

Some golden rules for confidentiality

- Beware of neighbours who may try to draw you into discussing the family you are visiting.
- If you are explaining what you do as a Home-Start volunteer to a friend (or anyone else), make sure you talk about the work in general terms and always avoid disclosing information about a Home-Start family.
- If you talk to a professional who knows the family you are visiting, never be drawn into disclosing information that has been told to you in confidence (unless this concerns the safety of a child – and always check with your Home-Start organiser/co-ordinator first).
- Even at a meeting with other Home-Start volunteers, be careful about how much you say about a family you are visiting – they may be part of the same community as the family.
- Never be drawn into discussing one Home-Start family with another. Remember, the family may be testing you to see if they can trust you with private information. If you make it clear that you are not going to discuss the other family, they are more likely to be frank with you.
- Think carefully about how much you say to your own (personal) family. Children in particular may overhear something and have no understanding of confidentiality.
- If you meet the Home-Start organiser/co-ordinator or administrator, or a professional working with the family, or a member of the family in a public place (for instance, a shop), be very careful about what you say and how you say it.
- You should only keep written information about a family in the format you have been told about/given by the organiser/co-ordinator.
- Be careful when using social networking sites like Facebook, don't add a family as your 'friend'.
- If you communicate to confirm visits by email don't use your personal email and be careful not to include sensitive information in the message.
- If a family member says "I've got something to tell you – you won't tell anyone, will you?", remind them that it all depends on what it is. Normally, you would not pass on information without their permission but if it affects the safety of a child, you may have to. You can't promise to keep a secret until you know what it is.

If you are worried about some information you have come by, discuss it with your organiser/co-ordinator.