

Newsletter: Home-Start North West Hampshire, Rucstall Community Centre,  
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## Community Newsletter...

### Welcome to our Autumn Newsletter!



#### Reflections from Lockdown

Since our last newsletter back in February we never imagined that shortly after the whole country would be plunged into Lockdown due to a Pandemic, it still seems surreal! Here at HSNWH we locked up the office and worked from home until restrictions were eased in June, when it was safe to return but to a very different working environment!

Up to the 1<sup>st</sup> August we operated a staff rota to ensure only 3 members of staff could work together in the office adhering of course to our Covid Risk Assessment. We daily check our temperature with a newly acquired Temperature Gun and of course all visitors to the office too! We are very lucky in being able to use the small meeting room as an additional office space so that we can safely work 2 metres apart. Both offices are very well ventilated with all doors and windows opened so do wear a jumper if visiting!



**And at times  
we do have to  
wear a Mask  
too!**

During Lockdown we kept in regular contact with each other via Zoom and even had much needed regular Zoom Well-Being Sessions led by Bethan. However, being able to all work together again to share ideas etc. is amazing and I will never again complain about the office being too noisy!

**But more importantly how did we support families during Lockdown?.....**As life changed around us we had to quickly adapt to working in a very different way:-

1:1 phone calls were carried out to every open family from a member of staff at least once a week and in some cases more than once a week.

Our normal physical Groups were replaced with virtual groups via Zoom so families could remain connected. These worked well but sadly not all the families felt confident in joining or just didn't have the technology and they were offered weekly 1:1 phone/ video call volunteer support in addition to their regular weekly phone call from a staff member.

We held additional regular Zoom "coffee mornings" for families who were not already part of a family group and for isolated families who were referred to us during Lockdown period only.

We uploaded daily social media posts promoting child/parent interaction including play ideas for different age groups, nursery rhymes and story time. We posted regular wellbeing tips videos to give strategies for overcoming feelings of stress and overwhelm and held a 7-day mindfulness challenge via a closed Facebook group to support wellbeing.

We regularly shared the crisis numbers on our Social Media and created a new page on our Website to support families with tips and ideas to keep children busy throughout the Pandemic.

With the help of our amazing Volunteers we were able to deliver 3 lots of Activity Packs to families, one at the beginning of April which included donated Easter Eggs from Smyths Toys, a 2<sup>nd</sup> pack in May and the 3<sup>rd</sup> one in July ready for the Summer holidays! We included in the packs all the resources that families would need in carrying out the activities such as flour for making playdough and a magnifying glass & plastic container to go on a bug hunt!



**Above packs ready for delivery & below photo**



Here is some of the feedback received from families:-

*"I wanted to say thanks for the activity packs which have some great stuff in them and ideas - really appreciate Home start providing those and lovely to see a familiar face delivering them."*

*"Thanks for the pack! It's brilliant 😊 Z's loving the crayons and bubbles! And I'm planning on doing some colouring too tonight 😊 Really loving reading the ideas for activities too, haven't read all the way through yet but already looking forward to trying lots of stuff!"*

*"I've just received my activity pack and I am so amazed and in awe at how you all are continuing to make a difference to everyone at such a challenging time. Thank you so much. The self care information for me is really great too and I will make myself a self care box."*



Are you interested in a volunteer role with us? Our next Course is due to start during **January 2021**-Come & join our team of Volunteers.

We are looking for:-

- Home Visiting volunteers
- Family Group helpers
- Trustees
- Fundraising Volunteers

**BECAUSE CHILDHOOD CAN'T WAIT!**



## Silver Linings

There are many positives that have come out of this time that will continue to impact the way we work in the future:-

- As a staff team knowing that we can continue working in a crisis anywhere not just from the office to keep our services open.
- We have all quickly learnt new ways to reach families incl. how to film and upload videos to our YouTube channel to share tips, nursery rhymes & story-times on social media.
- Using Zoom as a tool to reach those families who are not able to access our service in person and continue to run regular Groups remotely.
- Being able to support our families at Professional Meetings remotely.

We were overwhelmed by the kindness of people who sent in donations and to businesses and other charities who supported us with donations of Food, Easter Eggs, Gift Vouchers and handmade face masks which has been much appreciated by our families during this unusual time!



## 'Big Hopes Big Future' renamed Preparing for School!

Just before Lockdown Dawn-our Preparing for School Co-ordinator had started the first of 6 School Readiness Courses planned to run in Schools throughout Basingstoke during the Spring/Summer terms. Sadly Dawn only managed to run the 1<sup>st</sup> Session in one school before the country was locked down. However, we were very aware that School Readiness would be needed even more with children being confined to their home and missing developing their social skills with other children. So Dawn adapted the course content and created a home-learning toolbox which was split into 4 weekly session packs. The packs contained all resources and learning aids to enable families to help prepare their child for School. Alongside the packs YouTube Videos were recorded to assist the learning and ensure families understood the activities to help benefit their child. If required a volunteer was matched to a family for additional weekly telephone contact to discuss any concerns they may have. So far we have supported 30 families in this new way and we are still receiving more requests via the Preparing for School Survey Monkey link that we have posted on Facebook!



*Preparing the Packs!*



*Above Packs ready for delivery & left a couple of examples of routines resources incl a poster of "What we may see on our way to school!"*

### AGM 2019/20

We had been hoping to hold our AGM meeting in September in the usual way but that was not meant to be and for the 1<sup>st</sup> time in Home-Start NWH history our AGM was held virtually on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2020! We were pleased to be joined by Trustees, Supporters, Cllr. Diane Taylor Mayor of Basingstoke & Deane, Andy Taylor the Mayors Consort and the Revd. Sue Coleman-Hampshire High Sheriff.

Janette Hewitt- HSNWH Chair paid tribute to our Patron Dr. Judith Darmady who sadly died from Covid 19 at the beginning of the Pandemic - "Judith will always be fondly remembered by HSNWH for her support, knowledge & dedication to improve the lives of children." Janette announced that in her honour the Volunteer of Year Award will be renamed the Judith Darmady Award.

In addition to celebrating HSNWH's achievements during 2019/20, the AGM was a great opportunity for Jools-Scheme Manager to share the innovative way the staff team carried on working in exceptional circumstances during Lockdown to ensure families were supported. Jools ended by saying that families have "blown us away, they have a lot more resilience that we give

them credit for and we remind them when they stumble how far they have come in their journey. The Pandemic has made HSNWH stronger and enabled us to become a better service!" Jools thanked everyone who has supported HSNWH during the last year and more recently through the on-going pandemic.



### Re-Starting Groups

In August we bought a "Fogger" with money secured from Covid funding to ensure the environment is Covid free for families and staff, a step nearer Groups re-opening! In September it felt safe to re-start Groups and risk assessments were put into place for Multiple Birth & Well-being Groups to return. However, it was decided that for the time being Wednesday Family Group would be held outdoors in a different location weekly, as many of the families use public transport to get to Group, and it was felt that it was not fair to put them at risk.



A big Thank you to The Costello School, Basingstoke who made these wonderful Face Visors (modelled by the lovely Claire), in time for our 1<sup>st</sup> trial Multiple Birth Group session held on the 29<sup>th</sup> September 2020!



**Katy & Kizzy ready for the start of first session of MBG Group!**



**Left "Bubble Play" fun & right "Treasure Hunt" at Memorial Park, some of the activities enjoyed at Family outdoor Group!**



Sadly due to 2<sup>nd</sup> Lockdown all our physical Groups were stopped until the New Year when we hope that Government Guidelines allow us to re-start.

Although 1-1 Volunteer home-visiting support has not resumed, many volunteers have been able to carry out social distancing walking with their matched families to parks and still provide

emotional support. Currently the Staff team are also carrying out reviews and Initial Visits with families through social distancing walking but hope when the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lockdown is lifted to also meet families and volunteers in a Covid secure coffee shop.

## Fundraising

If you haven't already done so, and would like to sign up to Easy fundraising, we get a donation every time you shop online, which at this time of year is amazing and completely free to sign up to!

Details on how to join are as follows:-

1. **Join** - Go to the following website link - <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/homestartnwhampshire2/>
2. **And sign up for free!**
3. **Shop** - Every time you shop online, go to easyfundraising. Choose the retailer and start shopping
4. **Raise** - After you've checked out, the retailer will make a donation to your good cause with no extra cost whatsoever!

Volunteer Toni Allen postponed her 130km walking fundraiser until next year and is now walking Camino Portuguese to Santiago de Compostella in northern Spain in May 2021 for HSNWH. You can donate on her Just Giving Page:-

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/toni-allen1>

If like Toni you would like to raise money for HSNWH, we are always looking at different ideas for fundraising and would welcome any suggestions/help.

**THANK YOU!**

## Save the Date:-

**AGM – 2021 TBC**

**Dates for your diary:-**

**Ramble** –Postponed until Spring/Summer 2021

## Number Crunching

**38**

**Active home Visiting/Group Volunteers – 20<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

**174**

**Children supported since 1st April 2020-20<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

**24**

**Requests for support received since 1st April 2020-20<sup>th</sup> November 2020**