



'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?'

My Life, Your Life, Our Life

A Guide for Flat-mates, Homesharers & Co-Residents

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Glossary

Term	Description
ATO	Australian Taxation Office
Commission or DSC	Disability Services Commission
Shared Living Supporter	The person or family who invite a person to live in their home. The person / people who provide support as part of the Shared Living arrangement. This could also be interchanged with Co-Resident or Homesharer depending upon the approach. A Shared Living supporter will share the same values, contribute to the relationship, and benefit from what the individual brings to the relationship.
Support Organisation	An organisation, that provides supports to people with disabilities.
Payment	A payment provided to the person providing support in Shared Living. This could be the support person for sharing their home or the person requiring support 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 an individual has an ongoing relationship and shared place of residence with a compatible person, couple or family, who provides companionship and support in a natural home environment.
Co-Residency	An arrangement where an individual lives with another person, couple or family and they share their home and aspects of their life together.
Homeshare	A nationally-recognised arrangement where a supporter (Homesharer) lives with an individual to provide companionship and some minor personal assistance.
Support Worker	An employee of a Support Organisation who is paid to provide formal care services, typically on a rostered basis, to an individual with a disability.
Shared Management	An arrangement between the person and a Support Organisation that enables flexibility and shared responsibility in managing the persons funding.

Section 1

Understanding Shared Living

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1.1 Introduction and Context

‘Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family or friends. Whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one.’

~ Jane Howard

Being connected to other people is a basic human need that provides the foundation of our existence and how we live together as a society. Our relationships are essentially one of the most important and fundamental elements of being human. As a modern society we have a variety of ways that people develop a sense of belonging, be it through intimate relationships, family networks, friendship circles, communities of interests or by simply being present in our local communities.

How these relationships look, feel and evolve for each one of us will differ 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. It is for this reason that people who work in Human Services strive to assist others to develop good support systems that enhance, promote and develop their relationships.

Shared Living is the collective term used for a range of approaches that support people in one of the most natural and beneficially ways possible – real people connecting, supporting and sharing their lives.

Alongside the development of Shared Living there has been a significant shift across Australia in how supports are provided to people, who require assistance to live a full life as active citizens. This change of emphasis is being captured in the term Self-Directed Support.

Western Australia has a strong history of exploring and supporting innovations that promote peoples’ choice, control and ability to determine and direct their own lives. Across Western Australia Shared Living has been an approach that people have been using for over 10 years with considerable success, offering so much more than assistance or support, but real connections and relationships.

Self-Directed Support aims to ensure 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 promotes people's citizenship, steeped in local communities and support that can be directed by people themselves.

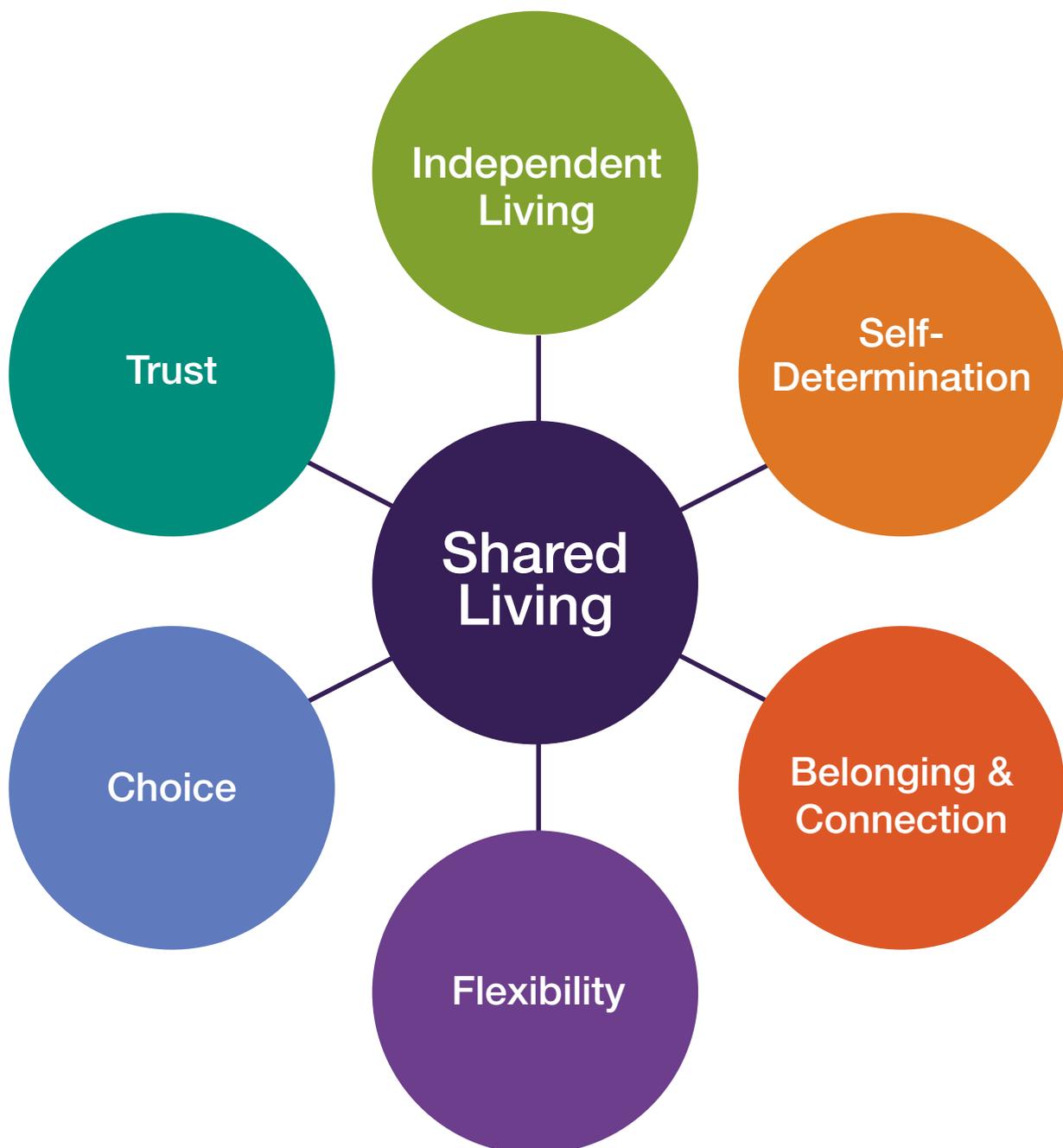
In May 2011, WA's Individualised Services (WAIIS) formed the WA Shared Living Working Party that included a range of Support Organisations with experience or interest in developing and supporting Shared Living arrangements.

It was recognised how Shared Living has developed through real innovations led by people sharing their lives, both the Shared Living Supporters and people using this approach. However, this has also led to differences in standards of practice across the sector when supporting individuals and families in Shared Living arrangements. The Working Party identified a need for current practices across the disability sector to be consistent, fair and rigorous while not impeding upon the potential of Shared Living arrangements to provide an individualised and flexible approach to support people in their lives. They also identified an increased interest by individuals and families and organisations, to consider Shared Living arrangements across other community support sectors. Members indicated these needs were best addressed through a Shared Living Framework in the form of a resource for the disability sector.

This resource has been developed to provide individuals who require support, their families and organisations with information about Shared Living arrangements. It is not designed to be prescriptive, but rather to provide options and considerations to maximise outcomes and minimise risks when developing and managing Shared Living arrangements. It is also anticipated that the contents of this resource will be subject to reviews in the future as disability services and supports evolve over time.

1.2 The Principles of Shared Living

There are a variety of ways that Shared Living can operate and support people. Before describing and defining the detail of these approaches, it is vital that we understand the principles underpinning Shared Living. Shared Living offers an individualised and tailored approach to match and support people's differences and uniqueness, offering people the opportunity to share their lives, not just their accommodation. Shared Living requires Support Organisations to explore what individuals want and how best to achieve their desires. The six principles of Shared Living drive that process.



The Six Principles of Shared Living

- **Belonging and Connection** – The right to be part of a relationship and be connected to others.
- **Independent Living** – The right to be a citizen with full access to an ordinary life.
- **Self-Determination** – The right to be in control of your own life and for your views and preferences to be acknowledged and reflected in your relationships and your home.
- **Flexibility** – The right to decide how to use your resources and how they will be managed to best suit you and your lifestyle.
- **Choice** – The right to choose your home and the life you live.
- **Trust** – The right to be trusted as an equal partner in the relationship.

1.3 Understanding Shared Living

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

~ Shared Living Supporter

Shared Living aims to reflect the way in which naturally formed relationships work and develop. Shared Living’s primary focus is about sharing lives which means there are benefits to both parties; the people who require support and the people offering support; both parties have lives to share and experiences to contribute, offering everyone enriched experiences and enhanced qualities of life. So often, people who share their lives and their homes report the enormous benefits to their own lives and their families.

The home is the platform for people to develop reciprocal relationships where the person is accepted and included as a valued participant in the homes and lives of the support person (and their family, where applicable).

Shared Living can develop new opportunities and everyday life experiences for the individual that they may not have otherwise experienced in other more formal and structured support arrangements. Similarly, Shared Living Supporters have the potential to have new experiences they may not have otherwise experienced were it not for their relationship with the individual they are supporting.

Experiences are so much more powerful when shared with others.

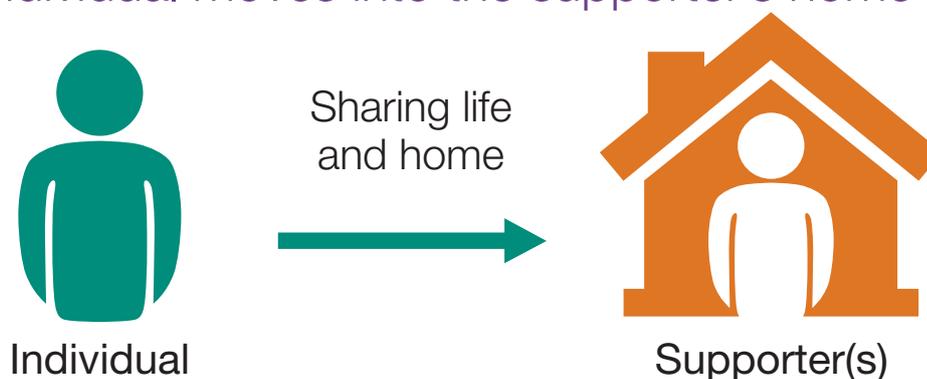
There are as many Shared Living arrangements as there are unique individuals. There is no 'one size fits all'. They all differ in a range of ways, including how the home environment is arranged, how the support is tailored to the person and how their shared lifestyle operates day-to-day. However they do share the main aim of providing support, and opportunities to the individual through the relationships formed.

There are, however, two main broad arrangements of Shared Living;

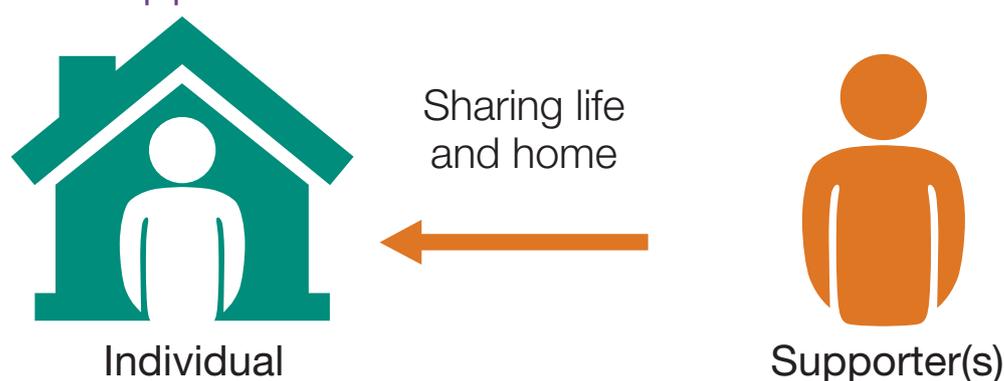
Co-Residency is when an individual lives with another person, couple or family and they share their home and aspects of their life together. There are two types of co-resident arrangements that are distinct from group living arrangements.

1. When the individual lives with another person, couple or family in the home of the person, couple or family.
2. When the person, couple or family lives with the individual in the individual's home.

1. The individual moves into the supporter's home



2. The supporter moves into the individual's home



1. Co-Residency – When the individual lives in the supporter’s home

This involves the individual living in the Shared Living Supporter’s home. The Shared Living Supporter(s) can range from a single person to a family with children, who share their home and everyday life with the individual. Whilst the individual is living in the house, the aim is that the house also becomes the individual’s home - the home reflecting everyone who lives there.

2. Co-Residency – When the supporter lives in the individual’s home

This is when the Shared Living Supporter lives in the home of the individual. The individual will own or lease their home through private or public means. The Shared Living Supporter can range from a single person to a couple with or without children.

To date, Shared Living Supporters have tended not to be families but are more often single people or couples and relate to the person they support more as flatmates.

The Shared Living Supporter may receive a financial payment, but it is more common for the supporter to receive a rent-free component and/or subsidy as payment for their support.

These arrangements can be on a full-time, part-time or occasional basis. For example, the individual may live with their family from Monday to Friday but on weekends live with their Shared Living support person.

The Shared Living Supporter may receive a ‘benefit’ for sharing their home and supporting the individual. The benefit can differ and could include a regular financial 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 there is a term used to describe one approach of Shared Living called Homeshare. It offers a distinct and internationally-recognised arrangement, with an agreed support mechanism and has been developed, led and supported by the international agency called Homeshare International www.homeshare.org

Person-centred approaches to Shared Living

Although there are two basic arrangements for Shared Living this does not mean that these are the only two ways to offer Shared Living. To ensure it offers a person-centred approach there are a range of customised responses for each person. People's lives and circumstances are unique and therefore Shared Living arrangements need to reflect this. The following is not prescriptive but gives some indications of how the Shared Living arrangements can vary from person to person.

People – Although the basic arrangements refer to one individual who requires support, it is possible that there could be a couple i.e. two people who have a relationship choosing to live with others.

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

Length of Time – Shared Living arrangements can last for a person's life time as the relationship develops and people become like family, or the arrangement can be temporary and time limited, maybe to assist the person in getting to know an area / community or the time to gain confidence and learn new skills involved in running a home.

Benefits – Shared Living should provide both parties with mutual benefits. 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 supporting the arrangement. This could include free rent, rent subsidy and/or a financial payment.

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

Practical and Personal Assistance – The support that people may require varies according to the person and their needs, but may include practical support and personal support. Practical Assistance may include assistance with cooking, shopping or maintenance, while Personal Assistance may include emotional support and / or personal care. Some people may also engage support from additional external paid Support Workers who may also support the person in their home alongside the Shared Living Supporter. These additional supporters may be employed by the same organisation supporting the Shared Living partnership, a different organisation, or employed directly by the person themselves.

1.4 The Key Features and Benefits of Shared Living

The detail of each Shared Living Arrangement is driven and dependent upon the person and the Shared Living Supporter's preferences. However, all Shared Living arrangements should offer these key outcomes and benefits to all participants involved;

- 1. A home** – There is a sense of home for both the individual and Shared Living supporter(s), irrespective of who physically owns or leases the dwelling.
- 2. A sense of belonging** – The individual is welcomed into and becomes a valued member of the household, and has the opportunity to participate in the everyday activities of the household and support person/s if they wish (e.g. support person/s family events, outings, activities etc).
- 3. A role and purpose** – The individual and the supporter have the opportunity to contribute to both the relationship, the home and to a shared life and experiences.
- 4. A say in the direction of life** – The individual has the right to identify and express their own ideas and preferences for their home environment, how they lead their day to day lives and their social and community interests, and is supported to pursue these as required.
- 5. A connection with others** – The individual is encouraged and supported to develop and maintain their own personal relationships, including those with their natural family and friends.
- 6. A sense of equality and reciprocity** – The individual has an equal stake in the partnership. The relationship is based on equality not hierarchy. The person has something to offer the relationship based on their own uniqueness, gifts and experiences.
- 7. A safe and supportive lifestyle** – The individual has the opportunities afforded to all citizens and the risks associated with this, with the safety of being supported by people who know and understand them.

Shared Living, however, is not:

- A “placement” where children and adults living with disability are placed with a family or persons to ensure a “roof over their heads.”
- A facility, hostel or other grouped service.
- An arrangement where the individual or individuals are supported by a formal roster of employed support workers.
- An arrangement where individuals, or Shared Living support persons, are excluded from each other’s home, life or community.
- An accommodation setting where individuals living with disability are grouped together and cared for by a house couple residing with them.
- To the exclusion of individuals with complex needs.
- Trying to meet the support needs of the individual by fitting them into a pre-existing suite of service options provided by the organisation without regard for individuality and flexibility.

Shared Living offers potential benefits to people and communities including;



People who require support –

Finding support steeped in relationships and local community.

Citizens – who are looking to share their lives and experiences, whilst offering some support.

Support Organisations – facilitating ‘ordinary supports’, learning how to support relationships and connections.

Communities – who learn how people can be included and the contributions they offer.

1.5 Who is Shared Living For?

As we know sharing your life and experiences with others is a fundamental need for all human beings, so if it is developed and supported well, it should be a viable option for all individuals regardless of perceived complexity of support needs. Similarly, Shared Living supporters are not dependent upon a type of 'typical candidate' or 'typical ideal family', Shared Living is an option for all kinds of people with a range of experiences and circumstances.

Shared Living is for individuals who require support and who want some or all of the following:

- To want and value companionship as a key outcome in their support.
- To have support in a home and family / friendship style approach.
- To want to contribute and offer support / friendship to others.
- To have more choice and control over their support and life.
- To be respected as an expert in their own life.
- To have support arranged based on their preferences and what's important to them.
- To determine their own personal outcomes and to have a say in how they are supported.

Shared Living is for citizens who can share their lives and offer support if they;

- Have a genuine commitment to being part of an inclusive home environment with someone who requires some support.
- Have a willingness to share their lives, family, friends and networks with the person.
- Are keen to benefit from the person's contributions to their life and networks.
- Are willing to share more than just practical and personal assistance with someone.
- Are willing to include the person in their life, family, home and experiences in a way that they would any other friend.
- To support the person to be an active participant in decision-making, recognising that this will affect their partnership.

Shared Living is for organisations who;

- Are willing to develop a range of ways to enable people to have more say and control over their support.
- Are willing to support a partnership and arrangements that goes way beyond a typical paid support worker relationship.
- Are willing and able to facilitate the development of natural, on-going relationships with the supporters that often extend beyond the usual formal kinds of support.
- To be an active and supportive partner in problem-solving.
- To be willing to operate in a forum that has less clarity and is much more person- dependent than usual formal support arrangements.
- Are ready to work in genuine partnership with individuals – aiming to develop a relationship based on mutual respect, shared understanding and honest communication.
- Are willing to safeguard all parties respectfully and in partnership with the individual and the Shared Living supporter.

1.6 What Are We Learning About What Makes Shared Living Work Well?

There are many factors that contribute to the success of Shared Living arrangements. However, the critical 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.

Key elements that people and families tell us that make a difference are; compatibility and connectedness, mutual respect and understanding and commitment and openness.

Compatibility and Connectedness

- Significant investment is required in finding and assessing suitable Shared Living support persons. Time is required to determine their values, beliefs, culture, interests and experiences, and to what extent these are shared.
- It can take a considerable amount of time for a Shared Living arrangement to be developed. Accelerating this process will consequently increase the likelihood of arrangements breaking down.
- The matching process requires a high degree of openness and honesty about values, preferences and likes and dislikes. Shared Living supporters and organisations need to be honest, which may mean discussing uncomfortable or 'touchy' subjects.
- Shared Living affects and involves everyone. This includes any children or partners of the Shared Living support person or individual. All need to fully understand and appreciate what the arrangement means.

Mutual Respect and Understanding

- Many people don't want a 'new family' but are looking to Shared Living to develop new meaningful relationships as an adult.
- Supporting people to connect, based on their strengths and supports is really important to ensure its based on mutual respect and understanding.
- Helping each other to contribute their own gifts, strengths and capacity is vital in developing a mutually respectful relationship.
- Orientation and training must be provided to Shared Living supporters to ensure they are well equipped with knowledge and skills to support an individual.

Commitment

- Commitment needs to come from all levels: the individual, their family members, Shared Living support persons and the organisation.
- Individuals, family members, Shared Living support persons and organisations need to comprehend what is required in a Shared Living arrangement.
- Individuals and their Shared Living support persons need to appreciate the usual tensions that can arise when people live together, and be committed to working through these as they arise.
- Families need to be able to form relationships and develop a level of trust with Shared Living support persons so as to accept their involvement and support provided to their family member with a disability.
- Shared Living supporters need to have a genuine commitment to sharing a home and everyday life with the individual on a longer term basis, and respect the natural authority of the person and their family.
- Staff members from organisations need to commit time and effort to find suitable Shared Living support persons and provide responsive ongoing support.
- Organisations need to understand complexities of relationships and commitment to ensure the individual's voice is heard.

Openness

Human relationships are seldom straightforward and rarely operate in the same way as the relationship of paid employees. It is vital to understand this key concept and support people to be themselves in the Shared Living arrangement.

Successful Shared Living arrangements all have openness at the heart of the relationships. Organisations need to be honest and realistic about all aspects of Shared Living, including its limitations and hold discussions with individuals and Shared Living supporters about the 'worst-case scenario' that could happen living with one another, and discuss how to respond to and manage these situations. Support Organisations who are clear about their supportive and safeguarding role offer everyone involved clarity and confidence. Support Organisations can nurture this sense of openness by respecting people's individuality and celebrating people's difference.

1.7 Shared Living Considerations for Support Organisations

People with experience of Shared Living tell us that it offers such rich benefits due to its primary focus on relationships and shared lives, not just shared accommodation. It intends to be a very different arrangement to that of usual services or support facilitated by Support Organisations, it requires a different level of nurturing and leadership, which may not work for all Support Organisations.

Support Organisations exploring this approach need to consider the following to ensure it is an approach that they can develop well, to support people to have good and safe lives in their local communities;

- Shared Living relies on effective communication, liaison and negotiation between a range of people including individuals, their families, Shared Living support persons and organisations. Much effort is expended on developing and maintaining relationships, conflict resolution and negotiation skills.
- The current lack of clarity and guidelines for non-taxed payments made to Shared Living support persons may cause some anxiety for individuals, families and organisations, therefore the support organisation needs to be clear, transparent and confident around this.
- Having a clear message about Shared Living, its benefits and its possible difficulties helps everyone understand it and reduces any negative perceptions around Shared Living simply offering a 'paid relationship' focused on accommodation.
- Families tell us that they have found that Shared Living can pose a challenge initially if the person is moving from the family home to a Shared Living arrangement. Primarily as this can feel like a move sideways not forward. The support organisation needs to work sensitively and respectfully to ensure this challenge is respected and heard, whilst demonstrating the possible benefits.

Ultimately a Support Organisation needs to be clear about the underpinning principles and values of Shared Living. The relationship of employee and employer is very different to other approaches (such as Shared Management) and therefore requires a different style of support. The approach may require intense initial support to develop the right arrangement and partnership, however when it works, the benefits and outcomes clearly pay off in the long term.

Section 2

Developing & Supporting Shared Living

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2.1 The Components of Shared Living

At the heart of Shared Living are principles that make sure the arrangement enables the person and their supporter to experience and enjoy the same opportunities as all other citizens whilst sharing their lives and home.

Alongside these principles, this section explores the stages involved in developing and supporting Shared Living.

Developing and supporting Shared Living involves:



The following section describes each stage and provides some good practice tips and experiences to best 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

As people begin to explore Shared Living for themselves and or their families, it is vital that the initial assistance provided helps people both understand Shared Living and explore how this might work for the person themselves.

Understanding who the person is, what they are looking for and importantly understanding what a good Shared Living arrangement may look like for this person is vital – it is almost like an individual design. This can only be done well, if the starting point is from the person, understanding them, their lifestyle, their expectations and their aspirations. This provides the foundation for exploring if, then how, a Shared Living arrangement may work.

There are a number of conversations to explore and understand Shared Living and we suggest those conversations are held in partnership with the person, their circle of support including their family, friends and current supporters.

Key Areas of Consideration

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

1. Understanding the person

Shared Living should be as personal and as individual as each person considering it and to do this well, all support should begin with really understanding the person, their lifestyle and their support.

Person-centred planning and approaches¹ can assist in these conversations and in understanding and exploring who the person is, what's important to them in their current lifestyle, what they can expect and hope for their future. Integral to this understanding is also exploring what the individual's support requirements are and what good support will look like for the person. All of this information helps to ensure any Shared Living design will reflect the person and their own requirements from Shared Living and their contribution 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 via a series of 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 with experience of Shared Living tell us that investing time and support into assisting the person and those around them to really understand what they want from and what they want to contribute to the Shared Living partnership, believe that lays strong foundations for any future matching process and success.

Shared Living can mean many different things to different people and establishing how each person understands and imagines Shared Living for themselves is vital, to ensure 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 assist the person to develop Shared Living

If Shared Living is an arrangement the person wants to explore further, then time spent understanding how best to facilitate this is important. Many organisations that have developed and supported Shared Living arrangements describe this exploration as an important stage, to ensure the person is safe and well whilst exploring Shared Living.

Consideration needs to be given to how the person may prefer to advertise and meet with prospective Shared Living Supporters and how best to support them in this journey, as it can be difficult if the right match doesn't come along first time around. Organisations need to be mindful of their approach in developing Shared Living as 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 assist understanding and exploration

► Useful Conversations:

Understanding the individual

- Who is the person?
- What really matters to the person?
- What makes them tick?
- Understand the person's family life and those in it.
- What kind of people work best for the person ie what qualities suit the person, what brings out the best in them?
- What makes life good today?
- What do you want for your future?
- Explore the persons gifts contributions and attributes.
- Understanding the person's current social network.
- Understand previous experience of living with people.

Understanding the person's lifestyle

- What are their beliefs and values?
- What are their habits and pace of life?
- What are their interests, hobbies?
- Do we understand the person's likes and dislikes?
- What are the person's preferences around drinking and smoking?
- How do they feel about having a pet?
- Cultural backgrounds & religious beliefs.
- Understanding what works and what doesn't work
- Understanding and appreciating their history and the impact this may have had on the person.

► Useful Conversations:

Understanding good support

- What makes good support for the person?
- Understand the kinds of support that the person requires including practical assistance and moral support of companionship.
- Support to connect and be involved in the community.
- Support with financial management (e.g. banking, payment of bills, taxation).

Understanding Shared Lives expectations and practicalities

- What does the person and/or their family want and expect from Shared Lives?
- What do they want to contribute to the partnership?
- Practical elements including full- time and part-time / short-term, long-term.
- Exploring time apart and together - how this will work best for the person?
- Will the person need any additional support?
- What would be a good contingency plan – in case of sickness, the relationship breaks down etc.

Understanding the Person's support

Exploring the person's unique support requirements together, can help develop the right support strategies that reflect the strengths and the exact support requirements of the person.

One way of doing this is to explore what support means for the person and then further explore ways in which this support may be developed, remembering that too much support can be overbearing and limiting for people. Just enough support is what we are aiming for – a balance of assistance and support that enables the person to live their life that reflects their needs. It is also important to help the person explore all forms of assistance including assistive technology and informal supports, all of which can be developed within 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

Options of how I want to be supported - My Support Strategies			

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

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 imagine?	3. How do you want your family and friends to be involved and how can we best support you with this?
2. How do you meet people and feel able to decide if you like them or not, without this being difficult?	4. How can we assist you in exploring Shared Living - what works well for you and what should we avoid?

2.3 Developing the Right Design

The design stage is the opportunity to really develop what a good Shared Living arrangement is going to look like for this person in detail. A Shared Living lifestyle based on the person and their expectations – a unique design. We know that by working together to create a design has a much greater chance of success.

This stage enables everyone involved to begin understanding what the arrangement needs to consider and provides the detail for the rest of the development and the actions needed to make it happen.

Key areas of Consideration

- 1. Co-designing the Shared Living arrangement**
- 2. Consider the right home**
- 3. Exploring the right person to share with**
- 4. Understanding risks and safeguards**

1. Co-designing the Shared Living arrangement

Shared Living should be very flexible, individualised and designed according to the person and their requirements. There are two basic types of Shared Living arrangements which can provide organisations with the foundations of developing the right arrangements for each individual.

However it is also important that the person considers both the right arrangement for them and if changing accommodation, they also consider the right accommodation.

The two main types of Shared Living arrangements for Shared Living:

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 that are distinct from a group living arrangement.

1. When the individual lives with another person, couple or family in the home of the person, couple or family
2. When the person, couple or family lives with the individual in the individual's home

Exploring the right option for the person is essential. Many people tell us that 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 additional support to the support offered by the Shared Living Supporter. This is hugely individual and dependent upon the arrangement designed and agreed with the person and the supporter.

2. Considering the home

Like all people, trying to find the right place to call your home can present some decisions, compromises and sometimes surprises. However, assisting individuals to explore what kind of property they require and the development of a housing specification can be helpful for both parties – particularly the party looking to move into a new property.

Although not exhaustive a typical housing specification would include the following key headings – exploring the right kind of property, the right community, adaptability of the house and any other considerations in relation to the house.

▶ Property Requirements	▶ Community Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The right kind of property - maybe a villa, townhouse, duplex, apartment, detached house or granny flat.• Size and number of bedrooms.• Number of living spaces and whether they can accommodate a shared place as well as allow for privacy.• Does the property need a garden?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A chosen community to support existing connections.• Proximity to local amenities such as shops, public transport.• Proximity to friends and family.• Proximity to place of school, employment, recreational/leisure and other community activities.• Is the location considered safe?• Will the community support what we have learnt about the person's expectations for the future?

▶ Adaptability	▶ Other Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there spaces that need to be accessible and or adapted? • Do we need to consider any future changes? • How adaptable is the housing to different living arrangements which include formal and informal supports? (e.g. are bedrooms big enough to accommodate a couple who are Shared Living support persons or a second individual with a disability?) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the age of the house? Will there be a lot of ongoing maintenance? • Conduct a home safety assessment. Are there any issues which may affect the health and safety of the occupants living within the home? • If the home is leased publicly, are there any parameters surrounding the lease for the purposes of Shared Living arrangements?

3. Exploring the right person to share with

The success of any Shared Living partnership is the compatibility and genuine connection of both parties, as well as the ability to offer each other the support both parties are looking for. Although it is difficult to plan for compatibility and friendship, as for many people it can be entirely personality dependent, we can help people explore and consider what kind of person may work best for them and what kind of person to avoid. Exploring areas such as interests, characteristics and hobbies can all help to build up a picture of the kind of person who may work best for the person.

Helping the person and those around them to explore the kinds of people involved in their life now particularly the people with whom the person has a good relationship with, can help to understand what is it about these people that work for the person. Drafting a list of the kind of people to look for, and the kind of people to avoid, can form the basis of recruitment of possible supporters.

4. Positive Safeguarding

Building and supporting important relationships in a person's life is a fundamental safeguard against isolation, loneliness and poor treatment.

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

People are safer the more others care enough about their safety and well-being to keep a close eye on their situation, to stand up to difficult situations with them, to act imaginatively in response to their vulnerabilities, to negotiate on their behalf with others who control important opportunities, and to struggle with them over situations in which they may be contributing to their own problems. Many people can be more vulnerable because they lack opportunities and assistance to make and keep good relationships.

It is necessary to continually consider the following questions:

- What would build energy and commitment among the person's allies?
- What would it take to invite at least one person into the person's relationship circle?
- What would it take to invite one more person from the outer edges of the person's life to be closer?
- Which associations and networks share the interests, passions and enthusiasm of the person?

- Where will people identify with the persons nationality, ethnic group or religion?
- Who would enjoy their company?
- Where could the person's presence make a positive difference?
- Who would enjoy and add to the knowledge, questions, experiences and information they already have?
- What community projects and activities would benefit from what they can contribute?

The thing that keeps us all safe in life, are strong trusting relationships with people who care about us. The more people who know us, look out for us, and are willing to be there during difficult times, as well as celebrate and share joyous times with us, the richer, and safer our lives can be.

Shared Living is about relationships and therefore, inherently, it means risk, particularly when someone is relying on people living in the home to provide support. The way in which organisations can positively approach this risk, is with a focus on relationships - within the Shared Living arrangement, and external to it, paid and unpaid.

A good design looks at strategies to support the person to be safe and well within the Shared Living arrangement. This may include strategies and practicalities that support the person to voice concerns or complaints, or mechanisms that enable the person to negotiate conflict within the partnership.

It is important that conversations that explore safeguards are held, including areas such as; what will we do if it just isn't working for you? What supports do we have around the individual as a back-up in case of an emergency?

Organisations have found that simple safeguards built into the design from the beginning work best such as;

- Making sure the Supporting Organisation has time with both parties alone, so both can talk freely about what's working, not working and areas of concern.
- Building in dedicated time to understand how the relationship is working and ensuring that the existing people in the person's life are still well connected.
- Having a continual focus of supporting people to have other relationships in their life i.e. friends, colleagues, acquaintances etc.

Exploring the right Shared Living arrangement

▶ Useful Questions		
Co-Residency – When the individual lives in someone else’s home	Co-Residency - When someone else lives in the individual’s home	Homeshare
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you specifically looking for a home which has a family environment or “family feel” to it? Some Shared Living support persons may be single persons or a couple without children? • How would you feel if there are children or partners living in the home, and when their friends or visitors come to visit? • How would you feel moving out of the home for when the Shared Living support persons require time apart? • How do you ensure you maintain and develop your friendships and relationships external to the Shared Living Supporters networks? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although the home belongs to the individual, how would they feel about moving out of the home temporarily for when their Shared Living support persons require time apart? If not, how would time apart be managed? • If the home is leased, how can the individual protect their security of tenure if the Shared Living support person decides to exit? Will the lease be only in the name of the individual so that if the arrangement breaks down, the individual is not left without a home? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although the home belongs to the individual, how would they feel about someone living alongside them? • The amount of support provided by a homesharer is around 10 hours - how would this work for the person? • How would the individual feel about visitors and friends of their homesharer? • How would the person living rent-free and contribution to the household expenses work for the person and their lifestyle?

Co-Residency – When the individual lives in someone else’s home	Co-Residency - When someone else lives in the individual’s home	Homeshare
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you feel about the potential to be friends with your Shared Living support persons’ extended networks? Would you like to be included in their activities, or would you prefer privacy or time alone? • How do you ensure it really feels like your home as well, given that the home physically belongs to the Shared Living support person? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would the individual feel if the Shared Living support person 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 parted ways? • How would the individual feel about visitors and friends of their Shared Living support persons, or if they have children who will be living with them as well? • How do you ensure you maintain and develop your friendships and relationships external to the Shared Living supporters networks? 	

Considering housing - Developing a housing specification

Community / Areas	The kind of property
Considerations	Adaptations that may be needed

Considering 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

Once the design is clear, the organisation can begin to recruit the potential supporter in partnership with the person and their family and friends. This requires a similar person-centred approach. Once a potential Shared Living Supporter is found it is essential to understand that even if the partnership looked good on paper, it is the actual real relationship that needs to work and this can only be explored over time. Time to get to know each other is vital involving more than simply getting to know each other, but to also get to know the person's chosen lifestyle, other people in their life including family and friends, and how the person's approach impacts on each party. Preparation for the Shared Living partnership needs to be carefully supported and developed. The Shared Living Agreement helps to prepare and explore the arrangement for all involved.

Key areas of Consideration

1. Finding the right person

2. Relationship-building – getting to know each other

3. Developing an Agreement

1. Finding the right person

The process involved in finding a desirable Shared Living Support Person needs to be exploratory and rigorous. The investment at the outset is designed to maximise the success of the arrangement for the long-term. The process enables both the Support Organisation to determine the person's suitability, but also supports the person interested in Shared Living to explore and thoroughly consider the reality of Shared Living.

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

~ Ben

Good practice experience teaches us that even in situations where the person is already in contact or friendly with a person who is interested in offering Shared Living, it is recommended that the same approach is taken. A friendship is not the same as the requirements of Shared Living.

We recommend that Supporting Organisations explore the following areas in the recruitment and matching process to cover essential information and to assess suitability:

- Advertising and recruitment
- Interviewing and getting to know the potential Shared Living Supporter
- Completing integrity checks
- Understanding payments and insurance

It is recommended that Support Organisations always involve people and their families when interviewing for potential Shared Living Supporters. The Supporting Organisation can involve and empower people to lead the interviewing process with easy checklists, photo boards and accessible prompts and questions. Involving people and families is easier and more meaningful if the Supporting Organisation is clear about their criteria for suitability and 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 the potential Shared Living Supporter reflect the same approaches as those with the person, to enable a genuine person centred exploration. Being honest about what the person is looking for and what support they require is vital to ensure everyone understands the expectations.

‘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 potential Shared Living Supporter

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 gifts, talents and contributions do you have to contribute to Shared Living? • An ideal match would include... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you expect the arrangement to be like for you? • What other issues and pressures are there on your family at the current time? • Is this a good time to invite new challenges? • How will your family adjust to the addition of other members? What changes, compromises or sacrifices will need to be made? Is everyone prepared to make these changes? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If in a relationship - is the relationship strong enough at this time to work as a team and support one another? • If single - have you considered the lifestyle changes and loss of privacy associated with sharing your home with another person?
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2. Relationship-building – getting to know each other

Once a potential person has been identified, we know that supporting the relationships to develop is a gradual process. There are some approaches that we can develop to facilitate relationship building that are both useful, sensitive and have a greater chance of success.

Positive introductions - How we introduce people can make a significant difference to how they are perceived, for example introducing someone in a positive way highlighting their positive contributions and interests, sets the right tone for any potential connection.

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

~ Ben

Support Organisations initially facilitate people to get to know each other over the first couple of months, meeting each other with the organisations support initially and then with each other in a variety of places, beginning in neutral places, and then including each other’s current home including friends and family. Doing things of interest together and assisting each party to arrange and coordinate these connections help in building 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 makes sense to both parties, reducing support over time as both people begin to understand each other and gain confidence.

As people get to know each other it is important to allow space and opportunity to explore their thoughts and views about each other and the potential relationship. It is really important for the Support Organisation to find ways to communicate with each person separately, ensuring people have the chance to talk freely about the partnership.

3. Developing an Agreement

A Shared Living Agreement is a working agreement that helps to both prepare for the arrangement and to also refer back to once the arrangement has begun.

The purpose of the agreement is to clearly outline how the Shared Living arrangement will work and what it involves. It is a three-way agreement between the person, the Shared Living Supporter and the Support Organisation. It is important that the Agreement is agreed by all parties.

The Agreement describes the nature of the Shared Living arrangement, including the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved. It should also include the type of support and assistance required by the individual.

Key areas to include in the Agreement are:

- Agreed probationary period and notice period.
- Agreed benefits including payments and tax (if appropriate).
- Agreed time apart and how this will be developed and supported.
- Agreed share of household tasks and any household bills.
- Review requirements of integrity checks and training.
- Complaints Procedure and appeals process.
- Agreed supervision and monitoring process of the Shared Living arrangement.

The Agreement should also include details regarding monitoring and supervision such as visits, contacts and funders evaluations, and how these will be performed.

Finally, the Agreement should clearly outline the outcomes expected for all involved, highlighting what each person is hoping to achieve and how. This ensures that at any point of reviewing the arrangement there is a clear overall agreement of what each party wanted to achieve and if this has been achieved.

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

~ Ben

2.5 Supporting People to Live Their Lives

Once both people are ready, then supporting the arrangement to begin is the next stage. This needs to work in a way that makes sense to the individual, beginning with a gradual move in or by an agreed date - the people involved will decide what's right for them. People with experience tell us that things never run according to plan, so a degree of flexibility and practical support is important.

Key areas of Consideration

- 1. Taking it slowly and practically**
- 2. Review design and agree on the final Agreement**
- 3. Develop confidence**
- 4. Learning to live together - negotiating responses**

1. Taking it slowly and practically

Once both parties feel ready and the Agreement is in place, then the Shared Living arrangement can begin. Many people begin with some trial periods that can be short visits to overnight stays, and increase the length of stay to weekends and longer. The most important consideration throughout this stage is to go at the pace that makes sense to those involved. It is important the organisation works hard to be actively listening to both parties and to help with initial problem-solving. Initially the support or facilitation from the Support Organisation is likely to be more intensive, supporting the relationship to develop and to help mediate or iron out any initial concerns or misunderstandings.

2. Review design and agree on the final Agreement

Although the design was developed and agreed upon at the development stage it is important that both people are supported to now use the agreement as a practical living guide to set the arrangement up in the best way possible right from the start. The Agreement will evolve as both parties develop a deeper understanding of what needs to be included to ensure they both get what works for them in everyday life. It is crucial that the things that were identified as important to both people are visible and accessible in the home.

3. Develop confidence

At this stage, people report finding the Support Organisation invaluable in; helping design some of the main activities of their life together, helping them to learn and develop routines that make sense for them and their new life, supporting them to explore local community resources together and to assist the supporter to understand the best way to support the individual.

During the development of this stage, it is important that each parties confidence and abilities are developed and facilitated, encouraging them to make arrangements, offering reassurance and enabling a conversation around solutions before stepping in with the answer. Sometimes for the Support Organisation, this is simply being at the end of the phone when either party 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 - negotiating responses

Supporting Shared Living partnerships requires everyone to understand the responses Shared Living supporters may demonstrate when sharing their lives with people and how best to support them.

Shared Living is about relationships, and the way we engage and interact with each other; our friends, our partners, our children and our colleagues, is learnt through a range of ways, including our experiences.

When we are faced with situations where we do not feel powerful, we may naturally try to control it. When we are faced with people who we care about, engaging in things that may be risky, we may naturally try to prevent harm.

Sometimes, we, and Shared Living supporters fall into a trap of engaging with people in ways that are more about ‘this is how we do things in our family’ than ‘this is the best way to support this person or situation’.

The other trap we can fall into is ‘this is how we do things as an employee of a service’ instead of ‘this is the best way to support this person and situation’.

It is important that the Shared Living Supporter has insight and awareness into these things, and to guard against falling into either of these traps.

2.6 Monitor and Learn

As people's lives grow and change, support to maintain, build and further develop the arrangement is essential to ensure its success into the future. Many people value the support of the organisation long term, and it is important that the relationship between all parties is maintained to ensure problems or difficulties are spotted early and that genuine trust is developed to be a reliable source of support through the partnership.

Key areas of Consideration

- 1. Learning as we grow**
- 2. Supporting decision-making**
- 3. Negotiation**
- 4. Safeguarding**

1. Learning as we grow

Once the Shared Living arrangement begins, the person being supported and/or their family together with the Supporting Organisation has a responsibility to monitor and support the arrangement and ensure both parties are getting out of it what they hoped.

Initially it is recommended that regular visits be made when both parties are home. This may need to occur for the first few weeks depending on the nature of the relationship (e.g. whether the individual and Shared Living support persons shared a previous relationship or were known to one another). Visits may also occur outside of the home and with individuals.

All Shared Living support arrangements should be subjected to a probationary or trial period to determine the suitability for all parties.

This length of probation can vary between three to six months depending on whether a previous existing relationship existed between the individual and their Shared Living Support Persons.

A formal gathering may need to be arranged by the end of the first month which is a process of determining what is working well, and isn't, and make any changes to the existing Agreement.

‘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 tell us that understanding their lives and how organisations can best 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 require support and assistance with understanding and making decisions for themselves. This may be because they haven't had many opportunities to make their own decisions or that they need some support to understand the information relating to the decision. Support to assist people to be included in decision-making is really important. To do this well the essential element is understanding how the person communicates and what really helps in how others communicate with the person. There are tools to help this at the end of this section.

Good practice in supporting decision-making tells us that not only is it important to understand the person's communication, it is also important to understand how best to present and explore this information relating to the decision. There are some key things to consider when supporting someone to explore a decision which include;

- Do you understand the best way to present this information to me to give me the best chance of understanding it?
- Do you understand the best way to support my communication?
- Are you the right person to offer me assistance with this decision?
- Is the information really relevant to the decision?
- Are you giving me the information at the right time in the right way?

3. Negotiation

As relationships develop and deepen, it is common to experience ups and downs. Support to problem-solve and negotiate is really important. Negotiating outcomes that work for both parties is an essential element of the support offered by the organisation.

4. Safeguarding

There is a danger that as life develops and unfolds for the person and their supporter, that life becomes static and remains the same. Although stability is important, having new and interesting opportunities is as important, having the opportunities as all other citizens, to explore what's possible in developing a lifestyle that's right for the person. Often fear of failure is what stops people from trying or assisting people to try new things. Fear that it may not work or that it presents new potential risks, can put people off the idea of trying. Support to explore new things that may provide new opportunities for the person can be valuable.

Importantly we also know that people who try new things less often, and who stick with the same routines can be more vulnerable. Community Living British Columbia³ worked with a range of people, families and workers to better understand how to help people be safe and well. They defined the following list as things to think about as they 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 clubs or groups.
- Not taking part in community activities.
- Not knowing your rights or how to recognise if your rights are violated or you have been take advantage of.
- Not participating in roles you want as a citizen.
- Only spending time with other people with disabilities or with people who are paid to support you.
- Discrimination at work or school.
- Disrespect and negative attitudes from other people.
- Difficulty communicating what you need.
- Behaving in a way that some people can find challenging.
- Not being listened to.
- Not being taken seriously.

The list helps to highlight areas that may be of interest to the individual to boost their connections and experiences which in turn reduces their vulnerability.

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

Understanding the Person's communication⁴

At this time	When the person does or says this	We think it means	You should do
<i>Example</i> 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
<i>Example</i> 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

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?
<i>Example</i> Food shopping – foods to buy	Lucy has favourite foods - these must be on the shopping list Lucy to be involved in the food shop Support Lucy to look at and explore new foods whilst shopping	Shared Living Supporter and Lucy together	Keep learning about ways to involve Lucy

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

2.7 Review and Reflect

It is the responsibility of the Support Organisation to review the arrangement regularly in partnership with the person and the supporter. Assisting people to explore what is working, what needs to change and any new opportunities to explore.

Key areas of Consideration

- 1. Developing the partnership**
- 2. Building the person's life alongside the arrangement**
- 3. Changing the arrangement / Ending the arrangement**

1. Developing the partnership

Although the review stage would appear to be the end of the process, it is actually one of the most exciting stages and can create new and revived direction. Many people value the review as an opportunity to reflect on how things have gone, what worked well and what didn't. Whilst also valuing the opportunity to explore new outcomes and new ideas 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.

It is advisable that the initial Agreement be formally reviewed after a trial period of three to six months of Shared Living so that any amendments required 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 essential that people explore how to continually build their life outside of the arrangement, so that people have rich lives not solely dependant upon 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 the arrangement / Ending the arrangement

There are many reasons why a Shared Living Arrangement may change and/or end. This can be due to the person and/or the Shared Living supporter no longer wishing to live in a Shared Living arrangement, people's circumstances changing, relationship breakdown between people, design of the arrangement not being sustainable, and so on.

It is critical that consideration and planning for these 'what ifs' are given the time and investment throughout the design, development, and monitoring of the arrangement.

