

Media release

Life-changing housing programme brings young and old together

11 April 2023

A new housing initiative launched today will enable older Aucklanders to live in their own homes and stay in their communities, says Age Concern Auckland CEO Kevin Lamb.

"The heart of Homeshare is very simple, connecting older people with a spare room with people who need accommodation and are happy to lend them a hand," says Kevin.

"Through Homeshare, homeowners can find people to share their home with. In most cases, this will be an older person living in their own home with a spare room. They are matched with another person who will provide them with social connection and support in exchange for good quality, affordable accommodation."

While relatively new to New Zealand, Kevin says Homeshare arrangements have had a great deal of international success over the last 25 years.

"The overseas experience shows that getting the right match between homeowner and homesharer can be life-changing," Kevin says.

"The key is for arrangements to be overseen and managed by a dedicated agency. Our role will be to manage the recruitment of homeowner and homesharer candidates to help create matches".

Age Concern Auckland is partnering with the Homeshare Australia and New Zealand Alliance (HANZA) on the initiative.

"HANZA has a great track record working with providers, particularly in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, and the ACT. With their insights and understanding of best practice we are well-positioned to deliver an accessible, affordable, and high-quality service that enables people to remain living at home as they age.

The Office for Seniors is funding the Homeshare programme. Director Diane Turner says increasing housing options for older people is a key tenet of the Government's *Better Later Life Oranga Kaumātua 2019 to 2034* strategy.

"People aged 65+ make up nearly half of all New Zealanders who live alone, many of whom have lost a partner," says Diane.

"Homesharing makes it viable for people to remain in their own homes and stay connected with their community".

Age Concern will begin recruiting homeowners and homesharers in the coming weeks. The aim is to establish between 40 and 50 Homeshares in the Auckland region over the next 18 months.

Auckland homeowners who want to know more about Homeshare can contact Age Concern Auckland on 09 820 0184. More information on the Homeshare programme is available at OfficeForSeniors.govt.nz

About Age Concern Auckland

Age Concern Auckland is a Charitable Organisation dedicated to the over 65s and those who support them and is one of the most significant providers of services across Auckland that connects, supports, empowers, celebrates, and respects the older people in our community.

Their work includes:

Intervention Services to support older people suffering from abuse, neglect and in need of social support, Ageing Well Services to assist older people to stay independent, healthy, and active, Social Connection Services that mitigate loneliness, promote community involvement, and enable mobility, and support for older people to age in place and maintain their quality of life as they age.

ageconcern@ageconak.org.nz

About HANZA

Established in 2006, Homeshare Australia & New Zealand Alliance Inc. (HANZA) is a not-for-profit organisation and peak body advocating for Homeshare providers. HANZA shares information, advice, and resources about homeshare and connects Homeshare programs within Australia and New Zealand to international programs. HANZA is a central source of information and support for people wishing to establish a homeshare program or those looking to find a homeshare organisation in their community.

info@hanza.org.au

About the Office for Seniors

The Office for Seniors provides information to seniors and is a key advisor to the Government about the issues and concerns of older people. We work to improve the lives of older people across the country by promoting the wellbeing and concerns of seniors and increasing awareness of the issues facing our ageing population.

The Office of Seniors implements the Government's Better Later Life – He Oranga Kaumātua 2019 to 2034 Strategy. Housing is one of the key areas for action in our Action Plan, including work to promote diverse housing choices. The Homeshare programme that enables such shared living arrangements.

ofs@msd.govt.nz

Questions and answers

What is the concept behind Homeshare?

Homeshare programmes bring together householders — such as older people who have a room to spare — with people who can offer a helping hand and company in exchange for affordable accommodation.

For homeowners Homeshare arrangements ensure they have practical support for everyday tasks, helping them stay independent. Homeshare offers financial freedom, connection, companionship and help around the home.

How will Homeshare work?

Generally a Householder provides a bedroom and shared facilities. In exchange, the Homesharer provides practical assistance such as preparing and sharing some meals, putting out the bins or doing some light gardening as well giving the added security of someone else in the home overnight.

However, every homesharing arrangement will be unique and designed to meet the needs of participating homeowners and their homesharer.

Is a homeshare a rental agreement?

Homeshare is not a commercial rental arrangement.

Age Concern Auckland will help with the development of a written lodging agreement detailing the shared arrangements i.e. the spaces to be shared and the assistance the Homesharer will provide. There will also be an agreed contribution to be paid by the Homesharer for lodging and utilities etc.

What are the benefits of Homeshare arrangements?

An increasing number of New Zealanders want to stay at home as they get older.

Homeshare allows householders to remain in their own homes. Homeshare programmes have been run internationally over the last 25 years, with demonstrated economic and social benefits:

- Alleviating loneliness
- Encouraging older people to engage or reengage with their local community.
- Reduced dependence on government funded aged care, disability, and health services
- Promoting healthy attitudes to ageing and disability; and
- Avoiding entry into residential care.

What is in it for the Homesharer?

In return for their assistance around the house, the Homesharer gets stable and affordable accommodation.

What is Age Concern Auckland's role?

Age Concern Auckland will recruit homeowners and homesharers. They will assess applicants for suitability via interviews, reference checks, and police checks, then facilitating matches between participants.

Our approach is based on overseas models, particularly on best practice and insights from Australian models supported by Homeshare Australia and New Zealand Alliance (HANZA).

How many people will this help?

Our aim is for Age Concern Auckland to establish between 40 and 50 Homeshare arrangements in the Auckland region over the next 18 months.

How long do Homeshare arrangements last?

The term of the homeshare arrangements will vary and it is ultimately agreed between the householder and homesharer on a case-by-case basis. Our aim is that arrangements are set up for at least 6 to 12 months.

Age Concern Auckland will facilitate renewal process and/or further Homeshare arrangements if needed.

Is Homeshare a substitute for in-home care or formal care?

No. Homeshare is not a substitute for formal care. If Householder's needs reach the stage where formal, qualified care is required, this responsibility does not fall on a volunteer Homesharer. Age Concern Auckland will guide the Homeowner to access formal aged care services.

How will Age Concern recruit potential participants? How will you ensure it is safe?

Age Concern will oversee recruitment, vetting and matching participants. This will include face to face interviews, matching candidates based on their needs and values, home safety inspections, reference checks and police checks. We will work with both parties to develop an agreement that ensures the expectations of both parties are clear.

All matches will go through a trial period, and if they are successful the match will continue.

When will the first Homeshares begin?

Invitations to participate in Homeshare for the Auckland region are open now. Auckland homeowners who want to know more about Homeshare can contact Age Concern Auckland at homeshare@accm.org.nz

The first matches will begin over the next 3 to 6 months.

Do homeshare participants need to pay for this support?

Age Concern will not be charging for this support.

Why is the Government funding Homeshare?

The government's Better Later Life He Oranga Kaumātua Action Plan includes a priority to ensure there are a wide range of safe, secure, and affordable housing options that meet older peoples' needs.

Homeshare supports older homeowners to stay in their own homes for longer, while making better use of existing housing stock for underoccupied homes.

Apart from the benefits to older homeowners and homesharers, Homeshare helps make our communities more inclusive. Overseas experiences show that Homeshare can help older people remain living in their own homes and communities for longer while providing affordable housing and reducing the demand on local aged care and health services. Homeshare promotes a positive and healthy attitude to ageing.

Age Concern Auckland

Email: homeshare@accm.org.nz