



2024-25 Annual Review



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**HOME
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Contents

Chair's Update	3
Treasurer's Update	4
Strategic Plan Update	5
Key Messages	7
Family Quotes	8
CEO's Update	9
Family Support Services	10 - 13
Groupwork Programme	14 - 20
Partner/Referrer/Volunteer Quotes	21
Charity Shop Update	22 - 23
Fundraising	24 - 25
Statistical Info	26 - 27
Our Trustees	28
Our Staff	29
Our Supporters	30
Our Funders	31
Contacts	32



Chair's Update

By Patrick Leavey



Welcome to the latest Annual Review of Home-Start Clackmannanshire.

I am the Chair of the board of trustees for the charity. The Trustees are a group of nine volunteers who hold governance responsibility for Home-Start Clackmannanshire. We make strategic level decisions, like approving the annual budget; ensure that the money from our funders is spent carefully and sensibly; and set the long-term direction of the charity. We meet every 6 weeks or so to discuss risks and how to avoid them, to plan for the future, and to keep an eye on the systems and processes which make Home-Start Clacks so effective.

This report covers the last financial year: the period of time from April 2024 to March 2025. It always seems a bit strange publishing our annual report in September, a full six months afterwards. But it takes a bit of time to process our accounts and to organise our AGM. And it gives us the time and space to reflect on what we achieved together over the course of the last financial year.

My main reflection is quite how many people make Home-Start Clacks the wonderful organisation it is today. Many people are due thanks for their time,

their hard work and their compassion and kindness. Thank you, in particular, to all our volunteers and the staff team who have supported 169 Clackmannanshire families over the course of those 12 months. This is the largest number of families we have ever worked with since we were founded in 1988, 37 years ago.

I also wanted to thank our new Treasurer, Colin Carmichael, for taking on the role, and for helping us to transition to from being a small charity to being (according to Home-Start UK's categorisation) a big one.

Thank you to Lynn Leitch, who stepped down as a trustee in September 2024. Lynn served on the Board of Trustees for 8 years. She stepped in to become our Chair in 2017 when the previous incumbent, Sylvie Dalley, decided it was time to hand over the reins. That was a really critical moment when Home-Start could have stumbled. Lynn made sure we didn't.

And finally, thank you to all our funders and supporters (listed in full on pages 30 and 31 who continue to fund us in what is a challenging financial environment. We wouldn't be here without you.

Treasurer's Update 24/25

By Colin Carmichael BA, FCIBS



This is my first report as Treasurer and my heartfelt thanks go out to our CEO Louise who 'lives and breathes' Home Start Clackmannanshire (HSC) and whose safe hands are responsible for our day-to-day financial operations.

A big thank you also to my fellow trustees and to our staff, volunteers and supporters. A successful team is only as strong as its weakest link, and our continuing financial strength is testament to the hard work, perseverance and capabilities of everyone associated with HSC in what continues to be a challenging environment.

First, a wee bit about me. My long-term career was in banking and corporate finance with large UK and global financial institutions. Following early retiral from financial services, I performed roles in internal audit, project management and risk management for two Scottish local authorities - my financial services career had revolved heavily around audit, risk and financial management. I finally decided to retire proper from paid employment during 2023. However, I wanted to continue to use my skill set in a charitable context, and when the opportunity came up to join the Trustee Board of HSC I was happy to put my name forward. It is now a year since I took up my position, and it has flown by faster than I could ever have imagined!

Report:

After what has been a career in finance where the key drivers were largely profit, sales and reward, it has come as a breath of fresh air to see a totally different outlook within HSC, where the balance sheet extends

beyond finance to social aspects. The work done by the staff and volunteers in supporting children and families across Clackmannanshire is truly humbling, and the financial stability of HSC should be seen as an enabler for this work to continue and to grow. HSC could not deliver the essential services we provide to our community without the continuing support of our donors, and we are forever grateful for this.

I am pleased to say that our financial health remains good. Over the past year we have seen the charity continue to grow, with strong levels of backing from our financial supporters, both new and old. In particular the funding received for restricted purposes (specific purposes / projects) has continued to grow. These funds are fully matched to the associated restricted purpose, with some funding carried forward to future years. But there is never an ongoing surplus in these funds and they are always time-limited, and our CEO and staff continue to work hard in attracting support to ensure our services to children and families are maintained.

Our shop continues to trade to a satisfactory level with the support of the local community in terms of both donations and sales, generating much needed income towards the charity's general running costs. Our thanks go out to the staff, volunteers and community for helping us keep this resource going.

Strategic Plan Update

By Patrick Leavey

Our Strategic Plan sets out the wider context in which Home-Start Clackmannanshire operates, our vision and mission, the services we deliver, the resources we have at our disposal, and the risks that we face and how we plan to mitigate them. The current strategic plan runs from financial year 2023/24 to 2025/26, so this Annual Report covers the second year of it.

When we discussed what should be in the strategic plan we did lots of additional research to help us really understand the communities we serve. The Wee County is a wonderful place with a fantastic community spirit. But many of the people living here face considerable challenges, and every year there is a steady stream of data to prove it. For example:

- End Child Poverty Coalition stats shows that Clacks has the second highest rate of child poverty in Scotland after Glasgow. 29% of children here live in poverty. Only a few minutes' drive away in Stirlingshire, the figure is 20%. In Perthshire it's 19%.
- In Clacks, the death rate of those aged 15-44 per 100,000 is 154 people. That compares to an average across Scotland of 111 per 100,000.
- Psychiatric patient hospitalisations in Clacks is 242 per 100,000 compared to 216 per 100,000 across the rest of Scotland.

The most important bit of the strategic plan is the four priorities:

1. Ensuring that we have increased awareness of our services both amongst the residents of the five most deprived areas of Clackmannanshire, and amongst potential volunteers.
2. Developing the support we provide when a family member has mental health issues, has been the victim of domestic abuse, or other issues identified by our CharityLog data.
3. Doing more to assist the school-age children of the families we support.
4. Continuing to widen our sources of unrestricted funds.

So how are we doing in our second year of the current strategic plan?

1. Increased awareness: Sofie (who provides support for our website and social media activity) and Jill (one of our trustees) have done a wonderful

job working with our CEO to produce our first communications strategy and a plan to deliver it. We can be confident that more and more people now see and interact with our content, online content in particular.

2. Developing the support we provide: We are now working with an organisation called Statisticians 4 Society which provides statistical support to charities. We hope this will enable us over the course of the next financial year to use the data that we already capture to improve the service we provide to families. We have also continued to develop our services, including the launch of a new dedicated Perinatal Infant Mental Health (PIMHs) group toward the end of the financial year.
3. School-age children: We have increased our capacity to work directly with children through bringing on board a third Family Support Worker Freya. 20% of our referrals came from education partners (schools, GIRFEC forum, ELCs) in the last year, and a common theme in these referrals is difficulty in children engaging with school.
4. Unrestricted funds: Sarah, Heather and our shop volunteers continue to do a fantastic job growing revenue at our shop on the High Street in Alloa. The new Gift Aid scheme they run has now started generating extra money for us too. Many, many thanks to our supporters who donated the clothing, household utensils, toys and books which allowed us to generate £56,998 from the shop in 2024/25.

So, at this halfway point, we think we are achieving what we set out to do when the document was published back in 2023. But we are not complacent. During the autumn of 2025 we will be thinking about what should be in the next three-year strategic plan, and we hope to publish that document in early 2026. If you would like to be involved in this process, please get in touch with our CEO Louise.



Key messages and measuring our impact

169 families supported over 24-25. Made up of 576 individuals – 243 adults and 333 children. Of these children, 154 were aged 0-5, 122 were 6-12 and 57 were 13-18.

Over 24-25, we received 128 new referrals. Health visitors again remained our highest referrers (24%), with Play Roots specific referrals (from various sources) following (22%), and then education (20%) and our early help and social work team (18%).

We have continued our environmental impact commitment, including receiving 33772.22KG of items, of which we successfully diverted 95% from landfill through onward sale, or donation to Nathans Wastesavers.

We provided items to 16 families through our Bairn Bank and joined the Baby Bank Alliance.

Launched a brand new partnership project supported by our local Child Wellbeing Partnership called Play Roots, working alongside colleagues from Action for Children, NHS (speech and Language), and Educational Psychology to provide enhanced group support for families with children under 5.

86% of parents/carers who responded to our 24/25 end of year survey reported feeling more confident in themselves after receiving our support.

85% of parents/carers who responded to our 24/25 end of year survey said they felt less isolated, and that their network has improved after receiving support.

81% of parents/carers who responded to our 24/25 end of year survey reported feeling more able to deal with challenging situations and make positive changes in their lives.

67% of parents/carers who responded to our 24/25 end of year survey feel better able to manage their mental health/wellbeing.

76% of families who responded to our 24/25 end of year survey indicated that their children are more interested and excited to learn and try new activities.

83% of families who responded to our 24/25 end of year survey report their children have increased confidence.

100% of referrers/partners who responded to our 24/25 end of year survey said they would recommend Home-Start to a colleague/family/friend.

100% of our partners/referrers reported having trust in the commitment and capability of our team to meet family's needs.

100% of volunteers are very satisfied/satisfied with their overall experience as a volunteer with Home-Start Clackmannanshire (measured through evaluation survey).

100% of our volunteers feel they are having a positive impact on our local community through their role (measured through evaluation survey).

100% of our volunteers feel valued and appreciated (measured through evaluation survey).

Our 24/25 shop customer survey reported 98% of customers were extremely or very satisfied with our goods and service.

100% of our customers reported they would shop with us again.

Save the Children Early Years grants came to an end at the end of 24/25. Since we started to administer the grants in 2020, we have delivered 122 grants, totalling £41,480, making an immeasurable impact for our families. That is not taking into account the gifts that came with grants, the Summer of Play funding/bags, the Winter of Play funding. It has been an incredible project, and it's sad to see the grants officially end.

Family Quotes

"I don't even think I could list everything Homestart have done for me or I'd be here for hours. Home start have changed my life for the better the support they give is just unreal I would be a shell of the person I am just now without their support, something goes wrong in my life practically every day and they're always there for me and my family. We get support to appointments which there is always many of, there's always an ear to listen when I need it most, they're always on hand with information about things to help me support my two asd kids, they've even printed out some makaton signs that would be beneficial to my non verbal daughter, they go above and beyond all the time and I'd honestly be lost without such great support from them".

"The support that my family has received has been great if has helped me through the worst time in my life. That is why I am going to become a home-start volunteer".

"My son really enjoys the time he gets one on one. They have introduced new things that I wouldn't have thought of that help his sensory needs via the items brought into the play".

"We attended the safari park trip which is something I wished to do with my kids but couldn't afford or get to due to not driving currently something which my daughter's friends had all experienced but they hadn't so now they can join in with their friends when chatting about these experiences".

"I found that it was a wonderful support for all the family. Helped us understand we are not alone with our frustrations when it comes to being parents".

"Been an amazing help to my family. Have built my confidence up so I can do activities with my kids. Have been a great support".

"Helped us with our confidence with the children encouraged to play more just enjoy our children. Group was great for meeting others with young children. Enjoyed the sessions where it was just the adults. The Co-ordinator was always able to help us work through issues and did not feel so isolated. The Family Support Work was great too".

"Great support and made me feel a lot better and happier, I'm more happier with my children".

"Home-start is always there when I need them even if it's just for a chat. Made a difference knowing I am not on my own and that I can ask for help".

"Made a difference for my child to have someone independent from the family to talk to and discuss all her big feelings. In a safe and nurturing environment".



CEO's Update

By Louise Orr

Since joining Home-Start, the phrase “time flies” has truly been brought to life for me.



Nothing stands still, as we must remain agile; always learning and adapting to move forward in our practice to ensure we best meet family's needs and provide each local child with the best possible start in life, #becausechildhoodcantwait. We are a part of a family's journey, but the impact we have, and the friendships and connections formed during that time, can last a lifetime.

I am lucky to have an incredible team of staff and volunteers who are passionate about what they do. This means it can be difficult to take stock of our accomplishments, and so in preparing our Annual Review, we have a wonderful opportunity to pause and reflect, and in doing so, take pride in what we (our team of staff, volunteers, trustees, supporters, funders, and our families) have achieved together.

Of course, we do not work in isolation. Clackmannanshire may be the smallest land based local authority, but we have a big heart, and a wonderful sense of community. We are fortunate to work closely with statutory and third-sector partners alike who share our values and drive. For example, over the last year, we have continued our role as third sector lead (a joint role with Barnardo's and Action for Children) as part of the new Family Support collaborative locally. Working closely with our local authority, and CTSL, to bring family voices to the heart of decision making and commissioning of family support services locally.

As we continue to experience growth in the need for our services, we have developed and expanded our team to meet those needs. We are thrilled to have been able to further advance our group work over the past year, launching a new partnership project, Play Roots, and introducing a dedicated perinatal infant mental health (PIMHs) group, called Bumps to Babies towards the end of the year. These developments, along with all our work, would not be possible without our dedicated team of volunteers.

Back in 2022, we were delighted to receive the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (now the King's Award for

Voluntary Service) to recognize the time, dedication and impact our volunteers have every day in their roles with us, and our team in supporting them every step of the way. In January 2025, that recognition for our volunteers was again brought to the fore with His Majesty the King paying a visit to Clackmannanshire to meet recipients of the award.

In addition to expanding our team, we have also worked hard behind the scenes to implement new systems and processes to support our work, and commitment to our team. We have brought in a new till system in the shop, allowing us to efficiently and easily track Gift Aid donations and claims, which will improve our income generation. We have also been working on actions within our Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EEDI) plan, and review this regularly to ensure it remains a live document and ongoing piece of work. We created and implemented our first communications strategy in October 2024 and have already seen improvements in our reach and engagement levels on social media. The work being carried out by the team can take a toll on our team wellbeing, and so one of our trustees Sarah, has been supporting us in beginning to shape a suite of wellbeing policies, and in drafting a wellbeing action plan.



Family Support Services

Family Support Co-ordinators

As always, we would like to begin by expressing our heartfelt thanks to our incredible volunteers. Without their dedication and compassion, we would be unable to provide such an effective and valuable support service to families across Clackmannanshire.

Over the past year, our team has continued to evolve and grow. We were delighted to welcome Paula back from maternity leave, and after an incredible 29 years of service, Irene retired – leaving a legacy that will be felt for years to come. In March, we also celebrated one of our long-standing volunteers, Bernie, officially joining our staff team – a wonderful addition.

This year has brought another increase in demand for our services. To help meet this growing need, we delivered three volunteer preparation courses and welcomed six new volunteers. Notably, two of them are individuals who have previously been supported by our service and are now supporting others, a testament to the strength and impact of our community.

Our Preparation Course, traditionally delivered face-to-face over eight weeks, has been adapted into a hybrid format. Volunteers now have the flexibility to complete online modules at their own pace, complemented by support from Co-ordinators and in-person catch-up sessions as needed. This new approach has allowed us to be more inclusive and responsive to volunteers' needs.

The course continues to cover essential topics, including Safeguarding, Domestic Abuse, and Mental Health — both in parents/carers and children. We also focus on the vital importance of listening skills and confidentiality, ensuring our volunteers are well-equipped to provide compassionate, informed support in all aspects of their role.

We remain committed to providing continuous learning and development opportunities for our volunteers. Over the past year, we have continued to align our work with The Promise, reinforcing our dedication to ensuring that all care-experienced children in Scotland are supported to reach their full potential and to feel loved, respected, and nurtured.

Once a volunteer is matched with a family, they receive ongoing monthly support from their named Co-ordinator. In addition, our staff are always available for a chat and ready to provide support whenever any issues or concerns arise. This open-door approach helps us ensure our volunteers feel confident, valued, and well-supported in their roles.

This year, we had the privilege of welcoming two students who completed their placements with us, volunteering in both family support and group work. Each brought a wealth of knowledge, along with practical and emotional support, which greatly benefited the families they worked with.

To ensure we are meeting the needs identified during initial assessments, our Co-ordinators continue to carry out 12-weekly review visits with families. These regular check-ins are vital for monitoring progress and adapting support as required.

This year has been particularly challenging for many of the families we support, with significant increases in poor mental health, financial hardship, and experiences of domestic abuse. In response, our team has deepened collaboration with a range of external agencies and partners — including Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), the Energy Efficiency





Team from Clackmannanshire Council, The Gate Food Bank, the Bairn Bank at our Home-Start Shop, Save the Children, and many more. Through these partnerships, we have been able to signpost and support families to access the wider services they need.

In many cases, our team also provides direct assistance by accompanying families to important appointments — including mental health services, hospital visits, and dental check-ups — addressing issues of missed or avoided appointments that have affected outcomes in the past.

Additionally, we have supported families with benefit checks and applications, working alongside Social Security Scotland and CAB to assist with Adult and Child Disability Payments, ensuring families receive the financial support they are entitled to.

We continue to run our two weekly Parent/Carer Wellbeing Groups during term time, supported by Maureen and Paula. One group meets at Community House in Alloa, and the other at the Dumyat Centre in Menstrie. Both groups are well-attended and offer a safe, confidential space where parents and carers can speak openly, try new activities, and connect with others who may be experiencing similar challenges.

The two groups often come together for shared activities, helping to build a wider sense of



community and support. This year, joint sessions included a clay workshop with Reachout with Arts in Mind and a festive Christmas celebration at Minnie's Kitchen, who generously provided us with a discount thanks to the generosity of their "pay it forward" initiative. These shared experiences have added extra joy and creativity to the group work, while further strengthening connections between families.

As we look ahead to 2025–2026, we are excited to continue developing and strengthening our support services for families across Clackmannanshire. We remain committed to creating meaningful opportunities for our volunteers and ensuring that every family we work with feels heard, supported, and empowered. With the growing demand for parent wellness support, we are currently exploring the possibility of launching a third Parent/Carer Wellbeing Group. We're excited about the opportunity to expand this vital service, watch this space!

**With warm regards,
Paula, Maureen, Leyanne, and Bernie**

Family Support Services

Family Support Workers

And just like that, here we are at the end of another busy year for the team at Home-Start Clackmannanshire!

As Home-Start Family Support Workers, we aim to offer practical help and emotional support to families experiencing difficulties, whether in the short or long term. We support the whole family in a non-judgmental way, and together we build a plan which is entirely tailored towards their needs. This can be a short, intensive, targeted piece of work lasting as little as 6 weeks, or it can last for a year or more. Our aim is to empower our families to address challenges and reduce risks and problems in their lives, and to make positive decisions moving forward. Family support ends when we agree that it is no longer needed. That could be the end of a family's journey with us, or they may move to a group support, or be matched with one of our wonderful volunteers.

When we meet a new family, our first step is often to offer help around practical and financial issues. We can refer them for a food parcel and fuel vouchers, and provide budgeting advice. We support families to access information from Citizens' Advice and Social Security Scotland to ensure they are receiving all the benefits they are entitled to. We have been able to access funding from organisations such as Save the Children for household items that are required, as well as referring to our 'Bairn Bank' (our own charity shop) for toys, books and clothes, baby equipment, and safety equipment such as stairgates. We were delighted to receive funding from SGN this year which allowed us to provide some energy advice and ensure that families had warm clothing and other items to make winter just that little bit easier through our "heat the person" funding allowance.

Poor mental health continues to be a UK-wide problem for both adults and children, and in Clackmannanshire it is an important area where support is required. This can take the form of emotional support (often just listening) and help to attend mental health and CAMHS appointments. Post-natal depression and other mental health problems can often lead to feelings of isolation, so we support families to attend our parent wellbeing groups and Bumps to Babies (perinatal infant mental health, PIMH) group run by our Family Support Coordinators, the Play Roots partnership groups, our



toddler groups and summer Play in the Park sessions led by our Group Workers, as well as simply getting out and about and attending activities in the local area. Mental health conditions can lead to chaotic living conditions, and we help with clearing out and cleaning, and generally improving our families' domestic situations. We aim to always work WITH families rather than doing these things FOR them, so that they have ownership of the changes and decisions that are being made and are more able to sustain them.

A significant part of the Family Support Worker role involves working with families on making sense of challenging behaviours and additional support needs, setting boundaries, improving communication, and establishing routines within the home; all aimed at improving adult-child relationships. Where school attendance and punctuality are an issue, we work through this with families, offering strategies and practical support to bring about change. We support parents and carers to attend Team Around the Child and Staged Intervention meetings at school and nursery, as this is something our families often find daunting. We help with paediatric appointments, eye tests, dental appointments, in short anything that is likely to affect a child's early development. We also support parents to access groups within Clackmannanshire like Incredible Years and Mellow Parenting.

Our work involves liaising with and working alongside other agencies such as Citizens' Advice, schools and nurseries, and the Health Visiting and Social Work teams. We have found there are many benefits to be gained from this sort of information-sharing and collaboration. We attend core-group meetings for



children who are on the Child Protection register, as well as supporting adults and children who have been affected by domestic abuse. We communicate with Safeguarders and have an input into Children's Hearings. We work with parents, carers and children where there is a kinship care arrangement, and support families where a parent is in prison.

Family Support Workers have provided direct support to a total of 35 families (49 adults/ 77 children) in the year 2024/25. We are always looking to build on and update our existing skills and knowledge so that we can provide the best support possible to our families.

Recently we have undertaken training in Domestic Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Under Pressure (helping young people talk about sensitive issues), Sextortion, Vulnerabilities of Babies, UNCRC (children's rights), Families Outside (supporting families affected by imprisonment), and Understanding PDA. We are trained in Safe & Together techniques (keeping children safe & together with the non-abusive parent in a domestic abuse situation), and Mental Health First Aid. We attended a highly informative session on drug and alcohol awareness and also took part (virtually) in a Child to Parent Abuse Conference.

LIAM (Let's Introduce Anxiety Management) training has helped us develop skills in the delivery of a Cognitive Behavioural therapy-informed approach to help children and young people suffering from mild to moderate anxiety symptoms. We participated in Trauma Skills training alongside our Home-Start Stirling colleagues and aim to continue to liaise with other Home-Start schemes to share ideas and good practice.

We are delighted that we will soon be joined by a third family support worker. Freya's previous job was also based in Clackmannanshire where she at times worked alongside the Home-Start team! We can't wait to have her on board.

The Family Support Worker role is nothing if not varied, and no two days are ever the same. Events such as our Christmas party in the Town Hall are always a highlight. This year we worked alongside Love in a Box to distribute gifts and ensure that all our families experience the magic of Christmas. Our summer trip to the Safari Park brought joy to children and adults alike, and other seasonal events like our Autumn nature festival and Easter fun day were well attended and great fun. As always, it has been a privilege to be part of the amazing Home-Start team this year and to work alongside our fantastic families, colleagues and volunteers. We are excited to see what 2025/26 will bring.

Megan and Susan



Group Support Services

Early years (0-3) groups

It has been another year of advancement for our early years groups locally. In past years, our focus was on 0-5, but with the introduction of 2's placements within ELC's, and the development of our new groups (Play Roots partnership and Bumps to Babies) our attendee pool has narrowed, and so we have spent time re-evaluating need, visiting wider Home-Starts to observe group models, and undertaking training to broaden our offering, including: BBC Tiny Happy People Champions Training to support children's early years language development; Makaton level 1; Scottish Book Trust Bookbug training; and Understanding Distressed Behaviour.

We have retained a focus on holding groups in communities, utilising community venues, to make

our sessions as accessible as possible for families to attend and providing natural opportunities for families to connect with each other and their wider community. We regularly have visitors to group to who can provide specialist information, support, or a fun activity for families to enjoy. Over the year, this has included: Childsmile, Play Talk Read, Clacks Works, CAB, and more.

We also support families to access the Hawkhill Community shop and cover the first-year membership (£5) for them. We also continue our commitment to the Dolly Parton Imagination Library; with 46 children enrolled, receiving a book every month (whilst they are aged 0-5).



Hawkhill Group

We have continued to provide families with time together playing and bonding along with snack, activities and Bookbug Sessions. Over the year, we had 34 weekly (term-time) sessions, with a total of 474 attendances (an average of 14 attendees per group).

We have regularly welcomed and supported new families while continuing to support our existing ones. Activities are designed to include literacy, numeracy and social skills but most importantly to provide fun and learning for all the family. Children can enjoy learning and playing in a safe environment and parents/carers have an opportunity to meet others reducing social isolation.

As with all our groups, we strive to remove as many barriers as possible to attendance. This can involve meeting families ahead of attending group, meeting families outside so they are not walking in alone and providing transport/transport costs.

Ben Cleuch Group

Our Ben Cleuch Group is naturally a smaller group due to the size of our space, but it is going from strength to strength with new members joining the group, and stable attendance throughout the year.

Activities across all groups are focused on fun, play, and connection, encouraging wee ones to meet their developmental milestones, and keeping in mind age and stage of our attendees. It has been a joy to see families enjoying the indoor and outdoor space, and seeing friendships form between families.

We ran a total of 33 weekly (term-time) sessions with a total of 272 attendances (an average of 8 per session).



Blue Hoose Group

Our Tullibody group at Action for Children's Blue Hoose venue provides the same support model as our other groups and also has the benefit of indoor and outdoor space. The children enjoy learning and playing in a safe environment and parents/carers have an opportunity to meet others and form friendships.

It was a bittersweet year for this group, as most of our attendees "graduated" from group naturally as they moved on to nursery. With the creation of Play Roots,

and higher need being seen in Alloa towards the end of the financial year, it felt a natural time to end our provision at The Blue Hoose.

A total of 12 sessions were run over the year, with a total of 62 attendances (an average of 5 per session). This is a smaller venue, with a maximum capacity of 6-7 families, and so this is a good average for the venue.

Group Support Services

Group Support Services – Play Roots

Play Roots was born over the Summer of 2024 from our local Child Wellbeing Partnership Lead reaching out to the third sector seeking ideas and support to build a unique early years offering for families that would support children in meeting their milestones, build on parental/child attachment, and ultimately provide the foundations and support required for families to thrive financially and in their wellbeing.

The partnership has evolved, led by Action for Children, and delivered through the joint efforts of Action for Children, Home-Start Clackmannanshire, an Educational Psychologist (Clackmannanshire Council), and a Speech and Language Therapist (NHS). This collaborative approach brings an enhanced toddler group offering to families with children 5 and under, providing a wealth of skills, knowledge and support that families may not otherwise have access to given capacity issues across the board with services, and focusing on providing a nurturing and educational environment for young children and their parents/carers.

After a thorough planning phase, with local families involved at each stage to ensure the service would meet their needs, Play Roots started its first group in Tullibody at the start of September 2024. By December 2024, we had three groups running in 3 locations (Tullibody, Alva and Clackmannan) and were thrilled to get our fourth group started in January 2025 (in Coalsnaughton).

Sessions are weekly (during term time), are 4 hours each, providing breakfast, and getting families involved in preparing and enjoying a healthy lunch. Through age-appropriate activities we strive to support child development, promoting cognitive, social and emotional development. Parents/carers and children are supported to engage in play, cooking, reading and much more together, fostering positive relationships and attachment. The group format naturally builds a supportive peer network for parents/carers contributing to positive wellbeing.

The groups were initially supported by our wonderful group workers Carole and Carolyne. Holly, who has been on a full circle journey from family, to volunteer, and joining the team in November 2024 is an absolute



natural with families, and has been working closely with Aisha, from Action for Children to deliver and nurture the groups since. From September 2024, to the end of March 2025, we have received referrals and engaged 26 families in the project.

During the holidays, structured sessions pause, and whole family activities run, with families also able to access wider Home-Start and Action for Children Holiday Programme activities.

Group Support Services – PIMHs

We have always been deeply inspired by Suzanne Zeedyk's work on attachment and her understanding of the need for babies to establish secure connections. After some of us attended her training in 2023, we experienced a profound realisation - that the children we worked with might have had different life experiences had their earliest months been spent building a strong bond with their mother (or caregiver). Sadly, for many mothers, factors such as mental health challenges, isolation, domestic abuse, and poverty can interfere with the development of healthy attachment.

These are exactly the kinds of issues that Home-Start Clackmannanshire supports families with daily. But we know that providing support at the earliest possible stage leads to significantly better outcomes for families. As such, we joined Home-Start UK's Perinatal Infant Mental Health Support (PIMHS) network. At the time, many of the families we were providing support to in their homes included expectant mothers struggling with mental health challenges. Through the network, we were inspired to consider how we could expand our PIMHS services to include a group support. Our Co-ordinator Leyanne became a natural PIMHs lead in this space, and Louise was immediately on board with the idea.

While Louise worked tirelessly on funding bids to get the project up and running, Leyanne completed a perinatal mental health counselling course, undertook Home Start UK's bespoke PIMHS training, and connected with colleagues from other Home-Start programs across the UK who were already well-established in providing PIMHS support to learn from their experiences. We also met with NHS Forth Valley perinatal team to get their insight into local need.

Our vision was clear: to build our offer by launching a PIMHS peer support group. This group would create a safe, non-judgmental space for mums experiencing/ more at risk of poor mental health. The aim was to remove barriers for mums who might struggle to attend traditional groups, offering them a space where they would feel truly understood. Research has shown that connecting with others facing similar challenges can reduce the risk of developing post-partum depression by as much as 50%.



In February 2025, we launched our group, “Bumps to Babies”, led by Leyanne and one of our amazing volunteers.

Our goal was to start small, creating an intimate and supportive environment where mums could build meaningful connections and receive the help they need to thrive. The Hive, a new community venue of The Wasp Community Club was a natural choice to host the group - central, easily accessible, and welcoming. By this point, we had already built trusting relationships with the mums through Leyanne's home-based work, however, many of them were anxious at the thought of participating in a group setting. To ease their worries, we reassured them that this was a brand-new group and that everyone was feeling the same nerves. We emphasized that they would have an active role in shaping the group and that it would be their space, moving at a pace that felt comfortable for them.

We started with six mums: three expectant mothers and three with babies aged three months or younger. Each of the mums shared common struggles - feelings of isolation, low self-esteem, and a lack of support. One mum was living with a chronic mental health condition, four had experienced postnatal depression following previous pregnancies, and five were on prescribed antidepressants. These challenges made it clear how vital it was for them to have a space where they could share experiences and receive support. The first few weeks were intentionally relaxed. We knew that for these mums, building trust and comfort with one another was crucial before they could open

Group Support Services



up about their struggles. After about four weeks, we introduced more structured activities in the form of group discussions, focused on topics that the mums themselves raised. One of the first things we explored was mental health. We used mind maps to visually represent how we feel when our mental health is in a good place versus when we're struggling. This activity turned out to be a fantastic way to spark group discussions and allow mums to share their personal experiences.

We felt it was important to model vulnerability and openness, so we shared some of our own personal experiences during these discussions. We quickly realized that doing so helped to create a deeper sense of connection and trust within the group. The group is constantly evolving to reflect the needs and wants of our Mums – this has included changing our start time, deciding on the format and size of the group, and identifying that something was missing from our group - namely, the modelling of positive interactions and the importance of play. That's when we welcomed Carole and Carolyne, our group workers, into the PIMHS group.

They brought a much-needed element of fun and light-heartedness, enriching the overall dynamic. Now, we've found a balance in our sessions: dedicating the first half of group to our structured wellbeing work, and the second half to play and fun - engaging in activities like Bookbugs, rhymes, and play. This mix of support and

play has allowed us to create a more rounded and holistic environment for both mums and their babies.

We're incredibly proud of every single mum in the group. We know how challenging this journey has been for them, and we recognize how difficult it is to step outside of their comfort zones. We're in awe of the love and support they've shown each other, and it's heartwarming to see the beautiful relationships that have blossomed as a result.

We're excited to see how our PIMHS support continues to grow in the coming year. To give you a sneak peek into our ongoing developments in 2025/26, two of the team completed training and are IAIM-registered baby massage instructors. This has been a fantastic addition to our support, as baby massage not only enhances the bonding process but also fosters a deeper connection between mum and baby.

There is a clear need locally for this kind of support, and so we're thrilled to see other local provisions up and running who we can signpost to, and between us all, offer a pathway of support for Mums who need it. These include Clackmannan Bumps and All, Baby Steps (Community House) and Aberlour Intensive Perinatal Service.

We currently have 12 mums attending the PIMHS group and have plans to launch a second group – watch this space!

Group Support Services – Holiday Programmes and Family Activities

Kidz-World

We continued to run monthly sessions, covering costs for families to enjoy the soft play area, spending time with other families, and having fun.

The children received a lunch box, and refreshments were provided for the parents/carers too. We had 9 sessions, with a total of 76 attendees. Over the year, we saw a decline in attendance, and after consulting families, realised that with more (younger) children in nursery, the sessions were not as accessible for families, and so we have decided to press pause for now, and are exploring other options for our families to connect.



Easter Event

Play Alloa allowed us to use their amazing space to host an Easter Fun session for our families. We had 47 attendees, who braved the rainy weather to join us for an egg hunt, some planting, Easter themed arts and crafts and a session with Reachout with Arts in mind.

This event was supported by the wonderful members of Millions Like Us, who donated easter eggs for our families.

Blair Drummond Safari Park Trip

We had 268 attendees at our family trip to Blair Drummond Safari Park in July.

We started the day with some very cheeky monkeys climbing on the coaches, and the hilarity continued from there! A fantastic day was had by all, with even the weather behaving itself. Everyone enjoyed seeing the animals and playing on the park. We all enjoyed a picnic lunch, catered by Asda, and the coaches were much quieter on the way home, a sign of some sleepy but happy children and adults alike!



Group Support Services

Summer Activity Programme

During summer 2024, we ran our weekly Play in the Park sessions across Clackmannanshire, supporting families to make use of the wonderful green spaces and play parks we have locally.

In addition to enjoying the park equipment in West End Park, Wimpy Park, Cochrane Park and Tullibody Park, we brought along baby sensory toys, bubbles, giant jenga, and more. We were joined by some of our wonderful partners across the Summer - The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) carried out a scavenger hunt and undertook a natural crafting session with families. Nicola from the Japanese Garden joined us one week to create fish kites and origami frogs with families. Reachout with Arts in Mind joined us to do leaf rubbings and make key rings. Our local Community Learning and Development (CLD) team had the kiddies working to stay refreshed by popping along with their



smoothie bike, which was great fun. Each week, we provided a variety of snacks and drinks for those in attendance and supported with transport/costs where needed.

A total of 296 attendances were recorded which is an average of 74 per session.

October Nature Festival

As we are so fortunate to have lovely green spaces on our doorstep all across the County, we wanted to celebrate this by having a Nature themed event over the October holidays. We had activities from colouring to making pumpkin lanterns, and were also joined by some of our partners; TCV were in attendance to lead a scavenger hunt and make leaf crowns. Reachout with Arts in Mind helped families craft some wonderful autumn lanterns and make leaf pictures. Land and Forestry had the children cutting wooden cookies. Our volunteer Joan did some den building, which was incredibly popular with everyone.



Christmas Party

We held our annual Christmas Party in Alloa Town Hall; welcoming 151 guests for an afternoon of dancing, crafting, making reindeer food, and of course, enjoying some party food!

Our entertainer captured everyone's attention with tricks, and a cuddly rabbit. Even Santa took time from his busy schedule to visit our children and give them each a gift.

Prepared by Carole, Carolyne, Holly and Leyanne.



Partner and Volunteer Feedback

Partner feedback – “I think the commitment from all staff, volunteers and management from Home Start is fantastic. The community and individual families benefit from the provision provided, a fantastic service all round”!

Referrer feedback – “Home start provided continued support to families when other services stepped back. It has allowed families to remain in control of their support while continuing to thrive”.

Partner feedback – “This is a service that is at the heart of communities of need. They have the skills knowledge and experience and truly understand the issues some families face and are there always to offer support and guidance, that some statutory bodies do not understand”.

Volunteer feedback – “Feeling part of something worthwhile has been important to my wellbeing”.

Volunteer feedback – “Friendly, inclusive, kind, supportive, thoughtful and responsive environment at HSC makes volunteering a pleasure”.

Partner/referrer feedback – “Home start are always very inclusive and extremely helpful they are one of the best if not the best third sector provider in our area. They engage with the appropriate target groups from areas of deprivation and always go the extra mile to offer help and support”.

Partner feedback – “Support from HS Clacks has been excellent - group workers added to our programme in a first rate way - they were keen, diligent and worked really well supporting our families Louise is an excellent source of support and open to dialogue, ideas and helpful support - this is much appreciated”.



Home-Start Charity Shop Update



It has been a busy and successful year in our wee shop!

We have welcomed a number of new volunteers to the team, bringing us up to a 21 regular volunteers in the shop, which we are very proud of: we simply wouldn't be able to operate without each and every one of them.

To show our thanks, and bring our volunteers together, we enjoyed two volunteer celebrations over the year. We also have a commitment to ongoing training and support, with volunteers engaging in various courses over the year including Drug and Alcohol Awareness with Transform Forth Valley, Bairn Bank Training and Visual Merchandising training.

We have supported 16 families through our Bairn Bank; which strives to provide items for families where cost would be a barrier. Anyone can refer, including families reaching out directly, and if we have the items they need, we will provide them for free. We have also joined the Baby Bank Alliance to strengthen our Bairn Bank, and connect with fellow Banks across the UK.

We have continued our efforts to make donating to us as accessible as possible – making use of our van for collections and increasing the number of donation pods we have located across the county. Thank you to our wonderful partners for agreeing to have pods for us: Ceteris (one in the e-centre and one in the Alloa Business Centre); Menstrie Community Action Group (Dumyat Centre); Alva Health Centre; Tullibody Health Centre and Ugym Tillicoulltry (who have 2 pods!) We are keen to continue to expand our pod locations; if you would like to accommodate one on your premises then please get in touch.

We are committed to environmental sustainability, and as such, strive to ensure as much of the donations we receive as possible are diverted from



landfill. Over 2024/25, we received 33772.22 KG of items, of which we successfully diverted 95% from landfill through onward sale, or donation to Nathans Wastesavers.

It has also been a year of development for us, renewing our lease for a further 2 years, and investing in our systems and space. We had a carpet fitted in our storage space, to enhance volunteer comfort levels and try to retain heat and have efficient energy usage over the harsh winter months.

We re-opened after our Christmas break with a fresh new look for 2025, bringing our Home-Start colours, and messaging to highlight that every penny raised in our shop goes towards supporting our family support services locally. Volunteers were integral to this, helping with the redesign of our layout, building shelves, and painting. We also had a new till system installed, which allows us to easily track and claim Gift Aid. Over the year, we had over 300 donors sign up, and we are excited to see the positive impact this will have on our income generation in years to come.

Of course, there have been struggles over the year, for example through staff absences, or storm damage, but the team always pull together and are dedicated to providing the best experience for our customers as possible. This was reflected in our end of year customer survey, where 98% of customers reported they were extremely, or very satisfied with our goods and services. 100% of customers reported they would shop with us again which we are very proud of.

We have lots of exciting plans to continue to develop our shop over the coming year, but want to recognize that without our volunteer team, the wider Home-Start staff team, our landlord, and our incredible donors and customers, none of this would be possible. Thank You.

Sarah & Heather



**Thanks to our
amazing Charity
Shop Volunteers**



Fundraising Activities

A key strand of our income generation strategy lies in raising money directly, and not too heavily relying on income from any one source, such as a trust or foundation. Our Chairty Shop remains our biggest contributor to this area of our work, but we have also continued to develop our wider community-based fundraising efforts, including activities such as:

The Kiltwalk

This is a great fundraising opportunity for us, but also a chance to raise our profile, and engage new members of the community, who are perhaps keen to support us, but can't contribute to regular volunteering.



Campaigns

Last year, we had our first exploration into using online fundraising platforms, through The Big Give. This year, we built on that through engaging in their Christmas Campaign, raising a wonderful £4,000 between their match donors, our pledges, and online giving during the campaign. These funds went directly to family support (food vouchers, winter wear, toys/gifts) over the festive season. We also continued our annual Christmas gift appeal, and once again felt the support and generosity of local individuals and businesses alike who donated toys and gifts to help ensure all our families felt the magic and joy of the season. A full list of our supporters and donors can be found on page 30.



Community Events

We strive to support wider community groups and events where possible, and often, they are also a great opportunity for us to raise awareness on our services. Sometimes, it is also a great opportunity to raise some funds through having a tombola, offering glitter tattoos for a donation etc.

This year, some of the team volunteered with Love in a Box, supporting their efforts to ensure every child locally had gifts to open on Christmas day. We also got involved in volunteering at Alloa Rotary's Santa's Grotto, which was lots of fun, and we were thrilled to be one of their chosen charities, receiving a proportion of the money raised in the New Year. We had a stall at Wimpy Parks fun day over Summer, which was a great chance to speak with locals, and proved that tombola's are always popular!



Statistical Info

April 2024 - March 2025



169

families supported
by our core services

=



576

individuals



243
Adults



333
Children



154
0-5 years



122
6 to 12 years



57
13 to 18 years

Child Protection:



5 families (14 children) worked with on the Child Protection register / on compulsory supervision orders



5 families (8 children) with care experience

Reason for Referral:

Access To Other Services	11%	
Being Involved In The Child(ren)'s Development/early Learning And Socialisation	50%	
Coping With Child's Mental Health	36%	
Coping With Child's Physical Health	17%	
Coping With Extra Work Caused By Multiple Birth/children Under 5	6%	
Coping With Loneliness And Social Isolation	42%	
Coping With Own Mental Health	67%	
Coping With Own Physical Health	14%	
Managing Child's Behaviour, Listening To Children And Respecting Their Rights	62%	
Managing The Household Budget	20%	
Other	24%	
Parent's Confidence Self-esteem	50%	
Parents Own Learning Needs	5%	
Stress Caused By Conflict In The Family	20%	
The Day-to-day Running Of The House	33%	

Geographical areas where families reside:

Alloa **42%**
 Alva **10%**
 Clackmannan **6%**
 Coalsnaughton **3%**
 Fishcross **2%**
 Menstrie **4%**
 Sauchie **13%**
 Tillicoultry **8%**
 Tullibody **12%**

Referral Sources:

Aberlour **1%**
 Self Referral **10%**
 CAB **2%**
 Clacks Works **1%**
 Education **20%**
 Health Visitor **24%**
 Play Roots (various) **22%**
 Mental Health Nurse **1%**
 Family Support Hub **1%**
 Social Worker **18%**

Circumstances at referral:

Unsuitable housing **16%**
 Family Member in Prison **4%**
 Forces **1%**
 Refugee/Asylum seeker **3%**
 1 or more parents employed **34%**
 Debt / Finances **14%**
 Speech & Language issues **25%**
 Substance misuse **6%**
 Domestic abuse **19%**
 Teenage pregnancy **2%**
 Mental health issues **57%**

Our staff team (Co-ordinators and Family Support Workers) alone carried out 726 home visits over the year.

Trustees



Patrick Leavey (Chairperson)



Colin Carmichael (Treasurer)



Joan Gibson



Melissa Albentosa



Sarah Shimmen



Jill Baty



Steven Day



Jim Nicol



Elaine Wilson

Staff



Louise Orr



Jacqueline Kidd



Linda Kerr



Laura Chalmers



Maureen Holden



Leyanne McLean



Paula Paton



Bernadette Syme



Carole Evans



Carolyn Nicol



Holly Daobry



Susan Bannatyne



Megan Thomson



Freya Kirkwood



Sarah Gray



Heather Jarvie



Shelley Bowman



Sofie Meier



Clackmannanshire

Supporters / Donors 2024-25

Andy Gray

Dollywood Foundation

U Gym, Tillicoultry

Alloa Round Table

Clacks Lottery

CTSI

Community House, Alloa

Jacqui & John Dick

Plum Competitions

Clacks Community Lottery

Arnold Clark

Reachout with Arts in Mind

**Menstrie Community Action Group
(Dumyat Centre)**

Alva Health Centre

Tullibody Health Centre

Ceteris

W. Anglia Maltings (Holdings) Ltd

Japanese Gardens, Muckhart

B & M Alloa

Hillfoots Harmony

Stirlingshire Voluntary Enterprise

The Wee Book Shop Dollar

Mears Group

Alva Development Trust

Clackmannan Development Trust

Alloa Baptist Church

Westbourne Medical Practice

Wasp Community Club (HIVE)

RMD Alloa

Cherry Blossom Beauty

Diageo, Cambus

The Cats Whiskers

Dollar Community - Santas Sleigh

World Wide Wrestling League

**Individuals who donated
to our Christmas Appeal**

Tesco Alloa

Asda Alloa

Royal Oak, Alloa

Alloa Rotary Club

Hawkhill Community Centre

Kidzworld, Alloa

Trillium, Alloa

**Sauchie and Coalsnaughton
Parish Church**

Morrisons Community Champion, Alloa

St Mungo's RC Prayer Group

Lithium Systems

RSVP Knitting Group

**Busy Bee Bingo - Coalsnaughton
Primary School Pupils**

Millions Like Us

Thanks to our funders





Clackmannanshire

**Chief Executive Officer:**

Louise Orr

Assistant Manager:

Jacqueline (Jax) Kidd

Office Manager:

Linda Kerr

Volunteer and Community**Engagement Worker:**

Laura Chalmers

Family Support Co-ordinators:

Maureen Holden

Paula Paton

Leyanne Mclean

Bernadette (Bernie) Syme

Family Support Workers:

Megan Thomson

Susan Bannatyne

Freya Kirkwood

Family Support Group Workers:

Carole Evans

Carolyn Nicol

Holly Daobry (Play Roots)

Shop Learning and Development Manager :

Sarah Gray

Retail Supervisor:

Heather Jarvie

Consultant Support provided by:

Shelley Bowman

Sofie Meier

Our incredible team of trustees, family support, group and shop volunteers.

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