

# Shared Lives: Supporting parents with a learning disability

**Jane Bell**

Shared Lives

South West



# Shared Lives South West

- Shared Lives South West is a charity working in SW England, supporting 300+ people through 250 Shared Lives carer households.
- Set up in 2004, one of the largest Shared Lives schemes in UK
- One of only a few independent schemes i.e. not part of a local authority
- Long term and short breaks
- People with a learning disability, mental health problems, older people, people with dementia, and vulnerable parents.
- Have supported a number of long and short term placements, and could have supported more.
- [www.sharedlivesw.org.uk](http://www.sharedlivesw.org.uk)

# Shared Lives is.....

- A personalised community based type of support with accommodation
- Delivered by approved carers who are part of a Shared Lives scheme
- The service user shares the home and family life of the Shared Lives carer
- Registered with CQC as provider of personal care. Adults service – 18+ but can also take young people in transition from 16+
- Not registered with OFSTED as not providing services to children.
- 154 UK schemes. Predominantly LD service.

# What does Shared Lives offer?

- A place to live for the adult and the child in a normal family home, sharing in all aspects of home and family life. Long or short term.
- Support around parenting, plus usual support to the adult
- Can be from start of pregnancy and birth partnering although more commonly referrals come when there is a child with parent. Most common when there may be considerations ongoing about the parenting ability of the parent.
- Adult retains parental responsibility for the child. Shared Lives carers are not foster carers as they are supporting the adult to support the child, not supporting the child themselves.
- Not an assessment service, although Shared Lives carers can offer very valuable insights into how the parent is managing that a more formal assessment would miss.

# Case study – Anna and Liam



# Process

- Referral from adult social care – or children’s services or enquiry from a legal representative
- Check against our vacancies – do not have many specialised places sitting vacant at any time.
- Collect detailed information about parent, child, issues, court proceedings.
- If we can match this with a vacancy, then Shared Lives coordinator would arrange introductory visits
- Negotiate fees
- Agree the “care” plan and roles and responsibilities with all parties and put agreement in place.

# Carers

- Comprehensive assessment
- DBS and many other references
- Pre approval and post approval training including safeguarding adults, mental capacity, person centred care, first aid, health and safety, money management, and other specific training to support needs of the adults
- For parents with LD placements would also require training on safeguarding children, parenting support skills and communication, training around attachment and boundaries and ensuring carers have an understanding of the court process if applicable.

# Legal framework

- A local authority has the general duty towards the child under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 (“children in need”). It has the more specific duty under section 20 to provide accommodation for every child in its area who needs it. That accommodation is provided by one of the ways specified in section 22C.
- Section 22C divides into 2: (i) “making arrangements for the child to live with a person under ss(3)”; or, (ii) “placement” under ss(5). A local authority must go down the “making arrangements” route unless it would be contrary to the child’s welfare (ss(4)). Living with a parent in a shared lives arrangement comes under “making arrangements” because the child lives with a parent or parents in their home.
- If the child is under a care order, the local authority either has to place with local authority foster carers or satisfy the ‘**placement with parents**’ provisions under the 2010 regulations. Placement with parents can be made into a Shared Lives arrangement



# Costs

- The service user pays rent and household costs, usually from benefit income, housing benefit, DLA etc. The accommodation occupied is taken into account when claiming benefits.
- Shared Lives South West pays its carers a fee for the care and support they provide to the adult. This is on a banded system and is usually funded by the LA responsible for the placement, although the parent may have to contribute under Fairer Charging as this is a community service not residential care. The banding would include a specific amount for the additional parenting supporting.
- Shared Lives South West charges a management fee to the responsible LA to cover making the arrangements and the support to the placement.
- The total cost of the placement varies in each case but is likely to be between £550 and £800 per week, with the local authority meeting between 65-85% of the cost.
- We have found that adult social care usually funds, although we would advocate the creation of a pooled budget with children's services.