

The state of the sector



**Shared Lives care in the UK
2023-24**



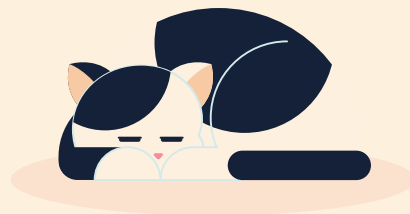
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Our **lives** get better
when they're **shared**

Key messages

- Shared Lives continues to offer the highest quality form of social care. The latest CQC reports show that **96%** of Shared Lives services in England were rated as good or outstanding, the same as last year, compared to **83%** across the wider social care system.¹
- Shared Lives carer numbers have increased for the second year in a row, increasing by **2%** to **10,081** and by **8%** since 2022. This welcome news indicates that recruitment and retention efforts across the sector have been successful over the last two years.
- Non-carer staff member numbers also rose to **961**. This is a **3%** rise from the **954** reported the year prior, and a significant **33%** increase since 2021. This positive change suggests a growing willingness to invest in Shared Lives from local leaders.
- The number of people supported in the sector saw a modest decrease of **2%** to **9,802**. This is the second consecutive annual decrease in this figure and **6%** fewer than the **10,394** reported two years ago.
- We would expect a lag between growth in workforce and the number of matches, because of the nature of the Shared Lives model and the careful matching process. But the decrease does highlight the importance of appropriate and pro-active referrals into Shared Lives services.
- The decrease must also be viewed in the context of the wider challenges within social care. Financial pressures have caused increasingly complex or inappropriate referrals into Shared Lives, meaning carers can support fewer people and leaving some without matches altogether.
- Social care in general requires significant investment and long-term planning so that people can get the support they need to live the good lives they deserve.



¹ CQC, The state of health care and adult social care in England 2022/23, October 2023 - <https://www.cqc.org.uk/publications/major-report/state-care/2022-2023>

About Shared Lives

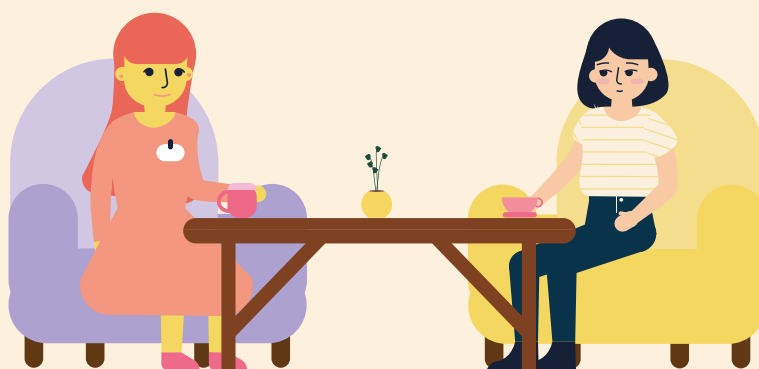
Shared Lives is a unique form of social care based on the simple but transformative power of human relationships. In Shared Lives, a young person or adult who needs support is matched with a Shared Lives carer, by their local Shared Lives scheme. Together, they share home, family and community life. Over half of the people using Shared Lives move in with their chosen Shared Lives carer to live as part of their household; and the remaining people visit for day support or overnight breaks. People get safe, personal care and support, in a place which feels like home. They make friends and become more active.

There are over 10,000 carers who are supporting 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 consistently rates Shared Lives in England and Scotland as the safest and best quality social care service. It can also save between £8,000 to £30,000 per person, per year for people with learning disabilities compared to supported living and residential care, and £8,000 lower per year for people with mental ill health.

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 19 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 organisations 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 one of its kind describing the size and shape of the Shared Lives sector and how it changes every year. It is the foremost source of information about how many people benefit from Shared Lives, what sort of needs they have, how many carers are working in the sector and what types of support they offer. We use these insights to identify trends which shape our strategic priorities in our work to grow and strengthen Shared Lives in the UK.

The data and insights in this publication would not be possible without the input of our 146 member schemes and we thank them for their co-operation.

Shared Lives Outcomes

Shared Lives continues to deliver the highest quality care across the whole sector. The latest CQC reports show that **96%** of Shared Lives services in England were rated as good or outstanding, the same as last year, compared to **83%** across the wider social care system. In Scotland, the most recent Care Inspectorate reports show that **40%** of schemes received a grade of Excellent, and **33%** very Good. All Shared Lives schemes in Scotland have a rating of at least grade 4 (good) for the care and support they deliver.² There are no specific ratings for care inspections in Wales and Northern Ireland, but the Care Inspectorate (Wales) and Regulation & Quality Improvement (RQIA, Northern Ireland) reports on Shared Lives schemes are consistently good.

² The Care Inspectorate has not inspected Shared Lives schemes since 2019

Shared Lives workforce

Shared Lives carers

There were **10,081** approved Shared Lives carers in the sector in 2023-24, increasing by 2% from the **9,840** reported last year. Over the last two years there has been an 8% rise in carer numbers. This is positive news and indicates that recruitment and retention efforts across the sector have been successful over this time.

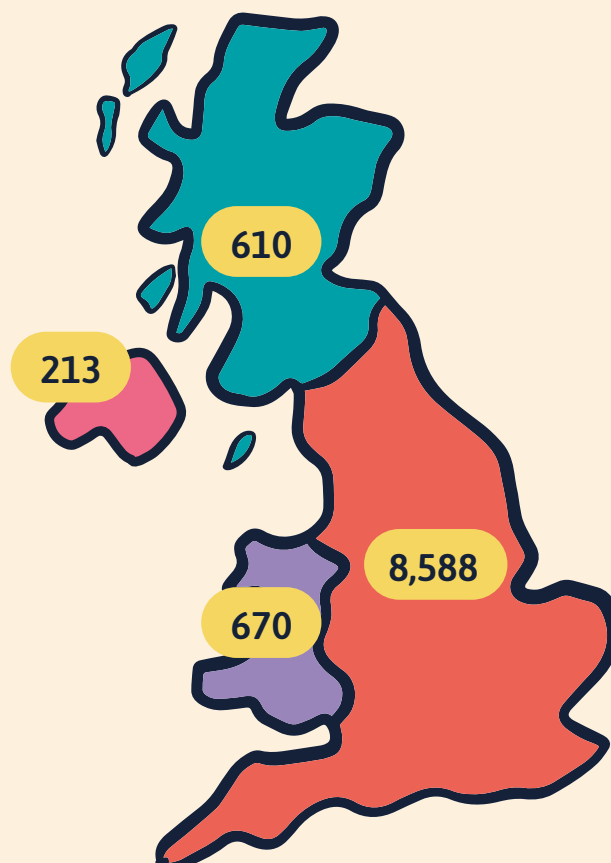
Carers by nation

8,588 carers in England

610 in Scotland

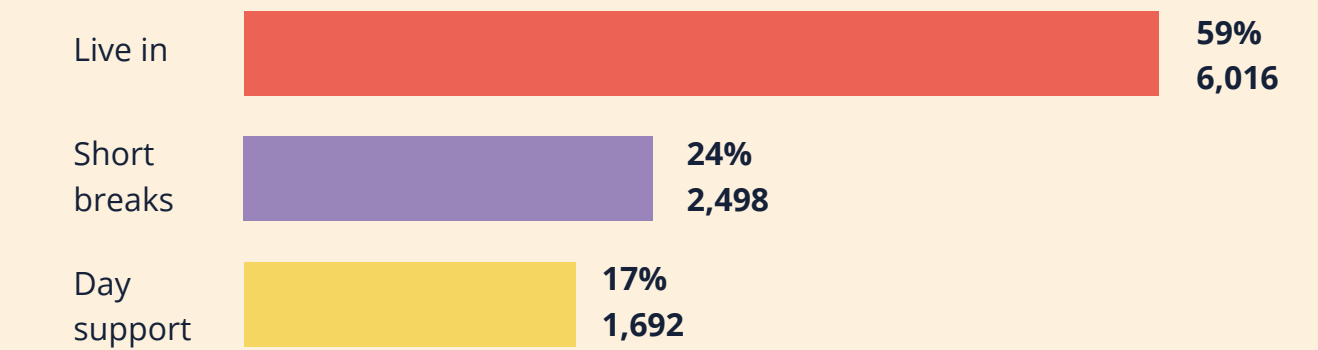
670 in Wales

213 in Northern Ireland



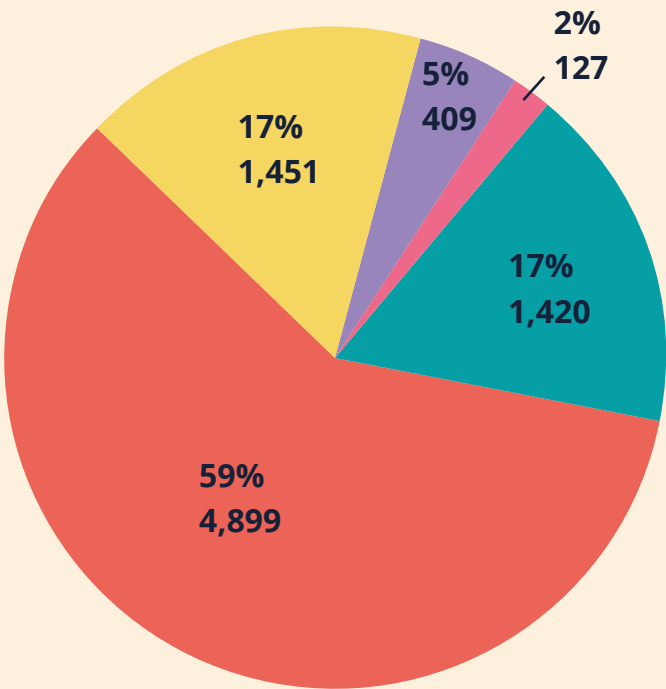
Types of support

Of those reported, **6,016** carers provided live-in support, **2,498** offered short breaks, and **1,692** day support. Those totals include carers who offer more than one type of support.



Shared Lives carers by age group

There were **127** carers aged 18-24
1,420 aged 25-44,
4,889 aged 45-66,
1,451 aged 67-74
And **409** were 75 and above.



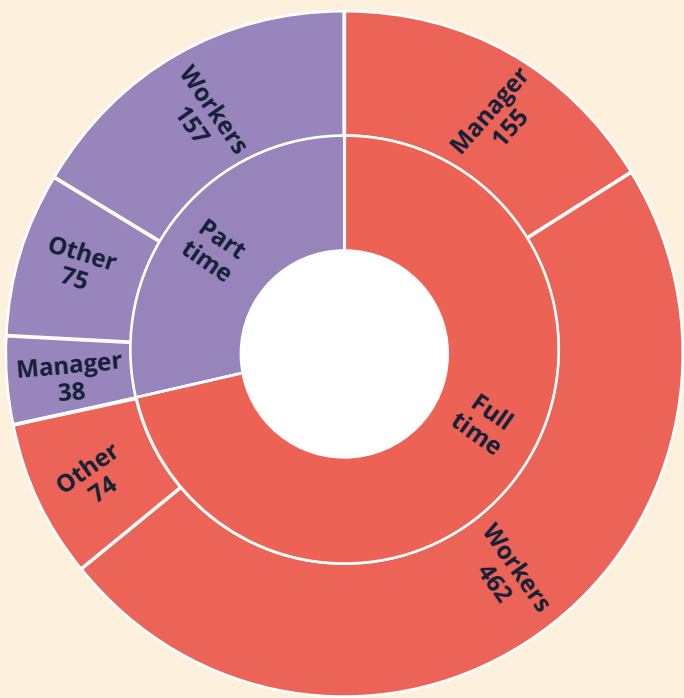
Shared Lives staff

Shared Lives schemes reported 961 non-carer staff members working in the Shared Lives sector. This is a **3%** rise from the 954 reported the year prior, and a significant **33%** increase since 2021. Unlike some previous years, the growth is not accounted for by a relative increase of part-time workers, with the percentage share of full-time staff actually increasing from **68%** to **71%** of the total. **691** staff were full-time, and **270** were part-time. This welcome news suggests a growing willingness to invest in Shared Lives from local leaders, which we hope will continue as the significant investment from the Accelerating Reform Fund (ARF) begins to affect the sector in the years to come.

There were **193** managers (**155** full time, and **38** part-time)

619 workers (**462** full time and **157** part-time)

149 dedicated admin/business support staff (**74** full-time and **75** part-time)



There were also **52** staff vacancies recorded across the sector, indicating potential for immediate growth amidst an expected further expansion under the Accelerating Reform Fund.

People supported in Shared Lives

There were **9,802** people supported across the whole sector. This is a **2%** decrease from the **9,974** reported last year, and just under **6%** fewer than the **10,394** reported two years ago. This modest reduction is disappointing but no cause for alarm. Because Shared Lives is based on the careful matching of people and carers, and because the process centres the wishes of both, it can take time to establish a successful match. We would therefore expect a slight lag between increased investment in infrastructure through the recruitment of more carers and staff, and an increased number of people supported.

However, the consecutive decrease does highlight the significance of reports from across the network, of increasingly complex referrals into Shared Lives services. This means carers are often unable to support the maximum three people, whilst some carers are left without any appropriate referrals at all. Given its quality, it is vital that referral networks treat Shared Lives as a first option for people with social care needs, and that appropriate referrals are made to enable the model to work best.

The decrease must also be viewed in light of the challenges faced by the wider social care sector, in which years of financial pressures have seen eligibility criteria for social care support squeezed. As a result, more complex needs are appearing right across the spectrum of support. Shared Lives is adaptable and caters to the full range of complexity of needs, but it is important that range is proportionately represented in referrals.

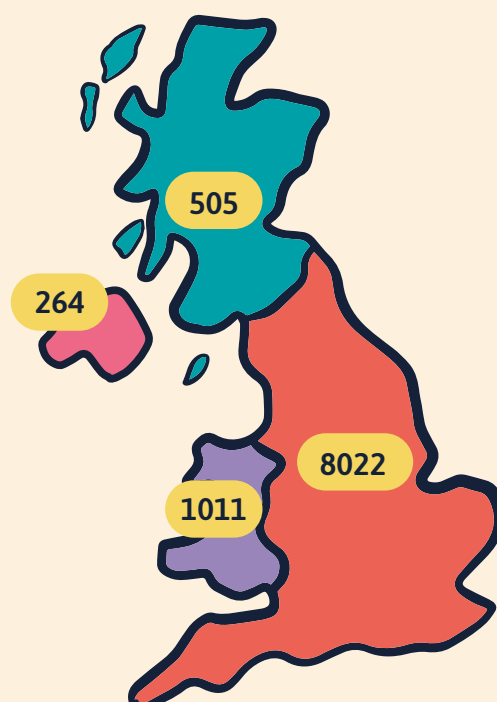
People supported by nation

There were **8,022** people supported in England

1,011 in Wales

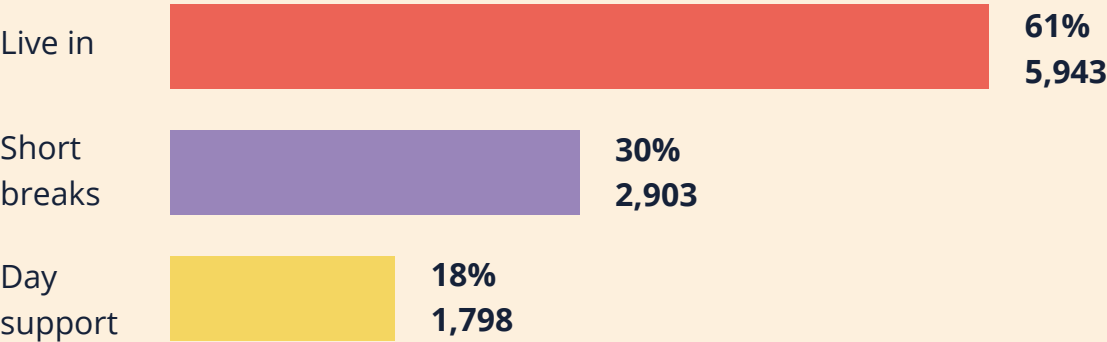
505 in Scotland

And **264** in Northern Ireland

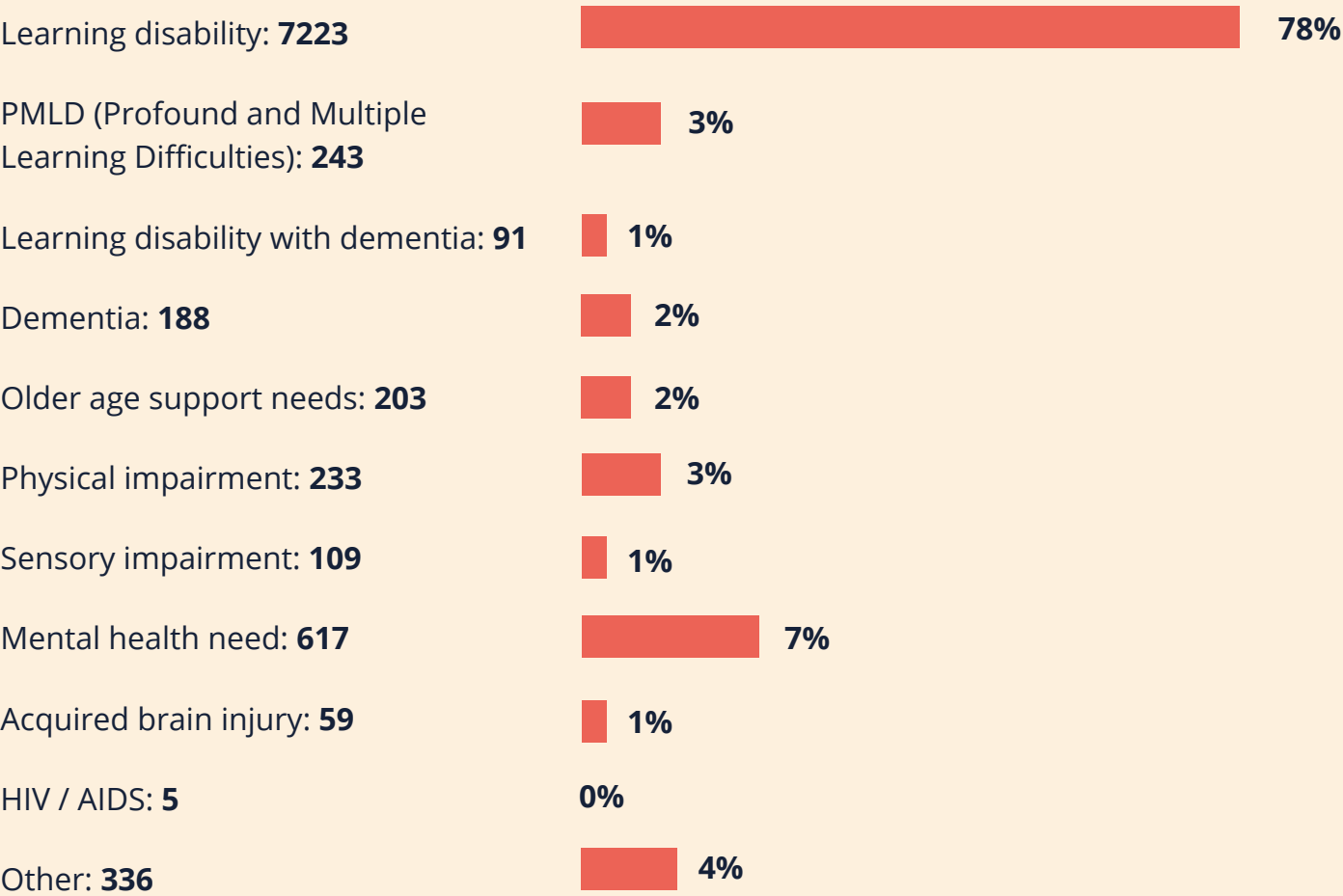


Types of support

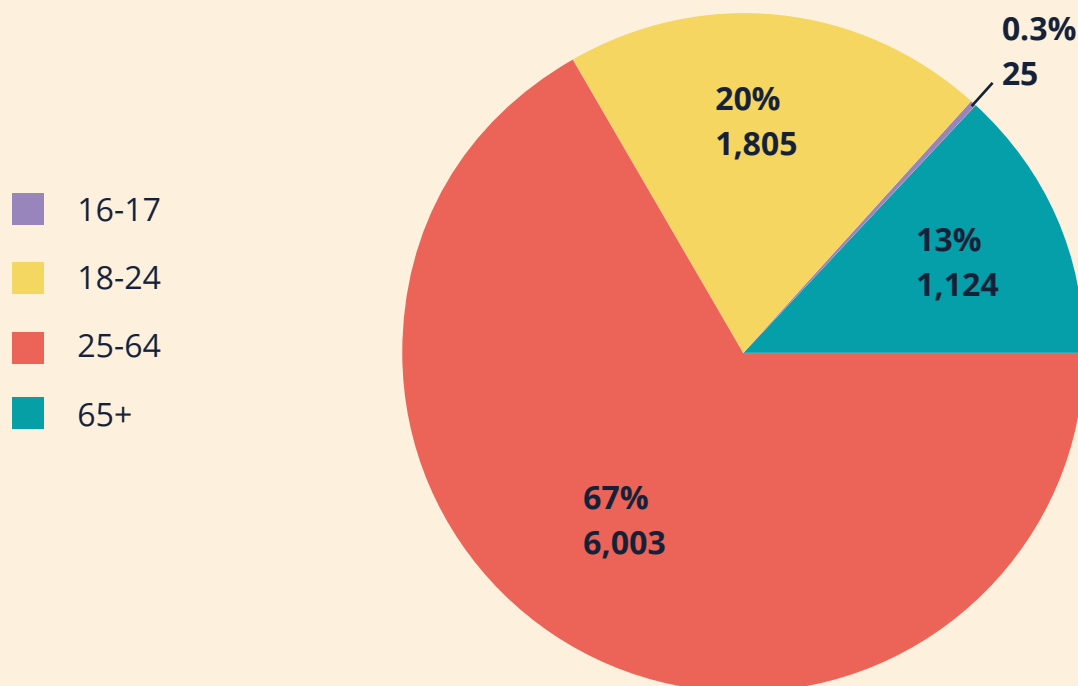
5,943 people accessed live-in support, **2,903** accessed short breaks, and **1,798** received day support.



Breakdowns by support need



Age groups of people supported



The number of supported people in each age group remained very similar to last year, although the numbers of people supported aged 16-17 fell by over half.³ This decrease highlights the importance of our new development project for care leavers and young people in Shared Lives. We are working to raise awareness of Shared Lives as an empowering, supportive option for young people, increase co-operation between children and adult social care teams and remove administrative and financial barriers to carers transitioning from foster care to Shared Lives.

³ The underlying decrease could be greater as there were almost 2,000 more people in this year's dataset with age group recorded.



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



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

🖱 www.sharedlivesplus.org.uk

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Company Number 4511426

Reg Charity Number (Scotland) SC042742

Reg Charity Number (England and Wales) 1095562