



Support and friendship
for families

Equality, Fairness and Diversity Policy

Home-Start Bristol welcomes and values difference. Equality of opportunity is at the heart of all we do. We treat everyone with respect and offer equal chances to participate. To help us achieve this we have a strategy for equality of opportunity and diversity. This will develop and inform our thinking, governance, management and practice. Home-Start has high standards. We will investigate and take action on any reports of practice, which trustees, staff, volunteers or families believe to be unfair or discriminatory. A commitment to equal opportunities is at the heart of our work. Performance is checked through Home-Start Quality Assurance assessments and reviews. We also do regular surveys to measure our progress (they may not always be with everyone. For example, we may survey staff or volunteers, and not families) Action plans are then drawn up to inform Home-Start's planning and targets. Home-Start will make sure that all its other policies and procedures will comply with this one.

Equal Opportunities Policy Statement

Home-Start is committed to a policy of equality of opportunity which respects the identity, rights and value of each individual. Recognising that discrimination exists, Home-Start is positively committed to oppose all direct and indirect discrimination in the organisation against people on the grounds of ethnic origin, religion, culture, disability, gender, sexual orientation, age and family status.

Home-Start declares its intention to work to promote equality of opportunity in employment practices, access to services, service provision, committee structure, committee membership and meetings, volunteer recruitment and selection, and training. Home-Start will work to this policy and will monitor, review and evaluate its

effectiveness.

Implementation of Home-Start Equal Opportunities Policy

1. Employment practices

Recruitment and selection

1.1 All job advertisements and job descriptions will state that Home-Start is committed to equal opportunities.

1.2 Job descriptions, person specifications and application forms will be reviewed as each vacancy arises to ensure they are directly relevant to the post. Consideration should be given as to whether the job can be shared and whether working hours can be flexible.

1.3 Application forms will only ask for information relevant to the post.

1.4 All vacant posts will be advertised as widely as appropriate for the job in order to encourage applications from all sections of the community.

1.5 Information sent to applicants will include the job description, the Equal Opportunities Statement, and details of essential and desirable attributes.

1.6 Monitoring forms (if used) will be separated from the application before shortlisting and will only be used after the selection process for monitoring purposes.

1.7 The members of the formal interviewing panel should have been involved in the shortlisting and should reflect as wide a range of background experience and skills as possible.

1.8 Shortlisting and selection for the post will be carried out objectively on job related criteria, specified in the job description and person specification.

1.9 The person specification should indicate which requirements are essential and which desirable. Only essential criteria should be considered in the first round of shortlisting. If large numbers of applicants meet all essential criteria, they will then be judged against the list of desirable requirements.

1.10 Interview questions will relate directly to, and be structured around the person

specification, job description and application forms. Questions will not be varied according to the age, gender, sexual identity, family status, disability, or circumstances of each applicant. It is acceptable to ask supplementary questions which must be related to previous answers.

1.11 References will only be used after interview, to support a decision made by the interview panel.

1.12 Reasonable travel expenses will be offered to all applicants attending interviews.

1.13 All short-listed applicants will be advised of the result of their interview.

1.14 Decisions taken at shortlisting and interviewing will be recorded. Feedback will be made available to unsuccessful interviewees on request.

1.15 Acceptance of the Home-Start Equal Opportunities Policy will be a condition of employment and all employees must work to this policy.

(See *Recruiting and Managing Staff* for good practice in implementing equality of opportunity during recruitment and selection.)

Employment

1.16 A performance review will be carried out after a period of three months employment and at the end of the agreed probationary period for the post (normally at six months).

1.17 Each newly appointed member of staff will receive induction in the job, relevant to the requirements of the job and to individual needs.

1.18 Supervision will be given to all staff, together with ongoing support, according to individual needs. All staff should be informed of the routes of access to the Management Committee and of the Grievance and Disciplinary Procedure.

1.19 There will be a system for regular review of the work, and an annual review.

1.20 Ongoing training will be available for all staff. Individual training needs and opportunities for development will be identified and discussed and met constructively.

1.21 Consideration will be given to the individual circumstances of a member of staff as

appropriate and agreed, providing the needs of the scheme are met.

See the Recruiting and Managing Staff and Recruiting and Managing Volunteers workspace for information about annual reviews, staff induction and on-going training, supervision and support and a model Grievance and Disciplinary Procedure.

2. Service provision

2.1 Home-Start will endeavour to keep up-to-date information about the composition of its catchment area and the number of people belonging to groups who are discriminated against and who could use the service and will monitor this.

2.2 Every effort will be made to build relationships with groups of people who are discriminated against so that they become more aware of what Home-Start is able to offer in support, resources, and involvement.

2.3 Home-Start will endeavour to meet the individual needs of each family. The matching of a family with a volunteer will be done as carefully and sensitively as possible.

2.4 All families will have an equal opportunity to attend social events arranged by the scheme.

2.5 Toys and other equipment/material will reflect as far as possible the diversity of our society.

2.6 The involvement of families will be encouraged and their views on the services offered will be taken into account when making policy decisions.

2.7 Home-Start will aim to ensure that employees and volunteers reflect the population in the community.

3. Access to services

3.1 The range of referrals or self-referrals accepted is only limited where Home-Start does not have the resources available to meet the number or complexity of cases.

3.2 Home-Start will aim to establish positive links with a wide range of referring agencies in the area and will accept appropriate referrals, the permission of the family having been obtained first.

3.3 Home-Start will publicise the availability of its services as to all sections of the community e.g. by the distribution of posters and leaflets, by publicising its services in user-friendly language and in appropriate languages other than English, by talks and presentations to groups and other agencies.

3.4 All publicity material, talks and presentations will include positive images of all people, particularly those who are disadvantaged by society.

3.5 Home-Start will be sensitive to the communication needs of individuals and aim to meet them.

3.6 Every effort will be made to select office and other premises which are accessible and do not restrict the participation of anyone in the activities of the scheme.

3.7 Consideration will be given to the needs of individuals who may use the premises, e.g. nappy changing facilities, translation services.

3.8 The ability of individuals to participate in the activities of Home-Start should not be restricted because of their own responsibility as carers, and consideration will be given to meeting their needs.

For more on families' access to services and service provision see the [Supporting Families workspace](#), and the [Managing and Recruiting Staff workspace](#) for good practice in recruiting and selecting volunteers and staff.

4. Trustees

4.1 Membership of the Home-Start Trustee Board will represent as wide a cross-section of the community as possible, including statutory and voluntary agencies.

4.2 There will be representation of volunteers on the Home-Start Trustee Board.

4.3 Opportunities will be offered to families to be represented on the Home-Start Trustee Board.

4.4 Trustees will endeavour to ensure that the time, place and conduct of meetings will enable all trustees and potential members to have an equal opportunity to be involved.

4.5 All trustees will be offered out-of-pocket expenses, including care expenses, for meetings and relevant agreed training courses attended.

4.6 All trustees will accept and work to the Equal Opportunities Policy.

See the [Working in the Community workspace](#) for information about community participation in Home-Start schemes. For more on the Trustee Board, see the [Governance and Management workspace](#).

5. Working with volunteers

5.1 Volunteers will be recruited from as wide a range of backgrounds as possible, taking into account the composition of the catchment area.

5.2 Where appropriate, former users of the scheme will be enabled to become volunteers.

5.3 Initial interviews will be informal and questions asked will be relevant to the work volunteers are to do.

5.4 It should not be assumed that everyone has literacy skills. Time and support should be given for the volunteer to complete and return the application form.

5.5 If police screening is part of the scheme's procedure, potential volunteers will be informed at the initial interview.

5.6 The individuality and differences of volunteers will be respected and selection of volunteers will be based on the experience and skills of each individual.

5.7 Final decisions as to selection of volunteers will be taken by the organiser/co-ordinator in discussion with the volunteer, and where appropriate with a Management Committee member.

5.8 Volunteers' expenses will be paid promptly on receipt of relevant documentation. Payment will be made in cash or by cheque, as requested and, if necessary, expenses will be paid in advance.

5.9 Regular support and supervision will be offered to all volunteers both in groups and on a one-to-one basis.

5.10 All support/supervision given to volunteers should be flexible and tailored to meet the needs of each individual. Group support should reflect the needs of the whole group.

5.11 All volunteers will be expected to accept and work to the Equal Opportunities Policy.

See the whole of the [Volunteers and Families](#) section for more information.

6. Training

6.1 All trustees, staff and volunteers will be expected to undertake training in equal opportunities, awareness training and implementation of an Equal Opportunities Policy, whether offered by Home-Start or by another agency.

6.2 Trustees will also be expected to undertake training on recruitment and selection.

6.3 Trustees should be aware of their responsibilities in encouraging all staff to participate in training to meet their development needs, and should budget for it.

6.4 Each preparation course for volunteers should raise awareness of and include a session on equal opportunities issues.

6.5 Courses of preparation should provide a safe environment in which discriminatory statements and practice can be challenged.

6.6 Content and materials of all courses should encourage anti-discriminatory practice ensuring that inappropriate statements and practice are challenged.

6.7 All outside speakers should be made aware of the Equal Opportunities Policy and required to work to it.

6.8 Schemes will endeavour to ensure that outside speakers reflect all sections of the community.

6.9 Schemes should offer all volunteers the opportunity for ongoing training within the organisation or externally and should budget for it.

6.10 The individual needs of all participants must be taken into consideration in the design of the course and in the choice of venue.

6.11 All training offered will reflect this policy at all times.

See the Governance and Management workspace and also the Recruiting and Managing Staff workspace.

Please also refer to the Home-Start Volunteer Preparation Course Guide.

Signed:  (Chair)

Date: 10/1/12

Date for Review: 10/1/2013

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