

# Sharing homes, Sharing lives

Growing Homeshare – a practical guide



# What is Homeshare?

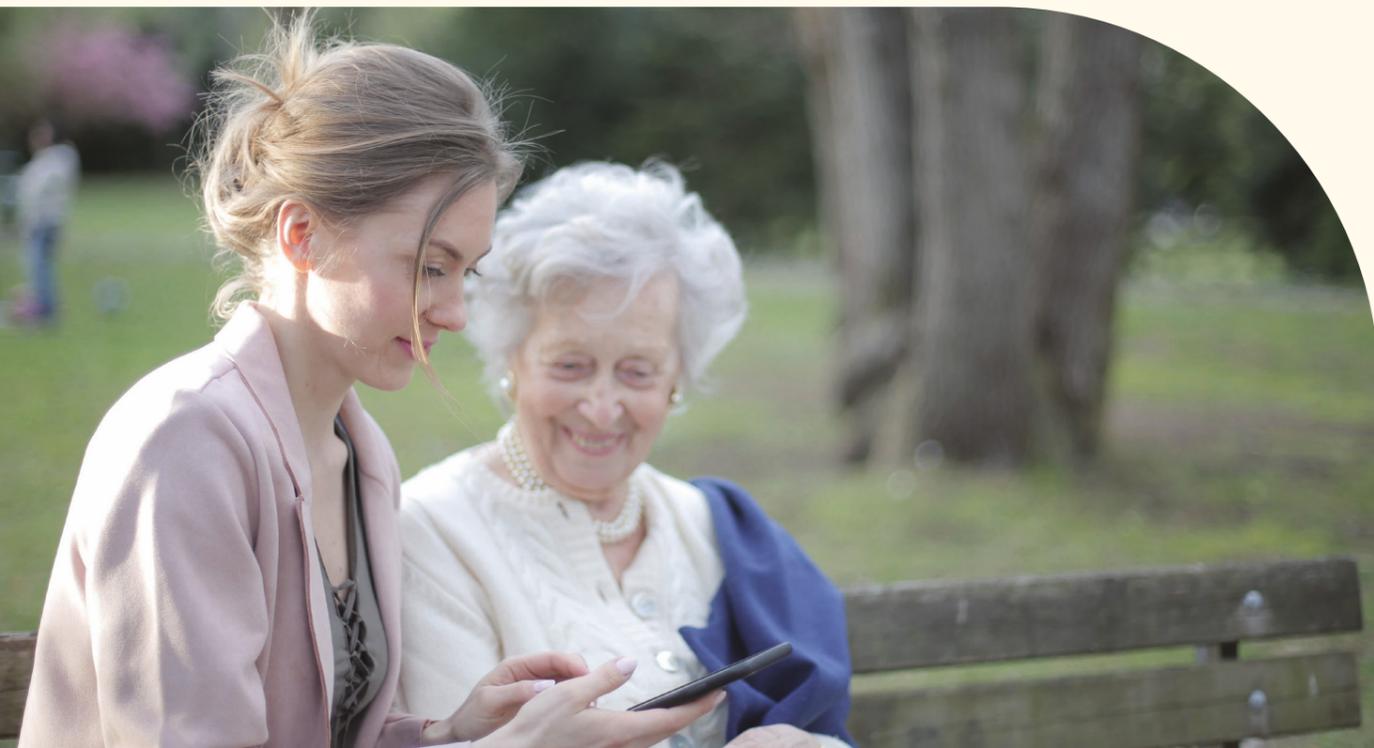
In Homeshare, someone who needs support to live in their own home and has a spare room, is matched with someone who wants an affordable place to live and can provide a little support. Both people share their life, time, skills and home life and benefit from sociable housing and companionship.



**“Householders”** are often older people who own their own home or are tenants, but need some support or have become isolated or anxious about living alone.



**“Homesharers”** are often younger people, students, or key public service workers. They may struggle to afford rocketing private rents, access council housing or are living in temporary accommodation.



# Foreword



**Alex Smith,**  
Chief Executive,  
The Cares Family

The brutal realities of loneliness in Britain, for both younger and older people is what drove me to found The Cares Family, a group of charities helping people find connection and community in a disconnected age.

This is what I find so impressive about Homeshare: it builds natural, and mutually supportive, human relationships. It has the potential to help tackle some of the greatest challenges facing our communities: growing social isolation, the lack of good quality affordable housing, poor mental health, and rising demand for social care and support.

The Cares Family, which has helped more than 26,000 older and younger people gain confidence, community and connection, along with Homeshare, demonstrates what is possible. As with many of the best examples of good housing, care and support. Homeshare is growing, but it needs to grow faster. Only concerted action will bring about the change we need.

**“After being in four different arrangements, I can safely say that Homeshare has been one of the best experiences of my life. Each householder has had different needs, but it’s a win-win situation for each of us, because when you turn that key in the door and a welcome smile waits you, it lifts you. Your help can be anything from just sitting and having a cup of tea, watching a TV programme together, to cooking, gardening, taking them to appointments and going out for lunch. For the householder, knowing that you are there to do the simple things like lock up, can help them sleep easy at night, which in turn helps their families know that they are safe. When I get older this is something I will be doing and I’ll get the benefits all over again.”**



Emma – Homeshare Ambassador

# This guide: a new future for Homeshare in the UK

**Homeshare tackles some of the greatest challenges facing our communities – growing social isolation, the lack of good quality affordable housing, poor mental health, and rising demand for social care and support.**

Where it has grown, it is part of a suite of options, alongside Shared Lives, housing with care, and asset-based forms of support at home, which help people to maintain their independence, wellbeing and remain living in their communities.

Homeshare is preventative in nature, helping people maintain their independence for longer and contributes to reduced demand on:

- Social care (such as home care)
- The NHS (through reduced unplanned admissions, GP appointments, falls, and delayed transfers of care)
- And other statutory services, such as emergency housing and homelessness support.
- It also signposts to other community services and helps people reconnect with their neighbours and local community.

Within Homeshare, people report many benefits:

- 96% of householders reported feeling less lonely since their Homesharers moved in and 86% reported feeling happier.
- Householders feel safer and comforted with an overnight presence in the home and Homesharers enjoy giving back to the local community.

*(Homeshare UK, 2021, sector survey)*



**Deborah Fox,**  
Head of Homeshare UK

## The UK's first social business offer

“We need all our communities to have a well-established Homeshare programme, which supports a growing number of people to find a safe place to live, friendship and some help around the home.

From 2022, Homeshare can be established through the Homeshare UK network's not-for-profit social franchise model, which provides a safe, effective, and professional Homeshare service in your local area. It offers real financial returns, and maintains the values and high service delivery standards that our Homeshare UK members uphold.

We are the only Homeshare network in the UK and provide a comprehensive range of high-quality business start-up and ongoing support services to our franchisees to support them to build and operate successful local social businesses.

But to be successful, you need the support of local authorities, housing providers, and other key organisations in the community, including the voluntary sector. You need leadership and commitment. You need front-line staff to fully understand and support the model and develop dedicated referral pathways.

This guide provides practical steps to help leaders in local authorities, and partners, to develop and support Homeshare in your local communities. We look forward to working with you.”



# Growing Homeshare – key steps to success

## Understanding your local population

**Local authorities are increasingly using population segmentation, risk stratification and other demographic profiling techniques to gain a better understanding of the local population and identify which groups are most likely to be interested in Homeshare.**

This segmentation then drives approaches to market for each group. Shared Lives Plus, which supports several areas to set up Homeshare programmes, uses ACORN – a customer classification tool – to help them understand the local population and develop targeting strategies.

Evidence from the UK and overseas suggests Homeshare is most successful in urban areas where:

- There are significant numbers of older people living alone
- Property is expensive to rent or buy
- Transport links are good
- There are significant student populations including mature and overseas students
- There are large employers such as hospitals, public sector, and retail.



**“We have a clear, shared story about how we work and what we want to change.”**

– A Think Local Act Personal, Asset Based Area 2.0



## Co-producing a compelling vision for Homeshare

Successful areas start with a clear story about change, with input and ownership from a broad range of agencies and communities. The vision is broad, focusing not just on Homeshare, but how it fits into a wider vision for an asset-based or strengths-based area, harnessing the gifts, networks and social assets people possess in that community.

Think Local Act Personal (TLAP) identifies co-production as a long-term relationship, where the people responsible for services work together with those using services, to share ideas and spaces for decision-making about policies, services, and activities.

The Directory of Community-centred innovations identifies Homeshare as one of many initiatives that seek to build community resilience and wellbeing.

That narrative is then put into practice, through co-designing local plans, and owned by local people, especially those who rely on services most, and/or most likely to be excluded from services and communities.

Homeshare organisations need to develop mechanisms for involving people and making sure the programme reflects and build on the aspirations, gifts, community assets, and individual strengths of people and families. In some areas, coproduction forums or panels have been established to provide oversight of the Homeshare scheme on an ongoing basis.

## Working in partnership

Leaders who want to build Homeshare ensure that the voluntary and community sector are at the heart of the partnership, as they often become critical in supporting referrals, and are skilled at reaching all kinds of communities.

Local partnership who can help deliver Homeshare:

- Adult services, public health, housing and community health services
- Large local employers and workforce development programmes
- A local further or higher education establishment, and student welfare groups
- The local voluntary sector, particularly organisations for older people and carers
- Local politicians and others who can champion the service
- The local academic community, to take an evidence-gathering approach.

There are a range of partnerships that are currently being developed that seek to drive improvement in health, housing and social care, including Integrated Care System (ICS) partnerships and new older people’s housing partnerships, as discussed in the Adult Social Care White Paper. It is important to ensure that, where necessary, you develop joint strategies and plans.

## Growing Homeshare – key steps to success

### Setting realistic timescales for growth

Research shows that it takes time to grow Homeshare; especially in areas where there is no history of the service. We would encourage leaders to be ambitious about Homeshare, but overestimating the numbers who will be recruited and underestimating the time it takes to set up, market, promote and recruit householders and sharers can be counterproductive. Based on our experience of helping many new Homeshare organisations become established, we can help to estimate accurately the levels of growth that can be expected.

### Putting in place robust policies and procedures

Public awareness remains low, and despite the approach being especially popular internationally, some people worry about its safety. Local authorities need to work with the new programmes to put in place or demonstrate how they will develop or adapt existing policies on safeguarding, privacy and other risks that may arise, to ensure risk is minimised and to identify plans for risk management. Successful areas have robust safeguarding policies in place and ensure that all staff working in Homeshare are trained and understand tried and tested policy and practice.

**“We will support local Communities to build the partnerships and plans to embed housing as part of the local health and care system.”**

– People at the Heart of Care:  
Adult Social Care Reform, 2021

### Developing solid referral pathways

In most cases, referrals are not from social care, or the main statutory services. Instead, they often come from individuals, such as the children or siblings of older people, or voluntary sector organisations. It is important that local partners have a good understanding of how and when to refer someone into Homeshare. There are three keys to an effective referral:

- Clear information on the support offer and who appropriate participants are
- Mutual and shared aims between Homeshare and the referral agency
- Reassurance of referral organisations' concerns about safeguarding and liabilities.



### Improving information, guidance and staff training

In light of advice contained in the recent white paper on the future of adult social care, many local authorities are currently in the process of improving and reorganising their information, advice and guidance.

Local authorities found value in face-to-face interactions, through use of stalls at local community events or referral agency information days. This allowed services to build rapport and trust with potential applicants and has resulted in reported higher contact-to-enquiry conversion than marketing materials in isolation, which was important in smaller communities or amongst vulnerable populations.

**“Homeshare is a common-sense approach that tackles two problems at once in a creative way. Loneliness is a hidden problem in our communities and, as well as providing more homes, this scheme will provide companionship and bring different generations together.”**

– Paul Ellis, Wandsworth Council,  
cabinet member for Adult Care  
and Health

### Consider all information channels:

- Ensure that staff in local authority customer services or contact teams have good information available about local Homeshare opportunities and know how to signpost people.
- Roll out training on Homeshare to all front-line staff who are likely to come across people that could benefit from Homeshare, such as customer contact centre staff, social workers, housing officers, library workers, GPs, voluntary and community sector workers, care navigators and social prescribers.
- Equip social prescribers with good information about Homeshare
- Ensure that all council and key partner websites have clear and accessible information about Homeshare.
- Develop a group of champions locally who can promote and disseminate information about Homeshare, and act as a good point of contact for problems or issues.



## Growing Homeshare – key steps to success

### Targeted marketing

Lessons from successful Homeshare organisations show that having a comprehensive, and well-resourced marketing plan (within obvious difficult financial constraints), is vital. There are varied target population groups and it is necessary to use your local understanding of the local population and ACORN demographic analysis for the marketing approach to adopt a range of activity. Various approaches should be deployed such as online, events and presentations to local groups and communities, as well as plans and timelines for monitoring a review of the approach.

### Making the case for Homeshare

We now have evidence to demonstrate that Homeshare will improve a range of outcomes for people, but also save costs in health and social care. However, securing investment to set up a new service or grow an existing one is never straightforward. This is why it is important for those who are leading on growing Homeshare, to develop robust and compelling cases for making the investment, which we have supported in several local areas.

### A good business case:

- Sets out the positive case for growing Homeshare, including any relevant strategic priorities, local demographic drivers, and projection of likely demand
- Explores the current strengths, weaknesses and opportunities associated with existing provision (or what gaps exist due to lack of a Homeshare programme)
- Is co-produced with people who draw on care and support, seeking out their views and aspirations
- Explores the cost and benefits of different growth options, based on a comprehensive analysis of Homeshare compared against other models of care, such as residential care, supported living or extra care homes
- Presents a clear costed plan for growth, including staff costs (including on costs and overheads), any transition costs (e.g. decommissioning an existing service or moving staff) and how these increase over time.
- Articulates risks and mitigations associated with implementation
- Provides recommendations on next steps and realistic timelines for implementation



**“We are interested in attracting younger older people, whilst they are independent but would welcome some companionship. To reach this group we have sought to use different language and approaches. After testing with local people, we found that the idea of having a housemate resonated with younger potential Householders. It offers them an entry into the Homeshare world at a lower level of support, which can be increased in time should their needs change.”**

– Ramona Amuza, Homeshare Gloucestershire Manager

## Find out more

**This paper is the first of a series of resources Shared Lives Plus will be publishing to support local areas to grow Shared Lives and Homeshare.**

Shared Lives Plus has more than 35 years’ experience of supporting local authorities schemes to grow Shared Lives and Homeshare. We can support you with:

- Needs analysis
- Coproduction
- Cost benefit analysis
- Recruitment strategies
- Business cases and options appraisal
- Training of social workers in the benefits of Shared Lives
- Implementation planning
- Commissioning strategies and plans

This is a shortened version of the toolkit, and a longer version is available online [homeshareuk.org](http://homeshareuk.org)

🔍 **search keywords ‘Growing Homeshare’**

**To find out how we can help meet your goals, please contact us:**

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