

Could you share your life?

The Shared Lives service offers long and short term placements for vulnerable adults with families. It's for adults from 16 upwards who have need of additional support. This can include a learning difficulty, physical disability, mental health condition, or need support because they are older. The service always needs carers to come forward to look after people. In this edition of Bolton Scene we spoke to three people who are benefiting from the service.

THROUGH the Shared Lives service a family, couple or single person offer either a short or long term home for a vulnerable person.

It means the person who is being supported experiences ordinary family life. The carer supports the person to develop or maintain independent living

skills, friendships and build roots in their community, creating a meaningful sense of belonging.

The needs of the person do vary from moderate to severe. Some could be looked after children who need a bit of support as they move into independent adulthood while others need support for the whole of their lives. They might need a permanent home; somewhere to stay for a short break or an overnight stay; or somewhere to live in the short term to learn independent living skills.



Sarah and Shelli

“Shelli treats me as an adult and I’m looking to become more independent in the future.”

“Shared Lives is such an appropriate name for the service,” said carer Shelli.

“You’re opening up your home to someone to become part of the family. The carers and the person being looked after are carefully matched.”

Shelli supports Sarah, who is 21 and has lived with her and her family for the past two years. But she also has other adults coming to her to stay short term.

For Sarah, it’s all about becoming more independent after going through a lot as a child. She is studying performing arts at Bolton College and likes acting and dance.

“I would like to go into acting and singing in the future,” she said.

“Shelli treats me as an adult and I’m looking to become more independent in the future.”

That’s one of the reasons why many carers take up the role.

“It motivates me as a carer to encourage others to get life skills and to live independently,” she added.

“We talk about the skills needed to live alone and with people. I feel like I’m passing on individual skills unique to Sarah, and am providing a family environment.

“We have 24 hour back up if there are any problems, have regular contact with the team and get regular training in anything we feel we need, such as first aid training.”



Sarah

Sarah lived with her mum, and both felt as mum was experiencing health problems that Shared Lives would be a good option.

She is looking to become more independent and move to her own home, in a year to 18 months’ time, but has needed support to do this.

Sarah gets a lot of help from Aziz and Tami in particular helping with money and budgeting, which is preparing her for becoming more independent.

But Sarah is also increasing her own confidence and self-reliance. She studied at Bolton College and now volunteers at its Brownlow Fold Centre. She supports two students with their studies.

Aziz and Tami joined Shared lives three years ago and Sarah is the first person to live with them. Aziz works as a carer for social services and they discussed joining for a long time before they did so.



Jean and Carmel

“Carmel coming to live with me has changed both our lives”

While Sarah is receiving the short term support that she needs, Shared Lives also works with people who need greater support.

Carmel has lived with Jean for three years after living with another Shared Lives carer. She has Downs syndrome and learning disability, and needs a high level of support.

They had already become good friends, before Carmel moved in as she would come to stay with Jean for short periods to give her previous carer a break. These short breaks are equally important for each other and Carmel goes to stay with Shelli who we met earlier.

“Carmel coming to live with me has changed both our lives,” said Jean.

“I worked in day services and when I took early

retirement the opportunity presented itself to take part with Shared Lives. I have previously done volunteer work and supported people as a befriender.

“It was a big decision for Carmel to come live with me but I don’t regret it and it has been good for both of us.”

Carmel’s interests include listening to music especially opera and Nana Mouskouri. They have a good social life and many friends and go on regular holidays. Carmel attends Horwich day centre five days a week and takes part in all sorts of activities from dance and keep fit to meals and trips out. They receive regular visits from a shared lives Shared Lives worker to help them.

If you’re interested in finding out more contact

01204 337515 or **337516** or email **adult.placement@bolton.gov.uk**

There’s also further information on our website:

www.bolton.gov.uk