

# Home-Start Ashford & District

## Volunteer Policy



### 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 is committed to valuing volunteers, preparing them for their role and supporting them on an ongoing basis. Home Start is committed to protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of our volunteers and as such will take all reasonable and practical steps to ensure volunteer health, safety and wellbeing.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the Home-Start Ashford & District Personal Safety and Health and Safety Policies

### 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 volunteering role within the organisation.
- Each volunteer is closely supervised by a trained staff member who monitors the impact of the work of home visiting volunteers with or for families.
- Volunteers are expected to be committed to the scheme and to the ethos of Home-Start and understand and implement Home-Start's policies and procedures.
- 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.
- Volunteers are encouraged and expected to give priority to their own personal safety in respect to how they carry out their Home-Start roles.

The Volunteer Charter sets out the mutual hopes and expectations between Home-Start and its home visiting volunteers.

Home-Start adheres to a range of policies, procedures and practices which are embedded in 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 will take all reasonable steps to ensure the volunteer's health and safety and personal safety in accordance with the scheme Health, Safety and Wellbeing policy and procedures and the scheme Personal 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.

### **Personal Safety and Wellbeing**

It is the policy of Home-Start that all volunteers will always give priority to their own personal safety in respect to how they carry out their Home-Start roles. Given this statement, Home-Start supports the safety of volunteers through the following:

- Volunteers will only visit a family following an initial visit and risk assessment by a scheme co-ordinator.
- Volunteers will not be placed with families where there is a known danger to personal safety. A question will be asked at the referral stage to establish if there are any known hazards to personal safety e.g. dangerous dogs, violent partner
- Volunteers will only visit families in their own home where all adult members of the household consent to Home-Start involvement
- Volunteers will be immediately withdrawn from visiting a Home-Start family if a potentially dangerous situation develops or is feared to develop.
- Volunteers will be fully supported with any personal safety concerns.

### **Volunteer Charter**

Home Start is committed to protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of our volunteers and as such will take all reasonable and practical steps to prevent high levels of stress from occurring as a result of involvement with Home-Start.

We will ensure that all our volunteers are made aware of the steps and support that they can access or take to minimise the effects of stress on themselves.

Home-Start will work to control the risk of stress, provide access to confidential counselling for volunteers affected by stress caused by Home-Start involvement and provide adequate resources to enable managers to implement this policy.

#### **Home-Start will:**

- Work to control the risk of stress.
- Provide access to confidential counselling for volunteers affected by stress caused by Home-Start involvement.
- Provide adequate resources to enable managers to implement this stress policy.

#### **Home-Start responsibilities:**

- To ensure good two-way communication and volunteer supervision.
- To ensure that volunteers attend training to undertake their roles.

- To ensure that volunteers have clarity in respect of their role.
- To ensure that volunteers who are experiencing stress have access to appropriate sources of advice and support.
- To provide access to a confidential counselling helpline for staff.

**Responsibilities of volunteers towards managing own stress levels:**

- To raise issues of concern with their Co-ordinator so that any problems can be quickly resolved.
- To take up training opportunities to ensure they are clear about their role and how to carry it out.

**Confidentiality**

Issues raised by volunteers will be dealt with sympathetically and treated as confidentially as is possible. Issues will be fully investigated as appropriate and steps taken if required.

**Travel**

Travelling to and from Home-Start families and other events creates an area of potential risk to personal safety. It is important for volunteers to:

- Ensure someone knows and can easily determine their whereabouts and their expected time of return to home.
- Try to use the same “known” travel routes where possible, avoiding isolated areas if they can.
- Stay alert and get help as quickly as possible if concerns about safety develop.
- Car doors should be locked and driven to a police station or garage forecourt. Do not leave the car unless absolutely necessary.
- If on foot, try to walk with someone else and be 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 the gut reaction.

**Home-Visiting**

Being in family home creates another area of potential danger to personal safety. Volunteers should always:

- Be assertive about any personal safety issues arising in a home. Ask for the householder’s co-operation in their personal safety, e.g. keeping a dog in another room during a visit.
- Read the signs as early as possible. If a potentially dangerous situation is developing, they should leave as quickly as possible. They should not attempt to referee a domestic conflict situation.
- Contact the relevant emergency services if necessary.
- Consider if there are any child protection implications and follow child protection procedures as instructed by scheme procedures.
- Report any incidents immediately to a scheme Snr manager or Co-ordinator and seek support and guidance for their own needs.
- Consider, with the co-ordinator, the feasibility of any continued contact with the family.

None of the above guidelines are meant to override common sense or instinctual reactions. The personal safety of the employee or volunteer must always be the primary consideration.

Signature of Chair: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date policy adopted: \_\_\_\_\_ Date policy to be reviewed \_\_\_\_\_