

Harrow Shared Lives Scheme Policy & Procedure No. 10

Communication

People may use different languages or methods of communication for a variety of reasons. This can mean that the people who are supporting them sometimes have difficulties in understanding them. However, being able to communicate is essential for taking part in and being in control of daily life and for influencing how services are delivered. The Harrow Shared Lives Scheme therefore aims to find ways to communicate effectively, and to provide help for anyone providing or using Shared Lives (SL) arrangements when this is required.

How would this happen?

We will ask about your preferred methods of communication when you first get involved with the service and will use these wherever possible in our work with you. If we need help to communicate with you, we will make use of interpreters / special equipment / visual aids / etc as necessary, and/or seek guidance from your family or other people who know you well.

If your first language is not English or you have other communication needs, we will try to find SL Carers who can communicate in your preferred way and/or find the specialist aids / interpreters / training required for the SL Carers to develop the necessary communication skills. A Shared Lives arrangement will not go ahead unless you and the SL Carers are confident that you can understand each other.

Your communication needs and arrangements will be explained in your Service User Plan, and regularly reviewed as part of this.

When we provide you with information about the service this will be written in plain English or format that can be easily understood.

We will also make sure that you have opportunities to tell us about your experiences in the service and your views on how it might be changed or improved. (There is more information about this in our policies on Consultation and Participation in the Service, Continuous Improvement in the Service, and Complaints and Concerns.)

It is important to have proper information when you make choices and decisions. SL Carers and SL Workers will do their best to provide information for you in a format or language that you can easily understand and keep. When you have a range of choices you will be given information about all the options. If necessary, you will also be given help to fully understand the options and choose the one that is right for you. You will have time to prepare for important events, as well as time to communicate your feelings, views and answers. (There is more information about this in our policy on Making Choices and Decisions.)

If you need support to speak up for yourself, this will be discussed as part of your Service User Plan. Support can be provided by your SL Carer and/or SL Worker, if appropriate, or by your family or friends or other representatives or by an independent advocate.

Good communication is essential throughout a service if it is to be run effectively and in the best interests of the people who are using it. We make sure that SL Carers and managers and workers have opportunities to communicate with each other as well as with you and other people in Shared Lives arrangements, through:

- meetings or support groups for SL Carers and/or people in Shared Lives arrangements
- shared training opportunities
- sharing examples of good practice
- 'buddying' arrangements between new and experienced SL Carers

See these other policies and procedures and documents for further information on:

- Standards of conduct and practice
- Making choices and decisions
- Equal opportunities
- Complaints and concerns
- Statement of Purpose
- Consultation and participation in running the service
- Continuous improvement in the service
- Referrals
- Daily life and inclusion in the community
- Contact with family and friends
- Service User Plan
- Individual planning, monitoring and review
- Training and development