

Become a **Shared Lives** carer with United Response





Hello, my name is Vanessa and I'm the Shared Lives service manager at United Response.

We are looking for kind and caring people within the Merseyside area who have room in their heart (and a spare room in their home!) and are willing to welcome a person with support needs into their lives to live as part of their family.

If you are thinking of becoming a Shared Lives carer with United Response, then reading this guide is your first step to work out if it might be right for you.

Shared Lives gives someone the opportunity to join a loving family home, so they can gain more independence, develop relationships or learn new skills at a pace that works for them.

Supporting a person in your own home can be hugely rewarding and it's a great way to make a difference to people's lives.

We've packed this guide with lots of information about the role of a Shared Lives carer and tried to answer some of the questions you might have.

When you get to the end and you would like to find out more, I'm only a phone call away.

Vanessa, Shared Lives Service Manager

What we do

We are United Response. Our story started in 1973 with just one home for people with learning disabilities. Now we support people across England and South Wales to do the things they love most, based in their chosen communities.

Alongside our Shared Lives service in Merseyside, we support disabled people to live the life they choose through our supported living, supported employment and community services.

What is Shared Lives?

Shared Lives is a support service for people who want to live independently in their own community but with the support of a family.

The people supported by Shared Lives live in the home of the people supporting them, becoming part of the family.

It's similar to fostering but for adults and is a great alternative to supported living or residential care.



Karl's Shared Lives Story

Karl is a gentle and caring person who has a wonderful sense of humour, and he can dance the socks of anyone you know. Karl has Down's Syndrome and a learning disability and although he does need some support, for the most part, he is a really independent man.

When Karl lost his parents, his family stepped in and supported him, taking turns to stay overnight with him. However, they needed a helping hand, so Karl's social worker contacted us to ask if we could provide a respite break for Karl. Karl visited Graham and Suzanne, two of our Shared Lives carers, and told them about himself and the things he liked. In no time at all Karl's sense of humour shone through and he had everyone laughing.

As you can imagine, the respite was a great success. But the story doesn't end there...

When Karl's home circumstances changed, alternative accommodation needed to be found. Karl and his family had looked at other services and did not feel they were for Karl, however after experiencing a Shared Lives respite break Karl felt that Shared Lives was the service for him and that Graham and Suzanne were the right carers. Everyone was delighted when Karl's respite became a long-term arrangement. Karl's niece called to say that their family were totally in awe of the concept of Shared Lives and that their uncle could be supported in a home from home service by such skilled and kind people.

Karl has continued to be supported by Graham and Suzanne since April 2022 and in that time, he has done so much with their support. He has slimmed right down through healthy eating, bought himself a whole new wardrobe of trendy clothes, really built up his independent living skills, been on holiday to Benidorm and is off to Mexico in a few weeks. Suzanne and Graham hosted a big birthday party for him in a local venue where all his family and friends attended.



Who can become a Shared Lives carer?

There are approximately 10,000 Shared Lives carers in the UK and they come from all backgrounds and walks of life.

The opportunity is open to everyone – whatever your relationship status, sexuality, race or religion, and even if you have no care experience. Some Shared Lives carers are already sharing their home with family, a partner, or even a few pets, while others will currently be living by themselves. The most important thing is that you are friendly and welcoming, have a supportive nature and the right personal values.

We do, however, ask that you:

- are at least 18 years old
- are a full-time resident in the UK or have leave to remain
- are able to give the time to support a person
- have a spare room big enough for the person you're supporting to have their own bedroom.

There is usually one main Shared Lives carer but you can make a joint application or apply with a support carer – this might be your partner, adult child, or a friend.

What kind of support would I give?

Everyone is different, so this can vary from person to person, depending on the individual's needs. Examples of support might include:

- Helping with practical things like money management, laundry, cooking, shopping and independent living skills
- Support with personal care like washing and dressing or reminding someone to take their medication
- Helping people to keep in touch with family, make new friends or take part in activities within the community.
- Supporting people to access education, volunteering, training or work opportunities.



How much will I be paid?

Shared Lives carers receive an average allowance of approximately £500 per week (in addition a payment towards rent, food and utilities), but this may vary according to the needs of each individual. In most cases, you will not pay tax on this amount. You will need to register as self-employed and report this income to HMRC.

Will I get a break?

Carers are entitled to up to 28 days' holiday a year. This will be covered by your support carer if you have one, or by a respite carer.

What does a typical day look like?

There is no typical Shared Lives day – you and the person you're supporting get to decide a routine that works for you.

You might be helping someone to take part in a hobby they love, to get into work, to develop relationships, or to go on holiday – the possibilities are endless.

Most of all, you'll be busy having quality time with the person you're supporting, just like you would with anyone else in your family.

Who would I be supporting?

In Shared Lives, everyone involved has a say and needs to be happy with the person they are going to live with. This makes it different to any other care role.

During your assessment to become a carer, we'll talk to you about who you'd like to support – their age range and needs, the number of people you could be approved to care for, and any other considerations. This will help us match you with someone who will fit into your home, should your application be successful. You will get the chance to get to know each other before you decide if this is right for you.

What is the application process like?

Shared Lives has a thorough application process, which helps us make sure that those who would like to become a carer with United Response will not only be good carers but also benefit from the experience themselves. The application process involves several visits, referencing, and other checks, but your friendly Shared Lives team will be here to guide you every step of the way.

We will also support you in your Shared Lives journey by providing you with a programme of training.



How can I find out more?

Contact us on:



0151 727 6456



Vanessa.Perry@unitedresponse.org.uk



www.unitedresponse.org.uk/shared-lives



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