

NOVEMBER 2026

Shared Lives South West Newsletter

shared lives south west

Updates from the CEO

There is a lot happening across Shared Lives South West, I wanted to keep carers informed.

CQC Inspection Update

We are currently going through our inspection by the Care Quality Commission. Our last inspection was in 2019, so this has been a long time coming. We have greatly valued our 'Outstanding' rating and are keen to retain it, recognising what it says about the quality of support provided by our staff and carers.

We have been preparing for inspection over several years, although much of that preparation is simply about continuing to improve how we work. Reviewing our practice, listening to people's experiences and making changes have always been central to providing a good service. I am grateful to staff and carers for the way you have contributed to these improvements and adapted to changes over the years.

The inspectors have now visited all of our offices, spoken with staff and carers, and met many of the people we support in their Shared Lives households. The feedback so far has been very positive, and we are hopeful of retaining our rating. We will share the outcome when we know.

Cornwall Tender Progress

In Cornwall, the tender process I mentioned in my previous update is progressing well. We have submitted all the required documents for review and now expect to know the outcome by November. I would particularly like to thank Lily, Joe and Jamie, who all live in Shared Lives in Cornwall and took part in a presentation about co-production as part of our submission. They did a wonderful job of sharing their experiences and showing why involving people in decisions about Shared Lives matters. Their contribution was an important part of our presentation, and we are very grateful to them.

Open Board Meeting in Cornwall

This followed a wonderful Open Board Meeting, where households joined staff and trustees to discuss how we can improve Shared Lives and help more people benefit from it. It was fantastic to have more than 50 people together in one room, sharing experiences, offering ideas and talking so positively about Shared Lives.

These opportunities are valuable because they bring trustees closer to the experiences of households, and help us think together about the future of the organisation. Thank you to all of you who contributed to discussions.

Changes to Carer Communications

You may have noticed some changes to this newsletter, with information that may previously have appeared in monthly carer emails. Going forward, the newsletter will focus on wider news, stories and updates, while carer emails will contain essential service information that all carers are required to read. This change should make important information easier to find and keep track of.

Thank You

Across all this work, the experiences of carers and the people you support remain at the heart of what we do. Thank you, as always, for your care, commitment and contribution to Shared Lives.

Dominic Spayne CEO at SLSW



Open Board Meeting 2026

We held our Open Board Meeting, welcoming Shared Lives households to join us and be part of the conversation.

Everything was provided in Easy Read, including the agenda and presentation, helping to ensure everyone could take part and have their voice heard.

A highlight of the day was hearing from Shared Lives Carer Caroline and Gabrielle, who she supports, as they shared their experiences and brought to life what Shared Lives is all about.

Our Trustees adopted the Annual Report, welcomed new trustees to the board, and heard updates from CEO Dominic Spayne on how the charity is performing and our plans for the future.

We also spent time thinking creatively together about how we can make Shared Lives even better, and how we can help more people benefit from Shared Lives in the years ahead.

Thank you to everyone who attended and contributed to such a positive and inspiring day.




shared lives
Annual Report









A warm welcome to Lucy

Lucy Foord has joined the Shared Lives South West team at the Devon office as a Funding and Benefits Officer.
We caught up with Lucy to find out more about her...

Can you tell us a little bit about your background?
I qualified working in the sports industry, then got a job in local authority. I worked for many years in housing benefits and council tax, then moved to a role more aligned with my core values, based around supporting the environment or people. I've worked for Dartmoor National Park, Action East Devon (A charity supporting young people), and my last role was with Age UK Devon.

How are you finding it so far?
Good. The people are all helpful, supportive, and kind. There is a lot to learn, but everyone is encouraging and helping me.

What made you apply for the role?
Again, the role aligned with my core values, centred around supporting people and making a difference, and I liked the sound of the charity. It's supportive and empowering nature towards its staff was something I was looking for in my working life.

What do you enjoy out of work?
I enjoy keeping fit and healthy. I have been a vegan for almost ten years now. I like Pilates, the gym, and walking at the weekend, followed by coffee and cake or a cheeky cider. It's all about balance. I enjoy reading and was pleased to hear Shared Lives South West has a newly formed book group. My two teenagers also take up a lot of my time, but my little cat Luna keeps me sane and supplies cuddles.

What are you looking forward to the most at Shared Lives?
The Christmas work do – WOW [the staff team is having dinner at the aquarium in Plymouth]! And helping people, of course.

What three things would you take to a desert island?
A Kindle with 1000's of books (and never-ending charge), decent coffee, and my cat (the kids will be fine).



Spike's national award win!

Moving into a new home can be a life-changing moment, but for writer and performer Spike Brooks, it also coincided with an unexpected national achievement.

Spike is celebrating after winning the Sports, Arts and Entertainment category at the national Dimensions Learning Leaders' Disability and Autism Awards.

The recognition came shortly after he moved in with Shared Lives Carers Susan and Robert Smith in Newton Abbot.

The award journey began with what seemed like a routine email.

"I received an email that I was nominated for something. And I was like, 'huh, neat', and that's when I found out about Dimensions," said Spike.

While pleased to be nominated, he never expected to progress through the competition.

"Being nominated for an award surprised me, but I thought that was it. Probably a month later, I got another email saying I was one of the finalists. And I was like, 'huh, that's cool', but again, I didn't think I'd win."

The news that he had won arrived while he was with his theatre group.

"I can't actually say what I said, but I was shocked, to say the least," Spike laughed.

After keeping the news under wraps until the official announcement, he attended the awards ceremony on 20 October alongside his mother.

The Dimensions Leaders' Awards 2026 ceremony took place at Paintworks in Bristol, celebrating adults with learning disabilities and autistic people across the UK.

Twenty people and groups with disabilities were recognised for their leadership, creativity, advocacy, and contribution to their communities at the ceremony.

"I did say I wasn't expecting to win, but I am very grateful and proud to receive it. I went with my mother, whom I thanked for creating me. It's great to get an award and messages from my friends and family.

"I'm thankful to Laura Cantliff and the Dimensions team. This experience would definitely be mentioned in my next play, Stuck On Chapter Two: The Unnecessary Sequel Written By An A.I. (Autistic Idiot)."

The award recognises Spike's significant contribution to Plymouth's arts and cultural scene. A writer, performer and self-confessed metalhead, he has built a reputation for championing inclusion, creativity and authentic self-expression.

As a key member of Funky Llama, Spike regularly MCs events across the city, from festivals to club nights, helping create welcoming spaces that celebrate diversity and community connection.

His acclaimed one-man show, Stuck on Chapter One, premiered at Theatre Royal Plymouth in 2023 and has since reached an even wider audience through podcast platforms. The production offers a heartfelt, humorous and insightful exploration of autism.

Beyond his solo work, Spike collaborates with Extraordinary Bodies and Diverse City while developing a multimedia franchise based on his own original storytelling. His creative projects often draw on themes of neurodiversity, alternative worlds and individuality, inspiring audiences to view difference as a strength.

Winning a national Learning Leaders Award is another milestone in an already impressive creative journey. For Spike, the recognition may have been unexpected, but it reflects the impact he continues to make through his writing and performances.

And while the award now has pride of place, it sounds as though Spike is already turning his attention to the next chapter of his story.





Being a carer one year on

One year ago, Jan Shaw took a leap of faith and became a Shared Lives Carer with Shared Lives South West. After many years of fostering and working in housing, homelessness services and supported housing, Jan found herself at a crossroads and looking for a new direction.

“I kept seeing Shared Lives South West adverts on Facebook,” she said. “Eventually I made an enquiry. I wasn’t even sure I’d be suitable, but the more I learnt about Shared Lives, the more I realised it was a really good fit.”

Twelve months on, Jan’s home in Chudleigh is a busy and welcoming place where she shares her life with Jordan, Lucy, two French Bulldogs called Basil and Margot, and two chickens who greet you in the front garden.

Together, they have created a home full of laughter, friendship and opportunities to grow.

Jordan was the first person to move in with Jan, relocating from Cornwall to Devon. Having previously lived in another Shared Lives household, he was ready for a fresh start.

“I wanted to come here to see if I could navigate my own world and my own life,” he said.

Jordan quickly settled into life with Jan and enjoys spending time with Basil, who soon became one of his favourite companions. Since then, he has grown in confidence and developed new skills that are helping him become more independent.

A particularly significant change has

been learning to travel by bus. Previously, Jordan relied on taxis to get to Dawlish Garden Trust, using much of his benefits to cover the cost. With Jan's support and encouragement, and inspired by Lucy's confidence using public transport, Jordan now travels by bus to his day service.

"He's financially so much better off and it's given him so much more confidence," Jan explained.

Jordan agrees.

"Who would have thought a year ago I'd be catching buses and getting things from the supermarket for myself?" he said proudly.

The savings are helping Jordan work towards another goal: a holiday of his own. Travelling has always been something he has wanted to do and he is currently saving towards a future trip, with Edinburgh high on the list of destinations he'd love to visit.

"Jordan has never been on a plane and he'd love to go to Edinburgh, but if that doesn't work out we are also thinking about other plans," said Jan reassuringly.

Lucy joined the household after hearing about Shared Lives South West through Jordan. Having met while attending Dawlish Gardens Trust, they were already friends, making the transition easier for everyone.

Lucy was keen to gain more independence while still maintaining strong relationships with her family.

"It's been an adjustment, but I'm settling," she said just a month after moving in. "Jan is kind and helpful."

Lucy continues to enjoy an active social life, meeting friends to enjoy her remote-controlled car hobby and playing football regularly for Exeter Ability FC.

Looking ahead, she hopes to find employment, possibly working as a dog walker.

At home, Lucy is making the most of having her own space and is excited about plans to redecorate her bedroom later this year, choosing the colours herself. Jan has also been supporting her to develop practical skills, including making homemade jam as Christmas gifts for family members.

Jordan and Lucy both attend Dawlish Gardens Trust and regularly access day opportunities at Farm Effect at Rattycombe Farm. At home, Jan encourages them to play an active role in everyday life, helping with household chores, budgeting and planning their spending.



"A big part of what we do is learning about the value of things, saving money and sticking to a budget," said Jan.

The pair have also embraced new experiences together. Jan's passion for horses led to both Jordan and Lucy volunteering at the Pony Club Championships at Bicton Arena.

Lucy took responsibility for the red safety flag, learning the correct procedures and helping riders check numbers, while Jordan managed timings with a stopwatch and whistle and communicated with neighbouring fences.

"It was brilliant," said Jan.

The household has also shared plenty of memorable moments closer to home, from watching the eclipse together to enjoying film nights and everyday moments that strengthen their bond.

For Jordan, having someone he trusts has made a huge difference.

"Jan helps with just about everything really," he said. "I feel I can go to her if I have a problem and she'll do her best to sort it out. She helps with paperwork, medical appointments and things like that."

Having Lucy move in has added another positive dimension to the household.

"It's good we all get on well," said Jordan.

"The advantage was that they already knew each other," added Jan. "That made things much easier and they've supported each other in different ways."

Jordan has even begun helping Jan with interviews for prospective Shared Lives Carers, a role offered by Shared Lives South West to ensure new carers feel welcomed and can answer questions about the role and services.

"We've done three so far," said Jan. "It's really helped Jordan's confidence meeting new people."

Jan describes the support she receives from Shared Lives South West as a key factor in her success. She credits both her Shared Lives Coordinator, Claire Young, who supported her through the approval process, and current coordinator Fiona Glanvill, who continues to support her now.

"Fiona and I just clicked straight away," Jan said. "I know I can ask her a random question or talk something through and she'll respond quickly."

Reflecting on her first year, Jan says one of her biggest lessons has been learning to ask for support when she needs it.

"I've realised I'm not a burden and that it's okay to ask for help. I can cope, and I'm doing well."

For anyone considering becoming a Shared Lives Carer, her advice is simple:

"I'm a single carer, and I wouldn't want that to put anyone off. Don't let it feel daunting. It is such a rewarding career."

After just one year, Jan has helped Jordan and Lucy develop confidence, independence and aspirations for the future.

In return, they have created a home filled with friendship, shared experiences and plenty of laughter.





Muggle memories made!

Muggles Peter, Peter and Evie enjoyed a magical day out at the Harry Potter Studio Tour, discovering the magic behind the films.

Peter and Evie, who are Peter's Shared Lives Carers, joined him on the visit to explore the iconic sets, props and special effects that brought the wizarding world to life.

What great photos and awesome memories made!







Birthday treats for Robert

Robert had a lovely birthday weekend with friends, finished off with a walk around Porthlevan.
These lovely photos were sent in by his Shared Lives Carer Diane Liddle.
Happy Birthday Robert!







Penzance Pride event

Some of our Cornwall team were out in force at the Pride Day in Penzance.
Many people stopped by to find out about Shared Lives services and becoming a carer, while others were drawn to Rhubarb, a cute dog owned by Shared Lives Coordinator Jenny Butt.







Smiles all round on days out

Shared Lives Carers John and Janelle sent in these lovely smiley photos from when they've been out and about.

They support Richard, Melissa, Michael and Jacob on respite, who are pictured.







Spiderman film cinema visit

Shared Lives Carer Melissa Boardman took her household to the cinema to see the new Spiderman film, Spiderman: Brand New Day.
They- Laura, Hattie and Melissa's son- all really enjoyed it







Ecplise birthday celebration

"Tracy had a lovely birthday," said Shared Lives Carer Eileen McLoughlin.
"We went to the circus, enjoyed a meal out, and then finished the day watching the eclipse in the evening."
Ann-Mari, who uses our services and lives with Eileen, is also pictured.





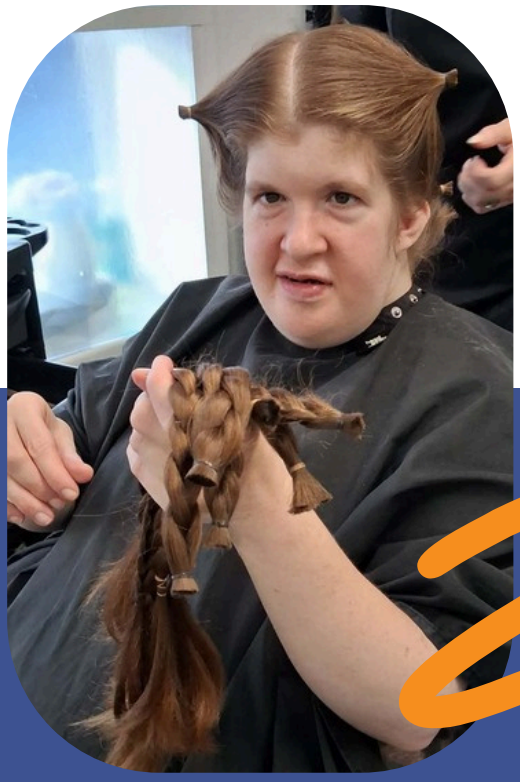


Fun times painting

The photos were sent in by Shared Lives Carer Tracy Workman.
Antony, who Tracy supports, is pictured with Leah, who is Tracy's granddaughter.







Lyndsey's special charity hair cut

How incredible is this?
Lyndsey, who uses our services and is supported by Shared Lives Carer Ann Sandercock, cut her hair for The Little Princess Trust.
Not only did she donate her hair to the fantastic cause, she also raised £100 in sponsorship.





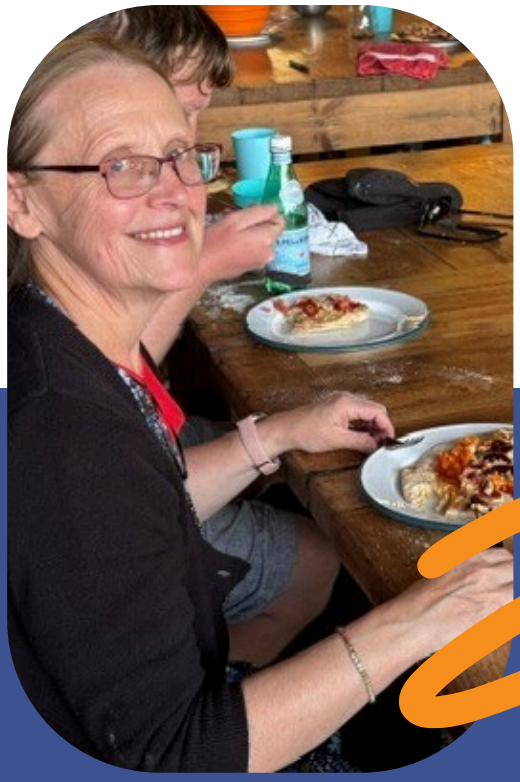


Bob's birthday meet up

How wonderful...
Bob got his birthday wish to go to the seaside," said Caroline O'Sullivan, a Shared Lives Carer.
"We spent a long weekend in Newquay, meeting up with three generations of his family."
A big happy birthday Bob!







Summer celebration time

We were sent these lovely pictures from Shared Lives Carer Karen Parker, who supports Linda long-term. Linda is pictured making pizza at a Mencap event recently.

Plus, there is a photo of Linda and Debbie, who enjoys short breaks, at Linda's day service summer celebration.





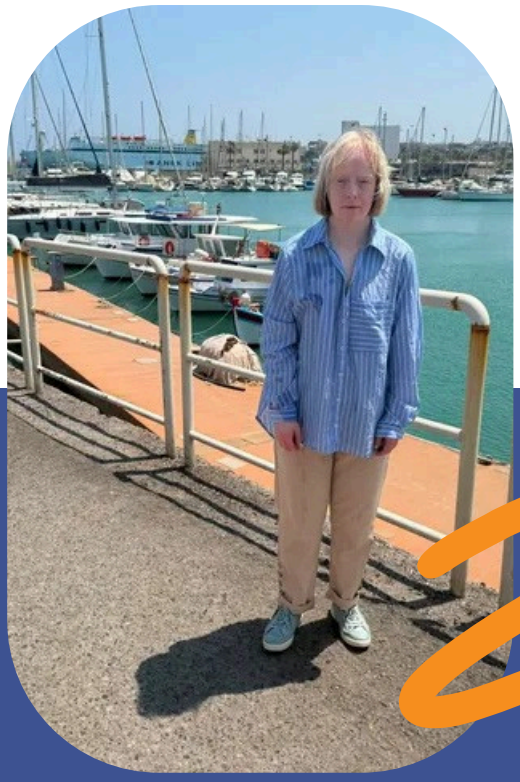


Ten Pin Bowling friday fun

A Friday bowling session and lunch out were enjoyed by one Devon Shared Lives household.
Shared Lives Carer Melissa Boardman took along Hattie and Laura, who she supports.
Daniel, Melissa's husband, and their son went too!
It looks like a fun time was had by all!





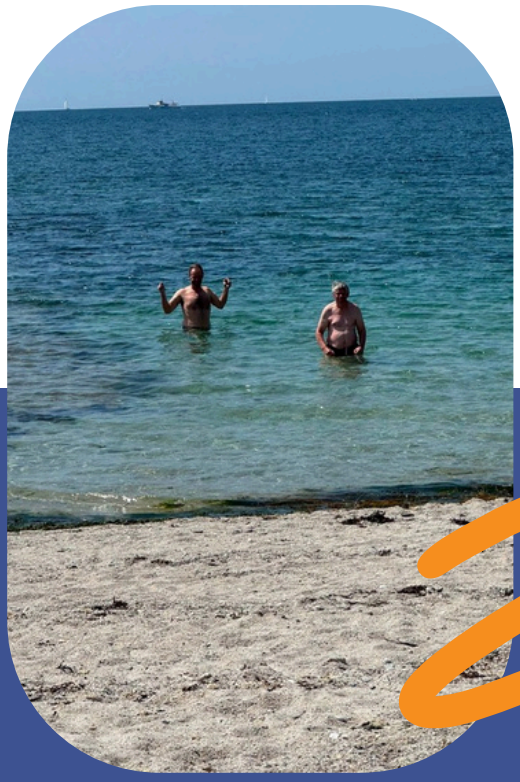


Greece fun in the sunshine!

"We enjoyed a family holiday with Laura and Hattie to Crete in Greece," said Melissa Boardman, a Shared Lives Carer.
"We had a lovely week filled with fun and sunshine."





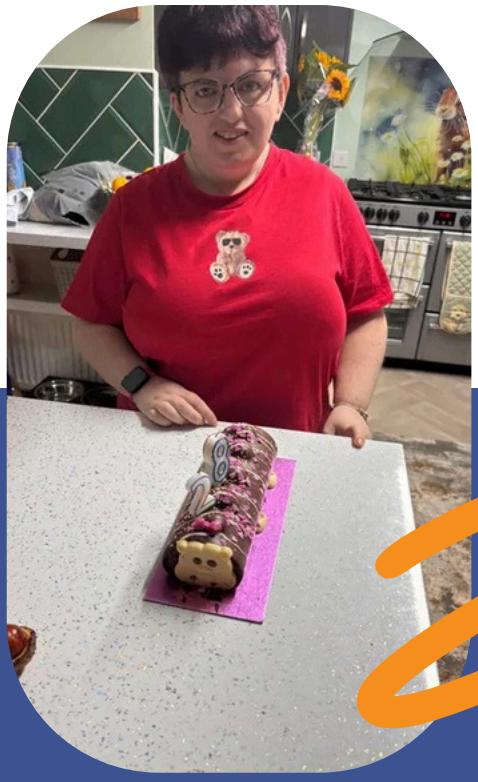


French escape away

Shared Lives Carer Nick Higgins sent in these great photos of his little French escape with Alistair and Kevin, who he supports.
We hope you had a wonderful time.







Lynn's birthday holiday

Shared Lives Carer Jo Crocker took Lynn, who she supports, away for her birthday.
It was Lynn's choice to have a little break away.
We hope you had a super time!







Plum picking adventures

Sylvia and Kathryn helped pick the plums from the garden and took the pips out of them, ready to make plum jam.
They are supported by the Hill family.





Beach, lunch and beautiful walks



"We've had a lovely few hours at Porth, near Newquay," said Nikki Drewett, Shared Lives Carer. "A nice lunch out, followed by a good walk, and some lovely views."

Pictured are Charlotte, Jamie and Helen, who use our services with Nikki.





Portugal proves popular for Elvin

"Elvin has been enjoying his visit back to his friends at a campsite in Portugal," said Di Cole, Elvin's Shared Lives Carer.

"He's joined the local bowling club, met up with his line dancing group and participated in the water aerobics meetings.

"He's spent two nights on a yacht with no electricity, anchored off the beach, and now in an apartment overlooking the beach of Sesimbra, just south of Lisbon.

"James [Di's husband] and I, love how he embraces a sense of fun and adventure in the great outdoors."







National Trust Communiity Meet ups

We had a great day at Lanhydrock National Trust.
The National Trust has given Cornwall Shared Lives Carers community access through Shared Lives South West on a number of dates this year.
Staff members Megan and Chloe joined some Shared Lives households for the day out.



Charity quiz team Winners!

Some of the staff team came together at Exeter Chiefs' ground, Sandy Park, for a quiz night in aid of the Exeter Chiefs Foundation.
It was a fun night of answering some tough questions, but one of the Shared Lives teams was victorious and won the whole quiz!
Lots of money was also raised for such a great cause.





Teignmouth pride support from SLSW

We had a busy time at Teignmouth Pride with Cllr Joan Atkin, Teignmouth's Deputy Mayor, stopping by our stand along with Cllr Penny Lloyd.
Jan and Lucy, a Shared Lives household, helped out on the stand; many thanks!
Communications Officer Dawn GIllingwater and Shared Lives Coordinators Sharon Button and Suzanne Morrison hosted the stand for the day.
Sam from our admin team also came to say 'hello' as well as Harry who uses our services.


shared lives south west
your heart,
your home.




lives
open your heart



Katie and Sam love the walks

Katie, Sam, and their Shared Lives Carer Zoe Maycox joined friends on a walk to the village of Pelynt and back.
Shared Lives is all about sharing and being part of the community, and this photo really sums that up!
Katie and Sam are pictured on the bench on the left at the front!
We hope you all had a great time.
They also dressed up for a Halloween party- we love the costumes!







Cream tea get together in the Devon office

What a fabulous afternoon at our cream team social event at the Devon office.
It was great to see so many carers and households come along.
A big thank you to those who popped in.








Rodda's



Sunflower fun in the sun for Peter

Shared Lives Carer Evie Brown sent in these great photos of Peter, who she supports, enjoying the Dorset Sunflower Trail with Evie's nearest and dearest.
It looks like it was a great day!





Chairty hair cut for Sophia

Sophia, the daughter of Shared Lives Carer Rachael Cowling, shaved her hair off for The Little Princess Trust.

Maureen, who Rachael supports, got in on the act and helped with the shaving process.

It's the second household that has supported the charity in recent weeks; it's such a great cause.

Well done to Sophia and all involved!





Scarecrow festival fun for Tracy

Tracy enjoyed a local scarecrow festival with her Shared Lives Carer Tracy Payne!
It looks fun! We love the Gruffalo scarecrow!





Baby cuteness overload!

What gorgeous photos!
Shared Lives Carer Mel Brunsdon sent in these great photos of Emma, who she supports, with baby boy Rylee. Rylee's mum Maja, is a former colleague of Mel's husband (pictured in the blue t-shirt) and Charlotte is Mel's son's girlfriend.
It's great to see Shared Lives in action.





Kevin's special card

"This to me, sums up Shared Lives," said Shared Lives Carer Eileen Bond.
"A birthday card wishing Kevin, the gentleman we have supported for almost 20 years, a 'happy birthday to our adopted brother'.
"No other residential establishment would he be made to feel like this.
"Happy Birthday Kevin. We did everything we could to make your day special."
They celebrated Kevin's birthday with a train ride and a shopping day, which was his choice.



London experience

Chanroth had a wonderful time in London with her Shared Lives Carer, Tracey Chase. They visited The London Dungeon and enjoyed exploring its exciting and interactive attractions. In great spirits, they had their photo taken alongside the famous Jack the Ripper display, featuring the well-known tagline, "Will he strike again?"
They also spent time at Madame Tussauds, where Chanroth had the opportunity to take photos with lifelike wax figures of celebrities, including Taylor Swift and E.T.
To round off their day, they enjoyed a ride on the London Eye, taking in the spectacular views of the capital.



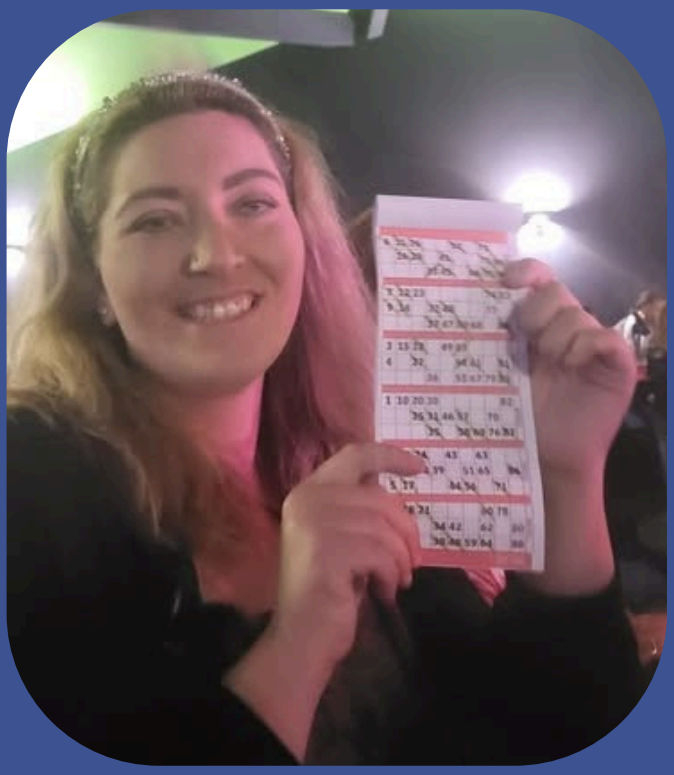
Football fun!

"Alec and Mark are pictured with The Jolly Green Giant before Yeovil Town FC's 6-0 win over Boston," said Gary Turner, a Shared Lives Carer
"The guys really enjoyed the game. "
We hope you had a cracking time



Care show learning

Team Leader Ed Bunce-Phillips attended the Care Show in Birmingham.
"It's been a lot of learning, conversations with the CQC about some best practice areas, and lots on AI and digital technologies," he said.



Bingo win for Abby

Well done to Abby!
While away on a holiday with her Shared Lives Carer Mel Thomas, in St Ives, Abby won at bingo!
"She is planning another holiday with her winnings," said Mel.



Cara's party dress choice

Cara had a great time buying a new dress and wearing it to a friend's party.
We love the sparkle Cara!
Cara is supported by Shared Lives Carer Sylvia Marsh.



Ice cream treats

With temperatures soaring in August, Gillian and David found the perfect way to cool off with a visit to an ice cream parlour. Accompanied by Shared Lives Carer Yasmin Miller, they enjoyed a sweet treat and made the most of the warm summer weather.



Jade's great testimony

Wow, how incredible is this?
This beautiful gift from Jade, who uses Shared Lives services, to her carers Jerry and Helen Brimson, truly captures the heart of what Shared Lives is all about.
Reading her words got us feeling emotional, because they perfectly reflect the life-changing impact of the relationships built through Shared Lives:

"You changed my life for the better."
"You always know how to make me smile."
"You make me feel safe."

It is hard to imagine a more meaningful testimonial than that.



Chanroth tries footgolf

"Football golf for us this afternoon. I was awful! Chanroth was amazing," said Bex McKnight, a Shared Lives Carer.
It's great to see Chanroth trying out a new sport!

ED&I Awareness

National Care Leavers' Month
November
https://leavingcare.org/nclm-2026-final-theme/

Movember
November
https://movember.com/

Inter Faith Week
November 8-15
https://www.interfaithweek.org/

Transgender Awareness Week
November 13- 19
https://glaad.org/transweek/

Disability History Month
November 19-December 19
https://ukdhm.org/

World Kindness Day
November 13
https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/world-kindness-day

St Andrew's Day
November 30
https://www.scotland.org/events/st-andrews-day





Florentina's birthday joy

A big happy birthday to Florentina!
Her Shared Lives Jo Crocker sent in these photos of her celebrating. Jo and Florentina went to a spa and also celebrated at home.
It sounds an absolutely wonderful day!







Pumpkin picking season



Shared Lives households have been out and about at various pumpkin farms in the lead-up to Halloween. We love the photos you sent in.





Spooky night at Halloween Disco

Heavitree Social Club in Exeter was packed with spooky fun as Shared Lives South West households and staff came together for a fantastic Halloween Disco.

Everyone got into the Halloween spirit with brilliant costumes, karaoke favourites and plenty of dancing.

The venue was transformed with amazing decorations, creating the perfect setting for a night of fun and friendship.

A huge thank you to everyone who came along, socialised and joined in the celebrations. It was wonderful to see so many people enjoying themselves.




SLEEPS
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We supported Jeans for Genes

The teams made sure they wore denim to work to mark Jeans for Genes Week in September.
There was an array of jeans and denim clobber across the offices.
Well done to all who took part to raise awareness and funds for a vital cause.



Deadline for the next edition is: December 15

Find us here: www.sharedlivessw.org.uk

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