

Harrow Shared Lives Scheme Policy & Procedure No. 57

The Shared Lives Approval Panel

The Harrow Shared Lives Scheme recruits and works with a group of people who are independent of the Scheme's processes for assessing Shared Lives (SL) Carers, but who support the work of the Scheme. This group is called an Approval Panel and is responsible for the approval of new SL Carers and Support Carers and for making decisions about the ongoing approval of existing SL Carers and Support Carers.

How would this happen?

People are invited to join the Approval Panel if they have qualifications and/or experience and/or interests that are relevant to Shared Lives. They should also add something helpful to the balance of skills, interests and backgrounds of the people who are already on the Panel. They are required to complete an enhanced police check before they can join the Panel.

The Approval Panel includes at least one SL Carer (who may be retired from this Scheme or working in another Scheme) and at least one person who has experience of being in a SL arrangement (either as part of another Scheme or having previously been part of this Scheme), or has experience of using other types of care and support services. Most members are not involved in the running of this Scheme and all of them play no part in the assessment of prospective SL Carers.

Before joining the Panel, new members are provided with information and/or training so that they understand:

- the aims and objectives of Shared Lives
- the remit of the Approval Panel, the role and responsibilities of the members and the code of conduct they are required to follow
- the importance of the Panel in the support and protection of people using the service
- the importance of keeping all information confidential
- the procedures for assessing and reviewing SL Carers and what the process feels like for a prospective SL Carer or Support Carer

- the skills and knowledge required by SL Carers
- the importance of having evidence about the skills and knowledge of SL Carers before making a decision about their approval.

Panel members will go through a probationary period of 3 Panel sessions before being confirmed as members. They can continue to be part of the Panel for up to a maximum of 3 years. They can end their involvement by giving written notice of 3 months. They may lose their membership of the Panel if they repeatedly miss Panel meetings, do not keep information confidential, break the code of conduct for Panel members or make it difficult for the Panel to do its work and reach decisions. Anyone who has concerns about a Panel member should tell the Approval Panel's chairperson in the first instance. If the chairperson and/or Scheme Manager are unable to resolve the problem the service Manager will consider the issue (after gathering any further information or evidence required) and make a decision. A Panel member may appeal against a decision to end their membership by writing to the Assistant Director Adult Social Care.

The Approval Panel meets every 6 months / 2 times per year, in order to:

- approve people as new SL Carers or Support Carers
- review the approval of new SL Carers after they have completed a probationary period of 6 months
- review the approval of SL Carers when there has been a significant change in their circumstances, or when there has been a complaint or allegation about them
- agree to any changes of approval or the ending of approval of SL Carers.

The Panel is chaired by Ruth Shippey who has the necessary skills and experience for this role. In the absence of the chairperson, the meetings will be chaired by Allie Brice. The Scheme Manager or another Scheme worker attends Panel meetings in order to act as an advisor and answer questions the Panel members may have, but is not a voting member. SL Workers come to meetings to answer questions about the reports they have written, but do not take part in the final decisions. A supporter may accompany members who have been in SL arrangements, but the supporter does not take part in decisions either. SL Carers may also be present for the time that their application or review is being discussed, if they wish.

An agenda for the Approval Panel meeting will be sent out 2 weeks ahead. If Panel members know any of the SL Carers being considered, they should discuss this with the chairperson / tell the Scheme Manager straight away. They will not usually be sent any assessment or review information about those SL Carers and will usually be asked to withdraw from the meeting during the Panel's discussion about them.

Reports will be sent out to Panel members 2 weeks ahead of the meeting so that everyone has time to prepare. These will be in a format that they can easily understand and/or they will have support to do this.

SL Carers and Support Carers have an opportunity to contribute to and comment on any reports written about them and are given a copy of the final report presented to the Approval Panel. A written record is kept of all the recommendations given at the meeting and the SL Carers are sent individual letters confirming the decision(s) taken about them.

The recommendations that can be taken by the Approval Panel are:

- approval – e.g. when there is evidence that the person has the knowledge and skills required for working with the Scheme
- approval with conditions – eg when the SL Carer is required to complete a probationary period, or their work is restricted in some way
- deferred – e.g. if there is not enough information to reach a decision
- not approved – e.g. when there is evidence that the SL Carer is not suitable
- change of approval – e.g. following a review of the SL Carer and a recommendation to increase or reduce their categories of approval
- ending approval – e.g. following a review of the SL Carer after a change of their circumstances, or after a complaint or allegation about them.

The Panel also recommends the categories of approval that are appropriate for each SL Carer:

- who can be in a SL arrangement with them – e.g. nature of disability / illness / gender / age group, etc
- how many people can be supported at a time (up to a maximum of 3)
- what type of care or support - e.g. long-term accommodation and support / short breaks / day care / kinship support, etc.

If Approval Panel members cannot reach a unanimous decision, a decision will be made by the Service Manager.

SL Carers and Support Carers can appeal against a decision by writing to the Assistant Director of Adult Social Care, who is independent of the work and membership of the Approval Panel and will review the information and processes before coming to a final decision.

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

- Recruitment and assessment of SL Carers
- Carer Agreement
- Standards of conduct and practice
- Supporting and reviewing SL Carers
- Training and development
- Continuous improvement in the service
- Consultation and participation in running the service
- Safeguarding against abuse or neglect
- Complaints and concerns