

**Home  
START**

Support and friendship  
for families

## **The Impact of Volunteering on Volunteers:**

Home-Start's volunteer impact  
management system [VIMS]

London pilot study



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## Foreword

I am proud to be chief executive of Home-Start UK for many reasons, and one of the most important is the charity's commitment to volunteering. Home-Start is a shining example of an organisation where not only do volunteers do the work, but in many ways the fact they are volunteers is what makes the services we provide so effective. For more than 40 years, Home-Start has been working with volunteers to offer parents the support they need to give their children the best start in life. At the heart of our service is the offer of support and guidance from one parent to another – a deceptively simple but incredibly powerful approach through which we have made a lifetime of difference to more than one million children in the UK.

In 2014, Home-Start helped 30,000 families and 63,000 children. To do so, more than 15,000 volunteers gave over a million hours of their time to support other parents struggling with often overwhelming pressures and difficulties.

In 2011, with funding from the City Bridge Trust, the City of London Corporation's charity, we set out to find out more about the volunteers who are such an essential part of everything we do. In this report, we learn about these volunteers and the tangible benefits of volunteering with Home-Start for their lives and the communities in which they live. As the report shows, volunteering for Home-Start is good for the people who do it, boosting not only their health and wellbeing, confidence and self esteem, but building their skills and offering those who want it a route into employment.

The report also shows the crucial part that volunteering can play in building cohesive communities based on shared experiences, values and social relationships. It is particularly pleasing to note the range of skills and personal experiences volunteers bring to their role and how adverse personal experiences can be used to such positive benefit. For a small but important number, volunteering is a direct and very practical way to give back to the service and community that helped them.

The report has been able to add some important perspectives to the subject of volunteer impact. We hope that it will be useful for all of those involved in harnessing the talents and energy of volunteers to help transform the lives of vulnerable families. At Home-Start we will continue to work with our network to further develop our volunteering expertise and build on the recommendations in this report. Our priorities will be to use the findings to show the real economic value of volunteering on our services; to call for local impediments to volunteering whilst claiming benefits to be removed and to seek wider acknowledgement of the role the voluntary sector plays in enabling volunteers to be work ready.

As we look to the future, we will do more to tell the full story of the value of Home-Start services to society. This report is an important part of that story and a powerful testament to the way in which volunteering can deliver long lasting impact for families, for communities, and for the volunteers who do so much to make our service great.

**Rob Parkinson, Chief Executive, Home-Start UK**

## **Headline findings**

**Home-Start recorded the information of 108 volunteers, working across London, over two years, from the start of their training through to their supervised work with families. The results showed that:**

- Volunteering as a home visiting family support volunteer has a positive impact for volunteers as well as for the direct beneficiaries – the families.
- There was improvement in the volunteers' personal development; skills development; health and well being; inclusion in social networks and local communities; and their engagement with the labour market
- While the main motivational driver was altruistic, volunteering as a route into work was also important
- Volunteers significantly improved their work ready skills
- Volunteers' personal experiences were highly relevant for a family support volunteering role.
  - Early findings suggest that people who have learnt from adverse parenting experiences themselves have better current self reported parenting skills
  - Relevant personal experiences, e.g. having experienced post natal depression, improved the volunteers skill set
- The evaluation of the training identified that volunteers were:
  - More aware of diversity and inclusion issues
  - More prepared for work place opportunities
  - More self confident

**Our recommendations.**

**As a result of the findings of this study, Home-Start is making eight policy recommendations. They are:**

1. A new method of calculating the true economic value of a volunteer's skill and experience must be developed; simply using the minimum wage undervalues what volunteers bring to their work.
2. Voluntary organisations should be given the resources to allow them to fulfil a unique role in enabling volunteers to be work ready and supporting them to find employment in specific sectors, such as social support. This must also be recognised as different from the wider work ready programmes.
3. There must be a commitment to longer term volunteering which allows people to mix both paid and non-paid work; to help them manage their volunteering around their modern, more fluid work patterns.
4. The government must ensure its national policy recognising the benefits of volunteering while job hunting is being implemented locally so that local agencies do not punish or discourage those claiming benefits from volunteering.
5. Further research should be carried out into what is the most effective skill and motivational profile for volunteers who provide semi-formal family support; to help voluntary organisations to recruit the right volunteers for the right role.
6. The preparation and support given to volunteers develops their ability to engage families. These interpersonal and relational skills enable volunteers to build trust across diverse communities and should be recognised in the development and measurement of volunteer programmes.
7. Volunteer management should be recognised as having a key role in building new public services and developing local communities.
8. The improvements in mental health for volunteers should be recognised as a valuable contribution to wider preventative mental health programmes.

## Executive Summary

### **The project**

The Volunteer Impact Management System (VIMS) pilot project was a two year project working in London, predominantly with six local Home-Starts. Its aims were;

- To pilot a system for evaluating the impact volunteering has on volunteers
- To develop supporting materials and training.

The project produced:

- Two training modules
  - *Working with Volunteers: Interviewing, Matching, Motivating and Retaining them*
  - *Supervising Volunteers*
- Practice guidance on the following aspects of volunteer management
  - Recruitment and training of volunteers
  - Retention of volunteers

This report focuses on the pilot of the VIMS system for evaluating the impact volunteering has on volunteers.

### **Evaluation of the VIMS system**

The outcomes for the evaluation of the volunteers' journey of change were:

- *To understanding how volunteering experiences benefit the individual*
- *To understand the social impact of using home-visiting volunteers to deliver a service for local communities.*

The Volunteer Impact Management System [VIMS] charts the journey of change volunteers undergo when providing home-based support to vulnerable families.

The data are generated from recording information from volunteers at recruitment and during training and ongoing supervision on five domains: personal development; skills development; health and well being; inclusion in social networks and community; and engagement with the labour market. VIMS also records the profile of the volunteers.

***Overall - Volunteering as a home visiting family support volunteer has a positive impact for volunteers as well as for the direct beneficiaries - the families.***

***Profile of the volunteers - The volunteers had diverse backgrounds with varied engagement with the employment market.***

The majority of the 108 volunteers whose data are reported were female 106 (98%); seven (7%) had a disability; 85 (76%) of the volunteers described themselves as a British citizen with the right to residence in the UK. Six (6%) of the volunteers were

working full time while applying to become a volunteer. 30% lived in social or temporary housing which is used as a proxy indicator for lower social economic status. The employment status of the volunteers was mixed, 24 (22%) worked part time and 27 (25%) of the volunteers were seeking new employment opportunities with only six (6%) being retired.

***The volunteers' journey of change - There was improvement in the volunteers' personal development; skills development; health and well being; inclusion in social networks community; and engagement with the labour market***

The greatest journey of change was in the volunteers' self-confidence, the mean score at the start of training was 2.90 and increased significantly to 4.50. There was found to be a significant change over time in the volunteers' sense of usefulness, awareness of others, confidence in own identity and looking forward in life.

The measures of both physical and mental health for the volunteers improved during their time volunteering. The volunteer's physical health was scored lower at the start of training and improved over time. However, the greater change was in the volunteer's mental health with a change in mean score of 1.28.

### **Motivations, skills and abilities and personal experiences**

***While the main motivational driver was altruistic, volunteering as a route into work was also important.***

***Volunteers significantly improved their work ready skills***

***Volunteers' personal experiences were highly relevant for a family support volunteering role***

The main motivational drivers to volunteer were altruistic – 73 (68%) 'giving something back', 72 (67%) wanting to work with children and families. Obtaining skills related to employment was also a motivational driver.

There was a statistically significant change in the ability and skills of the volunteers over time. The greatest difference in change over time was in their ability to communicate with others, job related skills and problem solving skills.

As well as abilities and skills people also brought their own personal experiences to the role of volunteering and the range of personal experiences corresponded with the experiences of the families Home-Start support. The sub-group of volunteers who themselves had suffered postnatal depression previously reported higher parenting skills at the start of VIMS and these skills improved over the time of the project.

## **From receiving family support to volunteering to support families**

***Early findings suggest that parenting skills are better for people who have learnt from adverse parenting experiences***

Seven (6%) of the volunteers gave as their reason for volunteering that they had received Home-Start support themselves previously. These volunteers reported higher scores for their parenting skills than the volunteers who had not received Home-Start support prior to becoming a volunteer.

This reflects existing research that suggests that adults who have developed a coherent perspective and understanding of their own negative early attachment relationships do not re-enact those poor parenting practices with their own children (Pearson et al 1994). They are said to have developed earned security.

## **Volunteering as a route to work**

***Home-Start is providing training and skills to support volunteers to become work ready***

Volunteers scored themselves higher at the end of 12 months than at the beginning of the preparation course for all of the following:

- participation in community/social events
- support and information networks
- activity in seeking employment (if relevant)
- activity in seeking other volunteering roles (if relevant) and
- activity in seeking further training or qualifications (if relevant)

The volunteers who were in work also developed new or enhanced skills.

Those volunteers who had expressed a motivation to seek work had consistently higher work skills over the four points in time than those not motivated to seek work.



## **Introduction**

This study is part of the evaluation of the Volunteer Impact Management System [VIMS]. The outcomes for this evaluation were:

- *To understanding how volunteering experiences benefit the individual*
- *To understand the social impact of using home-visiting volunteers to deliver a service for local communities.*

This paper reviews the evidence on the impact of volunteering for the volunteers themselves. Data provided from a pilot study of the Volunteer Impact Management System [VIMS] which charts the journey of change volunteers undertake when providing home-based support to vulnerable families in London will be reported. These data are generated from recording information from volunteers at recruitment and during training and ongoing supervision. Some of the associations between the motivations to volunteer and the development of the personal development and skills acquisition for the volunteers will be presented.

There is a growing body of evidence which suggests that the act of volunteering has a positive impact for volunteers as well as for the direct beneficiaries. Social care provided on a regular one-to-one basis by volunteers now provides a significant contribution to the delivery of public services (Blackmore, 2005; RNID, 2004; House of Commons, 2006). The effectiveness of the role volunteers play in the delivery of these key support services can be better understood by exploring the different experiences and motivations volunteers bring to family support and the impact this has on their own development.

Volunteering is described in the Manifesto for Change, Report on the Commission on the Future of Volunteering (2008) as: *'[Volunteering is] an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than (or in addition to) close relatives.'*

Home-Start has over 40 years experience matching trained volunteers to families with various, and often quite complex needs. This type of volunteering requires a high level of commitment, training, support and supervision and so can be categorised as 'formal volunteering'. Formal volunteering refers to unpaid work that benefits others to whom one owes no obligation (Gottlieb and Gillespie 2008) via an organisation that supports volunteering in health and social care (Egerton and Mullen 2008).

This is therefore distinct from the informal volunteering activities, for instance unpaid caring for those who are not relatives, but which takes place as private interactions in society (Egerton and Mullen 2008). While this ethos and model of formal voluntarism in Home-Start has remained, the wider policy arena, public attitudes, family structures and economic pressures have changed over the last 40 years. In particular, the incorporation of volunteering into employment policies has been a potentially influential development.

## **Background**

Rates of volunteering in England are high compared with other countries and relatively stable. Figures from the Community Life Survey show that in 2012-13 44% of adults volunteered formally (through a group, club or organisation) at least once a year and 29% did so at least once a month, increasing from 2010-11 when the figures were 39% and 25% respectively (according to the 2010-11 Citizenship Survey). NCVO report that: "rates of volunteering have remained remarkably stable, ranging from 39% at its lowest to 44% at its highest [formal volunteering once a year] (<http://www.ncvo.org.uk/policy-and-research/volunteering-policy/what-research-tells-us>).

There are a range of activities and types of volunteering included within these figures which require different levels of commitment and skill and differences by age, gender, ethnicity and socio-economic characteristics within the overall participation trends (Drever 2010).

These differences were summarised by Mundle et al (2012): "*Broadly, women were more likely to engage in all forms of volunteering compared with men; participation was higher for white groups compared to minority ethnic groups; younger people were less likely than older people to participate in regular volunteering but more likely to engage in irregular volunteering; those educated to degree level were more likely to be formal volunteers; volunteering was more common in the south of the country, with the exception of London which has the lowest rate of volunteering*" p6. An internal survey on volunteering in Home-Start- *Armbands in deep water* (Crispin et al 2005) found that of 1,000 volunteers surveyed 62% were over 46 years old and 95% of the volunteers were female.

Volunteer surveys provide limited insight into the experiences and meaning which volunteering has for individuals. With some notable exception (Thomas & Finch 1990, Baines et al 2008) there have been few qualitative studies which have explored the motives and meaning of volunteering from the perspective of volunteers. A number of studies have looked at the impact of volunteering on subjective and objective well being. Positive effects have been found for life satisfaction, self esteem, self rated health and for educational and occupational achievement, functional ability and mortality (Wilson 2000). The reported positive effects of volunteering for mental health have tended to be age related with older volunteers reporting more positive benefits (Van Willigen 2000).

Theories seeking to explain the motivations to volunteer tend to focus on three aspects:

1. personal experiences and motivations of the individual who volunteers
2. properties of the volunteering relationship with the beneficiary
3. community context.

## **Personal experiences and motivations of the individual who volunteers**

The motivation[s] to volunteer has been the focus of several studies (Knapp *et al.*, 1995; Dolnicar and Randle, 2007; Konrath *et al* 2007). The overall conclusions from these studies are that people volunteer for a mixture of altruistic and self interested reasons. Six aspects of motivation to volunteer have been identified by Clary *et al* (1998) [values; understanding; social; career; protective and enhancement], and these have been incorporated into an instrument designed to assess these functions (Volunteer Functions Inventory; VFI). [http://www.comm.umn.edu/~akoerner/courses/5431-S13/Clary%20et%20al.%20\(1998\).pdf](http://www.comm.umn.edu/~akoerner/courses/5431-S13/Clary%20et%20al.%20(1998).pdf).

The results from the administration of this instrument indicated that volunteers who received benefits relevant to their primary motivations were not only satisfied with their volunteer organization but also intended to continue to volunteer in both the short- and long-term future. Understanding the link between volunteer motivations and the retention of volunteers is important in managing volunteers cost effectively (Brodie *et al* 2011).

A number of studies considered the volunteering activities of those who may also be active service users themselves. These included people with mild to moderate dementia (George and Singer 2011), and mental health problems (Farrell and Bryant 2009). Other research has indicated that overall, disabled people are slightly less likely than the general population to volunteer (McMillan 2010).

McCudden (2000) reported that Home-Start volunteers are motivated to become Home-Start volunteers as the work is perceived to be close to their own personal experience [volunteers have parenting experience] and they feel they have something to offer whereas in other voluntary organizations the volunteers tend to be interested in the focus of the activities on offer.

It is proposed here that the concept of 'earned security' is relevant to the study of the impact some volunteers can have in family support. Earned security is a classification given to adults who have described difficult early relationships with their parents, but who also had current secure models of relating. Research suggests that adults who have developed a coherent perspective on their negative, early attachment relationships i.e. those who have earned security, do not re-enact poor parenting practices with their own children.

This study extends this to look at the relationship between volunteer previous experiences and their own personal development as volunteers by tracking the sub group of volunteers who had themselves received Home-Start support before becoming volunteers.

### **Properties of the volunteering relationship with the beneficiary**

Neuberger states that: *“something strange and wonderful is going on in the world of volunteering. It is this very elusiveness, the power of volunteering to act upon people in mysterious ways, that makes it so powerful an intervention - for those who volunteer, those who are helped by volunteers and the community generally that benefits from the contribution of volunteers”* (2007). This statement suggests that the act of giving time through volunteering affects the relationship which develops between the volunteer and the beneficiary and this in turn has an impact on the effectiveness of the support offered.

An independent impact report carried out for Home-Start Leeds stated that: *“developing and maintaining a trusting relationship with someone who has not simply been allocated to them; who has no professional title or uniform; and who has no agenda to pursue other than that which has been agreed with the family, is what works for them. It is this voluntary relationship in which they [the family] will invest to help them make significant changes in their lives”*. This attention to the nature of giving time voluntarily to develop a trusting relationship was further endorsed by a volunteer interviewed for Home-Start Kirklees: *“I think on both sides you get a lot from giving but you also get a lot from someone giving you their time”*.

A relationship between a professional and a member of the public is framed by protocol and an imbalanced power dynamic. A relationship between a volunteer who freely gives of their time as a gift and a member of the public has to be developed by establishing trust. Shapiro (1987) recognises the work undertaken to manage the development of trust in informal relationships. This element of trust is particularly important within a society which seems to be far less trusting of the more established institutions that provide support (O’Neill 2002).

An example of this is the recent recognition that it is harder to help people than it used to be, partly because of perceived bureaucratic barriers associated with risk management and governance, but fundamentally because of a general failing sense of trust within our society (Neuberger 2008). Programmes which blur the boundaries between time given voluntarily and an obligation to volunteer could have an influence on the development of trust in the relationship. This has been encapsulated in the phrase *‘voluntolds’* whereby there is seen to be some obligation to take up a voluntary role.

### **The community context**

Volunteering has a long tradition in community development and civic society. More recently there is recognition of the role volunteering has in addressing social exclusion and community workforce development. Increasingly volunteering is seen as a mechanism for addressing social cohesion and more specifically worklessness by helping to connect (or reconnect) individuals to the labour market through opportunities to develop skills, networks and training and qualifications (Cuskelly,

et al 2006; Holmes 2009; Russell, 2005). In this way volunteering becomes aligned with welfare to work policies (Baines and Hardill 2008). Exit interviews for Home-Start volunteers and previous external evaluations indicate they use the skills gained from training and working with Home-Start to gain further paid employment. Volunteers perceived that service with Home-Start offered a breadth of experience relevant to caring professions. In the Dunfermline study (2001) 47% of volunteers moved on to take up paid work and a further 12% went on to another volunteer opportunity. The majority of the respondents opted for work in social care; paid work in the voluntary sector; child care; teaching or paid work with Home-Start. A related aspect of using volunteering as a route into the labour market is the placement of students in volunteering roles as part of their training experience (Sagawa, Connolly, & Chao, 2008).

One of the criticisms of the explicit welfare to work programmes, as opposed to more general volunteering opportunities leading to paid employment, is that welfare to work programmes tend to devalue less marketable activities such as caring and other altruistic drivers such as personal growth in terms of fulfilment, growing self confidence, successful study, new relationships, and a sense of belonging (Hill and Russell 2009). The more traditional motivational drivers to volunteer including mutual aid and philanthropy are still relevant and used by the majority of volunteers to rationalise their volunteering.

This report provides data on the demographic profile of Home-Start volunteers, their personal experiences which they bring to the role and their motivations for volunteering. It also provides an analysis of the change over a 15 month period across five domains: personal development; skills development; health and well being, appreciation of diversity and inclusion and social networks and engagement with community and the labour market.

### **Methods**

The project collected data from volunteers based in six Home-Start schemes across London using questionnaires [see appendix A] at four review stages of their journey with Home-Start:

1. At the beginning of their preparation introduction training course
2. At the end of the preparation course
3. Six months after volunteering to provide home based family support
4. 12 months after volunteering to provide home based family support

The data reported below are from the volunteers who provided information at each of the four review stages. The volunteers were asked to self assess on the following five domains as designated in the following table – see appendix A for questionnaires completed by the volunteers.

**Table 1: Domains and associated indicators for volunteer development**

	<b>Domain</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
1	Personal Development	Self-confidence Sense that I am making a useful contribution Awareness of the effects of my actions on others Willingness to try new things Sense that I have things to look forward to in my life Confidence in my identity & values
2	Skills development	Ability to communicate with others Job related skills e.g. child development Parenting Skills Problem Solving Skills Organisational skills Literacy & numeracy skills Budgeting skills
3	Health and well being	Physical health & well-being Mental health & well-being
4	Diversity and inclusion	Appreciation of other people's cultures Appreciation of other's views / values / attitudes
5	Social networks, community and the engagement with the labour market	Participation in community / social events Support & information network Activity in seeking employment, (if relevant) Activity in seeking other volunteering roles (if relevant) Activity in seeking further training or qualifications (if relevant)

## **Results**

The majority of the 108 volunteers whose data are reported were female 106 (98%); seven (7%) had a disability; 85 (76%) of the volunteers described themselves as a British citizen with the right to residence in the UK. The religious beliefs of the volunteers covered all the major religions. Table 2 below demonstrates the employment status of the volunteers.

**Table 2: Employment status**

	Frequency n(%)
Working full time	6 (6)
Working part time	23 (21)
Seeking work	23 (21)
Retired	6 (6)
Student	8 (7)
Not seeking work	15 (14)
Student + working part time	5 (5)
Student + working full time	3 (3)
Working part time -seeking work	3 (3)
Student + seeking work	1 (1)
Total	93 (86)
Missing data	15 (14)
Total	108 (100)

Six (6%) of the volunteers were working full time while applying to become a volunteer. Whereas there were 24 (22%) working part time and 27 (25%) of the volunteers were seeking new employment opportunities. The table below describes the transport available to the volunteers.

**Table 3: Transport**

	Frequency n (%)
Car owner	28 (26)
Access to Car	3 (3)
On public transport route	43 (40)
Not on public transport route	1 (1)
Car owner and on Public transport route	18 (17)
Access to car and on public transport route	2 (2)
Total	95 (88)
Missing data	13 (12)
Total	108 (100)

As can be seen from the table above 46 (43%) of the volunteers were car owners. There are 0.76 cars per household in London compared with 1.21 cars per household in the rest of Britain. There is a declining trend for car ownership in London and an increasing trend in the rest of Britain (<https://londontransportdata.wordpress.com/category/subject/car-ownership/>).

Table 3 below provides information on housing and it can be seen that 53 (49%) of the volunteers were known to be in rented, social or temporary housing.

**Table 4: Housing**

	Frequency n(%)
Privately owned	41 (38)
Private Rental	25 (23)
Social Housing	26 (24)
Temporary Housing	2 (2)
Total	94 (87)
Missing data	14 (13)
Total	108 (100)

This section of results presents data about how people engage with Home-Start, what experiences they bring and what motivations they have for volunteering.



### Routes to recruitment

The table (5) below illustrates how the volunteers were recruited to Home-Start. The most frequent of these was through word of mouth 26 (24%).

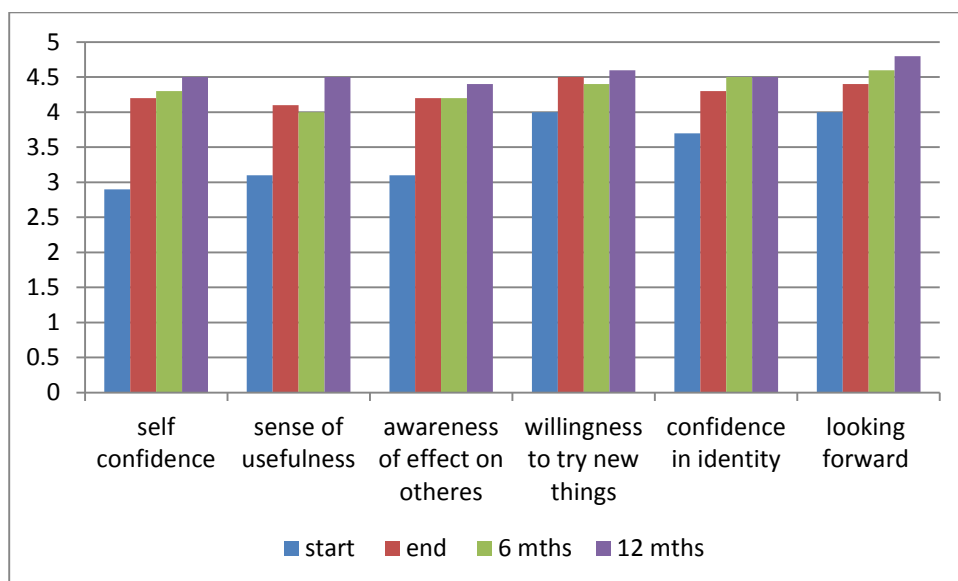
**Table 5: Routes of recruitment**

	Frequency n (%)
Word of mouth/volunteer/friend	19 (18)
School information	11 (10)
Leaflet drop/newsletter	10 (9)
Newspaper	10 (9)
Internet	9 (8)
Internet and word of mouth	7 (7)
Received HS support	6 (6)
Previous HS experience	2 (2)
Local voluntary organizations	4 (4)
Health visitor/Children Centres/NHS	4 (4)
Presentation at local groups	4 (4)
Fundraising event/open day	3 (3)
Student placement	3 (3)
Local radio	2 (2)
Job centre	1 (1)
Missing	13 (12)
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>

### Changes for volunteers while volunteering

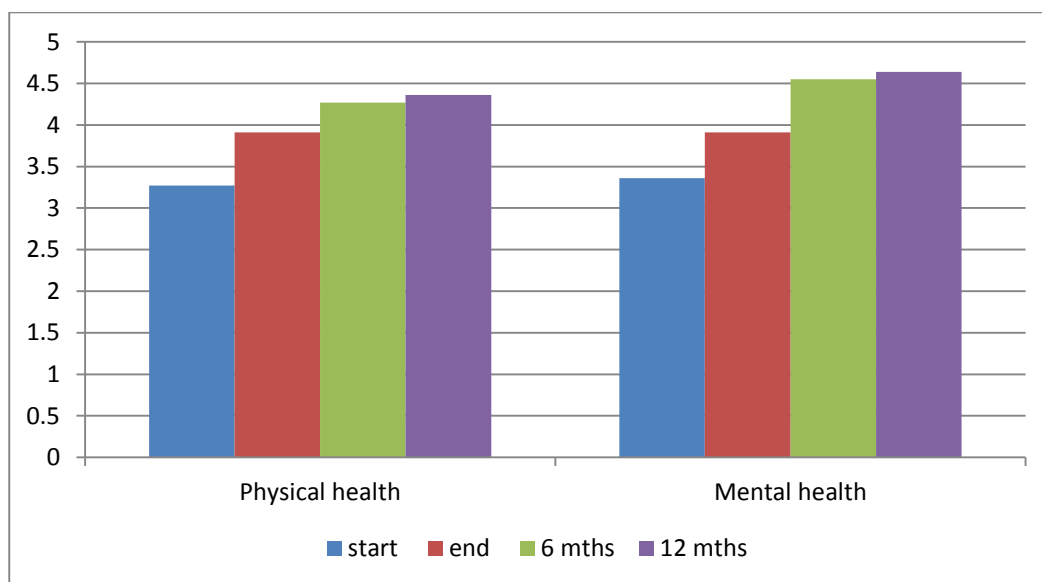
The bar charts below illustrate the journey of change which the volunteers experienced measured at four points: from before they undertook their preparation course; at the end of their preparation course; six months after completing their preparation course and 12 months after completing their preparation course across five domains. The greatest journey of change was in the volunteers self-confidence the mean score at the start of training was 2.90 and increased significantly to 4.50 ( $p < 0.001$ ). There was found to be a significant change over time in the volunteers sense of usefulness ( $p < 0.002$ ), awareness of others ( $p < 0.001$ ), confidence in own identity ( $p < 0.001$ ) and looking forward in life ( $p = 0.029$ ).

**Figure 1: Personal development**



The measures of both physical and mental health for the volunteers improved during their time volunteering. The volunteer’s physical health was scored lower at the start of training and improved over time ( $p < 0.005$ ). However, the greatest change was in the volunteer’s mental health with a change in mean score of 1.28 ( $p < 0.001$ ).

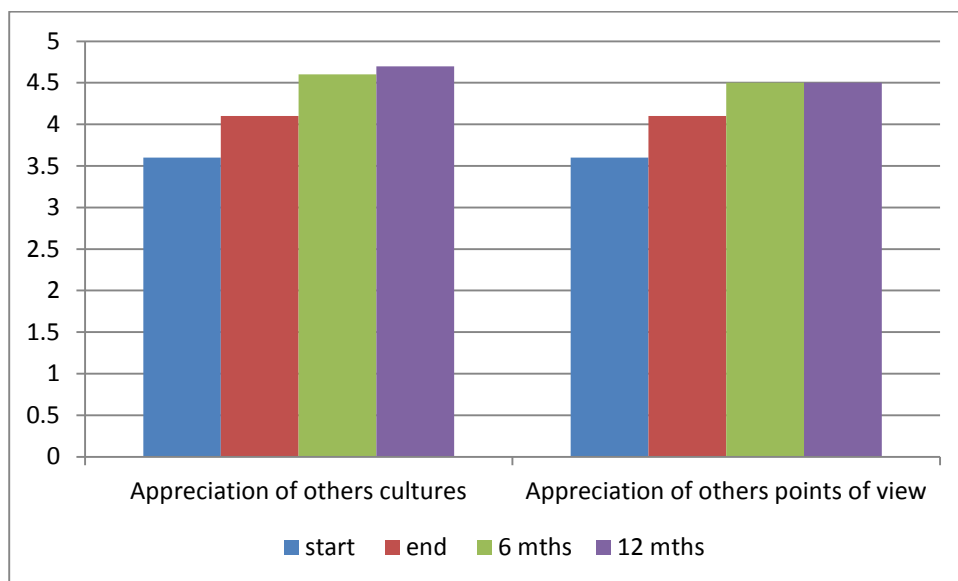
**Figure 2: Physical and mental health**



Of particular interest is the journey volunteers take on their appreciation of other peoples’ cultures and views and attitudes. Although the mean score of the volunteers at the start of their training was high at 3.6 they made a significant journey of change over time in their appreciation of cultures ( $p < 0.001$ ) and their

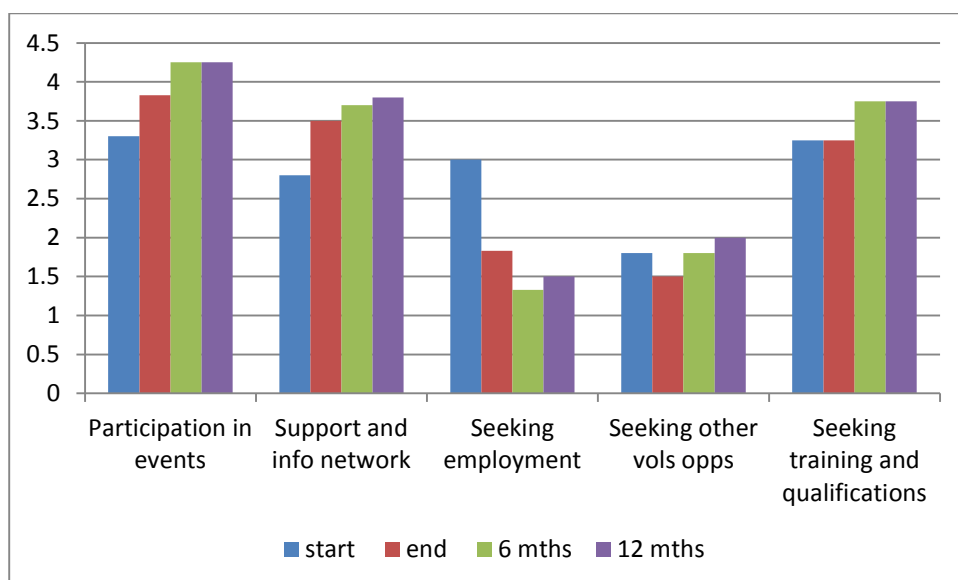
views and attitudes ( $p < 0.001$ ). The bar chart below illustrates the community engagement role volunteers are trained to play when working for Home-Start.

**Figure 3: Attitudes and values**



It is notable that on all indicators the volunteers scored themselves higher at the end of 12 months than at the beginning of the preparation course. This was especially for participation in events which demonstrated a significant change over time ( $p < 0.003$ ) and support and information networking ( $p = 0.011$ ). The exception to this was in seeking employment, however this is reported by the schemes as being in part as a result of volunteers gaining employment or going on to further training.

**Figure 4: Social networks and engagement with community services and labour market**



### Motivations, skills and abilities and personal experiences

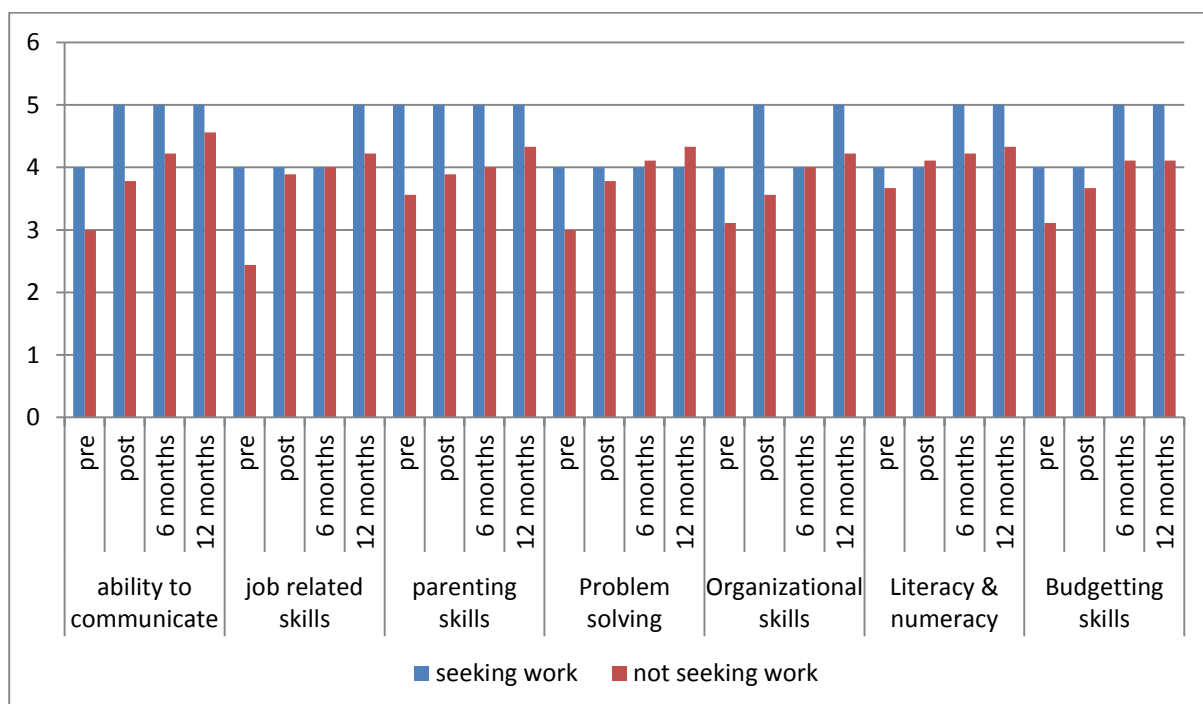
This section provides information on the motivations and personal experiences of the volunteers. The table (6) below summaries the reasons given for volunteering and as can be seen that the main motivational drivers were altruistic – 73 (68%) ‘giving something back’, 72 (67%) wanting to work with children and families. Obtaining skills related to employment was also a motivational driver. It is notable that seven (6%) of the volunteers gave as their reason for volunteering that they had received Home-Start support themselves previously. Other reasons given for volunteering for Home-Start were using previous experience, and a passion for helping.

**Table 6: Motivations for volunteering for Home-Start**

	Frequency n (%)
Giving back something	73 (68%)
Work with children and families	72 (67%)
Involved in the Community	60 (56%)
Training opportunities	49 (45%)
Skills to find employment	38 (35%)
Skills to change employment	20 (19%)
Student placement	12 (11%)
Received Home-Start themselves	7 (6%)

Figure 5 below illustrates the development of work related skills over time for the sub group of volunteers who were motivated to volunteer in order to seek work.

**Figure 5: Skills and abilities by motivation to seek work**



This figure 5 shows that all the volunteers improved their work ready skills. Those volunteers who had expressed a motivation to seek work had consistently higher work skills over the four points in time than those not motivated to seeking work. Those not seeking work made more improvements in their work related skills. It is noted that there were a number of volunteers who left Home-Start to take up employment.

The figure 6 below illustrates the improvement in self confidence of the volunteers depending on their employment status. The greatest change were for those working part time mean score changed from 2.50 to 4.50,

**Figure 6: Employment status by development of self confidence**

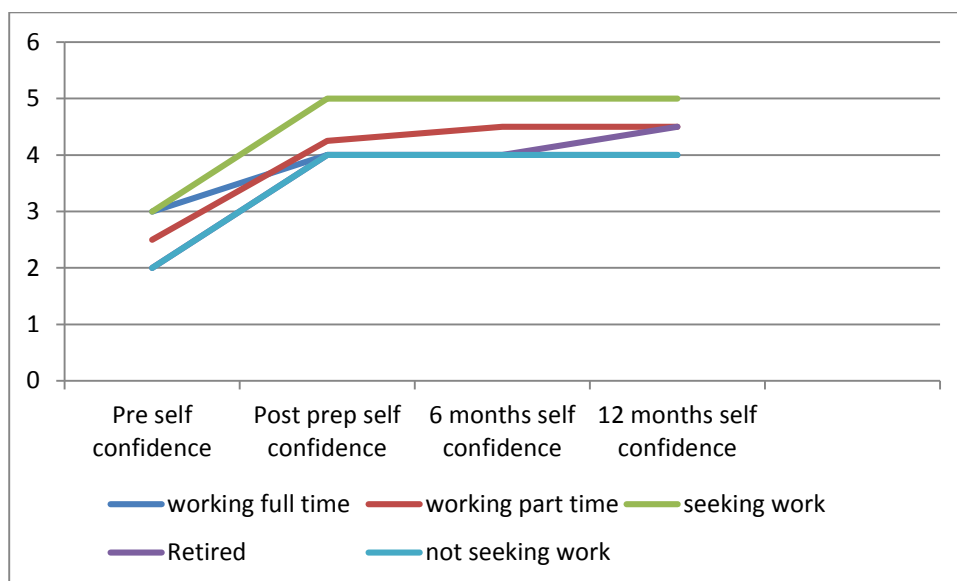


Figure 6 above illustrates the improvement in self confidence for the volunteers who stated that a motivational driver for them to volunteer was to be involved in the community compared with the improvement in self confidence of those volunteers who did not give as a reason for volunteering to be involved in the community. The improvement in the self confidence of the volunteers who specifically wanted to be involved in the community was greater than that for the volunteers who did not specify being involved in the community as a motivational driver.

**The skills and abilities brought to the volunteering role**

The skills and abilities which people brought to the volunteering role are described in Table 7 cooking was the most cited skill given by the volunteers on application (73, 68%), followed by listening/counselling (71, 66%).

**Table 7: Skills Volunteers bringing to Home-Start**

Skills	Frequency n (%)
Cooking	73 (68)
Listening/Counselling	71 (66)
Budgeting	46 (42)
Languages & sign	28 (26)
DIY	23 (21)
Committee Work	22(20)
Retailing	21 (19)

The associations between the reasons for volunteering and the skills the volunteers brought to the role when they were recruited were explored. People presented to volunteer with a skill set which varied dependent on their motivations to volunteer.

There were 73 people who volunteered to give something back; of these 73 people, there was a tendency to be more likely to have skills than those that had not volunteered for that reason: 39 (53%) had skills in budgeting and finance ( $\chi^2$  df1,  $p < 0.001$ ); 55 (75%) had cooking skills ( $\chi^2$  df1,  $p = 0.013$ ); 21 (29%) had DIY skills ( $\chi^2$  df1,  $p = 0.006$ ); and 54 (74%) who had listening/counselling skills ( $\chi^2$  df1,  $p = 0.009$ ).

There were also associations found between those volunteering to seek employment with those with skills in languages including sign language 16 (58%) ( $\chi^2$  df1,  $p < 0.003$ ). Of the 38 who were volunteering to develop their skills to find employment 30 (79%) declared they had skills in listening and counselling ( $\chi^2$  df1,  $p = 0.033$ ). Of those seeking to change their current employment 18 (90%) stated they had cooking skills ( $\chi^2$  df1,  $p = 0.018$ ), 17 (85%) and had skills in listening and counselling ( $\chi^2$  df1,  $p = 0.044$ ). Forty nine (45%) of the volunteers stated they wished to take advantage of training opportunities provided by Home-Start. Of these, 24 (49%) had skills in budgeting/finance, 43 (88) had skills in cooking ( $\chi^2$  df1,  $p < 0.001$ ), 39 (80%) in listening and counselling ( $\chi^2$  df1,  $p = 0.006$ ).

### Personal experiences

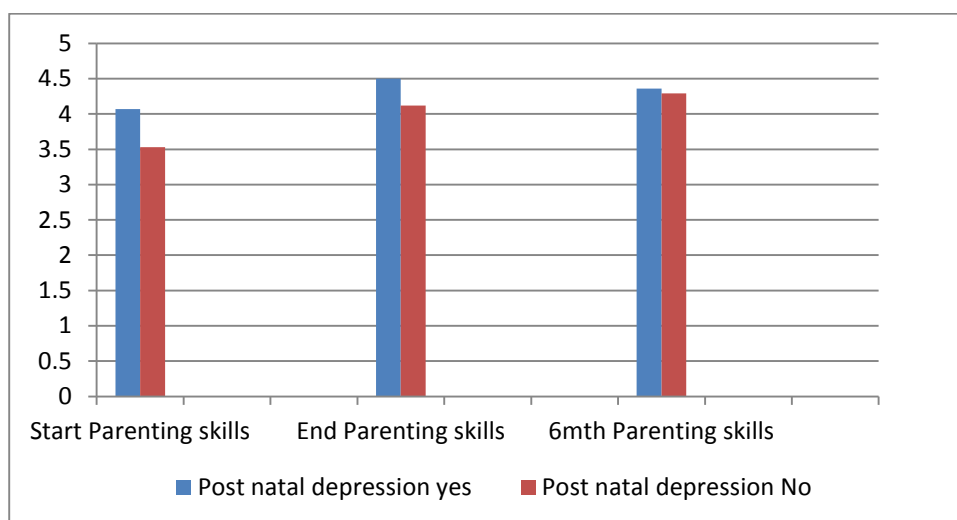
As well as abilities and skills people also bring their own personal experiences to the role of volunteering. Table 8 below illustrates the wide range of these previous experiences. The range of personal experiences corresponds with the experiences of the families Home-Start support.

**Table 8: Personal experiences**

Personal experience	Frequency n (%)
Child care	55 (51)
Counselling	46 (43)
Education	45 (42)
Bereavement	42 (39)
Lone parent	37 (34)
Divorce separation	35 (32)
Post natal depression	29 (27)
Ill health	28 (26)
Housing homelessness	25 (23)
Advocacy	24 (22)
Disability	24 (22)
Domestic violence	24 (22)
Social care	22 (20)
Substance abuse	18 (17)

Comparing those volunteers who had personal experience of post natal depression to those who did not the figure below illustrates the difference in their self reported parenting skills.

**Figure 7: Parenting skills and post natal depression**



The table below (table 9) shows the mean score (Friedman’s mean rank score) of the volunteers assessment of their improvement [journey of change] in their abilities and skills from the start of training with Home-Start until after 12 months of supporting families. In all categories there was a statistically significant change in their abilities as perceived by the volunteers. The lowest mean score (2.60) at the start of training was for job related skills which changed the greatest over time to a mean score of 4.30 ( $p < 0.001$ ). Table 9 also demonstrates that there was a statistically significant change in the ability and skills of the volunteers over time. The greatest difference in change over time was in their ability to communicate with others ( $p < 0.001$ ), job related skills ( $p < 0.001$ ) and problem solving skills ( $p < 0.001$ ).



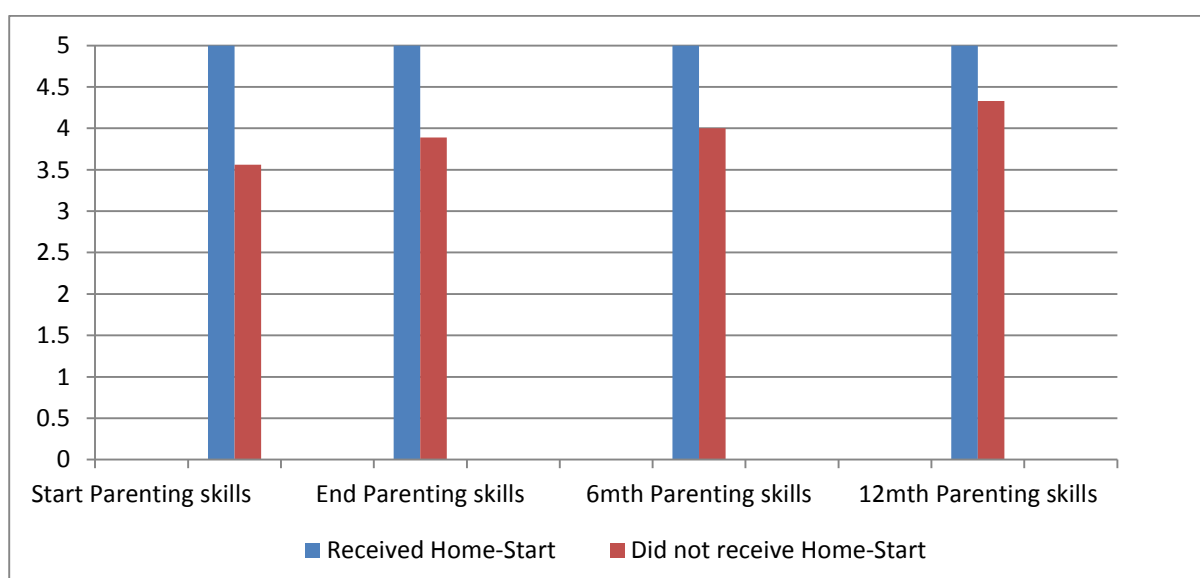
**Table 9: Abilities and skills development**

Ability	Start of training Mean (Rank)	End of training Mean (rank)	6mth Review Mean (Rank)	12mth Review Mean (Rank)	Df	Sig
Ability to communicate with others	3.10 (1.45)	3.90 (2.35)	4.30 (2.90)	4.60 (3.30)	3	p<0.001
Job related skills	2.60 (1.35)	3.90 (2.65)	4.00 (2.75)	4.30 (3.25)	3	p<0.001
Parenting skills	3.70 (2.10)	4.00 (2.35)	4.10 (2.50)	4.40 (3.05)	3	p=0.021
Problem Solving Skills	3.10 (1.60)	3.80 (2.30)	4.10 (2.85)	4.30 (3.25)	3	p<0.001
Organisational skills	3.20 (1.80)	3.70 (2.38)	4.00 (2.70)	4.30 (3.15)	3	p=0.031
Literacy & numeracy skills	3.70 (2.00)	4.10 (2.35)	4.30 (2.75)	4.40 (2.90)	3	p=0.022
Budgeting skills	3.20 (1.85)	3.70 (2.15)	4.20 (3.05)	4.20 (2.95)	3	p=0.012

**Receiving family support prior to becoming a Home-Start volunteer**

Seven volunteers had received Home-Start support before being recruited to be a Home-Start volunteer. The figure below illustrates the parenting skills developed over time for the volunteers who had or had not received Home-Start support before they started to volunteer for Home-Start. Those volunteers who had received Home-Start support themselves reported higher scores for their parenting skills than the volunteers who had not received Home-Start support prior to becoming a volunteer.

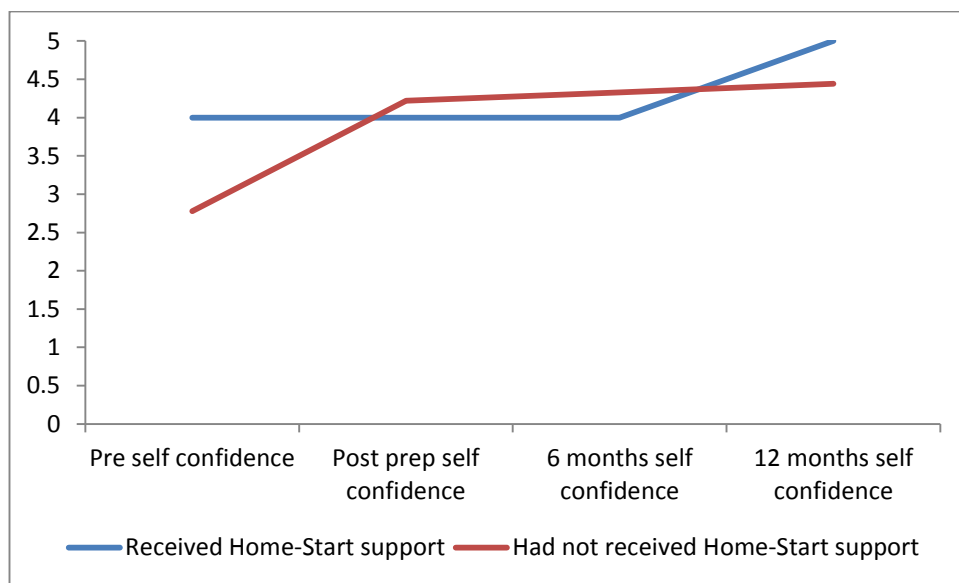
**Figure 8: Receiving family support prior to becoming a Home-Start volunteer and parenting skills**



## Impact of Volunteering on Volunteers

The figure below illustrates the self confidence of these volunteer who had previously received Home-Start support themselves – see blue line compared with the volunteers who had not had contact with Home-Start. The diagram shows that the volunteers at the beginning of the prep course who had not received Home-Start support themselves were less self confident than the volunteers who had experienced Home-Start support.

**Figure 9: Self confidence of volunteers who were in prior receipt of Home-Start support**



The self confidence of the volunteers who had received Home-Start support themselves was higher at the start of the volunteering role and ended higher than self reported confidence of the volunteers who had not previously received Home-Start support.

## Discussion

Previous studies of formal volunteering report that the volunteers were predominantly women, older and highly educated (Egerton and Mullan 2008). The majority of the volunteers in this pilot study were women. However, these data suggest a more diverse range of volunteer characteristics than have been reported in previous studies. The profile of the volunteers showed that 30% were in social or temporary housing which is a proxy indicator for lower social economic status. The employment status of the volunteers was mixed with only six (6%) being retired, suggesting that the age of this sample of volunteers was mainly below 65 years. The sample was recruited from London and may not reflect the wider Home-Start volunteer population across the United Kingdom.

There was a range of ways in which the volunteers in this study were engaging with the labour market. The majority were either in employment, training or actively seeking employment. The combinations of paid full or part time work; unpaid work; seeking work; and in work with additional training, points to a dynamic workforce with people using volunteering to make transitions into and out of the paid labour market. Taylor (2004) states: *a widening of work's conceptual boundaries is crucial if the complexity of people's working lives, and the relationships between different forms of work and between work and social identity, are to be explored and understood* p 4. This fluid, less categorised employment status has implications for volunteer retention and the flexibility of the volunteer offer (Haski-Leventhal & Meijs 2010).

The results show that across all the indicators of development for the volunteers in the five domains: personal development; skills development; health and well being; diversity and inclusion and social networks, community and engagement with the labour market, [with the exception of activity in seeking employment in domain five], there had been an increase from the beginning of the prep course to the end of the prep course and this was sustained over the subsequent 12 months when the volunteers were support families.

The data on changes in volunteers' physical and mental health and social cohesion indicated by changes in appreciation of other peoples' cultures and others' views, values and attitudes provide key preparatory information to develop a measure of the social return available from investing in volunteering in family support.

Further understanding of the personal experiences, skills and abilities which people bring to the role of volunteer could contribute to refining the attribution of monetary value placed on volunteer activity. Currently the input method for calculating the social value of volunteering is based on the wage paid often taken as the minimum wage. This method underestimates the market cost since employers' overheads are not included (Gershuny 2000). It is argued here that the replacement cost approach is not refined enough to reflect the skills and experiences which volunteers bring to the role of one to one support of vulnerable families in their homes.

The reported changes for the indicators between pre and post preparation training course for all volunteers provide a positive evaluation of the volunteer training being offered. The greatest difference in change over time was in volunteers' ability to communicate with others ( $p < 0.001$ ), job related skills ( $p < 0.001$ ) and problem solving skills ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Those volunteers who had expressed a motivation to seek work had consistently higher work skills over the 4 points in time than those not motivated to seeking work –see figure 5. The indicator 'seeking employment' was subject to changes in the external job market and changes in personal circumstances. Eighty five per cent of those seeking employment in the study were specifically motivated to work with families and children.

These data are suggesting that Home-Start is providing training and skills to support volunteers to become work ready in the social support sector and in the case of those 37 who were already in work they were developing new or enhanced skills. Voluntary work is intricately related to the occupational structure, and occupation/economic activity affects the types and amounts of voluntary work undertaken.

Baines and Hardill (2008) point out that people will only be able to use volunteering as a route into paid employment if there is local paid employment available. In addition to the availability of jobs, as part of the more general feedback from the local Home-Starts, there was some concern that there were local bureaucratic complications which impeded being able to make a commitment to volunteer while claiming welfare benefits.

Home-Start is managing a diverse set of motivations to volunteer from its volunteers. The majority are seeking to give something back and/or work with children and to be involved in the community. This motivation from Home-Start volunteers is part of the sense of reciprocity intrinsic to the Home-Start model of support between matched volunteer and family. The motivations and experiences which the volunteer brings to the relationship help to understand how trust can be developed. The ability to be 'non-judgemental' measured by the indicators appreciation of others' cultures and appreciation of others' views, values and attitudes provides an indication of the ability of volunteering to improve social cohesion and is an important aspect of the role of the home visiting family support volunteer.

Volunteers who are recruited to Home-Start have parenting experience as a prerequisite. In addition to parenting experience the volunteers in this study had a wide set of personal experiences which were similar to those of the families Home-Start supports. The personal experiences that people bring to the role of volunteering is an under researched area. It is important to recognise this range of personal experiences as it can contribute to understanding the development of an empathetic and trusting relationship between volunteer and recipient.

The concept of earned security offers a possible explanation. In its wider application people who have experienced a hardship or vulnerability in the past and currently have secure relationships are able to bring positive attributes to a supportive relationship. The association between having experienced post natal depression and the positive skills brought to the volunteering role are shown in Figure 8 which illustrates the difference in parenting skills between the volunteers who had or had not experienced post natal depression.

Those volunteers who had experienced post natal depression had higher parenting skills than those who had not experienced post natal depression. A particular type of personal experience which some volunteers brought to the volunteering role was having received Home-Start support themselves. The number of these people was small (N=7). Figure 9 illustrates the different scores for parenting skills which the prior recipients of Home-Start support reported. The scores were consistently higher at four time points for skills and abilities than those who were not in prior receipt of Home-Start support. The self confidence of those who had received Home-Start support was also higher – see figure 10. In addition if the volunteer was seeking employment they were more likely to have received Home-Start themselves previously.

These associations do not provide directional causal links and this avenue of investigation requires further study as it appears to have implications for recruitment and training and retention of volunteers and for the wider understanding of empathic and non-judgemental approaches to family support. However, when recruiting volunteers to support vulnerable families it remains very important to recognise and manage people who have experienced hardship or vulnerability in the past and are currently not able to make secure and positive working relationships. Past experience alone would not be a positive indicator for current effective volunteer involvement.

### **Recommendations:**

1. The replacement cost approach to monetarising volunteer contributions for family support should recognise the skills and experiences which volunteers bring to the role. Using the minimum wage as a proxy is not appropriate.
2. The unique role that specific sector voluntary organizations play in enabling and supporting volunteers to be work ready should be recognised as different from the wider work ready programmes. The specific sector voluntary organizations should be resourced to support these carefully managed transitions for volunteers.
3. Commitment to longer term volunteering should be part of a blended paid non paid work offer
4. Local impediments to volunteering while claiming benefits should be eradicated.
5. Further research should be carried out into what is the effective skill and motivational profile for volunteers providing semi formal family support.
6. The relational, interpersonal and communications aspects of volunteer preparation which support the development of trust in diverse communities should be developed into key outcome measurements for effective service delivery.
7. Volunteer management should be recognised as a key platform for building new public services and developing local social capital.
8. The improvements in mental health for volunteers should be recognised as a valuable contribution to wider preventative mental health programmes

### **Conclusions**

This pilot study has contributed to understanding the value of formal volunteering by highlighting the importance of knowing the motivational drivers, skills and attributes of people providing formal volunteer services. The improvement across 22 indicators of volunteer development provides evidence of the effectiveness of the volunteer training programme and ongoing support and supervision. Analysis has highlighted the associations between the personal experiences of the volunteers and their own development across a range of indicators. The data set is rich and can be interrogated further to evaluate the economic contribution of voluntary work both in terms of its direct value to overall production but also in terms of its contribution to work readiness and social capital. This could include the measurement of the social value provided by formal volunteering in terms of social cohesion, improved mental and physical health and readiness for employment. This study begins to contribute to the development of that approach as it demonstrates the economic and welfare impacts of volunteering on volunteers.

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# Volunteer Journey of Change

## Guidance notes for Volunteers

We are committed to offering Home-Start volunteers a quality volunteering experience. Many volunteers have expressed how their lives have changed since they became Home-Start volunteers.

To inform funders and other key stakeholders how much our volunteers benefit from the Home-Start volunteering experience we have devised a questionnaire for you to let us know how you are feeling at key stages in your journey with Home-Start.

The key stages are: at the start of the Preparation Course; at the end of the Preparation Course; after six months of supporting a family; after twelve months of supporting a family.

**We are very grateful for your assistance with this pilot project and hope it will benefit you personally to see changes brought about by your volunteering with us.**

Thank you.

If you have any problems completing this form or the Volunteer Diary please ask your Co-ordinator for help.

**Your Name**.....

(Your personal details will not be shared with anyone outside Home-Start)

**How have you gained personally? Please score how you feel from 0-5 (0=very poor and 5=excellent)**

<b>Personal Development</b>	<b>At Start of Preparation Course (0-5)</b>	<b>At end of Preparation Course (0-5)</b>	<b>After 6 months (0-5)</b>	<b>After 12 months (0-5)</b>
Self-confidence				
Sense that I am making a useful contribution				
Awareness of the effects of my actions on others				
Willingness to try new things				
Sense that I have things to look forward to in my life				
Confidence in my identity & values				

**How have your skills developed? (0=very poor and 5=excellent)**

<b>Skills Development</b>	<b>At Start of Preparation Course (0-5)</b>	<b>At end of Preparation Course (0-5)</b>	<b>After 6 months (0-5)</b>	<b>After 12 months (0-5)</b>
Ability to communicate with others				
Job related skills e.g. child development				
Parenting Skills				
Problem Solving Skills				
Organisational skills				
Literacy & numeracy skills				

Impact of Volunteering on Volunteers

Budgeting skills				
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<b>Health &amp; Well-being</b>	At Start of Preparation Course (0-5)	At end of Preparation Course (0-5)	After 6 months (0-5)	After 12 months (0-5)
Physical health & well-being				
Mental health & well-being				

**How much or little have the following changed for you? Please score yourself, (0=very poor and 5=excellent).**

<b>Diversity and Inclusion</b>	At Start of Preparation Course (0-5)	At end of Preparation Course (0-5)	After 6 months (0-5)	After 12 months (0-5)
Appreciation of other people's cultures				
Appreciation of other's views / values / attitudes				

**Below are ways that people may gain socially from volunteering. Please score yourself (0=very poor and 5=excellent)**

<b>Friendships, Contacts and Community</b>	At Start of Preparation Course (0-5)	At end of Preparation Course (0-5)	After 6 months (0-5)	After 12 months (0-5)
Participation in community / social events				
Support & information network				
Activity in seeking employment, (if relevant)				
Activity in seeking other volunteering roles (if relevant)				
Activity in seeking further				

training or qualifications (if relevant)				
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**‘I feel confident about the prospect of supporting a family at the moment’. What is your reaction to this statement? Please tick a box.**

<b>Please tick relevant boxes</b>	<b>At Start of Preparation Course</b>	<b>At end of Preparation Course</b>	<b>After 6 months</b>	<b>After 12 months</b>
Strongly agree				
Agree				
Neither agree or disagree				
Disagree				
Strongly disagree				
Not relevant				

**In addition to being a Home-Start home-visiting volunteer, do you volunteer in other roles at Home-Start or elsewhere? If yes, what are these? Please state at each stage in relevant boxes.**

<b>At Start of Preparation Course</b>	<b>At end of Preparation Course</b>	<b>After 6 months</b>	<b>After 12 months</b>

**Is there anything else you would like to add?**