

VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

WINTER EDITION

Hello wonderful volunteers and Happy New Year!

As we wrap up another busy (and very festive!) season, we wanted to say a huge thank you to you all. Whether you've been visiting families, training, cheering us on behind the scenes, or spreading kindness in quieter ways – you are at the heart of everything we do. This winter edition is all about celebrating you, sharing some highlights, welcoming new members of our team and looking ahead to what's coming next.

Grab a cuppa and enjoy!

Thienhuong, Karima, Rebecca, Indu, Mary, Sophie, Bianca, Lindita, Ann-Marie, Tara, Fiazah, Leonardo, Emily & Katherine.



**HOME
START**

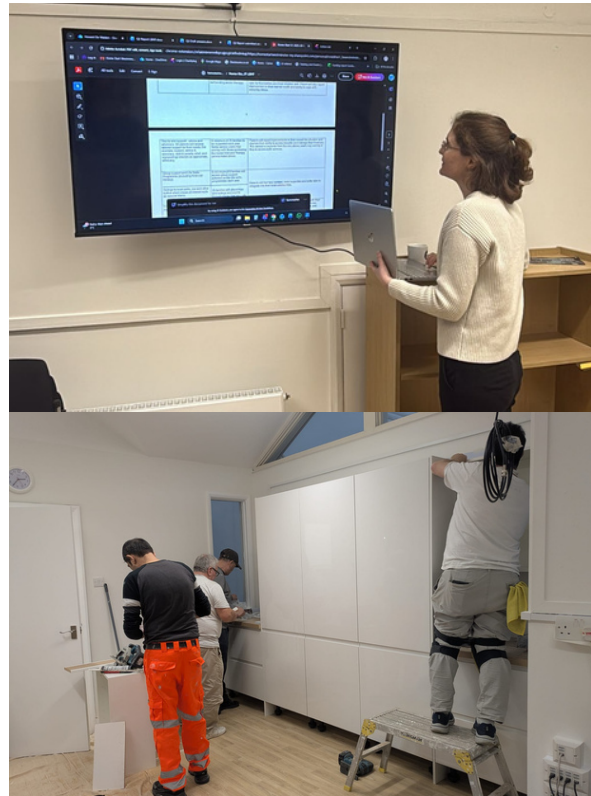
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HIGHLIGHTS

You said, we did!

A fresh new space

We've heard your feedback about the need to update our tech & presentations, so we're thrilled to share that our training room has had a fantastic makeover! Thanks to our amazing partners at EffectAble Constructions, we now have a brand-new TV & storage! We've already seen the difference with our Spring Volunteer Prep Course: the space feels fresh, bright, and welcoming, and we can't wait for everyone to see it at our upcoming events.



Celebrating YOU – Volunteer Winter Party

On Sunday 14th December, it was your turn to be celebrated. Our Volunteer Winter Party was all about saying thank you for the care, time and commitment you give throughout the year. Volunteers joined us with their families for a relaxed afternoon filled with wellbeing-focused activities including aromatherapy, stained-glass painting, and arts & crafts. A special shout-out to Elemis, who very generously donated 70 gifts – a real treat!

Winter Events & Outings

For many families, this time of year can be particularly tough but thanks to some incredible generosity and support, they enjoyed some truly special days! On 18th December, we hosted our annual Winter Party, complete with Santa's grotto, bouncy castle, balloon artist, face painting, and festive food. Families also enjoyed a number of outings this season. In October, they accessed free tickets to the London Transport Museum during half-term, and over the festive period, the Royal Parks Foundation and John Lewis offered tickets to Hyde Park Winter Wonderland and Santa's Grotto!



HIGHLIGHTS

Mums Together – Building Connection

This quarter also saw the successful launch of Mums Together, our new mum-and-baby group designed to reduce isolation and build peer support. With a cosy space, dedicated baby play area, gentle icebreakers and refreshments, connections formed quickly. The group has been facilitated by our social work students alongside coordinators, and the response from parents has been overwhelmingly positive. Because of its success, we're now exploring ways to expand Mums Together across venues in RBKC and Hammersmith & Fulham – watch this space!

Introducing the Volunteer Portal

We're excited to share that the Volunteer Portal will be launching soon, following the end of our next Volunteer Preparation Course. The portal will be a central online space just for our volunteers, bringing together everything you need in one place – no more hunting through emails or wondering where to find that one document you know exists somewhere! Once live, the portal will give you easy access to: policies & induction documents; practical guidance and volunteer resources; training materials, event information and service updates. We'll be sharing more details once it goes live – stay tuned!

Welcoming New Volunteers

In November we also delivered our final Volunteer Preparation Course of the year at Cheyne Family Hub, welcoming some fabulous new volunteers into the Home-Start family. We have also begun our first Prep-course of the year, welcoming 8 new volunteers with fantastic experience and knowledge between them! We'll be running another 2 prep-courses this year, so please help us spread the word if you know anyone looking for a volunteering opportunity in 2026!

Meet Rebecca – Our New Co-Deputy Manager

Last but not least! We were thrilled to welcome Rebecca, who joined us in December as Co-Deputy Manager. Rebecca brings extensive leadership experience, a strong background in perinatal support, and nearly 20 years in the charity sector. We're so pleased to have her on board and can't wait for you to get to know her. Keep flicking through to find out more!

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STAFF SPOTLIGHT

MEET REBECCA, OUR NEWEST MEMBER OF THE TEAM AND CO-DEPUTY MANAGER



When did you join Home-Start WKCHF and what drew you to the role?

I joined at the beginning of December which turned out to be a busy but great time of year to start! I have been working with families, babies and children in the antenatal and postnatal period for a number of years and in a variety of ways, and have been aware of the work of Home-Start for a long time. We all know it takes a village to raise a baby and I really think that volunteers play a hugely vital role in creating communities of parents.

What are you most excited to work on in your first few months?

I have been getting stuck into writing funding bids which is such a great way to learn more about the organisation. I am so impressed by how hard everyone works for the families they support and the huge, tangible difference Home-Start makes. I am also about to join the prep course which I am very excited about.

How do you hope to support volunteers in your role?

My most recent experience has been working closely with parents and babies, helping parents to tune into their babies' early language and communication in order to nurture secure attachment relationships. Volunteers are so well placed to support parents to think more about what their babies' cues and behaviours might mean, and to wonder with them. We know that supporting a parent to be more mind-minded (to think of their baby or child as an individual with their own likes or dislikes) leads to positive learning outcomes, better emotional regulation and stronger language skills. I am hoping volunteers will be excited to think more about this.

What's your go-to comfort food?

I always reach for spicy noodles when I am feeling full of cold or need a bit of cheering up! Soupy, saucy or stir fried, they always hit the spot for me and get me out of a slump.

Volunteer SPOTLIGHT

MEET EMILY, ONE OF OUR AMAZING BEFRIENDERS



When did you begin volunteering with Home-Start?

I began my training with Home-Start in June 2025, and I started volunteering with my first family in September 2025.

Why is volunteering important to you personally?

I have been involved with volunteer organisations since high school and it has always given me a strong sense of purpose and fulfilment. It's a moment where I can step away from everything else and dedicate myself to someone or something beyond my own life. When I moved to London, I felt a little lost and was going through a period where I needed to reconnect with myself. I looked for an organisation for quite a long time, and when I found Home-Start, I immediately felt it could be the right fit for me. Maybe this question calls for a very altruistic answer, but in my case, I think it's more selfish than people might expect. For me, the greatest achievement is when someone feels comfortable enough to open up and confide in me. Knowing that my presence contributes, even in the smallest way, to someone's wellbeing truly makes my day better. Honestly, since I started volunteering with Home-Start, even on a bad day, after a meeting with my family, I can put on a good song in my headphones on the way home.

What would you say to someone thinking about volunteering with us?

I would tell them to go for it, even if at first they feel unsure, think they're not capable enough, don't have enough time, or feel a bit scared. It's something that truly fills you up. At the same time, the Home-Start environment is wonderful and incredibly supportive, not only for the families, but also for us as volunteers. The initial training is very thorough and teaches you so many valuable things, not just for the work you'll do with the organisation, but also for your own personal growth.

Do you have a hobby or interest people might not expect?

I'm not sure, maybe people don't expect it because I'm often dressed in pink, but I have a bit of a witchy soul: I love the moonlight and black cats! That said, my main interest is psychology. I love reading books about it in my free time, and I hope to study it in the future.

Trustee SPOTLIGHT

MEET DAPHNE!



When did you join the Board of Trustees and what inspired you to join the board?

I joined 4 years ago. I am passionate about children having the best start in life - every child deserves that. I also believe that most parents care deeply for their children and about ensuring that all their basic needs, at the very least, are met. And yet, when you're struggling because of loneliness, stress, mental health, low income, trauma or even not having great role models yourself, parenting can have additional challenges. I love how HS comes alongside families to offer friendship and support (& so much more), building relationships, trust, and confidence as well as advice and signposting to other forms of support.

Can you share a bit about your professional background?

I launched a charity in 2010, borne out of my passion for others, especially children, who didn't have enough food to eat at home, or in some cases, have beds, warm homes or weather appropriate clothing and shoes. As someone who experienced 'lack' in childhood it was important to me to try to ensure that every child had opportunities. I felt that by initially focussing on adults, that we would also be able to indirectly help children. I don't have a 'great' educational background (partly due to undiagnosed adhd) and can't really claim to be a professional at anything, but I do have experience of developing, and growing a charity from a little germ of an idea. I retired due to poor health at the end of 2021, and the charity is still 'going strong'.

What are you most excited about for the future of Home-Start WKCHF?

I am most excited about, and for, the parents and children we come alongside. I love hearing the stories of people who've been able to be the best they can be for themselves and their children because of the time our volunteers have given. I like to think that we are helping to build a stronger and more resilient generation of children. I think it's really important too, to mention the real joy that comes from volunteering. There is true satisfaction in knowing that you're making a difference in someone's life.

What is your favorite time of the day and why?

Bedtime! As I snuggle down under the duvet on a cold night, I often think of people sleeping on the streets, or who are suffering in other ways. Although I don't have everything I want, I have everything I need, and I am grateful. for that.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Volunteer Survey

We want to hear from you! Your feedback, whether positive or constructive, is incredibly valuable to us. It helps us understand what we're doing well and where we can improve our services and your volunteer experience. Please take a few minutes to complete our **short, anonymous online survey by Friday 27 February**. Contact Katherine if you have not already received a link or scan this QR code on the last page of the newsletter.

Volunteer Forum & Infant Observation training

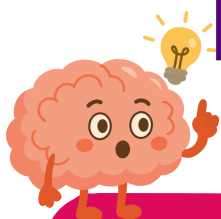
Join us at the Home-Start office on **Thursday 16th April from 10am-1pm** for our next Volunteer Forum where we'll discuss the volunteer survey responses, followed by an **Infant Observation training** workshop delivered by Rebecca. RSVP to Katherine to secure your place.
Lunch will be provided!

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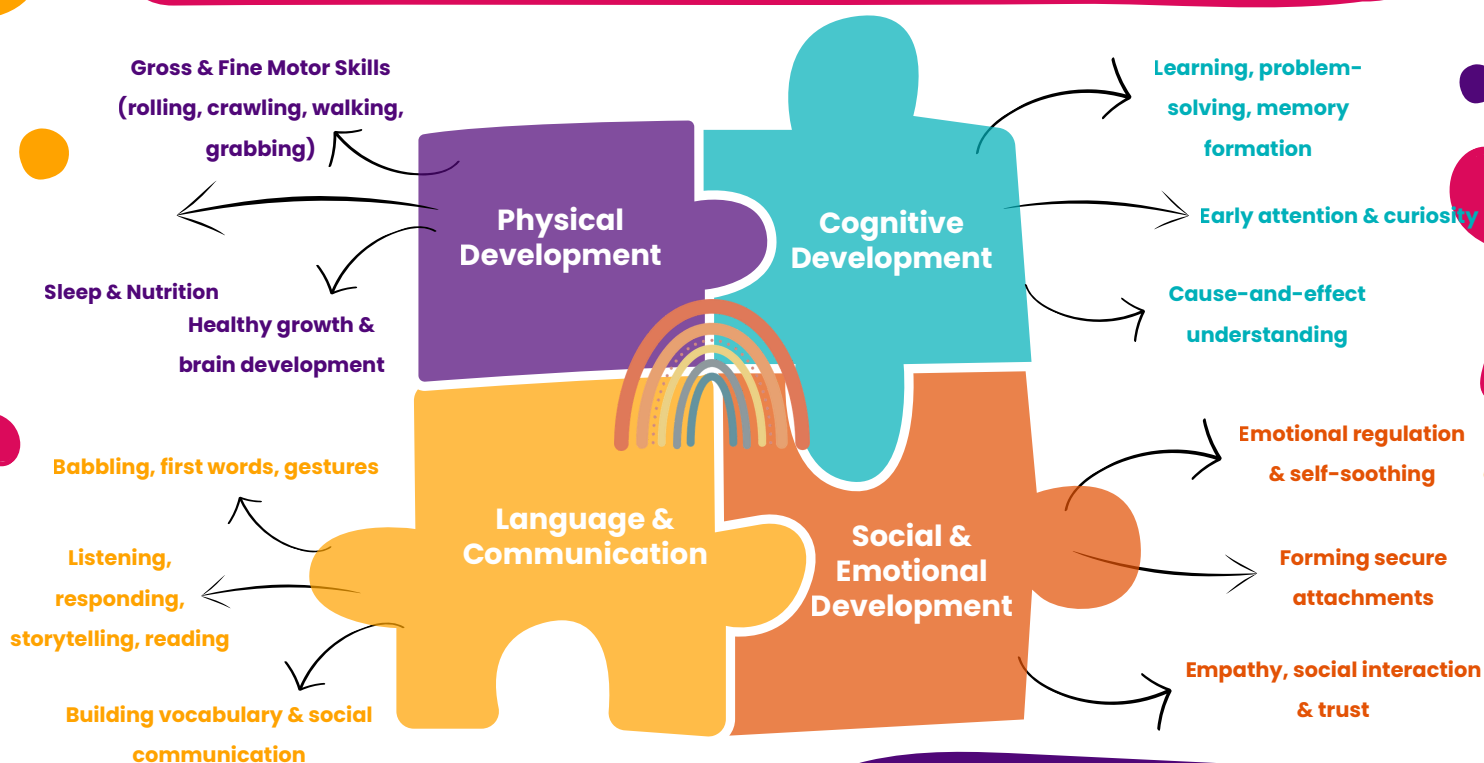
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DID YOU KNOW?

THE FIRST 1,001 DAYS



From pregnancy to age two, a baby's brain grows faster than at any other time in life, forming over 1 million neural connections every second. Every smile, cuddle, and conversation helps build a foundation for lifelong learning, health, and wellbeing



Small Moments, Big Difference

Simple, everyday actions shape a child's development:

- Talking, singing, and reading aloud to your baby or bump
 - Responsive feeding and comforting
 - Consistent routines and predictable care
- Warm, loving relationship

Why this matters for Home-Start?

Parents who feel supported are better able to nurture their children. Volunteers play a key role by:

- Reducing stress and isolation
- Providing practical & emotional support
- Offering a consistent, caring presence





**Scan this QR to access the
Volunteer Survey**

