

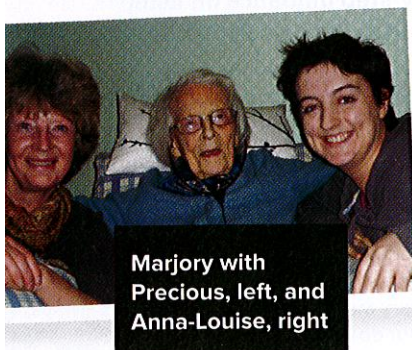
FAMILY FIRSTS

HOW THE YOUNG can help the old

Most elderly people want to stay in their own homes and now there are more schemes to help them do just that, says Naomi Greenaway

HOMESHARE is a housing-for-help exchange, where a younger person lives rent-free or at a low rent in exchange for around ten hours a week of care. **Precious Trevor, 60**, her 94-year-old mother-in-law, **Marjory**, and her homesharer, **Anna-Louise, 23**, explain how it works. **Precious works for English Heritage and lives in East Sheen with her husband and adult children.**

PRECIOUS SAYS "We couldn't have asked for anyone kinder than Anna-Louise to live with Marjory. She's Marjory's third sharer and they've all been superb. It was my mother-in-law who, three years back, decided she wanted extra support. She served as



Marjory with Precious, left, and Anna-Louise, right

a Wren in the war and is defiantly independent so didn't want to burden us, but she started getting anxious being alone at night and wanted companionship. I contacted Share & Care (shareandcare.co.uk), who vet and CRB-check applicants and suggest

The Homeshare scheme means my mother-in-law can feel secure in her own home

matches for a monthly fee (which varies). Although there are organisations that are non-profit, we wanted to use a company we'd personally been recommended. Anna-Louise works ten hours a week, which involves being at home with Marjory for five evenings at times that suit them both. She sleeps there every night, with a weekend off a month. We

supplement with a carer, who comes to give Marjory breakfast and lunch. Before Marjory had a homeshare, there were times she'd call us in a panic, and my husband or I would drop everything and go – her welfare is always our priority. But now she feels so more secure at home and we're happier knowing there's an extra pair of eyes and ears to alert us if anything happens. It's been beneficial for everyone – including, I hope, the sharers, who we support and view like family."

ANNA-LOUISE SAYS "I love coming home to someone who's happy to see me – and it's so much more enjoyable cooking for two than for one. Last year, I was at university in a house-share with other students who I barely saw. It also saves me money and I live in a big house with a garden – something I wouldn't otherwise be able to afford. Most of all, Marjory and I get on amazingly. I come home around 6pm, I make us dinner then we watch some telly – we both love documentaries and sport. We watched the Six Nations rugby together – although



"I love cooking and try recipes I hope Edith will enjoy, but we'd have never met if it wasn't for Casserole Club"

CASSEROLE CLUB is a network that helps people share extra portions of home-cooked food with the elderly in their area. **Actress Sophie Thompson, 51**, lives in London with her family, and once a week cooks for **Edith, 94**, who lives round the corner.

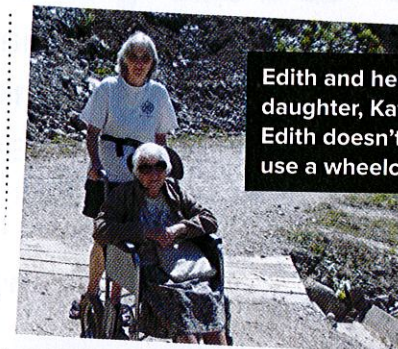


SOPHIE SAYS "Food is about sharing and connecting, so when I saw a poster for Casserole Club, I loved the idea. It's such a great way to knit the community together.

On my street we'll drop in a bit of cake here or a curry there – but with Casserole Club you get to help the most vulnerable. The first thing Casserole Club did was check my criminal record, then they matched me up with Edith, who lives round the corner. I could see on Edith's profile her dislikes and favourites, so I knew how to tailor my cooking and have made dishes like fish pies, meatballs or grilled chicken. She's also partial to

a fruity pud, so I've made her lemon-curd-and-blueberry bread pudding, and blackberry brownies for dessert. At first I arranged my cooking days via the Casserole Club, but now I contact Edith directly, which feels more like dropping round to a friend. I pop round with my Tupperware, explain any heating instructions and pick up my dishes from the week before. Edith's always so pleased to see me. I love knowing I've brought something she'll enjoy – cooking for her has motivated me to try new things in the kitchen, so my family benefits too!"

EDITH SAYS "I live on my own so it's a lovely treat when Sophie comes round. I have a daughter in Essex, a daughter in Wiltshire and a son in the US. They're all so good to me – but a bit too far away to drop round meals. Usually I make ready-meals or pasta but I've never been a good cook – my family got fed but my heart was never in it. Sophie and I hit it off immediately. She comes on Fridays and she makes



Edith and her daughter, Katherine. Edith doesn't always use a wheelchair

enough to last for two days. She's an excellent cook and makes things I've never tried before – I can't tell you what exactly, but it's all very tasty."

Edith's daughter KATHERINE, 65, lives with her husband in Essex. "At first, we were suspicious of someone we didn't know coming into Edith's house, but it has been wonderful. I live an hour-and-a-half away from Mum, so it's lovely to know that for two days a week she's getting a decent meal, with a little company thrown in." *For more, visit casseroleclub.com*

she's Irish and I'm Welsh, so there was a bit of conflict! Being in a homeshare doesn't restrict my social life. Marjory's always happy to hear I have plans, and she loves visitors, so I can invite friends over for dinner. Nobody stays over, but I'm not in a relationship anyway. Marjory's family is also a great support."

MARJORY SAYS "I didn't like being alone at night but now it's reassuring knowing someone is there when I get up and go to bed. Anna-Louise brought a pet tortoise with her – I wasn't sure about it at first but I've grown to really like it! It can be hard for me when my sharers change and I have to get used to a new routine – but equally I feel excited for them as they move on to something new. I like having someone around, but it's good that they're not in all day because I also like having the house to myself at times too." *Homeshare has match-up programmes around the UK. See sharedlivesplus.org.uk*

6 MORE HELPFUL IDEAS

SCHEME Good Gym
CONCEPT No more costly gym membership. Runners visit the elderly. If the runner doesn't arrive sweaty, they'll be sent to the shops to buy a paper! The scheme operates in Liverpool, Bristol and various London boroughs. Start one in your area at goodgym.org

SCHEME Shared Lives
CONCEPT The elderly move in with families. Shared Lives agencies (registered with the Government's care regulator) vet the carers. The family receives £150 of the carer's allowance. See sharedlivesplus.org.uk/shared-lives

SCHEME Dawn Patrol
CONCEPT Run by the Red Cross in Lancashire, Merseyside and Greater Manchester. This scheme buddies up school children with elderly people. Pupils check that the pensioners have left an agreed sign in the window each morning. If not, they alert the authorities. See redcross.org.uk

SCHEME Good Neighbours
CONCEPT Run by the Royal Voluntary Service, volunteers visit the elderly to help with anything from cooking to shopping to changing light bulbs. Visit royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk

SCHEME Community Independent Living
CONCEPT The scheme aims to help vulnerable adults live independently. Four hubs provide information and a range of support. See richmond.gov.uk/cils

SCHEME Telecare
CONCEPT Tailored technology to monitor the elderly in their own homes. For dementia, an alarm can be set off if they leave the house at unusual times. Other alarms include lack of movement, irregular heartbeat or bed-wetting. All government-funded. Contact your local authority. w&h

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