

Royal Greenwich Shared Lives

NEW CARER APPLICATION, ASSESSMENT & APPROVAL PROCESS

Introduction

Royal Greenwich Shared Lives was first developed in 1983 to provide accommodation to adults who have a disability. The majority of placements are within the Greenwich Borough, but some are located in neighbouring local authorities, e.g. Lewisham, Bexley and Kent.

The needs of the service users vary considerably. Service users may have a learning disability, mental health issues or a physical disability, or any combination of these. Some people are profoundly disabled and have high support needs; some are frail and may be confused; some have very difficult or challenging behaviour; some service users may also have additional medical conditions, e.g. epilepsy, dementia, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's Disease and some may have sensory impairment. Others may have mild disabilities and use the Scheme to increase their skills for independent living and may move on to other living situations. We also provide respite care for some people who live at home with their family in order to provide both the caring relatives and the service user with a break.

If you are interested in becoming a Shared Lives carer

Royal Greenwich Shared Lives are always keen to attract good quality carers within the local community and specifically within the Royal Borough of Greenwich.

Shared Lives pay carers a weekly placement fee for each service user that is placed which covers the room and board for the service user as well as the care and support the service user requires.

Prospective applicants will need to have a spare double bedroom in their family home, which meets Shared Lives standards and ideally some relevant experience in the care sector and capacity to support a service user to live with you as part of your family.

Anybody who is interested in becoming a carer should contact the scheme to discuss their interest. A Placement officer will talk to you in more detail about the service and can then arrange for an informal visit to your home to assess the property and talk to you in more detail.

At the end of this visit, if both parties are happy, the scheme staff will then leave an application pack which needs to be completed and returned within 4 weeks. When the scheme receives the application pack back and is satisfied it is fully completed, the assessment will formally begin.

IT IS A LENGTHY AND CONTINUOUS PROCESS AND CAN TAKE ANY NUMBER OF MONTHS TO COMPLETE FROM THE INITIAL APPLICATION.

Applicants can withdraw at any stage and equally there are times when we may not be able to proceed with your application if, for example, your property is unsuitable or if any of your vetting checks or references are unsatisfactory. Shared Lives staff will keep you fully informed of the progress of your assessment and of any areas of difficulty.

Shared Lives will undertake the assessment under the Care Act 2015. The Scheme requires Carers to comply with the Fundamental Standards as dictated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) of which the service is registered. Royal Greenwich Shared Lives are subject to regular inspections by CQC which include the quality and robustness of our recruitment process for new carers.

The purpose of the assessment is to establish:

- 1) The suitability of the property and accommodation
- 2) The fitness and suitability of the applicant to be a Shared Lives Carer
- 3) The applicant's understanding of best practice in care and support, diversity and equal opportunities issues, safeguarding and quality of life considerations

The assessment will be undertaken via a series of interviews and visits to your home. There are also a number of vetting checks and references that are required and applicants will need to provide information and undertake tasks (including learning and training) during the process. Applicants will also be required to attend the main office, when requested, as part of the assessment process.

Applicants need to ensure that they have the time and the desire to start a comprehensive, detailed and time consuming process which can ask personal questions and be intrusive. It is imperative that applicants are open, honest and transparent during the application and assessment process as incomplete or inaccurate information provided by applicants and discovered at a later stage will have a negative impact on the assessment process and will likely result in the assessment being cancelled and the applicant no longer being invited to be a Shared Lives carer for the Royal Greenwich Scheme.

Royal Greenwich Shared Lives works closely with Shared Lives Plus and other local Shared Lives schemes. Applicants need to advise us if they have ever applied, been approved or had approval refused or removed by any other Shared Lives service.

Applicants have to take much responsibility themselves and are required to undertake tasks during the assessment process independently. Applicants need to be prepared for this before making an application.

The Shared Lives Application & Assessment Process **- What can you expect?**

Initial Enquiry

Anybody who is interested in applying to become a Shared Lives carer should contact the service by telephone on 020 8921 6120. One of the team will go through an initial enquiry with you and give you any information that you need.

If you are still interested and the team member feels you have potential then we may undertake a site visit to meet with you and view your home.

If the team member does not feel you would be able to become a Shared Lives carer they will explain to you why.

Site Visit

At the site visit you will meet some members of the Shared Lives team. They will talk to you about becoming a Shared Lives carer, answer any questions that you have and look around your home.

The team members may make some recommendations to you and give you an idea of any changes that you may need to make in your home if you do apply to become a Shared Lives carer. It is important that you know what these are as the cost of making any changes will need to be met by yourself.

After the site visit the team members will discuss the visit and decide whether they should invite you to apply to become a Shared Lives carer.

If you are unsuccessful and are not invited to apply we will explain why and may make recommendations on what you need to do if you still wish to be considered as a Shared Lives carer.

If you are invited to apply, we will send you an application pack and explain the next steps in the process.

It is then entirely up to you if you wish to make a formal application. All we ask is that you complete the application pack within 4 weeks and return it to us.

If we do not receive your application pack back within 4 weeks we will assume you have chosen not to apply and we will close your enquiry. If you then decide to apply at a later stage we will need to start the process again.

Application

If we invite you to apply following your site visit you will receive an application pack in the post. The application pack will include an application form, a number of consent forms for us to obtain information about you and some work that you will need to start to complete as part of your assessment.

It is important that you complete the application form fully and accurately. You need to supply full contact details for all referees (including phone numbers), complete the section on equality and diversity fully and delete the relevant sections in the declaration's page at the back.

All consent forms need to be completed, with the required information, and signed.

Any applications received by the scheme with missing information or not completed fully or correctly will be returned and this will delay the assessment process. If you have any questions, or need any help with completing the application pack then you should contact the service and a team member will support you.

Assessment

After we receive your completed application pack back you will be allocated to 2 team members who will undertake your assessment.

- Various documents will be required as proof of identity, (e.g. driving licence, original birth certificate/passport), proof of ownership/tenure of your home (e.g. mortgage/rent agreement) and at a later stage in the process proof of house and if applicable car insurance for business use.
- A letter will be required from your mortgage lender or landlord giving their permission for you to have service users placed with you.

Royal Greenwich Shared Lives is required to assess the fitness of the applicant to be a Shared Lives carer and requires evidence of the person's good character:

- Applicants have to consent to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check (DBS) being made of their criminal record (including any convictions or cautions). Applicants must declare any convictions or cautions, even those that are normally considered spent, as the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act does not apply. Applicants are responsible for declaring pending or current proceedings or investigations which could lead to a conviction.
- In addition the DBS check will also provide information regarding anybody living in your home or with previous links to your home who also has criminal convictions, previous cautions or if any information is known about your home, or the people who have lived there, by the police.
- Applicants have to provide information about their past and present employment. We need to establish a full employment history, including any employment gaps and the reasons for them.

- A minimum of two personal references are required from people who have known the applicant for a minimum of two years and who is not related to the applicant by reason of birth/marriage/cohabitation or in a relationship.
- References are required from the applicant's current employer and a previous employer.
- For those applicants who have not been in employment, references from voluntary organisations can be considered provided the applicant has been actively associated with them for a minimum of six months, or alternatively, three personal references can sometimes be considered.
- Applicants will need to undertake a credit check and pass the information to the Shared Lives service. This will cost each applicant £2 as part of the process. Applicants need to demonstrate a good financial history, have not had any mortgage or rent arrears and be able to demonstrate that they are financially solvent without the addition of a payment from Shared Lives. This is to enable us to minimise the risk to service users placed in their tenancies with you and also establish that your motivations are not purely financial.
- Medical information is required from their GP regarding the applicant's health and suitability and applicants will need to consent to this being obtained. In some cases we may ask applicants to visit their GP to undertake this medical check as this may speed up the process. Any costs for this service, as dictated by the applicants GP, are the responsibility of the applicant.
- Royal Greenwich Shared Lives will also undertake a local authority record check within Royal Greenwich and will be able to view all, and any, contacts that the applicant has had with Royal Greenwich previously. This may include contacts and/or services provided by other parts of Royal Greenwich. All information regarding your application to become a carer and your assessment process will be recorded by Royal Greenwich Shared Lives.

During this process of undertaking the vetting checks and collecting the references there are a number of things that applicants will be required to be doing as part of the assessment process.

- Pen Picture (Service User Guide) – applicants will need to complete an exercise to provide a picture of themselves, their families and their lives on paper.
- Day in my life – applicants will need to write about a full day in their lives, from the moment they wake up to when they go back to bed, giving an illustration of a normal day in their life.
- Network & Contacts Map – applicants will need to complete an exercise to provide a visual map of all the significant contacts in their lives and the networks of people that they know and come into regular contact with.
- Equality & Diversity Questions – applicants will need to answer the questions, in writing, regarding supporting people in different areas of their lives that may conflict with their own.

- E-Learning – applicants will be required to undertake certain E-Learning modules provided by Royal Greenwich Shared Lives. This training is mainly in the area of safeguarding, mental capacity, information sharing and data protection but other areas may be requested and required.
- The Care Certificate – applicants who do not have a formal qualification in Health & Social Care will be required to register for, and start, the ‘Care Certificate’. This qualification will be undertaken during the assessment process and (if successfully approved) completed during the probationary year.
- Training Courses – applicants will be required to attend a number of one day training courses in key social care areas. Applicants will be expected to attend any that are required during the assessment process and (if successfully approved) through the probationary year.
- Carers Meeting and Service User Forum – at some point during the assessment process applicants will be invited to attend a carers meeting and service user forum which they will be expected to attend.

Once all of the vetting checks and references have been completed, and deemed satisfactory, the practical part of the assessment will begin and this will take the form of interviews by the allocated workers within your home.

There will be 3 formal assessment visits and each will look at a specific area of the job you will be doing:

- Suitability of Property – the allocated workers will inspect your property itself to assess size, facilities, health and safety and food hygiene standards. To achieve the required standards you may need to undertake improvements to the property and will also need to provide basic fire precautions. They will also discuss with you the type of service user you are best suited to support and house rules.
- Fit Persons Interview – the allocated workers will explore your previous experience and the reasons that you wish to become Shared Lives carers
- Principles of Care – the allocated workers will explore your views, opinions and ways of working particularly with people that are more vulnerable than you or from a different background. Applicants will need to be able to demonstrate an understanding of basic principles of good care and how they can be integrated into the support they provide and the needs of prospective service users.

Royal Greenwich is a multi-cultural and multi-racial community. Royal Greenwich Shared Lives is committed to ensuring that its services are accessible and appropriate to the needs of the whole community and that they actively promote equality of access and opportunity for all groups, lesbian and gay men, disable people and women. Applicants will therefore need to demonstrate a clear understanding of the specific needs of clients from any of the above groups and to actively support the Council’s anti-racist strategies and Equal Opportunities Policy.

During the entire assessment process, applicants should demonstrate an understanding and commitment to good practice issues such as care planning, risk taking and choice, decision making, personal care, acceptable rules and sanctions, management of continence, promotion of privacy and independence and an understanding of issues regarding sexual choices, orientations and preferences.

Approval

Following the completion of the assessment process a comprehensive approval panel assessment report will be written by the assessing officers and applicants will be presented to the Shared Lives Independent Approval Panel - which is a panel of independent members who make decisions about the approval of prospective carers.

Applicants will be given a copy of the report, once completed, that will be presented to panel and will be encouraged to make any comments regarding the assessment and the content of the report.

Applicants, with support of the allocated workers, will also record a short video guide which can also be presented to the independent approval panel and used for prospective placements at a later stage.

The allocated workers will advise the applicant of the decision of the independent approval panel following the meeting and they will then receive a formal decision in writing from the manager of the service.

The independent approval panel have the authority to decide not to approve an applicant (and give reasons), to approve an applicant (with or without conditions) or to defer the decision requesting more information to be collected.

New Shared Lives carers will be approved initially for a one year probationary period. In the first year you will be expected to complete the Care Award and any other mandatory training. You will also be required to show good working practice and engagement with the service.

Once Approved

Once successfully approved, applicants will become Royal Greenwich Shared Lives Carers and the scheme will begin to consider matching service users to refer to you.

Before we can make any placements you will need to have undertaken any requirements that have been identified during the assessment process.

All new carers are required to attend an induction day soon after their approval. At this day the scheme staff will go through the policies and procedures and explain the most key areas of your new role. You will be advised of the date of this and required to attend.

When you apply to be a Royal Greenwich Shared Lives carer, we require you to accept an undertaking that you will only take placements made by Royal Greenwich. Should Royal Greenwich Shared Lives not be able to make any placements with you within six months of your satisfactory approval by the Independent Approval Panel, you would be released from this undertaking.