

Harrow Shared Lives Scheme Policy & Procedure No. 14

Safe Friendships and Relationships

Friendships and relationships are important to everyone. The Harrow Shared Lives Scheme recognises your right to lead the kind of life you want and your right to personal, intimate and family relationships. People in Shared Lives arrangements have the same opportunities to develop and maintain a range of relationships as anyone else in the community.

How will this happen?

Before starting any Shared Lives (SL) arrangements SL Carers receive general information and training about people's rights and how to support people in their daily lives.

Your SL Carers will also be given information about your particular needs and wishes and a copy of your Service User Plan. This will tell them about the relevant friendships and relationships and interests you already have and about your hopes and wishes for the future so that they can support you in the way that you want.

You will have the opportunity to share in the family life of your SL Carers and in the community links they already have. If you wish they will also support you in building new links and relationships, by, for example:

- supporting you to find out about people or groups in the community that have similar interests to you
- supporting you in making contacts
- supporting you in finding out what is available locally, and in trying new activities
- supporting you in getting a job or starting voluntary work

Friendships can sometimes turn in to loving relationships or partnerships. This is a natural and positive part of life and your SL Carer will respect your choices, privacy and dignity in relation to these. Your friends and relatives will be welcome to visit, if you are staying in the SL Carer's home, and, as happens with most families, you will also be

expected to act reasonably and with consideration for other people in the household. (There is more information about house rules and individual responsibilities in your SL Agreement.)

There are sometimes risks associated with relationships including the risks of abuse or neglect. Your right to lead the kind of life you want, with relationships that you choose, may sometimes have to be balanced with your right to be safeguarded from harm. There is more information about this in our policy on Safeguarding against Abuse and Neglect.

If you require support to understand the nature of relationships and how to stay healthy and safe within them, your SL Carer will provide this in a way that is sensitive to your needs and/or will ask for appropriate professional help with this with your agreement.

A sexual relationship that you have not consented to is wrong and illegal. If your SL Carer suspects this is happening, the implications will be discussed with you so that you can make an informed decision about what action to take. If you do not have the capacity to give consent and/or to make choices and decisions about this, this will be discussed with your representative and/or Care Manager and/or other appropriate professionals, in order to make decisions and take actions that are in your best interests. In these situations we will follow guidance in the Mental Capacity Act 2005 Code of Practice. There is more information about this in our policy on Making Choices and Decisions.

If at any time your SL Carer becomes concerned that you may be involved in an abusive friendship or relationship she/he will immediately inform the SL Worker. The Scheme will then follow the policy and procedure for Safeguarding against Abuse and Neglect

It is illegal for a care worker to have a sexual relationship with a person he or she is involved in providing care for if that person has a mental disorder. This applies to SL Carers and SL Workers and any incident or concerns about this will be reported to the Police.

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

- Making choices and decisions
- Equal opportunities
- Confidentiality
- Risk assessment and risk management
- Health and safety

- Safeguarding against abuse and neglect.
- Whistleblowing
- Management of people's money, valuables and financial affairs
- Assessment of needs
- Daily life and inclusion in the community
- Contact with family and friends
- Service User Plan
- Individual planning, monitoring and review
- SL Agreement
- Standards of conduct and practice
- Training and development