

Address: APPG on Social Integration, c/o Chuka Umunna MP
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APPG on Social Integration minutes

Inquiry on Intergenerational Connection: Policy, Practice & Place

24th April 2018, 3:00-5:00PM

Attlee Suite, Portcullis House

Present (parliamentarians):

- Chuka Umunna MP, Chair (Lab)
- Wera Hobhouse MP (Lib Dem)

Present (others):

- Richard Bell, The Challenge (Secretariat)
- Jamiesha Majevasia, The Challenge (Secretariat)
- Justin Meadows, Office of Chuka Umunna MP
- Denise Burke, Co-founder, United for All Ages
- Dr Libby Drury, Lecturer in Psychology, University of Kent and Birkbeck, London
- Alex Fox OBE, CEO, Shared Lives Plus
- David Kingman, Senior Researcher, Intergenerational Foundation
- Lindsay Judge, Senior Research and Policy Analyst, Resolution Foundation

1. Introduction from the Chair

1.1 Chuka Umunna MP began the session by sharing a recent encounter with Sajid Javid, the then Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, in which he was told that the work of the APPG had informed the Government's recently-published *Integrated Communities* strategy. Chuka expressed his appreciation and gratitude to those who have so far been involved in advancing the work of the APPG, before introducing the first panel of speakers, consisting of Denise Burke from United for All Ages and Dr Libby Drury of the University of Kent and Birkbeck, London and inviting them to briefly explain the nature of their work.

2. Q & A session with panel one: policy and practice

2.1 Denise Burke said United for All Ages was focused on creating more shared sites where older and younger people can take part in activities together – fostering intergenerational interaction – and that it was aiming to support the establishment of 500 such sites by 2023. Denise noted that currently the most recognisable example of a shared site is Apples and Honey Nightingale, which opened in south London in 2017. It is

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a care home with a dementia unit and a nursery onsite that allows daily interaction between young and old. This interaction is enabled through parent and toddler groups visiting care homes and through links with local nursery schools and old peoples' homes, such as Busy Bee nursery schools and Anchor care homes. This approach has been endorsed by the regulatory bodies CQC and Ofsted, because they see the benefits brought by intergenerational activities. Denise emphasised her desire for more government and cross-party support going forward, as well as joined-up thinking from local authorities.

2.2 Dr Libby Drury introduced herself as a researcher with a focus on the psychological theory of intergenerational relationships. She said there were three main strategies that should be used to improve the outcomes of intergenerational programmes: learn from previous intergenerational initiatives as to what works and doesn't; use and continually evaluate robust scientific designs to strengthen the evidence base; and create more links between the theory and practice of intergenerational connection. Conditions that often result in effective intergenerational contact include: younger and older people interacting as equals, institutional support, cooperation between participants, and the promotion of shared goals. Libby concluded her introduction by emphasising that intergenerational relationships are not just about the young and old, but everyone throughout the age spectrum.

2.3 Chuka began the panel discussion by asking what it is on a practical level that brings people of different generations together through the co-location of nurseries and care homes, and what the experience of older people had been in the process.

2.4 Denise said that intergenerational activities could be as simple as singing or storytelling, or a physical activity, such as throwing a bean bag around. She emphasised that, when speaking about nurseries and care homes joining up, the age range of the children was between zero and five. Intergenerational activities in this case would be things like linking up with nearby parent and toddler groups, through to full co-location, whereby the nursery is on the same site as the care home and outdoor space is shared. There might also be designated communal space within the care home that the younger children visit daily. To get the richest benefit from that experience, it is best to have a coordinator from the care sector working in conjunction with an early years professional.

2.5 Chuka asked how success was measured from the perspective of both the children and older people.

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- 2.6 Denise replied by saying that we don't as yet have any meaningful evaluation of the benefits to young children. There is a lot of evidence on the benefits of intergenerational projects from abroad, especially from the USA, but the first piece of evidence that United for All Ages will be gathering will be from Apples & Honey Nightingale, which will be available from September 2018. Denise alluded to the Channel 4 programme 'Old People's Home for 4 Year Olds' which has drawn attention to the topic of intergenerational connection, but which Denise has reservations about. She said it was very stage-managed and was similar to 'I'm a Celebrity Get Me out of Here' in the sense that the children were taken to the care home venue for a limited period of six weeks' filming. Lastly, Denise said a number of academics and other professionals were examining the benefits of intergenerational connection for both young and old.
- 2.7 Chuka sought to clarify what the children got from intergenerational interaction, noting that he could see the benefits for the older group through stimulation, excitement and company.
- 2.8 Denise started by highlighting that, from the older people's perspective, Chuka had missed out their improvement in mobility which was quite marked and well-documented. Focusing on the benefits for children, she noted that many will not have their extended family around them as they grow up to the extent that she did during her own upbringing, and that they do not have many interactions with older neighbours. As a result, Denise said that children become very fond of the older people they spend time with, and over a sustained period the intergenerational relationships which develop enable the children to arrive at a better understanding of older people's lives and experiences. Denise added that intergenerational arrangements also create an economic benefit for care providers.
- 2.9 Chuka then asked Denise what she found to be the biggest obstacle facing United for All Ages, and whether their model was that of a social enterprise or a charity.
- 2.10 Denise said United for All Ages is a social enterprise and that, initially, the biggest obstacle facing her organisation was getting regulatory bodies to endorse their model. She noted the safeguarding concerns that Ofsted and CQC might have in relation to commercial nurseries sitting on the site of an old people's dementia unit. Having now overcome this challenge, Denise said the greatest obstacle was finding space for shared intergenerational sites. Denise noted that financial pressures on care homes had actually created an opportunity in this regard, as they have pushed those organisations to consider alternative uses for their space. She went on to argue that an endorsement of the shared sites concept by local authorities was required.

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- 2.11 Chuka turned to Dr Libby Drury to ask for clarification on what she meant by the term ‘robust scientific design’.
- 2.12 Libby explained that many programmes carry out questionnaires or interviews before and after an intervention focused on intergenerational contact has taken place, in order to measure its effects. If the questions posed are based on established scientific measures, then the results generated will be more robust.
- 2.13 Chuka followed up his initial question by asking which countries were already doing effective work in this area.
- 2.14 Libby said that in the USA there was more synergy between academia, scientific research, organisations similar to United for All Ages, national bodies and organisations sponsored by government. She also noted that in the Netherlands there are interesting intergenerational initiatives being pursued that involve young students having accommodation in care homes (the students are neither expected to act as carers or to mirror the work of care professionals). Drawing on successful examples from both the USA and the Netherlands, the available evidence supports the notion that intergenerational interactions which build friendships are the most powerful.
- 2.15 Chuka asked the panellists whether they had a sense of the extent to which the intergenerational issue was on the Government’s agenda, given the policymaking capacity taken up by Brexit. He also asked Libby whether she had any thoughts on the exclusion of the age divide from the Government’s recently-released integration strategy.
- 2.16 Libby replied by saying that the impact of Brexit on intergenerational relations was still coming into focus, and that she welcomed increased political attention on intergenerational issues.
- 2.17 Chuka asked whether different government departments were working in a joined-up fashion on intergenerational topics.
- 2.18 Libby said that, in her experience, cross-departmental collaboration on intergenerational issues was limited, but added that she herself had limited experience of working alongside the Government, so was not able to give a complete answer to this question.
- 2.19 Chuka thanked Libby for her responses and invited questions from the audience.

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- 2.20 A representative from the Big Lottery Fund asked Denise whether intergenerational initiatives, such as co-located nurseries and care homes, could save money due to their economies of scale, or whether they instead incurred extra costs due to the need to bring nurseries and care homes onto the same site.
- 2.21 Denise said cost savings could be made on the side of both nurseries and care homes, due to the pooling of resources that could take place, such as back office operations, catering and staff training. Ideally, a shared qualification would be developed that covers care for both the young and old.
- 2.22 Libby added that it was a fantastic idea to train carers to work with both younger and older people, and to give them an understanding of the optimal conditions under which strong intergenerational relationships can be fostered.
- 2.23 Denise went on to say that in co-located nursery/care home settings that are established in future, some of the spaces for children within the nursery should be reserved for staff working in the care home. With recruitment and retention a big challenge in the care sector, this arrangement would be of huge benefit to the staff, and would give these co-located settings the edge over other care providers.
- 2.24 A resident from Newham in London, a borough with a high proportion of ethnic minorities, suggested there are particular opportunities for intergenerational connection within these ethnic groups. This is based on the idea that older people are more likely to speak partially or fully in their mother tongue, due to an infrequent use of English, and that younger people could interact with them to improve their own language skills. The resident pointed to research showing that young people who master their mother tongue perform better in their education and enjoy higher levels of wellbeing, perhaps in part because they are more comfortable in their identities. He asked the panel for their opinion on this proposition.
- 2.25 Denise responded by emphasising the importance of establishing links between local schools and residents to foster meaningful intergenerational interactions. She added that these intergenerational interactions could have great benefits especially given the likelihood that the school's demographic would be reflective of the residents. Denise encouraged the resident from Newham to make an approach to his local authority to ask if they could work with schools to become more involved in their local areas.
- 2.26 The resident from Newham responded to Denise and emphasised the challenges that lay ahead in coordinating the framework needed to support intergenerational mixing.

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- 2.27 Libby replied to the Newham resident's comments and cited additional challenges in the world of research and academia. She said that a lot of the existing theory on intergenerational contact was based on a Western model of relationships drawn from USA or Europe, which discounted certain norms that depend on the ethnicity of a person. For example, the sharing of personal information has been put forward as one of the factors that improves intergenerational connection, but this has been wholly informed by a western evidence-based model. Libby said that more research was needed in this area to determine whether such an approach would be appropriate in different societies.
- 2.28 Wera Hobhouse MP paid testament to the progressive ideas put forward in the discussion so far, and acknowledged their importance for achieving progress following a period of what had effectively become a ghettoisation of age.
- 2.29 Chuka asked which local authorities stood out as trailblazers on intergenerational issues.
- 2.30 Denise highlighted Worcestershire County Council as a trailblazer because they are aware that local care facilities need to be redeveloped and that co-located intergenerational sites provide a way to achieve that. While in Worcestershire progress is being driven by the local authority itself, in Wigan it is being led by service providers. Even though progress is being made, Denise said the UK had a lot of catching up to do when compared to the work of the Singaporean government, which is actively championing the intergenerational mixing agenda.
- 2.31 Noting the comparable lack of progress in the UK on intergenerational mixing, Wera said that not only had Brexit pre-occupied the Government's policy agenda, but the effects of austerity had increased job insecurity within local authorities and led to a reduced willingness to pursue new projects.
- 2.32 Denise replied to Wera's comments about austerity by noting that financial costs should not be a concern because intergenerational projects require a re-evaluation of the uses of existing care facilities to avoid costly white elephant sites. Denise highlighted the Isle of Wight's promising work in pursuing this approach.
- 2.33 Libby followed up on Denise's reply by agreeing that new intergenerational innovations did not necessarily bring a financial burden. On a separate point, she also highlighted the need for more intent and effort in diversifying workplaces, citing her current research examining intergenerational interactions among employees.

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- 2.34 Chuka asked Denise whether the work of United for All Ages was focused on the very young and the very old, or whether it included young people in their teenage years.
- 2.35 Denise confirmed that United for All Ages' aim of 500 shared intergenerational sites by 2023 did not cater for the middle generation because the current focus was on combining older people's facilities with nursery provision.
- 2.36 Chuka asked Libby to share her insights on what intergenerational interactions would look like between teenagers and those in their twenties and older people.
- 2.37 Libby noted that the success of interactions involving teenagers and those in their twenties was heavily influenced by peer behaviour, because fashionable trends among young people can inhibit or facilitate certain behaviour. As a result, programmes which encouraged the younger age group to visit the elderly would have a greater impact than programmes operating the other way round.
- 2.38 Chuka thanked the first panel for their contributions and invited the second panel, consisting of Alex Fox from Shared Lives Plus, David Kingman of the Intergenerational Foundation and Lindsay Judge from the Resolution Foundation, to take their place in preparation for their discussion.

3. Q&A session with panel two: housing and place

- 3.1 Alex Fox, CEO of Shared Lives Plus, began by explaining the homeshare model promoted by his organisation. An older person is matched up with a younger person, who lives in their home and helps around the house, but pays little or no rent. Low levels of participation so far in the UK have been caused by a lack of awareness of the initiative, coupled with a lack of local authority engagement when compared to countries like France, Germany and Portugal. There is also too much caution about possible risks, despite homesharing having a great track record so far.
- 3.2 David Kingman, Senior Researcher at the Intergenerational Foundation, explained that his work focused on the intergenerational impact of the housing crisis. He noted that a common feature of the 25 largest urban areas in England was the low occurrence of neighbourhoods that housed both younger and older generations. David said this was reflective of macro trends which showed rural areas having aged twice as much as their urban counterparts, reaffirming the extent of age segregation in current UK society.
- 3.3 Wera agreed with David's comments and cited an example of a constituent in Bath who came to her surgery to complain about the influx of the student population. The

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constituent argued that the change of demographic had left him feeling disconnected and a minority in his community, and that this had resulted in him not interacting with other residents.

3.4 Lindsay Judge, Senior Research and Policy Analyst at the Resolution Foundation, revealed that her interest in the intergenerational connections inquiry was based on her organisation's involvement with the Intergenerational Commission. She said their recent report had found that older people today were less likely to live with their families than in previous years. It also found that, relative to the 1980s, there were a higher proportion of homes headed by a person over the age of 30 in urban areas compared to those headed by somebody over 65. These findings pose policy challenges for local authorities, because different areas could be disproportionately affected by either housing shortages or care needs.

3.5 Chuka asked Alex to clarify the difference between lodging and homesharing.

3.6 Alex said that lodging is primarily commercial in nature, while homesharing is about bringing people together, giving them the opportunity to get to know each other and allowing them the choice to live with one another.

3.7 Chuka asked what needed to be done to encourage take up of homesharing, especially in London where it can be lonely and isolating if a person has recently relocated to the capital.

3.8 Alex revealed that Shared Lives Plus had been seeking guidance from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) regarding the impact that homesharing could have on people's welfare benefits. He acknowledged that the process of raising awareness and gaining endorsements for the scheme had been dampened by councils who were concerned by the potential liability arising from referrals to the scheme. Alex said a 'Think Local, Act Personal' approach, which identifies the capabilities and resources in each particular area, would be beneficial in increasing take up by creating links between state, civil society and individuals, in contrast to a top-down model.

3.9 Chuka asked David whether there is a correlation between regional economic imbalances and the growth of age division and segregation. Chuka noted his personal experience of visiting residents in Clacton, which reaffirmed his view of this regional imbalance, but said he was also curious as to whether people's lifestyle choices played a role in contributing to segregation.

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- 3.10 David confirmed that regional imbalances were growing, and that there has been an upward trend over the last 25 years in terms of the greater economic opportunities within cities. He cited the expansion of higher education as a factor and highlighted Cardiff and Brighton as examples of places in which ‘studentification’ had led to concentrations of younger people in the centre of cities.
- 3.11 Chuka asked David whether he thought urban design played an important role in age segregation.
- 3.12 David said the marketing of a city centre lifestyle plays a role in making urban areas an attractive living proposition for younger people. This is in some ways a revival for city centres, as up until recent gentrification had occurred, a large proportion of inner city areas had not been sought after places to live.
- 3.13 Wera emphasised that the revival of inner city areas was largely welcome. She also pointed out that the concentration of younger people in these areas was driven partly by the difficulties families had living there, due to a lack of green spaces and parks.
- 3.14 Chuka asked the panel what changes could be made to the housing market to prevent families vacating properties based in inner city areas.
- 3.15 Lindsay replied by saying that the degree to which families were vacating these properties was driven largely by the marketing of them, but confirmed that this would soon change given the desire of many older people to return to cities due to the convenience and options that they offer. She argued that new builds should not only be focused on young people, but other demographics too.
- 3.16 David followed on from this point by arguing that the targeting of new builds towards first-time buyers had the potential to exacerbate age segregation, and that public policy should also look at the challenges around downsizing. He pointed to research showing that many older people do not currently downsize because their communities do not have suitable alternatives.
- 3.17 Alex said policy-making had not yet caught up with the sharing economy, but that platforms such as Airbnb had helped turn the tide of opinion in their favour. The financial costs associated with housing, as well as the austerity of recent years, were also factors in this increased popularity.
- 3.18 Wera suggested that planning policy should insist on community areas as part of new builds in order to facilitate interaction between people from different backgrounds.

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She said this view had been informed by her personal experiences of downsizing to a new build, where she found that there were limited opportunities for interaction.

3.19 Lindsay responded to Wera's comment by revealing that the build-to-rent sector had a lot more focus on creating community-based spaces that help facilitate intergenerational interactions.

3.20 Chuka thanked the panel for their responses and invited questions from the audience.

3.21 Thomas Neumark from The Peel Centre asked whether a consortium of organisations should be established to pursue a goal requiring as much big picture thinking as social integration.

3.22 A representative from The Scouts Association expressed concern about whether the care needs of older people would be adequately met under the homesharing model, and asked whether the efforts required to reverse trends in housing would be worth it.

3.23 A resident in London asked whether cultural differences made it easier for the homesharing model to thrive in other European countries in comparison to the UK.

3.24 Lindsay from the Resolution Foundation responded to Thomas Neumark by saying that local authorities should in the first instance be drivers of effective leadership on intergenerational connection through their five year plans. Turning to the question from the resident in London, Lindsay agreed that there were some key cultural differences between the UK and other European countries which influenced the approach to housing: while the UK has a preference for low-rise buildings and houses, other countries in Europe see no problem with raising a family in a flat which has no communal spaces.

3.25 David agreed with Lindsay that local authorities were best placed to provide leadership on intergenerational connection. He emphasised the importance of acting to reduce the age segregation which housing trends are currently exacerbating, citing research in the USA which found segregation increased social isolation and loneliness.

3.26 Alex confirmed that he had seen strategic leadership from local authorities but believed pressures from the housing economy had been the biggest driving factor behind their action. Alex questioned whether cultural differences were the key issue when it comes to differential take-up of the homesharing model, given that it has become more established in the USA and Australia, and that its success in Spain and

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Portugal has resulted from government backing. Speaking about the ability of the homesharing model to provide practical support to older people, Alex said homesharing was not a replacement for formal care services, but that older people had said they felt more active and confident as a result of the initiative, which brought significant health benefits.

4. Final remarks from the Chair

- 4.1 Chuka brought the session to a close and thanked both panels for their contributions. He noted the positive avenues for enhanced intergenerational connection that had been discussed, which have up to now been largely overlooked due to the overriding focus of commentary on the negatives of the generational divide. He said the session had been effective in introducing the health and wellbeing perspective in relation to intergenerational mixing, which the APPG had not yet considered.