

What is Home-Start?

Home-Start is a voluntary organisation that offers informal, confidential support to parents so that every child can have a good start in life. We prepare volunteers to visit families with at least one child under 5, in their own home. Volunteers offer regular support, friendship and practical help and emphasise the pleasures of bringing up children. They provide a breathing space for parents who feel overwhelmed by the stresses of everyday life and work alongside statutory service providers to improve outcomes for children.

Why do young families need Home-Start ?

A parent may be struggling to respond to the normal daily demands of young children. They may have practical difficulties or be feeling lonely, isolated, ill or depressed. Home-Start supports parents as they grow in confidence, strengthen their relationships with their children and widen their links with the local community.

Home-Start volunteers have:

- * been alongside mothers with postnatal depression – helping them to cope with the shock and fear such a situation creates;
- * provided an extra pair of hands for parents with three or more children under school age;
- * helped practically with hospital and other appointments for parents a long way from services;
- * been ‘Mum’ to single parents in need of someone to care about them as well as their children;
- * listened to parents with relationship

- problems and befriended them through the difficult stage of being on their own;
- * helped families from minority ethnic groups to meet new friends and feel less isolated;
- * provided support and a break for the parents of special needs children.

What is the Home-Start Approach

Home visiting, where each family’s individuality and privacy can be respected, is the unique service we offer. Volunteers and families meet usually weekly for 2-3 hours, sometimes on the same day, or visits are arranged around a volunteer’s work or the family’s needs. Each volunteer is matched with one, or sometimes two families, and visits for as long as necessary. They are required to keep brief records of visits for discussion with their co-ordinator.

Who are the Volunteers?

Our committed and caring volunteers are people of all ages who have parenting experience themselves. They are friendly, non-judgemental, reliable and good listeners. Parents who have been visited sometimes become volunteers themselves.

All Home-Start volunteers attend a 10-week preparation course which allows the co-ordinators to get to know them really well before matching them with a family. The course covers both practical and theoretical aspects including:

- the Home-Start ethos-confidentiality, boundaries, values and attitudes
- the ethics of visiting people in their own homes

- an understanding of relationships
- stress factors in family life
- positive discipline
- communication and listening skills
- safeguarding children

Volunteers work to Home-Start’s Policy and Code of Conduct for Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children and receive ongoing supervision, support and training from their Home-Start co-ordinator. They also support each other in group meetings and can attend Home-Start social events. Some volunteers join the Board of Trustees, fundraise with Friends of Home-Start or become drivers. They are paid expenses.

Family Groups, Trips and Activities

Family Groups are held in Hertford, Monday’s 10am to 12 noon during term time for referred families and Bishop’s Stortford, Tuesdays 1-3pm. The playleader, volunteers and Home-Start co-ordinator provide the children with a range of activities and support the parents. Home-Start occasionally organises outings as well as holding picnics and visits locally during the summer holidays. Talks on relevant topics are arranged for Family Group which other Home-Start families are welcome to attend.

Who refers families?

Families accepting the offer of a Home-Start volunteer are usually referred by Health Visitors or Social Workers. Referrals also come from midwives, paediatricians, child and family therapists, from other health care workers or other voluntary organisations. Some families ask Home-Start for a volunteer themselves.

We need the permission of the family to give general information about the level of support we provide to partner agencies we work with. Confidentiality is only breached if we are concerned about a child's safety and welfare.

Management and Staff

The day-to-day running of each Home-Start scheme is managed by a paid co-ordinator who is responsible to the Management Committee, made up of people from the local community, relevant statutory agencies and the NHS, voluntary organisations, individuals with specialist skills, and representatives from Home-Start volunteers. This multidisciplinary committee ensures partnership working with others involved with young families in the community. Each local scheme receives training, support and guidance from Home-Start UK, the National Organisation.

What about Funding?

Home-Start support is cost effective because we work through volunteers visiting families in their own homes. But it is essential that adequate funding is available to maintain the Scheme to provide continuity for the families and a regular supply of properly trained volunteers.

Herts County Council Children, Schools and Families is the major funder of Home-Start East Herts. Other funding is raised from local councils, housing associations, grants, fundraising and donations.

HOME-START EAST HERTS A Charitable Company limited by Guarantee

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HOME-START EAST HERTS

Supporting Young Families



**Support and friendship
for families**

Home-Start East Herts is committed to an equal opportunities policy that respects the identity, rights and value of each individual and we regularly monitor, review and evaluate its effectiveness.

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