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LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF HEALTH &
COMMUNITY STUDIES



FINAL REPORT:

Leeds Homeshare: Local evaluation

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Summary of Key Findings

From July 2016 to June 2020, Leeds Homeshare received 236 enquiries, although only 137 gave consent for their data to be shared. Numbers of people enquiring per quarter were generally small ($n < 10$), especially for homeowners, but a large spike in enquiries from Homesharers was seen in Q5 (July – September 2017), corresponding to an advert run in 'Spare Room' magazine. Another spike in Q9 followed the second launch of Leeds Homeshare, with associated press coverage.

The Leeds Homeshare scheme achieved eleven matches in the 4 years from July 2016 – June 2020, which meant that it did not become financially sustainable in that time. One of the main barriers was having a small pool of homeowners to draw on, meaning that suitable matches could not be made in time for homesharers who needed accommodation in a set timeframe. Interviewees suggested several possible reasons for this, including: organisational barriers leading to lack of referrals; scepticism from external organisations who might have been partners; delayed or untargeted marketing and communication; concerns over safeguarding; cultural perceptions of strangers, sharing living space and the younger generation.

The homeowners and homesharers who took part in interviews were strongly in favour of Homeshare and reported a range of benefits including: companionship, friendship, reduced social isolation and loneliness; feelings of safety; informal support – mainly from the homesharer to the homeowner as expected, but also some support given by the homeowner to the homesharer; intergenerational connections; support/ peace of mind for families of homeowners; wider social connections; financial benefits. Most described a successful process of negotiating boundaries at an early stage within the Homeshare dyad, sometimes supported by the project coordinator. For homesharers, there were some concerns and worries over homeowners' health issues and wanting to support them. For homeowners there were some concerns over homesharers doing too much to support them. It was clear that in successful matches, both parties enjoyed each others' company and had come to care about one another, using words such as 'friend', 'family' and 'relationship'. This relationship and companionship between them seemed to be perceived as of more importance than the 'selling points' of ten hours of support (for the homeowner), and the offer of affordable accommodation (for the homesharer).

Of the factors which facilitated successful matches, the most important was the role of the project coordinator. There was universal praise for the project coordinator throughout the process of matching the homeowner and homesharer, and supporting the matches, including intervening when necessary in unsuccessful matches. The project coordinators' efforts in developing partnerships and marketing were also praised, although it was acknowledged that more coordinated cross-council

support in this area would have been helpful. Other facilitating factors included trusted sources to spread the word about Homeshare, good partnerships, flexibility, and getting the timing right.

An unexpected finding was that the model of older homeowner matched with younger homesharer was not necessarily the only one. The monitoring data showed that the age ranges of potential homeowners and homesharers overlapped, and the first successful match was in fact between a homeowner aged under 50 years with a chronic illness and a mature homesharer only 10 years younger.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings from the local evaluation, which reported strong benefits relating the predicted theory of change pathway for all (but a small number of) participants, the following recommendations are made for the continued delivery of Leeds Homeshare:

- The role of the project coordinator is vital to making successful matches and maintaining them, and dealing with unsuccessful matches in a supportive way, and should continue as a full time role, especially if more matches are made such that the programme becomes financially sustainable.
- To get more matches and become financially sustainable, a different approach to marketing and communication needs to be taken, both in terms of appealing to homeowners and the people who can refer them (both Leeds City Council staff and external statutory and VCISO organisations). The national Homeshare UK organisation has offered to help with this.
- Concerns around safeguarding, which appear to be unfounded, need to be addressed directly.
- Clarity over the financial model may help with recruitment.
- Many potential homeowner enquiries were from families of potential homeowners – marketing should be aimed at this group.
- Financially sustainable models elsewhere in the UK are marketed on financial savings for the homesharer, rather than reciprocal companionship, which seemed to be the major success in Leeds. This may be worth considering, although the problem in Leeds is not a shortage of homesharers, but homeowners.
- Future research might usefully look at the other Homeshare schemes as comparative case studies. Of particular interest would be whether homeshare dyads were experiencing the same levels of support and friendship as in Leeds Homeshare, and if not to examine the

potential 'trade off' between the rich social relational experience enjoyed by Leeds Homeshare participants versus the financially sustainable models which may involve less support for participants.

Introduction

Background

Leeds Homeshare

The Leeds Homeshare project is a pilot project funded by the Big Lottery, as part of a national initiative, and delivered by Leeds City Council Shared Lives, in partnership with St Anne's Shared Lives, Care & Repair Leeds and Leeds Older People's Forum, as well as Leeds Beckett University. The project involves bringing together older people (Homeowners) who are at risk of isolation or loneliness and wish to share their home with somebody, and younger professionals or mature students (Homesharers). The aim of the intervention is to improve wellbeing and quality of life and reduce social isolation and loneliness in older people, while providing affordable housing for younger people and fostering intergenerational links. The Shared Lives service is experienced in the screening and preparation processes needed in order to "match" people and support and monitoring is provided throughout the project by Leeds City Council Adult Social Care.

The project board was set up from June 2015 to apply for funding, which was awarded in January 2016. A project coordinator was appointed in June 2016, and Leeds Homeshare officially 'launched' in September 2016. Following the first year interim report, there was a 'relaunch' of Leeds Homeshare with a celebratory meeting in the summer of 2018. The project board met monthly at first, and from January 2017 met 2-monthly. This final report represents 4 years of Leeds Homeshare.

Earlier work

A study was carried out in 2014 by Leeds Beckett University (formerly Leeds Metropolitan University) and Leeds City Council to identify and assess the needs of potential local Homeowners and Homesharers. 17 potential homeowners and 18 potential homesharers were interviewed. The most commonly reported perceived benefit for both groups was companionship, and also financial benefits, particularly for the homesharer. Homeowners also expected that they would feel 'safer' having someone in the house, for example if they had a fall. Both homeowners and homesharers felt that it would be a rewarding experience: homesharers felt that it would be a valuable experience for them, and homeowners believed they could learn from the homesharers and in turn would like to share experiences with them. Concerns were also expressed, by both groups, around the matching process and the uncertainty over whom they would be paired with, around uncertainty over what would be expected of them, and over potential risks, with concerns expressed that either party

could 'take advantage'. Homesharers had concerns about fitting tasks around work commitments and their social life, and about emotional aspects of the arrangement. Homeowners were apprehensive about having a 'stranger' living in their home, with many expressing a preference for living alone. Potential homesharers felt more positive about the proposed scheme than potential homeowners. Both groups expressed a need for a trial period, and ongoing support and monitoring. Homesharers were willing to pay a joining fee, but on the whole, homeowners were not (Allen et al., 2014). The report concluded that a pilot scheme was needed in Leeds to explore these issues further, and that it would be useful to work in collaboration with existing services in Leeds to roll out the scheme.

Wider literature

In the UK, there is a concern to meet the needs of elderly people, whose family and friends cannot provide the required help, companionship and security. According to a recent report published by Age UK, the total number of people supported by local authorities has reduced by over a third between 2005 and 2013, with significant falls in the number of older people receiving community services and residential and nursing homes (35% and 17% respectively) (Age UK, 2014). As a consequence, older people could find themselves at risk of being admitted to hospital, and be passed around the health and social care system without any actual benefit or savings in public funding. In addition to this, increasing costs in housing has made it difficult for young individuals such as care workers, teachers or students to find suitable accommodation.

Homeshare arrangements rely on successful pairing of people, based on compatibility, who are willing to join the scheme and have something to offer to the arrangement. Homeshare schemes recruit and assess participants, and carry out DBS checks. It is governed by a carefully worded agreement, which does not involve developing a contract of employment or tenancy rights.

The Homeshare concept is highly popular outside the UK with similar schemes already running in three continents: America, Australia and Europe. A recent scoping review of six studies of the impact of homesharing for older adults (Martinez et al., 2020) reported that increased companionship, increased wellbeing and support with daily tasks were all benefits perceived by older people. The main challenges noted by the older people related to navigating boundaries in terms of sharing space, sharing time and interpersonal relationships. The support of an external agency was seen as key to supporting a positive homeshare experience.

An evaluation of the largest Homeshare scheme in Spain (Sanchez et al. 2011) concluded that at least three dimensions of intergenerational solidarity were practised, over and above the simple exchange of accommodation for company. Participating elderly people experienced a much higher degree of intergenerational contact than if they were not in the scheme; both older and younger people acknowledged a positive change in their perceptions of the other; and the intergenerational relationships that formed were characterised by mutual help.

Outside of the national Homeshare scheme, 9 small Homeshare schemes were operating across the UK at that time, including London; East Sussex; Bristol; Cumbria; Dorset, Poole and Bournemouth; and Denbighshire. There are no reported schemes being implemented within the Yorkshire and Humber region.

According to Office of National Statistics (ONS), the population of people aged over 65 has steadily grown in Leeds over the last 10 years. Population projections show that by 2035 the population of Leeds will rise to 939,200, a percentage increase of 20.3% from 2010 reports. The age group with the greatest projected change in population is 65+ Years (47.6%). Between 2008 and 2033, the number of households is projected to go up in Leeds from 334,000 to 472,000, a 41% increase (Department of Communities and Local Government, 2010). This is greater than the percentage increase in Yorkshire and Humber (31%). Projected growth in population is the main reason for the increase in households, accounting for nearly three-quarters of the increase between 2008 and 2033. This pattern is reflected across the English regions; of the standard population variants, net international migration has the largest impact on household projections.

Evaluation Aims and Objectives

The evaluation aimed to establish key learning points from the pilot project by assessing:

- Organisational and process issues in the implementation and delivery of the project;
- Demographic profile and progress of applicants;
- Communication effectiveness;
- Changes to wellbeing and quality of life for both homeowners and homesharers
- Changes to social isolation and loneliness for both homeowners and homesharers;
- How the project is experienced by homeowners and homesharers, both in terms of process and outcomes.

Methods

We used a realistic evaluation methodology, using the Theory of Change (TOC) approach to provide a framework for the evaluation ([Judge and Bauld, 2001](#)). The TOC approach is a way of modelling how change will happen in a programme or intervention, ideally at the start of a programme or intervention.

The advantage of using a TOC approach is that it helps partners and stakeholders make explicit the links between activities delivered and programme goals (i.e. people living healthier safer and more engaged lives in their own homes; increase in affordable housing for younger people; increase in intergenerational connections). At the outset of the evaluation, local partners and stakeholders were brought together in a workshop format to develop and agree their 'theories of change'. Facilitated by the evaluation team, participants designed a map of the preconditions required to bring about the long-term goals of the Leeds Homeshare Pilot project. This TOC was then 'tested' by the evaluation team.

The evaluation used both qualitative and quantitative approaches as this strengthens findings by allowing some triangulation from different data sources.

Qualitative research

We conducted interviews with key partners (e.g. St Anne's Shared Lives, Leeds Older People's Forum, Leeds City Council Adult Social Care) to evidence the impact of the programme and to explore process issues. In the majority of cases, interviews were conducted face-to-face, at the convenience of the participants, using a semi-structured interview schedule designed to address the aims and objectives of the evaluation (See Appendix A). Individuals were sampled purposively based on how their background and role could contribute to meeting the evaluation's objectives. Additional interviews at a programme/strategic level were conducted with appropriate members of the Leeds Homeshare Pilot Partnership Board. A further four interviews were conducted with local and national stakeholders in late 2019. Three homeowners and three homesharers were interviewed in late 2018, and one homeowner and homesharer were interviewed again in 2019.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the findings of the interviews. Line by line coding of transcripts of interviews was undertaken, and emerging themes were developed.

Quantitative research

1. Monitoring data: Routinely captured information includes:
 - Participant demographics (age, sex, postcode, occupation).
 - Enquiries and referrals.

- Referral routes
- The number of people registering with the scheme.
- The number of successive and sustained matches made by the scheme.
- Motivation for enquiring

The National evaluation team also collected information, and we did not wish to add to the burden on the project workers or participants, so only asked for additional information where it was not already being collected routinely.

2. Social isolation and loneliness: We proposed to measure social isolation and loneliness at baseline and at 6 months after a person joins the scheme, using the three item tool developed by the Campaign to End Loneliness¹.
3. Quality of Life: We proposed to measure homeowners' and homesharers' quality of life at baseline, 6 months after joining and at the end of the project using the CASP-19 scale for homeowners (Wiggins et al., 2008) and adapted questions from the Adult Carer Quality of Life scale for homesharers (Elwick et al., 2010).
4. Wellbeing: The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) was used to collect data on wellbeing of both homeowners and homesharers for the national evaluation, and we expected to also have access to this data (Stewart-Brown et al., 2011), but unfortunately the national evaluation ended before any matches had been made.

Project participants were approached by the project coordinator and invited to take part in the evaluation. They were given an information leaflet (see Appendix C) and assured that they were free to take part or not, and it would not affect their service in any way, and given 2 weeks to think about it. If they then agreed to take part, they were taken through the informed consent process (see Appendix D), and given the first questionnaire to fill in (see Appendix B). All participants' data, once received, were anonymised and stored securely on password protected University computer network drives and/ or in locked cupboards and will be destroyed after 10 years, in accordance with the University data protection and management policy.

¹ <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/wp-content/uploads/Loneliness-Measurement-Guidance1.pdf>

Findings

Theory of Change

A theory of change workshop was held in July 2016, involving members of the Leeds Homeshare Pilot Project Board, and other key stakeholders. In the workshop, the participants were asked the following questions:

- Who is involved in Leeds Homeshare?
- What do people put into the project?
How could we measure that?
When should we measure that?
- Who might benefit from Leeds Homeshare?
In what ways might people benefit?
Long term benefits
Medium term benefits
Short term benefits
How could we measure that?
When should we measure it?
- Could there be any negative effects from being involved in Leeds Homeshare?
Who for?
How could we measure that?
When should we measure it?
- What does the project “pathway” look like for a Homesharer?
- What does the project “pathway” look like for a Homeowner?
- Have we missed anything?

The two hour workshop led to the production of a proposed theory of change (Table 1) and a pathway (Figure 1). This was revisited in another workshop meeting in October 2018. The revised versions are presented here. The main changes were:

- Risks moved into short term for both homeowner and homesharer;
- Developing shared interests, hobbies & skills added to both homeowner and homesharer outcomes;
- Photos removed as a data collection method;
- Help (signposting) if match does not work out added to pathway;

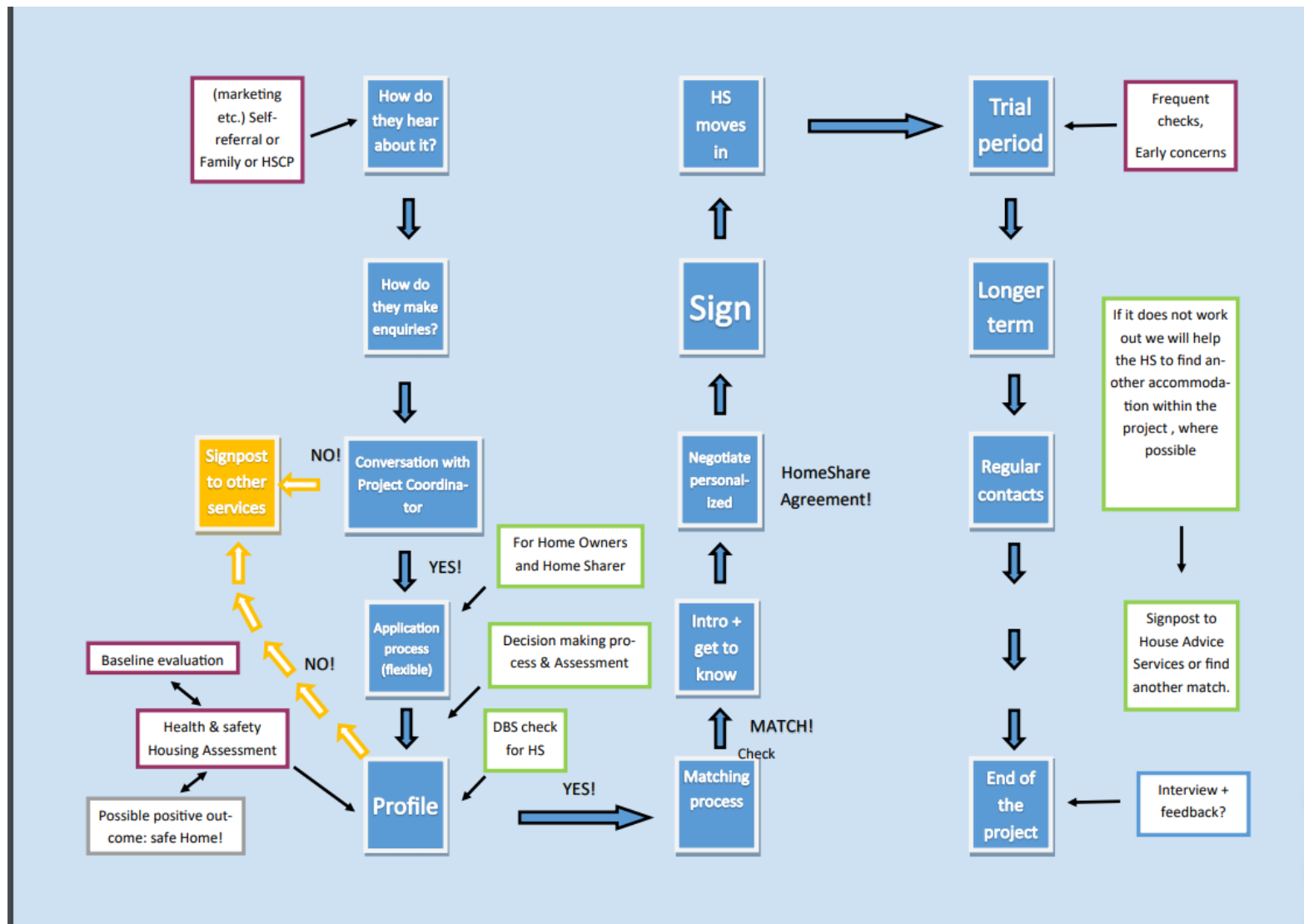
Table 1: Leeds Homeshare pilot project Theory of Change

Stakeholder group	Contribution	Short term effects (3m)	Medium term effects (6m)	Long term effects (6m +)	Measurements
Homeowners Older people (aged 60+). Intended for single people but not excluding OP + carer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodation Life experience (e.g. life skills, local knowledge) Time Informal support Companionship Stability/ security Family home Add structure to the day Safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial (cheaper than moving into sheltered accom.) Reduced isolation & loneliness Increased companionship Help with practical tasks Increased confidence? Increase physical & social activity? Enjoy living at home Increased psychological wellbeing <p>Risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expectations not met; Boundaries?; Mismatch: distress Reduced confidence if it goes wrong; Safeguarding; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased trust between HO & HS Decreased loneliness Feeling valued Social connections Less reliance on family and friends? (potential risk)? Doing more Family & friends worry less (or more?) Increased wellbeing (psychological, social, physical?) Increased social and physical activity Increased respect & understanding (intergenerational connections) 	<p>Advantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Feeling valued Reduced loneliness Skills Able to stay in home Improved health & QoL Increased social networks Developing shared interests/ hobbies skills <p>Risks: As for short term but also missing the homesharer if they leave (grown too fond)?</p>	<p>Interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Companionship Help Confidence Enjoyment Process Trust <p><i>Interviews with friends & family</i></p> <p>Questionnaire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isolation & loneliness Health & Wellbeing Activities Quality of life Feeling valued

Stakeholder group	Contribution	Short term effects (3m)	Medium term effects (6m)	Long term effects (6m +)	Measurements
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in MH issues if HS leaves early? 			
Homesharers LBU international or PhD students; LBU nursing, OT, PT, social work students; Young professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time • Informal support • Companionship inside & outside home • Help with housework etc, • Security/ safety • Life skills (e.g. IT) • Social contact • Consistent care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial (cheaper accom) • Increased companionship • Reduced isolation • Local knowledge • Increased confidence <p>Risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations not met; • Boundaries?; • Mismatch: distress • Reduced confidence if it goes wrong; • Safeguarding; • Increase in MH issues if HS is asked to leave early? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health & WB benefits (from feeling safe etc.) • Increased trust between HO & HS • Financial • Increased respect & understanding (intergenerational connections) • Reduced loneliness • Language • Security/ safety/ structure • Feeling “at home” • Increased wellbeing? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills • Employment opportunities • Money saved (housing ladder?) • Increased social networks • Developing shared interests/ hobbies skills 	<p>Interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Companionship • Confidence <p>Questionnaire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolation • Loneliness • Well-being
Others Project worker & shared lives team; OP social workers;	<p>IN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time spent with pair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased use of local amenities/ resources e.g. shops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in partnership working • Contribute to strategic aims of Leeds CC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wider community benefit of intergenerational connections 	Monitoring for national evaluation (Time spent)

Stakeholder group	Contribution	Short term effects (3m)	Medium term effects (6m)	Long term effects (6m +)	Measurements
OP family members; Health & social care professionals; Hospital discharge teams; Community groups, Third Sector organisations engaged with older people (e.g. Neighbourhood Networks, Age UK, Leeds Older Peoples Forum, Care & Repair); Housing associations; Advice & information professionals; Locality teams; Councillors; Fire & Rescue, Police (Safety checks); Research Team; Comms people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time spent promoting & networking • Engaging with HSCPs • Making procedures rigorous • Trouble shooting Evaluation • Liaison with board partners • Board members' expertise • Raising national profile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassurance for family & friends of HO and HS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent excess winter deaths • Improved communication? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HO reduced use of health services (GP, A&E, callout, hospital admissions & LOS) • Partnership opportunities • Reduced isolation overall • Reduced inequality (through making education accessible) • Sustainable option for LA • Risks: not sustainable 	<p>Interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging with HSCPs • Process of implementation Increased use of amenities • Partnership working Communication Strategic aims <p>Local data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winter deaths • Use of health services

Figure 1: Leeds Homeshare participant pathway



Monitoring data

From July 2016 to June 2020, Leeds Homeshare received 236 enquiries. The data below is taken from 137 enquirers (101 potential homesharers and 36 homeowners) who gave consent for their data to be shared. There were a further 99 enquirers who did not give consent for their data to be shared so cannot be part of the evaluation.

Figures 2 and 3 show the number of enquiries and applications each quarter from July 2016 to June 2020. Numbers of people enquiring per quarter were generally small ($n < 10$), especially for homeowners, but a large spike in enquiries from Homesharers was seen in Q5 (July – September 2017), corresponding to an advert run in ‘Spare Room’ magazine. Further spikes were seen in Q7 (January – March 2018), Q9 (July – September 2018) and Q15 (January – March 2020). The spike in Q9 followed the second launch of Leeds Homeshare, with associated press coverage.

Smaller spikes were seen in Homeowner enquiries in Q6 (October – December 2017), Q9 (July – September 2018) and Q13 (July – September 2019).

Figures 4 & 5 show the source of referrals for all of the Homesharer and Homeowner enquiries, from July 2016 to June 2020. For Homesharers (Figure 4), the data is dominated by ‘other’ (42%), but other significant sources were ‘Spare Room’ (22%), and ‘web search’ (25%). For Homeowners (Figure 5), the sources are more balanced, with perhaps a preference for face to face or more traditional communication styles: 23% ‘other’, 23% from ‘web search’, 21% from ‘word of mouth’, 18% from ‘adverts’, and 7% from professional referrals.

Motivations among enquirers for joining the Homeshare scheme were perhaps more varied than anticipated. Among 13 householders who expressed a motivation for wanting to join the scheme, only four had the motivation to facilitate independent living, while six were motivated towards companionship, one to providing supportive accommodation and two were recorded as ‘other’. Among potential homesharers, of the 52 who gave a response, the most popular motivation was for cheap accommodation ($n=25$), but 12 gave their motivation as companionship, nine as ‘new experience’, four as looking for supportive accommodation, and two as facilitating independent living.

Figure 2: Homesharer enquiries & applications per quarter

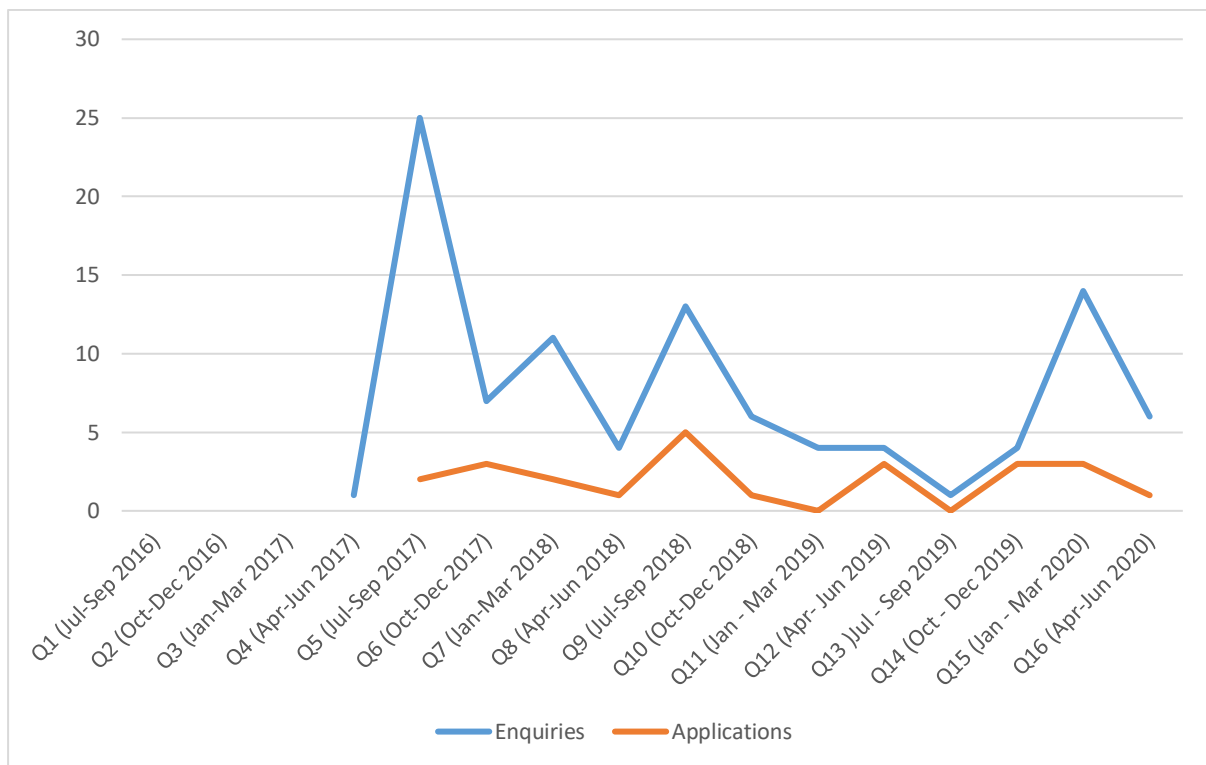


Figure 3: Homeowner enquiries & applications per quarter

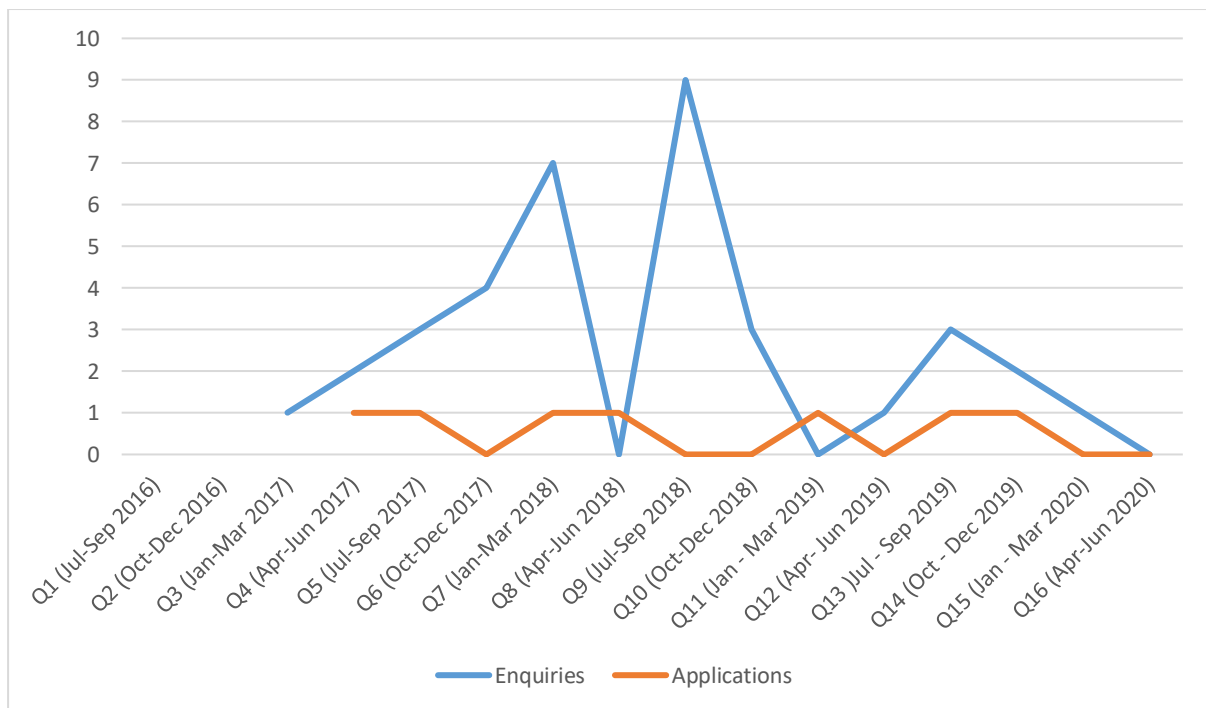


Figure 4: Sources of Homesharer referrals

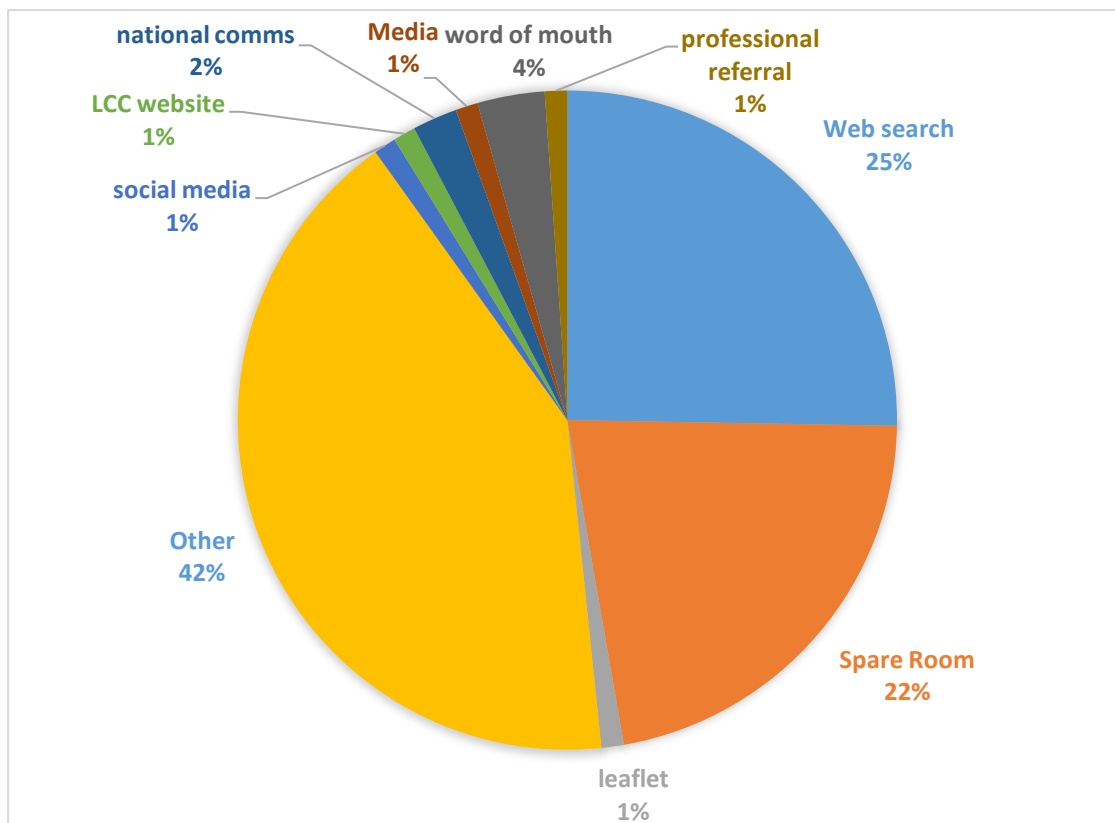
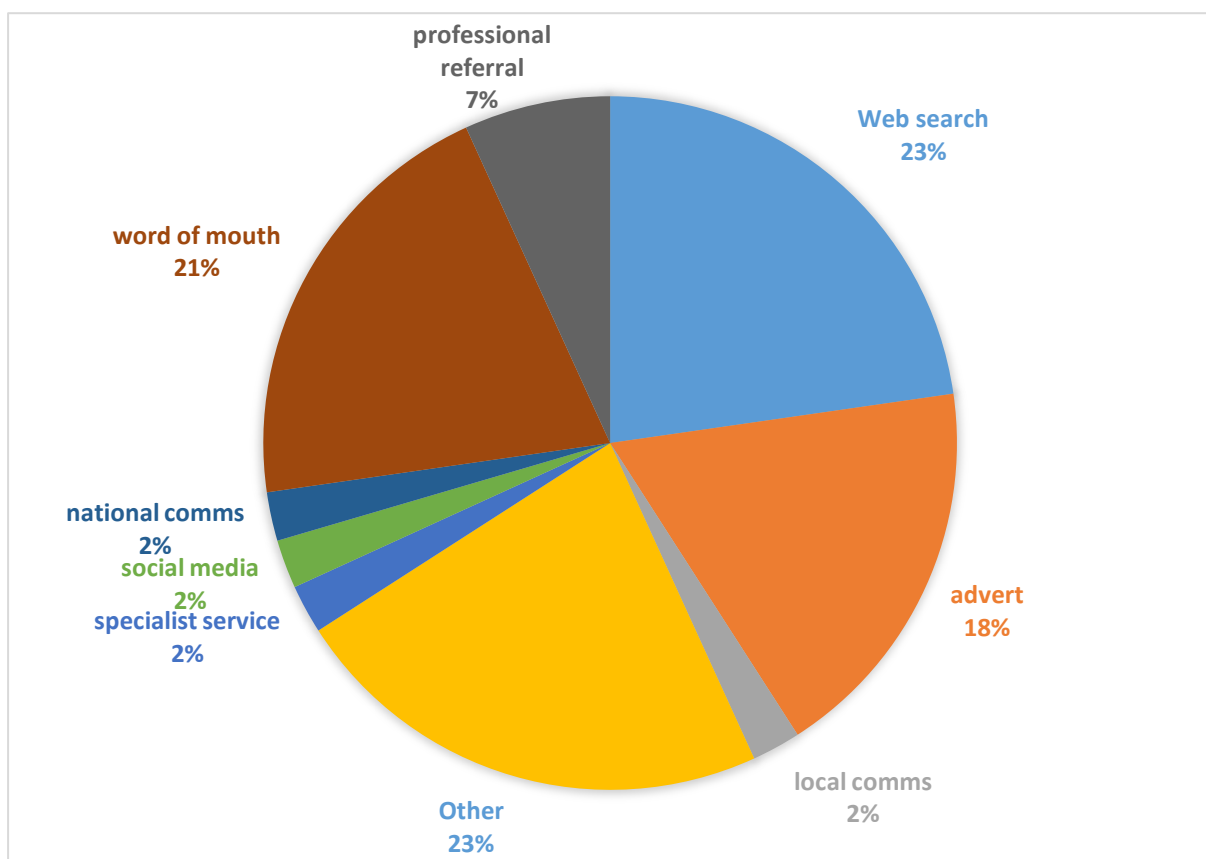


Figure 5: Sources of Homeowner referrals



Of all the enquirers, 88 (64%) were female and 39 (36%) male overall. The proportions were slightly different for the 101 potential homesharers (61% female, 39% male) and the 36 homeowners (72% female, 28% male). The mean age of potential homesharers was 31.0 years, while the mean age of homeowners was 71.5 years. There was an overlap in age ranges, with potential homesharers ranging from 19 – 64 years, and householders ranging from 38-93 years. The first successful match was made on 21st November 2017.

From July 2016 to June 2020, Homeshare Leeds has to date achieved eleven successful matches, against a target of 20 matches needed to become financially sustainable. One of the successful matches featured in an article in the Guardian newspaper, but this did not seem to generate any increased interest in terms of enquiries to the Leeds scheme.²

Questionnaire data

Six baseline questionnaires were returned: two from homeowners and four from homesharers. No follow-up questionnaires were returned, so we are unable to quantify change over time, although with such a small sample size, this would not be a reliable estimate anyway. Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation for each outcome for homeowners (n=2) and homesharers (n=4) at baseline.

Both homeowners and homesharers were substantively lonely at baseline, having mean scores of 9.55 (homeowners) and 9.09 (homesharers) on the Campaign to End Loneliness tool, in which 0 is least lonely and 12 is most lonely. However, both homeowner and homesharers scored well in the quality of life scales. For homeowners, the mean CASP-19 score of 40.55 was slightly lower than the mean score (43.3) from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (Howel, 2012). For homesharers, the score of 22.91 from 10 items from on the ACQ-QoL scale indicated a high quality of life.

Table 2: Outcomes from baseline questionnaire (n=6)

Outcome	Loneliness (scale from 0-12)	Quality of life
Homeowners (n=2)	9.55 (0)	40.55 (1.29) <i>(CASP-19 scale limits 0-57)</i>
Homesharers (n=4)	9.09 (2.54)	22.91 (5.40)

² <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/dec/29/how-we-live-together-the-housemates-with-a-71-year-age-gap>

		(ACQ-QOL scale limits 0-30)
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Qualitative interviews

Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with members of the Project Board and other key stakeholders in early 2018, and four further interviews with key stakeholders were conducted in late 2019. Baseline interviews were conducted with three homeowners and three homesharers, and follow up interviews with one homeowner and one homesharer in 2018-2019.

Stakeholders	Homeowner	Homesharer
14 interviews (13 participants)	4 interviews (3 participants)	4 interviews (3 participants)

The stakeholder interviews were fully transcribed and line by line inductive coding was carried out for the first five. After this, the list of emergent codes was organised into themes, and the remaining five interviews were coded against the themes already developed, although new themes were added if they emerged from the data. The process was repeated for the homeowners and homesharers, with inductive coding carried out for all interviews.

The following themes emerged:

Benefits for homeowners and homesharers

In the first year of Homeshare, stakeholders could think of many potential benefits of the Homeshare scheme for both homeowners and homesharers. Several felt that there would be benefits for both sides (other than cheap accommodation for homesharers), some of which were as yet unknown, and that the homeowner and homesharer could support one another.

Benefits mentioned for homeowners included: reduction in social isolation, low level support of different kinds (not personal care), relationship/ friendship with the homesharer, gaining skills (e.g. computer literacy), gaining confidence, maintaining independence in their own home (and thereby preventing social isolation), improved wellbeing/ quality of life.

“They just maybe want to have a cup of tea with somebody and watch Coronation Street or “I can’t quite reach my blankets on the top of my wardrobe any more” or “I actually really struggle to go do my food shop and mow the lawn” (Stakeholder)

People also mentioned benefits for the homeowner's family, such as increased peace of mind in knowing that their family member was not alone overnight.

Benefits mentioned for homesharers included: cheaper accommodation, relationship/ friendship with the homeowner, emotional and life skills gained, increased confidence.

Interviews with homeowners and homesharers once matches had been made confirmed many of these benefits and some additional benefits for both homeowner and homesharer.

"I would recommend it by all means, even if it's just for... as I said, more of a homely atmosphere, being cheaper than privately renting and just getting a different outlook."

(Homesharer 2)

Social isolation & social relations

In the first year, social isolation was identified as a key driver for the inception of Homeshare, and stakeholders felt that Homeshare could play an important role in addressing this for homeowners and homesharers. It was mentioned that addressing social isolation was a recognised need in Leeds, and that other projects were also looking at tackling it.

"Obviously we talk a lot about isolation and older people but we know it affects people quite acutely in their twenties as well, so I think there's benefits on both sides" (Stakeholder, phase 1)

This theme came out very strongly in the interviews with homeowners and homesharers, with both partners appreciating the 'companionship' of each other, and how well they got on together. Some mentioned it was like family :

"she's such a lovely person. I'm just so lucky the person that I got. We got on so well together, right from the start. Also, another expectation and outcome. I expected a younger person and this lady I've got is in her 40's which... she's a mature, responsible person."

(Homeowner 1)

"Well the benefit for me is the company, is the company and home share. I mean, you see I have carers coming in Monday to Friday to really they don't have to take me shopping or anything like that because the carers do that. So, there's not a lot for them to do really, except companionship and have a chat and that sort of thing." (Homeowner 2)

"It helps to feel that there's somebody in the house overnight, you know sort of, you know I feel safer when he's in, in the night-time. You know when he's sleeping here." (Homeowner 2)

"it's very important to help the person. You don't need to do a lot of things, because maybe you can live your life normal. But always live with the person. When I arrive at home,...] I ask my experience today and she asks about her life. It's very nice. It's like my family. It's nice. They are another person for sharing your life." (Homesharer 1)

"she'll be up around the house all the time and you know, there when I get in from work and just stuff like that, so we'll have a chat and a catch up and whatever, so yeah, it's a lot more relaxed and just nice, like having company, like you know somebody's there. You know, not that – I quite like to keep to myself, I'm quite a loner but at the same time it's nice to actually, if you wanted to speak to somebody and have a chat, that somebody's there" (Homesharer 2)

"I couldn't really be happier, it's really nice. Erm, we have a good laugh together, so yeah" (Homesharer 3)

Participants spoke of informal activities that they did together, which would not necessarily qualify as 'support', but enhanced the companionable relationship:

"What else do we do? Look at funny things on the phone, from the internet." (Homeowner 1)

"She cooked the other evening and we watched the England/Croatia football match. I haven't got a television in here. I only watch television on the computer. So, she cooked a meal which she was going to cook anyway, but she'd got quantities for the two and we had a drink and watched the football" (Homeowner 1)

"When she studies English, she do... she talk about when you have to do presentation in your class and she presented for me in Spanish, and I spectator and it was very well. She presented it very well." (Homesharer 1)

"Yes, we play scrabble sometimes in the evening, if he's not going out and if he's staying in he'll say would you like a game of scrabble and we play scrabble together, which is nice." (Homeowner 2)

Although both homeowners and homesharers mentioned enjoying each others' company and even needing that companionship, there was some reluctance on both sides to admit to feelings of loneliness:

"I thought it was a scheme for people that were lonely and I'm not lonely" (Homeowner 1)

"not that I'd say I was like, lonely, lonely but it is that, I had that sense of going, I'd be at work for eight hours talking to people then I'd go home, and I might not speak to anybody until the next day." (Homesharer 2)

However, one of the homesharers did admit to having felt lonely and that they had noticed this in their homeowner too, although the homeowner had not reported it themselves:

"Last year I was in accommodation with some people that I didn't really make friends with, they didn't really socialise at all, so it was quite lonely for me as well. Erm, and they weren't tidy in the slightest, I was the only one that was really cleaning the kitchen, the living room. So, it's nice to be living with someone that does keep things clean, that does want that company. So, the companionship kind of thing works both ways for us." (Homesharer 3)

"so [homeowner]'s daughter-in-law lived there for a few months and, I think it was last year or something and, when she left they noticed her health – [homeowner]'s health deteriorated a bit, mentally and physically, because of the loneliness. Erm, so, they really appreciate my being there for the company and stuff. I mean, I properly look after her and make sure she's happy, I'll buy her flowers every now and then, and yeah, do things to make her happy." (Homesharer 3)

Stakeholders also noted this reluctance to admit to being lonely or needing company:

"people with parents that could potentially benefit, have kind of said, oh yeah I can see this would be great for my mother in law or etc. etc., but actually she doesn't want to accept help or doesn't want to feel that she needs help and like as you'll have found, that's incredibly hard to measure if people don't want to admit that then they also aren't clear about it in their own minds that the purpose of this kind of thing, where you're trying to really get to the bottom of what those barriers are, if they're not willing to say, well I'm really lonely and I'd love some company but I don't want to admit that I need some company," (Stakeholder, other Homeshare)

Informal support as a means to stay independent

In the first year, several stakeholders mentioned Homeshare's role as 'informal support', for older people who didn't yet need care, such that it would allow them to remain living independently in their own homes for longer, create less pressure on health and social care systems and prevent frailty. However, many enquiries were from older people who did need more care. In the first year, stakeholders expressed concern that, if this wasn't managed correctly, there was a risk that homeowner's needs may be too great and homesharers may be asked to do too much. In the successful matches that we interviewed, this had not been an issue at first but later some homeowners have episodes of illness and homesharers had concerns about the potential for deteriorating health of the homeowners and what this meant for their own responsibilities:

"She was here with me. She took me along to the doctor's surgery which is just two doors away and the doctor called an ambulance and [...] insisted on coming in the ambulance with me and staying with me at the A and E in the hospital and then I had to stay overnight, so she came back here, collected me some stuff, came back to the hospital the next day. [...] Then I came a little bit of an illness attack a week after. It was something different. I knew it was something different, but I wasn't feeling at all well and it was when this heatwave just started, and she insisted on calling 999. She said, at the hospital they said I was to call 999 straight away. I said, well it's not the same thing, I know. She said, well even so, we'll call 999 and they didn't take me to hospital, but the paramedics came in and said it was the right thing to do. So, she was very concerned about me in that sense taking care of me."

(Homeowner 1)

"I think it's a heavy responsibility to children when a person is very old or ill because maybe that... I went past this with [homeowner] the other day and I can't sleep well because I think and in the morning I wake up and hope [homeowner] is alright. It's a responsibility I think, you understand?" (Homesharer 1)

Homeowners that we interviewed were more concerned about the homesharers doing too much for them:

"My main problem if you can call it that, is to stop her doing stuff. In fact, sometimes I have to get up when she's out, empty the dishwasher so that she doesn't come straight in from her work and go straight and empty the dishwasher or clean up... I'm keeping my kitchen much cleaner... well, not cleaner but tidier, because often I have piles of papers on the kitchen table or things and I think, I've got to clean up before [...] comes home because she'll be cleaning up." (Homeowner 1)

“I think it’s not too much. I help maybe in the garden. That is not very hard, and some days she says no, you don’t need to do anything. But for me, because I am a woman, I am not a young person. Young person don’t like cleaning. But in my life, I work a lot. For me, two hours, it’s not... sometimes, I don’t know, I’ll take the bins out because this old person maybe... today is brown bin, I take the brown bin, or maybe I just... I help her organise her cupboard. [...] For me, it’s not problem. For me, I need to help more.” (Homesharer 1)

Both homeowners and homesharers gave several examples of informal support that the homesharer had provided which included shopping, gardening and cleaning. One homeowner also mentioned that the homesharer had helped them with some electronic devices.

“twice she’s been shopping with me, while I haven’t been driving. We went on the bus to the shops [...] and then she helped me... she carried the shopping home, so that was a help, and while we were out we had a cup of coffee in a café and a bit of socialising.” (Homeowner 1)

“Yes, he helps me with the electricity, if the boiler goes off, he’s very, very clever. He goes down to the cellar to the boiler and fiddles about and switches it on normally, he’s very, very clever with the electricity. So that’s a very big help, because sometimes the boiler goes off you know, the central heating goes off, he goes down and sorts it out and that’s very helpful.” (Homeowner 2)

“we often just sit and chat in the living room, to be honest. We haven’t really gone out together, she’s very set in her routine, erm, and the carers do that kind of side of things, if she needs anything – if she needs to go to the doctors or anything, they’ll take her because I don’t drive so it’s limited what I can do outside of the house. Erm, but I mean, if she needs anything from the shops, I’ll go get it. Yeah” (Homesharer 3)

“so it’s like an overnight presence really, so it’s that and then, yeah, if she needs anything picking up in town or can’t get to somewhere, erm like she’ll text me and I’ll take stuff back, like on my way from work” (Homesharer 2)

Stakeholders noted that these kinds of support, although seemingly small, had the potential to keep homeowners out of residential care, and that homeowner’s families had better peace of mind from the homesharing arrangement:

“I mean just simple things like being able to change the bedding and doing your laundry and keeping yourself you know, and keeping the garden nice and the house tidy and general maintenance makes a huge difference to people’s health and wellbeing, so you know the

impact is huge if you start leaving those little things and they start getting on top of people, so I think in every case were looking at residential care probably” (Stakeholder)

“it’s made a huge, huge difference to some families, particularly families that don’t live locally or can’t get to see mum or dad, you know every day or every week that live at a little bit of a distance. They work full time, even if you live around the corner, it’s not always to bob round, even you know if you live only a couple of miles down the road because life just isn’t like that anymore is it?” (Stakeholder)

Support from homeowners for homesharers

Both homeowners and homesharers felt that the support was reciprocal, in that homeowners also supported the homesharers, whether this was by providing companionship and a place to live, or these more specific examples:

“I’ve also advised her, helped her book her flights[...] We’ve been looking online for what’s the best deal. There was one she had to talk to somebody on the telephone about it and I did the speaking because her English wasn’t very good to communicate something important for that.” (Homeowner 1)

“make them welcome when they first come. And well give them all the help that you possibly can. If they don’t know the area, tell them about the area and the park and pick out various things where they can go if they want to be on their own. But I can’t think of anything else, show them where the bus stops are, and the shops are.” (Homeowner 2)

“she’ll put washing on for- you know, turn the washer on, things like that. Erm, yeah, like we’ll both kind of vent about love lives and you know, friends annoying you and whatever. Erm, so she listens to stuff like that for me. Just a bit of a different point of view I suppose and seeing things from a different way so that’s quite good.” (Homesharer 2)

Negotiating boundaries

There were some good examples from both sides about the ‘tricky’ first phase of the homesharing arrangement and how important it was to negotiate boundaries in terms of space, time and activities. There were examples given of homeowners feeling they were being given too much help when they wanted to do things themselves:

“For example, if she sees I’ve done some laundry and I’ve got the laundry in the laundry basket, next thing I’ll see it’s hanging out on the washing line. I’m perfectly capable of hanging out my washing myself. I don’t want those things taken out of my hands and controlled. So, if she was staying on, I would have a talk with her about that, but I wouldn’t feel it would be uncomfortable to deal with that.” (Homeowner 1)

“I tried to reorganise her freezer and erm, and - so it was easier for her to access so she didn’t have to go to the cellar to get her food – she has a freezer upstairs as well. Erm, and she didn’t like that because it was out of her routine, so she asked me to change it back” (Homesharer 3)

Homeowners and homesharers gave examples of conversations they had had when the homeowner was not happy with the way the homesharer had done something. In all cases, the homesharer responded positively and the relationship was not negatively impacted, which gave both partners confidence that any further issues could be dealt with as they arose:

“Well he sometimes doesn’t clear up after himself. I say to him I’ve cleared up after you and he says I’m sorry. No, we, we don’t argue, we don’t argue at all.” (Homeowner 2)

“It’s just the same as any shared living situation, just obviously being respectful, keeping things tidy, stuff like that.” (Homesharer 2)

“where I put things in cupboards like stuff like that, forgetting to hang up my keys when I come in. Like, it’s very, very trivial stuff. And, erm, [homeowner] can be a bit snoopy, because you know, it’s her house. So, she will have a look in my room sometimes, and I’m a bit uncomfortable with that but I mean, it’s fine, she’s you know, doing her thing, it’s what she’s like. But it’s fine [laughs].” (Homesharer 3)

One homeowner was wary of potential pitfalls in terms of being taken advantage of, but felt well protected by the Homeshare rules:

“make your ground rules. Make sure you’re the boss without... that you’re not taken over emotionally by the Homesharer. I know there’s written in the rules of the agreement that you’re not to give them money or expensive presents or put them in your will which is very good advice, because there could be some very nasty people who try to wheedle their way in to old people’s affections for that.” (Homeowner 1)

Wider social connections

As well as the dyad relationship between the homeowner and homesharer, in some cases homesharers quickly got to know the family, friends or neighbours of the homeowner, and homeowners got to know some of the homesharers' friends and partners.

"I have three grown up children. They all live in other countries [...] and when I was taken ill and [...] was so helpful to me, the first thing was, I gave her my sons contact phone to contact him [...] and tell him that I wasn't well and what the situation was, that I was in hospital. Then he contacted my two daughters and they all got back to [...]. They've established quite a relationship there and they were all so grateful to her to help me, what they would do if they were on the spot... now, who will become Facebook friends... They were very appreciative for the way she dealt with it and communicated with them." (Homeowner 1)

"I've introduced [...] to my neighbours, particularly when I thought I was going to be the house sitter. I wanted them to know who she was, and she's spoken to several of the neighbours, and they've said how nice she was, because I thought if she was going to live here, and particularly if she was going to be here the rest of the year, she was part of the neighbourhood. I wanted her to be a neighbour to the other people." (Homeowner 1)

"just to make sure the family are aware of everything because they might not know what's going on when they're not around. So, it's kind of like a safety thing for [homeowner] as well, because she's had some falls since I've been there. Not at the house, but whilst she was on holiday and another time whilst she was away, so these things do happen. So, it's good to have that kind of safety net of like, being able to contact the family members without you know, feeling like I'm disturbing them or anything." (Homesharer 3)

Intergenerational connections

One of the aims of Homeshare was to strengthen intergenerational connections. When we asked participants whether their attitude to the other generation had changed as a result of being in Homeshare, responses from both homeowners and homesharers indicated that they already had a positive attitude to the other generation. In one match, the homeowner was not an older person, but someone with a chronic illness:

"Not really because I mean I have some young relatives you know, and they are very, very kind. You know they come and visit me, no I think my idea hasn't changed at all. No, I think

mostly you know other people that I know relatives they come and visit the young ones as well which is nice.” (Homeowner 2)

“Most of my friends as well are friends I work with, so we’ve got similar experiences in that sense, whereas she’s in a different field and she works from home, and just different things. It kind of gives you a bit of a different view I suppose of people’s lives.” (Homesharer 2)

“Our values might be different, slightly, but as people, we are not different at all. Erm, I don’t think there’s a barrier when it comes to ages. It’s a pre-conception that needs to be broken down because it doesn’t exist.” (Homesharer 3)

“it gives you a bit more insight I suppose of like, in living with – need and support I suppose, even though it’s not a great deal and it’s not as like a massive kind of disability, like that’s really obvious. But, I suppose it’s in that sense, maybe shows that you might you know, you can look at people and they might have issues that you wouldn’t necessarily realise, so, yeah, and kind of how that affects us” (Homesharer 2)

Stakeholders noted the potential for positive changes for both homeowners and homesharers:

“from younger people, lots of comments around realising, that the person has had a life up to that point as well and it’s an interesting life and actually they can have the same interests even though they’re 99 one of them is, somebody who is 21. And actually, that insight really, into what life can be like for older people and a more positive insight I suppose. And vice versa, the thing about the kind of student stereotype of out drinking every night and kind of the parties and all that sort of stuff. Actually, it happens obviously, but there’s students and that who are different or have that as well but are able to support people who want to learn about different things. And some of the insight into what it’s like being a young person in today’s world really, there’s isolation. It’s quite an uncertain world and so I think that kind of thing, the understanding of each other has been a big positive part of it.” (Stakeholder)

Financial benefits

A major ‘selling point’ of Homeshare was to provide affordable accommodation to homesharers, but only one of the three homesharers we interviewed really emphasised this as a positive.

“we’ve been going for a while now and obviously thinking about potentially at some point in the future living together, but he’s said you know, I might as well just stay here and save as much money as I can seeing as though it’s a pretty good set up really” (Homesharer 2)

“I can save money. I live in a really, well – quite a close, even though it’s not city centre, it’s really close to the city centre, so my commute is really quite short. So, that made a big difference from where I previously lived” (Homesharer 2)

Barriers for homeowners and homesharers

Perceptions from homeowners of their need for support and reciprocity

In the first year of Homeshare, a few stakeholders mentioned that most potential homeowners who meet the criteria to be eligible for Homeshare may not identify themselves as being ‘*an older person in need of support*’, and that most older people who did feel that they need support actually need personal care and are therefore not eligible for Homeshare. It was also suggested that older people were generally more willing to share their homes if it was for the purpose of helping somebody, rather than being helped.

“well I recognise this is a big problem, and hopefully this is a means of alleviating loneliness. Too much stress on that will put off people who don’t feel they are lonely, and there’s a bit of a stigma admitting your lonely. I’m lonely, I’m a billy no mates, you know. Why haven’t I got any friends? It’s difficult to say that, there’s a stigma.” (Homeowner 1)

“I think appealing to people’s sense of... responsibility is not the right word, but you know what I mean? Being helpful and being able to offer something to somebody else.” (Homeowner 1)

Stakeholders reiterated that this was something that homeowners felt quite strongly about:

“one of the early matches [...] got quite, not upset but very strong views on this thing about being told she would be at risk and she doesn’t know what she’s doing. And that’s to say I’m an intelligent woman, I’ve lived a full life, I know what I’m taking on and I know what I want, and I know what I don’t want. And I want to help some people who might be struggling at University and I want to offer them a home and I want to give them a safe place they can live while they’re at University. And I thought that’s the message, it’s not all about, this poor old person needs a student to look after them” (Stakeholder)

“it’s not a one way thing of sort of a younger adult offering support to an older person in their home. You know it works both ways and I think that’s what really appealed to me about it. And I think that’s really important to highlight to interested people and promoting a

service that you know benefit, could potentially benefit an older or person with a physical disability. It can also benefit the young carer as well in terms of you know financially but also forming friendships, learning about other people's life experiences and their skills."
(Stakeholder)

Marketing and information

In the first year of Homeshare, stakeholders mentioned that older people may need time to think about whether to become part of Homeshare, and that '*leaflets are not enough*' – what is needed is more local information and an example or case study.

"You have to be able to see the success story to be able to then buy into it" (Stakeholder)

In the 3rd and 4th years, stakeholders felt that although there had been some great successes in terms of marketing, it didn't seem to have reached the 'right people', particularly potential homeowners and their families:

"it's not for everyone but for the people that it's right for it will be a perfect solution or near perfect and that's how I feel about it. I feel like they're never going to be massive numbers but for the people that it is right for it's a great solution and how do you find those people."
(Stakeholder)

"One of the things that we are kind of really pleased that we managed to do was we got posters at bus stops across the city which was like, I think, I don't think we'd ever be able to do anything like that, like on my drive to work which is like 15 minutes, I pass about 10 posters and they're like a good size, like you can see them from a distance but all it did was up the sharer enquiries it still didn't reach the householders" (Stakeholder)

"My understanding is that some of that effort has been sort of put to the older person, but now that we know that more referrals come through their family members that more of an effort needs to be put you know that sort of maybe people 40, 50, 60 age range."
(Stakeholder)

"75% of people that are referred to home share actually come through their son or daughter but there has never been any marketing activity, as far as I know from the Leeds scheme actually at that group of people" (Stakeholder)

Cultural barriers, and negative perceptions of strangers

In the first year of Homeshare, stakeholders reported that older people and their families were felt to be wary about sharing their home with strangers. It was mentioned that perceptions of students may be off-putting to older people and their families. A few stakeholders mentioned that similar schemes had been successful in other European countries e.g. France and Spain. It was suggested that perhaps this was due to a different cultural attitude in these countries; it may be more usual for people to share their homes with extended family and non-related people, or perhaps the schemes had been running for so long that it had become the norm (e.g. students in Paris living with local families). It was also suggested that, in the UK, people may have busier lifestyles, which may act as a barrier to sharing their homes, and that intergenerational connections are weaker. Another issue that may be peculiar to the UK was that there were felt to be some status issues around not having to share your home.

"I mentioned it to lots of people and acquaintances and a number of people have said, I wouldn't want to have a stranger in my house, but as I say, I've had lodgers for many years on and off, different people in my house, so that's not a problem for me." (Homeowner 1)

"people felt it wasn't safe or that they thought it was a great idea but it wasn't for them." (Stakeholder)

"actually it occurred to me that of a certain generation that wouldn't have been what would have happened. You would have probably gone from your family home to your marital home with not necessarily anything else in terms of home sharing in between" (Stakeholder)

"I think there was definitely a sense speaking to residents of oh but what about, you know that guy who befriended that other guy and then he changed his will and you know, it's amazing how people's imagination where that would take it I guess." (Stakeholder)

"the biggest thing, sort of questions I didn't realise is the kind of cultural blocks on it really in this country. I think there's quite a cultural block of seeing what it is and how it works" (Stakeholder)

Intergenerational issues

In the first year, some stakeholders wondered whether students and younger people would welcome company from an older person, or whether they would prefer or benefit more from the company and support of their peers. It was suggested that supporting older people and reducing

their social isolation was not a priority for most students, and that mature students (who it had been hoped would take part in the scheme) were not applying – possibly because they already had accommodation and were not moving away from home to study.

Some stakeholders suggested that it would take more time to mix older and younger people and break down negative perceptions each had of the other.

“one thing that I didn’t want when I went in to it, I didn’t want somebody who needed a long-term home. I didn’t feel like I wanted to get stuck with somebody who was needy in themselves in their... emotionally needy I mean and wanted a long-term home. I didn’t want to be committed in that way” (Homeowner 1)

Barriers in the wider system

Matching process

In the first year, several stakeholders mentioned the need to understand more about barriers to matching. Some of the issues mentioned were: timing, having a ‘small pool’ to match people from, it being easier to find suitable homeowners than homesharers, unsuitable enquirers (e.g. older people who needed more personal care, people from outside the area), restrictions from the council on marketing and communications, finance and the impact on welfare benefits. In subsequent years, the main barrier to the actual matching process was the small number of homeowners who applied, which resulted in a small ‘pool’ to choose from when homesharers applied. Homesharers generally needed accommodation quickly and did not have time to wait for a suitable homeowner to come along.

“We need that critical mass don’t we for people to have enough options cos it’s really hard if we’ve only got two people are interested” (Stakeholder)

“with like needing accommodation for studying and stuff, erm, it can make it a bit late to get a good accommodation for student accommodation if you’re applying for this and waiting for results. That’s the only issue” (Homesharer 3)

“There seems to be more Homeshare applications than there are homeowners, so erm, might not necessarily be able to find a match. Erm, obviously it doesn’t always work as well so there’s that risk as well” (Homesharer 3)

Partnerships

In the first year, barriers were encountered from partners and it was felt there had been a lack of support at the University level as well as from other organisations. It was suggested this may be due to concerns about reputational risk in case of safeguarding issues, for both homeowners and homesharers. In the first year, a theme that emerged from the stakeholder interviews was that some older people's services were sceptical of the Homeshare scheme's feasibility and had not been mentioning it to their clients as a potential option, or had mentioned it in a negative way. There were felt to be concerns over health and safety, and over money, both in terms of the administration fees paid to the project and in terms of the effect on welfare benefits. This was felt to be, to some extent, because the scheme was new and had not yet been 'tested'. The learning from this was that:

- i) in the second stage of marketing, it may be better to speak directly to the older people themselves rather than go through third sector organisations who may not be supportive, and
- ii) evidence of outcome and value (*i.e.* a successful match) will make this easier

Unfortunately, in subsequent years this barrier remained and proved impossible to get over. Stakeholder interviewees in years 3 and 4 confirmed that this was also happening in other geographical areas, and suggested some possible reasons for this, and possible solutions:

"It's not a shock that it's been hard to get off the ground, the shock was that people haven't even really wanted to engage with it at those first early stages and of course that's when you build rapport and build trust. And I think probably I was over confident in thinking, oh you know I've got relevant experience and I'm used to having those conversations with people and making people feel at ease and I'm feeling like this is something they can get on board with but actually to even get to those conversations was a struggle" (Stakeholder, other homeshare scheme)

"there were real challenges with external organisation[...], you know some of those key older people's organisations in the city that just wouldn't engage, that was incredibly frustrating" (Stakeholder, other Homeshare)

Organisational barriers

A surprising finding in the stakeholder interviews in years 3 and 4 was the perception that, although there was very strong support and buy-in for Leeds Homeshare from some key individuals within

Leeds City Council, as evidenced by the provision of funding to extend the project coordinator's post for a year, there was a lack of buy-in from frontline staff who were interfacing with potential homeowners, which led to a failure to get many referrals from within other parts of the council, or from external partners, and poor or delayed communications and marketing. This was despite huge efforts made by the project coordinator in terms of marketing and partnerships, and was also an issue in another Homeshare scheme hosted in a local authority.

"the feeling was, oh it's going to be great because you're within the council so you've got access to OTs and adult social care and local area coordinators and all these kind of teams of people that could refer in and we've not had one internal referral" (Stakeholder, other Homeshare)

"Home Share is almost seen as like you know an alternative solution or you know a social issue. But actually, you know it could be part of the mainstream and I think if it was viewed more in that way and understood and embraced more, would there be more, more funding." (Stakeholder)

"with this many challenges you need a push right across the council and beyond and that's just, I've just not had that and I think if they'd have maybe had some initial scoping work just to evidence that actually older people weren't jumping at the idea, you know at the chance of it, then I think maybe there would have been a different kind of course taken" (Stakeholder, other Homeshare)

Stakeholders suggested several potential reasons for this lack of buy-in on the ground:

Slow growth

In the first year of Homeshare, the majority of stakeholders mentioned the pilot nature of the project and their understanding that, while it was '*disappointing*' that the project hadn't yet achieved a successful match, it was understandable, as it was '*early days*'. Some shared the view that the purpose of the pilot project was in fact to identify and tackle problems, to lay the foundation for future success.

It was acknowledged that the project had had a '*slow start*' and '*lacked momentum*', and that this could lead to a loss of enthusiasm from project board members and wider stakeholders, but several stakeholders also mentioned that this was no different from other Homeshare schemes in the UK that began at around the same time (see Macmillan et al. 2017). Several stakeholders mentioned that perhaps the initial target of 25 matches was too ambitious, and that this had now been

reduced. Some suggested that perhaps more time could have been spent at the beginning on local area profiling. There was some disappointment expressed that the proposed link across pilot schemes at national level had not really happened as yet.

“it took probably a good 9 or 12 months to actually even launch the scheme which should never have happened but the council itself put lots and lots huge barriers in the way of that scheme actually getting off the ground in terms of, I mean there was lots of issues around safeguarding initially and my understanding is, it’s never, well, yeah my understanding is it’s never wholly been accepted by people in the council that could actually have supported that scheme in a very active way. So, there are no dedicated pipelines from line services actually directly referring into that, you know into Home Share.” (Stakeholder)

Safeguarding concerns

Concerns over safeguarding were thought to be an issue in both the Leeds Homeshare scheme and another Homeshare scheme based in a local authority:

“even though there are incredibly robust practice and process people seem to be very sceptical and very reluctant to refer. I also think there’s a general attitude amongst older people, you know not me, not now and perhaps there is some cultural stuff in the north that makes it very difficult for people to want to have people in their homes, I don’t know, but I think in generally the problem has been that there’s been suspicion within the council that you know, it’s not safe or it’s just a cheap way of doing something else or perhaps their jobs might be at risk if it didn’t take off, but there’s been some scepticism within the council” (Stakeholder)

“and those at the adult social care team and social workers were kind of, you know I’d gone in expecting the concerns were going to be for the householders and all the questions were around, well why aren’t you doing a DBS check for householders because you know, you don’t know what their background is and you might be putting a sharer in with a sex offender [...] well if you know they’re a sex offender please don’t refer them for home share [...] In my mind, one of the safeguards is that we wanted to get referral via internal routes because then you’re better linked up with those people and they aren’t just someone random out in the community” (Stakeholder, other Homeshare)

There was also a perception that, although the bureaucratic processes involved in being part of the local authority was seen as a positive for some in terms of safeguarding, in reality these processes and associated attitudes prevented the project from being sufficiently agile to respond quickly to

new opportunities. Some stakeholders suggested that if Leeds Homeshare had been hosted by a third sector organisation instead of the council it may have been able to make more effective partnerships and better marketing.

“it’s been very traditional health and social care people that have kind of driven home share or very traditional voluntary sector person that’s been driving home share in Leeds and really it needs someone that’s quite entrepreneurial and perhaps more marketing and communications kind of expertise than health and social care. I mean that’s just from, you know thinking about, I mean some of the very successful home share organisations in the country are actually headed by people who have been private sector organised, sort of headed private sector companies in the past, more entrepreneurial, have got different skill sets.” (Stakeholder)

“there always, there was always resources for the co-ordinator. But we struggled for kind of any support beyond that admin support, marketing support. And I think being based in the council had it’s advantages, but I think if it had been based in an organisation like the voluntary sector or something it would have been, maybe it would have been more dynamic and got other supports” (Stakeholder)

Financial barriers

Stakeholders acknowledged that Leeds Homeshare needs to be sustainable in the long term. Some mentioned that a lot of time had been spent trying to get the fees right, so that it would be both attractive to participants and sustainable. It was mentioned that the homesharer’s contribution had to be increased from initial proposals, to reduce the homeowner’s fee, as otherwise feedback from homeowners indicated that they would not join. One stakeholder wondered if it should be means-tested in future.

“You’ve got young people that are willing to pay a lot more, whereas older people are wanting a lot more of the benefits and paying, are willing to pay less. I mean of course they are giving up their home aren’t they? I think they felt that anything beyond that was too much really” (Stakeholder)

“obviously for me I’d be paying rent either way, erm, but like you know, the homeowner paying you know, things- I suppose it’s for the support and the background, but I kind of thing, I suppose, it would depend on the people’s circumstances, you know, whether it might be too expensive for some people or not.” (Homesharer 2)

In the 3rd and 4th years, several stakeholders mentioned that homeowners seemed unclear about what they were paying for, and that homesharers sometimes were unclear that they were paying the Homeshare scheme rather than the homeowner:

“people would say I don’t really understand why we’re paying, like they couldn’t really see the correlation between getting that practical support but that they might cleaner or a gardener or someone to do meal prep, they weren’t making that connection” (Stakeholder)

“I think it was less that people were financial able to pay it and more that there was a feeling of why should they have to because they’re the one giving someone a room.” (Stakeholder)

“like a little bit of a disconnect I guess that you might feel you were happy for someone to cook and clean but actually you don’t want to think that you have pay for someone to have a chat with you” (Stakeholder)

“Something about the fact that money doesn’t really exchange hands, people almost query that, it’s interesting.” (Stakeholder)

“There’s been, there’s been a householder who I think she felt because she was paying a fee and a person was living in her home. It was a service that she was being provided with and it’s not a service, it’s an agreed you know, house sharing arrangement. So maybe everybody is DBS checked as well and maybe it’s one of those things that helps it become more equitable and more balanced. “ (Stakeholder)

Another financial barrier was the small number of matches, which meant that the scheme eventually was not financially sustainable, and support was reduced. Stakeholders spoke of the need to keep looking for external funding:

“we’ve got additional funding from the council to just to, well just through till now. But had to reduce substantially the staff so, and because of the current situation, it’s gone back into the main service that they manage because, well because the Coronavirus. So, it’s kind of gone right down the pecking order, there’s just been phone call occasionally to existing matches and nothing more than that” (Stakeholder)

“it needs more external funding to be honest and where that’s going to come from I don’t know. I don’t think, the Council have been supportive but they’ve not, they’ve not got the money basically there are so many other services demands and budget cuts coming up etc” (Stakeholder)

"I just wondered University as in a benefit for students for the University. But also, as a social kind of link within the city and a social impact and putting something back into the city the University is based in. You're not talking about vast sums of money, you're talking about £40-50,000 a year at this point. Now for a University you think that might be something they could even match fund it with somebody else." (Stakeholder)

Facilitating factors

Although there were barriers in the set up and delivery of Leeds Homeshare, interviewees also perceived many positive facilitating factors, as described below.

Project coordinator

There was universal praise for the project coordinator from stakeholders, homeowners and homesharers. Homeshare participants felt well supported and able to ask questions and get in contact at any time, but also that the support was appropriate and not intrusive. Several respondents mentioned that this was related to the personal characteristics of the project coordinator, and that someone else might not have been able to support participants so well.

"It's very easy to phone her up or send her an email and say, I don't understand what this question is about, or I can't be dealing with this at the moment and she's very considerate" (Homeowner 1)

"So, the fact that [...] is there, and it's partly her personality of course. If somebody else was doing the job, it might not do so well. But she is very understanding of her role and dealing with the two people." (Homeowner 1)

"I think it is the support, because it's not like I met this person which I lived with, okay. But if you do something or you need some help, or if you need to go back... I think the most important is support. It's very important for me, because I'm only here to help her. Or maybe some student comes here... what do I do now? You have support with Homeshare." (Homesharer 1)

"after the month trial, she came and sat with us both and we all had a chat to see if we're happy and things like that. That's pretty much it. I think she's left us to it, because it's working quite well." (Homesharer 2)

The project coordinator was responsible for carrying out the matching process, and supporting the matches, which include intervening if the matches were not successful. This happened twice in the eleven matches that were made – in both cases it was the homeowner who asked for the match to end - but in both cases a new homesharer was found and the second match was very successful. In

one of these cases, the homeowner was used to their own company and found they were unable to tolerate having somebody share their home, but they remain friendly with the homesharer, who now lives nearby. In the second case, the homeowner did not like the cultural or personal habits of the homesharer and felt that they were unfriendly.

“It was quite thorough. I think it was about an hour or something like that. I just did it in my lunchbreak over a coffee. It’s quite nice because it’s not like a job interview where you have to put your best foot forward. They want to know what you’re actually like, what you’re like living with, your personality, to match as many factors as they can which is good. Obviously both parties want to be happy.” (Homesharer 2)

“just to be honest about what you want, what makes you happy, what you do. Because I suppose if people did get scared and think, oh my god, she’s got to like me and put on a bit of a rosy attitude, then you might not get matched with the best person.” (Homesharer 2)

“this is my second home actually, sharing, because my first one – she couldn’t erm, cope with someone else being in the house. She had been on her own for 30 years, so I moved on to a second place and it’s - she is much, much more adapted to it. She is used to people being in the house so it’s a really good match.” (Homesharer 3)

A project coordinator from a different Homeshare told us that it could be a stressful role:

“obviously when you’ve got a project that is so much of a struggle to get off the ground, just day to day that gets really tough” (Stakeholder)

Flexibility of the scheme

In the first year, positive comments were made in terms of the project receiving ‘steady interest’, and widening its reach, and in terms of partnerships and ways of working (see ‘partnerships’ below). An unexpected development was the range of homeowners wanting support from Homeshare, other than older people. It was seen as positive that the scheme was able to adapt and the first match was made with a homeowner who was younger but with a chronic illness.

Partnerships

In the first year, the majority of stakeholders expressed positive feelings about the partnership working brought about by the Homeshare scheme. The project team and wider project board were felt to share skills, passion and commitment, with good representation from many sectors, although it was acknowledged that attendance at board meetings was falling. There was felt to be good support from Leeds City Council, and stakeholders mentioned that having Leeds Homeshare within the council made the scheme unusual and distinct, although some also mentioned that this had

caused restrictions that other Homeshare schemes may not have had, for example in terms of marketing. On the other hand, being able to draw on the Council's safeguarding, finance and marketing expertise was seen as positive by many stakeholders.

"the advantage of it is that both parties have got the backup of the council management. If anything goes wrong, they're not satisfied with how it's going that backup is there and I think that is one of the major advantages over a personal lodger arrangement" (Stakeholder)

People reported benefits from the partnership working, such as networking and understanding others' roles.

"I mean it's just nice to be involved in something new and something that we're testing out... I hadn't worked previously with the people that are on the board so I found that really useful. It was good to meet new partner organisations. I liked the mix of people that were round the table, a real mix of skills and backgrounds" (Stakeholder)

"where it's worked well has been a massive commitment from the organisations involved to make it work, there's a real kind of belief in it. From the different partners from the staff, from the council. I would say there's a real support for it, so that's been really positive." (Stakeholder)

In the 3rd and 4th year, there was strong support expressed by the national Homeshare UK organisation:

"I think Leeds could be huge, I think Homeshare could be huge in Leeds, I think it could be incredibly powerful. I think they've not quite got the right formula yet for delivering it or the right environment to make it work. So I think some small changes and some, I mean it's not huge changes, it's just small changes and some small attitude changes and some small practical changes from a number of chief stakeholders. It could really be quite successful and yes I do think it should continue in Leeds." (Stakeholder)

Trusted sources

Stakeholders felt that it was important to identify key people, to make the right links. Having the University and students' union involved was supposed to allow direct access to students through expected channels (rather than through an external agency) but, despite trying different ways to reach students, there had not been much interest to date. Also, having the third sector Older People's organisations on board had been expected to help with engaging older people through

know contacts and organisations, but this had not been very successful so far either. Instead, personal recommendations seemed to help, but these were necessarily on a much smaller scale:

“And then it’s the word of mouth thing, if people have friends of friends, family members or family members who have done it and they’re talked about it. That’s a trusted source that this is an okay thing and it’s just having enough people who are doing that.” (Stakeholder)

One homeowner mentioned that the reason they’d chosen Homeshare rather than having a lodger was for the added security of Homeshare, in terms of financial check, DBS check and continued support.

Two of the successful matches involved homeowners and homesharers who had mutual acquaintances, though one of them did not realise it when first matched:

“Well I knew that XXXX had been at a house across, up the road at a friend of mine, so I knew about him. I knew that she was, he was sharing with her. But she has a very small flat and she found that he’d got rather a lot of stuff and she felt it was being a bit overburdened for her.” (Homeowner 2)

“it just happened, because it’s quite a small world, she knows some people that I know and things like that. Her family live near where my family live, just things like that, there was quite a lot of commonality.” (Homesharer 2)

Timing

Timing was an issue mentioned by several stakeholders, in different contexts:

Timing of the project: One stakeholder mentioned that there had been an attempt to set up a Homeshare initiative in the area around ten years ago, but that there had been little interest at that time. Another stakeholder mentioned that the first launch of Leeds Homeshare happened at the same time as a consultation on closure of Old People’s care homes, so the two initiatives were linked in people’s minds, and this made them suspicious of Homeshare. Others mentioned that new projects can take a long time to become accepted:

“new projects you know do take a good few years to sort of get embedded in. So part of that getting embedded in the local psyche maybe, it’s quite a new concept for the public, possibly to take on board” (Stakeholder)

One stakeholder mentioned that people seemed to prefer shorter homesharing arrangements, in case they did not get on very well, or became too dependent.

“It’s not long term and if you know, one particular time when I think ... I’d like a break or I’d like my own family and friends coming in that period, I can do that, I’ve not committed very long” (Homeowner 1)

Staff time: A few stakeholders mentioned that the Homeshare initiative needed a lot of input from staff in terms of time and that, due to staff turnover and competing priorities, this had sometimes been a problem.

Timing of enquiries: Several stakeholders mentioned that students in particular need to find accommodation quickly, in advance of the academic year, and the timing has to be right for this. Some suitable homesharers were found, but as there was no suitable homeowner ‘on the books’ at that time, they had to find other accommodation.

Time of life: Several stakeholders mentioned the importance of ‘getting people at the right time in their lives’ – before they need care.

Inequalities

In the first year, some stakeholders mentioned that, with the financial barriers to those on welfare benefits, and concerns about safety from people who have never shared their homes with non-relatives before, there is a risk that Homeshare could benefit those who need it least (*i.e.* people with more money, skills, confidence and education, who are at least risk of becoming socially isolated). On the other hand, it was suggested that the scheme could reduce social inequalities for homesharers, by making accommodation more affordable and perhaps enabling them to go to University.

Several mentioned the difficulties the scheme had experienced in including homeowners who were receiving welfare benefits, as having someone else living with them would affect their benefits. A lot of work had gone into trying to overcome this barrier but, at the present time, this had not been effective and people who are receiving welfare benefits are not able to join the scheme. It was mentioned that the project team are campaigning about this at a national level (see Appendix D).

“It could be beneficial to people in council housing, social housing, there’s a lot of areas around the University that have a type of housing. So, it was a hope to try and use that stock and use those people as well.” (Stakeholder)

“my feeling would be that it probably is people from more professional backgrounds that would get involved in Homeshare because I think they’re more likely to have shared their homes or shared somebody else’s home or just generally lived with somebody who they’re not related to, if you’re from a more professional background.” (Stakeholder)

Another stakeholder also mentioned that, even if the benefits issue was resolved and the scheme was able to include homeowners in social housing, young professionals or students may not want to live in these areas:

“if you’ve got a young professional or a mature student, they don’t necessarily want to live in social housing or in some of the areas where there are a high proportion of social housing”

One homeowner who was disabled mentioned that ever since they had a full-time working person living with them, they lost part of their benefits, so now have to borrow money from the Department for Work and Pensions to pay towards housing cost. They felt that it would be more convenient for them to have a lodger paying rent, but still preferred Homeshare due to the additional security they felt it offered.

Communication

In the first year, stakeholders had a range of suggestions about how marketing and communications could be improved. Many were in favour of a second launch. Some would like to see better infographics on cost and other benefits, some would like better information on safeguarding e.g. what happens if a match breaks down, and some would like better communication from Leeds City Council. Some people mentioned that the photographs used in the advertisements were off-putting:

“That was their leaflet – like that. It previously had that photograph on and I thought well I don’t think I want to share my home with a young man who’s indoors with his baseball cap on backwards and I don’t want somebody strumming his guitar all the time” (Homeowner 1)

Some stakeholders felt there could have been a more coordinated approach taken to publicity, and that this should not have been delayed until the first match. It was felt that more guidance or publicity materials from the national Homeshare scheme would have been useful and saved the local scheme time in producing their own materials. Homeshare participants also had ideas about how communication could be improved:

“Erm, just like getting themselves out there a bit more, I don’t know any students that know about Homeshare. Erm, and that seems to be the biggest demographic that are interested in

applying [...] There's like seven different Universities in Leeds, so, I think if you tapped into the student unions, tried to get Homeshare as like a recommended place to stay on their lists and stuff, then that would work" (Homesharer 3)

"because universities are all about, all keen on giving something back to the community aren't they, as well as what they give to the students, and that can be a massive part of it if you integrated that into what the student union does. Then, I think that would have a massive effect" (Homesharer 3)

"I think I'd like to see students themselves getting involved in the process of Homeshare, rather than just being home sharers [...] And then not only would you have the interaction between elderly and younger within the Homeshare scheme, you've also got it with setting up, with connecting networks around care environments and erm, elderly community and the student environments. So, it would kind of broaden the effect that Homeshare is having on this kind of problem." (Homesharer 3)

"I think that was a gap, I mean there has been marketing nationally and locally. It's been a bit sporadic and not, not a clear plan in terms, merely in terms of resources to be able to put that kind of plan together. People with that skill base and the money to do that, but I think yes, I think we missed some opportunities at different times. There was a national campaign and then we didn't really do anything in Leeds until later and that kind of thing. "
(Stakeholder)

"I think everybody has heard of it, you know when I speak to people they're generally, I feel that most people I encounter have heard of the scheme. But maybe, maybe it's you know the detail in the marketing," (Stakeholder)

"benefit of the Local Authority is you know there's even in my short time in post you know there's been lots of things, ways we've been able to market the project. Like it was inter-generational week and so you know there was a blog by a councillor, so you know councillors links to other projects within the Authority who maybe work in Older People's Services or various hubs around the city. Older people networks, so you know in that respect it's quite easy to get the word out." (Stakeholder)

COVID-19

The last few interviews were carried out just before the lockdown in the UK the COVID-19 pandemic. This had a negative effect on Council funding, as it was diverted to emergency COVID response, and

subsequently the deficit experienced by all local authorities. One of the surprising findings was that there was an increase in enquiries during this time just before lockdown, but less surprising was that homesharers moved away to be with their own families, and potential homeowners were more reticent about having a new sharer:

“we’ve got quite a lot of new expressions at the moment of interest. Which is probably due to the pandemic and people sort of feeling that sense of isolation and sort the long term nature.” (Stakeholder)

“do feel even more cut off and even more lonely and feel that they would sort of you know weighed up the risks, the risks of loneliness against the risk of potentially getting a virus” (Stakeholder)

“we have had enquiries from, we’ve had a couple enquiries from younger people, you know young adults wanting to be carers” (stakeholder)

“that we’ve got existing an existing householder who had a match and for the young adult moving away to care for her own family. Meant that this householder you know is now very reticent about having somebody move in because of the pandemic and is fearful about you know, fearful about the risks, potential risks” (Stakeholder)

Conclusions

Key findings

From July 2016 to June 2020, Leeds Homeshare received 236 enquiries, although only 137 gave consent for their data to be shared. Numbers of people enquiring per quarter were generally small ($n < 10$), especially for homeowners, but a large spike in enquiries from Homesharers was seen in Q5 (July – September 2017), corresponding to an advert run in ‘Spare Room’ magazine. Another spike in Q9 followed the second launch of Leeds Homeshare, with associated press coverage.

The Leeds Homeshare scheme achieved eleven matches in the 4 years from July 2016 – June 2020, which meant that it did not become financially sustainable in that time. One of the main barriers was having a small pool of homeowners to draw on, meaning that suitable matches could not be made in time for homesharers who needed accommodation in a set timeframe. Interviewees suggested several possible reasons for this, including: organisational barriers leading to lack of referrals; scepticism from external organisations who might have been partners; delayed or untargeted marketing and communication; concerns over safeguarding; cultural perceptions of strangers, sharing living space and the younger generation.

The homeowners and homesharers who took part in interviews were strongly in favour of Homeshare and reported a range of benefits including: companionship, friendship, reduced social isolation and loneliness; feelings of safety; informal support – mainly from the homesharer to the homeowner as expected, but also some support given by the homeowner to the homesharer; intergenerational connections; support/ peace of mind for families of homeowners; wider social connections; financial benefits. Most described a successful process of negotiating boundaries at an early stage within the Homeshare dyad, sometimes supported by the project coordinator. For homesharers, there were some concerns and worries over homeowners’ health issues and wanting to support them. For homeowners there were some concerns over homesharers doing too much to support them. It was clear that in successful matches, both parties enjoyed each others’ company and had come to care about one another, using words such as ‘friend’, ‘family’ and ‘relationship’. This relationship and companionship between them seemed to be perceived as of more importance than the ‘selling points’ of ten hours of support (for the homeowner), and the offer of affordable accommodation (for the homesharer).

Of the factors which facilitated successful matches, the most important was the role of the project coordinator. There was universal praise for the project coordinator throughout the process of matching the homeowner and homesharer, and supporting the matches, including intervening when

necessary in unsuccessful matches. The project coordinators' efforts in developing partnerships and marketing were also praised, although it was acknowledged that more coordinated cross-council support in this area would have been helpful. Other facilitating factors included trusted sources to spread the word about Homeshare, good partnerships, flexibility, and getting the timing right.

An unexpected finding was that the model of older homeowner matched with younger homesharer was not necessarily the only one. The monitoring data showed that the age ranges of potential homeowners and homesharers overlapped, and the first successful match was in fact between a homeowner aged under 50 years with a chronic illness and a mature homesharer only 10 years younger.

How do the findings relate to the theory of change?

Reflecting on the theory of change that was developed and refined by stakeholders as part of the local evaluation, many of the expected impacts of Leeds Homeshare have been evidenced, despite a lack of questionnaire data. Qualitative interviews with homeowners and homesharers have confirmed:

- **Short term effects** of financial benefit for homesharers, increased companionship and reduced isolation and loneliness for both parties, help with practical tasks for homeowners, increased confidence (especially overnight) for homeowners, local knowledge for homesharers, reassurance for family of homeowners, and increased confidence (in not coming home to an empty house) for homesharers. There is implied enjoyment of living at home for homeowners, and implied increased psychological wellbeing though we do not have WEMWBS findings for this.
- **Medium term effects** of increased trust between homeowners and homesharers, financial benefits for homesharers, language skills for homesharers, indications of decreased loneliness and increased wellbeing for both parties, feeling valued (both parties), feeling 'at home' (for homesharers), feelings of safety and security (for homesharers), wider social connections, less reliance on family and friends, and family worrying less (for homeowners). We've not seen the anticipated increased social and physical activity for homeowners, this could be because they only wanted companionship and some help around the house (as seems to come across in the qualitative interviews). Another anticipated outcome in the medium term was increased intergenerational respect and understanding – we haven't seen this as our successful matches already had respect and understanding for the other generation.

- **Long term effects** – although matches tended to be shorter term and due to the slow start we hadn't had any really long term matches, we were beginning to see evidence of some of the expected long term effects – for example saving money to get onto the housing ladder, and increased social networks for homesharers. Episodes of ill health in the homeowners during the evaluation did suggest that having a homesharer may have led to reduced length of stay in hospital or other care facility, but with such small numbers we are not able to get any quantitative measure of this.
- **Risks** – in the theory of change workshops, stakeholders mentioned risks such as expectations not being met, boundaries, distress if a match wasn't working, safeguarding and possible risks to mental health for unsuccessful matches. The qualitative interviews revealed that in successful matches, a process of negotiating boundaries was begun during the matching process and continued throughout the match, with both parties feeling comfortable to raise issues with each other. In unsuccessful matches, the project coordinator was involved in resolving issues and ending the match when needed, supporting both parties. This likely reduced distress and mental health risks. An interview with the national coordinator revealed that no safeguarding issues had occurred in any of the Homeshare schemes in the UK.

How do the findings relate to the wider evidence base?

The findings of the local evaluation of Leeds Homeshare (Allen et al., 2014) are largely congruent with the findings of other related research and evaluation. In the scoping study that was carried out in Leeds in 2014, the most commonly reported perceived benefit for both groups was companionship, and also financial benefits, particularly for the homesharer. Homeowners also expected that they would feel 'safer' having someone in the house, for example if they had a fall. Both homeowners and homesharers felt that it would be a rewarding experience. Potential homesharers felt more positive about the proposed scheme than potential homeowners, and we have seen that there are many more enquiries from potential homesharers than homeowners. Both groups expressed a need for a trial period, and ongoing support and monitoring, and the role of the project coordinator was greatly valued in Leeds Homeshare. Homesharers were willing to pay a joining fee, but on the whole, homeowners were not, and this is reflected in the fee structure of Leeds Homeshare.

A systematic scoping review of six studies of the impact of homesharing for older adults (Martinez et al., 2020) reported that increased companionship, increased wellbeing and support with daily tasks were all benefits perceived by older people. The main challenges noted by the older people related to navigating boundaries in terms of sharing space, sharing time and interpersonal relationships. The

support of an external agency was seen as key to supporting a positive homeshare experience. All these findings were also the main findings in the Leeds Homeshare evaluation.

The national evaluation of Homeshare (Macmillan et al., 2018) had a few differences in findings to the Leeds Homeshare evaluation. In the national evaluation, matches were only made in London and Oxford - both areas of high cost housing - by the time the evaluation finished, and these reported more emphasis on financial benefits for the homesharer. The homeowners reported increased wellbeing and companionship, but this was not reported by homesharers. Instead, the homesharers reported enjoyment of sharing cooking and intergenerational learning. The national evaluation reported similar barriers to implementation of Homeshare, in that there was a limited pool of homeowners in appropriate housing stock, and similar challenges in negotiating boundaries, and escalating need of the homeowner, which were resolved by close contact with the project coordinator.

Reflexive statement

The lead researcher and report author has been involved with Leeds Homeshare since the early stages of applying for funding to the national pilot scheme. She has been a board member for Leeds Homeshare throughout and her wider research interests are in community wellbeing and social relations as ways of preventing and tackling loneliness and social isolation at all ages. This may be reflected as lack of impartiality in interpreting the findings of the local evaluation. However, the thematic analysis was led by the qualitative data, which was collected by other researchers in the team, so any personal input is hopefully minimised. On the other hand, the close involvement of the report author as almost an embedded researcher within Leeds Homeshare has also enabled insights into the process of delivery and effects of Leeds Homeshare that may not have arisen directly from the data collected. It is arguable whether these insights should enhance or detract from a fully objective observation of the data.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings from the local evaluation, which reported strong benefits relating the predicted theory of change pathway for all (but a small number of) participants, the following recommendations are made for the continued delivery of Leeds Homeshare:

- The role of the project coordinator is vital to making successful matches and maintaining them, and dealing with unsuccessful matches in a supportive way, and should continue as a full time role, especially if more matches are made such that the programme becomes financially sustainable.

- To get more matches and become financially sustainable, a different approach to marketing and communication needs to be taken, both in terms of appealing to homeowners and the people who can refer them (both Leeds City Council staff and external statutory and VCSO organisations). The national Homeshare UK organisation has offered to help with this.
- Concerns around safeguarding, which appear to be unfounded, need to be addressed directly.
- Clarity over the financial model may help with recruitment.
- Many potential homeowner enquiries were from families of potential homeowners – marketing should be aimed at this group.
- Financially sustainable models elsewhere in the UK are marketed on financial savings for the homesharer, rather than reciprocal companionship, which seemed to be the major success in Leeds. This may be worth considering, although the problem in Leeds is not a shortage of homesharers, but homeowners.
- Future research might usefully look at the other Homeshare schemes as comparative case studies. Of particular interest would be whether homeshare dyads were experiencing the same levels of support and friendship as in Leeds Homeshare, and if not to examine the potential ‘trade off’ between the rich social relational experience enjoyed by Leeds Homeshare participants versus the financially sustainable models which may involve less support for participants.

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APPENDIX A: STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Evaluation of the Homeshare Project

Stakeholder Interview Schedule (face to face OR telephone) - baseline

Interview Schedule:

Introductions

Stress that we want to talk about the project in a general way rather than trying to obtain specific information about any of the people referred into the project/involved. If names or identifying factors come up in the conversation then reassure that the information will be anonymised.

Background/Introductory information

- Please could you tell me about your role/what you do?
- How are you connected to the Leeds Homeshare Project?

Questions relating to the project

- Can you describe, in your own words, what is the Homeshare project?

Probes:

How did you find out about it?

What type of connection have you had with the project? In what capacity? (referral? Information-seeking? Joint working?)

What do you understand/know about the project?

Has your idea of Homeshare changed since you started the project?

- Can you describe the Leeds Homeshare approach?

Probes:

How is it different? What makes it unique compared to pre-existing services?

Do you think it is effective? If so, how and why (what features make it so?)

- How well do you think the project has worked/ is working so far?

Probes: what positive aspects have you noticed? What has been done right? Any preliminary positive results it has already yielded?

- What kind of obstacles, drawbacks, have you faced so far?

Probes: How have they impacted on the development of the project? How are you working on overcoming them?

- Is there anything you would like to see done differently?

Probes: things that could be improved? Strategies not used yet? Help you would like to receive?

- Why do you think the Homeshare project is important/useful/valuable?

- What impact do you think the project will have on the Homesharers and the Homeowners??

Probes:

Is the project engaging with people in a different way to existing services?

Why is the project important? What do you think would happen to the people involved in the project if it didn't exist?

- Have there been/ will there be any benefits for you personally?

Probes: training, skills, workload, networks?

- Will anyone else benefit from the project do you think?

Probes: existing services; families; friends; neighbours; wider community; society at large

- Do you think there could be any drawbacks to being involved, for yourself or others?

- How do you see the project (or Homeshare in general) developing in the future?

Probe: What improvements do you expect to see? What kind of results/impact do you expect it will make?

Closing questions

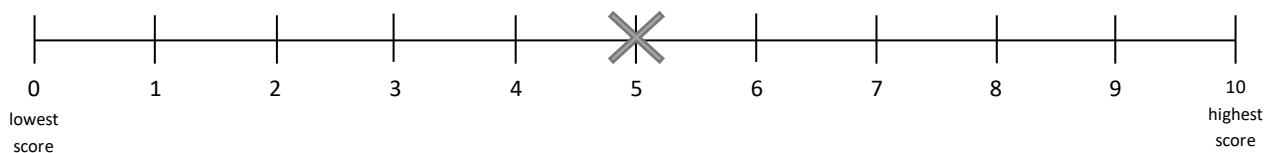
- Is there anything you would like to say about the Homeshare project which we have not discussed/talked about?

Thank you for your time etc., etc.

APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRES

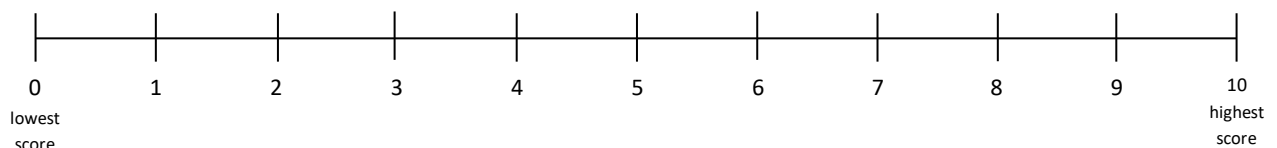
Homeowner Questionnaire

The Leeds Homeshare local evaluation team would like to ask you a few questions about your life in general. The survey should only take about 10-15 minutes. Each question is followed by a line, which is numbered from zero (the lowest score you can imagine) to ten (the highest score you can imagine). Please give a score from 0 to 10 to each question. To answer the questions that apply to you, please mark the bar above the number you choose on the line, as in the example below.

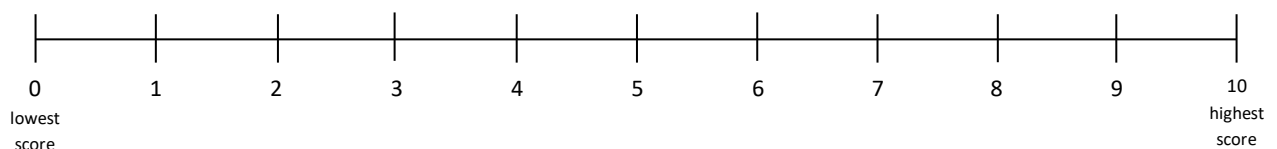


Please remember there are no right or wrong answers to this questionnaire and your responses are completely anonymous. Thank you for your collaboration.

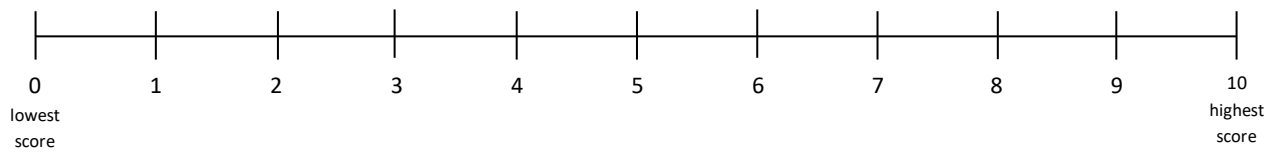
I choose to do things that I have never done before



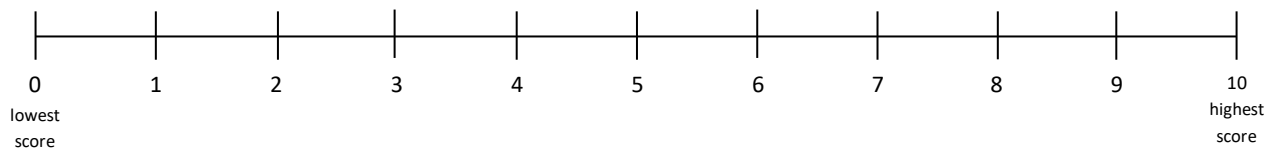
On balance, I look back on my life with a sense of happiness



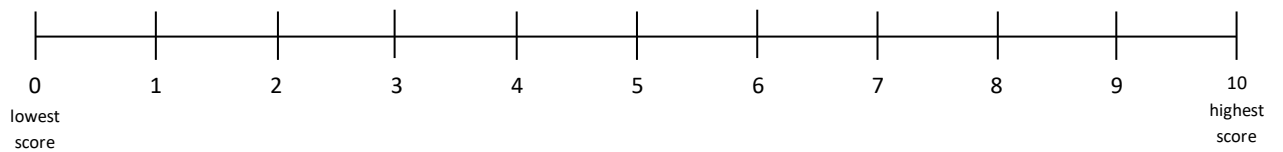
I feel free to plan for the future



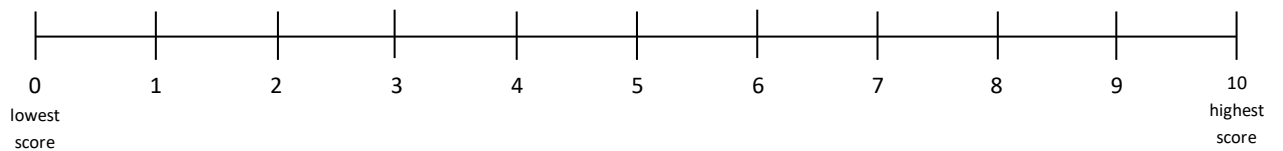
I feel satisfied with the way my life has turned out



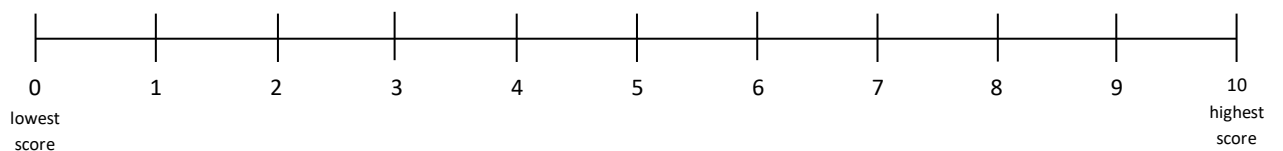
My relationships are as satisfying as I would want them to be



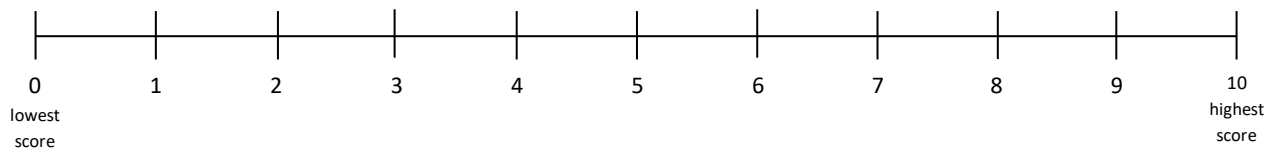
I feel left out of things



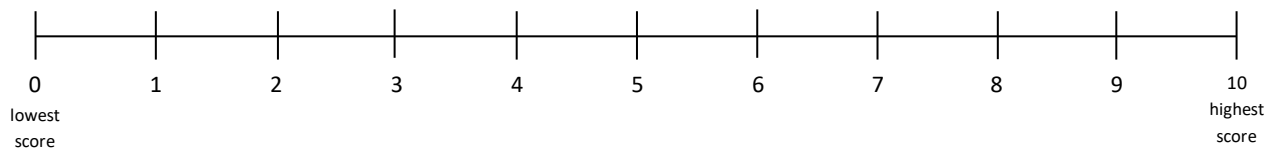
I feel that my life has meaning



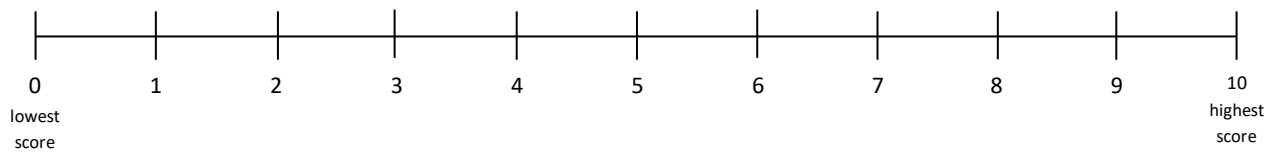
I feel full of energy these days



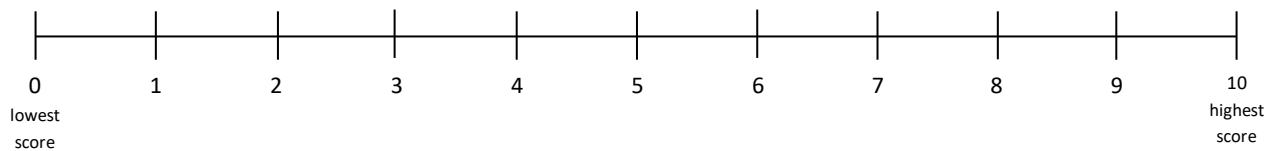
I feel that I can please myself what I do



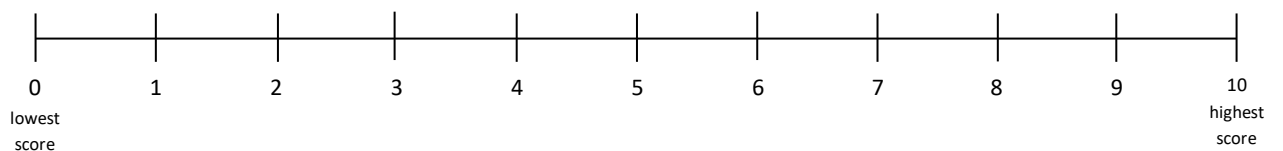
I am content with my friendships and relationships



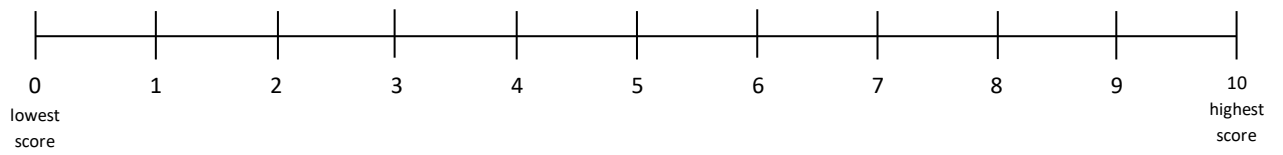
My age prevents me from doing the things I would like to do



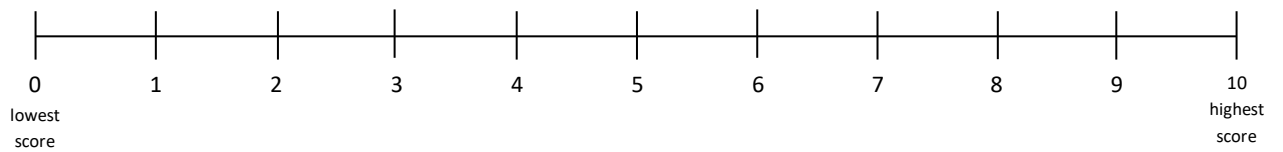
I feel that the future looks good for me



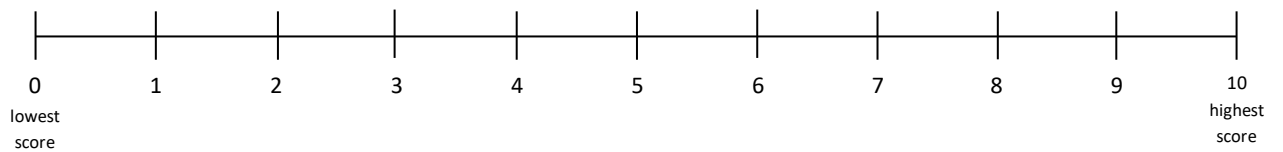
Shortage of money stops me from doing the things I want to do



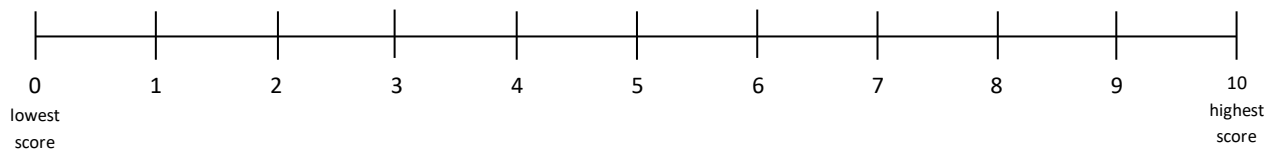
I enjoy the things I do



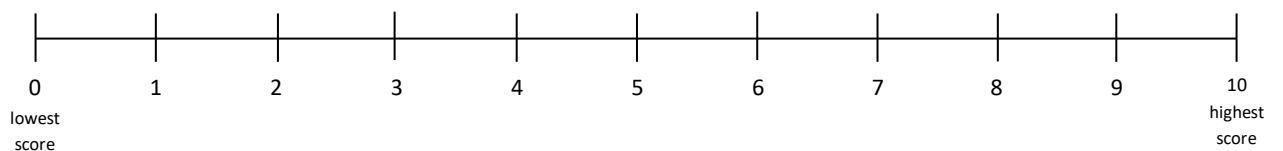
I feel that what happens to me is out of my control



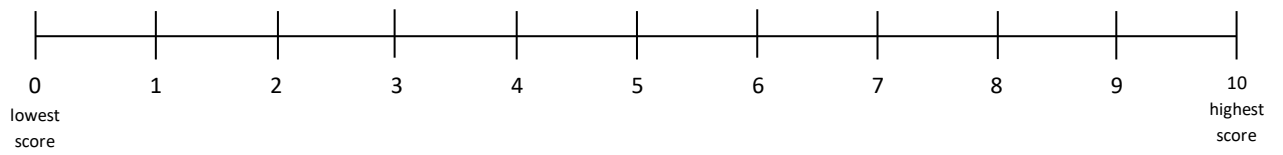
My health stops me from doing the things I want to do



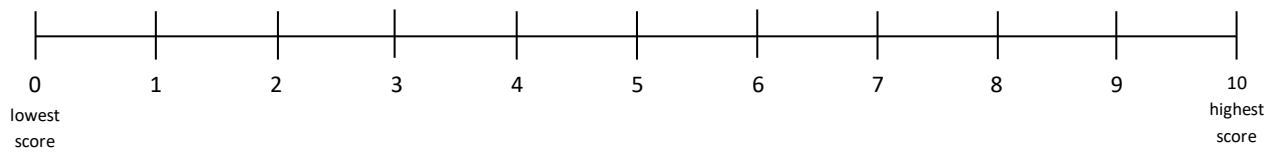
I have enough people I feel comfortable asking for help at any time



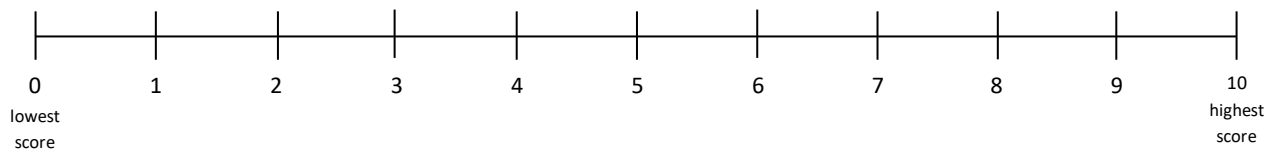
I enjoy being in the company of others



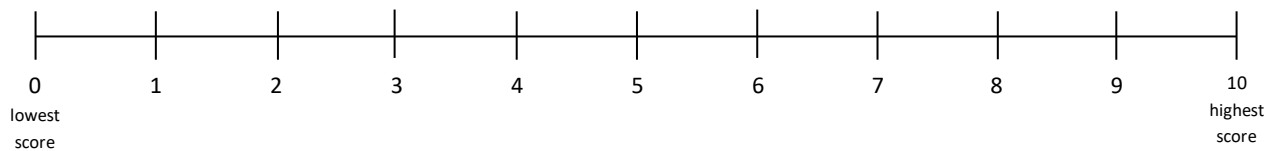
I can do the things that I want to do



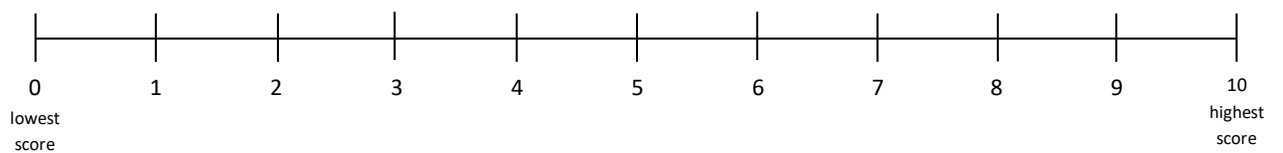
I feel that life is full of opportunities



Family responsibilities prevent me from doing what I want to do



I look forward to each day



Please, could you now answer the following questions?

What is your age in years?

☐ I would rather not say

Which gender do you identify with?

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Other

☐ I would rather not say

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

☐ Secondary school (GCSE or equivalent)

☐ Further education (A levels, HNQs or equivalent)

☐ Bachelor's degree

☐ Master's degree

☐ Doctoral degree

☐ Other

☐ I would rather not say

To which of these ethnic groups do you feel you belong?

☐ White British

☐ White Irish

☐ Any other White background

☐ Black: African

☐ Black: Caribbean

☐ Any other Black background

☐ Asian: Indian

- ☐ Asian: Pakistani
- ☐ Asian: Bangladeshi
- ☐ Any other Asian background
- ☐ Mixed: White and Black Caribbean
- ☐ Mixed: White and Black African
- ☐ Mixed: White and Asian
- ☐ Any other mixed background
- ☐ Chinese
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I would rather not say

What is your marital status?

- ☐ Single
- ☐ In a relationship
- ☐ Married or civil partnership
- ☐ Widowed
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Separated
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I would rather not say

Who do you live with? (homesharer not included)

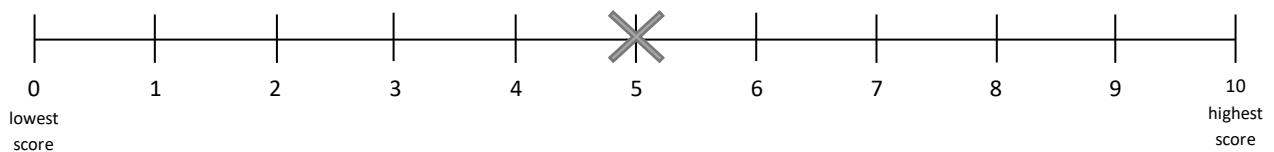
- ☐ On your own
- ☐ With partner/spouse and/or children
- ☐ With tenant(s)
- ☐ With friend(s) and/or relative(s)
- ☐ With carer(s)

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your input is valuable.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Dr Anne-Marie Bagnall (a.bagnall@leedsbeckett.ac.uk, 0113 812 4333)

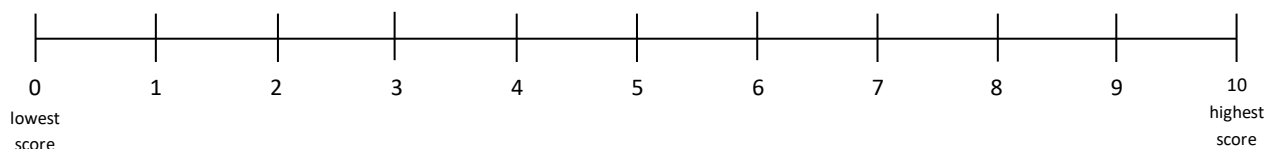
Homesharer questionnaire

The Homeshare team would like to ask you a few questions about your life in general and your experience as a homesharer. The survey should only take about 10-15 minutes. Each question is followed by a line, which is numbered from zero (the lowest score you can imagine) to ten (the highest score you can imagine). Please give a score from 0 to 10 to each question. To answer the questions that apply to you, please mark the bar above the number you choose on the line, as in the example below.

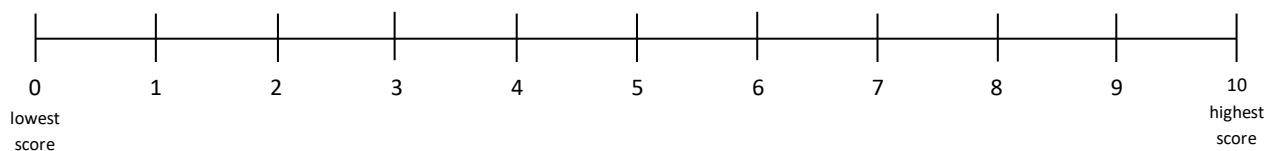


Please remember there are no right or wrong answers to this questionnaire and your responses are completely anonymous. Thank you for your collaboration.

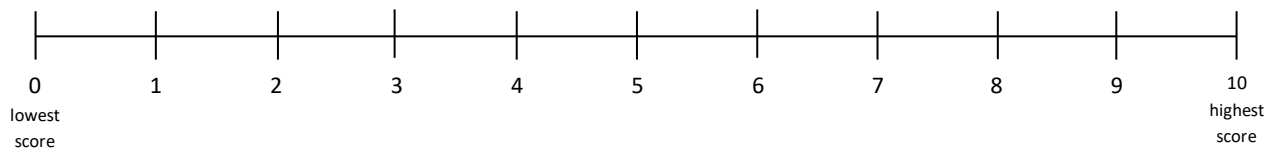
I am able to save for a rainy day



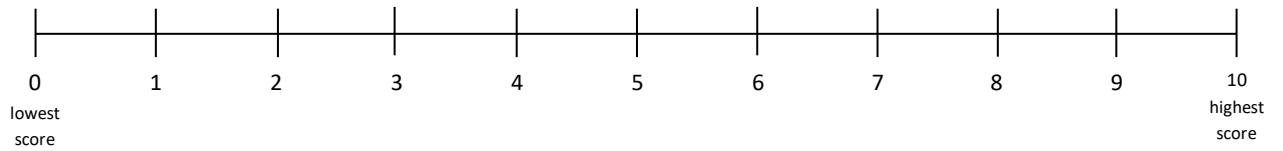
I feel I will be able to make the life of the person I live with better



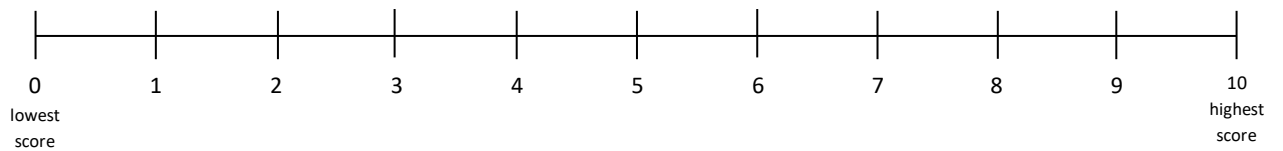
I worry about money



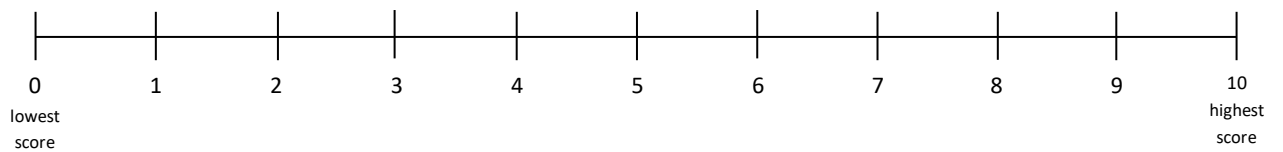
I am satisfied with my life



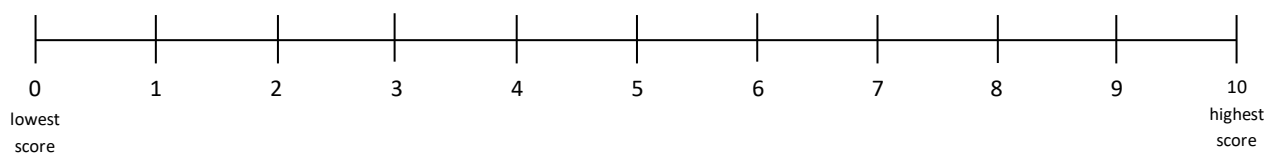
I feel satisfied with my financial situation



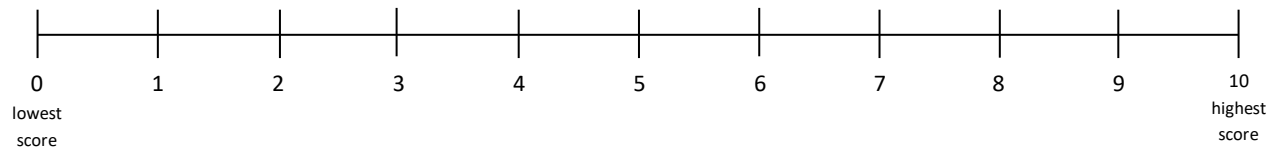
I have enough people I feel comfortable asking for help at any time



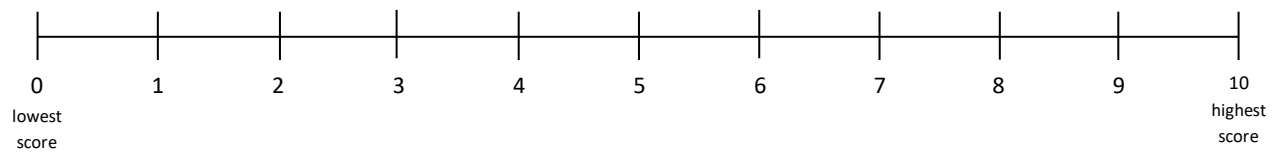
I worry about going into debt



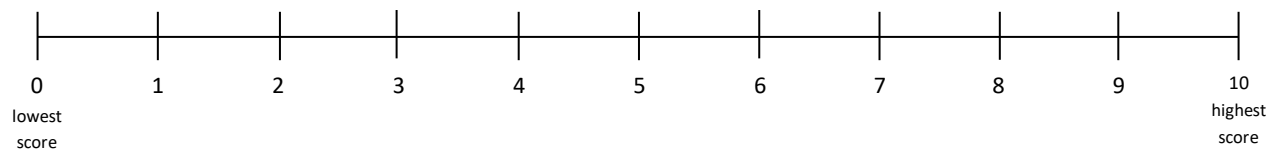
My relationships are as satisfying as I would want them to be



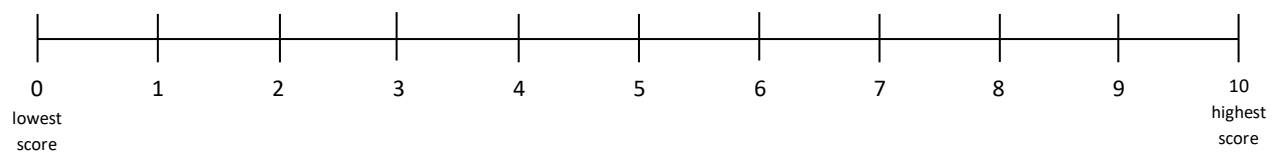
I am able to deal with a difficult situation



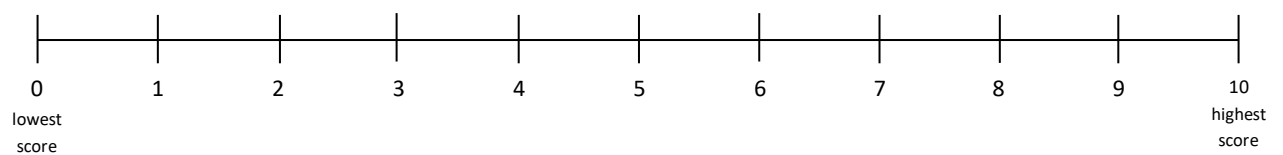
There is enough money in my budget to pay for the things I need



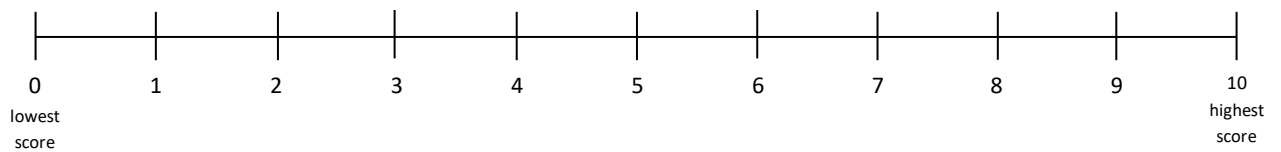
I can take care of the needs of the person I live with



I am content with my friendships and relationships



Being a homesharer is important to me



Please, could you now answer the following questions?

What is your age in years?

☐ I would rather not say

Which gender do you identify with?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I would rather not say

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- ☐ Secondary school (GCSE or equivalent)
- ☐ Further education (A levels, HNQs or equivalent)
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Doctoral degree
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I would rather not say

To which of these ethnic groups do you feel you belong?

- ☐ White British
- ☐ White Irish
- ☐ Any other White background
- ☐ Black: African
- ☐ Black: Caribbean
- ☐ Any other Black background
- ☐ Asian: Indian
- ☐ Asian: Pakistani
- ☐ Asian: Bangladeshi
- ☐ Any other Asian background
- ☐ Mixed: White and Black Caribbean
- ☐ Mixed: White and Black African
- ☐ Mixed: White and Asian
- ☐ Any other mixed background
- ☐ Chinese
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I would rather not say

What is your marital status?

- ☐ Single, never married
- ☐ Co-habiting
- ☐ Married or civil partnership
- ☐ Widowed
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Separated
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I would rather not say

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your input is valuable.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Professor Anne-Marie Bagnall (a.bagnall@leedsbeckett.ac.uk, 0113 812 4333)

APPENDIX C: STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET



An evaluation of Leeds Homeshare Pilot Project

Stakeholder Interview Participant Information

Dear Stakeholder

We are conducting an evaluation of the Leeds Homeshare Pilot Project which is funded by the Big Lottery and aims to match up homesharers and homeowners to benefit both parties. We are an independent team, we work for Leeds Beckett University. We are interested in your views as a stakeholder and would like to talk to you, either face to face or on the telephone; whatever is most convenient to you.

Before you decide whether you would like to talk to us please take the time to read this information carefully. We will be asking how you think the project went, what your involvement has been and what impact you think the project is having.

With your agreement we would like to digitally record the conversation so that we can remember everything that is said. You have the right not to be recorded or stop the recording at any point.

You also have the right to stop taking part in the interview at any point if you want to and you do not have to give a reason why. In addition, if you change your mind about taking part afterwards, you can also withdraw what you have said up until 4 weeks following the interview. This is the point at which we will have started to analyse the findings, and it becomes very difficult to separate everything out from then onwards. You can withdraw your consent by informing the Homeshare project worker or a member of the University evaluation team. Your relationship with the Project will not be affected in any way whatsoever if you do or do not take part. If you do take part you will be asked to sign a consent form to show that you have agreed to take part.

We may use some of the things that you say and write them in reports (only with your permission) but your personal details will be kept private. All recordings, notes and information that you provide will be stored securely. Paper copies will also be stored in a locked filing cabinet at Leeds Beckett University.

The research has been checked by an independent individual, called a Local Research Ethics Co-ordinator (LREC) to protect your well-being, rights and dignity. This research was reviewed favourably by the LREC at Leeds Beckett University.

We hope that the research will eventually be published in articles and reports and presented at conferences. We cannot guarantee that the research will help you directly, but it may improve learning around projects such as this.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. We look forward to meeting you very soon.

If you have a concern about any aspect of this research you should ask to speak to the researchers who will do their best to answer your questions. If you remain unhappy and wish to speak to someone independent from the study, you can do this through Professor Nick Frost, School of Health & Community Studies. Tel: 0113 812 9027
Email: n.frost@leedsbeckett.ac.uk.

Contact us

The team members are:

Anne-Marie Bagnall,
Reader, Centre for Health Promotion Research
Tel: 0113 812 4333
E-mail: a.bagnall@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

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Reader, Centre for Health Promotion Research
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Salvo Di Martino
Research Assistant, Centre for Health Promotion Research
Tel: 0113 812 5923
E-mail: s.di-martino@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

If you have any questions please call or email a member of the evaluation team above. Or write to us at the address below:

Centre for Health Promotion Research
Faculty of Health & Social Sciences
Leeds Beckett University
518 Calverley Building, Portland Way, City Campus, Leeds LS2 8NU

APPENDIX D: OVERVIEW OF WELFARE BENEFITS ISSUES

Leeds Homeshare, Overview of Welfare Benefits June 2017

Introduction

Welfare benefit regulations are currently resulting in barriers to claimants accessing Leeds Homeshare. There are specific regulations which would result in a detrimental impact on household income, or a potential overpayment of benefit, should a claimant choose to Homeshare. This is resulting in many less affluent Homeowners (this term includes tenants), and those claiming some disability benefits, being unable to take part in Homeshare.

Leeds Homeshare is referring any potential applicants who claim benefits to the Welfare and Benefits Section (WBS) who are advising on individual circumstances enabling an informed choice to be made regarding participation in Homeshare.

Working Age Claimants - under pension credit age (PCA) currently 65 for men and 63 for women.

- **Housing Benefit.** Homesharer classified as a 'non- dependent'. Significant reductions to Housing Benefit dependent upon income of Homesharer. Can be matched with an exempt group which includes full time students but lose exemption in the summer holidays if start earning.

Under Occupancy charge, Homesharing can result in an increase in Housing Benefit as a spare room is occupied but this may be offset by losses to other benefits.

- **Universal Credit.** Set deduction of £70.06 per month for all non- dependants, students are not exempt. Leeds is scheduled to go to full service with Universal Credit from June 2018
- **Severe Disability Premium.** Not an income in itself but included in DLA/ PIP claims and leads to increased awards of various benefits which are lost if applicant Homeshares, as a criteria is that no-one else lives with them in the property. There is an exemption that applies to Homeshare schemes based in charities but does not apply to Local Authority schemes.

Case Study

Mary is a 40 year old Leeds Homes tenant who applied to Homeshare. In recovery from cancer she still felt tired from treatment and would have benefited from the support with daily living tasks through Homeshare. As her son had recently left home to go to university she was also looking for companionship.

The Severe Disability Premium increased her income by £62.45 per week. Despite an increase of £8.51 Housing Benefit, as she would no longer be under occupying, a net loss in income of £53.94 per week meant that Mary was unable to take part in Homeshare.

Pension Age Claimants – over pension credit age (PCA) currently 65 for men and 63 for women.

- **Housing Benefit.** The non- dependent classification of Homesharers has less of an impact as the income of a non- dependant is ignored for 26 weeks. With full time students there is no deduction if full time work is taken up over the holidays.
- **Severe Disability Premium.** The loss of the Severe Disability Premium has the same impact on loss of income as with working age claimants, however the exemption through charitable Homeshare schemes does not apply.

The National Picture

It has been highlighted by all of the Big Lottery funded pilot projects that barriers around Welfare Benefits are resulting in difficulty in Homeshare being accessed by less affluent residents and those with disabilities, with concerns around the implications for equality and diversity.

This has been accepted as a priority by the National Partners with Age UK leading on the issue. Following advice from benefit experts within Age UK there will be lobbying to change the non- dependent classification of Homeshare. This will commence after the results of the general election are known however the initial advice is that this will be difficult to achieve, due to the lack of evidence base for the impact of Homeshare and the variations in the models of schemes.

Possibilities

The scheme has been advised that by changing the classification of Homesharers to lodgers with nil rent they will no longer be classified as non-dependants. Shared Lives Plus are supporting the scheme to explore this options with the local benefit team. Leeds WBS has taken a different position on this and without any element of commercial arrangement would consider lodgers with nil rent to remain classified as non- dependants.

The Oxford Model

The sharer pays between £270 - £370 ¾ of which goes to the Householder to cover gas, water, council tax and other costs. This is considered a commercial arrangement so the

Homesharer is not classed as a non -dependant. This is however considered to be income which is taken into account when calculating welfare benefits.

Conclusion

The complexity of Homeshare and welfare benefit claimants is such that there is no simple solution to lessen the adverse impact of Homeshare on the income of some claimants. It is recommended that Leeds Homeshare.

- Continue to seek advice individually for any Homeshare applicant so they can take a fully informed decision regarding proceeding.
- Remain fully informed of any national developments which may have a positive impact for the Homeshare movement.