

1. Who are Shared Lives South West (SLSW)?

Shared Lives South West (SLSW) is a registered charity providing Shared Lives services across the South West of England. We offer accommodation with care and support, within the homes of our approved Shared Lives Carers.

Our services include long-term arrangements, short-breaks, and daytime support, for adults with care and support needs. We focus on promoting independence, supporting health and daily care, and helping people to achieve their aspirations and goals.

We are registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Founded in 2004, we were previously known as SWAPS (South West Adult Placement Scheme).

2. Who is a Shared Lives service suitable for?

SLSW offers services to people who have a learning disability, autism, issues with their mental health, physical disabilities, and early-stage dementia, as well as other support needs. Shared Lives can also support parents who have a learning disability.

The service is available to adults, usually over 18, although we can (in some circumstances) support young people aged 16 + who are in transition to adult care.

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 moving them into a care home would be inappropriate. For example, a young person moving into a home with people significantly older 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.
- where someone has been fostered and they are approaching 18, and have an eligible care and support need, and wish to continue living with their foster family.

3. Who are our SLSW Carers?

Shared Lives Carers are individuals, couples, or families who offer care and accommodation in their own homes. They can provide support to a maximum of three people using the service at a time. Shared Lives Carers have a variety of skills, experience, and knowledge, which may come from providing care and support to a family member or friend, or from their professional working life. We also look at transferrable skills and the values that people hold.

Shared Lives Carers are located throughout Devon, Plymouth, Torbay, Cornwall and Somerset. We aim to recruit carers in all areas to widen the choices 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 Shared Lives Carers assessed and approved?

Carers are thoroughly assessed by SLSW to determine their suitability for the role. This includes an assessment, training, and attendance at an independent Shared Lives panel. The panel makes the final recommendation on whether an applicant should be approved. The entire assessment process takes about 12 weeks and is undertaken by a Shared Lives Coordinator (SLC). Various references and checks are undertaken including:

- DBS check: An enhanced check with the Disclosure and Barring Service.
- Medical check: This is self-certified on the application form.
- Employment history check: To verify employment background.
- Housing and Financial check: Ensures stability in housing and finances.
- Right to Work check: Confirms eligibility to work in the UK.
- References: Both personal and professional references are required.

The applicant will be visited in their home. All adults (and children where appropriate) living in the home will be spoken to as part of the assessment process. Applicants must complete our in-house online training together with some external training (flexible online and/or booklets).

The training includes but is not limited to:

- Medication
- Safeguarding Adults
- Mental Capacity Act
- Health & Safety
- Equality & Diversity
- First Aid – the minimum requirement is a Basic Emergency First Aid which includes CPR (this is an in-person course)
- Data Protection
- Oliver McGowan Learning Disability and Autism
- Person Centred Care
- Infection prevention & Control
- Fluid & Nutrition
- Safeguarding Children
- Communication
- Privacy & Dignity

*Please note courses need to be renewed and refreshed at various times.

If evidenced through provision of appropriate certificates, comparative up-to-date training through current or previous employment may be accepted. This can be discussed further with the assessing SLC.

The assessing SLC will gather evidence for the assessment that shows the applicant has the necessary values, skills, experience, motivation, support from their household, and an appropriate home. The application will then be put forward to an independent approval panel. The panel is made up of volunteers who are independent of the scheme and have a wealth of experience in related fields. All panel members have received relevant training for their role.

The Registered Shared Lives Manager will make a recommendation to the approval panel stating whether they feel the applicant should be approved. If the panel agrees, the applicant will be approved and become a Shared Lives Carer with SLSW.

The matching process can begin as soon as the carer has been approved. The carer will have completed all necessary training and taken out Public Liability Insurance before beginning to support a person.

5. How are Shared Lives Carers supported?

All Shared Lives Carers are required to meet agreed SLSW Carer standards. Carers are regularly visited and monitored against our standards, policies, and procedures.

Carers will be able to access ongoing training and support through SLSW to ensure they can fulfil their role. Carers are expected to keep updated with our mandatory training every three years.

Every Shared Lives Carer within our scheme is supported by a Shared Lives Coordinator (SLC) who has three main roles:

To manage the referral and matching process between the person wishing to use the service, relevant professionals, carers, and other people living in the carer's home.

To assess, monitor, and review Shared Lives Carers to ensure that they are working in a person-centred way. Additionally, the work of the scheme meets the requirements of CQC regulations 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.

SLSW will carry out a face-to-face monitoring visit with carers at least every twelve weeks. Carers will be able to telephone and email their SLC in-between these visits. Where there is a need for more frequent visits, the SLC will work closely with the carer to arrange this. SLSW also conducts an annual Carer Appraisal and a Review for the person/s supported.

SLSW operates a duty system Monday–Friday (9am–5pm) should the carers allocated SLC not be available for support. There is also on-call emergency support at weekends and Bank Holidays (9am-5pm).

SLSW also has a specialist funding and benefits team who will, when appropriate, help the person to maximise their benefits and take on corporate appointeeship for them.

6. How are referrals made to Shared Lives South West?

Referrals are usually made by professionals in social care and health teams, and sometimes by care agencies on behalf of the person hoping to use the service. Referrals may be made by people wishing to use the service and their families directly.

SLSW works closely with transition teams for people reaching adulthood who have been supported within fostering and now wish to transition into Shared Lives.

We request that our referral is completed with detailed information about the person. We can also accept an up-to-date care and support plan which provides detailed information about the person being referred to us.

SLSW can be contacted by phone ahead of a referral being made to speak with the team. We can advise on the suitability for our service as well as having an overview of our Shared Lives Carer vacancies.

We currently have contracts with: Devon County Council, Cornwall Council, Somerset County Council, Torbay Council and Plymouth City Council for the provision of Shared Lives services.

7. What is the “matching” process?

The most important part of the referral process is the process of matching. Our SLC's will look very closely considering the person's wishes and aspirations, their care and support needs, their likes and dislikes, and lifestyle and preferences. They use this information to match the person with a Shared Lives Carer who could best support them and enable them to live a full and happy life in their home.

The more information a Shared Lives Carer has about the person, the more likely it is we can find a good match and progress offering a service. It is also important to have as much information as possible about the person's income and benefits at this point too, so we can be sure the service is affordable to the person.

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

To support the matching process, there is usually a person-centred introductory period, where the person may visit the Shared Lives Carer over one or more visits, to support the transition into the Shared Lives home. Funding will be agreed for the introductory period based on SLSW short break costings.

8. How long will the referral process take?

The time taken for the service to start can vary for many reasons. On occasion we may need to arrange extra training or aids and adaptations may be needed, to enable the carer to meet the person's needs. SLC's communicate closely with carers, professionals, and family members to ensure that the referral process runs smoothly, and timescales are clear and agreed.

9. Can I make a referral for a service to start 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. We are not an emergency service, although we do have some carers who are very experienced and flexible, who may be able to accept an emergency referral.

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

SLSW takes great care in the matching process. If we are unable to find a suitable match, we will communicate this with the referrer and agree on how best to proceed.

11. Can referrals be made directly to Shared Lives South West Carers?

No, all arrangements must be made through SLSW.

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. This sets out the total charge inclusive of rent and household cost, and care and support costs.

People using services are responsible for meeting the rent and household costs within the total fee. People may also 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 person's level of care and support they require from the carer. The costs for this will be agreed upon during the matching process.

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 license agreement to cover this aspect of the service. The payment also covers their living costs such as food, laundry, clothing, wifi, heating, lighting, and so on.

Most importantly, the payment covers the time and support given by the Shared Lives Carer, in meeting the care and support needs of the person. This may include supporting getting up and dressed, preparing and eating meals, bathing, shopping, attending activities, building independence skills, and so on.

14. What role does the local authority have?

SLSW works closely with the local authority to monitor and review each person supported within the scheme. The local authority will speak with the person supported, the Shared Lives Carer and the SLC, to ensure that the service remains appropriate and effective for the person. SLSW works with the local authority to resolve any issues or emergencies and arrange for alternative accommodation and support should this be needed. These responsibilities form part of the contract between each local authority and SLSW.

15. How will Shared Lives South West support and monitor the service?

The SLC will keep in contact with the carer to monitor how the service is going. When the person has been living with the carer for 15 weeks, the SLC will review 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
 - Reviewing whether the person's benefit maximisation process is complete
- Ensuring we have worked with the person using the service to set out the outcomes they want to achieve by writing a personalised care and support plan
- Each carer will be visited by their SLC every 3 months and more frequently if there

are issues or problems. There may be phone or email contact between these visits. The SLC will undertake an annual review of the service provided by each carer and a review of the person's care and support plan.

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

SLSW is registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and will be monitored by them for compliance with 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?

When becoming a Shared Lives Carer there will be some costs involved. As a charity we always aim to keep these costs as low as possible.

You will need to cover the cost for the following:

- A DBS check (renewed every three years)
- First aid training (renewed every 3 years)
- Public Liability insurance (renewed every year) - we recommend that this is sourced through Shared Lives Plus, who can also offer membership to their scheme.

This will be discussed in detail with your SLC

18. What happens when a service ends?

There are several reasons why a Shared Lives service may end. For example, a person may be ready to move on to greater independence, or their needs may change. Alternatively, a carer may no longer be able to continue offering the support needed. Such a change should not come as a surprise and is typically anticipated in advance.

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. SLSW will work with the local authority to help the person find suitable alternative accommodation.

On occasion 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 the local authority, such situations can be anticipated and avoided. However, should it happen, the local authority will be responsible for making emergency arrangements for the person.

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

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