


Shared Lives placements for older people

Outline of a research project
funded by the NIHR School
for Social Care Research



Improving the evidence base for
adult social care practice

Do Shared Lives adult placements offer an affordable alternative to traditional services for older people?

Current social care policy puts great emphasis on community-based, personalised services that are designed to give people more choice and control over their care and support. However, with an ageing population and cuts to local authority funding, personalised services for older people could be seen as unaffordable. Thus there is a need for evidence that personalisation is cost-effective.

Shared Lives adult placement is where an individual or family is paid to include an isolated or under-supported older or disabled person in their family and community life. Shared Lives is also used as day support and as respite for family carers. The SSCR-funded *Personalisation of Services Scoping Project* indicated that Shared Lives services are potentially beneficial for many older people. Despite limited research, there was evidence of high levels of satisfaction among service users and also cost-savings when compared to traditional services, particularly for people with learning disabilities. Councils are now interested in the potential of expansion of Shared Lives for older people, both state-supported and self-funding, and further research is needed in this area.

This project

- will generate evidence about the potential of Shared Lives for certain groups of older people, such as those needing low-level 24-hour support, the socially isolated, and those whose carers need regular respite care.

It aims to

- identify demand for Shared Lives among older people and their carers, including among self-funders
- investigate barriers and facilitators to implementation and expansion
- compare the outcomes and cost-effectiveness of Shared Lives with traditional alternatives for older people such as residential care, respite care and home care
- develop elements of good practice for Shared Lives
- provide evidence to help local commissioners decide whether or not to implement or extend Shared Lives schemes for older people in their areas.

WHAT IS THE CONTEXT?

In recognition of a lack of an evidence base for the personalisation of social care, the SSCR funded the *Personalisation of Services Scoping Project*, which ran from October 2009 to March 2011. During the study it became apparent that, in the face of budget cuts, there was a danger the emphasis on personalised care and support would be lost. In the current demanding financial climate, evidence is therefore needed on personalised services that will deliver good outcomes at low cost.

One of the services highlighted through the study as a potentially successful personalised service was Shared Lives (previously known as Adult Placement). NAAPS (the UK network for family-based and small-scale ways of supporting adults – now renamed ‘Shared Lives Plus’), has described Shared Lives as ‘where an individual or family is paid a modest amount to include an isolated or under-supported older or disabled person in their family and community life. In many cases that person goes to live with a Shared Lives carer and their family, although Shared Lives is also used as day support, as respite care for unpaid family carers, as home from hospital care and as a stepping stone for someone to get their own place’.

In the scoping project, Shared Lives appeared to be a highly personalised, community-based service which, although most commonly offered to people with learning disabilities, could have potential for older people.

The limited research evidence shows high satisfaction among Shared Lives service users and cost savings when compared to traditional services, particularly for people with learning disabilities. It has been suggested that Shared Lives outperforms alternative care and support options on key indicators of personalisation: inclusion, flexibility, choice and control. Shared Lives carers, clients and scheme managers felt that basing the service in a family home, having a maximum of three people for each Shared Lives carer, and the detailed ‘matching’ of carers to clients were important factors that led to a very personalised service.

Shared Lives in practice

Recent data shows:

- 133 registered Shared Lives schemes in 2010/11 (CQC)
- around 10,000 Shared Lives carers in the UK in 2011 (NAAPS)
- 4,210 people supported by Shared Lives in England in 2010, of whom 575 were over the age of 65 (Information Centre for Health and Social Care)
- Shared Lives is rated highly by the CQC, with the highest proportion (95%) of services rated as good or excellent of all regulated social care service types
- Shared Lives has the best performance in relation to national minimum standards, meeting 93% on average (CQC).

Questions now in need of evidence-backed answers include: Is Shared Lives more suitable for some individuals or service user groups than others? What is its potential role for older people, particularly for those who are socially isolated? Does it offer a substitute to traditional respite care? What are the costs and cost-effectiveness of Shared Lives for older people compared to alternative provision? It also remains unclear why, given that Shared Lives is so highly regarded, it does not form a greater proportion of adult social care services and whether this is primarily the result of low awareness and understanding of the service among care managers and commissioners – or lack of funding to run Shared Lives schemes.

HOW WILL THE PROJECT WORK?

The project was designed in collaboration with two local councils, Leeds and Oxfordshire, that are interested in extending the use of Shared Lives to a wider group of older people. A third council, Kent, will also be a fieldwork site.

Research project outline

STAGE 1: Development and schemes survey

The project's work with the three councils will establish exactly how they wish to extend Shared Lives further with older people and their carers, what are the current and potential key points of contact and access to schemes, and the implications for where future demand might most effectively be identified. A critical element will be establishing appropriate ways of explaining the Shared Lives schemes to practitioners, brokers and potential users, and understanding their information needs and key points in current processes. The initial work will also clarify the characteristics and circumstances of individuals that may make them particularly suitable or unsuitable for Shared Lives.

A national survey of all Shared Lives schemes (local authority and independent) will be conducted to identify the extent to which they are being used by older people and their carers. For each scheme the survey will identify:

- a description of the scheme, its relationship with the council's Adult Social Care department and its use by self-funders (if any)
- levels and type of provision for older people and their carers
- plans with respect to provision for older people and their carers and trends in use of the scheme generally
- payments made to carers and charges to service users and carers
- interest in taking part in stage 2.

STAGE 2: Fieldwork

The main fieldwork will include:

A national postal survey of older people already using Shared Lives and their informal carers. This will compare their social care-related quality of life (SCRQoL) outcomes with those using alternative services. Survey data will only be collected from local authority funded users so that older people who respond to the Adult Social Care Survey can be used as comparators.

Identifying and monitoring potential demand in the three council areas. Detailed plans for this data collection will be developed in Stage

1. Potential points for establishing demand would be: when considering a move into a care home; in the early stages of dementia; and at the point of being provided advice after having been declined council support.

Tracking the experiences and outcomes of up to 15 older people, their informal carers and Shared Lives carers in each of the three council areas. These interviews will give researchers the opportunity to compare their SCRQoL outcomes on taking up a placement and 6–9 months later. The project will also interview scheme managers, social work practitioners and commissioners about their views of the potential of Shared Lives and their experiences. Overall, the project will be able to collect detailed information about the processes of Shared Lives, including the practices involved in the matching process, barriers and facilitators to implementation, and elements of good practice.

Collecting detailed costs information from a sample of schemes identified through the Stage 1 scoping survey.

STAGE 3: Analysis

Analysis of the data should enable comparison of relative costs and experienced quality of life between those using Shared Lives and those supported in care homes or their own homes. Multivariate analyses will explore factors associated with variations in outcomes.

Project publications

A communication and dissemination plan will be in place from the project. In addition to academic articles and an administrative and methodological report, there will be: web-based and traditional printed outputs, which may include brief reports on local priorities for the three participating councils, policy briefs and executive summaries for practitioners and policy makers, and accessible Research Findings documents; events, including a mid-project workshop to share intermediate results with stakeholders; and conference presentations (for example, the NAAPS annual conference, British Society of Gerontology, Community Care conferences). The project will ensure an ongoing web presence, making use of the SSCR, PSSRU and NAAPS websites.

Research project outline

HOW DOES THE PROJECT FIT THE AIMS OF THE SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL CARE RESEARCH?

As adult social care departments seek to personalise services at a time of increasing financial pressure and a growing older population, there is a real need for evidence on low-cost, personalised services for older people. Shared Lives could offer an alternative to traditional services for some older people. It is an established but small service that has strong advocates; however, there is a lack of research evidence to effectively demonstrate any potential benefits and cost savings.

The research project will address this need for evidence and provide important evidence for practitioners and local commissioners to help them decide whether or not to implement or extend Shared Lives schemes for older people in their areas and for which individuals it would be most suitable. It should also raise the profile of Shared Lives among social work practitioners, which will mean that information about the schemes is passed on to older people and their carers as appropriate, for use when deciding between service options.

If the evidence suggests that Shared Lives is a viable option for some older people and is cost-effective, and Shared Lives provision is expanded, it is possible that inappropriate admissions to care homes may be avoided. Expansion of Shared Lives will also bring greater choice for older people and their carers.

The Research Team

Professor Ann Netten, Professor of Social Welfare, University of Kent; Director of the Kent branch of the Personal Social Services Research Unit (PSSRU); Director of the Quality and Outcomes of Person Centred Care Research Unit; Associate Director of the NIHR School for Social Care Research, will have overall responsibility for ensuring that the strands of work are successfully coordinated and completed to timescale and within budget.

Lisa Callaghan, Research Officer at Kent PSSRU, will be responsible for day-to-day management of the project, liaison with sites, and conducting and supervising fieldwork. Her research interests include personalisation of care and support services, and housing, and care for older people.

Nadia Brookes, Research Officer at Kent PSSRU, will be responsible for day-to-day project management and lead on costs and outcomes. Her research interest focuses on developing practical ways to assess experiences and outcomes for individuals.

All will contribute to analysis, production of outputs and dissemination of results.

Project title:
Outcomes, Processes and Costs
of Shared Lives

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to 31 March 2014

Budget:
£340,078

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