



Frequently Asked Questions

- **What sort of support do volunteers provide?**

Volunteers provide friendly practical and emotional support. Such as someone to talk to – compassion, empathy, good listening skills and a non-judgemental attitude are required. They may accompany the family to appointments or trips to the park or a playgroup and be another pair of hands to help with the children. They may role model how to play with the children. They may occupy the children while parents' complete household jobs – however the volunteers are not babysitters or cleaners. They may be able to help the parent tackle some tasks, but it's all about empowering the parent to do it themselves with the volunteers' support, rather than doing it for them. This will all be covered in detail in the volunteer preparation course.

- **How much time are volunteers required to give each week?**

A **Home-Visiting volunteer** will need to commit to visiting the family they are supporting once a week; the visit will last a maximum of three hours. All visits take place Monday to Thursday between the hours of 9am and 4pm (only when our office is open).

When the volunteer and the family they are supporting agree on a day/time to visit, we try to keep the visits to the same day/time each week as far as possible, to avoid any confusion.

A **playgroup volunteer** will support at our groups, the groups are usually a maximum of two hours, but we also allow time for setting up and clearing away – so around three hours in total. Some Home Visiting Volunteers also support at Playgroups.

- **What qualifications do volunteers need?**

No formal qualifications are required. If you are a parent/step-parent, carer or have relevant experience working with children and families, you will be very welcome to apply.

All volunteers require an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check, which Home-Start will assist with. We also require two references.

- **What is the recruitment process?**

All volunteers complete a Volunteer Application Form. When we receive the completed form, we will arrange for the volunteer applicant to meet one of our Family Support Coordinators for an informal interview. This is a chance for us to get to know the applicant and to explain the role in more detail. It is also a chance for the applicant to ask any questions they may have.

We will send the applicant a link to start their online Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and we will also contact both referees provided on the application form.

You will be trained to Home Start Warrington and Cheshire standards of excellence. All volunteers complete our Volunteer Course of Preparation, which is online modules that the volunteers complete at home in their own time and there are also four in person training sessions. These sessions take place within school hours. The first session is the longest, 9.30 am to 2pm and lunch will be provided. The following three sessions are 9.30 am to 12.30 pm. Dates of the training will be advised to applicants at interview stage. On completion of the course, all applicants will have a final interview with a Family Support Coordinator.

Volunteers need to have completed both the online and in person training, have an enhanced DBS check, two satisfactory references and have signed our Code of Conduct and relevant policies and procedures (all covered in the training) before they will be able to volunteer with a family or at one of our groups or events.

- **How are volunteers matched to a family?**

On completion of their training and after the final interview, they will be carefully matched with a family. The Family Support Coordinator will explain the family circumstances to the volunteer and advise the type of support the family require and how to do that. The coordinator will accompany the volunteer to the family home for the first visit to introduce them to each other and will stay for a while to let volunteer and family get to know each other a little. The coordinator will call the volunteer after the first visit to discuss how it went. After that the volunteer will continue to visit weekly, they will complete a diary sheet after each visit and send to the office. They will be reassured that they can call their coordinator at any time to discuss anything. They will meet at least every six weeks to discuss how the support is going. Volunteers will only work with one family at a time.

- **How are volunteers supported in their role?**

Volunteers are fully supported by our Family Support Coordinators, they will meet at least every six weeks for Support and Supervision sessions, which usually last around one hour.

We run regular volunteer meet ups for peer support, refresher training and socials, volunteers do not need to attend all of these, but we encourage them to attend as many as they can.

- **What is the typical timeframe a volunteer works with a family for?**

It varies how long volunteers work with a family. The volunteer can continue to visit weekly until the family either no longer require the support or the youngest child in the household enters full time education. Sometimes, it's just couple of months, but it can be for a couple of years.

- **Can volunteers claim back expenses incurred while volunteering?**

All volunteers can claim for the expenses of travelling to attend Home-Start training/groups or visiting the family they are supporting. We can reimburse milage or costs of public transport.

- **What impact does volunteering have on the volunteer themselves?**

Your experience, attributes and competencies will be recognised, and you will have the opportunity to develop them further.

Volunteers report that volunteering with Home-Start has a positive impact on their well-being, such as increased self-esteem, and finding it rewarding to be helping a family and seeing the family flourish and increasing their knowledge and skills and broadening their outlook.

