

Home-Start Ashford & District

Personal Safety Guidelines



Home-Start Ashford & District Contact Numbers

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Emergency Services, 999

Police, Non-Emergency, 101

NHS, Non-Emergency, 111

Out of Hours Social Services, 03000 419191

Your Personal Safety

Volunteering with Home-Start Ashford & District means you will often be working alone, for instance when you travel to visit a family or attend a Home-Start event or course. While you are visiting a family you will also be alone in the sense that usually no other Home-Start volunteer or member of staff will be with you.

The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that, in the highly unlikely event that you encounter a risky situation or find yourself facing a medical or other emergency when you are by yourself, you will know what to do.

Please take a moment to read the guidance below and remember:

Rule number 1 is: Always give priority to your own personal safety.

The Basics

- Always give priority to your own personal safety. Never put yourself or others at risk while attempting to defuse a situation or tackle an emergency.
- Take the time to familiarise yourself with the personal safety guidance set out below.
- Please attend the personal safety training events offered to you by Home-Start.
- Always carry a mobile phone with you when working alone. The phone should be fully charged and have credit on it.
- Promptly report all incidents where you have felt unsafe - even if just because of a verbal threat - and please co-operate with the Scheme when personal safety issues require investigation.
- In an emergency always use the Emergency Procedure described below.
- Take care not to escalate a situation. In particular, don't use provocative language or gestures towards members of the public, families, fellow volunteers or staff.

Training

On joining Home-Start Ashford & District, you will receive information and training in the personal safety aspects of volunteering. Personal safety information and training will be updated and repeated periodically as necessary.

Guidance

Below are detailed guidelines on dealing with particular risk situations which we strongly recommend you follow. However, none of this is meant to override your own common sense and gut instincts.

Home-Visiting

First, please be reassured that:

- You will only be asked to visit a family where the family has specifically and willingly requested support from Home-Start and following an initial visit by a Home-Start Coordinator.

- You will not be placed with a family where there is a known danger to personal safety. When a family is first referred to Home-Start a member of staff will ask questions to establish if there are any known hazards to personal safety within their home e.g. dangerous dogs, violent partner etc.
- You will be immediately withdrawn from visiting a Home-Start family if a volunteer or member of staff believes that a potentially dangerous situation is developing or is likely to develop.
- You will be fully supported if you have any personal safety concerns.

When you are visiting a family we suggest you should:

- Be assertive about any personal safety issues arising in a home. Ask for the householder's co-operation, e.g. keeping a dog in another room during your visit.
- Read the signs of a safety issue as early as possible. If a potentially dangerous situation is developing, leave as quickly as possible. Do not attempt to referee a domestic conflict.
- Always use a Buddy System and if necessary the Emergency Procedure (described below) to call for help if necessary.
- Consider if a safety issue has any child protection implications and, if so, follow the Home-Start Ashford & District Safeguarding Procedures (available from the office on request).
- Report any safety incidents immediately to the Scheme, and ask for support and guidance for your own needs and together discuss whether continued contact with the family is feasible.

Travel

When travelling to and from family visits and other Home-Start events you are also likely to be alone. It is therefore important that you:

- Use a Buddy System to ensure someone knows your expected time of arrival home.
- Try to use the same pre-planned travel routes (known to your Buddy) where possible, avoiding isolated areas if you can.
- Keep activities confined to daylight hours wherever possible (last appointment preferably no later than 4pm).
- Stay alert and get help as quickly as possible if you are concerned about safety. If in your car you should lock the doors and drive to a police station or garage forecourt. Don't leave the car unless absolutely necessary.
- If on foot, try to walk with someone else and be as visible as possible and be aware of possible places of safety to head for if trouble develops.
- Keep body language confident and assertive, move purposefully and avoid heroics.

The Buddy System

Our "Buddy" system is designed to add a further level of security for you when you are visiting a family or attending a Home Start event:

- We recommend you appoint a Buddy whenever you are working alone. Your Buddy can be any responsible adult. Your Buddy must however be someone who is available and able to physically go and check on you if necessary (for example they should not have children at home with no-one else to care for them). If you are unable to ask family or friends you can use your coordinator.
- You should let your Buddy know the date, time and location of your home visit or other appointment and your expected time of return home. You should also give your Buddy the Home-Start Contact Numbers and tell them what to do if you do not return at the expected time (see the next paragraph).
- If within one hour of the time of your expected return from working alone, you fail to make contact with your Buddy, he or she should immediately try to telephone you on your mobile number. If there is no satisfactory response and there is reasonable cause for concern, the Buddy should call one of the Home-Start Contact Numbers so that the matter can be escalated (see below).
- In the unlikely event that there is no reply from any of the Contact Numbers, your Buddy should call the police on: 101 if they feel this is appropriate.
- Please also consider electronically linking up with your Buddy while you are working alone using a free app on your mobile phones such as "Find Friends" or "Find My Friends" so that the Buddy can track where you are.
- There are also a number of free apps that work as check in-check out assistants that can raise an alarm and be used as a personal alarm should you need, one endorsed by The Suzy Lamplugh Trust is "Hollie Guard"

Emergency Procedures

Medical, Fire or Police Emergency

In the event of a medical, fire or police emergency occurring while you are working alone, you should first call 999 to summon the appropriate emergency services and then, if possible, call one of the Contact Numbers.

Any Threat to Personal Safety – First make sure you are safe

If there is any serious threat to your personal safety or the safety of a member of the family you are visiting, you must first leave the situation as quickly as possible. Once you are in a safe place, you should immediately call 999 if anyone else remains in danger. After that, call one of the Contact Numbers for help and advice.

In the case of an emergency where a child of the family is threatened or at risk please do not remove them under any circumstance. Contact the emergency services and inform them that children are present.

Escalation following a call from your Buddy

If your Buddy calls one of the Contact Numbers to report that you have failed to return home, the Home-Start contact taking the call will immediately call your mobile number, your home number and the number at your family visit or appointment.

If there is no satisfactory response on any of these numbers and there is reasonable cause for concern, the Home-Start contact will then call the following (while continuing to try to call you on your mobile or at home):

- Claire Randall or Kat Wiles
- If necessary, the police on: 101
- The Chair of the Board of Trustees to inform them of the situation and the action taken
- Your named emergency contact to advise them of the situation.

Hollie's Guard

Hollie Guard is a free personal safety app that can be downloaded onto any iOS or Android device.



With Hollie Guard, if ever you feel threatened, you can send out an alert by either shaking your phone or pressing the icon button. Once you activate an alert, your location along with video and audio evidence is automatically sent to your emergency contacts via SMS and/or email. Your emergency contacts can then take action to help you quickly.

There are multiple features which can be used:

- Journey Feature - This ensures safe travel by providing real-time updates as users move between two places.
- Meeting Feature - Meetings allow users to identify when they are going to a meeting with a risk factor. A timer can be set, and an alert is automatically created.
- Man Down - For users in situations where injury or personal immobilisation is a possibility by flagging sudden deceleration, non-movement & impact.
- Reports - Reports allow users to record and geotag incidents within the app. All reports will get saved to the users account, not on the device.

As well as all the features of Hollie Guard, you can now choose to upgrade your service to Hollie Guard Extra, a brand-new service through which an alert response centre will monitor any alerts you trigger.