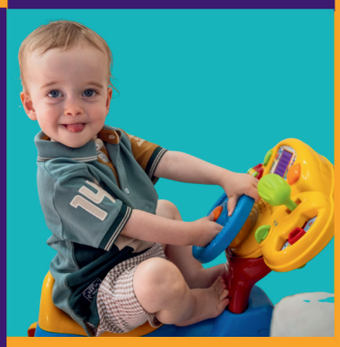
2024 2025



HOME START

West Lothian

Contents

A Message from our Chair

I am honored to present the Annual Report for Home-Start West Lothian as your Interim Chair. This past year has been both challenging and rewarding as an organisation, as we continue to provide crucial support to families in our community. We continue to navigate a difficult financial landscape as an invaluable 3rd sector organisation offering support, friendship and practical help to parents with young children in West Lothian.

Early intervention is crucial to the life chances of children growing up in difficult situations and the unique relationships that we build with families are extremely effective in empowering families and preventing the worst consequences of parental challenges. I wanted to thank all of our staff and volunteers for all their dedication, efforts, knowledge and skills they have brought to their roles over the past 12 months. You really do make a difference to families who need us most.

Reflecting on Our Achievements

For the last 25 years we have supported over 6,000 families, providing one to one, group support and practical help to parents, most of whom come from the most deprived areas of our community.

Over the past year, we have extended our reach, supporting more families than ever supporting nearly 200 children through our Groups alone.

Our dedicated volunteers and staff have delivered essential early intervention services, offering both emotional and practical support to families navigating difficult times. Our community-based approach empowers parents and ensures children have the best possible start in life.
Some of our highlights from the past 12 months include:

- 139 accepted referrals
- 168 Groups run throughout the year
- 243 families receiving support

Adapting to Change and moving forward

As we move forward, our focus remains on building resilient, supportive communities. We will continue to advocate for families, adapting our services to meet emerging needs and challenges. Together, we aim to foster an environment where every family has access to the resources and support they need to thrive within our community.

The landscape of family support has evolved, and so have we. Our team has embraced innovative methods to meet the growing needs of our community, we have drastically enhanced our data for decision making, expanded our digital resources and adapted our programs to ensure continued support, even in an uncertain and financially challenging landscape.

We will continue to adapt to change as we move forward in to 2026 to ensure that we can continue to provide the best possible support to families.

I am delighted to not only be presenting this year's annual report but also launching our 2026-2031 strategy. A tremendous amount of work has gone in to bringing this strategy to life, engaging with our stakeholders to ensure that we can support families and our community in the best possible way – making evidence based decisions that help reduce the pressure on social care and mental health services.

If you have any feedback on our strategy please do email us at **admin@homestartwl.org.uk**

Scott Coutts
Interim Chair of the Board

Our Vision

Home-Start West Lothian's vision is for all children in the region to have the best possible start in life. We want to empower families and enable them to build resilience for a positive future.

GROWTH

We are committed to reach significantly more families, providing access to support in a way that works for them

VOICE

We will work alongside families to provide tailored support to help increase their knowledge, skills and confidence ensuring their voice can be heard and their views are listened to

INCLUSION

We are committed to inclusion and equity in all we do so that our services are available to everyone

IMPACT

We work with other members of the Home Start community to ensure we provide high quality provision for our families

Keeping the Promise

> Where children are safe in their families and feel loved they must stay – and families must be given support together to nurture that love and overcome the difficulties which get in the way

The Promise

In October 2016, the First Minister promised that Scotland would “come together and love its most vulnerable children to give them the childhood they deserve”. She announced an independent root and branch review of care (“The Care Review”), driven by those with experience of care. As a leading family support charity, Home-Start’s work is closely aligned with The Promise. At Home Start West Lothian we are committed to the principles of The Promise applying them across all aspects of our work. By fully embracing the Promise and embedding it into our work with families, we’re continually improving our impact, ensuring everything we do is underpinned by children’s rights.

Our Impact

139
Accepted Referrals

134
Families have received 1-1 support

243
Families received essential support through 1-1 and Groups

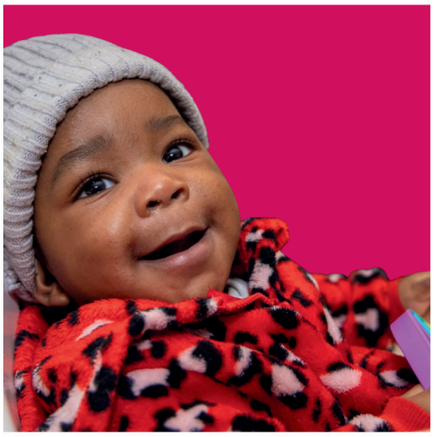
168
Group Sessions delivered

198
Children were supported through our groups

10
Training courses for families and volunteers

Our Support

for the families of West Lothian over the year

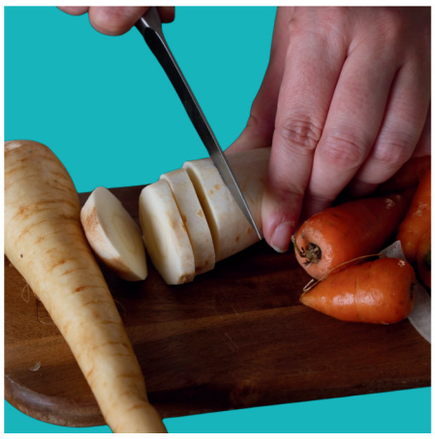


One-to-one home-visiting support provided by a trained volunteer

Volunteers visited families on a weekly basis for 2-3 hours and offered support, friendship and practical assistance, together with help to increase the confidence and resilience of families, precious time for listening and talking, help with the children and support to use local services and resources.
We also signposted our families to other agencies such as financial wellbeing services, clothes bank and foodbank, The Larder, and other charities or public sector services.

Perinatal Support Groups for both antenatal and early post-natal mothers and babies.

These groups ran weekly in 6-week blocks. The weekly sessions covered a range of topics for pregnant or early post-natal mothers to increase confidence and knowledge of key topics. Sessions covered techniques and advice relating to baby calming, baby massage, sleep routines, baby yoga, encouraging positive behaviours, relaxation techniques and fussy eating.



Stay and Play sessions

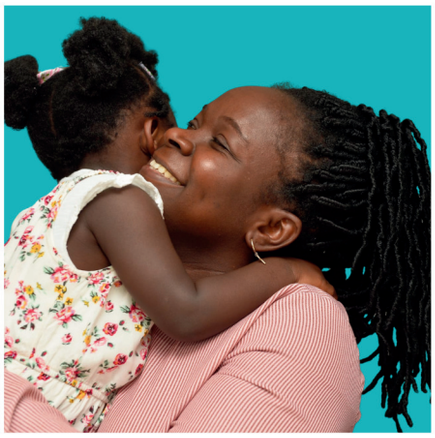
Due to demand for this service we started a new stay and play session in Livingston which added to our existing session in Blackburn. Each of these groups provided space to encourage play to help support childhood development, language, emotional intelligence and regulation, creativity and intellectual reasoning. Activities included Bookbug, art and craft sessions, role play and indoor and outdoor activities.

Wish for Wellbeing

From feedback received, we introduced a new 6-week course – covering stress management techniques, yoga, financial wellbeing advice, healthy eating tips and recipes, self-talk and goal setting.

Walking group for parents and children up to the age of 5

During the good weather we ran a weekly group which offered an opportunity for parents and carers to meet other parents whilst enjoying outdoor exercise with all the associated physical and mental health benefits

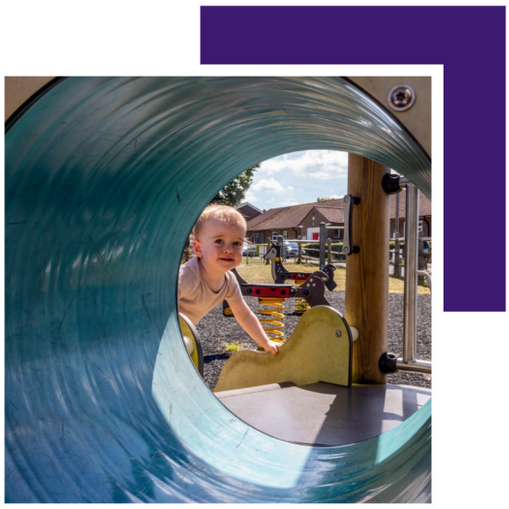


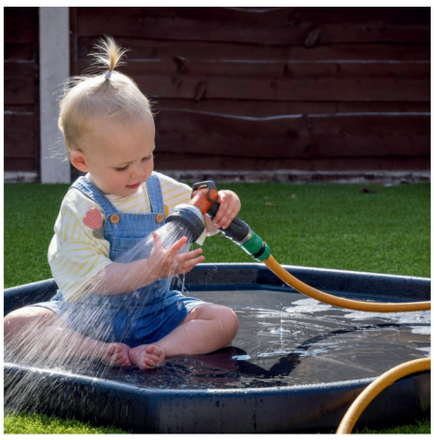
Adult yoga sessions

We offered a monthly yoga session for parents. Parents were able to benefit from a relaxing yoga session, taking part with fellow parents and carers.

Trips and outings for families

We organised a programme of trips and outings which took place during the summer school holidays. This not only gave families the chance to enjoy local attractions and venues such as a soft play, parks, and farm attraction but it also provided families with the opportunity to enjoy quality time together as well as getting to know other local families in a relaxed and enjoyable setting.





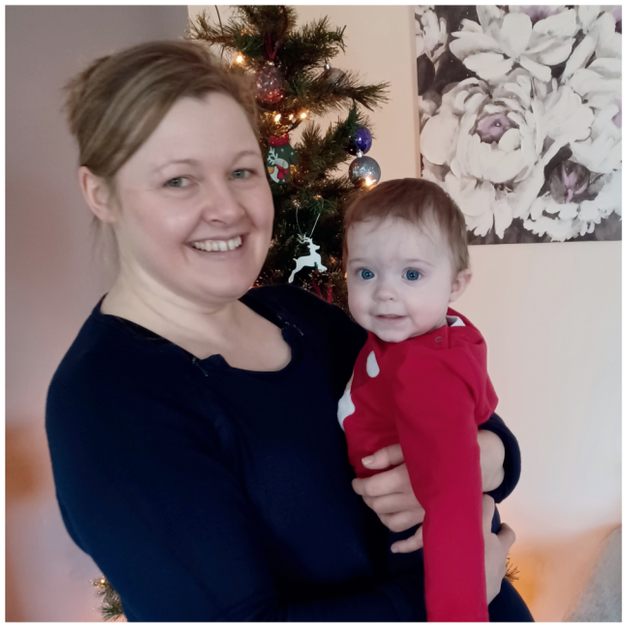
Food vouchers and financial support

Food vouchers and financial support - many shops offered us vouchers over the course of the year and for this we are extremely grateful. These vouchers were given to families who were experiencing financial hardship.

Spotlight On Families

Home-Start has been a nuturing support for my son and I after a traumatic start to motherhood.

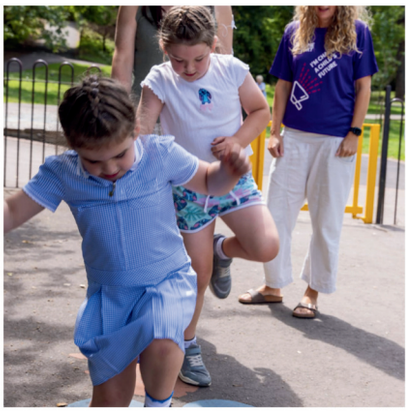
As a primary teacher, with a health visitor as a mum, I felt well prepared for motherhood, which was something I had dreamt about since childhood. However, nothing could have prepared me for the hormonal impact that becoming a mum would have on my coping strategies that I developed for my chronically unsupported and undiagnosed ADHD. After hitting crisis point shortly after giving birth, I ended up being hospitalised. This was not how I expected my journey as a parent to begin, I felf like I'd failed at the first hurdle.



My Family Support Coordinator supported me in rebuilding my confidence that had been shattered and boosted my self-esteem. It was so important to have someone to talk to about what happened to me, I always felt lighter and happier after each of her visits. She worked with me to build my confidence in areas where I really struggled such as preparing meals and organising things around the house. Most of all, she reassured me in my parenting, she delighted with me in my successes and made me feel like I wasn't a failure.

Comments

Having a volunteer come and support me and my children has been wonderful... she makes me feel at ease helps me get organised in aspects I struggle with.



My volunteer is an amazing person and she's became such a big part of mine and my children's lives.

I will always be thankful for my volunteer and what she has brought into my life. She has given me inspiration to love the outdoors again, and that adventure can be found right on your doorstep, you just have to look.

Thank you for all your support and help over the past year it's been incredible.

Having a volunteer has been amazing! It has been extremely helpful and my kids have even made a bond with our volunteer too! It's not only helping them come out their shells but it's helping a lot with how social they are.

Having a volunteer has really helped me get out my comfort zone, she's helped me become more confident getting out into the community with my son, having a volunteer has really benefited my little family a lot.

Financial Overview

£347,317 INCOME

£283,166 EXPENDITURE

Main Funders 2024 - 2025

West Lothian Council

BBC Children in Need

The Robertson Trust

Save the Children

The Henry Smith Charity founded in 1628

The National Lottery

Other funders and donators

Sainsbury's

Co-op

Shin-Etsu

Tesco

Asda

THANK YOU!

We owe our successes to the unwavering commitment of our volunteers, staff, and
supporters. Their dedication and efforts are very much appreciated by all of our stakeholders, but I am sure none more so than the families.

On behalf of the Board I also wanted to extend a thank you to all of our funders and contributors who make it possible to operate. Without your contributions we would not be able to do the work we do – so a big thank you from us all.

I extend heartfelt gratitude to everyone involved in making our work possible.

I look forward to continuing the growth of Home-Start West Lothian and the number of families that we can support.

Scott Coutts
Interim Chair of the Board

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