

Home-Start Ealing Volunteering Policy May 2025



We
inspire
growth

We
prioritise
kindness

We
achieve
together

Document Title	Volunteering Policy
Policy Owner	Caroline Chapman, Director
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Review Cycle	Annually, or following significant changes in legislation

1 Introduction

1.1 Aims and objectives

Home-Start Ealing Ealing believes in the positive impact that volunteering can have. Volunteers are the heart of Home-Start Ealing, and volunteering is embedded throughout all areas of the organisation.

This policy reflects the ongoing commitment of Home-Start Ealing to help volunteers fulfil their roles to the best of their ability. This policy also exists to highlight the nature of a volunteering relationship with Home-Start Ealing Ealing and how it is different to that of an employee regarding recruitment, ongoing support, expectations, challenging situations and general management.

The purpose of this policy is:

- To establish a framework to support volunteers so they can provide the best possible support for children and families.
- To offer guidance to Co-ordinators and those who interact with volunteers as part of their role, so that they can support volunteers in a safe, equitable, respectful, and effective manner.
- To explain what Home-Start Ealing expects of volunteers, and in turn what volunteers should expect of the organisation.
- To emphasise the importance of safety in volunteering at Home-Start Ealing Ealing; protecting those we support, and the safety of volunteers themselves.
- To ensure that volunteers have a positive volunteering experience.

1.2 Policy Scope

Home-Start Ealing seeks to maintain the highest possible standards in safer volunteer recruitment, onboarding practices, training and safeguarding to ensure that volunteers within Home-Start Ealing operate within a safe environment.

The policy is applicable to, and must be followed by, all employees, volunteers and contractors, whether permanent or temporary. These groups should be made aware of this policy if they will be working with or supporting volunteers.

The policy will be reviewed on a regular basis to reflect changes in the law, best practice guidance and internal business need.

1.3 Definitions

Unless otherwise stated, the words or expressions contained in this document shall have the following meaning:

<i>Term</i>	<i>Definition</i>

Volunteering	Any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit Home-Start Ealing. Central to this definition is the fact that volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. This can include a defined role undertaken on a regular basis, or a one-off contribution of time from an individual.
Volunteer	Someone who contributes their time, skills and experience to Home-Start Ealing for free and without compensation (other than core expenses in certain circumstances, such as travel for their voluntary role.)
Board	The Home-Start Ealing's Board of Trustees
Co-ordinator/ Supervisor	Any individual who supports a volunteer in their role, be that directly in terms of allocating tasks for the volunteer or through providing training, general guidance and support.

2 Volunteer Agreements, Guidance and Important Information

2.1 General Expectations for Volunteers:

- Home-Start Ealing is committed to best practice in volunteer recruitment and management practices, helping to safeguard the families we support.
- Volunteers should be well supported by their Co-ordinator. They should know what is expected of them, be offered training suitable for their role and be able to volunteer in a safe and inclusive environment.
- Volunteers should never be engaged to replace paid staff jobs
- All volunteers must familiarise themselves with policies and procedures relevant to their role and carry out their volunteering role within those defined standards and procedures.
- If volunteers know of or become aware of any conflicts of interest associated with their volunteering role, such as knowing a supported family, they should inform their Co-ordinator.
- No legal contract, compensation agreement or relationship of employment will be created between Home-Start Ealing and the volunteer.

2.2 Expenses:

- It is Home-Start Ealing policy that volunteers should not be out of pocket for any expenses that they incur while performing their volunteer role. The organisation will reimburse reasonable, agreed and receipted expenses.
- Volunteers may claim agreed expenses incurred in travelling to and from their place of volunteering. This means the refunding of bus or train fares or the payment of a fuel allowance.

2.3 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR):

- GDPR applies to all data that Home-Start Ealing's hold on their volunteers.
- Home-Start Ealing will adhere to GDPR guidelines to ensure volunteer data is stored safely and securely, in line with current guidelines, whether this is physically or electronically.
- At the point of application volunteers can opt in or out of different forms of communication from Home-Start Ealing (eg. group Whatsapp for volunteers).
- The personnel files of volunteers are securely archived for two years after the individual has ceased their volunteering role with the organisation, after which time the file is destroyed. This timeline will be increased to ten years if a safeguarding concern or incident has been raised in connection with the volunteer.

2.4 Health & Safety:

- Home-Start Ealing is committed to ensuring that individuals can volunteer in a safe environment and that they are not exposed to unnecessary risks.
- Volunteers are covered by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.
- The Board has overall responsibility for health and safety across the organisation, but all members of Home-Start Ealing including volunteers have a responsibility to act safely and ensure they do not expose themselves or others to any unnecessary risks.
- Volunteers will be provided with appropriate health and safety information and training before commencing their role which will include any risks identified as part of the role risk assessment process.
- The Co-ordinators and volunteers are jointly responsible for ensuring safe volunteering practice is observed through the application of our Health & Safety policy and, where relevant, the prior completion of relevant risk assessments for events or specific volunteering activities.
- Volunteers are covered by the terms of the organisation's public and employer's liability insurance policies where they are engaged in approved volunteering roles. This is subject to policy limits, terms, conditions and exceptions.
- Home-Start Ealing does not insure volunteers' personal possessions against loss or damage.
- If a volunteer is unsure about any action that could be hazardous or if they require further information, they should contact their Co-ordinator for guidance.

2.5 Confidentiality Agreements and Reputation Awareness:

- During their time volunteering at Home-Start Ealing, volunteers may have access to confidential or sensitive information. This information should only be shared with relevant individuals at Home-Start Ealing unless specifically agreed with the Co-ordinator. Volunteers should see the Confidentiality Policy for more information and specific guidance.
- Depending on their role, volunteers may be asked to sign a Confidentiality Agreement.
- Home-Start Ealing encourages volunteers to protect the good reputation of Home-Start Ealing whilst active in their volunteering role or whilst in association with the organisation. This could include but is not limited to remaining free of substances such as alcohol or drugs whilst volunteering, avoiding abusive or disrespectful language, and generally promoting a positive image of Home-Start Ealing through their actions and behaviour. If a volunteer acts in a way that brings the organisation into disrepute, they may be asked to leave their volunteering role with immediate effect.

2.6 Recruiting, training and onboarding volunteers

Home-Start Ealing seeks to maintain the highest possible standards in volunteer recruitment, on-boarding practices, induction, training and safeguarding measures. This should ensure that volunteers operate in an environment which is safe for themselves, for the families Home-Start Ealing supports and other individuals (including volunteers and staff).

Before a Home-Start Ealing volunteer takes up their role, the following should be in place;

- A clear volunteer role description and person specification
- An application form where volunteers can explain how they meet the role description (you may want to provide alternative formats such as recorded applications)
- Volunteers who wish to apply should be informed that relevant Disclosure and Barring (DBS) are a requirement of the role and what level of check is provided. You may want to explain that a previous criminal offence will not necessarily prevent someone from becoming a volunteer.
- The application form should explain that volunteers will be asked to provide two references.
- Interviews should be conducted. Volunteers should be told about the tasks involved in the role and asked about how their skills, experience and interests would fit the role.
- Volunteer applicants should be asked about why they are interested in volunteering for Home-Start Ealing and what motivates them.
- Interviewers can explain what volunteers will gain from the role. This could include training or opportunities for personal development and some of the other opportunities like meeting new people, learning more about their community.
- Staff should enquire about volunteer availability in the interviews and how Home-Start Ealing can make the role work for them, for example, flexible hours to allow for childcare.
- Volunteer applicants should be reminded about any requirements they'll need to meet before starting volunteering, for example, undergoing a DBS check or providing references (see appendix 1).
- It's good practice to keep records of interviews.
- Completion of a volunteer induction

Documents relating to the recruitment of a volunteers (as outlined above) must be kept on the volunteers file (either hard copy or electronically, in line with the retention table with GDPR/data protection policy).

All volunteers must inform Home-Start Ealing if their circumstances change between checks particularly if this affects their suitability for contact with children or adults, or if they undertake new duties that require regular unsupervised contact with children.

2.7 Induction and training

The type of induction and training that a volunteer or trustee requires will depend on their role.

- All volunteers and trustees are required to read and sign the Home-Start Ealing Safeguarding policy, the safeguarding/child protection code of conduct and the safeguarding adults code of conduct.
- Signed documents should be kept on the volunteers' personnel file.

2.8 Supervision

Home-Start Ealing recognises that regular and effective supervision plays an essential part in both the provision of a high quality and safe service to families and in the management and development of its volunteers.

Trustees are ultimately accountable for ensuring that adequate supervision is provided to all volunteers and delegate the responsibility for undertaking this activity to the senior staff member and/or Co-ordinators.

Co-ordinators with oversight from the Director must ensure that:

- Supervision is regular, planned and recorded.
- Supervision forms part of the overall framework of guidance and support provided to volunteers.
- As part of their role and commitment to Home-Start Ealing, volunteers must be available for supervision meetings.
- Supervision records are kept in line with Home-Start Ealing policy; notes are made of discussions to maximise the support to the family and the volunteer's capacity to deliver support.
- Families are aware that the volunteer will be talking to the organiser/co-ordinator about the progress of their home visiting.
- One-to-one supervision of volunteers by their coordinator should occur at a minimum of once every 6 weeks. In exceptional circumstances (such as staff or volunteer illness), this can be increased to a minimum of once every 6-8 weeks. Please note, this is the minimum required, and if a volunteer is supporting a family with complex needs best practice would be to meet more often.
- Volunteers who are supporting families with more complex needs should have more frequent supervision.
- Undertaking other roles should be supervised as deemed appropriate by the Home-Start Ealing.
- Supervision meetings should be held on a one-to-one basis where confidentiality can be respected.
- Records are signed and retained to comply with data protection requirements. Any data concerning a family is retained on the family file record and any data concerning the volunteer is on the volunteer file.
- Senior staff report on a quarterly basis, to trustees, that volunteers' supervision meetings are up to date and in line with this policy.
- Cancelled or postponed supervision meetings are noted in the volunteer file and an alternative time and date is agreed as soon as possible.
- The Co-ordinators are responsible for ensuring the volunteer knows:
 - that they know they can access informal support from the Home-Start Ealing at any point
 - that they should report any safeguarding/child protection concerns, and that they should not wait until the next supervision meeting to do so if any concerns emerge in the course of their support to the family
 - the out of hours telephone number to use to report any safeguarding/child protection concerns.

3 Safeguarding

Safeguarding volunteers and the families they support is vitally important to Home-Start Ealing.

3.1 Training

As outlined above, volunteers must receive appropriate and up-to-date training in safeguarding and child protection. Volunteers should be confident in how to report any safeguarding concerns they observe, overhear, or are otherwise involved in. For more information, please read the Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy and the Safeguarding and Protecting Adults at Risk Policy.

3.2 Lone Volunteering

Depending on their role, volunteers may need to perform their role alone. Home-Start Ealing has lone working/volunteering procedures that volunteers are made aware of. Lone volunteering is not in itself unsafe, but it has the potential to increase risks.

There should always be a communication plan between the volunteer and the Co-ordinator for when lone volunteering is taking place. Volunteers shouldn't remain in a situation where they feel unsafe or take unnecessary risks. Volunteers should always voice any concerns about lone volunteering with their Co-ordinator. More information on lone working safely can be obtained from <https://www.suzylampugh.org/>

3.3 Maintaining Appropriate Boundaries

Co-ordinators should be informed if a volunteer has had a previous professional or personal relationship with a family we support to agree how best to manage confidentiality and risk and ensure that Home-Start Ealing policies and procedures are followed.

Volunteers should not approach families they support/service users who they encounter in a social setting. This is especially important if the family does not instigate the contact and may not want to be recognised or identified as a user of the Home-Start Ealing service.

Volunteers must not enter into a romantic or sexual relationship with service users or members of their families. This constitutes a breach of professional boundaries and relevant codes of conduct/practice.

The organisation recognises that it is possible that the friends and family of volunteers may become service users and, indeed, that volunteers themselves may in some circumstances become service users. It is important that volunteers speak to their Co-ordinator about such situations to avoid any conflicts of interest, breaches of confidentiality or professional boundary issues.

It is inappropriate for Home-Start Ealing volunteers to deliver a service or become main support to a friend or family member. Arrangements will be made for another volunteer to take over the role. Any exceptions to this must be recorded on the volunteer file (for example, where a parent of a service user volunteers with a group that the service user attends).

3.4 Online Safety and Boundaries

Communicating via digital technology and the internet is an important part of being able to connect with families and often plays a significant role in organising visits. In some circumstances, for opportunities like a Digital/ Remote volunteer, online communication is pivotal to a volunteers' role.

Wherever possible, Home-Start Ealing has a responsibility to ensure that communication between families and volunteers retains appropriate boundaries in line with our safeguarding guidelines.

Home-Start Ealing should have a process in place relating to Online Safety which includes a plan for volunteers using technology and online programmes to engage with their families.

3.5 Challenging situations involving volunteers

Home-Start Ealing strives to be an environment where volunteers can thrive. However, Home-Start Ealing recognises that problems may occur and that at some point challenging situations may arise where a volunteer is dissatisfied with their volunteer experience, or where a volunteer's behaviour or actions may not align with the acceptable standards outlined in this policy.

Volunteers are not contractually engaged with Home-Start Ealing and therefore the approach to such challenge will be different to the framework followed by paid members of staff. Home-Start Ealing is still committed to ensuring there is a fair and consistent process for resolving issues that may arise.

It is important that volunteers are supported by their Home-Start Ealing to feel confident about raising concerns, know that they will be listened to and taken seriously and are aware of the process should an issue be raised. Home-Start Ealing has a Complaint's procedure, which covers complaints about the organisation and its staff. All complaints against Home-Start Ealing will be treated confidentially and will be dealt with openly, fairly and promptly to minimise any disruption to volunteers.

On occasion, it may be necessary for Home-Start Ealing to end a volunteer's involvement with the organisation. When this situation occurs, we will endeavour to give due notice to the volunteer, try to find an alternative role, and in all cases will treat the volunteer fairly and with respect. Where circumstances require it, we reserve the right to terminate the volunteer's engagement immediately. Any decision to officially cease a volunteer's involvement with the organisation will be formally communicated to the volunteer in writing.

Where it is possible that a volunteer may be involved in a safeguarding concern or may be responsible for illegal activity, Home-Start Ealing has a duty to follow its own internal safeguarding procedures and report any concerns of illegal or unsafe activity to the appropriate authorities or areas of law enforcement.

3.6 Management of Resting Volunteers

'Resting' is the term used when a volunteer takes some time out from their volunteer role.

- Home-Start Ealing aims to maintain a flexible and sensitive approach to supporting volunteers and places a usual limit of twelve months on any rest period, although this is situation and role specific.
- A record of the resting period is kept on the volunteer file and their status as an active or resting volunteer is clear.
- Home-Start Ealing will keep in touch with the resting volunteer as appropriate to the individual circumstances.

- It is recommended that a returning volunteer has a one-to-one meeting with their Co-ordinator prior to commencing their duties. It is required that the returning volunteer rereads and signs the policies relating to their role, as well as undertakes any relevant training.
- If a volunteer returns after more than 12 months they may need to complete a new application form, references, DBS, refresh their training and read and sign policies relating to their role.

Appendix 1: Recruitment Checks.

Volunteers requiring DBS checks must be rechecked at three yearly intervals unless automatic update service is used

Volunteer Roles	Role description required	Application form /CV	Interview	References	Other	Level of Check	Child Barred List	Adult Barred List	Workforce
Home-Visiting Volunteer	Yes	Enhanced	Formal /Recorded	Two		Enhanced	Yes	Yes	Child & Adult
Group Volunteer	Yes	Enhanced	Formal /Recorded	Two		Enhanced	Yes	No	Child
Trustee	Yes	Enhanced	Formal /Recorded	Two	Trustee declaration	Enhanced	No	No	Child & Adult