



Homesitters®

We stay while you're away

Occasional
employment and
an enjoyable break
from routine



*We are looking for more homesitters
and would like to hear from you...*

Who are we?

Homesitters Limited was established in 1980 to provide a live-in home and pet sitting service, available throughout the year, in England, Wales and Scotland.

As a homesitter, what would I actually do?

You stay in other people's homes and care for their pets and possessions while the owners are away. Although for much of the time you are free to come and go as you please, you take on various responsibilities for the owner. You live in the client's home (which maintains security); you keep the areas of the home that you use clean and tidy; take telephone messages; deal with callers; water houseplants and provide light garden care. If you are happy to homesit with pets or livestock, you care for them as instructed, maintaining their normal routines.

We leave nothing to chance. We give you a detailed brief to enable you to decide whether or not to take on the assignment, and usually you will have a preliminary meeting with the client before the assignment begins.

It is essential that you and the client have a clear understanding of what the assignment involves, so before leaving home the client will complete a detailed "HOMESITTERS CHECKLIST" with you. The Team at Head Office who are handling the assignment will keep in touch with you at every stage of the booking, including during the assignment.

“Homesitters has added another dimension to my life, giving purpose, variety, as well as helping out financially...it is an ethical, well run company.”

Mrs P W, Berks



What does home and pet sitting offer our homesitters?

- The chance to stay in a variety of homes, and to enjoy their amenities and surroundings
- The opportunity to see new places and explore different areas
- The company of pets (if you wish) without the commitment or expenses of owning them
- The responsibility of standing in for other homeowners
- Modest remuneration to supplement your income
- A considerable saving in your own household costs (such as heating and electricity) while on assignment
- A food and travel allowance (both tax free)
- The benefit of the company's 24 hour backup and comprehensive insurance cover
- Freedom of choice in both the type and number of homesits you undertake

If you are looking for *regular salaried employment* homesitting is **not** suitable because:

- Payment is very modest; normally it equates to 1.75 hours per day at the National Living Wage
- Absence from clients' properties must not exceed three consecutive hours during daylight or one hour after dark
- Homesitting is not continuous employment but we like our homesitters to be generally available throughout the year

“Home and pet sitting is really fun but it is also purposeful. It provides a real break from the routine and a chance to get fit walking the dogs. We can do it as much or as little as we like, combining all our interests together and the animals are the best part of all.”

Mr and Mrs S, West Sussex, homesitters since January 2012



Some frequently asked questions

- ▶ **How available do I need to be?**

We do like our homesitters to be generally available throughout the year. This is because (a) we are busy all year round, and (b) clients often want the same homesitter at different times of the year.
- ▶ **How will you choose the homesits to offer me?**

Before you join us, you will have an opportunity to discuss home and pet sitting in great detail. At this interview, you tell us about your skills and experience and your likes and dislikes, so that we can be sure to match you to assignments you will enjoy. We take very comprehensive briefs from clients about their homes and pets, and we give you full details when offering you a sit. You are free to choose both the number and type of homesits you undertake – and you meet the client before the homesit takes place, to ensure that this is the right sit for you.
- ▶ **Do I need particular skills and experience?**

Yes – you must be experienced in running your own home. Our employees are “surrogate homeowners” which means that they must be able to apply their domestic skills to the needs of the client. Many homesits include the care of pets, so a liking for dogs and/or cats and some hands-on experience is also a great asset.
- ▶ **Will I be insured?**

Yes, we provide employer’s liability insurance which covers you (and your partner, if applicable) whilst you are working for us. We also carry public liability and professional indemnity cover.



► **Will I be working all day?**

Certainly not! Home and pet sitting is a serious responsibility but it is meant to be enjoyable. Normally the average working time does not exceed 1.75 hours per day. When you're not carrying out your duties, you are free to remain on the client's premises or to explore the local area. Any period away from the property must not exceed three consecutive hours during daylight or one hour after dark, but you may leave the premises on more than one occasion each day.

Our homesitters tell us that they enjoy their trips out visiting local towns, beauty spots, National Trust properties or taking country walks. Shops, museums and galleries are among the varied attractions of city homesits.

When in the client's home, homesitters seize the opportunity to catch up on letter-writing, reading, crosswords, cataloguing photographs, embroidery, painting etc, whilst also enjoying the amenities of the client's property and the company of their pets.

► **How long are homesits?**

The average length of an assignment is about two weeks, but there are lots of opportunities to sit for shorter periods – or considerably longer periods.

► **Do I have to stay at the home all day?**

Not unless you want to! But the aim of home and pet sitting is to look after the client's property and animals, so our absence periods have to be limited. We aim to achieve a sensible balance between taking proper responsibility for our clients' homes and pets, allowing you the chance to explore new areas.

► **How far afield will I travel?**

Homesitters' travel costs to and from homesits and preliminary meetings are reimbursed by our clients. To keep these costs to a minimum we try to select the nearest homesitters to the client that meet their requirements.

If the assignment is very specialised, or booked at short notice, we may well have to bring a homesitter from a great distance.

Some homesitters like to be offered homesits in their local area rather than going further afield. They feel more comfortable on home territory – they know where the best shops are and are familiar with local travelling conditions etc. For other homesitters a major attraction of homesitting is the chance to travel further afield, combining homesits with visits to family or friends. We like to accommodate homesitters' preferences in this respect – but not by disadvantaging clients. Whilst the opportunities to travel far afield are limited, you can increase your chances by:

- Nominating other base(s), close relations' homes perhaps, from where you would set off for assignments
- Sharing costs to travel beyond the nominal 80 mile radius i.e. putting yourself on a level playing field with more local homesitters.

► **Am I allowed visitors?**

No. We request that you meet your friends or family away from the clients' properties, during your permitted absence periods. This may seem rather restrictive, but understandably clients like to know the people who will be in their home.

“I wish I’d started doing this when I first retired a few years ago...”

Mrs N B, Herts

▶ **May I homesit alone – or do you only accept couples?**

We have many homesitters who homesit very successfully on their own, and they tell us that staying in a client’s home is much more welcoming than being alone in a hotel or guesthouse! This is particularly the case when a ‘solo’ homesitter is making a return visit to a regular client: both parties enjoy the continuity and familiarity. Those sitting as couples, on the other hand, often say how much they enjoy one of the few occupations which permits them to take their partner with them.

▶ **Homesitting is clearly a serious responsibility; what support do you give me?**

As employees, our homesitters operate under our direction and they benefit from the company’s many years of experience, having been founded in 1980. You enjoy your homesits knowing that nothing is left to chance; we ensure that you and the client have a clear understanding of each other’s requirements, and our guidelines are designed to be in everybody’s best interests. We provide ongoing support for each of our homesitters from the date that they joined us.

Our Head Office Team will take personal responsibility for you: keeping in touch regularly, looking after your interests, and ensuring that we place you most appropriately. From her/him you will receive detailed guidance notes on homesitting which are updated with newsletters.

Unlike our competitors, we provide 24 hour support for our homesitters (this is a human, not a telephone answering machine!), so if you have a problem on a homesit you have only to call us. In the event of a homesitter becoming ill or having a personal crisis which results in your needing to leave a homesit, we provide a replacement homesitter very speedily.

► **Will homesitting really suit me?**

Homesitting appeals to people from a wide range of backgrounds who enjoy a break and a bit of an adventure – but who want the security of a professional company backing them.

Many homesitters miss the company of pets and welcome the opportunity to “borrow” our clients’ pets; other homesitters do not have pet experience – but want to utilise their many years’ experience of running their homes.

Whatever your skills and situation, it is *attitude* which is key: respect for other people’s homes and possessions and a desire to provide a good service are the star qualities. Ideal homesitters are adaptable, sensitive people who take their lead from the clients – and put themselves in the clients’ shoes. With these attributes, and a sense of humour, you should find homesitting rewarding and fun!

Our recruitment process is, of necessity, lengthy and detailed. Because of the nature of the service we provide, it is essential that our clients and our homesitters have complete trust in us, and a clear understanding of what home and pet sitting involves. So – please – before putting pen to paper, consider carefully whether you will be comfortable being away from your own home, social life and interests – you can, of course, limit the length of homesits that you accept. It is particularly important that applicants who plan to sit alone have their own hobbies and interests to occupy their time on sits. Also, are you and your partner equally interested in the idea of home and pet sitting? It does not work if one partner is reluctant.

“I enjoy the flexibility of home and pet sitting ... and it provides a nice supplement to my pension”

Mrs H, Cornwall, homesitter since June 2014

Rewards and formalities...

Travelling allowance

The client will pay your travelling allowance to and from the preliminary meeting and the homesit. If you travel by car, tax free mileage refunds (for running costs) are based on current AA recommended rates.*

Living allowance

While on assignment, you can expect a normal standard of comfort and warmth but with careful eye on the budget! In addition, the client will leave you a tax free daily food allowance.* If you sit with a partner, food money is not provided for the second person.

Remuneration

The primary rewards for homesitting are **non-financial** but they do include modest remuneration to supplement a pension or other income. Your working time is remunerated at not less than the prevailing rate of National Living Wage plus appropriate holiday pay. Additional increments may be paid for the care of pets and various other duties.

Most of our homesitters are of pensionable age and therefore do not pay NI contributions. Liability to income tax depends on individual circumstances. We are required to deduct tax (PAYE) and NI contributions where applicable. When a couple homesit together, only one partner is required to become our employee for pay and tax purposes; however, both partners are subject to our vetting procedures.

Potential employees in receipt of state benefits should check how these would be affected by any earnings from homesitting before proceeding with an application.

* For current rates please telephone us (01296 630 730)

If you would like to become a homesitter...

... please write to us, telling us about yourself (and your partner if you wish to be accompanied) including:

- Why home and pet sitting appeals to you
- Your full postal address and your telephone number
- Your feelings about looking after pets and your experience of owning and/or caring for them
- Whether you have a car
- Confirming that you (and your partner)
 - a) Are fit and active
 - b) Have your own permanent home in this country
 - c) Are without accompanying pets or regular commitments
 - d) Do not smoke
- Whether you or your partner are in receipt of any state benefits
- Where you heard or read about Homesitters

Because of the nature of our service we provide it is essential that our clients have complete trust in us. All potential homesitters are subject to strict vetting procedures and we meet all prospective homesitters to discuss homesitting in detail. It is important for us to know our homesitters' likes or dislikes, so that we can be sure to offer the assignments which they will enjoy. These interviews usually take place at our Head Office to enable applicants to meet as many of our administrative staff as possible.

We look forward to hearing from you.



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