

RELATIVE:

Susan Howe

Susan is the sister of 58 year old Dennis who lives with Shared Lives carer Carol and her family.

Shared Lives

Better Lives

How did you hear about the service?

Dennis knew Carol's husband Rick through a club that he attended each week. He'd met them both before and got on well with them. They had a spare room available under the Shared Lives scheme and Dennis said he wanted to live with them.

At the time I viewed a number of residential homes and also visited Carol and Rick to find out more about the scheme. I knew instantly why Dennis wanted to live there. They were so welcoming and I felt it would be the best place for him.

What changes have you seen in Dennis?

Dennis had lived in a residential home for many years before he came to Carol and Rick. In the home there was a routine and planned activities for him and the other residents.

Under Shared Lives Dennis has become more independent and now makes his own decisions. He can choose his own bedtime, pick out his own clothes, choose what he wants to eat

and also plan out his own days. He catches connecting buses into town on his own and decides when he wants to come back. He's also planning holidays. It's a whole different world for him.

Dennis also works at Age UK and they have noticed a big difference in him since he moved in with Carol and Rick. They say his appearance is much better and he is far more outgoing now.

Shared Lives has enhanced his quality of life tremendously. He is made to feel like he's part of an extended family and he has a real sense of belonging.

How often do you visit Dennis?

I see him once every six weeks or so as I live a fair drive away from Leicester. Carol and Rick make me feel very welcome and comfortable so I see him far more than I did when he was in the residential home. I also speak to him almost every day over the telephone which again is something that didn't used to happen.

Would you recommend Shared Lives?

Without a doubt and I have been telling people about the scheme in the area I live. I have experience working with children with learning disabilities and I'm still in contact with some of the parents whose children have now grown up. Naturally they have concerns about where their children may receive care now they're adults and I've been telling them about the benefits of Shared Lives.

The scheme is run exceptionally well. They are organised and their carers are well informed and well prepared. When Dennis moved in with Carol and Rick everything was sorted out for him which was a great weight off my mind.

To find out how to become a Shared Lives carer:

Visit: leicester.gov.uk/sharedlives

Call: 0116 221 1370