

PRESS RELEASE

FROM: Fiona Bruce MP for Congleton Constituency

DATE: 4th March 2011



Home Start East Cheshire holds its 7th Annual General Meeting on 23rd February at Riverside, Congleton and invites more volunteers to join its good work.

Guest Speaker, Fiona Bruce MP, who is Patron of the charity said:

'This was the most moving AGM I have ever attended. The stories we heard during the meeting from selfless and dedicated Home Start East Cheshire volunteers of the help they give to local families struggling to cope bringing up very young children brought tears to the eyes of more than one person in the meeting'.

Volunteers Tracy Draper, Elizabeth Etherton and Susan Munro spoke of the help they give in family homes. They help with support such as establishing bed time routines for children with sleeping difficulties, support for children to attend vital medical appointments and budgeting help.

Fiona commented:

'I was most impressed – this is quiet, unsung help, going on in people's homes where they really need it. Perhaps the most important element of Home Start's selfless volunteers is the emotional support they offer – so that parents of children with particular needs, who often have no other support network nearby, don't feel completely on their own'.

The AGM heard from Maggie Spooner, Home Start East Cheshire Project Co-ordinator of appreciative comments from families who have been helped. One mum, who has just completed her Level 2 Awards in English and Maths and will be shortly volunteering herself with Home Start said:

'Home Start was a real life line for me. I was so lost and lonely when mine and mine ex-partner's relationship broke down. The family days helped me meet new people and I

realised I wasn't the only person who felt the way I did which, in turn, made me realise I wasn't a bad mother and improved my confidence. The home visits were helpful as I had someone come in and talk to me and help me sort things out for a single parent. Thank you, your help meant everything'.

Maggie also reported that at a recent review, one mum asked if her volunteer was a 'Secret Millionaire' and Maggie said:

'How wonderful to think that our volunteers are like Secret Millionaires to our families'.

Maggie told that AGM that more Home Start volunteers are needed and invited everyone to make this known as widely as possible.

The meeting was chaired by Home Start East Cheshire Chairman, Peter Munro, aided by Project Manager, Maggie Spooner. Peter introduced the meeting by explaining that:

'Home Start East Cheshire works actively with health visitors, social workers and other professionals in East Cheshire to provide support for more than 60 families and over 175 children'.

He went on to say:

'The charity has now trained almost 100 volunteers to help families in East Cheshire and six volunteers have completed the Childcare Learning and Development qualification in July 2010. Home Start East Cheshire also achieved the UK Quality Assurance target during the year'.

All the supported families have an opportunity to get together on Home Start's Family Networking Day when a range of activities for parents and children include parenting, play, healthy eating, learning and employment advice take place.

Peter paid special thanks to Maggie Spooner who during the meeting was repeatedly described as 'inspirational' and Peter praised her 'amazing dedication to the Scheme and her tireless efforts to keep us ahead of the field'.

He concluded:

'Home Start East Cheshire's unique service is in total harmony with the Big Society approach and its focus on prevention and early intervention, coordination of services, innovation, collaboration, local communities and above all, volunteering'.

You can volunteer with Home Start East Cheshire by contacting Maggie Spooner on 01625 511611 or emailing info@hscb.org.uk.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Picture 1 shows Fiona Bruce MP with volunteers Tracy Draper, Elizabeth Etherton and Susan Munro

Picture 2 shows (l to r): Maggie Spooner (Project Co-ordinator for Home Start East Cheshire), Cllr David Brown (Mayor of Congleton), Fiona Bruce MP, Cllr Rhoda Bailey (Cheshire East Councillor) and Peter Munro (Chairman of Home Start East Cheshire)

Picture 3 shows all the attendees of the AGM with Fiona Bruce MP

For more information about the work of Home Start East Cheshire, visit www.hscb.org.uk