

## THE rOLe of tHe Home-Start vOLunteer

To give children the best possible start in life, Home-Start supports parents as they grow in confidence, strengthen their relationship with their children and widen their links with the local community. Home-Start offers support, friendship and practical help to parents with young children in the local community.

The work of the volunteer requires a high level of commitment and reliability and will be supported by the Home-Start Co-ordinators.

### **The Home-Start Approach**

Home-Start volunteers are expected to work towards the increased confidence and independence of the family by:

- offering support, friendship and practical help
- visiting the families in their own homes, where the dignity and identity of each individual can be respected and protected
- reassuring families that difficulties in bringing up children are not unusual
- emphasising the positive aspects of family life
- developing a relationship with the family in which time can be shared and an understanding developed
- encouraging parent's strengths and emotional well being for the ultimate benefit of their own children
- encouraging families to widen their network of relationships and to use effectively the support and services available in the community.

### **Support for volunteers**

The Home-Start Co-ordinator, who is in turn responsible to the Trustees, supports the volunteers in their work with families offering regular supervision and training for the role.

### **Commitment required**

- initial course of preparation – all volunteers need to be prepared to offer support to families. The initial course of preparation lasts 40 hours over a number of weeks
- time with families each week – to meet the needs of families and ensure the best support we ask volunteers to offer to spend time with at least one family per week ideally for three or more hours depending on the needs of the family.
- willingness to accept regular support and supervision in respect of their voluntary activity.
- we recognise that volunteers may stop volunteering at any time but we would expect and hope they would be able to offer their time to Home-Start for two years or more.

### **Expectations of Volunteers**

In line with the guidance provided on the Preparation Course volunteers are expected to:

- be familiar with and committed to the Home-Start ethos as specified in the Constitution, Standards and Methods of Practice, The Home-Start Agreement, and the Home-Start Policy and Practice Guide.
- understand and implement Home-Start's policies on confidentiality, equal opportunities, child protection, health and safety looking after children in the absence of their parents
- be introduced to and support a family or families by visiting regularly (usually at least once per week) for as long as necessary
- share information with the co-ordinator and contact the co-ordinator immediately if there is concern about the physical or emotional well-being of any member of the family
- take part in reviews with the family and co-ordinator as requested
- keep records of visits as requested by the co-ordinator
- attend support, supervision and training sessions as arranged by the scheme
- submit travel and telephone expenses on a regular basis, which will be paid at the rate agreed by the trustees

- inform their insurance company that their car is being used for voluntary work with Home-Start for which expenses are paid

This is exciting and rewarding voluntary work, which requires energy, commitment, reliability, creativity and a sense of humour. All volunteers can expect the support of the co-ordinator, other volunteers and the Trustees, and, through the co-ordinator, other professionals involved with the family. The Board of Trustees membership includes two representative volunteers. There are also opportunities for self-development and social contact with others in Home-Start.

### Home-Start volunteer profile

A Home-Start volunteer should:

- be a parent or have parenting experience
- have a positive attitude to working with people of any gender, family status or sexual identity, or who are from any ethnic origin, culture or religion, or who may have a disability
- demonstrate a sensitive and caring attitude towards others
- have a non-judgemental attitude
- be clear about confidentiality and when a confidence remains so, but be able to decide when disclosure of a confidence is essential to the well-being of a child
- be reliable and understand the importance of reliability to the family
- have good communication skills including an ability to listen
- understand the need for support
- have a warm and open personality and a sense of humour
- have time and enthusiasm for Home-Start
- be able to work as a member of a team
- be prepared to keep records as requested by the scheme.