



Home-Start
Romania



The Home-Start Experience in *Romania*

A Ten-Year Impact Study
2015–2024

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Introduction

Home-Start is an internationally recognised family support programme that began in the United Kingdom in 1973. Its purpose is to support families with young children during challenging periods, by offering emotional, practical, and educational help through trained volunteers who visit families in their own homes. By strengthening families early, Home-Start aims to prevent later difficulties and support healthy child development.

In Romania, the Home-Start programme is implemented by the Adina Stiftelsen Foundation, a non-governmental organisation established in 2004 and active in rural communities in Dolj County. The Foundation works mainly with families affected by poverty, social isolation, or limited access to education. Within the Foundation's model, Home-Start represents the first and most important step, opening the door to long-term support through kindergarten activities, afterschool programmes, educational assistance, youth development, and women's empowerment initiatives.

In 2025, following the Foundation's 20th anniversary, a research study was conducted in partnership with the University of Craiova to understand the long-term impact of Home-Start on children, parents, and volunteers over the past ten years.



Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the research was to explore how Home-Start contributes to children’s development and family well-being over time, by both the support itself and the potential to be involved in other programmes. The study focused on understanding how early, home-based volunteer support influences children’s development, subsequent education, confidence, and social skills, how family relationships and communication change, and how parents and volunteers experience the programme.

The research also aimed to document Home-Start’s role in preventing educational and social risks, and in encouraging families to continue engaging with other supportive programmes offered by the Adina Stiftelsen Foundation (see Table).

Open Kindergarten Programme	Activities to nurture a healthy attachment child-parent	Preschoolers
After School Programme	Educational and personal development activities	Grades I-IV
Adina Home Programme	Educational and personal development activities	Grades V-VIII
Educational Programme	Professional guidance, financial, material and moral support	After graduating from Grade VIII
V13 Programme	Motivation for school and vocational training for 13 to 24 year old's	Youth at risk with focus on NEET youth
Empo Programme	A space where women can socialize, build self-confidence, develop skills, self-advocate/advocate	Over 16-year-old vulnerable women, unemployed

Methodology

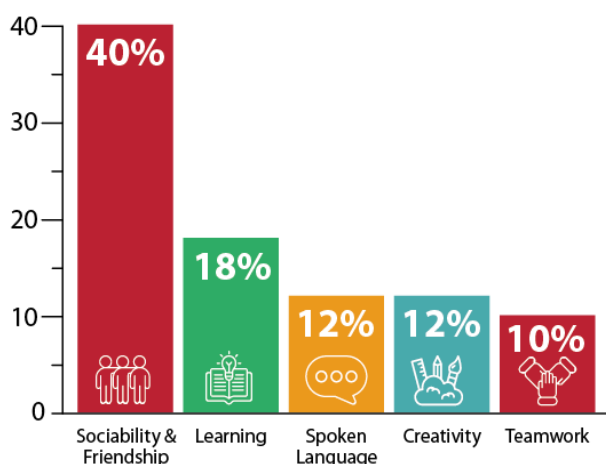
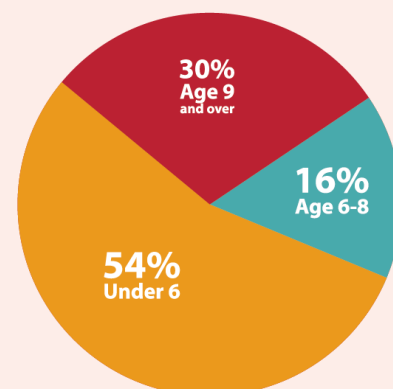
The research combined structured and open-ended questions. Questionnaires were completed by 83 children and young people and by 43 parents from families who had participated in the Home-Start programme between 2015 and 2024. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with 15 Home-Start volunteers and with 6 former child beneficiaries who are now teenagers or young adults.

The research was carried out During May and June 2025 by 24 students from the University of Craiova, under professional supervision. Participation was voluntary, and all data were anonymised and handled according to ethical standards.



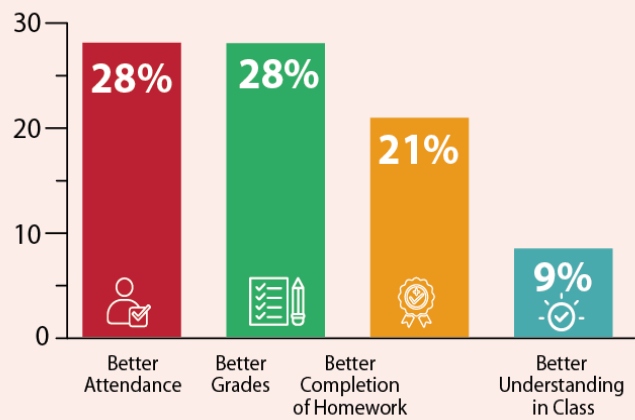
Children's Experiences and Outcomes

One of the most important findings of the study is that Home-Start reaches children very early in life. More than half of the children joined the programme before the age of six, a period known to be critical for emotional, social, and cognitive development. This early involvement highlights Home-Start's strong preventive role.



Children described clear benefits from their participation in Home-Start and then in other Adina Stiftelsen programmes. Many spoke about becoming more confident, more sociable, and better able to communicate with others. Creativity, teamwork and openness were frequently mentioned as areas of growth. More than 80% of children felt that the Adina programmes helped them to a very large extent in their personal, social, and future professional development.

Home-Start and subsequent programmes also had a positive impact on school life. Children reported better grades, improved attendance, and greater consistency in completing homework. Some had already completed their education, but the remainder reported strong aspirations to complete middle (15%) or high school (67%), possibly on to university (9%). Attributing these impacts to support received, the most commonly cited experiences were home visits and after school activities. These results suggest that emotional and social support at home from early childhood and then into school age can play an important role in educational engagement and aspirations.



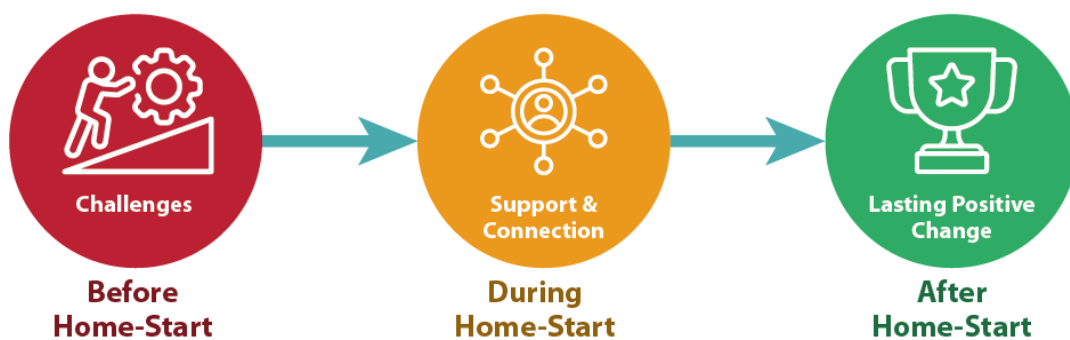
The emotional impact of Home-Start is especially striking. Almost all the children surveyed clearly remembered the volunteer who visited their home, even years later, and the vast majority considered Home-Start to be very important for their family. When asked to describe the volunteer in one word, children chose words such as “help,” “joy,” “friendship,” “support,” and “together.”



Former Beneficiaries' Reflections

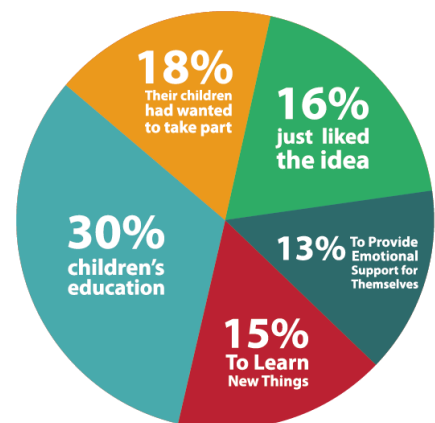
The reflections of former child beneficiaries of Home-Start in open-ended interviews mirrored the findings from the surveys. They saw the experience of Home-Start as an important turning point in their lives. Several explained that the volunteer arrived during a difficult period and provided emotional stability, encouragement, and practical guidance. They spoke about gaining confidence, learning responsibility, improving family communication, and staying connected to education or work.

For some, Home-Start and then involvement in other Adina Stiftelsen programmes contributed directly to finishing school, finding employment, or rebuilding direction and motivation. These stories show that the impact of Home-Start often extends well beyond childhood.



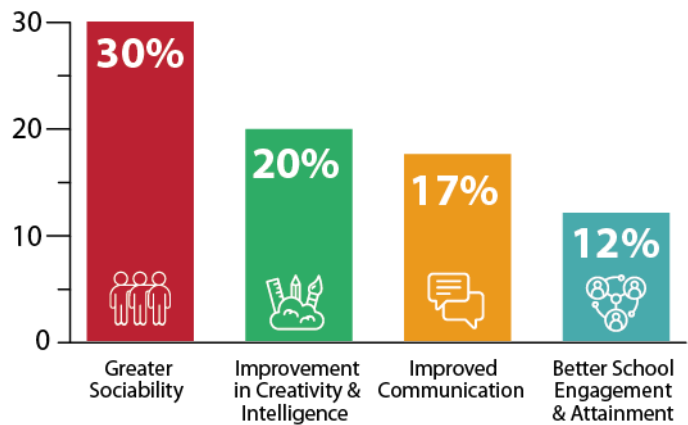
Parents' Experiences and Family Changes

Parents explained in survey responses that they joined the Home-Start programme primarily because they wanted support for their children's education (30%), to learn new things (15%) or to provide emotional support for themselves (13%), while other reported more generally that their children had wanted to take part (18%) or that they just liked the idea (16%).



Parents valued the encouragement their children received, and the positive atmosphere created by the volunteers and they reported meaningful changes within the family. Relationships between parents and children were said to have improved (29%), communication became more open (16%), and parents were more sociable and connected with more friends (25%). Emotional support was also noted (14%).

The relationship with volunteers was described as overwhelmingly positive. The support provided was for many focused on the children’s education and helping with activities for the children (48%). Emotional support and friendly advice for parents was also highlighted (35%). Nearly all parents characterised the support as kind, respectful, and helpful, and all rated the relationship with their volunteer as good or very good. Parents also observed clear positive changes in their children, corresponding closely to changes noted by the children themselves. Parents remarked on greater sociability (30%), improvement in creativity and intelligence (20%), improved communication (17%), and better school engagement and attainment (12%).



Volunteers Perspectives

Home-Start volunteers came from a wide range of ages and professional backgrounds, but shared a strong motivation to support children and families. In their open-ended interviews they described Home-Start as a programme that allowed them to build trust slowly, through consistent presence, patience, and genuine care.

Volunteers highlighted that many families face significant challenges, including poverty, lack of time, inconsistent or low parent–child interaction, limited education, and social isolation. They also highlighted poverty, large family size, and poor living conditions. Despite these difficulties, they observed that even small, regular actions—playing with a child, listening, encouraging hygiene or homework routines—can lead to meaningful change. Changes in the children as they supported families included more attentiveness, better motivation for and engagement with learning, and better behaviour. The majority identified better parent-child interaction, more joint parent-child time and generally more parental interest in children’s development and education. More consistent family routines were also mentioned.

Many volunteers described the experience as personally transformative and fulfilling. They spoke about developing greater empathy, patience, and social awareness, and about the deep emotional value of being able to make a difference in a child’s life.

Highly Emotionally Enriching **Soulful** Deeply Impactful
Meaningful Accomplishment **Transformative** Personally Fulfilling

Overall Conclusions

This research study has shown that Home-Start, as part of the Adina Stiftelsen Foundation's work, can make a meaningful difference for parents and children during difficult periods. By offering regular, home-based support, the programme helps children develop emotionally, socially, and educationally, while also supporting communication and relationships within families.

Parents, children, and volunteers spoke about the value of having someone who took the time to visit, listen, and offer support. These relationships were described as reassuring and supportive, helping families feel less alone and more confident in supporting their children. Subsequent to the Home-Start support, many of the children participated in other programmes offered by Adina Stiftelsen for school-age children. These served to consolidate and extend the impact of Home-Start in ways that are likely to provide young people with activities that enhance both academic achievement and also personal skills and social experiences.

Thus overall, the findings suggest that Home-Start provides an important form of early support that families can rely on. For some, this support continued to influence family life even after the visits ended, helping to strengthen relationships and encourage positive paths for children as they grow.