



# 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.



# Referral postcode Data

## Chart created from referral postcodes

Area	Referrals	Deprivation Level
Jaywick	130	Most deprived 1%
Clacton	255	Bottom 10%
Greenstead	70	Bottom 10%
Walton-on-the-Naze	35	Bottom 10-20%
St Osyth	35	Bottom 10-20%
Hythe / East Colchester	81	Bottom 10-20%
CO7 rural pockets	25	Mixed, some bottom 20%
CO5 rural pockets	12	Mixed
Other Colchester (CO3/CO4/CO6)	55	Mixed, some bottom 20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>698</b>	

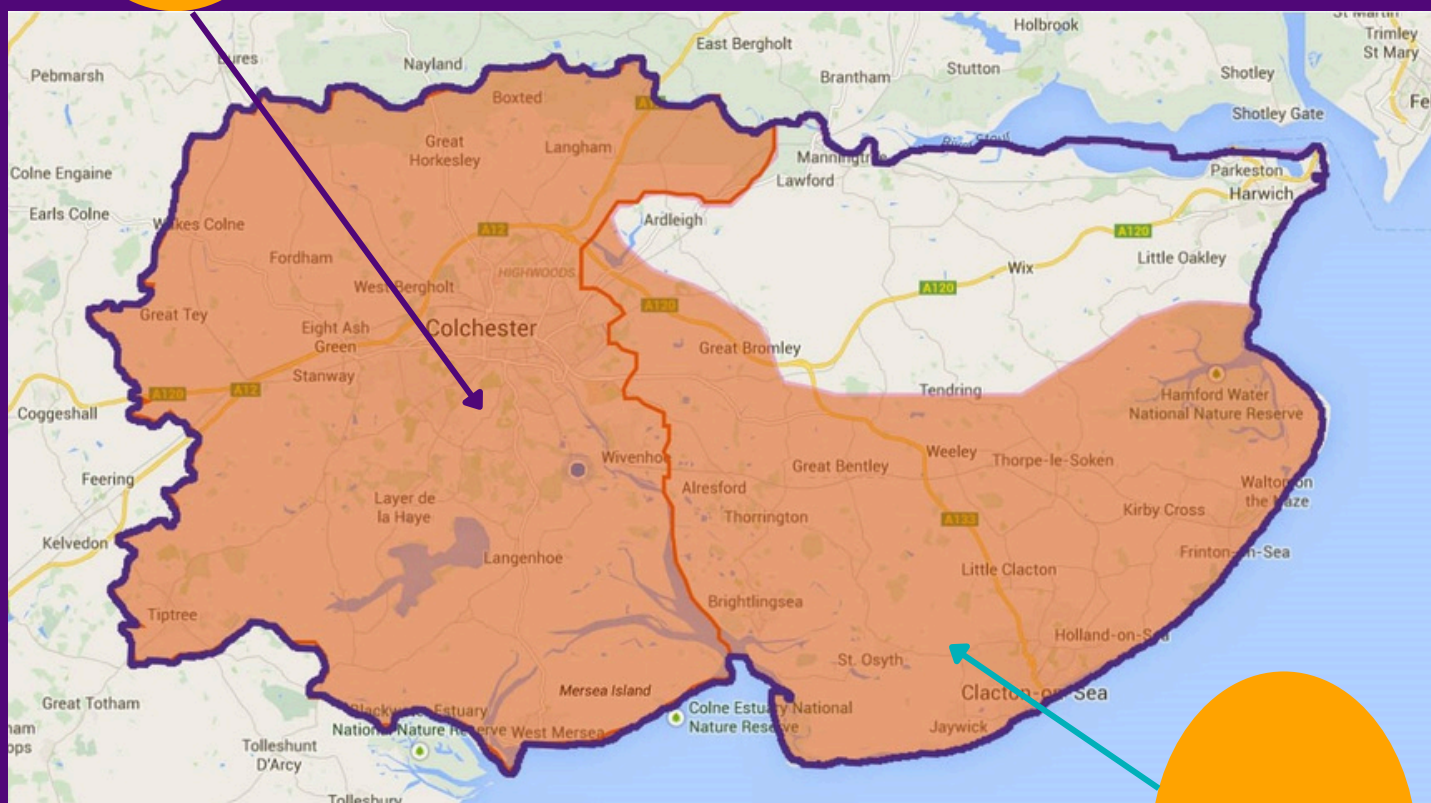
606 of 698 referrals (87%) came from the most deprived 10-20%

**Key Finding:** 74% of referrals come from areas in the bottom 20% for deprivation nationally, confirming services reach those with greatest need.

# 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.

# Greenstead: Compounded Disadvantage



**IMD Rank: 1,927 / 32,844**

Greenstead is in the most deprived 10% of all neighbourhoods in England (Decile 1, IMD 2019).

## Why This Matters

Census 2021 data shows the presence of Asian, Black, Mixed and Other ethnic groups in Greenstead, creating a more diverse population than surrounding rural and coastal areas.

This combination of high deprivation and minority ethnic households means families experience compounded disadvantage — poverty intensified by cultural barriers, language needs, and reduced access to services.

Home-Start's culturally responsive, volunteer-led model reaches these families where statutory services often cannot.

Where deprivation and diversity overlap, families need support that understands both.

# Needs on Referral Data

Sample breakdown by area, deprivation level, presenting needs and referral examples

Area	IMD Deprivation Level	Most Common Presenting Needs	Examples from Referral Data
Jaywick (CO15 2, CO15 3)	Most deprived 1% nationally	Severe isolation High parental mental health Behaviour challenges Financial hardship Housing instability Trauma / DV	Isolation, lack of support Suffers with anxiety Struggling with child's behaviour Financial support needed Victim of DV
Clacton (CO15 1, CO15 3, CO15 4, CO15 5)	Bottom 10% nationally	Child behaviour & routines Parental mental health Lone parents, multiple children SEN (ASD/ADHD/delay) Temporary accommodation Bereavement	Struggling with child's behaviour Mum suffers with depression Single parent of 5 Suspected ASD/ADHD In temp accommodation Bereavement of mother
Greenstead (CO4 3)	Bottom 10% nationally	Anxiety & low mood Isolation Parenting confidence Behaviour support Financial stress New to area	Suffers with anxiety Isolation, lack of support Confidence building needed Help with routines Financial support

The presenting needs of families in Jaywick, Clacton and Greenstead reflect the deep deprivation of these neighbourhoods. Jaywick referrals show high levels of isolation, anxiety, trauma and financial hardship. Clacton referrals are dominated by behaviour challenges, parental mental health, SEN and temporary accommodation. Greenstead referrals show persistent anxiety, isolation, low confidence and financial stress. Across all three areas, families consistently present with overlapping needs including mental health, child behaviour, isolation, poverty and housing instability demonstrating the essential role of both home visiting and group-based early years support.

**Key Finding:** All three highest-referral areas fall within the most deprived 10% nationally, confirming services are reaching families with the greatest need.

# Needs Analysis: Year-on-Year Comparison

Identified needs across families supported | 2024-25 vs 2025-26 Basic needs support increased from 41% to 56%, reflecting intensified cost-of-living pressures and rising poverty. Parental mental health concerns rose from 52% to 61%, with more parents reporting anxiety, depression and postnatal difficulties. Developmental needs also increased, with speech and language concerns rising from 28% to 36% and broader developmental delays increasing from 33% to 39%.

Need Category	2024-25	2025-26	Change	Interpretation
Basic needs support	41%	56%	+15%	Cost-of-living crisis deepening
Housing insecurity	18%	22%	+4%	More families in temporary housing
Parental mental health	52%	61%	+9%	Higher anxiety, depression
Domestic abuse indicators	14%	17%	+3%	More disclosures via home visiting
Child development	33%	39%	+6%	Developmental lag persisting
Speech & language	28%	36%	+8%	Significant rise in referrals
Attachment/bonding concerns	31%	34%	+3%	More early-stage vulnerability
Parenting capacity	47%	49%	+2%	Stable but high need
Social isolation	58%	63%	+5%	Informal networks weakening
Financial hardship	62%	71%	+9%	Sharp rise in debt and poverty
SEND needs	19%	24%	+5%	More children awaiting assessment
Access to early years services	27%	33%	+6%	Families struggling to access

**All 12 need categories show year-on-year increases, with basic needs (+15%), financial hardship (+9%) and parental mental health (+9%) rising fastest.**

# Sample of needs on Home-Start 25-26

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 from 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 eldest, and dealing with low income.

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

# How needs affect parents and children supported

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

- • Lack of parenting role models
- • Insecure or temporary housing
- • Poor parental mental health
- • Social isolation
- • Ill health
- • Low confidence in group settings
- • Limited access to transport
- • Unable to fund activities
- • Lack of parenting skills



## How these factors directly affect 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.

# Poverty and mental health

According to the most recent Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2019), 10% of individuals aged 0-19 in Essex are experiencing 'Absolute Low Income'. Our data shows the critical needs of families in our delivery area.

## Poverty & Basic Needs

Our families identified:

- Insecure or temporary housing
- Food & fuel poverty
- Debt & financial hardship
- Limited access to transport
- Lack of affordable childcare

56% of families referred needed basic needs and financial support



## Mental Health

- Poor parental mental health
- Social isolation & loneliness
- Low confidence in group settings
- Anxiety & depression
- Lack of support networks

61% of families referred needed mental health and wellbeing support



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

# 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.

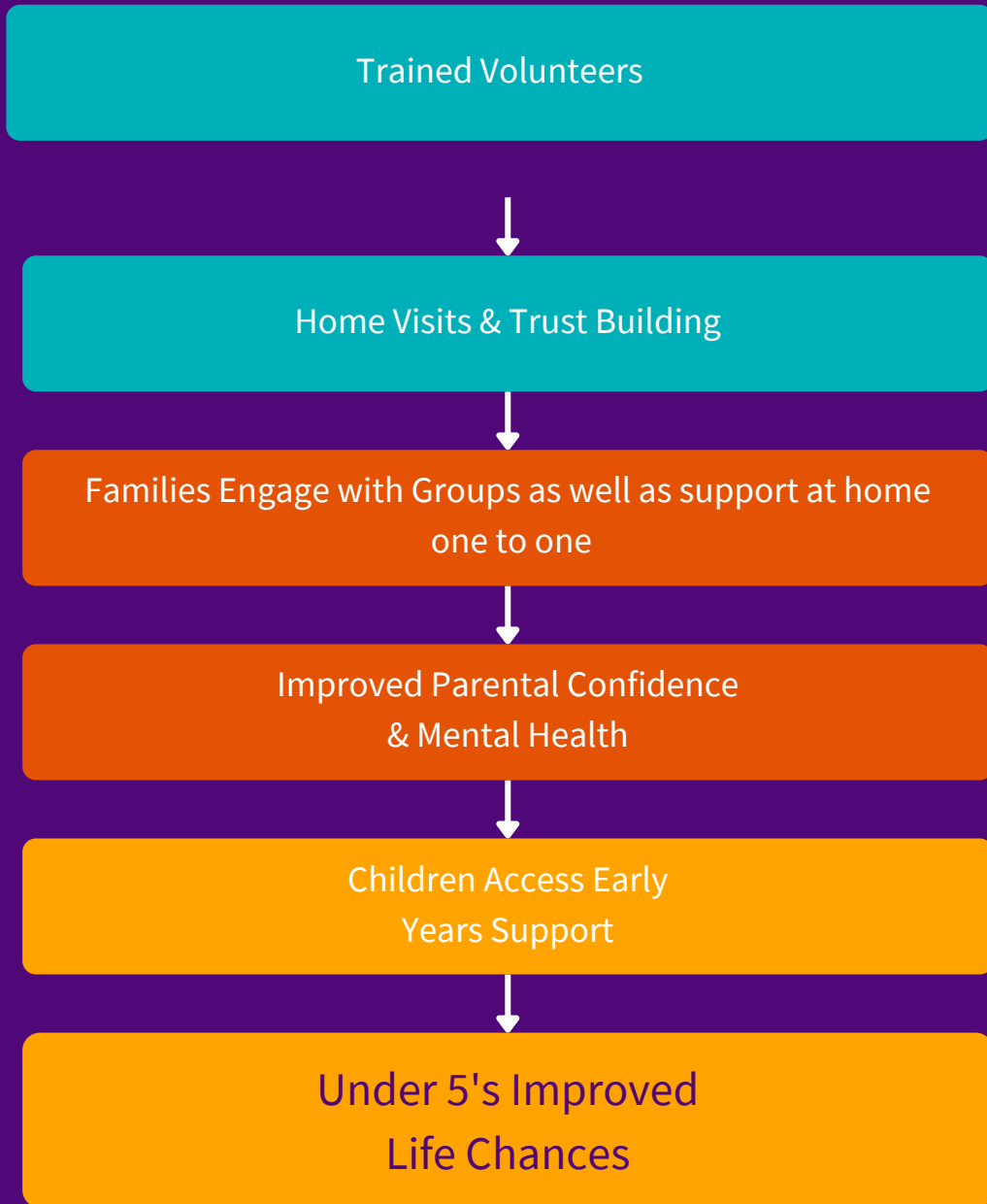


**The  
Incredible  
Years®**

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

Confidence building

Signposting

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**

## Age 1- 5 years examples of baby group activities delivered

In response to the needs expressed by families, Home-Start CJC has developed both home visiting and group activities aimed at supporting child development and enhancing parents' well-being. Every smile, cuddle, chat and game makes a huge difference, helping babies learn to communicate and develop confidence.

### 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 e.g breastfeeding
- Bonding with parents & baby
- Sleep safety
- Access to Essentials - support baby's growth
- Encouraging baby towards their first sound



### 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
- Advice and guidance e.g weaning
- Developing motor skills



### 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
- Socialising
- Balancing, motor skills
- Following instructions



## Play Town 1-4 years

- Role play
- Hygiene
- Craft
- Snack time ( healthy eating)
- Circle time
- Listening and turn-taking
- Independence skills
- Social skills
- Praise-based behaviour support
- Talk Listen and cuddle
- Info on childcare support schemes



## 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
- Motor skills



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

# % of improved outcomes 2025-26

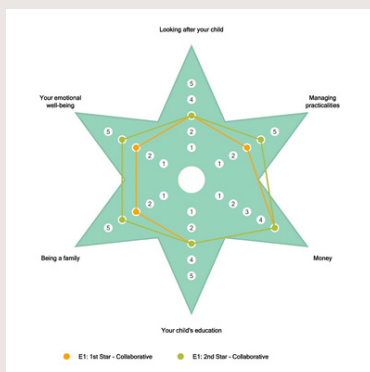
## Results from our Outcome Star monitoring

### Child 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%



**Monitoring positive change**

# 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 | child development

## LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

Family resilience | Reduced inequalities | Increased knowledge  
Reduced escalation | Improved life chances | Increased network .

## IMPACT

Children aged 0-5 facing disadvantages  
gain stronger development, improved wellbeing and healthier futures

## 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



# Parent Feedback

Home Start has helped me enormously over the last year or so. I've struggled with lots of personal issues and also the stress of being a new mum. It's been a rollercoaster of a year but without Home-Start I wouldn't be where I am today. It's given me a network of friends for life and lots of great advice and support.

It's lovely the groups Home-Start provide, and they always make me feel so welcome. I'm lucky to have found them at the right time.

My child has grown in confidence and can now do so many more things

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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...

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 are delivered in community centers and hubs 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.

## Parenting support

Parenting should remain flexible to each family with the use of evaluated parenting programs such as Triple P and incredible years to meet the needs of struggling parents

## 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 of services

## 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 hard to reach parents 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 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 to remove barriers of cost.

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 is 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 as well as promoting early years initiatives.





Forest School



Little Stars

We must continue to develop early years groups that build children's physical, cognitive and social-emotional skills. In our disadvantaged neighbourhoods



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**

# H&ME START



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