

The state of the nation:

Shared Lives care in Northern Ireland 2021-22



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Foreword

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Social Care Lead Older People & Adults
Strategic Planning and Performance Group
(SPPG)

I am very pleased to introduce the State of the Sector report for Northern Ireland produced by Shared Lives Plus.

We are working with the five Health and Social Care Trusts, Age NI and Shared Lives Plus to expand the use of Shared Lives care in Northern Ireland. Shared Lives is also traditionally referred to as adult placement by some schemes in Northern Ireland.

This report provides a useful baseline in relation to a better understanding of the

opportunities and challenges in delivering an expansion of a Shared Lives approach as the sector develops in Northern Ireland.

Shared Lives is an alternative to home care, care homes and day opportunities for people in need of support. Its approach offers personalised, quality care where carers share their lives and homes with the people they support. It provides people with the support they need to live as independently as possible and build a full life in their communities. It also offers them greater choice of who provides support and where they receive it. Shared Lives offers great care at a reasonable cost. It is rare that very personalised services can be both excellent in quality and highly competitive financially.

Shared Lives in Northern Ireland

Shared Lives is better known as adult placement in Northern Ireland and is a unique type of social care regulated by the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA). Four adult placement schemes were established by a number of legacy health and social care trusts in the 1990s. They have focused exclusively since then on supporting adults with learning disabilities. They offer day support, short breaks or longer-term care arrangements in the homes of approved carers in the community. Local schemes have a successful track record in building their services, pioneering the drive for more person-centred and community-based care models. Schemes offer people the chance to stay in the community being looked after in a more homely environment, offering a great

alternative to institutions and day centres.

Shared Lives Plus has been working with key stakeholders in Northern Ireland to support other groups, in particular older people. This work reflects how the model has expanded in the rest of the UK to support a broader range of vulnerable adults. This expansion is being supported with transformation funding and is being led by the Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) of the Department of Health in conjunction with the five health and social care trusts.

Age NI was recently successful in securing a three-year tender to extend the Shared Lives model to older people throughout the region and is registered with RQIA to provide this service.



Key messages

- The total number of people supported by Shared Lives in Northern Ireland is **264**.
- Of the people supported, **96%** receive help due to needs associated with learning disability, **2%** due to physical impairment, **1%** due to mental ill health and **1%** due to dementia.
- In age categories, **81%** are working age adults (aged 25-64), **18%** are young adults (those aged 18-24), and **1%** are older people (those aged 65+).
- Of the types of support provided, **41%** receive short breaks, **35%** are on long term placements and **24%** receive day support.
- Four out of five Health and Social Care trusts have Shared Lives schemes which support people with learning disabilities.
- South Eastern Trust is working towards establishing a Shared Lives scheme for people with learning disabilities.
- In 2017-18, **221** adults were supported by adult placement schemes in Northern Ireland. Growth of the Shared Lives model has been slowed by the covid pandemic, though the small growth we have seen is welcomed.
- Age NI have been awarded a contract by the Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) of the Department of Health to extend the Shared Lives model to older people in Northern Ireland. It is anticipated that this will accelerate the growth of Shared Lives in Northern Ireland.
- RQIA reports on Shared Lives/adult placement schemes are consistently good.
- Shared Lives remains a highly cost-effective form of adult social care. An independent review found that Shared Lives resulted in an average saving of between **£8,000 and £30,000 a year**, depending on the person's support needs and local alternative services.



Corey's story

Joanne and Stuart Stevenson, both Positive Futures short term carers, have been providing short breaks in their home to Corey since 2010. They became Shared Lives carers in 2020 when Corey turned 18 years of age. Prior to this they offered respite fostering to Corey.

Joanne, Stuart and their daughters, Vicky and Anna, have built up a very close relationship with Corey and now see him as a member of the family. Their extended family also have a great relationship with Corey, particularly grandad George who Corey refers to as his 'best friend'.

The family are very in tune with Corey's needs and support him in a person-centred way. They let him choose what activities he would like to do and offer him a choice of meals. Corey is encouraged to be as independent as possible when at the family's home, and they are constantly teaching him new skills, whilst ensuring he holds onto the skills he's learnt over the years, such as reading and writing. He stays with them for two overnight short breaks per month.

"I love staying with all the family and I don't like to leave" says Corey.

"I do loads of stuff with them, which is really fun. I really like going to McDonald's, watching movies, cooking, reading, colouring in, going to rugby with Stuart and singing on drives with Stuart in the car."

"I love all the family and it made me sad when I couldn't see them."

Joanne and Stuart reflected on their time with Corey, saying: "Corey has been a part of our family for 12 years now and getting involved with him is easily the best decision we have made as a family. Before we became carers we had doubts about whether we could make a difference and what the impact would be on all of us."

"Looking back now we misjudged the situation, it is reasonable to have those fears, but by staying calm and working closely with colleagues in Positive Futures you find a way to resolve issues practically and overcome challenges."





▲ Corey, Joanne and Stuart

“Corey has been a star and we are so lucky to spend time with him and watch him progress through life. We are always surprised at the positive impact Corey has on everyone he meets, and our wider circle of family and friends have all benefited from having this exceptional young man in their lives.”

“What we have found most important when supporting Corey is having a positive attitude, a common-sense approach and the importance of building a good relationship with Corey’s family, which is fundamental. After that you just need to find out how Corey enjoys spending time and then concentrate on having lots of fun.”

“The entire Stevenson family mean everything to me and Corey” says Sonya Holmes, Corey’s mother.

“They treat Corey like he is a member of their family. They are the only support I have for Corey; I appreciate everything they do for him. In lockdown I found it very difficult not having the support from Joanne and Stuart. They very kindly sent parcels in the post to Corey, including items like colouring books which he loves.”

“Offering short breaks to families means a lot, if you have any free time, please consider offering support to an adult with a learning disability. You can make a difference!”

People supported within Shared Lives

Of the 264 people supported by Shared Lives in Northern Ireland in 2021-22:

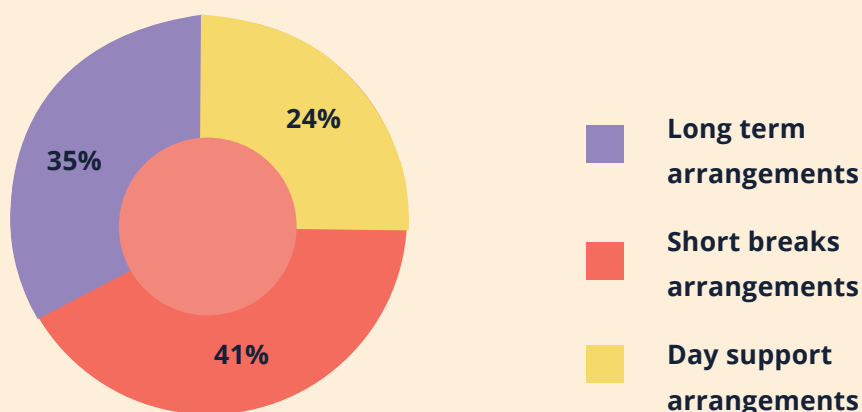
96% live with a learning disability.

2% are supported for a physical impairment.

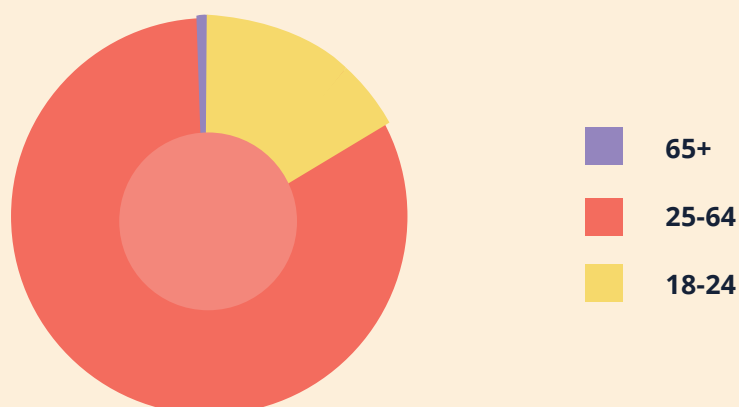
1% are supported for mental ill health.

1% are supported for dementia.

Types of support



Age of people supported





Ewan King visits Northern Ireland

Ewan King, CEO of Shared Lives Plus, made it a priority to visit Northern Ireland shortly after taking up his post in September 2022. Ewan, formerly Deputy Chief Executive of the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), visited Northern Ireland on 26th September 2022. He was welcomed by Bernie Kelly, Development Manager, and taken to visit the Families Matter Shared Lives Service, managed by Positive Futures on behalf of Belfast Health & Social Care Trust. Ewan and Bernie met with Alison Milford, Service Manager, and Glenda Barnett, Manager of the Host Family Scheme, Western Health & Social Care Trust. They had a useful discussion about the successes and challenges of managing Shared Lives schemes.

Ewan and Bernie then attended a working lunch provided by Age NI. They were given an update on Age NI's plans to extend the Shared Lives model to older people in Northern Ireland, following successful registration by RQIA.

Their next visit was to meet with Joanne and Stuart Stevenson, Positive Futures short term carers, who have been providing short term

breaks in their home to Corey since 2010. Mr and Mrs Stevenson stressed the benefits to their family of having Corey in their lives (see case study on page 2).

Finally, Ewan and Bernie met with Jane McMillan from the Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) of the Department of Health. Jane has been instrumental in driving the Shared Lives agenda in Northern Ireland.

Reflecting on his visit to Northern Ireland, Ewan commented:

"I hugely enjoyed my trip to Northern Ireland where I met lots of fantastic leaders involved in growing Shared Lives, including colleagues at Age Northern Ireland, Western Health and Social Care Trust, and Positive Futures. Despite the challenges facing social care in Northern Ireland, I was enormously impressed with their commitment and passion for Shared Lives. The highlight of my trip was meeting Mr and Mrs Stevenson who told me about their amazing experience supporting Corey, who comes for breaks at their house and takes part in amazing adventures around Bangor!"

Age NI Shared Lives Scheme for Older People

Age NI are very excited to have won the tender from the Department of Health to deliver a Shared Lives Service to older people in Northern Ireland. Age NI is well established in its support of older people and provision of care services as well as projects that promote the health and wellbeing of older people and their carers.

The Service is registered with RQIA and commenced in January 2023.

Work has initially concentrated on the recruitment of Shared Lives Carers, as well as spreading the word about the service within all five Health and Social Care Trusts, as well as GP Federations, voluntary and community groups.

A Reference Group has been established and meets regularly to consider the systems in place to support the new service, as well as ensuring consistency across all of Northern Ireland. It is made up of representatives from Age NI, Department of Health and each Trust, as well as Shared Lives Plus.

Age NI consulted with their volunteers and Consultative Forum of older people in order to ensure their resources are accessible and the message about the service is clear.

The service will provide day support to older people, aged over 65 years who may be lonely and isolated, or in the early stage of need in terms of dementia or physical issues. One of the benefits of the service will be that it will support carers to have a break from caring.

The service is funded by the Department of Health for three years, with the possibility of it being extended for a further two years. During this time it is hoped that the service will grow and develop to include short breaks and live-in care.

Twelve Approval Panel members have been recruited and trained. The first Approval Panel took place on 15th June and two Shared Lives Carers have been approved and will now be trained and matched with an older person. Three more applicants are currently being assessed and recruitment is on-going.

The service is made up of a Manager who has experience of managing a Shared Lives Scheme for adults with Learning Disabilities. Two part-time social workers are currently being recruited.

Discussion about this new service has been overwhelmingly positive as it is an exciting opportunity to provide early intervention and support to older people in order to ensure they stay as independent for as long as possible and remain well connected to their communities.

Age NI, the Department of Health and Shared Lives Plus are looking forward to a launch event for the service on 13th September which will be an opportunity to celebrate the achievements so far and look forward to building on these for the future of the service.



▲ Alison Milford, Head of Shared Lives, Age NI

NICON Conference

Shared Lives Plus had a stand at the NICON Conference in the La Mon Hotel on Wednesday 19th and Thursday 20th October 2022. The theme of the conference was Recognition, Ambition, Mobilisation. Speakers included Robin Swann MLA, Minister of Health, Colin Gildernew MLA, Chair of the Health Committee and Jeffrey Donaldson MP.

Some of the issues highlighted included; the impact of the pandemic on health and social care, funding and workforce pressures, the drive for transformation, the importance of integrated care and patient centricity, the need for strong leadership and good outcomes.

All the key speakers praised the excellent work of health and social care staff during the pandemic and politicians pledged a commitment to fair pay and terms and conditions for them.

Bernie Kelly, Development Manager for Northern Ireland, stated **"There was a steady stream of visitors to the Shared Lives Plus stand for information. It was great to engage with staff from all sectors. Everyone was very positive about plans to extend the Shared Lives model of social care to older people in Northern Ireland."**



Shared Lives Plus Staff Conference

The Shared Lives Plus Annual Staff Conference was held on 25th January 2023 in Liverpool, titled A Time for Growth. Over 50 colleagues including Board Members, Ambassadors, and staff from all four nations of the UK attended. The purpose of the day was to take stock, refresh our vision and develop ideas for how we address the big challenges and opportunities facing the organisation.

We received an inspiring speech from Clenton Farquharson, Chair of Think Local Act Personal, who shared some valuable insights about the need for us to develop a shared sense of belonging, use co-production to 'redesign' services, and work together to build a better organisation.





Shared Lives Week 2023

To help celebrate Shared Lives Week 2023, Positive Futures invited Families Matter Carers to lunch at Belfast City Hall on 28th June.

Carers enjoyed catching up with each other and staff from Positive Futures who are providing great support to them.



If you would like help to grow or develop a Shared Lives scheme in Northern Ireland please contact:

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

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