

Over the year 2024/25 we are grateful to have had the on-going support of our volunteers :

Chairperson
Joanna McQuillan

Linda Telford

Management Committee
Rosemary Clarke
Eileen Anghel (Treasurer)
Eelco Westerhuis (Vice Chair and Safeguarding Lead)
Marion Khosravi
Linda Kirk
Breda Connolly (Withdrawn July 2024)
Kathryn Baxter (Safeguarding Advisor)

Carol Holmes

Sandra Boyde

Pamela McDowell

Scheme Organiser
Michelle Boyde

Shop Organiser
Marci Kocova

Imogen Hallam

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**H&ME
START**

**South &
East Belfast**

Annual Report

**Home-Start South and East Belfast
annual report and accounts 2024-2025**



Chair's Report 2024/25

This year has been one of increased stability after a couple of turbulent years. In April we settled well into our new premises in Connswater which gave us more space and increased footfall. As a result, the shop provided much needed increased income and support for families. Unfortunately, a year later we were informed that the Connswater Centre was closing and we had 2 weeks to vacate. However, we quickly found new premises on the Cregagh Road and huge thanks are due to Michelle and Marci for managing yet another move. This year the Committee agreed to pay Marci Kocova a small salary as recognition of the many hours she puts into managing the shop.



Our contract with the Belfast Trust was renewed for another year and we were grateful for funding from the Halifax Building Society, the Pears Breathing Space Fund, the Belfast Cathedral and Strathearn School who had a collection at their Christmas school play. This funding allowed us to appoint a Family Support Worker and we were delighted when Maisie Curran took up post in October. Subsequently there was an increase in referrals for home support and we were also able to run Healthy Eating and Laundry projects to help families with cost of living pressures.

We also had some changes to our committee during the year. Eelco Westeruis was co-opted as a trustee and was subsequently voted onto the committee as Vice Chair and Safeguarding lead at the 2024 AGM. His previous expertise and knowledge as the Scheme Organiser have been invaluable. The Committee thanked Rosie Clarke for fulfilling these roles over recent years and we are delighted that she remains as a trustee. Breda Connolly left the committee and we were sad to hear of the death of Paddy Donnelly who served as a trustee for several years. Attracting new trustees to the committee remains a challenge.

In February 2024, we were informed by Home Start UK that they were undertaking a Quality Assurance audit of the HSSEB scheme. We completed a self-assessment which was submitted by the deadline of mid June 2024. Jennie Wroe (HSUK) visited us in February 2025 to audit files and we received our report and improvement plan at the end of April 2025. This exercise, whilst useful in highlighting areas for improvement has taken a long time and many hours to complete. Jacky Sinclair returned to her part time admin role for six months to help us get ready for the audit for which we are very grateful. We are now working through our improvement plan and hope to receive accreditation in 2025.

Like all voluntary organisations, we are still struggling to attract volunteers, both for home visiting and to help in the children’s shop. Several people came forward as volunteers over the year and received training, but for various reasons did not proceed to be matched with families. As home visiting is at the core of the service we provide, recruiting volunteers must remain our main focus, whilst at the same time seeking new ways of supporting families and providing alternative services.

Personally, I would like to thank the Committee and especially Eileen for their on-going support and advice over the past year. Michelle has worked very hard to keep the scheme running whilst also managing the shop and seeking and supporting volunteers. Lastly, we wouldn’t be a Home Start charity without our volunteers, who visit families, run the shop, and serve on the Committee. Hopefully we can increase our volunteer numbers in all areas over the next year.

Joanna McQuillan (Chair)

Manager's Report 2024/25

The process of recruiting families and volunteers has been slow again due to a lack of staff, but we still managed to support 35 families throughout the year between home visiting and projects. We trained two new volunteers, and both were matched and doing well; however, one was unable to continue because of other commitments. We still continued to support our families and access the food bank when needed and supply clothes and baby items from the shop.

I have attended the local family hub meetings and have been able to get some referrals from them. We recruited Maisie as Family Support Worker in October 2024 and she has been brilliant. With her support, we were able to take on more referrals and run both the healthy eating project and the laundry project again.

Once again, we were overwhelmed with toy donations from Cash for Kids, which allowed us to support the families we work with. I also applied to Storehouse to ensure that all our families received a Christmas hamper with fresh food to cook on Christmas Day. Our new shop unit in Connswater has been fantastic. It is much bigger and provides more storage space. We also recruited two new volunteers for the shop, which allowed us to extend our opening hours. The shop has been busy, generating more income, and we’ve received many donations that have helped us support more families.

As we progress, we intend to seek further funding to employ an additional support worker and a part-time administrator. These expanded resources will enable us to establish and facilitate family groups. We also plan to implement new strategies for volunteer recruitment.

Michelle Boyde (Scheme Organiser)

ACCOUNTS 2022/23

Expenditure 2024/25	
Salaries/PAYE	£ 39,704
Core Costs	£ 9,205
Projects –	£ 2,160
Total Costs	£ 51,069



Income 2024/25	
Belfast Trust	
Cathedral Trust/Black Santa	£ 2,880
Halifax	£ 5,000
Pears ‘Breathing Space’ Fund	£ 7,500
Charity Shop	£ 24,940
Other Donations	£ 50
Total	£ 78,674

Treasurer's Report 2024/25

Applications for funding were successful, and we are very thankful for grants received as outlined by the Chair above which mainly support our core business, which is family support.

Our main funder is the Belfast Health and Social Trust, but grants from the Halifax and Pears have financially boosted staffing costs, which had been underfunded, and allowed us to appoint a part-time family support worker.

The accounts in our table below show that income seems excessively high for two reasons. Firstly, the nature of grant funding is usually to finance planned expenditure, so we have received monies that are allocated for spending in the near future.

The funds from the Belfast Cathedral ‘Black Santa’ appear high as the allocation for two years were received during our 2024/25 financial year.

Strathearn School chose our charity to support in their end of year dramatic performance and their generous donation will appear in next year’s accounts. Again, we are deeply appreciative for all funding and donations received.

Secondly, takings from the Charity Shop have increased more than threefold on the previous year to boost our income by £18K. This is a very valuable income stream and our thanks to both the public for supporting it and volunteers for their dedication. In recognition of this success, a new part-time staff member was engaged in the shop from August 2024 and we can financially support our Healthy Eating and Laundry projects.

The year ends on a good footing but we are not complacent as the move to the Cregagh Road premises in May 2025 will provide different financial challenges. My thanks to the volunteers, staff and Committee for their support and stewardship, and to Joanna for her leadership.

Eileen Anghel (Treasurer)