(6) Approval Panel Selection of Members & Operational Criteria

It is the policy of Kent Shared Lives to establish and maintain a panel of people who operate independently of Shared Lives (or organisation managing the service). This panel of people is known as the Shared Lives approval panel and is responsible for the approval of prospective Shared Lives hosts and the approval status of hosts who are already part of Shared Lives.

**Composition**

The approval panel has a panel chair who is either a senior member of staff with no responsibility for the management of anyone who carries out assessments of prospective hosts or a person who is completely independent of Shared Lives and who has the necessary skills and experience.

Shared Lives will aim to ensure that the panel is made up primarily of people who are independent of Shared Lives. It will include people who stay with Shared Lives hosts and Shared Lives hosts themselves.

People who are employed by Shared Lives or the organisation can be panel members as long as they are not involved with the assessment process and are not responsible for the management of anyone who carries out assessments. People employed by Shared Lives or the authority will aim be in a minority during any panel meeting where decisions are to be made.

The panel composition will, where possible, reflect the community served by Shared Lives, offering a balance of interests, skills, backgrounds and an even gender balance.

Shared Lives will appoint a team manager and responsible person as panel advisers. The panel advisers will be part of the approval panel in order to answer panel questions, provide clarification and provide the panel with the Shared Lives perspective. The panel adviser will not enter into any discussions or decisions about host approval.

The maximum numbers of panel members present for the panel to consider panel business and make a decision is six. The minimum numbers of panel members present for the panel to consider panel business and make a decision is three.

**Appointment of Panel Members**

All panel members will be recruited and selected using a fair and equitable process set down by the scheme.

Prospective panel members will go through comprehensive checks and references including a standard Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check.
Panel members will go through an induction process to ensure they fully understand the sensitive nature of panel information and the importance of panel in the support and protection of adults. They will also understand the importance of evidencing host skills when making decisions and the action they will take if they not satisfied with panel procedures or decisions.

Panel members will receive written information about Shared Lives, Shared Lives processes, their panel role and expected conduct.

**Resignation and removal of Panel Members**

Panel members are able to resign from the role and should give Shared Lives three months’ notice in advance that they intend to do so. If concerns are expressed about a panel member they will be discussed in the first instance with the panel chair. If the chair is unable to resolve these concerns, the chair will discuss them with the Shared Lives manager and an action plan agreed.

The ultimate sanction against a panel member is removal of their membership of the panel. The people who are authorised to give notice to a panel member are the panel chair and the responsible individual. The decision will be communicated to the panel member by the panel chair. If a panel member wishes to appeal against the decision they should raise the issue with the responsible Individual. In the event that the person is not satisfied, they will be advised of the KCC complaints procedure. This procedure will be discussed as part of the induction of new panel members.

Panel members will serve on the panel for a maximum of three years.

**Process**

The panel will be held every month to consider assessments of prospective hosts and reviews of existing hosts, when required. Reports on existing hosts need to be presented to panel if they are seeking a change in approval or as result of a complaint or major change of the host’s circumstances.

All notes from panel will be retained by Shared Lives as a record.

During the monthly panel the Shared Lives worker who carried out the assessment or review will be available to answer questions and clarify issues. In some instances if the assessor is not available it may be possible for a colleague or representative to support instead. This can only be effective if the representative has a good understanding of the issues in the report and is able to answer questions.

During the monthly panel, members will be given the opportunity to raise questions and clarify issues based on the report they have read and any comments from the person presenting the report.

The panel will not be expected to make a decision when the assessment or review is not fully complete or references and checks are not available.
If panel members already have an interest in or knowledge of a host they must declare this to the panel chair. The panel member must agree with the panel chair whether their interest or knowledge will affect their objectivity and if necessary they must agree to withdraw from the panel while the particular host is discussed.

**Evidencing knowledge and skills**
The primary role of the panel is to assess the evidence of the host’s knowledge and skills and determine if this sufficient for a new host to become approved or an existing host to change their approval.

Reviews and assessments will be written by the Shared Lives worker to reflect the individual host concerned. The evidence of each host’s knowledge and skills will look very different depending on the host, their circumstances, motivations and experiences.

Shared Lives will ensure that panel members understand the concept of the knowledge and skills required to be an effective host as part of their induction to the role of panel member. They will also ensure that panel members are aware of different ways that these knowledge and skills can be evidenced.

Panel members must ensure that they look objectively at each host assessment and review and consider each of the knowledge and skills statements. For each statement they will consider whether the Shared Lives worker has provided them with sufficient evidence that the host has the knowledge and skills required.

Whether the type and amount of evidence outlined in the report is sufficient is a relatively subjective decision to be taken by the approval panel. However if panel decisions are seen to be fair, equitable, consistent and sound it is likely that their view on the type and amount of evidence will be equally so.

**Decisions**

**New approvals**
The approval panel will decide on the suitability of the applicant. When considering the assessment of new applicants the outcome will either be:

**Approved** - This means that the panel were satisfied with the thoroughness of the assessment pack. Panel have reached the decision that the host can now work for Shared Lives to the level of their approval.

**Not Approved** - This means the panel members have decided that an applicant is not suitable or that checks and references revealed something unsatisfactory. In this case the appeal process will be made available to applicants.

**Deferred** - This means that panel members were unable to reach a decision. It may be that the assessment report was incomplete, references were
insubstantial or that it was felt that the applicant requires further training or experience to develop their knowledge and skills. In this case the situation will be explained fully to the host and a date agreed to present them to panel again in the future. When a host is deferred Shared Lives will work with them to meet panel requirements and recommendations.

**Reviews**
When considering the reviews of existing hosts, decisions will be more tailored to the specific circumstances of the host and the reason their review has been presented to panel. They could, however, include:

- **Increase of approval**
- **Decrease of approval**
- **Other change in current approval**
- **Removal of approval due to resignation, retirement or scheme sanction**

The panel has been given the mandate by Shared Lives to make all necessary decisions and any associated sanctions in connection with approval of new and review of existing Shared Lives hosts.

The panel will ensure any decisions they make are in line with this mandate from the scheme.

**Disagreement**
If panel members do not reach a unanimous decision it is agreed that a majority decision will be accepted. In the event that an equal split decision occurs, the panel chair will have a casting vote.

**Appeals**
Shared Lives has an agreed procedure to be followed in the event of hosts wishing to appeal against a panel decision. Initially, the host should raise the issue with the panel chair who will respond in writing. If the host is still not satisfied, they should raise the issue with the responsible individual. In the event that the person is still not satisfied, they will be advised of the KCC complaints procedure.

All existing and prospective hosts will be made aware of the appeal process.