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# Frequently Asked Questions

## What is Homeshare?

Homeshare brings people together with spare room with people who are happy to chat and lend a hand around the house in return for affordable, sociable accommodation.

In a Homeshare, someone who needs a small amount of help to live independently in their own home (householder) is matched with someone who has a housing need and can provide support and companionship (homesharer). In return for 10 hours a week of help around the home, a householder provides a room and shared facilities rent-free to a homesharer. Agreements are flexible and tailored to the needs and abilities of the parties involved.

Homeshare is a way of helping people to help each other by exchanging their resources. It enables two unrelated people to share a home for mutual benefit.

**“Householders”** are often (not always) older people who have developed some support needs or have become isolated or anxious about living alone.

**“Homesharers”** are often younger people, students, or key public service workers who cannot afford housing where they work. Or they may be unable to access council housing or are living in temporary accommodation.

## Who are Shared Lives Plus?

Shared Lives Plus is the UK network for Shared Lives and Homeshare. Shared Lives Plus provides support, advice and a collective voice for Homeshare services.

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Homesharing sometimes occurs informally. The Shared Lives Plus Homeshare Network members facilitate these mutually beneficial relationships in a way that is safer and more widely accessible.

## How does Homeshare work?

Homesharing relies on friendship, mutual respect and support. Both parties have a need and something to give. The Householder provides a room and shared facilities free of charge to the Homesharer. In return the Homesharer provides companionship and roughly 10 hours per week of help with low level practical tasks.

Homeshare is not a new idea – we are part of a global movement of Homeshare organisations. Homeshare started in America around 50 years ago and came to the UK in the early 80's and currently operates in 19 countries.

## Does the Homesharer have to stay in their room?

No. Usually, Homesharers also share common parts of the house such as the kitchen and living room. It's not unusual for the Homesharers and Householders to find that they have things in common and they enjoy spending time together as well as spending time alone.

## What kind of support does a Homesharer provide?

A Homesharer is expected to provide about 10 hours per week of low level practical help. This is detailed in your agreement and these are flexible and tailored to the needs and abilities of the people involved. Homesharer responsibilities and can include things like cooking, cleaning, walking the dog, gardening, helping with technology or just keeping the Householder company.

## What about personal care?

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A Homesharer does not provide any elements of personal care to the Householder. Personal care includes: bathing, medication administration, lifting and feeding. However, it is possible for a Homeshare arrangement to sit alongside a separate personal care service.

## What are the benefits of Homesharing?

### For Householders...

- Enables them to stay in their own home longer
- Feeling they are giving something back to society and their community
- Having someone on hand to do those tasks they don't have time or ability to do
- For those who live alone, just having someone around the house can be a great comfort
- The practical help provided by the Homesharer and the contribution to utilities could potentially save a significant amount of money.

### For Homesharers...

- They are able to live in low cost and safe accommodation sometimes in areas near their work or studies that they otherwise wouldn't be able to afford.
- A social living environment
- Feeling they are giving something back to society and their community

## How do I become a Householder or Homesharer?

The first step of becoming a Householder or Homesharer is having a chat with your Homeshare Coordinator. For the coordinator to find the best match for you, they need to get to know you. If you want to proceed after this chat, this is what will happen:

- You will be asked to fill in an application form with more details about yourself, your hobbies, your interests, what you are looking for in a match (the support you

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would like as a Householder or can offer as a Homesharer). Your coordinator will go through this with you to make sure they have as much detail as possible to make a strong match.

At this point, if you are a Householder:

- We will write up an anonymous profile for you which will be used to advertise the opportunity to potential Homesharers.
- We will complete our safeguarding checks like assessing your property and carrying out reference and DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks if necessary.
- We can then share with you a selection of Homesharer profiles for you to consider.

If you are a Homesharer:

- We will then write up a profile for you which will be shared with Householders of Homeshares you are interested in.
- We will complete our safeguarding checks by following up references and completing financial and DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks (these are to be paid for by the applicant before any meetings can take place).

Once a Householder asks to meet a Homesharer after viewing their profile, an introductory meeting will be arranged with the coordinator present. Both parties may also like to have a friend or family member come along.

If the introduction is a success then the Coordinator will support the Householder and the Homesharer to produce a voluntary agreement. This will detail your responsibilities to each other and specify an “end date” for your match (this can always be extended later).

We then suggest a trial period of a month, during this time 2 weeks notice can be given to terminate the agreement (after the trial period 1 calendar month notice will be required).

You will have regular contact (a mix of face to face, phone calls and email) with your Coordinator throughout your Homeshare. This allows your Coordinator to monitor and support the progress of your arrangement and ensure that both Householders and Homesharers are happy, well and safe.

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## How long does it take to make a match?

It varies. Matching the right people together is our priority rather than rushing into a match that might not work. Getting DBS checks can also take some time.

## How long does a Homeshare match last?

The average Homeshare match length is 12 months – the longest current match has been active for over 5 years.

## Is it safe?

Our coordinators get to know all participants well and by the time the Homeshare arrangement starts Householders and Homesharers won't be strangers. We have a very thorough vetting process; suitability to partake in the programme is checked through a thorough application process, interviews, meetings, exploring the motivations of participating in the programme, and references requests. All expected security checks are carried out including enhanced DBS checks. Home checks are also conducted to ensure homes are safe and suitable.

We will meet with both parties to satisfy ourselves that there are no risks to either the Householder or the Homesharer. We also encourage family members and friends to get involved so everyone feels comfortable with the set up.

When we feel that we have found a suitable match, we will introduce you and let you get to know each other. If that feels right, we can organise a trial period. You will know at each stage whether you feel comfortable and safe progressing to the next stage. We provide on-going support and monitoring to all matches.

## How much does it cost?

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## For the Householder

The monthly Householder fee is £50 per month. Householders will not receive any money towards rent from the Homesharer but may receive a contribution towards the cost of household bills and utilities from the Homesharer.

## For the Homesharer

The Homesharer does not pay rent to the Householder. Instead, the Homesharer pays Homeshare UK to cover the costs incurred in finding and supporting good matches.

- **£X** initial admin fee to cover recruitment and safeguarding checks
- **£X** (Fees paid to Homeshare programmes vary to reflect local economies but always represent significant savings on other accommodation options).

In addition a Homesharer may pay a contribution towards to cost of household bills and utilities.

## Will homesharing affect my entitlement to benefits or other state support?

No rent changes hands in a Homeshare agreement and there is no tenancy agreement which makes things a lot simpler. If homesharing may affect your eligibility in terms of benefits or allowances, we will work through these together before you make a decision to join the scheme. Everybody's situation is different and we will endeavour to get the best possible outcome for our Householders and Homesharers.

## What if something goes wrong?

This isn't something we often see happen. This is because we have such a thorough and diligent matching process. The match will only go ahead if all parties feel they are the perfect fit.

Homeshare matches are made carefully and we work hard to ensure prospective Homesharers understand how the organisation works and whether it is suitable for them.

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The Homeshare Coordinator is there to provide support if something goes wrong. Sometimes a little assistance from the Coordinator in communicating expectations or concerns is all that it takes to get a match back on track. Most Homeshares end because of the Homesharer needing to move to a different area or a Householder requiring more support than a Homeshare can provide.

If you do want to end your Homeshare agreement prematurely there is normally a notice period of a month. However, in the case of gross misconduct, there is no notice period.

### **Where can I find out more about Homeshare?**

You can find out more about Homeshare via our website **XXX**

You can email **XXX** or call **XXX** for more information to be sent electronically or to arrange a discussion.

We need your help to raise awareness of Homeshare and encourage more people to get involved.

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