

VOLUNTEERING MATTERS

in partnership with

Royal Borough of
Greenwich

Family Mentors Greenwich



Impact Report 2021/22

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Find out more about
Family Mentors Greenwich &
Volunteering Matters



Foreword

"We like to describe our help as the friendly face of support. Our hands are on the family shoulders, gently guiding them in the right direction, eventually letting go to see them move on their way !"



Family Mentors Greenwich have been successfully supporting families in the Royal Borough of Greenwich for 7 years. Each year that passes we carefully watch and monitor the changing needs in the community, approaching these with our placed based knowledge. Our service is needed more now than ever before, with so many families in Greenwich facing increasing challenges. We approach each family situation individually and unique as they are, delivering the work tailored to their needs. We build a relationship in their community, asking them where help is needed and together plan a way forward. We like to describe our help as the friendly face of support. Our hands are on the family shoulders, gently guiding them in the right direction, eventually letting go to see them on their way!

I am always humbled to see the amazing work our volunteers complete with the family. Their compassion and determination is always plentiful, they chose to volunteer in a complex and challenging area, their desire to help is inspiring. We always count ourselves very lucky to have such highquality individuals step forward to help. Our continued relationships with London universities such as Greenwich and Goldsmiths are highly valued and always delivers us an amazing pool of willing helpers.

I hope that, throughout this report, we can highlight our impact and bring to life the stories of families and volunteers who make this project such a success.

Susan Parr, Project Manager, Family Mentors Greenwich



Volunteering Matters - who are we?

VOLUNTEERING MATTERS
#WeAre60

At Volunteering Matters, we believe everyone should have the opportunity to thrive. To do this, we bring people together to overcome some of society's most complex issues through the power of volunteering and mentoring.

This year we celebrate our 60th birthday! 60 years of partnering with communities to overcome adversity, tackling social isolation and loneliness, improving health, developing employability skills and opportunities, and making sure young people can lead change.

We turn local knowledge and energy into action and progress, building stronger communities and a better future for all.



Reducing social isolation and loneliness



Improving mental and physical health



Ensuring young people can lead change

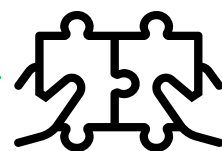


Building skills, confidence and opportunity



Key Outcomes 2021/22

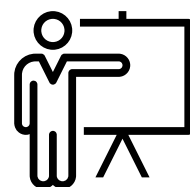
65 families matched to their dedicated volunteer in 21/22



104 referrals received from RBG Children's Service's



63 new volunteers trained



3935 hours given to RBG families



... our volunteers dedicated on average 76 hours per week to the families !

Our Delivery in Greenwich

What to expect when you work with Family Mentors Greenwich, how we make positive steps forward

Upon referral, our friendly staff team reach out to the family, spend time with them to help form the plan also setting goals they would like to achieve with the help of their volunteer. We want to know a little bit about them before choosing a volunteer, so a great match is based on lots of factors. We want to make sure they are matched with someone they feel comfortable with and want to be supported by. Project staff regularly review how the support relationship is going with the volunteer and the family. To make sure things are going well and the family are benefitting from our help. We regularly update the Social Work team with developments and will attend review meeting to share our progress.

Their own dedicated volunteer

To spend around 1-2 hours with the family every week for approximately 3-6 months

A personalised action plan

The initial plan is drafted by the social worker, we invite the family to add in their goals. The plan is regularly reviewed to reflect outcomes achieved and progress made.

Careful case management

Family Mentors staff manage the relationship of Social Worker, family & volunteer. Making sure everyone is happy, informed and onboard.



... on average we match a family to their volunteer within 17 days of first contact !

IMPACT: Where We Can Help A Family

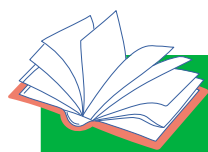
What do we measure to show our impact?

Our personalised action plans are broken into three main areas of support needs. We then break these down further into another four subsections;



Housing & Finance

- Suitable living standards
- Housing stability
- Access to housing & finance support
- Financial independence



Education & Schooling

- Improved school life & behaviours
- Parental support to education
- Further opportunities
- Equality & accessibility



Health & Wellbeing

- Improved mental health
- Enabled to make healthier choices
- Self care & nurturing
- Access to health support

Each area is scored between 1-6, 1 being good and settled, 6 requiring the most immediate and urgent attention. Every family matched will be initially scored with information gathered from the referral, care plan, early observation, meeting with the family and their description of need. The scoring is closely monitored against the contact visit reports supplied by the volunteer. Family Mentors staff carefully study the feedback the changes that are happening, periodically reviewing the starting scores, and concluding scores at the end of our support. Sometimes scores can change dramatically other times little or no change can happen. These depend on the motivation of the family, socio economic factors and support accessed through out the plan.

IMPACT: Greenwich 2021/22 Figures

The quarterly figure's in more detail, based on 64 closed families where impact data was monitored.

IMPACT MEASURE	Yr7 Q1	
	Start	End
Housing & Finance	% of 1-2 Scores	% of 1-2 Scores
Suitable Living Standards	41%	71%
Financial Independence	41%	76%
Housing Stability	41%	76%
Access to Housing & Finance Support	41%	76%
Education Employment & Training	% of 1-2 Scores	% of 1-2 Scores
Improved School Life & Behaviour	29%	71%
Parental Support To Education	35%	76%
Further Opportunities	29%	76%
Equality & Accessibility	53%	76%
Health and Wellbeing	% of 1-2 Scores	% of 1-2 Scores
Improved Mental Health	6%	65%
Enabled To Make Healthier Choices	24%	82%
Self-Care & Nurturing	59%	88%
Access To Health Support	53%	76%

Yr 7 Quarter 1
(17 families)

IMPACT MEASURE	Yr7 Q2	
	Start	End
Housing & Finance	% of 1-2 Scores	% of 1-2 Scores
Suitable Living Standards	45%	68%
Financial Independence	36%	68%
Housing Stability	36%	73%
Access to Housing & Finance Support	27%	86%
Education Employment & Training	% of 1-2 Scores	% of 1-2 Scores
Improved School Life & Behaviour	55%	77%
Parental Support To Education	73%	86%
Further Opportunities	77%	86%
Equality & Accessibility	77%	86%
Health and Wellbeing	% of 1-2 Scores	% of 1-2 Scores
Improved Mental Health	9%	59%
Enabled To Make Healthier Choices	32%	73%
Self-Care & Nurturing	27%	77%
Access To Health Support	45%	82%

Yr 7 Quarter 2
(22 families)

IMPACT MEASURE	Yr7 Q3	
	Start	End
Housing & Finance	% of 1-2 Scores	% of 1-2 Scores
Suitable Living Standards	0%	63%
Financial Independence	0%	63%
Housing Stability	13%	75%
Access to Housing & Finance Support	50%	88%
Education Employment & Training	% of 1-2 Scores	% of 1-2 Scores
Improved School Life & Behaviour	50%	88%
Parental Support To Education	38%	75%
Further Opportunities	75%	88%
Equality & Accessibility	75%	100%
Health and Wellbeing	% of 1-2 Scores	% of 1-2 Scores
Improved Mental Health	0%	63%
Enabled To Make Healthier Choices	75%	100%
Self-Care & Nurturing	38%	63%
Access To Health Support	50%	88%

Yr 7 Quarter 3
(8 families)

IMPACT MEASURE	Yr7 Q4	
	Start	End
Housing & Finance	% of 1-2 Scores	% of 1-2 Scores
Suitable Living Standards	53%	65%
Financial Independence	53%	59%
Housing Stability	70%	76%
Access to Housing & Finance Support	59%	82%
Education Employment & Training	% of 1-2 Scores	% of 1-2 Scores
Improved School Life & Behaviour	47%	76%
Parental Support To Education	59%	82%
Further Opportunities	65%	82%
Equality & Accessibility	70%	88%
Health and Wellbeing	% of 1-2 Scores	% of 1-2 Scores
Improved Mental Health	6%	65%
Enabled To Make Healthier Choices	65%	88%
Self-Care & Nurturing	65%	88%
Access To Health Support	59%	82%

Yr 7 Quarter 4
(17 families)

IMPACT: How We've Helped Our Families

Families facing a range of emotional and practical life challenges, can rely on us to be there for them

The personalised action plans are broken down into different support needs a family have, our volunteer will focus on these during their sessions together. The desired outcomes fall under the three main heading of **Housing & Finance**, **Education & Schooling** and **Health & Wellbeing**. Typically each quarter we see improvements in all areas, particularly within housing stability - addressing tenancy issues and focusing on rent arrears, improving school life and behaviours - addressing school absence and lateness. Also supporting improving mental health - just the opportunity to talk with someone on a regular basis can be enough to make significant changes.

35% reported improvement with housing stability



33% reported improvement of school life and behaviour's



57% reported improvement with mental health & wellbeing



All outcomes have been calculated using our impact framework - with input from families, volunteers & relevant professionals at all stages. Percentages in this report are based on the experiences of 64 families where support has now come to an end.

Volunteer Focus; Amelia



Family Mentors Greenwich

Amelia tell us a little about you?

I'm a working parent, in Sports Development and have a very sporty 9 years old and a lovely husband. Aswell as living locally I also work in the Royal Borough of Greenwich, meaning I know the area well and have lots of knowledge about local services that might be useful to others. My own family are very important to me and I'm lucky to have my extended family live close by. We like meet up on evenings or at the weekend and enjoy just hanging out together! My nephews and my son have a great relationship and are more like best friends. I know how important that network is to me and how much I rely on their help. I grew up in the north of England and went to university there too. I studied Sport & Exercise Science and then Public Health. I also met my now husband there too!

Tell me why do you volunteer, what is your motivation?

I volunteer to keep in touch with reality and the real world. I work from home most days now but find the opportunity of volunteering enables me to use my skills to connect with people in the community. In my present career I found myself moving away from working with families, and that was something I wanted to keep in touch with. I didn't want to lose those skills I crafted over the years.

What are the challenges when working with a family?

Understanding what to deal with first and when to encourage the family they can do things for themselves. I initially look for the 'quick wins' with families, that builds on the trust between us so we can target the larger issues as we progress. It's amazing when a family say they've done it themselves, it's the most rewarding feeling ever!

What's been your highlight?

The relationships I've built up with the family - I won't ever forget that. We have laughed, cried, and supported each other. I really miss them when it's time to move on.

How has the Family Mentors volunteering experience been?

Generally positive and very rewarding. Although initially it's very nerve wracking to support a family, I was worried something might go wrong or what I could do to help, but as your confidence grows the experience just becomes better.

Is there anything else you want to say?

Don't underestimate the power of a chat with Susan and Helen, sometimes that niggling thing is something - but other times it's nothing, a chat with Susan or Helen always makes you feel at ease.



"Amelia has been an angel, she has made such a difference, thank you! She just 'gets' us, my son really looks forward to her visits, and she's found him such interesting activities to attend after school. She knows when I'm in a bad space and respects that. We love her!"

Family OB, Abbeywood

Volunteer Focus; Jose

Family Mentors Greenwich



Jose tell us a little about who you are?

I am currently working as an SEN tutor with children with moderate learning difficulties, most of which are non-verbal. I am a parent of two teenagers, a girl 14 years old and a boy 15 years old, and they are both amazing kids. I currently live in East London, Aldgate East. In 2021 I finished my undergraduate degree in Psychology (first class). I am very proud of myself. Before that, I worked in bookkeeping for nearly a decade. I also worked during the pandemic for the NHS and NHS Blood & Transplant Services, this was a fantastic experience, and I gained clinical skills that had it not been because of the pandemic, I would not have thought to go towards that path. But I am so glad I did.

Tell me why do you volunteer, what is your motivation?

I always had in mind to help people (volunteer) but never pushed myself to do it. However, while studying at university I came across Volunteer Matters and reading about what this charity do helping families struggling with everyday life issues, so I decided to join. At first, I was in my second year at the university, I thought that helping people who struggle with mental health issues would give me a better first-hand understanding of what I was studying. However, the more I have gotten involved, the more I want to help. Furthermore, at the beginning of volunteering I wanted to go through the social work route, and volunteering would somehow give me a gist of what to expect. But then, the more involved I got in volunteering, the more I noticed that children living with the families are so vulnerable I decided to professionally start working with children and young adults (who are the most affected by what is happening in their household). Now I am currently weighing what path I want to go through. On one hand, I am thinking of going through the NHS route (CAMHS) and on the other, applying for social work and working with children and young people with moderate to severe learning difficulties and Social, Emotional Mental Health issues. So here is where I am now, thinking about what path to take.

What are the challenges when working with a family?

I would say bonding is the biggest challenge because if there is no chemistry between you and your family, it's unlikely that anything will work. Another challenge I experienced has been getting a response from the family regarding meeting them; for example, we all agreed on a time, date and place to meet, but sometimes instead of cancelling the meeting, they would instead go silent, it can be frustrating.

What's been your highlight?

I enjoy volunteering because I get the chance to meet new people who just need a little help, and doing it increases my practical and social skills, it gives me fulfilment and it's fun.

How has the Family Mentors volunteering experience been?

So far, my experience of volunteering with Family Mentors has been tremendous. I am happy that I came across it, Susan and Helen are there whenever I need them (even the slightest silly questions - they are always there to clarify). It is a pleasure to be surrounded by people who care, therefore I am still here and will continue to volunteer for as long as possible.

Jose is a highly valued volunteer with our project and has worked with us since 2020, he has helped so many families and has been particularly success with the hard to reach and challenging client's. Jose always shows initiative and commitment to the role, he will always go that extra mile to help the family. He can easily put anxious and stressed people at ease and approaches each new challenge with enthusiasm. We know we are so lucky to have him!

Susan Parr, Project Manager Family Mentors Greenwich



Change Story - Dijana & Family N



'It was always a pleasure working with this family. As a volunteer I felt appreciated and respected. I enjoyed supporting them to use their own values and experiences to change their child's life for the better. They were always kind, and my involvement was highly appreciated. I hope they are doing well now. If they ever read this, I want to say I wish them all the best and I will remember them as one of my kindest families who did their very best every time'

Dijana, Vounteer

When a referral came in to help the family at the end of their CIN plan, the home consisted of three generations of family. The home would be untidy, lacked routine, no set meal times and the child (5) and was not attending school regularly. Concerns were so high the family were put on a CP plan. When Dijana was introduced to them Covid was still a huge concern, she is a highly skilled professional and a qualified Social Worker in her native Montenegro. From the very start the family engaged so well with Dijana, they were always polite and welcoming. The volunteer focused on areas of the child's routines and wellbeing, she offered clear guidance and suggestions to improve their home life. The routine within the home improved dramatically, as the family had learning difficulties this impacted how tasks needed to be approached and delivered. Dijana negotiated with the whole family to address the rent arrears and helped them devise a repayment plan; it was estimated they would be debt free within 12 months. Social Worker Progress Gonomwe said 'Family Mentors supported this family in an incredible way. The child was subject to a CP Plan and the child lacked structure at home: no routine around meal, play, bathing and sleeping times and normally presented as tired and sleepy in school. The volunteer was able to build a trusting relationship with the carers, helped built their confidence and security. Outcomes greatly improved for the child at school – no longer sleeping in class and he had had breakfast in the morning before school. The volunteer provided practical support like visits to the park for playtime, this improved interaction between him and his carers, also important for his language, social and emotional development. The child spent less time on iPad and TV, developing relationships with other children at school and enjoying playing with family and peers.'

This case was a lengthy and complex, Dijana modelled behaviours, guided the family to address day to day tasks, she closely monitored their progress and saw the family move forward. Dijana developed a strong working relationship with the Social Worker Progress Gonomwe, he supported Dijana with her applications becoming a UK recognized Social Worker. Together the partnership of Children's Services, the volunteer, Family Mentors, and other external professionals saw the family step down from CP to CIN and then close, as concerns had been reduced so dramatically. It was clear to see the family were happier and growing in confidence. The Grandmother said 'Dijana was like an angel, she helped us so much, she always made us feel like we could achieve the changes. She was always welcome to our home, and without her help I don't think we could have made such a difference. Our family are happy and settled – she really did make a huge difference – thank you!'. Dijana has since gone on to gain full time employment as a fully qualified Social Worker in Lewisham.

"Volunteering Matters & Dijana have been invaluable to the family, they have got in there and asked the questioned that needed to be asked, and found the answers quickly"

Ms Lee's Head Teacher, Windrush Primary School

Change Story - Happiness & Hazel



'When Happiness is here, she makes me feel less anxious, she makes me feel like I can do so much more and I am a good parent! She listens and never makes me feel judged, she never lets me down and is always so nice'

Hazel, Mother

This family had had extensive involvement with Greenwich CS since 2007. There were serious concerns since 2011 around neglect, physical chastisement, and domestic abuse from the children's biological father. There were reports of poor school attendance, poor living conditions, hygiene, and sexualised behaviour from one of the children. The children were subject to a Child Protection plan twice, initially between 2011 and 2012, and again from 2014 to 2016. The family consists of mother, her partner, and her four children aged 7, 8, 12 & 15. Mother's partner has been very supportive within the family. The family were referred to us in 2021 under a CIN plan, following concerns raised by school around the children hygiene, adding the children had been to school on more than one occasion without breakfast and had significant concerns around attendance and punctuality. Mother admitted lateness, but disputed these claims of poor hygiene, and going without food. The youngest child has a diagnosis of autism, mother said he could have episodes of wetting. School and parents were at logger heads and really struggled to communicate. Mother was anxious to talk with them, and felt she was being victimised and singled out. At the point of referral CS reported there were no safeguarding concerns, and the children have a positive relationship with their mother and her partner. The assessments did not identify any concerns regards to the children at home, the home environment was clean and tidy.

Happiness started working with the family and mother, they quickly built up a strong rapport. Happiness' plan was to look at family boundaries, routines and helping to improve communication with school. She immediately set about devising a daily and weekly routine chart, including bed and wake up times, bathing, dressing and laundry rota's. The family received this enthusiastically, Happiness worked out allocated time for everyone in the home, especially in the mornings to avoid any delays getting out and into school. School quickly noticed things were changing and attendance improving, mother went to exceptional measures to prove the children were eating breakfast by taking photographs to show to school. These improvements continued for a few months and the family were stepped down to TAC. However shortly after this school started to report back worries about behaviour's in class, this started to impact on mothers' anxiety and she feared taking the calls from the school.

Happiness recognised this was not a productive relationship with school and it needed to be addressed. She spent a lot of time talking to mother about how she was feeling and trying to see how she could help build Hazel's confidence. Hazel spoke about her musical skills and being able to play the piano and sing, volunteering was suggested in a school or community group, Hazel really liked this idea and saw it a way to build skills and eventually moving toward becoming a music tutor. Happiness took the initiative to reach out to school to see if a meeting could take place to discuss their worries and mother to have her voice heard too. This was arranged and the issues were thoroughly discussed, by Happiness attending too it gave Hazel the confidence to speak up. In conclusion there was a lot of misunderstanding between the two parties, school had not realised how anxious Hazel was and Hazel realised her silence was interpreted as avoidance and non-cooperation. School and the family made a written agreement to improve their relationship, and this still stands today and is working well. Hazel said ' When Happiness is here, she makes me feel less anxious, she makes me feel like I can do so much more and I am a good parent! She listens and never makes me feel judged, she never lets me down and is always so nice'. School commented 'We have seen a marked improvement with the family, we are more aware how Hazel feels, we stop and chat at school pick up, this allows us to approach any worries early, and avoid it becoming a problem. Volunteering Matters and their volunteer definitely made a huge impact on the family'. Happiness worked with the family for a period of 8 months, the TAC is now closed.

What They Said - Social Workers

The service the family I referred received was very positive. The response was prompt and helpful and an appropriate younger volunteer mentor was assigned to the service user with considerate measures carried out due to the service user's personal circumstances. Thank you!

BP, NQSW RBG



I regularly use Family Mentors when working with families I believe require some hands-on support. I have seen the remarkable work Family Mentors do. One of my referred families had help from their volunteer, who secured a donation of a brand-new washing machine/dryer to the home, this made a huge difference with the children's presentation at school and at homelife.

KS, SW RBG



Mum's engagement has improved considerably since the involvement of Family Mentors, a good working relationship seemed to have been established between the volunteer and mum. It is my view this has contributed to her feeling less anxious regarding her relating to professionals and in general. Thus, some of the actions in the plan she has managed to see through.

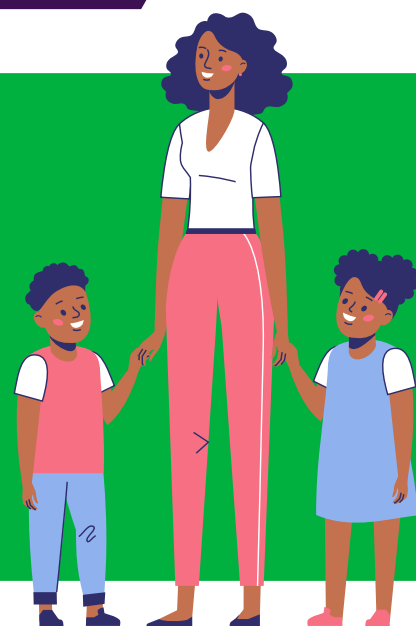
NM, SW RBG



What They Said - The Families

Rita has helped in so many ways, she always has come up with really helpful ideas, she always encourages me, helps me see the difficulties but will boost me and show me I can make it. If I needed something she helps – like letters or appointments and using apps.

Family APL, Eltham SE9



I really liked what I was told by Family Mentors, it really felt like change could happen. I've been offered help in the past and it wasn't the right time for me then. I am really keen to get help now - I'm ready, and so pleased I got the call within days of the Social Worker mentioning the referral.

Family KS, Abbeywood SE2

It's a good service and I would recommend it to anyone. Helen has been very approachable and found me a great volunteer. They've been easy to talk to and also helped me get a cot from a local online advert and even delivered it to me as I don't have a car! Next week I'm meeting my volunteer in town and I'm looking forward to that. I'm managing so much better now - so thank you.

Family CB , Greenwich SE10



What They Said - The Volunteers

Thank you for this opportunity it has helped me grow in confidence too, it has helped me understand myself better and allowed me to support someone who needed that helping hand. There is a Chinese belief that things happen for a reason, and I feel like the moons aligned to make this happen!

Tingting, Volunteering since 2020



I wanted to tell you how happy I am to be part of team. I have thoroughly enjoyed helping my family, I can see there has been a huge change in her parenting and mental health. I want to move forward with my step up to SW application and have been lucky enough to secure a next stage assessment! This role, you as staff and the SW have helped me so much. Thank you!

Lauren, Volunteered 2019 -2021



Thank you for giving me the opportunity to volunteer, it has helped me so much with my journey to become a social worker. It is so important to me to volunteer; it is my duty! The UK allowed me to come and live here, allowed me to work hard and become a social worker, I now have to say thank you, and give something back to the UK.

Lola, Volunteering since 2019



Greenwich Snapshots

VOLUNTEERING MATTERS
#WeAre60



Afterword

Helen Maunsell
Engagement Manager
Family Mentors Greenwich



Every year brings a new challenge to the Family Mentors project, Sue and I remain enthusiastic about the work we do and the families we help. I'm extremely proud of our volunteers and the families. I love meeting people and hearing their story, and when we match a family with a volunteer it's never a case of whose name is at the top of the list. We look at what the family need, and who can fulfill that role to achieve a long and meaningful relationship. We see so many highly talented people come forward to volunteer and make our service a success and as relevant as it's ever been. Their commitment to help makes everything worthwhile. I have worked with families in the borough for many years, and I have seen many changes, but the fundamentals of a helping hand never changes. I bring a wealth of local knowledge to the job and impart that to families and volunteers alike.

I am enjoy being able to share my safeguarding knowledge with the GSCP training team, and co-facilitate these sessions to other RBG professionals regularly throughout the year. The relationship we have with Greenwich Children's Services is amazing, we know we can always rely upon the teams to support us if we have a concern and welcome our volunteers making them feel part of the professional support network.

I've been with Family Mentors for over 5 years now, and no day is ever the same, I just wish every town in the UK had a Family Mentors team to help!

Helen Maunsell, Engagement Manager





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