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North West Kent

# VOLUNTEER INFORMATION PACK



***Each volunteer is reliable, non-judgemental, accepting,  
genuine, respectful, acts as part of a team -  
and aims to make herself redundant!***

# **STAFF CONTACT NUMBERS**

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[ Manager ]**

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+ Special Needs Lead ]**

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[ Administrator & Co-ordinator for Gravesend ]**

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# VOLUNTEER POLICY

Home-Start wants to see a society in which every parent has the support they need to give their children the best possible start in life...  
It offers a service recruiting and training volunteers - who are usually parents themselves - to support to families with at least one child under 5 years

## Policy Statement

Home-Start volunteers play a crucial role in providing support for families and are central to the Home-Start service. The work of the organisation is dependent on the availability of a committed team of volunteers able to support the delivery of service to families.

Home-Start NW Kent is committed to valuing volunteers, preparing them for their role and supporting them on an ongoing basis.

## Underpinning Principles

- Volunteers do not need specific qualifications; it is their life experiences, attitudes and interpersonal skills that matter
- All volunteers are carefully recruited, selected, inducted, trained and supported for their individual role within the organisation
- Each volunteer is closely supervised by trained staff who monitor the impact of the work with or for families
- Volunteers need to be committed to the scheme and to the ethos of Home-Start and understand and implement Home-Start's policies
- Home-Start recognises that volunteers require satisfaction from their role and encourages opportunities for personal development
- Home-Start's professional approach to managing the work of the volunteers allows the organisation to demonstrate the value of their work to families, to volunteers and to the wider community
- Feedback from volunteers is encouraged and welcomed in developing the work of the scheme and the role of its volunteers

The [Volunteer Charter](#) sets out the mutual hopes and expectations between Home-Start and its volunteers.

## Procedures

Home-Start UK provides a range of procedures and guidance which are embedded into the Home-Start Quality Assurance System for Schemes. These include the necessary legal requirements but are also designed to ensure good practice is followed including in the following areas:

- Volunteers will be recruited from all sections of the community in line with Home-[Start's Equality, Fairness and Diversity](#) policy
- Volunteers will be supported in their role and receive regular supervision - providing opportunities for development of the volunteering role and access to advice and guidance as required
- All out of pocket expenses will be paid as agreed by the scheme
- Volunteers will be covered by insurance while carrying out their agreed role
- Home-Start NW Kent will take all reasonable steps to ensure the volunteer's health and safety in accordance with the [Health and Safety](#) policy and procedures
- In line with the [volunteer complaints procedure](#), volunteers have the right to discuss any concerns with the relevant person
- Volunteers will be encouraged to participate in ongoing training opportunities and peer support sessions to maximise the benefits of their volunteering
- Volunteer information will be included in the scheme's monitoring and evaluation and will help to measure the impact of Home-Start's work

Further information available on the Home-Start UK website [www.home-start.org.uk](http://www.home-start.org.uk)

# Looking after children in the absence of their parents

## Policy Statement

It is the policy of Home-Start NW Kent that in some situations or in unforeseen circumstances, volunteers may be asked to look after the children without the parents present. This may involve taking the children out or looking after them in the family home

### 1. Context

Home-Start volunteers provide non-judgmental, practical and emotional support to help build the family's confidence and ability to cope. Home-Start NW Kent allows volunteers to look after children in the absence of parents in some circumstances. For example:

- looking after the child/ren in the family's home while the parent(s) attend a meeting or appointment
- accompanying the family (eg to a Citizens Advice Bureau, or to the GP's) to look after the children while the parent/s go into their appointment
- taking the child/ren out for a short while to the park or similar to give the parent a brief break, or to spend some focused time with one of the other children

### 2. Procedures

- 2.1 The volunteer and the family should have had the opportunity to get to know each other, and wherever possible the activity should be planned in advance
- 2.2 The Co-ordinator will normally have agreed in advance to the activity in discussion with the volunteer, and undertaken an appropriate risk assessment
- 2.3 Risk assessment includes arrangements (if appropriate) for transporting the children, and signed permission is obtained from the parent where possible
- 2.4 The family record and the volunteer diary records the activity and the reason for the arrangement
- 2.5 The Co-ordinator ensures that the volunteer has the necessary information from the parent, including emergency contact details (see checklist)
- 2.6 The volunteer will be clear about how and who to contact at the scheme if they have any concerns, *including* if the activity happens out of office hours
- 2.7 HS NWK recognises that in rare circumstances an urgent situation may require that a volunteer takes sole charge of the child/ren without the opportunity of discussing it with the Co-ordinator in advance
- 2.8 In such a situation, the volunteer will record on the volunteer diary the reason and circumstances for the event, and inform the Co-ordinator *at the earliest possible opportunity* by phone
- 2.9 The Co-ordinator will undertake any appropriate follow up review with the family and/or discuss in supervision with the volunteer
- 2.10 Volunteers will not normally be permitted to invite the family they support to their own home, although in very limited circumstances and only with the prior approval of the organiser, this may happen (for example if the supported family are living in a situation that makes home-visiting difficult or impossible or there are very limited opportunities for outings etc)
- 2.11 Unaccompanied children will never be taken to the volunteer / staff member's house, except in emergency situations
- 2.12 HS NWK will ensure that this policy and procedures are explained to all new volunteers during initial training and regularly referred to during supervision / ongoing training

# **SHARING OF PERSONAL INFO**

- The family you visit will only be told your first name
- They will not have details of your address or phone number
- You may choose to give them your mobile number, but you don't need to – and, if you would rather not, blame Home-Start 'policy'
- To protect your landline number if/when ringing the family, dial 141 first
- Please be aware when sharing information at all times, for instance regarding where you work

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You will receive details of any family you are matched with as follows :

- Name/s
- Address
- Contact number
- Dates of birth (re ages + birthdays)

Please keep this in a private place – only to be shared with appropriate person/s in terms of your whereabouts

# CONFIDENTIALITY

The issue of confidentiality is of central importance to Home-Start – and our observance of it is crucial to our scheme's success and the success of each and every Home-Start relationship

## What Does It Mean ?

- confidential information is shared between two or a very limited number of people (normally between the volunteer and staff member who introduced)
- there is an understanding that such information will go no further (except in the case of child protection)
- only trusted people will be party to confidential information – so if a volunteer is unreliable in other ways, i.e. pattern of home visiting, he/she is unlikely to be trusted with it
- the revelation of confidential information will place a responsibility on the listener who 'shared the burden'

## How Do I Respond ?

- in most situations, it is enough to listen, acknowledge, reassure and discuss alternative methods of support. When the nature of the confidential information is worrying the volunteer, he/she should always discuss it with their staff contact [ who is paid for worrying ]
- never enter into a collusive relationship regarding confidentiality, i.e. *"I've got something to tell you – you won't tell anyone, will you?"*
- remember, you have been chosen as a confidante – so you should not feel inadequate to deal with the information given
- if seriously in doubt as to whether to keep confidentiality, ask yourself *"Is the safety of a child affected?"* Clearly, we intervene to protect a child – whereas adults have to be assumed to be able to protect themselves
- only in cases where you feel the child is in need of protection must you ensure that relevant agencies have relevant information – and this is best conveyed through Home-Start staff. It is almost always possible to first discuss the situation with the family and ideally encourage them to take steps themselves. If not, staff will talk to them and refer on as appropriate

## Further Guidance

- Never be drawn into discussing one Home-Start family with another. Remember, your family may be testing you. If you make it clear that you cannot discuss another family, this will strengthen the trust between you and the family you are supporting
- Be very careful what you say if you meet a fellow volunteer, or staff member in a public place
- If you are explaining what you do as a Home-Start volunteer to a friend, or anyone interested, take care not to disclose info regarding the family you are home visiting
- When talking to professionals who know the family you visit, never allow yourself to be drawn into disclosing information told to you in confidence (unless related to child protection)
- Always consider carefully how much you wish to say about the family you visit within a support/supervision group. Keep in mind that someone present may be able to identify them
- Beware of neighbours (of family you visit) who attempt to draw you into discussion
- Always store written information (in which initials are used, rather than full names) in a safe place - keeping names/addresses separate from notes
- consider carefully how much you tell your own family about your Home-Start activity. You may put them in a difficult situation if you say too much



# **PERSONAL SAFETY**

*It is Home-Start policy that staff and volunteers always prioritise their own personal safety in respect to how they carry out their roles and responsibilities*

- volunteers will only visit a family following an initial visit by staff
- volunteers will not be placed with families where there is a known danger to personal safety. A question will be asked at referral stage regarding hazards to personal safety, such as dangerous dog, violent partner
- volunteers will only visit families where all adults in household consent to Home-Start involvement
- volunteers will only visit families who have specifically and willingly agreed to Home-Start support
- volunteers will be immediately withdrawn from visiting a family if a potentially dangerous situation should arise, or is feared to develop
- volunteers will be fully supported with any personal safety concerns

## **TRAVEL**

- volunteers should ensure someone knows and can easily determine their whereabouts and expected time of returning home
- try to use the same 'known' travel route where possible, avoiding isolated areas
- keep home visits confined to daylight hours wherever possible
- stay alert and access help quickly if concerns regarding safety develop. Car doors should remain locked and car driven to police station or garage forecourt. Do not leave car unless absolutely necessary
- if on foot, try to walk with someone else and remain as visible as possible. Be aware of possible places of safety to head for if trouble develops
- keep body language confident and assertive, move purposefully and avoid heroics
- always take a common sense approach and pay attention to gut reaction

## HOME VISITING

- be assertive about any personal safety issues arising in a home. Ask for the family's co-operation in their personal safety, i.e. keeping a dog in another room during a visit
- read the signs as early as possible. If a potentially dangerous situation is developing, leave as quickly as possible. Volunteers should not attempt to referee a domestic conflict situation
- do not attempt to remove child/ren from house, but do contact Home-Start staff immediately after leaving
- consider if there are any child protection implications and follow procedures
- seek staff support and guidance at any time you feel uneasy
- consider, with your staff contact, the feasibility of continued contact with the family

***NONE OF THE ABOVE IS MEANT TO OVERRIDE  
COMMON SENSE OR INSTINCTUAL REACTIONS***

***PERSONAL SAFETY OF VOLUNTEERS  
WILL ALWAYS BE OF PRIMARY CONSIDERATION***



# TRAVEL

Volunteers should not be out of pocket for the home visiting support they offer families.

Travel cost is payable to be claimed every couple of months, having completed a 'Travel Expenses Form'.

Those travelling by car should note mileage (perhaps at first home visit alone) and those using public transport should keep tickets in order to be reimbursed.

Some may use their car occasionally to transport a family to a group or shopping – with personal car insurance providing cover.

It is suggested that volunteers write to their provider to inform them of this :

*"I am an accredited volunteer with Home-Start North West Kent, a family support home visiting scheme.*

*In the course of my voluntary activity with them, I may occasionally use my car to carry passengers.*

*For such journeys, I am eligible to receive mileage allowance of 40p per mile to contribute to the cost of fuel.*

*I should be grateful if you will confirm that my policy covers any passenger of third party claims which might arise out of the use of my vehicle for this purpose."*

The Association of British Insurers (ABI) accepts that being a volunteer is a social act and so covered by *social, domestic and recreational* use of a car included in comprehensive insurance.

## GENERAL INSURANCE

All volunteers and staff members are covered by a standard [ Zurich ] policy covering Home-Start activities [ bought into by schemes nationwide ]

This policy does not cover families in the homes of volunteers so while trips to the shops, park, toddler group, childrens centre etc. are fine –

PLEASE DO NOT TAKE PARENTS AND/OR CHILDREN  
BACK TO YOUR OWN HOME

# QUESTIONS ANSWERED

## Who refers families for Home-Start support?

Anyone can, including families themselves – but it tends to be Health Visitors, Childrens Centre Workers, Social Workers and various other community workers

## How will I be matched with a family?

Once you have completed the 40-hour course of preparation (including the CHILD PROTECTION session), provided references and received your cleared CRB check back – an appropriate family will be identified.

A telephone call from Home-Start staff will give you some information, initially without names/address – and time to consider, if required. If and when agreed, she will arrange with you to personally introduce (either meeting you at the address or collecting you). You will be given basic written contact details to keep at home.

## How long will I support a family for?

Staff reviews usually take place at six months and then 12 months, with you as volunteer consulted with at all times as to the appropriate time to begin withdrawal. Families have been informed by staff before a volunteer is matched that weekly support will be for anything between 6 and 15 months, with closure aimed for around one year. It is a good idea to remind them and discuss this with them every so often, so that endings are not a surprise for anyone.

## What should I do if I have any concerns/worries?

Always contact a member of staff. If not the person who introduced you to the family – one of the others. Regular supervision will be provided – one-to-one, in small groups and by telephone – to discuss how you're getting on and share ideas.

**WELCOME !**  
**You have joined a scheme with**  
**31 years history of supporting**  
**North West Kent families**