

Home-Start Harlow

Referral policy

Home-Start Harlow is committed to providing a safe, efficient and responsive service to local families with at least one child under five. Referrals are accepted with the consent of the family. The range of referrals or self-referrals accepted is not limited, except where the resources available are not adequate to meet the number or complexity of cases. Waiting times are carefully managed and referrers and families are kept informed.

This policy outlines the scheme's procedure for managing the expectations of families, safeguarding vulnerable families without the pro-active support of other agencies whom are waiting for support, ensuring referrers are clear about the status of their referral.

A copy of this policy will be available in regularly circulated referral packs for referrers.

Criteria

Referred families must have at least **one child under the age of five years**, and live in Harlow.

With **prior consent of the family**, referrals may be made by a variety of organisations within health, education, children's services, and the voluntary and community sector. Families may also be referred by a relative or friend. Families may also refer themselves.

Referrers will be notified of receipt of the referral, when support commences, every 3 months and when support ends. Families whom have self referred or been referred by a professional other than their Health Visitor, will be asked for consent to inform their Health Visitor of the start and end of support.

Referrals can be made by completing a referral form, making a referral by phone/email or fax. Referral forms can also be accessed via the scheme website. **Referral forms MUST be signed by the parent/carer to be accepted (unless made over the telephone; verbal**

consent will be needed), and the risk assessment fully completed. Incomplete or unsigned referrals will be returned to the referrer.

All referrals are taken to an allocation meeting within 2 weeks of receipt, and the referrer notified by letter of the decision to:

1. **Place the referral on the waiting list** – if the anticipated time before a volunteer becomes available exceeds 4 weeks. The family and referrer will be made aware by letter of this decision, and an anticipated waiting time provided.
2. **Arrange an initial assessment of the family** – if the anticipated time before a volunteer becomes available is less than 4 weeks. The referrer will be notified of the outcome of the visit by letter, unless a volunteer match is imminent.
3. **Signpost the family to alternative support** – if it is unlikely a volunteer will become available in the next 6 months, or where the family is deemed vulnerable whilst waiting for support. The referrer will be notified of the nature of this support and it will be made explicit that the family are NOT yet receiving full support.
4. **Refuse the referral** – please see below:

A referral may not be taken up if:

- 1: Too high Level
- 2: Health/Safety risk
- 3: Family didn't want support or support needs out of service remit
- 4: Not in at Initial assessment/couldn't make contact
- 5: Not in area
- 6: No child under 5

The referrer will be contacted and informed of this decision and the reasons why – this will also be documented and steps taken to prevent future

inappropriate referrals.

Waiting families

The Coordinator will keep in touch with waiting families and their referrer, updating them on waiting times. They will be encouraged to contact the scheme at any time.

Capping referrals

The scheme may make a decision to refuse referrals for a period of time if waiting times exceed 6 months. Similarly, the scheme may choose to write to referrers to discourage referrals due to waiting times, if they exceed 6 months.

Date for review: September 2014