

## What is Home-Start

It's a free home visiting service that offers volunteer mentor support to young families in the local community.

Volunteers are linked one-to-one with a family that has at least one child under school age, and visit once a week for two hours where they offer:

- Mentoring – listening, emotional support, sharing, role-modelling, bringing in information as needed around the day to day stressors, reminder about self-care, encouraging and normalising being a parent.
- Practical help – attending appointments, playgroup, going shopping or to the library and community activities
- Positive encouragement with the children playing, reading, singing, outdoor activities.

## Who can use the mentoring initiative?

Families from any cultural background with a child under school age.

Most commonly parents are exhausted, often isolated or lonely, sometimes feeling overwhelmed.

## How families access Home-Start?

Call the Home-Start Coordinator on, 0428 736 961 or get in touch via a community agency such as Maternal Child Health Nurse, The Family Haven or your local GP.

## Contact Us

Phone: 0428 736 961  
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**This is a partnership between Baptcare and Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project**



# Home-Start

PROGRAM



## Background

The Home-Start initiative has been created to support early years outcomes for our children. Specifically, to;

- Provide support to isolated and marginalised parents with young children.
- Improve parenting capacity.
- Encourage better connections with community and services.
- Build stronger relationships with family and extended family.
- Support strong outcomes for children to be ready for school.

Home-Start is an evidence-based international early intervention program first established in the UK over 30 years ago. It is a volunteer-based program and works directly in the home with families in the community. Trained volunteers visit families weekly to provide mentoring, emotional support, practical support, positive engagement with children, linkage into services/community for the family.

Volunteer mentors are supported with high quality, in depth training and guidance from the Home-Start Coordinator on a regular basis. When trained, mentors will visit once a week with their allocated family for 2 hours per visit; and provide emotional support (primarily) for the parent/s and some practical support.



OUR VOLUNTEERS GIVE YOUNG FAMILIES PRACTICAL AND POSITIVE SUPPORT. WE KNOW THAT PARENTS SOMETIMES NEED TO TAKE A TIME OUT TO RECHARGE AND HAVE A SHOULDER TO LEAN ON. THIS IS THE ROLE OF OUR MENTORS.

## What happens when a family is referred for support to Home-Start?

The Home-Start Coordinator will make an initial visit to assess with the family to see if the program is the “right fit” for them. If it's decided to proceed the Coordinator will then introduce a volunteer mentor to the parents.

It is then up to the mentor, family and Coordinator when the visits happen and how long the mentoring arrangement will remain offering support to the family (generally 6 months).

The Coordinator will maintain close links with both the volunteer mentor and the parents to ensure the supports are meeting the family's needs.

## Who can be a Home-Start volunteer mentor?

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Volunteers are parents or grandparents themselves or have parenting experiences – they come from a wide range of ages and backgrounds.

All new volunteers must attend a preparation course and undergo a screening process before being linked with a family. The course offers new volunteers a chance to gain greater knowledge of their role and increase their confidence in offering mentoring support.