



Home Link Family Support



*Working with our
volunteers to provide
practical and emotional
support to families with
young children*

ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14



Who we are:

Our mission is to educate the general public as to the needs of parents and children under five, and to encourage the development of community schemes in order to alleviate disadvantage in families with young children. Our main area of operations is in South Edinburgh and Midlothian

What we do:

We work with volunteers to provide practical and emotional support to families with young children and work with strategic partners to influence the policy landscape as it impacts on families and young children

What our funders say:

"Home Link Family Support provides an innovative high quality client centred service to vulnerable children and their families, encouraging individuals from the community to support those who are most in need at a time and place that is most suitable for them."

Hamish Fraser, Commissioning and Planning Officer
Early Years - Midlothian Council

"The City of Edinburgh Council recognises the hard work undertaken by the volunteers supported by Home Link Family Support. Their efforts have helped address the social isolation experienced by many young parents across South Edinburgh."

David Hoy, Commissioning Officer Planning and Performance
Children and Families - The City of Edinburgh Council.

What our service users and volunteers say:

What our families said:

'Having a volunteer allows me look at other ideas which helps me understand life better.'

'My Home Link volunteer really understands me and that is what I like.'

'Debbie was a major support in my life when I needed it most, a fantastic friend for me and the boys when we needed somebody and was brilliant when I needed a shoulder to cry on. Without Debbie this last year would have been a lot harder to cope with. She's truly a star.'

The following comments are from exit reviews completed by volunteers:

'Yes, it was a very rewarding experience and definitely helped me to get a new job.'

'I've achieved a personal satisfaction because I could contribute to someone's life and also develop my own skills.'

'I have really enjoyed working with families and Home Link - the experiences have given me new skills that I will be able to use in my new job.'

Message from the Manager:

What a really busy year we have had. On behalf of the Board and Staff team I would like to thank all our volunteers, befrienders and funders for providing endless encouragement, time and commitment to enable us to support as many families as we could during the year 2013-14.



We were fortunate enough to gain funding from the Volant Trust which has allowed us to expand the Systemic Work (Therapeutic Family Work) in Midlothian, recruiting another Systemic Practitioner and offering additional art and play therapy sessions to families across Midlothian.

New opportunities presented as a result of funding from RS Macdonald, the Big Lottery and South NHP to enable our befrienders to be trained to deliver PEEP (Parents as Early

Education Partners) at home, encouraging vulnerable parents to experience this parenting programme in their own home. This is a new project for us with impressive results for the children and parents involved.

6 volunteers were trained to deliver Living Life to the Full Cognitive Behavioural Therapy approach to help families with their confidence and self-esteem and to help them find solutions to difficulties they are facing. 14 volunteers were trained in Bookbug Assertive Outreach programme with 10 of these volunteers delivering the Big Bedtime Read in Midlothian, part of the Early Years Collaborative Test of Change.

Christmas 2013 was made extra special thanks to the kind donations from Scottish Widows and Scott Moncrieff offices in Edinburgh and Glasgow in partnership with Fresh Start. Over 100 children and their families benefited from the food hampers and Christmas gifts.

We were delighted to launch the Antenatal Befriending Project in March 2014 having been successful in being awarded funding from the City of Edinburgh Early Years Change Fund in partnership with EVOC.

We moved office in February 2014, which has enhanced the service to enable us to deliver training on site and provide volunteers with a comfortable and accessible space to meet the team.

Finally we achieved Excellence in Befriending awarded by Befriending Networks, one of only 4 services in Scotland to achieve this accolade. Well done to all those involved for their hard work and determination to complete the task.



The services we have provided:

Preschool befriending

In 2013-14 103 families with 179 children benefited from preschool befriending support.

Befriending is for families who have at least one child under five or are expecting a baby and are experiencing some form of difficulty.

A volunteer Befriender visits weekly, for a couple of hours, to help in a variety of ways e.g. settle into a new area, build the families' confidence to go out with the children, and give families someone to talk to who won't judge them.

Weekly visits are arranged through the Project Worker who matches the family with an appropriate Befriender. Our volunteers are all trained, screened and PVG checked by us to ensure that they are able to provide the right level of support. They come from all walks of life with a variety of skills and experiences.

Our Project Workers manage the volunteers and are responsible for ensuring that each volunteer is matched carefully with a family. They take into consideration what the family want to get from befriending, what support best meets the family's needs and the kind of person that they assess the family will get on with.

Our Befrienders are friendly, good listeners, able to understand a family's feelings, and help families think through feelings and problems and discuss them in confidence. Befrienders can visit for up to a year.

Reasons for referral 2013-14

Emotional support; practical support; social and emotional isolation; mental health issues; children's health related issues/disability; family separation; new to the area; domestic violence; concerns for child development and welfare; parental substance misuse.

Therapeutic Family Work

Figures for 2013/14

28 families with 74 children were supported during this year. 16 Social Work; 1 Children 1st; 3 Internal = Total of 20 new families were referred and allocated support.

There are many themes that run through all families referred for Therapeutic Family Work. The most common themes are:

- Transgenerational parenting patterns
- Belief systems
- Attachment relationships
- Parents' needs overtaking children's needs
- Family dynamics
- Relationship issues
- Children's challenging behaviour
- Bullying
- History of sexual/physical abuse
- History of drug/alcohol misuse
- Merged families
- School refusal
- Separation of parents

Therapeutic Family Work aims to:

- Work systemically with family systems and extended systems
- Ensure that each family member is given a voice
- Circular approach rather than a linear one
- Work with the whole system rather than individuals
- Pay attention to process of interactions and identify 'trigger' points
- Identify patterns of behaviour
- Remove the culture of blame
- Enable family members to recognise that change lies within the whole system and not just with the child(ren)
- Using non-threatening creative methods
- Using Art and Play Therapists to work alongside children

We ask families to score themselves every 3 months while they receive the service and score themselves from 1 (good) to 5 (things are very difficult within the family) against the following outcomes: family functioning; family strengths and adaptability; difficulties that the family have identified themselves that they want to address and communication within the family.

75% of families felt that there had been an improvement in the communication between family members

68% had noticed an improvement in family functioning



Family Support Work

10 families received support for up to 6 months.

The majority of families referred for family support have children on the Child Protection Register. Most are referred for support with parenting, building routines in the home, attending appointments and getting involved in their local community. Other supports provided by the Family Support Worker include help to follow through with the Child's Plan where applicable and applications for grants, writing letters, liaising with other organisations, attending meetings and general emotional support.

After assessment of the family's needs a plan of support is discussed and, where applicable, outlined in the Child's Plan. Families are encouraged to stick to the plan of support agreed with the Family Support Worker and it is reviewed regularly. Many families lack motivation due to depression and need a lot of encouragement and support to stick to the plan.

Group Work in Midlothian

In 2013-2014 three groups were run with 18 parents benefiting from 60 hours of direct group work support. The groups run weekly for a couple of hours for between 10 and 14 weeks to coincide with the school terms. A crèche is provided and taxis offered for those who may find it difficult to self-travel.

The Time for Me group is an activity based group that focuses on building and sharing creative skills whilst encouraging peer support among parents. The aim is to encourage parents to set their own agenda, build relationships through sharing experiences thus improving their confidence and self-esteem. This in turn has a positive impact on the children and helps build family resilience.

The group worker facilitates all the sessions herself and this year was supported by one of our volunteer befrienders.

Evaluation of the group is carried out by asking each participant to complete an evaluation form at the start, middle and end of the group. They are asked to score themselves on 5 different outcomes namely: feeling less isolated, improved self-confidence, increased resilience and motivation, learned new skills, improved health and wellbeing. Scores show that all participants score higher at the end than they did at the beginning across all outcomes.

Volunteering

It is the backbone of all that we do. We have had the time and commitment of 76 volunteers helping us deliver the work of Home Link Family Support, including befriending, governance, administration, database support, IT, website maintenance, marketing, social media, training and service promotion. Thank you for all that you have done.



New Projects and Developments

QIB

We have been awarded Quality in Befriending "Excellence" award by Befriending Networks. We are one of only 4 organisations in Scotland to achieve this accreditation. We are delighted. In the process of applying for this award we updated and re-examined many of our procedures.

Antenatal Project

In December 2013 we were successful in obtaining funding through The City of Edinburgh Change Fund to pilot an 18 month antenatal befriending project. These volunteers will work with the whole family ensuring that, antenatally, they are ready for the arrival of their baby by providing practical and emotional support, helping develop the trusting relationship needed to ensure the best possible start for vulnerable children. We will assess the needs of the family, looking at strengths they already have and building upon them. Helping the family to decide what they need rather than dictating what they should do. Where possible, we plan to share the recruitment of volunteers for this service and the mainstream befriending service although the CEC funding has allowed us to recruit a specific Coordinator for this service, who will be responsible for all aspects of developing the project.

PEEP at home

A new provision that we have piloted throughout Midlothian and South Edinburgh to engage parents with their children's learning. Funding was received from various external trusts to cover volunteer expenses, materials and training. We have trained 15 volunteers to become PEEP practitioners with 30 children benefiting from the support. Through this scheme volunteers can achieve a City and Guilds qualification, one volunteer has already achieved this.

Big Bedtime Read and Bookbug Outreach Programme

10 volunteers have been trained to be part of the Early Years Collaborative Test of Change; this has been supported by them accessing Bookbug Assertive Outreach training.

Outcomes

For our Families who receive preschool befriending

Since 2010 we have been asking our families to self-assess the impact that befriending has on their family. The areas of support we focus on are: health and well-being; parenting skills and capacity; social and emotional isolation; ability to cope with daily life; relationships between parent and child and what the family want to achieve themselves (own outcome). We meet the family to do the reviews at 3 monthly intervals.

- 85% of families reported a reduction in isolation**
- 71% of families reported an increase in coping with difficulties of daily life**
- 71% of families reported an improvement in their wellbeing**
- 77% reported an improvement in their relationships within their family.**

For our Volunteers

Each time we meet the volunteers we ask them to score themselves between 1 (poor) and 5 (excellent) against the following outcomes: their own outcome, improved self-esteem and confidence as the result of volunteering, improved understanding of the issues facing children and families, increased sense of achievement from helping others, increase in skills and work readiness as the result of volunteering, increased connection to their community.

Volunteers have scored themselves 80% in relation to an increase in their self-esteem as a result of volunteering

- 78% increased their knowledge and understanding of issues facing children and families**
- 82% of volunteers said their sense of achievement and connection to the community had improved**
- 73% achieved their own outcome**
- 81% said they felt they are work ready.**

The difference we have made

The following is a brief PEEP case study with a family we are working with.

Sarah is a young mum with an 18 month old baby boy with poor attachment with her child. She did not want to spend any time with him. She stayed at home with her parents and relied on them to do most of the childcare. The health visitor referred Sarah and her child for PEEP to help build their relationship and improve mum's confidence in communicating and interacting with her child.

Our volunteer has worked effectively to support Sarah to be more confident in her ability to interact with her son and she is now caring for him with little intervention from her parents. She has reported that she is attending a local family centre and has built up friendships with other mums within the community.

How befriending helps volunteers as well as families

A lone parent in her 20's with a child with autism has been volunteering since September 2013. She is matched with a lone parent also in her 20's who has mental health issues. The focus of the support is helping the family try and establish local connections, manage finances, ensure the mother has accessed all her benefit entitlements, help address her rent arrears. The volunteer has supported the family to link in with the relevant agencies.

The volunteer has accessed training on mental health and plans to train so she can deliver PEEP with the family. Now that their financial situation has improved, the focus of the support will divert to helping develop the relationship with the mother and child. The volunteer and family are gaining knowledge of the benefit system, local resources and confidence in dealing with service providers across Midlothian. She has recently applied for a place to study HNC in childcare.

How befriending helps the family

The Roberts family have 3 children (two under 5 years). Jane's partner died in a road accident and since then she has suffered from severe depression. The first few sessions with the volunteer were chaotic but gradually the volunteer managed to build a routine and relationship with the children so that they did not swear and fight during the visits. They had to learn to take turns, and have enjoyed being read to and playing games. They look forward to the volunteer bringing a new book on each visit. The fact that they can sit down long enough to listen to a story has greatly improved their attention span and school has reported a change in behaviour in class of the oldest. Their mother has also learnt from the volunteer about setting routines and that shouting does not improve the situation. The volunteer is currently helping Jane to access local support and social groups.



How Therapeutic Family Work can help

Family of mum, new partner of 18 months,
13 year old boy and 14 month old baby.

The Systemic Practitioner first had to identify the difficulties within the family, establish relationships with all family members, allow each family member the opportunity to voice concerns and enable the 13 year old boy to express why he was angry. He had been getting into trouble at school for fighting. Initially the mother blamed her 13 year old son for everything that was going wrong within the family. Through using an Art/Play Therapist the son was able to express how he felt 'pushed out' and also that his mum and her partner were heavy drinkers and although his physical needs were being met they had not been emotionally available for him. He also constantly worries about his mum's drinking. Work with this family is on-going but the mother now recognises that she cannot blame her son for everything; she needs to address her drinking and spend more time with him.



YEAR in NUMBERS

4 preschool befriender training courses delivered

304
Children

34 funders and donors

33 new volunteers

158 Families supported

3
Project Workers

58
Befrienders

16,848
volunteer hours

5 new initiatives to help vulnerable children and their families

1 Antenatal Befriending Coordinator

£106,311 economic value of volunteer hours

1
Family Support Worker

2 Systemic Practitioners

5 sessional Art and Play Therapists

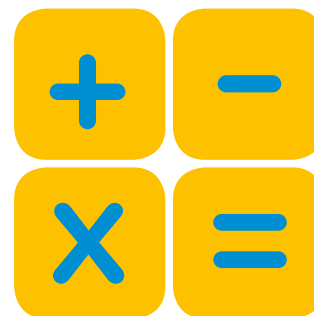
2 local authorities served

7.7 full time equivalent staff members

Finance

Income and Expenditure Accounts

	2014	2013
	£	£
Income		
Charitable Resources Grants	270,112	251,085
Voluntary Income	33,194	20,003
Investment Income	780	803
Total Income	304,086	271,891
Expenditure		
Charitable Activities, Direct Support Costs	284,834	261,007
Governance	4,080	3,579
Total Expenditure	288,914	264,586
Surplus/(Deficit) for Year	15,172	7,305



	2014	2013
	£	£
Balance Sheet		
Fixed Assets	2,665	4,024
Current Assets	170,773	148,292
Current Liabilities	(28,842)	(22,892)
Net Current Assets	141,931	125,400
Net Total Assets	144,596	129,424

The current financial position in the United Kingdom continues to be challenging for the voluntary sector. Budgets are being cut across all sectors and as a result competition for funding is becoming more intense.

Against this economic back drop, the performance of Home Link Family Support has been impressive in 2013-14. A small surplus of £15,172 was generated (Prior year: £7,305) based on income of £304,086 (PY: £271,891). Midlothian continues to be Home Link Family Support's largest funder, contributing £147,020 (PY: £148,301). Home Link Family Support also received significant levels of funding from:

- > £51,533 City of Edinburgh Council (PY: £48,373); £18,654 BBC Children in Need (PY: £27,207)
- > £33,194 Donations from trusts and individuals (PY: £20,003)

Home Link Family Support continues to have a strong balance sheet with total reserves of £144,596 (PY: £129,424) made up of unrestricted reserves of £103,078 (PY: £73,184) and restricted reserves of £41,518 (PY: £56,240). We will continue to monitor the level of unrestricted reserves to ensure that the organisation is equipped to deal with the economic uncertainty which lies ahead.

The Board of Directors are confident that Home Link Family Support is well placed to meet the financial challenges which face all charitable organisations. Home Link Family Support has already secured the majority of its 2014-15 funding and the Board are confident that the management and staff team are well placed to continue to provide the excellent services which have built Home Link Family Support's reputation.

Al Morrison

TREASURER

Board Members 2013-14

Phil Watt	Chairperson	
Kathy Crombie	Vice-Chair	<i>Retired 28 Oct 2013</i>
Alan Morrison	Treasurer	
Mark Smith	Secretary	
David Mason		
Judith Matheson		
Pamela Nichol- Littlejohn		<i>Retired 28 Oct 2013</i>
Marion Dunbar		
Chris Kelly		<i>Joined 28 Oct 2013</i>
David Kerr		<i>Joined 28 Oct 2013</i>
Callum Chomczuk		<i>Joined 28 Oct 2013</i>
Emma Jamieson		<i>Joined 28 Oct 2013</i>
Nicky Yarrow		<i>Joined 28 Oct 2013</i>

Staff members 2013-14

Paula Swanston – Manager
Isla Le Roux/Liz Pattinson – Finance Officer
Jane Ellis – Volunteer Officer
Sheena Smith – Senior Practitioner
Helen Gault - South West Edinburgh Project Worker (*Moved over to ABP March 2014*)
Zosia Ross (*Left December 2013*)/**Amanda Vickery** (*from March 2014*) – South East Edinburgh Project Worker
Heather McKie – Midlothian Project Worker
Liz Notarangelo – Systemic Practitioner- Midlothian
Maggie Dickson - Systemic Practitioner- Midlothian
Helen Gault - Antenatal Befriending Coordinator (*from March 2014*)



Home Link Family Support

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Funders 2013-14

On behalf of the Board, staff and volunteers and the families we support we would like to give our sincere thanks and appreciation to all our funders and donors this year. Without your support we would not have been able to help so many vulnerable children and their families.

Albert Hunt Trust
BBC Children in Need
Big Lottery
Binks Trust
Brownlee Charitable Trust
Castansa Trust
City of Edinburgh Council
Chris Lowe
Cruden Foundation
Dr Mike Wilson
EVOC Early Years Change Fund
Henry Duncan Awards

Iain Stewart Foundation
Isobel Gray
Jenny Lowe
Katherine Mackenzie
Kelly Family Charitable Trust
Kennedy Charitable Trust
Margaret Murdoch Charitable Trust
Midlothian Council
Nancy Roberts Charitable Trust
Netherdale Trust
Pleasance Trust
Ponton House Trust

RK Young Trust
Robertson Trust
Roger Vere Foundation
RS Macdonald Charitable Trust
Ryvoan Trust
Scottish Widows
Sir James Miller Edinburgh Trust
Tillyloss Trust
Tweedie Miller Charitable Trust
Volant Charitable Trust
Widower's Children's Home Trust