

Home-Start West Berkshire is a local network of trained volunteers and expert support, dedicated to helping families with young children navigate difficult periods in their lives.

Key Information for Referring Families into Home-Start West Berkshire

Eligibility

- Families must reside in West Berkshire.
- At least one child in the family must be under the age of five.

Referral Process

- Families can self-refer directly at www.home-startwestberks.org.uk/self-referral-form
- Referrals from other organisations require the family's explicit consent.
- Use our online referral form, available at www.home-startwestberks.org.uk/professional-referrers-form
- Ensure the referral form is completed fully to avoid delays. Missing information may result in follow-ups, which can slow the process.



Key Information for Referring Families into Home-Start West Berkshire

Service Scope and Limitations

- Home-Start provides a preventative service, offering support to families before statutory intervention is necessary. If a family becomes involved with social care, we may need to withdraw support, though each case will be reviewed individually.
- Referrers must specify the type of support being requested such as group, home-visiting or Baby Bank support and identify the desired outcomes for the family.

Referral Criteria and Exclusions

1. **Public Law Orders:** Families subject to public law orders are not early intervention cases and therefore not suitable for Home-Start support.
2. **Domestic Abuse:** There should be no active domestic abuse cases, as volunteer safety is a priority.
3. **Complex or High-Risk Cases:** Volunteers are not trained social workers; they are community members offering their personal time. Cases involving highly complex or distressing circumstances are not suitable.
4. **Hazardous Living Conditions:** Home conditions must not pose a significant health hazard.
5. **Readiness for Change:** Families must demonstrate a willingness and readiness to make positive changes. Volunteers are motivated by making a difference and should not be assigned to situations where interventions have consistently failed, or the family is not in a position to engage meaningfully.

Important Notes for Referrers

Volunteers are a vital and limited resource. Their efforts should be directed toward families who are ready and able to benefit from support. Ensuring appropriate referrals helps maintain volunteer motivation and maximizes the positive impact of our services.

For more information, visit our website or contact Home-Start West Berkshire directly.

THE REFERRAL PROCESS



REFERRING TO HOME-START WEST BERKSHIRE

Referral Process for Home-Start West Berkshire

Submission of Referrals

- Referrals will only be accepted using the most up-to-date form available on our website.

Initial Review

- If additional information is needed, the referrer will be contacted within 3 working days.
- If the referral is deemed inappropriate (e.g., at a safeguarding level), the referrer will be informed immediately.

Assignment of Referrals

- Accepted referrals will be assigned to the appropriate Project Coordinator.
- The Coordinator may contact the referrer by phone to gather further details, if necessary.

Family Contact and Initial Visit

- The Coordinator will attempt to contact the family within 5 working days to arrange an initial visit.
- A minimum of 3 contact attempts will be made, utilizing at least two communication methods (e.g., phone, text, or letter).

Unresponsive Families

- If the family does not respond, the Coordinator will verify the contact details with the referrer.
- If contact cannot be established, a letter will be sent to the family explaining that they have 2 weeks to respond.
- If no response is received within this timeframe, the file will be closed, and the referrer will be notified.



Initial Assessment

- The Coordinator will arrange an appointment with the family at a time that is convenient for them.
- When appropriate, the Coordinator may conduct a joint visit with the referrer to ensure a collaborative approach.
- During the visit, the Coordinator will assist the family in identifying and rating their difficulties. The family will also be encouraged to define how they will recognise improvements in their situation.
- Based on the assessment, the Coordinator will explain the most suitable service to address the family's needs.

Next Steps

- If the family decides not to proceed with support, the file will be closed, and the referrer will be notified.
- If the family agrees to work with Home-Start, an email will be sent to the referrer confirming the support to be provided.

Group Support and Home-Visiting Services

Group Support

- Families selected for group support will be contacted by the Group Worker to arrange a start date.
- Transportation and accessibility needs will be addressed to ensure the family can attend.
- If the family feels anxious, the Coordinator can assist in facilitating their first visit to help ease their transition.

Home-Visiting Support

- For families selected for home-visiting support, the Coordinator will explain the process and provide an estimated timeframe for matching the family with a volunteer.
- Home-Start West Berkshire does not operate a waiting list. However: If volunteers are currently in training or if a suitable volunteer is expected to become available soon (e.g., completing work with another family), the file may be kept open for up to 12 weeks.
- If no suitable volunteer is found within this timeframe, the family will be informed, and the referrer will be notified accordingly.

Ongoing Review and Closure of Support

- The Coordinator will review the family's progress and supervise the volunteer every 6-8 weeks to ensure the support remains effective and aligned with the family's needs.
- Support will typically conclude within a maximum of 12 months, at which point the Coordinator will conduct a closing visit with the family and notify the referrer.