

Standards & Methods of Practice of Home-Start Schemes

Home-Start offers support, friendship and practical help to parents with young children, in local communities throughout the UK and with British Forces in Germany and Cyprus.

Home-Start offers a unique service, recruiting and training volunteers – who are usually parents themselves – to visit families at home who have at least one child under 5 to offer informal, friendly and confidential support.

To help give children the best possible start in life, Home-Start supports parents as they grow in confidence, strengthen their relationships with their children and widen their links with the local community.

The following Standards and Methods of Practice are included as a Schedule to the model Memorandum and Articles of Association adopted by each Home-Start scheme.

All Home-Start schemes have charitable status and sign an Agreement undertaking to work to these Standards and Methods of Practice.

1. Home-Start works with families who are experiencing difficulties or suffering stress and who have at least one child under five years of age. These families are offered support in their own homes by volunteers for as long as is necessary.
 2. Each Home-Start scheme is an independent voluntary organisation which works towards the increased confidence and independence of the family by:
 - offering support, friendship and practical assistance
 - visiting families in their own homes, where the dignity and identity of each individual can be respected and protected
 - reassuring parents that difficulties in bringing up children are not unusual and encouraging enjoyment in family life
 - developing a relationship with the family in which time can be shared and understanding can be developed; the approach is flexible to take account of different needs
 - encouraging the parents' strengths and emotional well-being for the ultimate benefit of their own children
 - encouraging families to widen their network of relationships and to use effectively the support and services available within the community.
 3. The Trustees of each Home-Start scheme employ the staff and are responsible for the effective management of the scheme including funding, insurance, premises and good employment practice. The Trustees ensure that proper links are developed with the statutory caring agencies and with other voluntary organisations within the community.
- No representative of a funding agency is eligible for election as the chairperson of Home-Start.
4. At least one salaried organiser/co-ordinator is employed who has relevant training and experience, and whose duties include:

- the administration of Home-Start to ensure conformity with the Standards and Methods of Practice
- the preparation and support of volunteers
- liaison with other voluntary and statutory agencies working with young families
- the initial visit to each family; careful attention is paid to matching volunteers' skills and experience to the needs of the families
- supervising the ongoing support to the family and the ending of that support.

5. Organisers/co-ordinators and volunteers are normally parents themselves, or have had parenting experience. Volunteers are supported by Home-Start organisers/co-ordinators and other Home-Start volunteers. Support from other professional workers associated with the families is available to the scheme.

6. All volunteers are carefully selected and attend an initial course of preparation. They receive ongoing training, information and support to meet the needs which develop in the course of their work with Home-Start.

7. The range of referrals or self-referrals accepted is not limited, except where the resources available to Home-Start are not adequate to meet the number or complexity of cases. All referrers will be informed when Home-Start support begins and ends.

8. All personal information about parents and families is treated as confidential, to be discussed only as necessary with the organiser/co-ordinator in support of the volunteer and to assist the family. Any disclosure of the confidential information to any other person may only be undertaken with the expressed permission of the parents for the purpose of assisting the family, except where it is considered necessary for the welfare and protection of a child when information shall be shared with the appropriate authority.

9. All Trustees, staff and volunteers, must be aware of and sensitive to the Home-Start Equal Opportunities Policy and support and promote its implementation.

10. All Home-Start schemes retain close links both with Home-Start nationally and with other Home-Start schemes and avail themselves of the training and information provided. Policy and guidance are developed through relevant consultation throughout Home-Start. The shared experience of each Home-Start scheme and of Home-Start nationally, regionally and centrally, ensures that the development of Home-Start nationally is as effective as possible to the ultimate benefit of the families.