



Home-Start Bristol

## Home Start Bristol Volunteer Resting Policy

Home-Start Bristol (Home-Start) recognises that volunteers may need to take some time out from supporting families due to personal commitments or difficulties. However this "volunteer resting" period should be carefully monitored, evaluated and managed to ensure accuracy of statistics, appropriate spending of volunteer budgets and efficient use of organiser time.

Home-Start aims to maintain a flexible and sensitive approach to supporting volunteers but places a limit of six months on any rest period. Each resting volunteer will be contacted after three months to discuss their future commitment to the scheme. In circumstances where the volunteer knows their predicament will be resolved within a short time, it may be possible to extend the rest period but not beyond a further three months.

The volunteer will no longer receive support, supervision or training during the rest period but contact will be maintained as appropriate. Any volunteer returning after an absence of more than 12 months will be required to enrol as a new volunteer, undertake a new enhanced criminal record check and refresh their training through the preparation course.

### Impact of resting volunteers

This is the term we use when a volunteer takes some time out from supporting families due to short term personal commitments or difficulties. Usually volunteers are able to give the organiser/co-ordinator plenty of notice during support and supervision sessions that they need to take a break from their voluntary activity. When this is the case, plans can be made to ensure that the volunteer's absence from the scheme and any supported families is handled in a positive, honest and open way. There are restraints on why this period has to have time limits:

- the scheme is funded on the basis of one volunteer supporting an average of two families per year.
- long term, the scheme cannot financially support volunteers who are not actively supporting the scheme and its families.
- all volunteers on the books are supported, i.e. sent newsletters, regularly supervised by the organiser, invited to social events and ongoing training opportunities.
- the training, support and supervision offered to a resting volunteer costs as much as for an active volunteer and there are associated travel expenses for these events. Of course there are not any travel expenses to supported families for a resting volunteer but usually we are asking active volunteers to visit an extra

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family to make up the numbers necessary for us to achieve funding requirements.

### Negative consequences

- The scheme cannot support as many families which could greatly affect funding given.
- The scheme is supporting volunteers who are not visiting families at the expense of those who are.
- Pressure is placed on active volunteers to support more families, which could result in their over commitment.

### Management Procedure

To ensure these problems are kept to a minimum, while maintaining a flexible and sensitive approach to supporting volunteers in their work, the following procedure is recommended:

- any supported families should be contacted, informed of the situation and offered a replacement volunteer.
- the volunteer will no longer receive support, supervision or training during the rest period but contact will be maintained as appropriate.
- a limit of six months is placed on any rest period with:
  - an invitation to discuss their continued involvement after the first three months.
  - if the volunteer knows their predicament will be resolved within a short time, it may be possible to extend the rest period for another three months but it is not recommended it is extended beyond six months.
- if contact cannot be re-established after six months then the volunteer should be taken off the books.
- all resting volunteers are welcome to return to the scheme at any time after they have resolved their difficulties and can be fully active.
- volunteers returning after a prolonged absence of more than 12 months would be expected to enrol as a new volunteer, undertake a new enhanced criminal record check and refresh their training through the preparation course.

Signature:  ..... Date: 8.12.10 .....

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