

POLICY STATEMENT

Home-Start generally work to support families by working with parents/guardians, or with parents and children together. However there may be some exceptional circumstances when it may be helpful to look after a child/children without the parents being present. It is the policy of Home-Start that in some situations, or in unforeseen circumstances, volunteers may be asked to look after the children without the parent/guardian present. This may involve taking the children out, or looking after them in the family home.

CONTEXT AND LEGISLATION

Home-Start volunteers provide non-judgmental, practical and emotional support to help build the family's confidence and ability to cope. Home-Start 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 (e.g. to Citizens Advice 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 for the parent to spend some focused time with another child in the family

PROCEDURE

1. The volunteer and the family should have had the opportunity to get to know each other, and wherever possible the activity (without the parent/s) should be planned in advance
2. The co-ordinator will normally have agreed in advance to the activity in discussion with the volunteer, and undertaken an appropriate risk assessment.
3. Risk assessment includes arrangements (if appropriate) for transporting the children, and signed permission is obtained from the parent and child as appropriate.

4. The volunteer diary records the activity and the reason for the arrangement and this is stored in the family file along with the risk assessment and signed consent form for this specific purpose.
5. The co-ordinator ensures that the volunteer has the necessary information from the parent, including emergency contact details (see guidelines).
6. The volunteer will be clear about how and who to contact at Home-Start if they have any concerns, including if the activity is taking place out of office hours
7. Home-Start 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
8. In such a situation, the volunteer will record on the volunteer diary the reason and circumstances for the event, and inform the organiser at the earliest possible opportunity by phone.
9. The co-ordinator will follow up with the family and take appropriate action
10. Supported Families, including their children, are not permitted to visit the volunteer's own home .
11. Home-Start will ensure that this policy and procedures are explained to all new volunteers during the preparation course, and that it is regularly referred to during supervision / ongoing training.

This policy adopted: July 2021

Date policy to be reviewed: July 2024



Signed: Andy Walkden – Chair of Trustees

