

Home-Start Glasgow North West

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Confidentiality refers to the way in which private, personal and business information is treated within the Home-Start.

Home-Start addresses the issue of confidentiality on two fronts:

Families

The acquisition, storage and sharing of information concerning Home-Start families.

Employees and Volunteers

The acquisition, storage and sharing of information concerning volunteers and employees of Home-Start.

Families

Home-Start families are those who have been referred and:

- are waiting to be, or have been, visited by the Co-ordinator(s)
- are waiting to be, or have been, matched with a suitable volunteer
- whose support has recently come to an end

Acquisition

Home-Start will obtain information about families on referral forms and on family visit forms. This information will be considered confidential and will not normally be shared with any other agency.

A volunteer will become a friend, supporter and trusted listener within the family circle and is very likely to become privy to information of a personal and private nature concerning the family with whom s/he is involved.

This information is shared on the basis of the trust that has developed between the volunteer and the family. The expectation of the family should be that information is given in confidence and will not normally be shared with any other agency.

Home-Start may obtain information from other agencies in order to ensure that we act in the best interests of a family.

Storage

Documented information on families will be kept locked away in secure premises. Access personal information will be strictly limited to the Home-Start Staff.

Home-Start acts in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998

Sharing

Volunteers discuss their work regularly with a Co-ordinator. These conversations will normally be limited to updating the Co-ordinator on the family's progress and seeking the Co-ordinator's advice in support of the volunteer and/or in support of the family. On occasion this will include the Management Committee member named as the contact for child protection matters.

In the course of training and support of volunteers, anecdotal information on Home-Start's involvement with families may be exchanged but will be done in such a way that no family or family member/s can be identified.

Information about families will be confidential to Home Start and will not normally be shared with any other agency.

Where other involved agencies request feedback in the interest of the family, information of a general nature will be provided by the Co-ordinator. This will normally be done with the knowledge and, ideally, the consent of the family.

Home-start will provide statistical information to funders, referrers and to Home-Start UK for appraisal and evaluation purposes.

Where a family express their desire for information to be shared with another agency, the family's wishes shall be observed.

Occasionally a Home-Start family will move to another area in which a Home-Start scheme operates and will seek support from that Home-Start scheme. Information that is deemed relevant and necessary to ensure that the family's best interests are being served shall be exchanged between the schemes.

In certain circumstances, Home-Start may be obliged by law to provide information on a family to the police or courts. This shall only be done on the advice of Home-Start UK's legal representative, shall be kept to the minimum necessary, shall be factually accurate and without personal interpretation.

Where Home-Start becomes aware of a crime having been committed, or be suspicious that a crime may be committed, which involves a Home-Start family, Home-Start is not (with a few exceptions) under obligation to report this information to an outside agency.

Where there is a perceived significant risk to the safety or welfare of a volunteer, member of staff or family member Home-Start reserve the right to take any necessary preventative action including supplying information to outside agencies.

Where there is concern for the welfare of a child, Home-Start is obliged to pass on this concern to the appropriate authority. Home-Start families will be made aware of this as a condition of the acceptance of their referral.

Where information is disclosed, Home-Start will normally advise the family of such disclosure.

Employees and volunteers

Home-Start Glasgow North West employs:

- 1 Senior Co-ordinator
- 1 Co-ordinator
- 1 Administrative Assistant
- 1 Cleaner

Home-Start volunteers are:

- Home visitors
- Management Committee members

Acquisition

Home-Start, in its role as a responsible employer and voluntary organisation, will become privy to information of a personal and private nature.

Information will normally be obtained from a variety of sources such as

- application forms,
- volunteer/employee interview conversations,
- relevant vetting procedures,
- supplied references,
- former employers

In relation to Management Committee Matters, information of a business nature will also be received from a variety of sources, for example,

- funding agencies
- Home-Start UK
- other Home-Start schemes

Storage

Documented information on volunteers and employees shall be kept locked away in secure premises and access to this information will be strictly limited to appropriate persons within the Home-Start organisation, and will not normally be divulged to any other person inside or outside of the Home-Start organisation.

Home-Start acts in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998

Sharing

Any personal or business information discussed in Management Committee meetings will be confidential to the meeting unless the Management Committee is acting in a detrimental way to the Home Start scheme or to Home-start UK.

Where an outside agency requests a personal reference from Home-Start, the former/current employee in question shall be advised of the request and their permission obtained before the request is granted.

Any employee of Home-Start Glasgow North West, who subsequently elects to gain employment or volunteer with another Home-Start scheme, must cite Home-Start Glasgow North West as a referee.

Any person who elects to gain employment or volunteer with the Home-Start Glasgow North West scheme, and who has previous employment/volunteer experience with another Home-Start scheme, must use the previous scheme as a reference.

All Home-Start volunteers and employees will receive guidance on confidentiality issues and must agree to abide by this policy.

Management Committee

There are some members of the Management Committee whose status differs from that of volunteer. They are the appointed representatives of various statutory bodies and funding agencies. Any information that Management Committee members may obtain regarding families supported by Home-Start or of a business nature must be treated in strict confidence. Any breach of this confidence may result in the committee member concerned being expelled from the Management Committee.

Home-Start UK

Home-Start UK will not normally divulge information regarding one Home-Start scheme to another Home-Start scheme, or to any other agency, unless there is a significant risk that the actions of a scheme is likely to bring the name of the Home-Start organisation into disrepute or where the quality of the service offered to families is in jeopardy.

This policy will be reviewed annually and amended as necessary.

Signed on behalf of the Management
Committee: _____
Position: _____
Date: _____