Appendix 4 – Anonymised Consultation Feedback.

Shared Lives Consultation – Combined, Anonymised Summary for Individuals, Family and Public

Overview

One publicly accessible online questionnaire was made available as a form of open consultation, as well as an Easy Read format of the key questions made available for all Individuals and Carers within the Shared Lives scheme.
Three in-person consultation discussions were held with people supported through Shared Lives, carers, family members, advocacy representatives and council officers regarding proposed changes to charges for accommodation, food and household costs from 2027.
Across all meetings, participants generally understood the reasons for the proposed changes, particularly rising living costs and the aim of creating greater consistency with charging arrangements. However, concerns were raised about affordability, the size of the increase, and the potential impact on people's quality of life and opportunities.

Key Themes

1. General Support for Fair and Consistent Charging

A strong theme across the consultations was that people felt charges should be fair and applied consistently across everyone using Shared Lives.
Participants generally agreed that:

- Rising food and household costs make some increase understandable.
- People in similar circumstances should contribute on a similar basis.
- Consistency between local authority areas is desirable.

Several individuals explicitly stated that "everyone should pay the same" and that equal treatment was fair.

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2. Concerns About Affordability

Despite broad agreement with the principle of fairness, participants expressed concerns about the financial impact of increased charges.
Key issues included:

- Individuals having less disposable income.
- Reduced ability to pay for social activities and community participation.
- Concerns that people may need to reduce spending on outings, meals out, cinema trips and hobbies.
- Worries that some individuals have limited savings and may struggle to absorb significant increases.

Participants across the various meetings stressed the importance of maintaining current lifestyles and opportunities for inclusion while implementing any new charging arrangements.

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3. Importance of Quality of Life

A recurring message was that people supported through Shared Lives value active and fulfilling lives.
Examples discussed included:

- Attending college.
- Taking holidays and respite breaks.
- Socialising with friends and partners.
- Community activities.
- Employment.
- Recreational outings.

Participants feared that substantial increases in contributions could reduce opportunities for these activities if disposable income decreases. Maintaining wellbeing and social participation was viewed as equally important as ensuring fairness in charging arrangements.

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4. Particular Concerns for People in Employment or Retired

One consultation response highlighted concerns regarding the impact on an individual who works and contributes from earned income rather than relying solely on benefits.
Family members questioned whether a large increase could disproportionately affect working individuals and potentially undermine efforts to remain in employment. Discussion focused on ensuring that charging arrangements do not unintentionally disadvantage people who work.
One consultation discussion highlighted the circumstances of an older supported individual living in a long-established Shared Lives arrangement. The individual valued stability, consistency and remaining in their home environment. However, expressed concerns about how proposed charges would apply to someone with a pension rather than Universal Credit, and the Carer expresses a strong preference for maintaining consistent support arrangements and minimising disruption.

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5. Need for Individual Financial Assessments

There was recognition that impacts will differ between individuals.
Participants welcomed clarification that:

- Benefits and financial circumstances would be reviewed.
- Financial assessments would be undertaken where appropriate.
- Individual circumstances would be considered before implementation.

There was reassurance that assessments would help determine the practical effect of the proposed changes on each person's finances.

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6. Understanding and Managing Money

Some discussions highlighted that:

- Many people have support from carers, relatives, appointees or deputyships to manage finances.
- Some individuals would find large financial changes difficult to understand independently.
- Family members and carers often provide significant support with budgeting and financial decisions.

Participants emphasised the importance of clear communication and appropriate support throughout the implementation process.

7. Positive Feedback About Shared Lives

Participants consistently expressed satisfaction with Shared Lives arrangements. Comments reflected that people:

- Feel happy and settled where they live.
- Value family-based support.
- Enjoy positive relationships with carers.
- Appreciate convenient locations close to family, work and local amenities.
- Experience active and fulfilling lifestyles within Shared Lives.

No concerns were raised about the quality of support being received through the Shared Lives scheme itself.

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Public Online Consultation – Anonymised Summary

Three written consultation responses were received through the online consultation questionnaire. Two responses were submitted by relatives of supported individuals and one response was submitted by a member of the public identifying themselves as a council tax payer.

It should be noted that the council tax payer response represents approximately 1 respondent out of a 2026–27 Bridgend County Borough Council tax base of 55,793.37 Band D equivalent properties, equating to approximately 0.0018% of the tax-paying population.

Additional Themes from Online Consultation Responses

1. Support for Fair and Consistent Charging

The two responses from relatives of supported individuals broadly agreed with the principle of fairness and consistency. Respondents accepted the rationale for implementing a banding approach but emphasised that implementation should not adversely affect supported individuals or carers.

2. Preference for Phased Implementation

Both family-member responses suggested that a staggered or phased introduction would be fairer, particularly for self-funding individuals. Respondents expressed concern about the impact of sudden increases and highlighted the need to minimise financial shocks.

3. Impact on Self-Funding Individuals

A theme emerging from the family responses was concern that self-funding individuals could experience a different impact from those whose increased costs may be met through benefits or other state-funded support.

4. Public Response Focused on Value for Money

The council tax payer response strongly disagreed with the proposals and questioned the use of public funds to support the scheme. The response argued that council resources should be prioritised elsewhere and expressed opposition to perceived subsidy arrangements. As this view was expressed by a single respondent, it should be considered alongside the wider consultation evidence.

5. Communication and Information

One respondent felt insufficient information had been provided regarding the operation of the proposed banding system and suggested that consultees required greater detail to make informed comments.

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6. Welsh Language

No specific impacts on opportunities to use Welsh were identified by respondents. One respondent expressed opposition to translation and Welsh language considerations, while the remaining respondents did not identify any concerns or impacts.

Key Issues for Consideration

The consultation feedback suggests the following issues may require consideration before implementation:

1. Balancing fairness and consistency with affordability.
2. Protecting individuals' ability to participate in social, leisure and community activities.
3. Considering the impact on people with limited savings.
4. Understanding implications for people who are in employment.
5. Ensuring robust financial assessments and benefit reviews.
6. Providing accessible information and support for individuals and families.
7. Phasing or mitigating significant increases where appropriate to reduce financial shock.

Overall Conclusion

The consultation feedback indicates broad acceptance of the principle that Shared Lives charges should reflect increased living costs and be applied consistently across individuals. However, participants consistently emphasised that any changes should be implemented in a way that protects people's quality of life, independence, social participation and financial wellbeing. The strongest concerns related not to the principle of change itself, but to the affordability and practical impact of significant increases on individuals' day-to-day lives.

The public online consultation responses broadly supported the principles of fairness and consistency, particularly among relatives of supported individuals, while emphasising the importance of phased implementation and consideration of individual financial circumstances. One response from a council tax payer opposed the proposals in principle; however, this represents a very small proportion of the overall tax-paying population of Bridgend County Borough.

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Anonymised Summary of Shared Lives Consultation Feedback (Carers, in-person @ Civic 15 April 2026)

Purpose of the Consultation

The consultation explored proposals to:

- Introduce a **three-band payment structure** for Shared Lives carers based on assessed support needs.
- Harmonise **terms and conditions** across Bridgend and Vale of Glamorgan Shared Lives schemes.
- Increase Bridgend carers' **paid respite/annual leave entitlement** from 2 weeks to 4 weeks.
- Increase individuals' **board and lodging contributions** to better reflect actual living costs and align with arrangements in the Vale.
- Implement changes from **January 2027**, subject to consultation, scrutiny and Cabinet approval.

Key Themes from Feedback

1. General Support for a Fairer Banding System

Most carers understood and broadly supported the principle that:

- People with higher support needs should attract higher payments.
- A banding system is fairer than a flat-rate payment model.
- Consistent arrangements across Bridgend and the Vale would create a more unified regional service.
- Improved payment structures may help recruit and retain carers.

Several carers commented that reward should reflect complexity, time commitment and responsibility rather than personal care alone.

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2. Significant Concern About Financial Losses for Some Carers

The strongest concern raised was the financial impact on carers expected to move into **Band 1**.

Key issues included:

- Potential reductions in income despite increased annual leave.
- Existing financial commitments such as mortgages and larger properties needed to support placements.
- Concerns that long-term carers may reconsider continuing in the scheme if income falls significantly.
- Requests for clarity on future earnings before making decisions about remaining carers.

Several carers stated they support the principle of banding but were worried about the practical impact on their household finances.

Suggested Mitigations

Carers suggested:

- Transitional protection arrangements.

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- Phased implementation of reductions.
- Protecting existing placements.
- Alternative options for carers impacted by Band 1 placements.

These suggestions were repeatedly raised throughout consultation meetings.

3. Strong Support for Increased Annual Leave

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive regarding the proposal to increase paid leave from:

- **2 weeks to 4 weeks per year**.

Carers felt:

- Two weeks was insufficient given the 24/7 nature of the role.
- Additional leave better acknowledges caring responsibilities.
- The change is a significant improvement in carers' terms and conditions.

Many carers viewed this as one of the major benefits within the proposals.

4. Recognition of the Hidden Demands of Shared Lives Caring

Several carers highlighted that support needs are not always reflected in visible disability or personal care tasks.
Examples raised included:

- Emotional support.
- Continuous supervision and responsibility.
- Restrictions on carers' social life and employment opportunities.
- Being effectively "on call" 24 hours a day.
- Managing behavioural, social and safety risks.

Carers requested that assessments fully recognise these less visible aspects when determining bands.

5. Concerns About Increased Charges for People Being Supported

A major concern related to proposals for increased board and lodging contributions.
Issues raised included:

- Reduced disposable income.
- Less ability to save for holidays, hobbies and personal goals.
- Impact on individuals who work and do not receive full benefit support.
- Anxiety that people may feel financially disadvantaged despite maintaining the same lifestyle.

Some carers supported the increase in principle but stressed the need for:

- Careful communication.
- Individual financial assessments.
- Phased implementation where appropriate.
- Consideration of exceptional circumstances.

6. Importance of Individual Circumstances

Feedback repeatedly highlighted that:

- Not all support needs are obvious.
- Banding should account for hidden disabilities and vulnerability.
- Financial circumstances vary significantly.
- Some people may require exceptional arrangements.

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Particular concerns were raised regarding individuals who:

- Work full time.
- Have savings.
- Have complex social or emotional vulnerabilities despite appearing relatively independent.

Carers requested flexibility and individual consideration where standard arrangements may not fit well.

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7. Views on Caring Motivation

Many long-serving carers stressed that:

- They did not become carers for financial reasons.
- People they support are viewed as family members.
- Stability and quality of life remain the primary motivation.

However, carers also emphasised that:

- Financial sustainability remains important.
- Caring is increasingly regulated and demanding.
- Appropriate recognition and remuneration help ensure viability of the role.

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8. Day Opportunities and Independence

Several discussions focused on helping individuals:

- Develop independence.
- Access employment and volunteering.
- Use public transport.
- Participate in community activities.
- Access meaningful daytime opportunities.

Concerns were raised about limitations in current local provision and the need for more structured activities, particularly for younger adults.

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9. Support for Advocacy and Engagement

There was positive feedback regarding:

- Easy-read consultation materials.
- Involvement of advocacy organisations.
- Planned group consultation sessions.
- Ensuring people supported by Shared Lives have opportunities to express their views.

Carers generally welcomed further engagement opportunities.

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10. Other Issues Raised

Additional matters raised included:

- Queries regarding tax implications of updated payments.
- Transport and mileage costs.
- Use of loyalty/reward cards when shopping for individuals.
- Future respite capacity.
- Recruitment and retention of carers.
- Consistency of social work support.
- Concerns about long-term planning and future transitions for individuals supported through Shared Lives.

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Overall Consultation Messages

Areas of Broad Support

- ✅ Fairer payment arrangements based on need.
- ✅ Harmonisation across Bridgend and Vale of Glamorgan.
- ✅ Four weeks paid leave.
- ✅ Recognition of higher-complexity placements.
- ✅ Greater consistency and transparency.

Areas of Concern

⚠ Potential income reductions for some Band 1 carers.
⚠ Increased financial contributions for supported individuals.
⚠ Need for transitional protection and phased implementation.
⚠ Ensuring hidden support needs are reflected in assessments.
⚠ Impact on carers' long-term sustainability and retention.
⚠ Need for flexibility around exceptional financial circumstances.

Key Recommendation Emerging from Feedback

The clearest message across the consultation was support for the overall direction of travel, provided implementation includes **careful transitional arrangements, individual flexibility, and appropriate financial protections for carers and supported individuals who may be adversely affected by the changes.**