

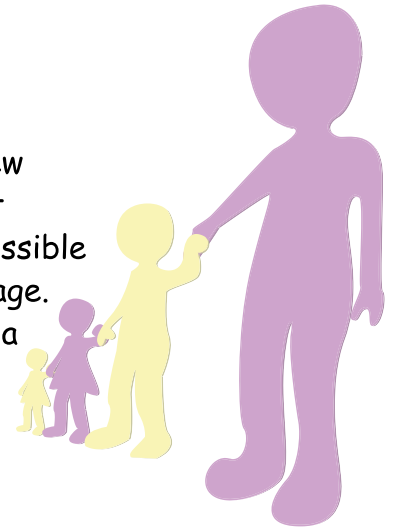


Home-Start National Inc Impact Report 2017



Introduction

Home-Start is a not for profit charity that has been operating in New South Wales since 1989 and in Victoria since 1999. The Home-Start volunteer home visiting program aims to prevent child neglect and possible child abuse by working with families who are experiencing disadvantage. The Home-Start volunteer home visiting program started in Australia in 1989 and is also successfully implemented in twenty-six countries around the world.



Home-Start recruits, trains and supports volunteers who visit weekly with families with children under the age of five. The volunteers provide friendship, support and practical help to parents that feel burdened by the role of parenting. The relationship between the volunteer and the family is voluntary and is built on trust. This Impact Report aims to show the reader how the program benefits families, volunteers and the local community. It does this by using the voice of families and volunteers who tell their own story of how Home-Start has influenced their lives.

LIFE FOR MOTHERS BEFORE A HOME-START VOLUNTEER

REPORTED LOW MOOD, DEPRESSION OR ANXIETY ISSUES

100%

FELT ISOLATED AND LONELY

100%

FELT OVERBURDENED

66%

*Statistics obtained from in depth interviews with families with a Home-Start volunteer, 2017

LIFE FOR MOTHERS WITH A HOME-START VOLUNTEER

FELT LISTENED TO AND EMOTIONALLY SUPPORTED

100%

FELT AN INCREASE IN PARENTING ABILITY

83%

REPORTED RECEIVING PRACTICAL HELP

66%

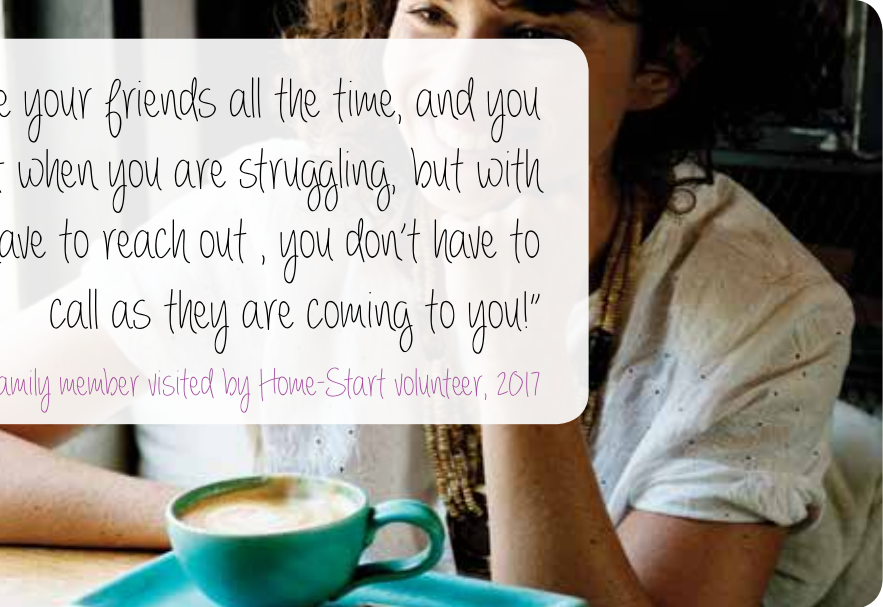
*Statistics obtained from in depth interviews with families with a Home-Start volunteer, 2017

"Honestly one of the highlights is the volunteer coming during the week. My children are so excited to see her. The first ten minutes is lovely they hug and cuddle the volunteer while we chat and catch up. Life is much more pleasant with a volunteer"

Mother with a Home-Start volunteer, 2017

HOME-START VOLUNTEERS OFFER SUPPORT TO FAMILIES

Social support is the basis of the Home-Start program. Families referred to Home-Start commonly experience stressful life events without an existing support network. Home-Start aims to offer families support through volunteers that are trained to meet the needs of each family and to help improve their functioning. This support comes in the form of friendship, household management, access to services and helping to build a social network.




"You know you don't see your friends all the time, and you have to reach out when you are struggling, but with Home-Start you don't have to reach out, you don't have to call as they are coming to you!"

Family member visited by Home-Start volunteer, 2017

Evidence supports Home-Start

Researchers at Amsterdam university published two longitudinal studies where they followed families that had a volunteer from Home-Start. They conducted interviews over a ten year and four year period consecutively. The purpose of the studies was to monitor long term changes in parenting and child behaviours after participation in the Home-Start volunteer home visiting program. They found improvements over the ten year period, in parenting competence and parenting skills along with a decrease in hyperactivity, anxiety and oppositional behaviours in children (Van Aar et al., 2015). It was also shown that the implementation of a Home-Start volunteer resulted in significant long-term improvements in parenting competence, behaviour and wellbeing. Better parenting lead to a decline in child behaviour problems (Hermanns et al., 2013).

Families report they need:



EMOTIONAL SUPPORT	100%
PRACTICAL SUPPORT	66%
SUPPORT TO CONNECT WITH CHILDREN	83%
SUPPORT TO ACCESS SERVICES	66%

#Statistics obtained from in depth interviews of families with a Home-Start volunteer, 2017.






HOW DO VOLUNTEERS SUPPORT FAMILIES?



active listening **neutral & non-judgemental**, *no stigma from a concerned and genuine volunteer*, along with the **development of a close and intimate relationship** between *mother and volunteer.*

Words used by families with a Home-Start volunteer, 2017

FAMILIES REPORT HOW THEY ARE BEST SUPPORTED BY A VOLUNTEER

-  Non-judgemental volunteers who actively listen
-  Regular weekly visits by a committed volunteer
-  The sharing of parenting wisdom of volunteer's own experiences as a parent
-  Play with and enjoy the children
-  Practical help around the home



IMPACT OF HOME-START ON FAMILIES



Statistics based on data from interviews of families with a Home-Start volunteer, 2017

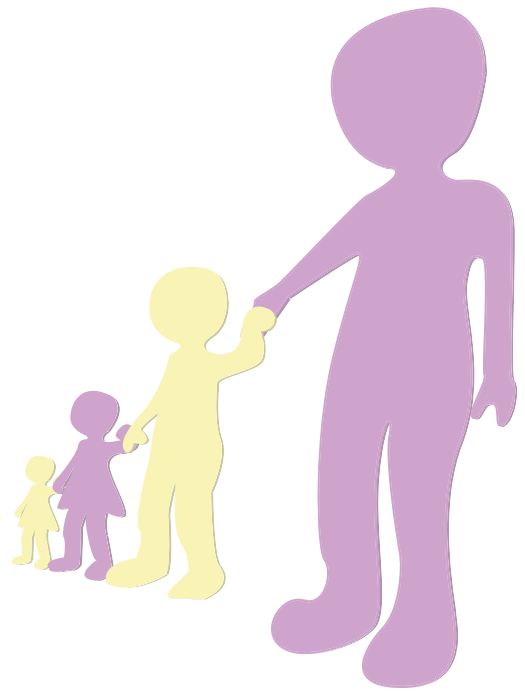


"having a volunteer meant that I could breathe"

family with a Home-Start volunteer, 2017

Case Study

"I am an only child with no extended family and no in laws. My mother died a few weeks after my first child was born. As the months passed, I had no older female in my life to guide me with parenting, to tell me if my baby was normal, if I was doing a good job, or even what I should be doing with him at home each day. I read internet articles and books and tried to follow every single piece of advice perfectly, lest I let my baby down. I began to believe I was doing such a poor job that my baby's future was ruined already with no chance of redemption. I self-harmed and thought about suicide. I apologised to my baby daily that he had such a poor mother. My Home-Start volunteer is the older female in my life who has experience with children, and listens to my endless concerns, and assures me that my children are okay, and I am doing the best I can. I can't describe how comforting it is to share the heavy load of child raising with someone who feels like



family, if only for two hours a week. I have no other family members or older females to share time like this with. Sometimes we just play with the kids, other times she helps me get to appointments. I can't emphasise enough - I have no one else to help me whilst my husband is at work. My Home-Start volunteer is a godsend and I am incredibly grateful."

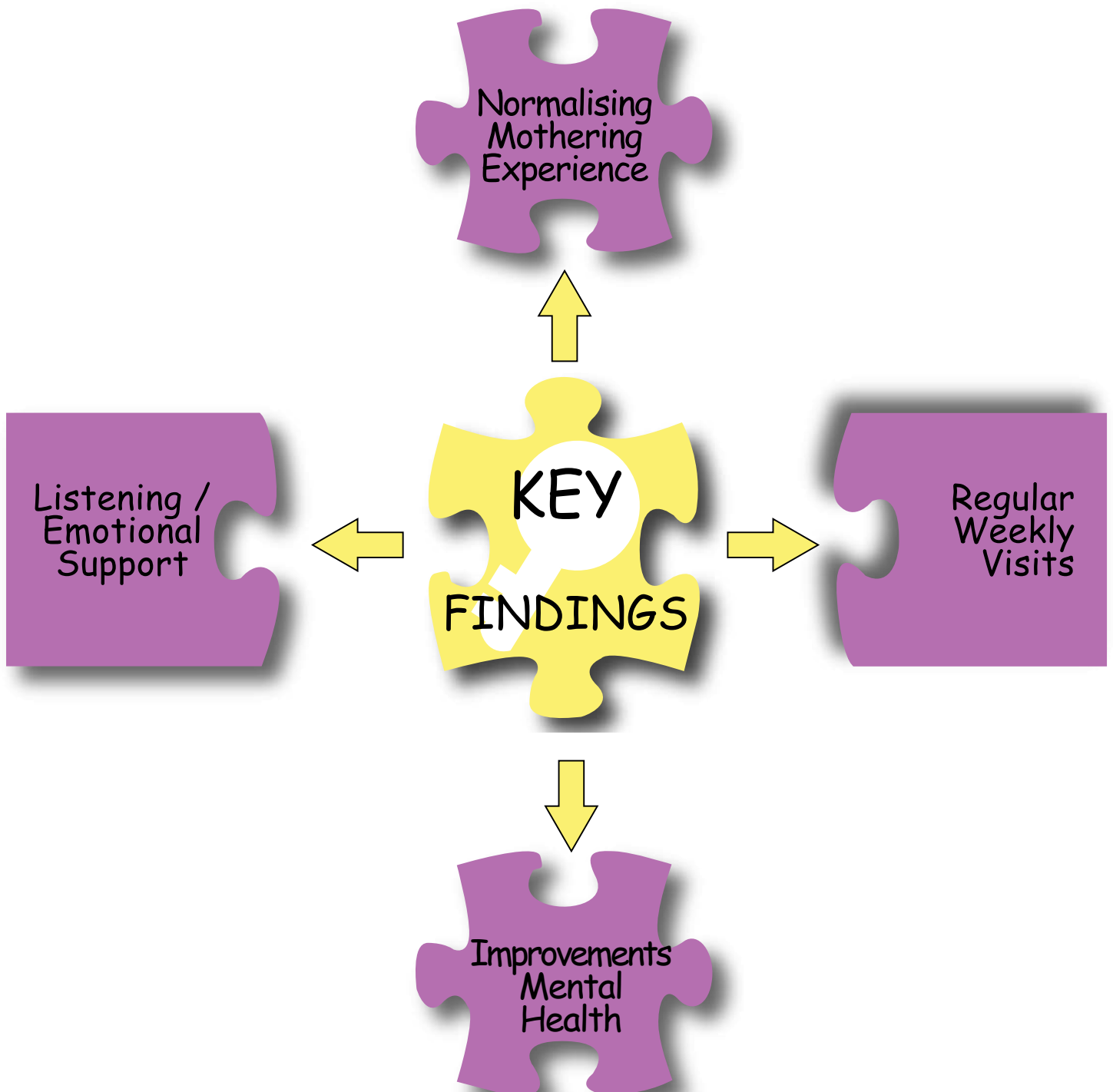


"My Home-Start volunteer is a godsend and I am incredibly grateful"

IMPACT REPORT KEY FINDINGS



MAIN REASONS WHY HOME-START VOLUNTEER HOME VISITING PROGRAM HELPS FAMILIES



NORMALISES MOTHERING EXPERIENCE



Parents referred to the Home-Start volunteer home visiting program feel that parenting is insurmountable and unachievable. Many mothers feel overburdened, anxious and concerned if they are parenting well. Thankfully a Home-Start volunteer can potentially normalise parenting for mothers and reassure them that they are doing the best job they can and that it is good enough.

"My time with my volunteer was really valuable. My volunteer she came into my home and she saw things I would worry about. She saw my messy kitchen, my child with weebix in his hair. She really normalised being a mum. She showed me that this is okay and just a part of being a mother. It's not a reflection on me. This insight was invaluable for me as a first time mother and that my volunteer was a mother herself and she could share her experience and give me reassurance. Having my volunteer normalise my parenting is so positive. You wouldn't think it would have as much value as it does. But just to know that most people experience this, showed me that it was alright"

REGULAR WEEKLY VISITS

Regular visits by committed Home-Start volunteers is shown to have a positive effect on families by improving their wellbeing. Families report that consistent and regular weekly visits by reliable Home-Start volunteers provides stability and safety. Importantly the visits occur in the families' homes, so support is easily accessible, inexpensive and welcomed.



"I am a mother who was isolated, had anxiety and depression. But now it is a really good help that someone is coming each week. It forces me to get out of my head. When I know my volunteer is coming I have to get up and have a shower and make an effort. I have friends but they have their own lives. Not having regular contact with others means that all the days roll into one. Some are lighter and some are harder. But now I know my volunteer is coming every Tuesday. Having that regularity has helped me to look forward to something. Tuesdays are the best. Now I am much happier and my daughter is too".





LISTENING/EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Parents report how important the relationship between themselves and their volunteer has become. This relationship is unique and can be described as a negotiated friendship. After undertaking training, the volunteer is matched to a suitable family to ensure that the relationship benefits both the family and the volunteer. This relationship grows over time and becomes based on rapport, connection and trust.

"It's such a relief to have a volunteer who is in touch, and where I feel listened to and understood. She is the only one really. It's really nice to have a supportive friend that won't judge and give a listening ear. She provides me with encouragement and support and is really gentle"

IMPROVED MENTAL HEALTH OF MOTHERS

One of the main reasons for families seeking help from the Home-Start volunteer home visiting program is mothers experiencing low mood, depression and anxiety. Many Home-Start mothers are overburdened and face challenges such as post-natal depression, disability, a mental health diagnosis, former drug and alcohol use, childhood trauma or a history of domestic violence. These issues can compound and challenge a mother's mental health. Fortunately, families report that regular visits from a Home-Start volunteer dramatically improved the mother's mental health. With regular support from a Home-Start volunteer mothers describe increased feelings of wellbeing and report being happier.



"I don't think my volunteer realises that she actually saved my life. I was feeling suicidal and I was looking at being admitted as an inpatient at a hospital. But just having her come changed my perspective of a family, by providing me with a little support and treating me like I was normal".

CHALLENGES FAMILIES FACE

Home-Start families are faced with a variety of pressures that impact on their ability to parent and manage stress. There are many reasons that families experience disadvantage and require support to help them better manage their daily lives.

Socially isolated
100%

Concerned about child development
33%

Mental health problems
100%

Sleep deprivation
66%

Health Issues
33%

Multiple Children
50%

Post Natal Depression
50%

Problems with child behaviour
66%

Statistics based on data from interviews with Home-Start volunteers, 2017

"my volunteer is just incredible. My son has really challenging behaviours and he is not a likeable child. He struggles to regulate his emotions, but my volunteer is golden and accepting".



SOCIAL ISOLATION

Families that are referred to Home-Start volunteer home visiting program are usually socially isolated and lonely. For many different reasons Home-Start families have limited support from their extended families. Fortunately, the Home-Start volunteer home visiting program works to lessen the sense of isolation and to increase social connections not only with the volunteer but with the community as well.

"I am socially isolated. I was born in another country so there are no regular visitors. We don't have our mothers, fathers, aunties and uncles. We don't have our families so it's a very difficult place to be a mother. Home-Start is priceless"

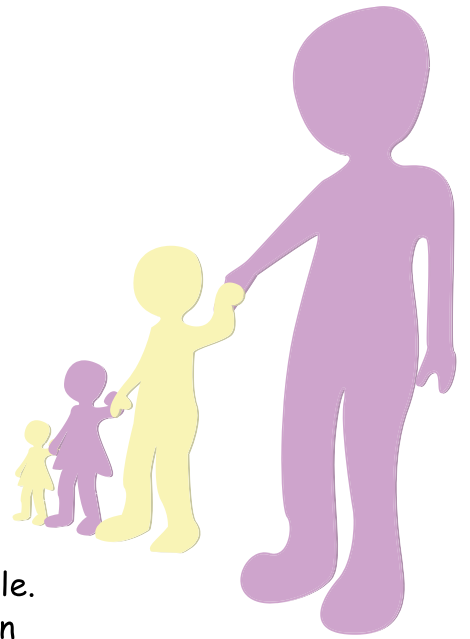
ENGAGING WITH CHILDREN

The Home-Start volunteer home visiting program supports parents to bond with their children. With the support of a Home-Start volunteer, mothers report feeling more engaged and connected to their children. This is a positive result as research shows that the greater the attachment between a mother and a child the better the outcomes for the child's development and future. Home-Start volunteer home visiting enables and equips a mother to enjoy her child.

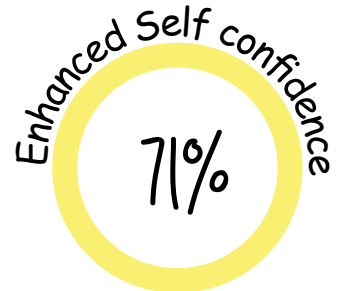
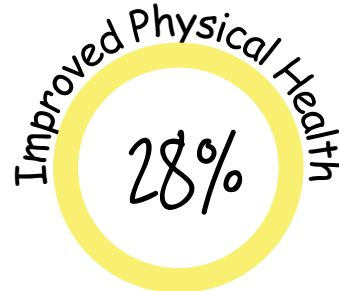
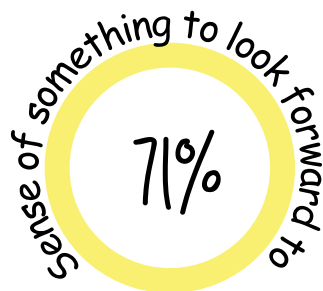
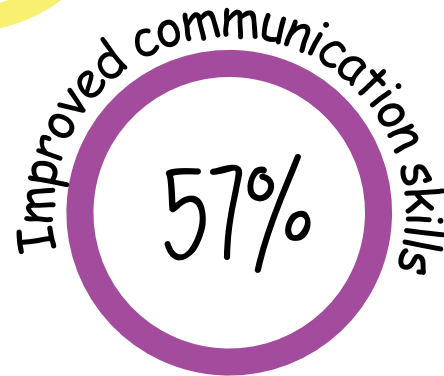
"I watched my volunteer interact with my boys. She would sit with them on a rug and play games and sing songs and they watched her and they really loved it. It just hadn't occurred to me I could enjoy them. Instead I felt angry, resentful, tired and felt like they had ruined my life. My volunteer helped me to connect with my babies. She modelled for me how to play and enjoy my children, and it just happened in the moment. It happened in my own home, using my own resources. And now I enjoy playing with my boys. I like to be with them and I enjoy their company".



Impact of Home-Start home visiting on volunteers




The findings of our research highlight that Home-Start home visiting positively impacts on volunteers as well as families. Volunteers report an increase in self-confidence, improved mental health, along with a sense of doing something worthwhile. These outcomes are encouraging and suggest that participation in the Home-Start volunteer home visiting program is beneficial not only for families but also for volunteers.



Statistics are based on data from interviews with Home-Start volunteers, 2017

HOME-START VOLUNTEERS REPORT IMPACT



"I feel so much happier! I thought that I would be helping someone but they are helping me. This joy that you get is amazing!"

"Generally speaking my self confidence has improved. Volunteering is good for me too"

"I suffer from depression and it does uplift me having Home-Start in my life. I get as much out of it if not more"

"I really look forward to seeing them. When I get close to the house I start smiling and don't stop smiling until I leave"

Home-Start volunteers support dads too

Fathers are included in the support provided by Home-Start volunteers and report benefit for themselves and their families. Today's dads are often challenged by financial stress, possible unemployment, long work hours, child caregiving, and health issues. Although the request is usually for support for the mother and children, fathers report that the support of the Home-Start volunteer benefits everyone in the family.

"My wife speaks very positively about her experience with her volunteer. Things were a struggle, so our volunteer came to us to provide an extra pair of hands, but she has provided more than that. She has provided my wife with companionship and morale support. The volunteer has been overwhelmingly helpful for us as a family as my wife has been provided with that support. The help extends beyond the mum. Having a Home-Start volunteer has made a definite positive difference to all of us".

Father with a Home-Start volunteer, 2017

Home-Start volunteer home visiting program is culturally inclusive

A significant number of families that are referred to Home-Start volunteer home visiting program have mothers who are born overseas. Without family locally, they are socially isolated and are missing practical support, reassurance and the presence of a family member to simply delight in their child. Thankfully, the Home-Start volunteer home visiting program can provide the family with a volunteer that can do just that!

In the words of a volunteer

"I have the same sense of humour as the mother I visit and our cultures do not divide us. The mother I visit grew up on a rice paddy farm and was sent away to school and was grateful just to have food to eat. Her life growing up was so different to mine. Her baby is beautiful and she is doing a great job, I provide her with lots of reassurance, just so she can hear that, as mums don't always get that recognition. The mum I visits confidence has increased a lot during that time and we just absolutely connect. People have a need to have that sense of belonging and to have relationships with people, it is really important and I think Home-Start is that. It helps the parents to recognise how important their job is and connecting them with facilities that they need along the way and bringing back that sense of community and not parenting by yourself! "



Volunteering with Home-Start provides volunteers with a glimpse into how other people live. They experience the different beliefs, values and cultures of others and importantly reflect on their own.

"I love everybody's perspective. Volunteering with my family has allowed me to see how they celebrate things and continue traditions. I really started to enjoy what other people are offering. I delighted in it and it reinforced what we do at home"

Home-Start volunteer home visiting program also benefits the local community

Home-Start volunteer home visiting helps to build stronger communities. Families are supported by Home-Start volunteers to rebuild their social networks and increase their participation in their local community. Significantly, volunteers also report they become more knowledgeable of resources within their community and more involved.

Volunteering provides volunteers with opportunities for personal development and recreation within their local community. Additionally, evidence shows that people who volunteer experience greater wellbeing, happiness, health and longevity.

Building stronger community with Home-Start volunteer home visiting

Volunteers report



Awareness of other cultures, beliefs and values	100%
Better knowledge of local resources for families	85%
Enhanced self-awareness personal values/ beliefs	71%
More involvement within the community	71%



Volunteers are
happier
healthier
and socially
connected

Volunteers report

"I have more of a connection with the community now, I have joined Lions club too"

"Now I feel like an integral part of the community, like I am invaluable".

"It's nice being a part of the Home-Start community"

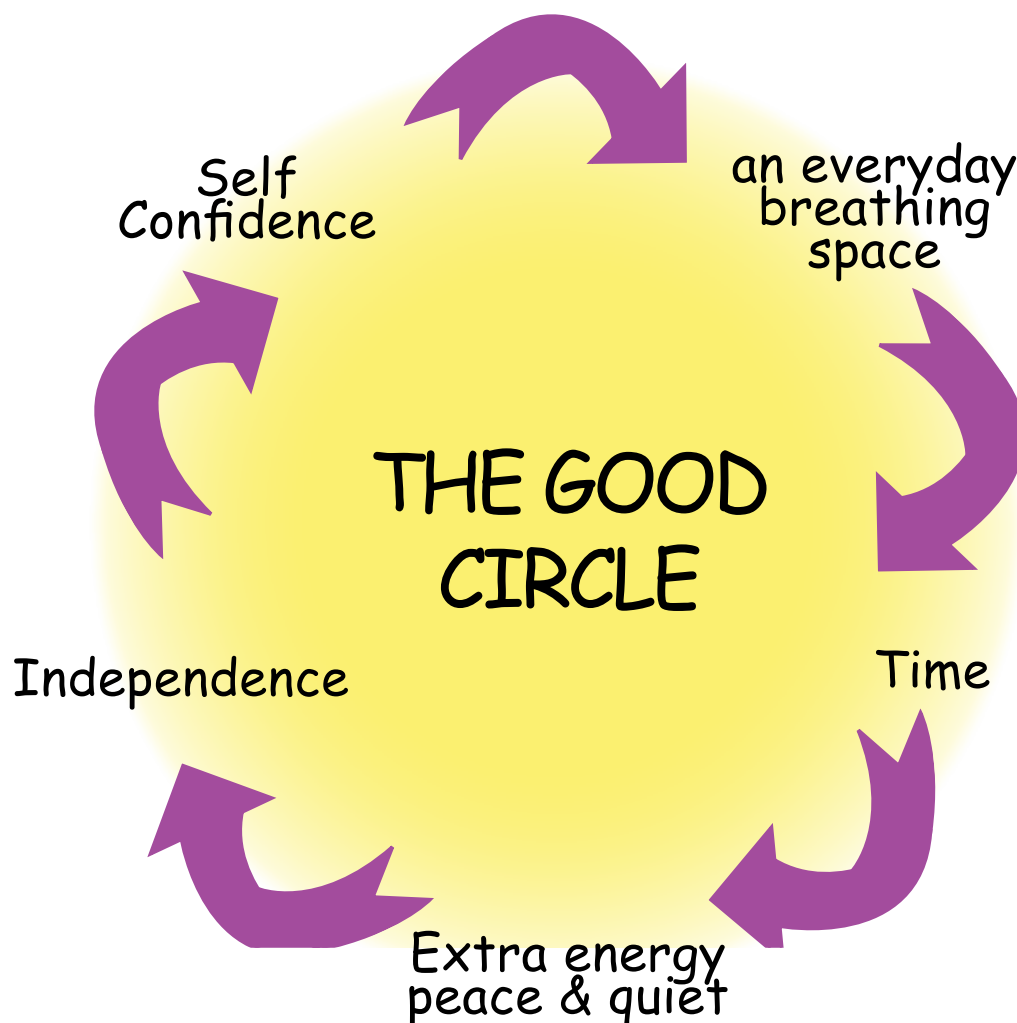
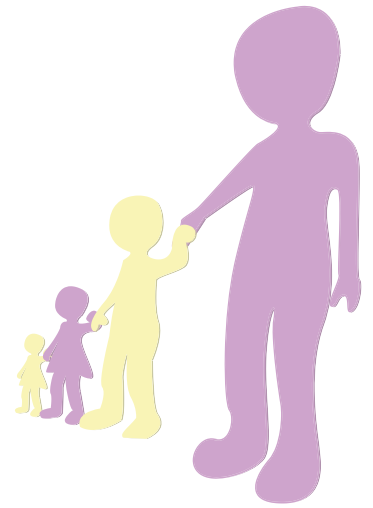
"I have recently seen another volunteer activity I would like to do due to this positive experience with Home-Start"

"I was isolating very badly, it has definitely helped me with that. Home-Start has reinforced for me not to isolate myself and to stay active in the community"

The research explains how Home-Start works

Researchers in Denmark 2014 designed the Good Circle model to demonstrate how the impact of support by a volunteer develops over time. It begins with the Home-Start volunteer providing breathing space for the caregivers during their visits, which in turn leads to extra energy, and peace and quiet for the whole

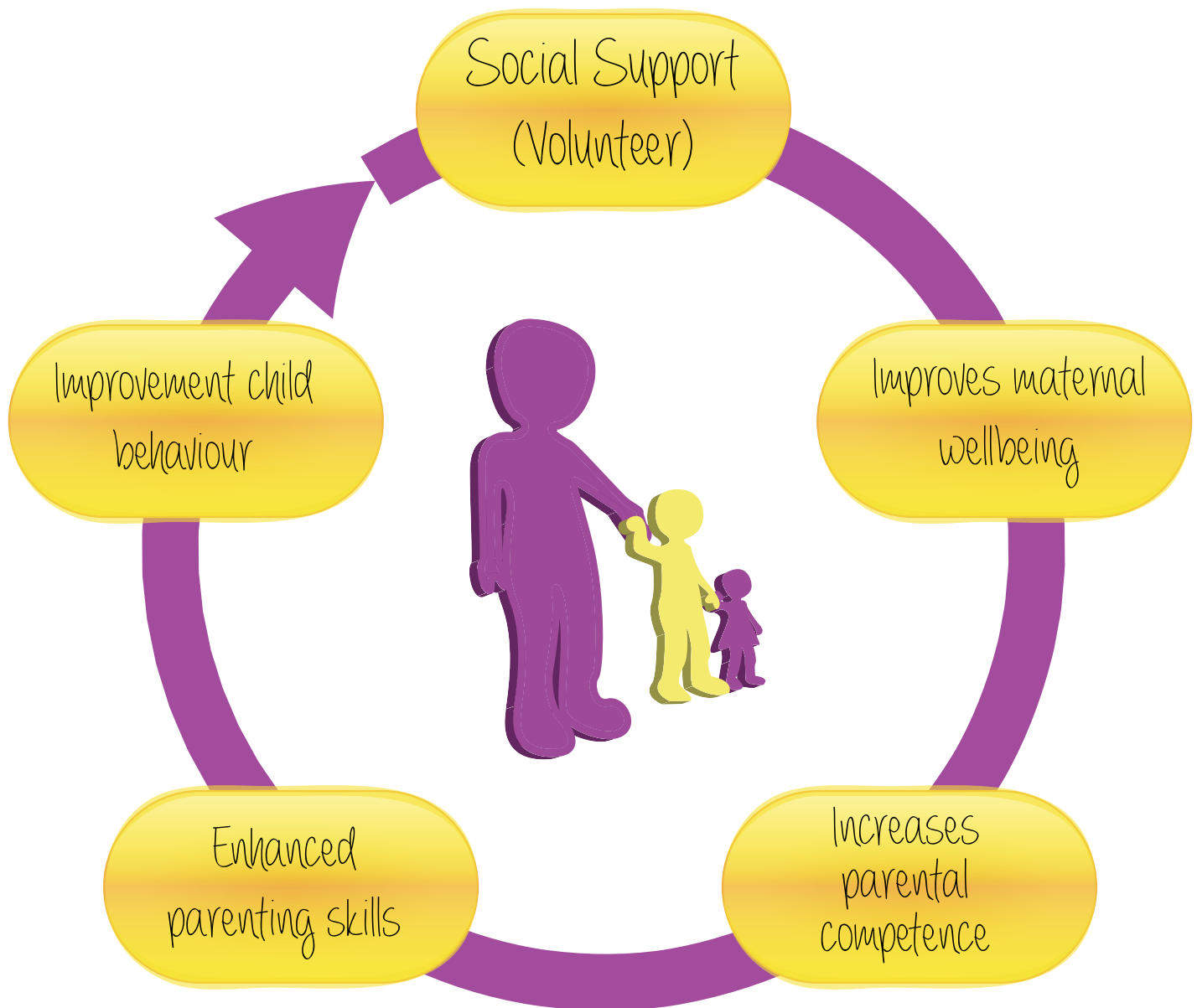
family. This helps to solidify the family as a unit and gives them the confidence to find their everyday breathing space for themselves.



"My volunteer and I have such a lovely friendship. When my youngest was a baby she used to hold him so that I could have some time to myself. We catch up and chat. I rest with a cup of tea and do jobs and have a regular break. Everyone feels nice and peaceful for two hours every week"

Family member visited by a Home-Start volunteer, 2017

Home-Start Intervention theory



Researchers from Amsterdam created this model to describe how the Home-Start volunteer works for so many families. It reinforces that the social support supplied by a volunteer helps to improve the parent's wellbeing. Over time the parent's competence develops, which in turn enhances and improves parenting skills and consequently the behaviour of the child.

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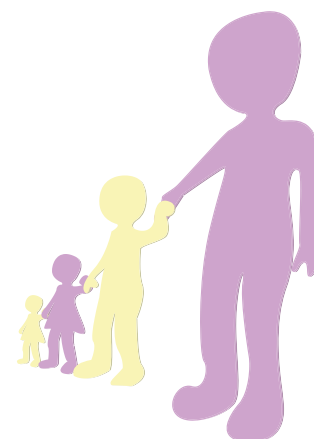
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Impact report statistics/quotes from in depth
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Recipient - Playing Your Part Award, 2017.
In recognition of the role Home-Start plays in promoting the safety and wellbeing of children
National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect NAPCAN

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