



# Home-Start Watford, Three Rivers & Hertsmere



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# Who we are: Home-Start Watford, Three Rivers & Hertsmere

- Home-Start WTRH is a well-established local charity with over **32 years' experience** supporting local families with children under the age of 5
- We are an independent charity, part of a nationwide Home-Start UK federation
- We provide an early intervention to prevent future crisis
- We support parents to enable children to have the childhood they deserve
- Parent led support – adaptable to the family's needs
- Volunteer based service where all home-visiting volunteers are parents themselves



# Who we support

## Families who meet our 4 criteria

- Have at least one child under the age of 5 yrs old
- Living in Watford, Three Rivers or Hertsmere
- Their home is safe for a volunteer to visit (i.e., DA perpetrator is not living at/accessing the property)
- Children/child are not on CPP at the point of referral



## Our 4 core services



### HOME-VISITING SUPPORT

In-house trained volunteers providing practical and emotional support to families through weekly home-visits



### FAMILY GROUP WORK

Helping families overcome isolation and engage with others in their local community.



### COUNSELLING SERVICE

Supporting parents who are experiencing mental health challenges.



### COMMUNITY BUDDY SERVICE

In-house trained Buddies, quite often once supported families themselves, offering guidance and friendship to others in community settings



## Where we work

### Families supported

|              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| Watford      | 50% |
| Hertsmere    | 29% |
| Three Rivers | 21% |





# Home-Visiting Support

- Free and open to all supported families Side-by-side parenting support
- Weekly 2–3-hour visits for six months
- Emotional support – a compassionate, non-judgmental listening ear, offered by volunteers with relevant lived experience who walk alongside families rather than directing them.
- Practical tasks such as supporting parents to get out of the house, helping them establish routines, or helping with getting organised.
- Role-modelling positive interactions, such as play, story time, and building warm, responsive relationships with children.
- Signposting and engaging with other services to ensure families can access the wider support they need.
- Our approach is rooted in respect – recognising and valuing each family's parenting style, culture, and lived experience.



**A strong safeguarding culture underpins all our work**

# Family Groups

- Free and open to all supported families
- All inclusive
- Welcoming, respectful and safe environments
- Modelling good play and positive parenting strategies
- Supporting families to connect
- Following Early Years Foundation Stage framework



*Otley Way (South Oxhey) (3R)*

*Leavesden Green Community centre (W)*

*St Michael and All Angels (H)*

# Counselling Service:

**Our flexible, barrier-free model ensures that families who are facing multiple challenges can still engage consistently, maintain progress, and receive early, sustained support.**

- 12 weeks of sessions (with an extension possibility)
- Available to all families/carers who are receiving Home-Start support or who have received support within the last year.
- Available to all volunteers

Our delivery model ensures every parent can engage in a way that works for them, including:

- Low cost (affordable to all )
- In-person sessions, with childcare provided
- Online/Zoom sessions for parents who cannot attend in person
- Three accessible community venues, aligned with the locations of our Family Groups
- Adapted scheduling to accommodate work patterns, health needs, and caring responsibilities



# Community Buddy Service (following home-visiting support)

The Community Buddy Service supports friendships within our Home-Start community and helps families build confidence, connection, and independence.

- Develops friendships and informal peer support
- Helps prevent social isolation
- Builds local community connections to boost wellbeing
- Provides Buddy training and increases volunteer confidence and skills
- Support offered for around four months, overseen by a dedicated coordinator
- Acts as a steppingstone into further volunteering or pathway to employment

## Three Entry Routes for Community Buddies

The redesigned model now offers **three flexible volunteering pathways**:

- **Parent Buddy** – Parents with lived experience who want to support others
- **Community Buddy** – Volunteers who are not parents but wish to provide companionship and support
- **Step-Down Home-Visiting Volunteer** – Experienced home-visiting volunteers moving into a lighter-touch role

This expanded model widens access to volunteers, increases capacity, and strengthens our ability to match families with the right type of support.

Developed by HSWTR , The **Community Buddy Service will be rolled out across the Home-Start federation in 2027**







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# Why is our support needed?

## Nurturing Every Child's Potential

The early years of life are a time of rapid brain development, laying the foundation for learning, emotional well-being, and social connections. During this critical period, children form the building blocks for their future.

## The Power of a Loving Environment

A nurturing, stable, and loving home environment plays a pivotal role in shaping a child's future. Positive early experiences help build resilience, confidence, and a sense of security.

## Supporting Families, Strengthening Futures

When families face stress, it can affect the ability to provide the consistent love and support children need. However, with the right support, families can overcome challenges and ensure their children thrive.



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# Complexity of Needs for Three Rivers families

- 86% of families supported in Q3 had three or more complex needs, and 37% presented with five or more complex needs (12 indicators of complex need).
- The proportion of families with 3+ needs is consistent with the average across all three geographical areas we support.
- Three Rivers families made up 23% of all families with the highest levels of complexity (5+)

Most common presenting needs in Three Rivers in Q3:

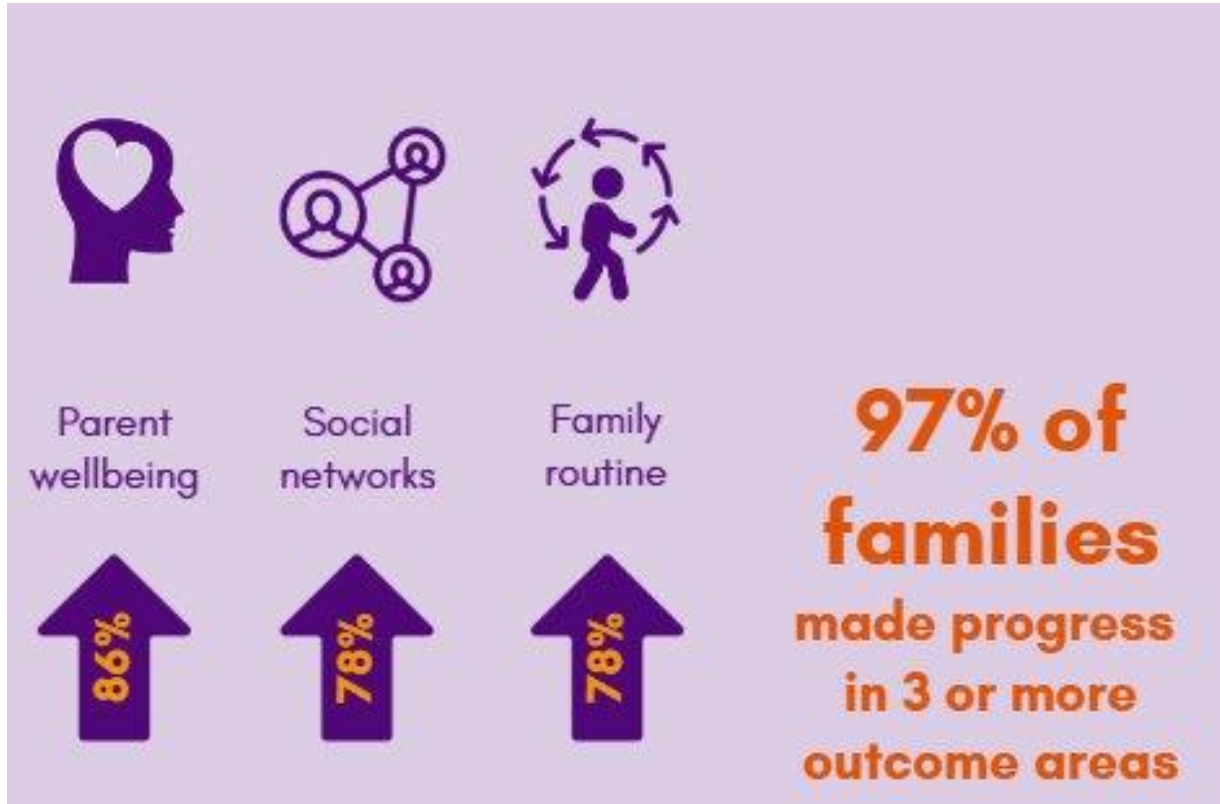
- Mental health – 79%
- Stress – 67%
- Social isolation – 67%
- Physical health – 50%
- Financial difficulties – 38%

Other significant factors include:

Lone parenting, English as a second language, learning disabilities, domestic abuse, and children with SEND.

**These figures highlight a consistently prominent level of need in the district, with families facing multiple overlapping challenges. This reinforces the ongoing requirement for early, coordinated, multi-agency support to prevent escalation and improve outcomes.**

# Impact



## Case Study – ‘Judith’ story





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# How we align with your council plan (26-29)

## 1. Healthy, Safe & Thriving Communities

- Home-Start provides early help through family assessments, home visiting, counselling, and group support.
- Directly supports vulnerable residents, improving mental health, reducing isolation, and strengthening family resilience (Council Plan pp.14–17).
- Strong alignment with safeguarding and multi-agency partnership expectations.

## 2. A Green & Sustainable Future

- Local delivery model reduces need for long-distance travel, supporting accessible community-based services.
- Family groups and community spaces promote sustainable use of local infrastructure.
- Stabilising families enhances long-term community resilience.





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# How we align with your council plan (26-29)

## 3. A Prosperous & Vibrant District

- Volunteer programme builds skills, confidence and community participation.
- Group activities reduce isolation and increase access to services.
- Signposting connects families with education, health, financial and community resources.

## 4. A Well-Run Council

- Comprehensive KPIs, demographic reporting and case studies support transparent commissioning.
- Evidence-based monitoring ensures value for money.
- Multi-agency working strengthens efficiency and outcomes.



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# What's impacting local family support

- Funding: How We Sustain Our Work
- System Pressures & the Funding Gap Facing Charities
- External Factors Shaping Our Planning and Delivery
- The Reality We're Working In
- Why protect the families?
- How You Can Help Us Support Local Families



**Any questions?**



**HOME  
START**