Home-Start Network Volunteering Policy

We inspire **growth**

We prioritise **kindness**

We achieve **together**

Document Title	**Volunteering Policy**
Distribution	**For use by Home-Starts UK wide**
Policy Owner	**Assistant Director Network Development**
Ratified	**September 2023 and subsequently January 2024**
Review frequency for local Home-Starts:	**Three years**
Review Cycle	**Reviews could happen more frequently if there were significant changes in legislation**
Source **Directorate/Department**	**Network Development** **Network**

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Volunteering Policy changes

From	To	Date	Reason	By
Changes to the retention period of volunteer files from 12 months	Volunteer files will be retained for 2 years	September 2023	To comply with good practice in data retention	HSUK
Changes to retention periods and exclusions	Extended periods in cases where there are safeguarding issues concerning volunteer to 10 years.	September 2023	To comply with legal changes and good practice and to clarify exemptions	HSUK
Supervision every 12 weeks	Supervision at least every 6 weeks. Clarification of this has been added page 9	January 2024	To meet best practice guidelines	HSUK
Administrators were not required to have any DSB (or alternative checks)	We recommend that administrators have a basic level DBS (or alternative) check	September 2023	In recognition that administrators have access to sensitive data and to reflect good practice	HSUK

POLICY APPROVED BY	
Name:	**Sarah Brown**
Signed:	Sarah Bro
Date:	**18/2/2026**
Review Date:	**Feb 27**

1 Introduction

1.1 Aims and objectives

Home-Start believes in the positive impact that volunteering can have. Volunteers are the heart of Home-Start, and volunteering is embedded throughout all areas of the organisation**.**

This policy reflects the ongoing commitment of Home-Start to help volunteers fulfil their roles to the best of their ability. This policy also exists to highlight the nature of a volunteering relationship with Home-Start and how it is different to that of an employee regarding recruitment, ongoing support, expectations, challenging situations and general management.

The purpose of this policy is:

- To establish a framework to support volunteers so they can provide the best possible support for children and families.
- To offer guidance to volunteer managers and those who interact with volunteers as part of their role, so that they can support volunteers in a safe, equitable, respectful, and effective manner.
- To explain what Home-Start expects of volunteers, and in turn what volunteers should expect of the organisation.
- To emphasise the importance of safety in volunteering at Home-Start; protecting those we support, and the safety of volunteers themselves.
- To ensure that volunteers have a positive volunteering experience.

1.2 Policy Scope

Home-Start seeks to maintain the highest possible standards in safer volunteer recruitment, onboarding practices, training and safeguarding to ensure that volunteers within Home-Start operate within a safe environment.

The policy is applicable to, and must be followed by, all employees, volunteers and contractors, whether permanent or temporary. These groups should be made aware of this policy if they will be working with or supporting volunteers.

The policy will be reviewed on a regular basis to reflect changes in the law, best practice guidance and internal business need.

1.3 Definitions (see also specific guidance in nation relevant appendices)

Unless otherwise stated, the words or expressions contained in this document shall have the following meaning:

Term	***Definition***
Volunteering	Any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit Home-Start. Central to this definition is the fact that volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. This can include a defined role undertaken on a regular basis, or a one-off contribution of time from an individual.
Volunteer	Someone who contributes their time, skills and experience to Home-Start for free and without compensation (other than core expenses in certain circumstances, such as travel for their voluntary role.)
Board	The Home-Start's Board of Trustees
Volunteer Manager/ Co-ordinator/ Supervisor	Any individual who supports a volunteer in their role, be that directly in terms of allocating tasks for the volunteer or through providing training, general guidance and support.

2 Volunteer Agreements, Guidance and Important Information

2.1 General Expectations for Volunteers:

- Home-Start is committed to best practice in volunteer recruitment and management practices, helping to safeguard the families we support.
- Volunteers should be well supported by their volunteer manager. They should know what is expected of them, be offered training suitable for their role and be able to volunteer in a safe and inclusive environment.
- Volunteers should never be engaged to replace paid staff jobs

- All volunteers must familiarise themselves with policies and procedures relevant to their role and carry out their volunteering role within those defined standards and procedures.
- If volunteers know of or become aware of any conflicts of interest associated with their volunteering role, such as knowing a supported family, they should inform their volunteer manager.
- No legal contract, compensation agreement or relationship of employment will be created between Home-Start and the volunteer.

2.2 Expenses:

- It is Home-Start policy that volunteers should not be out of pocket for any expenses that they incur while performing their volunteer role. The organisation will reimburse reasonable, agreed and receipted expenses.
- Volunteers may claim agreed expenses incurred in travelling to and from their place of volunteering. This means the refunding of bus or train fares or the payment of a fuel allowance.

2.3 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR):

- GDPR applies to all data that Home-Start's hold on their volunteers.
- Home-Start will adhere to GDPR guidelines to ensure volunteer data is stored safely and securely, in line with current guidelines, whether this is physically or electronically.
- At the point of application volunteers can opt in or out of different forms of communication from Home-Start, such as our e-newsletter
- The personnel files of volunteers are securely archived for two years after the individual has ceased their volunteering role with the organisation, after which time the file is destroyed. This timeline will be increased to ten years if a safeguarding concern or incident has been raised in connection with the volunteer.

2.4 Health & Safety:

- Home-Start is committed to ensuring that individuals can volunteer in a safe environment and that they are not exposed to unnecessary risks.
- Volunteers are covered by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.
- The Board has overall responsibility for health and safety across the organisation, but all members of Home-Start including volunteers have a responsibility to act safely and ensure they do not expose themselves or others to any unnecessary risks.
- Volunteers will be provided with appropriate health and safety information and training before commencing their role which will include any risks identified as part of the role risk assessment process.
- Volunteer managers and volunteers are jointly responsible for ensuring safe volunteering practice is observed through the application of our Health & Safety policy and, where

relevant, the prior completion of relevant risk assessments for events or specific volunteering activities.

- Volunteers are covered by the terms of the organisation's public and employer's liability insurance policies where they are engaged in approved volunteering roles. This is subject to policy limits, terms, conditions and exceptions.
- Home-Start does not insure volunteers' personal possessions against loss or damage.
- If a volunteer is unsure about any action that could be hazardous or if they require further information, they should contact their volunteer manager for guidance.

2.5 Confidentiality Agreements and Reputation Awareness:

- During their time volunteering at Home-Start, volunteers may have access to confidential or sensitive information. This information should only be shared with relevant individuals at Home-Start unless specifically agreed with the volunteer manager. Volunteers should see the Confidentiality Policy for more information and specific guidance.
- Depending on their role, volunteers may be asked to sign a Confidentiality Agreement.
- Home-Start encourages volunteers to protect the good reputation of Home-Start whilst active in their volunteering role or whilst in association with the organisation. This could include but is not limited to remaining free of substances such as alcohol or drugs whilst volunteering, avoiding abusive or disrespectful language, and generally promoting a positive image of Home-Start through their actions and behaviour. If a volunteer acts in a way that brings the organisation into disrepute, they may be asked to leave their volunteering role with immediate effect.

2.6 Recruiting, training and onboarding volunteers

Home-Start seeks to maintain the highest possible standards in volunteer recruitment, on-boarding practices, induction, training and safeguarding measures. This should ensure that volunteers operate in an environment which is safe for themselves, for the families Home-Start supports and other individuals (including volunteers and staff).

Before a Home-Start volunteer takes up their role, the following should be in place;

- A clear volunteer role description and person specification
- An application form where volunteers can explain how they meet the role description (you may want to provide alternative formats such as recorded applications)
- Volunteers who wish to apply should be informed that relevant Disclosure and Barring (DBS) checks, Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) and Access NI checks are a requirement of the role and what level of check is provided. You may want to explain that a previous criminal offence will not necessarily prevent someone from becoming a volunteer.
- The application form should explain that volunteers will be asked to provide two references.

- Interviews should be conducted. Volunteers should be told about the tasks involved in the role and asked about how their skills, experience and interests would fit the role.
- Volunteer applicants should be asked about why they are interested in volunteering for Home-Start and what motivates them.
- Interviewers can explain what volunteers will gain from the role. This could include training or opportunities for personal development and some of the other opportunities like meeting new people, learning more about their community.
- Staff should enquire about volunteer availability in the interviews and how Home-Start can make the role work for them, for example, flexible hours to allow for childcare.
- Volunteer applicants should be reminded about any requirements they'll need to meet before starting volunteering, for example, undergoing a DBS check or providing references (see Appendix 1) and Appendix 2 for an explanation of induction
- Its good practice to keep records of interviews.
- Completion of a volunteer induction (see Appendix 2)
- (Please refer to the guidance in the Safer Recruitment Policy for Staff for recruitment as some of these aspects apply to volunteers too.)

Documents relating to the recruitment of a volunteers (as outlined above) must be kept on the volunteers file (either hard copy or electronically, in line with the retention table with GDPR/data protection policy).

All volunteers must inform Home-Start if their circumstances change between checks particularly if this affects their suitability for contact with children or adults, or if they undertake new duties that require regular unsupervised contact with children.

2.7 Induction and training

The type of induction and training that a volunteer or trustee requires will depend on their role.

- All volunteers and trustees are required to read and sign the Home-Start Safeguarding Children's Code of Conduct.
- Signed documents should be kept on the volunteers' personnel file.
- Volunteers working with families must complete a full course of preparation

2.8 Supervision

Home-Start recognises that regular and effective supervision plays an essential part in both the provision of a high quality and safe service to families and in the management and development of its volunteers.

1.3 Trustees are ultimately accountable for ensuring that adequate supervision is provided to all volunteers and delegate the responsibility for undertaking this activity to the senior staff member and/or organiser/manager.

Managers must ensure that:

- Supervision is regular, planned and recorded.
- Supervision forms part of the overall framework of guidance and support provided to volunteers.
- As part of their role and commitment to Home-Start, volunteers must be available for supervision meetings.
- Supervision records are kept in line with Home-Start policy; notes are made of discussions to maximise the support to the family and the volunteer's capacity to deliver support.
- Families are aware that the volunteer will be talking to the organiser/co-ordinator about the progress of their home visiting.
- One-to-one contact between volunteers who are supporting families and coordinators should occur at a minimum of once every 6 weeks and the expectations are set out below.
- One-to-one, face to face supervision of volunteers by their co-ordinators should occur at 12 week intervals. In addition, volunteer co-ordinators should make contact with volunteers who support families at 6 week intervals (for example one extra contact between the full supervision). This contact can be done via telephone, Teams/Zoom etc. This contact does **not need to involve a full supervision** for example, where a co-ordinator would discuss all aspects of volunteering such as the volunteers' wellbeing, availability, learning needs etc. The purpose of the 6 weekly contact is to discuss the families that the volunteers supports. This session should be conducted in a reflective/open manner where volunteers are prompted to share with the co-ordinator what support/activities they have been using with the family, what progress the child/ren and family are making/not making and the reasons for this and any observations that the volunteer may have noticed e.g. if the parent appears to be growing in confidence, feeling overwhelmed, finding it difficult to follow through on ideas/suggestions/actions discussed at earlier visits etc. It is important that the volunteer is encouraged to consider how the child/ren are presenting and what impact any challenges facing parents/family/living situation may be having on the child/ren in the family. Volunteers should also be asked if they have any concerns about the child/ren/family. These sessions should be recorded (written notes) and the information should be added to the relevant family file.
- Please note, if a volunteer is supporting a family with very complex needs best practice would be to discuss the family/support more often.
- Undertaking other roles should be supervised as deemed appropriate by the local Home-Start.
- Supervision meetings should be held on a one-to-one basis where confidentiality can be respected.

- Records are signed and retained to comply with data protection requirements. Any data concerning a family is retained on the family file record and any data concerning the volunteer is on the volunteer file.
- Senior staff report on a quarterly basis, to trustees, that volunteers' supervision meetings are up to date and in line with this policy.
- Cancelled or postponed supervision meetings are noted in the volunteer file and an alternative time and date is agreed as soon as possible.
- The volunteer manager is responsible for ensuring the volunteer knows:
  - that they know they can access informal support from the local Home-Start at any point
  - that they should report any safeguarding/child protection concerns, and that they should not wait until the next supervision meeting to do so if any concerns emerge in the course of their support to the family
  - the out of hours telephone number to use to report any safeguarding/child protection concerns.

3 Safeguarding

Safeguarding volunteers and the families they support is vitally important to Home-Start. Home-Starts must ensure they have processes in place to support the following areas addressed in the policy:

3.1 Training

As outlined above, volunteers must receive appropriate and up-to-date training in safeguarding and child protection. Volunteers should be confident in how to report any safeguarding concerns they observe, overhear, or are otherwise involved in. For more information, please read the Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy and the Safeguarding and Protecting Adults at Risk Policy.

3.2 Lone Volunteering

Depending on their role, volunteers may need to perform their role alone. Home-Starts must have local lone working/volunteering procedures that volunteers are made aware of. Lone volunteering is not in itself unsafe, but it has the potential to increase risks.

There should always be a communication plan between the volunteer and the volunteer manager for when lone volunteering is taking place. Volunteers shouldn't remain in a situation where they feel unsafe or take unnecessary risks. Volunteers should always voice any concerns about lone volunteering with their volunteer manager. More information on lone working safely can be obtained from https://www.suzylamplugh.org/.

3.3 Maintaining Appropriate Boundaries

Volunteer managers should be informed if a volunteer has had a previous professional or personal relationship with a family we support to agree how best to manage confidentiality and risk and ensure that Home-Start policies and procedures are followed.

Volunteers should not approach families they support/service users who they encounter in a social setting. This is especially important if the family does not instigate the contact and may not want to be recognised or identified as a user of the Home-Start service.

Volunteers must not enter into a romantic or sexual relationship with service users or members of their families. This constitutes a breach of professional boundaries and relevant codes of conduct/practice.

The organisation recognises that it is possible that the friends and family of volunteers may become service users and, indeed, that volunteers themselves may in some circumstances become service users. It is important that volunteers speak to their volunteer manager about such situations to avoid any conflicts of interest, breaches of confidentiality or professional boundary issues.

It is inappropriate for Home-Start volunteers to deliver a service or become main support to a friend or family member. Arrangements will be made for another volunteer to take over the role. Any exceptions to this must be recorded on the volunteer file (for example, where a parent of a service user volunteers with a group that the service user attends).

3.4 Online Safety and Boundaries

Communicating via digital technology and the internet is an important part of being able to connect with families and often plays a significant role in organising visits. In some circumstances, for opportunities like a Digital/ Remote volunteer, online communication is pivotal to a volunteers' role.

Wherever possible, Home-Start has a responsibility to ensure that communication between families and volunteers retains appropriate boundaries in line with our safeguarding guidelines.

Home-Starts should have a process in place relating to Online Safety which includes a plan for volunteers using technology and online programmes to engage with their families. For staff who would like support in forming your process for online safety and boundaries relating to volunteers, please consult the Online Safety audit tool on @Home.

3.5 Challenging situations involving volunteers

Home-Start strives to be an environment where volunteers can thrive. However, Home-Start recognises that problems may occur and that at some point challenging situations may arise where a volunteer is dissatisfied with their volunteer experience, or where a volunteer's

behaviour or actions may not align with the acceptable standards outlined in this policy. Further guidance on this can be found **here.**

Volunteers are not contractually engaged with Home-Start and therefore the approach to such challenge will be different to the framework followed by paid members of staff. Home-Start is still committed to ensuring there is a fair and consistent process for resolving issues that may arise.

It is important that volunteers are supported by their Home-Start to feel confident about raising concerns, know that they will be listened to and taken seriously and are aware of the process should an issue be raised. Home-Start has a Complaint's procedure, which covers complaints about the organisation and its staff. All complaints against Home-Start will be treated confidentially and will be dealt with openly, fairly and promptly to minimise any disruption to volunteers.

On occasion, it may be necessary for Home-Start to end a volunteer's involvement with the organisation. When this situation occurs, we will endeavour to give due notice to the volunteer, try to find an alternative role, and in all cases will treat the volunteer fairly and with respect. Where circumstances require it, we reserve the right to terminate the volunteer's engagement immediately. Any decision to officially cease a volunteer's involvement with the organisation will be formally communicated to the volunteer in writing. Further guidance on managing the ending of a relationship with a volunteer is available **here.**

Where it is possible that a volunteer may be involved in a safeguarding concern or may be responsible for illegal activity, Home-Start has a duty to follow its own internal safeguarding procedures and report any concerns of illegal or unsafe activity to the appropriate authorities or areas of law enforcement.

3.6 Management of Resting Volunteers

'Resting' is the term used when a volunteer takes some time out from their volunteer role.

- Home-Start aims to maintain a flexible and sensitive approach to supporting volunteers and places a usual limit of twelve months on any rest period, although this is situation and role specific.

- A record of the resting period is kept on the volunteer file and their status as an active or resting volunteer is clear.

- The local Home-Start will keep in touch with the resting volunteer every six weeks or as appropriate to the individual circumstances.

- It is recommended that a returning volunteer has a one-to-one meeting with their manager prior to commencing their duties. It is required that the returning volunteer

rereads and signs the policies relating to their role, as well as undertakes any relevant training.

- If a volunteer returns after more than 12 months it is advised to complete a new application form, references, DBS, refresh their training and read and sign policies relating to their role.

Appendix 1: Recruitment Checks.

- Please note, the below acts as a guidance only. For example, level of checks are determined on whether the volunteer is completing regulated activity, whether they have reasonable day to day supervision and whether your Home-Start is based within a specified establishment.
- Volunteers requiring DBS/PVG/Access NI checks must be rechecked at three yearly intervals unless automatic update service is used
- **Scotland:** Roles that involve regulated activity are to be checked through Scotland's Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme (PVG Check)
- **Northern Ireland:** Roles are checked through AccessNI
- **Email:** customerservices@dbs.gov.uk to ensure you are checking your volunteers and trustees at the right level.

Volunteer Roles	Role description required	Application form /CV	Interview	References	Other	Level of Check	Child Barred List	Adult Barred List	Workforce
Home-Visiting Volunteer	Yes	Enhanced	Formal /Recorded	Two		Enhanced	Yes	Yes	Child & Adult
Group Volunteer	Yes	Enhanced	Formal /Recorded	Two		Enhanced	Yes	No	Child
Trustee	Yes	Enhanced	Formal /Recorded	Two	Trustee declaration	Enhanced	No	No	Child & Adult
Volunteer Driver (Transport)	Yes	Enhanced	Formal /Recorded	Two		Enhanced	Yes	Yes	Child & Adult
Administrator	Yes	Basic	Informal /Recorded	Two		Basic level check	No	No	NA
Retail Assistant	Yes	Basic	Informal/ recorded	One		No check	No	No	NA
One Off (events)	Yes	No	None	None		No check	No	No	NA

Appendix 2: Induction, training and supervision

Please note, these are the minimum requirements. Each local Home-Start will determine what additional training and policies are suitable for the volunteer depending on their role.

Volunteer Role	Safeguarding Code of Conduct (to include safeguarding, GDPR and confidentiality).	Induction	Other policies	Supervision	Additional training (complete as necessary)
Families Home					
Home-Visiting Volunteer	Yes & annual refresher	Volunteer Course of Preparation	Looking After Children in the Absence of Parents	At least every 6 weeks (more frequent if family have complex needs)	
Local Home- Start					
Family Group Volunteer	Yes & annual refresher	1 Day		As required	
Trustee	Yes & annual refresher	Trustee Induction	Trustee Conflict of interest policy	As required	
Volunteer Driver (Transport)	Yes & annual refresher	1 Day		As required	
Administrator	Yes & annual refresher	1 Day		As required	
Retail Assistant	Yes & annual refresher	Retail- specific		As required	
One Off Volunteer (events)	Relevant to event	On the day briefing			