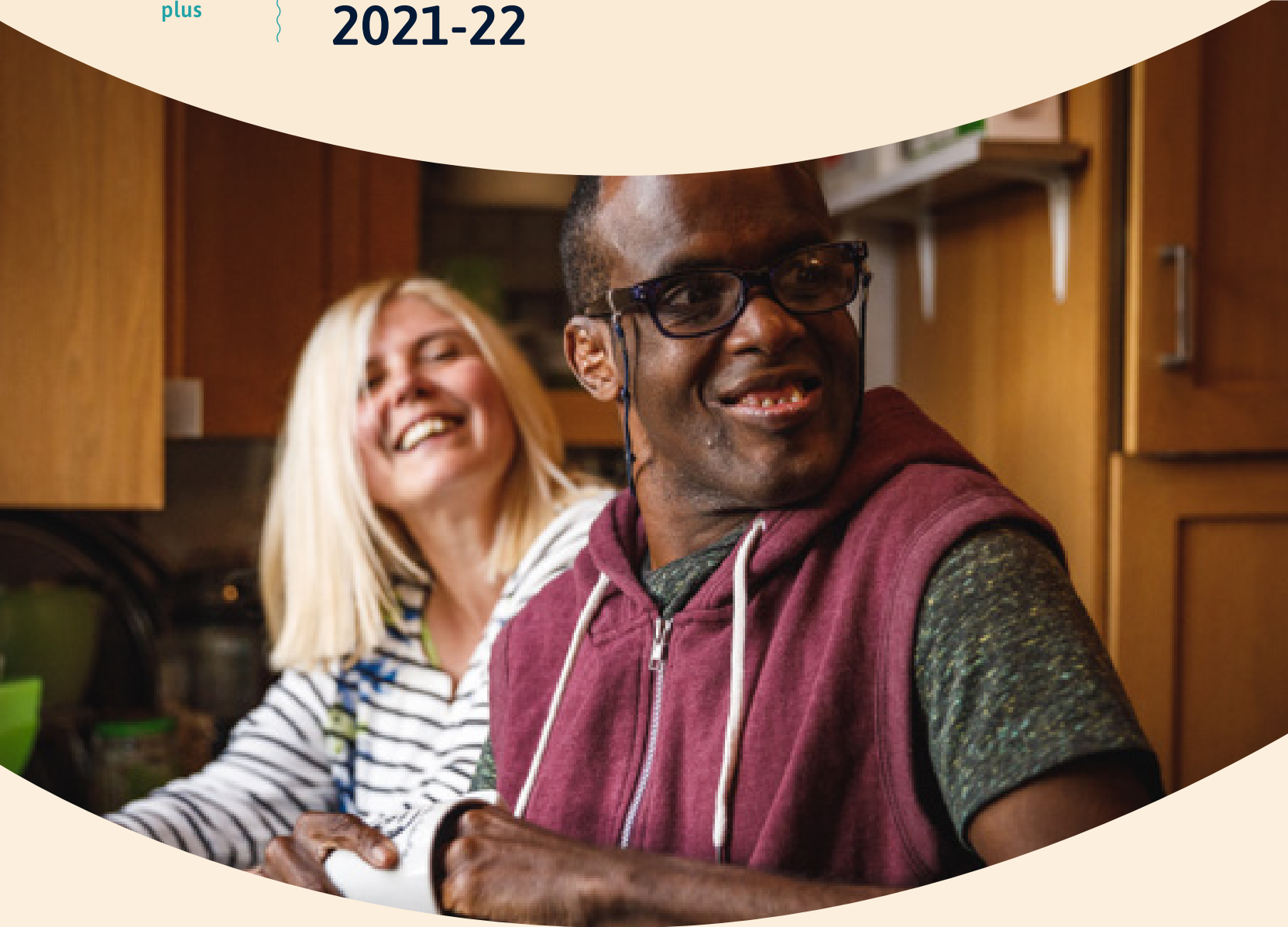




# The state of the nation: Shared Lives care in Wales 2021-22



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**"I am so glad I have family like Liz, she is the best Shared Lives carer I could ask for. I don't know where I would be without Shared Lives. I am happy I have Liz in my life, she has helped me to be the person I am today."**

**"People saw the learning disability and not the person."**

My name is Catherine and when I was 18 years old I found myself in a mother and baby placement, with a plan which would help me learn new skills to live independently and be better equipped to look after my baby son. This did not happen.

At that time, I remember I was made to feel that I was not a good mother, nor that I was able to take care of myself. Things were written about me every day in a book but I was never told what was being written. I soon lost all my confidence and also lost a lot of weight; I weighed just six stone. I wasn't helped to use the washing machine, dry clothes, cook, or shop for food, so when I went to the shops I would just waste my money. I asked for help, but I was told that a report would be sent back to social services about how I was doing.

I felt so low and didn't take any pride in myself, I was suffering from depression. I had an appointee looking after my money which meant I didn't even know how much money I had. I felt that my life had been taken over. I was told that I didn't need an advocate so I didn't have anyone to support

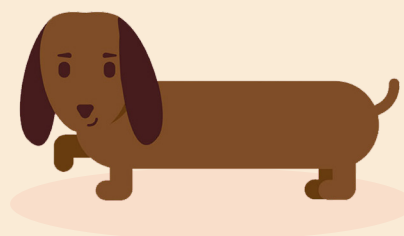
me at this very difficult time in my life. I was not treated as part of a family.

People saw my learning disability and not the person who just needed a little help. I believe the lack of support I received contributed to my son being taken away from me and adopted.

When it was time for me to move on, I was asked if I wanted to go to an adult placement. I was worried that it would be just the same.

When I first came to live in Shared Lives, I didn't know how to take care of myself. I had no friends and no job.

Liz, my Shared Lives carer sat down with me, and we made a plan together. She asked me what things I would like her to help me with. This made me feel happy, someone was asking me what I wanted. We made a wish list. I learnt new skills and took control of my money so I no longer needed an appointee. I just need some support from Liz now.



My life is now so different, my confidence has grown, I take care of myself, prepare some meals and do my own laundry. Me and my friends go to the cinema and I have been on holiday with Liz and the rest of the family. Now I can do lots of things that I couldn't do before. I no longer suffer from depression but I do feel low sometimes. I still need support from Liz emotionally and to make some decisions, but she only gives it to me when I need it. I feel that I have

more control over my life now.

I am a member of the Learning Disability Action Group and am supported by North Wales Advice and Advocacy to attend their meetings. I also sit on the panel for All Wales People First in Cardiff, Advocacy supported me to do this. I am proud to be a Shared Lives Plus Ambassador and to share my story, not enough people know about Shared Lives and how it can change peoples' lives for the better.

## Introduction



**Kathryn Morgan Development Manager,  
Shared Lives Plus, Wales**

Shared Lives is a model of care that aligns with the key principles and priorities for recovery, set out by Welsh Government in their 'Improving Health and Social Care, (Covid-19 Looking Forward) Social Care Recovery Framework'<sup>1</sup>.

In some areas of Wales, Shared Lives was the only community based service which remained 'open' for people needing full time and/or respite care during Covid-19. People remained at the heart of the service during the pandemic, their health and wellbeing being the priority. The number of Shared Lives carers and individuals who contracted Covid was exceptionally low.

Despite the pressures of Covid and restrictions on peoples' daily lives, the number of Shared Lives carers has remained fairly stable and 87 new people were assessed and recruited during 2021-2022.

The number of people supported in Shared Lives increased by 18%, as day support and short breaks (for individuals and family carers) returned as Covid restrictions eased. There is an increase in awareness of the service from referral teams, a broader group of people are now being supported to live a good life in Shared Lives households across Wales.

<sup>1</sup> Improving health and social care (COVID-19 looking forward) | GOV.WALES

We know Shared Lives could support many more people in Wales. Mencap Cymru report that there are 70,000 people living with a Learning Disability in Wales, 1 in 4 are known to social services. Shared Lives schemes support 7% of the 17,500 people who are known to social services. And only 2% of the total 70,000 living with a learning disability<sup>2</sup>.

The Mental Health Crisis Service in South East Wales, which is delivered in partnership between the local Shared Lives scheme for Gwent and the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, has so far helped over 140 patients and provided over 1800 nights of tailored support in the local community for people who experienced a mental health crisis. Conversations about coproduction and investment are needed in other areas across Wales in order to replicate the positive outcomes we hear about in Gwent.

Watch ‘The pioneering ‘Shared Lives’ scheme that has been praised for transforming people’s mental health’ [here](#).

Homeshare is also growing in Wales and we now have three Pilots, Shared Homes Swansea, Pembrokeshire Homeshare and Rhannu Cartref Gwynedd Homeshare. Homeshare offers an opportunity to solve the issues of social isolation and a lack of affordable accommodation. In Wales we have seen huge rises in house prices, the largest in the UK, particularly since the toll was removed from the Severn Bridge. Further West we have seen almost entire villages being bought up as second homes which has priced local inhabitants out of the area.

Homeshare offers people a chance to experience companionship, share life skills with one another and share home life. It gives family members peace of mind and helps people live independently at home for longer. We hope to be reporting on our first matches between Householders and Homesharers very soon.

Talk to us about the development of Shared Lives and Homeshare in your area.

2 About learning disability | Mencap Cymru ~ Wales





# Foreword



**Albert Heaney,**  
**Chief Social Care Officer, Wales**

Shared Lives is a creative approach to supporting people, providing a strong voice in social care, continuing to encourage innovation, and working to bring together communities to offer care and support with families at home. This year’s annual report demonstrates their significant achievement in continuing to operate during the Covid-19 pandemic.

This year also marks the tenth anniversary of the collaboration of services in the Gwent area, now known collectively as Shared Lives South East Wales. This successful collaboration has enabled flexibility and is supporting a wide range of people to live more independent lives, enabling them to develop their involvement in the local community, to learn new skills and have new experiences.

It is the biggest Shared Lives scheme in Wales with an ability to grow and diversify the model of care, more recently, securing funding for a Dementia Project and a Mental Health Crisis service which has led to the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board becoming the seventh partner within the collaboration.

I am delighted to see that Shared Lives is looking to the future to expand opportunities for many more individuals who can benefit from living within families in their communities and becoming involved in their day to day lives.

Yours sincerely,

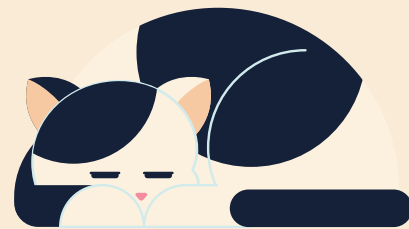
**Albert Heaney CBE**  
**Chief Social Care Officer for Wales**



## Key messages

- Shared Lives has grown by 18% over the last year and 27% over the last five years in Wales. Reflected in this increase are the return of short breaks, day and sessional support as well as respite for family carers post Covid, and an increase in awareness in referral teams of the benefits of a Shared Life.
- Shared Lives supports 7% of people with a Learning Disability who are known to social services. With investment, many more people could be supported in a Shared Lives household to live well, independently and with voice and control over their lives.
- Over 140 people living in Gwent, who experienced a mental health crisis, were supported to recover in their local community thanks to a unique and tailored Shared Lives Crisis service which is in partnership with the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board. The positive outcomes of the Mental Health Crisis Service are well documented.”<sup>3</sup>
- During the pandemic we saw many Shared Lives services go through a period of transformation, refining processes and procedures, ensuring a responsive and sustainable service for the future which covers all 22 Local Authorities.
- We now have three Homeshare Pilot programmes in Wales; Swansea, Pembrokeshire and Gwynedd, which form part of the Welsh Government funded ‘Developing Homeshare and Shared Lives in Wales’ Project. Homeshare offers companionship and affordable accommodation for the Householder and Homesharer.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240025707>



## Recovery priorities

We hear from two Shared Lives schemes who share stories of their transformation and resilience during Covid-19.



### Ategi Shared Lives

Like many, Ategi's team and Shared Lives carers worked incredibly hard to ensure ongoing support for people during Covid-19, they also looked to the future and post-pandemic rebuilding. Following the former CEO's retirement, Ategi underwent a significant interim period of transformation before transitioning to new CEO, Kate Allen, in April 22.

As other services shut their doors and remained closed throughout the pandemic, Ategi worked closely with existing Shared Lives carers to support sustainability of long-term arrangements, they also provided short breaks and respite on a needs basis through risk assessment and mitigation.

In addition to maintaining support throughout the pandemic, they invested in the organisation, reviewed operational procedures, recruited new trustees, improved governance structures and invested in core capacity and skills. New posts have been introduced, which will help with development and ultimately deliver strengths-based support and help people achieve their goals and improve their wellbeing.

Part of their plans for growth will be to focus on potential funding streams, a new

bi-lingual website [www.ategi.org.uk](http://www.ategi.org.uk), logo and brand as well as enhancing their easy read and Welsh language offers to improve accessibility. They have also invested in an online recruitment, assessment and training tool for new Shared Lives carers.

"Shared Lives continues to provide a cost-effective means of supporting people in family environments within the community, and Ategi continue to work with local authorities and other partners to further develop this option, with peoples' wellbeing at the heart of the service."

Shared Lives network of independent carers provide high quality, personalised support to people across Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Cardiff.

**Support when you need it:** "We joined the team of Shared Lives carers in 2016 and carried out the relevant training needed. We had our concerns, especially if we could cope, as you can't just clock on and off as a Shared Lives carer. But any of the doubts going through our minds soon diminished, as the Shared Lives team were able to answer all our questions quickly and professionally and put all our doubts to rest, leaving us feeling very confident."



## West Wales Shared Lives

West Wales Shared Lives is a local authority-led scheme which supports 107 Shared Lives carers who share their lives with just under 90 people in Cardigan, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire. A well-established service and one of the first in Wales, their mission is for Shared Lives to be the accommodation option of choice.

Whilst continuing to support everyone living a Shared Life in West Wales during Covid-19, they undertook a robust review of delivery, performance and current needs which informed their service development plan.

Strategic priorities include increasing the profile of Shared Lives across West Wales so that everyone is informed of the positive outcomes that can be achieved when people choose a Shared Life. The scheme has also invested in their workforce with changes to the team structure. New area coordinators in each county, with individual locality plans for each area, focussing on increasing referrals, building strong relationships with other social care teams thereby ensuring more people are able to choose Shared Lives as an option for their support.

All operational practices were reviewed to ensure safety and quality of provision. The scheme has recently moved to online recruitment and assessment of potential

new Shared Lives carers which has reduced the approval time and has led to an increase in the numbers recruited. This is adding strength to an already experienced and committed network.

The Shared Lives model of care enables West Wales to offer a realistic step-down option from residential care, prevents individuals from admission to hospital, provides an emergency response service, and remains a financially viable option for strengths-based care and support in the community. It supports people to live independently, in a Shared Lives family home. Respite, day support and short breaks services are available for people who need support to live a good life, 73 people live with their Shared Lives carers and their families long term.

West Wales Shared Lives is a scheme with drive and capacity to develop new initiatives in response to changing demands on social care.

Gaining my life back, the right to freedom of thought and conscience: "I live a shared life and I would like to thank Shared Lives for giving me the opportunity of gaining my life back, after living in a nursing home for many years, following my accident."





## Giving young people a chance to thrive

Helen has been a Shared Lives carer for 8 years, she takes pride in supporting young people and helping them to move on to live independently. Previously a foster carer, she talks about what it feels like to offer someone a Shared Life in her family home.

**“I’ve supported a number of young people over the last 8 years in my role as a Shared Lives carer and the best part of that role is being able to watch people learn new skills and blossom into adults, many of the young people I’ve supported have gone on to live independently”.**

Helen talks about the moment when she is first introduced to a young person who needs somewhere safe to live, some stability in their life, someone to listen to them. Meeting with them may start with an hour over a coffee, a meal, a day together, an overnight stay, followed by a long weekend and then eventually moving in, if everyone is happy and feels comfortable.

**“The most difficult task of having someone new join our family is not to fuss or overpower. We think we are a ‘normal’ family, we recognise that family can sometimes need space and at other times company, it’s very important to know the**



**difference. I take time to understand the person. It’s important to recognise the challenges the young person faces when moving in to an established family home. It can be overwhelming. The time it takes for each individual to settle will vary. Some take time to come out of their shell, although here it doesn’t take long!”**

Helen believes open and honest conversation is a good place to start. Being a good listener is vital, being sure to give someone time to explain their feelings, opinions and aspirations supports a good Shared Life arrangement.

## Tailored to the individual - Aldi's vs. Asda?

Helen continues, "As a family we take things one step at a time depending on the person's wants and needs. Being available for them when they need me is important. We are such a big family, they connect with my children before they connect with me! Peer support and having my children beside me is a big help.

"Their bedroom is their safe haven, somewhere they can relax, take time away from busy family life should they need to. I'm a big believer in not setting out ground rules at the start. Get to know one another and my family first. Everyone is different, we can agree what's needed as the relationship builds."

If someone is nervous and lacks confidence to go out, but wants to help with the shopping, Helen will choose Aldi's over Asda.

"Involving people in decisions helps. At Aldi there are low shelves so people don't feel shut in and there's no music playing which can be a distraction. We'll also try somewhere small, the local shop, start

slowly and gradually build up confidence".

People who first arrive in a Shared Lives household may be cut off from friends and family. Some view it as a fresh start, to leave behind whatever has happened previously. Living a Shared Life can enable people to form a network of support around themselves, including school, college, clubs, gym, employment, volunteering, meeting health professionals as well as building a social circle.

"As a Shared Lives carer you are part of a person's whole life but you are not going to be their 'everything'. My role is to offer a safe environment and provide strong foundations, enabling a person to learn about society, their surrounding community, how to budget as well as look after their own wellbeing. Some young people have plans to move on to independence and I take pride in helping them to achieve that. Gently stepping back, as we do with our own children, allowing them to spread their wings".





## Helen talked about the upheaval for some young people at the age of 18...

"In the same summer, school finished, college started, they moved out from Mam and Dad's to start life at a new Shared Lives home. Instead of building on our relationship, getting to know one another, we quickly looked for colleges or work that would suit her whilst trying to ensure a smooth transition of moving in with myself and family.

"If transitions to Shared Lives could take place at a younger age of 16 all the important groundwork would be done first, enabling the young person to concentrate on growing up and what matters to them. They can enjoy the last years of school and carefully plan their future with the right support.

"They would be settled, have confidence, security and be comfortable carrying on with their life. I have supported emergency Shared Lives arrangements where there has been little time for introductory meetings beforehand, but Shared Lives at 16 would represent a preventative service. It would reduce the stress and anxiety that I have witnessed in young people. By the age of 18 they have experienced insecurity, lack of continuity in care workers, mental ill health, become distracted from their education, worrying about where they will live, how they will manage independence, afford their bills and step out into the wider world".

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## Family connections...

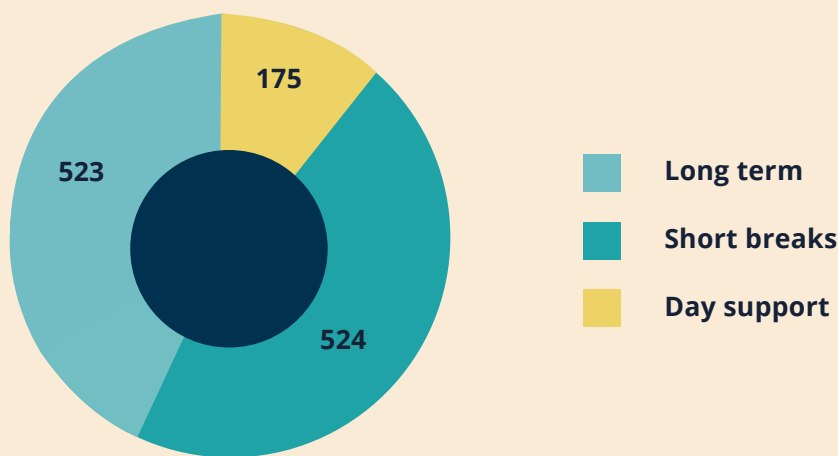
**"The people who come to my home and choose a Shared Life do so with support of my family. They bond with my children and real friendships develop. I have so many fond memories of the young people I have supported over the years. One young lady was a bridesmaid at my daughter's wedding and the picture takes pride of place in our home. It was a very special occasion for many reasons."**



# Key Statistics

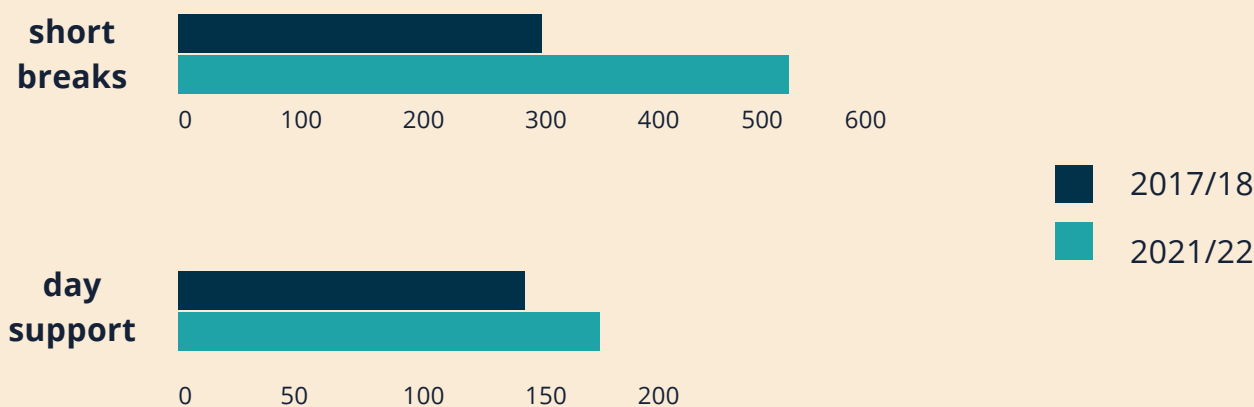
Shared Lives is a flexible service which can provide support by the hour, per day, a few days per week, each month or long term. With one scheme providing 700 new arrangements during the reporting period.

## Number of people supported (by main type of Shared Lives care)



This represents a 42% increase in people supported through short breaks and a 22% increase in people supported through day support on the previous year. These increases reflect the successful re-opening of services following the reduction in Covid restrictions.

Over the last 5 years the most significant growth of Shared Lives care in Wales is reflected in a 77% increase in people supported through short breaks and a 19% increase in people supported through day support. Over 330 people living with dementia were supported by Shared Lives short breaks/day support in 2021/22.







## Shared Lives schemes across Wales

Ategi Shared Lives: **01443 484400** [info@ategi.co.uk](mailto:info@ategi.co.uk)

Denbighshire Shared Lives: **0300 456 1000** [spoa@denbighshire.gov.uk](mailto:spoa@denbighshire.gov.uk)

Gwynedd & Anglesey: **01758 704145** [Cynllun.lleoli@gwynedd.llyw.cymru](mailto:Cynllun.lleoli@gwynedd.llyw.cymru)

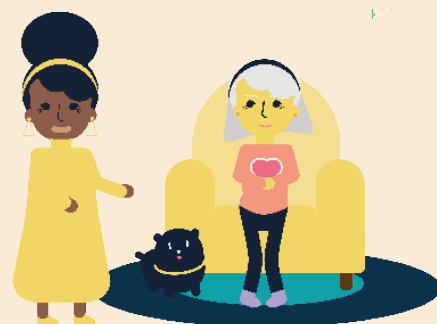
Powys Shared Lives: **01597 827247** [shared.lives@powys.gov.uk](mailto:shared.lives@powys.gov.uk)

PSS - Person Shaped Support: **01745 828000** [wales@pss.org.uk](mailto:wales@pss.org.uk)

South East Wales Shared Lives: **01443 864586** [adultp@caerphilly.gov.uk](mailto:adultp@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Vale of Glamorgan: **01446 731105** [c1v@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:c1v@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)

West Wales Shared Lives: **01267 246890**



## About Shared Lives Plus



Ariennir gan  
**Lywodraeth Cymru**  
Funded by  
**Welsh Government**

Shared Lives Plus promotes supportive shared living through Shared Lives care and Homeshare with local and national governments. We believe everyone should be able to choose who they spend time with - and do what matters to them. We want to reduce loneliness and help make our communities more connected. Our members are 6000 Shared Lives carers, over 140 Shared Lives schemes and a growing network of over 20 local Homeshare organisations. We offer guidance, best practice, a community of people sharing their lives, legal advice and insurance.

Around the UK, 9,000 Shared Lives carers open their homes and hearts to someone who needs support after hospital treatment, for mental ill health, dementia, learning disability, older age or for young people leaving care. In Wales we have just under

900 Shared Lives carers supporting over 1,200 people to live a good life, with support, in their local community. Shared Lives care is consistently rated the best quality and safest form of care across the UK.

In Wales we have been funded by Welsh Government to develop Shared Lives and Homeshare. In Homeshare someone looking for help around the home is matched with someone looking for affordable accommodation, tackling loneliness and housing issues in one solution. To view the Homeshare Annual Report follow this [link](#).

We also work to diversify and establish new Shared Lives and Homeshare schemes. To find out more visit [www.sharedlivesplus.org.uk](http://www.sharedlivesplus.org.uk)







## Methodology

This is the eighth annual report on the state of the sector in Wales. In 2021/22 there were eight schemes in Wales – all members of Shared Lives Plus. Seven of the schemes responded to the survey covering all 22 local authorities in Wales. Schemes provided comprehensive information although data on age and support need was collected differently in different authority areas.

## Acknowledgement

We would like to thank all member schemes for their participation in the compiling of the report and Helen and Catherine who took part in interviews and everyone who supported the Development team throughout the year.

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**If you would like support to grow or develop a Shared Lives scheme please contact:**

**Kathryn Morgan - Development Manager**

**07867 452158**

**[kathryn@sharedlivesplus.org.uk](mailto:kathryn@sharedlivesplus.org.uk)**



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

🖱 [www.sharedlivesplus.org.uk](http://www.sharedlivesplus.org.uk)

✉ [info@sharedlivesplus.org.uk](mailto:info@sharedlivesplus.org.uk)

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Reg Charity Number (England and Wales) 1095562

