

## HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY

The Trustees of Home-Start Herefordshire recognise and accept their responsibility to ensure that all reasonable precautions are taken to provide and maintain working conditions which are safe, healthy and comply with all statutory requirements and codes of practice and to ensure the health and safety of any person who may be affected by the operations of Home-Start. For health and safety purposes volunteers will be treated in the same way as employees.

Home-Start Herefordshire will endeavour to create and develop a working environment in which there is an awareness of the vital importance of health and safety and which encourages all employees and volunteers to participate in developing and practising safe working methods and to have regard for the welfare of themselves and others.

### Procedure – Organisational Responsibilities

#### The Trustees

The Trustees of Home-Start Herefordshire have the following responsibilities:

- i) the provision and maintenance of a safe place of work with safe access to and exit from it ;
- ii) a working environment that is free from hazard and risk to health;
- iii) equipment and systems of work that are safe and free from risk to health;
- iv) such information, instruction, training and supervision as is necessary to ensure the health and safety of employees at work;
- v) formal systems for identifying hazards;
- vi) adequate first aid facilities;
- vii) adequate means of preventing and fighting fires;
- viii) the monitoring and review of the implementation of the health and safety policy.

The Trustees have overall responsibility for the implementation of the health and safety policy. Trustees have delegated responsibility for health and safety to the Scheme Manager. The named Trustee Representative for advice and guidance is **Hazel Misselbrook**. The named member of staff responsible for day to day implementation is **Diane Gibson**. In consultation with the Scheme Manager she will maintain safety records, conduct accident investigations, assessments and inspections and ensure the health and safety policy is implemented and adhered to. She will familiarise herself with all relevant health and safety legislation in order to advise the Trustees.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/>

#### Staff

All staff responsible for supervising other staff or volunteers are responsible for the health and safety of their staff and volunteers and will:

- Ensure that on joining Home-Start Herefordshire all new employees and volunteers are given training in health and safety matters appropriate to their duties, including accident reporting, emergency procedures, fire precautions, code of safe conduct and location of first aid box.
- Ensure that all employees and volunteers are provided with adequate information, instruction, training and supervision to ensure health and safety of employees and volunteers.
- Ensure that all employees and volunteers are familiar with Home-Start's health and safety at work policy.
- Co-operate with and participate in the investigation of all accidents and conduct of assessments and inspections.
- Within their area of authority, regularly inspect the workplace with regard to the suitability of equipment provided for health and safety of employees, check work methods and practices to ensure safe systems of work.

## **Employees and Volunteers**

The success of the health and safety policy and its implementation cannot be ensured unless there is active co-operation from the employees and volunteers. All employees and volunteers have a statutory duty to promote their health and safety and the health and safety of others who may be affected by their actions.

All employees and volunteers will:

- Make themselves familiar with and conform to the health and safety policy and observe safety rules at all times.
- Work safely and efficiently and with due regard for the health, safety and welfare of others including the public.
- Report accidents and incidents promptly that may lead to injuries.
- Report all unsafe conditions that may arise
- Co-operate with Management when accidents require investigation.
- Comply with statutory obligations and requirements of the codes of practice.
- Shall not interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interests of safety.
- Shall use any equipment provided in accordance with the training and instruction that they have received.

## **Administrative Arrangements**

### **First Aid**

During the induction programme employees and volunteers will be shown the first aid box available within the office & outside Family Groups. Names of first aiders and appointed persons together with information on how to contact them will be given to the employee and volunteer.

### **Accident Reporting**

- All accidents, however minor, must be reported to the appropriate member of staff who will complete an accident report form (near misses, potential hazards and damage must also be reported immediately).
- All accidents (near misses, potential hazards and damage) will be investigated. The Scheme Manager must be informed and will take responsibility for ensuring that corrective action is taken where appropriate to prevent a recurrence.
- The Scheme Manager will notify the appropriate authorities where necessary.

## **Emergency Procedures**

### **Fire Procedures**

On discovering a fire you should

1. Sound the Alarm
2. Leave the building as quickly as possible (without running) by the nearest exit. Go straight to the assembly point.  
DO NOT stop to collect personal belongings.  
DO NOT re-enter the building until advised by the Fire Service or a senior member of staff that it is safe to do so.
3. Ensure that the Fire Brigade have been called.

In addition, all staff, volunteers or visitors to the office should ensure that they:

- i) are aware of the location of all exits;
- ii) know the location of the fire alarm and fire appliances and how to use them;
- iii) know where to assemble in the event of an evacuation.

### **Fire Precautions**

Potential fire risks need not be dangerous provided that some simple but important precautions are observed by all employees and volunteers.

- Memorise the evacuation procedure, your emergency exits and assembly point in case of fire.
- Familiarise yourself with the position of fire fighting equipment and the correct method of operation of extinguishers and never interfere with, or misuse, the fire equipment.

- Keep fire exits, routes and access to fire fighting equipment clear from any obstruction,; do not wedge fire doors open.
- Keep your working areas free of waste as far as possible and in particular those areas which are not easily accessible, eg: under desks, behind radiators etc. Keep all combustible materials a safe distance from heating appliances and do not place anything on heaters.
- There is to be NO SMOKING on the premises.
- If you do see anything which may be a fire hazard, correct it yourself if easy and safe to do so, or report it immediately.

### **Code of Safety Conduct**

- Conform to the health and safety policy, all health and safety rules and signs, fire precautions and emergency procedures.
- Ensure that you understand and follow the safe operation of your duties, ask if you do not understand any aspect of these.
- Report all accidents, near misses, potential hazards and damage immediately to the appropriate person.
- Do not interfere with or misuse anything provided for the health and safety of employees or volunteers.
- Do not act in a way that could endanger yourself or others; do not play practical jokes.
- Do not run, especially on stairs or steps. Use handrails; never read or be distracted (by mobile phone etc.) while walking.
- Keep your work area tidy and clear of obstructions; do not leave things lying around.
- Clean up any spilt liquids, tracked in rain, etc immediately.
- In the event of your being called upon to handle bulky or heavy objects, only lift or move what you can easily manage; always bend your knees and keep your back straight – take the stress in your legs, not your back. GET ASSISTANCE if in doubt. Do not overreach; do not climb on anything not meant for the purpose; use a ladder, ensuring that it is in good condition.
- Electrical equipment is regularly checked and is normally safe when properly used, but:
  - \* Never touch electrical equipment with wet hands
  - \* Always disconnect electrical equipment before moving it
  - \* Never attempt electrical repairs unless authorised
  - \* Always keep electrical supply cables and wires away from wet areas or from where they could be walked over, etc.
  - \* Always switch off equipment if not in use.
- Information on any specific hazards and precautions will be issued as appropriate and is available from the Scheme Manager. Training in dealing with hazards will be conducted as appropriate.

### **Display Screen Equipment – Precautions**

It is the policy of Home-Start to optimise use and application of Display Screen Equipment (DSE) whilst safeguarding the health, welfare and job satisfaction of those involved in operating such equipment. The following should be observed:

- Employees engaged in intensive VDU work will be allowed a 10 minute break after 60 minutes continuous screen or keyboard work.
- Where the employee's or volunteer's duties includes the operation of a VDU as well as other duties, they should organise their working time so that VDU work is interspersed with other activities whilst maintaining an acceptable level of efficiency and productivity.
- Upon recruitment to jobs involving a significant amount of VDU work employees or volunteers will be advised to have an eye test, the cost of which will be reimbursed to the employee. Where an employee is advised that glasses are needed, these must be obtained and worn. This procedure will also apply to current employees.
- All VDU users are reminded that regular eye check-ups are advisable and should not be neglected.
- In certain circumstances, it may be necessary for an employee or volunteer to obtain spectacles for use in VDU work that differ from those worn at other times. Where this is the

case, Home-Start may, at its discretion, meet part or all of the cost of the spectacles obtained for use at work.

- Furniture should be adapted to fit the employee's or volunteer's body. The lower back needs support; the backrest should be adjusted if necessary. Feet should be placed flat on the floor or a footrest provided. A document holder should be provided if necessary.
- The VDU should be adjusted to increase comfort. The top should be just below eye level. Contrast and brightness may be adjusted for individual preference. Position the VDU at a 90° angle to windows if possible.
- Dim the lights or adjust blinds/curtains if necessary but do not make the room too dark.
- Light coloured clothing which can reflect light on the screen should be avoided.
- Users should be encouraged to look into the distance periodically – a something at least 20 feet away.
- Stretching exercises should be undertaken during the day (neck, shoulder, back, wrists, hands and fingers).

## **Information and Training**

### **New Employees and Volunteers**

On joining the organisation, all employees and volunteers will be informed of the general health and safety aspects of their employment and of any specific information appropriate to them.

### **All Employees and Volunteers**

All employees and volunteers will be informed about, and trained in, health and safety matters including exposure to any identified risks. Such information and training will be given in the event of there being a change in circumstances affecting health and safety, and otherwise will be adapted and repeated periodically where appropriate. Training will be conducted at times suitable for staff and volunteers.

### **Risk Assessment**

Regular and systematic inspections and risk assessments of all potential hazardous substances and work activities will be made by, or under the authority of, the nominated Trustee and will take into account all the relevant regulations and codes of practice. Specialist advice will be obtained if necessary and the risk assessment will be reviewed periodically. The significant findings will be recorded and appropriate preventative and/or protective measures taken as necessary.

### **Alcohol and Drugs Abuse**

Over-indulgence in alcohol and drugs can lead to dependency and resultant health problems. It can impair an individual's performance at work, adversely affecting the efficiency of the organisation and jeopardising the safety of others.

Staff who identify potential sufferers are required to advise the Chairperson of their suspicions.

When an employee or volunteer admits having a problem of this nature and agrees to undergo treatment for it, the organisation will regard the matter in the same way as any other illness and will support the individual's efforts to overcome the problem.

Should the individual not co-operate with treatment or suffer a relapse, or if it appears that recovery is unlikely, a warning will be issued to the employee requiring a full recovery. If this does not materialise, then dismissal is likely.

### **Smoking**

Smoking is not permitted at Home-Start offices. Volunteers are requested not to smoke at the homes of or in the presence of families, as smoking constitutes a fire hazard and can be unpleasant and dangerous for the smoker and family members.

In families Home-Start supports there may be members who smoke. If a member of a family a volunteer is asked to visit is a smoker, the Organiser will discuss this with the volunteer.

### **Infectious Diseases/Conditions**

Job applicants for paid or unpaid work and existing employees and volunteers who have, or suffer from, an infectious disease/condition will be treated in the same way as any other person except in

so far as it puts the health and safety of themselves or others at risk or otherwise adversely affects their ability to perform their duties.

### **Mobile Telephones**

When travelling, staff should not use mobile phones whilst driving a car. Use of the mobile phone with a hands free facility is also not recommended as it can cause distraction and lack of concentration.

The phones can be set up to take messages that can then be checked at the start or end of a journey when the car is parked.

The safety notes from the phone guide should be read as a reminder.

### **Personal Safety**

It is the policy of Home-Start Herefordshire to ensure that everyone in the organisation is aware of and fulfils their responsibilities for safety from violence at work. To this end, Home-Start is committed to:

- Conducting a regular analysis within the organisation to identify risk, hazards, problems or patterns or other issues.
- Introducing as necessary, preventative measures to minimise the risk of violence at work.
- Making all new members of staff and volunteers aware of the personal safety policy and their responsibilities within it.
- Providing after care procedures such as counselling and time off work.
- Training staff and volunteers to ensure that they can fulfil their responsibilities under the policy and protect themselves at work.

### **Staff & Volunteers**

A risk assessment is carried out prior to an initial visit to a family referred.

- Volunteers will only visit a family following an initial visit by the organiser/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 where all adult members of the household consent to Home-Start involvement
- Volunteers will only visit families who have specifically and willingly requested a Home-Start volunteer
- 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.

### **Travel**

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

- Ensure someone knows and can easily determine their whereabouts and their expected time of return to home or office.
- Try to use the same "known" travel routes where possible.
- Stay alert and get help as quickly as possible if concerns about safety develop. Car doors should be locked and the car driven to a place of safety. 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 or volunteer homes creates another area of potential danger to personal safety. Staff and 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 an animal 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, then immediately contact Home-Start staff.
- Consider if there are any child protection implications and follow child protection procedures.
- Report any incidents immediately to your manager, seeking support and guidance for your own needs. Any accidents or near misses on or off site should be recorded in the accident book in the office.
- Consider, with your manager, the feasibility of any continued contact with this family or volunteer.

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.

## Stress

It is the aim of Home-Start Herefordshire to ensure that all staff and volunteers are kept safe and healthy at work and are not subjected to excessive workloads, onerous working practices or a detrimental working environment which might, if unchecked, cause stress. It is also the aim of Home-Start to identify and assist those employees and volunteers who are suffering from stress, for whatever reason, and finding it difficult to cope by offering reasonably practical alternatives and support mechanisms.

Employees and volunteers may seek help themselves from a GP, counsellor or colleague. If it is the employee's or volunteer's belief that their duties or the working environment is the problem, the employee or volunteer is encouraged to raise it with his/her supervisor. Any such complaint will be dealt with sympathetically, maintaining confidentiality as appropriate, fully investigated and appropriate steps taken to assist.

An employee or volunteer may initially not recognise the symptoms of stress. There are a variety of symptoms that may indicate a tendency to stress that has an adverse impact on the employee's work. A supervisor may recognise symptoms associated with stress and discuss these in confidence with the employee or volunteer. If an employee or volunteer is prone to accidents, constantly feeling drowsy, has an inability to concentrate, feels or becomes violent or aggressive, experiences mood swings or erratic behaviour, or depression, these may be signs of stress. The employee or volunteer is encouraged to seek help to identify the cause and take appropriate steps to deal with it.

Signature of Chair: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date policy to be reviewed July 2022