# Volunteer FAQs

**Q: What is the minimum age to become a volunteer?**

A: 18 years old.

**Q: Do you have to be a parent to be a volunteer?**

A: No, you do not have to be a parent to volunteer with us. Ideally, you would have an understanding of the challenges of family life.

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**Q: Do you need any experience working with families?**

A: No. A non-judgmental attitude is essential, along with being friendly, caring and having an understanding of the pressures and challenges that family life can bring.

**Q: Do I need any qualifications to be a volunteer?**

A: No. We offer support and training throughout your time as a volunteer. Most of all, we are looking for volunteers who can offer a listening ear, gentle guidance, and encouragement.

**Q: Do volunteers get any training?**

A: All family support volunteers must attend a preparation course which is 6 x 3-hour sessions, online via zoom, unless stated otherwise. We run these courses throughout the year.

Home-Visiting volunteers will also need to attend an additional in-person session.

We also offer optional training throughout the year for volunteers to continue building their skills and knowledge.

**Q: What support do I receive as a volunteer?**

A: You will be supported by a Family Coordinator who will provide supervision sessions every 6 weeks. We offer peer support sessions to all volunteers, where volunteers can meet, share experiences and advice, encourage each other and get to know each other.

**Q: Can I volunteer remotely?**

A: Yes. After training, you can provide Telephone Support to a family from wherever you are as long as you have phone signal and you are in a private, confidential space.

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**Q: How much time will I spend volunteering?**

A: Each volunteer role involves different time commitments, so it can vary but ultimately it is up to you and how much time you would like to commit to Home-Start Suffolk.

We always want to make sure that your volunteering fits in around your life and not the other way around.

**Q: What kinds of families would I be helping?**

A: Every family is different and faces various challenges. This could be due to mental health issues, disability, long-term health issues, loneliness, isolation, or something else altogether. Whatever the reason they come to Home-Start, families are offered non-judgmental, confidential support.

As a volunteer, you have a choice in what you want your volunteer journey to look like. Throughout your onboarding and training, our team will get to know you so you can be matched with families where we think you will be able to make the most difference. You can also tell us which challenges families might be facing that you would not feel comfortable supporting.

**Q: What are the benefits of volunteering with Home-Start Suffolk?**

A: Becoming a volunteer at Home-Start Suffolk offers a range of meaningful benefits including:

- Making a difference
- Positive wellbeing
- Personal growth and confidence building
- Training and support
- Improving local communities
- Authorised expenses paid

**Q: Why volunteer with Home-Start Suffolk?**

A: “I volunteer because I have a background in health and social care and this is a little bit about giving something back, but also helping me to continue to use some of the skills that I have.

It’s really rewarding. I like the fact that I have actually helped some families to feel a little bit less stressed, or some children to feel a little bit happier in their family home.

Volunteering is really enjoyable, it’s really inspiring and it’s really fulfilling. There are lots of opportunities along with it, opportunities for networking, opportunities for training and it’s a really worthwhile thing to do.” - Clare, telephone support volunteer since April 2019.

"What I enjoy most about volunteering is meeting new families. I like helping local families because often it can be little things I can do to help them which will make a huge difference.

As a volunteer, our main role is to be a professional friend that is someone they can trust, not a faceless person from a statutory body.

I do feel supported, I have had some excellent training and I do feel confident about carrying out my volunteering duties.

There are many families in the county who need that support, so I would encourage anyone to have a go or at least talk to Home-Start about the possibility of being a volunteer." Julia, trustee and home-visiting volunteer since March 2024.