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A country for all ages:

ending age apartheid in Brexit Britain



About United for All Ages

United for All Ages is a think tank and social enterprise that aims to build a stronger Britain and stronger communities by bringing younger and older people together. Launched in 2010, United for All Ages works with policymakers, councils, charities, universities and companies to make 'a Britain for all ages' a reality. United for All Ages focuses on how action for and by all ages can tackle some of Britain's major social and economic issues, from housing and care to work and technology.

United for All Ages was set up by Stephen Burke and Denise Burke who both have substantial experience in childcare and eldercare. Stephen was chief executive of two national care charities, Daycare Trust and Counsel and Care, and was councillor, cabinet member and leader as well as vice-chair of the primary care trust in a London borough. Stephen is chair and trustee of several national and local organisations working on housing, care, health, families and ageing. Denise led on childcare for Peterborough city council and headed up youth and childcare for the Mayor of London as well as being chair of BBC Children in Need for London and the South East. She has been a childcare and early years consultant with local authorities, was interim CEO of smallsteps, the largest childcare provider in the Netherlands, and is chair of the Poppy & Jacks nursery group in north-west England.

United for All Ages and My Family Care launched www.goodcareguide.co.uk, the only site where families can find, rate and review childcare and eldercare. United for All Ages also set up www.downsizingdirect.com to encourage and support older people to downsize their home. Policy papers and commentary from United for All Ages can be found at www.unitedforallages.com

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Introduction

A country for all ages

2016 was a year of division – from Brexit to Trump and beyond across the world – with seemingly a generational divide in political attitudes. Older and younger generations have been pitted against each other and blame each other for the outcomes of key votes. Underlying these headlines are multiple grievances from different generations about their economic lot.

Early in 2016 United for All Ages published *Fairness for All Ages*, setting out ways to promote intergenerational fairness. The paper contained many different views, mainly on economic measures. The debate still rages following the recent House of Commons Work and Pensions select committee inquiry report into the issue with its recommendations on financial support for pensioners. We believe that any fundamental economic solutions promoting intergenerational equity must address the housing crisis and the balance of taxation.

Can we make 2017 a year when we unite and start to build a country for all ages?

In this paper United for All Ages explores how different generations can come together and unite. We asked twenty organisations for ideas and practical solutions that promote social integration for all ages, highlighting that we are interdependent, social and unselfish creatures.

Our society is plagued by ‘age apartheid’. Much of what we do is segregated by age, particularly so for the youngest and oldest generations. United for All Ages believes more age-integrated activities in our communities can form the basis for rebuilding trust, confidence and mutual support between younger and older people across our society.

This paper particularly looks at how mutual understanding and respect can be promoted by people of different ages mixing and communicating, working together and supporting each other. This can and does happen in a wide range of spheres, media and activities to help promote stronger bonds in our society and meaningful interactions between generations.

We are very grateful to all those who have contributed to this paper – people of different ages and from organisations working with different generations, in Europe, the USA, Japan and elsewhere. They have challenged us all to think and work in new ways if we are to bring generations together in this country in 2017 and beyond.

By sharing our concerns and interests and sharing our spaces and communities across generations, we can promote stronger understanding between people of all ages. Ending age apartheid and promoting social integration between generations can help build a country for all ages, where we are united not divided. In Brexit Britain that must be an ambition worth sharing and pursuing.

Stephen Burke
Director, United for All Ages

Age apartheid – a country divided by age and generation?

This paper addresses several related issues:

- age segregation of different generations and the multiple impacts of a lack of mixing between age groups
 - perceptions held by both younger and older generations of unfairness in their relative treatment
 - bottom-up solutions that could help create communities and a country for all ages
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Action to end ‘age apartheid’ is needed urgently because we live in a country increasingly divided in many ways, one of which is by age and generation. That division has become more marked in the last year and the turmoil in 2016 with the UK vote to leave the EU and the USA vote to elect a new President. Some argue that Trump and Brexit are just symptoms of a much wider malaise created by globalisation. This has left many behind, manifesting itself in low pay, a housing crisis and growing alienation.

United for All Ages addressed economic issues in our 2016 paper, *Fairness for All Ages*. We argue that two measures are required urgently to

address the housing crisis and implement fairer taxation. Investment in building many more affordable homes for both younger and older generations has to be accompanied by the balance of taxation shifting from income to wealth to reduce the burden on those of working age.

A Country for All Ages does not revisit all these issues. So while this paper looks at housing, for example, it focuses on how new models of housing in local communities could bring older and younger people together to promote mutual understanding and trust. But first we look at ‘age apartheid’ in the UK and why it matters.



Society has become **increasingly segregated by age**. Children go to school largely surrounded by children of the same age and the occasional authoritative adult figure. Children see their parents and grandparents less often for complex socio-economic reasons (we have to work so much, the house is cheaper in another city, we can't care for the parent/grandparent, who is now living longer, at home, so we pay for their care in a "home", another form of segregation). The old are increasingly isolated from a society that changes ever more quickly.

Think of your friendship group: **how diverse is it in age?** Think of those you work with, how old is the youngest, how old is the oldest, do you, they, meaningfully interact in the same space regularly?

Iain Tidbury,
Masters Student, University of Winchester



The insidious media coverage of intergenerational unfairness belies real relationships – younger people respect and love older people, their grandparents, neighbours and relatives, and they share passions, pleasures and interests. But **too often lives are lived in parallel** – using the same streets, parks, shops and cafes but forced apart, crossing paths now and again, through family gatherings, chats at bus stops, waiting in queues.

Janet Morrison, Independent Age

How segregated are we by age?

According to research by the Social Integration Commission, the average Briton has 42 per cent fewer interactions with people of different ages than would be expected if there was no social segregation. Much intergenerational mixing is likely to be within families. The SIC analysis shows that if you exclude interactions within the nuclear family, the average Briton has 54 per cent less interaction with other age groups than would be expected if there was no social segregation and 56 per cent fewer interactions if you also exclude extended family.

The level of age group integration varies depending on age. When family interactions are excluded, those aged under 17 have the least number of social interactions with other age groups, having 80 per cent fewer interactions with other age groups than would occur if age was irrelevant. Those under 17 are also the most reliant on family relationships to enable them to mix with people of other ages. This lack of interaction raises questions about whether young people have enough exposure to a diverse group of adult role models.

And as older Britons age, they have a decreasing number of interactions with younger Britons. Those aged 65-74 have 26 per cent fewer social interactions with those younger than 65, while those aged 75-80 have 38 per cent fewer interactions with those younger than 65.

Is age segregation growing?

Age segregation has been steadily worsening for almost 25 years according to the Intergenerational Foundation. Its Generations Apart project looked at age segregation in housing between urban and rural areas. This showed that there is a stark divide between the age profiles of towns and countryside, which is growing over time. Between 1991 and 2014, the median age of rural areas rose twice as quickly as that of urban ones. Places classified as “rural town and fringe” areas now have the oldest age profile, with a median age of 50, while in “major urban conurbations” it is just over 35. The stark rural-urban divide is illustrated by places which have the most extreme median ages. The study found that among 7,201 neighbourhoods in

England and Wales, there are 487 where the median age is above 50, and 60% of these are found in rural areas; by contrast, there are 337 neighbourhoods where the median age is under 30, all of which are found in urban areas.

This growth of age segregation is also mirrored within large cities. Not only has the country become increasingly divided between older rural areas and more youthful urban ones, but older and younger people are also sorting themselves by age into different neighbourhoods within urban areas. This effect is most striking for young adults (aged 18 to 34), who are more likely to live in neighbourhoods that contain only other young adults, predominantly close to the centres of cities. The research found that the two most age segregated cities are Cardiff and Brighton, while the least age-segregated is Wigan.

Age segregation therefore relates to how the housing market operates. The growing isolation of young people living near the centre of cities, and the rising number of children who live in areas with few older people, would appear to reflect the shift towards many more single adults and young families living in rented accommodation in inner city areas when in previous generations they would have moved to suburban areas. This growth of age segregation demands much more action on affordable housing to enable older and younger people to live in the same areas.

Does age segregation matter?

In just a few decades, we have turned thousands of years of mixing between young and old people and those in mid-life into an ‘age apartheid’. This is harmful for all of us and for our society. It has in particular left many older people isolated and institutionalised, while it deprives young people of the experience and wisdom older people have to offer. Loneliness is now one of the biggest threats to the physical and mental health of all generations. Our communities would be much stronger if they were built on reciprocal trust, understanding and belonging engendered by different generations sharing spaces, interests and concerns.

There are now more people aged over 65 than under 16 as our population ages. Can we make contact between the generations 'normal' again? Age integration should be the focus of social innovation, knitting together unrelated people, young and old, who need support and need to be needed too. To make progress on these important issues and win support for bringing generations together, we need people to understand why our society is losing out from age segregation.

Some commentators suggest that 'age is just a number'. But there are many who argue that ageism is the biggest barrier to progress. Age

apartheid simply reinforces ageism by reducing the contact between generations which could dispel the myths and stereotypes that ageism thrives on. That's why we believe integrating generations is so important in Brexit Britain.

United for All Ages' work has focused on shared concerns and shared interests, shared spaces and shared communities across generations. This paper proposes ways to make these happen from three perspectives: building multigenerational communities; promoting two-way relationships; and new ways of communicating between generations.

Ten ways to create multigenerational communities and a country for all ages

- 1 Establish a national council for all ages which brings together organisations representing different generations to explore how mutual interests and understanding can be promoted
- 2 Promote the development of multi-generational communities across the country with national awards, training and support
- 3 Encourage shared identity and interest groups to think and act all ages and strengthen relations across generations
- 4 Support community businesses to start up and prosper by meeting the needs of the whole population
- 5 Create public spaces and shops that are age friendly and accessible for all
- 6 Ensure that community organisations and services from universities to older people's housing schemes open their doors to people of all ages
- 7 Invest in community-based projects that end age ghettos in housing and everyday activities and create new community organisations
- 8 Share the experience, energy and resources of different generations through mentoring and advocacy, Homeshare and family care for mutual benefits
- 9 Promote theatre and other arts activities to increase communication and understanding between generations
- 10 Create an intergenerational convention that brings together young and older people from across the country to debate solutions to issues of mutual concern and inform the national council for all ages

Age integration should be the focus of social innovation, knitting together unrelated people, young and old, who need support and need to be needed too.

A problem shared

United for All Ages fundamentally believes that older and younger people have much more in common than anything that divides them. But judging by some of the interactions between individuals in social media and between national organisations in more traditional media and arenas, that doesn't always appear to be the case. Often we seem to be shouting at each other rather than listening and working together. Generations have been pitted against each other by the media and commentators and we have allowed this division to be exploited.

The contributions below to this paper from the National Pensioners Convention and the

Intergenerational Foundation show their intent to stand up for each other – but they also show how far we have to go to make that happen in practice.

We therefore call for the establishment of a **national council for all ages**, made up of organisations working with different generations and ages. This would provide a forum to debate the big issues of mutual interest and develop mutually beneficial solutions. The national council would also be informed by the intergenerational convention as proposed later in the paper.

Generations united?

1

The House of Commons Work and Pensions Select Committee's 'Intergenerational Fairness' inquiry said: *"The millennial generation, born between 1981 and 2000, faces being the first in modern times to be financially worse off than its predecessors...children are twice as likely as pensioners to be living in poverty."*

They recommended that the state pension should be cut back and universal pensioner benefits *"should not be off limits when spending priorities are set in future Parliaments"*.

What sort of society says our grandchildren will only get a decent life by downgrading the lives of older generations?! After all:

1. An estimated 6.5 million older people have an annual income of less than £11,000
2. 5.8 million older people struggle to afford food, gas and electricity
3. Adult social care budgets have been cut by £5 billion
4. An estimated one million pensioners are suffering malnutrition

Pensioners are not to blame for university debts, the housing crisis, short-term and zero-hour contracts, benefit cuts, the bedroom tax and abolition of housing benefit for those aged under 25; nor for the young having to work longer, pay more and get less pension under the new Pensions Act.

It is government cuts and privatisation, the bankers, property sharks, big landlords and the likes of Sir Philip Green, Sports Direct, Deliveroo and Uber that are to blame.

The NPC believes the **generations must unite to stand up for each other**.

Dot Gibson, National Pensioners Convention

Generations united?

2

Back when a university education was free, society invested in the young to improve GDP. Today, **the young are expected to invest in themselves** by taking out £50,000 loans - £9,000 a year in fees, and over £8,000 a year in living costs.

The current terms are punitive: above-inflation rates of interest (RPI+3%) charged; compound interest charged monthly; 5% year-on-year rent rises; and maintenance grants removed from the poorest students and replaced by yet more loans.

The reward of a lifetime graduate premium no longer exists. Instead, graduates face an extra 9% tax on income over £21,000 each and every year for the next 30 years. It means an effective tax rate of 41%, after national insurance deductions of 12%, and income tax of 20% are included. No wonder levels of anxiety and depression amongst students are on the rise.

That's why the **generations are uniting**. Parents are waking up to the debt burden facing their children. They are starting to stand by their kids and call for a fairer student deal as they see them leave university loaded down with a debt that could follow them for 30 years.

If we want greater intergenerational cohesion, then intergenerational solidarity must go down the generations as well as up.

Liz Emerson, Intergenerational Foundation

Building multigenerational communities

Our sister organisation in the USA, Generations United, has led the way on promoting communities that are truly multigenerational. Donna Butts explains more below.

Of course communities are multi-faceted as well as multigenerational. Throughout our work United for All Ages has highlighted how shared spaces and shared sites in local communities could be used by people of all ages and why this makes economic as well as social sense. Opening up children's centres and schools, universities, older people's housing and care homes would enrich local communities.

There is increasing interest in this country and elsewhere like Singapore in childcare and eldercare facilities sharing the same site, with

children and older people interacting. This co-location of services could become the norm in new developments if planners, developers and care providers worked together with local communities.

This section contains many other ideas about how communities can promote mixing and integration across generations: community businesses and meeting houses, casserole clubs, apps and specialist housing. We must also challenge ageism and accessibility to ensure people of all ages can take part. And we must ensure that we have a sustainable care system fit for families and all ages to support all generations and those with or without children of their own.



Communities for all ages

Most communities are multigenerational, meaning they have members of all generations. Yet all too often they are artificially segregated by age and few intentionally work to unite all ages.

Those that do, show great benefit. Their residents are more likely to say they live in a place where they can see themselves growing up and growing old. They are invested.

To shine a light on communities that strive to integrate and value all generations, Generations United began the Best Intergenerational Community Awards Program. The application process is designed to help communities assess and plan for an all-generations future.

It's a goal for every community regardless of size or demographics.

In Minnesota the Northland Foundation launched AGE to age which brings the generations together in 13 rural communities and Reservations. Through a guided planning process, older and younger community members identify local needs and devise their own grassroots solutions.

In one of the largest counties in America, San Diego, five intergenerational communities work to ensure all generations benefit by interacting with each other through activities such as the Intergenerational Games and fitness activities.

Truly liveable communities build on the positive resources that all generations have to offer. After all, we are stronger together.

**Donna Butts,
Generations United, USA**

““ **Businesses led by local communities**

Community businesses which are locally-led and meet needs identified by local people, create new civic spaces where the generations meet. The creation and running of a **community business brings together diverse groups from across the community** in a shared attempt to **take back some control of their local place**.

Take the Bevy, for example, a community-pub on the Moulsecomb estate in Brighton. It provides a home for the Friday older people’s lunch club to reduce social isolation, the university rugby league team’s post-match drinks, the local Parkrun breakfast, the local choir and a number of other societies. In doing so, it creates opportunities for these diverse groups to meet, share experiences and together come up with new ways to improve the place where they live.

Even those community businesses that benefit a particular segment of local people nevertheless bring the generations together by being accountable to the wider community. Leeds Community Homes, for example, plans to build 16 new homes that will largely benefit young families. But it is raising capital from across the community and all community share owners can play their part in making the project happen.

Erosion of civic space feels less urgent than the loss of direct services but its impact on our communities can become corrosive. Community business can be part of the solution.

**Vidhya Alakeson,
The Power to Change**

““ **Accessible public spaces**

To really foster social integration among people of different generations, it is crucial they can come together in local communities.

Yet, as those living in Anchor’s retirement housing and care homes have told us, more and more older people are put off from venturing out because of the **inaccessibility of their local shops and public spaces**. A recent poll revealed 78% of older people don’t think their town suits their needs, preventing them from leaving their homes and shopping as often as they would like.

We launched our Standing Up 4 Sitting Down campaign to encourage retailers to make seating available for all those who need it. Extra seats mean that older people will be more inclined to get out - increasing their health and fitness as well as reducing social isolation.

Crucially, it means older and younger generations would come into contact with each other more – helping foster good relationships.

It makes **good business sense too**. The independent think-tank ILC-UK, cautioned that the UK could be in danger of sluggish economic growth as a result of “underspending” by older people, something which translates to an incredible loss of £3.8 billion a year.

Of course, **more seating doesn’t just benefit older people** – pregnant women and disabled people, among others, benefit too. It really is in the interests of us all that we stand up for sitting down!

**Jane Ashcroft,
Anchor**

Universities for life

The Brexit vote revealed, among many other things, something like the **'two cultures'** of old and young, the former looking to restore mythical better times, the latter seeking an expanded and open world of cosmopolitanism and opportunity. Recently, and perhaps representative of something more common, one lady interviewed about Brexit said 'my granddaughter keeps telling me I bugged up her future by voting to leave the European Union'.

The gap between these two worlds is most likely not quite as large as sometimes seems. But opportunities are required for greater communication between these two worlds. One way is to **make the university campus a place for the encounters that are necessary for such communication.**

There is every reason why universities should be encouraging all ages, but especially the older generation, to seek opportunities at universities. This could range from offering specialist degrees and other programmes for older people, to ways that older people could contribute work and life experience to younger students, including in terms of employability. Outreach does not have to mean that the older generation are only visited; it can also mean they become visitors. **The wealth of resources on university campuses must be deployed imaginatively to create intergenerational opportunities.**

**Professor Nigel Tubbs,
University of Winchester**

Open to the community

There is a pressing need for more sheltered or extra care accommodation of the kind which ensures its residents do not become socially isolated from the communities that surround them.

At Notting Hill, **we look for creative ways of bringing schools, families and local communities to events** at sheltered accommodation sites to meet the residents. Recently at a scheme in Lewisham we hosted a dance performance from the troupe Young Stars, after which the residents took to the floor and joined in. It was followed by a Q&A

session where opposing sides of the generational divide asked each other questions about their lives and experience.

We celebrated the opening at Cheviot Gardens, our independent-living accommodation, by inviting a local primary school to create and bury a 50 year time capsule, containing amongst other things a school jumper, a unique film project telling the story of life in affordable housing and £5 notes, both old and new.

**Kate Davies,
Notting Hill Housing**

““ New community organisations

The EU referendum exposed a generational divide in political attitudes. In 2017, we must emphasise what unites rather than divides us. To do that, we need to create **21st century community institutions where different generations can come together.**

Germany's Mehrgenerationenhäuser are a key component of the German federal government's ageing population strategy – over 450 of these ‘**multigenerational meeting houses**’ have opened across the country in recent years. These community centres are designed to be places where people of all backgrounds and ages can meet and mix – hosting day care services for older people, services for children and young people as well as citizens' advice centres; and featuring bistros and cafes fashioned as ‘public living rooms’. Through running joint activities

bringing together the elderly and young families, they foster a sense of community and instil the value of co-operation and mutuality in local residents.

Technology has the potential to divide us in ways it hasn't before –as seen through recent analysis of the way social media can reinforce already-held political views. However, there is great capacity for **technology to unite different generations in new and innovative ways.** Initiatives which pool community resources, such as Casserole Club, bring people face-to-face with their neighbours and temporarily transform living rooms, gardens and kitchens into community spaces.

**Jon Yates,
The Challenge**

““ How about living together?

An interesting concept "intergenerational". It implies to me that we don't actively interact across age groups and we don't live alongside each other. That might be because society seems to value youth above all and see older age as a burden, a period of decline to be avoided at all costs.

Well, that's the **everyday ageism** we aim to stamp out at Evermore.

The majority of marketing dollars spent globally are targeted toward youth with only 5% aimed at over 50s. Marketing departments segment by decade then lump everyone into a 60+ bracket. Yet these 60+ in the developed world have most of the wealth. Shortsighted we think.

And we're not impressed with "age defying" potions. We embrace the joy witnessed between toddlers and older people; when students move in with seniors in care homes to share lives and where people can live full lives.

Can we **learn from each other?** Yes, we can.

Let's follow examples of positive communities around the world. Build new neighbourhoods where every age can thrive in harmony. No more ghettos for older people. We can use housing wealth to create new communities that deliver great health and happiness for all.

**Sara McKee,
Evermore**



The care dividend

4 in 10 unpaid carers are men, often caring for their partners. **Women are more likely to be carers but are also, more likely to be caring for more than one person.** Nearly 1 in 3 women in their late 50s are caring for an adult (their partner, an older relative or a neighbour) and 1 in 7 women in their late 40s are caring for an adult and a dependent child. 3 in 10 working families rely on grandparents for childcare. 1.9 million grandparents have reduced hours, given up work or taken time off to care for their grandchild. Kinship carers – those who step in to care when parents are unable to care for their children are hardest hit. Many are living in poverty. It is usually women who will see themselves (and be regarded by others) as responsible for caring for the people around them. In some minority ethnic communities in particular that duty to care is very strong and their reliance on services is much less. In others the person whose job it is may not be so evident or so

available. Families live further away from each other, separation and divorce and re-partnering make it less obvious who should be the carer.

Our society has rested on the assumption that women will step in to care. But families cannot always provide the care that is needed and many in our increasingly isolated older generation simply have no one to turn to. Care doesn't just happen. We have to value it, support it and invest in it. Evidence shows that **investing in our care infrastructure would see a 'care dividend'**, an economic return on investment with higher female employment, tax receipts and lower welfare spend. The alternative is looming towards us. The social care crisis is no longer in the future. It is now.

**Sam Smethers,
Fawcett Society**

Two-way 'win-win' relationships

There is so much that older and young people can and do share – from a lifetime of experience to practical support. Those relationships are often about common interests from football to cookery, technology to yoga, but they can extend much further.

So why don't we invest more in what could be life-changing relationships? The confidence and support that a mentor or an advocate provides can make a huge difference and build lifelong relationships and positive support for

partnerships between the generations. Sharing a home can also have huge mutual advantages for older and younger people.

We all bring different experiences to these relationships – sometimes we have seen it before, sometimes the world is changing faster than ever – not least as grandparent or grandchild.

Core to all these relationships are the mutual contributions and benefits that make them a win-win.

“ Breaking down barriers

Mentoring is nothing new – the word comes from 'The Odyssey' after all – but **online technology provides exciting opportunities to connect people and generations** who might otherwise lead entirely separate lives.

“You realise that they might have ipads these days but their concerns are still the same,” explains Alli, a council worker who has been mentoring young people online for three years. “You recall your own experiences at school and that helps you think about what you learned, and saying ‘that happened to me’ gains their trust.”

Kaydie, one of Alli's mentees, agrees. “When I started online mentoring I wouldn't be able to speak to a teacher or tell anyone how I was

feeling. But getting a response from someone who has got experience of what you're going through gets rid of the butterflies in your stomach when you're thinking ‘What do I do now?’”

Rather than communicating online being a barrier, both believe it has actually helped build the trust essential for successful mentoring. “They share more with you when you're not face-to-face, especially when they're shy,” Alli explains. “It gets people to hear your story,” says Kaydie. “Online mentoring gets rid of walls between you and gives you more confidence.”

**Anand Shukla,
Brightside**

The confidence and support that a mentor or an advocate provides can make a huge difference and build lifelong relationships and positive support for partnerships between the generations.

“Facing cancer together

Currently the cancer, older people and advocacy (COPA) service, which is a partnership programme between OPAAL, the Older People’s Advocacy Alliance, and Macmillan Cancer Support, is available in ten areas of England and one in Wales. Funded by Macmillan and BIG Lottery, peer advocates aim to be the ‘voice’ of the older person, are non-judgemental and make sure those they support are heard.

Initially the COPA programme sought volunteer peer advocates aged 50+ who had themselves been affected by cancer. As the programme developed our project partners felt **potentially great volunteers were being turned away** because they were under 50; we opened up the age profile of our volunteers and have found strength in these intergenerational advocacy partnerships. One of these partnerships, between David and advocate James, features in

our Older People’s Cancer Voices films; the rapport between the pair is clear.

David describes the support James gives him: “The thought of attending hospital appointments alone made me feel very apprehensive. I found James’s presence very comforting and I felt at ease with him straight away.”

James reflects on this intergenerational partnership: “I firmly believe the **relationship is the main priority**. The criteria for matching partners should be on personality as people relate to each other in so many different ways!”

Angela Broadbridge,
OPAAL UK (Older People’s
Advocacy Alliance)

“Contributing and benefiting

For a long time, Homeshare has been a **neat idea which has struggled to take off**. The concept is simple and appealing: someone who needs a little help or companionship, and has a spare room, is matched with someone who can offer a little help and needs somewhere to live. Usually a carefully vetted younger person moves in with an isolated older person: they pay no rent, but split household bills and offer around ten hours a week of help.

With Big Lottery and Lloyds Bank Foundation support, there are now 20 local Homeshare programmes and hundreds of shared households: **finally Homeshare is growing**. This is partly because attitudes to sharing

housing are changing – look at the huge growth of AirBnB for instance – and partly because more cannot afford housing and loneliness in later life is growing. But the new schemes are also changing the tone: Homeshare is not just about helping isolated older people, it’s also a way for an older person to give a young person a start in adult life. One scheme is aimed specifically at young people who are struggling.

In Homeshare, **both benefit because both contribute**: exactly the kind of unity we need between generations.

Alex Fox,
Shared Lives Plus



Grandfathers and grandchildren

When thinking about uniting all ages, **let's not forget the grandfathers.** Recent international research by Professor Ann Buchanan, a Grandparents Plus trustee, has found that many grandfathers are experiencing longer, healthier lives during which they are developing a new 'niche' for themselves by becoming more involved with their grandchildren (Buchanan, A and Rotkirch, A. 2016 *Grandfathers: global perspectives*. Palgrave Macmillan). What is especially interesting is not only is this involvement good for grandfathers (as long as it is not too intensive), but **it is also good for grandchildren's well-being.** This is quite apart from anything that grandmothers do. Grandfathers are acting as male role models and mentoring from grandfathers, being active

together, help in finding employment and, of course, financial support are especially welcome. The dilemma is that sometimes parental divorce and separation can break relationships between grandchildren and grandparents. Further research is needed to understand the impact of this break in relationships and support.

Grandparents Plus is the national charity that champions and supports grandparents, especially in their role caring for grandchildren and when they are raising their grandchildren as 'kinship carers'.

**Ann Buchanan and Lucy Peake,
Grandparents Plus**

Challenging and communicating

Underpinning change in our relationships with other generations must be better communication between generations. That will help us to challenge stereotypes and myths, and promote understanding and trust.

Better communication takes many forms: from mixing on our streets and in our shops, at our workplaces and in our homes, to our communities and our universities, online and offline.

We also need to be creative. Street parties, theatres and the arts can and do reach all generations – and encourage people to talk to each other.

At the start of this paper we propose creating a national council for all ages. This needs to be supported by an idea proposed in our last paper: an annual intergenerational convention in which a group of 14-30 year olds and a group of 70-90 year olds (comprising pairs of people from every

major city / city region) discuss a small number of key national issues, such as immigration, welfare and housing, and work together to produce an agreed statement of priorities. The event should be live streamed so that anyone, young or old, can get involved remotely and the participants should be supported and encouraged to be local ambassadors for the process leading up to and away from it.

Similar models of engagement could be developed within local communities and within communities such as disabled people, LGBT people and minority ethnic people. People are more likely to come together if they have shared identities and interests.

Finally, given this paper starts with Brexit and Trump, it's important that people of all ages are registered to vote and exercise their democratic right.

Shared identities

In 2011, three intergenerational projects were among the first of their kind. These projects aimed to **promote solidarity and improved relations between different generations of the LGBT community**. While there has been growing interest in intergenerational projects, there appears to be very little organised activity between younger and older lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals in the UK.

With this in mind, ILC-UK with Age UK embarked on a programme of work to explore the potential of intergenerational projects within the LGBT community. A series of pilot intergenerational projects were developed in three areas of England – Leicestershire, central London and Stockport.

In Camden, arts workshops were held aimed at challenging stereotypes and social isolation. The project in Leicester used interviews

conducted by younger participants to gather and record personal histories of older LGBT individuals. In Stockport different generations of LGBT people were involved in developing local policies, including raising their issues and experiences with local service providers. The projects aimed to share and learn new skills, improve understanding between younger and older people, foster mutual support and celebrate LGBT heritage. Despite their differences, the projects shared a common aim of **fostering improved relations between the generations and challenging stereotypes**. Furthermore the initiative paved the way as a model of good practice for future LGBT intergenerational projects and has already been replicated in the Bronx in New York.

Sally-Marie Bamford, International Longevity Centre-UK

“ Theatre not fear

Fear. It began with a simple monster under our bed, but has grown with us to be one of the main characteristics of society today. I suggest that we are not dependent, selfish creatures, but creatures acting out of this very fear, and that knowledge and communication are the keys to overcoming this. Communication between generations, however, is not an easy task.

We must now find a way to open this dialogue. ‘In an angry world of Trumpism and Brexit, theatre can save lives.’ (Dow, 2016). **Theatre is one of the only art forms left which still appeals to all generations.** From pantomime to musicals, political satire and Shakespeare,

theatre draws in audiences of all generations and creates a safe space for a few hours. For this reason, theatre has a chance of being a platform for communication. Look at Camden People’s Theatre who opened their doors for people to perform and discuss the effects of Brexit on their lives. If one small theatre can do this, then imagine the effects of larger theatres opening their doors for similar events, providing a platform for their multigenerational audiences to talk to each other - something which we have lost in our technology dominated society.

**Rachael Rulton,
Masters Student, University of Winchester**

“ Get creative

Its 7am and we are standing in a courtyard in Tokyo watching a morning ‘rajio taiso’ session, the traditional tai chi type exercise Japan is famed for. Highlighted in shafts of bright sunshine are fidgety pre-school children in vests and pants and older people aged from 60 to their 90s, some standing, some with walking frames and wheelchairs. All absorbed in the session, as they are every morning, in a centre that houses both a pre-school nursery and residential care home – with lots of opportunities for shared activities, from meals to art to play. **It’s a genuinely arresting sight.** An activity that both groups would do apart but which somehow has more meaning done together.

I’m a fan of anything that brings together the generations - with joy, laughter, absorption in the moment. Because just as I don’t think I’m doing well if I’ve only got washed, dressed and fed in a day, older people need more to life than these activities with the occasional lunch club or church service thrown in.

As a trustee of the Baring Foundation I’ve seen many wonderful examples of **arts activities that bring the generations together.** I was fortunate enough to visit a comedy workshop for older people run by Get Out in The

Hague. The workshops culminate in a stand up show which pairs an older people with a young professional comedian – resulting in great material and interesting relationships, and lots of laughs! Closer to home, Magic Me in Tower Hamlets offers a range of intergenerational arts activities from Cocktails in Care Homes to Mad Women, an intergenerational mixed arts programme for younger and older women. The Oxford Concert Party used music, storytelling and poetry and the inspiration of objects and artefacts from the Ashmolean Museum to engage a seniors club and year 5 primary students in a six week project. And the Green Candle Dance company’s production ‘Identity Parade’ a dance and multi-media show featured school children and older people to exploring ideas of identity. More can be found at www.ageofcreativity.co.uk

Arts and creative projects get my vote for **engaging the generations in shared experiences** – freeing the spirit, absorbing and entertaining. And anything that smashes through the paucity of expectation of wellbeing in later life and results in more joy and more laughter gets my vote. And street parties – let’s have more street parties!

**Janet Morrison,
Independent Age**

Making a country for all ages happen

This paper contains a host of ideas for building multigenerational communities and bringing older and younger people together in positive two-way relationships and through better communication. In Brexit Britain we believe this needs to be done urgently.

'Age apartheid' is not a feature of a healthy society. It wastes the talents and experiences of so many older and younger people. Suspicion and mistrust are not the foundations on which to build the future. Age segregation is costing the country dear.

Many of the proposals in this paper are about thinking and working differently. A few require investment but most don't. Many are about making better use of existing resources in our communities and opening them up to all ages.

Making a start requires leadership, at all levels. But this is not just about government, national or local, or our community organisations. It's about our relationships and our communities, wherever we live, work, rest and play.

All of us as individuals, whatever our age, must take responsibility.

“ We all need to grow up

On twitter, post Brexit, the old/young division was strong in response to the older generation largely voting out and the younger generation largely voting in. Many were and are angry at a campaign aimed at division, yet if the young blame the old they are only contributing to this idea of division. I remember making theatre in rooms where the youngest was aged 7 and the oldest 77, these were always the most interesting, dynamic, creative and productive rooms I have been in. The last three years I've spent my time studying in a room where the youngest was 19 and the oldest 50 plus, with some lecturers maybe a few years older. These were the most educational, challenging, thoughtful spaces I have been in. As a teenager the most influential people were my older friends and teachers, many of them 30 plus when I was aged 14-17.

For these reasons age has largely seemed irrelevant to me. Experience makes the difference. And here I don't mean the amount of experience, I mean the sort/quality/type/diversity of experience a person has had. The older generation largely has had a different experience than the younger generation. Their 'modern experience' is often very different from the younger modern experience, because of the difference of their previous experience. This is complex, difficult, and challenging. Dismissing any particular age range is not a solution, nor is ignoring them.

Society seems to largely ignore the value of age diversity, and the value of age itself once it

has reached "old". I hear of a time when communities raised children - parents, other parents, siblings, grandparents, uncles, aunts, all chipping in, it sounds like something that might help. I hear of European countries (and non-European) with intergenerational households. This at least sounds like it might teach tolerance, patience, if not care. I think of why these relationships don't exist as perhaps they once did (or still do in places), and why it seems many in society are increasingly isolated/segregated/lonely/scared.

Underneath all the many complex reasons I can't help but see capitalism, or neoliberalism, right there, entwined at the root of it all, and by this I mean profit making for the sake of profit making, and the complex, often invisible ideology it brings with it. What if ultimately this mode of life stops us all from growing up?

'Most people don't grow up. It's too damn difficult. What happens is most people get older. That's the truth of it. They honor their credit cards, they find parking spaces, they marry, they have the nerve to have children, but they don't grow up. Not really. They get older. But to grow up costs the earth, the earth. It means you take responsibility for the time you take up, for the space you occupy. It's serious business. And you find out what it costs us to love and to lose, to dare and to fail. And maybe even more, to succeed. What it costs in truth.'

Maya Angelou

The 'take responsibility' bit is what is most powerful for me. That is the most difficult part.

Iain Tidbury,
Masters Student, University of Winchester

Fairness for All Ages – twenty radical ways to promote intergenerational equity

Published by United for All Ages in 2016

Reducing intergenerational inequity is the challenge of our times, according to United for All Ages' 2016 report, Fairness for all ages. It highlights twenty ways in which the widening gap between older and young people could be closed.

Key recommendations include a commission on fair tax, a national task force on the supply of older people's housing, new schemes to boost asset accumulation by young people, flexible working for all ages, a national retirement service, and an intergenerational convention bringing older and young people together to share views and discuss priorities.

The widening gap between generations is highlighted by analysis of the latest household wealth data (2012-14), published at the end of 2015 by the Office for National Statistics.

This shows that the wealthiest 10% of households own 45% of total household wealth (their aggregate wealth was up 21% on the previous two year period) while the least wealthy half of households own 9%.

It reveals that:

- median private pension wealth was £749,000 for the wealthiest 10% of households compared to £2,800 for the least wealthy 50% households; while median net property wealth was £420,000 compared to £0.
- over a quarter of individuals (26%) live in households with negative net financial wealth, with over a third of children under 16 and young people aged 16-34 living in such households; the households with the highest net financial wealth are aged 55 plus.
- those aged 25-34 tend to live in households with a higher level of debt than other age groups, while those aged 65 and over tend to live in households with the lowest value of financial debt and are least likely to have a debt burden.

The report features contributions from some twenty national organisations concerned about intergenerational inequity - ranging from Barnardo's and the Family and Childcare Trust to the International Longevity Centre and

Grandparents Plus, together with Demos, the RSA, Friends of the Earth and the Strategic Society Centre.

These organisations shared ideas and plans to promote intergenerational equity and better relations between young and older people. Young and older people are least likely to mix with other age groups and young people are often excluded from political decision-making that shapes their future.

Key proposals in the paper include:

- a commission into fair taxation for all ages, with transparency about income, wealth and debt for different generations, a review of inheritance tax and ending anomalies like age-related National Insurance exemptions
- building 300,000 homes a year with a mix of affordable homes for young and older people, and a national taskforce on the supply of retirement housing, downsizing and other options for older people
- encouraging all families with children to save and accumulate assets for their future with a range of government assisted saving schemes
- work-life balance for all ages at work, including flexible working options for older people who are grandparents and/or carers of adults, plus two way mentoring to exchange skills and knowledge between workers of all ages
- opening up community facilities such as children's centres and care homes as community hubs or shared spaces for people and families of all ages
- a national retirement service to encourage older people to volunteer and share skills and experience with younger people
- stopping the burning of fossil fuels completely within a generation and ending the investment of pension and other funds in the fossil fuel industry
- creating a national intergenerational convention bringing older and younger people together to debate key national issues affecting all generations and priorities, supported by local conventions

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