

POLICY STATEMENT

Home Start Southwark is committed to The 2010 Equality Act and 1998 Human Rights Act by developing an organisational culture that respects equality and human rights and welcomes and values difference in all aspects of its work. A commitment to equal opportunities and the fundamental rights of individuals is at the heart of our work.

To help us achieve this Home-Start Southwark has in place policies and procedures relating to staff and volunteers that are designed to uphold the rights enshrined in both 2010 Equality Act and 1998 Human Rights Act. Employees, trustees and other volunteers are, therefore required to comply with all policies and procedures designed to ensure respect for equality and human rights. Home-Start ensures all its other policies and procedures comply with this policy.

Context & legislation

As an employer and service provider Home-Start Southwark is required to comply with anti-discrimination legislation. It is also firmly within our ethos and values as an organisation to ensure that all staff, volunteers, families, funders and other stakeholders are confident that we will treat everyone with fairness, dignity and respect.

Home-Start Southwark is committed to offering equality in:
Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Marriage and civil partnership, Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion or belief, Political opinion, Sex and Sexual orientation.

The policy reflects Home-Start Southwark's commitment to the Human Rights Act 1998, the extension of the law on harassment and the Equality and Human Rights Commission's Codes of Practice for Employment, Equal Pay and Services, Public Functions and Associations.

Home-Start Southwark is committed to a culture that does not tolerate victimisation, harassment or bullying. Home-Start Southwark will investigate and take action on any reports of practice, which trustees, staff, volunteers or families believe to be unfair or discriminatory.

All staff are made aware that unfair or discriminatory treatment of another individual will result in the consideration of disciplinary proceedings and will normally be treated as serious misconduct warranting dismissal.

PROCEDURE

Trustees

- Trustees are responsible for ensuring that the local Home-Start meets its legal responsibilities, including those relating to Equalities legislation. All trustees accept and work to the Equality, Fairness & Diversity Policy and monitor its implementation in the day to day work by receiving and analysing regular reports.
- Membership of the Home-Start Southwark Trustee Board represents a wide cross-section of the community.
- Opportunities are offered to volunteers to be represented on Home-Start Southwark's Trustee Board.
- Opportunities are offered to families to be represented on Home-Start Southwark's Trustee Board.
- Trustees endeavour to ensure that the time, place and conduct of meetings enable all trustees and potential members to have an equal opportunity to be involved.

Recruitment and selection

- The Safer Recruitment Policy and the Recruitment, Supervision and Management of Volunteers Policy must be adopted.
- All job advertisements and job descriptions state that Home-Start Southwark is committed to equality of opportunity.
- Job descriptions, person specifications are reviewed as each vacancy arises to ensure they are directly relevant to the post. Consideration is given as to whether the job can be shared and whether working hours can be flexible.
- The person specification indicates which requirements are essential and which are desirable. Only essential criteria are considered in the first round of short-listing.
- All vacant posts are advertised as widely as appropriate for the job. Application forms/CVs ask only for information relevant to the post including an Equality, Fairness and Diversity statement and monitoring form. Health questionnaires are not used until after a conditional offer of employment is made.
- Monitoring forms are separated from the application before short-listing and used only after the selection process for monitoring purposes.

- Reasonable travel expenses are offered to all applicants attending interviews.
- Acceptance of the Home-Start Equality, Fairness & Diversity Policy is a condition of employment and all employees must work to this policy.
- All staff should be informed of the routes of access to the Trustee Board, the Quality Assurance standards and of the Grievance and Disciplinary Procedure.
- Appropriate consideration will be given to the individual circumstances of a member of staff within the scope of the Equality Act, providing the needs of the local Home-Start are met. This may include actions such as reasonable adjustment to the employee's working environment or flexible working patterns.
- Home-Start Southwark is committed to ensuring that all employees have a workplace free from victimization, bullying and harassment, are made aware of the relevant policies and procedures and know how to report incidents.

Service provision

- Home-Start Southwark keeps up to date information about the population in the community/area in which it works, including hard to reach and disadvantaged groups. It works to ensure that it builds appropriate relationships in order to offer accessible support, resources and involvement to every family that falls within its remit.
- Home-Start Southwark endeavours to meet the individual needs of each family.
- All families are given an equal opportunity to attend social events.
- Toys and other equipment/material reflect as far as possible the diversity of our society.
- The involvement of volunteers and families is encouraged and their views on the services offered are taken into account when drafting strategic and operational plans and making policy decisions.
- Home-Start Southwark reviews and analyses its monitoring information in order to fulfil its aim of ensuring that employees, trustees and volunteers reflect the population in the community.

Access to services

- The range of referrals or self-referrals accepted is only limited where Home-Start Southwark does not have the resources available to meet the number or complexity of cases.
- Home-Start Southwark establishes positive links with a wide range of referring agencies in the area including those supporting hard to reach/disadvantaged groups and accepts appropriate referrals, the permission of the family having been obtained first.
- Home-Start Southwark seeks to publicise the availability of its services to all sections of the community, including providing information about its services in user-friendly language and in appropriate languages other than English.
- All publicity or information materials include positive images of people.
- Home-Start Southwark is sensitive to the communication needs of individuals and families, and aims to meet them wherever possible.
- Every effort is made to select office and other premises which are accessible and do not restrict the participation of anyone in the activities of the local Home-Start Southwark.
- Consideration is given to the needs of individuals who may use the premises. Home-Start Southwark activities should be as accessible and inclusive as possible.

Working with volunteers

- Within the scope of the Equality Act volunteers do not have the same rights as employees, Home-Start Southwark will always treat its volunteers with equality and fairness and welcome diversity.
- All volunteers are expected to accept and follow the Equality, Fairness & Diversity policy, a copy of which will be provided as part of the induction process.
- Volunteers are recruited from a wide range of backgrounds, taking into account the composition of the catchment area.
- Where appropriate, former users of the service may be enabled to become volunteers.
- The individuality and differences of volunteers are respected and selection of volunteers will be based on the experience and skills of each individual.
- Volunteers' expenses are paid promptly on receipt of relevant documentation.
- Regular support and supervision is provided to all volunteers.

Training

- Equality and Diversity is part of the volunteer course of preparation.
- Trustees encourage all staff to participate in training to meet their development needs.
- All training offered by the local Home-Start Southwark reflects this policy at all times.
- All outside speakers are made aware of the Equality, Fairness and Diversity Policy Statement.
- Where possible Home-Start Southwark offers all volunteers the opportunity for ongoing training within the organisation or externally.

Monitoring

- Performance in relation to this policy is monitored through the Home-Start Southwark Quality Assurance self-assessments and reviews.
- Monitoring of current local Home-Start Southwark data against relevant demographics takes place to inform planning and targets.