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FAQs about **Shared Lives carers**

Q I've never worked as a carer before – does that matter?

A: No – we can train you up to be the best carer there ever was. Our carers come from all different walks of life. All you need is the open mind, big heart and empathy it takes to be a great carer and the willingness to learn new skills. Of course, if you've got experience of being a carer before, that's a bonus.

Q I have worked as a carer before – will you still train me?

A: Absolutely. Even if you've worked as a carer your whole career, you'll still need to attend all of our training sessions. These are designed to make you the best carer you can be, teach you about how we do things here at PSS, and they're a great opportunity to develop yourself and meet other Shared Lives carers, too.

Q Do I need a spare room?

A: If you like the sound of being a long-term or short-term carer where people stay with you overnight, you're going to need a spare room for them to stay in. This will need to be vacant, furnished and have some storage space as well. If you want to provide daytime support only, you won't need to provide a spare bedroom. Please feel free to chat to us about the options available to you.

Q Why are Shared Lives carers classed as 'self-employed' and not employed staff members?

A: Shared Lives carers are classed as 'self-employed' because they have loads of choice and flexibility in the work they do – they're not contracted to do certain hours and they can choose who they want to support. For example, most of our Shared Lives carers will go and meet the person we've matched them with before they begin caring for them. If either the carer or the person they are going to be caring for feels like it's not going to work out or like the other person might not be a good fit for them, they're under no obligations whatsoever to go ahead with the placement. This is where being self-employed as a Shared Lives carer is a little different to how it might be if you worked as a carer for another social care organisation.

Q Will I get a salary when I'm self-employed?

A: When you're self-employed, we'll pay you for the work you do, rather than a salary.

Q How much will I earn?

A: Rates of pay and terms and conditions will vary depending on what area you live in. You'll need to register with HMRC and complete a simplified self-assessment tax return at the end of the financial year. HMRC will be able to give you a hand with this if you need it.

Shared Lives carers do qualify for income tax relief, which in many cases means that they pay little or no tax. Give us a shout and we may be able to provide you with more information about how it works where you live.

Q Can I be a Shared Lives carer alongside another job?

A: Some people who work part time, do shift work or work reduced hours are able to fit their career as a Shared Lives carer alongside their existing employment. However, if you work full time and have limited availability, this usually restricts the amount of opportunities you have to provide support, and we'll take this into account when we assess your suitability for the role.

Q Do I need to pay anything to get set up? What will I need to pay for?

A: Because Shared Lives carers are self-employed, you will need to pay for some things yourself:

- A Gas Safety Check to make sure their homes are gas safe, and if you live in sunny Wales, you must also pay for your own Electric Safety Checks on their property. These things must be done before any placements start and updated when needed. However, if you rent your home or your pad is council-owned, these checks may have already been done and dusted.
- Your own Disclosure and Barring Service check (formally known as Criminal Records check) at £44 (or £59 for equivalent PVG scheme in Scotland).
- The cost of a GP reference, if your GP charges a fee for that.
- Any increased insurance costs you may have. Please have a chat to us about this.
- Public liability insurance, to make sure you're covered if anything goes wrong.

Q What can I expect during the assessment process?

A: The assessment process is in-depth, but it isn't as formal as the word 'assessment' might make it sound. We'll help you through it; we'll come round to your house for a few home visits, and together, we'll have a chat about:

- your values;
- your skills and experiences;
- your references;
- your training needs; and
- any risks within your home.

The same member of our fab team will come and see you each time, so you'll have the chance to get to know each other. This really helps our team get to know the sort of person you might get on well with when you start your caring role.

Once all the assessments have been done, we'll hopefully be able to approve you to start working as a carer.

Q How will PSS support me once I'm working as a carer?

A: Once approved you will receive fantastic support from one of our team, who will be with you every step of the way. They'll come and see you at your house regularly (more frequently at the start of your placement to help you get settled), find out how you're getting on and give you any support you need. You'll have access to an out of hours service, too, just in case you need it.

You'll have an annual review, and you'll be invited to come along to our carers' meetings, where we all get together to share tips, advice and guidance (and have a nice cup of tea and a cake together).

Q I don't drive, will this be a problem?

A: That's absolutely fine, just let us know. We'll make sure we keep that in mind when we match you with someone.

Q Are there any age limits for Shared Lives carers?

A: As long as you're an adult, your age is fine by us. Some of the people who use Shared Lives might prefer a younger carer, and some pay prefer someone older – but this is something we consider as part of our matching service.

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