

HOME-START BRACKNELL FOREST

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Home-Start Information Sharing Policy

Policy Statement

Home Start Bracknell Forest is committed to ensuring that all information about parents and families is treated as confidential, to be discussed only as necessary with the organiser/co-ordinator in support of the volunteer and to assist the family.

Any disclosure of confidential information about a family to any other person will only be undertaken with the expressed 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 when information shall be shared with the appropriate authority. The best interests of the child will always be the prime concern when considering sharing information with other agencies.

Home-Start Bracknell Forest will respect and protect the information it holds about the families it supports by keeping accurate, factual, substantiated records and by taking all reasonable measures to ensure the secure handling and storage of this information.

Procedures

1.Support for families

1.1 Home-Start supports the principles of openness and honesty with families. In line with our policy on confidentiality, which should be read alongside this document, staff will not normally share information about a family with outside agencies without first discussing it with the family. We do not, however, require their *permission* to pass on information that concerns the welfare of a child. This includes making referrals to Children's Social Care/Social services or other agencies as part of an assessment, to secure further support services or to pass on a concern.

1.2 The confidentiality, information sharing statements and information regarding data protection will be included on information given to families before a service is provided.

1.3 Home-Start Bracknell Forest will therefore -

1.3.1 Explain to children and families at the outset how and when information will be shared, including within Home-Start.

1.3.2 Explain that information shared may relate to concerns if they arise but could also be positive information about their progress. Explicit consent will be obtained to share specific information relating to the family, the only exception being where there is a risk of significant harm to a child or serious harm to an adult.

1.3.3 Consider the protection, safety and welfare of the child as the overriding consideration when making decisions about sharing information.

1.3.4 Wherever possible, however, Home-Start will respect the wishes of children and families when sharing information about them.

1.3.5 Seek advice if in doubt. This may be from the scheme's strategic lead, safeguarding special adviser, the Home-Start UK Family Services Specialist or the Practice & Safeguarding Team or legal adviser from Home-Start UK.

1.3.6 Ensure that the information shared is necessary for the purpose for which it is being shared, is shared only with those who need to see it and is accurate and up to date.

1.3.7 When transporting or sharing sensitive information about a family the scheme will take all reasonable and sensible precautions to ensure this is done securely.

1.3.8 Record the reasons for decisions to share or not share information in the family file.

1.4 Involving children in decisions to share information

Children In families supported by Home-Start will mainly be young children, but where they are mature enough (normally considered to be 12 or over) they are involved in making decisions to share information about them.

2. Recording information in Home-Start.

2.1 Home-Start's practice is to record only information which is relevant to the support for the family. The records kept by the scheme are primarily to guide and review the support a family receives. They also reflect the scheme's contact with and on behalf of the family.

2.2 Records kept are factual, accurate, up to date, signed and in line with Home-Start's Data Protection and Record Keeping policies.

2.3 Records are maintained in a Family File in accordance with Home-Start record keeping guidance. Individuals have a right of access to the information that Home-Start holds about them and to be aware who else may have access to the information.

2.4 Family Files are maintained in accordance with our Data Protection policy and held confidentially within the scheme. The trustees should agree in what circumstances files will be accessed and by whom.

2.5 Anyone, other than paid staff, accessing a family file, signs the family file front sheet giving details of the reason for access and the date it took place.

2.6 Child protection, safety and welfare concerns will be recorded by the designated organiser/co-ordinator (normally the organiser/co-ordinator responsible for supervising the support for the family) on the Home-Start Record of Concern & Action form. Information

recorded on a ROCA form will be factual, accurate and up-to-date and discussed with the recorder's line manager.

3. Training and induction

The training and induction for all trustees, staff and volunteers includes information on their responsibilities with regard to record keeping and to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. This includes signed and dated confirmation of their understanding and acceptance of the Home-Start safeguarding policy, code of conduct and procedures and Home-Start's policy and guidance on Data Protection, Confidentiality and Information Sharing.

4. Moving or sending sensitive information

4.1 When sharing information outside Home-Start by means other than face to face contact, Home-Start follows the Moving or Sending Sensitive Data (data in transit) guidance

4.1.2 Home-Start risk assesses all means of sharing or carrying sensitive data about a family outside the scheme to ensure it is done so as securely as possible.

4.1.3 If sending information by post Home-Start takes all steps necessary to ensure the recipient's details are accurate and that only the named person has access to the information.

4.1.4 When sending information by fax Home-Start ensures the recipient is at hand when the fax arrives at its destination.

4.1.5 When sending information via a web portal the scheme ensures there is robust password protected access control in place and that only the intended recipient has access to it.

4.1.6 When storing or moving information via a mobile storage device e.g. laptop, tablet PC or memory stick, Home-Start only does so if there are no safer alternative methods and only after a rigorous assessment of the risks.

5. Liaising with other agencies

Home-Start is committed to maintaining effective communication with other key agencies and shares information according to these principles in order to contribute to the best support available for children and their families.

5.1 Referrers

Referrers are informed in writing when Home-Start support starts and the nature of that support, home visiting, group support or a combination of both. They are also informed, again in writing, when Home-Start support ends. With the family's consent are informed of any changes in the nature of support or the family's circumstances as the relationship with Home-Start progresses.

5.2 Health Visitors, Children's Centres and other agencies

With the family's permission, their Health Visitor (if not the referrer), Children's Centre, or other appropriate agencies the family are known to, may be informed that Home-Start is supporting the family. This aids effective communication between agencies and helps to ensure a more co-ordinated approach to the delivery of services.

5.3 If as a requirement of funding, families receiving Home-Start's support have to be registered with a Children's Centre, Sure Start in Northern Ireland or in some areas of Scotland as part of a Children's Plan, this will be fully explained to the family at the initial visit and the nature and extent of any information sharing agreed with the family in advance.

5.4 Multi-agency meetings

Home-Start staff will attend multi-agency meetings with the family's knowledge and consent, and having discussed with them the information that will be shared, with whom and how it will be recorded. The exception being where there are concerns for the safety or welfare of a child and it would not be safe or practical to do so.

5.4.1 When sharing information about a family it supports Home-Start adheres to the principle that the information is necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure. Where professionals unconnected with the particular family are present Home-Start should emphasise the sensitive and confidential nature of the information they are sharing

5.5 Providing reports for multi agency meetings.

Information provided about a family in a report is factual, accurate, up-to -date and substantiated and should be in writing. The organiser/co-ordinator discusses the contents of the report with the family prior to the meeting as long as to do so would not increase the likelihood of harm to the child/children.

5.6 Commissioners of services

Evidence of positive outcomes for children and their parents is essential to underpin Home-Start funding applications and for accountability purposes. Home-Start retains statistical records of their support for families and children to meet requirements. Home-Start may also, on occasions produce case studies or other information to demonstrate their support to families and to illustrate the positive impact of this support. When doing so all personal, sensitive or indentifying information is removed.

This policy should be read in conjunction with Home-Start Bracknell Forest's policies on -

- Safeguarding & Promoting the Welfare of Children (Child Protection)
- Safer Recruitment
- Safeguarding/Protecting Adults
- Data protection
- Confidentiality
- Record Keeping & Retention
- Safe Storage and Handling of Disclosure Information

And the guidance sections -

- 7 Golden Rules of Information Sharing
- Involving Children in Decision to Share Information
- Releasing Information to Prevent or detect a crime

Home-Start's procedures and practice with regard to Information Sharing need to be seen in context and therefore link with:

- Home-Start Quality Assurance standards and guidance for schemes on the Home-Start Intranet

- A commitment to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to work within Home-Start, statutory and local procedures
- Safe recruitment processes for all trustees, staff and volunteers
- identified personnel who hold the Strategic Lead and designated safeguarding responsibilities within Home-Start, as detailed in the Safeguarding/ Child protection Policy
- Insurance and risk management requirements.

Through sharing information in an open and responsible way Home-Start will contribute to ensuring children supported have the best start in life

Date policy adopted:

Signature of Chair:

Date policy to be reviewed