PSS Shared Lives Guidance

**Transition and Mixed Child / Shared Lives Arrangements (formerly Adult Placement)**

**Introduction**

Shared Lives Plus and the Fostering Network recognise the benefits of inter-generational practice. It is our view that intergenerational placements are of benefit to all parties. This jointly agreed practice guide is underpinned by this belief.

There are many instances in which Shared Lives carers may find themselves assisting with the transition of young people from children’s to adult services. There are also instances where they may provide accommodation and support to both children placed through the Fostering Service and adults under Shared Lives.

There are a number of different ways in which transitional and mixed child-adult placements arise:

Foster carers who wish to become Shared Lives carers in order to facilitate a continuation of support into adult life to an individual child.

Foster carers who are supporting siblings (that is children placed who are related to one another) or have other children of differing ages placed with them and wish to continue to support those siblings or other children after the age of 18. Shared Lives schemes will become involved when the oldest child reaches 18 but Fostering will remain involved with the younger children.

Foster carers who wish to accommodate siblings but where one or more are already 18+.

Short breaks carers approved to support both adults and children.

Schemes that have developed a service for 16 – 18 year olds in response to transition issues for this age group.

Schemes that offer parent and baby placements.

Young people moving from other children’s services to adult services e.g. from residential care.

Shared Care arrangements running into adult life.

Where the term **‘carer’** is used on its own in this document it refers to a person who is intending to work or is working as both a Shared Lives carer and a Foster carer

This guidance only relates to England and to mixed child / adult placements where children are placed under Fostering regulations.

The following Shared Lives Plus practice guidance represents what we consider to be best practice advice for such transition and mixed child / adult placements.

In order that transition from child to adult placement takes place effectively and for mixed child / adult placements to be a positive experience for all parties Shared Lives Plus believes that there should be jointly agreed protocols and procedures between children’s and adult services. In order to create a national consistency to this approach it is felt that these should be agreed to at a national level between key stakeholder organisations.

Mixed child / adult placements require particularly careful planning to take account of:

the different legal status of children and adults

the difference between the children and adults legislative frameworks

the fact that separation between children’s services and adult services can cause significant communication difficulties

the need to avoid unnecessary breakdowns in funding arrangements caused by a lack of forward planning for young people in Foster care

By planning carefully we can achieve stability of placements, a seamless transition into adulthood and clarity of information about payments.

**Practice Guidance**

**Principles of good practice**:

The wishes and requirements of the individuals placed are central

Good information must be provided to carers about Shared Lives and Fostering requirements

Carers working for Fostering and Shared Lives services will need support to be clear about their role with each person that they support

There is a need to ensure that effective communication takes place between children’s and adults care management teams throughout the transition period

There is a need for clear protocols governing the way in which the Fostering and Shared Lives services work together

There is a need to avoid unnecessary duplication of processes and paperwork

Good risk assessment and risk management is essential

**Protocol for Transition from Foster Care to Shared Lives:**

Schemes will need to consider a number of factors when supporting Foster Carers who wish to continue to care for the young people placed with them once they reach 18:

Information about Shared Lives should be available for children’s teams and Foster carers so that it can be considered alongside other long term options such as direct payments or discharge from care to continue to live with the Foster carers without support or funding.

The need for a continued service into adult life should be formally identified as early as possible but certainly by the age of 16.

Shared Lives schemes should be involved at an early stage in transition planning

Information sharing between agencies should be given a high priority e.g. Transfer of information from the Fostering agency to the Shared Lives scheme; Information sharing between agencies when making a new placement; resolving any confidentiality issues which may make inhibit comprehensive information sharing.

Shared Lives schemes are subject to different Regulations to Foster care. They also have separate Regulators. Shared Lives is regulated in England by the Care Quality Commission and Fostering by Ofsted.

The issue of care management support for the young person must be addressed. This should recognise the current difficulty which exists in the different legal responsibilities which the Shared Lives carer and the Foster carer have to the people placed with them. Ensuring that this change in responsibilities is explained carefully to the Foster carer moving into the Shared Lives scheme.

The Shared Lives scheme will need to assess the suitability of the Foster carer to be a Shared Lives carer. This will involve careful communication between the Fostering agency and the Shared Lives scheme. The Shared Lives scheme assessment should take into account the Foster carer assessment.

Considering the relative knowledge skills and qualification requirements of Foster carers and Shared Lives carers. Ensuring that the Foster carer is able to provide evidence that they have the skills and knowledge to support adults.

Level of respite support for Shared Lives carers and Foster carers may differ and any discrepancies will need to be recognised and wherever possible equalised.

The scope of any existing Carer Public Liability Insurance will need to be looked at and fresh or amended cover obtained as appropriate.

Any implications related to DBS or other safeguarding checks both for service users and members of the household.

Impact of Building Regulations (if there are more than 6 people in the house then the Foster carer may need to apply for change of use of the premises). Refer to separate guidance on Houses in Multiple Occupation.

Who will fund the placement of the young person once they reach 18? Also consider the implications of any differential fee level and impact of benefits entitlement.

The Benefits impact when the young person turns 18 needs to be considered both in terms of the impact on charges and on the Foster family/Shared Lives family.

Carers need to be fully informed about the HMRC rules covering tax relief and National Insurance contributions for both Fostering and Shared Lives.

Any continued or joint use of any adaptations or special equipment to be considered.

**Protocol for joint working between the Fostering/Share Care Agency and the Shared Lives scheme:**

Agreement between agencies is vital to the success of any mixed child / adult placement. This should set down the way in which the agencies will work together. A working protocol should be drawn up which includes agreement on:

The identification of a lead agency

Being clear that approval as a Foster carer does not automatically make someone suitable as a Shared Lives carer and vice versa

The way Shared Lives carers should be assessed:

* if the carer is an approved Foster carer then the Shared Lives scheme should be able to use the assessment of the Fostering agency as a basis for their own assessment;
* if the Shared Lives carer wishes to support someone under 18 with personal care needs then the Fostering agency should be able to use the Shared Lives assessment as a basis of the Foster carer assessment;
* if the carer has applied to work with both adults and children then the assessment should be carried out jointly by the agencies.

Agency involvement in Carer training. Both agencies should be involved in training where the carer has applied to support both adults and children.

Health and Safety issues and particularly around risk assessment.

How, if the carer has applied to work with both adults and children then the assessment report should be presented separately to the Fostering and the Shared Lives Panels.

Situations where the Shared Lives carer wishes to provide support to 16-18 year olds without personal care needs. In this case their Shared Lives assessment should be appended to a Fostering service assessment and presented to the Fostering panel as required by the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

The need for consultation between the agencies before making a decision to place anyone into the household. Matching decisions should be agreed by all agencies involved after comprehensive information sharing. All agencies should be involved in the placement agreement meeting and the detail of the service user plan.

Support visits: there must be an agreement between the agencies about the frequency and timing of support visits to avoid unnecessary burden on the carer.

The way in which complaints are investigated. All agencies must:

* liaise fully during any investigation
* be notified of the outcome of any investigation
* be notified of any complaint or allegation

The way in which the placements are monitored. Clear identification of a lead agency for each placement and agreement about where joint placement reviews would be appropriate.

How carer reviews will be conducted and agreement about when it would be appropriate for these to be held jointly.

Post approval training:

* each carer should have a common learning and development plan agreed with the carer by both agencies;
* the plan should clarify which agency is responsible for delivering which parts of the plan and how the carer should be supported to enable them to take part in learning opportunities.

DBS checks:

* agencies must be clear about the DBS checks required, who is checked and which agency is responsible for carrying them out;
* the DBS check must be the ‘DBS Enhanced with list checks’.

The shared responsibility for POVA and POCA procedures particularly around relative reporting and information sharing responsibilities.