



A Child Protection Policy for the Home-Start World Wide Network

Introductory Comments

It is now widely acknowledged that all organisations working with children should have a Child Protection Policy. It is increasingly becoming a requirement of grant giving bodies.

This Home-Start policy makes it clear that as an organisation we are committed to protecting children from all forms of abuse neglect and exploitation and that if concerns are raised about the safety of a child action will be taken.

The policy seeks to be universally applicable across the Network and bases its values on the Convention on the Rights of the Child that all Home-Start countries have ratified. It is very close in content to policies developed by a number of INGOs and therefore may seem familiar to some of you. There are however a few components that are specific for Home-Start and Home-Start schemes.

The Policy includes the requirement to develop a locally appropriate Code of Conduct and includes the MINIMUM required content for such Codes of Conduct. The objective of a code of practice is to protect both children and those working with or in contact with them. It should be based on good practice and common sense. It is recognised that a number of Home-Start Worldwide Network members will already have adequate Codes of Conduct in place.

Once adopted responsibility for implementation of the policy will be with the Members of the Network. It is anticipated that in addition to work on Codes of Conduct some will need to develop internal procedures to ensure everyone knows what to do if there are concerns about a child's safety. The appointment of an "officer" for child protection at the level of schemes, National Associations and Home-Start Worldwide is also likely to be a new development for some.

Home-Start Worldwide will be responsible for monitoring the extent of implementation of this policy.

For those who work in partnership or under the "umbrella" of another organisation with its own Child Protection Policy it is not anticipated that there should be any difficulty in them also endorsing this policy.

This Policy will replace the one currently on the extranet, which is more general, and now some years old.



Child Protection Policy Home Start Worldwide Network

Scope

This policy applies to Home-Start Worldwide and all members of its Network

The Policy is applicable to:

- All staff and volunteers whether working for Home-Start Worldwide, a Home-Start national association or a Home-Start local scheme.
- All Trustees of Home-Start Worldwide and of Home-Start National Associations and Home-Start schemes
- Persons employed on short-term contracts such as consultants, researchers etc.
- Members of the media, private individuals and celebrities undertaking visits to Home-Start schemes whereby they will have access to children
- Staff and representatives of organizations who work in partnership with Home-Start or provide services to Home-Start as a result of which they come into contact with children.

It will be the responsibility of the Network members to implement this policy.

Home-Start Worldwide will be responsible for monitoring the extent of implementation of this policy.

This policy will be reviewed every three years.

INTRODUCTION

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child gives all children the right to protection from all forms of physical or mental injury or abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation (article 19)

Members of the Home Start Worldwide Network¹ have a common commitment to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and to the protection of children. We recognise that the abuse, neglect and exploitation of children happen in all countries and societies worldwide. We also acknowledge that abuse is often perpetrated by those in positions of trust and can include professionals,

¹ The Home-Start Worldwide Network includes Home-Start national associations that are members of the Home-Start network and their schemes as well as the Home-Start Worldwide as a charity



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volunteers and others with access to children through programmes such as Home Start.

This document sets out our common values and the principles guiding our child protection policy together with agreed steps to be taken in meeting our commitment to child protection.

OUR COMMITMENT TO PROTECT CHILDREN

Definitions

'Child' refers to an individual under the age of 18.

'Child abuse or maltreatment'² constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power

'Working with Children' is defined as those who are engaged in an activity, within the HS Network that involves direct contact with, or facilitates access to, children

Our Values

- Child abuse is never acceptable.
- All children have equal rights to protection from abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- We have a commitment to protecting children throughout the Home- Start Worldwide Network.
- All members of the Home-Start Worldwide Network have a responsibility to meet agreed standards of child protection in their work.
- Our policies and code of conduct should be interpreted within the framework of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- We are guided throughout the Child Protection process by the principle of the "best interests of the child".
- We work in partnership with parents/carers and/or other professionals to ensure the protection of children.

² 'World Report on Violence and Health' (WHO 1999 & 2002)



Our Standards: What we will do

Awareness: All members of the Home-Start Worldwide Network will ensure that all staff, volunteers and trustees are aware of the problem of child abuse and the risks to children.

Prevention: We will ensure through local training, supervision and support that risks to children are minimized.

Reporting: All staff, volunteers, trustees, consultants and others must be clear about the steps to be taken where concerns are raised over the safety of children (detailed procedures must be available at the national and scheme level).

Responding: We will ensure that action is taken to protect children and support them and their families where concerns arise because of possible abuse.

In order to meet the above standards, all Members of the Home-Start Worldwide Network will:

1. Develop and adopt a Code of Conduct which will as a minimum, include the following:
 - We will always treat children with respect regardless of their (or that of their parents') gender, ethnic or social origin, language, religious or other beliefs, disability or other status.
 - We will use language and behaviour towards children that is at all times appropriate and in no way harassing, abusive, sexually provocative or demeaning.
 - We prohibit physical punishment or discipline or use of inappropriate physical force of any kind.
 - We prohibit sexual activity (including grooming³) with children regardless of the age of consent locally.
 - We prohibit inappropriate use of computers, mobile phones, video/digital cameras or other electronic devices, including to access, view, create, download or distribute online abuse images of children.
 - We prohibit the use of children for domestic or other work that is inappropriate to the child's age or development; where it interferes with the time available for education and/or recreational activities or where it places him/her at significant risk of injury, exploitation or abuse.

³ Grooming is when someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse or exploitation. (NSPCC)



2. Take all concerns raised about child protection seriously.
3. Support staff, volunteers, trustees, parents, children and others who raise concerns.
4. Take positive steps to ensure the protection of children who are the subjects of concerns including making referrals to other agencies in line with any local procedures and co-operate with any process of investigation.
5. Appoint an officer (at the level of schemes, national associations and HSW) who will receive reports of any concerns, suspicions, incidents or allegations of actual or potential child abuse or any breaches of this policy, and take action in accordance with any local procedures.

ENSURING OUR COMMITMENTS ARE MET

1. All members of the Home-Start Worldwide Network will endorse this child protection policy.
2. All staff, volunteers and trustees will have access to this Home-Start policy and code of conduct and to all local child protection policies and procedures.
3. Recruitment procedures for staff, volunteers and trustees will include checks on suitability for working with children. Where it is practical this will include “police checks”.
4. Induction for all staff, volunteers and trustees will include a briefing on child protection.
5. Each scheme will display contact details for reporting abuse and all staff, volunteers and trustees, will have access to contact details for reporting.
6. Training resources will be made available to the Home-Start Worldwide network to meet our commitment to child protection.⁴
7. Home-Start Worldwide will be available to provide advice to the network when required. A trustee will take on a lead role.
8. All those covered by this policy must be made aware that breaching it or the local code of conduct may result in disciplinary action and/or discontinuation of their connection with the organization.

⁴ The attention of the network is drawn to the range of child protection training materials for trustees, staff and volunteers available on the Home-Start Worldwide Extranet.