



(PLEASE COMPLETE ELECTRONICALLY)

Organisation			
Name of Organisation	Home-Start Oxford		
Registered Address (including Post Code)	<p><b>OXFORD OFFICE</b> 26 Kingfisher Green, Blackbird Leys, Oxford OX4 7BX</p> <p><b>WITNEY BASES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High Street Methodist Church 40 High St, Witney OX28 6HG</li> <li>• Ceewood Hall Smith's Estate, Witney OX28 5AR</li> <li>• Windrush C of E Primary School Isabelle Spencer Way OX29 7DL</li> </ul>		
Website	<a href="https://homestartoxford.org.uk/">https://homestartoxford.org.uk/</a>	Telephone	01869 322 488 / 0787 6341429
Facebook/Twitter	<a href="https://m.facebook.com/HomestartWitney/">https://m.facebook.com/HomestartWitney/</a>	Email	<a href="mailto:admin@homestartoxford.org.uk">admin@homestartoxford.org.uk</a>
Contact Name	Katharine Barber		
Position in Organisation	Chief Executive		
Registered Charity	YES	Registration Number	1108612
<p><b>What are the activities and/or aims of the organisation?</b></p> <p>Home-Start's vision is to shape a country where all children have the best possible start in life. Like Witney Town Council we believe all children should be given the chance to live a full and varied life.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>"90% of a child's brain development happens before age 5."</i></b> <i>Oxford Brain Story, University of Oxford</i></p> <p>The earliest years make the biggest impact and investing in those years is the most cost-effective way of ensuring children's futures are not limited. Once the chance is missed, making up lost ground in later life is difficult, expensive and often just doesn't happen. Home-Start want to make sure that no parent or family feels alone in the critical task of raising</p>			



children. Our focus is building compassionate communities of support for families, parents, and children – because childhood can't wait.

We support local under 5s and their families through challenges that include trauma and poverty, disability, autism, illness, mental health issues, multiple births, relationship stress, refugeehood, social and rural isolation, domestic abuse, addiction, and debt. Our unique service, recruits and trains volunteers who visit families at home every week, giving non-judgmental, confidential emotional support as well as informed and practical help. Families with more complex needs are supported by our Family Support Worker.

Another key part of our service is running groups. Most groups are popular, universal baby or toddler provision that delivers community connection and preventative support, they are run by our expert staff and trained volunteers to support mental health, play, attachment, and early learning. Other groups are by-invitation for more vulnerable, referred families. These smaller groups provide a vital first step into community engagement for struggling isolated families. It is testament to how people feel about our service that some supported mums and dads go on to become volunteers themselves.

Home-Start Oxford has been providing 1:1 home visiting support to Oxfordshire families with children under 5 for 34 years. Our group work is more recent. In Witney we started running groups in the Methodist Church in 2018. We are now a firmly established part of community life amongst the town's early years families. During the pandemic, when other services ceased, we remained open for new referrals and found innovative and alternate ways to keep families with the youngest children connected and supported. Remarkably, and in response to pressing need, we actually expanded during the pandemic - in 2020/21 we supported 275 families, in 2021/22 that rose to 450, the majority in Witney. (This does not include a Facebook community of over 1,800 including 885 followers on our Witney and West Oxfordshire page.) This expansion is particularly notable given that over the course of the pandemic the number of individuals we supported with complex needs rose by 30.5%, and support to parents with disabilities more than doubled. 46% of supported families we support 1:1 are non-White British.

Always keen to improve our service, we have been developing a new model of extended outreach to engage the hardest to reach families in our group work. Anxious, isolated parents, particularly those from marginalised groups, need more than just a colourful advert to engage and come along to a group. Very often they need to build trust and confidence through individual support. In Witney, our Family Group Coordinator has been building personal relationships with families – meeting for a cuppa, telephoning, and texting when she knows people need a little more support. We have been increasing our presence and our networks in more deprived areas too, including on Smith's Estate where we now run groups from Ceewood Hall - we have plans to further extend our service on the estate in the coming year.

What we do works. At the end of support in 2020/1:

- 98% reported more confidence in being involved in their children's learning,
- 97% reported improved children's emotional health/wellbeing
- 94% felt less isolated.

The thousands of hours given each year by our 51 volunteers make Home-Start Oxford an extremely cost-effective charity. Most volunteers are supporting families through 1:1 weekly home visiting. Our groups in Witney are supported by 6 trained volunteers. Their average contribution of 12 hours/week to our service is worth over £6,000/year.

Our 2022 referrers survey shows demand at 5 times capacity.



**Case study: Emily's story**

Emily is two and a half and has autism. Her mum and dad split up after a stressful, isolated pandemic. Dad withdrew financial support and moved to a single room where Emily could not stay overnight. Mum was impoverished further because Dad's absence meant she had to leave her evening care-worker job. Mum's mum is gravely ill. Mum is anxious and does not drive which increases her isolation. Emily's teenage sister has a history of self-harm. The family's two-bedroom social housing is not big enough for Emily to have a safe space of her own.

*"Through lockdown we were stuck at home and even after that we still weren't going anywhere. I was a bit worried at first to take Emily to children's groups as I didn't know how it would be for her and me - I didn't want people to think the worst of her when they didn't know about her. I felt isolated at home, especially during Covid. I felt trapped in. I didn't know whether to try find a group with children like Emily. I just wanted her to be able to go to a group where she would fit in. She can be challenging at times where she doesn't understand and has melt downs - it can be quite hard."*

Like many families disproportionately affected by Covid, Emily's family has needed additional one-to-one support around complex issues and to build confidence to engage in groups. We've supported Emily to start her autism pathway and helped mum to claim disability living allowance and universal credit. When Dad suddenly withdrew the family's main source of income Mum was left with unpaid bills - we helped her negotiate with housing, gas, electricity suppliers and gain expert advice around budgeting and debt. We helped mum access school counselling for Emily's big sister and are currently supporting the family to find more suitable housing. We share texts with Mum most days and our Coordinator goes to see the family at home every couple of weeks. Without this additional support Emily would not be accessing the groups that are transforming her life.

*"Jan got me to start going to some smaller groups at first, then the bigger one at the church, and Emily loved it. Emily likes to do her own thing, like playing alone, she doesn't talk either but she settled in well which was brilliant for her and me. I think I really need it too for my mental health. It's no good being stuck in all the time. Jan also supported us to go along to a group at Cogges, a farm in Witney. I was worried as I didn't know what Emily would be like and whether she'd join in. She did for some things and also enjoyed doing her own thing as well. That bit of extra support from Jan to get us to go along really helped. I couldn't recommend Home-Start enough."*

**"Every £1 invested in quality early care and education saves taxpayers up to £13 in future costs." Oxfordshire School Readiness and Lifelong Learning Strategic Plan. OCC. July 2020**

**Membership**

How many members do you have?

We do not have an official membership however we do collect data on group users.  
FAMILIES: This year we expect to reach over 500 beneficiaries through our groups in Witney.  
VOLUNTEERS: 6 trained volunteers support our group work in Witney.



Approximately how many of your members live in Witney?	All our Witney groups, both universal and targeted, are for families from Witney and its surrounding area.
Is membership restricted in any way?	Open access groups are open to any family with a child under 5. Invitation groups are for referred families (including self-referred) with a child under 5.
What is your annual subscription, if any?	All our groups are free. Though if families want to make a donation there is a collecting pot.
Are you affiliated to Oxfordshire Youth or other similar umbrella organisation? If so, which one?	We work closely with Oxfordshire Youth and are one of the key organisations for the early years, as part of the Children & Young People's Forum that they coordinate. We are also part of a VCS Consultative Group for West Oxon convened by Heather McCulloch at WODC. Also Witney Forum and West Oxon Mental Health Forum convened by WODC, School Readiness and Lifelong Learning Network, and WOSEND West Oxfordshire Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Forum. We founded and lead the county's VCS Early Years Network. We are an entirely independent local charity. We are affiliated with Home-Start UK, a separate charity that supports local Home-Starts.
Local venue/meeting place (if applicable)	<b>High Street Methodist Church,</b> 40 High St, Witney OX28 6HG <b>Ceewood Hall,</b> Smith's Estate, Witney OX28 5AR <b>Windrush C of E Primary School,</b> Isabelle Spencer Way, Witney, OX29 7DL
<b>Grant-Funding</b>	
<p><b>Purpose for which the grant is required:</b></p> <p>Home-Start Oxford will continue to provide unique and comprehensive services for families with under 5s in Witney across all levels of our 1:1 and group provision. The cost of providing our full service in Witney and West Oxfordshire is £96K/year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1:1 home-visiting provision in Witney and West Oxfordshire costs £55K/year and is being funded by other donors (see below).</li> <li>• Group provision in Witney costs £41K/year - we have already secured £19.5K from a variety of other funders.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>We are asking Witney Town Council for £21,500 match-funding for a raft of Home-Start groups that will support over 500 individuals in Witney.</u></b></p> <p>Over the coming year our staff and volunteers will deliver:</p> <p><b>LITTLE SPLASHERS</b></p>	



Baby group for under 1's every termtime Tuesday at Witney Methodist Church for between 30 and 40 people/session. 32 parents are currently registered – again not everyone can attend every week. 73 families have accessed the group over the last year. Little Splashers is a warm and friendly space where parents and babies enjoy stories, singing, Sing and Sign, baby massage techniques, developmental play. Parents share experiences and tips. Like all our groups, Little Splashers deploys the evidence-based PEEP Learning Together programme which gives parents confidence as their children's first educators and supports children's development, attachment and happiness. Families are supported to join the group with a phone call from the Family Group Co-Ordinator prior to joining.

*"Everyone is just so lovely and I know I speak on behalf of all of us that go, I think it's really helped a lot of us get through motherhood. It's our favourite day of the week Tuesday!"*

One mum shared her experience of the group in this WODC video:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0iuBzwlCQCK>

Once babies reach one, they can move on to one of our Puddle Jumpers groups...

#### **PUDDLE JUMPERS, METHODIST CHURCH**

Parent and toddler group for children 0-5s, every term time Wednesday, Witney Methodist Church for up to 50 people/session. We are over-subscribed and ideally would like to be able to run another session to meet the high demand. There are currently 98 parents with 113 children registered. In addition to PEEP informed activities, we have started a book swap with donated books, encouraging early reading at no cost.

*"It's just nice to do something different like reading with her, and children's books are quite expensive. And there's only so many times you want to read the same one!"*

#### **PUDDLE JUMPERS, CEEWOOD HALL**

A new parent and toddler group for 0-5s, term time Mondays, Ceewood Hall, Smith's Estate for up to 50 people/session. Historically there has been no provision on Smith's, Deer Park and Kingfisher Estate for a free stay and play group. Public transport costs from these areas into the town centre are expensive. Many of these families are on a low-income and facing financial difficulties. We are working with Mums who have experienced different challenges including domestic abuse, ex-partner in prison, single parents, child bereavement, social isolation, mental health issues, and PND. Already 12 families (about 28 people) are attending regularly, growing week on week. The Health Visiting team are backing this new group provision, attending monthly to weigh babies and provide children's development checks.

#### **PEEP GROUPS (BY INVITATION)**

We will run three six-week courses for 8 referred families in different locations across Witney (last year we held courses on the Smith's and Windrush Estates and at the central Methodist Church). We already have referrals to fill these sessions three times over. The PEEP informed content is designed to support children's learning from birth, addressing the disadvantage gap in education and alarming increase in children who are deemed not 'school ready'. We are really pleased to be reaching younger parents through this group and find that we are successful achieving engagement with parents who may be low in confidence, through investment in relationship building outside the sessions and building a group who have shared experiences and challenges. These comments from parents evidence the need:

*"This is the first time I've been out since I had my son and he's 6 months. My daughter has really suffered as she only goes out if my Mum can take her and she's 2.5 years old and due to start nursery." (Mum had PND)*



*"I've pulled my 2-year-old out of nursery as I am too anxious about Covid so I've kept her at home. I haven't been to any groups with my son who is 5 months." (Mum has anxiety – 10 marked on the questionnaire)*

*"H seems happy at home with me – we've just got used to it." (H is 22 months and is delayed in his speech and social skills)*

*"It's really hard for me to get out with my two boys as I have a disability and it takes me 20 minutes to walk of the entrance to the estate to get the bus. I don't really know any other local Mums." (8 marked on the questionnaire for anxiety)*

### **SINGLE MUM GROUP**

Monthly coffee meet ups. We were finding that single mums were some of our most isolated and anxious parents. Most activities happen in the week, and many felt particularly isolated at weekends. 3 single mums attended our first single mums' 'meet up and chat' group and went on to set up their own WhatsApp group – we now refer other single mums to that WhatsApp group if they want to join. Through WhatsApp the mums independently plan meet ups at weekends and during the week and give each other peer support. We meet over coffee every month to support and help grow this important peer support.

### **BUGGY WALKS & OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES**

BUGGY WALKS will run every 4th Wednesday each month. In January 2022 we started a new buggy walk on the Smith's Estate having experienced low attendance at the Methodist Church from Smith's Estate families, who we were keen to reach. We were mindful of the greater levels of isolation and potential exclusion due to financial or confidence barriers faced by local mums and babies. The buggy walks provide a non-threatening way to meet new parents without walking into a new group setting. They are hugely beneficial to mental wellbeing, combining connection with other people, physical activity for parents and children and mindfulness – 3 of the NHS 5 steps to Mental Wellbeing. Having a destination encourages more parents to come and access other services. Planned walks from September include to the fire station, library and a nature walk.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES We'll include a year-round outdoor element to our service, to support health and wellbeing. We have developed relationships with Bridewell Gardens and Cogges Farm and will continue to support and facilitate occasional group outings and activities in these special settings. We are also working with WODC and Harvest@Home to provide a community garden/growing/harvesting/cooking space on the Smith's Estate.

### **SUMMER ACTIVITIES PROGRAMME**

We will run summer activities through August 2023 – as with 2022 these will be twice a week, 2-hour morning play sessions in parks and outdoor spaces around Witney. These have been very popular over summer 2022 – with an average of 40 attendees. They have been well publicised and have provided us with yet another way of reaching new families – 22 new parents/grandparents with 34 new children attended over the summer. Our most popular play session was attended by 78 people (31 parents, 47 children).

*"It's so good to get the children out of the house and talk to someone."*

*"It's such a long summer when you are at home with a baby and everything has stopped. I've really struggled mentally."*

*"Difficult to find anything to do that is free."*



*"This is a saviour for me."*

**DIGITAL SUPPORT** - We will provide digital support to a wider community of young families and volunteers through our Facebook and social media platforms and through regular email newsletters. Over the summer of 2022 Facebook proved extremely effective for publicising our summer activities programme.

**ADDITIONAL OUTREACH** – Where families from a group, or new families referred by Health Visitors need extra encouragement the Family Group Coordinator supports them with a weekly check in phone call – these calls help build trust and confidence and are usually needed for a couple of months. Around 5 families every month will benefit from this extra outreach.

Amount of grant applied for		<b>£21,500</b>
Has your organisation previously applied to the Town Council for a grant?		YES
If YES, please give details	<p>In 2018/19 Witney Town Council supported the establishment of our Family Wellbeing Groups with a grant of £250</p> <p>In 2020/21 and 2021/22 WTC supported our group provision through the pandemic and beyond with grants of £11,700 and £9,138 respectively, enabling us to become an established, inclusive and valued service for hundreds of families across Witney.</p>	
Have you applied for a grant to any other body or organisation?		YES
If YES, please give details	<p>We have already secured substantial funding for group provision in Witney for 2022/23 - £5K from WODC, £5K from Children in Need, and £9.5K from The Henry Smith Charity. Groups in Witney cost £41K/year. This exceptional value for money is achieved because £6,000 support-in-kind is given through volunteer hours, and overhead costs are kept low by discounted rates from supportive Witney venues. We are asking for £21,500 match-funding from WTC to fill the 2022/23 funding gap around Witney group provision.</p> <p>1:1 home-visiting services in Witney and West Oxfordshire cost around £55K/year and will be funded by larger grants already secured from The Henry Smith Charity, Awards for All and from smaller grants from local trusts/foundations, churches, corporate partners and community fundraising.</p>	
<b>Financial</b>		
<b>Please enclose a copy of your latest audited accounts, a financial projection for the period following the balance sheet or a Business Plan if a new organisation.</b>		



Please note: We had a good financial year in 2020/21, due to successful fundraising and reduced expenditure on rent and travel. Although much of this was unrestricted or short-term, we took the decision to expand support in the face of need. We hired new staff and extended hours in Autumn 2021, so expenditure is higher for 2021/22, and significantly higher in the year ahead (factoring new salaries over 12 months rather than 6). We will be spending reserves in 2022 with higher margins of risk on income we are targeting.

## Fundraising

### What fundraising events or activities will your organisation be holding this year?

We will re/apply to local trusts including The Jim Cousins Trust and The Bartlett Taylor Trust.

We will continue to nurture relationships with local corporates and churches and continue to build on our relationships with other statutory funders. For example, we have been meeting with Witney County Councillors and hope to secure some repeat funding from their CPF and other funding streams. Statutory funding, including from WTC are essential to ensure our financial sustainability, we particularly value multi-year funding because of the security it offers and the planning it enables.

We are growing our events fundraising – last year 2 Witney runners took part in the Oxford Half Marathon for us. This year 5 residents from Witney and surrounding villages are running, including a supported mum. This is her page where she shares her story. We love it when families we've supported start supporting us - so empowering and affirmative!  
<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/kay-adair-louise-cann>

**JustGiving** Home Start Oxford on the Oxford Half Marathon 2022

**31%**  
 £155 raised from 2 supporters

**Kay & Louise's Page**  
 Fundraising for Home Start Oxford

**Story**  
 Kay and Louise have two children, a 10-year-old boy and a 7-year-old girl. They are both employed and have a good income. However, they have a young child with special needs and they are struggling to pay for the extra costs of a full-time carer and educational support. They have been struggling for some time and have been unable to find a carer who can provide the support they need. They are looking for a carer who can provide the support they need and who can also provide educational support for their child.

**Supporters** 8

- Anonymous £20.00
- Anonymous £10.00



## **General**

Please provide or attach any additional information which may assist the Council in reaching its decision.

### **MAKING SURE THE COMMUNITY IS AWARE OF OUR SERVICE**

We are constantly reaching new children and parents. Our new groups and venues, summer programme, and active referral connections with Kerry Harris, Midwives, Health Visitors, and links on new estates like Windrush Primary, mean we have wide and evolving reach.

We have a well used 'Home-Start in Witney & West Oxfordshire' Facebook page. Our positive reputation brings many word-of-mouth recommendations. We will continue to use local media like BBC Radio Oxford, Spotted in Witney, Witney Gazette, posters, Play Days and displays.

The Family Group Coordinator will telephone families who are new referrals, to encourage their engagement. By-invitation attendees reach us through our referral partners.

### **COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS**

We value our partnerships with:

West Oxfordshire District Council - especially Kerry Harris, Community Connector

Waitrose & John Lewis

Witney Fridge

Witney Baby Bank

Town, District & County Councillors

Health Visiting Team

West Oxfordshire Citizen's Advice

CAP money advice

Aspire

Library

Ceewood Hall, Davenport Road Methodist Church, Witney Methodist Church

Part and Parcel Caffeine and Cake

Cogges Farm

Bridewell Gardens

Harvest @ Home

Cookery club @ Windrush Primary School

You Move

### **SAFEGUARDING**

We follow Safer Recruitment practice to recruit all our staff and volunteers, to ensure our team are suitable for work with vulnerable families. Initial induction for all staff includes Home-Start UK 'Getting Started' training & OSCB (Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board) Generalist / Designated Lead / Strategic Lead Safeguarding training ensures that individuals have a good understanding of the Home-Start ethos and the principles and practice of its family support as well as systems & procedures relevant to good safeguarding practice. 1:1 support volunteers receive a 32-hour bespoke 'Volunteer Preparation Course'. In addition to this, Group volunteers received specialist group facilitation training. All our volunteers receive safeguarding training, and are DBS checked. We take up to 2 references and volunteers adhere to a Safeguarding Code of Conduct. Risk assessments are carried out for all activities. All parents are made aware of our Group Agreement and provide contact details so they can be contacted if issues arise.

**AVOID THE BABY BLINDSPOT!**



***“The period from pregnancy to age three is when children are most susceptible to environmental influences. Investing in this period is one of the most efficient and effective ways to help eliminate extreme poverty and inequality, boost shared prosperity, and create the human capital needed for economies to diversify and grow.”***

*UNICEF, World Bank and World Health Organisation Nurturing Care Framework*

**I certify that the above information is true to the best of my knowledge and belief, and that I am authorised to make this application for Grant-aid.**

Signed: Katharine Barber

Date : 22/08/2022

*If posting, please return your completed application form to the address overleaf, for the attention of the TOWN CLERK*

For office use only:			
Acknowledged		Previously Applied	
Grant Aid Awarded/Amount	Y / N	Chq No.	