

Who is being nominated?

Suzanne Mahony

Organisation

Aberdeenshire Shared Lives Scheme

Award Details

Category

Category 3: An Enlightened Approach 2019

Q1: Overview

Shared Lives care offers people with an alternative and highly flexible form of accommodation and /or care and support inside and outside the Shared Lives carer's home. Shared Lives arrangements are set up and supported by Shared Lives Schemes and the care and accommodation people receive is provided by ordinary individuals, couples or families in the local community. This alternative initiative and proven successful experience enables individuals to chose a Shared Lives opportunity where they are able to share activities and life experiences with people who can support their needs.

Shared Lives enables a wide range of vulnerable people with a disability to live independent lives, have their health and well-being promoted and can , for some people, reduce the need for admission to hospital, or residential care. It is with this specific promoting of a persons health needs that I feel this application is suitable. The opportunities that Shared Lives has to offer are greatly valued by both people using the service and by family carers and commissioners. Our scheme provides long term accommodation, shared care accommodation, short breaks and daytime support.

Q2: What did you do?

There is evidence that people who take part in a bowel screening programme can have an early diagnoses or reduction in bowel cancer developing. Many people may not take up the opportunity for bowel screening through fear or can be put off by the actual test of handling stools. Shared Lives carers have played a pivotal role in improving a vulnerable persons health needs in an area which can often be lost or forgotten about when a person is vulnerable or disabled.

Shared Lives carers and workers within the Council scheme have attended a training called Talking Mats to enable communication and conversation both verbally and non verbally, at a level that may suit an individuals specific needs . <https://www.talkingmats.com> . Talking Mats was developed from a research project conducted by University of Stirling and is used within our organisation and used alongside other methods of communication such as PECS (Picture exchange Communication System).

This specific tool has enabled our Scheme to provide an even more basic tool alongside the NHS bowel screening guidance to enable support to be given to a task that requires sensitivity , respect and dignity whilst ensuring this process is carried out successfully and with the participants understanding and consent. This training has been offered to our Shared Lives Carers and Shared Lives Scheme workers as a two day face to face training opportunity and there is also an e-learning format on communication on our Council website and extended face to face course on Makaton at various levels.

With a greater understanding of communicating at different levels it has enabled information sharing , enabled comments to be shared and importantly questions to be asked. With these various formats of communication it has enabled us to deal with felt various concerns and what might have been seen as a problem or embarrassing has enabled us to build healthy relationships by choosing different communication formats for individuals and enabling people to participate in bowel screening.

Q3: What did you achieve?

With commitment , understanding and knowledge of the issues this scheme has devised a support system to our Shared Lives carers, our own Shared Lives team , people who use this scheme and their families to encourage a potential life saving procedure that may have been overlooked or thought not necessary whilst helping to address inequalities. Being able to help and be part of giving a clear health message to everyone, including people with a disability can keep people well and lower the risk of an illness.

As an extended piece of work the scheme has made some PECS cards so help and guidance can be provided to a person for example to attend the Doctor and hospital. This has extended to other health needs such as physiotherapy appointments, an Ophthalmologist appointment and Dentistry needs.

We believe with this support and advocacy, issues that are important particularly to those most vulnerable in society, have had their views and wishes genuinely considered when decisions and choices are being made about their lives.

With this support programme now clearly in place, people over 50 years old, using this scheme ,have a real life opportunity to make important changing decisions for themselves . People in this age category, using this scheme, have now taken up the opportunity to be part of the bowel screening programme. We have also observed that a person who had a negative thought process of hospitals and Doctors is now more able to attend appointments with the understanding that they are there to help to you.

With this extended knowledge of interactive communication Shared Lives in Aberdeenshire has been able to use these various methods to find out more about a person such as , their likes and dislikes, their concerns and how we can help with life skills they may like to be involved in.

Q4: Why should you receive an award?

Awards are a fantastic way to recognise the hard work of the people and organisations involved. Entering enables me to let the people involved know that their work is truly valued as a partnership. For the people involved who required this support that they realise, even though not named, that their experience with Shared Lives has bought change for them and others who may also have had the same anxieties.

This award may publicly acknowledge the work that has been carried out whilst highlighting an area of health that may not normally be spoken about .