

The state of Shared Lives



Shared Lives care in
the UK 2024-25

A report by
Shared Lives Plus





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Our **lives** get better
when they're **shared**

Key messages

Learning from four years of data

A four-year dataset - **2021-22 to 2024-25** - provides the most detailed view of Shared Lives carers, supported people, and scheme staff across all nations to date.

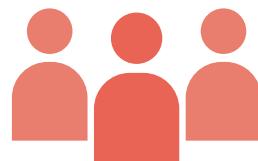
Supported people

Numbers remain stable at **9,898** in **2024-25**. England continues to perform strongly, while Scotland recorded **4%** growth in **2024-2025**.



Shared Lives carers

Numbers have grown **13%** over four years, reaching **10,406**. The strongest year for growth was **2023-24**, with increases in England (**3%**), Wales (**12%**), and Northern Ireland (**2%**).



10,406
Shared Lives
carers

Shared Lives scheme workforce

Since data collection on workforce began in Wales and Scotland in **2022-23**, the **three-year** national dataset shows the Shared Lives Plus workforce grew steadily from **954** to **997** staff by **2024-25**, an approximate **5%** increase.¹



Future growth

Shared Lives Plus is testing dementia day support through the **Live More** programme in Greater Manchester, to inform national rollout. The **Young People Leaving Care** programme is also expanding, delivering specialised arrangements and transitional support for care leavers.

Summary: **Shared Lives is expanding steadily, diversifying services, and building workforce capacity to meet evolving needs across the UK.**

¹ The larger increase reported last year reflected early-stage data capture; improvements and review of the dataset now show a steady growth of approximately 5% between 2022-23 and 2024-25.

About Shared Lives

Shared Lives is a real example of what the future of good social care looks like. It builds relationships, belonging and purpose within local communities.

Shared Lives schemes bring people who need support, together with Shared Lives carers, to share homes, lives, and community connections, so everyone has the chance to live where they feel they belong.

Across the UK over half of the people using Shared Lives move in with their chosen Shared Lives carer; nearly half visit a Shared Lives carer for day support or overnight breaks. People get safe, personal care and support, in a place which feels like home. They build relationships, skills, do things they enjoy and become more active.

There are over **10,400** carers who support nearly **10,000** people across the UK. All carers are approved following rigorous recruitment and training by one of the UK's **146** local regulated schemes. The Care Quality Commission in England and the Care Inspectorate in Scotland consistently rates Shared Lives as the safest and best quality social care service.

Scotland

526 supported people (+4%)
589 carers (-3%)
48 scheme staff (-2%)

England

8226 supported people (+3%)
8851 carers (+3%)
857 scheme staff (+1%)

Wales

918 supported people (-9%)
748 carers (+12%)
92 scheme staff (+8%)

Northern Ireland

228 supported people (-14%)
218 carers (+2%)
No data for scheme staff



About Shared Lives Plus

Shared Lives Plus is the membership organisation for Shared Lives, representing Shared Lives carers, schemes and Homeshare organisations. Our vision is a kinder, stronger society built on sharing our lives and homes. We help build communities where everyone lives a full life, regardless of the support they need. We do this by encouraging Shared Lives care and Homeshare to flourish, creating the right structures to guide and uplift people who want to share their lives and homes.

This year we supported **146** schemes, **6,315** Shared Lives carer members and **16** Homeshare organisations UK-wide. We have a unique voice which we use to assist local Shared Lives and Homeshare organisations and Shared Lives carers through policy, guidance, advice, and legal work. We support local organisations to establish new Shared Lives and Homeshare services and improve existing ones.

To find out more visit

 www.sharedlivesplus.org.uk



About this report

The State of Shared Lives report is the only publication that illustrates the scale and nature of the Shared Lives sector, charting how it develops year on year. It serves as the primary source of information on how many people benefit from Shared Lives, the types of support they need, the number of carers involved, and the different ways they provide care. These insights help us to identify emerging trends and inform our strategic priorities as we work to grow and strengthen Shared Lives across the UK. This report would not be possible without the contributions of our **146** member schemes, whose cooperation we are grateful for.

Analysing four years of data

We now have a complete four-year national dataset for the numbers of supported people and Shared Lives carers. In addition, we have a near-complete two-year national dataset for Shared Lives scheme workers (with no data available for Northern Ireland), as data collection in Scotland and Wales only began in **2022-23**.

Comparing data across this period provides a more comprehensive and consistent view of trends in Shared Lives carers, supported people, and scheme staff across the UK. With the implementation of improved data collection and analysis methods in **2021-22**, this enhanced dataset enables more accurate year-on-year comparisons, a better understanding of emerging patterns, and more informed workforce planning and service development.

By examining trends over multiple years, rather than in isolation, we can identify sustained growth, areas for improvement, and the impact of strategic initiatives across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.



How we use these findings

Best practice

The information we collect plays a crucial role in shaping the future of Shared Lives. Qualitative evidence is used to create best practice guidance, which is shared with the sector and applied by commissioners, social workers, and schemes to improve and expand existing services.

Growth and diversification

The data also enables Shared Lives Plus to build a strong case for investment, supporting engagement with key bodies across the UK: Integrated Care Systems (ICS) in England, Health and Social Care Partnerships in Scotland, local authorities, health boards and Regional Partnership Boards in Wales, and Health and Social Care Trusts and Integrated Care Partnerships in Northern Ireland - as well as commissioners and other decision-makers responsible for funding and developing the sector. It provides a clear picture of what proportion of overall care provision is delivered through Shared Lives, while also highlighting opportunities for diversification and areas where provision can be scaled further.

Advocacy and representation

The data strengthens our ability to represent and advocate for the sector at a national level, ensuring its voice is heard in key decision-making arenas. The information was crucial, for example, in the project to win the first ever targeted Government investment into the Shared Lives sector with the accelerating reform fund. In addition, the information allows us to identify schemes that are achieving positive outcomes in certain areas, which in turn enables us to gather and share examples of best practice across the wider network.

People supported in Shared Lives

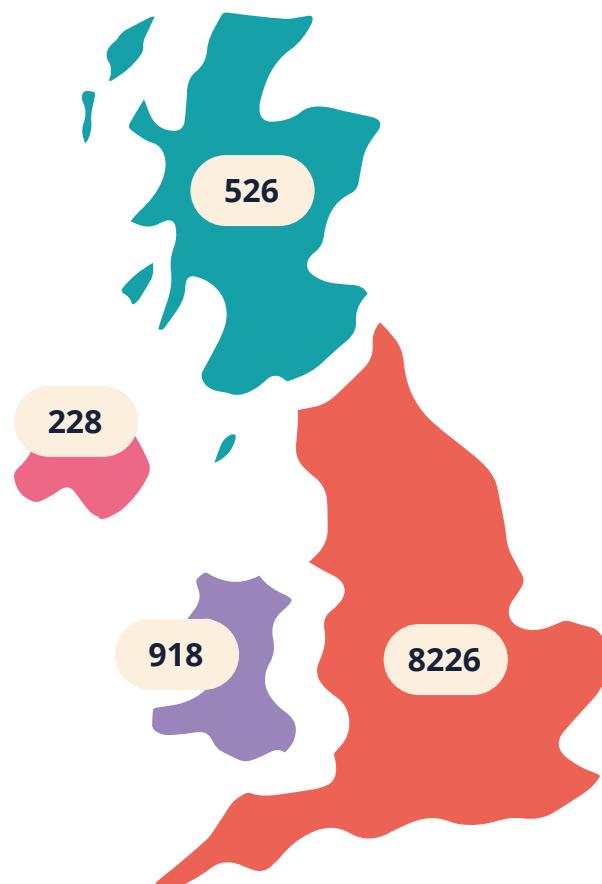
Between **2021-22** and **2024-25**, the number of supported people in the UK has remained relatively stable, with **9,898** individuals supported in **2024-25**. While there has been some variation over the period, the most recent year shows a modest recovery of **1%**, reflecting the sector's resilience and ability to adapt to changing needs.

This stability should be viewed positively in the context of wider pressures across the social care sector, where financial constraints, shifting eligibility criteria, and increasing complexity of needs have created ongoing challenges. As in previous years, Shared Lives' unique model means that fluctuations in numbers can reflect the time and care required to achieve the right match, rather than changes in demand.

Feedback from across the network continues to highlight increasingly complex referrals, which can limit the number of people each carer is able to support at any one time. Some carers, meanwhile, report gaps between appropriate referrals. This reinforces the importance of Shared Lives being considered as a first option within referral pathways for people with a wide range of support needs.

People supported by nation

At a national level, England maintained strong levels of support with a slight rebound in **2024-25**. Scotland showed a **4%** increase, demonstrating steady growth, while Northern Ireland continued to show consistent engagement. In Wales, some variation remains due to the implementation of improved systems, local priorities, and eligibility criteria; however, Shared Lives continues to provide essential, high-quality support to a significant number of people across the nation.



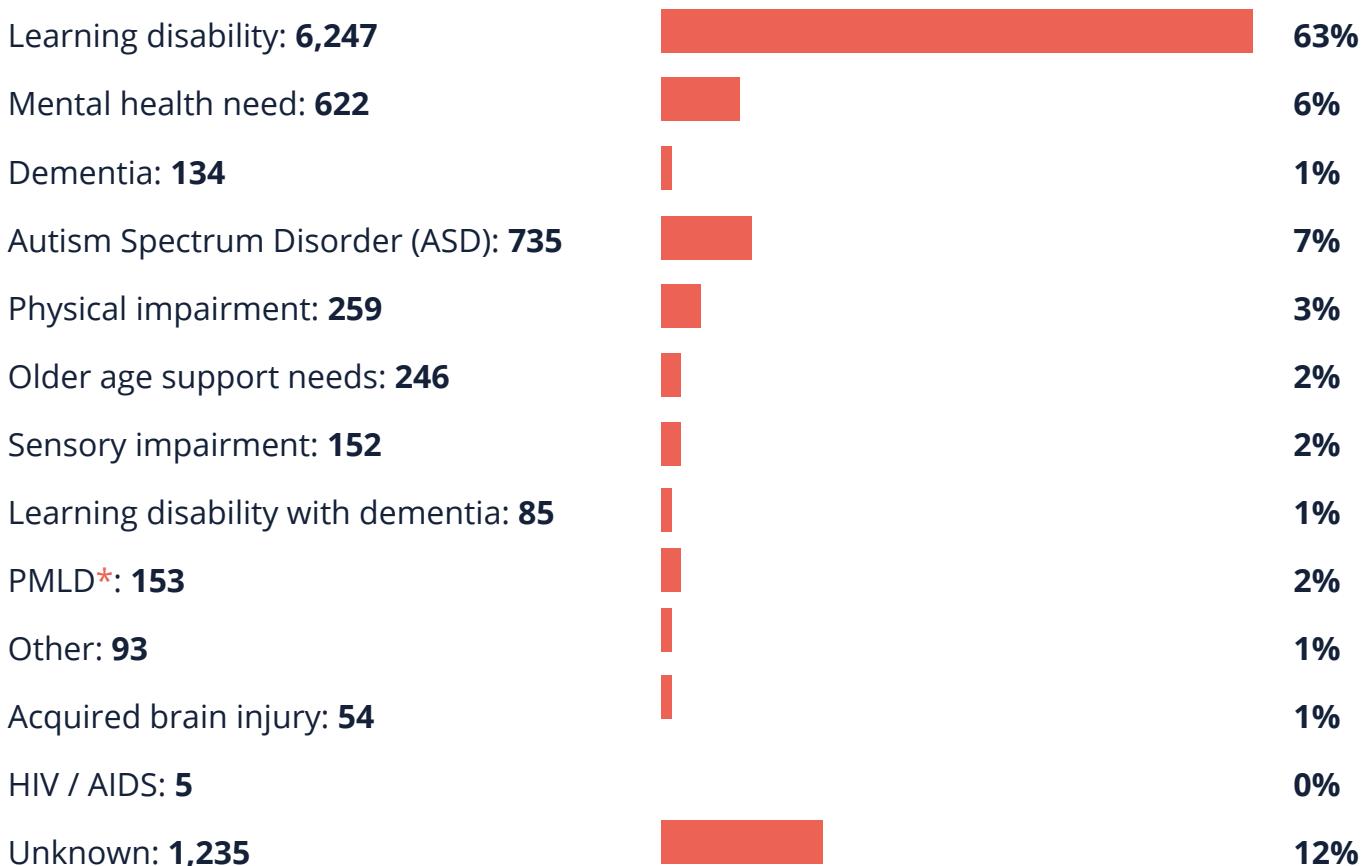
Types of support accessed

This year, **5,760** people were reported as accessing live-in support, **2,712** accessed short breaks, and **1,728** received day support. These figures are slightly lower than last year's reported numbers (**5,943**, **2,903**, and **1,798** respectively), though this likely reflects differences in reporting rather than a significant change in access.



Breakdowns by support needs

We've updated how support needs are recorded this year, including adding new groups like Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and refining existing categories. While this means the data can't be compared directly with last year, it's clear that Learning disability continues to be the largest area of support, with increases seen in sensory impairment, physical impairment, and older age support needs.

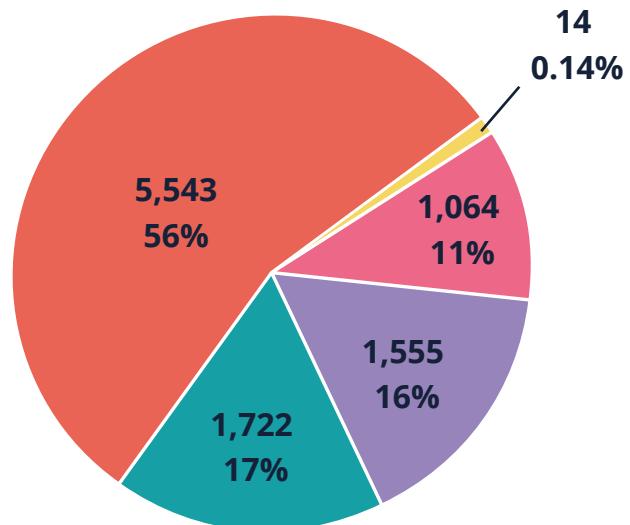


* profound and multiple learning disability

Age groups of people supported

The largest group continues to be adults aged **25-64**, who make up over half (**56%**) of all people supported. The proportion of younger people (**16-24**) and older adults (**65+**) has remained broadly consistent year on year.

A new “no data” category was introduced this year, which affects direct comparisons, but the overall pattern of support by age remains similar to previous years.



 16 - 17  18 - 24  25 - 64  65+  No data

Care leavers

Between **2024** and **2025**, there were **351** reported transitions into Shared Lives.

The most common route was a transition from foster care with an existing carer, accounting for **72%** (**108** out of **151** reported routes).

This is the most detailed picture we've had of care leavers in Shared Lives, and it reinforces our commitment to growth through the Young People Leaving Care programme.



Shared Lives carers

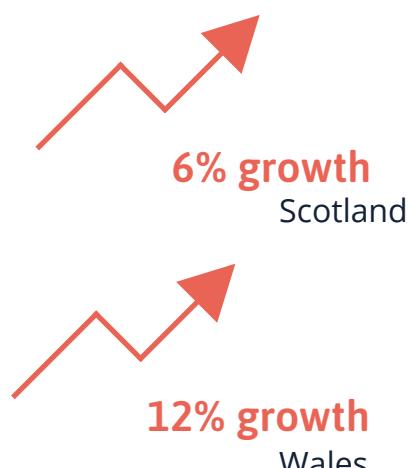
Between **2021-22** and **2024-25**, the total number of Shared Lives carers in the UK increased from **9,226** to **10,406**, representing a growth of **13%** over four years.



At a national level, England experienced a steady rise in Shared Lives carers, increasing from **7,562** to **8,851**, a **17%** growth over the four-year period and driving most of the UK-wide increase. In contrast, Northern Ireland saw very limited change, remaining largely flat at **213** Shared Lives carers until a slight rise to **218** in **2024-25**, reflecting a **2%** increase.



Scotland's figures were more mixed. After a rise in **2022-23**, Shared Lives carer numbers declined slightly to **589**. Overall, Scotland has seen a **6%** increase since **2021-22** despite a small reduction in the total number of schemes in this period. Wales too experienced more changeability due to the implementation of more robust approval processes. After an initial dip in **2023-24** to **670** Shared Lives carers, the numbers rose to **748**, leading to an overall growth of **12%**. This growth is thought to be partly due to the assessment of additional carers to help sustain existing arrangements.



Across all schemes, there were **10,406** approved Shared Lives carers in total and **5,589** registered Shared Lives households. This suggests that some households include dual carers, or that support carers are linked to specific arrangements or households, rather than operating more generally across the scheme. Of the total number of Shared Lives carers, **1,695** were support carers only, reflecting the continued growth of flexible and short-term support within Shared Lives.



All carers: 10,406



Support carers: 1,695



Households: 5,589

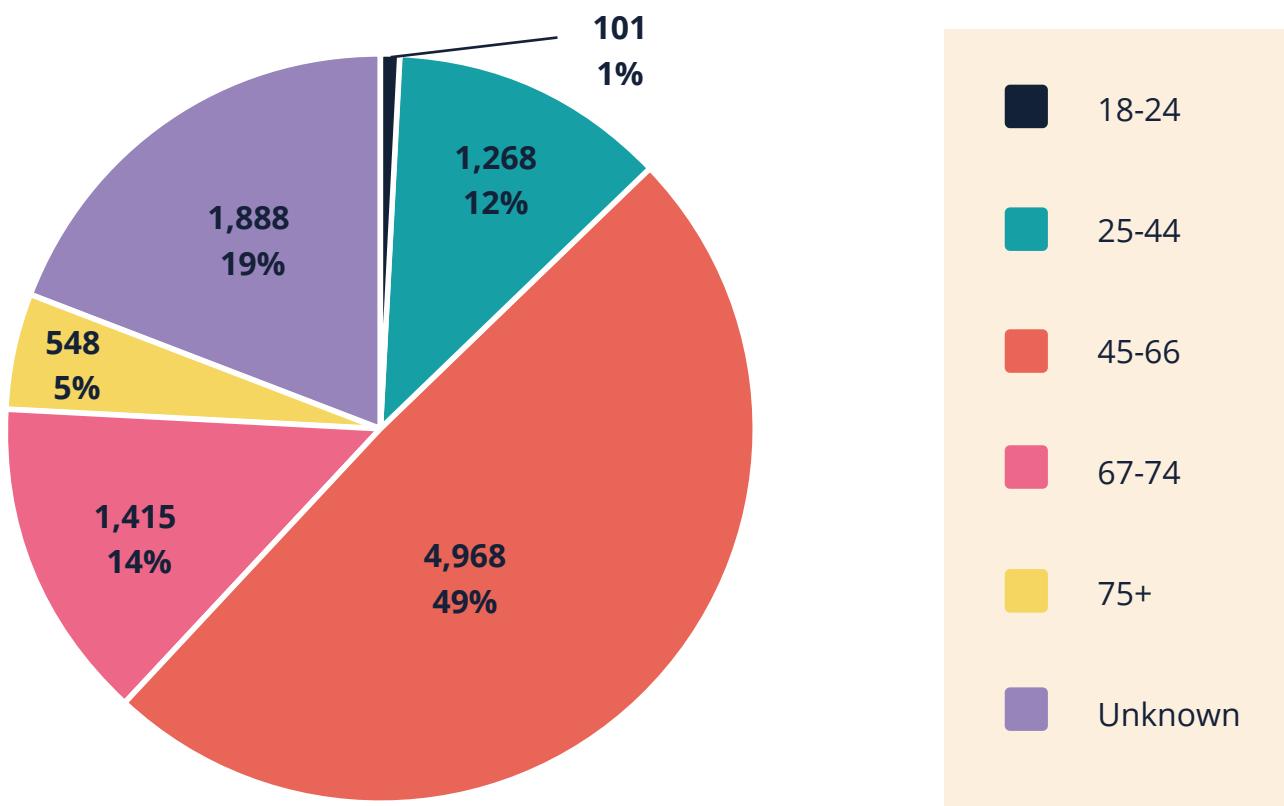
Types of support

While the number of Shared Lives carers providing live-in support has decreased modestly, this is balanced by an encouraging rise in those offering short breaks. This increase reflects greater flexibility and a broader range of support options for people who need care.



Shared Lives carers by age group

This year, a new “unknown” category was introduced, which affects direct comparisons, but the overall pattern of support by age remains similar to previous years. The **45-66** age group clearly remains the largest, with **4,968** carers (49%).



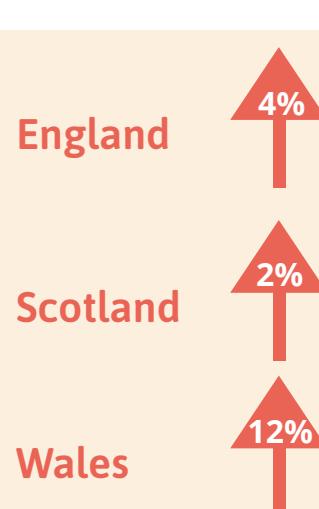
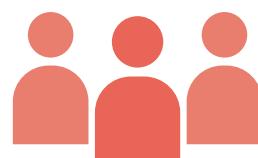
Shared Lives workers

We have a three-year national data set for staff workers, as data collection in Wales and Scotland only began in **2022-23**. Between **2022-23** and **2024-25**, the Shared Lives Plus scheme workforce grew steadily across the four nations, with scheme staff numbers increasing from **954** in **2022-23** to **997** in **2024-25**, reflecting an overall national growth of approximately **5%** over the past two years. This updated figure replaces the larger increase reported last year, following improvements in data collection and validation that provide a more accurate picture of workforce growth.

This year, **71%** of scheme staff were employed full-time, with **681** full-time and **274** part-time workers across all roles. This maintains the positive balance seen last year, when the share of full-time staff also stood at **71%**. The continued presence of a predominantly full-time workforce highlights both the stability of the sector and a sustained willingness by local leaders to invest in Shared Lives capacity and infrastructure.

Breaking this down further, there were **175** managers (**139** full-time and **36** part-time), **654** workers (**468** full-time and **186** part-time), and **126** administrative or business support staff (**74** full-time and **52** part-time). This profile closely mirrors last year's distribution and suggests that schemes are maintaining a well-rounded workforce to manage growth in Shared Lives carer numbers.

Across the nations, England continues to demonstrate steady expansion, increasing from **825** staff in **2022-23** to **857** in **2024-25** (a **4%** rise). Scotland's workforce has remained stable at around **48** staff (**2%** growth since **2022-23**), while Wales shows clear strengthening, with staff numbers rising from **82** to **92** (a **12%** increase) over the same period. Although data for Northern Ireland are not yet available, the overall picture across the UK is one of measured, sustainable workforce growth, providing a solid foundation to support the parallel rise in Shared Lives carer numbers and placements.



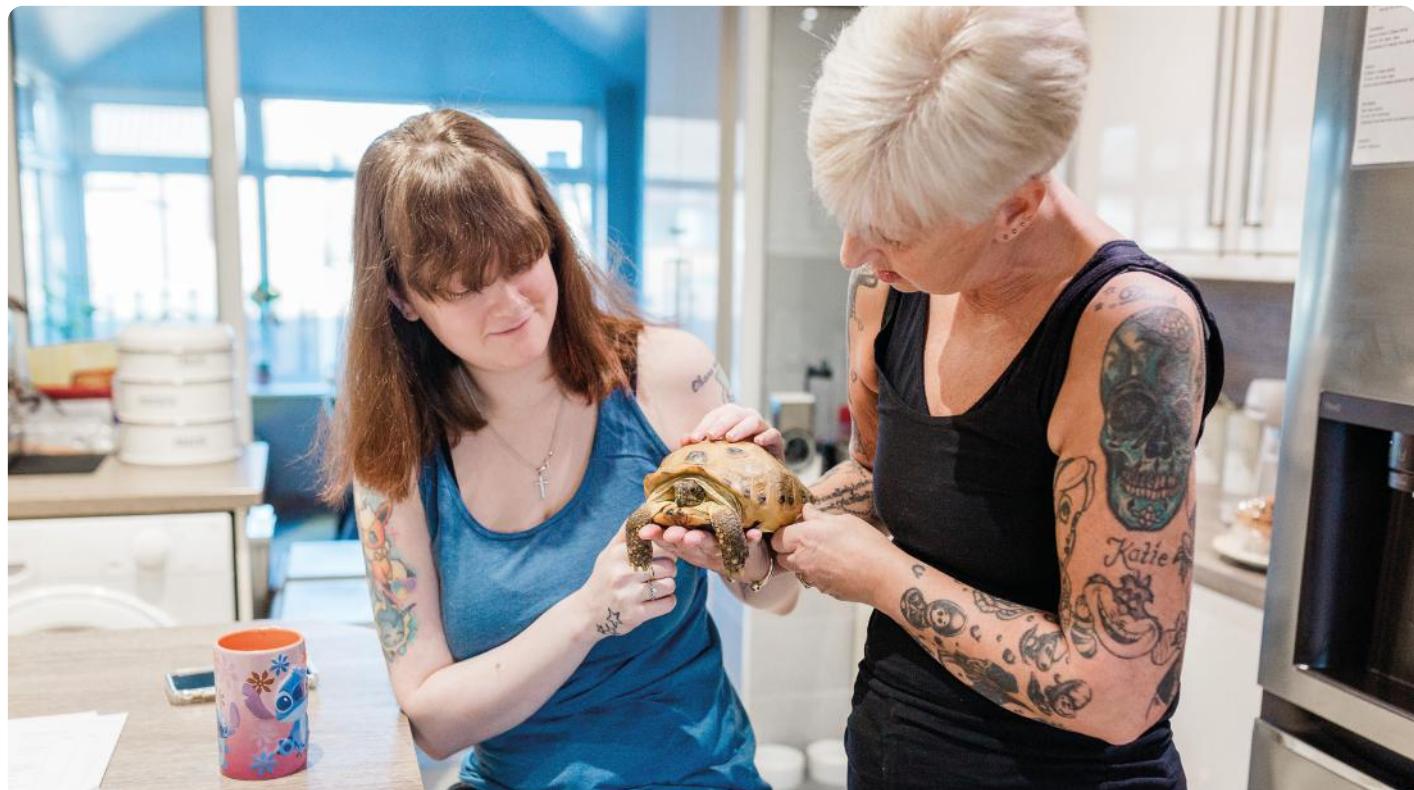
Current and projected growth

Growth and development of Shared Lives schemes

Some Shared Lives schemes have exhibited clear growth in carer numbers, supported more people, and expanded the types of support they offer over the last four years. Our data shows examples of schemes making notable progress, particularly in the number of people they support.

Shared Lives Plus has worked closely with several of these schemes, using our six building blocks for growing a robust Shared Lives service. You can read more about this approach in our recent guidance [**'Developing Shared Lives for people with a learning disability'**](#), published by Partners in Care and Health and available on the Local Government Association website.

Many of the schemes with noticeable growth have diversified their offerings, introducing support for dementia, acquired brain injury, sensory impairments, and mental ill health. Others have strengthened their short breaks and day support. These developments reflect the sector's responsiveness to evolving community needs.



Impact of the Accelerating Reform Fund (ARF) in England

In **2024**, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) launched the Accelerating Reform Fund (ARF), bringing renewed investment and momentum to the Shared Lives sector in England.

More than half of all Integrated Care System (ICS) areas chose to dedicate part of their ARF grant to developing and expanding Shared Lives, recognising its impact across communities.

ARF-funded projects have driven progress through:

- Recruitment and marketing activities
- Additional Shared Lives staff capacity and dedicated roles focused on carer recruitment and new development areas
- Developing robust business cases for future investment to sustain and grow the model locally
- Profile raising and relationship building across adult and children's social care teams (to support more young people in accessing Shared Lives), as well as health and voluntary sector partners to encourage the uptake of Shared Lives as an option for people with a range of health and care needs including mental ill health, dementia and providing access to breaks for unpaid carers.

The Shared Lives landscape across England is diverse, with ARF-funded projects starting from different points of development. While the full impact of the ARF is still emerging, its influence is already clear.

In just the first year, national investment through the ARF has contributed to the growth in both the number of people supported and the number of Shared Lives carers in England.

Early analysis by Shared Lives Plus shows a strong link between ARF funding and sector growth.

Of the areas that saw increased participation in Shared Lives last year, **29** drew on ARF investment to expand their work. Together, these areas supported **317** additional people, accounting for **60%** of all national growth.

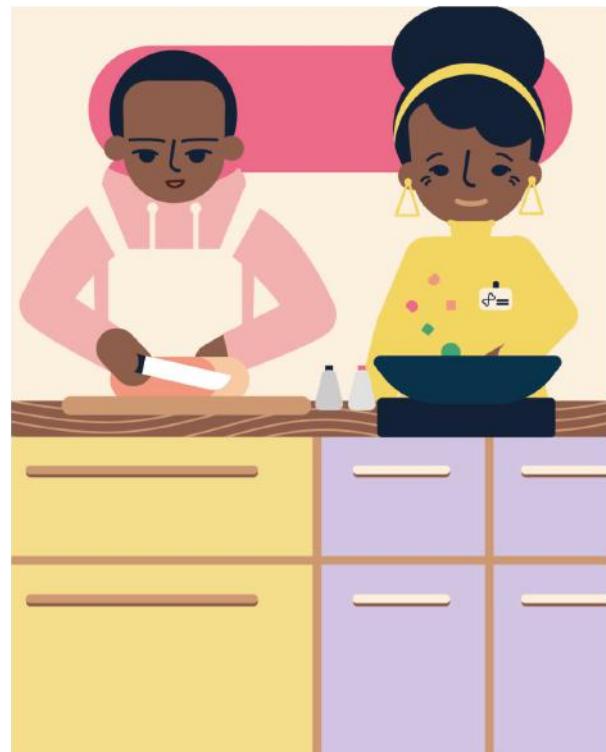
This early evidence demonstrates the power of targeted national investment in accelerating local development and improving access to Shared Lives.

To sustain this momentum and scale the model further, continued government investment is essential.

Expanding support for care leavers

Launched in **2024**, the [**Young People Leaving Care**](#) programme promotes a 'Shared Lives First' approach for two main groups: young people in care aged **16** and over in Scotland and England/ **18** and over in Wales and Northern Ireland; and care leavers with a learning disability, autism, neurodiversity, or complex trauma. The programme aims to collaborate with government to embed Shared Lives within both children's and adults' policy and guidance.

The overarching goal is to improve outcomes for care-experienced young people and reduce the 'cliff edge' many face during transition to adulthood. At present there are **37** Shared Lives schemes participating in the programme across the UK.



Diversifying support offers for people living with dementia

In **2025**, Shared Lives schemes reported a total of **134** supported people living with dementia in Shared Lives arrangements across England, Scotland and Wales. Smaller than other support groups such as those with a learning disability, this area is poised for growth, as demonstrated by the investment in the [**Live More**](#) Programme.

In Greater Manchester, all ten local areas, supported by the Mayor, Shared Lives Plus, Greater Manchester ADASS, and Dementia United, are piloting early access to Shared Lives day support, ahead of traditional adult social care eligibility. The Live More programme is testing and experimenting with Shared Lives as a cost-effective model of early action and prevention for people with dementia and their families, aligned with the key themes of the NHS Ten Year Plan and adult social care reform. Embedded within the Live Well Dementia strategy, the programme evaluates both economic and social outcomes, providing evidence to guide future national expansion and improve care for people with dementia. Live More also aims to extend into other areas and aligns with key national strategies, including Scotland's 'Everyone's Story' dementia strategy, Wales's Dementia Action Plan, and the Regional Dementia Care Pathway in Northern Ireland.





Our lives get better when they're shared

Data note

This report is based on the best information available at the time analysis was carried out. It uses data from Shared Lives scheme responses, reliable external sources, and data already held by Shared Lives Plus. Since information is not collected in the same way by all Shared Lives schemes and across all topic areas, the amount of data and level of detail vary. Where we could not collect information, we have shown this as 'no data', rather than filling in the gaps based on assumptions. In some cases, high-level figures are included to provide context. Figures are included to provide a broad picture. They should not be used to make wider claims or comparisons and should be read with care.

[Read the full data transparency statement](#)

[Visit the report website page](#)

**To find out what Shared Lives
can do for you, please contact us:**

- Ⓐ www.sharedlivesplus.org.uk
- ✉ info@sharedlivesplus.org.uk