



My Life, Your Life, Our Life

A guide to Shared Living

I want to share my life with people who matter to me, people I know care about me, like a family or very close friends. After all, what's life if you have no one to share it with?



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Glossary

Term	Description
ATO	Australian Taxation Office
Shared Living Supporter	The person or family who invites you to live in their home and provides you with support as part of a Shared Living arrangement. They might also be called a 'Co-resident' or 'Homesharer'. A Shared Living supporter will share your values, contribute to the relationship, and benefit from what you bring to the relationship.
Support Organisation	An organisation, that provides supports to people with disability.
Payment	A payment given to the person giving support in Shared Living. It could go to the support person for sharing their home, or the person needing support for sharing their home with the support person. A payment can be provided free of tax, partially taxed (both subject to private ruling from the ATO), or fully taxable.
Shared Living	A support arrangement where you have an ongoing relationship and share a home with a compatible person, couple or family. They also give you companionship and support in a natural home environment.
Co-residency	An arrangement where you live with another person, couple or family. They share their home and aspects of their life with you.
Homeshare	An arrangement where a supporter (Homesharer) lives with you so you can have companionship and some minor personal assistance.
Support Worker	Staff who are paid to give a person with disability formal care services, usually based on a roster.
Shared Management	An arrangement between you and a Support Organisation that keeps things flexible. You share the responsibility of managing your funding.



Section 1



1. Understanding Shared Living

1.1 Introduction and Context

Being connected to other people is a basic human need that gives us a basis for our lives and how we live together as a society. Our relationships are one of the most important things about being human. In our society, we have a range of ways that people develop a sense of belonging, through:

- close relationships
- family networks
- friendship circles
- communities of interests
- being part of our local communities.

How these relationships look, feel and grow for each of us will be different, based on our own personalities, circumstances and values. However, the need to belong and connect to others matters to everyone regardless of ability, age, health and experience. This is why people who work in Human Services seek to help others develop good support systems that build their relationships.

Shared Living is the term used to describe a range of ways to support people in a way that has the greatest benefits – real people connecting, supporting and sharing their lives.

While Shared Living has been developing, Australia has experienced a large shift in how people who need assistance are given support to live as active members of the community.

This change is described using the term ‘Self-Directed Support’.

Western Australia (WA) has a strong history of exploring and supporting new ways to promote peoples’ choice, control and ability to determine and direct their own lives. Across the state, Shared Living has been an approach that people have been using for more than 10 years with a lot of success, offering not only assistance or support, but real connections and relationships.

Self-Directed Support aims to make sure that people can direct their support and decide how to best use the resources available to them. Shared Living is an excellent example of a support arrangement that encourages people to be part of their community, surrounded by support they can direct themselves.

In May 2011, WA’s Individualised Services (WAiS) formed the WA Shared Living Working Party (Working Party) that included Support Organisations with experience or interest in developing and supporting Shared Living arrangements.

Shared Living has developed through new ways of doing things led by people sharing their lives – both the Shared Living Supporters and people using this approach. However, this has also led to different standards of practice across the sector when supporting individuals and families in Shared Living arrangements. The Working Party identified a need for ways of doing things across the disability sector that are consistent, fair and rigorous but don't affect the possibility of Shared Living arrangements supporting people in individualised and flexible ways. They also identified an increased interest by individuals, families and organisations, to think about Shared Living arrangements across other community support sectors. Members suggested these needs were best addressed with a Shared Living Framework for the disability sector.

We have developed this resource to give information about Shared Living arrangements to people who need support, their families and organisations. It is not designed to be a strict guide. It explains your options and things you need to think about so you can make the most of your outcomes and cut down any risks when developing and managing Shared Living arrangements. We expect that this resource will be reviewed in the future as disability services and supports grow and change over time.



1.2 The Principles of Shared Living

There are different ways that Shared Living can operate and support people. We need to understand the important ideas, or principles, that Shared Living are based on. Shared Living offers an individualised and tailored approach to match and support people's differences and uniqueness, offering them a chance to share their lives, not just their home. Shared Living requires Support Organisations to look at what people want and the best way to achieve that. The six principles of Shared Living drive that process.



The Six Principles of Shared Living

1. Belonging and connection – you have the right to build relationships and connect with other people.
2. Independent living – you can live an ordinary life.
3. Self-determination – you can be in control of your own life and make choices about how you live.
4. Flexibility – you can decide how things should be done so they suit the way you want to live your life.
5. Choice – you can choose where and how you live.
6. Trust – you can be trusted as an equal partner in your relationships.

1.3 What is Shared Living?

This is about sharing my life, not just my home – we are both great friends. We both get loads out of it.

Shared Living Supporter

Shared Living aims to match the way relationships naturally work and develop. Shared Living is about sharing your lives. There are benefits to both parties – the people who need support and the people offering support. Both parties have lives to share and experiences to offer. This gives everyone a chance to have great experiences and a better life. People who share their lives and their homes talk about the good things it brings to their own lives and their families.

The home is a place where people can develop mutual relationships. They are accepted and included as a valued member of the household and take part in the life of the support person (and their family, where applicable).

Shared Living can give you new opportunities and everyday life experiences that you might not have had in other support arrangements. Shared Living Supporters can also have new experiences they may not have experienced if it weren't for the relationship with the person they are supporting.

Experiences are so much more powerful when shared with others.

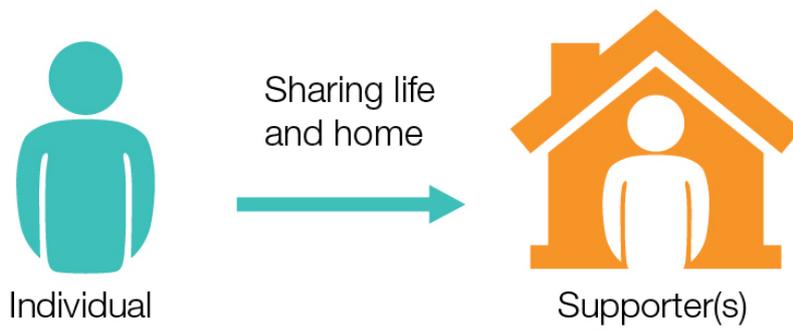
There are as many Shared Living arrangements as there are unique individuals. There is no 'one size fits all' – they are all different, including how the home is arranged, how the support is designed to suit the person and how the lifestyle they share works from day-to-day. However they do share the main aim of providing support, and giving the person opportunities through the relationships they form.

Even though every arrangement is unique, there are two main types of Shared Living, known as co-residency.

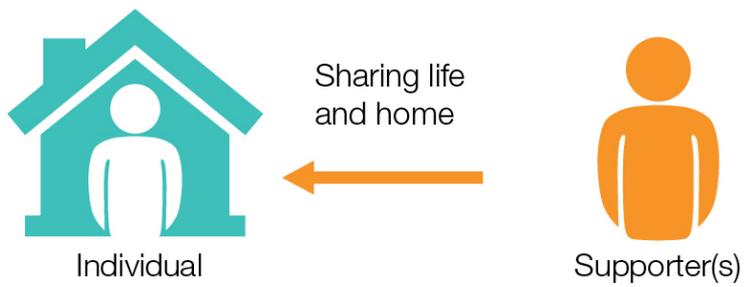
Co-residency is when an individual lives with another person, couple or family and they share their home and aspects of their life together. There are two types of co-resident arrangements, which are different from group living arrangements.

1. When a person lives with another person, a couple or a family in the home of the support person, couple or family.
2. When the support person, couple or family lives with the person in their own home.

1. The person moves into the supporter's home



2. The supporter moves into the person's home



Co-residency

When the person lives in the supporter's home

This involves the person living in the Shared Living Supporter's home. The Shared Living Supporter(s) could be a single person or a family with children, who share their home and everyday life with the individual. When the individual is living in the house, the aim is that the house also becomes their home – the home reflecting everyone who lives there.

When the supporter lives in the person's home

This is when the Shared Living Supporter lives in the home of the person they support. The person owns or rents their home privately or through public housing. The Shared Living Supporter could be a single person or a couple who may or may not have children.

Until now, Shared Living Supporters haven't tended to be families. They are more often single people or couples and treat the person they support like a flatmate.

The Shared Living Supporter might get a financial payment. It is more common for the supporter to get a rent-free component and/or subsidy as payment for their support.

These arrangements can be full-time, part-time or occasional. The person might live with their family from Monday to Friday but live with their Shared Living Supporter on weekends.

The Shared Living Supporter might be given a 'benefit' for sharing their home and supporting the person. The benefit might include a regular payment or reduced rent/subsidised rent or a combination of both. Where there is a financial payment this may come from the individual's funding.

Across Australia the term Homeshare is used to describe one approach to Shared Living. It offers a unique arrangement that is recognised around the world. It has an agreed support method that has been developed, led and supported by Homeshare International – an international agency. www.homeshare.org



Person-centred approaches to Shared Living

Although there are two basic arrangements for Shared Living, this doesn't mean these are the only two ways to offer Shared Living. To make sure it offers a person-centred approach there are ways to respond that are right for each person. People's lives and circumstances are unique, so their Shared Living arrangements need to reflect this. The following ideas show you how Shared Living arrangements can vary from person to person.

People

Although the basic arrangements refer to one person who needs support, it is possible that there could be a couple in a relationship choosing to live with others.

Frequency of time

Shared Living arrangements can vary from part-time sharing a couple of days per week or weekends only) to full-time – living together all the time.

Length of time

Shared Living arrangements can last for a person's lifetime as the relationship develops and people become like family. The arrangement can also have a time limit, which may be needed to support the person while they get to know an area/community or the time to build their confidence and learn the new skills involved in running a home.

Benefits

Shared Living should have mutual benefits for all the people involved. The Shared Living Supporters may receive a 'benefit' for providing support in both arrangements. However, the kind of benefit depends upon the agreement of the person, the Shared Living Supporter and the organisation that supports the arrangement. This could include free rent, a rent subsidy and/or a financial payment.

Many supporters do not want formal 'benefits' as they feel the mutual benefits of the relationships are payment enough. The benefit for the recognised Homeshare approach is specific, including free rent and a contribution to household bills in return for 10 hours of support and companionship.



Practical and personal assistance

The support that people may need changes according to the person and their needs. It may include practical support and personal support. Practical Assistance is help and support to get things done such as:

- cooking
- shopping
- taking care of your home.

Personal Assistance is help and support for your:

- emotional needs
- personal care.

Some people might also use support from other paid Support Workers who may support them in their home alongside the Shared Living Supporter. These additional supporters might be employed by the same organisation supporting the Shared Living partnership, a different organisation, or employed directly by the person.



1.4 The key features and benefits of Shared Living

The detail of each Shared Living Arrangement depends on what the person and their Shared Living Supporter want. However, all Shared Living arrangements should offer the following benefits to everyone involved:

1. A home for the person and their Shared Living supporter, regardless of who owns or leases the home.
2. A sense of belonging – the person is welcomed into the household and becomes a valued member. They have the opportunity to take part in the everyday activities of the household and the people who support them if they wish, including family events, outings and activities.
3. A role and purpose – the person and their supporter can contribute to the relationship, the home and to a shared life and experiences.
4. A say in the direction of life – the person has the right to identify and express their ideas for what they want in their home environment, how they live their day-to-day lives and their interests. They get the support they need to reach these goals.
5. A connection with others – the person is encouraged and supported to build and keep their own personal relationships, including those with their family and friends.
6. A sense of equality– the person is an equal in the partnership. The relationship is based on equality. The person has something to offer the relationship based on their own uniqueness, gifts and experiences.
7. A safe and supportive lifestyle – the person has the same opportunities as other members of the community as well as the risks connected with this. They have the safety of being supported by people who know and understand them.

Shared Living is not:

- a placement for a person with disability to make sure they have somewhere to live
- a hostel or group service
- a place where paid support workers come and go according to a work roster
- a place where people are not included in each other's lives
- a group home for people with disability and carers who live there
- a place where someone with complex needs is not included
- a place where someone's needs are met according to the service options that are available.



Shared Living offers potential benefits to people and communities, including:

- People who need support – finding support amongst relationships and in the local community.
- Members of the Community – looking to share their lives and experiences, while offering some support.
- Support Organisations – providing 'ordinary supports', learning how to support relationships and connections.
- Communities – learning how people can be included and what they have to offer.

1.5 Who is Shared Living for?

As we know sharing your life and experiences with others is a a basic human need. If it is developed and supported well, it should be a practical option for everyone, regardless of how complex their support needs are. Shared Living Supporters are not dependent on a certain type of person or an ideal. Shared Living is an option for all kinds of people with a range of experiences and circumstances.

Shared Living is for people who need support and want:

- to spend time with other people as a key outcome for their support
- support in a home with a family or friendship style
- to offer friendship and support to others
- to have more choice and control over their life and the supports they use
- to be respected as an expert in their own life
- to base the choices they make for their supports on what they want
- to set their own goals and how they will achieve them.

Shared Living is for members of the community who can share their lives and offer support if they are:

- committed to including someone who needs support in their:
 - life
 - home
- willing to share their:
 - lives
 - family
 - friends
- keen to experience the benefits that are offered
- willing to offer more than just:
 - Practical assistance
 - Personal assistance
- prepared to support someone in the decisions they make.

Shared Living is an option for Support Organisations that are willing to:

- develop ways to give people choice and control in how they use support
- use support arrangements that are different to normal support worker arrangements
- help people build relationships that are more than what support workers normally offer clients
- problem solve
- work in a way that is not as straightforward as the way things are usually done
- work with individuals as part of a real partnership based on:
 - respect for each other
 - shared understanding
 - honest communication
- make sure everyone is safe and protected.



1.6 What makes Shared Living work well?

There are many factors that contribute to the success of Shared Living arrangements. However, the important elements in maximising the outcomes for people are less about the technical details (although that is important) and more about the quality of the relationships involved.

There are four key things that make a Shared Living arrangement work well:

- finding a good match that can make a strong connection
- offering each other respect and understanding
- commitment
- being open.

Finding a good match that can make a strong connection

It can take a while for a Shared Living arrangement to be developed. A lot of time is needed to make sure a Shared Living Supporter is the right person.

You need to find out about someone's:

- values
- beliefs
- culture
- interests
- experiences.

People need to be honest about these things. You might need to talk about topics that make you feel uncomfortable. You also need to think about how much you are willing to share about yourself and your life.

Offering each other respect and understanding

Many people choose Shared Living because it gives them a chance to build strong relationships with other adults.

These relationships need to be built through offering each other:

- any special talents or strengths you have
- support
- respect
- understanding.

A Shared Living Supporter needs training to make sure they have the right knowledge and skills to offer the support that is needed.

Commitment

Everyone must be committed to a Shared Living arrangement, including:

- the person
- their family
- the Shared Living Supporter
- the Support Organisation.

Everyone needs to understand what is needed to make a Shared Living arrangement work. Problems and issues come up when people live together and everyone needs to be prepared to work through them. Families need to build trust and a strong relationship with the Shared Living Supporter. A Shared Living Supporter must be committed to sharing a home and daily life with someone for a long time.

Support Organisations must be committed to giving their:

- time
- effort
- ongoing support.

Being open

People in a Shared Living arrangement need to be themselves. If people are themselves, a Shared Living arrangement will work. Support Organisations need to be clear about:

- what their role is
- how much support they can offer
- what might go wrong
- how to handle any problems that come up.

Support Organisations can support openness by respecting people's individuality and celebrating peoples' differences.

1.7 Things Support Organisations need to think about

People with experience of Shared Living tell us its benefits come from its focus on relationships and shared lives, not just shared accommodation. It intends to be a very different arrangement to the services or support that organisations usually offer. It needs a different level of care and leadership, which might not work for all Support Organisations.

There are things Support Organisations need to think about when they try Shared Living, to make sure it is an approach that they can develop well and where they can support people to live good, safe lives in their local community. Things to think about include:

- Shared Living needs good communication between a range of people including the person, their family, Shared Living Supporters and Support Organisations. A lot of effort is put into building relationships, resolving conflict and negotiation skills.
- The information available about non-taxed payments made to Shared Living Supporters is not clear. This could cause concern for the person, families and organisations. The Support Organisation needs to be clear and share the information they have and be confident doing this.
- Being clear about Shared Living, its benefits and its challenges:
 - helps everyone understand how it works
 - cuts down any negative ideas people have about Shared Living being a 'paid relationship' focused on where someone lives.
- Families tell us that Shared Living can be challenging at first if the person is moving out of the family home into a Shared Living arrangement. It can feel like a move sideways and not forward. The Support Organisation needs to make sure this challenge is respected and heard, while showing the benefits that Shared Living can have.

A Support Organisation needs to be clear about the important ideas and values behind Shared Living. The relationship of employee and employer is very different to other approaches, such as Shared Management. It requires a different style of support. The approach may require a lot of support at first to develop the right arrangement and partnership. When it starts to work, the benefits and outcomes clearly pay off in the long term.

Section 2



2. Developing and supporting shared living

2.1 The components of Shared Living

At the heart of Shared Living, there are principles that make sure the person and their supporter experience and enjoy the same opportunities as other members of the community while sharing their lives and home.

This section looks at the stages involved in developing and supporting Shared Living.

Developing and supporting Shared Living involves:



The following section describes each stage and provides some tips and experiences that can support and develop Shared Living. However, as with any person-centred approach – the people who can best lead and demonstrate what will work well for them are the Individuals, families and Shared Living Supporters who are involved.

2.2 Explore and understand

During this stage, someone who is thinking about Shared Living needs to understand:

- how Shared Living works
- how it will work as part of their life.

There are also important things to think about during this stage, such as:

- understanding the person and knowing:
 - who they are
 - what they are looking for
 - what a good Shared Living arrangement would look like for them
- exploring if Shared Living is the right arrangement
- understanding the best way to offer support while a Shared Living arrangement is being developed
- having good conversations that help someone understand more about Shared Living.

Important things to think about

1. Understanding the person.
2. Exploring if Shared Living is the right arrangement.
3. Understanding the best way to help the person develop Shared Living.
4. Good conversations to support understanding and exploration.

1. Understanding the person

Shared Living should be as personal and individual as each person thinking about it. To do this well, all support should begin with really understanding:

- the person
- their lifestyle
- their support.

Person-centred planning and approaches¹ can help these conversations and in understanding and exploring who the person is, what's important to them in how they live their life now, and what they can expect and hope for their future. You also need to look at what the person's support needs are and what good support will look like for them. All of this information helps make sure any Shared Living design will reflect the person and what they need from Shared Living and what they can bring to the partnership.

¹ A Little Book About Person Centred Planning, J.O'Brien and C.L.O'Brien. Inclusion Press

Good practice suggests Support Organisations spend time assisting and gathering information through person-centred conversations.

It's so important that the organisation knows and understands the person – so they can see if this is working for the person now and in the future.

Kathy

2. Exploring if Shared Living is the right arrangement

People who have tried Shared Living say that helping the person, and those around them, to really understand what they want from, and what they can bring to, the Shared Living partnership, lays strong foundations for any future matching process and success.

Shared Living can mean many different things to different people. Working out what each person understands and imagines Shared Living to be is important, to make sure their expectations are clear, upfront and achievable in a Shared Living arrangement.

It's a way of life – it's not a job...It's a great way of life though!

Kathy

3. Understanding the best way to help the person develop Shared Living

If Shared Living is an arrangement the person wants to look into further, then time spent understanding the best way to make this happen is important.

Many organisations that have developed and supported Shared Living arrangements say this is an important stage, to make sure the person is safe and well while exploring Shared Living.

You need to think about how the person would like to advertise and meet with people who could be their Shared Living Supporters and how you can support them. It can be difficult if the right match doesn't come along first time around. Organisations need to be aware of their approach in developing Shared Living. It needs to reflect what works best for this person, not simply following a process.

We had to take it slow, carefully and very intentionally. The last thing Joe needed was more rejection and unfortunately sometimes people just don't connect – my role was to work out how to best support Joe to explore Shared Living in a way that was respectful and which did not create more harm for him.

Leanne

4. Good conversations to support understanding and exploration

Understanding the person

- Who are you?
- What really matters to you?
- What makes you tick?
- Understand the person's family life and the people in it.
- What kind of people work best for you ? What qualities suit you? What brings out the best in you?
- What makes your life good today?
- What do you want for your future?
- Explore the person's talents, qualities and what they can offer.
- Understand the person's current social network.
- Understand the experience the person has had of living with other people.

Understanding the person's lifestyle

- What are your beliefs and values?
- What are your habits? What is the pace of your life?
- What are your interests and hobbies?
- What are your likes and dislikes?
- What are your preferences around drinking and smoking?
- How do you feel about having a pet?
- Understand cultural background and religious beliefs.
- Understand what works and what doesn't work
- Find out about their history and the impact this had on them.

Understanding good support

- What makes good support for you?
- Understand the kinds of support that the person needs including practical assistance and personal assistance.
- Support to connect and be involved in the community.
- Support with managing money – banking, paying bills, tax.

Understanding Shared Living expectations and practicalities

- What do you and/or your family want and expect from Shared Living?
- What do you want to bring and offer to the partnership?
- Find out about practical elements including full-time and part-time/short-term, long-term.
- Talk about time apart and together – how this will work best for you?
- Will you need any extra support?
- What would be a good plan to have in case of sickness or if the relationship breaks down?

Understanding the person's support

Exploring the person's unique support needs together can help develop the right support strategies to:

- suit their strengths
- match their exact support needs.

One way of doing this is to look at what support means for the person and then look at ways this support might be made possible. Remember that too much support can be controlling or limiting. We are aiming for just enough support – to reach a balance between letting the person live their life and meeting their needs. It is also important to help the person look at all types of support, including assistive technology and informal supports, which can be developed in a Shared Living arrangement.²

Things I do for myself	Things I need to be able to call on someone for support	Things I need some guidance with	Things I need practical or physical assistance with

² Individual Service Design, Paradigm, Fulton and Kinsella, 2010

Options for how I want to be supported – My Support Strategies

The following is just one example that can help to explore how the person wants to be supported.

How to best support the person in exploring and developing Shared Living

Useful conversations

1. When you imagine the Shared Living arrangement – what do you think could happen?
2. How do you meet people and decide if you like them or not, without it being too hard?
3. How do you want your family and friends to be involved and how can we best help you with this?
4. How can we help you explore Shared Living – what works well for you and what should we stay away from?

2.3 Working out the right design

During this stage, a person who is thinking about Shared Living needs to work out what a good arrangement would look like for them. Shared Living arrangements are more successful when people work together to create the right one. There are important things to think about, which could be:

1. Working together with other people can help you come up with the right Shared Living arrangement for you.
2. Working out what type of home would be best for you, including:
 - the kind of property – a house, a unit or a flat
 - where the home is located
 - the community the home is in
 - the features the home has
 - things about the home that might need to be changed.
3. Who would be the right person to share a home with.
4. The risks that need to be thought about.
5. What is the best way to keep you safe?

Important things to think about

1. Working together to design the Shared Living arrangement
2. Consider the right home
3. Looking at the right person to share with
4. Understanding risks and areas of safety

1. Working together to design the Shared Living arrangement

Shared Living should be very flexible and designed to suit the person and meet their needs. There are two basic types of Shared Living arrangements which can give organisations the foundations for developing the right arrangements for each person.

However, it is also important that the person thinks about:

- the right arrangement for them
- the right accommodation for them.

Looking at what's right for the person is essential. Many people tell us there is real value in meeting other people who have a Shared Living arrangement, to see how this looks and works for others.

Additional support

Many people who have a Shared Living arrangement also have help in addition to the support given by their Shared Living Supporter. This is unique for each person and depends on their Shared Living arrangement.

2. Consider the right home

Finding the right place to call your home can present some decisions, compromises and sometimes surprises. However, helping people to explore what kind of home they need and developing a list of housing needs can be helpful for everyone, especially the person looking to move into a new home.

A list of housing needs would usually have the following headings – looking at the right kind of home, the right community, changes that could be made to the home and any other things to think about.

The right kind of home	The right community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The right kind of home: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ villa ○ townhouse ○ duplex ○ apartment ○ detached house ○ granny flat. • The size and number of bedrooms. • The number of living spaces and if they can give people a shared space as well as privacy. • Does the property need a garden? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A chosen community to support connections the person already has. • Being close to local services such as shops, public transport. • Being close to friends and family. • Being close to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ school ○ work ○ recreation or leisure activities ○ other community activities. • Is the home safe? • Will the community support what the person wants for their future?
Changes that could be made to the home	Other things to think about
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there spaces that need to be easy to access and/or changed? • Do we need to think about any future changes? • How easily could the home be changed to suit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ different living arrangements? ○ the help needed? (e.g. are bedrooms big enough for a couple who are Shared Living Supporters or a second person with disability?) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How old is the home? Will there be a lot of work to do to look after it? • Do a home safety check. Are there any problems that could affect the health and safety of the people living in the home? • If the home is leased publicly, are there any rules in the lease about Shared Living arrangements?

3. Looking at the right person to share with

The success of any Shared Living arrangement is based on:

- how well the people get along
- the connection they have
- being able to offer each other the support they're looking for.

It can be hard to plan how well the people will get along and if friendships will be made. For many people, it can depend on their personality. We can help people look at and think about what kind of person may work best for them and what kind of person to avoid. Looking at areas such as what kind of person they are and the interests and hobbies they have can help build a picture of the right kind of person.

Helping the person explore the kinds of people they already have good relationships with can help them understand what makes them the right kind of people. Writing a list with the kinds of people to look for, and the kinds of people to avoid, can form the basis of finding possible supporters.

4. Understanding risks and areas of safety

Building and supporting relationships in a person's life is a very important way to keep you safe from:

- being alone and loneliness
- being treated badly.

What matters most to people's safety is the depth and quality of their relationships.

People are safer when others care enough about them to:

- keep a close eye on their safety and wellbeing
- stand up and face challenges with them
- respond in creative ways to things that make them vulnerable
- talk with others who control important opportunities for them
- struggle with them over ways they might add to their own problems.

Many people can be more vulnerable because they lack opportunities and assistance to build good relationships.

You need to think about the following questions:

- What would build energy and commitment amongst people on the person's side – their allies?
- How could at least one ally be added to the person's relationship circle?
- What would it take to get one more person to become a closer part of the person's life?
- Who shares the person's interests, passions and enthusiasm?
- Who identifies with the person's culture or religion?
- Who would enjoy spending time with the person?
- Where could the person become more involved, take part and make a difference?
- Who would enjoy and add to the person's knowledge, questions and experiences?
- To which community projects and activities does the person have something they could offer?

The thing that keeps us all safe in life, are strong trusting relationships with people who care about us. Our lives are safer and better when people:

- know us
- look out for us
- are willing to be there during hard times
- celebrate and share happy times with us.

Shared Living is about relationships which means risk, especially when someone is relying on people living in their home to give them support. Organisations can positively approach this risk by focussing on relationships:

- within the Shared Living arrangement
- outside the Shared Living arrangement
- paid and unpaid.

A good design looks at ways to support the person to be safe and well within the Shared Living arrangement. This might include:

- supporting the person to talk about their concerns or make complaints
- ways for the person to work out any conflict within the partnership.

It is important to talk about staying safe, including topics such as:

- what will we do if it isn't working for you?
- what supports do we have for the person as a back-up if there is an emergency?

Organisations have found that building safety in from the beginning works best.

This can include:

- making sure the Supporting Organisation has time alone with both parties to talk freely about what's working, what's not working and areas of concern
- building in time to understand how the relationship is working and making sure the person stays well connected to the other people in their life
- focussing on supporting people to have other relationships in their life, such as friends, people they work with and people with the same interests.

Looking at the right Shared Living arrangement

Useful questions

Co-residency – When the person lives in someone else's home

- Are you after a home with a family environment or 'family feel'? Some Shared Living supporters might be single persons or a couple without children?
- How would you feel if your Shared Living Supporter has children or a partner living in the home?
- How would you feel when they have visitors?
- How would you feel moving out of the home if your Shared Living Supporter needs time apart?
- How do you make sure you keep your friendships and relationships outside of the Shared Living Supporter's networks?
- How do you feel about possibly becoming friends with people your Shared Living Supporter's knows? Would you like to be included in their activities, or would you prefer your privacy and time alone?
- How do you make sure it really feels like your home as well, given that the home belongs to your Shared Living Supporter?

Co-residency – When the Shared Living Supporter lives in the person’s home

- Although the home belongs to the person, how would they feel about moving out for a short while when their Shared Living Supporter needs time apart? If not, how would any time apart be managed?
- If the home is rented, how can the person protect the future of their lease if the Shared Living Supporter decides to leave? Will the lease be only in the name of the person so if things don't work out, they aren't left without a home?
- How would the person feel if the Shared Living Supporter has a partner who would also like to be part of the arrangement? What role and expectations would they have about the partner?
- What would happen if the couple broke up?
- How would the person feel about visitors and friends their Shared Living Supporter has?
- If the Shared Living Supporter has children, how would the person feel about living with them as well?
- How do you make sure you keep your own friendships and relationships outside of the Shared Living Supporter's networks?

Homeshare

- Although the home belongs to person, how would they feel about someone living with them?
- The amount of support provided by a homesharer is around 10 hours – how would this work for the person?
- How would the person feel about their homesharer having visitors and friends over?
- How would the homesharer living rent-free and paying part of the household costs work for the person and their lifestyle?

Thinking about housing

Working on a housing specification

The right home	The right community
Changes that could be made to the home	Other things to think about

Thinking about the right Shared Living Supporter – match

Things to look for – the kind of people that work for me	Things to avoid –the kind of people who don't work for me



2.4 Preparing and supporting the relationship

During this stage, you need to find the right Shared Living Supporter. The people who are part of the Shared Living arrangement need to meet and get to know each other, which will take time.

There are important things to think about, like:

- finding the right Shared Living Supporter
- checking to see if that person is right for the job
- building a relationship and getting to know each other
- preparing a Shared Living Agreement (Agreement) – a document that explains how the Shared Living arrangement will work and what is involved.

The Agreement helps to prepare and explore the arrangement for all involved.

Important things to think about

1. Finding the right person
2. Relationship-building – getting to know each other
3. Developing an Agreement

1. Finding the right person

You must be thorough when you're looking for a suitable Shared Living Supporter. Putting time and effort in at the beginning will make the arrangement more successful in the long-term.

Doing this:

- helps the Support Organisation work out if the person is suitable
- supports the person interested in Shared Living to look at and think about the reality of Shared Living.

We know this is the right way to do things, even when the person is already in contact or friendly with a person who could become their Shared Living Supporter. A friend is not always suitable as a Shared Living Supporter.

We asked people about their work, their social life, their friends and we checked out what they think about Len's life.

Ben

We recommend that Supporting Organisations look into the following areas to find a suitable Shared Living Supporter:

- advertising and recruitment
- interviewing and getting to know a possible Shared Living Supporter
- completing integrity checks
- understanding payments and insurance

We recommend that Support Organisations always involve the person and their family when they interview possible Shared Living Supporters.

The Supporting Organisation can support the person to lead the interview with:

- easy checklists
- photo boards
- accessible prompts and questions.

Allowing people and families to take part is easier and more meaningful if the Supporting Organisation is clear about:

- what makes someone a suitable Shared Living Supporter
- how the final decision will be made.

My advert was on Gumtree. We had a guy apply and he just didn't want to listen to me in the interview – we all knew this isn't going to work, he is not the right one.

Len

Useful conversations to have with a possible Shared Living Supporter use the same approaches as those had with the person and allow a real, person-centred exploration. Being honest about what the person is looking for, and what support they need, is important to make sure everyone understands what is expected.

It's really important to know the whole situation – not just about the person, but also their family and their own life before they have met you. No one's life is straight forward – so it's important that you understand that.'

Corbie

Useful conversations to have with the possible Shared Living Supporter

- Who are you – what do you like, dislike?
- What is your life like – typical day, typical week, special occasions?
- Who is involved in your life?
- What talents and qualities do you have that you can offer to Shared Living?
- An ideal match for you would include...
- What do you expect the arrangement to be like for you?
- What other issues and pressures are there on your family at the moment?
- Is this a good time to tackle new challenges?
- How will your family adjust to extra members? What changes, compromises or sacrifices will need to be made? Is everyone prepared to make these changes?
- If they're in a relationship, is it strong enough at this time to work as a team and support each other?
- If single – have you thought about:
 - how your lifestyle will change
 - losing some of your privacy?

2. Relationship building – getting to know each other

Supporting the relationship to develop takes time after a possible Shared Living Supporter has been found. There are some ways to build relationships that are:

- useful
- sensitive
- have a better chance of success.

Positive introductions – How we introduce people can make a big difference to how they are seen by others. Introducing someone in a positive way and highlighting their strengths and interests sets the right tone for making a connection.

The main focus of my role is to facilitate the relationship between the two people.

Ben

Support Organisations allow people to get to know each other over the first couple of months. They meet each other with support from the organisation at the beginning. They can then get together in different places, starting in neutral locations. Next they can progress to visiting each other's current home and possibly meet their friends and family. Doing things of interest together and assisting each party to arrange and coordinate these connections helps to build the confidence of each person.

Getting to know each other can take several weeks and sessions. Support Organisations need to support the partnership at a pace that works for everyone. As both people begin to understand each other and grow their confidence, support can be reduced over time.

As people get to know each other, it is important to give them:

- space
- opportunities to look at their thoughts and views about each other and the developing relationship.

It is really important for the Support Organisation to find ways to communicate with each person on their own and make sure people get a chance to talk freely about the partnership.

3. Developing a Shared Living Agreement

An Agreement is helpful for:

- preparing the arrangement
- referring back to once the arrangement has begun.

The purpose of the Agreement is to clearly outline:

- how the Shared Living arrangement will work
- what the Shared Living arrangement involves.

It is a three-way agreement between the person, the Shared Living Supporter and the Support Organisation. It is important that all three parties approve the Agreement.

The Agreement describes:

- the Shared Living arrangement
- the rights and responsibilities of all three parties involved
- the type of support and assistance the person needs.

Key areas to include in the Agreement are:

- how long agreed probationary or notice periods will be
- any payments or tax benefits
- the amount of time that will be spent apart and how this will be developed and supported
- who will take care of which household tasks and any household bills
- what reviews of integrity checks and training will be done
- how to make complaints or appeals
- how the Shared Living arrangement will be supervised and monitored.

The Agreement should also include details about monitoring and supervision such as visits, contacts and evaluations for funding, as well as how these will be done.

Finally, the Agreement should clearly explain the outcomes everyone is expecting – what each person’s goals are and how they will achieve them. Doing this will make sure that if the arrangement is reviewed, there is a clear understanding of each party’s goals and if they have achieved them.

The agreement is the backup – it’s the relationship that matters. Take it slow.

Ben



2.5 Supporting people to live their lives

During this stage, plans are made to get the Shared Living arrangement started. Things don't always go to plan though, so everyone needs to be:

- flexible
- supportive.

There are important things to think about during this stage:

- doing things at a pace that works for the people involved
- looking at the Shared Living Agreement and:
 - making sure it is right
 - making any changes that are needed
- building everyone's confidence that the Shared Living arrangement is right and will work well
- learning to live together.

Important things to think about

1. Taking it slowly and practically
2. Review and approve the final Agreement
3. Develop confidence
4. Learning to live together – working out how to respond

1. Taking it slowly and practically

Once people feel ready and the Agreement is in place, the Shared Living arrangement can begin. Many people start with some trial periods – short visits first, then overnight stays. Over time the length of the stays extends to weekends and longer. The most important thing to think about during this stage is to go at a pace that works for the people involved. It is important the organisation listens to both parties and helps with problem-solving in the early days. In the beginning, support from the Support Organisation will be more intensive as they help the relationship develop and clear up any concerns or misunderstandings.

2. Review and approve the final Agreement

It is important that both people get support and use the Agreement as a guide so the arrangement works in the best way possible right from the start. The Agreement will grow and change as people learn more about what needs to be included to suit their everyday life. It is really important that the things both people said were important can be seen and are accessible in the home.

3. Develop confidence

At this stage, people say the Support Organisation is really helpful in:

- planning some of the main activities of their life together
- setting up routines that make sense for them and their new life
- supporting them to find and use resources in the local community
- assisting the supporter to understand the best way to support the person.

During this stage, it is important that each person:

- builds their confidence
- develops and use their abilities
- is encouraged to make their own arrangements
- gets support to find solutions to problems before someone else steps in with the answer.

For the Support Organisation this can simply mean being available on the phone when someone needs some help. However, a balance in assisting and building confidence is needed.

It's important to know when to step back and help people make their own agreements – this is what builds their relationships.

Ben

4. Learning to live together – working out how to respond

Shared Living arrangements need everyone to understand the ways the Shared Living Supporter can share their life and the best way to support the person.

Shared Living is about:

- relationships
- how we engage and interact with each other
- our friends, our partners, our children and our colleagues.

It is learnt through a range of ways, including our experiences.

When we face situations where we do not feel powerful, we might try to control them. When we see people we care about doing things that may be risky, we try to keep them safe.

In Shared Living arrangements, there are traps people can fall into, such as:

- treating people in ways that are more about 'this is how we do things in our family' than 'this is the best way to support you'.
- believing 'this is how we do things at our service' instead of 'this is the best way to support this person'.

It is important that the Shared Living Supporter knows and understands these things, and can stop themselves from falling into one of these traps.



2.6 Monitor and learn

It's important to make sure the Shared Living arrangement can be successful into the future. People need to build real trust so they know they can rely on the relationship for support.

There are important things to think about during this stage, including:

- learning happens over time
- support might be needed when it comes to decision making
- understanding:
 - how the person communicates
 - what helps when others communicate with the person
- problem-solving and finding a result that works for everyone
- routines could become boring – people might need to explore interesting opportunities and try new things.

Important things to think about

1. Learning as we grow
2. Supporting decision-making
3. Working things out together
4. Safeguarding

1. Learning as we grow

Once the Shared Living arrangement begins, the person being supported, their family and the Supporting Organisation need to:

- monitor and support the arrangement
- make sure both parties are getting out of it what they hoped.

We recommend they make regular visits when both parties are home. This may need to happen for the first few weeks, depending on the nature of the relationship and whether the person and their Shared Living Supporter knew each other before. Visits can also happen away from the home with individual people.

All Shared Living arrangements should go through a trial period to work out if the people are really suitable. This could be from three to six months depending on whether the person and their Shared Living Supporter knew each other before.

A meeting might need to be arranged by the end of the first month to work out what is working well, and what isn't. Changes can be made to the agreement at this time. This is not about having a lodger in your house – this is about sharing your life with someone – really sharing your life. And the benefit is on both sides – my family have all benefited from Ryan being in our life.

Ryan and Rob

As partnerships develop, people with experience say that understanding their lives and the best way for organisations to support them is important.

Understand that we are a family, not a service, understand the depth of intrusion that we face at times and the impact this can have on our lives. The long-term support is so important – it can be a big factor in make or break.

Kathy

2. Supporting decision-making

Some people may need support and assistance with their:

- understanding
- decision-making.

They might not have had much experience making their own decisions, or might need support to understand information relating to the decision. Support to include people in decision-making is important. To do it well, you need to understand:

- how the person communicates
- what helps others communicate with the person.

There are tools to help this at the end of this section.

Good supported decision-making practices show us that while it is important to understand the person's communication, it is also important to understand how to give the person information relating to the decision. There are some key things to think when you support a person's decision-making:

- Do you know the best way to give the person information so they have the best chance of understanding it?
- Do you understand the best way to support the person's communication?
- Are you the right person to offer the person assistance with this decision?
- Does the information really relate to the decision?
- Are you giving the person the information at the right time and in the right way?

3. Working things out together

As relationships build and deepen, it is common to experience ups and downs. Support to problem-solve and work things out together is really important. Working out results together that will work for both parties is an important part of the support that the organisation can offer.

4. Safeguarding

There is a danger that life for the person and their supporter will become routine and won't change much. It is important that things are stable, however, having new and interesting opportunities is just as important. They should have the same opportunities as all members of the community – to find out what's possible as part of a lifestyle that's right for them.

Being scared to fail can stop people from trying new things. Fear that it may not work or that there are risks, can put people off the idea of trying. Support to explore things that may give the person new opportunities can be valuable.

We also know that people who don't try new things often, and stick with the same routines can be more vulnerable or at risk. Community Living British Columbia³ worked with different people, families and workers to try and understand how to help people be safe and well. Below is a list of things that can make people more vulnerable over time.

Things that can make people more vulnerable

- not having a job or enough money
- not having friends or family in your life
- not belonging to any clubs or groups
- not taking part in community activities
- not knowing your rights or how to tell if they're being violated or you have been taken advantage of
- not taking part in roles you want as a member of the community
- only spending time with other people with disability or people who are paid to support you
- being treated unfairly at work or school
- disrespect and negative attitudes from other people
- not being able to communicate what you need
- behaving in a way that some people find challenging
- not being listened to
- not being taken seriously.

³ <http://www.communitylivingbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/Responding-to-Vulnerability.pdf>

This list highlights areas that the person might be interested in to:

- grow their connections and experiences
- make themselves less vulnerable.

Understanding the person's communication⁴

At this time	When the person does or says this	We think it means	You should do
Example At this time	Lucy grabs at your arm or clothing and is smiling	Lucy is happy and is initiating some fun or conversation	Acknowledge Lucy's initiation – start a conversation – offer something fun to do

Understanding how best to communicate with the person

At this time	When you want the person to know or understand this	You should say or do this
Example At the weekend	When you want Lucy to know her family are coming to visit	Show Lucy her family photo and say Mum and Jo are coming today

⁴ Supported Decision Making, Fulton, Sanderson and Woodley, Paradigm

Getting clear about decision-making

Important decisions in the person's life	How must the person be involved?	Who makes the final decision?	When will this be reviewed?
Food shopping – foods to buy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lucy has favourite foods – these must be on the shopping list• Lucy must be involved in the food shop• Support Lucy to look at new foods while shopping	Supporter and Lucy together	Keep learning about ways to involve Lucy



2.7 Review and reflect

The Support Organisation, if there is one involved, needs to look at how well the Shared Living arrangement is working. The person and their Shared Living Supporter need to be included.

They need to look at:

- what is working
- what needs to change
- new opportunities to look at.

There are important things to think about during this stage:

- how well things have gone, what worked well and what didn't
- building a life outside of the arrangement so the person doesn't rely on their Shared Living Supporter for everything
- changing the arrangement
- ending the arrangement.

Important things to think about

1. Developing the partnership
2. Building the person's life alongside the arrangement
3. Changing or ending the arrangement

1. Developing the partnership

The review stage is one of the most exciting stages. It can create a fresh, new direction. Many people see the review as an important chance to look at how things have gone – what worked well and what didn't. It's also a chance to set new goals and make plans for the future. A key role of the Support Organisation is to help both parties learn and problem solve together as the partnership develops and help to build their own skills together.

We recommend that the Agreement is formally reviewed after a trial period of three to six months of Shared Living so that any changes it needs can be made and approved.

It's about supporting the person with their life – all of their life, the good bits and the complicated bits.

Corby

2. Building the person's life alongside the arrangement

Even where the Shared Living arrangement is going well, it is important to look at ways the person can keep building their life outside of the arrangement, so they don't just depend on the Shared Living Supporter relationship.

It's important to keep supporting the person to build more people into their life, this way they are not totally reliant upon the Shared Living supporter – this means the person has real back-up in way of friends and the person has a better life.

Rod

3. Changing or ending the arrangement

There are many reasons why a Shared Living Arrangement might change and/or end. It can be due to:

- the person and/or the Shared Living supporter not wanting to live in a Shared Living arrangement anymore
- people's lives changing
- a breakdown in the relationship between the two people
- the design of the arrangement not being able to last.

It is important to think about, and plan for, these things during the planning, development, and monitoring of the arrangement.

References

1. *A little book about person centred planning*, J. O'Brien and C., L. O'Brien, Inclusion Press
2. *Individual Service Design*, Paradigm, Fulton and Kinsella, 2010
3. www.communitylivingbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/Responding-to-Vulnerability.pdf
4. *Supported Decision Making*, Fulton, Sanderson and Woodley, Paradigm

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