

Home-Start Southwark (Home-Start)

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.

Date policy adopted: 17 November 2017

Signature of Chair: P South

Date policy to be reviewed November 2020

Referral Procedure

Families may refer themselves or be referred by any professional working with the family in accordance with the referral guidelines. We recommend a pre-referral contact with the scheme via phone call or email before making a family referral.

Referrals from professionals and practitioners must be made on a Home-Start Southwark referral form



Referral form received by scheme office on HSS referral form



The Referral form is assessed and the named coordinator will take on responsibility for liaising with the referrer and the family from the point of allocation

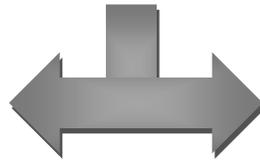


The named co-ordinator will contact the family and arrange an initial visit



Initial visit completed and working objectives agreed with the family. The referrer will be informed in writing when this has taken place and the outcome.

If no volunteer available, Co-ordinator contacts family regularly with update



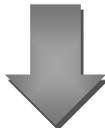
Volunteer matched within 1 month (if available). Co-ordinator will attend visit with the volunteer.



Further Co-ordinator contact to re-assess family need (after 2 months)



Referrer informed



Family to be matched with volunteer identified following re-assessment, alternative support identified to meet family's needs, or the referral is returned to the referrer with an explanation as to why the scheme is unable to support the family currently. Referrer informed.

Criteria for accepting referrals

- The family lives in the London Borough of Southwark
- The family has at least one child under the age of five, or is expecting a baby
- The family is experiencing difficulties
- The parent or parents have given their consent to the referral being made by signing the referral form.

Refusing a referral

- The range of referrals or self-referrals accepted is not limited, except where the resources available to Home-Start are not adequate to meet the number or complexity of cases.
- If the referral does not fall within our referral criteria or there are insufficient resources to provide support, the referrer will be informed that Home-Start cannot help on this occasion.
- The scheme will support a referrer where possible to find alternative or a more appropriate support network if the family does not meet our criteria.
- Home-Start Southwark monitors the number and type of referrals received in order to ensure that the scheme's capacity to provide the service is not overstretched and to ensure that families receive the most appropriate support.
- The referrer will be informed in writing if a referral has been refused and a copy of the correspondence filed on the family file.

Waiting lists

- Home-Start Southwark aims to match a suitable volunteer with a family as soon as possible but this may be affected by scheme capacity, time of year and engagement from the family to be supported.
- Families will be placed on a waiting list if a volunteer is not available and for no longer than 2 months, with the consent from the family.
- If a suitable volunteer is not available after that time then the family and referrer will be informed and agreed actions will be taken.
- During the waiting time the family and referrer will be kept updated and any contact documented on the family file
- Any decision to suspend accepting referrals will be discussed fully with the Chair of Trustees and communicated to the relevant referring agencies.

Response to Referrer

Home-Start Southwark will maintain on-going communication with referrer and will ensure that the referrer knows when:

- The co-ordinator will be making the initial visit
- A referral has been taken up and nature of support to be offered, e.g. linked to a volunteer, group support
- A family is to receive minimal support only
- A referral has not been taken up so Home-Start will not be providing support
- A family is placed on a waiting list (see section above)
- Support to a family ends and reasons for closure

Accepting a referral

- Referrers should make it clear on the Home-Start Southwark referral form the current needs of the family and share relevant information with the scheme especially those relevant to risk assessment.
- In the interest of the welfare of children, Home-Start will contact the family (by phone or letter) to arrange a home visit and respond to referrer within two weeks to indicate the status of the referral (even if an initial visit has not been made).
- The co-ordinator always conducts an initial visit to each family before support is offered. On this visit the initial Family Visit Form (or Initial Visit form for Self-Referrals) will be completed to independently assess the family's needs and to explain in detail the service we can offer.
- Home-Start Southwark will only work with families where there is consent and families have the right to withdraw from receiving the support at any stage.
- All supported families will be reviewed regularly throughout the support and will be closed following a final review visit.
- If there are any further queries, a Coordinator will contact the referrer for further information.
- In exceptional circumstances (e.g. if requested by the family) a joint visit with the referrer can be made.
- For families who have self-referred to Home-Start Southwark we will need the details of a professional (i.e. Health Visitor, Midwife or other health or social care professional) who is working with the family or who has worked with the family in the past.

Safeguarding

Any safeguarding concerns which arise during the referral process or the engagement stage with the family may cause a delay in service, in line with the scheme's safeguarding procedures.

Frequently Asked Questions

Home-Start Southwark aims to support the families in Southwark with young children within the current resources available.

How do I refer a family?

If you are unsure whether a referral is suitable, please ring our office (020 7737 7720) and ask to speak to one of the co-ordinators who will be happy to help.

Referrals from Professionals and Practitioners must be made on the Home-Start Southwark referral form

How do I refer myself, a family member or friend?

You can call the office and ask to speak to one of the scheme co-ordinators. If they are not available, then our office staff will take some basic details and get a co-ordinator to call you back.

The co-ordinator will ask you some questions and explain how we may be able to support you. If you feel that you would like to go ahead, we will need the details of a professional you are or was working with in the past, such as a Health Visitor, Midwife, or other health and social care professional to contact. Once we have spoken with the professional will arrange to visit you at home where you can discuss your need and our service further. This will also be an opportunity for you to ask any questions you may have. We will also complete a Home-Start referral form.

What do we need to know about a family?

We will need to know everything that is **relevant**

- Why you feel the family needs Home-Start support
- whether the child(ren) has special needs, is registered disabled, has a CAF or on the Child Protection Register
- whether the parent(s) has special needs
- whether there are any health and safety issues
- which other agencies may be working with the family
- what other help the family may be getting (e.g. from family or friends)

Within the Home-Start ethos of openness and honesty, we generally share the referral details with the volunteer. We believe that this helps the volunteer give the most effective support. Our volunteer adheres to the scheme confidentiality policy (see below)

What is Home-Start Southwark's policy on confidentiality?

All personal information about parents and families is treated as confidential, to be discussed only as necessary with the co-ordinator in support of the volunteer and to assist the family.

Any disclosure of confidential information to any other person may only be undertaken with the permission of the parents for the purpose of assisting the family **except** where it is considered necessary for the protection of a child or vulnerable adult. In which case information will be shared with the appropriate authority with or without the parent's permission.

Our confidentiality policy is explained fully by the co-ordinator on their initial visit to a family and then again when a volunteer is matched.

Does Home-Start Southwark attend case conferences?

It may be helpful for the co-ordinator involved with the family to be invited to attend case conferences. The volunteer would only attend if invited to do so by the family, as a friend for moral support. The volunteer should not be asked to speak on behalf of Home-Start Southwark at a case conference.

What other information does Home-Start Southwark expect to receive from you?

- Any major changes in the family's circumstances e.g. if a volunteer may be in danger of physical violence
- Child Protection issues that may have emerged
- If you close a case, go on extended leave, another worker replaces you etc.
- Home-Start Southwark scheme uses the Hardiker Level of Need scale to assess the level of support needed for families.

Family Need Assessment & RAG (RED, AMBER, GREEN) rating system)

Home-Start Southwark scheme uses the Hardiker Level of Need scale which identifies the need of the families.

Level 1	Universal, Isolation, Accessing services
Level 2	Mental health, special needs, disability, parenting, housing
Level 3	Child in need, history of domestic violence; substance misuse, child emotional & behavioural issues, special needs, illness and disability
Level 4	Child safe guarding concerns, multiple complex needs, current domestic violence; substance misuse.

However it is recognised that the levels of need within the family do not necessarily tell us about the impact on the scheme of working with the family. Home-Start Southwark assesses the level of need of each family at the initial visit and categorise the complexity and impact on the scheme using a RAG rating system (RED, AMBER, GREEN).

The RAG rating system is used to determine the priority needs of the families on the waiting list. The rating system is based on family complexity and impact of their needs, risk factors, scheme workload, social care activity, disability, existing support from social care and other partnership agency, engagement with other services etc.

Families with a Red rating will be giving priority and be place at the top of the list. However, if a family receives Amber or Green they will NOT be on the waiting list for longer than two months and will override a RED rating family after this period.

Should referrers have any questions about the support given to families they should contact the office on 020 7737 7720 or by email on info@homestartsouthwark.org.uk