

HOME-START BRISTOL

Volunteer Newsletter JUNE 2021



Welcome to our volunteer newsletter - a resource for keeping in touch with and supporting our volunteers



Happy Volunteer Week - Terri's update

It's Volunteers' Week this week so it's timely to reflect on the amazing contribution that you all make to Home-Start Bristol and say a huge thank you from me and the team for your time, energy and commitment. Our volunteers come from a variety of backgrounds and bring many different skills and life experiences but you are all united in wanting to support families through difficult times and help them be the best they can be.

John Lewis and a giant Cheque!

For those of you who didn't see it on Facebook, John Lewis at Cribbs Causeway continue to support our work. Last week they handed over a cheque for £750 which is amazing and will provide lots more activities for our families especially over the summer months.



It's also worth remembering that the main way new volunteers hear about Home-Start is through word of mouth, so do spread the word we're always ready to welcome new volunteers!



What Home-Start Families say about their volunteers

"Having our volunteer was a huge mental boost, it gave me someone to discuss things with when I felt like there wasn't anyone else I could talk to."

"I didn't get a chance with Covid to have any home visits, but found it was the small things that made a difference, someone checking in on me, thinking about the fact I liked gardening with my children and growing plants for us. We had a couple of cucumbers and one tomato from the plants, but the children were so excited."

"Our volunteer was a very calming influence and my children instantly loved her. Her gentle manner encouraged me to trust myself and grow in confidence as a parent, and her (outdoor) visits got me through one week at a time, until my mental health improved."

"It has been so nice to know that on a Wednesday afternoon I have 5 minutes to be distracted, to chill and talk. I always feel happier when I finish on the phone"



Volunteer Workshops

If you have been around long enough, you will have heard of VTEs (Volunteer Training Events), or peer support and coffee mornings. We have been having a debate about what to call these sessions and for the moment have settled on 'Volunteer Workshops'. We're still not sure that this quite captures it, but we basically want these sessions to be informative, interactive and friendly, and as ever, getting volunteers together is a chance to discuss anything that has come up for us, to catch up with other volunteers and to meet some amazing people!

We are also going to try to make volunteer events accessible to more of us by swapping the days around. The next one is still on a Thursday but we will alternate days of the week after that. We hope this will allow more of you to join us.



Future topics for our Volunteer Workshops

We're planning on running eight Volunteer Workshops a year (avoiding school holidays) which will include training on a variety of subjects, in a 'Let's Talk about...' format. This might include:

- Families with twins / multiple births
- Perinatal mental health
- Working in a trauma informed way
- Young parents and care leavers
- Issy Martin is also offering to run another session on Solution-Focussed support



What else would you like a Volunteer Workshop to focus on?

Sessions could occasionally bring in an invited professional, some will be led by a member of staff, and volunteers are very welcome to lead one too! If for example you have experience as a parent of twins, or some other knowledge, experience or expertise that you could share with other volunteers, we would love to hear from you. It could be a 'training' type session or just an interesting starting point for a conversation. Please let us know if you'd like to be involved by contacting us at the office.

Launch of our Activity Packs on Zoom June 10th, please hold the date



On **Thursday 10th June**, we will present the activity packs that have been put together with the help of some wonderful volunteers (Lauren, Maria and Gemma). There are different themed packs that families can access if referrers, co-ordinators or volunteers think they would benefit from them. The packs are there to support families and to encourage interactions with their children. For volunteers they could be a good conversation starter and something to follow-up with families. We can also help families to make the best use of these resources and to model how to use them. Hopefully there will be a chance to meet face-to-face at some point to try out the craft resources, have a nose through the pamper pack and peer through the seedlings and nature trail of the nature/grow pack. But in the meantime find out about them on Zoom!

We will also be talking about the prospect of a return to home visiting and how people may feel about this.

Our current **Volunteer Preparation Course** is going really well (with everyone getting the hang of breakout sessions!) and we've arranged a couple of face to face sessions for the group. This includes **Wednesday 9th June 10am– 1pm at Lawrence Weston Farm** when we'll focus on "play" and its importance in child development and as a way of supporting children. This session is also available to other volunteers so please let the office know admin@homestartbristol.org.uk if you'd like to attend (numbers are limited due to covid restrictions even outdoors).

Feedback on prep sessions so far has been really encouraging ...

"I am really enjoying the training. It's lovely to 'meet' my fellow volunteers and hear their experiences and their views. It's great to meet the coordinators and to hear the experiences of active volunteers. There's a good mix of presentation of the content and the break-out rooms, and I feel able to ask questions if I need to."

Feedback from Volunteer Workshop May 2021

Autism and Neurodiversity

Our May Volunteer Workshop focused on children who are different, particularly those with autism. Some feedback and resources went out just after the session. If you'd like to find out more, or to point families towards some resources and support, here are some great places to start:

Bristol Autism Support – a local charity with a huge range of support to offer, from phone support, training and coffee mornings (currently on Zoom) to in-depth knowledge of local services and groups and a very active FB page where people share their concerns and exchange tips in a caring and constructive way.

<https://www.bristolautismsupport.org/>

The National Autistic Society is a well resourced website with plenty of advice and guidance. There is also a contact centre with supportive and knowledgeable volunteers, including legal advice on claiming benefits, getting diagnosed, getting educational needs met, etc. <https://www.autism.org.uk/>

Supportive parents – a local charity for children and families concerned by special needs and disability (all SEND, not just autism). They have a range of videos on their website and run a phone and email helpline as well as a range of training and advice. <https://www.supportiveparents.org.uk/>

Sparkling Moments with a family



At the end of our Solution Focussed training session, we were asked to share a "sparkling moment" from the previous day - just a little memory of something that had made us smile. It was suggested that we could use this idea with our families, but we also thought it would be a nice addition to our newsletters, to remind us all why we do this. Please send us your special HSB moments for inclusion in future editions, but for this one we're starting with a memory from volunteer rep Janet who has been visiting families with HSB for 19 years.

"Mum was an amazingly positive person and Dad was lovely too, but because he worked very long hours, Mum spent most of her time stuck in a cramped upstairs flat on her own with a new baby and an adorable, but energetic toddler who had Down's Syndrome. On my third visit she let me in and said "Hello Janet". There was an echoing shout of "Dandan" from the lounge and a small human cannonball came flying down the passageway, threw himself into my arms and smothered me with sloppy kisses, while the two mad terriers ran yappy circles round my ankles. What a wonderful way to start my day!"

Walk and Talk meet ups and return to Home visiting

We've got three *Walk and Talk* meet ups booked for June in:

Lawrence Weston Community Farm on 24th June (10-12pm),
Windmill Hill City Farm in Bedminster on 30th June (10-12pm),
Grimsbury Community Farm in Kingswood on 29th June (10-12pm).
So, do join us and mention it to your HSB families if you think they'd like to come along (you can accompany them). We're offering the chance to get outside, meet other families, have a chat and refreshments—all are welcome but dress for the weather!



How are outdoor meet ups going? Is it good to be back?



We have been back meeting families outside since after the Easter holidays and we would love to hear from you how that is going? Families are certainly appreciating the face to face contact. We are now in discussion about returning to in home visits, hopefully from the end of June. We will be sending more details out shortly.

We have been mulling over ways to connect volunteers and need your advice. Is someone giving away a cot? Have you found a great group in Knowle West? A lovely playground in Southmead? What would be the best way to pool resources and tips? Anyone with a clear idea of the best platform to use, please let us know!



When groups start re-opening we would also like to scout out what exists in terms of groups and activities for our families. We'll be asking if any volunteers would pop into their local children's centre to pick up leaflets, look out for churches that run stay and play groups and we'll pull together a list of resources to help volunteers support their families.

We are also looking for a volunteer who is free on a Monday and could help us to keep our activity packs stocked and sorted.

Thank you for reading, If there is any content that you would like to see or contribute, or any feedback please let us know. **Volunteer Reps:** Maroussia Rochigneux, Janet Leonard, Celia Ellis, Terri Fletcher (Manager)

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