****

**For immediate release**

13th June 2016

**Homeshare International launches support initiative to help organisations start a homeshare programme**

***Coincides with new £2 million National Homeshare Programme Fund from Lloyds Bank Foundation and Big Lottery Fund***

Homeshare International, a charity that supports professionals who run homeshare programmes, today announced an initiative to help organisations take advantage of this proven – and underused – service model.

Homeshare enables two unrelated people to share their lives for their mutual benefit. A homesharer provides support and companionship to a householder in exchange for free or low-cost accommodation. Homeshare builds relationships, often between two generations, recognising that those who take part have needs and something to give.

**Who the support initiative helps**

A homeshare agency skilfully matches homesharers and householders and supports the match. The Homeshare International initiative will help organisations establish an agency based on proven structures and processes.

An agency can be established by a charity, non-profit or commercial organisation – in the UK, 50% of schemes are charities or social enterprises and 50% are private companies.

‘Homeshare helps in so many ways. In areas where there are homeshare programmes, health and social services benefit from fewer demands on their services, and communities benefit from better use of housing stock and stronger relationships,’ said Elizabeth Mills, Director of Homeshare International. ‘And it’s not just about the homesharer doing housework, which is the stereotype. For example, there are matches where a young person helps the householder with technology, so she can email and Skype with her family members.’

‘Because homeshare has so many benefits, many different types of organisations can benefit from starting a programme, and that’s why we’ve developed this support initiative – to make it easy for them to launch a sustainable programme.’

**What the support initiative offers**

By working with Homeshare International, organisations will receive comprehensive, tailored support to start an agency. They’ll be able to take advantage of international best practice so they fulfil their mission and the needs of those they serve.

‘We piloted the initiative with Homeshare Oxford, which is funded by Lloyds Bank Foundation and delivered by Age UK Oxfordshire. From helping them select the best business model to putting leaders in touch with international counterparts, we provided professional support that’s helping make their new project a success. We’re now offering the same service to other organisations, making it easier for them to set up their own programme,’ said Elizabeth.

Homeshare International’s new initiative was launched to coincide with the announcement from Lloyds Bank Foundation and Big Lottery Fund that they’re creating a three-year, £2 million National Homeshare Programme in the UK. The Programme’s mission is to help put homesharing on the map as a viable housing solution. Homeshare International acted as a consultant to Lloyds Bank Foundation during the Programme’s planning and development stages.

*## Ends ##*

**Notes to Editors**

Homeshare supports social and public policy in many important ways and can be part of the solution for organisations tackling many issues, including

* Supporting older and disabled people in their own homes for longer, delaying or preventing the need for costly residential care
* Enabling hospital discharge and preventing ‘bed-blocking’
* Alleviating loneliness
* Providing low-cost accommodation for mature students in areas where universities have increased their intake faster than their student housing programmes
* Providing affordable housing in expensive cities like London, for example for key workers and single parents
* Making better use of housing stock – many older householders are under-occupying their homes
* Contributing to solidarity between the generations
* Contributing to strengthening local communities

*About Homeshare International*

Homeshare International is a network of professionals worldwide who run a homeshare programme, support the development of homesharing or raise awareness of what homeshare can offer as a solution to many of society’s needs.

The Homeshare International Research Advisory Group (HIRAG) is an international academic network that is developing an evidence base for homeshare. Its research helps governments, charities, non-profits and commercial organisations deliver more effective and sustainable programmes.

Visit [www.homeshare.org](http://www.homeshare.org) to learn more about Homeshare International.

**Media Contact:**

**Elizabeth Mills OBE, Honorary Director, Homeshare International 07970 742062 or email elizabeth@homeshare.org**