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# Case Study: Judith and Jennifer

Share and Care Homeshare 2016

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82-year-old Jennifer was diagnosed with Dementia in May 2014. Share and Care Homeshare arranged and managed a Homeshare arrangement between her and her Sharer Judith, from October 2016 until September 2017. Jennifer's daughter, Jo said; "I wish I had known about Share and Care much sooner in Mum's diagnosis – having a Sharer was a very welcome solution for that year of Mum's life. Mum was 79 years old when first diagnosed and we had seen her getting more forgetful. Following a gastric illness and a suspected stroke, she had another scan which showed the dementia. Her life, quite slowly initially, started to get smaller and more limited. After a few years she had to stop driving so her independence decreased, and she did not always remember arrangements she had made to meet people so she grew increasingly

isolated. She was also finding everyday tasks, such as shopping and washing clothes, difficult. After her diagnosis the council arranged for carers to come in twice a day,

but she certainly didn't feel like she needed carers; that wasn't really the sort of help she needed – she actually needed a little practical help and most of all, companionship.

“My mum had studied singing and piano at the Royal Academy of Music, and performed in many concerts as a founder member of the Monteverdi Choir. She was very involved in the music scene locally, was Head of Music at a prep school, and then Head of Singing at a girls' boarding school. Consequently, her home has always been filled with music, whether it be impromptu musical gatherings, teaching at home, or rehearsals. Even after her diagnosis she still played the piano, though more limited, and continued to enjoy a sing-song at the piano. She is intellectual and well read, and has always enjoyed doing crosswords and Sudoku. She loves watching historical TV programmes and documentaries and enjoys short walks, although would get confused as to where she lived as her dementia progressed.”

Jo approached Share and Care Homeshare because she believed that having a Sharer present would enable her mum to stay in her home for longer. “We didn't feel that she was ready to go into a care home, although her memory was failing her and her care needs had increased over time. She was less independent, and no longer liked being on her own, but we aren't able to be with her all the time. She loves company! Although she had carers popping in, a weekly visit from a home hairdresser and friends who would visit during the week, we felt that having a Sharer there would make up for the times when we were unable to be there, and that this would make such a positive difference to her (and to us). We were also relieved to know that with someone living with her, she wouldn't feel so isolated and lonely. Another bonus was that a Sharer could also feed her cat.”

### **How did you hear about Share and Care Homeshare?**

“During a drug research trial, I got to know the specialist nurses and research nurses and discussed with them how Mum needed, and would benefit from, company in the evening; they recommended Share and Care. My only possible options were; to sell the house, or to try Share and Care. I thought I would have to make a lot of adjustments to my Mum's house, but all I actually needed to do was clear the room and, through Share and Care, along came Judith. It was serendipity.

## **Tell us about your Mum's Sharer**

"I felt Judith, who is a teacher, was the right person for Mum, that she had been very carefully chosen, and it had been carefully thought out. I am so grateful for what Share and Care do and how they do it. The way Judith was presented to us was very accurate, she very quickly became part of the house and took over the running of the house and Mum's diary, which was a real relief for me on a day-to-day basis. I was reassured by the way Judith and my Mum built up a relationship. Judith was very artistic and they would do painting together. Judith also played the recorder and she and my Mum could really share the music together. Judith would say 'let's try this'. She was really very proactive and would take Mum out to local museums and cafés. And then there was sharing meals with Mum – and if I was there too, we would take turns in cooking and chat about our lives."



## **How did the finances work?**

"When she was diagnosed with dementia, Mum was financially assessed and she was deemed to have to pay a certain amount, with the council funding an extra £60 per week. When Judith came, we were able to reduce the evening and weekend visits, which drastically reduced the amount the council was having to pay towards Mum's care. Initially, Mum was paying Share and Care's agency fee herself. However, I approached Mum's council to ask if Share and Care could be included in Mum's care plan. The council agreed and absorbed it into Mum's cap as they realised that the other care visits had been reduced as a result of Judith's placement, so it was saving them money. The council ended up paying less than they had when Mum just had the evening half hour visits, and yet Mum was getting so much more time and support from having Judith living with her. The council told me; 'it is such an ethical programme that it should be rolled out in councils across the country'.

“Mum thrived under the arrangement and we feel was in better health physically and mentally than she would have been without it. I would say, as best I can, that a 15-20 minute visit from a carer, however nice they are, doesn't give that cognitive stimulation that having a Sharer can give.”

### **“Share and Care gave us a year's grace”**

Judith moved out in September 2017 when Jennifer's dementia had declined. Jo says: “Share and Care gave us a year's grace, and gave Mum an extra year in her own home. I always felt so supported by the way Share and Care kept in contact, and with all their advice.”

### **We also caught up with Jennifer's Sharer, Judith**

“I had been a nanny and I was looking for a place to live. I had no knowledge of Share and Care Homeshare and then I saw this opportunity. Having been in a role of nanny and mother, I thought it would be ideal. There was monetary consideration obviously too as it would save me money. I wanted to find out more about it.

“On meeting Jennifer, I thought, ‘this would work’. Yes, she has Alzheimer's, but she is a lovely person who has had a wonderful life, and we got on well. Our shared love of music was an important factor in our relationship. Share and Care picked up on that shared interest. It is important to have something that connects people. If she was getting anxious, I could change the whole atmosphere by putting on music.

“Cooking was also important as it was something we were doing together. She always wanted to help and it was important that I let her help. I did the cooking, and she did the cutlery; she loved to order the cutlery!

“Homesharing was a huge learning curve for me. The challenges were when she and I were tired, just like normal people, and I would get the same questions again and again and that was challenging. You have to watch out for those times and learn to recognise them. We would both go to bed at 9pm, which was fine by me. I would say I could Homeshare again; I could combine homesharing with a job, but not job and studies which I am currently doing.

"I became very close to Jennifer, and to the family. I got a lot out of Sharing with her. My self-confidence rose while I was there. I got on well with Jennifer; she was so sweet with me and would pick up on if I needed a hug. She might not remember my name – she never got to grips with my name nor that I lived there – but she would ask if I was going to stay the night and she would be relieved that I was staying. She may be forgetful and living with Alzheimer's, but she was still very intuitive and loving