



# Annual Report

*April 2023 - March 2024*

To volunteer:



To get  
support:



To donate:



# An introduction from the Chair of our Board of Trustees

I am incredibly proud of our achievements over the past year and the critical work we have carried out.

It has been a challenging year. Children and families are struggling, due to poverty and inequalities. Those in the greatest need are struggling to access community services.

Despite these difficulties, we remain steadfast in our commitment to supporting families across Southwark, and growing our work in Lewisham. Through the efforts of our dedicated volunteers and expert staff team, we deliver tangible differences to the lives of children and families in their time of greatest need, fostering a sense of optimism and hope for a brighter future. The often-heartbreaking circumstances our families are facing demand unbounded resilience and compassion, and I'm truly proud and grateful to all our volunteers, staff and trustees.

As we roll into the new financial year, Cheryl Rhodes will be leaving us as CEO, and I want to thank her for her dedicated leadership which has been instrumental in driving HSS forward over the last 6 years. The Board are excited to appoint Becca Jones as our new CEO, after 9 years in our Family Support team. We're also saying goodbye to Juliet, Shahida, Leonardo and Mavalyn – with 22 years of service between them – and want to thank them for all they have given and taught us.

Our heartfelt thanks also go to our funders, partners, volunteers and donors, without whom we could not support so many families – particularly Ali, Ben and Nan who have taken on epic fundraising feats this year. The funding landscape is increasingly challenging, and while it inspires us to grow and do better, the cycle of raising money is demanding and worrying.

Looking ahead, 24-25 will be an exciting year when we celebrate both 30 years of work in Southwark, and, through the incremental growth in Lewisham, re-branding to Home-Start Southwark & Lewisham. We remain resolute in our determination to do everything possible to help children and families work towards the bright future they deserve...

Because childhood can't wait.

**Alex Williams** – Chair of the Board of Trustees, Home-Start Southwark



# This year we've supported...

**153**

families with

**306** children

**41%** of

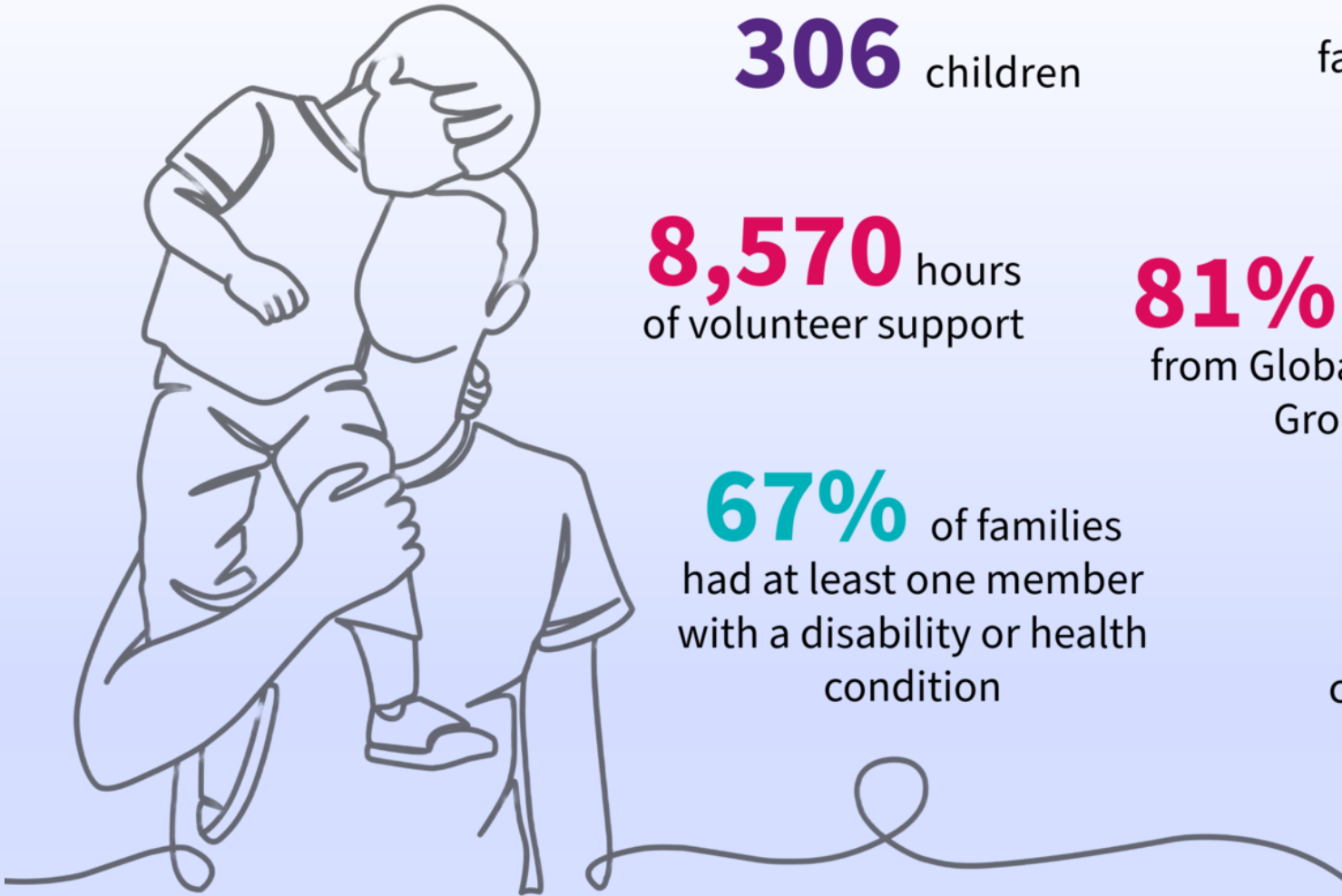
families were from a  
single parent  
household

**8,570** hours  
of volunteer support

**81%** of families  
from Global Majority  
Groups

**67%** of families  
had at least one member  
with a disability or health  
condition

**28%** of  
families were  
coping with past or  
current domestic  
abuse





# What we do - an overview from our CEO

The support we provide is simple yet transformative – someone stands alongside you every week and helps you to do the things your family needs (within reason!). Parents co-produce goals that focus the support on their young child/ren's needs, and are then matched with a trained volunteer or staff member. Providing 2-4 hours of weekly, individual support to families in their own homes and communities for 6-12 months reaches the parts of life that other services can't - through building trusting relationships and empowering parents that they can do the best for their children. No other services locally provide this type of support.

2023-24 has been a year where we've focused on honing what we do that is unique – our home-visiting support, in both Southwark and Lewisham. While we've delivered less group activities, we're excited to have developed our offer to include the Making it REAL programme – supporting 3-4 year olds in Southwark to develop their communication and literacy skills through enriching their home environment and building parents' confidence. I'm also really proud to be a member of the Southwark Maternity Commission's panel, as there is a growing body of evidence that women and babies, and especially those from global majority ethnicities, need better, fairer support – and we'll be building our perinatal strand "Bump to Babe" to reflect the Commission's findings.

The magic behind all we do is our wonderful team of volunteers, trustees and staff who work tirelessly to support our families. We are proud that our volunteering programme is recognised by the Investing in Volunteers quality mark, and have worked hard this year to ensure both our 7 session preparation course, and ongoing training, supervision and support enable our team to both support families and enhance their own professional and personal development.

This report is a celebration of what local families have achieved with our support. On the next few pages you'll hear directly from our families, and see the outcomes they've achieved this year. Then you'll hear about the different way people give their time to HSS, through family volunteering and being a trustee. If you're inspired by what we do, please offer us your support – through volunteering, donating, or promoting our work.

**Becca Jones** - CEO

# Highlights of our year

April 23- Mar 24

**Apr**

**May**

Ali's Ultra Marathon  
Fundraiser

HS Norway visit

Ben's Ride  
London  
Fundraiser

**Jun**

Summer Volunteer  
Preparation  
Course

Volunteer  
Celebration  
Brunch

**Jul**

Healthy Movers  
picnic with HS  
Lambeth

**Aug**

Global Charity  
competition  
award

**Sep**

Ben's 10k run  
Fundraiser

**Oct**

**Nov**

AGM 2023

Autumn Volunteer  
Preparation  
Course

Bridge Morning  
Fundraiser

**Dec**

Our Christmas  
appeal gave 106  
children Christmas  
presents with  
support from local  
businesses

**Jan**

The REAL project  
started with 11  
staff and  
volunteers being  
trained in the  
delivery

**Feb**

Chosen to be a  
charity of the  
year for  
Innova

**Mar**

Spring Volunteer  
Preparation  
Course

Access Self Storage  
Easter Appeal

The Southwark  
Maternity  
Commission began

# How we know we're making a difference

This report features stories and quotes collected from family's feedback as part of our journey to keep improving our services for children and families.

Alongside this, we measure the progress families make by completing a holistic needs assessment at the beginning of our support and reviewing this every 3 months. These changes are expressed in the percentages you will see throughout our report.

This is not just for our data - families being able to see the positive changes they are making and receiving encouragement builds confidence that they can and will manage the struggles they are facing.



# Improving parenting skills and child development

**80%**

of parents said they improved their parenting skills

**74%** of children attended more positive activities such as children's centres and playgroups

**74%** of parents said their child development or behaviour improved

**92%** of parents became more involved in their child/ren's development and learning

**83%** of parents felt their relationship with their child/ren improved

**89%** of families with multiple children felt better able to balance their needs





# Vicky's story

## Hope for the Future

Autism was new to Vicky when Damaris was diagnosed. She was overwhelmed, frustrated, and struggling with her behaviour.

Damaris was due to start school soon but had not attended nursery or playgroups because Vicky worried about how distressing Damaris found new places and felt unsafe taking her out. Damaris did not communicate with words, and did not seek to interact with others. Vicky and Damaris were mostly at home and didn't meet other families.

The family were introduced to Rosy, a Family Support Practitioner at HSS. Vicky was nervous about Damaris meeting someone new, but knew they both needed help. Rosy led the **REAL** programme, to support Damaris' communication and literacy through stories, songs, and even exploring textures and mark-making with jelly! Rosy listened to Vicky and recognised her strengths and efforts.

Family life changed. Over 6 months, Rosy supported Vicky and Damaris to develop a routine, and to access the community - the Aquarium, butterfly garden, parks, soft play and supermarket. Vicky said that going out more gave Damaris more to want to communicate about - "You would not believe she is the same girl. Damaris could not say Mummy - now she can! When she hears the ice cream van, she leads her buggy to the van to tell me that's what she wants. She copes better with disappointment and with changes to her routine."

Vicky feels more connected to Damaris and more confident as a parent, which has led her to re-build social connections and meet up with other families. Thinking about school has been hard for Vicky, but having time to talk things through, and support with the processes - alongside seeing Damaris enjoy time with other children has helped with the decision.

**"Your support made me believe that there is hope for the future."**





# Improving health and wellbeing

**74%** of parents felt more confident and resilient



**76%** of parents felt better able to manage their mental health

**75%** of parents said their family was less isolated

**83%** of families were more able to attend essential appointments

**83%** of parents felt better able to manage their child/ren's emotions or comfort them when they were upset

**89%** of parents felt more able to manage their child/ren's physical health

# Sofia's story

## Time and Space to talk



Sofia felt unsafe. A traumatic childhood, a difficult birth, and surviving a violent crime with her newborn baby resulted in a mental health crisis and diagnoses of complex post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression. Sofia's son Diego was now 6 months old and she knew that her mental health was increasing their isolation, as she did not want to leave the house to access activities or appointments, and did not want to leave Diego with others.

Sofia was receiving mental health support and so it was important that Sofia, her mental health practitioners and her HSS Family Support Coordinator worked together to ensure the support was safe and met Sofia and Diego's needs and wishes, and so began with video-calls rather than in person at Sofia's home. The family were introduced to Lauren, a student on placement with HSS as part of her social work degree. Lauren was able to give Sofia time and space to talk through her worries and potential solutions. Lauren provided resources and information about child health and development and helped Sofia consider how she could best support Diego. Sofia began to set herself goals and talk through with Lauren how she could achieve them.

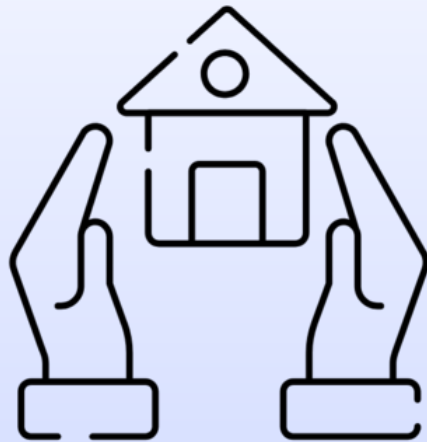
As Sofia's knowledge and understanding of babies needs grew, with Lauren's help, she built a routine for the family. Diego enjoyed more play time at home. Sofia felt more confident in her abilities as a parent. With information and encouragement, she felt comfortable enough to attend local children's centres and the library, and was able to talk through challenges and how to work through them. Sofia felt safe enough to seek Lauren's support to source a nursery place for Diego.

After 9 months support from HSS, Sofia felt more confident and safer in the community. Having a structured routine had reduced her anxiety, and Diego began attending nursery part-time, giving him the chance to socialise and play with other children.

## Improving homes and money

**64%**

of families said they were more able to manage their finances



**65%** of families with housing problems felt their situations improved

**77%** of parents felt less stressed about money

**69%** of families felt more able to manage the home environment; that it was cleaner, more comfortable or better able to meet their needs

# Sade's story

**“From their first visit, Home-Start Southwark helped”**

Sade and Abeo were struggling with juggling the needs of their newborn twins, Zayaan and Adela. Zayaan had a heart condition and was born with talipes – he had to wear a foot-brace and could only be held in specific positions. Sade had a wrist injury, and so leaving the home for appointments was very challenging when Abeo was working, especially as they lived in an upstairs studio flat with no lift. Zayaan had many hospital appointments and this became very stressful for the family. Sade was a first-time mum and felt very isolated, especially as most of her friends and family were abroad.

“Straight away when they visited me, they helped me write a supporting letter to Housing, which I really believe fast tracked the process”.

Sade was then introduced to a volunteer who helped her to get out of the house and access playgroups and appointments. When the family moved to a more suitable home, Sade still struggled with getting the double buggy into the lift.

“The volunteers helped me. Even when the lift stopped working, they would help me carry the children up and down the stairs”.

Sade began attending playgroups and the library with support and information from HSS.

“The groups I attended helped me feel less isolated, and I was signposted to other services.”

Home-Start Southwark helped Sade and her family get through a difficult year, but now things are much better; Zayaan has had heart surgery and no longer wears a foot brace. The twins are attending nursery part-time, and Sade feels much more confident as a parent.

**“The support was so practical, even though it was only 2 hours, I achieved so much.”**



# Shahida's story

## 10 years on...

My journey with HSS began 10 years ago when I was referred after I had my second baby, and then again after my third. I received support from an incredible volunteer, Kristen.

This experience was truly transformative for me. It opened many doors, from becoming a volunteer myself to eventually working for HSS. I am incredibly proud of my journey—from where I was to where I am now—and I am committed to continued growth.

The work experience I gained at HSS was a crucial steppingstone. Family support work not only revealed areas where I needed growth but highlighted my strengths. I thoroughly enjoyed working with the team, and I'm so grateful for how supportive everyone was in teaching me new skills. I learned so much, including using Outlook, Excel, and managing my schedule.

However, the most important growth was personal. Working with different families made me realize that I could be too empathetic at times, and felt overwhelmed by others' sorrows. I recognized that this was unhealthy for me, and if I wanted to carry on working with families, I needed to build emotional resilience.

Clinical supervision helped me. I was taught techniques for navigating difficult conversations. I learned to stay in control of my emotions and steer conversations to foster positive outcomes. This was one of my greatest challenges, but with experience, I've been able to strengthen this skill.

Now, I feel confident. I am stronger mentally and emotionally. I could never have imagined, when I first sought help, that I would be where I am today.

One of my proudest accomplishments has been with my children—my eldest daughter excelled in her SATs examinations and was accepted into a prestigious school. I truly believe HSS played a huge part in that journey, especially Kristen, who captivated her with reading at every visit.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you, Home Start.

**Shahida** - volunteer and former HSS staff member



# Our volunteers in numbers

**85**

volunteers with

**21** newly trained

the most experienced  
volunteer has been with  
HSS for last

**16** years

Our volunteers offered  
support in:

English

French

Akan

Portuguese

Russian

Chinese

Jamaican Patwa

Italian

Dutch

Spanish

Romanian

Yoruba

Punjabi

German

**...and other languages  
and dialects**

**19%** of volunteers  
have disability or health  
condition

there is almost **50**  
years gap between our  
oldest (74) and youngest  
(26) volunteers



# Our Founder (and first volunteer)'s story

## Where it all began

My first contact with Home-Start was in 1990 when I was chatting to my cousin John Page and became interested in the work that he had done in helping Margaret Harrison develop Home-Start from a simple operation in Leicester to an organisation with over 300 schemes in the U.K. and in many overseas countries. When I showed interest, John said “say no more - go and visit Margaret”, and - like so many others, I was immediately struck by her charisma and vision for helping vulnerable young children through trained volunteers. I assisted the Leicester office in fundraising and in due course became Chairman and visited some of the schemes. There were then 13 schemes in London, but not one in my home territory of Southwark, and with the help of the Home-Start regional consultant, I applied for 3 year joint funding from Southwark Health and Social Services. With the help of a good friend Anne Rowley - a Children’s Court Magistrate, we formed a steering committee and were extremely lucky in recruiting Sherry Pickles as our first Co-ordinator (C.E.O.’s had yet to be invented). Sherry had recently returned from Germany where she had organised a scheme in the British Forces. Our first Inaugural Meeting was held in July 1995 and within a year Sherry had recruited 14 volunteers, placing all of them with families.

Two years later, in December 1997 we held our AGM in the main chamber of Southwark Town Hall and among our guests were the late Dame Tessa Jowell (who had consented to be Patron of Home-Start Southwark), Harriet Harman MP and Sir Simon Hughes MP. Party politics was never an issue in their unequivocal support for Home-Start and its objectives. Since that time we have been more than fortunate in having benefitted from the tireless commitment, skills and enthusiasm of our wonderful volunteers, our staff members and our trustees, particularly Pam Jacobs and Pippa South who have all, like me, inspired by the vision of Margaret Harrison in giving support for the youngest and most vulnerable members of our society- and thus our future.

**Chris King** - Trustee and Founder of Home-Start Southwark

# Robina's story

"It's amazing to see families grow"



I am a mother of two, and had just finished my degree in Professional Practice in Child and Youth studies when I joined HSS. I wanted to put my knowledge I had acquired into practice and was intrigued about how HSS worked with families.

6 years on – I still think it was a great decision, because I still enjoy meeting new families and sharing skills and information they may find useful.

Volunteering with HSS is rewarding - it is amazing to see families grow through my time with them. Being emotionally available to talk and support gives parents comfort and strength to improve their lives. I can see the difference from when I meet a family to when I finish supporting them – it feels good to have made an impact.

Its not always easy – one of the biggest challenges for me has been working with families who have had huge financial problems and have wanted money. Through our training we know that we can help with budgeting tools and give information and signpost to support, but that we as volunteers and HSS cannot give money. Its hard to have difficult conversations.

The best thing about volunteering is the time I get to spend with families – with no expectations of rewards – so I was blown away when HSS nominated me to be a Southwark Star! I felt very honoured to have been nominated, and it was amazing going to the Tate Modern for the awards ceremony!

I would recommend volunteering with HSS to anyone - my sister has just finished her training and started volunteering with a family.

I am grateful to Home Start for allowing me to volunteer with them and meeting all the amazing wonderful families.

**Robina** – Family support volunteer

# Thank you to our volunteers for...

**8,570** hours  
of work with families

**112** hours of  
training





# Conchy's story

**“The time commitment is small, just two hours a week, but the impact you can make is significant”**

From the start, I felt truly welcomed by the entire team. Having previously volunteered with various charities, including Children Village in Spain, I was looking for an opportunity to work more closely with families and HSS fits that perfectly. Unlike my past experiences, HSS allowed me to help children and their families together. It gave me the chance to provide direct support and encouragement.

One of the most rewarding parts of my 18 months at HSS is seeing the families grow. It's very satisfying to know that the progress we help build continues long after our direct involvement ends. I can clearly see the difference we are making, helping families become more confident in their journey with their children.

Of course, there are challenges too. One of the hardest parts is finding the right balance between being friendly and maintaining a professional role. It's important to set clear boundaries while still offering warm and caring support as this is essential for the success of the help we provide.

I highly recommend volunteering with Home-Start to anyone passionate about supporting families. The time commitment is small, just two hours a week, but the impact you can make is significant. Everyone has unique skills and experiences that can really benefit the families, and there is always something new to learn. If you have the time and the passion, it's a truly rewarding experience.

I have always been curious about how a charity operates behind the scenes and how decisions are made. When a trustee position became available, I applied, as it also aligned well with my business background. After a couple of interviews, I was thrilled to join the Board of Trustees. This role allows me to be part of the continued success of HSS, and ensures the voice of family support volunteers is represented in our decision-making.

My experience with HSS has reinforced my belief in the power of community support and the profound impact we can have on the lives of families and children.

**Conchy** – Family support volunteer and Trustee



# A big thank you to everyone who has given their time and money to HSS this year!



Peter  
Stebbings  
Memorial  
Charity



Southwark  
Council



## A big thank you to everyone who has given their time and money to HSS this year!

### **Southwark Children Centres and Family Hubs Lewisham Children Centres and Family Hubs**

#### **Private Individuals:**

Norman Johnson  
Celia Randell  
Tina Colclough  
Sara and Ben Scanlan  
Ali King  
Charlotte and Chris King  
Lloyd Davies  
Pippa and Terry South  
Nan and Michael Doble  
Amy Withey  
Philippa Orpen-Palmer  
Richard Berhard  
Luke Campbell

#### **Charitable Trusts & Foundations:**

Charities Trust  
Children's Trust  
Elizabeth & Prince Zaiger Trust  
Family Fund Business Services  
Glasspool  
Robert Holman Memorial Trust  
The Money Charity

#### **Others:**

Access Self Storage Sydenham Canopi  
BCS (Electrical and Building Services) Ltd  
Brewbird Cafe  
London Zoo  
Home-Start UK  
Home-Start London  
Globe Theatre  
The Body Shop (Tooley Street)  
Grace Reid  
Decathlon Peckham  
Dulwich & Sydenham Golf Club  
Easy Fundraising  
John Lewis & Partners  
LNER  
Marquesado  
Omnicom  
MG OMD  
PWC  
Waitrose London  
London Business School  
Impact on Urban Health  
PPL Hub  
Innova  
The London Community Foundation Global  
Charity Competition  
Natasha Colbert

#### **Voluntary and Community Organisations:**

Lewisham Donation Hub  
Lewisham NHS Trust  
South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust  
Lewisham Health Visitors  
King's College & Guy's & St Thomas's Hospitals'  
Community Midwifery & Health Visiting  
Southwark Children's Services: Social Care and  
Early Help Team  
Special Educational Needs Team  
Speech and Language Team  
Indigo Midwives  
Lewisham Family Thrive  
Mammakind  
Lewisham Local  
Get Rid of and Donate  
Community Southwark  
Little Village  
Parent Action  
Citizens Advice Bureaus: Southwark and Lewisham  
Community Connections Lewisham  
Lewisham Family Information Service  
Lewisham Food Bank  
Southwark Food Bank  
Lewisham Parochial and Almshouse Charities



**020 7737 7720**

**[info@homestartsouthwark.org.uk](mailto:info@homestartsouthwark.org.uk)**

**[www.homestartsouthwark.org.uk](http://www.homestartsouthwark.org.uk)**



To access online versions of our financial and impact report, please scan the QR code