

# Introduction to Volunteering with Home-Start Mid & West Suffolk



## Volunteering Opportunities

We have many different roles and think we have something for everyone who would like to use their skills to help others and to learn new skills too. We are looking for team members for the following roles:-

- to become a home visiting volunteer supporting a family
- to help in one of our family groups that are run for parents with children under 5 years old
- to encourage development of speech and language in our LENA project
- to be a retail assistant in our charity shop in Eye or our eBay hub in Stowmarket
- Trusteeship to help develop the organisation and ensure it is run to charity commission standards

There may also be other opportunities, so if you have a particular skill that you think we could use then speak to us.

## Who are Home-Start?

Home-Start Mid & West Suffolk is a part of the national charity Home-Start UK, with schemes in over two hundred local communities. We recruit and train volunteers to help families with young children. Traditionally, our home visiting volunteers support other parents by visiting them in their own homes for a couple of hours each week. This support to families is needed now more than ever and crucial in helping families to cope, develop resilience and stay positive through perhaps the most challenging time in their life.

We also run family groups for parents and children to attend.

Across the UK thousands of Home-Start volunteers support families at home each week, in situations as diverse as isolation, bereavement, multiple births, illness, disability or who are just finding parenting a struggle. They provide non-judgemental practical and emotional support and help build the family's confidence and ability to cope.

## Our Ethos

At Home-Start Mid & West Suffolk we believe that children and families deserve the best possible start in life, to have choices and chances to live the best lives they can.

We offer support through home visiting/telephone befriender volunteers, family groups, specialist support groups and workshops to people from all walks of life and we aim to help them through any barriers they may face. Our services and projects are dedicated to making a positive difference to the lives of children, families and communities throughout Mid & West Suffolk.



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## What qualifications or experience do I need?

To become a home visiting/telephone befriender volunteer the only real qualification you need is to be a parent or to have had full time care of children. This is not a requirement if you are helping at one of our groups or with the charity shop/eBay hub.

Friendliness and a caring attitude are essential as well as an understanding of the pressures of parenting. We value people who don't judge others; people who will respect the fact that they have been invited into a family's home; people who will treat a mother or father as an equal.

## Would I make a good volunteer?

***To make a difference in someone's life you don't have to be brilliant, rich, beautiful or perfect, you just have to understand and care!***

Have a look at the list below and see how many apply to you. We do not expect you to be able to tick all the boxes!

- ✓ Understand why families may need support from Home-Start
- ✓ Have a knowledge of child development or willingness to undertake training
- ✓ Have a positive, non-judgmental attitude to working with people of any gender, family status or sexual identity, or who are from any ethnic origin, culture or religion, or who may have a disability
- ✓ Demonstrate a sensitive and caring attitude towards others
- ✓ Have a clear understanding of the confidential nature of the Home-Start service, and not to break confidences shared by the family, other than when disclosure is essential in order to protect the wellbeing or safety of a child
- ✓ Have time and enthusiasm for Home-Start, be reliable and understand the importance of reliability to the family
- ✓ Have good communication skills and most importantly the ability to listen
- ✓ Have a warm and open personality and a sense of humour
- ✓ Enjoy working with other people and being part of a team.

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## What kind of families would I be helping?

All kinds of families can find it hard to cope for all sorts of reasons, maybe because of the illness or disability of a child or because of post-natal illness, bereavement or loneliness. At Home-Start we support any parent with young children who asks for our help and the families we support, like volunteers, come from all walks of life.

You may find that you are supporting a family with:-

- Emotional support to help parents find ways to manage and resolve problems.
- Direct support to children, including playing, listening, having fun, establishing routines, or encouraging development.
- Practical help, perhaps with getting to appointments, helping with budgeting meal planning or cooking.
- Accompanying your family to family groups or trips to the park.

## Some feedback from families we have worked with about the impact a Home-Start volunteer has had on their life:

“My volunteer listened. She was someone to talk to, and she supported me through several stressful times and encouraged me to achieve my goals. She was an absolute angel.”

“My co-ordinator was someone to listen, talk to, help with the children, with issues. She built my confidence and self-esteem and supported us through the tough times.”

“It made a massive difference to me and my family. As the volunteer helped me grow in confidence, I grew to want to do more with my children.”

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## Becoming a Home-Visiting Volunteer

If you are thinking about becoming a home visiting volunteer, you should have sufficient free time to be able to commit 2-3 hours per week to visiting your family and envisage being able to volunteer for at least 12 months. Obviously we would love it if you can volunteer for longer!

To become a home visiting volunteer you will need to complete the 7 week preparation course (one day a week, 10am to 2pm – and not in school holidays) and undergo a DBS check. We will need two references from people who have known you for at least two years and know you well enough to say whether you have the qualities and skills to become a home-visiting volunteer.

Once you have completed the training you will be matched to a family. Your co-ordinator will accompany you on the first visit and introduce you to the family. You will receive regular supervision from your co-ordinator and you will be free to call the office for a chat if anything is worrying you.

## What will I learn on the 7 week Home Visiting Volunteer Training?

The following is an example of the course content but the schedule is adapted to meet the needs of each group that comes together and will be subject to change.

### Introduction and Role of Volunteer

Aim: - To introduce volunteers to the principles of Home-Start.

### Communication and Listening skills

Aim: - To explore aspects of active listening and communicating without words.

### Values and Attitudes

Aim: - To raise awareness of differing opinions, values and circumstances.

### Family Life and Supporting Parents

Aim: - To evaluate the diverse experiences within a family unit and how Home- Start helps.

### Parents and Children

Aim: - To become more aware of the complexity of parenting and the changing needs of children.

### Confidentiality

Aim: - To understand the concept of confidentiality and Information sharing.

### Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

Aim: - To gain basic but essential knowledge regarding child protection.

### Being a Home-Start Volunteer

Aim: - To highlight emotions surrounding home visiting and appropriate behaviour.

### Community Support Networks

Aim: - A detailed look at other services/agencies supporting the community.

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## Becoming a Group Volunteer

Our family groups are for parents & children to come and play together and are currently located in Bildeston, Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill, Honington, Lakenheath, Newmarket, Stowmarket, Wattisham and Woodbridge. We also have a monthly Dad's Group on a Saturday at Stowmarket Children's Centre, and specialist referral only SEND and Perinatal Mental Health groups. We also occasionally run "Forest Schools" groups in various areas.

We offer a wide range of activities and play experiences for children aged 0- 5 years old. Volunteer roles within our group are varied, you could find yourself supporting with art & craft, cooking, sharing books with children, preparing snacks or taking part in a treasure hunt or den building outdoors.

Unlike becoming a home-visiting volunteer, we do not insist that you have parenting experience or that you complete the full prep course. However, you will have to complete an application form giving two references, undergo a DBS check, complete our safeguarding training and attend a 3 hour induction course.



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## Becoming a LENA Volunteer

LENA (formerly known as Home Talk) is our exciting new project and we are looking to recruit volunteers to help us deliver this project in Mid & West Suffolk.

To a child's brain, the most important time in life is before the 3rd birthday. Research shows that talking more with babies is one of the most critical elements in their early brain development. It works right from birth even before the baby understands a single word! Most parents don't know how much they're talking with their babies.



Babies and children wear a vest with a pocket for the audio device. This registers the sounds and patterns of words, including babbling and gurgling, but not actual words. It also distinguishes between adults' and children's sounds, logs conversational 'turns', and recognises other audio such as the radio or television. Feedback is given to the families about how, and how much, they talk to their children. Volunteers help the family by talking through targets to increase the number of words a baby or child hears, and gives tips on how parents can reach the targets: from singing nursery rhymes

to reading books and from talking about the shopping or the laundry to extending language and vocabulary.

To become a LENA volunteer you need to undertake 15 hours of specialised training (8 hours, if you have are in the process of completing or have completed Volunteer Home Visiting Preparation training).

You would visit the family for ½ an hour a week for 12 weeks and you need to be able to commit to being available for 12 consecutive weeks.



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## Becoming a Retail Volunteer

We have a small but growing team of retail volunteers and we are keen to find more individuals who would like to join our small but powerful team.

Our shop in Eye raises vital funds to support our work, and we have now also opened an online selling hub based in Stowmarket to build on this.

**Team Member** - As a team member you will be helping us with the day to day running of the shop by assisting and serving customers, preparing stock ready to go out for sale, visual display of the shop floor and windows, rotating and replenishing stock. You will have training and guidance from our Shop Manager and our two Deputy Managers. You can be customer-facing, or undertake tasks in our preparation area.

**IT/computer based volunteer** – This is based at our charity shop in Eye, and is ideal for someone who would prefer not to have a customer-facing role. You will register donors that are UK tax payers on our system, enabling us to claim 25% tax back on the items they have donated. You will also be involved in pricing and labelling items with the correct gift aid details, which will enable us to get donated items out on to the shop floor promptly.

**e-Bay Selling Hub** – this is based at our hub in Stowmarket. You will be involved with the team that sorts donated items, prepares them for sale, displaying and photographing items to show them at their best. We particularly need help with listing items for sale on e-Bay.

**Volunteer Driver** - As a volunteer driver you will be a fundamental member of our team helping to collect and deliver the donated stock we need in store to increase vital funds for our other family services. You'll be required to use your own car or van, however, expenses will be paid to cover fuel and mileage costs at the HMRC approved rate.

Volunteering for our retail team you will help to:

- make a difference to parents and children facing great difficulties
- give something back to your local community
- feel part of a team
- improve your health and wellbeing
- gain more confidence

Volunteering in these retail roles can fit into any spare time you have available, therefore roles are flexible to suit the number of hours and days you are able to help. To enable us to organise rotas we do ask for a commitment of a 3 and a half hour shift either weekly or fortnightly; if working a Saturday this can be monthly.

To apply you will need to complete an application form and we will need two references. We look forward to welcoming you to our team and helping you get the most out of your time with us.

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## Becoming a Volunteer Trustee

Trustees are responsible for governing a charity and directing how it is managed and run, and we are keen to expand our existing team of dedicated trustees. This is a great opportunity to give something back to your community by sharing your skills and knowledge, and a great way to meet new people. The Board of Trustees meets 4-5 times per year, and as a guideline, spends around 3-5 hours per week on their duties.

If you have any relevant skills that you could share with us, for example: management or financial skills, income generation, strategic planning or communication/media skills, or indeed any skills that you feel would enhance our trustee team, please call Amanda Jacques on 07540 282074 or Angela Dennis 07936 913928 to discuss this further.

## Will I get any on-going training once I start volunteering?

We offer a comprehensive free training programme to all volunteers, giving you the opportunity to develop your skills and knowledge.

Examples of the courses we have offered are:

- **Journey to School**-preparing children & parents on their journey to starting education.
- **Mental Health Awareness**-looking at the impact of mental health on the whole family.
- **Challenging Behaviours** with Suzanna Pearson.
- **Winter Warmers**-looking at benefits and money saving tips.
- **Sleepy Heads**-this covers developing good sleep routines and support around sleep problems.
- **Paediatric First Aid**
- **Story Sacks and Treasure Baskets** looking at resources to help with childrens development

## What do I do next?

If you have any questions, need additional information or an application form via an online link or in paper form, then please ring the office on 01379 678552 or email [alison@homestartmidsuffolk.org.uk](mailto:alison@homestartmidsuffolk.org.uk)

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