



2nd WORLD HOMESHARE CONGRESS

1 – 3 July 2011 Cologne, Germany.

REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The Congress was a great success on a number of fronts – the participants, the knowledge gained, information shared and the valuable networking experienced. Thirty seven participants attended over two days representing eight different countries – UK, Ireland, USA, Australia, France, Germany, Belgium, Japan.

In spite of language differences, the engagement and contribution by all attending was really impressive. This was made possible by Homeshare International's Chair Professor Malcolm Johnson who has an uncanny knack of putting people at ease and enabling them to speak publicly in varying levels of English competence.

PRESENTATIONS – Day 1

Professor Anne-Lotte Kreickemeier started the presentations with a brief history of “Wohnen für Hilfe” (Housing/Living for Help) the ‘Senior-Student Homeshare program’ which she helped establish in the early 1990s. This German version of Homeshare developed as a collaboration between three Universities in Darmstadt and their Education and Applied Science departments. There are now more than fifteen Wohnen für Hilfe programs in different University cities in Germany which network and liaise with each other and have an annual meeting of program coordinators. A number of programs were represented at the Congress, including the programs from Cologne and Münster. More was learned about current developments in workshops and informal discussions over the couple of days.

Alex Fox, Chief Exec, Shared Lives Plus (formerly National Association of Adult Placement Services (NAAPS)), UK.

Alex outlined the challenges experienced by the UK Homeshare movement trying to position Homeshare within the UK policy context. Alex's organisation, Shared Lives Plus, supports a number of linked, small scale initiatives, which build on real relationships through matching people – two of these initiatives are Homeshare and Shared Lives. With Shared Lives, a disabled or older person is matched with a registered Shared Lives carer and their family whom they visit or move in with. In the case of Homeshare, the householder is the older person or the person with a disability who brings a person seeking a low cost accommodation option into their home to share for mutual benefit. Shared Lives is a big program in the UK but Homeshare is still developing and is actually struggling. Alex suggests that lessons could be learned by other countries from the UK experience, such as being clear as to whether Homeshare is positioned as a philanthropic, private, commercial or state initiative. He stresses the increasing need within the UK context to market Homeshare to individuals and families, rather than to policy makers.

The UK has strong advocacy and umbrella groups who are supporting self directed care and person centred approaches and Homeshare fits very comfortably into this policy context, so this marketing

approach makes a lot of sense. John Galvin, the CEO of EAC (Elderly Accommodation Counsel), one such advocacy group, was a special guest of the Congress and talked about the EAC's role in 'Spreading the Word' about Homeshare through their website and other means in their efforts to help older people explore their housing and care options.

Alain de Penfentenyo, Founder and President, ensemble2generations (E2G) – inspired us with his enthusiastic and thoughtful business planning approach. E2G is in the 'Senior-Student Homesharing' category of Homeshare programs, like Wohnen für Hilfe; as opposed to Older Persons Homeshare or Younger Persons Homeshare (Disability). These distinctions were discussed at the Management Forum on Day 2 (see below). Alain's presentation showed that 'voluntary work' does not equal 'amateurism'. A social program can be professionally managed, and keep its social and humanitarian nature. E2G is very successful. In just four years the program has multiplied and now boasts 25 active programs in France, three of which are in the Paris Region. They attribute their success to developing skills in Business Planning and designing a robust business model which is simple but effective. A key element to E2G's success, in Alain's view, is developing a clear message about what Homeshare is all about and then staying on message.

Kirby Dunn from the USA – HomeShare Vermont – was stimulating as she always is. HomeShare Vermont was established in the early 80s so was by far the longest running Homeshare program in attendance at the Congress. They have done some excellent evaluation studies over the years which include an "Outcomes Report" and a recently completed study "The Dedicated Volunteers of HomeShare Vermont: a Thirty Year Follow Up". (Both of these are most informative and really inspiring reading.) The Outcomes Report demonstrated clearly the benefits of Homesharing and Kirby loves to say: "If someone could sell you a drug and offer you those three attributes: sleeping better, eating better and being happier—you would pay a lot of money for these benefits. But you can have all that just by homesharing."

Kirby also talked about the decline in the number of Homeshare programs in the US since the heady days of the mid 90s when there were over 400 programs (both homesharing and shared residences – just under half of which were match up homesharing). Numbers have dropped back to those of the mid 80s with only 65 match up homesharing programs remaining. There are clearly lessons to be learned from the US experience. Kirby gives the following explanations:- Lack of standardized program meant no replicable model developed; no nationwide program took it on; lack of concerted marketing; no universal funding source; very different in different places and focus on different types of clients.

In spite of this depressing picture, there are many very successful, long running programs like HomeShare Vermont which are still strongly supporting the Homeshare cause but facing a daunting emphasis on development – money for buildings – not services. Interesting, as it is such a contrast to the UK vision for aged housing.

Younger Householders with Disabilities is the last presentation to mention. This was my own presentation and is available in full for anyone interested. Essentially I talked about the experience at Wesley of testing the Homeshare model with younger householders with disabilities and the review of the disability program that was undertaken mid 2010. The review concluded that "Homeshare Disability has proved to be a very worthwhile program for the people with a disability participating in the program. It is a service that leads the way in terms of empowering people with disabilities to: lead their lives with dignity; achieve or maintain independence and be included in society."

The study had some criticisms of the program and a number of recommendations were made. The key recommendations are:

- to clarify and strengthen the eligibility criteria for householders
- to ensure Homeshare Coordinators are clear on their role and work within this role.

Critical to the success of the Homeshare program in disability is who manages the program and how it is managed.

FORUM – MANAGEMENT OF HOMESHARE – Day 2

Critical to the successful development and sustainability of Homeshare programs is the management of them:

1. **WHO** manages Homeshare – the organization and the people?
2. **HOW** Homeshare is managed – methodology, team approach, integrated with other services, stand alone?
3. **WHAT** resources & supports are available to the program?
4. **WHERE** programs are located – urban or rural areas; areas with housing shortages, located in the geographical area it is servicing.

A panel of Homeshare experts used these four questions to describe their experiences and discussed and debated different management models of Homeshare; keys to effective management of Homeshare and what underpins long term sustainability of Homeshare.

A highlight of this forum was a presentation by Cathy Mandaza, Homeshare Manager at Crossroads Care, Central and North London. Crossroads Homeshare is the most successful, long running Homeshare program in the UK and its survival is testimony to the tenacity and commitment of Cathy. It is an extraordinary story and an example of how critical the question is of 'Who manages Homeshare'. Cathy has held the program together through three changes of auspice agency since 2000 and now the London Homeshare program seems to be in the right place and is strengthening and growing.

Participation in this forum was lively and most informative. The growth in Senior-Student Homesharing in the European countries is significant – not just in Germany and France, previously mentioned, but also in Belgium and we heard from all of these initiatives. The star 'newcomers' on the Homeshare block, who contributed to this session, were the Japanese. Mamiko Miyahara from the Dept of Architecture, University of Tokyo presented the research that she has been doing into US Homeshare programs and the collaborative work she is undertaking with her colleague Kazuyo Sonohara from the Tokyo based accommodation program - NPO Heart Warming House. Mamiko approaches Homeshare as an architect and focuses on living spaces and adaptations that are valuable to ensure homesharing by unrelated people is successful. This was a fascinating and different way of looking at Homeshare.

WORKSHOPS

The last session consisted of three stimulating workshops:

1. Supportive Homeshare Networks - National and International
2. Developing Partnerships
3. The World Wide Web for Homeshare – a SWOT analysis

WORKSHOP FEEDBACK AND CONCLUSION

The workshops demonstrated more than anything else the common ground we all share in pursuing the ideal of promoting homesharing in our own countries and internationally. The issues and the challenges we face are similar. We can learn so much from each other. We were left wondering with amazement that one small, but significant, service can fire up such interest, enthusiasm and passion worldwide!

All committed to meet again for the 3rd World Homeshare Congress to be held in Oxford 5/6 July, 2013!

Beris Campbell

HANZA (Homeshare Australia & NZ Alliance), founding Coordinator Wesley Homeshare, Trustee – Homeshare International.