

**An easy-to-read summary  
about research on the quality,  
outcomes and cost-effectiveness  
of Shared Lives services  
in South East England**



**September 2009**

## Introduction

This summary report describes some research that took place during 9 months between September 2008 and May 2009. (Research means finding out the answers to some particular questions.)

We would like to say thank you to all the services that made this research possible by taking part in it, and to all the people who joined in the discussion groups.

The research was about Shared Lives, or Adult Placement as it used to be called until recently. The name was changed so that it was easier for people to understand what was special about this kind of service – which is that a person is supported and included as part of a Shared Lives carer's family.



Shared Lives carers can provide different kinds of support for people, such as short breaks, daytime support, or a longer-term home. We wanted to find out what sort of quality and outcomes were available in Shared Lives, and what people thought was important about quality and outcomes, and what the costs were for providing these services.

Because words like 'quality' and 'outcome' are complicated and can mean different things to different people, these are the meanings that were agreed for this research:

- Quality means meeting a person's needs and wishes, and always looking for ways to get better and better at this.
- An outcome is the result (good or bad) of a Shared Lives arrangement and includes any new opportunities that come with being supported through Shared Lives.

## How we did the research



We read the most recent inspection reports for all the Shared Lives services in South East England. This told us what the inspectors had found when they visited the services.



We held discussion groups in 4 of the best services, to find out more about the views and experiences of people who were using the service, and the Shared Lives carers and workers too.



We asked all the services about the costs of providing support, and of running the service.



We also read other research concerning Shared Lives in England, to see if this could add useful information to the things we found out ourselves.

## The main things we found out about quality and outcomes

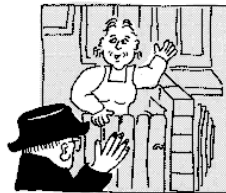
Most Shared Lives services are excellent or good, and meet national standards for care and support. When this was compared with inspections for care homes and other types of registered services, Shared Lives services were found to be better.



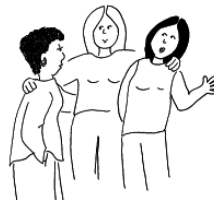
Most Shared Lives services provide positive experiences and outcomes for the people who are using the services. They also provide high levels of satisfaction for them, their relatives, and the professionals who are working with them.

These are things that all the Shared Lives services did well:

1. Leading an ordinary life in the community.



2. Sharing the Shared Lives carer's family life.



3. Supporting the Shared Lives carers



These are some of the most important things that affect quality and outcomes in Shared Lives:

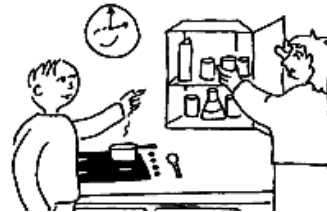
1. Other people and organisations knowing about Shared Lives, and understanding what these arrangements are really like.



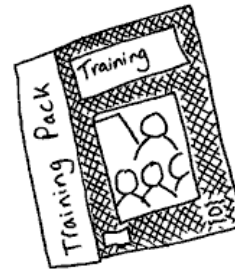
2. The relationship between the person and Shared Lives carer, which is one they both benefit from.



3. Carers and workers having all the information they need in order to support a person well.



4. Choosing the right people to be Shared Lives carers and workers, and making sure they have the training and development they need to do their jobs properly.



5. Everybody involved in Shared Lives having opportunities to make comments, and being listened to.



6. Managers having the right kinds of information so that they know what is happening in the service, and can take sensible decisions and actions.



These things regularly cause problems in Shared Lives:

1. Working together with care managers. (The importance of this is not always properly understood outside the Shared Lives services.)



2. Things to do with money, such as payments to carers, or who pays for what, and how much. (This involves managers outside Shared Lives too.)



## The main things we found out about costs



The costs in Shared Lives services varied a lot. This included the amounts that Shared Lives carers and workers were paid, and also the ways that people who were using the services were being charged. This meant that sometimes people in longer-term arrangements could not claim all the benefits they were entitled to.

None of the schemes was able to say exactly what it cost to run their service, so this needs some attention from them. However there was enough information to show that Shared Lives offer good value for money, because they provide high quality support at a lower cost than other similar services.

## The future for Shared Lives services

The government is bringing in some changes which mean that people will have more say and more choices about the support they receive. Shared Lives services are already well set for taking an active part in these changes.