

**Home-Start West Somerset supported
and helped 505 families**

505
families



**HOME
START**

**West Somerset
Annual Review
Sept 2024 - Sept 2025**

**Our challenge:
childhood can't wait**

Home-Start West Somerset is a local community network of trained volunteers and expert support helping families with young children through challenging times. That means we're there for parents when they need us most, because childhood can't wait.

**Our solution:
making early years count**

Today, families face more pressures than ever. And the services that could help them are stretched or non-existent. Without stable homes, young children won't build the foundations they need to thrive as adults. We work alongside parents to help them regain their confidence.

How we do it: Helping parents be the best they can be. There's no judgement, just compassionate, confidential help and expert support. Starting in the home, our approach is as individual as the families we work with.

Offering Support, friendship and practical help to families with young children in their own home...

Family Activity Groups:

A variety of family led-activities, A variety of family led activities, from community-based events, encouraging families to explore our local area to Story Start, supporting parents to read with their babies and young children.

“Home-Start can help transform lives with the specialist support they are able to offer families with young children. With a large workforce, many of whom spend a lot of time away from home, I have no doubt that their assistance in helping some of our colleagues on the Project would be hugely beneficial. As such, I am happy to commend Home-Start and hope this will enable them to achieve their vision to expand the services they offer.”

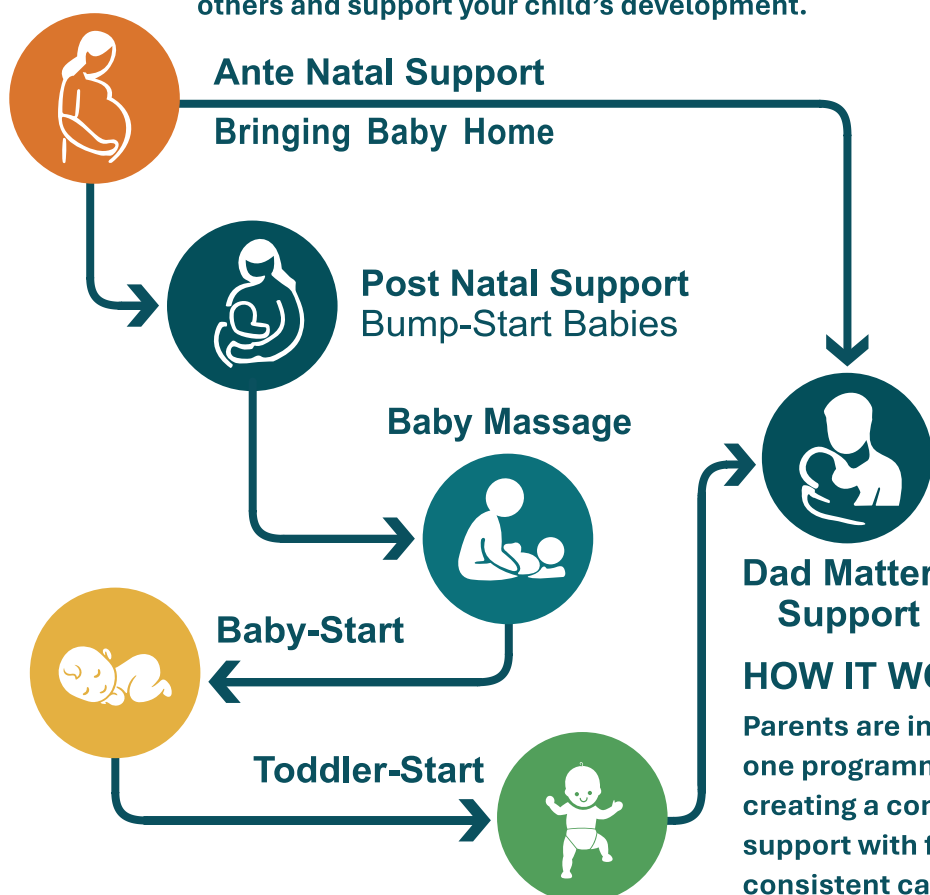
**Justine Goff: HPC Mental Health
& Wellbeing Programme Lead**



THE GROWING TOGETHER PATHWAY

A CONNECTED JOURNEY OF SUPPORT FROM PREGNANCY TO TODDLERHOOD

Welcoming a baby is a life-changing journey — and you don't have to take it alone. Our Growing Together Pathway offers a supportive, friendly and expert-led series of programmes for parents and baby from pregnancy to age two. Each step is designed to build confidence, connect with others and support your child's development.



HOW IT WORKS

Parents are invited to move from one programme to the next, creating a continuous journey of support with familiar faces and consistent care throughout.

Parenting Pathway (0–2 years):

A structured and supportive journey for new parents, beginning during pregnancy and continuing through toddlerhood.

1. **Ante Natal Support** – Preparing expectant parents for birth and the early days of parenting. Get ready for birth and beyond with essential guidance, emotional support, and practical tools.
2. **Bringing Baby Home** – Immediate postnatal support focusing on the transition home and early bonding. Helping you settle into life with a newborn — with support for feeding, sleep, and early bonding.
3. **Post Natal Support** – Bump-Start Babies (Drop-In Group) – A casual group offering peer support and expert advice for parents and babies. Continued emotional and practical support in the early weeks. A relaxed space to connect with other parents, chat with experts, and share the ups and downs of early parenthood.
4. **Baby Massage** – Strengthening parent-infant bonds through nurturing touch and relaxation techniques. Gentle techniques to strengthen your baby's development and deepen your bond through touch.
5. **Baby-Start** – Support for the first exciting months — focusing on play, routine, development and parental well-being. Supporting developmental milestones and parent confidence in the early baby months.
6. **Toddler-Start** – For growing little ones and growing challenges — we explore behaviour, communication, and toddler independence. Focusing on toddler development, behaviour, and growing independence.
7. **Dad Matters Support** – Dedicated support for dads, integrated across the pathway, to ensure inclusive parenting support. Dads are supported, included, and connected every step of the way.



bumpstart

Support through
pregnancy, birth
and beyond

Through our Bump-Start programme, we offer expectant parents knowledge, empowerment and skills to support their new family. This is offered through a variety of antenatal workshops, 1:1 encouragement and



“I felt very good during the Real Birth sessions, I could ask any questions I wanted, there was a lot of useful knowledge about the process during birth and well-being during pregnancy.”

“Real Birth sessions helped my confidence in preparing for the baby and how to care for them. It also gave me a good insight into birth and what to really expect.”



to mum, to baby, to everyone...

Supporting dads to have the best possible relationships with their families

“It was good to have someone independent I could easily call on, where the focus was on me as an individual coping as a Dad, and who would not judge.”

“Dad Matters was the only one around I felt was on my side and I could talk to.”

23
families



Baby Massage

Discover the amazing benefits of baby massage led by certified instructors and make lasting friendships.

72
families



“Due to reflux my daughter struggles with being laid flat, Caroline was always calm and reassuring if she got upset.”

“The massage was a great way to bond with my baby and she really enjoys what I have learnt and we really enjoy our moments together.”

Baby-Start

A Montessori Inspired Programme
for Families with Babies
0-12 months

78
families



“This group has been the highlight of my week! We absolutely love it. It has given us so many ideas of things to do at home and my baby really enjoys the activities. I love that the group is small and have some similar activities each week, such as songs and stories. I wish it could continue forever, thank you Hayley.”

“Me and my baby have loved the sessions with Hayley. My baby loved the interactions with songs and play. This has given me so much confidence with playing, and I have been surprised by the great handouts from each session. We will continue to use everything we have learned forever. Thank you, I wish it was continuing and not sure what to do after.”





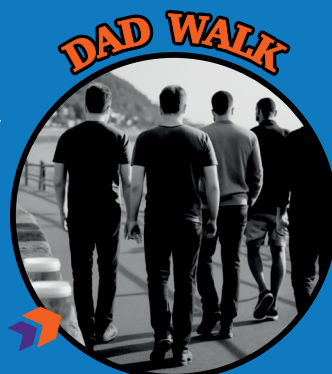
to mum, to baby, to everyone...

Supporting dads from the perinatal stage to 5 years to have the best possible relationships with their families

Report from "Dad Matters" co-ordinator Dan:

As a Dad Coordinator in West Somerset, my goal is to create a welcoming community where dads can come together, learn from one another, and enjoy new experiences. I'm passionate about coming up with a variety of ideas to encourage involvement and build connections that support everyone's growth.

Some of the activities I organise include dad walks, where we enjoy a walk, have a good chat, share a laugh, and then maybe stop off for a pint. I also run pop-up barber shops in the local area, offering dads the chance to get a haircut, have a friendly chat, and feel comfortable opening up if they want to.



In addition, I provide one-to-one support for those who might need a bit of extra help. Sometimes, as a dad, it can be hard to know exactly what your role is or what to expect, especially with so much media around making it look like dads don't struggle. I believe it's really helpful to hear from real dads about their experiences, what works, and what they've learned along the way — all in a relaxed, friendly environment.

My focus is on creating positive, supportive spaces where dads can meet, share, and feel part of a community that cares. It's all about coming together, having a good time, and supporting each other along the way.

"I can tell that you are very honest and genuine and that you mean everything you say, that makes it very easy to talk to you"



23
families



THE DAD BARBER PROJECT

It's more than just pop-up barber shops.

its all about creating a relaxed, friendly space where dads can connect, have a chat, and build a supportive community.



"I was worried to begin with talking about my issues as I know you, but I am finding it extremely helpful. You are very knowledgeable and caring, which is exactly what I need. You are a great man, who is very good at what you do and I just want to thank you for everything you are doing for me"



bumpstart®

Support through
pregnancy, birth
and beyond

Increased confidence in their parenting improved from **63% to 95%**

Improved well-being of the parents improved from **63% to 98%**

The positive impact on Homelife improved from **86% to 95%**

The progress and development of their child improved from **68% to 93%**

Through our Bump-Start programme, we offer expectant parents knowledge, empowerment and skills to support their new family. This is offered through a variety of antenatal workshops, 1:1 encouragement and postnatal baby groups.

Antenatal (Real Birth Workshops RBW) & Baby Massage groups

Coordinators Theresa Finglass & Caroline Lovell

Antenatal (RBW)

Overall, these groups have gone exceptionally well this year. We are in regular contact with all the community Midwives who refer new mums to our Antenatal educational sessions (RBW) that we offer. Equally we have a lot of self-referral expectant mums to be as well.

“Made to feel very welcome with plenty of time to ask questions which all were answered well. A safe space and well-structured course.”

“I wanted to come back again to Homestart to start Antenatal as being heavily pregnant and very tired I needed a reminder of what to expect when I go into labour as I had forgotten a lot of it also had a previously traumatic birth with my first baby, Theresa and Caroline gave me a lot of reassurance that every birth is different and helped me to relax more in preparation for my second birth cannot thank them enough”

Baby Massage

Increased confidence in their parenting improved from **51% to 85%**

Improved well-being of the parents improved from **52% to 86%**

The positive impact on Homelife improved from **56% to 86%**

The progress and development of their child improved from **48% to 89%**

- Helps your baby relax
- Regulates sleep patterns
- Enhances bonding relationship
- Reduces stress levels
- Boosts the immune system
- Relieves wind and constipation



Bump-Start Babies

- Infant feeding
- Weaning
- Sleeping
- Baby sensory
- Friendship



“We look forward to coming to this group every week. I've met some lovely friends”

“The group is very beneficial both for myself and my baby. They are friendly and welcoming, this is a great place to come and socialise whilst allowing my baby time to mix with others.

We love the resources and Caroline is always available for support and advice”

“Coming to group has helped my confidence and has helped me to get out of the house”



Baby-Start

A Montessori Inspired Programme for Families
with Babies 0-12 months

Just a quick case study

“This spring cohort a volunteer supported the Baby-Start Session with extra hands with refreshments and care and interaction for the families.

The volunteer has also signed up to support the next cohort as she enjoyed the sessions so much and is also enthusiastically signed up for the Baby-Start Practitioner Training this Autumn.

The volunteer was experienced with families who are vulnerable and was able to target her care towards a family in need.

The family and volunteer built a relationship over the last 6 weeks and the family have asked for help leading to a match.

The volunteer is able to commit to this and we discussed the needs and they can be met through group and direct support.”

Have fun with your baby while making friends too!

- Sing Family Songs and Rhymes
- Share Books and Stories
- Learn about your Baby's Development Journey
- Make a Lasting Memory with Baby Footprints on Canvas
- Share Ideas for Making Discovery Treasure Baskets
- Learn about Preparing Baby Friendly Spaces



Increased confidence in their parenting improved from **57% to 97%**

Improved well-being of the parents improved from **63% to 97%**

The positive impact on Homelife improved from **67% to 99%**

The progress and development of their child improved from **67% to 99%**



Toddler Start is our exciting new two-part programme for toddlers and parents, and the conclusion of our 'Growing Together Pathway'.

Through Toddler Start we explore the magic of toddler brain science and help parents find playful ways to handle tantrums. Parenting isn't about perfection – it's about connection and through Toddler Start parents discover new ways of connecting with their toddler.

Parents build their confidence (and their child's) and friendships grow between adults and between toddlers! It really is a fun and informative group.

Toddler Start

A six week programme designed to enhance your toddler's communication and physical skills and prepare you for life with a two year old!

Suitable for parents / carers of 1-2 year olds

Part 1 12-18 months

Part 2 18-24 months



Increased confidence in their parenting improved from **75% to 90%**

Improved well-being of the parents improved from **80% to 90%**

The positive impact on Homelife improved from **80% to 80%**

The progress and development of their child improved from **65% to 92%**

“Thank you so much for today's session. We both felt very welcome in your group. It was a lovely balance between free play and structured activities as well singing on top. Amazing! We really had a lovely morning of fun with you. Looking forward to the next one!”



Project Overview

The purpose of the project is to raise the quality of provision of Montessori-inspired, child-centred programmes of engagement for families, parents and children across West Somerset through the provision of Home-Start initiatives.

This will be achieved by the Recipient using Baby-Start as a leading programme of work; inspiring other projects, initiatives and programmes to be led by the Home Start West Somerset team.

'On the 16th of May 2025 Family Support Coordinator Hayley travelled to London to represent Home-Start West Somerset at Nursery World's Big Day Out.

The event and invitation were due to our endorsement and collaborative work with Montessori Global Education and Hayley spoke at the conference alongside Karen Chetwynd their CEO about Partnership working and the innovative way in which we share our best practice through our service.

We were the Home-Start Charity present at the event and Hayley waved the flag to promote West Somerset and our challenges, such as having such a large area to cover, rural barriers and how we have overcome them to achieve great outcomes.'

'Hayley continues to develop the journey with Baby-Start and has involved Home-Start volunteers in groups and the upcoming practitioner training pilot, which begins in September. The aim is to ensure the legacy of Baby-Start at HSWS and within our community.

Hayley has also developed another pilot programme this year called 'Montessori Moments – Prepared Environments', with the first session held at our base in Alcombe and then it will travel to Williton, Minehead's Little Fishes group and Dulverton across our area. This is a parenting style programme that follows Montessori practices with themes linked to Baby-Start condensed featuring a focus on 'Parents as their Child's first Educators'.

The hope is to bring enrichment and wellbeing for families accessing our Pathway, with a solid foundation in empowering parents to be present and mindful in their family life'.

'Home-Start West Somerset Cannington in the Spring with our Pathway of Baby-Massage with Bump-Start Lead Caroline and followed this with a course of Baby-Start. Hayley arranged for a volunteer linked to the community in Cannington to be present for the duration of her sessions and this inspired the opening of an ongoing Baby-Group in Cannington. This has now become a toddler group as their babies have grown, and we are now looking back to our Pathway to offer the community Toddler Start to inspire their volunteer and family leads.

Following on from this model that has previously worked in Stogursey too, we will look next to Dulverton!'



Hayley representing Home-Start West Somerset at Nursery World's Big Day Out in London



Home-Start West Somerset would like to thank

HPC
Community Lottery
Somerset Community
Foundation
Somerset Community Learning
Montessori
Somerset NHS survey results
NFU Donation Williton
NFU Donation Taunton
Somerset Masons
Fairfield Trust

Somerset County
Clarks
Sainsbury
Avon & Somerset Police
The City Charity Trust –
Macpherson Fund
Xmoor Rox
Maureen Whitmore
Brendon Hill Methodist Church
Minehead Panto People
West Somerset Garden Centre

Dunster Winter Festival
West Quantoxhead Church
Jo's Upper Room
Mr and Mrs Dewhurst
Brushford PCC
Dorothy Whitney Elmhirst Trust
Minehead Methodist Church
Coffee Beans café
Minehead Parochial Church
John Freegard heating
Upton Village

A sincere thank you to everyone who came to buy plants, drink tea, eat cake and especially to the plant team who, in no small measure made the day a huge success.



The Plant Sale at Minehead Methodist Church on Saturday May 10th to raise funds to continue the services and support that it offers to families with young children across the whole of West Somerset. There was lots of continuous activity throughout the plant sale itself with the plant team on hand to offer their guidance and advice on the different plants available. The kitchen team deftly poured drinks and made sure all that had enough sustenance to carry on selecting plants. Outside the Church the Queen and Princesses of cupcakes tempted the crowd with their offerings.

Home Start also extends their sincere thanks to Minehead Methodist Church for hosting us again and to the volunteers, helpers and Trustees who gave their time to bake, plant, lift and carry. We would also like to thank other people who kindly donated plants, planters or their time promoting this event.

Nearly £1500 was raised. Thank you all.



This quilt was a gift to Home-start West Somerset.

Project Linus UK is a network of volunteer needlewomen throughout the UK, Whose aim is to provide comfort and cheer to babies, children and teenagers who are sick of distressed.

Thank you to Project Linus

Volunteers at
Minehead Bay
Festival



ALCOMBE Children Centre

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