

## **Home-Start Essex**

### **Safeguarding and Protecting Children Code of Conduct**

All adults who work or volunteer with, or on behalf of, children are accountable for the way in which they behave and for the steps they take to manage risk and safeguard and protect children. For the purposes of this Code of Conduct the definition of a 'child' or 'young person' is anyone aged under 18 years of age, as supported by legislation and guidance across the UK. This includes infants and unborn babies.

This Code of Conduct is accepted and signed **annually** by all trustees, staff (including agency staff), volunteers, students, and those working pro-bono for the charity. This extends to self-employed contractors or associates/consultants too. It ensures that we are all aware of our responsibilities and expectations in supporting families and children. It is introduced to trustees, staff, and volunteers as **part of their induction** and indicates that we fully understand and are committed to Home-Start's Policy and procedures for Safeguarding and Protecting Children.

**Throughout all our work and activities to support families, the best interests of the child(ren) are our prime concern.**

Adults working or volunteering with families and children occupy a position of considerable trust. Our conduct and behaviour, including in our private life, must demonstrate that we will always act in the best interests of the children with whom we come into contact. We avoid any behaviour (including online behaviour) which may compromise our ability to safeguard children and Home-Start's reputation.

Diversity and inclusion should remain at the forefront of Home-Start's work. We must always treat children without prejudice or discrimination and understand that children are individuals with individual needs. We must respect differences and commit to challenging discrimination and prejudice. **We understand some children may be more vulnerable to abuse and neglect, face barriers to support or require extra safeguards to keep them safe.**

**By signing this agreement, trustees, volunteers, and staff commit to:**

- model and promote Home-Start's commitment to safeguarding and protecting children in all aspects of their work and wider conduct, including in the use of social network sites.
- follow the Home-Start Handbook (as relevant to the individual's role), the policies and procedures relating to safeguarding, including the Safeguarding Policies themselves, this Code of Conduct, and policies relating to confidentiality and GDPR/data protection.
- be aware of situations which may present risks to children and assess, plan, and organise work so as to minimise these risks.

- follow Home-Start procedures for reporting concerns about the welfare of a child, **Essex** or about the behaviour of an adult, without delay.
- undertake safeguarding training specific to their role in order to keep knowledge and skills up to date.
- ensure all record keeping is accurate, timely, clear, and stored as per local procedures.
- model positive examples of behaviour towards children and adults.
- listen to and respect the views and rights of children.
- recognise that children can be adversely affected by words and actions and to sensitively challenge inappropriate, offensive, racist or abusive language and behaviour, when safe and appropriate to do so.
- ensure that any physical contact with a child is appropriate to the nature of the activity, acceptable to the child, and parent/carer, and non-abusive.
- not exploit or abuse their position with regard to children.
- not make inappropriate, sexual, or abusive remarks.
- where practicable, be visible to others when working with children.
- **If working alone with children, adhere to the [‘Looking After Children in the Absence of Parents Policy’](#)**
- **Always maintain professional boundaries.**

### **Inappropriate behaviour:**

When working with children you **must not**:

- allow concerns or allegations to go unreported.
- use any inappropriate discipline, including physical punishment.
- act in a way that can be perceived as threatening or intrusive.
- patronise or belittle children.
- use inappropriate, discriminatory, or offensive language.
- make sarcastic, insensitive, derogatory, or sexually suggestive comments or gestures to or in front of children.
- take unnecessary risks.
- smoke, vape, consume alcohol, or use illegal substances.
- develop inappropriate relationships.
- make inappropriate promises to children.
- engage in behaviour that is in any way abusive, including having any form of sexual contact.
- let children have your personal contact details (mobile number, email, or postal address) or have contact with them via a personal social media account.

**All trustees, staff and volunteers commit to adhere to the following boundaries and must not:**

- have or be perceived to have favourites.
- give lifts to children outside agreed activities.
- arrange meetings with supported families outside agreed hours.
- **knowingly** buy goods or use the services of supported families or their friends.
- provide any support or services outside of your agreed Home-Start role.
- personally accept or borrow any money or gifts\* from supported families.
- personally give or lend money or **make** gifts\* to supported families.
- 'friend' or 'follow' or 'accept' supported families on any social media sites or give out your personal mobile or home telephone numbers. Adjust privacy settings on your own personal social networking sites, as appropriate.

If you come into contact with a supported family in a social setting, you should maintain a professional distance. Pay attention to your own behaviour in such a setting.

\*Small token gifts (e.g., chocolates) may be accepted to avoid offence but should be reported to the coordinator. Monetary or high-value gifts must not be accepted. Staff or volunteers wishing to give token gifts should consult their coordinator to discuss a fair and appropriate approach, e.g. each child may receive a small gift at a Christmas party.

### **Declaration**

I acknowledge my responsibility to protect children.

I have read and agree to follow the:

- Home-Start Safeguarding and Protecting Children policy
- Home-Start Safeguarding and Protecting Children Code of Conduct
- Home-Start GDPR/Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy and Procedure
- **Home-Start Looking after Children in Absence of Parents Policy (where adopted).**

I accept that failure to work to this Code of Conduct may result in suspension pending investigation. For staff this may result in disciplinary action; trustees or volunteers who do not comply with the Code of Conduct may be asked to leave Home-Start. Signed copies of the Code of Conduct will be held on file on the Home-Start's records.

***\*Note - At Home-Start Essex all sign off of this document is managed electronically via a Charity Log form, which is then stored on the personnel file.***

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Print name \_\_\_\_\_

Role (trustee/staff/volunteer) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**We appreciate the time, energy, and commitment that everyone brings to Home-Start. Essex**  
**Through our consistent approach we each play a part in helping to ensure that Home-**  
**Start support helps children to be safe, secure, and happy.**