

Frequently asked questions by those thinking about becoming a SLSW Carer



Who can become a Shared Lives South West Carer?

Shared Lives South West (SLSW) Carers come from all backgrounds and bring a wide range of life and work experiences. They are professional, paid, self-employed carers. We welcome people with care experience and transferable skills.

All carers are required to have public liability insurance, more can be found here: <https://sharedlivesplus.org.uk/membership/membership-benefits/insurance-if-you-need-it/>

Just as there is diversity in the people being supported by SLSW, carers need to come from a variety of backgrounds and have different life experiences, skills and qualities to help meet the needs of people they support. There are, however, some common criteria that SLSW need from you:

- To be at least 18 years-old. There is no upper age limit as long as carers are fit and healthy.
- To have a spare bedroom.
- To be a full-time resident in the UK or have leave to remain.
- To have the time to care and support the person to thrive.
- Anyone can apply to become a carer regardless of whether they are single/ a couple, have children or not.
- Being a SLSW Carer is open to everyone! You can be in a civil partnership, married, straight, LGBTQ+, whatever your race or religion.



Do I need specific qualifications to be a carer?

No. When you are preparing to be a SLSW Carer you will receive training to help you identify and build upon the skills you already have, and develop any new skills you might need.



What kind of support would I give?

The support you give to people is as individual as they are, but could range from:

- Supporting someone with practical things like washing, cooking or shopping and helping them develop these independent living skills.
- It could involve some more personal care including washing or dressing or reminding them to take their medication.
- Helping people make social networks – keeping in touch with families, making new friends and getting involved in their community.
- Supporting people to access education, volunteering, training and employment including how to manage their money and safely use it.
- Developing cultural and religious community relationships.



What if I'm not sure about sharing my home long-term?

Some SLSW Carers start by offering short breaks. It gives them a chance to find out what being a SLSW Carer is like. Short break Carers who have a spare room are often surprised by how much they enjoy it and then it's often an easy decision to open your home to someone long term. Some carers start long term placements straight from being approved. The choice is yours.

How long does the assessment process take?



We aim to go through the assessment process with you as efficiently as we can and you could become a SLSW Carer in as little as six to eight weeks, although sometimes it does take longer depending on the applicant's circumstances and the capacity of SLSW staff.



Can my partner become a SLSW Carer too?

Yes! Usually there is a main SLSW Carer and your partner can apply as a joint SLSW Carer.



Can you tell me about the application process?

Find out more here: www.sharedlivesw.org.uk



What do I need to pay for?

DBS, First Aid Training, Insurance and Shared Lives Plus membership.



Will I have a say in who I care for?

Yes! This is one of the best parts of SLSW; everyone involved has a say and needs to be happy with who they are going to live with and enjoy a short break with. It's totally unlike any other caring role.

As part of the assessment to become a SLSW Carer, you'll talk with your SLSW Coordinator (SLC) about who you'd like to support – their age range and needs, the number of people you will be approved to care for and any other considerations. Typically all arrangements will be well-matched and planned, with you all getting to know each other before deciding the match is right.



Will I need to do any training?

SLSW Carers undergo mandatory training for example: First Aid, Mental Capacity Act, Medication Awareness, Health and Safety, Hydration, Infection Control, Equality Diversity and inclusion, Person Centred Support and Values and Safeguarding Adults.

Other training is available depending on knowledge and skills and the needs of the people being supported.



How will becoming a SLSW Carer impact me if I am on benefits?

It must be declared to DWP as it's treated as earnings.



Does it impact my mortgage or tenancy?

If you have a tenancy you need an agreement from the landlord in the rented property. You also need an agreement with your mortgage provider as it could make your mortgage void if you do not declare it.



What support is available for SLSW Carers?

Your SLC will be on hand to support you. They will be able to provide you with any advice and guidance as well as ongoing training for the role. You'll also be able to access other services that you or the person you support need – the network of professionals around you will lead to incredible discoveries for the person you support – and you! SLSW will share activities and events to help support you.

We link you with other carers for support as we have the buddy system and we also organise social events.

We also have a growing SLSW Carers Facebook private group where carers from across the organisation chat, post pictures and share activities.

The national umbrella organisation Shared Lives Plus can also support you. You can join as a member and will be part of a network of 16,000 carers.



Can I be a SLSW Carer if I have pets?

Yes.



Can I be a SLSW Carer if I have a long-term health condition?

Your health will be considered when applying to be a SLSW Carer and any long-term conditions are taken into account. The most important factor is whether you are physically and psychologically fit to cope with the demands of supporting someone else.



Will a police record stop me from being approved as a SLSW Carer?

Not necessarily. We ask for potential carers to be open and honest about their past convictions. The law states that the only criminal convictions that prevent people from caring are those that relate to an offence against children or vulnerable adults or a sexual offence. Minor offences may not count against you in your application to be a SLSW Carer. You will need to disclose all criminal convictions when you first apply to SLSW as the application process to become a SLSW Carer includes an enhanced criminal record check.



What happens if I am ill?

Contact your SLC and your contingency plan will be put into action.



What happens if I want to go on holiday?

SLSW Carers will have respite, but will need to discuss this further with their SLC.



Do I need to have disabled access?

It is not essential to have disabled access, however it may increase opportunities of a match.



How much support will I receive from SLSW?

We have a dedicated staff team who are always there to help. There is also an emergency telephone number and an on call service at weekends.



Can friends and relatives still come and stay in my home?

Yes.



Do I need to be able to drive and have a car?

No, but it is helpful as part of the role.

If you are a driver you are expected to have valid insurance and driving licence.



What happens if I have a dental/doctor appointment?

We encourage you to maintain your own well-being and use your support carers when needed.



Can the person I care for come with me on holiday?

Yes if they want to.



If I attend meetings with SLSW do I get travel expenses?

No.



Can I get any help with completing my tax return?

No. SLSW refers SLSW Carers to the HMRC. There is a leaflet which we send out to SLSW Carers. We also provide you with details of your payments at the end of each financial year to help with your tax return. There is also access to assistance via the

Shared Lives Plus membership.



Can I work and be a SLSW Carer ?

Yes. You have to acknowledge that the person you are supporting may need your support during your working hours.



Can I have more than one person in the same room?

Yes if the people you are supporting are a couple or if it is the wish of the two people to share a room.



Do I need internet access and to be able to be computer literate?

Yes, it is vital to your role. A lot of SLSW Carers access correspondence, communication and training on their mobile phone, laptop or iPad.

If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.

