

Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy – Volunteer Quick Guide

At Home-Start, we are committed to the safety and well-being of every child. Through their trusted relationships with families, volunteers may often be the first people to spot concerns. This document outlines volunteers' safeguarding responsibilities, focusing on your responsibilities and actions to take when concerns arise. This is a quick guide; we would encourage you to read and have access to the full Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy to get a fuller understanding of safeguarding. An extract of your responsibilities as set out in the Policy is contained in the Appendix 1.

Key Principles

- Every child has the right to protection from harm.
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, including all volunteers.
- The well-being of children is our top priority, and volunteers must remain vigilant to any signs of abuse or neglect.

Understanding the child 's daily life

It is vital that we understand what life is like for the children in the families we support. This includes listening to what they have to say or communicate, observing what they do, and considering what parents/carers have to say. It is essential that we discuss this information with your coordinator and include what you notice in your diary sheets.

Types of Abuse

1. **Physical Abuse** : Deliberate harm to a child, such as hitting, shaking, or burning, which may result in injuries like bruises, cuts, or broken bones. This includes physical 'punishment'. All injuries to non-mobile babies are a source for concern.
2. **Emotional Abuse** : Ongoing mistreatment that damages a child's emotional development, such as constant criticism, humiliation, or exposure to/living in a household where there is domestic abuse.
3. **Sexual Abuse** : Inappropriate sexual contact or exploitation, including forcing or persuading a child to take part in sexual activities or exposing them to sexual content.
4. **Neglect** : Failure to meet a child's basic needs, such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision, leading to harm or developmental issues.
5. **Other Forms** : This includes online abuse, exploitation (e.g., forced labour or trafficking), and harmful practices like female genital mutilation (FGM) or forced marriage. See the Home-Start Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for details.

Your Responsibilities as a Volunteer

1. **Understand and Follow the Policy** : Be familiar with safeguarding procedures and sign the Safeguarding and Protecting Children Code of Conduct. You can find your responsibilities under the Policy in the Appendix 1. Know who to contact in your Home-Start if you have concerns, including who to contact if your concern is urgent or your coordinator is unavailable. Talk to your coordinator about the family you are supporting to help you understand their circumstances/needs.

Recognise Concerns : Stay alert to signs of harm or distress, such as injuries, behavioural changes, or fear of certain individuals. You may notice that children are not meeting milestones or have a concern about a parent's ability to care for their children.

2. **Respond Appropriately** : If a child or adult discloses something to you or you witness something concerning:
 - o Stay calm and listen without leading or prompting.
 - o Assure the child/adult that they have done the right thing by telling you.
 - o Do not promise confidentiality but explain that the information will be shared with the appropriate person to ensure their safety.
3. **Report All Concerns** : Share any concerns with your Volunteer Coordinator immediately. Do not investigate yourself. Sometimes you may feel unsure whether there is a 'concern'. However, it is vital to always discuss any 'niggles' with your coordinator who will help you to understand what actions can be taken to help. Sometimes abuse is not obvious, your 'niggle' may be the piece of information that makes up a bigger picture.
4. **Record Information** : Accurately record what was said or observed using the local reporting procedures.

What to Do in Case of Immediate Danger

If you believe a child is in immediate danger, call emergency services (999) and then inform your Coordinator.

Allegations Against Staff or Volunteers

If you hear or suspect any staff member, volunteer (including a trustee) is acting inappropriately towards a child/adult, report this immediately to the Safeguarding Lead or your Coordinator. If necessary, contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or your local social care team (see contacts below).

If an allegation of causing harm or inappropriate behaviour is made against you or someone very close to you, share this with your coordinator who will help you to understand the next steps.

Training and Support

You will receive safeguarding training as part of your volunteer role. Always ask for further guidance if you are unsure about any situation.

Key Contacts

Speak to your Volunteer Coordinator or Safeguarding Lead if you have any questions or concerns. If you are concerned that appropriate action has not been taken, please speak to your Coordinator again or, speak to another member of staff or trustee. If you are still worried, you can contact the NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000 or your local social care team (see numbers below).

Local Procedures *To be added to/amended by the local Home-Start

- These are our Home-Start contact names and numbers:
- These are the out-of-hours numbers you should contact, if needed:

- Your Home-Start team is responsible for contacting your local authority social care to inform them of safeguarding concerns. You would only need to contact this team yourself if you felt that Home-Start had not taken appropriate action in response to a safeguarding concern or for out-of-hours urgent concerns:

Appendix 1

All volunteers must:

- Review and sign off the Safeguarding and Protecting Children Code of Conduct annually;
- Remain up to date and comply with Home-Start policies and practice guidance related to Safeguarding/child protection;
- Attend annual Safeguarding/child protection training, as per local procedure;
- Exercise 'professional curiosity', including questioning, challenging and raising concerns when something feels 'wrong';
- Attend and participate in meetings that include discussions and reflections about interactions with families. In Scotland this should also include specifically making reference to GIRFEC and the points from the SHANAARI wheel.
- Always inform their Coordinator/line manager if they know a service user in any other capacity. This would include in previous or other professional capacities (e.g. if a volunteer knows a service user through a separate paid job), or within their personal lives (e.g. if their children are in the same class at school, or if friends or family members became service users).
- Never instigate contact with any service users in any setting outside of Home-Start, or agreed sessions/meetings.
- Never enter a romantic or sexual relationship with a service user or a service user's family member. This constitutes a serious breach of boundaries and codes of conduct.
- Always inform their Coordinator/manager of any risk of breach or breakdown of professional boundaries they are aware of, including those related to themselves or colleagues.
- Adhere to the Safeguarding and Protecting Children Code of Conduct.
- Concerns about harm or abuse to a child must always be shared and should be shared as soon as possible with your Coordinator. You can therefore never guarantee complete confidentiality to a child, parent, or anyone else regarding harm or abuse.
- It is not your responsibility to investigate or verify concerns of harm or abuse. You may need to ask questions to clarify the information you have been given (e.g. 'you've told me that you're hungry because you haven't had any breakfast today or tea last night, have I understood that right?' 'I can see you have a bruise on your leg, how did you get that?') but any questions should be limited to ensuring you have understood. Anything further, and specifically asking leading questions (e.g. 'did your brother do this?' 'Did someone hurt you?') can seriously impact any later legal action or official investigation.

- If there is imminent risk of harm, or a child has been injured you should immediately phone emergency services (999) follow advice given, and then inform the relevant person in your Home-Start as outlined above.
- All information related to a concern of harm or abuse must be recorded as per the local Home-Start procedure for your role. For Home-Starts this is done through use of a 'ROCA' (Record of Concerns and Action) or equivalent. A copy of the record may be required (at a later date) as part of the child protection process or as evidence for future criminal prosecution.

We would encourage volunteers to read the full Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy and to know where to access this for more information.