



Age NI Shared Lives Service

Our lives get better when they're shared



Shared Lives NI

What is Shared Lives?



Shared Lives helps older people to stay as independent as they can, for as long as possible.

It is very different from other traditional models of care. This type of care is about taking support back to family homes and ordinary, everyday activities.

Imagine if, instead of relying on limited outside care services for help, an older person could be supported by a caring family, couple or individual living nearby.

This is Shared Lives. It is well established in other regions and is based around sharing your home, family and community life with an older person who needs support.

Could you be the missing link to keep an older person connected?

Could you provide an older person with a lifeline of connection to their community, a helping hand to get to social activities or take up old hobbies, and some regular company, as an extension of your home and family life?

Shared Lives relies on special individuals, known as Shared Lives Carers, to open their hearts and their homes to include an older person in need of a little extra company and support.

Age NI is now recruiting new Shared Lives Carers across Northern Ireland.

What is involved?

As a Shared Lives Carer, it can be as simple as providing day support for a few hours, a few times a week. For the people supported, it feels like being part of your family, rather than “receiving a service”.

And although an allowance is paid to you, it doesn't feel like a “job”.

Who would I be caring for?

You will be matched with an older person who may be lonely and isolated, they may be in the early stages of dementia, or they may have some mobility difficulties and simply need a helping hand to get out and about.

They may also be cared for by a family who would benefit from a break from caring.

By offering an older person connection to others, to community, to life, the difference you can make is immeasurable.

What would I do as a Shared Lives Carer?

The care and support is based on shared interests and lifestyles and it is tailored for the older person and what they would like to do during your time together.

Some examples of what you might do together:

- Go for a walk
- Go to a café or out for lunch
- Have a meal with your family
- Go to a football match or tea dance
- Play bowls
- Go to a community or church group/service
- Watch a movie together
- Go to the pub or social club
- Sing In a choir

“Working from my own home, having someone visit you, I wanted to make the difference for one person and I signed up right there!”

- Heather

Does a Shared Lives Carer get paid?

As a Shared Lives Carer providing day support, you will receive an hourly rate, based on agreed hours. You would be self-employed and could be eligible for tax relief. Being self-employed, you would also have the flexibility to work around hours that suit you and the person being supported.

Does a Shared Lives Carer need qualifications?

You do not need any qualifications to be a Shared Lives Carer. Some carers have had experience of working in social care or personal experience of caring for others, but some have no experience at all.

The qualities we look for in carers are: being passionate about helping others, being caring, patient, committed, encouraging and sensitive to others' needs. Your enthusiasm, motivation and commitment are more important than any formal qualification. A good sense of humour is also an asset!



Training and Support

You will receive an induction, the training you require, support and guidance to help you with your new role and keep you up to date with best practice.

You would be expected to adhere to Age NI's Policies and Procedures as part of your role as a Shared Lives Carer. This would be explained during your induction and training.



Safe, Secure, Supported

Age NI's Shared Lives service is regulated by the RQIA (Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority) and that means it is safe and regularly monitored and inspected to make sure the older person is well cared for. This also means that you, as a Shared Lives Carer, are well supported to provide that care.

Becoming a Shared Lives Carer can really enrich your life and that of the older person you support.

"I just wanted to do something that opened people's horizons."

- Kerry

Interested in becoming a Shared Lives Carer?

If you are interested in becoming a Shared Lives Carer, the first step is to contact the service. There is an application form to complete. Upon application, you will be allocated an Age NI Shared Lives Social Worker.

The Social Worker will carry out your assessment. The assessment process can take 3-6 months and you will be asked to provide references from your employer, friends and GP. We will also complete an Access NI check. And we complete a health and safety check of your home. As the final stage, the assessment is presented to an Approval Panel.

"I've always been caring, and we wanted to support someone who would fit in with our family. It's given us a richer life, and now we're always out and about."

- Liz

Matching you with an older person

Once you are approved as a Shared Lives Carer, careful matching with an older person requiring support will commence. A careful assessment of the older person's needs and a detailed care plan will have been completed in advance of this.

Once you are matched, introductory visits and meetings will take place, so you can get to know each other. Once both parties are happy with the match, the placement will be agreed and the support arrangement will begin.



What Support will I receive as a Shared Lives Carer?

You will have support from your Age NI Shared Lives Social Worker. In line with the requirements of the Adult Placement Regulations, you will receive visits from your Social Worker on an ongoing basis, three months after your placement has been agreed; at least twice a year after this, and on one occasion when the person you support is present with you. There will also be an annual review of the placement.

Age NI Shared Lives service also organises support groups for Shared Lives Carers and the people they support. Getting together with other carers can be a useful source of support for you.



Interested in finding out more?

If you like the sound of Age NI's Shared Lives service and would like to find out more about becoming a Shared Lives Carer, we would love to hear from you!

Please get in touch with Alison Milford, Head of Shared Lives:

**Email: alison.milford@ageni.org
or mobile: 078 9098 6442**

Age NI is the provider of a new Shared Lives service for older people in Northern Ireland, commissioned by the Department of Health.

About Age NI

Age NI is the leading charity for older people in Northern Ireland. Its vision is a world in which we can thrive as we age and its mission is to help older people to enjoy later life.

Age NI provides a wide range of care and wellbeing services, as well as free advice and advocacy to support older people and their loved ones in navigating the challenges and opportunities of later life.

In providing care and support, Age NI helps older people to stay well and live independently as long as possible, connected to their community and involved in decisions about their life.

You can find out more about Age NI on our website: www.ageni.org

Or for information and advice call our free, confidential Advice service on **0808 808 7575** Monday to Friday 9am-5pm (excl Bank Holidays).



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