



pss*

Your guide
to becoming a
Shared Lives carer

**make
yourself**



They say that you should surround yourself with people who bring out the best in you. As a Shared Lives carer, it's your job to be one of those people.

It'll be your role to give the people in your care a loving, safe environment (in your house) where they feel they can really live their lives to the fullest. In fact, if you asked any of our Shared Lives carers, they'd tell you that doing their job has brought out the best in them, too. It has enriched their lives; it's given them ultimate job satisfaction, it's allowed them to work flexibly from their own home and it's brought so many opportunities to learn, grow and develop in ways they never thought possible.

As far as jobs (and care services) go, we think that's pretty special.

What is Shared Lives?

Imagine if you needed some support with everyday things, like ironing your clothes, taking your medication or cooking your tea. Imagine that, instead of living in a traditional care home, you could live with a second family, supported by someone who gave you their patience, empathy, understanding and strength. Imagine your carer involved you in family life, supported you as much or as little as you needed and gave you the time, space and choice to live your life like you want to live it.

Sounds good, doesn't it?

“ I am very happy with the help I get to stay in work and the help I get to be as independent as I am. ”
Peggy*, Manchester

That's what Shared Lives is all about: people who need a little extra help with everyday stuff go and live with a specially recruited and trained Shared Lives carer, and like most families do, they navigate life together. Some of our carers provide daytime-only support, too, so don't worry if you don't have a spare room.

Shared Lives carers provide a form of short-term, long-term, respite care and daytime-only care that is focused not just on supporting people, but empowering people. And it works.



“ The work you have done is outstanding, I cannot emphasise enough how impressed I am with his progress. ”

Social worker, Merseyside

It's not just us who think it's great – we've had loads of great feedback from other professionals who can see a massive positive difference in the people they work with who are supported by Shared Lives carers.

Who are our carers?

Amazing, yet ordinary, people like you.

Our Shared Lives carers are ordinary people from all different walks of life, but like you, they all have the same thing in common: they care about other people.

Whether you realise it or not, people like you are perfect for caring roles. You have the power to do something amazing: to transform the lives of others, just by being yourself.

Every day, our carers make it their business to give people more confidence, more life skills, resilience, positivity and a greater sense of purpose. They improve people's sense of physical and emotional wellbeing, and help them maintain relationships with friends, family and the community.

How's that for job satisfaction?



“ We have a great sense of family, until PSS pop round we often forget Jenny is part of Shared Lives! ”

Geoff, Wallasey

Who uses Shared Lives?

Shared Lives provides support for people aged 16 or over who can't, when they start using the service, fully support themselves on their own.

That could be any of us.

It could be someone suffering from a mental health problem, like depression. It could be someone who is 16 and just leaving the care system. It could be someone with a learning or physical disability. It could be a new mum who needs a bit of extra support in the early days.

We don't discriminate – when someone needs a bit of help, we're here. We support people who have never had any support before, and we support people who have been in the care system their whole lives. No-matter who they are, what stage of life they're in or what their background is, our aim is to help them live their lives to the fullest.

A match made in heaven

Like we mentioned earlier, when you become a Shared Lives carer, someone you care for will come to live with you. To make sure you're going to get on, we provide a matching service. We'll tell you and the person you'll be caring for all about each other, and we'll make sure your lifestyles match up.

The great thing about that is, you're likely to support someone who enjoys the same things as you. So you'll have one more person on the couch with you when you watch TV, one more dog walking companion, one more vote for a Friday night takeaway and one more person who understands what life can be like sometimes.





“ Brilliant service I would be isolated without the support. Carer support tailored to meet my needs. My family are able to have a break from caring. No other service is as personalised as this is... home from home. ”

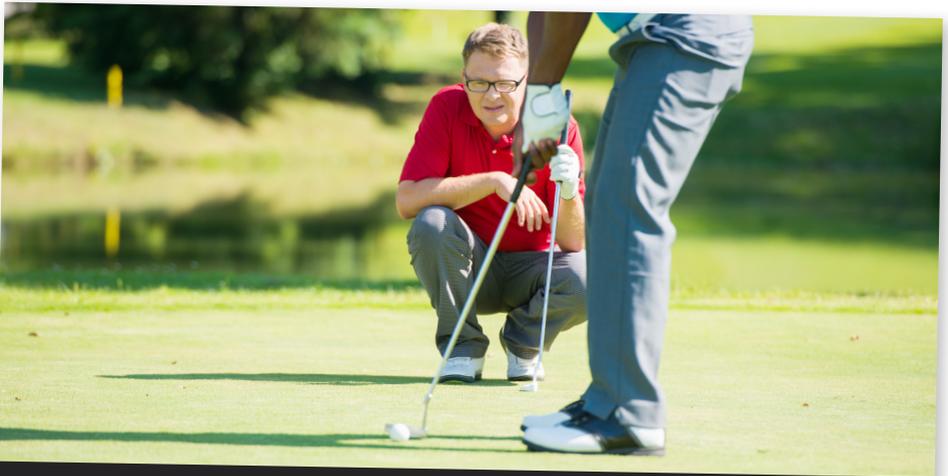
Jalal, Staffordshire

What do Shared Lives carers help with?



What you do to support the person you care for will, of course, depend entirely on their needs. Some people may have complex or severe support needs and need help with things like washing, changing, eating and drinking. Others may need some emotional support more than anything else.

Your job will be to provide as much or as little support as they want.



Here are some examples of the types of things you might do together:

- **Choosing and ironing an outfit (make Gok Wan proud)**
- **Going to medical appointments**
- **Cooking (and taking very honest feedback, even if you do think you're the next Masterchef)**
- **Popping to the shops**
- **Getting in and out of the car**
- **Taking medications (spoonful of sugar optional)**
- **Going for a walk in the park for some fresh air**
- **Getting the right money ready for a bus journey**
- **Voting for the X Factor winner**
- **Getting back to the car before the parking metre runs out**
- **Doing exam revision**
- **Talking through a problem at work**

What or who is PSS?

We're a social enterprise with a mission to help people make the most of their lives. Founded in 1919 by the wonderful Eleanor Rathbone, we provide loads of different services to help people out – from mental health services through to social services. From our Liverpool home, we founded Shared Lives back in the 1970s, and we've been doing it ever since.

We don't do care by numbers, we do care that is shaped by the people who need it. Here at PSS, our job is to recruit, train and support amazing, yet ordinary people like you who have caring in their bones.

What if I've never worked as a carer before?

Don't worry if you've never worked as a carer before, we're here to train you up to be the best carer there ever was. We'll give you the skills and knowledge to keep people safe, well and secure. You'll also get loads of support from one of our brilliant Shared Lives team, who will come and see you regularly and always be there at the end of the phone if you need some advice or just a chat. The rest is down to you and all the wonderful things you can bring with your personality.





“ I am very happy with all areas, I have enjoyed my 26 years as a Shared Lives carer. It’s hard work, but enjoyable. To help and change lives for the better is a fantastic feeling and it’s great to have a team who look after us so well. ”

Martin, carer, Merseyside



Do Shared Lives carers get paid?

Absolutely. Although it might not feel like it sometimes, this is a way to earn a living after-all. As a Shared Lives carer, you'll receive a fee for your time. How much you get paid will depend on the needs of the person you're caring for.

The person you care for will also pay a set amount towards the family food budget and household bills. In long-term placements, they are helped to manage their own tenancy and to pay rent, usually through partial or full housing benefit.

What makes a good Shared Lives carer?



If you're a big-hearted, genuine, determined, professional and open-minded kind of person, you're our kind of person. But let's hear it from the people who use Shared Lives:

“ I love to pack my bag and go on respite. I take my wallet with me. I like my bedroom. ”

Ellen, Wales

“ Caroline and Dave who provided respite have been fantastic with Jamie and very helpful to us. Caroline has reminded us when we have forgotten to book dates, usually because we have been so busy. We have felt that Jamie has been safe and made to feel part of the family. It continues to work wonderfully for us. Thank you to all involved. ”

Richard, Wales

The perks of being a Shared Lives carer

We know it's a clichéd thing to say, but when you're a Shared Lives carer, no two days of work are ever the same. Here's a list of some of the great things about being a Shared Lives carer:

- **You can change someone's life for the better**
- **Work from home – or the park, or the café, or the swimming pool, or the bingo hall...**
- **Work flexible hours**
- **Earn a living by doing something wonderful for someone else**
- **Learn things about yourself you never knew possible**
- **Train up in brand new skills**
- **Get support from your own dedicated team of people who are there to help you be the best you can be**
- **Extend your family**
- **Stop someone from being lonely**
- **Do something truly amazing with your life**

How do I become a Shared Lives carer?

We're so glad you asked! We're told all the time that becoming a Shared Lives carer is one of the best things you can do – you're in for a real treat.

Because the role of a Shared Lives Carer is so important, we've got to be absolutely sure that you and your home are ready and suitable for a Shared Lives placement. To make sure we do things properly, we've got an eight-step process.

As we're sure you can understand, before you can become a Shared Lives carer, we're going to need you to go through a couple of checks with some external bodies, including the Disclosure and Barring Service. We also need to make sure your home is safe. These things can take a little while and often varies from person to person. We'll be making it as streamlined as possible and we'll always try and keep you in the loop. However, if you've any questions or queries you can contact your Shared Lives development worker to check how things are progressing at any point along the way.

Step one: **let's get together**

You'll meet with one of our team members, who will come round for a chat about the ins and outs of becoming a carer. We'll answer any questions you might have.



Step two: **put pen to paper**

It's time to fill out your application form and give us the names of your referees.



Step four: **preparing for your panel**

Every potential Shared Lives carer is presented to an independent panel, so to make sure we can show off your skills, we'll need you to provide some extra information, like a personal profile. Don't worry, we'll guide you through it.



Step three: **getting to know you and your home**

We'll have a chat about your learning and development requirements, complete some checks (like a criminal record check and a barred list check via the Disclosure and Barring Service), and have a look at your home to assess how accessible it is. We'll also start to follow up your references.



Step five:
your assessment report

We'll produce an assessment report, which shows all your lovely skills and knowledge.

Step seven:
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, fire and other safety checks around your home.

Step six: **get involved**

You're almost a fully-fledged member of the team, so we'll need you to come to our compulsory and specialist training. Our training is designed to make you the best carer you can be and will tell you all about how we do things here at PSS. We'll need you to come along to the mandatory training even if you have years' of experience. To get you bedded in, we'll also invite you to come and have a brew with some other carers and get to know the rest of the team.

Step eight: **match-making time**

You did it! Welcome to the team. Now for the extra fun bit. It's time to start matching you with some fab people to care for. You'll be assigned your very own member of our team who will help you out as you get going with your brand new role and will guide you through the matching part.

“ There is no more rewarding job than being a Shared Lives carer. Having the opportunity to support someone and share your life with them is a true privilege. ”

Jane, Shared Lives carer, North Wales



A photograph of a man and a woman in a gym or community center. The man, on the left, has grey hair and is wearing a dark grey jacket over a green shirt. The woman, on the right, has blonde hair tied back and is wearing a bright green jacket over a grey t-shirt. They are both smiling and looking at each other, with the woman's hand resting on the man's. In the background, two other people are visible, one in a blue top and one in a blue shirt, standing near a wooden door. The floor is light-colored wood.

“ I’ve worked with PSS for 13 years and enjoyed every day. Every day is different when I and my service users are happy. The after hours service is very good. Very happy and I’m happy to be part of PSS. ”

Richard, Wales



Let's have a chat

Got any questions about becoming a Shared Lives carer?
Want some more information?

Get in touch and let's have a chin wag.

make
yourself



at home



makeyourself.org.uk