

SUMMER NEWSLETTER

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Essex

Issue 2 - Summer 2026



Top News

Service Delivery Update - NEW Online Wellbeing Group for families in West Essex, funded by Harlow Health Centres Trust is here!

A message from our CEO - Nic O'Brien

Welcome to our Summer Newsletter. I am delighted to share the publication of two independent evaluations undertaken by the University of Essex, which highlight the positive impact of our services on children and families across Essex. The evaluation of our Healthy, Happy, Connected Families Project shows that we are successfully reaching families experiencing complex challenges, including poor mental health, financial pressures and social isolation, and helping them to improve wellbeing, build confidence and strengthen family relationships through practical, accessible support.

The findings also reinforce the growing need for family support services. Many families continue to face significant pressures, and demand for emotional wellbeing, counselling and early intervention support remains high. It is more important than ever that families can access trusted services that help them navigate these challenges and build resilience for the future.

We are equally proud of the evaluation of our Thriving Communities Project, which explored the impact of our counselling service. The report highlights how tailored support is helping to reduce inequalities, improve wellbeing and enable families to feel more connected, confident, and equipped to manage everyday life. None of this would be possible without the dedication of our volunteers, staff, partners, funders and supporters, and I extend my sincere thanks to each of you.

If you would like to learn more about the difference your support makes and the services delivered through these projects, please visit our website: [Our Impact - Home Start Essex](#)

Thank you for helping us ensure local children get the best possible start in life.



Services Update - Supporting Families in Mid & South Essex

Every day, Home-Start Essex works with families, volunteers, and community partners to provide practical and emotional support where it is needed most. From family groups and wellbeing programmes to counselling and one-to-one support, our services help parents build confidence, feel less isolated and give their children the best possible start in life. Here are some highlights from across Essex this quarter.

Mid Essex

- Family support groups
- SEND family support groups
- Online Wellbeing group - Maldon

Our family groups continue to support families throughout the Mid area, providing opportunities for connection, support and play. Our SEND group, based in the Braintree District provides a safe, supportive space for families with children on the SEND pathway to meet other families, gain additional support and referrals into other services for SEND needs and encourage parenting confidence.

Our Maldon online wellbeing group is providing half-termly group sessions throughout the year until March 2027 and is providing support for parents on topics including anxiety, self-esteem and communication. Whilst online, the group will have a face-to-face meet-up to enable parents to connect and build relationships and networks to provide ongoing support for each other after our support ends.

South Essex

- Coast to Calm Wellbeing Groups
- Fitness + Fun Groups
- Mothers in Mind
- Family Support Groups

September to December

Our two Coast to Calm groups have been helping parents and children explore Essex's coastal environment while learning how nature can support wellbeing and mental health. Families have enjoyed sessions with Beach School Explorers, Essex Bird Aware and Essex Libraries, spaces are available now. Our weekly Family Fitness & Fun group; Mothers in Mind Wellbeing group and Family Support Groups continue to provide valuable opportunities for connection, play, and support across South Essex.

NEW WELLBEING GROUP

Are you suffering with anxiety, stress or low mood? Home-Start Essex have a group running in the HARLOW area to help with your wellbeing. This online group runs over 5 weeks and is all about supporting you to feel better.

The group is a non-judgemental, safe and supportive place where you can meet others feeling similar.

It's okay to not be okay.
You are not alone, we can help.

To join, please get in touch 01245 847410
or email info@home-startessex.org.uk
to find out more information



Services Update - Supporting families in West Essex

- New Baby Massage Programme
- Online Wellbeing Groups
- Accessing Support

New Baby Massage Programme

We're delighted to be expanding our Baby Massage programme into Harlow, led by a qualified International Association of Infant Massage (IAIM) practitioner. The sessions help parents strengthen bonds with their babies, build confidence, and meet other local families.

We're also delivering new online **Wellbeing Groups** funded by Harlow Health Centres Trust. Sessions cover topics including anxiety, self-esteem, and communication, helping parents improve their wellbeing while building supportive connections with others. Groups will continue every half-term through to March 2027.

Parent Feedback - Baby Massage

"It was amazing! It was a great bonding experience for me and my daughter. Jo was such a fab teacher, so knowledgeable and made us all feel so relaxed and comfortable."

How to access support

If you or a family you know could benefit from Home-Start Essex support, we'd love to hear from you.

🌐 Complete Self or Professional Referral form online

☎ Call us: 01245 847410

✉ Email: info@home-startessex.org.uk





Volunteer Spotlight

Meet Heidi

Role: Family Support

Volunteer & Group Volunteer

Area: South Essex

About Heidi -

Heidi is a valued Home-Start Essex volunteer who supports a family through telephone befriending while also volunteering at our Brentwood Fitness & Fun and Rayleigh Mothers in Mind groups. Her warmth, kindness and commitment help families feel welcomed, supported, and connected.

Heidi regularly goes above and beyond for the families she works with. She creates handmade keepsakes for parents and children attending group sessions and recently donated a pram to a family facing financial difficulties, providing practical support when it was needed most.

How Heidi is Making a Difference

- Supports families through telephone befriending.
- Volunteers across two Home-Start Essex support groups.
- Creates handmade gifts and keepsakes for families.
- Helps families build confidence, connections, and positive memories.

Why I Volunteer

"I love my Home-Start volunteering. I have a purpose now and my health isn't seen as a problem".

Staff Nomination

"Heidi consistently brings compassion and positivity to everything she does. Whether supporting a family or helping at a group session, her dedication helps parents feel supported and less alone. She truly embodies Home-Start's values and makes a lasting difference."

Thank You, Heidi!

Our volunteers are at the heart of Home-Start Essex. We are incredibly grateful for Heidi's dedication, generosity, and commitment to helping families across Essex thrive.

Volunteer Recruitment

Are you Inspired by Heidi's volunteer journey?

We're always looking for volunteers across Essex. Find out more at:

www.home-startessex.org.uk/volunteer



CORPORATE SPOTLIGHT

Strong partnerships and sustainable funding are vital to helping us reach more families and create lasting change. We're delighted to share news of recent funding support and exciting collaborations that are helping us strengthen and expand our work across Essex. Read more below...

Thank You to Garfield Weston

Funding Core Family Support Services across Essex

We are delighted to have received funding from the Garfield Weston Foundation, providing vital support for our work with families across Essex. This funding enables us to strengthen our core services and continue supporting families facing challenges including poor mental health, isolation, financial hardship, housing insecurity and additional needs in early childhood. The funding gives us the flexibility to respond to individual family needs, build trusted relationships and maintain high-quality support where it is needed most. It also helps us invest in our workforce and volunteers, ensuring children and families receive the support they need to thrive. We are grateful for the Garfield Weston Foundation's investment in helping us create brighter futures for children and families across Essex.



Garfield Weston
FOUNDATION



Partnership Spotlight

Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust,
Broomfield Hospital Information Hub.

Following an invitation from Patti Travella, Project Manager at Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust, Home-Start Essex joined the Information Hub at Broomfield Hospital. Located in the hospital foyer, the Hub provides advice, information and signposting services for patients, families, and staff. Thanks to volunteer Debbie Kemp, Home-Start Essex is now represented at the Hub on a monthly basis.

Why It Matters

- Reaching more local families at an early stage.
- Strengthening partnerships with health professionals.
- Raising awareness of support and volunteering opportunities.

Helping families access the right services through referral and signposting pathways.

Work with Us

Could your organisation help us reach more families across Essex?

At Home-Start Essex, strong partnerships enable us to provide vital early help services for families experiencing challenges including poor mental health, isolation, financial pressures, and additional needs. We are always keen to build new relationships with businesses, community organisations and professional networks that share our commitment to improving outcomes for children and families.

Recent partnerships with organisations including, Beach School Explorers and Essex Bird Aware demonstrate how collaboration can increase community impact, raise awareness, and improve access to support.

Opportunities Include

- Charity of the Year partnerships
- Corporate sponsorship
- Payroll Giving
- Team fundraising challenges
- Employee volunteering
- Community event partnerships

Current Opportunity

We are particularly interested in developing new partnerships to support family wellbeing, volunteering, fundraising, and community engagement across Mid, South and West Essex. We welcome conversations with businesses and organisations looking to make a meaningful difference in their local communities.

Contact: Melissa Reynolds – Events & Partnerships Manager

melissa.reynolds@home-startessex.org.uk



Fundraising & Community News

Connecting with communities across Essex

This quarter we've been building partnerships, raising awareness, and connecting more families to support through collaboration with local organisations, health partners and community champions.

Pictured: Jackie Creak, Comms, Marketing & Events, Home-Start Essex, with Colin Pegler, MD of Vaycay Holidays

Community Supporter

Celebrating local support in Witham

VayCay Holidays – Supporting local families

We are delighted to recognise VayCay Holidays for their fantastic ongoing support of Home-Start Essex in the Braintree district.

The team have organised a large Christmas gift drive and an Easter egg collection, helping local children and families enjoy special moments at key times of the year. They have also invited Home-Start Essex to their regular networking events, enabling us to raise awareness, connect with local businesses and strengthen relationships across the community. We are very grateful for their continued support and commitment to families in Witham.

Community Highlights This Quarter

Established – Monthly presence at Broomfield Hospital Information Hub

Strengthened – Partnership with Mid & South Essex NHS Foundation Trust

Increased – Awareness of Home-Start Essex Services and volunteering opportunities

Expanded – Community referral and signposting pathways for families

HSE Contact Details

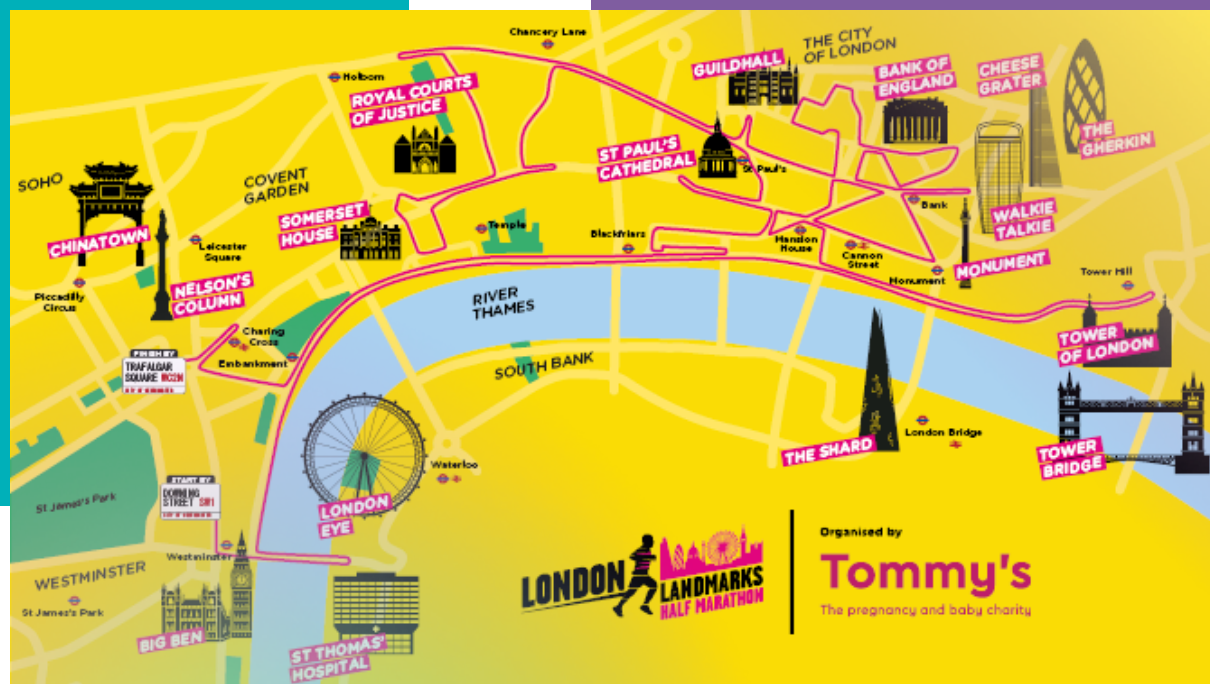
To learn more about our services, funding opportunities, partnerships, or community engagement activities, please contact the Home-Start Essex team using the details below.

www.home-startessex.org.uk

info@home-startessex.org.uk

Phone – 01245 847410

Events & Fundraising



London Landmarks Half Marathon 2027

Be part of the event's 10th anniversary edition

Home-Start Essex has secured five charity places for the London Landmarks Half Marathon 2027, taking place on Sunday 4 April 2027. Participants will take on a 13.1-mile closed-road route through central London while raising vital funds to support local children and families across Essex. Places for this iconic event are highly sought after, making this a fantastic opportunity to experience the capital and support a great cause.

Whether you are an experienced runner or looking for a new challenge, we would love you to join Team Home-Start Essex and fly the flag for local families in 2027.

Interested? Apply for a charity place at: tinyurl.com/londonlandmarksh2027applynow



Home-Start Essex Online Auction

If you're new to our online auction, we regularly work with local businesses and supporters who generously donate prizes and experiences to help us raise vital funds for our work with local families. Every pound raised through the auction helps us continue providing support to families with young children across Essex.

Our latest prize is 10 x 35-minute sessions at Studio35 in Ingatestone - a great opportunity to do something for yourself while supporting a local charity.

Bidding is now open: [Click here to enter](#)