

# Impact Report 2020-21

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# Helping to keep East Sussex families safe and well since 1996



Home-Start East Sussex provides one-to-one support and group work to encourage and develop the increased safety, confidence and independence of local children and adults who have experienced adversity. The charity supports local families and the survivors of domestic abuse to build stronger, more resilient relationships, encouraging them to make decisions, act for themselves and take back control of their lives.

## Lotus Domestic Abuse Recovery Programme

for women who have been affected by domestic abuse, but who are now away from the relationship and feel safe. The group supports women to process their experience, rebuild confidence and keep themselves and their family safe from abuse in the future.



## Volunteer Family Support Service

aims to increase the safety, wellbeing, confidence and independence of families with at least one pre-school child or who are expecting. A matched parent-volunteer provides a kind listening ear and works with parents on any issues they may be facing.



## One-to-one IDVA support

additional support for those affected by domestic abuse with the additional challenges they may be experiencing. Supporting victim-survivors to access any specialist support services they may need, create effective safety plans and support their children through their anxieties.

## Being Mum Programme

supports new first-time mothers to improve their confidence in their new role as a mum by providing a space to speak about the changes and challenges that becoming a parent can bring, whilst helping mums to build friendships with likeminded women..

## Who's in Charge? Programme

for parents of children whose behaviour is violent, abusive or seeming beyond control. The group helps parents to reduce and overcome shame whilst exploring options of meaningful consequences for children who seem to care about very little.





***"Every week I could interact with other mums, receive support and offer support in return. It has really kept me going through this awful time."***



# Our Team



**Kate Lawrence**

Chief Executive,  
Services Manager &  
Safeguarding Lead



**Egle Kelsaite**

Volunteer and  
Families  
Coordinator



**Alex Salmon**

Lead  
Programmes  
Facilitator



**Jordan Hollis**

Programmes  
Facilitator and  
Services  
Assistant



**Rachel Morrison**

Programmes  
Facilitator and  
Services  
Assistant

**9**  
**trustees**



**20**  
**volunteers**



# Successes of 2020-21

While longer term funding for April 2021 onwards was less available in the first half of the year, Home-Start East Sussex was proactive in securing short term emergency COVID response funding to meet the increased needs of our clients during the pandemic. Overall, the pandemic has had a positive short term effect on the charity's funding position.

We were able to deliver more online services and groups than initially funded for and offer essential one-to-one IDVA support to clients that needed it.

We responded to the increased demand for domestic abuse support in the wake of the pandemic by delivering a record 10 Lotus Domestic Abuse Recovery Programmes.

Staff made it clear that they were committed, passionate and motivated to ensure that clients' needs would continue being met. They worked extra hours, changed their work patterns, and were flexible in which tasks they carried out.

Home-Start East Sussex ensured that we continued to meet the needs of the most vulnerable during the pandemic by transitioning all services to remain accessible throughout lockdown. We quickly adapted to digital services due to our cloud-based system, staff flexibility and home-working, IT literacy, a healthy and supportive trustee-CEO relationship and clients who were generally receptive to digital support.

The digital support offering has had the unexpected positive outcome of being the preferred delivery method for some clients with high anxiety or caring responsibilities. This has led HSES to conclude that offering digital and face-to-face support post-pandemic will have a wider client reach.



LeadingLight

Three year accreditation by SafeLives

Just before lockdown we learned that our Lotus Domestic Abuse Recovery Programme was awarded SafeLives Leading Lights accreditation, the gold star standard for domestic abuse services. This evidences that our services have empowerment, resilience and client safety at their core.





# Challenges of 2020-21

*"The service was a point of contact when there wasn't much else going on, when there are no other services or support, my other parents groups are closed."*

In the first three months of the year, transitioning to offering digital services had to be prioritised which impacted on service delivery plans and the writing of funding applications.

A minority of clients were unable to access our services due to a lack of devices or wifi connection. Those referred by statutory services were able to receive equipment via their social worker. By the end of the year we had secured funding to be able to buy equipment for clients who needed it.

Volunteers needed extra support to respond to the intense level of emotional and mental support that clients needed and to offer support digitally.

Many of our home-visiting volunteers reported that they were shielding during the first lockdown, making it apparent that the Home-Start East Sussex volunteers themselves were vulnerable, and in some cases more vulnerable than the clients they usually support.

At the beginning of the pandemic, health visitors were not visiting families at home and this impacted on the number of professional referrals we received for our Volunteer Family Support Service. However, previous clients self-referred back to our service and we were able to offer the majority digital support with the volunteer they had previously worked face-to-face with.

"I think our support for families is vital at this time. My own experience of being unwell and anxious, because of the COVID situation, makes me appreciate how difficult it must be for families who have far more difficulties than myself."

All existing and new clients needed new assessments to identify new or changing support needs. It was necessary to contact some funders to discuss amending outcomes so that pandemic-related support needs could be met.

We needed to postpone our first Being Mum group twice. Once as we needed to rewrite the programme for online delivery, then again because Lockdown One eased and our clients understandably wanted to see extended family who had not yet met the new addition to their family.

*"It helped me remember that the world is still ticking, that someone out there hadn't forgotten about me."*





***"This service isn't about someone solving your problems for you, but having someone there to listen, help and support you, as you solve them."***



# Our reach in numbers



**185**

clients supported in total

**171**

parents supported

**127**

children directly supported

**211**

children indirectly supported

Home-Start East Sussex uses a trauma-informed approach to all service provision. We support clients with a variety of additional needs. Of those supported this year,

**68%**

reported that they were living with a disability

**59%**

reported having a mental health problem

**18%**

lived in the lowest 20% deprivation deciles

**13%**

reported having drug or alcohol related issues

**10%**

were living in insecure housing

**9%**

were from black and minoritized communities

**8%**

had additional needs relating to finances

**6%**

disclosed they were from the LGBT+ community





# Our Approach

Home-Start East Sussex is well established in the community, and over the years has built effective links with other providers and partners operationally and strategically across East Sussex and Brighton & Hove. All our services are free of charge and, although confidential, staff recognise the value of partnership working and appropriate information-sharing for child and adult safeguarding and to ensure the best support for clients.

Our services play a vital role within the coordinated community response to domestic abuse:



A commitment to equal opportunities and the fundamental rights of individuals is at the heart of our work. This includes equal treatment and opportunity for people of any race, sexuality, gender, disability, religion or age. Our vision is to be able to offer services for anyone who needs them.

Our priority for 2021-22 is to improve our diversity and inclusion.



We understand that domestic abuse does not discriminate, which is why we are planning to become learning partners with Brighton Switchboard to ensure our services are more inclusive. Home-Start East Sussex will also work towards a LGBT+ quality standard to ensure that all survivors feel comfortable and welcome when accessing our services.

As a conscious employer, Home-Start East Sussex has signed up to our local Living Wage Campaigns, committing to account for the cost of living in our staff salaries.

Home-Start East Sussex is a Disability Confident employer because we believe that people with disabilities and long term health conditions should have equal opportunities to fulfil their potential and realise their aspirations.



We also want to promote diversity and inclusion within our board of trustees. Home-Start East Sussex is a member of the Young Trustees Movement which commits to increase the number of under-30s on boards. Whilst this spotlight is on the age factor, the Young Trustees movement is part of a wider call for diversity on boards.



# Feedback from clients showed that...



**99%**

built skills that would help them in the future

**99%**

felt less isolated after connecting with others

**97%**

felt more confident in their role within their family

**91%**

felt their mental health had improved



*I am halfway with my journey and closing chapters but deciding on how my new chapter will be written. I am in charge, I am allowed an opinion and the right to be myself. This course has empowered me and I am so grateful for the support*

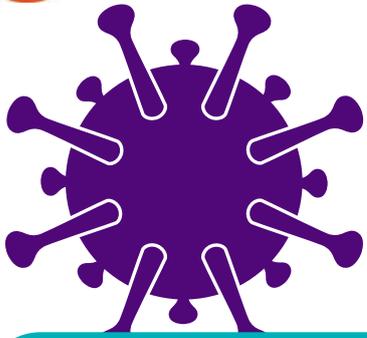


**93.5%**

**Overall positive outcomes**

*Based on 116 responders across each of our five services.*





# Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic

At the time of writing this report, the UK is still in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. As we move slowly towards the lifting of restrictions, the situation continues to regularly change. However, the implications of the pandemic continue to have the greatest impact on the most vulnerable.

We were granted emergency funding for those whose family situation was being worsened by the pandemic. We were able to support more domestic abuse victim-survivors in their recovery and develop services for new first-time mums and parents experiencing abuse from their children.

Feelings of isolation and inability to cope were particular issues for our clients. They reported increased anxiety, other mental health issues and a lack of confidence around home-schooling.

As a response to the pandemic, Home-Start East Sussex significantly adapted services to enable vital contact and connection with clients.

**"As parents, we were given a real lifeline to support during a period that was extremely difficult."**

**"The group has been something to look forward to despite lockdown, knowing that it's a part of my routine that's still going to happen every week despite everything going on. "**



**A typical team meeting at HSES**

*"Doing the course helped me see myself as a survivor, which feels strong, rather than a victim, and I can be a better parent when I am strong."*



# Lotus Domestic Abuse Recovery Programme

The Lotus Domestic Abuse Recovery Programme is a unique group service developed by Home-Start East Sussex to support women who have been through domestic abuse in their recovery and journey forwards. The six-week structured group aims to empower women with the tools and knowledge to keep themselves and any children they may have safe from abuse in the future.

“ **It means the world knowing I'm not mad or horrible or stupid, but most importantly not alone** ”

The Lotus Programme was developed in 2019 after three years of delivering targeted services to support victims of domestic abuse.

The programme covers:

- Emotional abuse including gaslighting
- Financial abuse and control
- Isolation in abusive relationships
- Early warning signs of an abusive partner
- The cycle of abusive behaviour
- Addressing areas of life still affected by abuse
- Co-parenting with an abusive ex-partner
- Supporting children with their anxieties
- Assertive communication and wellbeing

“ **I would like say what a dramatic impact the course has had on my life in this short period. I feel like a new person who has gained back control and am beginning to create the person I was all those years ago.** ”

This year, we provided support to

**107  
women  
with  
188 children**

across ten group programmes, our highest total yet.

Feedback revealed that;

**94%** felt they were more likely to have **a future free from domestic abuse.**

**98%** felt **better able to recognise the warning signs** of abuse.

**98%** felt **less isolated** after meeting other women with shared experiences.

**100%** had a better understanding of the **tactics of domestic abuse.**

**100%** had a better understanding of the **positive behaviours in a healthy relationship.**





***"The best thing about the group was being able to speak to mums who have had trouble and finding that I'm not the only one who is struggling."***



# Being Mum Programme

“ **I've learnt to stop judging myself and stop comparing myself with other people** ”

The Being Mum programme was a newly developed service for 2020-21 written in line with the Unicef Baby Friendly Initiative and the international ICON programme. Home-Start East Sussex created this service after recognising a need for new mothers to have a space to discuss perinatal mental health in a group setting which normalises the difficulties around the transition into parenthood. With suicide being the leading cause of death for mothers in the postnatal period\*, we wanted to create the opportunity for mums to share their experiences and to speak about the ups and downs of their new life as a mum, in order to improve outcomes for first-time mothers and their babies.

Feedback revealed that;

**90%** had an **improved relationship with their baby**

**97%** had **learned new skills** to support their baby's development

The six-week structured group allows mums to discuss;

- Their story of becoming a mum
- Changes to identity and feelings of isolation
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Bonding with baby and how to improve this
- Maintaining positive relationships with others, including partners
- Learning and development activities and importantly, to develop friendships with other new first-time mothers across the county.

Across 3 group programmes, we were able to support



**94%** reported feeling **more confident about their role as a mother**

**100%** felt **less isolated** after meeting other new first-time mothers

“ **I have learnt to let my partner parent our baby independently rather than always being there. I think this has made their relationship stronger.** ”

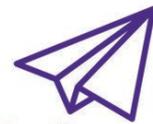




***"Just having someone to reflect to is very helpful. Someone is there for me for once. For a long time there was no one to ask me how I was feeling."***



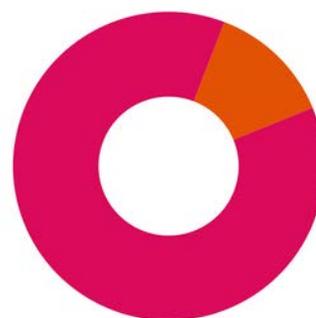
# Volunteer Family Support Service



**“ I felt like I had someone on my side, like someone heard me and encouraged me. ”**

Our Volunteer Family Support Service is the longest-running support service at Home-Start East Sussex, with 2020-21 being its 24th year of targeted support to local families. The service supports families with children under school age by matching them with a trained parent volunteer for regular ongoing support, advice and signposting.

Parents were supported in managing the behaviour of their children with additional needs for example, who were finding it difficult to adjust to a new routine, whilst others were supported to access local Foodbanks in response to financial insecurity.



a positive difference was made to **87%** of supported families

**“ Having a volunteer eased the impact of lockdown because anxiety is so hard and there is no other support at the moment. ”**

The COVID-19 pandemic meant that practical support in clients' homes was paused, and support was instead provided via telephone or video call. In addition to their regular support of providing a kind listening ear and supporting parents with their wellbeing, confidence and independence, our volunteers also supported vulnerable families to adjust to the 'new normal' brought on by the pandemic.

**“ I got a lot off my chest, offloaded and shared my anxieties. Me being in a better place meant I was better at being a mum. ”**

Our team of volunteers was able to support

**99 children**  
and a minimum of  
**45 parents**



A man wearing a brown fedora hat, a light blue denim jacket over a pink sweater, and a tan scarf is looking down with a somber expression. He is sitting on a ledge in a crowded, brightly lit outdoor setting, possibly a market or festival, with blurred lights and people in the background.

***"One thing this course has really helped with is my shame. It's been wonderful to hear from other people going through the same thing."***



# Who's in Charge? Programme

“It's such a great support system and a source of strength and knowledge.”

The Who's in Charge? Programme is a group for parents of children and adolescents whose behaviour is violent, abusive or feeling beyond control. Home-Start East Sussex piloted this service in response to a demand for support from our existing clients as well as the wider community. Also we recognised that there were no other local organisations to signpost them to with a targeted service for child-to-parent violence and abuse.

“I don't feel so out of control.”

Child-to-parent violence and abuse is one of the most stigmatised and misunderstood forms of domestic abuse, yet its prevalence is actually incredibly common. Some researchers estimate that 3-5% of adolescents are seriously abusive towards their parents, with others suggesting an even greater frequency. During the pandemic, parents and children have been confined in small spaces with limited external contact. In many cases, this has escalated violence and abuse within the home.

“I love the way it slowly reveals a way forward step by step. Small steps are way more manageable.”

The nine-week structured group explores:

- The multicausal nature of abuse
- Entitlement and responsibility
- Meaningful consequences for the child
- Anger and common myths
- Communicating assertively
- Wellbeing, self-care and goal setting

Our pilot group supported

**13 parents  
and carers**  
with  
**25 children**

Feedback revealed that;

**5** out of **6**

reported having a **better relationship** with their challenging child

**5** out of **6**

felt their **mental health had improved** during the group.

**100%**

felt **better able to manage their child's behaviour** in the future.

**100%**

felt **less isolated** after meeting other parents and carers with shared experiences.

**100%**

felt **more confident in their role as a parent or carer.**





***"It's given me a much better understanding of abuse. I know the signs now, I know how a healthy relationship should be compared to a toxic one."***



# One-to-one IDVA support

In addition to our group-based support programmes for victims of domestic abuse, Home-Start East Sussex also delivered one-to-one support to clients that needed it during the pandemic.

We were able to support clients with:

- Safety planning (primarily parents experiencing child-to-parent violence)
- Criminal court cases, civil justice remedies, accessing legal support
- Coordinating child contact, Social Services and children's schools
- Accessing a GP, mental health services, addiction support and counselling
- Parenting children who may have witnessed domestic abuse
- Benefits and immigration issues
- Accessing housing support after leaving an abusive relationship
- Referrals to pattern-changing courses
- Emotional support
- Escalation to higher-risk agencies when needed.

Our staff team offered one-to-one support to

**44 clients**  
with  
**84 children**

“ **I definitely feel like I have a thicker skin and this stems from learning that my ex's behaviour was not normal or acceptable and that I wasn't imagining it.** ”

Three of our team are presently working towards their SafeLives IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor) qualification.

“ **Thank you for helping me be in charge of my own feelings and realising that I would never ever go back to my ex-partner. For everything you have done and patiently listened to, and for your encouragement.** ”





# Our Supporters

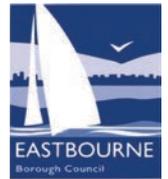


Thank you to all of our lovely supporters who have worked creatively to fundraise for Home-Start East Sussex in safe and engaging ways throughout the pandemic. Our supporters have danced, run art classes, held sponsored walks, given up vices, rowed from Lands' End to John O' Groats and even more! You are wonderful and we cannot thank you enough.

Thanks also to the many Waitrose and John Lewis stores across East Sussex and Brighton & Hove for their generous donations not only to our services, but to our past, current and future clients too. This year's Give A Little Love campaign was incredibly valuable for our clients who received some lovely gifts, from baby items to Easter hampers.



And a huge thank you to each of our funders throughout the year. Your generosity has enabled vital services to continue to support vulnerable families and individuals during a year that was so difficult for all.



With generous donations from:

HE KS NO NB Memorial Volunteer Gift Aided expenses

# THANK YOU

## from all at Home- Start East Sussex

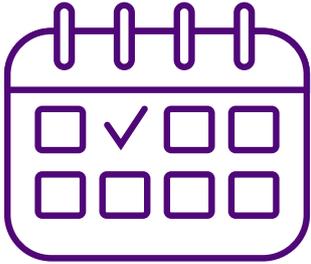




# Get Involved



You can support people to live in a safe and nurturing family and to enjoy a positive, fulfilling life in the following ways.



## Regular donations

Set up weekly, monthly, quarterly or yearly donations at no extra cost via our TotalGiving page.

## Hold a fundraising event

A time-bound challenge, a talent show, a bake-off or a sponsored walk - whatever you love doing, do it for a good cause! Set up a fundraising page via our TotalGiving page to stay on track of donations and share your progress with supporters.



## Support while you shop

Sign up to Amazon Smile and Easy Fundraising to donate at no extra cost whilst shopping online.

## Leave a gift in your will

Under UK tax law, legacies to charities are exempt from inheritance tax. Supporting Home-Start East Sussex in your will is an amazing way for your generosity to last beyond your own lifetime.



[www.totalgiving.co.uk/charity/home-start-east-sussex](http://www.totalgiving.co.uk/charity/home-start-east-sussex)

