

# Sandwell Shared Lives CARER NEWSLETTER



## An update from the scheme:

How are we in April already? As the year seems to be flying by, the Sandwell Shared Lives team have been working hard to enhance and expand our services. We have been very busy with new referrals and are welcoming a steady stream of new carers joining the family.

A few weeks ago, some of you may have caught Shared Lives Plus CEO, Ewan King, on BBC breakfast news. This appearance aimed to raise awareness of Shared Lives schemes and promote the core values of our services.

We too have been spreading the word, although not on national news, but amongst social work teams, community groups, health services and more. We continue to share good news stories, which highlight the positive outcomes and purpose of the service provided.

We have introduced the new strand to the Shared Lives scheme - Day respite - through the Home and Away service. We currently have placements in progress which are already making a significant difference for the individual's accessing respite and their families. Read more of Adrian's story later in the newsletter.

The team is committed to providing you with support. If you need any assistance, please do not hesitate in contacting the team.

We are excited to see how the scheme will grow and advance throughout 2025. Lastly, we wish you all a Happy Easter!

*The Sandwell  
Shared Lives  
Team*



## In this newsletter:

A message from Diane Cox, Registered Manager.  
Shared Lives Week - W/C 23rd June 2025.  
Home and Away with Adrian.  
You said, We Did!  
Information Point.  
A tribute to Joy Tomkins.

0121 569 4467

[sandwell\\_sharedlives@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:sandwell_sharedlives@sandwell.gov.uk)

**Stoney Lane Centre,  
Summer Street, West  
Bromwich, B71 4JA**

# A message from Diane Cox, Registered Manager:

Hello, everyone.

I just want to take this opportunity to share with you, something that sits at the heart of everything we do here at Shared Lives — well-being.

Whether you're a carer, a person we support or a family member, your well-being matters deeply to us.

Shared Lives is built on strong, caring relationships, and the simple truth is: when we take care of each other, we all thrive. That means checking in with yourself, reaching out when you need support, and making space for the small things that lift you up — a walk, a chat, a quiet moment, or even a shared laugh over a cup of tea.

**To our carers** — your kindness and dedication shape lives every single day, and it's just as important to show that same care to yourselves.

**And to everyone we support** — your individuality, strength, and happiness are what inspire us. We are always here to listen and walk alongside you.

*Well-being isn't just a goal, it's an ongoing journey, and we're proud to walk it together. Let's keep looking out for each other — because together, we make life better.*



## SHARED LIVES WEEK 2025

MONDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> JUNE 2025  
– FRIDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2025

Every year, we celebrate the Shared Lives community during Shared Lives week. This year Shared Lives week will take place from Monday 23<sup>th</sup> June to Friday 27<sup>th</sup> June. The theme is **#WeAreSharedLives**.

In Sandwell, we will be using this as another opportunity to raise our profile and show how proud we are of what we do! We will be looking to share individuals and carer stories across the whole council.



Additional to this, we are looking to launch a new social media page on Facebook. We want to share information and stories on our page. Shared Lives Plus are looking to create a collective video with the message **'Stories are better shared'** where households film a short video of them passing a book from screen to screen. We will be looking to use this idea to make our own within Sandwell Shared Lives and share as our first post on our new social media page! We can pass these video clips on to Shared Lives Plus for those who wish to be involved in the wider video. We would love for as many of you to be involved with this as possible. We will update you with more details about this in the upcoming months.

**If you want to share your story on being a Shared Lives Carer, or believe the individual you support would like to share theirs – get in touch with Paige to discuss more.**

**Your views, stories and experiences can be used to spread the word to others of how important, life impacting and rewarding it is to be a part of the Sandwell Shared Lives family!**



# HOME AND AWAY WITH ADRIAN



In July 2024, the pilot of the Home and Away scheme was launched by Sandwell Shared Lives. This respite service is designed to provide family carers with a much-needed break, allowing them to prioritise their well-being and self-care after the challenges posed by the Covid pandemic.

One referral for this service came from a family member who, in her own words, "desperately needed a break!" The team collaborated with Adrian and his family to explore how the new day respite option could be beneficial, as they preferred not to access overnight respite due to some of Adrian's health needs.

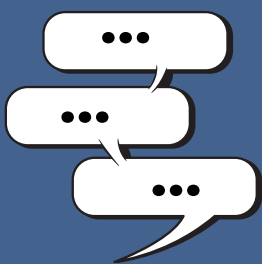
The Shared Lives team conducted a thorough assessment, asking Adrian about his preferences for day respite. He and his sister met with the Shared Lives Carers identified as a good match for him. Adrian was matched with two sets of carers who have continued to provide regular day respite sessions. Adrian accesses day respite sessions throughout the week where his sister arranges her respite with the Shared Lives Carers on a flexible basis.

Adrian told us he really enjoys going to his Shared Lives Carer's home. He told us about the cakes he has been baking, walks he has been on, going bowling and doing some crafting. He told us that some of these activities are things he hasn't been able to do in a while and he thinks it is good that his Shared Lives Carers can help him to do them.

"It is fantastic!" said Adrian's sister, who is his main carer. She told the team the day respite sessions has allowed her time to attend appointments, reconnect with friends, and take much needed breaks. She mentioned that Adrian really enjoys his outings and has formed a great relationships with the Shared Lives carers and their families. The Shared Lives Carers have become a valuable support network for both Adrian and his sister, and gone above and beyond to support them during difficult periods.







# YOU SAID, WE DID.



At Sandwell Shared Lives, we value all of your feedback and comments of how the service can improve and develop. We produce annual carer and individual surveys, complete annual Registered Manager Audits, complete annual carer reviews, hold carer meetings and engage with carers on a regular basis. All information and requests collected from these sources are carefully considered, and we take action to fulfil your requests and achieve goals.

We have developed a 'You Said, We Did' document that combines these requests along with the actions we've taken to address them. This will be shared alongside this newsletter for you to look at.



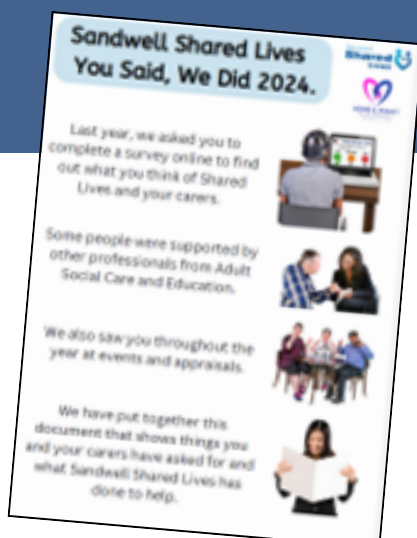
## WHAT WE ARE CURRENTLY WORKING ON:

### Training:

We are currently looking at other training providers and systems that may be more accessible and appropriate for Shared Lives placements. We will share further information with this when it is available. Until then, you can access [Care Tutor](#) to complete training modules.

### Remittance Slips:

Some carers have informed us they are not receiving remittance slips for their payments received from Shared Lives since the finance system changed in September. We have discussed this with the systems team and moving forward you should receive a remittance slip via email. Our business support team are working hard to provide remittance slips for payments made between September and April. These will be shared with you when they are available.



We have also created a 'You Said, We Did' document for the queries and actions made to address issues that individual's have raised. This will be sent via post to individuals.



## Contact information:

0121 553 1831

swbh.learningdisabilitynurses  
@nhs.net

## LEARNING DISABILITY NURSES

Dawn Love and Charlotte Horton are the Learning Disability Nurses within the Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust. They can provide additional information and support with accessing health services in Sandwell.

The Sandwell Shared Lives team has referrals individuals to the LD nurses for additional support and they have gone on to support individuals to reduce anxieties, achieve reasonable adjustments in their care and access services in a timely manner. One of our Long-term carers says how helpful Dawn and Charlotte have been and they have made a difficult time, a lot less difficult.

## LEARN CPR IN JUST 15 MINUTES

Download the **RevivR** app or **follow this link** to access a free, interactive CPR training tool that teaches you how to deliver CPR in just 15 minutes!



Here is an **online tool** which allows you to search for current and up-to-date information on the location and availability of your local defibrillator. Knowing this could save a life!

## WHERE IS YOUR NEAREST DEFIBRILLATOR?

## NHS APP

As technology progresses, the NHS app is used more widely for accessing health services. This could have an impact on you or the individual within your placement.

Within Sandwell Shared Lives, we like to keep up to speed and be involved with developing systems to be more appropriate for you. There has been some discussions of an app that is more accessible for individuals with Learning Disabilities and their carers. We have become a part of this task group to assist in advocating for individuals and carers whilst this is being developed.

Until this development is completed, there are some walk through videos of the NHS app that can assist you with using and understanding the features available.



**[WATCH VIDEOS HERE](#)**

# A TRIBUTE TO JOY TOMPKINS

It is with a heavy heart that we say goodbye to Joy Tomkins. Joy was Sandwell Shared Lives' first approved carer for the scheme back in 1999. Joy provided positive placements to many individuals and gave valuable support to their families. Despite retiring from the scheme in 2022, we know that Joy kept in contact with many families, not only those who were in Shared Lives, but those in particular who she had contact with when she worked for Options for Life. Joy was a 'one off' and a well missed Shared Lives Carer. Fondly missed.



Please inform the scheme of:

- Changes to medications or GP/Consultants
- Changes to contact details
- Changes in social worker
- Slips, trips, falls and near misses
- Medication errors
- Training completed with other organisations
- Gas safety certificate
- SL Plus membership and insurance completion

**Remember it is important we have the most current and up-to-date information stored as a CQC regulated service.**

## GOOD NEWS:

We continue to share good news stories from the service with senior leadership and other agencies. Please share any good news stories and photos with Paige or Natalie.

We collate all good news stories into a brochure which we will also be sharing with you all soon.



## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

Friday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2025 - GOOD FRIDAY (COUNCIL CLOSED)  
Monday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2025 - EASTER MONDAY (COUNCIL CLOSED)  
Monday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2025 - BANK HOLIDAY (COUNCIL CLOSED)  
Monday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2025 - BANK HOLIDAY (COUNCIL CLOSED)

In case of emergency during Council closures, please refer to emergency contingency plans and/or contact the Emergency Duty Team on **0121 569 2355** or go onto the main Sandwell Council website for any other emergency contact numbers.

