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| **General Guidelines:** | * Families must have at least one child under 6 live within the City of York area, and have given their consent to the referral. Self referrals are accepted.
* Volunteers offer a weekly visit to families on a regular basis but should not be seen as home-helps or child minders.
* Home-Start is not a crisis organisation and cannot offer short term crisis help.
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| **Guidelines to note before making a referral:** | * Our aim is to help any family where there is or may be temporary breakdown or difficulties, where a period of support by Home-Start may make a difference.
* Family situations where there are chronic ongoing, long-standing problems, where there is likely to be little change over a long period may not be appropriate for referral.
* Family situations where there is active alcohol or drug dependency are not suitable for referral.
* Complex family situations where statutory intervention and a Child Protection Plan is active, are not appropriate for referral to Home-Start, but may be referred later as part of the support to the exit strategy.
* Families where there is active domestic violence are not suitable for referral, however, it may be entirely appropriate to refer once IDAS are involved or at a later stage when the threat of violence is diminished.
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| **About the volunteer:** | **Volunteers** have parenting skills, understand the pressures of bringing up a young family and have all taken part in a course of preparation for visiting. They are screened by the Disclosure & Barring Service before linking with families, and receive ongoing supervision and training from the organiser. |
| **Home-Start volunteers are able to help:** | * Reduce family isolation, increase social support networks and connect with socially excluded families.
* Strengthen parent/child relationships
* Improve parents’ physical health and emotional wellbeing
* Help parents to appreciate the joys of parenting, improve parenting skills and build their resilience and ability to cope
* Improve the home environment
* Improve access to health and community services
* Help families connect with other services they have difficulty reaching or engaging with, such as education and training
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| **Confidentiality:** | All information about parents and families is treated as confidential, to be discussed only as necessary with the organiser in support of the volunteer and to assist the family. Any disclosure of confidential information to any other person may only be undertaken with the expressed permission of the parents for the purpose of assisting the family, except where it is considered necessary for the protection of a child when information shall be shared withappropriate authority. |
| **How to refer:** | * Make Initial Telephone Enquiry to the Home-Start office to determine that the referral is appropriate, giving family background and current situation. (See separate document)
* Referral forms will be emailed or posted for completion, preferably in the presence of the family, with as much detail as possible please. Referral forms will soon be available on our website at [www.homestartyork.org.uk](http://www.homestartyork.org.uk) to download/print off, following Initial Telephone Enquiry. PLEASE RETURN USING A SECURE EMAIL SERVICE OR PASSWORD PROTECT THE FORM, SENDING A PASSWORD BY SEPARATE EMAIL
* On receipt of completed referral form, if we have the resources to offer support to the family, an organiser will contact them to arrange a visit. We try to do this within 14 days of receipt of the form.
* Referrers will be informed when Home-Start support begins and when it ends.
* The volunteer is supervised by an organiser and enquiries about our involvement with the family should be made to the organisers.
* Matching a family with a volunteer is done as carefully and sensitively as possible and Home-Start endeavors to meet the individual needs of each family. There will be occasions when families may have to wait for a suitable volunteer.

 If this is the case, we inform families and referrers at the outset and try to be realistic  about waiting times.  |

Home Start York guidelines for making a referral