



HACT

age2age

PROJECT

Homeshare Carlisle and Eden:
What has been achieved and
what is the learning from the first year?

EVALUATION REPORT

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1. Introduction

Homeshare Carlisle and Eden is part of HACT's age2age programme, a series of intergenerational initiatives centred around housing that are improving communication, overcoming loneliness, reducing isolation and improving well-being.

Homeshare is an initiative that brings together two people who can help each other; a householder who is willing to share their home but is at a stage in their life where they would benefit from some help and support and a homesharer who needs accommodation and is willing to give some help and friendship in exchange for somewhere to stay.

Learning from another age2age Homeshare project, which took place in Mendip Somerset between 2009- 2011, has offered valuable insights to the developments in Cumbria and helped our understanding of what may contribute to a successful Homeshare scheme in rural areas.

This evaluation report explores what has been achieved in the first operational year of Homeshare in Cumbria during September 2010-2011. The context and background to the project is detailed, followed by the main achievements. Barriers and challenges are discussed and the report ends with the key messages and learning that have emerged.

The purpose is to show how Homeshare contributes to the outcomes of HACT's age2age initiative and to inform the development of future intergenerational Homeshare schemes.

2. Context: setting the scene

2.1 Cumbria is one of the most rural counties in England and the gap between household incomes and house prices is amongst the widest in the England¹. Across Cumbria, 42 per cent of all social rented housing is located in rural areas; this makes up 13 per cent of the entire rural housing stock and housing needs surveys continually show the need for local and affordable housing in rural communities².

2.2 The Eden Valley Strategic Housing Market assessment 2009³ reports that there will be a large increase in the elderly population, both proportionally and absolutely, between 2008 and 2031. The life expectancy for men and women in Eden is 78 and 83 years, slightly higher than the UK average, and 15.2 per cent of Eden households are made up of people living alone. In contrast all, age groups under 60 are expected to decrease, with the absence of young people being attributed to the absence of job opportunities and prohibitive house prices.

2.3 In 2009, a group of local agencies in Eden district, Cumbria, formed a steering group to explore the need for Homeshare in Cumbria. A research report⁴ was commissioned which reported in early 2010 and it recommended the appointment of a Homeshare co-ordinator to develop the scheme in Eden. The report found that Homeshare would be a convenient and beneficial arrangement for students, particularly post graduate and overseas students who would tend to be older and have

¹Cumbria Rural Housing trust 'Helping rural communities in Cumbria to help themselves', September 2011

²ACT (ACTion with Communities in Cumbria), The Rural Share of Deprivation, May 2010

³Cumbria Housing Strategy 2006-11

⁴Bulmer, Caroline (January 2010) Homeshare Research Report, produced for the Homeshare Steering Group Committee Cumbria

more life experiences. The report also recommended that intergenerational social activities between young people and older people considering Homeshare would be a way of challenging the negative views that some generations hold towards each other.

2.4 In 2010, funding⁵ was made available to develop Homeshare in Cumbria. The steering group was disbanded and an advisory group formed to take forward the scheme in Eden. HACT's presence in Cumbria through the age2age project was to support that development in Cumbria, offering an alternative option to housing agencies.

3. Expected Outcomes

3.1 The overarching age2age programme outcome for Homeshare is:

- The Homeshare model contributes to generating confidence and increased understanding between generations.

3.2 Specific outcomes for Homeshare Carlisle and Eden are:

- The health and wellbeing of younger and older participants is increased
- Housing concerns of younger and older people is addressed
- Home sharers and householders contribute to more inclusive communities

4. What has been achieved in year one?

4.1 A Homeshare coordinator took up post in September 2010. Age UK Carlisle and Eden host the project and the co-ordinator is part of the Age UK Carlisle and Eden staff team. He works 4 days a week and is based in their offices in Penrith.

There have been advantages in hosting Homeshare in a trusted and well-established local third sector organisation. It has given credibility to the initiative and allowed the co-ordinator to access a number of on-going partnerships and networks. Homeshare also supports the objectives of Age UK Carlisle and Penrith and is now part of their strategic objectives in promoting intergenerational solidarity and supporting innovative housing solutions for older people.

4.2 Two matches have been achieved, one in Penrith and one in Carlisle. The Penrith match has now been in place for 5 months. Unfortunately the Carlisle one finished after 10 days.

⁵Funders: Headley Trust and Charles Hayward

CASE STUDY ONE: PENRITH

Mavis and Ken are an older married couple who live in a large house in Penrith. They are very involved in the local community and their extended families live nearby. Ken is severely disabled and Mavis is his main carer. Mavis felt she needed more support with caring and they heard about Homeshare through the local publicity.

Veronica is from Lithuania and moved to Penrith for employment. She is a manager in a local business and works long anti social hours. She had been renting a small room in a house but she missed being in a family home. Veronica found out about Homeshare through the internet website <http://www.spareroom.co.uk/> She had also seen a number of leaflets and posters around Penrith.

Veronica supports Mavis and Ken by washing the car and tidying the garden and Mavis described her as a hard worker. Veronica sometimes sits with Ken when Mavis is out and they have plenty to talk about. Mavis says: *'It (Homeshare) suits us perfectly, we are so blessed. You can tell if you are going to get on'*.

Veronica⁶ is reported to love the homely atmosphere at Mavis and Ken's and she participates in family occasions. She is able to carry out her work commitments whilst still enjoying a lively household.

An example at how well the match is working occurred recently. Veronica had become very stressed, because due to the pressures of her work, she felt unable to keep to her 10 hours of help and support to Mavis and Ken. An agreement has now been reached and Veronica is doing 4 hours help a week and paying a small rent of £35 a week. The new arrangements appear to suit everyone much better.

CASE STUDY TWO: CARLISLE

Beryl lives in social housing in Carlisle and was widowed earlier in the year. In spite of having very supportive family and friends living near by, Beryl has been extremely lonely and misses someone in the house. She heard about Homeshare through Age UK Eden and Carlisle publicity leaflets and thought it may work for her. She did not need any practical tasks but wanted someone coming in at night.

The Homeshare co-ordinator introduced her to Ann. After a number of meetings, Beryl decided that she wasn't the right householder for Ann because they had different expectations of the share.

Subsequently, Beryl and Sue were introduced. Sue was a mature student at the University of Carlisle carrying out a professional master's degree in an allied health profession. She

⁶It was not possible to interview Victoria because of her working commitments

lived in the midlands and due to the intensity of her course she was looking for cheap accommodation in Carlisle where she could stay during the week. She was reluctant to go into halls of residence as she was not interested in student life and wanted quietness to study.

Sue found out about Homeshare on a Google search and was interested as she thought it would be a way of getting to know an area better and have introductions into the local community. She commented that the Homeshare co-ordinator had prepared her well for the share.

After two meetings, Sue moved into Beryl's with the full agreement of Beryl's family for a trial period. Although at first everything went well, the match ended in 10 days. There were no serious issues but both agreed it wasn't working out as planned. They parted good friends and with no hard feelings.

Beryl has now withdrawn from the scheme. The Homeshare co-ordinator referred her to Age UK Carlisle and Eden Prevention team who are now working with her to alleviate her loneliness. Sue has also withdrawn and has arranged her own accommodation on a private basis.

4.3 There are a variety of different reasons why homesharers and householders come forward to take part in Homeshare and a personalised, individualised approach is needed with each match. For this reason, the co-ordinator recognised that a pool of people in both groups is required in order to make matches that are likely to succeed. Currently there are two potential householders and three possible homesharers waiting to share although circumstances of both groups can change quickly.

4.4 The scheme has been successful in recruiting homesharers and has had over 60 enquiries from sharers. This has mainly taken place through the internet and social networking sites, a point developed further under communications. The decision to extend into Carlisle where there is a student population means there is potential to attract students who may be looking for alternative accommodation. An evaluation of Homeshare programmes in 2010 recommended that Homeshare schemes should consider targeting students as potential homesharers⁷.

4.5 The co-ordinator should be commended for his energy and commitment in positioning Homeshare in Eden as a credible, professional, alternative housing solution that could be considered alongside other housing options. Evidence for this comes from its proposed inclusion in the Cumbria Housing Strategy and well as a number of other agencies promoting Homeshare in Eden. The extent of awareness raising that has taken place among a diverse range of stakeholders and organisations that may wish to refer people to Homeshare is significant. This has included housing organisations such as Cumbria Rural Housing Trust, Impact housing and Eden Local Authority Housing; voluntary sector organisations such as the Northern Fells Group, Avalon respite care and Cumbria Youth Alliance, as well as numerous community groups and clubs.

⁷Coffey, J (July 2010) An evaluation of Homeshare Pilot Programmes in West Sussex, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire: Oxford Brookes University, School of Health and Social Care

4.6 There has been a strong focus on different methods of communication to reach different groups and individual preferences, whether that is electronic, leaflets, media or face-face. This has resulted in the engagement of older people, younger people and professionals. For example, Homeshare Carlisle and Eden has a created an online presence of over 400 followers having online conversations. It serves to keep people in touch with developments and has led to direct enquiries from homesharers. The project is registered on some accommodation websites⁸ and this has brought forward the majority of the sharers' enquiries. More traditional methods of communication have been used through radio, television and local and national press. The co-ordinator has given talks at groups and looked for opportunities to link with community initiatives such as village agents.

4.7 A promotional film is nearly complete and will be used to show visually how the scheme works. It was put together by a small group of older and younger people under the direction of a local designer. The film is to be launched at a local premier and it will then be placed on You Tube and be linked to other websites.

4.8 Two local authorities outside Cumbria have expressed an interest in finding out how Homeshare works. They are Manchester City Council (Policy Research officer) and Lancashire County Council (Locality Commissioning officer). These are being followed up by the co-ordinator.

4.9 The importance of partnership development was a key learning point from Mendip Homeshare. Similarly the evaluation of Homeshare programmes⁹ recommended that a professional engagement strategy was important for ensuring appropriate professionals were aware of the programme and understood the referral criteria. The original steering group set up to explore the need for Homeshare in Cumbria and to lead its initial developments laid good foundations for partnership working by involving a number of different agencies from the start. When funding¹⁰ was received, the steering group reformed into an advisory group, which meets every three months. At a recent meeting of the advisory group (September 2011) it was agreed to review the membership and recruit other agencies, including a representative from Carlisle.

An important partner identified by the steering group was a link with the NHS because of the potential of Homeshare to improve the health and wellbeing of householders and their sharers. Consequently a Health Improvement Specialist from the NHS Cumbria Public Health team has been recruited to the Advisory group.

4.10 It is early days to see if changes have occurred towards the intended outcomes of age2age. The first year of Homeshare has been important for laying down the foundations and providing the right context for matches to flourish. There are signs that the matches between older householders with younger people meet the need for affordable accommodation. Similarly in the two matches so far, householders and sharers show examples of positive attitudes and behaviours towards different generations. For example in one match, there are signs of reciprocity between

⁸These are: spareroom.co.uk, gumtree.com, roombuddies.com & zoopla.com.

⁹Coffey, J (July 2010) An evaluation of Homeshare Pilot Programmes in West Sussex, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire: Oxford Brookes University, School of Health and Social Care

¹⁰Funders: Paul Hamlyn foundation and John Ellerman

the younger sharer and older householders, where the 10 hours a week of support suggested in the Homeshare agreement has room for negotiation. The matches are not about 'looking after' or 'mothering' a young person, they are based on an exchange. In one match there has been recognition by the older people of the pressures that young people have today in finding jobs and affordable places to live. For the three homesharers that have been involved in matches, there was an interest in being part of a family, as well as introductions to the local community.

In the second year of Homeshare as more matches take place, the evaluation will be able to explore evidence of the changes that can come about through Homeshare.

5. Barriers and challenges

The development of Homeshare and its first year of operation have highlighted barriers and challenges to a successful service. One of the conundrums is that many of the barriers and challenges need to be overcome before successful matches can be made, but matches are required in order to show people and partners how it works and the potential value.

5.1 A key barrier to overcome has been people's perceptions of the risk involved in matching younger and older people, which is based on negative attitudes and stereotyping. Older people and professionals have shown concern at placing a young person with an older person who may be vulnerable. Some professionals have expressed the view that older people in rural areas are more vulnerable because of the isolation. Similarly, there are stereotypes of younger people being conveyed such as 'going out all night', playing loud music and drinking alcohol. From the people involved in Homeshare so far, these stereotypes are not played out and as more matches take place, the project will be able to challenge these perceptions of older and younger people.

5.2 All the homesharers and householders in the scheme are required to have Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks. The checks are time consuming and as many of the homesharers are looking urgently for accommodation, they may find alternative accommodation whilst the checks are being carried out. The CRBs can also be intrusive and costly, but have already been shown to be a necessary requirement in Homeshare Carlisle and Eden. One homesharer had a conviction on his CRB that made him unsuitable for Homeshare. CRBs are important if the integrity of the project is to be maintained and perceptions of risk are changed. Age UK Carlisle and Eden have lessened the delays applying for CRBs at the beginning of an enquiry and the process is facilitated more quickly because Age UK is an approved centre for CRB applications.

5.3 The co-ordinator's role is complex and multi functional between promoting the scheme, finding suitable householders and homesharers, and supporting matches. He also has to move between a strategic role and operational function, both of which require different skills, levels of seniority and management support. This point is picked up in the following section.

5.4 It has not been easy to engage the major housing providers in the initiative, although at the moment the reasons why are not clear. They express interest in the idea but are not keen to adopt it as part of a housing option for their tenants, possibly until there is more evidence that it works. It is being included in the Cumbrian Housing strategy but at the moment it is unknown what money will be available for implementing the strategy.

5.5 Another barrier identified, and linked to the above point, is that Homeshare is not county wide so the County Council and some housing providers may be reluctant to take on a scheme that is only operating in Carlisle and Eden, and not in West Cumbria and South Lakeland.

5.6 In spite of all the engagement work that has taken place with various organisations, interest groups and partners, some key players have not yet got involved. For example, it would be beneficial in the drive to have more householders that adult social care is more closely involved. Similarly, the University of Cumbria, Newton Rigg campus Penrith, has not been receptive to Homeshare as part of the accommodation choices for students; understanding the barriers and trying to find a way to engage this potential source of local sharers would be beneficial.

5.7 Whilst 60 young people have shown an interest in Homeshare, the scheme has not impacted on people from black and minority populations¹¹, although there have been email enquiries. It is in line with other Age UK Carlisle and Eden services, which fall below the 3.5% reach to black and minority populations. The reasons for this are not yet clear and it would be useful to know the barriers that Homeshare may present to these groups.

6. Key messages and learning

A number of key messages and learning have emerged from this first year of the project. These are of interest to HACT, Age UK Carlisle and Penrith, Homeshare Advisory group and other Homeshare, or potential Homeshare, schemes.

6.1 It is clear that Homeshare is “*not for everybody*”, and that a large pool of potential homesharers and householders are required for matching people who can live together successfully. In the matches so far, the needs and expectations of each match have been quite different. The project has also discovered that the prospective younger homesharers are often transitory and if they are not found a match quickly they look elsewhere for their housing needs. Conversely, householder’s needs feel less urgent and they appear happy to wait for the right sharer to be found for them.

6.2 Different methods are required to engage participants. This has been shown by the successful contact with homesharers through some key websites and the establishment of an online presence. Whilst maintaining that approach, it is now time to shift the emphasis and find the recruitment methods that will bring in a bigger pool of householders. Learning from Mendip will be useful here where the co-ordinator recruited more householders than sharers because the focus was on raising awareness with older people’s organisations and services, rather than engaging young people.

6.3 Age2age Homeshare is testing a model that contributes to generating confidence and increased understanding between generations. It is important that this generational focus is not

¹¹ In Eden District, 3.5 per cent of the population is from Black and Minority Ethnic Groups. These figures are based on Cumbria County Council’s definition of Black and Minority Ethnic groups which includes: Eastern Europeans; Gypsy Travellers; Irish people; Black African and Black Caribbean people; Asian and East Asian people; and People who are mixed race. Source: Mid-2007 Estimates, Office of National Statistics (experimental statistics)

lost and that where matches occur, the generational relationship is clear. The definitions of who is 'young' and who is 'old' need to be clarified in order to avoid stereotyping of both generations. The feasibility study¹² commissioned by the Homeshare Steering Group in Cumbria in 2010 prior to Homeshare project becoming operational, and early learning from Mendip indicate that for Homeshare to flourish in communities, the barriers between old and young need to begin to break down and trust develop. It would be useful for Homeshare to link more closely with the age2age project in Carlisle, run by Impact Housing, to explore links and connections between the different elements of age2age.

6.4 The role of the co-ordinator is complex and requires a number of skills and attributes. These include finding the right partnerships and alliances, building relationships on a number of levels, excellent communication skills across a range of methods, knowledge and understanding of safe guarding issues and the monitoring and evaluation of matches and their outcomes. With such multiple tasks required, it is rather like keeping a number of balls in the air making it difficult not to be drawn to one direction and miss others.

Learning from Mendip showed the importance of support for the co-ordinator through regular supervision with a senior member of staff in the host organisation. In the second year of Homeshare Carlisle and Eden, close supervision will continue to be essential in order to support and monitor a focused work plan for the co-ordinator. A work plan and communication strategy for year two, agreed by the Age UK Carlisle and Eden Board, the Homeshare Advisory group and supported by HACT should be put in place as soon as possible.

6.5 Safe guarding issues remain important and the recognition that new technology, whilst being beneficial for extending the reach of the project, also raise new questions about safe guards for the project.

6.6 The contribution and meaningful engagement of users and potential users of Homeshare should be strengthened. In the way that Homeshare has successfully been to communicated, diverse ways of involving the generations in developing Homeshare would be useful.

6.7 As has been shown in this report, the co-ordinator has successfully made a large number of contacts, relationships and alliances. In the second year, these stakeholder relationships need to be deepened, a few priority relationships identified and gaps highlighted. A stakeholder mapping exercise would be beneficial in this process with a follow on action plan in place for engaging those stakeholders.

6.8 The role of the host organisation is to make strategic links, either through its own networks or forging new ones. This will enable Homeshare to be embedded at a senior level and support the co-ordinator in operationalising the scheme. Age UK Carlisle and Eden, as a well-regarded and established organisation, is well placed to support these links. Age UK Carlisle and Eden will also need to have a business and fund raising strategy, which targets a range of different beneficiaries.

¹² Bulmer, Caroline (January 2010) Homeshare Research Report, produced for the Homeshare Steering Group Committee Cumbria

It may need to explore newer and stronger partnerships with for example young people's organisations, children's services, Foyers and independent living schemes. Other potential relationships for Homeshare include colleges, health and social care and housing providers, organisations working with people with slight and moderate learning disabilities, and linking more closely with the personalisation/ individual budgets agenda. Another partnership, which would increase professional engagement, is with professional development and training officers. Time Bank skills sharing would offer a positive spin to the project.

6.9 The partnership with health could be strengthened particularly as the public health function moves from the NHS into local authorities in 2013. Cumbria is very fortunate to have Professor John Ashton, the North West Regional Director of Public Health and Regional Medical Officer, who has shown an interest in the model and a direct communication with him would be useful.

6.10 HACT has a role in supporting these strategic relationships and alliances, particularly through promoting Homeshare to housing organisations and policy makers as a real alternative housing option.

Through this, HACT can support a greater understanding of the barriers to implementation that are present within the sector. Finding effective ways to engage with the sector would be extremely useful for the host organisation during its second year. In particular, HACT may be able to influence a housing association to be part of the Local Advisory group.

7. Summary

Homeshare is a simple concept but complex to implement. Homeshare Carlisle and Eden has had a very productive developmental first year with a considerable amount of energy and commitment being shown by a number of people to get the necessary infra structure in place. Towards the end of this first year, the hard work is beginning to generate matches.

The numbers remain small and these will need to be scaled up if Homeshare is to be a viable housing option benefiting all generations in the years to come. The numbers are unlikely to be large but Homeshare is important in offering alternative housing provision. It is acknowledged that Homeshare will not suit everyone and more evidence is required to show its benefits if trust in the scheme is to be secured.

A final evaluation report on the scheme will be available in December 2012.