



# High performing Shared Lives schemes and carers

## What we learnt from schemes



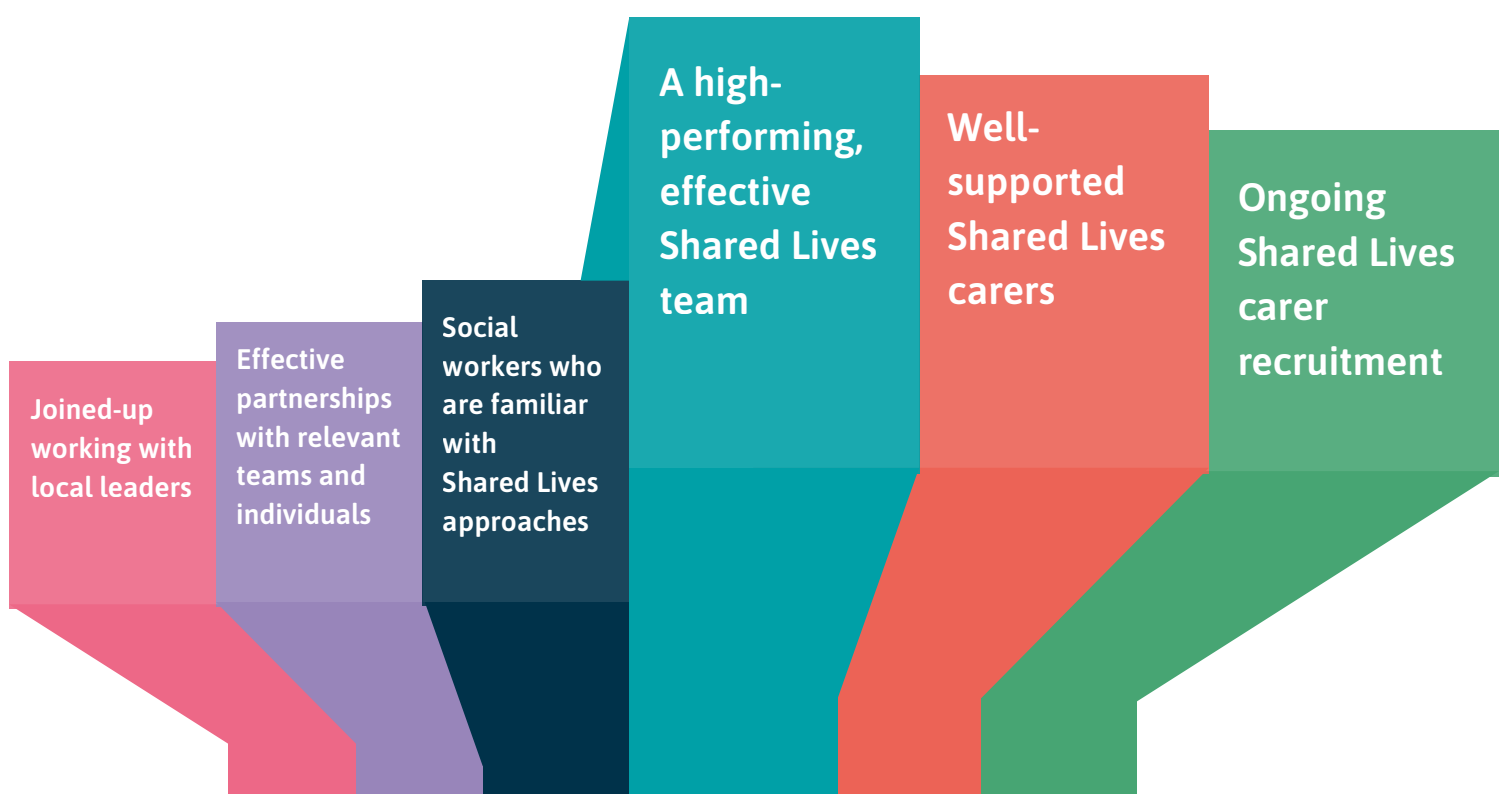
# Introduction

Over the past two years, Shared Lives Plus have collected best practice insights from Shared Lives schemes following state of sector returns. We engaged with schemes who significantly grew the number of supported people within their scheme.

We asked schemes about their approach in relation to key practice areas for growing and developing a scheme – the ‘six building blocks’ for growing a robust Shared Lives service, as outlined in guidance we produced with Partners in Care and Health (PCH).

This briefing outlines best practice that contributed to effective and impactful scheme delivery, having a well-oiled and effective scheme, including streamlined processes and systems. This is broken down into the following areas:

- 1. A high-performing effective Shared Lives team**
- 2. Well-supported Shared Lives carers**
- 3. Ongoing Shared Lives carer recruitment**



# A high performing effective Shared Lives team

Having a high-performing and effective Shared Lives team is essential to Shared Lives development.

**“The first eighteen months of development were not focused on growth but rather establishing ourselves and getting processes in place.”**

**Shared Lives Scheme Manager**

## **Training and development opportunities for staff**

Development opportunities for Shared Lives scheme staff are essential in strengthening knowledge, confidence, and professional capability. Opportunities, such as trauma-informed practice training, promote good practice in support and monitoring, especially as a scheme diversifies, for example, by supporting more care leavers.

**“Staff attend training provided to Shared Lives carers to increase their knowledge and understanding on requirements.”**

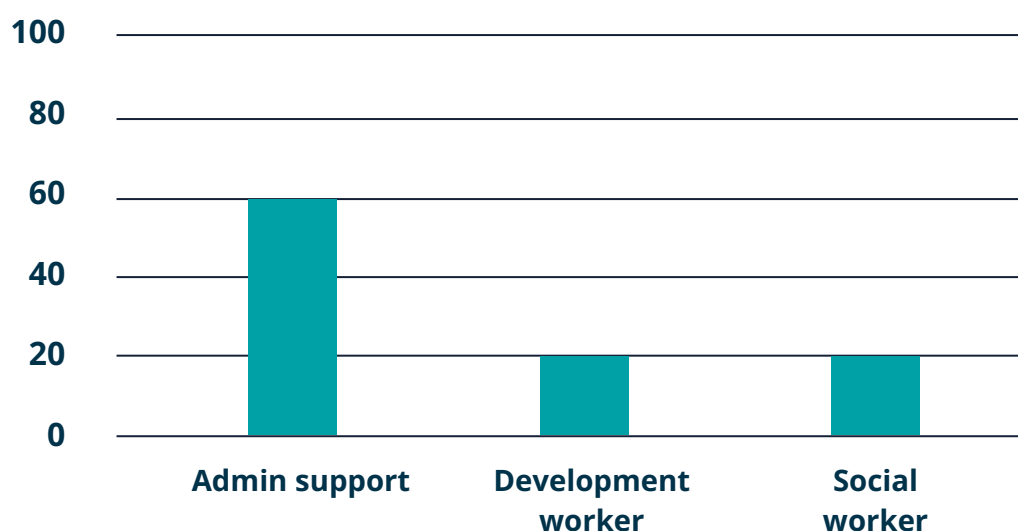
**“Workers have an opportunity to develop, and one is becoming an Occupational Therapist Apprentice.”**

**“We have close relationships with workforce development teams.”**

## Dedicated capacity for certain scheme functions

Dedicated capacity in certain areas, such as administrative support, is important because it frees up other scheme workers to focus on supporting arrangements and development work. Schemes reported that dedicated capacity enabled the team to grow in line with demand and take on more meaningful development activity, diversifying their Shared Lives offer.

**% of schemes surveyed who employed these roles**



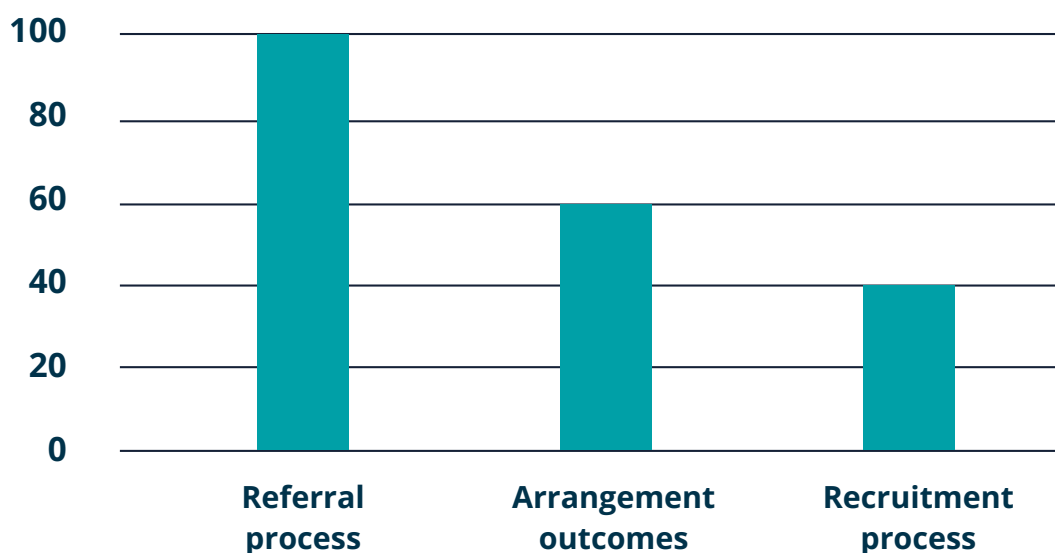
**"The staffing of the scheme has developed in line with scheme growth."**

**"The employment of a part-time administrator was vital."**

## Monitoring and tracking tools to analyse scheme data

Monitoring and tracking tools are crucial in allowing schemes to analyse key performance data, such as referrals and recruitment activity, ensuring this is done with a structured, consistent process, pulling out insights to improve understanding of key blockers. Schemes reported using tools like spreadsheets, SharePoint, Mosaic, Power BI, and Asana to guide strategic, evidence based planning. For independent schemes, commissioners had oversight of monitoring and tracking tools.

### What is monitored by schemes?



**"Our Sharepoint site is used to track and analyse scheme data."**

**"We use Mosaic for Shared Lives carer monitoring. This system was developed by the internal Mosaic team and was the result of a digital business case."**

**"Power BI is used for tracking and monitoring referrals. SMT has oversight of this."**

## **Strategic Advice support**

**Shared Lives Plus work with local areas to enhance their Shared Lives schemes ways of working. This includes reviewing operational approaches, identifying development opportunities, and creating practical implementation plans. This support helps schemes strengthen performance, systems, processes, and team capability at whatever stage of development they are in.**

# Well supported Shared Lives carers

Ensuring Shared Lives carers are well supported in their role, including appealing care and support fees, is essential to growing a Shared Lives scheme. This helps Shared Lives carers feel valued in their role and means that the carer support package is attractive to potential Shared Lives carers, aiding recruitment activities.

**"I think it's important to have a good offer for carers in terms of the support and monitoring, sufficient respite nights to ensure carers receive a rest, and to really value the carers and make them part of your team by involving them in co-production, advertising and policies. Regular pay uplifts are a must."**

**Shared Lives Scheme Manager**

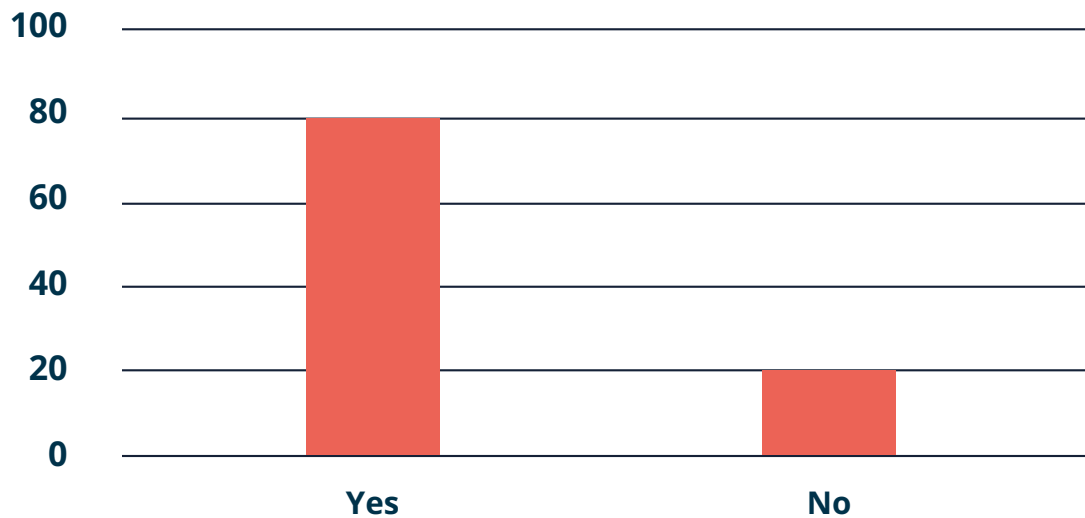
## **A thought-out approach to Shared Lives carer fees**

Fair, competitive, and regularly reviewed care and support fees are vital to sustainably growing a scheme. Schemes reported providing annual fee uplifts and benchmarking fees against other local authorities and services who have high and rewarding fee levels, emphasising that strong fees are an essential underpinning of sustainable scheme growth.

**"We've had an uplift for carers the past few years."**

**"Stressing the importance of high fees from the outset is necessary to aid carer recruitment and retention."**

## % of schemes included in annual fee uplifts



### Building regular breaks into support packages

Building regular breaks into support packages ensures that Shared Lives carers can sustain their role, preventing burnout. Sufficient breaks are an essential part of the Shared Lives carer role, as outlined in Shared Lives Plus guidance.

**“Having respite provision in place as part of a package at an early stage is really important.”**

**“Most Shared Lives carers access breaks through Shared Lives, with others accessing breaks through other services.”**

## A range of support options for Shared Lives carers

A range of support options, including peer support and bespoke training, ensures that Shared Lives carers are well equipped to the unique demands of their role. Schemes reported setting up co-production groups, peer-support options, and offering bespoke training and support where needed.

**"We have bespoke training for Shared Lives carers - traditional training content is not appropriate for Shared Lives."**

**"We have co-production groups to understand exactly what Shared Lives carers need."**

**"We are setting up peer-support groups."**

Of schemes surveyed:

- **80%** offered bespoke training, when necessary, to Shared Lives carers
- **40%** had peer support in place



## **Clear support and monitoring processes and systems**

Clear support and monitoring processes ensure that Shared Lives carers feel well-supported in their roles and have access to the information and resources they need. Schemes noted this supports better communication and oversight.

**40% of schemes surveyed had digital systems to support Shared Lives carer monitoring**

**"Shared Lives carers have access to an external SharePoint with all scheme resources."**

## **Strategic Advice support**

Shared Lives Plus work with local areas to enhance their support offer for Shared Lives carers. This includes fee benchmarking, designing support systems, reviewing training, and exploring new ways to ensure carers feel valued and equipped, supporting your aims to establish, grow, or diversify Shared Lives. Shared Lives Plus's Shared Lives carer training platform hosts a suite of key learning modules, specifically tailored to the role of Shared Lives carers.

# Ongoing Shared Lives carer recruitment

Shared Lives carer recruitment is the most common barrier to growth cited by schemes nationally. However, many schemes have had success with various approaches and techniques to stimulate recruitment. The schemes we engaged with had a thought out, consistent and varied approach to Shared Lives carer recruitment which supported them in growing. This was founded on:

## Employing a range of recruitment activities

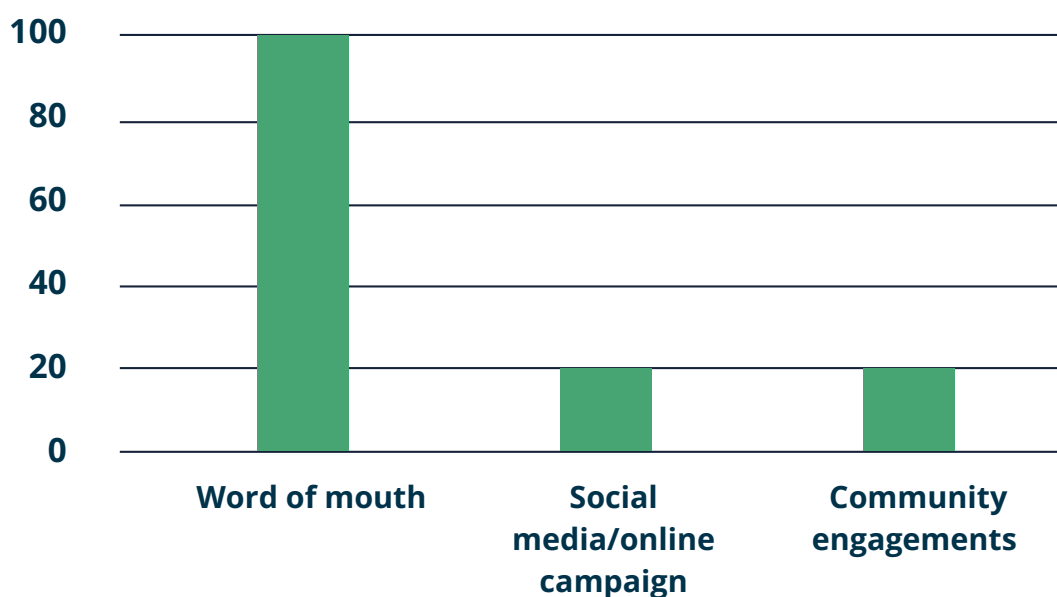
Using a range of recruitment channels has been beneficial for schemes, ensuring they're reaching a wide range of audiences, and allowing them to understand what channels are most effective.

"Our lead assessor has good links with community groups."

"We have funded a £250 refer a friend scheme as word of mouth is the most successful route."



## Most used recruitment channels



## Employing various messages to appeal to different audiences

Shared Lives carers are from a wide range of backgrounds and living situations. Therefore, schemes used a range of recruitment messages, tailored to each individual audience and demographic they are trying to recruit.

**"Messaging in recruitment materials has changed and now stresses that this is a professional caring role."**

**"We've decided not to start with the 'Shared Lives' tagline... instead framing comms around do you have the right values, spare room etc."**

**"We've advertised working from home, targeting professionals as opposed to 'empty nesters'."**

## Outcomes monitoring to track the success of different techniques and messages

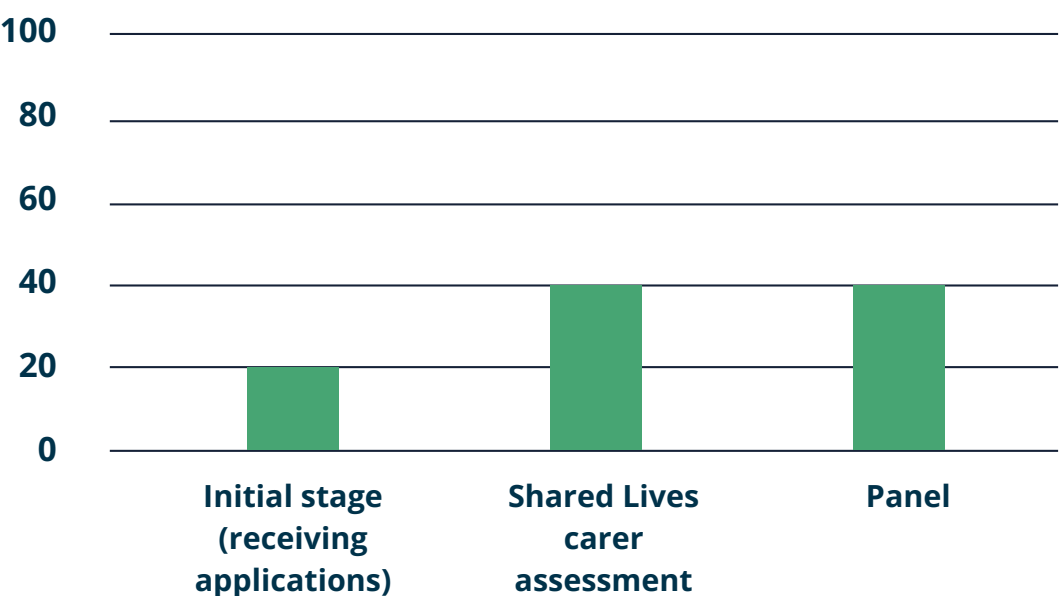
Tracking and monitoring the success of recruitment activity is vital to understanding what channels and messages are most effective in your local area. Key metrics to measure include reach, engagement, click through rate, and cost per application and hire. The results from this tracking can inform future activity.

“We’ve employed an outcome focussed approach to digital communications.”

## Streamlining recruitment and assessment processes

Streamlining processes can help create a seamless recruitment pathway for candidates, reducing barriers to applying and ensuring the application process can be completed as quickly as possible.

**% of schemes to make changes to steps within the recruitment process**



**“Accelerating Reform Fund (ARF) funding has been used to introduce a new recruitment portal and to jazz up our website.”**

**“We have streamlined recruitment processes, providing a lot more information upfront to ensure suitable applications, setting realistic expectations and setting out the need for training.”**

## **Strategic Advice support**

**Shared Lives Plus offers support to refresh and improve recruitment activity. This includes helping you review previous approaches, streamline processes, developing and supporting the delivery of targeted recruitment campaigns, enabling you to build and sustain a strong base of Shared Lives carers at all stages of your scheme’s development.**



**Birmingham**  
City Council

## STRATEGIC SPOTLIGHT

Shared Lives Plus supported Birmingham City Council to develop and implement a refreshed approach to Shared Lives carer recruitment, as well as identifying new options for support and monitoring conducted by the scheme. This project was focused on the:

- Development and implementation of a new carer recruitment strategy
- Delivery of training to Shared Lives carers through Shared Lives Plus's online training platform
- Development of an options appraisal, to implement a new digital system for Shared Lives carer management and monitoring

### Achievements

- From June 2024 to July 2025, 23 Shared Lives carers were recruited, with three more going through the approval process
- The options appraisal informed the scheme's decision to procure a digital system for Shared Lives carer management and support
- "The support we have had from Shared Lives Plus has been second to none. It has enabled us to work at pace and to implement good practice." - **Caroline Naven, Head of Transformation for Adult Social Care**

Shared Lives Plus understands the challenges councils, Integrated Care Systems (ICS), Shared Lives schemes, housing partners, the voluntary and community sector, and the NHS face. We have a well-established approach to supporting the development of Shared Lives, which we call Strategic Advice, working collaboratively to build sustainable, joined-up models of support.

Request a copy of our Strategic Advice consultancy brochure.

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**Our lives get better  
when they're shared**

