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In Surrey more people are invited to share their home

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A new partner is taking on Shared Lives in Surrey aiming to welcome more people into the service who can open their homes to adults with support needs and help them live independently and well.

Shared Lives enables adults with learning disabilities, physical disabilities or mental health needs to live within a supportive household, for short or long-term stays. Similar to fostering, it offers a home environment where people can build life skills and learn to lead active lives in their local communities.

Surrey County Council has appointed an experienced provider to run the service from this month, following a competitive selection process. The provider, the charity Ategi, has more than 30 years' experience running care and support services including Shared Lives schemes in England and Wales.

All current Shared Lives carers and arrangements will continue to be supported, and more people from a wide range of backgrounds are being invited to explore the rewarding opportunity of becoming a Shared Lives carer.

Shared Lives carers receive ongoing support, a weekly fee and training according to their needs. No formal care experience is required – carers simply need a spare room, compassion and the willingness to support an adult with additional needs in their own home.

Around 80 Shared Lives arrangements, both short and long-term, have transferred to Ategi from Surrey Choices, the previous provider. People supported by the service have in recent years achieved life-changing outcomes including passing driving tests, securing meaningful employment, and gaining independence and improved mental wellbeing.

Kate Allen, Ategi's Chief Executive, said: "We are delighted to be bringing Ategi's extensive Shared Lives experience to Surrey and to build on the strong foundations created by Surrey Choices. We know how important continuity is for the people and families who rely on the service, and our priority is to ensure they continue to receive the high-quality, person-centred support they value.

"With more than 30 years' experience delivering Shared Lives – including across London and the South East – we bring extensive Shared Lives experience from across England and Wales, which will help us work alongside local partners to support the service's continued success and future growth. We look forward to working with carers, families and partners across Surrey to enable more people to live independently, build meaningful relationships and play an active role in their communities."

Sinead Mooney, Surrey County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, said: "Shared Lives has long been an important part of the support we offer in Surrey and I've seen the difference it can make to people's wellbeing and independence, and the rewarding experience it offers carers.

"Our new partnership with Ategi will build on Surrey Choices' foundations, and we've been working hard to make sure the transition is as smooth as possible for everyone involved. We're grateful to our existing Shared Lives carers for the support they provide, and we're encouraging more people to consider coming forward to help adults with additional needs lead fulfilling lives."

Louise Hayes, Operations Director at Surrey Choices, said: "We are incredibly proud of everything our Shared Lives colleagues, carers and the people we support have achieved together. We transfer the Shared Lives scheme with enormous pride in the legacy and the positive impact it has had on so many lives. We pass it on with confidence to Ategi, an experienced provider delivering Shared Lives across multiple counties in the UK, knowing the values of compassionate, person-centred support will continue."

In the words of one family member with experience of Shared Lives, it is "an excellent service enabling adults with additional needs to live as near to independence as they can, with a safety net."

Some Shared Lives placements in Surrey will continue to be provided by Mencap, as they are currently.

Anyone interested in finding out more about becoming a Shared Lives carer, or who has a query about an existing arrangement, should contact Shared Lives Registered Manager Paul Dawson at Ategi on 01494 932 920. More information can be found on Ategi's website: www.ategi.org.uk.

Surrey County Council

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