

HOME START

Cymru



Impact Report

2025/2026

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Foreword and introduction

I am delighted to introduce Home-Start Cymru's Impact Report for 2025–2026. This year has highlighted both the significant pressures facing families across Wales and the remarkable strength, resilience and hope they continue to show.

Throughout the year, our volunteers and staff have supported families during moments of challenge, transition and uncertainty. Their commitment, compassion and steady presence have ensured families receive support that feels dignified and rooted in trust. Our partnerships with funders, local authorities, health services and community organisations have enabled us to reach families earlier and offer help when it is most needed.

As Trustees, we are incredibly proud of the organisation's continued growth and its dedication to safeguarding, volunteer development and high-quality practice. Above all, we are proud of the families who welcomed us into their homes and worked with such determination to build brighter futures for their children.

This report is a celebration of that resilience and of our collective belief that every child in Wales deserves the very best start in life.



Jonathan Richards

**Chairperson
Home-Start Cymru**



The need

Pressures facing families across Wales

Across Wales, parenting has become harder than it should be. Families are balancing rising living costs, insecure housing, overstretched public services and limited support networks. Mental health concerns continue to be one of the most frequent reasons families reach out to us, often intertwined with financial pressures and the strain of coping alone.

At the same time, neurodevelopmental needs are rising sharply. Many families wait months or even years for assessments, leaving parents uncertain and anxious as they try to understand their child's behaviour or development.

In this context, early, relational support is crucial. Families need connection, encouragement and practical guidance from people they can trust - and this is what Home-Start Cymru is proud to provide.

Early childhood

Why relationships matter

Early childhood lays the foundations for lifelong wellbeing. Research shows that nurturing relationships shape a child's emotional regulation, communication, resilience and ability to learn. When families face adversity - whether poverty, trauma, poor housing or mental health difficulties - stress within the home can place strain on these crucial relationships.

Compassionate, strengths-based support can act as a protective factor for children and parents alike. Our model places human relationships at the centre, because we know they make the greatest difference.



About Home-Start Cymru



Home-Start Cymru is a family support charity rooted in communities across Wales. We work in 19 local authority areas, with partner Home-Starts in Ceredigion, Wrexham and Flintshire to ensure families throughout Wales can access high-quality, relational, early help close to home.

Each day, our volunteers and staff work alongside parents and caregivers, offering warmth, understanding and steady companionship during times when life feels particularly challenging. Our aim is simple: to help families build confidence, strengthen resilience and create safe, nurturing home environments where children can thrive.

What makes our work unique is our volunteer-led model. Trained volunteers bring empathy, their time and lived experience into the heart of family life, forming trusting relationships that many parents describe as transformative. This relational approach ensures support feels dignified, human and grounded in genuine connection.

We work closely with Welsh Government programmes such as Flying Start, Families First, the Children and Communities Grant, and with Local Authorities, Health Boards, Health Visitors, GPs, midwives, schools and community networks. These partnerships ensure that families can find us easily - whether they refer themselves or are introduced by a trusted professional.

Why we are needed

»» Purpose

To build the skills and confidence of families so children can develop positively and thrive.

»» Vision

A Wales where every family feels confident, connected and supported to ensure every child has the best start in life.

»» Mission

To offer trusted, volunteer-led early support that nurtures confidence and whole-family wellbeing. We work alongside families and partners to reduce isolation, build resilience and create strong foundations for children's futures.



Our values and ways of working

We meet families with compassion and respect. Our priority is to create a safe, welcoming space where they feel able to talk openly without fear of judgement. We begin by recognising the strengths already present in every home - the love, commitment and determination that parents bring, even when they are under pressure.

Trust is central to everything we do. We work with integrity, stay consistent, and move at the appropriate pace dictated by each family. We remain positive, even when families feel uncertain or overwhelmed. We provide emotional support to help parents to see their potential and stay beside them until they can feel that hope again for themselves and their children.

Helping families where support is needed most

Circumstances and diversity

Families turn to Home-Start Cymru for many reasons, often coping with several pressures at once. Around half of the families we supported last year were experiencing parental mental health difficulties. Lone parents made up almost forty percent of the families we worked with, many carrying significant emotional and practical responsibilities alone. More than a third had children with neurodevelopmental needs, and just over a quarter were managing disabilities or long-term health issues.

Financial strain remains a significant and growing challenge. Nearly a quarter of families reported debt or financial hardship, often alongside unsuitable housing or difficult living conditions. A smaller but important number were refugee or asylum-seeking families rebuilding their lives in new communities, often experiencing trauma, isolation or language barriers.

Language, identity and representation

We work with families from a diverse range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, especially in suburban areas, and we are committed to ensuring every family feels welcomed, valued and represented in our services. Equality, diversity and inclusion are woven through our volunteer training, supervision and partnership work.



Our impact on families' lives

Over the last year, through a range of services based in families' homes, in various groups and in community settings, Home-Start Cymru supported:

Families	Children
1,153	2,220

***Includes Home-Start Conwy**

Our approach

Following referral, families work with our staff to complete an asset-based, whole-family assessment. Using a series of strengths-focused outcome questions, parents reflect on different areas of family life and score themselves based on what feels most relevant to them.

This forms a co-developed Family Support Plan that is owned by the parent and may include emotional support, assistance, information, signposting, and opportunities to build social connections.

Our volunteers support parents to work towards their goals, build confidence and motivation, embed positive changes, and access wider support. Families review their progress regularly with our staff and complete a closing assessment when their support ends.

Changes in scores between assessments show the distance-travelled over time and are recorded safely and securely on our caseload management system. We are able to analyse this data as a measure of our support's quality and impact on families' lives.

Our impact at a glance

The impact figures below show the percentage of families who self-reported partial or significant improvements in their selected outcome areas:

Parental outcomes

Parental wellbeing

84%

Improved parental mental health

84%

Reduced parental loneliness/isolation

75%

Coping with physical health



Parental confidence

76%

Increased confidence and skills to manage the demands of caring for multiple births or young children

Accessing services and managing household

72%

Parents felt more connected to community networks

83%

Increased confidence managing household budget

Family resilience

87%

Improved family relationships due to reduction of conflict and/or stress

87%

Improved ability to cope with day to day challenges

Children's outcomes

85%

Improved child
mental health

88%

Coping with child
physical health



Gwent pilot project outcomes

67%

Improved school-
readiness

50%

Improved speech
and language



Family voices in their own words

“My support worker was very friendly and supportive. She provided a safe space where I felt I could talk freely.”



“It made a massive difference in behaviour, with more listening and understanding choices.”

“I had postnatal depression, anxiety and intrusive thoughts. My worker provided a safe, non-judgemental space to rebuild confidence.”



“My support worker helped me build routine and stability at home when things felt overwhelming.”

"Having to navigate a very difficult and life-changing scenario was made that much easier having Home-Start Cymru there to help. From tailored advice and helping us get settled in our new home, they were there every step of the way."



Claire's story

» Background

I first connected with Home-Start Cymru around 2022–23, during a very difficult period in my life. I was experiencing domestic abuse, including post-separation abuse, and was under extremely high levels of stress and emotional pressure. At the same time, I was navigating challenges linked to my neurodivergence, which I felt were not always understood by the services I was working with.

» Support provided

- I was supported by workers from Home-Start Cymru, and from the very beginning, I felt a real difference in how they worked with me.
- They were compassionate, understanding, and non-judgemental. For the first time, I felt truly listened to and believed. My support worker took the time to understand both my situation and my neurodivergence in a way I hadn't experienced elsewhere.
- With their support, I began to make sense of what I had been experiencing and started to understand the abuse more clearly. This helped me feel less trapped and more able to see a way forward.



» Outcomes

- With ongoing support, I slowly began to regain stability and confidence. I started to feel more in control of my life and better able to cope day to day.
- By the end of the support, I felt significantly better and more reassured in myself and my situation.
- This also had a positive impact on my children. I was able to focus more on their needs and create a more stable and supportive environment for them. While things are not always easy, my life now feels much more grounded than it did during that crisis period.

While on a year-long waiting list for counselling, the volunteer became a vital source of emotional stability helping manage stress, combat loneliness and regain a sense of control in her life.

» In her words:

“For the first time, I felt truly listened to and not judged.” Before I received support, I felt lost, overwhelmed, and completely alone. Now, I understand how important it is to have someone who listens without judgement and takes the time to truly understand you.”

Hannah's story

»» Background

Hannah, from Caerphilly, welcomed her first child, and like many new parents expected the early months to be joyful but challenging. Instead, she found herself increasingly overwhelmed. By the time Frankie was around five to seven months old, Hannah was struggling with depression, anxiety, and persistent intrusive thoughts. Her health visitor, Marie, recognised that Hannah may be experiencing Postnatal Depression (PND) and referred her to Home-Start Cymru for additional postnatal support.

»» Support provided

Through Home-Start Cymru, Hannah received tailored, wraparound support including:

- Creating a safe and consistent space where Hannah could speak openly about her thoughts and feelings over a cup of tea.
- Developing coping strategies and the confidence to manage daily life with a young baby.
- Service navigation – Connections to essential services to begin rebuilding her life.

»» Outcomes

- Improved day-to-day functioning: Everyday tasks felt more manageable.
- Increased confidence as a parent: She started to enjoy motherhood in a way she hadn't since her child was born.
- Successful return to work: Feeling more stable and supported, she returned to her teaching role two days a week.
- Long-term resilience: Although she still has anxious days and intrusive thoughts, she now has the skills to work through them independently.

»» In her words

“My support worker was amazing, I can't praise her enough. I think about her often.”

She changed motherhood for me, for the better. Without her, I would have continued in the dark place I was in.”



Volunteering

Use your lived experience to support parents and children

Home-Start Cymru volunteers are at the core of everything we do. We are looking for people who bring parenting, caring or professional lived experience and want to use that understanding to support families during challenging times. You don't need to be an expert. Many of our volunteers are parents, grandparents, carers, or people who have worked in education, health, childcare, community or caring roles. What matters most is kindness, empathy, reliability and a willingness to listen without judgement helping parents feel less isolated, more confident and better able to cope.

What you'll do

You'll spend around two hours a week with a family offering simple, practical support:

- Listening when things feel overwhelming.
- Helping build routines and confidence.
- Encouraging positive time between parent and child.
- Connecting families to local support.

Small actions matter. Over time, they build trust and confidence.

By sharing your time and experience, you can help parents feel less isolated, more confident and better able to cope.

The impact you'll have

Families tell us they:

- Feel less isolated.
- Gain confidence as parents.
- Build stronger relationships at home.
- Feel more able to cope.

Your time creates real change.

“Just being there for a family can really matter. It's one of the most rewarding things I've done.”

Make a difference - we'll support you every step of the way

You'll be fully supported

Before you start, you'll complete preparation training (**around 20 hours**).

You'll learn about:

- Safeguarding and boundaries
- Supporting families effectively
- Child development and wellbeing

Once you begin, you'll have:

- Regular supervision
- Ongoing training
- Support from experienced staff
- A wider volunteer community

Safe and supportive

All volunteers complete a safer recruitment process:

- Informal conversation
- References
- Enhanced DBS check

This helps keep families and volunteers safe.

What you'll gain

Volunteers often tell us they:

- Feel more confident
- Learn new skills
- Build connections in their community
- Feel part of something meaningful

Ready to get involved?

Visit: volunteering.homestartcymru.org.uk

Email: volunteering@homestartcymru.org.uk

Scan: QR Barcode to register your interest

Give your time. Change a family's story.



Diana's story

“I wanted to give something back”

When Diana became a parent, she was living abroad due to her partner's work. Being away from the UK meant she did not have easy access to relatives or familiar support networks. During a time when family life felt new and demanding, she experienced the isolation and uncertainty that many parents face when raising young children without trusted advice close at hand.

Years later, those experiences stayed with her and shaped her decision to volunteer.

Diana first joined Home-Start Crawley, Horsham and Mid Sussex, completing a six-week face-to-face preparation course. She describes the training as “**excellent**” and says learning alongside other volunteers helped her build confidence.

“Being with other people and doing role play helped us learn how to communicate and break the ice.”

In 2021, Diana continued her journey by joining Home-Start Cymru through the Powys project. This was during the COVID-19 pandemic when training was delivered online as part of a new national structure. Although this felt very different, she adapted and remained committed to supporting families in her community. She remembers feeling extremely nervous before meeting her first family.

“You don't think you're going to be able to do much good... you worry you might make things worse.”



With reassurance from coordinators and careful matching, Diana gradually found her confidence. Over time, she has supported families facing complex challenges, including ongoing disability, family court proceedings, immigration pressures, and, more recently, supporting a family experiencing isolation linked to children's neurodevelopmental needs. Through consistent visits, encouragement, and practical support, Diana has seen how small actions can lead to meaningful change.

“You realise you've got something to give... and how much even a small amount of input can change things for somebody.”

Volunteering has also had a positive impact on Diana's own wellbeing.

“My confidence has definitely improved... it helps my mental health and gives me a sense of purpose.”

“Oddly enough, saying goodbye can be the most rewarding moment. You know the job is done for now and the family is ready to move forward.”

“Volunteering gives me real satisfaction. I know I am giving something back to society.”

Financial Review

Home-Start Cymru continues to manage its finances prudently, balancing ambition with a strong focus on risk management, accountability and long-term sustainability. Our financial approach ensures that resources are focused where they matter most - supporting families - while maintaining the systems, governance and reserves needed to operate safely and responsibly. At year end, our financial position reflects this. Total income was £1,629,698.67 against expenditure of £1,581,445.49, resulting in a positive surplus of £48,253.18. This outcome strengthens our reserves and provides a stable foundation as we continue to grow our impact for families across Wales.

How we use our resources

Our expenditure profile demonstrates a clear and consistent commitment to frontline delivery:

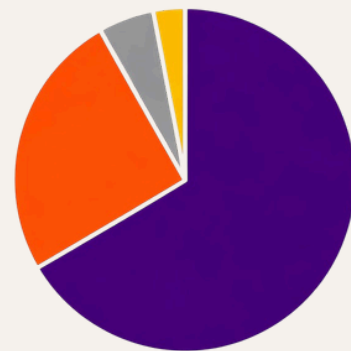
- **Service delivery: 90.5%** of total operating expenditure is invested directly in delivery and our workforce, including the staff and volunteers who provide relationship-based support to families across Wales, alongside the training, supervision and resources that enable high-quality, safe practice
- **Infrastructure and governance costs:** represent just **9.5%** of total expenditure. These costs are modest and tightly controlled, covering essential areas such as safeguarding systems, digital infrastructure, professional assurance and financial oversight.

This balance reflects our commitment to:

- Prioritising direct support for children and families
- Maintaining strong safeguarding, quality and accountability
- Using public and charitable funds efficiently and transparently

Where our income comes from

While statutory and local authority funding remains our largest single income source, Home-Start Cymru has taken deliberate and sustained action to reduce dependency on any one funding stream.



- Statutory – Local Authority, Health Boards, WAG
- Trusts and Foundations, Lottery, HSUK
- Corporate grants and partnerships
- Individual and Community

Significant progress has been made last year in:

- Expanding multi-year trust and foundation funding
- Growing corporate income beyond expectations
- Increasing levels of unrestricted income to support core costs and innovation

This diversification strengthens organisational resilience and reduces exposure to commissioning or policy changes, particularly within a challenging public funding environment.

Financial controls

Delivering a balanced budget with strong controls

The charity's Board and SLT maintains a robust budgeting and monitoring framework, with clear oversight by trustees. Spending decisions are closely aligned to strategic priorities, and financial performance is reviewed regularly.

Building reserves for long-term sustainability

At December 2025, free reserves stood at £381k, slightly above the level set out in the organisation's Reserves Policy. This policy is designed to cover approximately three months of operating costs, including staff liabilities, notice periods and contractual commitments.

Maintaining reserves within this agreed threshold enables Home-Start Cymru to:

- Manage funding gaps and transitions safely
- Absorb short-term financial shocks
- Invest in organisational capacity and future sustainability without compromising frontline delivery

Trustees and the Senior Leadership Team review reserves regularly to ensure they remain appropriate, proportionate and aligned to organisational risk.



Acknowledgements

We'd like to extend our deepest gratitude to our commissioners, philanthropic donors, supporters and fundraisers whose generous spirits have not only enriched Home-Start Cymru but also laid a foundation for our growth and future planning.

Health Boards and Local Authorities:

Anglesey County Council
Caerphilly County Council
Cardiff County Borough Council
Merthyr County Council
Powys County Council
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Council
Rhyl Town Council
Swansea County Council

Charitable Trusts and Corporate Partners:

Asda
Charities Aid Foundation
Children in Need
Simin Gibson Charitable Trust
Dulverton Trust
Garfield Weston
Gwynt Y Mor Wind Farm
Hartsheath Charitable Trust
Henry Smith Foundation
Home-Start UK
Wales & West Utilities
Moondance Foundation
National Lottery Community Fund
Tesco
SEDA
Forage
Gwynt Y Mor Community Fund via CVSC



Closing statement

As we reflect on this past year, what stands out most is the remarkable strength we have witnessed in families across Wales in the face of growing adversity. Our staff and volunteers see this every day. Every positive change reflected in this report is the result of that shared effort, the dedication of our volunteers, the professionalism of our staff teams, and above all, the achievements of families themselves.

Looking ahead, Home-Start Cymru is preparing for a new chapter of growth, resilience and impact. Over the next four years, we will:

- Listen even more closely to families and volunteers, ensuring their experiences shape how our services are designed, delivered and improved.
- Strengthen our national voice in Welsh policy, guided by rights-based approaches including NEST and CRIA, so that early help is recognised as essential, not optional.

By continuing to build a broad and resilient financial base, we can ensure that Home-Start Cymru remains a stable, trusted source of support for families for years to come. To meet emerging needs, we are expanding our delivery models. This includes new perinatal pathways, early years groups, neurodiversity support and digital provision that reflect how families want to receive help.

We are investing in digital systems, safeguarding, data and organisational infrastructure so our services remain high-quality, safe and evidence led. This foundation will support further innovation in perinatal mental health, school readiness, neurodevelopmental support and community-based group work - ensuring our model adapts to the evolving needs of children and families across Wales.

Achieving this vision will take collaboration. Our work this year has only been possible because of the generosity and commitment of commissioners, charitable trusts, corporate partners, volunteers and community supporters.

To everyone who has supported us, partnered with us or believed in our work this year: thank you. We are deeply grateful.

Together, we can continue to nurture confidence, reduce isolation and give children across Wales the strongest possible start in life.



Jayne Drummond
Chief Executive Officer
Home-Start Cymru

Key Contacts

Every contribution, financial, practical or through the gift of time, strengthens our ability to stand with families through moments of challenge and change. We welcome conversations with partners, supporters, and anyone interested in contributing to our work. If you'd like to support us, get involved, collaborate, or learn more about our work, here's how to reach the right people.

General Enquiries

info@homestartcymru.org.uk
Phone: 0333 880 0014

Volunteering enquiries

www.volunteering.homestartcymru.org.uk
volunteering@homestartcymru.org.uk

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