

Home-Start Essex

Telephone Befriender Volunteer Information

Who are Home-Start Essex?

We recognise that being a parent can be hard work, especially with young children and that many parents feel exhausted and overwhelmed by the stresses of family life. It can be even harder when faced with issues such as post-natal depression, a child's illness or disability, isolation, or multiple births. The families we help come from a wide variety of backgrounds and are looking for support for many different reasons

Home-Start Essex are here to help, we provide a Home-Visiting Service, Telephone Befrienders, Family Groups, Wellbeing Groups and help with School Readiness.

How are families referred to the service?

Families are often referred to Home-Start via their Health Visitor, School, or another agency. However, anyone can refer, and a family can contact us directly, as long as the family has a child 0 – 8 years.

What do we do?

We recruit and train volunteers who all have parenting experience or experience of working with families and children, they come from many different backgrounds and vary in age. They support families by offering emotional support and guidance as well as help with school readiness. This friendly parent-to-parent model is a simple yet effective way of enabling families to get back on track.

By recruiting local volunteers, we give them the opportunity to volunteer, through receiving training and support, thus improving their confidence, knowledge, and skills.

We are currently offering support in Mid, South & West Essex and Southend-on-Sea.

What are we looking for in a Telephone Befriender Visiting Volunteer?

A Home-Start Essex Volunteer must...

- Have parenting experience or experience of working with families and children
- Be prepared to undertake the Home-Start preparation training course
- Demonstrate a sensitive and caring attitude towards others.
- Be reliable and understand the importance of reliability to the family.
- Have good communication skills and the ability to listen.
- Understand why families may need support from Home-Start.
- 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.
- Be prepared to attend support sessions while they are supporting a family and attend two on-going training events a year

What training do the volunteers receive?

Every volunteer completes our Preparation Course before they are matched with a family. This hugely popular training will equip you with all the skills and knowledge needed to help a family. Opportunities are given for ongoing training at various times throughout the year in local areas.

Volunteer Preparation Course

Anyone wishing to volunteer with Home-Start Essex must complete our Preparation Course. The aim of the course is to build on the skills you already have. You do not need any formal qualifications to do this course.

The course of preparation is friendly and informal. For this role it will usually be run over 3 sessions of 2.5hrs via Zoom (with a 10-minute break), there is also a small element of self-learning. These are delivered once a week and term time only.

The 3 sessions cover the following:

- Welcome to the course and introduction to Home-Start
- Role of a Home-Start Volunteer (including confidentiality, listening & communication)
- Supporting Parents
- School Readiness
- Protecting Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

Telephone Befriender Role

What is the role?

Our Telephone Befrienders offer emotional support and guidance to families. They offer time, friendship, and a common-sense approach to help a family through a difficult time. They will support families with a weekly phone call for period of 6 months.

Telephone Befrienders are expected to:

- Commit to supporting the family through weekly telephone support for a period of 6 months.
- Develop a relationship of trust with parents over time which will enable open and trusting conversations and enable you to work alongside them.
- Be non-judgemental; ask open questions and enable parents to explore, reflect and make their own decisions. Be supportive of their choices.
- Listen and understand the whole situation, avoid jumping to conclusions and encourage the family to come up with their own solution.
- Respect parents' choices when managing their children, encourage positive parenting where possible
- Empower people to make their own decisions and find their own solutions by supplying information, ensuring the information you provide is accurate

Boundaries

- Maintain boundaries during your role as a volunteer.
- Avoid sharing personal information i.e. where you live, your phone number, social media etc.
- Keep within the boundaries of your role as a 'telephone befriender', if the family asks for additional support i.e. Doorstep Support – please speak to your coordinator who will manage accordingly.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

- Maintain confidentiality of your family; do not discuss families you support in ways that would identify them to others
- Make sure that any information you record about families is held securely and is destroyed as soon as support is ended
- Do not leave any messages on answerphones with any personal information if you are not sure who is going to be able to hear them.
- If you think there has been a mistake or breach of data protection tell Home-Start about it so we can manage this.
- Know that deliberate breaches of confidentiality could result in ending their volunteering role and even make them liable to prosecution

Safeguarding

- Maintain the boundaries of their role of 'Telephone Befriender' this means to not engage in face to face contact with the family.
- Complete your Telephone Support Record after every call.
- Notify your coordinator immediately of any concerns no matter how small and ensure that it is also documented on your diary sheets.
- If you feel that your concerns have not been listened to and acted upon by the coordinator, raise this with the Safeguarding Lead at your organisation.
- If a family member says "I've got something to tell you – you won't tell anyone, will you?" remember not to promise to keep a secret because you do not know what they are going to say. If you have any concerns over the welfare of a child, you must tell your co-ordinator.
- Undertake safeguarding training specific to their role in order to keep knowledge and skills up to date
- Model positive examples of behaviour towards children and adults and not to make inappropriate, sexual, or abusive remarks

Equality and Diversity

- Respect every individual's beliefs and that nobody is treated less favourably or excluded in anyway. We are all different and all have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.
- Treat others the same way you would want to be treated
- If you witness any behaviours where you feel someone is being treated less favourably or excluded, then you must inform Home-Start of this immediately so we can tackle this and take appropriate action

Volunteer Welfare

- If at any time you feel overwhelmed because the family's needs are so great, please talk to your coordinator.
- Be mindful that as a Home-Start volunteer you do not carry the sole responsibility for improving the family's circumstances.
- Attend supervision sessions to share how you are feeling; discuss any issues, concerns, and positive outcomes. For example, there may be times when you feel you are not making any progress with the family and that is ok, please do share.