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## General Manager’s Report

2021-2022 was another year of change for most of us. While we emerged from the Covid-19 pandemic with a welcome sigh of relief, we found that returning to ‘normal’ wasn’t quite as easy as we might have imagined.

We were delighted to move away from remotely supporting families via phone and video calls, and get back to seeing them face to face, in their own homes when restrictions allowed; outdoors and in public spaces when they didn’t. It was a joy to welcome families back to our groups and see the fun children had playing, learning and socialising together.

After six years in Alford Place, our team embraced the additional change of moving to our new offices in Union Street’s Langstane House in November and it really is fantastic to be together again - supporting, inspiring and learning from each other.

What hasn’t changed is our commitment to helping families give their children the best possible start in life. The pandemic has left its mark on all of us, and its consequences for young children and their parents and carers has often been severe.

Families were forced into close living conditions for long periods of time which put a strain on many relationships. Job losses, money worries, fears around Covid- 19, home schooling older children and being cut off from family and friends, all contributed to an increase in anxiety and other mental health problems for parents.

Across Aberdeen and the rest of the world, children missed out on learning, play and social opportunities so critical to their early development. For many families, providing children with a healthy diet, enough exercise and access to toys, books, games and activities – all so important to their growing bodies and brains - proved a real challenge.

It’s clear that the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable families continues even as the pandemic recedes, and will be felt for many years to come. Today, we’re more resolved than ever in our mission to give support and friendship to families, helping them to create a loving and secure home environment where their children can grow up happy, healthy, confident and able to achieve their full potential. Our dedication is unwavering, and we will continue to walk alongside them, giving them the help, advice, encouragement and support they need, when they need it. Our work has never been more important.

**Eleanor McEwan**

General Manager, Home-Start Aberdeen