



Evaluation Report Supporting children under 5 years

2025 - 2026



Home-Start Colchester Jaywick and Clacton
Charity Number 1116639

Introduction

This evaluation provides an overview of the needs of infants and children under 5 years who are referred to, or engage with, Home-Start Colchester, Jaywick & Clacton (HSCJC). It identifies the presenting needs of families across Colchester and South Tendring, outlines the early years services delivered by HSCJC, and evaluates the effectiveness and impact of these services during the 2025–26 period. The report also reflects on what worked well and sets out changes required to meet emerging needs and feedback from families, volunteers, and partners.

Home-Start Colchester, Jaywick & Clacton delivers early intervention support in some of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in England, including Jaywick, Greenstead, Clacton, Highwoods, Hythe, and Walton-on-the-Naze. These communities experience high levels of child poverty, poor parental mental health, social isolation, and limited access to early years resources, all of which have been further exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis.

This evaluation explores the needs we are seeing, the response we have delivered, and the changes we must adopt to ensure our support remains effective, accessible, and aligned with local need.



Snap shot of needs in our delivery area

Children under 5 years in Colchester and South Tendring experience some of the poorest early years outcomes in Essex, with Jaywick ranked the most deprived neighbourhood in England (IMD 2019). Child poverty exceeds 50% in the most disadvantaged coastal areas, contributing to high parental stress and reduced access to early learning opportunities.

Public health indicators show low breastfeeding rates, high smoking in pregnancy, and increased maternal mental health needs across coastal Tendring. Developmental delay is already visible by age 2, and Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) outcomes in Tendring coastal wards remain 10–15 percentage points below the Essex average.

Parents of children under 5's needs

- Food insecurity
- Insecure or temporary housing
- Poor parental mental health
- Social isolation
- Neurodiversity
- Low confidence in group settings
- Limited access to transport
- Lack of affordable early years provision



These factors directly affecting under 5's

- Emotional security
- Early learning
- Social development
- Attachment
- Physical development
- Long-term outcomes
- Emotional wellbeing
- Play opportunities



Without early intervention, inequalities widen rapidly in the first five years.

Sample of needs on Home-Start CJC's referrals

Struggling with a child's behaviour, and needs reassurance, OCD, depression, and anxiety.

Challenges with mental health and other medical conditions.

Coping with multiple births, mental health, single parenthood, isolation, and difficulty bonding with babies.

Need for behaviour strategies, high-risk pregnancy, and mental health complications.

A mother lacking confidence in being left alone with her baby, who would benefit from home support and group participation. Support needed at home with prioritisation, positive parenting, and hygiene.

Parenting, mental health, bereavement, low income

Bereavement of a baby, isolation, in shared accommodation., who would benefit help accessing groups.

Need for home support, confidence boosting and help coping with anxiety in accessing the community.

Facing mental health challenges, struggling with the behaviour of the eldest child, and dealing with low income

Bereavement of a husband, struggling with a child's behaviour, seeking boundaries and routines.

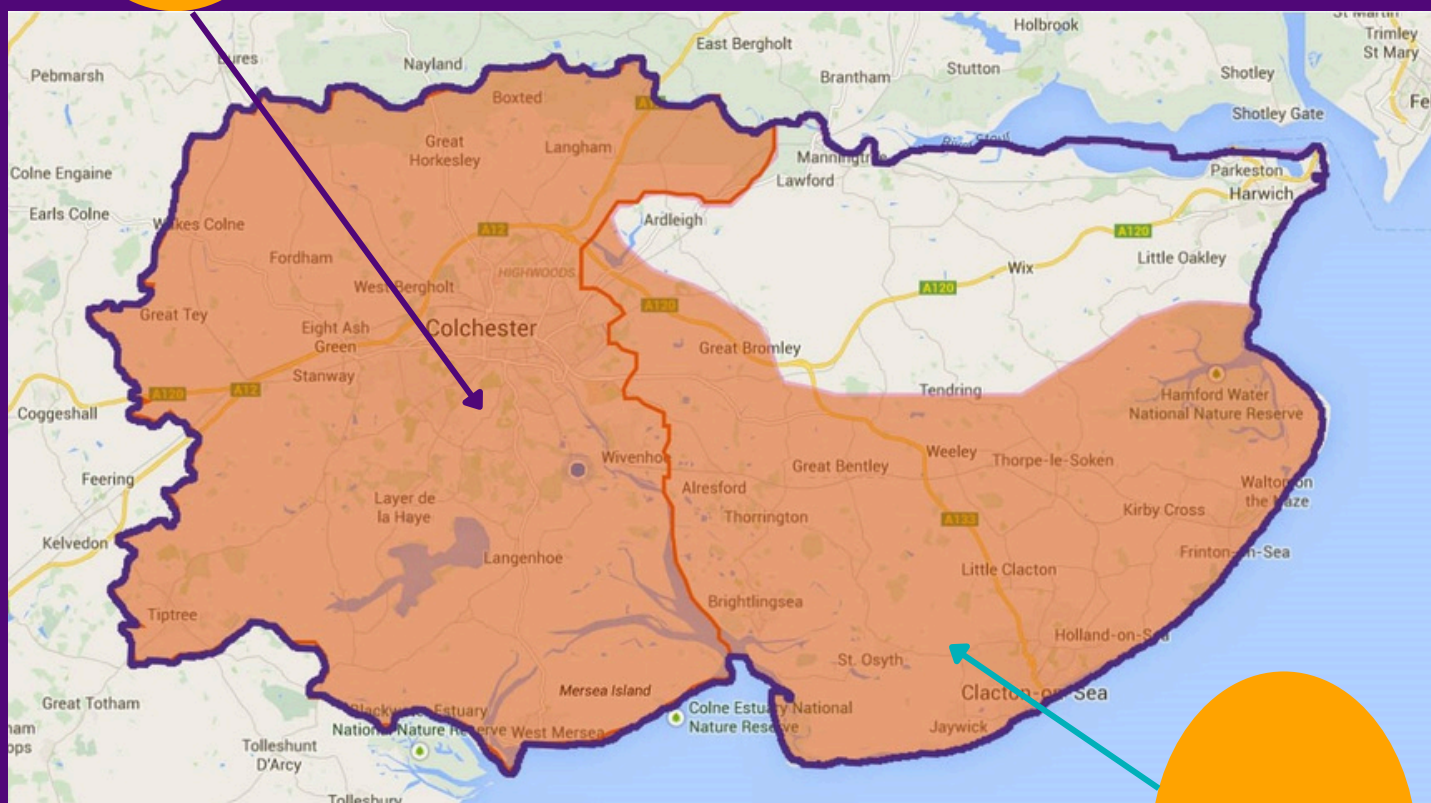
A parent struggling with anxiety, who would benefit from support with eldests, and dealing low income.

Seeking parental advice, community financial support. Looking for support with children's behaviour and assistance in getting out.

Needs in our delivery Area

45%

Around 40–45% of children in Greenstead are living in poverty, depending on the measure (Before or After Housing Costs). This makes Greenstead one of the highest-poverty areas in Essex and places it in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods in England



Jaywick (Brooklands & Grasslands LSOA)
Over 50% of children in Jaywick are living in poverty after housing costs.

50%

With the highest child poverty rate in Essex, South Tendring faces a critical demand for comprehensive support systems. Jaywick, identified as one of the UK's most deprived neighbourhoods, highlights the urgent need for targeted interventions.

Areas like Greenstead, Hythe, and parts of Clacton face entrenched deprivation, compounded by limited access to early years provision and significant parental mental health needs.

Home-Start CJC uses evaluated Parenting tools



Home-Start CJC delivers evaluated, evidence-based parenting programmes to ensure families receive the highest quality support. Our staff are trained in both Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) and Incredible Years, two of the most widely recognised and researched parenting interventions available.

Triple P equips parents with practical strategies to manage children's behaviour, prevent problems, and build strong, healthy relationships.

Incredible Years focuses on strengthening parent-child interactions, promoting social and emotional competence, and reducing challenging behaviour.

Our evaluation shows that families who engaged with these programmes reported:

- **Increased confidence in managing behaviour**
- **Improved family routines and boundaries**
- **Reduced parental stress and anxiety**
- **Stronger parent-child attachment**
- **Greater understanding of child development**

Parents told us they felt more equipped to handle challenges calmly and consistently, creating a more positive home environment for the whole family.

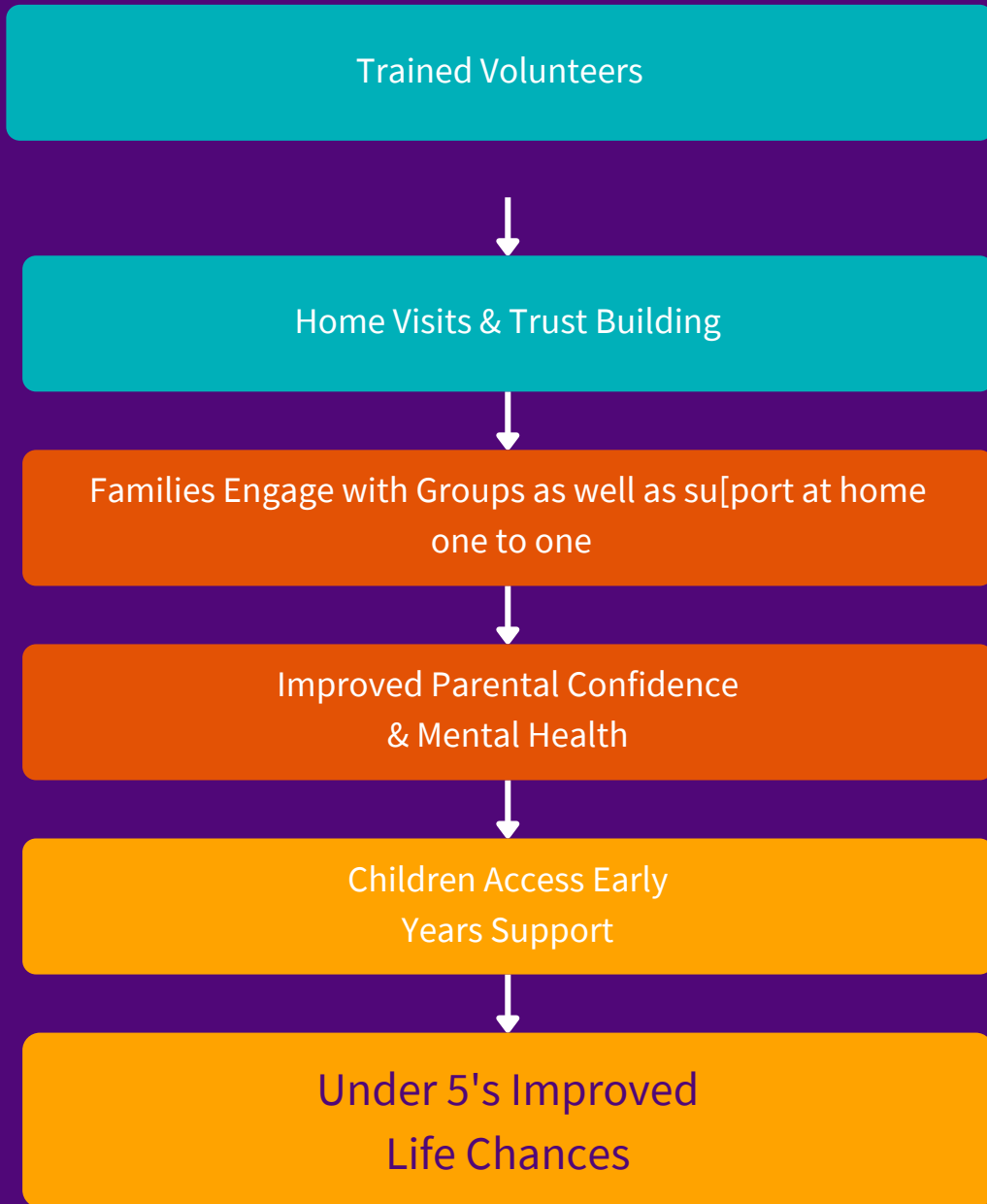


**The
Incredible
Years®**

An Empower Community Care Organization



Impact Flow



Our response to support need

Home-Visiting

Feedback informs us that home visiting reduces barriers to support and enables trusted relationships to build increasing confidence to engage. Meeting families at home where they feel safest reduced anxieties and creates a positive foundation to encourage independence.

- Triple P-informed parenting support
- befriending-building trust and confidence
- routines and boundaries
- behaviour support
- attachment
- emotional wellbeing
- early learning at home
- play support
- social skills

Both the co-ordinator and the volunteer generously gave their time to my son and I, and as the baby year went on, it felt like a weight was being lifted and I was able to successfully recover in the postpartum period despite the rough start to the year.



Support at home where families feel safest

Group support offered for under 5's

In response to the needs expressed by families, Home-Start CJC has developed essential both home visiting and group activities aimed at supporting child development and enhancing parents' well-being.

Baby Groups (0-6 months)

- Sensory Play - stimulate development
- Early Communication - foundational language
- Emotional Support - nurture well-being
- Peer Connection - build parent networks
- Guest Speakers - expert insights
- Bonding with parents & baby
- Access to Essentials - support baby's growth



Baby Drop-Ins (0-12 months)

- Delivered alongside Health Visitor baby weigh-ins:
- Safe, calm spaces
- Early learning activities
- Triple P-informed parenting support
- Signposting to health and financial support



Baby Massage

- enhance bonding,
- reduce stress
- improves mental health for both parents and babies.



Early intervention makes a lasting difference in the first five years.





Toddler Development Groups (1-2 years)

- Movement, singing, dancing, baby sign
- Emotional regulation
- Early communication
- Parent coaching



Play Town School Readiness (1-4 years)

- Role play
- Craft
- Snack time
- Circle time
- Listening and turn-taking
- Independence skills
- Social skills
- Praise-based behaviour support



Forest School (2-5 years) - Highwoods & Frinton-on-Sea

- Nature exploration
- Risk-managed tool use
- Fire safety and cooking
- Gross and fine motor development
- Resilience and confidence building
- Peer support for parents



Early intervention makes a lasting difference in the first five years.

Group feedback example

Home-Start Feedback Form

To enable our charity to find further funds to continue to provide funded groups, please help by providing feedback.



Colchester Jaywick and Clacton

How do you feel that our funded group has benefitted you and your child? Such as interaction with other children, confidence within the group, exploring new toys, physical development, sharing. Mums - peer support, individual guidance, information and support, befriending listening ear etc...

Its been a god send, I wish I found it sooner.
meeting other mums, interaction with other children,
being able to socialise and meet other mums.

What do you enjoy the most about the sessions?

Laid back, easy to feel comfortable.

Has the group helped your own wellbeing in anyway?

absolutely I just wish I found it sooner

How do you feel we could improve the sessions?

Nothing

Is there any other help or support that you feel we could provide?

NO, volunteers are great at giving support.

Thank you for taking the time to complete our feedback form

Outcomes Achieved in 2025-26

% of families showing improvement

Child Development Outcomes

Child wellbeing	92%
Socialisation	89%
Emotional regulation	84%
Early learning engagement	81%
Attachment & bonding	88%
School readiness	86%
Listening & turn taking	83%
Independence skills	78%
Gross motor skills	91%
Fine motor skills	84%
Resilience	79%

Parent Outcomes

Mental health	94%
Reduced isolation	87%
Parenting confidence	89%
Parenting stress reduced	84%
Routines & home environment	82%
Parent-child relationship	88%
Child behaviour	79%
Peer support networks	91%



Theory of Change -Under-5's Services

Staff | Volunteers | Family Hubs | Partnerships
Triple P | Outcome Star | Funding | Local Knowledge | trusting relationship

ACTIVITIES

Baby Groups | Baby Drop-Ins | Toddler Groups
Play Town | Forest School | Home Visiting | Peer support

OUTPUTS

Weekly groups | Home visits | Triple P sessions
Developmental observations | Parent feedback | Case studies

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

Improved wellbeing | Reduced isolation | Better routines
Early communication | Emotional regulation

MEDIUM-TERM OUTCOMES

Attachment | School readiness | Behaviour
Resilience | Peer networks | Home learning environment

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

Family resilience | Reduced inequalities
Reduced escalation | Improved life chances

IMPACT

Children aged 0-5 in facing disadvantages
stronger development, wellbeing and readiness for school.

External validation of Home-Start CJC services

Home-Start UK Quality Assurance Review (2025)

- Excellent family support
- Strong safeguarding
- Robust governance
- Skilled staff and volunteers
- High-quality recording of children's lived experiences



CVST Organisational Strength Review

- Strong community presence
- High-quality delivery
- Innovation and responsiveness
- Well-trained staff and volunteers
- Strong partnerships



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Interaction with other children, confidence within the group
physical development, mums-peer support and many more
including free items

What do you enjoy the most about the sessions?

I enjoy the fact that my child learns something new
after each session

Has the group helped your own wellbeing in anyway?

Yes - meeting other mums and sharing our joys and
challenges has been very helpful

How do you feel we could improve the sessions?

Making interesting it to twice weekly

Is there any other help or support that you feel we could provide?

NO

Thank you for taking the time to complete our feedback form

What worked well ?

Collaborating Effectively

Our most successful groups in community centers and hubs thrived when various services operated alongside each other. For instance, at Kingsland Church, Precious Bundles offers baby clothes and accessories. Additionally, our baby drop-in sessions run concurrently with baby weigh-in appointments, creating a supportive environment.

Being fully inclusive

Ensuring that the groups remain universal and accessible to everyone has proven effective. This strategy was particularly successful when the charity received joint funding along with other local voluntary services who supported vulnerable infants. This collaboration strengthened our relationship with Y.E.S and Afrika U.K., leading to a positive working partnership and better understanding.

Peer parents support as well as baby groups

Parents emphasised the significance of peer parent groups for their mental well-being, indicating that the focus wasn't exclusively on their children but also on them.

Volunteers with lived experiences

Volunteers with lived experience, supporting groups and home visits, were recognised as a significant strength by families.

Home-Visiting

Home visiting remains the key to build trust, increase self esteem and engage in attending community provisions.



Addressing the needs of babies and children under five in Colchester and South Tendring requires a focused approach on tackling deprivation and inequality.

What do we need to do moving forward ?

Feedback and monitoring indicate that we are heading in the right direction. Our learning emphasizes the importance of building on our strengths. It's essential to focus on key disadvantaged areas and establish new provision to provide additional support for children under five in these areas. Additionally, we should aim to recruit more volunteers in these critical areas.

Home visiting is certainly one of our strengths, allowing us to connect with families who initially hesitated to join group activities. Once trust is established, these families thrive when they start attending Home-Start and community support services. Groups need to continue to be none means tested and free to attend.

Observation tells us we need to continue to have mixed-need groups as they create natural peer modelling. Parents who have established routines and emotional stability provide positive examples for those who are struggling, helping them build confidence and new strategies. Children also benefit by copying more advanced peers, accelerating their social, emotional and communication skills. Without this balance, families in crisis tend to cluster together, limiting opportunities for positive change. Finding the right balance is essential. Finding the right equilibrium crucial.

Our groups must continue to offer services that families desire and feel comfortable attending, such as appropriate toys, engaging programs, and a supportive early years environment. Utilising Essex child and family venues ensures that the spaces are already equipped to meet developmental needs .





Forest School



Little Stars

Continue to deliver a variety of fun groups to inspire under 5's and develop skills



Baby Group



AWS Group

Continue Peer parent Support Groups





Continue to work in partnership with local services





Continue to train volunteers with lived experience to support under 5's



Continue to see home visiting as an asset to reduce barriers to participation



When possible provide essential living packs and recycled baby clothes

HOME START

The image features the text 'HOME START' in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The word 'HOME' is on the top line and 'START' is on the bottom line. An orange, stylized human figure is integrated into the text. The figure's head is positioned within the 'O' of 'HOME', and its arms are raised, with one hand reaching up to touch the top of the 'O'. The figure's body extends downwards, overlapping the 'A' in 'START'.