

Health and Safety
Information for
Volunteers of
Home-Start Wirral

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 Wirral. Both Home-Start Wirral 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 Wirral 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 coordinator. 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 coordinator so that they may be addressed without delay.

CONTENTS

1 POLICY

2 GENERAL

3 GUIDELINES

- 1 CODE OF SAFETY CONDUCT
- 2 FIRST AID AND ACCIDENT REPORTING
- 3 INFORMATION AND TRAINING
- 4 RISK ASSESSMENT
- 5 SMOKING
- 6 INFECTIOUS DISEASES
- 7 MOBILE TELEPHONES
- 8 PERSONAL SAFETY
- 9 LIFTING AND HANDLING LOADS
- 10 TRANSPORTING FAMILIES
- 11 LONE VISITING
- 12 MATERNITY
- 13 FIRE
- 14 STRESS

1. POLICY

The Trustees of Home-Start Wirral 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 Wirral

Home-Start Wirral 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.

Date.....May 2009.....

2. GENERAL

The Trustees of Home-Start Wirral have overall responsibility for the health and safety of employees and volunteers and those people affected by the activities of Home-Start. The coordinator 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 coordinator so that appropriate health and safety measures can be taken.

3. GUIDELINES

1. CODE OF SAFETY CONDUCT

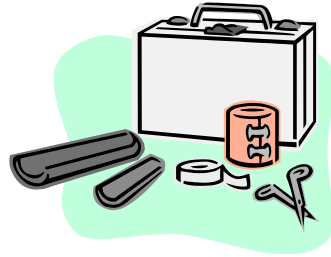
The safety of all volunteers engaged in Home-Start activities is paramount. In order to achieve a safe culture within the organisation, volunteers must follow the health and safety rules and guidance of the organisation. In particular you should:

- 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 co-ordinator 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 co-ordinator 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 co-ordinator. If you are unclear as to whether you should be helping a family in a particular way – ask the co-ordinator.
- Notify the co-ordinator without delay if you spot a hazard whilst undertaking your role which has not been addressed with you. The co-ordinator 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



If an incident occurs within a family, a volunteer may administer medication in an emergency only. ALL accidents and near misses should be reported to the designated person within the scheme as soon as reasonably practicable.

All volunteers are expected to attend First Aid training and refresher training when required.

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 co-ordinator will at his/her 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 co-ordinator 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 he/she has an infectious disease, it should be reported in confidence to the co-ordinator. The co-ordinator 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 this should be switched off mobile phones whilst driving a car. Use of a mobile phone with hands free facility is also not recommended as it can cause distraction and lack of concentration.

The phones can be set up to take messages which can then be checked at the start or end of a journey when the car is parked.

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 co-ordinator 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 co-ordinator
- Request that the co-ordinator 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 co-ordinator will highlight any specific hazards observed within the family home prior to your visits

Animals

You will be advised by the co-ordinator 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 co-ordinator
- Be aware that family pets may be unpredictable. Not all pets appreciate being patted and stroked!

9. LIFTING AND HANDLING LOADS



Lifting 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.

All volunteers should observe the following good handling techniques:

- **Examine the object** – for size, shape and weight. Decide how and where to hold. Check for grease, oil and sharp edges
- **Clear your path** – of obstructions and tripping hazards
- **Know** – where and how you will let the object down
- **Get help** – if you have any doubts about lifting objects

- 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 his/her capabilities. When under pressure at work it is easy to take on more than you can safely handle.

- Lift smoothly, avoid jerky motions and look for alternatives for lifting, pushing or pulling. Wherever necessary use a mechanical aid. Stop work if you feel strain and report to your supervisor immediately.

- Wherever possible try to break down a heavy load, which can be handled more easily. However, it should be noted that several lighter loads may increase the risk if awkward movements have to be repeated.
- Where the centre of gravity is not in the middle of the load it must be handled more carefully to avoid injury. Before you attempt to handle an unfamiliar load try to get an idea of its weight distribution so that it can be handled more safely. The best way to test the load is by lifting up a corner or rocking it.
- Where a load is bulky or unwieldy, for example where it is too large to fit between your knees when you crouch to pick it up from the floor, then it will probably be necessary to get help. Generally, if a load exceeds 75cm in diameter assistance should be sought, as there is an increased risk of injury. It may be possible to break down the load into smaller loads. It must be remembered that both repetitive handling and team handling have their own risks.



Handling Techniques:

- **Place your feet:** Stand close to the object – feet should be a little way apart and the leading leg as far forward as is comfortable. This should give a stable and balanced base for lifting.
- **Adopt a good posture:** Stand with shoulders facing the same direction as hips. The back should be straight, knees bent and the load grasped with both hands as near to waist level as possible. Lean forwards a little over the load if necessary to get a good grip.



- **Get a good grip:** Grasp the object firmly, always try to hook fingers under the load to make sure your grip won't slip as this is less fatiguing than keeping fingers straight.
- **Lift with the legs:** Stand up slowly and slowly straighten legs. After they are straight, bring the back to a vertical position. Lift smoothly and avoid jerky motions.
- **Hold the object close:** Keep the heaviest part of the load as close to the body as possible. When changing direction, move the feet rather than twisting the body.
- **Put down before adjusting:** Place load and then move into the desired position.



- **Lifting Overhead** - Avoid lifting objects above shoulder height. Where it is necessary to lift objects overhead, a platform or sturdy ladder should be used. Never use a chair or a box. If in doubt, always get help.
- **Lifting Heavy Objects** - If an object is too heavy, large or hard to handle, get help. Ensure that one person is the leader, that

moving the object is done one step at a time and the load is distributed evenly. On a stairway, the carrier of the lower end of the load should take most of the weight. This is especially hazardous if he or she is also walking backwards.

For all other handling:

Care should be taken handling carrying cots, toddlers and babies. Volunteers with back problems should not do so. If in doubt – get help.

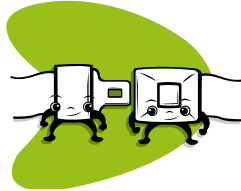
10. TRANSPORTING FAMILIES

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:

- Talk to your coordinator and ensure that you are authorised by the scheme to transport families. If authorisation is given you will be required to show that you hold a valid driving licence and you will be asked to demonstrate that you hold insurance and that your vehicle is roadworthy.
- Notify your insurers of your work for Home-Start. A model letter is available from the co-ordinator.

- It is essential that all passengers are secured by a seat belt or child safety harness. It is not safe 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**.
- 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
- Always make sure your co-ordinator know what day and time you visit
- 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 co-ordinator of your condition. Such information will be treated in the strictest confidence. The co-ordinator 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 co-ordinator 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 co-ordinator 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 coordinator as soon as possible so that the coordinator 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.