

Practitioner article

Shared Lives services in Scotland

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Shared Lives services in Scotland

Anne Fernie, Scotland Development Worker for NAAPS, explains the development of Shared Lives in Scotland which provides community based support for vulnerable people.

Introduction

NAAPS is a UK charity that supports very small scale community based services such as Shared Lives (formerly Adult Placement) and promotes best practice in service delivery.

NAAPS aims to:

- Promote Shared Lives (Adult Placement) and other small community services as an important local resource.
- Promote a legislative environment which ensures safety and quality but allows small community services to flourish.
- Promote best practice in service delivery.

Scotland Development Worker

In 2008 following success in securing three year funding from the Scottish Government NAAPS established a Scotland Development Worker post. The aims of the post are to:

- Promote and support the effective establishment of Shared Lives services in each local authority.
- Support current and new schemes to extend the range of services provided and the groups of people that can use Shared Lives services in every area.
- Provide support to Shared Lives services in Scotland through the provision of training and learning programs, publications and individual advice to enable schemes to meet the regulatory requirements set by the Scottish Government.

Services

A survey carried out by NAAPS in 2005 established that there were 15 services operating across 19 of the 32 local authorities. Many of these providers are local authorities but there are a number of independent providers and the greatest amount of support delivered at that time was in the form of short breaks to older people. Since then services, known as Supported Lodgings for young care leavers, have been registered as Adult Placement and the number of registered services now stands at 31.

Terminology

In April 2008 the term Adult Placement was replaced by NAAPS with the term Shared Lives. This followed wide consultation within the membership to find a term that better describes what Adult Placement is and can offer people. We feel that the term Shared Lives achieves this.

How is Shared Lives different?

Shared Lives arrangements are made by an agency (a Shared Lives Scheme). The scheme approves and trains the Shared Lives Carers (SL Carers), receives referrals, matches the needs of people seeking a service with SL Carers, and monitors the arrangements.

Shared Lives arrangements are very different from more traditional forms of 'care'. The features that make them different include:

- people in Shared Lives arrangements have the opportunity to share in the life of the SL Carers
- family and social networks
- SL Carers use their family home as a resource
- arrangements provide committed and consistent relationships
- the relationship between the SL Carer and the person placed with them is of mutual benefit
- SL Carers can support up to two people at any one time
- SL Carers do not employ staff to provide support to the people placed with them
- Shared Lives Schemes are regulated by the Care Commission.

Shared Lives arrangements are very flexible and can be tailored to the needs and requirements of each individual. Arrangements can include any of the following, either individually or in combination:

- Long term accommodation and support
- Short breaks
- Day time support
- Rehabilitative or intermediate support
- Kinship support where the carer acts as 'extended family' to someone living in their own home

Development and history

The development of Shared Lives services takes forward the Scottish Government agenda:

- Highly personalized services.
- The individual is involved in the design and review of the service.
- They promote physical and mental health & wellbeing.
- They are rooted in local communities.
- They promote community involvement and active citizenship.

Shared Lives is not new.

- Throughout history there have always been people who have supported vulnerable people by taking them into their own homes or by supporting them in the same way that a family may support a vulnerable member. Shared Lives is a way of adding safety and structure to this concept.
- The oldest schemes in Europe are in Gheel, Flanders (700+ years old) and Brighton (150+ years old). In the 19th Century Shared Lives was widespread in the crofting communities in the Highlands of Scotland. Most recent development has been over the last 25 years.

Carers

Shared Lives Carers are specially recruited through an in depth assessment process, then approved by an independent approval panel. Carers are supported and monitored by the scheme. There is a requirement to undertake training both prior to approval and post approval. Training includes topics such as safeguarding, understanding disability and mental health issues or any other training that equips carers to deliver the required support.

Matching is key to a good Shared Lives arrangement and takes into account the requirements of the individual seeking a service and the skills and knowledge of the SL Carer as well as practical issues such as where the carer lives and who lives with them, whether they smoke, keep pets or like sport etc. It is also important that people like each other and think they can enjoy sharing everyday life experiences.

Broadening horizons

NAAPS has recently published a 'Business Case for Shared Lives' which is based on research in a number of Shared Lives schemes in South East England. The evidence from this is that Shared Lives is a cost effective service. Traditionally Shared Lives has

been provided to people with disabilities, but schemes are keen to broaden the range of services that they can provide and recently have been exploring provision to offenders, mothers with a learning disability and their babies and young people at risk of homelessness.

Shared Lives can be of benefit to those young people with low to moderate support needs due to the personalized nature of the provision and the support that can be given to develop the skills needed for independent living and to sustain a tenancy. Shared Lives could fulfil the temporary accommodation need with Shared Lives Carers assisting the young person to 'move on' to their own tenancy.

Scottish Churches Housing Action has been awarded Scottish Government funding to explore this area and is currently engaged in an analysis of the model as an option in the area of homelessness and this has led to collaborative working.

Conclusion

In my opinion I think that the Shared Lives model is a flexible one that can be applied in many situations, the main focus being that the provision takes place in the homes of ordinary families that can provide a nurturing structure and community inclusion.

NAAPS lends its support to Shared Lives providers through development of Shared Lives specific policies and procedures, the development of good practice guidance, delivering training and providing support to carers, through its Carer Development Worker. I liaise with the Care Commission and the Scottish Government to keep abreast of national strategies. A NAAPS Scotland group meets every two months and this provides the opportunity for those services to come together and discuss national and local issues and to share and discuss practice issues.

Further information

For further information, contact practicescotland@shelter.org.uk in the first instance.