

Home-Start Hertfordshire

Looking after Children in Absence of Parents Policy and Procedure

Policy Statement

It is the policy of Home-Start that in some situations or in unforeseen circumstances, volunteers may be asked to look after the children without the parents present. This may involve taking the children out or looking after them in the family home.

Context

Home-Start volunteers provide non-judgmental, practical and emotional support to help build the family's confidence and ability to cope. Home-Start allows volunteers to look after children in the absence of parents in some circumstances. For example:

- looking after the child/ren in the family's home while the parent(s) attend a meeting or appointment
- accompanying the family (eg to a Citizens Advice Bureau, or to the GP's) to look after the children while the parent/s go into their appointment.
- taking the child/ren out for a short while to the park or similar to give the parent a brief break, or to spend some focused time with one of the other children

Procedure (*schemes to add to and customise this section*)

1. The volunteer and the family should have had the opportunity to get to know each other, and wherever possible the activity should be planned in advance
2. The organiser/co-ordinator will normally have agreed in advance to the activity in discussion with the volunteer, and undertaken an appropriate risk assessment
3. Risk assessment includes arrangements (if appropriate) for transporting the children, and signed permission is obtained from the parent where possible
4. The family record and the volunteer diary records the activity and the reason for the arrangement.
5. The organiser ensures that the volunteer has the necessary information from the parent, including emergency contact details (see checklist)
6. The volunteer will be clear about how and who to contact at the scheme if they have any concerns, *including* if the activity happens out of office hours
7. Home-Start recognises that in rare circumstances an urgent situation may require that a volunteer takes sole charge of the child/ren without the opportunity of discussing it with the organiser/co-ordinator in advance.
8. In such a situation, the volunteer will record on the volunteer diary the reason and circumstances for the event, and inform the organiser *at the earliest possible opportunity* by phone.
9. The organiser will undertake any appropriate follow up review with the family, and/or discuss in supervision with the volunteer
10. Volunteers will not normally be permitted to invite the family they support to their own home, although in very limited circumstances and only with the prior approval of the organiser, this may happen (for example if the supported family are living in a situation

that makes home-visiting difficult or impossible or there are very limited opportunities for outings etc.)

11. Unaccompanied children will never be taken to the volunteer / staff member's house.

12. Home-Start will ensure that this policy and procedures are explained to all new volunteers during the prep course, and regularly referred to during supervision / ongoing training.

Signature of Chair: _____ Name: _____

Date policy and Procedure adopted: _____

Date policy to be reviewed: _____