



*“Having my volunteer gave me the space to be a more engaged mum.”*

## Tatiana’s story

"My second son, Khamani was born during the pandemic. He was an exceptionally clingy baby and I think I knew deep down that something wasn't quite right. When he was 7 months old Khamani was diagnosed with a rare eye disorder, and we were told that he had already lost 80 percent of his sight. Suddenly we were thrust into a world of medical appointments. Khamani had two operations back-to-back to save the remaining 20 percent of his vision.

Khamani’s disability makes life harder to manage and affects all of us. Getting out with the kids, keeping on top of the housework, managing Khamani’s appointments, cooking meals or spending time with my older son Micai, 6, when Khamani refuses to be put down is tough. Most of the time Micai would go to our bedroom where he’d sit on his tablet for hours as all my focus was on Khamani. I felt so guilty.

My relationship with the boys' father broke down and I was left on my own, struggling to cope. I didn't want to burden friends and family, so I put on a mask, pretending to the outside world that I was coping when in fact I was desperately lonely, isolated and crippled with anxiety. We were referred to Home-Start Wandsworth, and I was matched with a Home-Start volunteer, Cynthia, who immediately put me at ease.

Cynthia is a rainbow in our life. With her help, we are able to leave the flat and go to the park, and even go on family day trips. When Cynthia visits, I have time to catch up on household chores and I can play a game or read with Micai while Cynthia plays with Khamani. For the first time, I can spend quality time with Micai knowing that Khamani is happy playing with Cynthia; she has built a brilliant bond with him.

We are so lucky to have Cynthia in our life. The difference she makes to my family is huge. I can be having a bad week and then I’ll think Cynthia will be here on Wednesday and my anxiety goes down. She takes the pressure off and that makes me a more engaged and happy mum. The boys now have a mum who feels more confident and independent, less stressed and anxious.

I wouldn't be where I am today without Home-Start. By the time they got involved I’d lost all confidence in myself. I was struggling with Khamani’s disability and I was still coming to terms with being a single parent. I was feeling very low. When I look back I can’t believe how far I’ve come. I no longer feel guilty the children are missing out because they now have everything they need and more."