

HOME START

Lorn

Home-Start Lorn Newsletter

April 2026

Home is where we **start** from
across **Oban**, Lorn & the islands.



Since January 2026, we have supported....

39

Families

**supported via
1-2-1 support**

63

Children

**supported via
1-2-1 support**

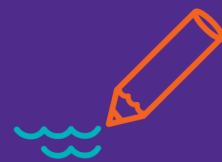
116

Parents

**supported via
group activities**



Spring News 2026...



Hello and welcome to our second newsletter of 2026!

It's been a busy and eventful start to the year for Home-Start Lorn. Since our last edition, we have said goodbye to Hannah, who has been an instrumental manager over the past five years. Her dedication, leadership and commitment to families have made a lasting impact on the service, and she will be greatly missed. As we move forward, we do so with a strong sense of continuity and optimism. We are delighted to have welcomed two new members of staff, alongside another team member returning from maternity leave. With a growing team comes fresh energy, new ideas and a shared enthusiasm for the future of our service.

This period has also given us an opportunity to pause and reflect on the past few years, ensuring we continue to build a structure that best supports both our staff and the families we work alongside. I am pleased to have stepped into the role of Interim Manager and look forward to supporting the team through this next phase of development.

Our group sessions and one-to-one family support remain at the heart of what we do, and we are pleased to see both continuing to thrive across our communities. With new team members bringing new perspectives, we are excited to begin introducing a range of new group activities in the coming months. We would also like to highlight our recent Easter event on Mull, which was a fantastic success and a wonderful opportunity for families to come together and celebrate.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support

Rebecca MacLennan

Interim Service Manager



Current Team from left to right:

Rebecca MacLennan — Interim Service Manager *role change from Senior Family Coordinator* (Isle of Mull)

Kirsty Canning—Family Coordinator (Isle of Mull)

Saskia Ross—Senior Coordinator *role change from Family Coordinator* (Oban)

Nikki Wasik—Family Coordinator *new in post* (Oban)

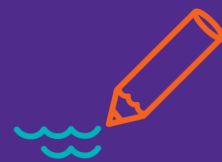
Jo Oliver—Groups *new in post* (Oban)

Andrew Parker—Office Coordinator *role change from Administrator* (Oban)

Rachel Hathaway—Funding and Development Officer *returned from maternity leave* (Oban)

Please see the Home-Start Lorn website, 'Meet Us' section, for more information including staff profiles and individual contact email addresses—<https://homestartlorn.org.uk/meet-us>

Team updates 2026...



A fond farewell from Hannah

I couldn't leave without saying goodbye.

It's incredibly hard to put into words what the last five years at Home-Start Lorn have meant to me. They seem to have passed in the blink of an eye, yet they have been some of the most meaningful, challenging and rewarding years of my life. It has truly been the honour of a lifetime to manage such an incredible service, and I feel so lucky to have been trusted with that responsibility.

From the very beginning, I was welcomed into something really special. I want to thank everyone who has been part of my journey—those who laid the foundations before me, and those who have been alongside me over the last five years. Your time, energy, support, trust and belief have meant everything.

Together, we have achieved so much. We relaunched after a global pandemic, opened a new service in Helensburgh, expanded our group work, grew and diversified our staff and volunteer team, opened an office in Tobermory, and celebrated the grand opening of our Family Centre. These are things I could never have imagined at the start, and they have only been possible because of the passion, resilience and determination of every single person involved—our staff, volunteers, trustees, families, community members and funders.

One of the parts I will treasure most is the opportunity I've had to work directly with families. To those who welcomed me into their homes, shared their experiences, and trusted me with their children—thank you. That trust is something I will never take for granted. You are incredible parents and carers, raising amazing children, and I have been constantly inspired by your strength, honesty and resilience.

As I reflect on my time here, I keep coming back to one thing—the importance of family. Family comes in all shapes and sizes, and in many different forms. At Home-Start Lorn, our family is made up of the mums, dads, carers and children we support, alongside our staff team, volunteers and trustees. It's a family because we look out for one another, we support each other, and we truly want the best for each other. We show up, we put in the time and effort, and we stand beside each other when it matters most—and that is something very special.

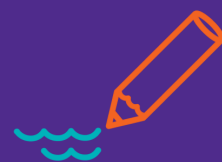


Being part of this community has reminded me just how powerful connection, kindness and support can be. Home-Start Lorn isn't just a service—it's a place where people are valued, where potential is nurtured, and where everyone is encouraged to grow, succeed and feel supported every step of the way.

I will miss you all more than I can say. But I hope this isn't really goodbye—I hope to stay connected and still be around in some way when I can.

Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for everything. I am so proud of what we've built together, and I can't wait to see what the future holds for this incredible service and for all of you who make it what it is.

Celebrating Hannah





Mulling over Mull!

News from Mull

Having said goodbye to our beloved manager Hannah, we welcome our new manager Rebecca, wishing her all the best, with this exciting new role.

We are working closely with our island communities, strengthening partnerships, creating family fun, promoting good health and well-being, encouraging and empowering our parents/carers and nurturing our little ones and new families.

Our commitment to the well-being of families in our community has grown from strength to strength. Through the winter months, we focused on parent/carer & baby bonding and wellbeing.

Our wonderful Community Nursery Nurse, Annabell, has been providing much needed support to new parents, through her beloved baby massage sessions. While our lovely Victoria has completed our Mini Movers Yoga Classes for baby & parent/carer. Both these classes are designed to ease tears, promote relaxation and aid sleep for both babies and their parents/carers.

Research shows that baby massage can enhance emotional bonding, improve sleep patterns and reduce stress. Annabell's caring approach and her genuine passion for helping families, have made these sessions a cherished experience, teaching vital skills and growing a supportive community network, where parents can connect with each other and share experiences.

Yoga can improve physical well-being, reduce stress, and enhance emotional connections. Victorias yoga sessions focused on gentle movements that catered to both parents and little ones, allowing everyone to benefit from a mindful, peaceful practice.

Our groups are bursting with events, visitors, songs, stories, crafts and activities. Our children have been busy painting shells and pebbles to decorate their Fairy Woodland. We are looking forward to having our Oban friends over for the day, to go for a walk in the fairy woodland, decorating it with their lovely painted shells, pebbles and fairies. We are hoping for some sunshine! And some ferries to the fairies!

Easter may have been a wash out with weather and island residents stranded with no ferries, but lots of Mull families joined us for a spectacular Easter Event! With an easter egg and scavenger hunt, two fully costumed easter bunnies, bubbles, crafting easter bonnets, toys, park fun, fruit pick n mix, chocolate treats, parachute songs and games, we had an absolute ball! Everyone had an Eggcellent day!





More news from Mull

News from Mull

Groups and Bookbug sessions have been well attended with families engaged and joining in for songs, rhymes and stories. March was all about the beautiful book: 'It's A Wonderful World' based on the song by Louis Armstrong. With wonderful pictures and a beautiful theme, our families enjoyed Messy plays, Bookbugs, art and activities based on spring and this lovely book. All made possible by the Smart Play Network, who are celebrating 4 years of their pathways through play project.

We have been in touch with our local Early Learning Centre and are very excited to be planning some joint play group sessions together.

This will be a lovely way for little ones to get used to the nursery environment, building bridges through the transition, through play and talk, helping families feel comfortable, in a fun, relaxed environment.

We have contacted local Gaelic Teachers/Speakers to encourage bilingual language skills in our families. We've had some very positive responses to this and now have the challenge of learning some Gaelic songs and nouns, to use in our Bookbug or Group sessions.

We are thrilled to announce that, Leanne, our fabulous dental technician from Child Smiles, will be joining us at the end of the month, during Wednesday group. Accompanying her will be Charlie the Crocodile puppet, who will entertain us with a delightful story.

Leanne will share valuable information on how to care for our teeth and the best foods to keep them healthy. She's also fantastic at answering any questions you might have and tips for encouraging little ones.

Rebecca had an exciting visit at Rainy Days, from the BBC! This was a follow up from the Royal visit but they have been busy filming a new Balamory kids tv show last year..... which we are really looking forward to seeing on our screens! Featuring lots of local families!

This week, weather permitting, we are heading to the park in the woods for....A Teddy Bears Picnic! Sun dances are essential and required – Unfortunately no rain dances are allowed. Hoping for a break in the weather from some school holiday fun.

Weaning Workshops planning has begun, collecting tried and tested recipes and listening to parents/carers for what helps. Sounds like confidence boosting is a definite, so hopefully with sharing, talking, watching, reading, trying and feeding back, we will create confident, comfortable feeders.

Mull Groups are going to be reaching remote island villages, as we expand our services across the island. Once a month, we will create Messy/Sensory plays from North to South of the Isle of Mull, with Homestart reaching the heart of our communities.



Family Centre turns 1...

Birthday Celebrations

On Thursday, 19th February, we celebrated the first anniversary of opening our Family Centre.

We marked the occasion by hosting a professionals' drop-in session in the morning, giving stakeholders and community members who work with families the opportunity to visit the space, ask questions, meet the team, and learn more about how the centre has supported our community over the past year.

In the afternoon, we held a family celebration where families came together to celebrate a year of support, connection and friendship in our beautiful space. There were games, new toys and equipment, delicious food, and plenty of time to enjoy being together, celebrating and playing in our amazing centre.

In our first year at the Family Centre:

- * We have had over 1700 family attendances at to our groups.

- * We have recruited 8 new volunteers.

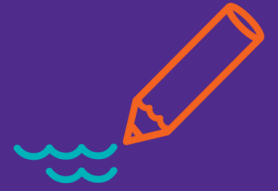
- * 14 other community partners and groups have used our space for meetings, events and their own activities.

We are incredibly thankful to everyone who has been part of our journey during this first year — from all the families who attend our groups, to the community members who have supported us through fundraising, and to our valued funders who have made this journey possible.

Thank you to everyone who has helped make our first year such a success — we are excited for what the future



Oban news...



Mother's Day Brunch

On 12th March, we hosted a Mother's Day Brunch in our family centre to celebrate all our wonderful mums. There were pastries, smoothies and our very own Rachel brought in some homemade granola! All the mums got to take away a wrapped gift and some flowers, while the children had a wonderful time playing in our newly assembled play shop. Lots of the mums commented on how lovely the centre looked and thanked us for putting something on just for them. It was an important reminder that making our families feel loved and appreciated goes a long way and it was lovely to be able to take a moment to celebrate our wonderful Home-Start mums!



Earth Day Sensory Session

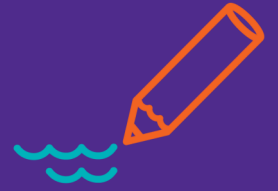
To celebrate Earth Day, we ran a special sensory session in our family centre. We created different habitats in the centre and themed sensory activities around them. Our beloved play shop became a sensory sea cave and our reading nook became a forest! We also had a polar region paddling pool and special baby zone with some lighter touch activities. The icing on the cake was the sensory rice world map which the children absolutely loved playing with – safe to say, it didn't look like a map for long! The families commented on how lovely it was to have something a bit different on and that they would love to see more of it in the future. One parent said: "Isla loved it! We all had a great time. Thank you so much. This was a great idea and we're looking forward to the next one". Having seen how much the children and their parents valued the session, we would love to run them more regularly so watch this space!



Fyne den trip

In February we were lucky to be able to take a day trip to the Fyne Den play area near Inveraray, the play area is well equipped with toys and climbing areas with a lovely outdoor garden too! We were joined by families and volunteers and a great day was had by all.





Bookbug Training

This month, Nikki, Rachel & Jo from our Oban team had the fantastic opportunity to attend Bookbug training, and it proved to be both inspiring and energising for everyone involved. The session brought together practitioners passionate about early years literacy and the power of shared stories, songs, and rhymes.

Throughout the training, we explored new ways to engage children and families through the Bookbug approach. The emphasis on creating welcoming, inclusive environments really resonated with us, as did the importance of building confidence in parents and carers to enjoy books with their little ones. We also picked up plenty of fresh ideas for interactive activities, from action songs to creative storytelling techniques that we're excited to bring back to our own sessions at the Family Centre.

We're looking forward to putting our learning into practice and continuing to make Bookbug sessions fun, engaging, and meaningful for all the families we support. Here are our top 5 songs – you can look them up on the FREE Bookbug app:

- 1) Zoom, Zoom Zoom
- 2) A Big Red Bus
- 3) Brochan Lom
- 4) Cross Cross Line Line
- 5) I have a Little Spider



Upcoming events in May 2026

HOME START
Lorn

Twilight Bookbug

WEAR YOUR PYJAMAS AND JOIN US FOR MILK, COOKIES, BEDTIME STORIES & SONGS

Monday 18th May
Session 1 - 5-5:30 pm
Session 2 - 6-6:30 pm
The Family Centre,
14 Stevenson Street, Oban

Book Your space on
TeamReach code HSL1

Scottish Book Trust
Inspiring readers and writers

HOME START
Lorn

Bumps and Babies

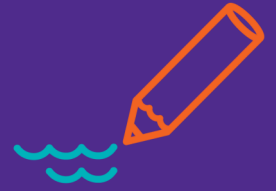
ARE YOU PREGNANT OR HAVE A BABY UNDER 6 MONTHS?
COME FOR A WARM CUP OF TEA AND A CHAT ABOUT ALL THINGS PREGNANCY, BIRTH AND BABIES

SPECIAL GUEST APPEARANCES FROM MIDWIVES AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS

Tuesdays 1-2pm
Starting 19th May

HOME-START FAMILY CENTRE
14 STEVENSON STREET, OBAN
JO@HOMESTARTLORN.ORG.UK
07878074570
TEAMREACH CODE: HSL1

Spotlight on Inspiralba



Inspiralba employability lead role

Our Office Coordinator Andrew started the role of employability lead through the Inspiralba program back in October 2025. Each week he devotes up to 1 day per week in this role, and has now completed 6 months. He has provided more information below:

To give an overview, the **employability lead** role entails:

- Meeting referred clients **one-to-one** to find out what their needs are.
- Complete a **needs assessment** with them (similar to an initial visit “getting to know you” form) and onboard them onto the system.
- Identify what support the client might need to get back into employment (e.g., training courses, laptops, mental health support) or improve their employability.
- **Purchase and implement the agreed support** this may be organizing training, certifications or helping them prep for interviews.

Onboarded Clients

16 clients onboarded, 5 are HS families and 11 were external referrals.

3 clients completed the scheme and were supported with their wellbeing and via training, one into a new part time role.



Parental Employability
Support Fund

Just a few examples of assistance that have been implemented:

Therapy in various types– face to face and online.

6 laptops purchased for online training and CV support/application support.

3 driving theory test books purchased.

Video editing course through the Open University.

CSCS card examination.

3 Beauty and Therapy courses booked and completed to further existing skills.

3 CV's re-written for clients.

4 jobs offered to clients.

Accessing local skills

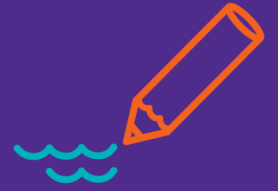
Andrew has compiled a list of local and national trainers, therapists and other providers (driving instructor, wellbeing therapy) in order to be able to provide the clients with options in their respective requirements.

You can find out more about Inspiralba below:

<https://www.inspiralba.org.uk/employability-support>



Fundraising...



Glasgow Kilt Walk 2026

Our wonderful Home-Start Lorn Volunteer, Beth Campbell, took part in the Glasgow Kilt Walk, raising awareness and funds for the charity. She walked the 14.6 mile route in under 5 hours (4 hrs, 49 mins) and raised a whopping £560 (and counting!)

Beth said:

Sunday 26th April, a warm sunny day, walking from Clydebank to Balloch, 14.6 miles. Got a shoutout for HomeStart Lorn at the start of the walk 📺

Great company and lots of encouragement from the 'Kilties'. It was hard going at times, especially when my wee toes blistered BUT there was never a moment of giving up.

Towards the end of my walk we were joined by lots of families on their Wee Walk and that raised my spirit and bought home why I was there.

Blood, sweat but no tears!



Pop-Up Shop Success at the Family Centre

On Friday 24th and Saturday 25th April, we were delighted to host a pop-up shop at the Family Centre, made possible by the generous donation of items from a local shop owner.

The event was a great success, raising over £300. In addition, it provided a valuable opportunity for families to collect brand new clothing free of charge, helping to support those in our community.

A big thanks to the staff and volunteers whose time and effort made this event possible.



Funding News



Funding updates

We are delighted to share some recent funding successes that will help us continue supporting families across our community:

- Argyll and Bute Early Years – £12,000 awarded to support our service and support offerings for children aged 0-3.
- William Grant – £40,000 (£20,000 per year for two years) contributing towards the running costs of Home-Start Lorn.
- STV Children's Appeal – £3000 towards the cost of delivering group activities.

It is thanks to our funders and the generosity of our community that we are able to continue running our organisation and supporting local families.

If you would like to donate and help us continue this work, you can do so through our People's Fundraising link- <https://www.peoplesfundraising.com/donation/home-start-lorn>

An enormous thank you to all of our funders! Without their support, belief in the service, and financial backing, we would not be able to operate.



As a charity, our continued service provision is always reliant on securing ongoing funding.

If you are reading this newsletter and are in a position to make a monetary contribution, please see our website for full information about different ways to donate:

<https://homestartlorn.org.uk/funding>

