

How soon will a volunteer be matched with a family?

- Families should generally be informed that Home-Start may not be able to allocate a volunteer straight away. (It may be useful to check regarding the availability of volunteers before making your referral.)
- Availability of volunteers varies greatly throughout the year, depending on the number of new volunteers recruited and school holidays etc.
- The matching process is done with sensitivity and may take time. We believe that for a family to be most effectively supported, the right match needs to be found.
- If there is likely to be a long delay before we can match a volunteer with a family, we will inform the family of this. We may also inform you the referrer and will endeavour - in partnership with you - to link the family with other appropriate services/facilities.

What is Home-Start Barnet & Harrow's policy on confidentiality?

All information about families is kept confidential within Home-Start Barnet & Harrow and discussed with the coordinator(s) in support of the volunteer and to assist the family. This ensures that a close, trusting family-volunteer relationship can be built up. Disclosure of confidential information to any other person may only be undertaken with the express permission of the family, for the purpose of assisting them, except where it is considered necessary for the protection of the child, when information will be shared with the appropriate authority.

DATA PROTECTION: Please **password protect** your referral prior to emailing it to us and send us the password in a **separate email**.

Does Home-Start Barnet & Harrow attend Case Conferences?

It may be helpful to invite the Coordinator involved with the family to attend case conferences. The volunteer would only attend if expressly requested 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 Barnet & Harrow at a Case Conference.

What other information does Home-Start Barnet & Harrow need?

- 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.

Projects *

Family Support (families with Under-5's) ● Family Health Coaching ● Perinatal Health Coaching ● Home-from-Home Family Group (Grahame Park Community Centre) ● Parenting programmes ● Women's Support Group (DV) ● Therapeutic Play project (DV) ● Money Smart money management project ● and more...



HOME-START Barnet & Harrow

Referral Policy & Guidelines

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Registered charity no. 1109550

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What is Home-Start Barnet & Harrow?

Home-Start Barnet & Harrow is a voluntary organisation that promotes the welfare of families with children up to the age of twenty-five (* various projects, please see back page). We recruit and train volunteers to visit families in their own homes, offering friendship and practical and emotional support on a regular weekly basis.

How is a family eligible for Home-Start Barnet & Harrow support?

The family:

- lives in the London Boroughs of Barnet & Harrow
- has at least one child under five (* If the child has special needs she/he can be up to the age of 25)
- is experiencing difficulties
- has given their consent to having support from Home-Start.

Who can refer a family?

- Anyone in the community, e.g. a health visitor, GP, teacher, social worker
- Families can also refer themselves

How do you refer a family?

- If you are unsure whether a referral is suitable, please call us to confirm.
- We prefer professionals to complete Home-Start Barnet referral forms. These are obtainable from our office, email: admin@homestartbarnet.org, or online at www.homestartbarnet.org
- If the referral is made telephonically, please make it via one of our coordinators. Our Admin Team can only take basic details.
- **DATA PROTECTION:** Please **password protect your referral prior to emailing it to us and send us the password in a separate email.**

What do we need to know about a family?

We need to know everything about the family that is **relevant**, e.g.

- why the family needs Home-Start support
- whether the child(ren) is/are special needs, registered disabled, has/have a CAF or is/are on the Child Protection Register
- whether the parent(s) has special needs
- whether there are any health and safety issues
- contact details of other agencies working with the family
- what other help the family is getting (e.g. from family or friends)
- the names/dates of birth of all members of the family.

As per the Home-Start ethos of openness and honesty, we share referral details with the volunteer. We believe that this helps the volunteer give the most effective support. The volunteer respects confidentiality (see over).

What happens after a referral is made?

- A coordinator will contact you to discuss the referral.
- We aim to contact the family (by phone or letter) within 2 weeks of the referral and arrange a home-visit by a coordinator.
- In exceptional circumstances (e.g. if requested by the family) we can make a joint visit together with the referrer.
- The purpose of the visit is to enable the coordinator to independently assess the family's needs, and to explain more fully about our service.
- At a weekly team meeting the coordinators discuss which volunteers are available and which one might be most suitable for each family.
- We arrange a further visit to introduce the family and volunteer to each other and agree on how the volunteer will support the family, when the visits will take place, and when a review will be held etc.
- We will inform you when we have matched a volunteer to the family, and when our service with the family comes to an end.

How long does a volunteer stay with the family?

- The duration of support varies from family to family.
- On average, Home-Start Barnet & Harrow supports families for 6 months, but varies according to need.
- We aim to enable the family to get through a difficult patch & move on.
- Where the difficulties are ongoing, we may help the family link up with other agencies that provide more appropriate / intensive support.
- It is very rare that we would support a family for longer than a year.

What is the role of the volunteer?

- To offer friendship, encouragement, emotional and practical support
- To be alongside the family, enabling them to find their own way forward
- To help the family widen their support/social network
- The volunteer may, for example
 - be a listening ear or an extra pair of hands and eyes
 - help the family to get out and about – to shops, the park, local parent and toddler groups
 - help the family get to appointments (GP, hospital etc.)
 - occupy the children (within the home) while mother has a much-needed rest, or catches up with housework & important phone calls

What DOESN'T a volunteer do?

- Housework
- Baby-Sitting, i.e. the volunteer does not stay with a child while the parent goes out, nor will she or he take the child out without the parent or carer.

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