

### CASE STUDIES – SHARED LIVES\*

#### Chris's Story – Birmingham Shared Lives

Chris lived in residential care before moving to Shared Lives Plus, he currently lives with his carer Alison with the Birmingham Shared Lives Scheme. Whilst living in other residential care, Chris felt he had some independence but other clients priorities came first. After some meetings with a social worker and an advocate, he discussed the good and bad points of residential accommodation against Shared Lives. After initially worrying about the home environment of living with a couple and the possibility of feeling left out, in his eyes Shared Lives won him over because of the independence it would allow Chris to have in comparison to what he had in residential care.

After visiting a Shared Lives carer twice, the carer decided he was not ready for a permanent placement. Chris was then introduced to and visited Alison, staying with her overnight to see if they were compatible, then a final meeting was set up before he moved in with her. Chris enjoyed walking the dog, he sorted out his bedroom, medication, a bus pass and medical treatments, whilst getting to know Alison's family and friends. Since joining Shared Lives Chris has taken up Zumba, goes out more regularly, goes on trips, bakes and volunteers.

Chris says, "I am more independent. I go to more places than before, like we just went to Brighton – I couldn't do that before, there would be a lot more people involved and a lot of planning. Our trip to Rome would have taken much longer to plan, for example, how many staff and clients were going. In residential I couldn't go out to a club without having to do a risk assessment and care plan. Since I moved in I think we have been on 9 trips. I also stay with Sylvia and Carol for respite, they are Shared Lives carers too."

"I would say it is more of a family. I do get on with everybody... I would say it is more of a closeness."

#### Karen and Phillip – Worcestershire Shared Lives

One important part of Shared Lives is ensuring that as well as those who live in Shared Lives, those who open their homes, hearts and lives also get what they are looking for. We spoke to Karen Barlow, who lives with her husband Phillip. Together, they support two individuals; Kieron and Jenna on a long-term basis.

We spoke to her to find out what she gets out of Shared Lives.

## **Karen and Phillip's Story**

"I have worked in the care service since 1992. I became a Shared Lives provider because I learnt that many people that needed a carer also needed a home, a family life, stability and a familiar face which is not always available in residential settings.

I knew that I, my husband and my family could offer these things."

"I have shared my life with two people full time and six people on a respite basis."

### **What is your favourite thing about Shared Lives?**

"Shared Lives enables people to live in a family home as well as have someone to support them 24 hours if needed."

### **How has your life changed after opening your home to someone who needs support?**

"My life hasn't changed. I am still working with people that need care, it is just the circumstances that have changed."

Shared Lives is a vocation, not just a job, but it is well worth doing.

I would say if you're not 100% sure what it would be like then try respite first this will give you a taster to what Shared Lives is all about."

"We have been with Worcester shared lives for four years and it's the best care job I have ever had I love it. Shared Lives is a great scheme that allows people to experience every day family values.

I love the fact that we can help people to live a life that they want and show them things that they thought impossible or never had the chance to experience before. There is nothing better to see than their faces light up with excitement or pride when they have accomplished something.

It is a great feeling to help people to achieve happiness in their lives.

Jen and Kie are part of our family we enjoy their company we laugh, cry and live life **together.**"

## Case Studies – Brenda – Newham Shared Lives

The Shared Lives carers all across the UK are anything but similar. Each story is different and this is just proof that anyone can become a Shared Lives carer! This story follows Shared Lives youngest carer to date who began caring when she was just twenty two years old! Four and a half years later, she has supported two individuals on a long term basis as well as seven on respite.

### Brenda's Story:

"I saw a very close friend of the family doing Shared Lives and I thought it was admirable, and as I got to learn more about it, I thought to myself, this definitely something I can do.

The main reason I became a carer is because I have always been the type of person who loves working with people. I love to help and support others, more especially passing on my skills and watching someone grow in confidence, feel empowered and know that they can do things themselves.

I find it amazing that it's possible to make such a difference in someone's life by opening your home, your heart and involving people in our family life.

Kevin (who has a learning disability) has lived with me on a long term basis for almost 4 years - and Luis (who has epilepsy and recovering from a brain tumour) has lived with me for a year and a half. Kevin is now very stable in his routine - and the day activities I put in place are working very well for him. He has gained weight, takes more pride in his appearance, he's more confident and does not hold back when speaking about what he wants and does not want. Luis is more relaxed now, which may be the reason why he has not had a seizure since living here - his understanding of English has also improved."

### Do you believe Shared Lives is a more appropriate option for those needing support?

"Not necessarily, I think it really does depend on each individual and their need. I think every carer in Newham has something different to offer but that still may not suit anyone who is in need of support. While I think Shared Lives is amazing, we have to remember that these are people's family homes and may not necessarily be suitable to everyone. It's a brilliant option but I'm not sure it's the only one."

How has your life changed after opening your home?

"My life has changed a lot - being the youngest carer, initially I felt like I would have to sacrifice a lot, but not really. I didn't sign my life away! As long as I get my 'me time' every now and then, I can balance my time well enough to still do what I want to do, and the people I support are happy - then life is great!

You cannot put a price on the feeling you get from knowing you are making a huge impact on someone's life."

*\* Excerpts taken from the Shared Lives Plus website on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2017.*