



ESSEX SHARED LIVES INTRODUCTION GUIDE



This Guide will introduce you to Shared Lives and the Essex Shared Lives scheme

If you have any questions about what you read or if you want further information about Shared Lives, please contact us:

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Contents

Overview	3
About Essex Shared Lives.....	3
Aims and Objectives	3
Roles and responsibilities of scheme workers	3
Equal Opportunities.....	4
How to become a Shared Lives Host	4
How much will I get paid from Essex Shared Lives and how is that fee calculated?.....	4
What are the rewards for the Shared Lives Host?	5
Can I have short breaks from supporting someone?	5
Do I receive training and further support?	5
How to be supported by the Essex Shared Lives scheme	6
Referrals to Essex Shared Lives	6
Assessment of needs	7
Matching Process	8
The Shared Lives Panel	10
Care Quality Commission (CQC)	11
Accommodation	11
Finance	12
Transition from Foster Care to Shared Lives	12
Planning for transition	12
Mixed Fostering-Shared Lives Arrangements	12

Overview

About Essex Shared Lives

The Shared Lives scheme provides a unique form of support in the community, based within the homes of people specifically recruited and trained for this purpose. Shared Lives has been funded by Essex County Council (ECC) and available in Essex since 2007, but it was only in 2021 that the service was integrated to ECC, becoming Essex Shared Lives.

The scheme supports people aged 18 and over with a wide range of support needs in ways that help them move towards independence, not dependence. By living or being part of the approved Shared Lives Host's family circle, people can be part of each other's lives and enjoy activities together.

It can be long term support and accommodation where the person moves in with the Shared Lives Host for as many months or years as appropriate, or short breaks to give family hosts respite from their supporting responsibilities or the person visits the home of the Shared Lives Host for several hours during the day to take part in activities of their choice.

Aims and Objectives

The Essex Shared Lives scheme will provide people with care and support needs the opportunity to be part of the family and community life of a Shared Lives Host. Our service aims to ensure that people using Shared Lives are:

- treated as part of the Shared Lives Host's family or household
- supported to be part of their local community
- supported to learn and use new skills
- do as much as they can for themselves
- are treated equally, with consideration and respect, so they have privacy in their home and life
- supported to make their own choices and decisions so they can lead the kind of life they want and achieve the things that are important to them.

Roles and responsibilities of scheme workers

The registered manager meets all requirements of the [Health and Social Care Act \(2008\) \(Regulated Activities\) Regulations 2014: Regulation 7](#). Essex Shared Lives have a staff team responsible for all aspects of the management and delivery of Shared Lives to eligible people in Essex including:

- The assessment and approval of Shared Lives Hosts
- Management of referrals into the scheme
- Establishing Shared Lives arrangements
- Support and monitoring of Shared Lives arrangements in Essex
- Support to Shared Lives carers
- The ongoing training of Shared Lives carers

Essex Shared Lives is committed to deliver highly effective, safe, caring, well-led and responsive care and support to people using Shared Lives. We are also committed to ensuring the safe and effective assessment, recruitment and support of our Shared Lives Hosts.

Equal Opportunities

All people have the same human rights. However, the Essex Shared Lives scheme recognises that some individuals and groups can sometimes be discriminated against, for example, on the grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, HIV/AIDs, marital status, or age. We are committed to working in ways that value diversity and promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice.

Definitions of Equality and Diversity are:

- Equality is a legal framework to protect against discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people with 'protected characteristics'.
- Diversity is the valuing of our individual differences and talents, creating a culture where everyone can participate, thrive and contribute.
- Diversity is multi-dimensional and includes, race, disability, class, economic status, age, gender and transgender, sexuality, faith and belief.

How to become a Shared Lives Host

The only three requirements for a person to become a Shared Lives Host applicant are:

- Have a suitable spare bedroom at home
- Have a willingness to support adults with learning disabilities or autism
- Be comfortable using the internet, email and MS Office

Those requirements will be disclosed in the Application Pack the applicant will receive from Essex Shared Lives once they have demonstrated interest in becoming a Shared Lives Host.

Once the Application Pack is received by the Shared Lives team and the application fully assessed, Essex Shared Lives will request:

- Enhanced DBS check of the applicant
- References

Then, the application will be presented to an independent panel for approval.

Should the applicant be successful, a Care Licence will be issued by the Essex Shared Lives team and Agreements will be completed.

How much will I get paid from Essex Shared Lives and how is that fee calculated?

The scheme, through a Social Worker, will assess the needs of the person to identify and agree the level and type of support that the Shared Lives host will be required to provide to the individual and, in turn, the level of payment they will receive from the Shared Lives scheme. It is important that we know about a person's physical, social, emotional and cultural needs and their hopes and wishes, so that we can meet these within the Essex Shared Lives scheme.

The assessments will place the Arrangement into one of the three payment bands and will identify points like:

- Personal care needs

- Capacity of the individual to stay alone and safe
- How much help the individual need for basic tasks such as eating and drinking
- Shopping and household tasks such as cleaning, cooking and laundry etc
- Money management
- Medical conditions etc

Depending on the needs of the person, the Care and Support Fee can vary between £280 and £427 per week.

What are the rewards for the Shared Lives Host?

As a Shared Lives host you will:

- be registered as self-employed with HMRC and will work from your home and local community
- have a regular income while someone is staying with you
- receive tax allowances
- have paid holiday time
- get continuous and regular support and guidance from the Essex Shared Lives staff team.
- get an Enhanced Membership of Shared Lives Plus, which offers a range of benefits such as Public Liability Insurance, Professional Advice, close support from a network of Shared Lives professionals, national meetings and discounts on retail shops and everyday shopping.

Can I have short breaks from supporting someone?

During periods of respite, the Shared Lives host will be paid 50% of the agreed fee per day that the adult spends with their Respite host.

If you are providing Live-in Support, you are entitled to up to a maximum of four weeks per year of support fee for the adult being supported for the period of respite provided. You will receive 50% of the care and support fee for the adult for the duration of the respite placement.

Do I receive training and further support?

Training may take place both pre-assessment and post assessment. The only mandatory trainings are Medication Administration and Safeguarding, however you will have a range of other trainings opportunities available to you. They may cover mental capacity, health passport training, person centred planning, budgeting skills, letting go, moving on and others.

Essex Shared Lives will provide support and monitoring visits every three months to each Shared Lives arrangement. Our support and monitoring process ensures that Shared Lives arrangements are safe, effective and continue to work for everyone involved in them. Support and monitoring visits focus on:

- The Shared Lives arrangement and any issues which may have arisen
- How integrated the individual using Shared Lives is to the Shared Lives carer's home
- Reviewing records about the person they are supporting in Shared Lives, i.e., medication, financial records
- How effectively the scheme is supporting the Shared Lives carer and the arrangement

Essex Shared Lives will also provide ongoing telephone support and additional support visits to any Shared Lives Hosts who need this. Our approach to support and monitoring of Shared Lives arrangements ensures that:

- Our Shared Lives Hosts receive the practical and emotional support they require
- Our approach ensures positive working relationships with our Shared Lives Hosts and that we have a detailed understanding of all arrangements in the scheme.

How to be supported by the Essex Shared Lives scheme

Once Essex Shared Lives learn of a new referral, a few steps need to be followed to onboard the adult in the scheme:

1. Social Worker completes Care Needs Assessment and discusses options with the person with support needs
2. Social writes Information for Service Provider (ISP) and send to Service Placement Team (SPT)
3. SPT sends it through to Essex Shared Lives
4. Essex Shared Lives team decide whether it is a suitable referral
5. If it is a suitable referral, the Essex Shared Lives team will communicate the decision to SPT and the Social Worker
6. Social Worker get funds agreed at a forum with an independent panel and sends the Information for Service Provider (ISP) to Service Placement Team (SPT).
7. The Service Placement Team then send a Purchase Order to Essex Shared Lives
8. Licences and Agreements are issued and regular support, monitoring of placement and respite breaks are arranged.

Referrals to Essex Shared Lives

Essex Shared Lives scheme recognises the importance of proper information in making informed decisions. Our referral procedure aims to be prompt, thorough and fair to everyone concerned. We will provide information about Essex Shared Lives and ask for information about the person referred to the service that is based on their assessed needs and wishes. We will tell the person in as short a time as possible whether we can meet their needs and if not, we will tell them the reasons why.

How will this happen?

We will start by giving the person clear information about what kinds of accommodation and/or care and support we provide, and which people can make use of this. This will be included in our Statement of Purpose and our Service Guide. We will give this and other useful information to the person and/or the person's family or representative and to the person's Care Manager / Social worker referring the person. The information will be written in plain English or another language or format that the person can easily understand, or we may use a DVD or a short film or some other way of communicating if the person prefers.

The referral process should include the following:

- Written information about the needs of the person being referred to the Shared Lives scheme. We will not be able to proceed with a referral until we have this. This could be a local authority community care assessment or a self-assessment if the person's local authority / service commissioner has agreed a process for this. If the person does not already have an assessment of their own needs, we will arrange for a suitably qualified person to discuss and agree this with them and/or their representative. If we need any specialist information, such as nursing or occupational health, we will ask the person's permission and work with the person and/or their representative to plan for this too.
- A visit to the person and their family, if the person wishes, so that we can explain about Shared Lives, they can ask questions and so that we can also get to know more about the person. A visit will be at the person's home, our office or somewhere else if the person prefers.
- If the person, and/or their family, wish to continue with the application, then further discussions would take place to obtain more information about the person's needs and wishes.
- We will use all this information and the information we already have about our Shared Lives Hosts to decide whether we have any Shared Lives Hosts who can meet the person's needs. This is known as the matching process. If we do have Shared Lives Hosts that we think the person will like and who can meet the person's needs, we will arrange for the person to meet the Shared Lives Hosts to help them decide whether they want to go ahead with an arrangement.
- If:
 - we do not provide the kind of accommodation or care or support the person is looking for
 - or the person does not fit the criteria for our service
 - or we cannot find any suitable Shared Lives Hosts

we will tell the person and their Care Manager / Social Worker who referred them as soon as possible and we will also explain the reason/s for this in writing.

Assessment of needs

It is important that we know about a person's physical, social, emotional and cultural needs and their hopes and wishes, so that we can meet these within the Essex Shared Lives scheme.

How will this happen?

Before making a Shared Lives arrangement, we will always ask for a written assessment of the person's needs and their aspirations. This can be a local authority community care assessment or a self-assessment if the person's local authority has agreed a process for this. The person's Social Worker or other appropriate professional will have discussed this with the person before and it will cover things like the person's:

- accommodation and personal support needs
- community, family and social contacts
- education, training, and/or occupation
- leisure activities
- cultural and faith needs
- physical and mental health care

- any special equipment or treatment or rehabilitation the person requires
- how the person communicates
- having adequate money
- whether there are particular risks in the person's day-to-day life, and how these can be managed
- What changes or wishes the person has for the future.

If the person does not already have an up-to-date assessment of their needs, then we will ask a suitably qualified person to discuss these areas with the person and/or the person's representative, and then to let us know about the needs they have agreed together.

We will use this information to find Shared Lives Hosts who may be able to meet these needs. If we find Shared Lives Hosts who are suitable for the person, we will share this information with them so that they can also think about providing a service for the person, and whether they will be able to meet the person's needs. The Shared Lives worker will give the person information about the Shared Lives Host too, so they can also think about whether that arrangement would be right for them. This process is called matching.

If the arrangement goes ahead (after all the necessary introductions, visits, etc.) the Shared Lives Host will be given a copy of the person's needs assessment, or a summary of this, to keep for as long as the arrangement continues. Another copy will be stored at the office, and we will also make sure that the person has been given a copy too.

The person's assessment of needs will be the starting point for planning the details of the person's Shared Lives arrangement. The plan will be agreed between the person and/or the person's representative, the Shared Lives Host and the Shared Lives worker, and is called a Service User Plan.

The plan and the arrangement will be reviewed regularly (at least once every year), which means that if the person's needs or wishes change over time the plan and/or the arrangement can be changed too.

Matching Process

A Shared Lives arrangement can only be successful if the Shared Lives Host is able to meet the person's needs and if the person and the Shared Lives Host(s) and other people in their household all get on well together. Essex Shared Lives scheme therefore gathers together all the important information about the person and about our Shared Lives Hosts and we use this to work out which Shared Lives Hosts will suit the person. This is known as matching.

How matching will happen?

All our Shared Lives Hosts will be properly recruited, assessed, and trained by us before they are able to start working with the person or anybody else who requires support. During this time, we build up our knowledge of them and their families and of the skills and experience the Hosts have to enable them to support someone.

Once we receive a referral for the person who will be using or living in a Shared Lives arrangement, we start to build up our knowledge of the person and their needs, wishes and aspirations.

These are the sorts of things we consider when working out which of our Shared Lives Hosts might be suitable for the person:

- the person's assessed needs and wishes
- any identified risks/ risk management
- the skills, knowledge, and experience of the Shared Lives Host(s)
- the personal interests that the person and the Shared Lives Host(s) have
- the location of the Shared Lives Host(s) home
- the facilities and accommodation the Shared Lives Host(s) can offer the person
- the cultures and/or faiths that are important to the person and the Shared Lives Host(s)

If we find any Shared Lives Hosts whose skills can be matched with the person's needs, we will give the person and/or the person's representative information about all of them. The information will be in a format that the person can understand easily. We will also give information about the person to those Shared Lives Hosts that we think will make a good match with the person.

If the person and/or the person's representative would then like to meet up with one or all of the Shared Lives Hosts we will make arrangements for this. This enables the person and the Shared Lives Host(s) to find out more about each other and to see for themselves whether the person has things in common after all. This kind of visit is called an introduction and is part of the matching process. An introduction can include an overnight stay if the person is thinking about having short breaks with the Shared Lives Host(s) or of living with them for a while.

We will make sure that the person and/or the person's representative understands the matching process and that all our Shared Lives Hosts understand it too. As it is so important that the person and the Shared Lives Host(s) get on well together, they both have a say in whether the arrangement could be a suitable one. It will not cause a problem if either the person or the Shared Lives Host(s) does not wish to go ahead with more introductory visits or with making a longer-term arrangement.

The decision about whether a Shared Lives arrangement is right for the person is a very important one. We understand that it takes time and proper information to make this sort of decision and that the opportunity for the person and the person's family or representative to visit and 'test drive' an arrangement will be a helpful part of that process.

How will introductions take place?

An essential part of making a decision is having all the information the person needs beforehand. The person will be given information about Essex Shared Lives scheme and about any Shared Lives Hosts who may be suitable for the person as part of our referral and matching procedures. Visiting the Shared Lives Host(s) adds to this by giving them and the person and/or the person's

representative an opportunity to experience the arrangement directly. The Shared Lives Host(s) can also visit the person if the person wishes.

The person will usually be able to:

- meet the Shared Lives Host(s) and other members of their family or household and find out what they are really like
- see the house, the bedroom (if the person will be staying there) and the neighbourhood
- have a meal there
- have an overnight stay (if the person will be having short breaks or living there)
- see what kinds of records are kept by the Shared Lives Host(s)
- speak in private with other people who are already making use of a Shared Lives arrangement
- ask any questions they may have.

The person and/or the person's representative can visit as many times as the person wishes until the person feels comfortable about going ahead with a longer-term arrangement. However, either the person or the Shared Lives Host(s) can call a halt to the introductions at any point if they do not feel the arrangement will be suitable after all.

Even if the person does decide to go ahead with a longer-term arrangement, there will still be a trial period when the person can change their mind. The length of the trial period will be agreed at the start of the arrangement and written in the Arrangement Agreement.

Deciding that one Shared Lives arrangement is not right for the person does not mean that the person cannot try another one. The Shared Lives worker will discuss this and will arrange introductory visits to another Shared Lives Host(s) if appropriate.

Introductory visits play a big part in making sure an arrangement is right for everyone involved. We therefore try to avoid making Shared Lives arrangements in emergencies when this kind of opportunity may not be possible. However, we have a separate procedure which we follow if an emergency arises and there really is no time for the person to get to know the Shared Lives Host(s) before the person goes there. The person's Shared Lives worker will explain more about this if it affects the person.

The Shared Lives Panel

The assessment, approval of Shared Lives Hosts is critical process that ensures the success, safety and effectiveness of Shared Lives for people who use or live in Shared Lives Arrangements. The Shared Lives Panel which provides independent scrutiny and quality assurance is integral to this process.

Introduction

Shared Lives Panels play a key role in the approval of Shared Lives Hosts. They also have an important role in quality assuring the assessment process through:

- monitoring and reviewing the quality of work of Shared Lives workers during the assessment process
- providing feedback on the quality of Shared Lives Host applications
- identifying any problems with the Shared Lives Host assessment process
- ensuring that there is consistency of approach across the Shared Lives scheme, that the approach is fair to all applicants, and it has been completed in a thorough and rigorous way.

Each Shared Lives scheme should have a Panel. The Panel is a group of interested and experienced people, appointed by the scheme, but operating independently of that scheme. This panel considers assessments of new Shared Lives Host applicants and makes recommendations about their approval. The Panel also makes recommendations about the ongoing approval of existing Shared Lives Hosts. As the scheme manager is registered with the relevant care regulator the overall decision for the approval of a new Shared Lives Host, or the ongoing approval of an existing Shared Lives Host is made by the scheme manager.

Regulators in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland play a role in ensuring that Shared Lives schemes are effective and work to an agreed standard, thereby ensuring the quality and safety of individual Shared Lives arrangements. Each of the four regulators works to slightly different regulations and standards but have broadly the same approach to the existence of Panels.

Care Quality Commission (CQC)

The Care Quality Commission is the independent regulator of health and adult social care in England.

They make sure health and social care services provide people with safe, effective, compassionate, high-quality care and we encourage care services to improve.

CQC monitors, inspects and regulates services to make sure they meet fundamental standards of quality and safety, and we publish what we find, including performance ratings to help people choose care. They set out what good and outstanding care looks like, and we make sure services meet fundamental standards below which care must never fall.

To learn more about the Care Quality Commission, visit www.cqc.org.uk.

Accommodation

How does it work?

- Shared Lives Hosts are expected to provide accommodation which the person using Shared Lives will rent from the host
- The person will have their own key to the home.
- As the person is renting the room from you, the host, they may ask for their room to be more personalised to their tastes

- People living in Shared Lives cannot share their room with another person unless they are a couple and wish to do so

Finance

More information about finance in the Shared Lives scheme:

- The person will pay their rent, utilities and food directly to you from their benefits
- The scheme will pay you a fee for the care and support you offer to the person. This is solely for you as a Shared Lives host.
- The person will receive their benefits directly into their bank account and can be assisted to manage these by the Shared Lives Officer or Social Worker. This includes Disability Living Allowance (DLA)/ Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
- The person will be responsible for buying any personal possessions such as clothing, electronic equipment and holidays from their money
- The overall income for the placement may be different if compared to Foster Care. However, as the person will hold their money, the Shared Lives host will receive less but will not be responsible for the client's personal expenditure
- Shared Lives hosts are classed as self-employed and are entitled to tax concessions. This is currently £250 p/w per person using Shared Lives plus £10,000 totalling £23,000. This may change so seek advice from your Shared Lives Officer.
- Shared Lives Hosts are not entitled to Carers Allowance for the person staying with them and are unlikely to be entitled to any means tested state benefits
- Shared Lives hosts are required to keep records of finances, medication and key incidents and present them when requested

Transition from Foster Care to Shared Lives

Many young people in transition who move into Shared Lives have previously been fostered. Although the principles of living with an individual or family in their home is the same, there are some important differences between Fostering and Shared Lives.

Planning for transition

To ensure success in this transition process, professionals will collaborate to coordinate a transition plan for each young person, that is personalised to them and built around their unique needs and preferences.

Mixed Fostering-Shared Lives Arrangements

Shared Lives Plus and the Fostering Network recognize the benefits of inter-generational practice. It is our view that intergenerational placements are of benefit to all parties.

Our principles of good practice are:

- The wishes and requirements of the individuals placed are central

- Good information must be provided to carers and hosts about Shared Lives and fostering requirements
- Carers/Hosts working for fostering and Shared Lives services will be offered support to be clear about their role with each person that they support
- There is a need to ensure that effective communication takes place between children's and adults care management teams throughout the transition period
- There is a need for clear protocols governing the way in which the Fostering and Shared Lives services work together
- There is a need to avoid unnecessary duplication of processes and paperwork
- Good risk assessment and risk management is essential

There are many instances in which Shared Lives Hosts may find themselves assisting with the transition of young people from children's to adult services. There are also instances where they may provide accommodation and support to both children placed through the Fostering Service and adults under Shared Lives. There are a number of different ways in which transitional and mixed child-adult placements arise:

- Foster carers who wish to become Shared Lives Hosts in order to facilitate a continuation of support into adult life to an individual child.
- Foster carers who are supporting siblings (that is children placed who are related to one another) or have other children of differing ages placed with them and wish to continue to support those siblings or other children after the age of 18. Shared Lives schemes will become involved when the oldest child reaches 18 but fostering will remain involved with the younger children.
- Foster carers who wish to accommodate siblings but where one or more are already 18+
- Short breaks carers/hosts approved to support both adults and children.
- Schemes that have developed a service for 16 – 18-year-olds in response to transition issues for this age group.
- Schemes that offer parent and baby placements
- Young people moving from other children's services to adult services e.g. from residential care
- Shared Care arrangements running into adult life

For the transition from child to adult placement to take place effectively, and for mixed child-adult placements to be a positive experience for all parties, there should be jointly agreed protocols and procedures between children's and adult services.

Mixed child-adult placements require particularly careful planning to take account of:

- the different legal status of children and adults
- the difference between the children and adults' legislative frameworks
- the fact that separation between children's services and adult services can cause significant communication difficulties
- the need to avoid unnecessary breakdowns in funding arrangements caused by a lack of forward planning for young people in foster care

By planning carefully, we can achieve stability of placements, a seamless transition into adulthood and clarity of information about payments.

This information is issued by:
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