

Meeting of:	CABINET
Date of Meeting:	3 FEBRUARY 2026
Report Title:	SHARED LIVES SCHEME
Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member	CABINET MEMBER FOR SOCIAL SERVICES, HEALTH AND WELLBEING CORPORATE DIRECTOR – SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING
Responsible Officer:	JOE BOYLE COMMISSIONING AND SERVICE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the policy framework and procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	<p>This report seeks Cabinet approval to commence consultation regarding proposed changes to the Shared Lives (Adult Placement) Scheme in Bridgend. The service is currently run by the Vale of Glamorgan Council through a Partnership Agreement. There are currently 16 individuals in long-term placements, and 13 Shared Lives households (either single or couple carers).</p> <p>In March 2025, Cabinet approved continuation of this partnership for a term of 5 years subject to annual review. The proposal is for all individuals and self-employed carers within the scheme to move into a banded payment system in order to make this a fairer system for all involved.</p> <p>Consultation will be undertaken to ensure the views of those affected can be considered. The consultation proposed will be run in conjunction with the Vale of Glamorgan Council as our operational partner.</p> <p>The Vale of Glamorgan Council is also seeking similar consultation.</p>

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval to commence consultation regarding the proposed changes to the Shared Lives Scheme.

2. Background

2.1 In March 2025, Cabinet approved the continuation of the Partnership Agreement with Vale of Glamorgan (VOG) Shared Lives (Adult Placement) Scheme, where there are currently 16 individuals in long-term placements, and 13 Shared Lives households (either single or couple carers).

2.2 All individuals using the scheme have been assessed by Adult Services and are then referred to Shared Lives as part of their care and support plan to meet eligible unmet needs and their contributions are determined by a financial assessment.

2.3 The proposal within the Partnership is for all individuals and self-employed carers supported by the scheme to move into a banding system in order to make this fairer for all involved. Should the move to banding be approved by Cabinet, two key factors will change from current practice in Bridgend:

- A) Banded allowance rates paid to self-employed Shared Lives carers;
- B) Alignment of personal contributions towards their accommodation made by individuals supported within the scheme.

Current allowance rates to Shared Lives carers

2.4 Currently, Bridgend carers receive a fixed standard rate of £616.77 per week irrespective of the level of needs or complexity of the individual(s) they support. This can be viewed as inequitable as it does not recognise the differing levels of complexity of those cared for, and does not recognise the different levels of care provided by carers. As self-employed carers, this payment is made as an allowance where the carers themselves are responsible for managing their tax position. Some carers with lower caring responsibilities may have other paid work, whereas some carers rely solely on the Shared Lives Scheme for their income.

2.5 The intention of the proposed banding system is to create a more equitable approach across the partnership between Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) and the Vale of Glamorgan Council (VOG) through all individuals being placed in one of three bandings:

Band 3 – high levels of care/support	Paid £636.88 per week
Band 2 – mid-level care/support	Paid £609.60 per week
Band 1 – low levels of care/support	Paid £481.62 per week

These rates are for the 2025-26 financial year and will be subject to an annual uplift for 2026/27, which is yet to be confirmed.

2.6 This follows banding systems used in other Shared Lives partnerships across Wales and the UK. Notably, the proposed bandings for the Bridgend Scheme will utilise competitive allowance rates in comparison to neighboring schemes, where the proposed banding rates (allowances paid to carers) in the VOG/BCBC Partnership are higher, for example, than those paid by the South East Wales partnership (which is the largest equivalent scheme in Wales).

2.7 As part of the consultation, officers will undertake further conversations to fully understand the impact of the proposed banding system and support the identification of the options for implementation, subject to Cabinet approval. This is especially important given the intention for the Shared Lives scheme to grow and diversify. The identification of a 'No detriment' approach will be an option consulted upon, which is intended to mitigate the potential risks and financial impact, primarily from the weekly income reduction for carers supporting Band 1 placements.

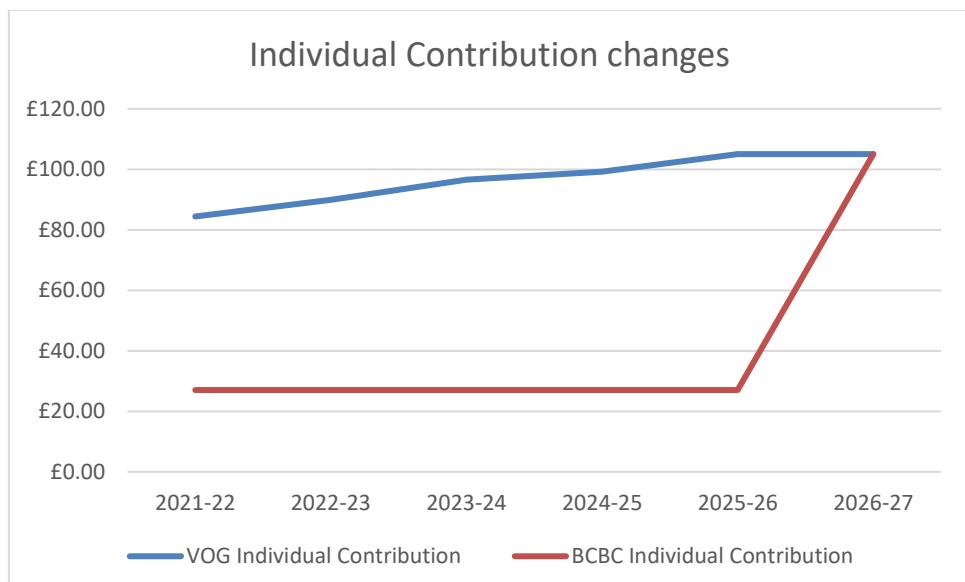
Personal contributions towards accommodation made by individuals receiving care and support within the scheme

2.8 While the Council funds the social care element of the service, individuals within the scheme pay towards their accommodation costs. This is made up of:

- rent (via Housing Benefit / Universal Credit) – which is set by local housing allowance rates
- personal contributions towards meals, heating and utilities – which form part of the allowance provided to the carers

2.9 Personal contributions are intended to supplement the rent as a payment towards the normal costs of living. The total of rent and personal contributions paid by individuals in Bridgend has been static at £105 per week since 2015.

2.10 The following graph shows personal contributions (excluding rent) in Bridgend and the Vale. As can be seen, BCBC individuals currently pay £27.05 per week, which has never been increased in line with inflation. This is in contrast to the VOG where annual increases in individual contributions have taken place, in line with annual inflationary uplifts, creating inequality within the Scheme. The position in Bridgend is a legacy rate implemented prior to the creation of the partnership in 2019. Because the Bridgend contribution has been static at this rate since at least 2015, and VOG individuals had already been subject to annual inflationary uplifts, this has created the difference between the starting rates shown in the graph below.



2.11 The move to banding is intended to bring about a unified and consistent approach to allowance payments for carers under the Shared Lives Scheme, which includes

an equitable approach to individual contributions. The table below provides a breakdown of the contributions:

Band	Total Allowance	Total Individual Contribution (including rent which rates are remaining the same as currently)	BCBC Contribution
1	£481.62	£197.08	£284.54
2	£609.60	£197.08	£412.52
3	£636.88	£197.08	£441.80

3. Current situation/ proposal

- 3.1 The consultation seeks to gain views and opinions around the proposal to implement the banding system and the impacts that this will have on the individuals, the carers and the service.
- 3.2 Of the three proposed bands, carers providing care and support to individuals in Band 3 will be positively impacted by this process, both financially and through the increased paid respite leave that is proposed, from 2 weeks (current allocation in Bridgend) to 4 weeks (in line with what VOG carers currently receive).
- 3.3 Although carers supporting individuals in Band 2 would currently receive £7.17 a week less (equates to an annual total of £372.84 loss per individual), the addition of another 2 weeks of paid leave per year (equating to £1219.20) results in them being positively impacted by a total of £846.36 for the year.
- 3.4 The option of a “no detriment approach” as outlined at paragraph 2.7, is focused on carers for individuals in Band 1, for whom there would be a proposed loss of £135.15 per week with allowances reducing from £616.77 (current BCBC fixed rate) to £481.62 (Band 1 rate) per week. The addition of 2 weeks paid leave would not be sufficient to offset the financial loss for these carers.
- 3.5 BCBC officers have discussed potential risks/impacts of implementing the banding system with the Shared Lives Team. This meeting indicated the potential likely responses and outcome of the proposed implementation of the bandings to support staff in shaping and identifying the requirements of the consultation.
- 3.6 As part of the consultation process, officers will welcome suggestions from carers to help identify how this transition to bandings can be most effectively implemented, should this be approved by Cabinet following consultation.
- 3.7 Officers have identified initial options, but in order for this to be a fair and effective consultation process, views from carers and Individuals will be sought to inform the full options. Options considered may include allowing for the temporary protection of the existing rates of allowances to ensure there is no loss of carer capacity. Where this is identified, the details around any temporary protections will be confirmed and presented as part of the final report to Cabinet.
- 3.8 As shown from the graph in section 2.10, individual contributions have not been increased annually in BCBC since 2015. The current personal contribution of £27.05 per week is not a realistic reflection of the true cost of living. This does not

help individuals to prepare for independence if/as and when they are ready to move on to more independent living arrangements.

- 3.9 By implementing the proposed approach and increasing the individual contribution in line with the VOG, this creates an equitable approach across the partnership, with realistic contributions towards weekly meals and utility costs. This will also prevent the likelihood of large build-ups of individual finances which can occur in their personal accounts, and which can sometimes jeopardise entitlement to Housing Benefit/Universal Credit. This aspect will be assisted by BCBC's Financial Safeguarding Team, where appointee/deputyship functions can also be provided as necessary.
- 3.10 Under the Charging and Financial Assessment Code of Practice (Part 4 & 5) issued under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, where an authority amends existing policies, they are required to consult those affected locally. Whilst it is anticipated that there will be no fundamental amendments required to BCBC's Non Residential Charging Policy, assurance must be given that all individuals involved in the scheme, both carers and supported individuals, have had a full opportunity to consider their options and make a fully informed decision. Should any changes to the Policy be identified during the consultation period, these will be reported as part of the final Cabinet report to be presented later in the year.
- 3.11 VOG are pursuing a full consultation to be coordinated as a partnership, for the same reasons of equity and to ensure all voices are heard. While the main impacts identified in Bridgend are for long-term placements, the Shared Lives service is also a high-quality option for short-term/respite placements, and the consultation will help to clarify the payment arrangements and expansion opportunities for short-breaks and respite.
- 3.12 The consultation will be offered online as well as targeted in-person conversations with individuals and carers currently involved with the scheme. Given the currently low numbers of individuals and carers involved in the scheme for BCBC (there are 16 people in long-term placements, and 13 Shared Lives households), commitment is given that 100% of individuals and carers will be directly consulted, to ensure they understand the proposals, their options, and be given the opportunity to provide feedback.
- 3.13 As the commissioned provider of Specialist Advocacy for Learning Disabilities, People First Bridgend have also agreed to offer independent advocacy support for any individuals that may need this during these consultation discussions.
- 3.14 The responses and discussions that take place throughout the consultation will seek to ensure that all those involved with the scheme understand the options being presented, and have the opportunity to provide feedback and alternative suggestions to be considered. There will also be an opportunity to use the consultation process to raise awareness of the Shared Lives Scheme more widely, and be used to help in potential future carer recruitment.
- 3.15 The exact nature and timing of the consultation will be agreed between the partners and with key stakeholders, including BCBC Communications Teams. It is proposed that this consultation will run for 12 weeks with the findings presented back to Cabinet.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1

Involvement	In the formation of this report, relevant officers from the Directorate have been involved along with partners from the VOG. Through the consultation, individuals and carers involved with the scheme will have the opportunity to feed into the formulation of the future structure as set out by the proposal.
Long term	This report and proposal sets out to bring a consistent set of terms and conditions to the Shared Lives Scheme for carers and individuals supported which will enable a more consistent growth of the service to allow for more carers to support more individuals through the service.
Prevention	The aim of this proposal will be to prevent and remove inconsistent terms and conditions for individuals and carers involved with the scheme and also allow for individuals support to experience a more fair, equitable and realistic set of expectations towards their contributions to their living arrangements, which will set them up for success as and when they move on from the scheme.
Integration	This proposal will be integrated across the shared lives service ensuring equality of approach for all involved across the partnership.
Collaboration	Partnership working has taken place with our shared lives partners in the VOG to create this proposal.

6. Climate Change and Nature Implications

6.1 There are no climate change and nature implications as a result of this report or the proposals within it.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 The use of the Shared Lives Scheme partnership supports the Council to fulfil its corporate safeguarding requirements by allowing for greater care to be provided to adults with additional needs. The proposal enables the council to extend these duties through the provision of a fairer, more equitable and realistic service.

7.2 There are no Corporate Parenting implications from this report or its associated proposals.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 While cost saving is not the driver for the introduction of these bandings, the implementation of this system should bring about savings to the Directorate. This is mainly due to the rebalancing of individual contributions, which consequently reduces the placement costs to BCBC.
- 8.2 Any financial implications/savings linked to the final recommended proposal will be set out in the next report to Cabinet, following the consultation (if approved).

9. Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 9.1 Approve the commencement of consultation for a period of 12 weeks regarding the proposed changes outlined in the report, noting that the process will be coordinated with the Vale of Glamorgan Council and other stakeholders from Spring 2026;
- 9.2 Note that a further report will be presented to Cabinet following the consultation.

Background documents

None