

Introduction to Volunteering

Home-Start is a national organisation with over 350 schemes throughout the UK. There are also schemes in Australia, Cyprus and Germany; in fact they are sprouting up in countries all over the world. The first scheme was established in Leicester in 1973. Home-Start has had a fairly low profile, however we do actually support roughly the same amount of families as the NSPCC.

Home-Start Calderdale

Home-Start Halifax was launched in September 1999 covering mainly the North Halifax area of Calderdale. In April 2006 additional funding was given to enable Home-Start to broaden the support area to cover the whole of Calderdale, therefore all families living in Calderdale can now benefit from Home-Starts unique home visiting volunteers to get the support they require. The name of the scheme changed from Home-Start Halifax to Home-Start Calderdale, this was necessary to reflect the area covered.

The scheme is constantly growing and many more families in Calderdale are able to benefit from the support of a Home-Start volunteer.

We currently have over 50 home visiting volunteers, 7 Trustee volunteers and 5 paid staff:

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| • Senior Co-ordinator | Linda Crowther |
| • Office Manager | Gail Lumb |
| • Co-ordinator | Charlie Johnston |
| • Co-ordinator | Samantha Gallagher |
| • Co-ordinator | Faye Herbert |

Role of a Home-Visiting Volunteer

After receiving this information pack it is your choice to decide if you could offer your skills as a parent, to make a difference to a family living in Calderdale. Every family supported by our team of volunteers has individual needs and each volunteer has individual skills therefore our co-ordinators need to carefully match, your skills, ability and confidence to the family's needs. Some areas of support may include reassurance that the parent is doing a good job, practical help, a listening ear, some parents just need someone to talk to, help to gain confidence to get out of the house, managing children's behavioural problems, there are many more areas of support, far too many to categorise.

As a Home-Start volunteer you will visit the same family in their own home, every week for a couple of hours. As Home-Start works with children and vulnerable people it is important to keep up consistency with the visits in order to build up a "friendship". Home-Start offers a befriending service, emotional support with some practical assistance. However this does not mean that you will be babysitting, home helps or run a taxi service. It is your aim as a Home-

Start volunteer to enable the family to manage on their own and not to rely on you. **Example** – If the family you support does not have a car, taking them to the park in your own car will not enable them to manage independently. However helping the family on the bus or motivating them into walking enables them to see that it is manageable on their own.

Home-Start asks for a minimum commitment of 12 months from a volunteer. However we understand your own personal circumstances may change and you may be unable to commit. You can discuss this at any time with a Co-ordinator. Support is offered to families for as long as they and the volunteer feel it is needed. Sometimes this support can be for a few weeks, but sometimes it can be up to a year or more.

If you feel at this point that home-visiting might not be for you, but that you would still like to help, we would welcome your interest in becoming a trustee on our management board. If you feel that this is for you, please let us know and we can give you details on what that role would involve.

All out of pocket expenses are reimbursed, you are able to claim for bus fares, mileage, phone calls, and stamps used for Home-Start purposes. The Co-ordinators will bear in mind the area that you live in and where your family lives. We will aim for it to be as easy as possible for you to get to visit the family supported.

Application Form

The first step to becoming a Home-Start volunteer is to complete the application form. Completing the form does not mean you have agreed to become a volunteer – it is an expression of interest.

Option 1 complete the form and send it to the office, our co-ordinator will phone you to arrange a suitable time to come and visit you in your own home to discuss with you the role of a volunteer. It is also a chance for you to ask any questions.

Option 2 Don't worry too much about the form, if you prefer you can wait until you meet the Co-ordinator and fill it in together. You will need to phone the office to arrange a convenient time for a co-ordinator to come and visit you in your own home.

The application form asks you to disclose any criminal offences you may have. If you do disclose information about your past, it does not mean that you automatically cannot be a volunteer. We will discuss the circumstances surrounding the incident and maybe seek further information before making a decision. You can always phone to discuss it if you are not sure. It is always better to be honest at this point rather than be found out at a later date. (please see policy sections in Criminal Records Check)

Meeting a Co-ordinator

A letter will be sent to you to confirm the date and time of the visit by a co-ordinator. This visit gives you a chance to understand fully what is expected as a Home-Start volunteer and what benefits you will get from your volunteering experience. It is after this meeting you decide whether you would like to attend the Home-Start Preparation Course, starting the process to becoming a volunteer. Various courses run throughout the year including weekend courses so please state the best time for you to attend a course.

References

You are required to provide 2 referees on the application form. Home-Start Calderdale will then write to the referees asking them to provide a reference for you. Please seek permission from the referee before submitting their details to Home-Start Calderdale. **The referees must not be related to you.**

Preparation Course

The preparation course helps to utilise your own skills as a parent, enabling you to help others. The course is enjoyable and a good way to meet other people. It enables you to discover your own strengths and hopefully you will gain a new found confidence. There is very little writing to be done on the course and it is up to you how much you want to write and how much you want to say, but usually as the group get to know each other we have difficulties in keeping people quiet!

There are usually about 10 people on the course, which is normally held at either Calderdale Business Park in Ovenden or at Ferney Lee School in Todmorden

The preparation course is over 40 hours in total - one 4 hour session per week for 10 weeks. The sessions are usually held in school hours so that people are still able to drop off and collect from school. Normally the courses do not run in the school holidays. If there is enough demand an evening course or weekend course can be organised. Refreshments are provided but you will need to bring your own lunch.

During your attendance on the preparation course your references and criminal record check will be processed. This is done to enable you to support a family as soon as possible after completing the course.

Criminal Records Bureau Check

Your application will be subject to an enhanced check with the Criminal Records Bureau. This will involve giving the scheme personal details such as driving licence number, passport number etc. Please disclose any convictions on your application form. A copy of the criminal records check will be sent to the office and also a copy sent to your home. Please read sections 3-5 of the Recruitment of Ex Offenders Policy

Section 3 - Policy for the recruitment of ex offenders

The Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 makes it an offence to apply for, offer to do, accept or do any work with children (paid or unpaid) if disqualified from working with children. Disqualification can arise from inclusion in either the list of those considered unsuitable to work with children held by the Department of Health or the Department of Education and Employment. In addition the courts can disqualify those convicted of serious offences from working with children

The Charities Act 1993 disqualifies individuals who have convictions for offences involving deception or dishonesty from acting as trustees.

Section 4 - Policy for the recruitment of ex offenders

Subject to paragraph 3 above, Home-Start Calderdale will consider applications for recruitment from individuals who have a criminal record to a paid or unpaid position within the organisation on their merits but the safety of children, vulnerable adults and families will be paramount and overriding consideration in determining the matter.

Section 5 - Policy for the recruitment of ex offenders

A criminal conviction may not necessarily be a bar to being an employee or volunteer for Home-Start. Certain offences are however so serious that in light of the nature of Home-Start's work, the existence of a conviction for such an offence will normally preclude the applicant from involvement in the organisation on a paid or unpaid basis:

- *Offences against children or against a person*
- *Sex offences*
- *Benefit Fraud*
- *Theft when in a position of trust*
- *Offences where weapons were used*

Open College Network Qualification (Optional)

Home-Start Calderdale works in partnership with Leeds University to offer volunteers an option to gain credits from the Open College Network for home visiting. A booklet is given to all interested and each session on the preparation course relates to each session in the booklet. It is advisable that the booklet is filled out weekly after each session. If you are interested in receiving more information please mention this to your co-ordinator.

End of Preparation Course Interview

On the last session of the preparation course your co-ordinator will arrange a suitable time for you to call at the office to discuss with them the next stages of volunteering. If this is not arranged you will receive a letter with a date and time. This interview is an opportunity for you to discuss any concerns you may have and also this is your chance to say what you are not willing to accept i.e. smoking, dogs, cats, any specific issues.

We hope this may answer some of your questions. Please phone the office if you require any further information. 01422 340819.