

HOME START

Edinburgh



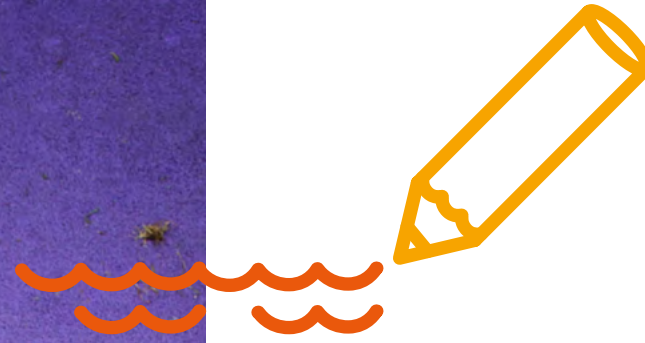
Because
childhood
can't wait

Strategic Plan 2023-27
Home-Start Edinburgh

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“Home-Start has helped me so much and has turned my life around”



Letter from the Chair

Home-Start Edinburgh is part of the nationwide Home-Start UK network. We have been active in the city since 1986 and in that time, we have assisted over 10,000 children. We provide a framework for staff and trained volunteers, primarily visiting families in their own home, to offer emotional and practical support.

Our last strategic plan ran from 2019 and what a period it was, incorporating a pandemic, a cost of living crisis, and a merger between the two Edinburgh based Home-Starts. Yet through it all, our dedicated staff and volunteers continued to work incredibly hard supporting young families in Edinburgh. On behalf of the board, I'd like to thank everyone who contributed so much to our cause, your efforts made a huge difference to many vulnerable young lives. We also owe a debt of gratitude to all our funders through this period, as no charity can function without financial support and we are lucky to have super partners who are not only generous, but who truly understand the work we do.

Much of the recent past has been shaped by the Coronavirus global pandemic, which was a huge challenge for many of our families, contending with issues such as loneliness (we work with a lot of single parents), poverty, reduced social interaction and interruptions to education. As with all organisations, we had to adapt. Contact with families moved online and outside, but assistance continued to be offered to families who asked for it. We have embraced a hybrid working model for our staff, combining time in the office to retain our fine culture and team ethic, with the ability to allow our team some flexibility to work from home.

Despite the pandemic, we were able to meet our objectives set out in our previous strategic plan, in terms of numbers of families supported, building

stronger partnerships, piloting a Home-Start UK learning scheme named Big Hopes Big Futures and strengthening our communication.

Late in 2021 the boards of Home-Start Leith and North East Edinburgh and Home-Start West and South West Edinburgh began discussions to see what benefits there would be in a merger of the two organisations, creating one city wide charity, Home-Start Edinburgh. We were attracted by the fact we would be able to help families across the entire city and would be better aligned with our partner organisations, who work on a city-wide basis. Moreover, we recognised that through a merger we would be able to drive operational and financial efficiencies and enjoy some benefits of scale, such as one lead manager and one office. We conducted an extensive stakeholder consultation with funders, Home-Start UK, partner organisations, staff, volunteers and families, and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Hence, early in 2022 both boards unanimously voted to merge, and Home-Start Edinburgh was born. Chief Executive, Eliza Waye, and her team have embraced the opportunity enthusiastically.

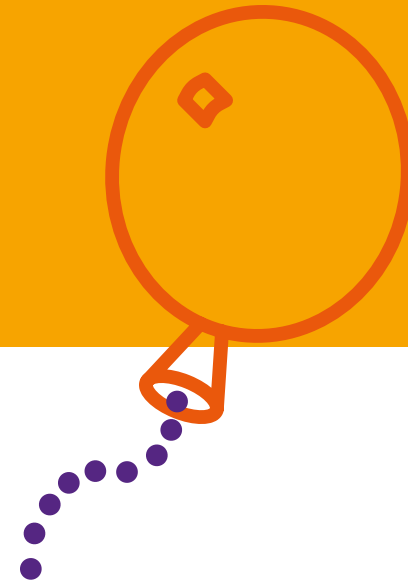
Our strategic plan is shaped by the recent merger and the opportunity to serve the city of Edinburgh. It also builds on our ethos of being a charity primarily powered by trained volunteers, working alongside our professionals. With a cost-of-living crisis, following a pandemic, poverty will increase and so will the need for our services. We have made growth an objective for that reason, but the plan highlights the need for that growth to be efficient and sustainable.

Robin Black
Chair, Board of Trustees

Home-Start

Our vision, mission and values

Together with families,
because childhood
can't wait



Home-Start UK

Home-Start is a local community of network trained volunteers and expert support, helping families with young children (age five and under) through challenging times. Across the country over 180 local Home-Starts have 10,000 volunteers helping well over 50,000 children every year. Our volunteers work alongside parents, in their own homes, to help them cope with the stresses and strains of life and make sure they have the skills, confidence and strength they need to nurture their children. They also deliver groupwork in the community, sharing knowledge and skills with families to support their child's development whilst also reducing social isolation and building a network of friends.

Families struggling with isolation, physical and mental health, loneliness, poverty, substance misuse, domestic violence, and a variety of other issues, receive the support of a volunteer who will spend around two hours a week in a family's home supporting them. We also offer group work and day trips which provides company and support for families and enables us to interact with even more children.

The early years make the biggest impact: Home-Start makes sure those years count so that no child's future is limited. Children who are raised in a stable, loving, family environment are more likely to have a positive and healthy future.

Home-Start Edinburgh

Home-Start has been operating in Edinburgh since 1986 and in that time we have worked with over 10,000 children. For much of that time there were two separate Home-Starts in the city, Home-Start Leith & North East Edinburgh and Home-Start West & South West Edinburgh. In 2022 we merged, creating one charity to cover the entire city, aligning us with our partners and stakeholders and bringing numerous operational and financial efficiencies.

Edinburgh is a beautiful city with significant wealth, but despite that, many families live in incredibly difficult circumstances. According to the Scottish Government, 22% of children in Edinburgh live in poverty, but in some electoral wards this figure is 35% and in lone parent families, 41%. Poverty impacts health, life expectancy and mental wellbeing. It also creates an attainment gap, as at the age of five children from the highest income families are 13 months ahead in vocabulary compared to those from the lowest income families. The cost-of-living crisis, following the disruption of the pandemic, is likely to create significantly more demand for our services.

Through the merger, stakeholders told us that the feel of Home-Start Edinburgh services should remain the same. Local volunteers for local families, embracing City of Edinburgh Council's '20-minute neighbourhood strategy'. We know social isolation and loneliness continues to be a destabilising factor in the lives of many families and will work with Scottish Government's 'Recovering our Connections' plan to help reduce the impact it can have.

Our strategic goal is that “every family has the support they need, to give their children the best possible start in life, enabling them to take up and benefit from the opportunities available to them.”

We aim to centre child and family voice in what we do, incorporating principles from The Promise and United Nations Rights of the Child.

The outcomes we want to achieve, to help this happen are that:

- parents are confident and have positive relationships with their children,
- children are ready for nursery and school, and
- families engage fully with their communities and other local services

Our values as an organisation are:

- we offer families choice,

- we work in partnership - with each other, with families and with other agencies,
- we work in a spirit of openness, encouragement and enjoyment,
- we are flexible and responsive to the needs of families.

Our core activity is for volunteers, supported by staff, to visit families with children under five at home. They provide emotional and practical support, and work towards goals agreed with the family. We also offer parents' groups, information on and referrals to other agencies, perinatal support, finance support and family outings.

We provide a professional, safe and supportive framework for our volunteers to operate in, including an allocated co-ordinator, training, PVG certification, peer support and access to the Home-Start community. 80% of our staff are ex Home-Start volunteers.



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➤ Children are ready for nursery and school

➤ Families engage fully with their communities and other local services



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Where we are at



Together with families, we have achieved great things:

- We have surpassed our annual target of supporting 80 families a year: each year since 2019 we have supported in excess of 110 families.
- We piloted Big Hopes Big Futures. Through a dedicated worker, we were able to form closer links with local primary schools and develop our practice regarding transitions. We have worked to embed the learning from this program across different staff roles.
- Our partnerships are stronger: becoming Home-Start Edinburgh has enabled us to form ties with other local and national organisations to enable better outcomes for families. We hope to further this in the years to come.
- We have broadened our volunteer opportunities to include Administrative, Social Media and Digital Communications roles. We are embracing new technology and improving how we connect with families.

But we still have far to go:

- We have never worked in South-East Edinburgh. To truly become 'Home-Start Edinburgh', we need to develop connections, knowledge and understanding of this community, to provide the right service at the right time.
- We know that poverty can negatively impact a child's ability to grow and develop. Whilst the Scottish Government has set ambitious targets regarding Child Poverty in Best Start, Bright Futures, even by their prediction 17% of children will live in relative poverty in 2024. We can do more to mitigate the impacts of poverty on children and their families.
- The Covid-19 pandemic and the social isolation it required has negatively impacted on young children's development. Home-Start Edinburgh has a role to play in providing opportunities to overcome these effects.



Strategic Plan



Our strategic plan is naturally aligned with the Home-Start UK strategic plan, which highlights growth, voice, inclusion, and impact. We also align ourselves with the Scottish Government's priorities including: narrowing inequalities, reducing child poverty and alleviating its effects; preventing adverse childhood experiences where possible; raising children's attainment and ending the poverty-related attainment gap; addressing loneliness and social isolation; tackling domestic abuse and its consequences.

When setting our objectives, we ask three questions of ourselves: can we help more families, can we be more effective at helping them and are we laying the foundations of a sustainable charity? Our recent merger frames many of our objectives.

Growth

As we grow into our merged status of Home-Start Edinburgh we will be able to assist more young families throughout the city. We will broaden our geographic scope of operation and will be able to help more families through home visits, group work and trips. Through the life of our plan, we aim to increase the number of families we assist by 25% and to establish operations in all four Edinburgh localities, north, south, east and west. Beyond numeric growth, we also aim to diversify the types of families we work with.

As we deliver support to a wider area of the city and communicate more effectively, our recognition within the community will continue to grow, creating a virtuous circle where more families ask for help and more volunteers and funders are attracted to us. Achieving our growth targets will not be possible without more funding and volunteers.

Our three strategic objectives are:

- Growth
- Effectiveness
- Sustainability





Effectiveness

We rigorously measure how effective we are at helping families and how efficiently we operate our charity. When families are referred to us, we initially assess their needs to ensure whether Home-Start Edinburgh is best placed to help them, or one of our partner organisations, ensuring our resources are used to their best effect to ensure help goes to the people who need it most, at the time they need it. Effective partnership is a core principle of operation, and an area we aim to develop through the life of our plan.

Direct family feedback on how effective we are is important. Our goal remains that 80% of families that receive a service from Home-Start Edinburgh should show improvement in the areas they identify as requiring change.

Beyond being effective with the support we offer, we owe efficiency to our funders. We measure objectives such as

- Percentage of indirect costs as a proportion of total expenditure (which are naturally low as we are a volunteer-based charity).
- Three monthly reviews of service ensure that we provide support for long enough to achieve goals whilst also managing endings productively.
- Staff to volunteer ratios

“Effective partnership is a core principle of operation, and an area we aim to develop through the life of our plan.”



Sustainability

Home-Start have been operating in Edinburgh since 1986 and we're here for the long run. Through the life of the plan we are laying down objectives to ensure we have a sustainable future. We are also defined by our volunteers and staff and we wish them to feel fulfilled, believing in what we do. We invest in training our volunteers and staff and we assess their satisfaction levels.

Central to a sustainable charity is a sustainable funding model, never too reliant on any one funder. During our plan we will diversify our funding model and will grow the proportion of unrestricted funding.

Finally, we believe robust risk management is crucial for all organisations, but especially so for a charity dealing with vulnerable children. We strive to ensure our risk management controls remain resilient. As part of ensuring good governance our board assesses and reviews regularly the risks facing our organisation. As part of a nationwide charity, we are subject to a Quality Assessment as implemented through Home-Start UK. Our most recent assessment achieved an excellent result.

Moving forward

Home-Start has come far in Edinburgh, helping thousands of children across the city over many years. As the demand for our service keeps growing, we have the vision to expand the help we offer to an even wider group. However, we can't take this journey alone. Helping more families will require more volunteers and more funding. If you are able to help with either, we urge you to get in touch. Together, we can help more families, because childhood can't wait.





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