"He is part of our family, we are part of his family - Shared Lives is a unique service which we are proud to be part of."

This is the view of two Shared Lives carers in Cambridgeshire who are supporting a call for more people to take up the opportunity to make a real impact on someone’s life by joining the scheme.

Cambridgeshire County Council is today launching a campaign to increase the number of Shared Lives carers in Fenland and Huntingdon who can open up their home to those with a learning disability or an older person needing care and support.

The scheme provides an opportunity for someone to be part of the family and community of a Shared Lives carer who in turn offers friendship, support and care. Whether it is for a few hours a week, a short respite stay or a long-term live-in arrangement Shared Lives carers can still work while supporting an adult.

It is a paid caring role with a fixed tax free allowance of £10,000 per year plus an extra £250 for each person supported each week or part of a week.

Cllr Anna Bailey, Cambridgeshire County Council’s Adults Committee chairwoman, said: “We really want to recognise all the amazing Shared Lives carers that we have and the huge difference they make to people’s lives every day. Our carers come from all walks of life and do not need qualifications or experience, they just have to be over 18 with the right attitude and a willingness to truly share their lives with another person.

“We really need to increase the amount of Shared Lives carers we have in Huntingdon and Fenland but also across Cambridgeshire to cope with the ever increasing demand, so if you have a spare room and would like to change someone’s life by becoming a Shared Lives carer, please get in touch.”

Chris and Pam Dawe, who live near Welney, found being Shared Lives Carers was a natural progression having previously worked as foster carers.

“The scheme has been amazing for the young man that we care for,” they said. “With our support and the team behind us, he has been able to live a full and meaningful life. With our support and guidance he is now working part time and is a valuable part of the work team, well liked and respected by his colleagues.”
They added: “He is part of our family, we are part of his family. Shared Lives is a unique service which we are proud to be part of.”

Ruby and Steve Dunn, who live in March, became Shared Lives carers after retiring from a 30-year career in the pub trade. They said their new role has enriched their lives with “education, friendships and, purpose”.

“It’s a wonderful feeling knowing you can give this support to all involved, the family and the person needing the respite,” said Ruby. “We have had some amazing times, and made some lovely memories for ourselves and the person we are caring for. As for their family or carer they can feel safe in the knowledge that their loved ones are being well cared for while they have a well-deserved break.”

For more information about Shared Lives, call 01354 750084, email [email protected] or visit www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/shared-lives-carers