Derbyshire Shared Lives Scheme

Shared Lives Guidance on Family Members of the Person being Shared Lives Carers

Purpose

This guidance sets out Derbyshire Shared Lives Scheme's position on circumstances where a close family member may be considered as a Shared Lives Carer.

It presents specific risks and complexities. Any decision must clearly demonstrate that the arrangement promotes the person's wellbeing.

Scope

This guidance applies to:

- Young people transitioning into adult services **only** where the family member is the current foster carer/kinship carer.

Decision-Making Authority

- The overall decision to assess and approve a family member as a Shared Lives Carer rests with the Shared Lives Registered Manager and Group Manager.

Key Principles

- Any consideration of a family member becoming a Shared Lives Carer must adhere to the following principles:
    - Needs of the individual must be central at all stages.
    - The individual must have independent advocacy.
    - The arrangement must support choice, control, and independence, not limit development or opportunities.
    - Risks to family dynamics and long-term relationships must be explicitly assessed.

Key Considerations and Risks

Introducing a formal, paid caring role within a family can significantly change relationships. The following issues must be carefully explored:

1. Family Dynamics and Conflicts of Interest

- A paid caring role may alter existing family relationships.
- The family member will no longer be able to act as the individual's advocate.
- Potential and actual conflicts of interest must be clearly identified and managed.

2. Assessment and Approval

- Family members will be subject to the same rigorous assessment and approval process as all Shared Lives Carers.
- Approval is not automatic and may be refused if standards are not met.

3. Independent Oversight and Accountability

- The carer must accept monitoring, review, and professional challenge.
- The arrangement will be kept under regular and careful review.
- Shared Lives staff and partner agencies must have appropriate access to the home.

4. Training and Professional Responsibilities

- The family member must attend all required training.
- Accurate, clear, and up-to-date records must be maintained for audit purposes.
- The carer must work in partnership with Shared Lives and external professionals.

5. Legal and Policy Framework

Family member carers must work within the framework of relevant legislation, including:

- Mental Capacity Act
- Care Act
- Equality Act
- Human Rights legislation
- GDPR

6. Financial and Benefits Considerations

- Individuals living with a close family member will not be eligible for Housing Benefit.
- This has implications for funding and sustainability of the arrangement.
- To avoid conflicts of interest, Shared Lives strongly advises the use of an independent organisation to manage the individual's benefits and finances.
- The family member cannot apply for Lasting Power of Attorney for Property & Finance or Health & Welfare if they are their Shared Lives carer.

7. Risk of Placement Breakdown

If serious concerns arise, the Shared Lives arrangement may need to end.

This could result in broader family relationship breakdown and emotional impact.

Safeguards

Before approval, the following safeguards must be in place:

- Independent advocacy for the individual.
- Clear risk assessment and mitigation plan.
- Agreement on financial management arrangements.
- Clear understanding by the family member of professional boundaries and responsibilities.

Summary

While Shared Lives arrangements with family members can, in rare and complex situations, achieve positive outcomes, they carry heightened risks. These arrangements will only be considered where they clearly represent the best and least restrictive option, and where robust safeguards and ongoing professional oversight are in place.

Each case will be judged on its individual merits, with the welfare and rights of the individual remaining paramount.