

**Address:** APPG on Social Integration, c/o Chuka Umunna MP  
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

**Email:** [APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org](mailto:APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org)

**Website:** [SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk](http://SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk)

**Telephone:** 07722553856

**APPG on Social Integration minutes**  
**Intergenerational connection inquiry launch event**  
**4<sup>th</sup> December 2017, 2:45PM – 4:00 PM**  
**Committee Room 5, House of Commons**

**Present (parliamentarians):**

- Chuka Umunna MP, Chair (Lab)
- Dr Paul Williams MP (Lab)
- Wera Hobhouse MP (Lib Dem)
- Caroline Spelman MP (Con)

**Present (others):**

- Richard Bell, The Challenge (Secretariat)
- Nick Plumb, The Challenge (Secretariat)
- Justin Meadows, Office of Chuka Umunna MP
- Bobby Duffy, Managing Director, Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute
- Caroline McFarland, Director, Common Vision
- Paul McGarry, Head, Greater Manchester Ageing Hub
- David Robinson OBE, Founder, Community Links
- Alex Smith, CEO and Founder, The Cares Family
- David Williams, CEO, St Monica Trust

**1. Introduction from the Chair**

1.1 Chuka Umunna MP welcomed members of the APPG on Social Integration and those in the audience. He introduced the work of the APPG, and spoke about the group's purpose and mission – to bridge divisions across all social fault lines, be they related to ethnicity, religion, age or socioeconomic background. Chuka briefly summarised the APPG's previous inquiry into the integration of immigrants, which concluded in August 2017.

1.2 Chuka then introduced the theme of this inquiry as intergenerational connection, focused on how we can bridge the generational divide that was exposed by recent political events, namely the 2016 EU referendum and 2017 General Election. Chuka noted that, as far as he was aware, there are no other select committees or APPGs examining generational division in a systematic manner. Intergenerational connection is a topic straddling many different policy areas, which puts the APPG in a good position to

**Address:** APPG on Social Integration, c/o Chuka Umunna MP  
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

**Email:** [APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org](mailto:APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org)

**Website:** [SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk](http://SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk)

**Telephone:** 07722553856

study it, given that it is not fixed to any one department in the same way as a select committee.

## **2. Presentation by Bobby Duffy, Managing Director of the Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute**

- 2.1 Bobby began by noting that the 2017 General Election represented the greatest age gap in voting choices that Ipsos MORI had recorded since records began in 1979. Older voters were twice as likely to vote for the Conservative Party as the youngest age group, and less than half as likely to vote for the Labour Party. This followed the 2016 EU referendum, in which three-quarters of young people voted Remain, and two-thirds of older people voted Leave.
- 2.2 Putting generational differences in voting choices into historical context, Bobby spoke about political life cycles, and the fact that as people become older they are more likely to vote Conservative. Bobby then explained that party political attachment has become much more fluid. He noted that only 20% of UK millennials were attached to one party, and that this showed greater fluidity in the UK than other European countries.
- 2.3 Examining generational differences on particular policy areas, Bobby reported that older people were more in favour of higher taxes to fund increased welfare payments than younger people. Of all the social issues that had been considered in the research by Ipsos MORI, immigration held the same level of importance across the age spectrum until 2014, where there was a divergence and it became more of a concern for older generations. There was also a disparity between generations when the question of the welfare state was posed, which attracted support from the older baby boomer generation in contrast to minimal support from both Generation X and Y.
- 2.4 Bobby was keen to emphasise that this disparity was more to do with a lack of connection and belief in big institutional responses than some generations caring more about the welfare of others. To back this up, Bobby said lots of data showed that younger generations were just as likely, if not more so, to volunteer in their local communities. The younger generation have been tarnished by negative, but false, perceptions.
- 2.5 The negative perception of the younger generation is based on public opinion data not only from the UK, but from 38 other countries as well, all of which have far more positive views of older people, seeing them as ethically responsible and community-oriented compared to lazy and selfish millennials.

**Address:** APPG on Social Integration, c/o Chuka Umunna MP  
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

**Email:** [APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org](mailto:APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org)

**Website:** [SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk](http://SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk)

**Telephone:** 07722553856

2.6 Bobby's presentation then moved on to examine the degree to which young people are optimistic about their future, showing that they have a significantly more pessimistic outlook than they did in 2003. This again was not a trend restricted to the UK, with young people in other countries, including China, Peru, India, Indonesia and France all believing their future would be worse than preceding generations.

2.7 In terms of the causes of this worldwide pessimism among young people, members of the public thought that some of contributing factors could be the lack of home-ownership, prospects of economic insecurity in later life, insecure jobs and global instability. Despite these challenges, Bobby said that what was evident and consistent in the information available was the absence of a serious intergenerational conflict, with a broad consensus between generations on issues relating to economic growth, housing supply and job security.

### **3. Presentation by Richard Bell, The Challenge:**

3.1 Richard began by summarising the work of The Challenge to enhance social integration, before beginning his presentation by noting that age had emerged as a more reliable indicator of voting intention than income for the first time in modern political history.

3.2 Richard then moved on to the results of the British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey, which collated the views of 3,000 people on a range of topics. He noted that the survey was conducted after the EU referendum but before the 2017 General Election.

3.3 Examining the findings of the survey, Richard said that attitudes had been measured based on the left-right axis. This had been the predominant tool used in British politics over the course of the last century, and was useful in highlighting attitudes towards fiscal policy, redistribution and investment in public services. Under-35s tend to fall in the middle of the left-right spectrum, and in some instances veer towards the right on matters of economic redistribution, whereas those aged 55-64 were more left-leaning.

3.4 On tax and spending, those aged 45 and above tend to support increased public spending, whereas younger people are more in favour of keeping taxation at the current level. There is a cross-generational consensus against cutting taxes. Furthermore, housing, education and health were identified as top areas for increased investment by all age groups. However, a consensus is less evident when it comes to ranking the importance of these priorities. 18-24 year olds prioritise housing, 25-44 year olds prioritise education, while those aged 45 and above prioritise health. Despite these variations, all age groups support more home building in their local area, and agree more support should be given to those struggling to pay rent.

**Address:** APPG on Social Integration, c/o Chuka Umunna MP  
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

**Email:** [APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org](mailto:APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org)

**Website:** [SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk](http://SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk)

**Telephone:** 07722553856

- 3.5 Richard focused again on the different attitudes towards the welfare state that young and old have. The BSA's findings show that those aged 25-44 are most averse to the welfare state, whereas 55-64 year olds were most sympathetic towards it. Furthermore, those aged 18-24 tend to be in strong agreement with the idea that current welfare benefits are too high, suggesting they may be more right-wing than older people on question of welfare and social solidarity. As a result, Richard argued that any characterisations of the political divide between generations that placed young people as more left-wing than older people, perhaps inspired by the droves of young people who voted for the left-leaning Labour party in 2017, were mistaken.
- 3.6 On economic and fiscal policy, Richard argued there was more agreement than disagreement between generations when compared to the libertarian-authoritarian axis of political opinion. The libertarian-authoritarian axis reflects the degree to which people think the stability of the social order should trump individual freedom, or vice versa. Research shows that millennials are more liberal with regards to social and cultural values, and hence much further along the libertarian side of the axis in comparison to the majority of the population who lean towards a more authoritarian worldview. However, on closer inspection, one finds that the younger you get from the age of 54, the less likely you are to have an authoritarian perspective.
- 3.7 Richard proposed that a gulf in social and cultural values was better placed to explain the different voting choices made by baby boomers and millennials, and to explain why young people swung very decidedly towards Labour in the 2017 General Election. This resonates with much commentary suggesting that elections are being contested on cultural, not economic, grounds.
- 3.8 Bringing his presentation to a conclusion, Richard remarked that there was a great deal of common ground between generations, but that the evidence of divergence on certain issues should not be ignored. Indeed, polling conducted on behalf of the APPG by The Challenge and YouGov showed that many young and old people were willing to see the living standards of the other generation drop in order to achieve their own preferred outcome on Brexit.
- 3.9 However, Richard did note grounds for hope when he cited work done by Ipsos MORI for the Intergenerational Commission, showing that the more people from different age groups came into contact with one another, the more they tended to be optimistic about the life chances of millennials.

**Address:** APPG on Social Integration, c/o Chuka Umunna MP  
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

**Email:** [APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org](mailto:APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org)

**Website:** [SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk](http://SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk)

**Telephone:** 07722553856

3.10 Chuka Umunna MP thanked Bobby and Richard for their presentations and then invited comments from a number of contributors to the APPG's *Ages Apart?* essay collection.

#### **4. Comments from contributors to the *Ages Apart?* essay collection:**

4.1 Caroline Macfarland, director of Common Vision (CoVi), began the conversation by saying that people of different ages are not in a binary battle with one another, but want a system that delivers for them without sacrificing the wellbeing of others. She argued for a better standard of debate and said framing needs to be towards common goals, as opposed to the divisive approach taken by many politicians which tends to result in 'othering'. Caroline argue against the idea that intergenerational connection was just about kids going into care homes, and instead advocated for a collective intergenerational perspective which explores similarities both within and across generations.

4.2 Paul McGarry, who heads the Greater Manchester Ageing Hub and leads the Age Friendly Manchester campaign, focused on three key points relating to intergenerational connection. He firstly pointed to the lack of a national ageing strategy, despite the demographic changes that had taken place over recent decades. Secondly, he referenced research undertaken by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, which identified inequalities within generations rather than between them. Lastly, Paul echoed the sentiments of Caroline by calling for a more nuanced conversation around age, especially after the specific targeting of young people's votes by the Liberal Democrats and Labour in 2010 and 2017 respectively.

4.3 David Robinson, who founded Community Links and is also a Fellow at the London School of Economics, said that, even though there may not be a conflict between different generations, there was increasing distance between them. He agreed on the possibility of finding common ground on attitudes, particularly once different generations come into contact with one another. David called for bolder action to foster meaningful relationships between different generations, which would require a fundamental rethink in how we live our lives.

4.4 Jennifer, a graduate of the National Citizen Service (NCS) programme, said that during her time on the programme her team of young people created a penpal scheme with a residential care home, where residents were living with dementia. Through this experience she found that older people had fixed perceptions of young people and vice-versa, with the older generation thinking that young people are lazy and always causing

**Address:** APPG on Social Integration, c/o Chuka Umunna MP  
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

**Email:** [APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org](mailto:APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org)

**Website:** [SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk](http://SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk)

**Telephone:** 07722553856

trouble, and the younger generation thinking that old people are lazy and angry. Jennifer said it was not until she took part in the project that she became conscious of her own preconceptions, and said it is worrying that one could be unconsciously harbouring such views.

4.5 David Williams, CEO of the care home operator St Monica's Trust, which is best known for its involvement in the Channel 4 documentary 'Old People's Home for 4 Year Olds', stated that he was not interested in political views, but rather the practicalities of bringing different generations together. Despite the widespread coverage they had received through the documentary, he agreed that bringing generations together did not necessarily have to involve nursery children; rather the key factor was ensuring the creation of co-dependent relationships that bring positive outcomes.

4.6 Reflecting on a recent visit to the Netherlands, David recalled that his hosts were perplexed as to why intergenerational connection was such a topical subject in the UK. In the Netherlands, intergenerational contact is embedded as key factor when it comes to deciding how to use spaces. There are great examples of intergenerational projects working well in the country, driven by a view that there should not be separate spaces for younger people and older people. Examples include students living in care homes, and nurseries being based within them. David said it is important to have both an environment and activities that can play host to different generations, as this has an instrumental role in the development of co-dependent relationships.

4.7 In his concluding remarks, David said his main fear was that intergenerational projects such as his will become a fad and a topical subject, whereas the reality is that concerted efforts could lead to real change and if done properly such an approach should be core to the provision of older people's care and to school-level education.

4.8 When asked how he had been successful in bringing generations together through The Cares Family, Alex Smith revealed that he was driven by the desire to connect young professionals who are changing older people's communities with older people in those communities, for their mutual benefit. Based on this premise, as well as a belief that the young and old have a lot to gain from one another, Alex said The Cares Family aims to help different generations find commonalities and explore the benefits that can arise from cultural differences.

4.9 In highlighting these commonalities, Alex cited good relationships, learning and independence as things that are aspired to by both young and old. He also pointed to common challenges: 700,000 children and elderly people are living in poverty. One of

**Address:** APPG on Social Integration, c/o Chuka Umunna MP  
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

**Email:** [APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org](mailto:APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org)

**Website:** [SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk](http://SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk)

**Telephone:** 07722553856

the biggest social challenges to have emerged in the UK is loneliness, which is also partly an intergenerational problem, with older people aged over 75 ranking as the loneliest, and 21-35 year olds the second loneliest.

4.10 Exploring the benefits of cultural exchange in greater detail, Alex said that we could learn a lot from other European countries. He said capitalism had exacerbated the individualistic tendencies in today's UK, and argued also that we needed to move away from visual representations of the young and old that play into narratives of giver and receiver.

4.11 Mr Umunna thanked the contributors for their insights and invited members of the APPG and those in the audience to share their thoughts.

## **5. Comments from APPG members and the audience**

5.1 Dame Caroline Spelman MP challenged the notion that capitalism was to blame for a lack of intergenerational connection, and instead argued this could be attributed to human self-interest, particularly given the data in Richard Bell's presentation showing a clear consensus between young and old on increased welfare and pension payments.

5.2 Dame Caroline then highlighted a number of social and historical reasons as to why there was intergenerational division in the UK today. She firstly looked back to her own generation's upbringing, when the surviving grandparent came to live with the family rather than living alone. Dame Caroline secondly contrasted the UK with some Asian countries in which families establish a providence trust to address their needs, including education, health and social care.

5.3 A representative from The Scouts Association emphasised her support for David Williams' desire to pursue shared spaces, but expressed reservations regarding its feasibility given the shortage in local authority funding.

5.4 A representative from Magic Me, which has been running arts projects in east London for 30 years, said that their success was firmly rooted in people coming into activities as equals, which meant that through their interactions both parties were able to dispel myths about one another. She also advocated for a grassroots approach to the policy-making process that is people-centred, as opposed to top-down.

5.5 A representative from Grandparents Plus said that a quarter of working families depend on grandparents for childcare, which was reflective of the great interdependence between generations. The representative confirmed there were around 200,000

**Address:** APPG on Social Integration, c/o Chuka Umunna MP  
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

**Email:** [APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org](mailto:APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org)

**Website:** [SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk](http://SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk)

**Telephone:** 07722553856

grandparents who had taken up the role of being a guardian, in instances where a child might have otherwise gone into state care. However, there is not adequate state support for those taking on this responsibility.

5.6 A Labour Party member raised a point about bias in the mainstream media which may lead to some voices being amplified more than others. This has an effect on generational differences in political beliefs, because older people are more likely to rely on mainstream media over social media. The member cited the example of his grandmother, who criticises Jeremy Corbyn for a lack of engagement, and said she may have a more rounded view of the Labour leader if she were to refer to social media.

5.7 On a separate point, the Labour Party member said he felt a great deal of apprehension when it comes to striking up conversations with strangers, because of the way people have been socialised to be wary of them.

5.8 A representative from the Centre for Ageing Better called for similar progress to be made on tackling ageism as had been achieved with regards to gender equality. She echoed concerns about the dramatic demographic shift in the make-up of the population that has occurred, with seemingly no cohesive policy framework in place to respond to it. She ended her comments by arguing there is an unfounded assumption that the working age population is still in a position to contribute to the social care needs of the elderly.

5.9 John Bryan, a resident from Harrow, concluded the open discussion by suggesting that the tax base needed to be reassessed to support service provision. He also said there were no substantive conflicts between generations, and that we need to give more consideration to addressing inequalities within generations.

## **6. Final remarks from the Chair**

6.1 Chuka Umunna MP began his concluding remarks by saying that today's session would prove very useful in helping to shape the APPG's inquiry into intergenerational connection. He said the 2016 EU referendum result and 2017 General Election result had encouraged the APPG to look at intergenerational questions through a political lens, but that some of the evidence presented today might suggest there are divisions along social lines more than along economic lines. Chuka emphasised that one of the inquiry's aims will be to clearly define the generational division, if indeed there is one. Chuka noted the importance of investigating the challenges demographic changes pose to intergenerational connection, including the impact of an ageing society.



**Address:** APPG on Social Integration, c/o Chuka Umunna MP  
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

**Email:** [APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org](mailto:APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org)

**Website:** [SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk](http://SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk)

**Telephone:** 07722553856

6.2 Chuka then stressed the importance of taking the inquiry out of Westminster in order to meet people affected by the generational divide, and those doing work to bridge it. This would follow a similar model to the community visits undertaken during the APPG's previous inquiry into the integration of immigrants.

6.3 Chuka concluded by saying that the inquiry would be cross-party, due to the scale of the issue of intergenerational connection, and the fact that it is a multi-parliament and multi-government challenge. He encouraged people to engage with the APPG going forward, online and in person, through submitting evidence and getting in touch with advice. He made a pledge that the group would do its very best to meet the challenge set by everyone in the room today.