



Frequently asked questions about

BECOMING A SHARED LIVES CARER



Your skills and experience



I've never worked as a carer before – does that matter?

No – we can train you up to be the best carer there ever was. Our carers come from all different walks of life. All you need is the open mind, big heart and empathy it takes to be a great carer and the willingness to learn new skills. Of course, if you've got experience of being a carer before, that's a bonus.



I have worked as a carer before – will you still train me?

Absolutely. Even if you've worked as a carer your whole career, you'll still need to complete all of our training sessions. These are designed to make you the best carer you can be, teach you about how we do things here at PSS, and they're a great opportunity to develop yourself and meet other Shared Lives carers, too.



What type of training will I be given?

You'll be trained in all kinds of things from safeguarding and providing personal care to administering medication.



'I had less freedom before. Now I can do what I want. I can come and go when I want to.'

Kevin, biker, Lincolnshire

The experience of being a Shared Lives carer



What if I meet the person I'm matched with and I don't want to go ahead, or what if the person I'm matched with doesn't want me to support them?

You'll meet the person you've matched with before you start supporting them. If you or the person you matched feels like it's not going to work out or like the other person might not be a good fit for them, neither of you are under any obligations whatsoever to go ahead.



What if things aren't working out once I start supporting someone?

A member of the PSS Shared Lives team will be with you every step of the way, so if something's not feeling right or things aren't working out with the person you're supporting, you need to make sure you're honest with them. We always review each arrangement after six weeks.

We have a relationship with the person you're supporting, too, and can find out how things are looking from their angle. Your Shared Lives worker will either help you work through it, give you the advice you need or help you explore the various other options available to you. You won't be on your own.



How many people can I support at once?

You're likely to match lots of times with people who need support, but you'll be limited to supporting a maximum of three people at any one time. That'll mean you can provide equal top-notch support to each person individually and still have time spare for some you-time.



I have children – can I still be a Shared Lives carer?

Absolutely! Shared Lives is all about bringing someone into your family and giving them the warm support of a loving environment, and lots of the people we support are delighted when they find out their potential carer has children. This is one of the things we'll take into consideration when you're going through the matching process.



I have a pet – will that stop me being a Shared Lives carer?

Not at all. Again, this is all down to the personal preferences of the people we support, so we'd make sure people know you've got a pet when we match you up. For example, we won't match you with someone who has a dog allergy if you've got a pup at home.



My partner isn't a Shared Lives carer – can they still support me?

We want the people we support to feel a part of your family and get to know them really well. If the person you support lives with you and your family they should feel relaxed and happy in their company, able to do things together and be friends. However, as a Shared Lives carer, you're the one with the expertise, so you should be the person providing support. That's not to say, however, that your partner can't apply to be a carer alongside you: that way you can be a team of carers together.



Can my partner and I both be carers?

Yes. If you live together, we can take both of you through the recruitment and assessment process together. You'll work as a support team.



Will I need to provide personal care support?

Not everyone we support needs to be given personal care support. Personal care covers a range of things – from supporting someone to brush their hair through to supporting them with washing and going to the loo. It's a type of support that you'll need specific training to give. Whether or not you're willing and able to provide personal care will be taken into consideration during the matching process.



Can I have another job as well as being a carer?

You're self-employed as a Shared Lives carer, so it's entirely up to you. Many people who work part time, do shift work or work reduced hours are able to fit their job as a Shared Lives carer alongside another job. However, if you work full time and have limited availability, it can reduce the amount of opportunities you have to provide support.



Do Shared Lives carers get holidays?

We all need a break from our jobs from time to time to relax and recharge our batteries – and being a Shared Lives carer is no different. While you take a break, we can organise for the person you support to go and stay with another Shared Lives carer through our Short Breaks service, go and stay with their family or stay at a respite unit. It'll be a rest for you and a great change of scenery for the person you're supporting.



Will I be able to go abroad with the person I support?

If the person you support wants to go abroad and it's safe to do so, you can go abroad with the person you support. We ask that you run it past us before any plans are made, just so we can make sure the person we support is happy.



Will I get support from other carers?

Yes. We've got lots of different carer groups in each of our regions where carers can come together, swap stories, swap tips and generally chat. We've also got private carer groups on Facebook, too, where lots of our carers are chatting and comparing notes every day.



How will PSS support me?

In each of our regions, we've got Shared Lives teams who are dedicated to supporting you:

- We'll give you advice on everything you need to get going, like public liability insurance, health and safety and paperwork. We'll walk you through anything you're not sure of.
- We'll provide full and thorough training in everything you need to get started as a Shared Lives carer. Once you're up and running, you'll be enrolled into a programme of essential online learning, which we'll need you to complete as you go along.
- You'll have a dedicated member of our team who'll get to know you and the person you support really well. They'll be your main contact at PSS and will be in touch with you regularly to check everything's going swimmingly.
- You'll have an induction process, where we'll prepare you for the different parts of your role.
- We'll explain all the policies and procedures we have here at PSS and how you can make sure you follow and understand them.
- We'll prepare you for dealing with different situations you might come across.
- We'll be here for you whenever you need us – and we've even got an out of hours support line to get help and advice when our offices are closed.
- We'll introduce you to a network of carers just like you.



What other support is available to me as a Shared Lives carer?

Shared Lives Plus is a membership organisation especially for Shared Lives carers. Shared Lives Plus is a completely separate organisation from PSS and we're not involved in running it. They're a specialist organisation who, once you've joined them, can provide oodles of independent advice and resources about all things Shared Lives – from access to insurance through to specialist training and one-to-one support. Think of Shared Lives Plus a bit like a club or alliance you can join.



I don't drive, can I still be a Shared Lives carer?

That's not a problem at all. You can still be a Shared Lives carer if you don't drive, just let us know. We'll need to make sure we keep that in mind when we look at matching you with someone to support.



Is Shared Lives regulated?

It sure is. In England, we're regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). In Wales, we're regulated by the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). We're inspected regularly. You can read our CQC reports by visiting the CQC website: www.cqc.org.uk. You can read our CIW reports by visiting the CIW website: careinspectorate.wales

*'I see them giggling in this little kitchen
of mine and just think, this is life.
Hannah and Cindy have grown so
much. We colour each other's lives.'*

Jean, Shared Lives carer, Lincolnshire

Being self-employed



Will I need insurance?

Shared Lives carers need to have a few different insurance policies in place:

- **Public liability insurance:** Shared Lives carers are self-employed and provide a service to the public, so just like you would if you ran your own business like a shop or a hairdressers, you need to make sure you have cover in place. We can support you with that.
- **Home insurance:** we'll need to see a copy of your home insurance.
- **Car insurance:** if you drive, you'll need business cover for your car. We'll need to see a copy of your car insurance and valid MOT.



How much money will I get paid?

Your average Shared Lives carer who is providing support through our Live-in service gets paid between around £240 to £500 a week per person they support, depending on where they are in the country and what the person they're supporting needs. How much you get paid is decided by the local authority we're working with, so it can differ from place to place.



How much tax will I pay?

Shared Lives carers get income tax relief. You will receive certain payments (qualifying amounts) tax-free. This means you can claim expenses for the money you spend on providing support – things like buying petrol, paying the bills and buying supplies for the person you support. And with qualifying care relief, you only need to keep simple records.

You'll need to register with HMRC and complete a simplified self-assessment tax return at the end of the financial year. HMRC will be able to give you a hand with this if you need it. Shared Lives carers do qualify for income tax relief, which in many cases means that they pay little or no tax.



Will the person I support contribute to my bills?

You'll get contributions from the person you support for things like food, petrol and bills.



Will I need a DBS check? Who will pay for it?

Yes, you'll need to get a DBS check as part of the recruitment and assessment process. It costs around £40 and you'll need to pay for this yourself.



Will I always have work?

Once you're registered as an approved Shared Lives carer with us, you go into our database of carers. When we do our match-making process, your name will come up if your skills, lifestyle and availability matches someone we support in your area. We're growing all the time and more and more people are coming to us for support, but it's not guaranteed that you'll always have someone to support. Lots of people keep another job alongside their caring role with us.

'I used to work as a counsellor. Now I can build stronger relationships and share experiences with the people I support.'

Wendy, Shared Lives carer, North Wales



Your home



Do I need a spare room to be a Shared Lives carer?

If you like the sound of being a long-term or short-term carer where people stay with you overnight, you're going to need a spare room for them to stay in. This will need to be vacant, furnished and have some storage space as well. If you want to provide daytime support only, you won't need to provide a spare bedroom. Please feel free to chat to us about the options available to you.



Do I need a big house?

You don't need a giant house to support someone. All you need is a spare room and (as cheesy as it sounds) some spare room in your heart to give to someone else. We've got Shared Lives carers who live in two-bed terraces, three-bed semis, in apartments, on farms and in six-bed detached homes.

We'll take the type of house you have into consideration when we match you up with someone. That way, we can make sure that the person you support can get around easily and safely. But you can leave that bit up to us.



What home checks will you do?

We'll need to come and do some checks on your home. Don't worry though, we're not going to ask you to turn it into a five-star hotel! We still want your home to be homely, but it has to be safe for someone else, too.

We'll see what type of home you live in (so we can match you to the right person) and give you advice about things like any hanging wires that might need to be sorted, fire alarms that would need to be installed, carbon monoxide detectors, first aid boxes and any other bits and bobs to help keep both you and the person you support safe and well. We'd also do a fire evacuation plan with you.

More information

To find out more or to make the first step, visit our website at www.sharedlivescarers.com where you can also watch some videos about becoming a carer, or contact our friendly team in your local area:

> LINCOLNSHIRE

Call: 01529 400765

Email: sharedliveslincs@pss.org.uk

> NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK

Call: 01379 644423

Email: sharedliveseast@pss.org.uk

> MANCHESTER

Call: 0161 946 3568

Email: sharedlivesmanchester@pss.org.uk

> MERSEYSIDE

Call: 0151 702 5555

Email: sharedlivesmerseyside@pss.org.uk

> MIDLANDS

Call: 01543 448380

Email: midlandssharedlives@pss.org.uk

> WIRRAL

Call: 0151 702 5555

Email: sharedliveswirral@pss.org.uk

> NORTH WALES

Call: 01745 828000

Email: wales@pss.org.uk

> ISLE OF MAN

Call: 0800 197 9820

Email: sharedlivesisleofman@pss.org.uk



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to live their life to
the fullest.*

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