

Home-Start South Leicestershire

Looking after children in the absence of their parents Policy

Policy Statement

It is the policy of Home-Start South Leicestershire that in some situations or in unforeseen circumstances, volunteers may be asked to look after the children without the parents present. This may involve taking the children out or looking after them in the family home

1. Context

Home-Start volunteers provide non-judgmental, practical and emotional support to help build the family's confidence and ability to cope. *The Home-Start service is primarily about 'being with' not 'doing to' or 'doing for'*. However, Home-Start South Leicestershire recognises that in some circumstances it will be helpful and appropriate for volunteers to look after the children in the absence of parents. For example:

- looking after the child/ren in the family's home while the parent(s) attend a meeting or appointment .
*Examples might include:
an appointment with a GP, Citizens Advice Bureau, a solicitor or counsellor*
- accompanying the family to look after the children while the parent/s go into their appointment.
- taking the child/ren out for a short while to the park, library or similar to give the parent a brief break, or to spend some focused time with one of the other children.
- giving child/ren some "special time" that parent/s are unable to offer due to parental physical and/or emotional ill health.

However, it is also important to avoid building the impression that the Home-Start volunteer is able to provide a baby-sitting or child-minding service.

2. Procedures

- 2.1 The volunteer and the family should have had the opportunity to get to know each other, ie at least 2-4 visits, and wherever possible the activity should be planned in advance
- 2.2 The coordinator will normally have agreed in advance to the activity in discussion with the volunteer, and undertaken an appropriate risk assessment
- 2.3 Risk assessment includes arrangements (if appropriate) for transporting the children, and signed permission is obtained from the parent where possible
- 2.4 The family record and the volunteer diary records the activity and the reason for the arrangement.
- 2.5 The organiser ensures that the volunteer has the necessary information from the parent, including emergency contact details (see checklist)
- 2.6 The volunteer will be clear about how and who to contact at the scheme if they have any concerns, *including* if the activity happens out of office hours

- 2.7 Home-Start South Leicestershire recognises that in rare circumstances an urgent situation may require that a volunteer takes sole charge of the child/ren without the opportunity of discussing it with the coordinator in advance.
- 2.8 In such a situation, the volunteer will record on the volunteer diary the reason and circumstances for the event, and inform the coordinator *at the earliest possible opportunity* by phone.
- 2.9 The coordinator will undertake any appropriate follow-up review with the family, and/or discuss in supervision with the volunteer
- 2.10 Volunteers will not be permitted to invite the family they support to their own home
- 2.11 Home-Start South Leicestershire will ensure that this policy and procedures are explained to all new volunteers during the Course of Preparation, and regularly referred to during supervision / ongoing training.

Adopted by the Trustees as the Looking After Children in the Absence of their Parents Policy of Home-Start South Leicestershire:

Date approved by the Board of Trustees: 12 August 2014
.....
Date of Next Review:

Signed by Chair:

Date:

Previous Review Dates:
.....
.....