

## Home-Start Stroud District

### Managing Referrals and Waiting Periods Policy and Procedure

#### Policy Statement

Home-Start is committed to providing a safe, efficient and responsive service to local families with young children. Referrals are accepted with the consent of the family. The range of referrals or self-referrals accepted is not limited, except where the resources available are not adequate to meet the number or complexity of cases or where ring fenced funding is secured to deliver support packages to families with specific support needs. Waiting times are carefully managed and referrers and families are kept informed.

#### Purpose of Policy and Procedure

**For funders:** As one element of demonstrating an efficient, responsive and reliable service to families, Home-Start will operate to clearly documented referral procedures that can be shared with existing and potential funders and potential partners in joint delivery of services.

**For referrers:** to ensure good safeguarding practice we will ensure that referrers are absolutely clear about the nature, timing and level of Home-Start’s support to families they refer and that they do not mistake occasional support offered to families waiting to be matched with the full Home-Start support service. Clearly documented referral procedures are shared with referrers and they are kept informed at all stages of the support to families including when support ends.

**For families:** Home-Start’s commitment to good matching remains an essential feature of our service. If a suitable volunteer cannot be identified within the period noted within the following procedure, either due to the schemes capacity or the needs of the family, the referral should be returned to the referrer. Referrers and funders should be made aware that this is an important part of Home-Start’s commitment to ensuring excellent and safe practice in family support.

**Continued Best Practice development:** In order to comply with the HSUK Quality Assurance System Home-Start will have and operate to clearly documented referral procedures.

#### Referral procedure: To be added below by the scheme

*See following document attached “Referrers Guide to Home-Start Stroud District and Quedgeley”*

Signature of Chair: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date policy and Procedure adopted: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date policy to be reviewed \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# A Referrer's Guide to Home-Start Stroud District and Quedgeley (updated November 2018)

## Working together to support families

*We are committed to providing a safe, efficient and responsive service to local families with at least one child under five*

Home-Start Stroud District is an independent charity that was set-up in 1999. Since this time we have helped families with young children through a combination of home-visiting and group support. We are proud to be able to offer a flexible approach to supporting individual families.



We aim to give support to families who may be struggling to cope with a variety of challenges, including perinatal mental health issues, disability, isolation, the demands of parenting young children, bereavement and multiple births: helping prevent these difficulties from escalating into crises, and crises from developing into family breakdown.

The scheme currently works within the **Stroud District Council boundaries and the town boundaries of Quedgeley.**

We are particularly focussed on early intervention work and will accept any referral where there is a child under five.

Our unique services work alongside other organisations and statutory services working with families and we value our relationships with other agencies. Home-Start is not a substitute for professional services but complementary to them, and the best results are achieved through an active partnership between professionals and Home-Start.

### **We currently offer:**

- **Home-visiting:** a trained volunteer (*all our volunteers do an initial 40-hour training course with us and are then regularly supervised by a member of staff*) visits a family, in their own home, for 2 or 3 hours a week.
- **group support:** through our Bump-Start, Best-Start and Mothers in Mind groups.

### Home-Start volunteers offer:

- To build a parent's confidence so they can make positive choices about how to run their own lives.
- A listening ear & emotional support.
- Help with the children.
- Praise & reassurance
- Help to build the family's resilience and ability to cope.
- Non-judgemental practical support.
- A flexible approach to individual families.



### They encourage families to:

- Reduce family isolation and increase social support networks.
- Strengthen parent/child relationships.
- Improve parent's physical health & emotional wellbeing.
- Appreciate the joys of parenting & improve their parenting skills.
- Improve children's health, wellbeing and development.
- Improve access to health and community services.

### Group-Start support offers an opportunity for parents to receive peer support, widen their social circle, and meet in a non-judgemental environment. This includes:

- **Bump-Start** – ante-natal group support, within a 6-week programme. Providing extra support and reassurance throughout parents' pregnancy journey. Activity-based sessions focusing on the emotional transition to parenthood.
- **Best-Start** – post-natal group support, within a 6-week programme. Parents receive up-to-date parenting information, an insight into their child's development and a chance to share experiences and advice.
- **Mothers in Mind** – a group specifically for mothers affected by poor mental health during the perinatal period. We give women a safe space to bring their children (bump to under 5) and to express their feelings around motherhood. In discussion circles or whilst enjoying a craft, we explore for example: self-care, positive self-image, overcoming stigma, and living with poor mental health and the effects it can have on the family system.

### Why refer a family to Home-Start?

Every year we talk to families, volunteers and professionals about the effect of Home-Start support. Through this vital monitoring and evaluation of our service we know that by supporting parents, Home-Start makes a positive contribution to family life and to the outcomes for children.

**Research shows:**

That our support is effective in connecting, and remaining with, socially excluded families.

Our informal approach is welcomed by parents who are reluctant or unable to take up other support services.

Home-Start volunteers and targeted group-work act as a bridge between families and the social and economic benefits and services in their community that they may otherwise miss out on.

Home-Start's non-time limited support means that families have time to build up a relationship of trust with Home-Start who are able to walk alongside the family for as long as is necessary and needed to overcome the challenges they are facing.

**Who can refer families to Home-Start?**

Home-Start Stroud District (HSSD) and Quedgeley is committed to providing a safe, efficient and responsive service to local families with young children. Referrals are accepted only with the consent of families. The range of referrals is not limited (except by lack of resources) and can include self-referrals.

HSSD works hard to build and maintain a relationship with referrers and families so that they are clear about what we can and cannot offer, its timing and nature, and that the primary purpose of HSSD is to offer support, friendship and practical help to families in their own homes or in group-settings.

Our main referrers are health visitors, midwives, social care and other professionals working with families and pre-school aged children. This includes GPs and those working in mental health, education, early years and youth support. Around 10% of our referrals are self-referrals.

When a family is referred to us they will be supported by an experienced, professionally run organisation that offers high quality support.

**How to refer a family to Home-Start**

Our referral procedural is designed to support all of our safeguarding practice and clearly documents procedures that are used to include informing referrers of any changes in support and its ending.

For each referral a form must be completed. (referral forms can be downloaded from our website [www.homestartsd.org](http://www.homestartsd.org) or if you email [enquirieshomestartsd@gmail.com](mailto:enquirieshomestartsd@gmail.com) we can send you a form).

Referrers are more than welcome, but not obliged, to phone our main office on 01453-297470 to discuss a referral before making it. If you specifically want to discuss a family attending one of our groups you should call our Groups office on 01453-821085.

The **information required on our referral form** is designed to help the referrer identify how, in their view, families could benefit from our support and which service(s) they are referring the family into. Information on the form includes:

- family details
- family needs
- health and safety issues
- background information that may be useful for support to be effective
- details of any partnership agreements that may be in force



The completed form will be used by the Scheme Manager to determine whether or not:

- the family has willingly chosen Home-Start support
- the referral falls within the remit of the scheme
- the referrer needs to provide further information prior to a visit by the co-ordinator
- the scheme is likely to have the resources to support this family
- Which service the referral should go to within the scheme

The referral form is designed to link with our initial visit and ongoing review forms that are used to monitor and evaluate support as it proceeds and concludes through our internal MESH system (monitoring and evaluation system in Home-Start). These forms are regularly reviewed and updated.

### **What you can expect from us**

We will always acknowledge by return, usually by email, the receipt of any referral.

If the referral does not fall within the remit of the scheme or there are insufficient resources to provide support the referrer will be informed within two weeks that Home-Start cannot help.

We do not operate a waiting list. However, if it is envisaged that it might be possible to offer support within a relatively short time (up to eight weeks) and the family and referrer agree, then the referral will be held until this time. If support is not available after this time, then the family and the referrer will be told and advised to re-refer at a date in the future when it is envisaged we might have capacity for the family.

### **The scheme ensures that the referrer is clear when:**

- A member of staff will be making an initial visit.
- A referral has been taken up and the nature of support to be offered i.e. volunteer home visiting, group support or if a family is to receive minimal support only from one of the family coordinators.
- A referral has not been taken up.
- A family is awaiting support (see notes above).
- Support to a family ends.

Any other information requested about our support with the referrer is done with the permission of the family in line with our confidentiality, sharing information and safeguarding policies which can be requested to view from our office or downloaded from our website [www.homestartsd.org](http://www.homestartsd.org).