



Health and Safety Information
for Volunteers of
Home-Start Exeter and East Devon

FOREWORD

Health and safety is a condition free from risk of injury or threat to our health and well being. It is an objective to be achieved, not a natural state of affairs.

Health and Safety is a shared responsibility within Home-Start Exeter and East Devon. Both Home-Start Exeter and East Devon, employees and volunteers have responsibilities for their own health and safety and for the health and safety of people who may be affected by their activities.

This guide has been written with the health and safety of all volunteers in mind and should be read carefully and be used as a reference book. It not only details the responsibilities of the trustees of Home-Start Exeter and East Devon but if read carefully will ensure your own health and safety and the safety of families and others in all the activities you do.

There may be specific risks attributed to your activities which are not covered by this guide. These will be addressed directly with you by your organiser. If you have any concerns in respect of your wellbeing or your health and safety, or those of others with whom you come into contact, you are requested to raise these at your earliest opportunity with your organiser so that they may be addressed without delay.

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1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Trustees of Home-Start Exeter and East Devon recognise and accept their responsibility to ensure that all reasonable precautions are taken to provide and maintain working conditions which are safe, healthy and comply with all statutory requirements and codes of practice and to ensure the health and safety of any other person who may be affected by the operations of Home-Start Exeter and East Devon.

Home-Start Exeter and East Devon will endeavour to create and develop a working environment in which there is an awareness of the vital importance of health and safety and which encourages all employees and volunteers to participate in developing and practising safe working methods and to have regard for the welfare of themselves and others.

2. GENERAL

The Trustees of Home-Start Exeter and East Devon have overall responsibility for the health and safety of employees and volunteers and those people affected by the activities of Home-Start. The organiser has day to day responsibility for the management of the health and safety of the volunteers.

All volunteers must read and comply with this health and safety information whilst undertaking duties for Home-Start and have regard to the health and safety of all people affected by the volunteers' actions. Any health and safety hazard which the volunteer is aware of must be reported without delay to the organiser so that appropriate health and safety measures can be taken.

3. GUIDELINES

1. CODE OF SAFETY CONDUCT

The safety of all volunteers engaged in Home-Start activities is paramount. In order to achieve a safe culture within the organisation, volunteers must follow the health and safety rules and guidance of the organisation. In particular you should:

- Never attempt to carry out work of a dangerous nature.
- Never be afraid to question or report the use of equipment or practices which could lead to injuries.
- Ensure that you understand and follow the health and safety instructions you are given. If in doubt – ask. The organiser will discuss with you any specific hazards you may face in carrying out your role and the measures taken to combat or minimise the risks to your health and safety.
- You must report **all** accidents, including near misses, no matter how trivial. It is essential that the organiser is aware of all incidents so that appropriate measures can be taken to ensure your safety and the safety of those affected by Home-Start activities.
- Never “volunteer” to undertake duties outside your role as a Home-Start volunteer without consulting your organiser. If you are unclear as to whether you should be helping a family in a particular way – ask the organiser.
- Notify the organiser without delay if you spot a hazard whilst undertaking your role which has not been addressed with you. The organiser will consider what, if any, health and safety measures should be taken.
- Attend training events updating health and safety advice whenever possible.
- Follow the guidance on lifting at all times.
- Always report a change of circumstances, either involving the family you are supporting, or involving yourself, which could impact on your role with Home-Start.
- Comply with the Safeguarding Policies of Home-Start.

2. FIRST AID AND ACCIDENT REPORTING



During the Preparation Course volunteers will be shown the first aid box available at Home-Start offices.

If an incident occurs within a family, a volunteer may administer medication. **All** accidents and near misses should be reported to the organiser within the scheme as soon as reasonably practicable.

Volunteers are insured to administer:

- a) First Aid
- b) prescribed drugs or medicines
- c) drugs and medicines available without prescriptions

However insurance cover is removed should the Home-Start employee/volunteer happen to be a doctor, surgeon, dentist, etc, and they administer medication in their professional capacity. In this case the intention would be for their own Medical Insurance policy to respond.

3. INFORMATION AND TRAINING

As a general principle health and safety training will be integrated with the Preparation Course.

All volunteers will receive appropriate health and safety training in line with their duties. Training and information will be updated as appropriate. Specific hazards will be addressed individually with the volunteer.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT

The organiser will at their initial “assessment visit” with a family consider how to address these hazards and discuss any safety issues arising with the volunteer prior to the volunteer’s initial visit. If the organiser does not feel that health and safety concerns can be properly and adequately addressed, the volunteer will not be matched with the family.

5. SMOKING



Smoking is not permitted at Home-Start offices. Volunteers are requested not to smoke at the homes of families as smoking constitutes a fire hazard and can be unpleasant and dangerous for the smoker and family members.

In families we support there may be members who smoke. If a member of a family you are asked to visit is a smoker, we will discuss this with you and if you are willing to visit the family we will discuss with the family how best we can ensure that we can prevent or minimise your exposure to smoke.

6. INFECTIOUS DISEASES

If a volunteer is aware that they have an infectious disease, it should be reported in confidence to the organiser. The organiser will consider whether any extra special measures are necessary to ensure the health and safety of the volunteer and family supported. The disclosure of an infectious disease will not of itself preclude the volunteer from acting as a home-visiting volunteer.

If a family has a member or members with an infectious disease this information will only be disclosed to the volunteer if it is felt that the volunteer needs to know to ensure the health and safety of the volunteer which cannot be reasonably met without disclosure. Any disclosure will be discussed and agreed with the family.

All volunteers must be familiar with and adopt good hygiene practice to minimise the risk of spreading infection.

7. MOBILE TELEPHONES



When driving, volunteers should not use their mobile phone and they should be switched off whilst driving a car. .

8. PERSONAL SAFETY

Violence

Whilst the work of a Home-Start volunteer should not expose volunteers to the risk of violence, an unexpected situation can arise where the volunteer finds himself/herself at risk of violence. Volunteers should always give priority to their own personal safety. Home-Start will do all it reasonably can to minimise the risk of violence to volunteers and to support volunteers who are victims of violence.

- Volunteers will not be placed with families where there is a known danger to personal safety. The organiser will establish if there are any known hazards to personal safety at the referral stage
- Volunteers will only visit families willing to receive a Home-Start volunteer; that is where all adult members of the household consent to the Home-Start involvement
- Volunteers will be immediately withdrawn from visiting a Home-Start family if a potentially dangerous situation develops or is feared to develop
- Volunteers will be fully supported with any personal safety concerns

Guidelines for volunteers:

- Your personal safety is paramount. There may be unexpected occasions when you will face a domestic situation giving rise to potential conflict and violence
- If a potentially dangerous situation is developing, remove yourself from the situation as soon as possible. Do not attempt to intervene in a situation where there is domestic conflict
- Do not be enticed into an argument
- Do not turn your back on someone who is behaving aggressively
- Never try to touch someone who is angry – this may worsen the situation
- Keep an eye on potential escape routes
- If a person is drunk or aggressive do not enter the house
- Trust your instincts – remove yourself as soon as possible
- Do not provoke the violent party
- Take all threats seriously, even if only implied
- Discuss any relevant information about a family with your organiser

- Request that the organiser accompanies you if you are concerned about your safety when seeing a family
- Do not give your home address or telephone number to families
- Do not give out other staff or volunteers' telephone numbers or addresses
- Never stay in a situation where you think you may be at risk. **Don't feel you have to stay because of your commitment to the family or Home-Start scheme.**
- Be aware of personal space – yours and others'! Encroaching on people's personal space can make them aggressive. If other people are too close to you and making you uncomfortable, ask for more space or move away
- Use main routes in and out of estates
- Try to stay calm if someone is starting to get angry. Your body language, voice and response can help to diffuse a situation. Take a deep breath, keep your voice on an even keel and try to help
- Do not be aggressive back – this is how anger can escalate into violence
- If one partner is attacking the other, do not intervene – leave and call the police
- If the situation is dangerous, then get away from it as fast as you can. Never remain alone with an actively violent person
- Give the aggressor what they want if it is a personal possession. Throw it beyond them so they have to run away for it. This gives you a chance to get away

The Family Home

- A family home can never be entirely free of hazards but an awareness of the importance of safety matters, together with care and consideration can reduce risks to a minimum
- The organiser will highlight any specific hazards observed within the family home prior to your visits

Animals

You will be advised by the organiser prior to your initial visit whether or not there is a possibility of contact with an animal(s) during your family visits. If this is a matter of concern, you will not be placed with the family unless appropriate measures can be put in place to extinguish or reduce the risk of contact. If an animal is present during a visit:

- Be assertive – ask for the householder's co-operation, e.g. by keeping the animal in another room
- Announce your visit – and check that safeguards are in place
- Report concerns to your organiser
- Be aware that family pets may be unpredictable. Not all pets appreciate being patted and stroked!

9. LIFTING AND HANDLING LOADS

What can be done to help prevent manual handling injuries? Answer: In simple terms, the main thing is a risk assessment, though there are other considerations: Firstly, does the load need to be moved at all? If so, can it be moved mechanically? For example by using a handling aid? Advice on the many different types of lifting and handling aids is contained in the Health and Safety Executive publication "Are you making the best use of lifting and handling aids?" <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg398.pdf>

If manual lifting is the only option then there are a number of things that can be done to reduce the risk, including;

- making the load smaller or lighter and easier to lift,
- breaking up large consignments into more manageable loads,
- modifying the workstation to reduce carrying distances, twisting movements, or the lifting of things from floor level or from above shoulder height,
- improving the environment and clearing your path of obstructions and tripping hazards – eg better lighting, flooring or air temperature can sometimes make manual handling easier and safer
- getting help if you have any doubts about lifting objects

Lifting, pulling, pushing, holding, carrying, restraining, throwing and handling loads incorrectly can cause serious injury including twisted and torn muscles, dislocation and bone fractures, slipped discs and hernias in addition to general fatigue.

How to Lift Heavy Objects Safely:

1. Make sure you are standing directly in front of the item you wish to lift
2. Check if the item has handles which you could use
3. Know where you are taking the object before you begin
4. Position your feet evenly (shoulder width apart)
5. Keep your back straight and stand up tall
6. Tighten your stomach muscles
7. Squat to the floor by bending your knees- DO NOT move your upper body
8. Take hold of the object firmly with both hands
9. Distribute the weight evenly - make sure you are not unbalanced
10. Keeping the object close to your body, begin to stand up by straightening your legs (This will use your leg muscles and shouldn't put strain on other areas)
11. Stand up slowly. Do not move quickly or jerk when doing this
12. You can now walk with the object (but be careful not to twist your body unnecessarily). Take small steps if possible.
13. If you are carrying a large object which restricts your view, ask if someone can guide you. This will prevent you from tripping or bumping into objects
14. When placing the item down, bend your legs
15. Remember to keep your back straight as you bend down again
16. Be careful to lower each side of the object to the floor separately- this will avoid trapping your fingers under the weight

Care should be taken handling carrying cots, toddlers and babies. Volunteers with back problems should not do so. If in doubt – get help. Volunteers should be aware of their own limitations. Lifting or moving an object should not be attempted unless the volunteer is absolutely sure that it is within their capabilities.

10. TRANSPORTING FAMILIES

It is the responsibility of the volunteer to ensure that their motor vehicle is roadworthy and that they are properly insured to transport families.

If you are likely to transport a family in your motor vehicle you must:

- show that you hold a valid driving licence and you may be asked to demonstrate that you hold insurance and that your vehicle is roadworthy.
- Notify your insurers of your voluntary role at Home-Start.
- It is essential that all passengers are secured by a seat belt or child safety harness. It is not safe or legal for a parent to travel in a motor vehicle with a child on their lap.

You must comply with the law concerning seat belts:

- All passengers must use a **seat belt** if one is fitted. A **Driver** is liable to prosecution if a child under 14 years does not wear a seat belt.
- If your vehicle has seat belts fitted, children 3-11 years and under 135cm in height (approx 4ft 5 in) must use an appropriate **child restraint** to meet legal requirements.
- You **must not** carry an unrestrained child in the front seat of any vehicle.
- If an appropriate child restraint is fitted in the front, but not in the rear, children between 3 and 11 and under 1.5m in height **must** use the front seat restraint or seat belt.

If you are transporting a family and the family provides a car seat for use in your vehicle, you should ask a family member to install the seat in your car as the member of the family will be familiar with the installation of the seat. If this is not the case you must check the appropriate installation guidance before installing the seat in your car.

11. LONE VISITING

- Always carry a mobile phone if possible
- Always let someone know where you are going and when you will return
- If your plans change, inform someone as soon as possible
- Do not carry with you any valuables or large sums of money
- Trust your intuition – if you feel scared or uneasy, do not ignore it
- Avoid dark unlit areas
- Avoid visiting at night
- Take care where you park – always have your car keys ready **before** you leave the house of the family
- Do not make impromptu visits

12. MATERNITY

If you become aware that you are pregnant, please advise the organiser of your condition. Such information will be treated in the strictest confidence. The organiser will assess what adjustments, if any, need to be made to your volunteering role to ensure that any additional health and safety issues are addressed.

13. FIRE

On discovering a fire, you should:

1. Sound the alarm
2. Leave the building as quickly as possible. Do not stop to collect your personal belongings.
3. Do not re-enter the building until advised by the Fire Service or the organiser that it is safe to do so.
4. In addition, please ensure that you are aware of the location of all exits. This is important if you are escorting a family to an activity in a place you may be unfamiliar with.

14. STRESS

Volunteering can be very rewarding. It can also on occasion be stressful. There may be circumstances within a family which arise that the volunteer finds very stressful (such as the serious illness of a child).

A volunteer may initially not recognise the symptoms of stress. There are a variety of symptoms which may indicate a tendency towards stress which could have an impact on the volunteer's health.

If you are distressed or upset following a family visit, do discuss your feelings with the organiser who is there to support and help you.

15. CONCERNS ABOUT THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF A FAMILY MEMBER

If for any reason you have any concerns about the health and safety of a member of a family you are supporting you **must** share these concerns with your organiser as soon as possible so that the organiser may consider how best Home-Start can support the family.

The safety of families and children is paramount in all our work and it is essential that as a volunteer involved with families and children you adhere fully to our safeguarding policies.