



Your guide to

BECOMING A SHARED LIVES CARER

pss*

What is Shared Lives?



Shared Lives is a little bit like fostering, but with the big difference that it's for people over the age of 16 (over 18 in Wales) who want to live as independently as possible. Shared Lives carers provide people with the practical and emotional support they need to live life the way they want to. We have Shared Lives carers up and down England, North Wales and the Isle of Man.

What do Shared Lives carers do?

As a Shared Lives carer, it's your job to support people to meet their goals, in whatever ways they need you to. You can either support someone while they live in your house with you and your family, or you can support them just during the day.

You might be supporting someone to:

- Do practical things in everyday life like washing, going to the loo or eating
- Look after their finances
- Look after their baby
- Get involved in their community
- Make new friends
- Travel the world
- Manage anxiety
- Get into education
- Learn how to bake
- Get their dream job
- Start a new life addiction-free
- Go out on their own for the first time

The possibilities are as unique as each of the people we support.



Who do Shared Lives carers support?

Shared Lives is a really flexible type of support, and our Shared Lives carers support people from all different backgrounds with all different goals. As a Shared Lives carer, you could support:

- People who are aged 16 (or aged 18 in Wales) and just leaving children's care
- People who have been in hospital and need a hand getting back on their feet again
- New parents who need a bit of support in the early days
- People who have learning disabilities
- People who have a mental health condition
- People who have physical and/or sensory disabilities
- People who are recovering from an addiction
- Anyone else who needs or wants some support to live life to the fullest

Our team of experts will match you up with someone based on your lifestyle, the support you can provide and your home.



Ways you can support someone with Shared Lives

We have six different types of Shared Lives service – some that involve supporting someone while they live in your home and some that involve supporting someone just during the daytime. Our Shared Lives carers choose which types of Shared Lives service they want to provide.

Support someone while they live in your home

As a Shared Lives carer, you can offer a whole range of different services to the people we support while they live with you and your family at your house. You can choose which types of support you want to offer.

- ***Support someone as part of your family***

With our Shared Lives Live-in service, the person you support becomes part of your family, living at home with you while you support them to be as independent as possible.

This is an amazing opportunity to work from home as a Shared Lives carer, doing hours you choose.

The person you support might live with you for a short amount of time or a longer amount of time. Either way, it's about opening up the doors of your home and giving someone a warm welcome.

- **Support someone leaving hospital**

Home from Hospital supports people who are ready to leave hospital, but still need some support to get back on their feet. Someone who's well enough to leave hospital will come to live with you for a short period of time while they fully recover and build their confidence back up to live independently.

- **Support someone as they move out of foster care**

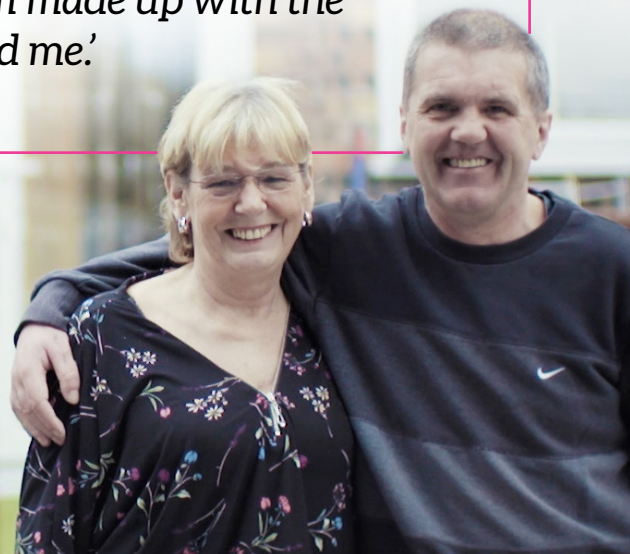
With our Move On service, you support a young person as they move out of foster care and flourish into adult life. They will come and live with you and your family at your house.

- **Supporting someone while they have a break from their usual support**

Everyone loves a holiday and a change of scenery every now and then – and the people we support through Shared Lives are no different. With our Short Breaks service, you'll support someone staying with you at your home for a short amount of time. During this time, not only does the person we support have a break away from their usual home, their full-time carers also have a rest.

'When I lived on my own, I made bad decisions. I wasn't happy. Since I've lived with Liz, I love my life and I'm made up with the way PSS understand me.'

Gary, eternal optimist, Liverpool



Continue supporting someone after foster care

If you're a foster carer, become a Shared Lives carer with us and you can be part of our Move On Together service.

You'll need to be assessed as one of our carers, but once you've come through the process, you'll be able to continue supporting the person you're caring for as a Shared Lives carer.

Support someone for the day

- **Shared Days:**

With Shared Days, you can support people during the daytime. You can support them to do the things they enjoy most. This can be out and about or in your home for a set amount of time.





Do Shared Lives carers choose who they support?

We have a matching service that pairs you up with someone to support whose lifestyle, support needs and personality is a good match for yours.

Before we set anything in stone, you'll have the chance to meet the person you've been matched with. Depending on the type of support you're offering, they may come and stay overnight at your house, just to see how it goes, or you might spend a day together as a bit of a trial, to see how you both feel. You'll both have a choice.

It's all about making sure the person you're matched with feels comfortable, safe and happy, and you do too.

Our Shared Lives matching service

We've got our own dedicated team of Shared Lives match-makers at our Shared Lives services in Norfolk, Manchester, Merseyside, Lincolnshire, North Wales, Isle of Man and the Midlands. They get to know the people we support really well, and they get to know our carers really well, too.

It's their job to think about which people we support would be a good match for you as a carer, and which of our Shared Lives services you could offer them.



A job that fits around your life

Being a Shared Lives carer is really flexible. You can support up to three people, working hours that suit you and fit around your family.

You can usually work as a carer alongside another job if you want to. Some carers start off supporting one person alongside another non-caring job, love being a Shared Lives carer and then gradually increase their hours supporting other people until they're a full-time Shared Lives carer.

You'll be self-employed, but we'll be with you every step of the way and you'll have your own personal team who will be there for you anytime you need us, even out of office hours.

Why become a Shared Lives carer?

- Work from home, or the park, or the shops, or the bingo hall (wherever your shared life takes you)
- Work for yourself, alongside your specialist team at PSS
- Work hours that suit you, so you can still have lots of family time and work your usual job
- Get loads of support from us, anytime
- Change someone's life
- Put your life experiences to great use
- Do something amazing for someone else
- Get endless job satisfaction by watching someone grow
- Earn a living just by being you – bringing your whole self to the role
- Help give someone the family life they really want

Who's PSS?

PSS is a social enterprise that supports people to live happy, healthy and hopeful lives, whether they're:

- adults who have learning or physical disabilities, challenges with their mental health or difficulties as they're getting older;
- people in and around the criminal justice system; or
- families who've been through unsteady times.

No-matter who you are or where your life has taken you, we listen, understand and find a way to help you reach your goals.

Along with Shared Lives, we've got about another 12 different services that support people from all different walks of life.

We've been around since 1919 and invented a number of the care systems you see today. We were responsible for starting a whole host of charities you might recognise – Age UK, Relate, Citizens Advice Bureau and Legal Aid to name a few.

The quality of what we do is so, so important to us – in fact, we've got a team of people dedicated to it. We're really proud of the top-notch services we provide. When you ask our teams why they want to give such a wonderful service, you'll quite often hear them say 'I'd want this kind of service', or 'This is the service I'd want for my mum.' And that's the way we look at things. We hope you do, too.

It's about giving people support that touches a person's life and gives them that bit of a helping hand when they need it most –without taking away their independence.

Back in 1978, we invented one of the most wonderful forms of care and support there is: Shared Lives.

*We've been doing this for a long time,
and we know how to get it right.*

What's PSS's role in Shared Lives?

PSS is paid by local authorities to provide the Shared Lives service to people in the local area, and by the people we support who have a personal budget or want to self-fund their support. We work with local authorities up and down England, in Wales and in the Isle of Man, and our service is growing all the time. Local authorities choose to work with us because we're so experienced, we put the people we support first and – even if we do say so ourselves – we recruit the best carers in the West (and, for the record, the East, North and South).

Here's how it works:

- Local authorities pay us, as Shared Lives experts, to deliver a Shared Lives service in the local area
- We recruit potential carers in that area that we know will do an amazing job
- We train carers up to meet our standards
- We work with local social work teams to match our carers with the people who need support
- We pay our carers a fee agreed by the local authority we're working with (the amount depends on where you live and the needs of the person you're supporting)
- We support both carers and the people we support while the Shared Lives arrangement is going on, making sure both have what they need
- We provide ongoing training for carers to keep their skills up-to-date
- Our dedicated Shared Lives team will be here to support you and cheer you on every step of the way with visits and phone calls, whenever you need us

*'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



How much do Shared Lives carers 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.

Tax relief and expenses

Shared Lives carers also 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 also receive contributions from the person they support for things like food, petrol and bills.



How do I become a carer?

We're so glad you asked! We've got a really thorough but at the same time not too painful (we hope) recruitment process to make sure we're only taking people on the journey to becoming a Shared Lives carer who will do us and the people we support proud. As you'd expect, we recruit our carers really carefully, which is why the people we support get the best possible service.

'Mitchell had always wanted to work on the railway. When he became an adult, we encouraged him to follow his dreams. He loves it.'

Linda, Shared Lives carer, Staffordshire

Do I need caring experience to be a Shared Lives carer?

It doesn't matter if you've never been a carer before, we'll train you up and help you to be the best you can be.

Of course, if you've had experience as a carer or you've worked in social care, you'll be in a really good position already. We'll still need you to do our training, even if you've been a carer before.

What do we look for in a Shared Lives carer?

You might be self-employed, but you're still part of the big PSS team. We're looking for people who match our values.



Big-hearted - you're kind, caring and compassionate; someone who will put the person they support first.



Determined - you're ready for a challenge, able to really go for your goals and help others reach theirs.



Professional - you're able to follow our processes, stay organised and keep records, committed to providing really high-quality customer service and keeping up-to-date with your training.



Genuine - you're honest, down-to-earth and don't take yourself too seriously.



Open-minded - you're non-judgemental, willing to try new things and able to be flexible to the needs of others.

Application and assessment

Once you've got all the information you need about being a Shared Lives carer, it's time to apply. As we mentioned earlier, we take our assessment of new carers really seriously, but we're all a friendly bunch and we try to make the whole thing as informal and stress-free as possible. The whole process takes about three to six months on average – but that depends on how available you are for us to meet you and take you through the seven steps to becoming a carer.

'We've gone from an empty nest to an active, lively household. The gift of seeing Chloe and Natasha grow into happy adults keep us going.'

Dave, Shared Lives carer, Staffordshire





Step one: let's get together

We'll meet you and find out more about your skills and knowledge. We'll see what skills you've already got to do the job and where we might need to help you develop them.



Step two: put pen to paper

It's time to fill out your application form. We'll also ask you to tell us the details of some people who can give you a reference.



Step three: getting to know you and your home

We'll get to know you better. We'll look at what training you already have, what type of training you'll need and plan how you'll complete it. We'll need you to have a DBS check, which costs £40 (you'll need to pay for this yourself) and we'll follow up on those references. At this stage we'll also come and have a look at your house, to see what type of support you might be able to provide at home. We'll look at things like accessibility and safety. We'll need to write to your landlord or your mortgage provider to get their approval as part of our checks. If you're becoming a carer in Wales, we'll do some electricity checks, too, and you'll also need to join Social Care Wales, which will have an additional cost.



Step four: preparing you for your panel interview

All of our carers have a panel interview, so in this step of the process, we'll help you get prepared. We'll put a thorough personal profile and assessment report together for you that shows off all of your lovely skills and experiences. So we can write this up in lots of detail, we'll come to meet you a couple more times and ask you about specific skills or experiences you've had. We'll talk to you about examples of when you've done some of the things you might need to do as a carer, like communicate really well or keep records. It'll be quite in-depth, but don't worry – you're the expert on you, so it'll be easy. Around now we'll also introduce you to some of our current Shared Lives carers and some people we support. They'll talk to you all about what it's like to be a carer or be supported by Shared Lives.



Step five: your panel interview

You'll come along to a panel interview where experienced Shared Lives carers, people who use Shared Lives and people who work at PSS will chat to you about the role. It's an interview, but a really friendly one, and we'll be rooting for you and supporting you the whole time.

'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



Step six: the big decision

This is the time we've all been waiting for, when you'll hopefully find out that the process has been a success and you've been approved as a Shared Lives carer. If you're successful, now's the time we'll get the ball rolling on any legal requirements, like gas safety, fire safety and other safety stuff around your home. We'll also put you in touch with some experienced carers who can offer you some top tips and guidance over a brew.



Step seven: match-making time

Yay! Welcome to the team. Once you're approved, you'll be part of our database of people we can call on when someone who needs support matches with you and your home. Now's the exciting time when we start the matching process and introduce you to your very own member of the PSS Shared Lives team, who will support you every step of the way on your journey as a carer.





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

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to live their life to
the fullest.*

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