

1 What is Shared Lives South West?

Shared Lives South West is a registered charity specialising in the delivery of Shared Lives services in the south west of England. Shared Lives South West is registered with the Care Quality Commission under the Health & Social Care Act 2008.

Shared Lives South West (SLSW) offers accommodation with care and support in the family homes of our approved SLSW Carers. Our services support adults who have a need for accommodation where their care and support needs can be met. Shared Lives can be a long-term arrangement, regular short breaks, or day time support.

Our long-term Shared Lives services enable people to live within a family environment, share in home and family life and be part of the local community. Our services aim to promote the person's independent living skills, support them with their everyday care and health needs and help them realise their ambitions and potential.

Shared Lives South West was set up in 2004 and was previously called SWAPS (South West Adult Placement Scheme).

2 Who is a Shared Lives service suitable for?

Shared Lives South West offers services to people who have a learning disability, people with mental ill health, people with physical disabilities, people with early stage dementia and older people. The service is available to adults, usually over 18, although we can support young people aged 16+ in transition to adult care. Shared Lives can also support parents who have a learning disability or mental health issue.

Shared Lives is a flexible service where a wide range of care and support needs can be met. It may be appropriate where:

- someone is quite independent but needs or wants a little more support on a day to day basis.
- where someone has some moderate to complex care and support needs but where moving into a care home would be inappropriate (for example a young person moving into a home with people significantly older than them) or where residential care would detract from their independence.
- where someone is currently in a care home but would prefer to live in a smaller more family orientated setting.
- where someone has been living at home with their family, but this is no longer tenable or the family cannot cope.
- where someone has been fostered on a long-term basis and is now approaching 18 and wishes to continue living with the foster family (in this case the foster family would also have to register with us as SLSW Carers).

3 Who are our SLSW Carers?

SLSW Carers are individuals, couples or families who are able to provide support as well as care and accommodation in their own homes. SLSW Carers can support one to a maximum of three people using the service in their home.

They have a variety of skills, experience and knowledge sometimes from their own personal experience as a carer, or from their work and careers as care professionals.

Our SLSW Carers are located throughout Devon, Cornwall, Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay. We aim to recruit carers in all areas to widen the choice for people. It is one of our aims to enable people to remain in their local communities rather than having to move to another part of the county to access an appropriate service.

4 How are SLSW Carers assessed and approved?

Carers are vetted by SLSW to assess their suitability for this role and will go through an assessment and training process and scrutiny by an independent Approval Panel who will make the final recommendation as to whether the applicant should be approved.

The assessment process usually takes between eight to 12 weeks and is undertaken by a Shared Lives Coordinator (SLC). The assessment includes comprehensive references and checks, including an enhanced check with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS – formerly the Criminal Records Bureau), medical, employment, housing and financial checks and personal as well as professional references. The applicant will be visited in their home and everyone living in the home will be part of the assessment process.

Applicants must attend training which looks at the values and attitudes needed to be a SLSW Carer as well as the practical and emotional issues of supporting someone in your home on a full or part-time basis.

Safeguarding Adults, Health and Safety and Medication Management, Equality and Diversity training are included in this training. No application will be presented to the Approval Panel until all parts of the assessment are completed. Please note that training is a combination of online workbooks and face-to-face training sessions.

Once the assessor is satisfied that the applicant has the necessary values, skills, experience, motivation and support from their household and an appropriate home, the application will be put forward to an independent Approval Panel. The panel is made up of volunteers who are independent of the scheme, but who have a wealth of experience in related fields and a commitment to supporting high quality Shared Lives services. All panel members have received training.

The panel will make a recommendation to SLSW about whether they feel the applicant should be approved. Once approved, the applicant will then become a SLSW Carer with SLSW and the matching process can begin as soon as the carer has Public Liability Insurance and an Emergency First Aid certificate. There is training for newly approved carers to complete on: Communication, Person-Centred Approaches, Finances - including how to support someone with their money - and the Mental Capacity Act

Approved SLSW Carers undertake additional training as and when required.

All carers are expected to attend Mental Capacity Act training- foster carers especially usually enjoy learning more about MCA and positive risk taking as they support and enable the young person to grow into adulthood and fulfil their potential. SLSW has a healthy attitude towards positive risk taking and encourage young people to develop their skills and support the foster carers to move away from a more risk averse culture within the children's arena.

SLSW is aware that foster carers will have undergone an extensive assessment and training programme and would encourage the applicant to share with the assessor what the carer is willing to share in terms of previous paperwork. However, SLSW Carers do have to undergo our own assessment process but foster carers will find it is less intrusive and intense as a foster assessment.

5 How are SLSW Carers supported?

All SLSW Carers are required to meet agreed standards of care set down by Shared Lives South West and are regularly visited and monitored against our standards and policies and procedures.

They will also be able to access training and support through Shared Lives South West to ensure they are able to meet the care and support needs of the people placed with them. Carers are expected to update relevant mandatory training. Every SLSW Carer who is part of Shared Lives South West is supported by a Shared Lives Coordinator (SLC) who will usually cover a broad geographical area. The SLC has three main roles:

- To manage the referral, including the matching process between the person who wishes to use the service, carers and the other people who live in the carer's home.
- To assess, monitor and review SSW Carers to ensure that they are working in a person-centred way and that the work of the scheme meets the requirements of the CQC regulations for adult social care, as well as the requirements of the Local Authority commissioners.
- To support carers in their role through regular telephone and face-to-face contact, and by organising training, networking events and meetings on a regular basis.

Foster carers will come with wide range of experiences of how they have been supported by fostering teams or agencies. Working with adult services can be very different to children's services, however SLSW does endeavour to make contact at least every twelve weeks (or as required). Sometimes this may only be a telephone call rather than a face-to-face visit. SLSW also conducts a yearly review. All carers will have visits in accordance with what they need so for example, newer carers may have more frequent visits.

The SLC will also be the allocated worker for the person you are supporting; this may mean they see the young person without you at times.

The SLC is available by email and phone during working hours. Some will work part time but you will get to know their work pattern. If your allocated SLC is not available then we have almost twenty SLCs who can all assist if needed and four Team Leaders. There is a duty system at weekends and Bank Holidays 9am-5pm.

We also have a designated Short Breaks Worker who will help with booking respite if and when this is appropriate.

We also have a specialist Funding and Benefits Team who will, when appropriate, help the young person to maximise their benefits and will take on corporate responsibility.

6 How are referrals made to Shared Lives South West?

Generally foster carers will move to SLSW with a person already in an arrangement and who is transitioning from children's services. If this is the case we will require a referral and confirmation of funding to be in place for the young person/s being supported before we would start to assess any foster carer.

In some cases, foster carers will also have other bedrooms available to utilise and in a Shared Lives arrangement a carer can support up to three people at a time.

If a foster carer wishes to remain registered with a foster agency then we will endeavour to work with the agency to ensure we are very clear about who is responsible for any future matching to reduce any risks for the individuals being supported. We would highly recommend having this conversation with the foster agency and SLSW at the time of application.

Other referrals are usually made by staff in social care and health teams, and other care agencies on behalf of a person hoping to use the service. Referrals can also be made by individuals and their families directly. There are currently contracts in place with: Devon County Council, Cornwall Council, Somerset County Council, Torbay and South Devon NHS Trust and Plymouth City Council for the provision of Shared Lives services.

In most cases we expect that the referring agency will have been involved in undertaking a needs assessment and drawing up a care plan for the person and have indicated that a Shared Lives service might be a good solution to meet their needs.

At this point, SLSW could be contacted by phone to discuss the referral with one of the Team Leaders. They will have an overview of our SLSW Carers who currently have capacity for new referrals. We will need a referral with some basic information. The referral will be allocated to one of our SLC's who will then discuss it further and gather more detailed information about the person in order to seek a match with one of our carers.

We will then undertake the matching process and if a suitable SLSW Carer can be found, we would progress with setting up a licence agreement and a Shared Lives agreement to enable the person needing a service to move into their new family-based accommodation.

7 What is the "matching" process?

The most important part of the referral process is the matching process. Our SLC's will look very closely at all the information given to them about the person's wishes and aspirations,

their care and support needs and their likes and dislikes, lifestyle and preferences. They use this information to match them with a SLSW Carer who could best support and care for them and enable them to live a full and happy life in their home.

The more information SLSW has about the person, the more likely it is we can find a good match and set up a service. It is also useful to have as much information as possible about the person's income and benefits at this point as this helps us to plan how we might maximise their income once they move into a Shared Lives service.

The matching process not only looks at the match between the carer and the person needing a service, it also considers the needs and preferences of the other people who live in the house – this may be members of the carer's family and other people who are already living there. It is important that the service will work for everyone involved.

To make sure that there is a good match, there is an introductory period where the person will visit the SLSW Carer, initially for an afternoon but then perhaps overnight or for a weekend. There is no fixed pattern for the introductory period – it will be arranged between the person making the referral, the person needing a service, the Shared Lives Coordinator and the SLSW Carer. Shared Lives South West makes a charge for the introductory process based on our short break service.

For our short breaks service, the introductory process will usually be a trial stay, before any further regular stays are set up.

8 How long will the referral process take?

If we identify a possible SLSW Carer, the time it takes for the service to start will vary. Sometimes it can be almost straight away and other times it takes a few weeks. If we have a potential carer, it will depend upon how long it takes to gather all the information we need about the person, how long the introductory visits take to arrange, how many visits are needed and the circumstances of both the person and the carer and their family. We may also need to arrange extra specialist training or particular aids and adaptations to enable the carer to meet the person's needs and we would not move someone in until this has taken place.

9 Can I make a placement at short notice or in an emergency?

In some circumstances we may be able to organise a service in a shorter time span. Moving into a Shared Lives service should be a planned event where everyone is given time to get to know each other and feel comfortable about the move, but we do have some carers who are very experienced and flexible and could offer an emergency placement.

10 What if a suitable match for the person can't be found?

We will only set up a service if we can find a good match between a person needing a service and a SLSW Carer. We will not place people with SLSW Carers where there is not a good match as it is much more likely this will break down and this will be upsetting and disappointing for all concerned. If we cannot find a suitable match, there are some other options. We can place the person on a waiting list until such time that a suitable place does become available. Alternatively,

we might be able to recruit a new carer with a specific person in mind, but this can take three to six months.

11 Can referrals be made directly to SLSW Carers?

SLSW Carers offer personal care and therefore have to be part of a Shared Lives scheme registered with CQC and can only support people who have been matched and placed by the Shared Lives scheme. All arrangements must be made through SLSW. Our carers are aware that they cannot take referrals unless they come through us. Any direct placement with a SLSW Carer would not therefore be classified as Shared Lives and would not benefit from any of the special arrangements and dispensations that exist specifically for SLSW Carers.

12 How much does a Shared Lives service cost?

SLSW has a banded fee structure for its long term and short break services in each area which will determine the total charge for a Shared Lives service, inclusive of all rent, household and support costs.

People using services are responsible for meeting the rent and household costs within the total fee. People may be required to pay a contribution towards their care and support under the fairer charging rules of their local authority.

The cost of a Shared Lives service will depend on the individual's level of need and what support they will require from the carer. Services are purchased from SLSW not from the carer directly.

SLSW supports people to claim all eligible benefits.

13 What does the payment to the carer cover?

Part of the payment covers the basic rent of the accommodation plus a contribution towards the upkeep of the communal parts of the home that the person has access to. The person signs a licence agreement to cover this aspect of the service. The payment also covers their living costs such as food, laundry, clothing, heating and lighting, and so on.

Most importantly, the payment covers the time and support given by the SLSW Carers in meeting the care and support needs of the individual. This may be support in getting up and dressed, preparing and eating meals, personal care needs and supporting people in tasks of daily life such as shopping and so on, and learning to live independently.

14 What role does the local authority have?

The role of SLSW is to support and enable the SLSW Carer to provide high quality care and support to the person we match with them. The SLC will support the carer and ensure that they provide the level of care and support that has been agreed through reviews and regular visits and contact with the person using the service and the carer.

We will make sure the person is happy with the service they are receiving and that the agreed outcomes for the services are being achieved.

Where the service is funded by a local authority, they retain a responsibility for supporting the person if they have any issues or dissatisfaction with the service and are responsible for arranging statutory reviews of the person, which they may wish the SLC and the SLSW Carer to have input into. If issues or emergencies arise, we expect Adult Social Care to work with us to resolve them and to make all arrangements for alternative accommodation and care should the service break down or become inappropriate to meet the person's needs. These responsibilities form part of the contract between each local authority and SLSW.

15 How will Shared Lives South West monitor the carers?

For new services, the SLC will keep in contact with the carer to see how the service is going. At the end of three months the SLC will review the service with the SLSW Carer and the person using the service to ensure that the service is working and that the carer and person are happy.

This will include:

- Reviewing whether the carer needs any further training or information to meet the person's needs now they have had a chance to get to know them better
- Reviewing whether the banding level agreed at the start of the service is appropriate or should be upgraded
- Reviewing whether the benefit maximisation process is complete
- Ensuring we have worked with the person using the service to set out the outcomes they want to achieve

The SLC will ask for input from the referring agency to see if there are any issues for them or for the person using the service that need to be fed back to the carer so that the service can be fine-tuned to meet the needs of the individual.

Each carer will be visited by their SLC and more frequently when there are issues or problems. There will be frequent phone contact between these visits. The SLC will undertake an annual review of the service provided by each carer, and of the person's individual plan.

16 How is Shared Lives South West itself monitored and regulated?

SLSW is registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and will be monitored by them for compliance against the requirements of the Health and Social Care Act 2008, as a provider of personal care services.

SLSW is developing its own quality assurance programme to ensure that the service it provides is of the highest quality and meets its customers' needs.

Each local authority that commissions a service has its own approach to monitoring our delivery of their contract and this can include regular monitoring meetings.

17 What costs are associated with becoming a SLSW Carer?

Foster carers are used to having a lot of their training and development needs funded by the children's services. When becoming a SLSW carer there will be some costs involved. As a charity we always aim to keep these costs as low as possible.

These costs are a DBS check (about £40 every three years), first aid training (usually about £30 depending upon the provider) and insurance (roughly £90 a year).

18 What happens if a service breaks down or is no longer appropriate?

SLSW may often be used as a stepping stone to more (or less) independent forms of care. The person may decide that they are ready to live more independently or may need a higher degree of support. Over time, a person's needs may change and the carer may no longer feel able to manage. It may be that circumstances within the SLSW Carer's own family mean they can no longer offer a Shared Lives service in their home. This should not happen out of the blue and will most likely have been anticipated.

Under normal circumstances when it is decided that a long-term service needs to end, the carer must give the person a minimum of 28 days' notice. This will be communicated to SLSW, the person using the service and the local authority's care manager. It is the care manager's responsibility to find suitable alternative accommodation.

In certain circumstances it may be necessary to end a service at short notice for the well-being of the person and/or the carer. It is hoped that by good joint working between SLSW and care managers, such situations can be anticipated and avoided. Should it arise, the care manager will need to make some emergency arrangements for the person. It is not possible to simply move the person to another SLSW Carer without undertaking this process.

We hope this answers your basic questions about Shared Lives South West and Shared Lives. If you have any other questions about Shared Lives South West contact our offices listed below:

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