

Case Study: Karen's Story

How Home-Start helped Karen manage severe depression and build a social support network to help her provide a more stable, secure home life for her young sons.

Karen was referred to Home-Start by her Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN). Karen has a history of severe depression and had made several suicide attempts in the past.

She has weekly visits from her CPN and attends counselling with her partner, but she has a very limited social circle and lacks the motivation to engage within the local community. Karen has a son aged 4 and

a young baby. Home-Start had been involved previously with Karen and her older son and it had proved extremely difficult to engage with her. She wouldn't make eye contact with people and would sit in a chair refusing to become involved in anything that was suggested to her.

Karen had bonded with her baby and her son, but it was apparent that both her



children, especially her older son, were affected by her unpredictable mood swings and anger.

Her partner was a 'hands on' Dad and compensated by taking the children out, so overall there were no grave concerns about their care, but the potential impact on their social and emotional development was an area of concern.

Making a change with Home-Start

To try and break this cycle of non-engagement the Home-Start worker encouraged Karen to attend a family group with her. At the group Karen refused to interact with any other parents or make eye contact and if she wanted to say something it would be transmitted through the worker. Whilst Karen could see the benefits the group offered her sons, her disengagement continued and Home-Start recognised that a new approach was necessary for

any improvements to be made. Karen was consequently introduced to Clair, a Home-Start volunteer who was also a life coach. Once Karen got to know Clair, Clair started working on specific areas, including; positive thinking, erasing negativity, awareness of limits and beliefs, discovering what motivated her, exploring what Karen enjoyed in order to develop hobbies, increasing self-esteem and looking at gratitude.

"Karen is now making positive plans and life changes to improve family life and her own mental well-being"

Kate

Home-Start
Family Support Co-ordinator

Planning for a brighter future

Karen and her partner felt the work with Clair had a massive impact on her life and both reported an improvement in her mood and better management in controlling anger which had been impacting on the children. This in turn saw their relationship improve for the better. Karen became more motivated and went out more with her children to places she would never have

gone before. Karen has started making efforts to improve her home life, the quality of time spent with her family and taking an interest in her personal appearance. Karen has also reported that she has started singing around the house which she finds uplifting and which in the distant past she enjoyed. A family holiday has now been booked which was one of their family goals.

This will be the children's first holiday and a much needed opportunity for them to enjoy their time together. Karen has completed her initial actions and tasks with the volunteer but there is an opportunity to develop these further, which Karen has said she would be happy to do. Karen continues to venture out with her children and the only involvement Home-Start now have with Karen is at

the Home-Start family group. Karen continues to see her CPN but not as regularly and the counselling she was receiving has now finished. Karen's increased emotional stability and positive state of mind has had a direct impact on the quality of care Karen is able to offer her two young sons. They are benefitting significantly from more social contact with other families and a happier home life.

It doesn't have to be hard to help

Many children and vulnerable families like Karen's are not so lucky. We need help and volunteers from across our society to help more families like Karen's.

You could be the one who changes a young life forever. To find out more, become a volunteer or raise money for Home-Start Warrington call: **01925 652320**

To donate visit:

<https://mydonate.bt.com/charity/charitySearch.html> and search for 'Home-Start Warrington'.