

Home-Start Herefordshire (hereafter called Home-Start)

Looking after Children in Absence of Parents Policy and Procedure

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

In all the above circumstances the volunteer / staff member MUST adhere to the following procedures.

PROCEDURE

Local Home-Starts *should add to and customise* this section

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. A prompt sheet to support a risk assessment can be found in Appendix 1
3. Risk assessment includes arrangements (if appropriate) for transporting the children, and signed permission is obtained from the parent where possible
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 checklist)
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 in 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 except in emergency situations as per 12 below (Home-starts should delete points 12, 13 & 14 if the trustees do not approve this)
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.

Local Home-Starts to include clause below *only* if the Board of Trustees have specifically agreed that this can happen:

12. In exceptional circumstances and only with the full involvement and agreement of Children's Social Care / Social Services, Home-Start will allow either the volunteer or a coordinator involved in the support to a family, to look after a child/ren in their home overnight.
13. This will only happen following careful risk assessment and the Chair of Trustees has been contacted in advance to notify.
14. A careful record of the circumstances and approval process will be kept in the family file.

This policy adopted:(date)

Date policy to be reviewed: (date)

Signed (Chair).....Name:.....

Appendix 1

Looking after Children in Absence of Parents

Prompt sheet

Area for consideration include:
Parents have given written consent for a volunteer to take care of their child without them being present
A risk assessment should be undertaken whether looking after the children in the family home or taking them out of the home, e.g. to the park.
The risk assessment should include consideration of the following: • The child's sleeping requirements (when and where) • Foods they can/cannot eat • Any allergies • Where in the house they play • Any medical conditions • Any prescribed medications • When the parents will return • Parent's contact details • Where the volunteer and children will go out of the home • What they will do while they are out • When they intend to return • Any refreshment needs • Any nappies/toileting/personal care requirements
Emergency procedures are in place in case of an incident or accident.
Children being transported in the volunteer's car must have previously informed her/his insurance company of their volunteering activity. Staff and volunteers must follow Home-Start UK child safety seat guidance at all times.
Volunteers are aware that they must remain with the children and always keep them in sight