



Partnership working to stimulate growth What we learnt from schemes



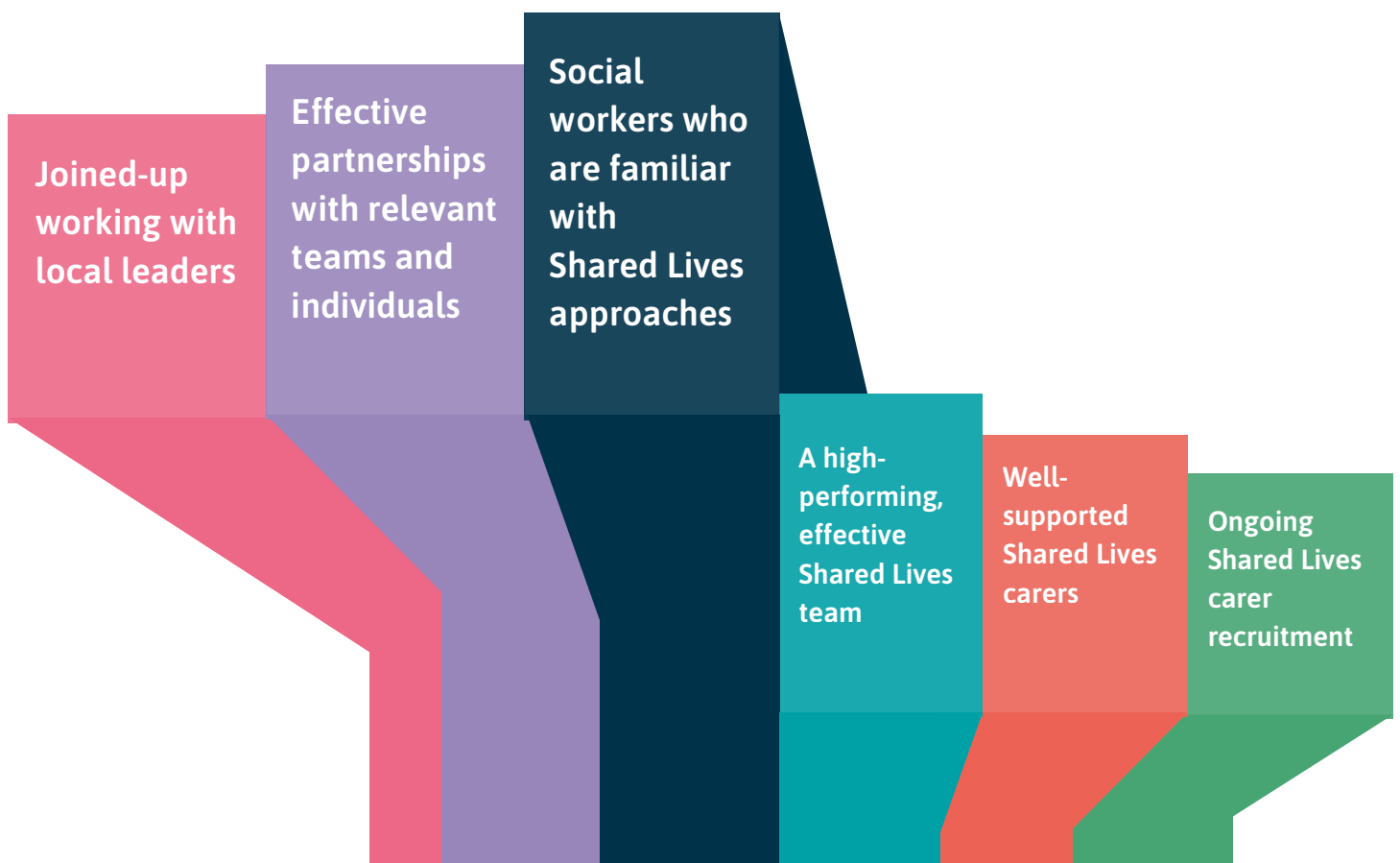
Introduction

Over the past two years, Shared Lives Plus have collected best practice insights from Shared Lives schemes following state of sector returns. We engaged with schemes who significantly grew the number of supported people within their scheme.

We asked schemes about their approach in relation to key practice areas for growing and and developing a scheme
- **the 'six building blocks'.**

This briefing outlines practice that contributed to schemes securing investment, becoming more visible, improving joint working, and building partnerships with colleagues, teams, and partners.
This partnership working includes:

1. **Joined up working with local leaders**
2. **Effective partnerships with relevant teams and individuals**
3. **Social workers who are familiar with Shared Lives approaches**



Joined up working with local leaders

Strong, collaborative leadership between Shared Lives schemes and senior local leaders, such as Directors of adult social care, is an essential underpinning of Shared Lives development.

“At the local level the drive and commitment of the Shared Lives scheme manager, backed by senior leaders in adult social care, is essential to the development and growth of a scheme.”

Dr Carl Purcell, Juliette Malley and Jill Manthorpe: Supporting Adult Social Care Innovation (SASCI)

The schemes we engaged with had strong working relationships with local leaders and strategic colleagues. This was founded on a few key areas:

Leaders who are Shared Lives champions

Senior and strategic colleagues were bought into Shared Lives and had a deep understanding of the model. They played a leading role in championing and promoting schemes, internally through council channels, but also to the public.

“The DASS, Council Director, and Councillors are all champions for Shared Lives and share good news stories.”

“Monthly highlight reports to commissioners have helped build trust.”

“Shared Lives is a service like no other and recognition of this is important.”

Overarching alignment of Shared Lives with local priorities as well as key local pressures

In areas we spoke to, Shared Lives was aligned with key local priorities, particularly to commission support that promotes independence. Schemes were also able to align themselves with key local pressures, such as providing short breaks when this is a provision gap locally, or by highlighting the cost savings that Shared Lives can achieve compared to alternative services.

“There was a drive from strategic colleagues to use Shared Lives as a short breaks option because of alignment with local priorities for person centred and strengths based support... 40 people supported in residential care who might be suitable for Shared Lives were identified.”

“We have regular meetings with commissioners. Having realistic targets has been essential.”



Producing a clear and successful business case for increased capacity in scheme, leading to investment

Schemes have developed business cases for strategic colleagues, demonstrating the cost benefit Shared Lives provides compared to more costly forms of provision, such as supported living and residential care, as well as the favourable effects Shared Lives can provide to individuals. This has led to targeted investment in schemes, which is often linked to ambitious yet realistic targets for growth.

60% of schemes surveyed received additional investment.

"Shared Lives Plus produced a cost-benefit analysis."

"Realistic targets have been essential."

"The business case led to increased staffing and a new advertising budget."

Strategic Advice support

Shared Lives Plus has a clear offer to help local areas promote joined up working with local leaders and strategic planning. This involves identifying options for growth, developing a strategic case for investment, including cost benefit analysis, and facilitating strategic planning. We'll meet you wherever you are at, whether that's establishing, growing or diversifying your Shared Lives scheme.

Effective partnerships with relevant teams and individuals

To realise growth, Shared Lives schemes need to be embedded within the local social care structure, building partnerships with teams across local authorities, as well as external partners in the community.

“As well as establishing connections and opportunities for learning across schemes, effective schemes work collaboratively at a local level with a range of different teams and individuals.”

Dr Carl Purcell, Juliette Malley and Jill Manthorpe: Supporting Adult Social Care Innovation (SASCI)

Schemes we engaged had strong partnerships with wider teams and individuals. This was centred on:

Establishing a cross-directorate Shared Lives working group, involving colleagues from housing teams, children’s services, fostering, communications and marketing.

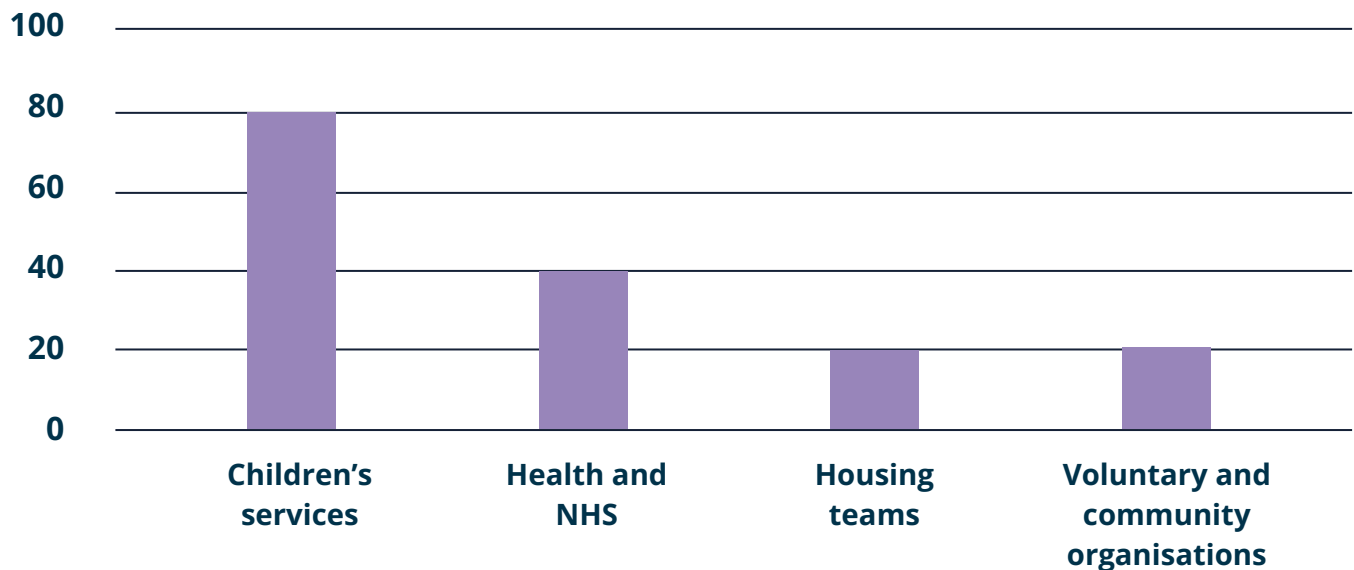
Cross-directorate working groups help Shared Lives schemes build strong, coordinated partnerships by bringing together colleagues from wider teams to align priorities and share expertise. This approach ensures Shared Lives is consistently considered across key teams, and that there is shared ownership for the development of Shared Lives locally.

“We established a steering group consisting of a wide range of stakeholders across the council.”

Partnerships built from schemes surveyed:

- Children's services: (80%)
- Housing teams: (20%)
- Health and NHS: (40%)
- Voluntary and community organisations: (20%)

Partnership building approaches by schemes surveyed



Schemes regularly attend boards, team meetings and forums

Regularly attending boards, cross working team meetings and forums ensures that Shared Lives remains visible and is consistently considered as an option by social work teams. They also give schemes a space to share good news stories and connect with teams, strengthening relationships and embedding Shared Lives as an option.

"The scheme has been getting round and speaking to teams and sharing good news stories."

"We've been presenting to every team and forum."

"We're a standing member at Learning Disability & Autism boards and part of team manager forums."

Schemes had a particular focus on developing relationships with children's services and transitions teams to support more care leavers

Developing strong relationships with children's services and transitions teams ensures Shared Lives is consistently considered for young people leaving care. Regular meetings and joint working groups strengthen coordination across children's services, housing and fostering, creating smoother transition pathways as a young person reaches 18.

"We attend monthly children's social care meetings for transitions."

"We're now working with fostering agencies."

"There's a working group in place, involving housing, children's, foster care teams, and external children's homes."

Strategic Advice support

Shared Lives Plus has a clear offer to help local areas develop effective partnership and professional working across teams and individuals, supporting their aim to either establish, grow or diversify Shared Lives. This includes defining and developing broader partnership working and agreements with teams, organisations and people, alongside defining and establishing new pathways into Shared Lives across teams and services.

Social workers who are familiar with Shared Lives approaches

Having skilled and knowledgeable social workers, who understand the Shared Lives model and how to refer, is vital to promoting a steady stream of high-quality referrals. Schemes can promote this through several tools and processes, as well as building relationships with teams and individual social workers.

“I am a huge supporter of Shared Lives – it delivers excellent support to people and enables [them] to live good lives in a loving family home. As a social worker, I know however, that we have a huge role to play in supporting Shared Lives to flourish, and that we need to encourage more referrals into Shared Lives.”

Lyn Romeo CBE, Former Chief Social Worker for Adults

Schemes we engaged with had strong working relationships with social workers, who had a clear understanding of the Shared Lives model and referral processes.



The use and refinement of a Shared Lives first approach

A Shared Lives first approach helps ensure Shared Lives is consistently considered as an option for referrals, with referral meetings and social workers actively required to consider Shared Lives before alternative provision. A thought out implementation of this approach is vital, ensuring it aligns with local priorities and pressures for social workers and is promoted by senior colleagues.

40% of schemes surveyed implemented a Shared Lives first approach.

“Our decision making forum has to consider Shared Lives.”

Regularly sharing Shared Lives carer vacancies

Regularly sharing Shared Lives carer vacancies ensures social workers remain aware of current availability and capacity in a scheme, whilst also making it easier to identify suitable matches and strengthening a schemes presence within local social care pathways.

60% of schemes surveyed regularly share Shared Lives carer availability.

“We feed Shared Lives carer vacancies into the home first panel.”

Training and presentations for social workers

Providing training to social workers helps them build a clear understanding of the Shared Lives model and referral processes. Less formal presentations can also be delivered to teams, helping to raise awareness of Shared Lives, and address any existing misconceptions.

80% of schemes presented to social work teams.

“Shared Lives is a part of inductions for new staff.”

Integration of Shared Lives in digital systems

Integrating Shared Lives into digital systems helps streamline referrals by making the scheme visible and accessible within existing social worker workflows.

40% of schemes surveyed had actively worked to integrate Shared Lives into digital systems.

“We’re on MOSAIC now so referrals come through internally, as opposed to email before.”

Clear referral guidelines and flow charts

Developing clear referral guidelines and flow charts helps social workers understand the Shared Lives referral pathway, making the process more consistent and easier to follow.

40% of schemes surveyed had developed clear referral guidelines.

“Referral pathways, with quick “how to” guides, have been built in mosaic at the relevant steps to promote referrals.”

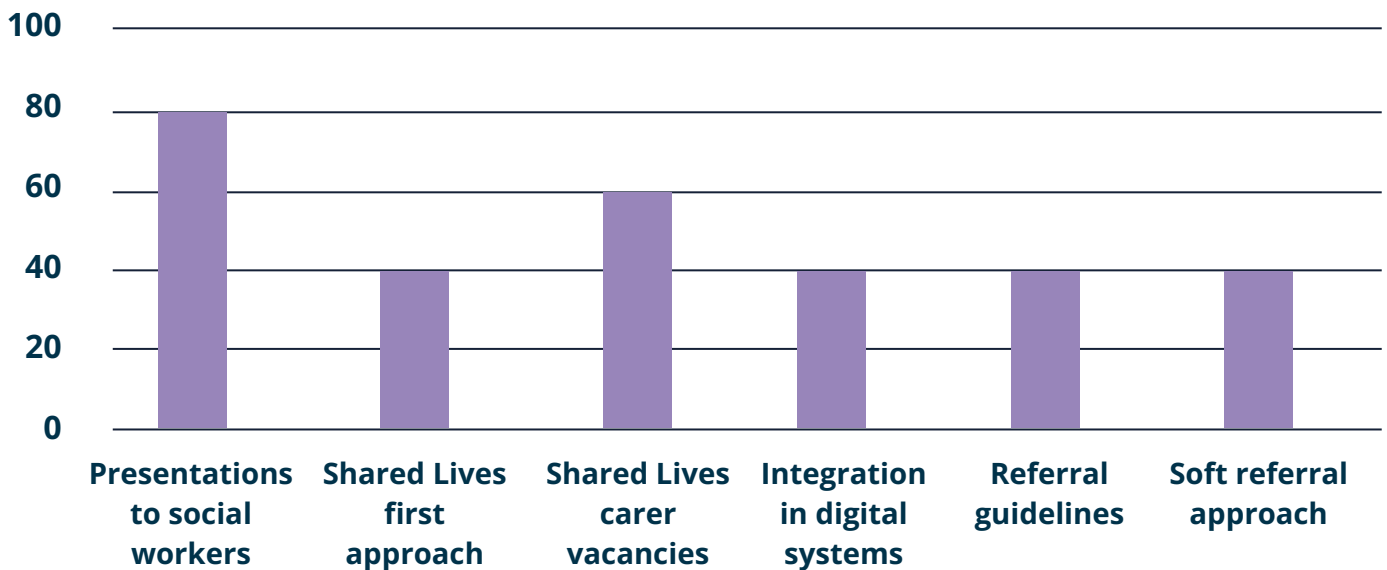
A soft referral approach

Using a soft referral approach, where social workers can approach a scheme informally about a potential referral, helps build relationships with teams. Schemes are seen as approachable, increasing the likelihood that Shared Lives is considered early in the referral process.

“We have a genuine relationship with teams, and are approachable, helpful and friendly.”

40% of schemes surveyed have the option of a soft referral.

Processes, tools and systems used by schemes



Strategic Advice support

Shared Lives Plus has a clear offer to help schemes raise awareness of Shared Lives amongst social workers and promote high quality referrals, whether they are establishing, growing or diversifying Shared Lives. This includes defining and designing new referral pathways, delivering Social Worker Training and developing local Shared Lives champions.



**Herefordshire
Council**

STRATEGIC SPOTLIGHT

Shared Lives Plus supported Herefordshire Council to review and develop their Shared Lives scheme and offer. This project was focussed on:

- The completion of a scheme audit and review
- The development of a vision and strategy to guide the schemes future direction
- The delivery of a business case for the growth of Shared Lives
- The development of an implementation roadmap

Achievements

- Increased strategic buy-in for Shared Lives
- “At a higher level we are now much more visible with strategic colleagues... Shared Lives is part of the transformation agenda and is much better known across social work teams... The report helped to set the Shared Lives agenda within the council.”
- “The work bought credibility in terms of stakeholders being engaged and involved with the scheme.” - **Ginnie Jacques, Herefordshire Shared Lives Scheme Manager**
- “Shared Lives Plus coming in was timely and gave a kick start to transformation, showing the art of the possible and providing an evidence base for us to build on.” - **Hilary Hall, Director of Adult Social Care, Herefordshire Council**

Shared Lives Plus understands the challenges councils, Integrated Care Systems (ICS), Shared Lives schemes, housing partners, the voluntary and community sector, and the NHS face. We have a well-established approach to supporting the development of Shared Lives, which we call Strategic Advice, working collaboratively to build sustainable, joined-up models of support.

Request a copy of our Strategic Advice consultancy brochure.

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sharedlivesplus.org.uk/consultancy-support/

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

