

Abbie's Story

“It's just such a lovely thing to do” – how being a shared lives carer can be something the whole family can enjoy

For Abbie and Sam Clayton, who live in Wallingford in south Oxfordshire, being a shared lives carer is part of their DNA.

Sam grew up sharing his family home with people with additional needs through the shared lives scheme. The innovative programme, run by Oxfordshire County Council, carefully matches adults with long term conditions with a caring household who can support them to live independently, often giving their full time carers a chance to take a break.

And having seen what a positive experience the programme brought to his life, Sam and his wife Abbie wanted the same for their children.

Abbie said: “It's great to have more people in the family. Rather than detracting from the children, it makes them appreciate diversity. It's nice to see them growing up in an environment where they can provide that caring role as well. It really gives something back.”

Abbie and Sam have been shared lives carers for 17 years, helping to support eight people during that time. The paid position comes with regular ongoing support and training, enabling them to feel confident that they're providing an environment for their guests to flourish.

Abbie continues: “The most rewarding thing is seeing people grow and develop into the people they become, pushing them that extra mile to really be independent and experience life as part of the family.”

“We get as much training as we need, especially around recognising each person as an individual. We have a really open communication with the shared lives team when we need it and other carers as well, so support is always available.”

Shared Lives carers come from all walks of life, from different backgrounds and live in all kinds of homes. **If you are a naturally caring person and think you could support an adult with additional needs, you can find out more about the programme at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sharedlives**



Abbie and Sam Clayton and their two children. Shared Lives Carers in Oxfordshire.

For more information about this release contact Molly Davies at Oxfordshire County Council molly.davies@oxfordshire.gov.uk or contact the Shared Lives Team sharedlives@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Notes to editors

- Around the UK, over 9,000 Shared Lives carers open their homes and hearts to someone who needs support after hospital treatment, for mental ill health, dementia, learning disability, older age or for young people leaving care.
- In Oxfordshire, there are around 100 shared lives households offering short stays, support for a few hours a day, or somewhere to live longer term.
- Shared Lives carers receive a fee based on the level of support they offer, rent and bills, in return for including someone in their home and community life.
- 150 Shared Lives services – including the programme run through Oxfordshire County Council - carefully match people together based on interests in common, lifestyle and personalities. People can visit or live with a Shared Lives carers for a few weeks, or many years.
- Shared Lives care is consistently rated the best quality and safest form of care across the UK – 96% rated good or outstanding by the Care Quality Commission.

