

# THE HOMESHARE ANNUAL REPORT 2020



**THE HomeShare**  
Together Helping Eachother

THE HomeShare

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# Forward

By Lucie Cunningham CEO & Founder



Covid-19 has had a long lasting and detrimental effect on society and the World. Many of us have lost loved ones and businesses. Our economy and our mental health have suffered, and our Health Service has experienced its greatest pressure in modern times. That said, we have also witnessed incredible unity, community spirit and innovation.

Without doubt, one cohort in our society suffered more than any other, those over the age of 70. They were asked to “Cocoon”, for months. Overnight, they were instructed to remain socially isolated in their homes, a practice which is against our nature as humans. The very cohort of people who need social interaction and stimulation the most. It is not until we reach a certain age (it differs from person to person depending on our mental and physical health) that we need others to survive, both for practical support and mental stimulation. While the rest of us had social media and technology to turn to, this cohort had to learn to survive alone, at the very time in their lives they needed people the most.

We have all witnessed and celebrated the incredible outpouring of solidarity and community spirit offered to those in society who were the real victims of Covid-19 (apart from those who lost their lives, loved ones and businesses) our older population. The Age Friendly charities, non-profit organisations and countless volunteers have worked tirelessly to give our older population a voice, a meal, hope and encouragement that they were not forgotten.

I have felt both proud and humbled by the countless conversations I have had with our Householders, their family members and our Sharers over the last 3 years, but most especially this year. The positive impact Homesharing has had on all their lives is not to be underestimated. Most of their stories and experiences remain private because many of our families and Homeshare matches wish to remain anonymous, as do most of us when it comes to our private lives. But to hear examples every day from them about how Homesharing has given them a renewed sense of living and not just existing, is simply humbling.

I am very proud to publish our 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Report. The figures herewith are very small, but “Mighty Oaks from Little Acorns Grow”. By collaborating and working together, we all have the power to offer change and help people live their best life, no matter their age and stage in life.

I would like to thank most sincerely those who have supported and believed in the future of THE HomeShare thus far. Your encouragement has enabled me to not give up on my vision of Homesharing in Ireland.

# Introduction

Since its foundation, THE HomeShare has successfully matched over 100 householders and sharers providing practical support and companionship for otherwise lonely and isolated householders. Today, THE HomeShare has 26 matches across the Republic of Ireland equating to approximately 7,200 hours of practical support in 2020 alone, and over 48,000 hours if you take into consideration the over night presence.

We are proud to be a part of Homeshare International, the global partnership of Homeshare organisations.

Homesharing does not just address the symptoms of loneliness, it gets to the causes, builds bridges across cultural divides and creates new intergenerational social connections in people's lives and homes. Homesharing works because it benefits both participants and allows both to contribute equally. Much like our UK and International partners, our message to older people is no longer that Homeshare will help you if you are lonely, but it will give you an opportunity to give a young person a start in life. Homesharing also works because this model is the only affordable option for social support which enables older persons, and those who are vulnerable, to remain living in their home of choice.

At THE HomeShare, we have been driving the Homeshare model in Ireland for over three years now. We need local leaders to step up and build on this momentum by supporting us to develop 'Homeshare-friendly areas', with Homesharing built into Local Authority's strategies. We need support in raising awareness, generating designated referral pathways and strategic council support in ensuring that Homesharing is an option for all, including those in social housing and those on housing assistance payments.

In the coming year we hope to offer strategic support to councils to explore how to get Homeshare established in your area, who to target and how to become a place where Homeshare thrives.



***'Colette and David pictured above, took part in Virgin One's "OAP B&B", a TV Series based on THE HomeShare model***

# What is Homeshare?



Homeshare brings together someone who needs some help to live independently in their own home with someone who needs some where to live. In return for low-cost accommodation, the Homesharer provides a minimum of 10 hours of support each week to the Householder as well as a presence in the home overnight for peace of mind and in case of emergencies.

THE HomeShare is a not-for-profit social enterprise that is part of a global Homeshare movement with programs currently operating across 17 countries including UK, Spain, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Australia, Canada, and the USA.

Householders are typically older people, or people who need support, to continue to live in their own homes. Householders, in most cases, have some support needs or may have become isolated or anxious about living alone. The idea is that with reassurance and companionship, Householders will continue to live full, happy and healthy lives. Householders will also be able to pass on their skills and experience to enrich the lives of those that share with them.

Homesharers are often younger working professionals or students who cannot afford housing where they work/study. Sharers are happy to give their time to support the needs of older people.

Homesharing benefits and enriches the lives of both the Householder and the Homesharer. It is not just about providing support but is also a great way to support intergenerational learning and to meet new people.

The support provided through THE HomeShare helps Householders live independently in their own home for much longer. The type of support offered by the Homesharer is agreed between the Householder and Homesharer and can include activities such as: companionship, cooking, shopping, cleaning, help with household administration and pet care.

The two are matched together by THE HomeShare, who find the right matches and offer ongoing support and monitoring to ensure the arrangement continues to work well for both people. THE HomeShare prides itself on its person-centred approach, with each match being a bespoke pairing. The Homeshare relationship is based on trust and friendship. People from different backgrounds, ethnicities and professions take part in homesharing. It is based on people helping each other to live better lives and create better communities.

# Our Calls to Action

Our aim is for Homeshare to become a mainstream housing and social care option in which participants can have confidence



## To make this happen we need:

- Investment for Homeshare in areas currently not well serviced including Galway, Cork, Limerick, Waterford, the North West and more rural areas outside the main cities and towns in Ireland
- Support from local and national policy makers to overcome key policy barriers that prevent people participating in Homeshare.
- More Health and Social Care professionals and other community based older person services understanding fully the Homeshare model and promoting THE HomeShare as a complimentary support model and the development of dedicated referral pathways from key public and local services
- Older people and their families to plan for later life and look at Homeshare as an option earlier to prevent reaching crisis point and enjoy Homesharing for longer



**‘THE HomeShare – Supporting Intergenerational Living’**

# THE HomeShare

## Supporting Policy Makers



THE HomeShare, in line with '**Housing Options for Our Ageing Population – Policy Statement**' (published in February 2019 by the Departments of Health and Housing) seek to respond to the preferences of older persons by putting in place initiatives to enable older persons to remain living independently in their homes and communities for longer.

**Action 4.8** of this policy statement details the launch of a new scheme to address housing issues for older people and the housing needs of others. Point 4.8 states the scheme will match those older people with under occupancy that wish to share their home with persons who require housing in exchange for providing practical support. This is Homesharing and this is what THE HomeShare has sought to achieve since its foundation in 2017.

The objective of THE HomeShare organisation is to seek support from local and national policy makers to overcome key policy barriers that prevent people from participating in Homeshare. Such restrictions and barriers imposed by mainstream legislation and policy, notably in relation to social housing and benefits, continue to impact on wider up-take of the service and limit the breadth of potential outcomes achievable. Social housing tenants/occupants should be afforded the same opportunities and availability to our services as their counterparts.

THE HomeShare supports the development and growth of stronger, more resilient communities. Homesharing is a direct and mutually beneficial solution to the current housing crisis nationwide. Homesharing provides older persons with a financially sustainable housing/support solution whilst also scaling the availability of current housing stock.

By offering older persons residing in under occupied dwellings with an opportunity to share their home with an accommodation seeker, Homesharing increases the availability and occupancy of existing housing stock and reduces the level of expenditure to local authorities with regard to accommodation seekers receiving housing supplements such as HAP.



# THE HomeShare

## Supporting Housing Authorities

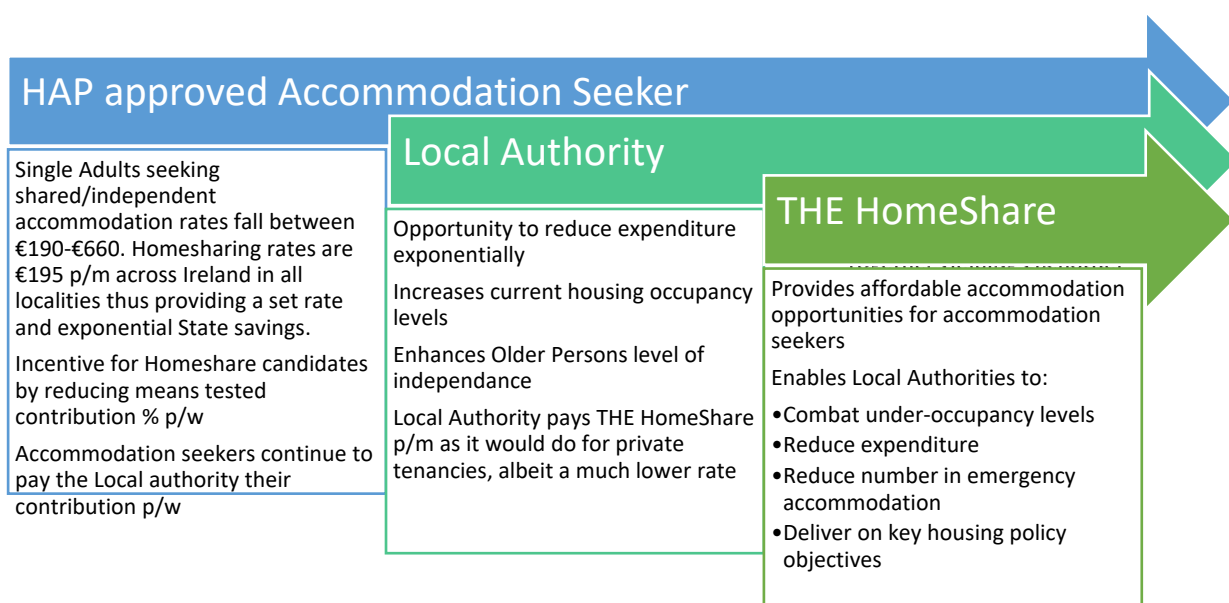


Figure 1: Homesharing and HAP

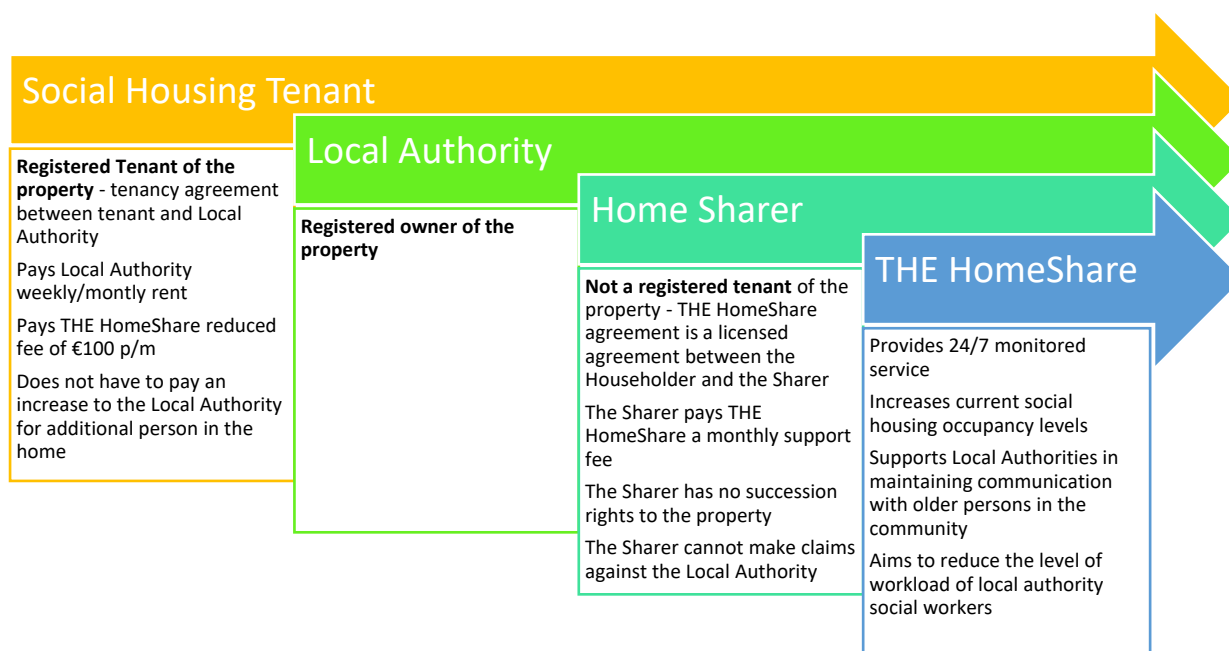


Figure 2: Homesharing and Social Housing Tenants



# Homeshare Case Study #1

## A Musical Match – Pat (91) & Farah (26)

One of our many Homeshare success Stories

Pat and Farah instantly connected when they were introduced to each other in November 2019.

Pat was living alone in his 3-bedroom home and although he is an extremely fit and healthy man, he found himself wanting company. This was never truer than when Covid-19 hit our shores and all of Pat's weekly activities (including jazz clubs and ballroom dancing) came to an abrupt end.

Pat is an acclaimed artist and musician, and Farah is a professional musician and singer. There is a 65-year age gap, but this is in numbers only as they are regularly jamming together on Instagram to keep busy during the lockdown! In addition to this, they regularly go for walks and cycles, and generally keep each other company.

Pat began introducing Farah as his new Granddaughter very soon into their Homeshare arrangement and Farah looks to Pat as her Irish Grandad.

Pat and Farah represent what is so truly wonderful about HomeSharing.



*"Farah & I are very grateful to be living in this situation, thanks to the Homeshare for introducing us. The concept of HomeShare is wonderful."*

**Pat, 91 years**

*"My sisters and I and the rest of our family and friends included are so pleased and relieved that our 91 year old father is enjoying an active and fulfilled life thanks to Lucie and her company choosing, organizing and overseeing a solid gold sharer for him! I highly recommend this organization."*

**Sine, Daughter**

## Homeshare Case Study #2

### Supporting older persons Preferences – Brian Murphy (93)

***\*Name changed for anonymity***

Brian is a 93-year-old gentleman who is registered blind and has carers who visit from the HSE twice each day to support him with his personal care needs and meal preparation. Due to Brian's sight impairment, he was falling more often (approx. 6 times per year) and some of those falls would result in hospital admissions (approx. 2 per year).

Not only was Brian living with the risk of falling and not being discovered for up to 16 hours, but he was also living with the negative effects of living alone including social isolation and loneliness. Moving to a Nursing Home was not Brian's wish, however he could not afford to pay for private live-in care and, in fact, did not need any care during the night, merely some company and an overnight presence in his home for peace of mind and in case of emergencies.

Brian was told about THE HomeShare service in 2017. After our initial assessment, it seemed Homesharing was the obvious solution for Brian and we found his first match in October of that year. Brian has been Homesharing now for over 3 years. For more than 2 years now, Brian has had no hospital admission and his falls have reduced dramatically.

Brian sailed through the bad Winter of 2018 and the lockdowns in 2020. When many people had to go without care during the "bad snow" of 2018 due to carers being unable to get to work, Brian had his sharer living with him who helped Brian with his meal preparation and shopping. During the lockdown's of 2020 due to Covid-19, although Brian was unable to go to his Day Centre twice a week, he did not have to go without company because he was Homesharing and was able to "cocoon" with his trusted sharer.

*"I have been using Homeshare for the past two years for my Uncle Brian who is 93 this summer. Without it he could not live at home which is extremely important to him. I have found Lucie and her team to be very professional and most importantly the genuine care that they show towards my Uncle is exemplary. I would have no hesitation in recommending their service to anybody who is considering it."*

**Mark, Nephew of Brian**

## Homeshare Case Study #3

### Building strong and resilient Relationships – Teresa (87) & Paula (67)

***\*Names changed for anonymity***

Teresa's son contacted THE HomeShare in January 2019. Teresa is living with Parkinson's Disease and her husband was very poorly in hospital at the time. We introduced Paula, a potential sharer who was looking for affordable accommodation closer to the place she worked as a full-time volunteer. Paula didn't want to live with people much younger than her, nor in a house that was too crowded.

We introduced Teresa to Paula in the nursing home she was staying in for respite while her husband was in hospital. Their bond seemed instant! Paula moved in with Teresa and almost 2 years later, the pair are inseparable. Sadly, Teresa's husband passed away in 2019. Having Paula already living in the home and being a trusted member of the household, Teresa was able to transition and come to terms with her husband's passing with the help of Paula's company.

After the first lockdown of 2020, Paula decided not to return to her voluntary work and stay at home to be company for Teresa. At the time of writing this report, the pair are still inseparable, going for their daily walks together and are looking forward to getting back out to the cinema, theatres and cups of coffee once it is safe to do so.

*"We have just celebrated the first anniversary of Paula starting her Homeshare experience with my mother Teresa. Our father passed away last August, and I don't know where we would be now if Paula wasn't in the house with my Mam. From the first meeting with Lucie till now where Lucie and her team check in and help out with vital supplies (masks etc especially at this time) if it's not possible for one of the family to get there it is brilliant to know my mam has someone to help out. I have recommended Homeshare to a good few friends and will continue to do so as we would be lost without it."*

**Paul, Dublin. Teresa's Son**

## Homeshare Case Study #4

### Maintaining financial independence – Rita (90) & Aoife (56)

*\*Names changed for anonymity*

In the early months of 2020 Aoife had heard about THE HomeShare and contacted us to enquire if she would be a suitable candidate for Homesharing. Aoife had recently returned to Ireland after many years abroad and was shocked to discover the housing situation that awaited her. Aoife had put her name on the Local Authority Housing List and was awaiting approval for HAP (Housing Assistance Payment). Once Aoife discovered the costs involved in Homesharing, she realised she would not need HAP to supplement her housing costs and could in fact maintain financial independence as homesharing is a financially sustainable model for both our householders and sharers. (We encouraged Aoife to keep her name on the Housing List to safeguard her possible future housing needs)

We introduced Aoife to Rita, a 90-year-old lady with similar interests to Aoife and who had lived alone for many years. They hit it off immediately over a cup of coffee and a cigarette! Aoife moved in with Rita within a few days and after the initial Trial Period, they were both delighted the other said Yes to continue living together. They both had company, someone to discover and watch the latest Netflix releases with and to go for walks to local coffee shops together.

Rita's family all live either outside Dublin, or abroad. For the family, having Aoife live with their Mum is the ultimate peace of mind. No longer are they worried about Rita having a fall and lying undiscovered all night and Rita's anxiety of living alone is now a thing of the past. Rita and Aoife are looking forward to decorating the house for Christmas, and maybe even having a little tipple of Baileys as a treat afterwards!



# We have BIG plans!

## Over the next 12 months we aim to:

- Develop new Homeshare provision in areas currently not well serviced such as Galway, Cork, Limerick, Waterford, the North West and more rural areas outside the main cities and towns in Ireland
- Introduce HomeShare ambassadors in Leinster, Munster and Connaught provinces to better support our matches outside the Greater Dublin area and scale up our existing network in these areas
- Raise the profile of the Homeshare model enabling many more people to enjoy a fulfilling community-based living experience
- Continue to work with our existing network, supporters and new partnerships to develop and market Homesharing. Introduce and test further services to enhance the Homeshare model and support the development of innovative ways that Homeshare can attract a wider range of participants
- Raise the profile and awareness of THE HomeShare through national marketing and promotion
- Create new online resources for our network of householders and sharers
- Continue to work to build a robust evidence base for Homeshare including outcomes-based measures
- Seek strategic partnership with Local Authorities, Slaintecare and policy makers to embed Homesharing as a mainstream social care option



# Challenges

## Covid-19



Homesharing continues to grow steadily in Ireland despite the Covid-19 pandemic. At the beginning of 2020, THE HomeShare were managing 22 successful matches. Of the 22, 11 subsequently ended when government restrictions/lockdowns

were put in place due to fear/potential risk of the virus being brought into the home by the sharer, especially those sharers working on the frontline.

By mid-July however, THE HomeShare began to see a steady increase in enquiries from family members and Healthcare professionals as they found the even more prevalent realisation of social isolation of our older population could be ameliorated through Homesharing. Householders and families sought ways to reduce isolation and loneliness, as well as a way in which they could be supported in a practical manner in the safest possible way.

Our sharers are not only put through a rigorous application process, but they are also fully vetted individuals that support their householders in daily tasks that in these uncertain times, could pose an unnecessary risk to our older population. For example, our sharers can support with topping up shopping, reducing the need for our householders to visit crowded shops and so on. Our sharers are there when family cannot.

The challenge we now face with Covid-19 is building awareness of our service so that more isolated householders can reap the benefits of our service.

## Funding

We know from evaluation of other Homeshare programmes that Homeshare organisations take time to become established into the local landscape. THE HomeShare is no different. The organisation was founded in 2017 and is still within the early growth phase. While the organisation is operationally financially stable, to grow and develop stronger awareness of our services, we require funding supports through available grants for innovation, technological supports and marketing.

As with any opportunity for funding, organisations are not always successful. Such is the case for THE HomeShare which has temporarily stunted our ability to increase our services further growth. We were proud finalists in 2 high profile awards in 2019.

# Challenges continues

## Risk averse attitude

Risk averse attitudes from health and social care professionals continue to prevent dedicated referral routes from being established. Safety of the model is still the key concern cited by potential referral agencies, families and older people themselves despite there being no safeguarding issues that have been escalated.

THE HomeShare is seeking to establish clear referral pathways so that more Health and Social Care professionals and other community based older person services better understand the Homeshare model to promote THE HomeShare as both an alternative and complimentary support model.

## Collating data

We know that Homesharing is making a difference to the people that take part as they tell us all the time, but we want to look at other ways of showing impact through data

THE HomeShare strive to provide both our Householders and Sharers with a more independent and supportive living environment. While we can gather and collate quantitative data with regard to the number of matches, support hours and the average length of Homeshares, it has proven a challenge to collate and correlate the qualitative data collected in terms of the positive improvements our Householders have realised with regard to their physical and mental wellbeing.

There is a high level of intangible information THE HomeShare team have gathered through relationship building and regular check ins with each of our matches which leads us to believe our householders have seen multiple benefits such as:

- Improved diet
- Improved mobility
- Decrease risk of falls
- Timely hospital discharge
- Increase in active hours
- Increase in positive outlook
- Decrease in social isolation and loneliness

THE HomeShare are now working with Collaboration Ireland and the 'Social Value Engine' service in the UK to measure the difference Homesharing can make to people's mental wellbeing.



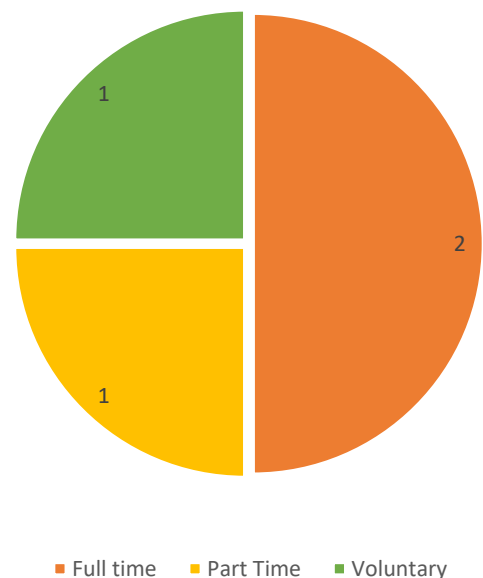
# A Snapshot of Homesharing in Ireland



- THE HomeShare provide a National Service throughout the Republic of Ireland
- The highest concentration with 62% of matches is within South Dublin
- THE HomeShare has seen a notable increase in interest from both prospective householders and sharers within areas of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown and Cork City

- THE HomeShare is a not-for-profit social enterprise.
- In 2020 THE HomeShare took on its first full time Homeshare Manager to assist and support the growth of the Homeshare model nationwide
- THE HomeShare also took on a part time Homeshare Ambassador for the Munster area in order to manage our current and prospective matches in line with our person-centred approach
- THE HomeShare is currently interviewing Volunteers

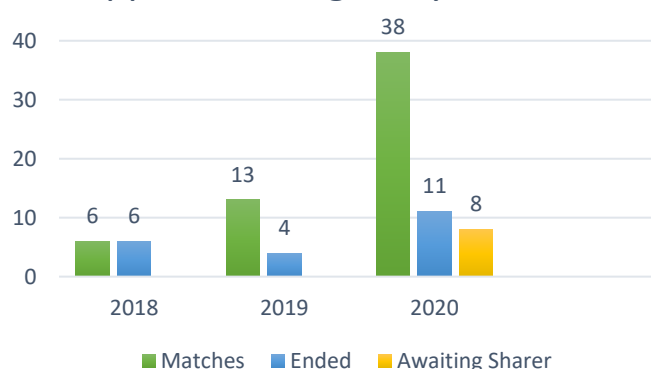
Staffing





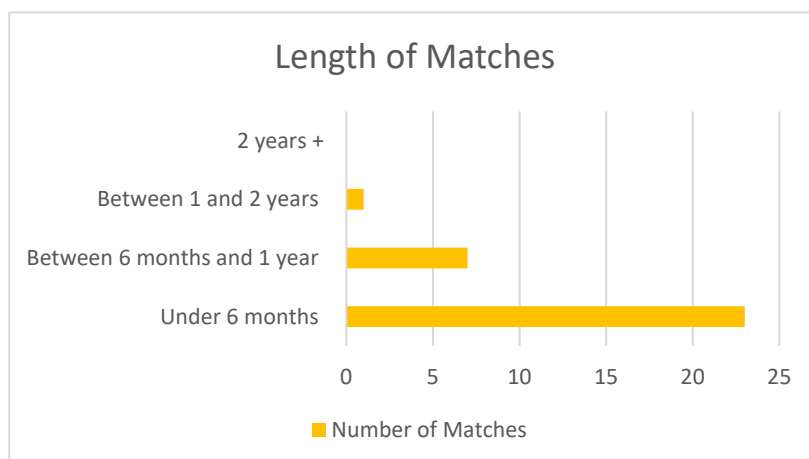
# Sustainability

## Homeshare Relationships supported in a given year



THE HomeShare has proven to be a sustainable enterprise. Our operations and growth are funded through income generated by Homeshare fees. We have also received nominal funding through a grant to enhance our website.

Over the course of 2020 THE HomeShare has supported 38 matches equating to approximately 7,500 support hours in 2020 alone. With 8 further householders awaiting suitable sharers, this number of support hours should increase to approximately 8,000 hours however the true number of hours can never fully be quantified as the amount of real time our matches spend together is in reality far higher than the 10 hours per week we request from our sharers.



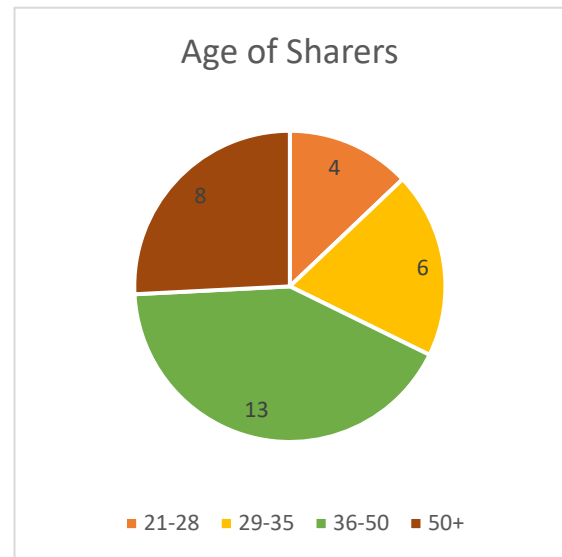
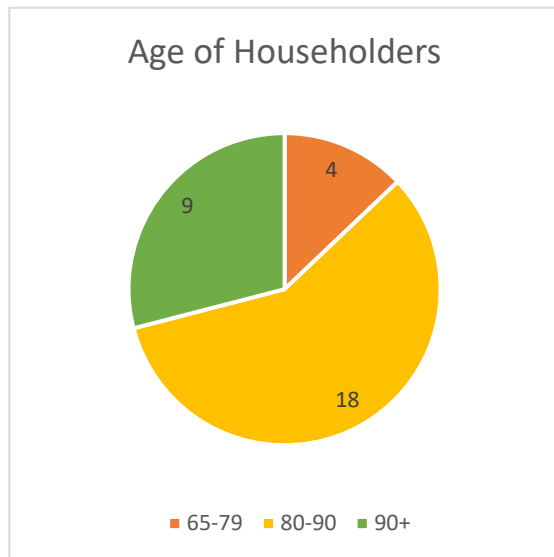
The length of a Homeshare match remains static at around 6 months but many Householders and Homesharers go on to participate in other Homeshare arrangements.

4 matches ended in 2019 with 100% of these relationships ending due to Householders passing, going into residential care and/or needing more support than Homesharing could provide.

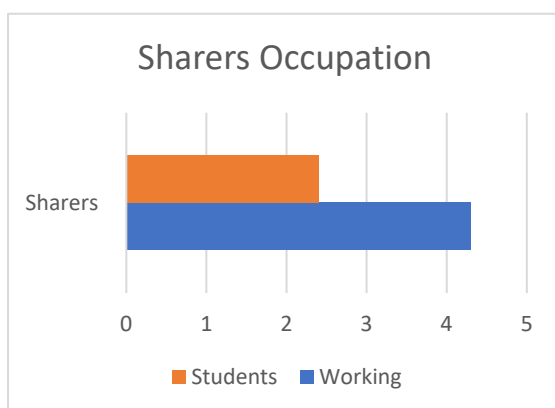
During the early months of 2020 eleven Homeshares ended due to Covid 19 fears. From mid-July, THE HomeShare has reported a rapid increase in those seeking out THE HomeShare as a potential social support for loved ones who are otherwise isolated in the current climate.

THE HomeShare currently has 26 matches and there are 8 older people waiting to be matched with a Homesharer. THE HomeShare has seen a **192% increase** in matches on 2019.

# Demographics



Our Householders are predominantly single females over the age of 80. In the UK however, 28% of Householders participating in a Homeshare arrangement in 2019 were under 79years old, an increase of 14% on 2018 showing that more and more people are beginning to seek supports earlier. 78% of all referrals to Homeshare for Householders came via a son or daughter of a potential Householder.



Homesharers are an equal mix of young professionals and students. THE HomeShare has seen a large increase in the number of accommodation seekers however not all are suitable for Homesharing. THE HomeShare has a stringent application process whereby we meet and vet each candidate to ensure suitability. THE HomeShare has had to turn down a nominal portion of potential Homesharers for various reasons including unrealistic expectations of Homesharing, poor reference and/or poor values and attitude.

THE HomeShare do not turn away potential Householders outright. We again have a thorough process whereby we meet and assess our Householders to determine their suitability to the Homeshare model. Unfortunately, Homeshare is not a viable option for some. In these instances, THE HomeShare, much like other social prescribing services, refer these Householders on to other services that can better meet their specific needs. The primary reason for Homeshare not being a viable option for potential householders is due to their care needs being too great to enable a Homeshare relationship. Other reasons include unrealistic expectations of Homesharing.

# Methodology

The information collected for this report has been used by THE HomeShare to evidence the status of Homesharing in Ireland through our service. We statistically reviewed each of our matches for the period January 2018- December 2020 to provide information with regard to:

- Organisation structure
- Delivery of the Homeshare service
- Homeshare matches
- Scheme participants
- Equality and Diversity
- Issues and Challenges

Additional information has been gathered from:

- Case studies from across the network
- Homeshare network meetings and reports
- One to one conversations with Homeshare UK network members and key stakeholders



## Testimonials

*"We had a wonderful experience with THE HomeShare. Lucie was very professional and always available. Sadly, my Mother passed but it was wonderful that she was independent up to the end, and we had the comfort of knowing that someone was with her at night and at the weekends. Karina, Mums sharer, even supported us with our role as carers. My mother would have hated professional staff in her home, and this solved the big problem we were having with her."*

**Robin Byran, Dublin**

*"I highly recommend this fantastic service which gives peace of mind to family members for their relative living on their own. Our sharer is so kind and helpful and a great companion to our dad. Lucie and her team are also amazing to work with."*

**Val, Daughter. Limerick**

*"The Homeshare has been absolutely instrumental in enabling my 86-year-old mother to continue living in her own home. Homesharing is a brilliant concept and is very professionally executed by Lucie and her team. Lucie puts a lot of effort into matching the homesharer with the elderly homeowner, and the follow up service she and her team provides is really excellent. She is always on hand to deal with any issues that arise and is very proactive in keeping in touch to make sure everything is going well. We've gotten to know Lucie well over the last year and I've always found her to be honest, sincere and very empathetic towards my mother. She really has the homesharing concept very well thought out and knows how to make it work. It is a pleasure to recommend Lucie and The Homeshare."*

**Stephen Kernan, Dublin**

## Testimonials

*"We met Lucie about 6 months ago when my dad was living alone and needed a companion. The HomeShare was the perfect solution. Lucie met my dad and family, got to know him and his needs and very quickly matched him with a lovely companion who's been living with dad for 5 months now. The Sharer, first and foremost, provides peace of mind and security for dad and his safety and also does light house-work and spends time with dad each evening. Lucie and her team are on hand 24/7 if you need them. Our family would highly recommend THE HomeShare and feel so lucky to have them in our lives so dad can continue to live independently in his own home."*

**S Duffy, Son, Dublin**

*"First class service provided by the Homeshare team for my elderly Mother."*

**Dan, Son. Dublin**

*"We engaged THE HomeShare to find a homesharer for my mother. We found Lucie to be friendly, approachable, understanding, empathetic and professional. She made us feel that she was just as invested as my siblings and I were to give my mother all the time she needed to get used to the idea of sharing her home with someone she didn't know, and then to find the best match. Lucie was always on hand if we needed her. I have happily recommended THE HomeShare to other people I know who have found themselves in a similar situation to us and will continue to do so."*

**Marigold White, Australia (Mum living in Dublin)**



# **THE HomeShare**

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