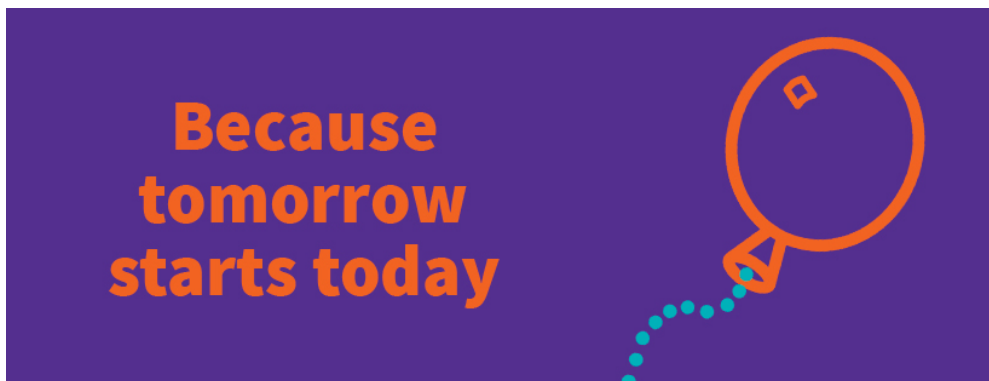




OUR CASE FOR SUPPORT 2026



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Introduction

For over 41 years, Home-Start Newark have been operating in our local communities, providing vital, free support to hundreds of families facing disadvantage with young children. Founded on the belief that "the best start in life begins at home," our charity has spent over four decades refining a model of peer-to-peer support that is as simple as it is transformative.

We are an independent, locally governed charity, though we benefit from our affiliation with the national Home-Start UK network. This unique position allows us to combine national expertise and rigorous quality standards with a deep, nuanced understanding of the Newark and Sherwood community. We recognise that the first five years of a child's life are the most critical for their neurological, emotional, and physical development. By supporting and enabling parents during this period, we are not just solving a short-term crisis; we are altering the trajectory of a child's life and, by extension, the future of our local society.

Executive Summary

Home-Start Newark provides free, confidential, and non-judgmental support to families with at least one child under the age of five. Our mission is to strengthen the family unit, recognising it as the primary catalyst for a child's well-being. We operate through three primary pillars: our **Home Visiting Service**, our **Family Group Sessions**, and our **Step Up for School** early learning initiative.

Currently, we are facing a pivotal moment. While our impact has grown - supporting 83 families and 141 children in the last year alone, our funding landscape has become increasingly precarious. This document serves as a comprehensive case for why continued and increased investment in Home-Start Newark is both a moral and economic necessity for Nottinghamshire.

Our Core Values

Our way of working is different from statutory services. **We work with parents to improve outcomes for their children through three core services: Home Visiting support, Family Groups sessions, and early learning development support.**

Parent-Led, Not Guided

We are led by the family's goals. We do not enter a home with a pre-set agenda. Instead, we work on supporting and enabling parents to identify what they want to change. Whether it is improving their mental health, managing the challenges of lone parenting, or establishing a better bedtime routine, the parent remains the expert in their own life.

The Power of Friendship

While statutory services provide essential formal frameworks for family welfare, Home-Start Newark adds unique value by offering a complementary, relationship-based layer of development support. We provide "friendship with a purpose," acting as an informal bridge that helps families navigate the wider range of services available to them.

Our Home Visiting Volunteers offer a listening ear and an extra pair of hands, which can reduce the feelings of overwhelm often associated with seeking help. This supportive, non-judgmental presence helps to build parental confidence, making it easier for families to engage positively with health visitors, schools, and other professional agencies. By providing this early, consistent support, we enhance the local ecosystem of care, ensuring families feel supported and enabled rather than merely processed.

We believe that every child deserves the best possible start in life, and we work tirelessly to empower parents to create brighter futures for their children. **Our goal is to create a ripple effect of positive change within families, enabling them to become their own best source of support. We believe that by investing in families, including those with children of all ages, we are investing in the future of our community.**

We believe that by investing in families, including those with children of all ages who benefit from our wider household impact, we are investing in the collective future of Newark and Sherwood.



Home-Start Newark's charitable AIMS are:

- To safeguard, protect and preserve the good health, both mental and physical of children and parents of children;
- to prevent cruelty to or maltreatment of children;
- to relieve sickness, poverty and need amongst children and parents of children;
- to promote the education of the public in better standards of child care within the area of Newark and its environs.

The Landscape of Need:

Newark and Sherwood District

Newark and Sherwood is a district of stark contrasts. While some areas are affluent, others fall within the highest deciles of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD).

Home-Start Newark works directly with families experiencing social and economic disadvantage, in the context of family life.



Many families in Newark and the surrounding areas experience significant and often overlapping challenges. Some of the most regular issues we provide development support for include: isolation and loneliness, poverty, increasingly complex housing needs, mental health difficulties, physical health needs, disability within the family, domestic abuse, lone parenting, a lack of support networks, parenting skills, and behaviour management. We also focus on helping families learn to manage finances, supporting children's early learning and development, and enabling families to access vital local and national services.

Within this context, we recognise that mental health challenges are rarely a simple byproduct of the "stress of parenting." Instead, most of our families bring established, pre-existing mental health histories into parenthood. The unique and relentless pressures of managing a household, often compounded by poverty and social isolation, frequently exacerbate these pre-existing conditions. Our Home Visiting Service focuses on supporting and enabling parents to manage their long-term well-being alongside the practicalities of raising a family. By acknowledging the parent as a "whole person" with an existing health journey, we ensure that their mental health history does not define their child's future.

We are currently observing a significant increase in housing-related distress, ranging from substandard living conditions to the threat of homelessness. These challenges, when combined with limited transport options in our more rural communities, can have a profound and lasting impact on a child's development and well-being. By supporting and enabling parents to navigate these crises, such as by acting as a bridge to housing associations or helping them articulate their needs to the local authority, we ensure that a family's circumstances do not dictate a child's future.

As part of this, we work closely with our local council and another charity in supporting migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in our area, offering a slightly adapted core service to better meet their needs.

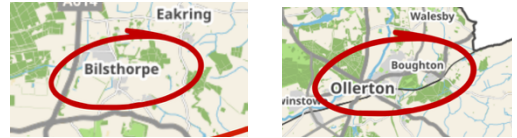
- **Mental Health:** 63% of our families identify mental health as their primary struggle.
- **Isolation:** 60% of families report feeling socially isolated, often with no local family network to rely on.
- **Economic Strain:** 33% of families require direct **development support** regarding financial management and poverty relief.

"I have found the work from Home-Start Newark volunteers and those that make it possible for the coffee morning sessions, to have been invaluable for the families that I have referred in over the years."
Lisa Moran NSDC Tenancy Officer



The Geographic Expansion:

Ollerton, Boughton, and Bilsthorpe



In 2022, Home-Start Newark recognised that families in the rural north of the district were being left behind.

The Rural Challenge

Ollerton, Boughton, and Bilsthorpe are areas of high social deprivation with "transport poverty." With only 60% of residents owning a car and limited bus links, families are often trapped in their villages, unable to access the central services in Newark.

Success of the Expansion

In the initial 18-month pilot:

- 23 families referred, 17 of which engaged and were offered significant support
- 4 new volunteers were recruited specifically from these local communities.
- The service provided a "lifeline" to families who previously had zero access to early years support.

The Funding Cliff

The cost of this specific expansion is approximately **£28,000** per annum. While we receive some support from Newark & Sherwood District Council, we currently face a significant shortfall in funding for this service.

Service Provision

Home-Start Newark offers a unique blend of support services:

- I. **Home Visiting Service:** Our trained parent volunteers provide weekly home visits, offering practical and emotional support tailored to each family's needs.
- II. **Family Group Sessions:** Our welcoming Family Group provides a safe and supportive environment for parents and children to connect, play, and access resources and support.
- III. **Step Up for School:** This program helps families prepare their children for early education, fostering a love of learning and building parental confidence.

Service Provision I: The Home Visiting Service

The **Home Visiting Service** is our core offering. It involves matching a trained volunteer with a family for a minimum of one hour of support per week.

Parents of young children face numerous challenges in navigating the complexities of child development and providing the best possible care. Our home visiting service recognises these needs and works in partnership with families to overcome the obstacles they encounter.

Through weekly visits, our volunteers offer invaluable support, supporting and enabling parents to achieve incremental and sustainable positive changes that benefit the entire family. The long-term nature of our service, typically for a period of 9-12 months, fosters genuine relationships between families and volunteers, allowing for organic and meaningful transformation.

For instance, volunteers might assist parents struggling with mental health by encouraging them to leave the house more frequently with their children. This could involve accompanying them to a local baby/toddler group until they feel comfortable attending independently.

Volunteers may also provide support during challenging situations such as counselling appointments (caring for the child while the parent attends) or difficult meetings with housing, benefits, or financial agencies. In these instances, volunteers can help parents articulate their needs, take notes, and remember crucial information.

Challenges faced by families are multifaceted and can include financial difficulties, housing concerns, establishing healthy family routines, and building a strong social support network. Our support empowers parents to enhance their knowledge, skills, and confidence, ultimately reducing the need for ongoing volunteer support.

The Volunteer Journey

Volunteers are recruited from the local community, ensuring they understand the local context. They undergo an intensive training programme covering safeguarding, boundaries, child development, and active listening. This ensures that when they enter a home, they are equipped to provide professional-grade support within a peer-based relationship. All volunteers are parents in their own right – which brings key skills and experience to the relationship.



The Impact of Home Visiting

By providing this service, we can prevent issues from escalating to the point of statutory Social Services intervention. Our volunteers help with:

- Practical tasks (attending appointments, weaning, play).
- Emotional support (parental confidence, coping with lone parenting).
- Bridging the gap to other services (Healthcare, DWP, Specialist Mental Health units).

Our key aim is to improve the quality of life of children, helping to maximising their potential, by working with their parents to help them grow their coping skills, boosting their confidence and resilience, and giving them the tools they need to manage family life in sometimes very challenging circumstances.

Data from the 2024/25 period demonstrates our. Our service resulted in a significant reduction in needs reported by families at the end of their support. These include:

- 76% reduction in families reporting a need for support with their own mental health.
- 67% reduction in families reporting feelings of isolation.
- 67% reduction in families reporting a need for support with parenting skills.
- 78% reduction in families reporting a need for support with their child's speech, language, and communication development.
- 61% reduction in families reporting a need for support with parental self-esteem.
- 100% reduction in families reporting a need for help accessing appropriate services.

These figures show a significant decrease in needs among families at the end of our support, demonstrating the project's success.

The overall impact is a more resilient family unit, better equipped to handle challenges, with improved parental mental health and enhanced child development. Our support also helps reduce feelings of isolation and helps parents cope with low mood, stress, and anxiety.

"When I was first referred, I felt so alone with my twins. My volunteer didn't come in and tell me what to do; she just listened and helped me get out of the house. She enabled me to find my own confidence again. Without Home-Start, I don't know where my mental health would be today." Lone Parent, Newark



Service Provision II: Family Group Sessions



Our twice weekly Family Group Sessions operate in central Newark and provide a safe, communal space for families who have an identified need for support and/or may lack the confidence to access mainstream "stay and play" groups.

Family Group runs 50 weeks of the year. Sessions run from 10am – 11.30am, they are run with volunteer helpers and currently two members of staff. Volunteer helpers will support in the kitchen and also in running activities and engaging with children and families.

Structure of Development Support

Rather than a standard "session," we provide comprehensive **development support**. This includes:

- **A Healthy Breakfast:** Addressing immediate food poverty and modelling and promoting healthy eating.
- **Professional Presence:** Having two trained staff members on-site to provide "in-the-moment" advice.
- **Peer Connection:** Reducing the isolation of lone parenting by connecting parents with others in similar situations.

During school holidays the sessions are extended to include older siblings, who are invited to attend Family Group on a registration basis (due to limited numbers). Again, this is a support element that benefits the entire family group.

Once a year, the charity arranges for a summer outing, where all parents and children are invited to attend. This usually involves a coach trip to a local attraction, where families can enjoy time some special time away from their usual environment.

These outings are a vital component of our development support, as they provide a rare opportunity for families to share new experiences and make lasting memories together. For many of the families we work with, the financial and logistical barriers of travel mean such trips would otherwise be out of reach. By providing this inclusive opportunity, we are supporting and enabling parents to bond with their children in a relaxed, joyful setting, while also sharing experiences with their peers. These shared moments are

fundamental to building family resilience and creating a sense of belonging within the community.

The Impact of Family Group

Family Group Sessions, reduce social isolation and many families currently lack access to social interaction opportunities for themselves and their children. Playgroups and parent-toddler groups are scarce and often require access to a car to reach, further isolating families who may not have reliable transportation.

Social isolation significantly impacts the development and well-being of both children and their parents. For children, limited social interaction can hinder crucial social and emotional development. Children learn to interact with others, share, and cooperate through play and social interaction with peers. Positive social experiences boost children's self-esteem and confidence in their abilities to interact with others. Social interaction also helps children learn to understand and manage their emotions, such as frustration, anger, and sadness.

For parents, social isolation can lead to feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and depression. Lack of social interaction limits access to support, advice, and emotional support from other parents. The constant demands of parenting can be overwhelming, and social isolation can exacerbate these feelings. Limited social connections can also hinder access to essential services and support networks.

Weekly Family Group sessions offer opportunities for children to play and interact with other children, while parents can connect with other adults. Beyond the core development support provided within the group, we actively facilitate community integration through a variety of structured activities. These include guided visits to the local park and trips to the library, where we support and enable parents to sign their children up for library memberships, fostering an early love of literacy and a sense of community ownership.

To provide a holistic approach to family well-being, we also host various external specialists within our Family Group Sessions. Families benefit from sessions involving music and baby yoga, which are specifically chosen to enhance child development and parental bonding. Furthermore, we invite partners such as the Family Hub to attend, allowing families to access statutory and specialist advice in a trusted, informal setting. By bringing these services directly to the families, we are enabling those who might otherwise feel overwhelmed by formal appointments to receive the development support they need. These interactions allow parents to learn from each other, share experiences, and build lasting confidence in their parenting abilities.

Family group has...

"Helped us with socialising. The kids have come on loads since coming"
"Provided us with a safe space for all families to join together"



Service Provision III: Step Up for School



Educational inequality begins long before a child reaches the classroom. Children who have had fewer early learning opportunities are often significantly behind their peers by the age of five. **Step Up for School** is embedded across all our services, ensuring that school readiness is a consistent thread throughout a family's journey with us.

Preparing for Early Education

We work with parents to foster a love of learning through play, reading, and the establishment of healthy routines. By supporting and enabling parents to gain confidence in their role as a child's "first teacher," we ensure children are emotionally, socially, and developmentally ready for the transition to school.

To ensure high standards of delivery, specialised information and resources for this programme are included as a core part of our Home Visiting Volunteer onboarding programme. We further embed this by ensuring school readiness is a standing item in regular support meetings between volunteers and staff, allowing for ongoing refinement of the support provided in the home.

The programme is also a vital component of our Family Group Sessions. Our dedicated Step Up For School worker attends these sessions regularly, providing direct development support to parents and children. Crucially, they also work alongside our group staff and volunteers to embed early learning goals into the group's fabric, ensuring every activity contributes to a child's transition to education.

Addressing the National Crisis (2025 Data)

School readiness remains a primary concern in national media. Recent data from September 2025 indicates that schools are increasingly "picking up the pieces" for children starting reception without key skills (BBC, Sept 2025):

- **Toileting:** 85% of teachers reported reception pupils needing help with the toilet; 33% have at least five such children in their class.
- **Communication:** 92% reported a decrease in speech and language abilities over the last two years.

When children are not school ready, vital educational time is lost to basic care. Step Up for School proactively addresses this by supporting and enabling parents to gain confidence as their child's "first teacher."

Community Outreach: A Light-Touch Gateway

Recognising that not every family requires intensive intervention, we offer a dedicated **Step Up For School Outreach Service**. This "light-touch" model enables us to offer our expertise in a variety of accessible formats, reaching families who may not otherwise access our more in-depth services.

Our outreach worker visits various "sites" across the community, including toddler groups, baby groups, and food hubs, in areas such as Ollerton and Balderton. During these visits, the worker provides free information and resources on school readiness, engages in supportive conversations with parents, and offers signposting to additional services. This flexible approach ensures we are meeting families where they are, providing early-stage development support that can prevent larger challenges from developing.



New resources obtained from ParentKind, INJAPTG showing benefits of attending groups and a hints and tips guide to starting reception.



It is apparent when speaking to parents that one of the main hurdles they face is toilet training. We get a lot of questions about when to start, how to start, and parents struggle to fit this milestone in in their busy lives. We provide advice and practical resources to support families with this.

The growth in family engagements within the Step Up For School programme is a clear indicator of its necessity within Newark and Sherwood:

- **2023:** 65 engagements with local families.
- **2024:** 106 engagements with local families.
- **2025:** 141 engagements with local families.

This represents a **117% increase in engagements** over just three years. This growth proves that our method of integrating early learning into the home environment is resonating with the community. We are not just providing resources; we are enabling

parents to create a home culture that values education, which in turn reduces the long-term pressure on local primary schools and statutory educational support services.

Our Impact:

We are proud of the positive impact we have on families. Our services empower parents, reduce isolation, improve mental health, and enhance children's development.



'The first words book you gave us last time she absolutely loves it and we read through it most days. Her speech is really improving!' Parent, Newark (Nov 2025)

Service Delivery Outcomes

In 2023/24, the charity supported 83 families (141 children). This comprised 33 families who received home visiting support, 43 families who attended our weekly family group sessions, and includes 7 families who received both services.

Securing funding for our home visiting service is crucial to its continued success and the well-being of the families we serve.

Home visiting offers a unique and invaluable support system for parents navigating the challenges of early parenthood.

- **Improved Parent-Child Relationships:** Home visits provide a safe and supportive space for parents to build stronger bonds with their children. Volunteers can offer non-judgment supportive space where parents can share any concerns and volunteers can provide information and support to parents within the security of this relationship, to enable them to find ways forward that fit their family.
- **Enhanced Child Development:** Home visits can significantly impact a child's early development. Volunteers can support parents in creating stimulating and enriching environments for their children, encouraging early learning and development through play and interaction.
- **Improved Parental Mental Health:** The challenges of parenthood can take a toll on pre-existing mental health conditions. Home visits provide emotional support, reduce feelings of isolation, and empower parents to cope with low mood, stress and anxiety.

- **Increased Access to Support:** Home visitors can connect families with essential resources and services, such as healthcare, childcare, and community support programs. This ensures that families have the necessary support to thrive.
- **Empowerment and Self-Reliance:** Home visits empower parents to build their confidence, develop their parenting skills, and make informed decisions about their children's well-being. This fosters a sense of self-reliance and enables families to navigate both current and future challenges more effectively.



"And guess what...I have been awarded PIP too. I got over a thousand pound put into my bank last night and honestly, I cannot stop crying - but its happy tears for once. I feel like I am finally out of that dark hole and things are looking up, I cannot believe it. Thank you so much for your support" Home visiting family



The Economics of Prevention

The Value of Intervention

While the qualitative outcomes for our families are profound, the quantitative argument for our service is equally compelling. To understand the true impact of Home-Start Newark, one must look beyond the immediate development support provided and consider the 'Cost of Failure' that we proactively work to prevent.

While our work is rooted in compassion, it is underpinned by a hard-headed economic reality: prevention is significantly more cost-effective than cure. We believe that no family should reach a "crisis point" where statutory intervention becomes the only option. Our mission is centred on supporting and enabling parents long before they reach such a precipice, ensuring they have the tools to maintain a stable home environment.

When a family unit fractures to the point that a child must enter the local authority care system, the fiscal burden on the taxpayer is immense. National data suggests that a single child in foster care or residential placement can cost the state between £50,000 and £200,000 per annum, depending on the complexity of the case. These costs are often a direct consequence of unaddressed social isolation or the pressures of unsupported parenting, and opportunities being missed to support families through difficulties before they become entrenched and persistent.

In stark contrast, the entire annual budget for our expansion into **Ollerton, Boughton, and Bilsthorpe**, which supports dozens of families and prevents many from escalating into the social care system is approximately **£27,556**.

A Vital Preventative Economic Tool

This comparison highlights that Home-Start Newark is not merely a "nice to have" community charity; it is a vital preventative economic tool for Nottinghamshire. By supporting and enabling parents during the critical first five years, we are:

- **Early Identification and Safeguarding:** We work closely with families to identify and address safeguarding concerns at an early stage. This proactive involvement reduces the need for higher-level, intensive statutory interventions. Our Home Visiting Volunteers are trained to recognise emerging risks, supporting and enabling parents to make positive changes that keep families together and children safe.
- **Protecting Future Productivity:** Children who receive the "best start" are more likely to succeed in education and contribute to the local economy as adults.
- **Leveraging Volunteer Value:** By using a peer-to-peer model, we turn a modest financial grant into thousands of hours of professional-grade development support that would cost the public purse hundreds of thousands of pounds if delivered by statutory staff.

We do not wait for the "Cost of Failure" to manifest. We invest in the "Value of Success" today, ensuring that our local society remains resilient and financially sustainable.

The Vital Role of the Family Support Coordinator

Many funders prefer to fund "frontline" work, but in a charity like Home-Start Newark, our Family Support Coordinators are the frontline. We have three Family Support Coordinators, covering our area, each with a slightly different focus, bringing a network of information and experience across the team.

The Family Support Coordinators are responsible for:

- **Safeguarding:** Working closely with families and volunteers, monitoring every match to ensure children are safe.
- **Volunteer Supervision:** Providing the emotional and professional support volunteers need to handle complex family cases.
- **Referral Management:** Acting as the point of contact for Health Visitors, Social Workers, and Schools.
- **Case Management:** Overseeing a caseload of 10–15 families, ensuring that **development support** is achieving the desired outcomes.

We are a small team but are proud of how the work we do supports and enables our families. Through the services we provide, these key support roles are directly responsible for measurable positive changes for individuals and the wider community.

Impact on Individuals and Families:

- **Improved Parental Mental Health:** The service provides emotional support, reduces feelings of isolation, and empowers parents to cope with low mood, stress, and anxiety.
- **Enhanced Child Development:** Volunteers support parents in creating stimulating and enriching environments, encouraging early learning and development through play and interaction.
- **Strengthened Self-Reliance:** Home visits empower parents to build their confidence and develop their parenting skills, fostering a sense of self-reliance and enabling families to navigate challenges effectively.

Impact on the Community:

- **Reduced Social Isolation:** By connecting families with essential community resources and providing consistent social interaction, the project directly addresses the significant issue of social isolation.

- **Prevention of Crisis:** Providing early, consistent support in the home prevents family breakdown and reduces the long-term dependency on statutory services like social care and health agencies.
- **Stronger Communities:** The project contributes to building stronger, more supportive communities by providing essential help to families in need and recruiting local volunteers.

"Support has been 5 out of 5! "I was a bit of a mess when I started with Home-Start....although I didn't want support at first, it has helped me become a better Mum.....it's so nice to have a friend to talk things through"
Home visiting family



Measuring the Outcomes

When a family is referred to this service, we undertake an initial assessment with them, where they self-measure against a range of criteria including their physical and emotional wellbeing, parenting issues and child behaviour management, isolation, ability to manage finances, family routines and more. This is reviewed at set points throughout the support, and again at the end, to show their journey travelled.

Our evaluation methods focus on measuring positive changes:

- **Improved Parental Mental Health:** We track reductions in anxiety and depression, and increased coping mechanisms, creating more stable home environments.
- **Enhanced Child Development:** We measure children's developmental strides in communication and social skills through our **Step Up for School** focus, laying the foundations for educational success.
- **Reduced Social Isolation:** We observe increased community connections and new friendships formed through our **Family Group Sessions**, directly combating the loneliness that often accompanies **lone parenting** or rural living.
- **Increased Access to Resources:** We quantify successful referrals to healthcare, specialist agencies, and the **Family Hub**, ensuring families are connected to the wider safety net.
- **Strengthened Family Bonds:** We assess improved family cohesion and parent-child relationships. We believe that as practical pressures - such as debt or housing instability are reduced, the emotional capacity for bonding and "friendship with a purpose" significantly increases.

Data collection, feedback from families, and observed improvements directly inform our ongoing work. This continuous monitoring ensures our services remain responsive and impactful, empowering parents and strengthening families to achieve better outcomes for children and the wider community.

Annual Statistics (2024-2025)



Families, Children & Engagements

- supported **39** home visiting families
- supported **40** families through our Family Group
- **In total we have supported 79 families across both services**
- **151** children have been supported by home visiting and Family Group
- we supported a further **22** older children during our Family Group
- holiday sessions
- **In total we have supported 173 children across both services***
- **This does not include older children within home visited families, who also benefit indirectly from the support provided to their family*
- We had **106** family engagements with our Step Up For School Community



- **10** volunteers have provided support at family group
- **27** volunteers have supported home visited families
- **13** new volunteers completed our Preparation course.
- **3** volunteers supported our fundraising work
- **1** qualified volunteer counsellor supported **2** families
- Our Volunteers and Trustees gave approximately **2378** hours of their time.



"I've loved having my volunteer, a great extra pair of hands. Home-Start has been amazing for our family, and we really appreciate what you've done"
Home visited family Nov 2024

Evidence of Accelerating Impact: Year-on-Year Growth (2023–2025)

A critical analysis of our service delivery data over the last 24 months reveals a significant and accelerating trend: while the number of families we support remains high, the **complexity and scale of the needs within those families have increased dramatically**.

The Data Comparison

In the 2023/24 financial period, we supported a total of 141 children across our **Home Visiting Service** and **Family Group Sessions**. By the close of the 2024/25 period, that figure had risen to **173 children**.

This represents a **22.7% increase in child-level impact** in just twelve months.

Analysing the "Complexity Surge"

This growth is particularly remarkable because it occurred during a period of extreme economic volatility. While the total number of families supported shifted from 83 to 79, the number of children within those family units increased. This indicates that we are increasingly being called upon to support larger families or those experiencing "compounded disadvantage", where poverty, lone parenting, and mental health challenges collide.

The increase to 173 children supported is not merely a statistic; it represents 173 individual lives where the trajectory has been improved through early intervention. The fact that our Home Visiting Volunteers and staff managed a 23% increase in child reach, despite facing funding deficit speaks to the extraordinary efficiency and dedication of our team.

Strategic Response: The Grants & Corporate Funding Officer

Recognising this surge in demand, the Board of Trustees made the strategic decision in 2024 to invest in a **Grants & Corporate Funding Officer**. The data now proves that this was a necessary and prescient move.

The "vulnerability gap" in Newark and Sherwood is widening. As statutory services are forced to raise their thresholds for intervention, more families are falling into the space where Home-Start Newark operates. Our ability to meet this 23% growth in demand is currently being "subsidised" by the tireless work of our volunteers and staff. However, to maintain this level of **development support**, the current financial deficit must be bridged.

Summary of Growth Impact

The following table provides a clear summary for prospective funders, illustrating why Home-Start Newark is a high-growth, high-impact investment:

Metric	2023/2024	2024/2025	Percentage Change
Total Children Supported	141	173	+22.7%
Volunteer Training (New)	4	13	+225%
Total Volunteer Hours	1,831	2,378	+29.8%
Step Up for School Outreach	65 Engagements	106 Engagements	+63%

Strategic Observation for Funders:

Despite a static core income, Home-Start Newark has increased its child-reach by nearly a quarter and more than doubled its volunteer recruitment rate. We are an organisation that is scaling to meet a crisis, and our funding deficit is not a sign of instability, but a "growth gap" that requires urgent philanthropic investment to sustain this vital momentum.

Our Funding Challenge: Navigating a Competitive Landscape

While the impact of Home-Start Newark is undeniable, maintaining our financial sustainability remains a significant and ongoing challenge. Our annual running costs now exceed **£165,000** each year.

While we receive vital support from Nottinghamshire County Council, Newark and Sherwood District Council (NSDC), and Children In Need (CIN), these income streams only cover a portion of the resources required to meet the rising demand for our services.

Managing the Annual Funding Gap

Like many charities in the voluntary sector, we operate within a challenging economic climate. At the start of each financial year, we typically face a projected funding gap of up to £75,000. It is a reality we navigate transparently and proactively. Inevitably, through rigorous fundraising efforts, community backing, and trusts, we successfully secure the necessary funds to bridge this gap and ensure our doors stay open.

However, relying on short-term, reactive fundraising places an administrative strain on our team and creates ongoing uncertainty. We are operating in an environment defined by:

- **Increased Competition:** A growing number of charities are competing for a diminishing pool of funds from grants and trusts.
- **Static Core Funding:** While our long-term funding partnerships have been beneficial and stable, they have remained mainly static for several years, failing to keep pace with inflation.
- **Rising Operational & Staffing Costs:** The cost-of-living crisis has significantly increased our overheads, from rent, insurance and software costs to the travel expenses essential for our Home Visiting Service. This also extends to the rising cost of essential staffing and frontline coordination, a vital investment in the professional staff who safely manage, support, and enable our volunteers to deliver high-quality development support across the district.

Proactive Strategy and Investment

We have not been passive in the face of these challenges. Recognising that the funding landscape was shifting, in 2024 we made the strategic decision to invest in a Grants & Corporate Funding Officer. This role was created specifically to diversify our income, strengthen our relationships with local businesses, and ensure we are submitting high-quality, successful applications to trusts and foundations.

Our strategic objective is to transition away from annual patchwork funding towards long-term financial resilience. We are actively working towards securing major, multi-year grant funding from prominent funders such as the National Lottery Community Fund, the Garfield Weston Foundation, and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. By investing in professional fundraising expertise, we are ensuring that Home-Start Newark remains competitive, robust, and focused on the future.

Rigorous Financial Management

The Board of Trustees and the staff team have worked tirelessly to ensure the charity is as lean and efficient as possible. We have:

- **Carefully Managed Funds:** Every line of our budget is scrutinised to ensure maximum value for money.
- **Reduced Overheads:** We have cut costs in non-essential areas to protect frontline delivery for families.
- **Governance Oversight:** While the Board may approve a provisional deficit budget to ensure service continuity, this is under continuous and rigorous review at every board meeting.

We are fully in control of our day-to-day operations, but to achieve true stability and expand our impact, we need forward-thinking partners to invest in our vision.



Diversified Income Streams

To ensure long-term stability, we maintain a balanced portfolio of funding. Rather than relying on a single major income stream, our annual operating requirements are met through five areas:

Funding Stream	Percentage	Strategic Focus
Grant & Corporate Funding Pipeline	27%	Year-round trust applications and business partnerships.
Restricted District Council Funding	26%	Core statutory funding for local family support.
Major Donor Support	23%	Generous philanthropic investments from individuals.
Restricted Grant Funding	18%	Ring-fenced funding dedicated to specific project delivery.
Fundraising Pipeline	6%	Grassroots community initiatives and digital giving.

The Grant & Corporate Funding Pipeline represents our continuous, year-round activity to identify, apply for, and secure new high-value funding streams, systematically reducing our projected annual deficit before it impacts frontline delivery. While these grant pipelines form the foundation of our financial strategy, we recognise that long-term resilience is never entirely guaranteed. Both statutory and trust budgets face constant pressure.

Currently, 26% of our core income relies on Restricted District Council funding, which is inherently vulnerable to local authority budget cuts. Furthermore, our 18% Restricted Grant funding is secured through BBC Children in Need, a vital partnership that provides immense stability but is fixed to conclude in 2028.

Consequently, we cannot afford to stand still or become complacent. We must remain exceptionally agile, highly visible, and constantly aware of the changing funding landscape. Knowing that a significant portion of our funding has a definitive end date means we are already actively researching, networking, and applying for alternative multi-year funds to replace the Children in Need grant well ahead of time.



While small-scale community initiatives like our annual quizzes and digital giving remain a vital way to keep local people connected to our cause, they only account for 6% of our budget. The true battle for our financial sustainability is fought by keeping our major grant pipeline moving. By actively managing these risks and diversifying ahead of time, we ensure that Home-Start Newark remains a stable, resilient lifeline for the families who depend on us.

Why Invest in Home-Start Newark?

Our work is not done in isolation. We collaborate closely with key local partners, including the Healthy Families Teams and Family Hubs, to ensure every pound we raise is targeted where it is needed most. By fully integrating into local strategic networks, we actively avoid the duplication of services, maximising our operational efficiency and community impact.

Investing in Home-Start Newark is an investment in the social fabric of our community.

- **A Proven Track Record:** We have 41 years of experience and deep roots in the Newark and Sherwood district.
- **Exceptional Value for Money:** Our volunteer-led model means that a relatively small financial investment is leveraged into thousands of hours of high-impact, one-to-one **development support**.
- **A Strategic Approach:** Through our Grants & Corporate Funding Officer and rigorous cost-cutting, we are doing everything possible to secure our own future.
- **Preventing Future Costs:** By **supporting** and **enabling** families now, we prevent the need for much more expensive statutory crisis interventions later.