

School for Social Care Research

Supporting older people in the community: What next for Shared Lives?

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Supporting older people in the community: What next for Shared Lives?

- The research project
- Who uses Shared Lives, and what do they say about it?
- Case studies of 3 Shared Lives schemes
- Is Shared Lives an option for older people?

What is Shared Lives?

- Family-based support; individual needing support included in host's family and community life; host's family home used as resource
- Types of arrangement: Residential or long-term, respite or short breaks, day support, rehabilitative or intermediate, outreach or 'kinship support'
- Careful matching of host and person needing support to ensure compatibility and mutual benefit
- SL schemes approve and train hosts, conduct matching process, monitor SL arrangements
- Established but small service, under-researched

The project

- The context: Need for evidence on personalised, flexible and cost-effective options for older people
- The project:
 - January 2012 - April 2014
 - Overall objective: to generate evidence about the potential of Shared Lives for older people
 - Evidence on outcomes & experience, costs, demand, issues for expansion
 - Multi-method approach: in-depth work with 3 LAs, national surveys

Shared Lives for older people

- 43 schemes responded to scoping survey (approx. 32% response rate)
- Learning disability main client group supported, but 72% provided services for older people

Type of arrangement	Number of schemes	Total number of older people
Long-term/residential	26	178
Day time arrangements	15	226
Respite/short breaks	15	89
Outreach/kinship support	2	4
Other	1	230
Total		727

The survey – who uses Shared Lives?

- 150 responses, from 10 schemes
- 4 types of SL: long term, day support, short breaks/ respite, outreach
- Characteristics of sample:
 - 50% female, 50% male
 - Age range 65-102, average age 77
 - 98% white British
 - Majority could get around indoors, in & out of bed, feed themselves, & use toilet easily
 - More difficulty with washing all over, getting dressed
 - Majority could not deal with finances etc. themselves

The survey – quality of life

- 74% rated overall QoL as good or very good; 22% as alright; 4% as bad or very bad
- Social care-related QoL (SCRQoL)
 - 8 domains: accommodation cleanliness & comfort, personal cleanliness and comfort, food & drink, personal safety, social participation, occupation, control over daily life, dignity
 - Scoring: Ideal state, no needs, some needs, high needs
 - Average score 0.84 (range -0.17-1.00)
- Loneliness, social contact

The survey – what people said about SL

“I am well cared for by friends” (Male, 68)

“Being made to feel part of a family gives me confidence and a feeling of being wanted and not alone” (Male, 68)

“I have been diagnosed with dementia but I am still with the people I call my family and over the 12 years I have been with them I have seen the family grow and always feel a part of it” (Male, 72)

“I'm part of a family now, where I am also able to be part of the local community” (Male, 73)

The survey – what people said about SL (cont.)

“It has given me the opportunity to get out with someone other than my family, to some places I have not been before, to walk and get fresh air”
(Female, 74)

“[Shared Lives] gives me something to look forward to and a purpose in life”
(Male, 68)

“I was in residential care with limited choices. I now live with a family and feel part of it. I now get to go to places I want to, and I have choices” (Male, 75)

The survey – what family carers said about SL

“2x 4 hour slots per week to enable me to get out of the bl....dy house. Invaluable!!!”

“the 2 hours once a month enables me to meet up with my friends otherwise I would be totally trapped” (Female, 58)

“Shared Lives allows me to have a brief but essential respite each week so that I can step back from 24 hour care to my own life. This means everything to me: a small element of my once whole professional life; time at home and with my husband; some time with friends” (Female, 60)

“[Our SL host is] more like a friend and have another opinion on problems, which is most helpful” (Female, 70)

Case study 1 – south eastern county council

- Existing scheme supporting range of client groups, small number of older people
- Offers day support, respite & short breaks, and long-term arrangements
- Starting point – planned to expand, needed to raise awareness in social work teams, previous project to increase arrangements for older people
- Few referrals over 12 month period, some inappropriate referrals
- Contextual factors – major restructuring of council & loss of previous links, eligibility criteria, funding mechanisms, recruitment of suitable hosts
- What next? Continue to expand, offer to self-funders, people with dementia
- What would help? Specific project, training for hosts, continued promotion of SL

Case study 2 – north western city council

- Existing scheme supporting range of client groups including older people
- Offers day support, respite & short breaks, and outreach in service user's own home; outreach mainly used by older people
- Starting point – planned to expand service to older people, expected most demand for outreach service, uncertainty around outsourcing
- Small number of referrals over 12 month period
- Contextual factors – consultation on outsourcing, restructuring of SW teams, financial structures, need for 'quick fix'
- What next? Continue expansion, focus on people with dementia
- What would help? Changing budget structures, utilising opportunities, flexibility of service, training for new social work staff

Case study 3 – south eastern county council

- Existing SL scheme - new project specifically focusing on people living with dementia & their carers
- Offering respite & short breaks, possibilities for long-term & day support
- Starting point – host recruitment, lack of shared understanding aims, objectives & expected benefits, perceptions about safety and acceptability
- Contextual factors – restructuring, management structures, local authority ‘knowledge creep’ unhelpful
- Key individual to drive it forward & management support seen as essential
- 6 months plus before first referrals to project

Is Shared Lives an option for older people?

- Valued by older people and family carers
- Not yet considered part of mainstream provision for older people
- Many schemes already support older people; build on existing provision
- Need support from management, adequate resources
- Continue to raise awareness, 'win hearts and minds'

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