

# Working together to SUPPORT families

A referrers' guide to  
the UK's leading family  
support service



# Home-Start... building strong partnerships to support families

**Home-Start is a national charity that is working with thousands of families in hundreds of communities across the UK.**

**We help families with young children through a combination of home visiting support, group support and social activities. Home visiting by volunteers accounts for at least 60% of our service.**

Home-Start aims to give support to families who may be struggling to cope with a variety of challenges, including post-natal illness, disability, isolation, the demands of parenting young children, bereavement and multiple births: helping prevent these difficulties from escalating into crises, and crises from developing into family breakdown.

In any local community Home-Start will be one of several organisations working with families and we value our relationships with other agencies. Since Home-Start is a voluntary organisation it can offer a flexible approach to individual families.

Home-Start support is not a substitute for professional services but complementary to them, and the best results are achieved through an active partnership between professionals and Home-Start.

**Our expertise, knowledge and UK-wide network of staff and volunteers can be a valuable resource for professionals.**

“ Home-Start is invaluable both to myself, as a professional, and to the women I work with. Having the help of a volunteer or participating in the social support Home-Start offers aids recovery from post natal illness. I value Home-Start and feel honoured to be asked to talk to the new volunteers about post natal illness, my role, treatment and resources. I have referred many people to Home-Start and all of them have had positive experiences and invaluable support.

*A nurse working with women experiencing pre natal and post natal illness.*

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## **Who can refer families to Home-Start?**

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The main referrers to Home-Start are health visitors and professionals in the social care and child care sectors. Others include GP's and those working in the fields of mental health, education, early years and probation. Around a quarter of families self refer.

**How to refer a family: see back page**

## What Home-Start achieves

**Every year we talk to families, volunteers and professionals about the effect of Home-Start support. Through this vital monitoring and evaluation of our service we know that by supporting parents, Home-Start makes a positive contribution to family life and to the outcomes for children.**

### Home-Start can:

- Reduce family isolation and increase social support networks.
- Strengthen parent/child relationships.
- Improve parents' physical health and emotional well being.
- Help parents to appreciate the joys of parenting and improve parenting skills.
- Improve the home environment.
- Improve children's health, well being and development.
- Improve access to health and community services.

**We also know that our success in connecting with families that other services have difficulty reaching or engaging with is valued by professionals.**

### Research shows:

- Home-Start is effective in connecting with, and remaining with, socially excluded families.
- Home-Start's informal approach is welcomed by parents who are reluctant or unable to take up other support services.
- Home-Start volunteers act as a bridge between families and the social and economic benefits and services in their community that they may otherwise miss out on.
- Home-Start works with socially excluded families to help empower them to access training and participate in community activities.



# What we do... and how we do it

## Home-Start volunteers

**Home-Start volunteers are normally parents themselves and after a course of preparation they bring to a family their personal experience and considerable knowledge of the resources in their local area.**

Their support is non-judgemental, free and confidential. A volunteer visits a family, in their own home, for two or three hours a week, for as long as a family needs them or until the youngest child turns five. A volunteer helps build a parent's confidence so they can make positive choices about how to run their own lives.

“ Our Home-Start volunteers have been important people in my children's lives and really helped in their development. The volunteers have helped them socialise with other children and adults so that now they can go out into the wider world with confidence.

*Louise, a mother of two suffering with post natal illness*



## The Home-Start promise on...

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### The welfare of children

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- Home-Start is committed to promoting the safety and welfare of children.
- The special relationship that Home-Start develops with families means that staff and volunteers may become alert to any concerns about the children's safety and well being.
- Every local Home-Start has effective, up-to-date policies, a code of conduct and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- All Home-Start volunteers, staff and trustees sign up to the Home-Start code of conduct for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and have criminal records checks at the appropriate level alongside other recruitment, induction, training and supervisory arrangements. Together these help to safeguard the children supported by Home-Start.

## Local Home-Starts

**Each local Home-Start is an independent charity set up by local people in response to a local need. It is managed by a trained, salaried and experienced organiser who is supported by a board of volunteer trustees.**

The trustees usually include a health visitor, early years and social care officers. Home-Start organisers recruit, select and prepare volunteers and provide continuous, ongoing support, training and supervision. Home-Start also offers a variety of support to families outside the home, which may include specialist family groups and social activities.

## The Home-Start promise on...

### Monitoring & evaluation

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- Every Home-Start undertakes self-assessment of their practice according to national quality assurance standards and criteria.
- The self-assessments are validated during a full review with Home-Start UK every three years. A third of all local Home-Starts are reviewed each year including interviews with families, volunteers, trustees and staff.
- Each local Home-Start collects monitoring and evaluation information about the support of families and Home-Start UK collects information annually from local schemes on the needs of families and on Home-Start's response to those needs.
- The quality assurance reviews and findings from our monitoring and evaluation inform planning and decision-making and are used to improve services.



# What we do... and how we do it

continued

## Support outside the home

**From setting up teenage parents' support groups to working with the families of those in prison, Home-Start is constantly forging links and partnerships to broaden and strengthen its work supporting families.**

The support Home-Start offers outside the home follows the same high standards as for home visiting support and is organised and delivered both by volunteers and staff with groups set up according to the needs of a local community. These may include family groups, post-natal depression support groups, healthy eating projects or special support for fathers. Social events and outings are also organised to bring local parents and children together.

“ The main problem in this area is isolation; many of these mothers just don't have any contacts. Home-Start, as well as providing a place for them to meet other mothers and children, works in partnership with local organisations to give parents practical help – counsellors and specialists come into the group to talk to them about a variety of issues and this support makes a real difference to their lives. *Organiser, Home-Start Harrow, working in one of the most ethnically diverse areas of the UK* ”

## The Home-Start promise on...

### Confidentiality

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- Throughout Home-Start's relationship with a family, all personal information about parents and families is treated as confidential, to be discussed only as necessary with the Home-Start organiser in support of the volunteer and to assist the family.
- With a family's permission (and only then), we will share certain information with referrers, ContactPoint, the English information sharing index, and if attending multi-agency meetings.
- Confidential information will only be shared with appropriate agencies with the 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.

## Home-Start UK

**Home-Start UK is an independent charity. It exists to provide the high quality support that local Home-Starts need to help families in their communities: up-to-date training for staff, volunteers and trustees; information and guidance on governance; legal and human resources advice; and help with fundraising. Collecting and sharing examples of best practice across the organisation, it lobbies national government and runs nationwide profile-raising campaigns. It supports local community groups working to set up new local Home-Starts.**

When a new local Home-Start signs the Home-Start Agreement, a partnership approach to supporting families is formalised. Home-Start UK will support that local Home-Start which will support volunteers who, in turn, support families. Home-Start UK's support is given by a named consultant for each local Home-Start and through the charity's other professional support teams.

## The Home-Start promise on...

### Quality Assurance

- When a family is referred to Home-Start they will be supported by an experienced, professionally run organisation that offers high quality support.
- Every local Home-Start signs an Agreement which requires them to establish and develop their work in accordance with Home-Start's Standards and Methods of Practice and to follow Home-Start's policies, procedure and practice.
- The Agreement requires every local Home-Start to work to 16 quality standards. These are set out in Home-Start's Quality Assurance System which was established, with the full participation of all local Home-Starts and the expertise of Charities Evaluation Services. It ensures the quality and consistency of support to every family and of Home-Start UK's support to local Home-Starts.



# How to refer a family to Home-Start

## You should:

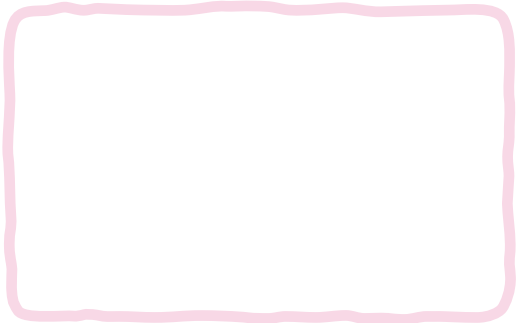
- Discuss Home-Start with the family – they **MUST** agree to receive Home-Start support.
- Establish that the family has at least one child under five – this is key to Home-Start support.
- Contact your local Home-Start and speak to the organiser.
- Complete a referral form, which indicates the family's needs.

## Your local Home-Start will:

- Set up an initial visit with the family to discuss their needs and tell them all about Home-Start.
- Carefully match the skills and experiences of a volunteer to the needs of the family.
- Introduce the volunteer to the family (this may take time and if a suitable match can not be made then you will be informed).
- Let you know when Home-Start support starts and ends.
- Keep you informed, within confidentiality guidelines, about progress.

Across the UK thousands of Home-Start volunteers visit families at home each week, supporting parents in situations as diverse as isolation, bereavement, multiple births, illness, disability or who are just finding parenting a struggle. They provide non-judgemental practical and emotional support and help build the family's confidence and ability to cope. Home-Start runs more services and has more volunteers supporting more families than any other family support charity in the UK.

This information was provided for you by:



**If blank above, see**  
**[www.home-start.org.uk/findus](http://www.home-start.org.uk/findus)**  
**for contact details of all local**  
**Home-Starts, searchable by**  
**postcode, county or region.**

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**START**  
Support and friendship  
for families