



## A referrers' guide to the U.K's leading family support service

We have been supporting Reading families with at least one child under 5 years old since 1984. Our support is provided for free and overseen by a professionally run, longstanding local self-funded charity. We believe that children need a happy and secure childhood and that parents play the key role in giving their children a good start in life and helping them achieve their full potential.

### Our main "core" services are:

- weekly home-visiting support, for 2/3 hours, by a trained parent volunteer, overseen by a designated Home-Visiting Co-ordinator,
- weekly group support in the Whitley and Dee Park areas of Reading, overseen by our Family Groups Co-ordinator and Play Leaders.

### We are trained and run targeted group support (when funds allow) in:

- Mums in Mind (supporting the mental health and emotional wellbeing of mums),
- Bump Start (supporting the mental health and emotional wellbeing of pregnant mums),
- Big Hopes Big Future (teaching children necessary skills to be nursery or school ready and showing parents the positive impact that they can have on their child's education),
- Mellow Parenting (attachment based parenting programme),
- Building Family Bridges (helping complex families get nearer to employment).

Home-Start aims to give support to families who may be struggling to cope with a variety of challenges, including a post-natal illness, disability, isolation, the demands of parenting young children, bereavement and multiple births: helping prevent these difficulties from escalating into crises, and crises from developing into family breakdown.

### 1. Qualifying Family

- there must be at least one child under the age of five, **and**
- the family must agree to the Home-Start Reading referral, **and**
- the family must live in the Reading Borough boundary, **and**
- the parent(s) and/or child/ren must have a need eg isolation, parenting, disability etc.

### 2. Families with Social Services involvement with current safeguarding concerns

Local Government cuts are likely to be a contributing factor as to the 40% increase in demand for our service since 2012. In order to manage this and support more families within our financial restrictions, we **cap** the number of families we support who have ongoing social services involvement and who are subject to a Child Protection Plan or Child in Need Plan.

### 3. Inter-Agency Working

Home-Start Reading support is **not** a substitute for statutory services but complementary to them. Best results for families are achieved through active partnership working between professionals. Our expertise, knowledge, and UK-wide network of staff and volunteers can be a valuable resource for professionals alike.

### 4. Who can refer families to Home-Start Reading?

Any professional who works with a family can refer to us by using our referral form. Families who do not have any professional involvement can refer themselves.

### 5. What Home-Start Reading aims to achieve.

- Reduce family isolation and increase social support networks.
- Strengthen parent/child relationship.
- Help improve parents' physical health and emotional wellbeing.
- Help parents to appreciate the joys of parenting and improve parenting skills.
- Help practically with paperwork, budgeting and contacting other services.
- Improve children's health, wellbeing and development.
- Improve access to health and community services.

### 6. Why have confidence in our service?

- The Home-Start national network has been running for over 43 years. Every local Home-Start signs an Agreement which requires them to establish and develop their work in accordance with Home-Start's Standards and Methods of Practice and to follow Home-Start's policies procedures and practice.
- Policies and procedures are in place, followed and regularly updated. Policies include Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children, Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Vulnerable Adults, Confidentiality, Equality, Fairness and Diversity and Health & Safety.
- All volunteers have at least 30 hours of initial training (option to accredit at level 2) and on-going training including annual safeguarding updates and full children' safeguarding training every three years.
- There is on-going external and internal research into our model and the lasting impact that it can have on our families.
- Home-Start Reading has a strong staff and Trustee team with professional backgrounds, which include Family Law, Mental Health, Nursing, Education, Health Visiting, Probation and the Police Service.
- Home-Start Schemes go through a regular Quality Assurance system every three/four years. Home-Start Reading scored 100% in 2014 and we are due the next full QA review in December 2017. Home-Start Reading will soon carry the RVA Safe and Sound quality mark.
- We are fully insured. We have Employers' Liability, Public Liability, Professional Indemnity and Trustee Indemnity cover in place.

## Testimonials

### What our referrer's have said:

*"I have referred at least two ladies to you within the last 9 months and will continue to refer and support Home-Start Reading as I feel it is such a worthwhile organisation and is greatly received by professionals and families alike. Thank you."*  
Health Visitor 2016

*"Please see attached referral for the next Mums in Mind group. Hopefully you will be able to get funding as I have had excellent feedback regarding this group from all the mums I have referred."*  
Health Visitor 2016

### What our families have said:

*"R gave me immense support and guidance. She didn't impose her ideas, just supported me. I looked forward to her coming. We would chat about so much - my family and my culture. She was the only other person I could trust to look after my baby. I'm going to miss her."* (End visit 42.15 2/8/16).

*"The best part of our experience was knowing that P was coming. It felt that all my stress evaporated the minute she walked into my house."* (End visit JR 62.10 26.09.16)

*"B was very friendly and easy to talk to. Knowing someone was there and happy to help was very reassuring for me."* (End Visit 14.16 - 19.10.16)

*End visit: "E is no longer the shy girl that she was and is now much more confident. She has settled well in school and really loves it. I am sure this is greatly down to R's support. We really miss her now the project has ended for us."* (11.16 4/11/16 re BHBF)

*"She has been a God send and has given me so much confidence. I got a boost from her just in the first couple of weeks. I have now joined a music groups and even started building bridges with my mum."* (23.16 20.2.17)

*"C gave me constant support - I never felt let down or alone. C has dragged me from my knees to my feet! She has attended appointments with me and given me the confidence to go alone. She has filled the "emptiness" that my condition caused. I now feel that my goals are achievable and I have a more positive future to look forward to."* (End visit: 31.15 2/3/17)

*"Mums in Mind has helped me feel liberated! For a long time I felt like I wasn't depressed enough to get treatment. I guess I was suffering in silence. I feel so much more positive about the future. The course has changed my thoughts and my thinking around mental health and it has helped me become a much better mum."* (96.16 2.3.2017 Evaluation Form)

### What our volunteers have said:

*"The Preparation course has helped me learn a lot about myself and how to help people in difficult situations. I now feel fully prepared and know I will always have support when I need it."*  
New volunteer from our October - November 2016 course

*"The hardest part about the Prep course was thinking I might not be up to the job, but I have now gained more self-confidence."*  
New volunteer from our October - November 2016 course

### What our funders have said:

*"...it was very valuable to experience, first hand, how much the families get out of the activities and the interactions that they have with the group. It certainly made us recognise how important the funds raised through children in need can be to projects such as yours."*  
Boots the Chemist and Children in Need