chart Home-Start's growing ability to provide further evidence that will help us to monitor and improve our effectiveness.

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Families supported by Home-Start are less isolated, more resilient, show improved mental and physical health, see improvements in children's behaviour and well-being and have less stress and conflict in the family.

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# Case Studies

## Mandy's Story

Mandy\* was first introduced to Home-start by a Health Visitor last January. SHE WAS IN HER OWN WORDS "a mess". "JUST WHEN I WAS COMING TO TERMS WITH THE LIKELIHOOD THAT MY SON GEORGE\* HAD CEREBRAL PALSY WE WERE HIT BY THE BOMBSHELL OF INFANTILE SPASMS.

"By early January, the seizures had stopped, but the anxiety (of worrying every time that he went off to sleep that he would wake to seize, that he would regress and lose those few milestones he had met, that life would never be OK ever again) was excruciating. It was made worse by the steroids that stopped the seizures. My lovely, good-tempered boy turned into a hyper-agitated, screaming machine, with an insatiable appetite and acute insomnia. If I could get three hours sleep in a day (never in one chunk, mind you) for the next three months, I considered myself lucky. We could barely leave the house because of his vulnerability to infection. I lost lots of weight. I looked grey. I would cry if someone made eye contact with me.

I was severely depressed and had acute anxiety and panic attacks. I was advised to phone a local NHS mental health charity for counselling. The kind lady I spoke to said that the waiting list for treatment was about six months. She sounded more distressed on my behalf than I was, but thought my needs were too acute to be met by their service. I was too ill for them to be able to help me, I realised with a sadness so deep that I could barely speak. I managed to summon enough voice to say that I understood, got off the phone and cried for two hours straight. How could I help my kids when I was such a wreck?

Our health visitor was on long-term sick and we were told there was a three month wait to see one regularly, but someone who was about to change jobs came to see me for a one-off visit. The one good thing that did come out of the meeting was a referral



to Home-Start. They have done more to help us as a family than anyone has done in the past 19 months.

**I am not the same person I was in January. Neither is George, nor is His sister. AND Home-start Has Played a Large Part in Helping us on our way on this Journey.**

Since April, our wonderful volunteer has come round for 3 hours a week to give me respite and support. She has enabled me to catch up on medical paperwork; to do laundry; she has come with me to difficult appointments (including a very nerve-wracking EEG). She has given me friendship and head space. She has helped to give me back what I have retrieved of my sanity.

She has helped George, by playing with him at times when through the exhaustion and anxiety all I could do was cry when I looked at him. More recently, she has looked after George so that I can spend a couple of hours one night a week with his sister. Because, like her brother, like me, she too is vulnerable.

She adores her brother in a way I had never imagined would be possible. But she wakes up at night sometimes crying because she is worried her little brother will never play football or because I have to take him to a routine appointment tomorrow and she is worried it will be one of those appointment when Mummy and her brother go into hospital and won't be let out for a week or so. Having the luxury of just two hours a week alone with my daughter has made such a difference. I felt that I have got my daughter back. It is a little glimpse of normal that is all too rare in our lives.

**Home-start Has HELPED all three of us immeasurably. THEY REACHED OUT TO US at a time WHEN NO ONE ELSE DID.**

They advised me to apply for Disability Living Allowance for George. They put me in touch with a carers support service that vetted our application. They put me in touch with local SEN groups. They have helped ease my transition back to work. I could go on, but to quantify their help is frankly impossible."

\*names have been changed and pictures are posed by models.

# our network

Local Home-starts are all individual charities rooted in the communities they serve. They are managed locally and supported by the national organisation, Home-start UK, which offers advice, training, information and guidance to the Home-start network to ensure consistent and quality support for parents and children.

Last year we supported:

29,170  
families



63,308  
children

at a cost of between  
£1000-£1500 per family.

We tailor our support to each family and work with the whole family, providing a combination of:

**Emotional support**

(to 59% of all the families we support)

**Practical support**

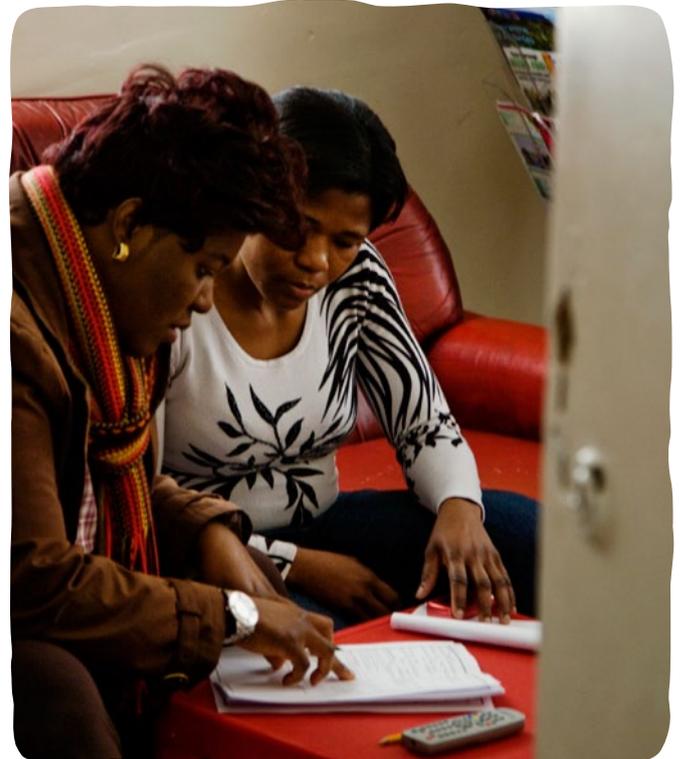
(to 50% of all the families we support)

**Activities with the children**

(to 37% of all the families we support)

**Support to use other services\***

(to 28% of all the families we support)



## 83% of families are referred from other agencies



### our Volunteers:

We provided volunteering opportunities to



and last year

**over 500**

new volunteers

Had their training accredited through the Open College Network.



Local Home-Starts are autonomous local charities with their own independent management structures that are set up in response to community need. They operate in 288 towns, cities and rural communities across the UK and with British Forces families in Germany and Cyprus

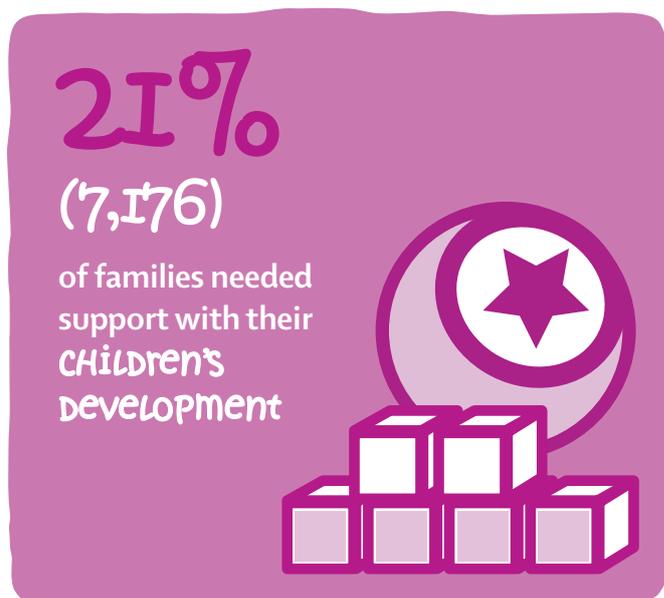
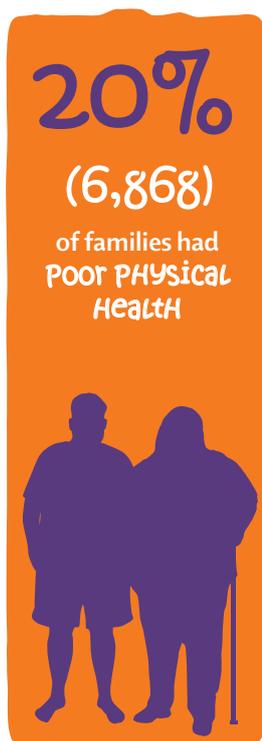
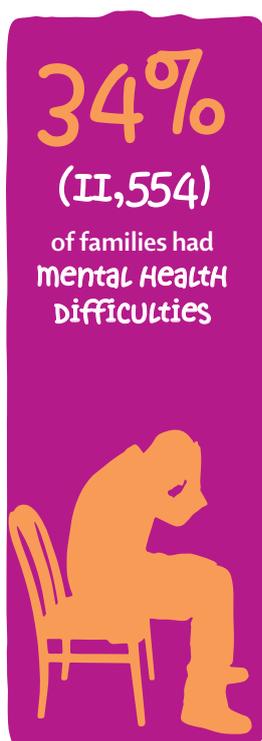


British Forces in Germany and Cyprus

(\*Key findings from a first analysis of data drawn from 33,925 families and 76,031 children supported from April 2011–October 2012)

# Working with families with multiple and complex needs\*

An analysis of just over 76,000 children and 34,000 families supported by Home-Start showed them to have a wide range of needs:



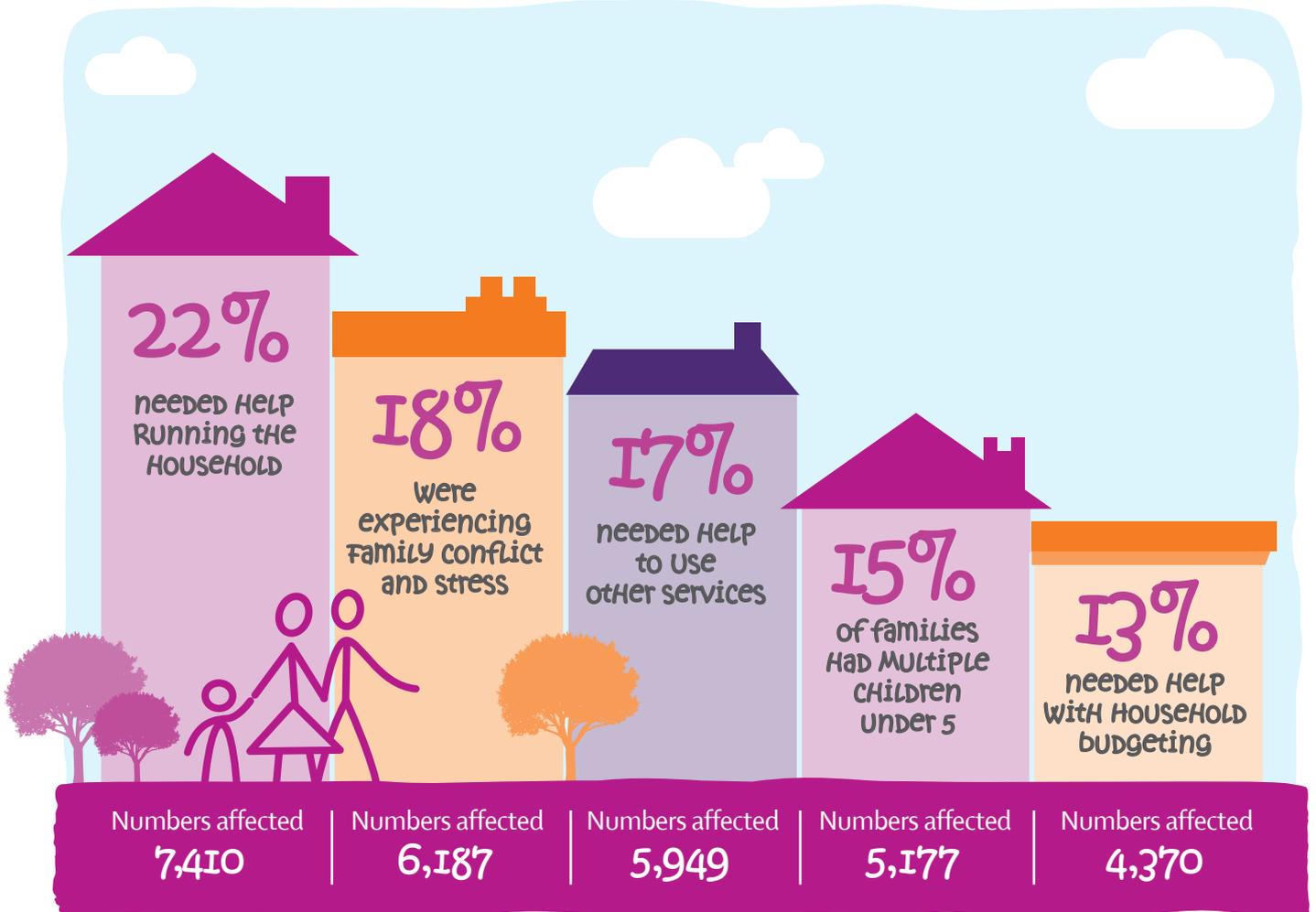
(\*Key findings from a first analysis of data drawn from 33,925 families and 76,031 children supported from April 2011-October 2012)

In the UK today around

**26%**  
(198,000)

of babies are estimated to be living within complex family situations where there are problems such as domestic violence, mental illness or drug/alcohol abuse\*.

(2013 NSPCC All Babies Count Campaign)

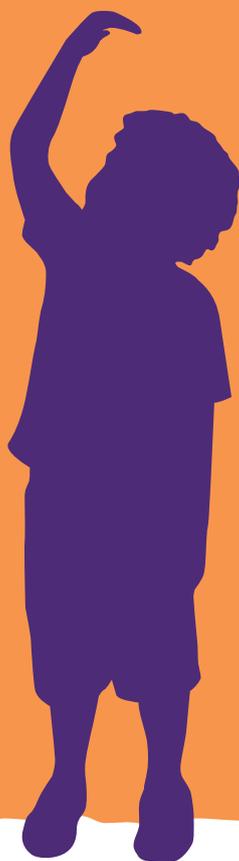


(\*Key findings from a first analysis of data drawn from 33,925 families and 76,031 children supported from April 2011–October 2012)

# Working with families with multiple and complex needs\*

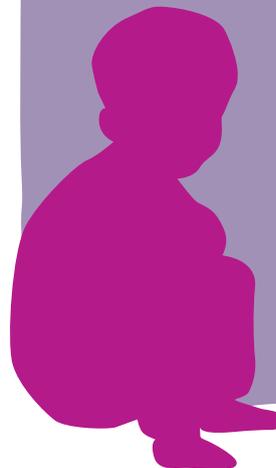
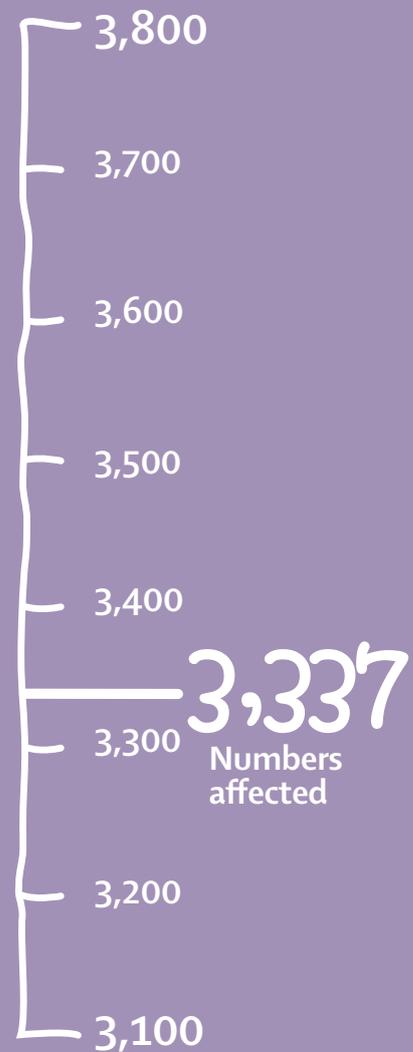
in  
**11%**

there were concerns about  
**CHILDREN'S PHYSICAL HEALTH**



in  
**10%**

there were concerns about the  
**CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH**



(\*Key findings from a first analysis of data drawn from 33,925 families and 76,031 children supported from April 2011-October 2012)

# Case Studies

## Sian's Story

FOR SIAN\*, 23RD APRIL SHOULD HAVE BEEN A GOOD DAY. THREE MONTHS PREGNANT, SHE'D TAKEN THE DAY OFF WORK TO HAVE AN ULTRASOUND SCAN. SHE AND HER PARTNER, DARRELL\*, HAD BEEN TOLD THEY WERE EXPECTING A BOY.

It was her stepfather's birthday, so Sian and her seven-year-old son, Lewis\*, went to her mum's house in Surrey to help them celebrate. Lewis had just come back from a bike ride with his uncle, and had gone to put a packet of biscuits in the car, when Sian, watching from the other side of the road, saw a car drive towards her son, hit him, and drag him down the road.

She and her mother chased after it, but when they reached Lewis he wasn't moving. He was taken by air ambulance to hospital, where it was 12 hours before he regained consciousness.

"He had a lump the size of a tennis ball on his head, his lung was bruised and his thigh bone was badly broken", says Sian. "He's sporty – football crazy. It was terrible to hear that even if he regained the ability to walk, he might never play sport again."

Two months after the accident, Lewis' grandmother, to whom he was extremely close, needed radiotherapy for a brain tumour which had been operated on, but which was now growing again.

"I had to give up work to look after mum and Lewis," says Sian, "which led to us getting seriously behind on our mortgage and nearly losing our house. My savings got used up paying to travel to London hospital appointments with Lewis, and for hydrotherapy to supplement his physiotherapy.

"Money problems and the fact that we had no time to ourselves then put a strain on my relationship with Darrell.

"And then, when our son, Harvey, was born with kidney problems it meant regular visits to the hospital for the first three months of his life."

It was a horrendous run of bad luck, which only started to turn after Sian's health visitor recommended that Lewis, who was now eight, be seen by a child psychiatrist. Diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, Lewis started to receive counselling. "And then, one day, I just went to pieces in the psychiatrist's office," says Sian. "That's when she told me about Home-Start."

When Sian got in touch with Home-Start, she spoke to Debbie, the senior coordinator there, who matched her with volunteer Yvonne. Yvonne arranged to visit Sian in her own home every week.

"I was sceptical at first," says Sian. "I didn't want someone in my home, taking over my role. But after about a month, it turned out to be the best thing.

After a while, I felt I could talk to her about anything – the kids, Darrell, money – and she didn't judge me.

With Yvonne's help, Sian felt strong enough to go back to work (Darrell's parents now look after Harvey five days a week), and resume studying for the accountancy exams she'd been working towards when Lewis had the accident.

And now? Things are good. Better than good. "Lewis's football coach helped him regain his strength with one-to-one training, and he was able to have the metalwork taken out of his leg. He's not only playing football, he's trying out for his district team," says Sian. "There's still some short-term memory loss, but that's improving, and he's doing well at school. The nightmares and panic attacks he used to have are gone, because of the support I got, which allowed me to put in the time with him.

"If it weren't for Yvonne, I honestly think I'd have lost the plot. At night, I used to have the same dream, reliving the accident, except in that dream, Lewis died. It was Yvonne who said, "Maybe you need to see someone," which I did.

**"Yvonne's a wonderful woman, and Her last formal visit was extremely emotional, with tears on both sides. Any family that has Her help is so lucky!"**

\*names have been changed

# Better outcomes for CHILDREN and families:

## Key findings:

Families Home-start supports made progress in all four areas of need: Parental Health and Wellbeing, Child Health and Well being, Parenting skills and family management.



Every family's needs was measured at the start, middle and end of support and scored from 0 (not coping) to 5 (coping very well).

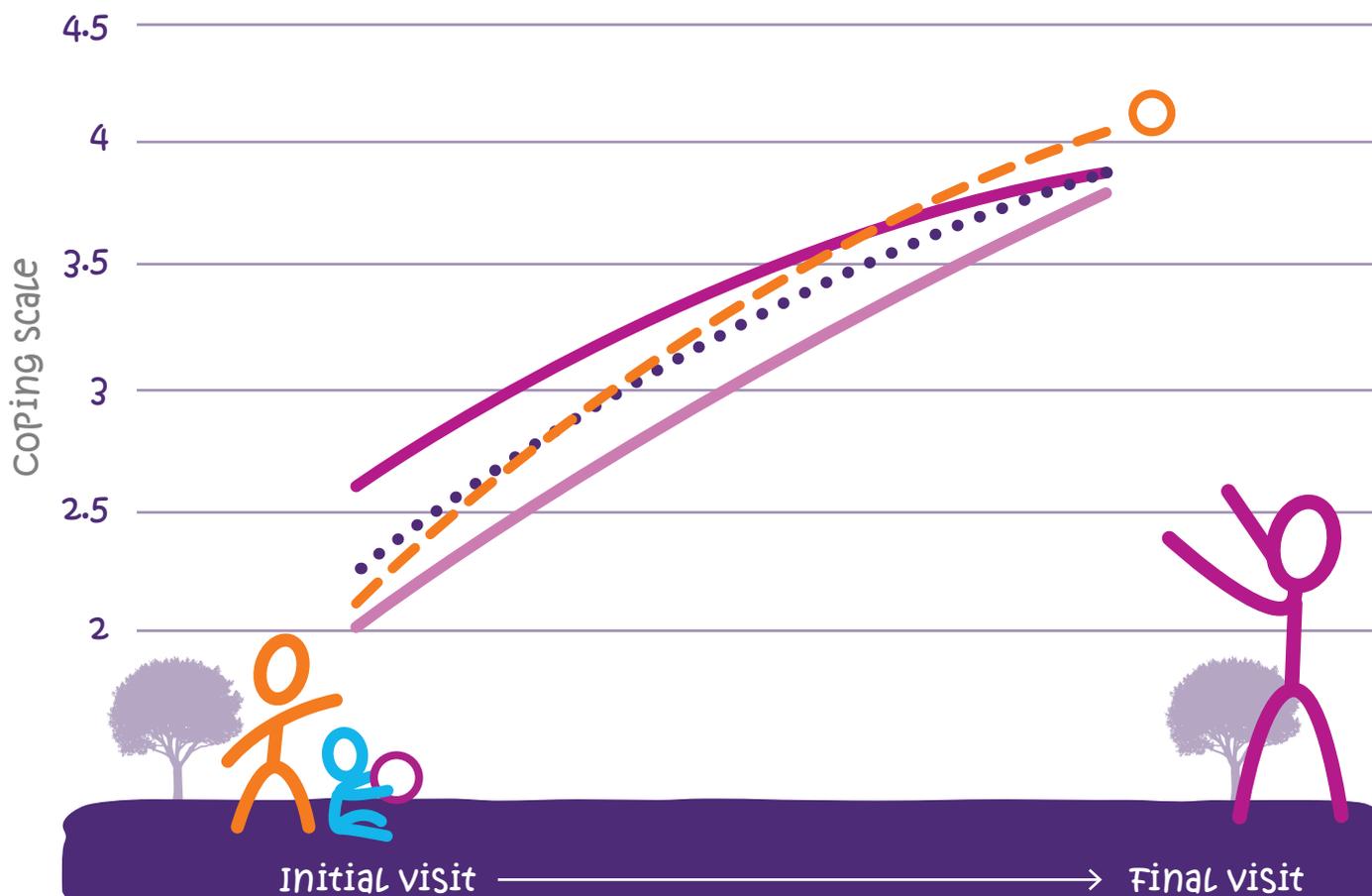
## Impact: Summary Chart

THE OVERALL PROGRESS FAMILIES MADE ARE ILLUSTRATED IN THE LINE CHARTS BELOW



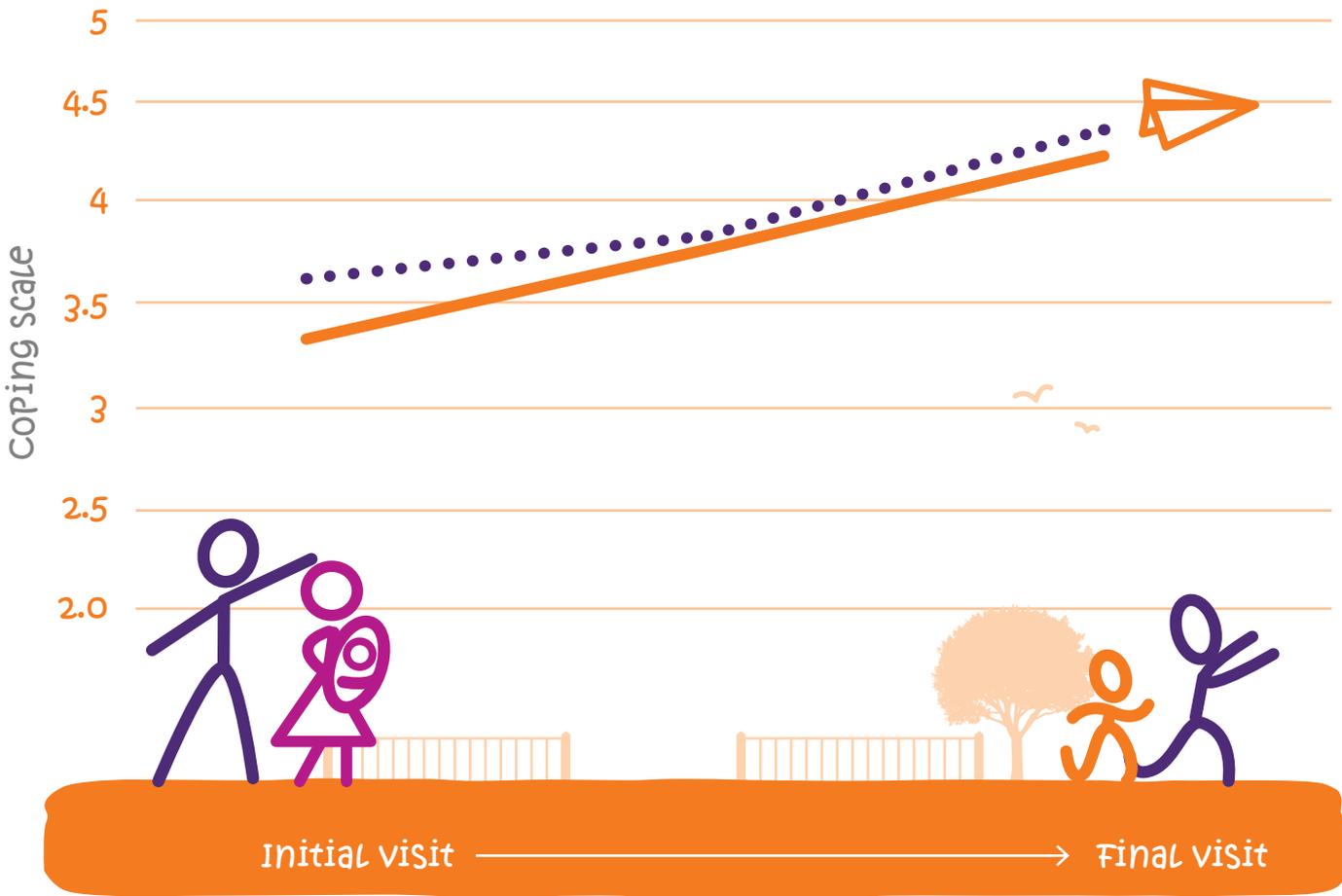
# Better outcomes for CHILDREN and families:

## Outcome 1: Improvements in parents' Health and Well being



	Initial visit	Final visit
— Coping with physical health	2.16	4.02
••••• Coping with own mental health	2.28	3.85
- - - - Coping with feeling isolated	2.62	3.89
— Coping with parent's self esteem	2.07	3.81

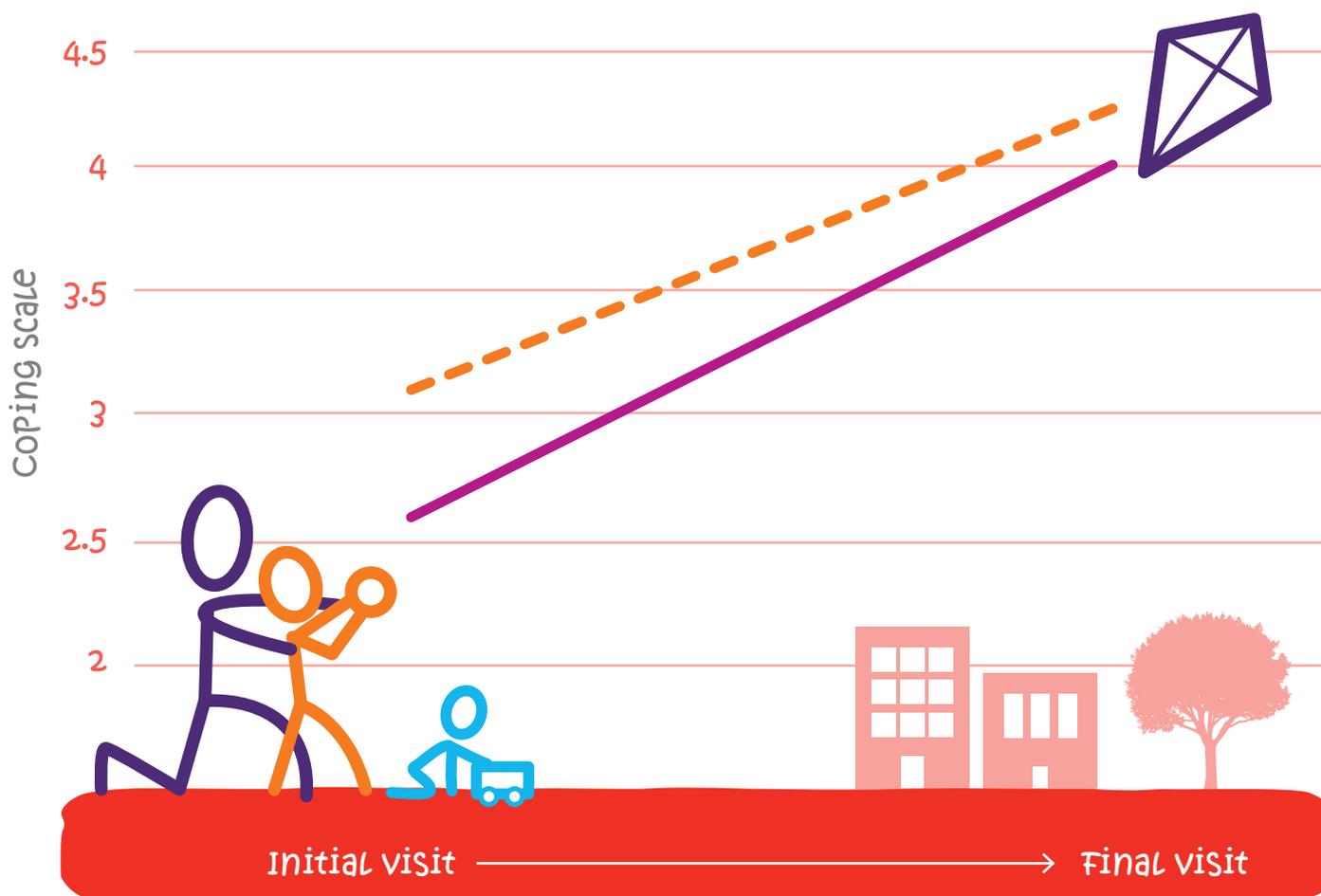
## Outcome 2: Children's Health and Well being



	Initial visit	Final visit
— Child's mental health	3.37	4.21
••••• Child's physical health	3.58	4.34

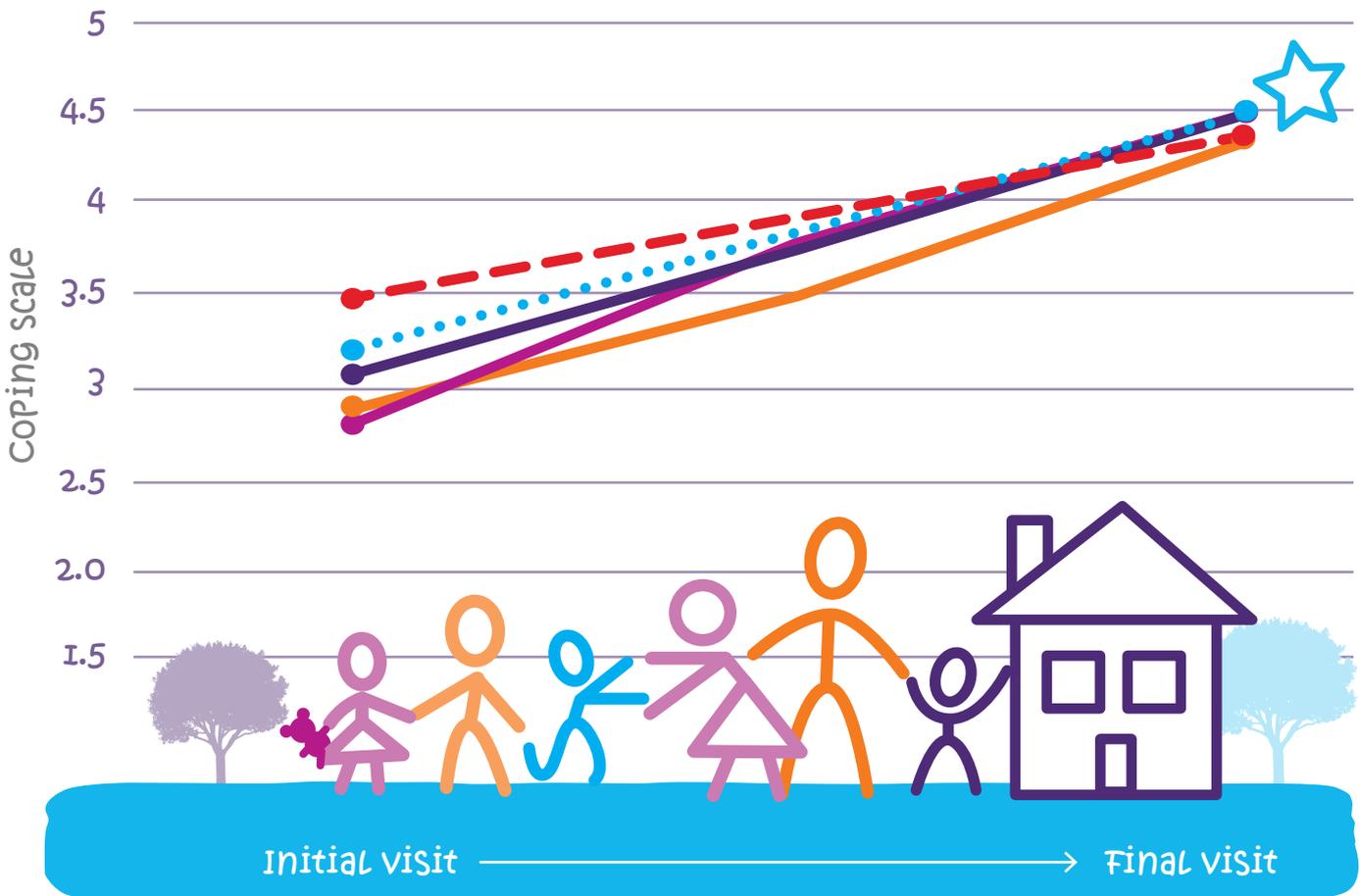
# Better outcomes for CHILDREN and families:

## Outcome 3: More confident and positive parenting (Parenting skills)



	Initial visit	Final visit
Managing child behaviour	2.66	3.99
Involved in child development	3.18	4.04

## Outcome 4: Improvements in managing the family home

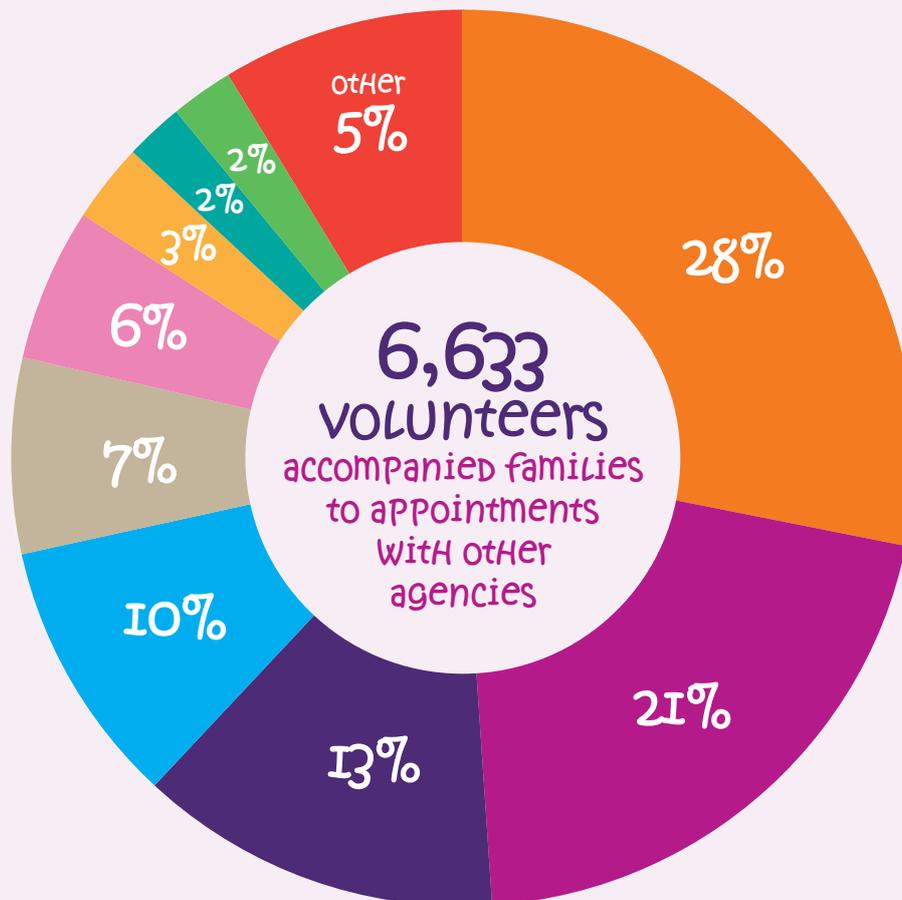


	Initial visit	Final visit
— Stress through conflict in the family	2.72	4.01
— Use of other services	2.41	3.84
— Coping with multiple children under five	2.57	4.01
••••• Day to day running of the house	2.33	4.00
- - - - - Managing the household budget	2.99	3.89

# Better outcomes for CHILDREN and families:

## Reaching into the Community

Home-Start also connects families with other services in their community so parents and children can make appropriate use of doctors, dentists, health visitors, social workers, mother and baby clinics, children's centres, children's mental health services, parent and toddler groups, nursery schools, and parenting programmes.



- |                                  |                         |  |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| ● Children's Centre (1,868)      | ● Nurseries (1,382)     | ● GPs (850)  |
| ● Mothers and baby clinics (645) | ● Health visitors (464) | ● Dentists (368)                                   |
| ● Citizens Advice Bureaux (187)  | ● Mental health (139)   | ● Benefits department (154)                        |
| <b>other</b>                     |                         |  |
| ● Debt Counselling (114)         | ● Job Centre (60)       | ● Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (58) |
| ● Legal (77)                     | ● Housing (24)          |  |
| ● Social worker (52)             | ● Adult Ed Centre (79)  |  |
| ● Parenting Programme (88)       | ● Helplines (24)        |  |

# Long term impact for children

In 2013, newly published longitudinal research\* showed that:



- children whose parents have had the support of a Home-Start volunteer have a better start in life than those who don't
- children are still benefiting up to three years after their Home-Start volunteer has stopped visiting.

Researchers compared three groups of parents. In one, each family had Home-Start support. In two control groups there was no volunteer support.

At the three year follow up, the Home-Start group showed more improvements than the two other control groups in the areas of:



- more responsive parenting,
- children showing less temper and anger issues and less anxiety.

The study showed parents in the Home-Start group:



- had more positive changes in parental well-being, competence and behaviour
- parented more consistently
- there was less rejection of their children



\*'Long term changes in parenting and child behavior after the Home-Start family support program', Jo M. A. Hermanns, Jessica J Ascher, Bonne J. H. Zijlstra, Peter J. Hoffenaar, Majaa Dekovic. University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands, Utrecht University, The Netherlands.

# Case Studies

## Becky's\* Story

BECKY AND HER FAMILY WERE REFERRED TO HOME-START IN AUGUST 2012. BECKY IS A SINGLE MOTHER OF FOUR CHILDREN – TWO TEENAGE GIRLS, LUCY\* AND ZOE\*, A 7 YEAR OLD SON, THOMAS\*, AND A 3 YEAR OLD DAUGHTER, DAISY\*.



**Becky suffers from severe mental health problems that make it difficult for her to cope sometimes. The eldest of six children, Becky's own mother suffered with mental health issues and she spent time in care as a child.**

She moved to the area after experiencing difficulties with her neighbours, which meant she and her family had to move home.

After the move Lucy and Zoe, had difficulty attending school, with poor attendance and were often sent home for bad behaviour.

All four children were on the Child Protection register. Becky was referred to Home-Start who offered her support. Naomi has been supporting Becky ever since.

Naomi provides Becky with crucial support when she is struggling with a complex range of issues and crises. She spends 2-2 ½ hours a week at her home. She helps her attend her medical appointments, talks her through phone calls to pay her bills, and when Becky's brother was sent to prison, Naomi supported her.

Becky and her youngest daughter Daisy also attend a weekly family support group at Home-Start where Becky gets practical

assistance, managing her finances, and Daisy gets to play with other children.

Naomi has helped Becky develop her parenting skills, helping her to set boundaries for her children. Now Daisy holds her mum's hand when walking down street rather than running off, and Lucy and Zoe know to be home by a set time in the evening.

Naomi is not just there for Becky, she helps support the whole family. Though Home-Start traditionally helps families with young children up to the age of five, Naomi has also provided support for the older children because she recognises that helping the family as a whole enables Becky to cope better. Naomi referred Zoe to a specialist who supports her with her dyslexia. As a result Zoe's attendance at school has improved. Naomi supports Becky to attend school meetings to discuss her daughters' progress. Naomi also referred Zoe and Lucy to the youth offending team who now mentor them on a weekly basis to help them stay safe and out of trouble.

Home-Start helped Becky find Thomas a school closer to home which has reduced the stress of getting children to school in the morning.

When the family came to Home-Start all four children had child protection plans. Now Daisy and Thomas no longer do and Zoe has been moved down to the Child in Need Register.

The staff at Home-Start have got to know Becky and her family well – they've watched her youngest daughter Daisy gaining confidence and attending nursery, and Thomas now has a 100% attendance record at school.

Once a month Naomi visits the family for a craft session and the whole family gets involved and plays together.

For Becky, the journey is very much still up and down, but Home-Start is helping her keep her head above water and become more independent.

\*names have been changed and pictures are posed by models.

# OUR JOURNEY TO GREATER IMPACT

*WE ARE COMMITTED TO IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF OUR SERVICES SO THAT EVERY FAMILY WE SUPPORT HAS A POWERFUL AND POSITIVE EXPERIENCE WITH US. THE PROCESS OF EVALUATION WILL HELP US IMPROVE AND DEVELOP OUR SERVICES.*

**We have been working to develop a single impact measure that can capture the core goal or 'essence' of our services\*.**

The measure we have developed is a parent coping scale that measures family's resilience.

Initial findings are positive with the proportion of parents rating themselves as coping 'most of the time' rising from 29% at first visit to 45%. The average (0-5) score for the group changed from 3.2 to 3.5 - a statistically significant change.

These findings can be seen illustrated in the diagram on page 22.



\*This project was undertaken as a collaboration between Home-Start UK, Deborah Ghate and the Centre for Effective Services

**Development of an overarching measure of impact for Home-Start UK: a feasibility study** Moran P and Ghate D (2013) available on the web at:

[www.home-start.org.uk](http://www.home-start.org.uk)

[http://www.cevi.org.uk/docs/Impact\\_Measure\\_Report.pdf](http://www.cevi.org.uk/docs/Impact_Measure_Report.pdf)  
[http://www.home-start.org.uk/about\\_us/what\\_we\\_do/policy\\_practice\\_research](http://www.home-start.org.uk/about_us/what_we_do/policy_practice_research)  
<http://www.effectiveservices.org/our-work/homestart>





**Home-Start was founded in 1973. Today we are one of the leading family support charities in the UK. Our volunteers transform the life chances of some of the most socially excluded children and families in the UK.**

Home-Start has a range of home and community based services for families, tailored to their individual needs and circumstances.

Nearly 15,000 trained family support volunteers deliver our services. The volunteers are supported by more than 3,000 trustee volunteers and 1,000 skilled, paid staff who provide the initial training and continue to support volunteers on a regular one to one basis.

Home-Start's approach to working with families is based on in-depth knowledge of local needs and close working relationships with other community agencies.

Over the last 40 years we have helped more than one million of the UK's most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and their families.

We currently reach 29,000 families and 63,000 children the UK every year - that's 1 in every 250 families bringing up children in the UK.

Our services reach into more than 288 communities across the UK and to British Forces bases in Germany and Cyprus.

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