

Home-Start Mid & West Suffolk: Report for the Worlingworth Annual Parish Meeting
Wednesday 18th April 2018

Home-Start is a family support charity and we have been holding our Monday morning play sessions here at Worlingworth community centre for the last six years. We are a drop-in session open to any families who would like to attend. We have Mums, Dads, Grandparents, childminders - all attending with their children. During term time the children are 0-5 years old but in the school holidays we welcome older brothers and sisters too. We have a mixture of families who live here in the village and families who travel in from the outlying areas.

What do we do? Well we give families a place to come together so that both the adults and children can socialise. We set out a range of play and learning activities which vary each week with a theme. The children have fun and learn at the same time. We have an area for the babies and we love to get outdoors and use the wonderful playing field and play equipment. We usually have a craft or a cooking activity during the morning, messy play, lots of running around and physical play as well as a chance for both adults and children to share in our snacktime. The children who come are also learning important social skills which will be important as they grow and start school or nursery.

Highlights from the last 12 months include:

- Funding from the Co-Op green token scheme that allowed us to purchase new baby equipment, a den and musical instruments.
- Drama sessions with UnitTwentyThree who have funding through the DissFest to work with community groups and we look forward to being involved with the festival in the summer.
- Seasonal visits to Charlottes wood at Wilby for family forest school sessions, two of our visits were kindly funded by the parish council
- A summer picnic and den building at Thornham walks in the school holidays and other weekly summer play sessions here at the community centre.
- A Christmas party and visit from Father Christmas and his elf with gifts of books kindly donated by Christchurch in Ipswich.
- Book giveaways for both children and adults to encourage a love of reading!
- We have recently ran a three week workshop here at Worlingworth for parents and babies under 1 to learn more about play specifically for babies using treasure baskets. This is part of our birth and beyond project which has seen Home-Start Mid and West Suffolk venturing into working in partnership with schools and early years settings to offer short courses for parents and children focused on play and getting children ready to start school. We have links with Thorndon and Worlingworth Primary schools and others in the area to do more of these workshops.
- As a group we have been able to visit the primary school on a number of occasions this year so that the children who attend our playgroup can experience a taster of school and so it won't be such a big step when they are old enough to start themselves. Also, parents can meet staff and see what happens in the school which is reassuring for the parents
- This year saw our Home-Start scheme open a charity shop in Eye, we are delighted with the response and the regular income it generates is important to ensure our ongoing ability to support local families.

- We have been able to start a weekly library session at Stradbroke library on Tuesday mornings which is called Jumping Beans and is attended by families from our Worlingworth group as well as other families living in Stradbroke. It is focused on introducing children to stories, rhymes and singing. This is so important for children's language development.

In addition to our weekly groups we can also offer local families a home visiting volunteer. We

work on a model of parents supporting parents. We train local parents who then visit another family weekly and give them support during a difficult time. This support has set aims and usually lasts for around 6 months. We are always pleased to hear from anyone who would like to volunteer with us, free training and on-going support is offered. Families who think they would like to be home visited can contact us direct or talk to staff at our groups.

We can also refer local families to the foodbank and furniture bank as well as signposting to other agencies for support e.g. citizens advice or the children's centre.

It is always good to say thank you so a special thank you to Jean Richardson and Meave Wigley who are Home-Start volunteers and help every week to run the play session. We couldn't run the group without them. Also thank you to Rosemary and the other hall volunteers, this hall is a wonderful resource and we enjoy our Monday mornings here very much and appreciate all the ongoing work that is being done to make the hall so comfortable.

Julie Sullivan

Group Co-Ordinator

Home-Start Mid and West Suffolk can be found on Facebook or contact our office on 01379 678552 for more information.