



“I am so happy  
because now I feel  
safe”

Shared Lives East Lothian

[www.eastlothian.gov.uk/sharedlives](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/sharedlives)

## Shared Lives stories—Louise, Andrew and Abby

Louise and Andrew Kennedy talk about what Shared Lives is like for them

Shared Lives does exactly what it says on the tin, it's 'sharing lives'. However, it runs much deeper than that. My husband Andrew and I were respite carers when we were given the opportunity to have a young woman to stay with us on a permanent basis. That was 2009, the young woman was Abby, and we've never looked back since.

Neither of us had any experience of parenthood, and all of a sudden we had a lively 19 year old in our lives. Abby certainly exploded into our lives, she was a whirlwind!!!

It was a learning experience for us all. Weirdly there seemed to be no process of adjustment. It was like Abby had been here forever, we just fitted together with the greatest of ease. I'm not saying we're the Waltons, we have had bumps along the way, like any family, but we work as a team. Abby's biological family are very supportive of us, and we encourage Abby to have a continued relationship with them.

We're so proud of the woman Abby has become, anyone who knows her would agree that she's unique! She has the biggest heart, and other people's happiness is paramount to her. During the Corona virus lockdown this has become more apparent. Abby has gone out her way to help others is shopping for our housebound neighbour, amongst many other examples.

Abby is part of our family and is always included in family activities. She says she feels lucky, because she has two families. In our heart of hearts, we feel so lucky and blessed to have Abby in our lives. The house is alive, it's NEVER quiet and we wouldn't swap it for the world. We were given the chance of respite, to give us all a break. It didn't work but for the best of reasons - we missed Abby and she missed us! There's nothing we wish to do, that wouldn't include Abby. We try to encourage Abby to have the same life as her peers, though teaching her about safety is paramount.

I'd like to pay tribute to Abby's friends, as they are VERY protective of her, and we can relax knowing she is safe, but still doing the same things that her friends are doing. Who knows....this may lead to Abby moving into her own independent but supported accommodation, at present there are no plans for this, but we would back Abby all the way.

We would say to anyone considering joining Shared Lives jump, do it now! We have the best support team we could wish for. Our wonderful social worker Louise Robertson is a regular visitor, and we also have the invaluable support of Anne Anderson and Gillian Neil.

One of our proudest moments was giving a speech, along with Abby at the Scottish Parliament, as part of Shared Lives. I think it was then, that it hit us, that we are part of something so magical and rewarding. I would say to anyone joining Shared Lives, there will be tears, plenty of laughter, but I promise you this, you'll feel fulfilled and will NEVER be bored.

Louise & Andrew Kennedy