

Sharing social care's best kept secret



Growing Shared Lives – a practical guide



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Foreword



Heather Thomson
Shared Lives Ambassador

"If I knew about Shared Lives when I was 16, my whole world would have changed faster and I wouldn't have had the anxiety of my future being so unknown. I think more social workers and people that work within the care system should know about Shared Lives because it could change someone's life for the better."



Cath Roff
Director of Adults and Health,
Leeds City Council

"Growing Shared Lives, especially with additional pressures brought about during the pandemic, has proven to be very difficult. Despite this, we have achieved some success and remain committed. It is central to our vision of building a strengths-based approach to care and support across Leeds, which is based on what is strong about local people – their strengths, aspirations and networks – rather than what is wrong."



Tandra Forster
Director of Integrated Adult Social
Care, Devon County Council

"It will be difficult, but far from impossible, to grow Shared Lives. If we work together, share resources and learning, and are creative and brave with the money we have, we can continue to invest in and grow Shared Lives, to ensure that even more people benefit from one of the highest quality and safest forms of social care in the future."

A positive future for social care

The UK Government has expressed a strong commitment to growing strengths-based housing and care support, specifically featuring Shared Lives as a way for local authorities to support their communities. Its adult social care reform white paper: **'People at the Heart of Care'**, published in November 2021, talks positively about the scaling up and potential growth of Shared Lives.

This message was strengthened by former Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Sajid Javid, in his health and care reform speech, who said Shared Lives was:

"The kind of innovative social care service, of which there are many, that we need to grow."

This briefing is for leaders in adult social care, such as Directors of Adult Social Services, Assistant Directors, Heads of Service and Commissioners, who want to grow Shared Lives.

It is centred on a desk-based review of recent evaluations and evidence, along with interviews and workshops with stakeholders from across adult social care.

We know, as does anyone whose had experience, that growing Shared Lives takes time and a set of promising conditions in which to flourish.

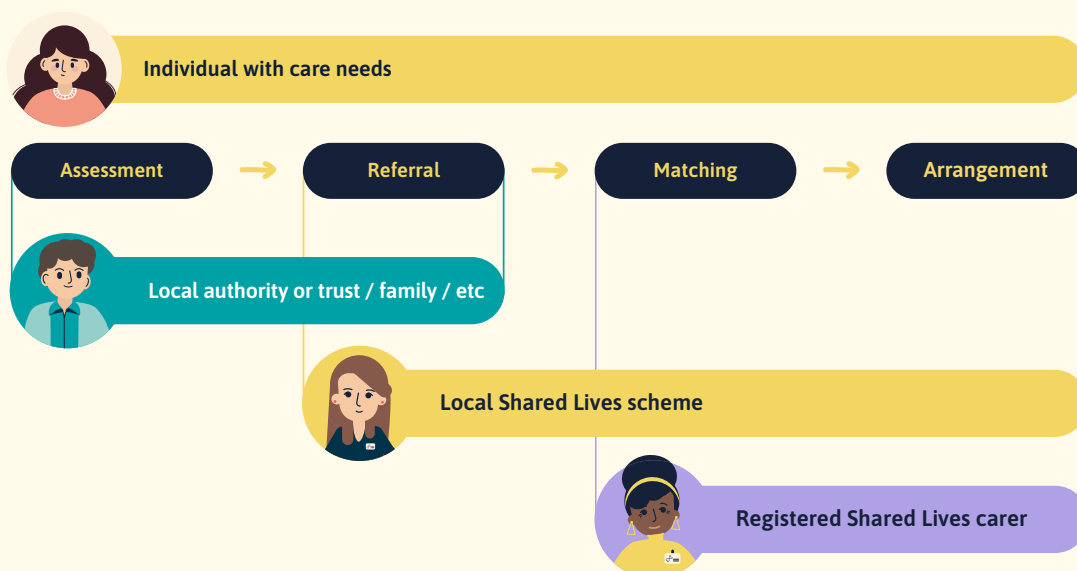
Much like the rest of the social care sector, Shared Lives schemes struggle to recruit carers and workers. Due to funding cuts, local authorities find it difficult to invest in the growth of Shared Lives. Public awareness about the benefits of Shared Lives is also low, which means that fewer people than we would like are requesting Shared Lives.

For more ideas in the longer version of this briefing and more information about Shared Lives, go to: www.sharedlivesplus.org.uk



The path to Shared Lives

Shared Lives is a community-based service that offers accommodation and support to adults with learning disabilities and other social care needs. It can offer long-term accommodation, where the person with support needs lives with the carer in the carer's home as part of their family and community life.



Ewan King,
CEO, Shared Lives Plus

"Anyone working in social care knows that the future of social care is deeply uncertain. The cost-of-living crisis is placing huge additional pressures on social care and those of us who draw on support. We believe Shared Lives has to be part of the solution to the challenges we face.

Growing Shared Lives will help transform the social care landscape, giving far more people a better quality, more personalised care and support option, along with significant potential cost savings for commissioners.

We call on leaders across social care to join us in developing a positive vision for the future and to commit to growing Shared Lives."



Worth your investment: why grow Shared Lives?

The case for Shared Lives is clear: it supports people to live the life they choose. Shared Lives care creates the best outcomes for people who need support and helps them to live the best lives they can.

The latest data from My Shared Life, 2022 shows that 98% of people in Shared Lives felt they were part of a friendship group or family most or all the time, while 88% of people felt that their Shared Lives carer's support improved their social life.

In October 2022, CQC rated Shared Lives schemes as 97% good or outstanding. 11% of schemes were outstanding last year - an improvement of +3% in the last year. Those that require improvement has decreased to just 3%. These statistics are testament to the ongoing hard work of Shared Lives schemes, who strive to support Shared Lives carers to provide exceptional care to people with a wide range of needs.

Shared Lives is also cost-effective, saving between £8k and 30k per annum, depending on the person's support needs and local alternative services.

"We were sending an adult with complex needs out of the borough. It was costing us £2,500 a week to find his support. We are now supporting him through Shared Lives at £700 a week."

Local authority commissioner



Growing Shared Lives: lessons from local authorities

Committed leadership

Committed leadership is crucial to growth, with leaders who include Shared Lives within their wider vision for an asset or strengths-based approach to care and support, which supports more people to live independently within their communities. Leaders seek to:

- Develop clear plans to grow Shared Lives – Create clear priorities and embed these in service strategies and plans, to communicate its strategic importance
- Role-model commitment – leaders should take opportunities to show they are committed to Shared Lives
- Leaders use stories, case studies and examples to communicate the benefit and impact of Shared Lives widely
- Build awareness and leadership among middle managers
- Value a co-produced approach to growth and diversification, drawing on people with lived experience of the service

Develop strong links with transitions teams

Developing strong links between children's and adult's social care – particularly through transitions teams - to maximise opportunities for people to move from foster care and children's homes into adult Shared Lives arrangements, at an early stage, is vital.

Case study - PSS Suffolk Working with Transition Teams

In Suffolk the local Shared Lives scheme has been running a campaign named 'moving on together', which is targeting fostering transition teams. The aim of the campaign is to put Shared Lives as the first consideration for transition workers who are looking at options for people who are turning eighteen and leaving their foster home. For this approach to work you have to build a strong working relationship with local transition teams. Try and educate them about the benefits of Shared Lives and ensure your scheme is approachable and friendly.



Align housing strategy with Shared Lives growth

Any Shared Lives strategy will need to consider the local housing market, housing stock and creative ways to ensure high quality Shared Lives carers have the right housing to support people.

Regional collaboration

In many areas where there is a mutual desire to grow Shared Lives, local authorities are coming together to collaborate.

Case study: North East England and East of England collaboratives

In the Northeast of England, for example, council areas (supported by ADASS and Shared Lives Plus) have worked together to invest in a joint programme of growth workshops, cost benefit analyses and communications support. In the East of England local commissioners with a common interest in growing Shared Lives regularly come together to share intelligence and combine resources. Shared Lives Plus is also in conversation with regional groups in other areas of England and Wales.

Effective commissioning

In areas where growth has been demonstrated, good general commissioning approaches have been fostered: commissioners have developed a comprehensive understanding of key issues, needs and assets. In these areas, commissioners also tended to have a good understanding of how Shared Lives operates and its expected benefits, not just for people with learning disabilities but also for other groups who can benefit, such as those with mental health conditions, dementia, and older people leaving hospital.

Making the case for investment

A business case or feasibility study is often required to support a leader in making the case for investment in Shared Lives. A good business case is evidence based, drawing on the best available data sources, including demographic trends and projections of needs and current levels of service use and capacity, and explores the cost benefits of different growth options, based on a comprehensive analysis of Shared Lives compared against other models of care (**for more information about business cases, search 'Shared Lives consultancy'**).

Embedding Shared Lives into business-as-usual

It is essential for leaders and commissioners to spend time on building the right conditions for Shared Lives to thrive. This means reviewing and improving systems, ensuring that IT and case management systems support referrals into Shared Lives, re-designing processes so they are easy to use and support fast-paced referrals, and ensuring that staff are well trained and have a good understanding of Shared Lives.

Ensuring carers' fees are reviewed

Shared Lives carers need to be included in any annual review of care fees by the local authority to ensure their fees reflect any uplifts to other providers. Local authorities should benchmark Shared Lives with other forms of care and should be aware of other local authority's fees.

Ensuring there are sufficient carers' breaks provision

Carers need a genuine choice of breaks. Market shaping by commissioners and good business planning by providers – including diversifying services - can help deliver this choice. Flexible funding can help local groups and social enterprises to deliver tailored, innovative solutions and improve equality of access to breaks.

Developing champions

Develop champions based within social care teams, to promote Shared Lives and help colleagues solve problems.

Targeted communications and recruitment

Recruitment of carers is a continuous and vital aspect for Shared Lives schemes; however, it is a major challenge. Key activities that contribute to effective marketing include:

- Relevant messaging for target audience
- Collaborate on recruitment – work with other organisations, such as the NHS or foster care teams, to promote Shared Lives.
- Encouraging word of mouth referrals – provide cost-effective financial rewards for people to recommend a friend or family member to become a Shared Lives carer.
- Recruiting from diverse communities - targeted work with local community groups, black and minority ethnic communities, LGBTQ+ media, faith organisations, and social clubs can increase the numbers of carers recruited from diverse communities.

Case study: London Borough of Camden

London Borough of Camden has developed eye-catching, targeted communications that resonate with the local population:



SHARED LIVES CAMDEN

What is Shared Lives? Become a carer Contact **easy** Easy read

What is Shared Lives?

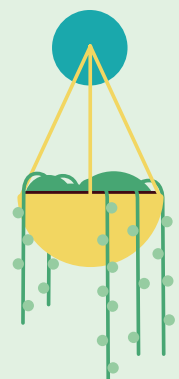
Shared Lives is a way that you can move in with somebody who can support you to learn new skills and do things you both enjoy.

The person you move in with is trained and is called a Shared Lives carer. You can stay with your Shared Lives carer for a long time or just for a short stay. You can choose what you do, and how much time you spend with them.

Shared Lives carers are not there to do everything for you. They want you to be as independent as possible. If you find something difficult they can work with you until you feel happy to do it on your own.

Find out more by getting in contact with the Shared Lives Camden team or clicking on one of the options below for more information.

[Talk to a member of the Shared Lives team](#)



We can support you

Shared Lives has more than 35 years' experience of supporting local authorities and schemes to grow to their potential.

We can help with:

- Needs analysis
- Cost benefit analysis
- Business cases and options appraisal
- Implementation planning
- Commissioning strategies and plans
- Coproduction
- Recruitment strategies
- Audience insight
- Communications and marketing strategies, and practical support
- Training of social workers in the benefits of Shared Lives

To find out how Shared Lives Plus can help meet your goals, please contact us:

✉ consultancy@sharedlivesplus.org.uk

☎ 0151 227 3499

🌐 sharedlivesplus.org.uk





Alison McDowell

Vice chair for the ADASS Northeast region,
and Director of Adult Social Care and Integrated
Services for Newcastle City Council

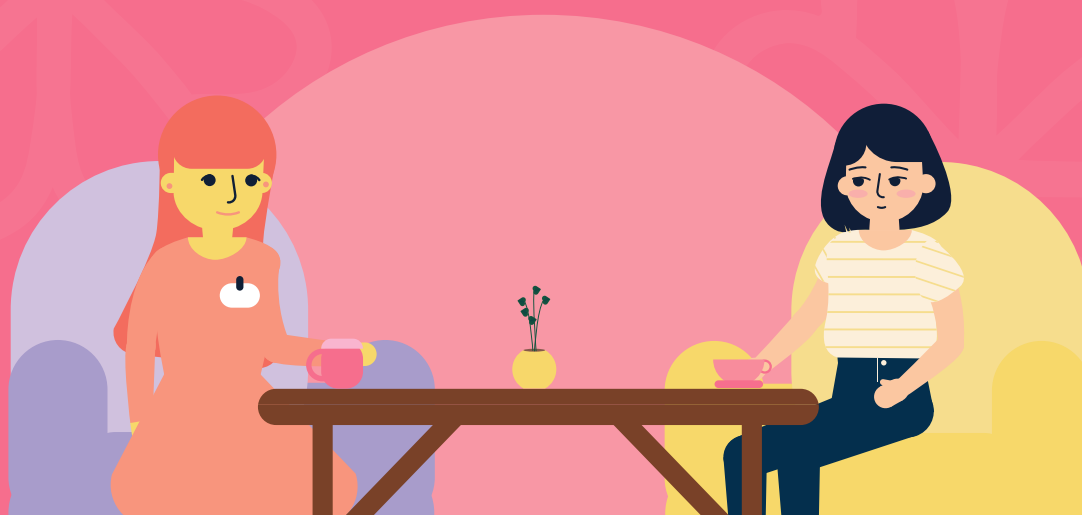
“One of the successes of the project so far, which is led by Shared Lives Plus and involves 12 local authorities, was establishing communities of practice, exploring ways we can scale up from a regional perspective so that everybody feels it is moving positively rather than competitively.

Providers have also been supported to embrace growth and diversification through a sequence of workshops, using people with lived experience to inspire and encourage stakeholders to consider how they can expand their service.

We’ve also provided marketing insight, with a series of demographic reports showing a regional picture for what a typical Shared Lives carer might look like. This has helped to inform key messaging and marketing campaigns that are focused on a local or regional perspective, rather than a generic, national one.”

This is a shortened version of the toolkit, and a longer version is available online www.sharedlivesplus.org.uk

Q Search keywords: ‘Growing Shared Lives’



The Shared Lives scheme helped me to start living



20-year-old Mollie moved in with her carer Mae through a Shared Lives scheme. Together, they share family and community life and Mollie receives personal care and support in a place that feels like home.


Mollie explains, "I'd been in crisis throughout my life and then I reached breaking point. I couldn't manage basic life skills."


When Mollie's social worker offered her the Shared Lives scheme, she chose to move in with Mae, an approved Shared Lives carer. Mollie lives in an annexe so has a place of her own, but with the full support of Mae and her family.


Since moving in, Mollie has grown in confidence. "I am more positive and talkative," she says. "I have a job working in a supermarket. I have friends my own age. I'm learning to drive. I am learning to cook, I do my own washing and I'm learning how to run a house, pay bills and clean my space."

Mollie's new environment has helped her overcome many of the challenges she previously faced. She says, "My mental health has improved, I feel proud of myself and I make my own choices." She really wants other young adults with Autism to have the same opportunity to be part of Shared Lives.

Get in touch today!

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