The Social Value of Intergenerational Approaches in Housing

Discovery Research and Impact Framework

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01 Introduction

HACT, Intergenerational England, Clarion Futures and Sovereign Network Group (SNG) are working together to create a new, collaborative approach to social value and impact measurement of intergenerational housing initiatives. The partnership aims to pioneer a transformative approach to developing a wider recognition of intergenerational approaches in the housing sector as well as contributing to cross-sector awareness and value [1].

The partnership is fuelled by a shared interest in, and passion for, nurturing communities where people of all ages feel welcome and supported. We recognise the positive impact of people connecting across generations and yet, we can all find this difficult to quantify and express. This research leans into that challenge and looks to shape a more in-depth narrative about the value of intergenerational approaches in a housing setting. By strengthening our abilities to collect and analyse data we will be able to continually evaluate the effectiveness of intergenerational housing initiatives. Documenting improvements in wellbeing, social engagement, and health outcomes, will also help refine approaches and demonstrate clear, measurable benefits, helping to secure ongoing support and funding.

"The intergenerational model is not simply about co-living arrangements; it is about embedding intergenerational thinking into all aspects of housing development, from social relationships and community engagement to systemic structures, policy frameworks, and urban design. There is a huge gap in how we evaluate this work and how it is referred to. It's so important to reference the work in a way that is highly regarded - as Social Value is - so that we can narrate impact in a robust and meaningful way to impact positive changes both operationally and strategically."
Intergenerational England

To take this forward, HACT was commissioned to design a multi-use framework to capture the impact of intergenerational activities in a housing context. In order to do this, a two-phased approach was adopted, which included a review of grey and white literature to understand existing research and best practice in this subject matter; a desktop review of key strategic documents from project partners; and focus groups and interviews across sectors to canvas expertise, ideas and examples of approaches.

The national context and policy landscape provides a timely opportunity to deepen and share insights on the impact potential of intergenerational approaches in housing. The current Government has committed to developing a long-term plan for housing and paired this with the target to build 1.5million new homes by the end of this Parliament [2]. The work of the Older People's Housing Taskforce concluded in 2024 and their reports share vital learning that support greater integration of generations in communities [3].

[1] For this research, we have had a focus on social housing, however, the research was not confined to these boundaries alone and we did source case studies, opinions and studies from those in a variety of housing settings including architects, private sector and international research about a range of housing models and contexts.
[2] National Housing Federation: https://www.housing.org.uk/news-and-blogs/news/Government-announces-plan-for-a-long-term-housing-strategy/
[3] The Older Peoples Housing Taskforce, final report outputs produced in 2024: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-older-peoples-housing-taskforce-report

Additionally, during the course of this research, the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Housing and Care for Older People launched an enquiry for 2025 into creating intergenerational communities [4]. All of these developments are underpinned by a growing interest and awareness of the benefits and opportunities of intergenerational connection and makes this is a particularly relevant time for our partnership to be sharing our research.

"If you can demonstrate that your interventions have an impact, then that's going to help them be engaged with and supported both politically and financially as well."
Clarion Futures

The research was supported by a cross-sector Advisory Group, chaired by Intergenerational England. This Group helped to shape, inform and evaluate the research as it evolved. Both this Group and those who participated in the focus group Interviews, came from a wide diversity of sectors and organisations to frame 'the intergenerational approach' and inform this discovery research from a range of perspectives. This was important to us because it was a way to recognise the breadth of intergenerational approaches and impacts. This project also offered us an opportunity to be inclusive and open in our thinking, to embrace collaboration and partnership and although the project has its grounding in a housing environment, we wanted to recognise that the intergenerational approaches and measures can encompass a vast range of sectors including health, care, education, and culture.

We would like to thank everyone who participated in both the Advisory Group and the focus group interviews; without their generosity of time, ideas and feedback, none of this would have been possible [5].

This report shares findings from the discovery research, which has been used to develop the social value impact framework embedded in this report.

"If you look at intergenerational activity working well, it's just kind of a well-functioning society, isn't it? You can then start to match that with people feeling confident, being listened to and learning in their communities."
SNG

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[4] Housing LIN: https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Housing/HousingforOlderPeople/intergenerational-housing/appg-inquiry-intergenerational-communities/
[5] Full list of Advisory Group members and focus group participating organisations can be found at Appendix 2.

This section sets out how intergenerational living and wider approaches are understood and defined and the stakeholders interested in this approach to living arrangements. This section looks at the wide range of definitions; why intergenerational connection is important across communities and systems; and why social value is an important approach for measuring impact.

2.1 Definitions

Throughout the research it became apparent that a variety of intergenerational approaches exist in a housing context and beyond. As such the definition of an 'intergenerational approach' in housing is multifaceted and using a scale or ladder approach has been useful to distinguish what can be meant by 'intergenerational approaches in housing'.

Within communities where people live and have their homes, intergenerational approaches can include using public spaces to encourage brief and friendly encounters that build a sense of neighbourliness. At a deeper level, intergenerational approaches can include utilising community spaces to encourage multi-generational use and through that encourage relationships across generations to form. Beyond this, facilitated, intentional activities, which have social connection as a core objective, seek to foster stronger ties and bonds across generations within community spaces in and around where people live.

Adaptations to homes that take a 'life course' approach further encourage and enable a diverse make up of neighbourhoods, providing opportunities for people to stay in their homes safely and continue to access their community spaces throughout their lives. Within the home, multiple generations may live together as a family or through other co-living arrangements.

'Intergenerational living for me feels more like a community who lives side by side and genuinely know each other and can be friends with each other.'
InCommon

Desktop research also highlighted how the term 'intergenerational living' has gained popularity in recent decades as societies have become more aware of the benefits and challenges of this living arrangement. The research surfaced 'co-housing' as a type of intergenerational approach in housing, which is a collaborative, resident-led, self-managed community that combines private and shared spaces. Cohousing communities encourage interaction, neighbourly contact, and informal mutual support [6].

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6 The London School of Economics and Political Science; 'Those little connections' Community-led housing and loneliness. Report for the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities; November 2021

Within a neighbourhood, the make-up of the community may encourage and enable different generations to live side by side and housing providers take an 'intergenerational approach' when allocating properties. Within a neighbourhood, allocation decisions may go further and consider incentives for residents to foster connections across generations, such as reduced rents or 'connection clauses' in contracts to encourage residents to play an active role in galvanising community spaces to bring people together across generations.

Within a local place, institutions may work together to co-create intergenerational approaches that foster intergenerational connection in a multitude of settings, including housing. And, from an older people's housing perspective, intergenerational living across a range of purpose-built later living housing settings is being further investigated in the UK's All-Party Parliamentary Group on Housing and Care for Older People Inquiry on 'Creating Intergenerational Communities [7]. This will be reporting in early 2026.

Public space & intergenerational use

Brief and friendly encounters, multigenerational use

Public space & facilitating connection

Intentional facilitation, deeper connections via community spaces

Adaptations to homes

Enabling generations to live side by side in communities

Multi-generational households

Generations living under one roof in communities

Strategic housing allocations

Intentional curation of multigenerational communities

Cross-sector community design

Organisations in local places setting whole life course and intergenerational plans

Purpose built intergenerational communities

Housing and public spaces designed and built to enable generations to live and connect in a community

Strategic allocations & community connection

Multi-generational communities and T&Cs asking for community engagement by residents

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[7] https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Housing/HousingforOlderPeople/intergenerational-housing/appg-inquiry-intergenerational-communities/

"Intergenerational is about placing a long-term, meaningful, and intentional lens on relationships and interactions that span all ages - building connections that are purposeful, reciprocal, and rooted in mutual respect."
Intergenerational England

During the discovery research, a number of those interviewed stressed the range of ages that can participate in intergenerational relationships. Many highlighted how this need not be reserved for the very young and the very old; there's many generations and ages in between who can also participate and benefit and therefore the definition of intergenerational approaches in housing should hold this as an underlying principle.

"The other thing I just really advocate for, with intergenerational, it doesn't always need to be very young children involved to make it intergenerational."
SNG

"I think there's a misconception that intergenerational has to be about young people and old people, there's actually a generation or two in between them, and that's where there's a lot going on,... it's about perceptions and about attitudes to people."
Clarion Futures

A number of focus groups also highlighted how intergenerational approaches are broad in their nature – bringing older and younger people together within a space, can take many forms and from these many forms, it can have many benefits. It can also be designed or happen by chance in a wide range of settings, not just in and around the immediate home. All of which are factors to consider when shaping an impact framework.

"I guess the interesting thing about intergenerational activity is that it doesn't necessarily need to be focused on one issue. So, if people are looking for a job, you can triage to identify some of the reasons, you know, for not having a job. And then, recommend support. I guess, intergenerational activity can be more holistic in terms of the activities people might do, where they come together and benefits for the people involved. And I guess that's why measuring it feels more complicated."
Clarion Futures

"We want to create community, for example a hostel community, it happens in a place but not a neighbourhood or set community.'"
James Blake, YHA, Advisory Group

2.2 The importance of intergenerational approaches across civil society

The concept of multiple generations living together- within homes and side-by-side in communities - has existed for centuries in many cultures around the world.

The growing attention to housing, family structures, and social care in academic, policy, and public discussions underscores the critical role of sound policy, inclusive design, and sustainable practices in building cohesive, healthy communities and addressing complex social, economic, and environmental issues. Older adults in many communities in the UK can be excluded from intergenerational mixing. United for all Ages states that 'Britain is one of the most age segregated societies in the world' [8]. The crisis of social disconnection is real, and its consequences are playing out in communities across the UK [9].

'In our latest You Gov poll, 83% of UK adults agree that mixing across generations helps reduce age-based stereotypes. Intergenerational connection isn't just beneficial - it's a civic responsibility. If we are to strengthen civil society and reverse the rising tide of disconnection, we must design policies and places that bring generations together with purpose."
Intergenerational England

Intergenerational approaches in housing have a growing range of stakeholders interested in the opportunities it can bring to individuals, communities and society. There are those that work directly in communities who are closely connected to the relationship benefits of bringing generations together. There are those in anchor institutions who are interested in the wider health and wellbeing impacts intergenerational approaches can bring and there are policy makers who are also interested in the conditions they can design to enable intergenerational approaches in housing (and beyond) to foster a happy, healthy society.

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[8] https://www.housinglin.org.uk/_assets/Resources/Housing/OtherOrganisation/Mixing-Matters-how-shared-sites-can-bring-older-and-younger-people-together-and-unite-Brexit-Britain.pdf
[9] https://files.thecaresfamily.org.uk/thecaresfamily/images/Building-Connection-Exploring-What-Works.pdf

2.2.1 Contextual considerations from a social housing perspective

Social housing has its roots in social change and in a purpose that strives to create affordable homes and communities in which people can thrive. These foundations surfaced during focus group interviews with stakeholders who reflected on the importance of homes and house-making, as intrinsically interlinked with community building. The success of one aspect being reliant and inter-dependent on the other.

'Trying to improve the well-being or improve the lives of our customers in various different ways is fundamental to who we are as a housing association because so many of our residents, you know, are living with complex challenges, complex lives and so recognising that we've got a role to play and I think that role to play can be termed as creating social value.'
Clarion Futures

In recent years, regulatory changes have also directed more of a focus on resident engagement and encourage more explicitly community safety and community building. The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 is a UK law aimed at improving the standards, safety, and operation of social housing. It received royal assent on July 20, 2023, and introduces several key changes, including increased regulation of social landlords, protection for tenants from hazards, and new consumer standards. The changes came into effect from 1 April 2024, applying to all social landlords, including councils and housing associations [10].

Within this the updated new Neighbourhood and Community Standard set out the social landlords have a responsibility to engage with the wider communal and public spaces where they own homes and other assets – even if they do not directly manage these spaces:

'Shared spaces' are those spaces associated with a registered providers' homes and used by their tenants that are not the responsibility of the landlord, as opposed to communal areas where landlords have direct responsibilities for ensuring their safety and maintenance [11].'

These clauses provide opportunities for housing organisations to have a greater engagement in fostering cohesive communities and to influence the wider place-making agendas.

'I think it's really important to know that we're not just considering housing as spaces in which people live but also the community around it and how we can enhance that.'
InCommon

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[10] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/rsh-sets-new-standards-to-drive-improvements-in-social-housing
[11] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65fc3d30f1d3a0001d32acef/April_2024_-
_Neighbourhood_and_Community_Standard_FINAL.pdf

2.2.2 Contextual considerations from a health perspective

Throughout the focus groups and conversations with stakeholders, the health implications of intergenerational connection and disconnection came up frequently. Through the desk-based research we also saw how emerging research and professional opinion highlighted the pressing need to bring people together to improve the health of communities and whole nations.

A lack of social connection and relationships has been linked to a 'loneliness epidemic' which research has highlighted can be as damaging as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. Other global health figures go a step further and stress the public health need to be greater connected across society. Dr Vivek H. Murthy, the U.S. Surgeon General from 2023-25, said in his recent (2023) Advisory how 'Social connection is a fundamental human need, as essential to survival as food, water and shelter...the health and societal impacts of social isolation and loneliness is a critical public health concern [12].'

The NHS Long Term Plan (2019) sets out a 10-year vision for transforming the healthcare system in England, placing a strong emphasis on prevention, early intervention, and integrated community-based care. A key element of this strategy is the recognition that good health is shaped as much by the social and physical environment as by clinical care. The Plan highlights the importance of working "across the NHS, local government, and the voluntary sector" to address the wider determinants of health, including housing, social support, and community infrastructure (NHS England, 2019). Research by The King's Fund underscores that poor-quality or insecure housing can exacerbate health conditions, increase hospital admissions, and hinder recovery, especially for older adults and those with long-term conditions. Integrated care systems (ICSs) are now encouraged to develop place-based models that support people to live independently at home for longer, aligning with findings from Public Health England which stress the cost-effectiveness of preventative interventions linked to housing improvements and social prescribing. As we move toward a more person-centred and preventative health system, housing is increasingly recognised not just as a setting, but as a key enabler of health and well-being, playing a pivotal role in reducing pressure on hospitals and supporting thriving communities.

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[12] From US Surgeon General, 2 May 2023, 'Advisory: The Healing Effects of Social Connection'
https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf

2.2.3 Contextual considerations from a local authority and place-making perspective

Relationships between people in communities has strong ties with community cohesion and the desk-based research helped to highlight how a number of public institutions have looked at the role of local authorities and place-makers in this space, with many calling for integration and connection to be a key part of their strategies and operations. This includes The Local Government Association ('LGA') who have published a guide for local authorities on how to integrate community cohesion into their ways of working and how they can work in partnerships locally. They emphasise the benefits of doing so, in particular to avoid conflicts, anti-social behaviour and strengthen safety, belonging and happiness:

'Effectively delivering community cohesion also tackles the fractures in society which may lead to conflict and ensures that the gains which changing communities bring are a source of strength to local areas. Community cohesion is therefore critical to the quality of life of local people and, as community leaders, local authorities have an essential role to play in facilitating this.'

The LGA's guide moves on to specifically reference the need to bring generations together as part of holistic community cohesion efforts and encourages intergenerational connection to be part of local authority plans for local places:

'Stereotypes about both older and younger people can be prolific. Older people are sometimes fearful of younger people. Younger people may not always see what older people have to offer. Both have a lot to offer and building community cohesion should take into account the need and benefits of bringing these groups together. Intergenerational work can be crucial in addressing the myths that proliferate about different age groups and can help to foster mutual understanding and tolerance between groups in the community. In many places, schools have come to rely on the extra support which older people bring to the classroom, younger families may also appreciate the help of the parenting skills of older people. There have been successful projects that have allowed both groups, older and younger, to share their experiences and develop new skills and to diffuse potential tensions between age groups within minority ethnic and faith communities" [13].

[13] The Local Government Association, 'Community Cohesion Action Guide', https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/communitycohesionactionguide.pdf

2.2.4 Contextual considerations from a government and systems perspective

Relationships, connection and cohesion have also featured in the UK's political space, with emphasis on the need to bring people together more in order to address concerns about loneliness, social isolation and polarisation.

The discovery research highlighted a recent briefing from the House of Lords on 'The Importance of Social Cohesion and Communities'. The briefing draws on UNECE's definition of cohesion and helps collate the current Government's public statements on the issues. It shares:

'This briefing examines what is meant by social cohesion, provides an overview of recent reports on social cohesion and communities, and sets out recent government statements on its policies to address concerns about social cohesion...Although defining the concept is challenging, the UNECE states that societies with higher levels of social cohesion "are documented as generally being healthier, more resilient to external shocks and crises, and experiencing higher economic growth [14]."

The report highlight's the Government thinking about cohesion, including this commitment to strengthen cohesion because it sees it as a key vehicle to create opportunities for people and communities:

"In response to a written question in October 2024, Alex Norris, parliamentary under-secretary at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, said the government is committed to working with communities across the UK "to build a culture of cohesion, trust and mutual respect". The minister said that to foster strong communities it is important to build strong relationships and create opportunities for people to be brought together from different walks of life [15]."

Supporting building new homes has also been a key part of national policies and discourse in recent years. Homes England, the UK government's agency responsible for housing and regeneration across England, has been allocated £8.03 billion of government funding to deliver at least 100,000 affordable homes outside of London by the end of March 2026 through the Affordable Homes Programme (AHP). This provides grant funding to support the capital costs of developing affordable housing in England and provides further opportunity to shape new homes and communities that are not only affordable but available at 'social rents' and therefore many social landlords have / are currently engaged with the AHP, with Homes England stating:

[14] United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 'Social cohesion: Concept and measurement', December 2023
[15] In reference to: House of Commons, 'Written question: Community relations (5285)', 11 October 2024.
From: The House of Lords briefing on 'The Importance of Social Cohesion and Communities' November 2024, accessed 13.03.2025

Social Rent is a priority for the AHP funding and Social Rent-specific grant rates can be accessed in all parts of the country subject to meeting our value-for-money assessments.

Additionally, one of the three priority areas for the AHP is housing for older generations:

AHP funding is primarily for the supply of new-build affordable housing. It supports...homes in rural settlements and supported housing for older, disabled or vulnerable people [16].

Additionally, the current Labour Government has made further commitments to build 1.5 million new homes by the end of this Parliament and this presents a crucial opportunity to rethink not just how many homes we build, but how we design and deliver them (MHCLG 2023). Social value principles in housing development offers opportunities to integrate intentional social impact objectives into the design and configuration of new homes and community spaces to support belonging, intergenerational connection, and long-term resilience. In line with this thinking, the government recently announced a £20 million Community Housing Fund to support community-led housing (MHCLG, 2024). This is the first time funding at this scale has been dedicated to overcoming financial barriers for cohousing and other collaborative models, enabling communities to secure land and develop inclusive, locally driven solutions. Incorporating intergenerational design, age-inclusive housing standards, and evidence-based social value metrics can provide a way to address the crisis of disconnection health and public bodies are siting and bring generations together in new ways; ensuring that this wave of housing not only meets demand but creates places where people of all ages can thrive.

[16] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-affordable-housing-funding

2.3 The importance of Social Value

Throughout the discovery research, many participants touched on their view of the importance of measuring and engaging with Social Value as a way to measure and showcase the impact of intergenerational approaches in a housing setting and beyond.

The majority reflected on how Social Value provided a useful shared narrative to describe, review and connect with the impact of an intervention across multiple systems and with multiple stakeholders. For those that explored this idea, they then connected this quality to the interconnected nature of intergenerational connection and the wide-ranging impacts it can have.

'It is a useful framework to use with smaller groups to evidence the difference they are making and the positive changes they are having.'
SNG

'If you can demonstrate that you know your interventions have an impact, then that's going to be supported both politically and financially as well across partnerships and different teams.'
Clarion Futures

Some also reflected on the long-term nature of impact that is recorded and shown through Social Value measurements and methods.

'The long-term impact on the individual as well, that's quite unique about the approach to social value, which resonates with a lot of the community partners that we work with.'
SNG

For some, having a focus on Social Value as a way of measuring impact connected with the deeper purpose of why organisations with purpose exist; to generate value for society. So, the methods very framing and terminology connected appropriately to what positive relationships in community are all about; creating a meaningful and lasting impact.

'I see Social Value as actions that can help bring more shared power and strength to a community.'
InCommon

'How do we place a value on relationships, at every level of the social eco-system? The intergenerational model of practice focusses on enhancing an intentional and recognised way of working, building, commissioning and connecting.'
Intergenerational England

This section shares the impacts and benefits of intergenerational approaches in housing, and its wider ecosystem, that emerged through the discovery research. Intergenerational housing approaches, where people of different ages are encouraged to connect, offers a multitude of benefits for both individuals and society as a whole and the key advantages are divided into three sections: the benefits for individuals, the benefits for neighbourhoods and the benefits for places and civil society more broadly.

3.1 Benefits for individuals

Social connection

Intergenerational living fosters the connection between people of different ages, combating feelings of loneliness and isolation [17] that can be particularly prevalent among older adults and young people. The research also highlighted that outside of co-housing and direct forms of intergenerational living, sharing spaces and activities with people of different generations provides an opportunity for enhancing meaningful social interaction that comes from stimulating conversation, promoting empathy and understanding.

'I think on both sides it's probably about loneliness and isolation. I think it's probably about improved mental health potentially with some physical health benefits depend on the activity.'
Clarion Futures

A recent YouGov poll conducted for Intergenerational England showed that 81% of UK adults agree that mixing with people of different age groups / generations can reduce feelings of loneliness, further reinforcing the feedback from participants in this discovery research [18].

Mutual support and assistance

Opportunities for mutual support and assistance are provided when living in an intergenerational community. Help with such things as childcare, home maintenance, or companionship, help to create a sense of community and mutual reliance.

'What I have noticed actually, on all the intergenerational projects I have worked on, is that the participants believe they were all volunteering to support the other generation...or to support something happening... It was really important to the older people that they felt they were volunteers that were helping the school children and likewise the school children felt they were volunteering and helping too'
SNG

[17] https://generationsworkingtogether.org/downloads/5bebf57b90d25-Intergenerational-Activity-Guide-2018-St-Monica-Trust.pdf
[18] Intergenerational England research with YouGov in 2024, accessed 13.03.2025: https://www.intergenerationalengland.org/ie-research

Focus group interviews drew attention to the mutuality of strong intergenerational connections that are formed in environments that encourage generations to come together. The mutuality was emphasised enough to make it stand out as a benefit in its own right, helping to strengthen and enhance the other positive impacts in this discovery research.

'A key thing about intergenerational connection, is that it's a mutually beneficial learning environment, including the general emotional and social skills development, the amount of young people and older people who have said they've grown in confidence through participating in the [intergenerational] programme is amazing.'
InCommon

Skills sharing and learning

A further key benefit that emerged through the research, was the increased opportunities for shared learning through intergenerational connections. The mutually beneficial benefits were seen to particularly enhance this opportunity, creating an environment of skill-sharing and learning, across generations as much as across interest areas, life experiences and cultures.

'It's something about different generations getting together and having the opportunity to interact, to learn about somebody different from your generation and to make friends in different generations as well, it's really powerful.'
SNG

'I do wonder if the whole thing about age is a barrier to our thinking ...it's often, or should be more about, an exchange of skills and experience or something like that as opposed to just, "How old are you in terms of your years?"
Clarion Futures

'At IMM, we believe that housing is more than bricks and mortar - it's a platform for connection, purpose, and learning across generations. Our youth social action programmes encourage intergenerational mentoring and opportunities for all ages to engage in social action within housing communities, offering pathways for skill sharing, civic responsibility, and personal growth – contributing to a more connected and inclusive future."
Intergenerational Music Making (IMM)

Health

Studies have shown that intergenerational contact can have positive effects on mental and physical health, reducing stress, improving cognitive function, and boosting mood [19].

'I think we saw [closer community connection] during COVID and the red tape came off for services too…We saw it just naturally happened from the community up, not the other way round. And it was a hard time for people and, you know, but people really looked out for each other.'
GP Priya Kumar

'Our job isn't to end loneliness but that's an outcome of the work we do; by bringing generations together, people feel more connected in their community…it's a great way of tackling it.'
InCommon

When participants of the focus groups and interviews were asked for how these health benefits then made a difference to individuals engaged in intergenerational connections and opportunities in the longer term, most referenced the positive impact this had on peoples' confidence, mood, mental wellbeing and for one GP, they felt this impacted life expectancy and long-term health conditions.

'I think you would improve life expectancy, I think you would improve the happiness of households, I think people will feel richer even though they're not richer in monetary value … I think there would be an improvement in diabetes and cardiovascular disease. We know that isolation really does lead to poor cardiovascular outcomes, so there is evidence out there. So, all those sorts of things would naturally come down, and it would be at a social value initially, which may have a greater value to a monetary value in the long term.'
GP Priya Kumar

[19] Campbell F, Whear R, Rogers M, Sutton A, Robinson-Carter E, Barlow J, Sharpe R, Cohen S, Wolstenholme L, Thompson-Coon J. Non-familial intergenerational interventions and their impact on social and mental wellbeing of both younger and older people-A mapping review and evidence and gap map. Campbell Syst Rev. 2023 Feb 16;19(1): e1306. doi: 10.1002/cl2.1306. PMID: 36913218; PMCID: PMC9934919.

3.2 Benefits for neighbourhoods and local communities

Fostering belonging

Intergenerational housing approaches can result in stronger communities by fostering a sense of belonging, cooperation, and shared responsibility. Many stakeholders who participated in the discovery research, reflected on how intergenerational approaches counter-acted separations that they saw in communities and by doing so, fostered connection and a sense of belonging to a local neighbourhood and local community.

'Thinking about the different angles of intergenerational approaches and how things currently are in society – we can all be quite separate...with intergenerational approaches, it brings people together; it can be for both people of those different generations and there's probably that longer-term learning and impact of understanding something from a different perspective. Some people might live in households with extended families with mixed generations and some people don't. And if you don't, it's probably particularly powerful about understanding a context and experiences from a different generation through well-thought our intergenerational approaches.'
SNG

For some, this increased feeling of belonging also encouraged greater civic participation in local place sand spaces. For those organisations who worked in communities to bring generations together, they shared how community members would start to instigate activity within their neighbourhoods, have greater confidence to venture outside and say hello to neighbours as a result of engaging with intergenerational activity and building connections across generations.

Reduced demands on local services

The mutual support that the individual experiences can in turn lead to a reduced demand on social services by alleviating the burden on formal care services such as nursing homes and daycare centres [20].

During the focus groups, a GP highlighted this impact too and shared how she had seen intergenerational approaches in communities had positively impacted local engagement with healthcare services, as well as supporting improvements in health and reduction in pressures on health services.

'Happier, healthier communities that live longer well and reduce pressures on the NHS.'
GP Priya Kumar

[20] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d273adce5274a5862768ff9/future-of-an-ageing-population.pdf

Addressing stereotypes, reducing ageism in communities

Another important role that intergenerational living has is in challenging negative stereotypes about ageing, promoting a more inclusive and age-friendly society and ultimately helping with combating ageism across society [21]. The World Health Organisation see intergenerational contact as one of the most effective strategies in combating ageism, a phenomenon that causes serious harm to older people's health, with research showing that older individuals with negative self-perceptions of ageing can live 7.5 years less than those with positive self-perceptions [22].
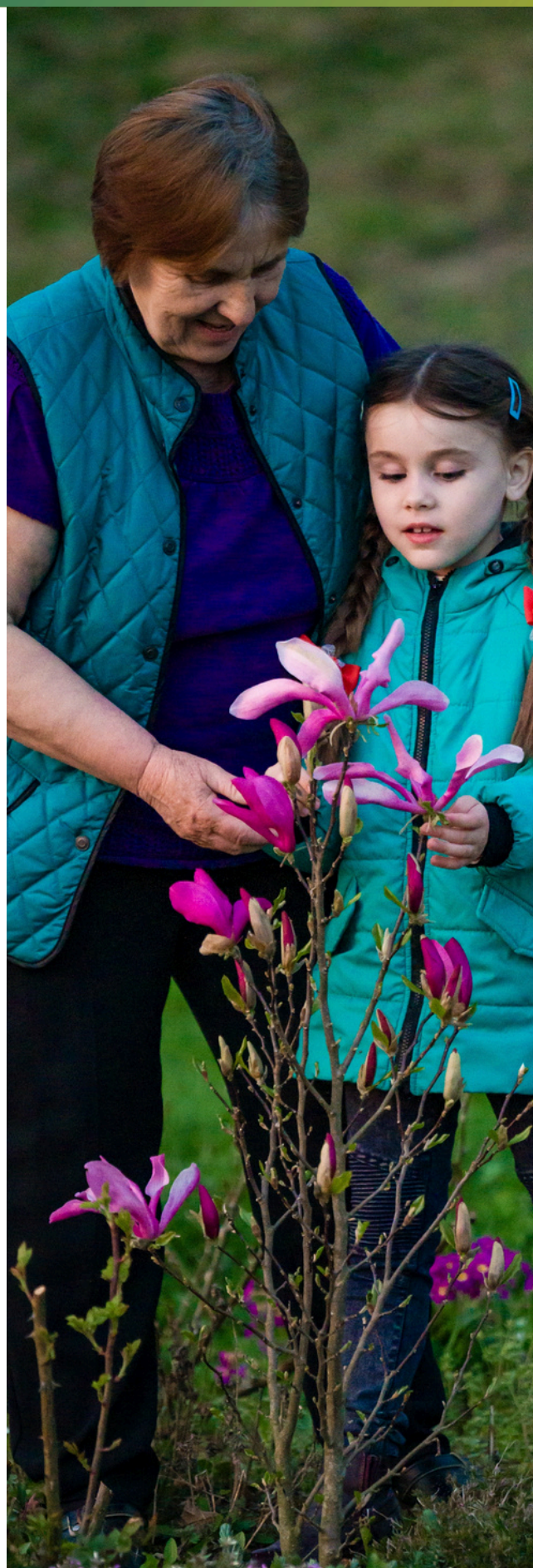
Throughout the discovery research focus groups, stakeholders shared how they noticed these stereotypes fading away when people are brought together across generations in a housing setting and in wider community spaces in neighbourhoods. They highlighted how assumptions are often replaced with a deeper level of care and connection for individuals that is then prioritised over stereotypes and helped foster more positive impressions of ageing and encouraged further engagement with others in their neighbourhood.

'From younger to older, there is stigma and also assumptions of those different age groups. ...it's assumptions just based on what you hear in the news and just what you hear with your own age group, that actually when you have those conversations, people realise 'no, they're actually really valuable members of society' - and that's both ways, for younger and older people – realising that they're not always that different from yourselves. Those common interests and having that opportunity to interact, helps facilitate changes.'
SNG

[21] World Health Organisation; 'Global Report on Ageism', 2021
[22] Ibid

3.3 Benefits for society

Building on the above, the discovery research pointed to wider societal impacts of effective intergenerational approaches in a housing context. When amassed and considered at large, the impact is felt to be transformative and can have the potential to lead to cultural shifts and even more long-term benefits for an even wider audience.

"There is an economic case for integrating intergenerational principles into housing developments as it can help create thriving local economies by stimulating demand for local services, increasing social engagement, and generating employment opportunities. Shared housing and co-living arrangements can provide more affordable options for both younger and older residents, easing financial strain and fostering a greater sense of collective wellbeing."
Intergenerational England

Vibrant resilient communities at large

Overall, intergenerational housing approaches offers a promising model for creating more vibrant, supportive, and resilient communities. By bringing together people of different ages, it can help to address some of the most pressing social challenges of our time, such as loneliness, isolation, and ageism.

'So, something it would be great to see is... significantly improved opinions of different age groups.'
SNG

'I think it will be generational change for children will be the biggest impact.'
GP Priya Kumar

Healthier society

During the discovery research, the focus groups and interviews surfaced a view that if intergenerational approaches in a housing and wider community context fulfilled their potential, it could transform the health of wider society. Although desk-based research did not uncover concrete evidence to verify this thinking, there evidence to show that interventions have supported improvements in health and wellbeing at a neighbourhood and individual level. Paired with this the detrimental health impacts of isolation noted above, add weight to the thinking that intergenerational approaches at scale could unlock positive impacts at scale.

'We spend £2 billion on medications in the NHS that nobody takes. But we haven't solved their problem. We've signed a prescription bill of £2 billion and if you could have spent that £2 billion in Intergenerational social movements or bringing people together, which serve the community...you could reduce the burden on the NHS, create happier and healthier communities and I think it's just about being very brave.'
GP Priya Kumar

'The National Housing Federation published the new report "Finding a safe home after hospital" this not only highlighted the important role housing plays in preventing delays to hospital discharge but how it can help alleviate pressures on the NHS whilst generating the NHS cost savings in the region of £53m - £65m per year. The research also showed that by creating homes tailored for older people, we can reduce hospital admissions, lower the need for residential care, and improve overall community well-being.'
Intergenerational England

Cohesion and civic participation

The discovery research highlighted how intergenerational approaches at large have potential to strengthen societal cohesion and address the growing separations between us as perceived by stakeholders participating in the focus groups. This ranged from the built environment and how we could instil greater intergenerational approaches here as well as in how the spaces in and around neighbourhoods across the UK can be activated to bring generations together.

'It's really enriching and gives you the sort of skills to communicate with people that you don't necessarily get much opportunity to communicate with. And this makes for a really nice society.'
InCommon

'Promoting respect and breaking down those barriers and stigmas and bringing different diverse groups together – it's so important to help how they understand each other and we find the common ground that bring all of them together.'
SNG

'I think that intergenerational housing should be on any street in the UK where you get young people and you get older people, you get a whole range of people, it should just be modern life. However, I think there's been a shift over the last couple of decades to sort of separate and for example, if you're older, society says 'You're gonna all live together over there.' And it can become quite isolating. Where as, actually it should just be an extension of the of the street that everyone lives in day-to-day.'
Levitt Bernstein

One partner also highlighted how intergenerational approaches has led to greater levels of civic engagement too and how these approaches have increased feelings of personal agency and power to support their communities.

'Intergenerational activism and people wanting to campaign about an issue they feel really passionately about in their community and feeling like they have the power to do so when they're connected with other people...whilst intergenerational connection is really great for the singular person, it's also amazing for community change.'
InCommon

3.4 Making Intergenerational Housing Approaches successful: enablers

The intergenerational approach to housing can offer numerous benefits. However, to make it successful, there are several key factors which need to be considered to ensure that success that emerged during the research and many of the stakeholders were keen to consider these factors.

What are the nudges that encourage intergenerational connection and generational connection in our shared spaces?
James Blake, YHA, Advisory Group

Careful planning, design & management of spaces

Housing should be strategically designed with consideration given to delivering a physical layout that supports interaction and community building. Shared spaces like common rooms, gardens, and recreational areas are spaces that can be used to encourage social connections [23]. Incorporating eco-friendly materials and energy-efficient systems in design supports long-term affordability and aligns with environmental sustainability goals, benefiting current and future generations alike [24].

During the discovery research, a number of stakeholders stressed the need for the design of homes, communities, whole new towns to have a holistic approach; ensuring that careful thought is given to not only how someone will live in their home but how they will move around and interact in the neighbourhood around that home.

'You don't solve any of this with the design of a single house, it's all about the design of a whole community, neighbourhoods'
Peter Greaves, Make Architects, Advisory Group

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[23] www.journeyofanarchitect.com; Intergenerational housing layout with shared spaces
[24] https://lignacite.co.uk/benefits-of-sustainable-building-materials-in-construction/#:~:text=Green%20building%20materials%20can%20last,can%20be%20replaced%20less%20frequently_

The needs of people of all ages and physical mobilities, including wheelchair accessibility and age-friendly features, should be accommodated in design plans too. In order to be welcoming spaces that also feel safe, the homes and communal spaces should enable all ages and mobilities to engage and interact with a space safely. A number of stakeholders referenced the HAPPI (Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation) design principles and how these could be drawn on to guide design choices and for retrofitting existing spaces to bring about greater accessibility and intergenerational connection too [25].

'The way that our environment, our communities and public spaces are designed can ultimately hinder or improve independence. It may well be that intergenerational communities develop as dementia friendly or as a core factor they consider the illnesses that are linked to ageing – thinking carefully about signage, acoustic properties, ...How can we design so that elderly people have the trust and confidence to engage with younger people and how can the designed environment support that?'
Omair Haider, Millenium Care Group, Advisory Group

With building new homes, a number of stakeholders stressed the need to go beyond the 'bedsit' approach and ensure that new homes for older people in particular are not very small one bed spaces. It was felt this isolated them from families, were unattractive to those who may be interested in downsizing. As a result, this discouraged older generations from moving into new neighbourhoods and reducing the intergenerational make up of new neighbourhoods.

So that's where I think housing and planning comes in. So, there's no point in making small one-bedroom flats flat. There's just no point because it doesn't serve the type of population we have here, and families can't be together.
GP Priya Kumar

'[The new homes] are also aimed at downsizers as well because our client has a lot of housing in the area with big family homes, so by building something that's attractive to all the people, that there's not a little shoe box and it's actually got a bit of space, it's got a bit of flexibility, we hope it can be attractive.'
Levitt Bernstein

A number of stakeholders also stressed the need for much more careful thought and attention given to how communal spaces will be designed and 'activated' to enable and encourage connection. There was a feeling that this has not always been prioritised as it should and is a missed opportunity that can provide an enabling environment for intergenerational connection.

[25] Housing our Ageing Population for Innovation (HAPPI), accessed 13.03.2025:
https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Design-building/HAPPI/

'So, for housing associations, there's one aspect that's about planning and having that joined up thinking, And there's another aspect where they're also joined up with healthcare services, town planning, builders and architects and everybody working together as opposed to us doing our own thing.'
InCommon

I think we need to start asking how will these people actually connect? Or will they connect? Is there a point to them connecting? Which spaces will they actually really share and how will they use them? What challenges and conflicts could that bring and is there anything we can do from a design or a long-term stewardship point of view to facilitate a better outcome?'
Clarion Futures

Flexibility and Adaptability

Successful and sustainable intergenerational housing and approaches has to be able to accommodate changing needs. This includes adapting not only to the changing needs of residents as they age, but any changing physical or emotional needs of residents across all age groups. Modification of housing units or the addition of support services may be required. As such, intergenerational housing needs to offer a diverse portfolio of living arrangements to accommodate the varying needs and preferences of its residents, such as independent living units, assisted living, or shared housing.

"Whether through multigenerational homes, co-housing, or mixed-age developments, design should foster social connection while addressing accessibility, cultural needs, and financial realities. A flexible approach ensures viability across urban and rural settings, making intergenerational living a practical solution for all, regardless of background, ability, or life stage."
Intergenerational England

'The flexible room is technically too small to be a bedroom in in planning terms, but it can be screened off from the living room, so it could be sleepover space, it could be a hobby room. It's just embedding a bit more flexibility...And as people age may need a carer staying or to enable friends and family to stay as well.'
Levit Bernstein

'We need a variety of homes than is usually provided to allow for that diversity and to be inclusive.'
Peter Greaves, Make Architects, Advisory Group

'Ensuring all communities provide for all age and stages of life and how you enable that so people feel that they want to remain in their communities.'
Paul Tisdale, St Monica Trust, Advisory Group

Positive stories: shifting the narrative

During the research, some partners highlighted the need for more positive stories about the value of bringing generations together and the creative ways this can be done in a housing setting. There's a shared feeling that once more communities, organisations and policy makers see these approaches being brought to life well, they will be attracted and encouraged to support more of it too.

'I hope positive examples of intergenerational design and building coming forward and getting these out there … then once it gets to the press then people start looking at it and say actually, I want to see more of that.'
Levitt Bernstein

Many have a hope that the benefits of intergenerational approaches in housing and communities is better seen and touches more people who hold budgetary powers to invest in scaling up effective ways that bring generations together.

'My best hope is that this really touches and speaks to people right across the spectrum, including people who have budgetary responsibilities and can help then see the value in bringing generations together and help them be able to say 'Yes, I want to invest in that'.
InCommon

Co-design

Throughout the research, many stakeholders shared perspectives on the value of co-producing and engaging with multiple generations to develop plans for neighbourhood developments right through to the services and activities that aim to bring generations together. For many, this is a key enabler, able to unlock the potential of intergenerational approaches. Adopting this way of working, was also felt to support organisations work with each other too.

'No one particular service is more impactful than another and we use a bespoke model within the community which integrates various services as a package. It is the process that is important – the workshops are rooted in co-creating, leading to empowerment, leadership and ownership.'
Intergenerational Music Making

'Social value initiatives done well is about initiatives that work with people to do things that can really benefit them…Asking people what they actually want to do intergenerationally and then working with that idea and shaping it into something that works in an intergenerational context, just makes the most sense. And it's nice because then you know people ae really having an important role in shaping the things they want to do.'
InCommon

Careful design and delivery of intergenerational services and activity

Throughout the research, many stakeholders highlighted what it takes to bring people together across generations effectively and ultimately help to unlock the potential impacts of intergenerational approaches. For some, this centred around careful and skilled facilitation of activities in communities.

'Really good facilitation, what any good facilitator should do in terms of making sure that people share in the air and there's a balance of power and people get their say. People facilitating can make sure that things don't go somewhere they shouldn't… just good facilitation with intergenerational practitioners is key.'
Clarion Futures

Other stakeholders highlighted the need for approaches that bring generations together to ensure accessibility in order to be delivered well and how this is another core component to enabling the fulfilment of intergenerational approaches.

'An accessible environment is really important, where people feel like they can partake in a way they want to and that they can.' For the team, this includes taking into account learning needs, time commitments, the physical space where people are encouraged to come together, the activities that are facilitated, asking people what they want and enabling others to craft their roles for themselves.'
InCommon

Other stakeholders noticed that mutuality in approaches helped to bring about equal benefits for people of different generations who are interacting with each other. During the desk-based research this principle also came up as a core foundation of effective social connection building, enabling balanced, reciprocal relationships [26].

'What I've noticed on all the intergenerational projects I've worked at is that the participants themselves believe they were all volunteering to support the other generation…It was really important to the older people that they felt they were volunteers that were helping the school children and likewise the school children felt they were volunteering too.'
SNG

[26] The Cares Family, Exploring What Works: Building Social Connection, 2023

For some stakeholders, enabling effective intergenerational approaches requires an investment in the longer term; an investment of time and longer-term funding to support the forming of relationships across generations.

'it's about having the activities, having that time, initiatives that are invested in that can bring communities together because naturally it's really difficult to just go up to your neighbour, say 'hello' and build connection…it's not just about creating bricks and mortar intergenerational living but it's also putting in the investment, the time, the resource behind really bringing people together.'
InCommon

3.5 Common barriers

In comparison to some other countries across the globe, the UK has been slow to realise the benefits of intergenerational connection and therefore fewer schemes and programmes exist that encompass it [27].

The advancement of inclusive, age-friendly design and initiatives is impeded by limited financial and policy support. Insufficient funding allocations hinder the development and implementation of projects aimed at creating more accessible and inclusive environments. Moreover, the absence of clear and comprehensive policies can create uncertainty and discourage investment in age-friendly initiatives. These limitations result in slower progress and a missed opportunity to fully realise the potential benefits of inclusive design, such as improved quality of life for older adults and increased social and economic participation.

'It's about making time….we need time for connection and time to build relationships…we need to start thinking in longer term with our approaches and our funding to really bring groups of people together.'
InCommon

Clear and comprehensive policies at both national and local levels are essential to guide and support intergenerational approaches in housing. Embedding intergenerational principles in local planning and housing policies ensures the sustainability and alignment of housing initiatives with broader social goals. These policies should promote accessibility, inclusivity, and the active participation of all ages in all aspects of society.

[27[https://www.housinglin.org.uk/_assets/Resources/Housing/OtherOrganisation/A-VILLAGE-APART-Amelia_Swaby.pdf

Furthermore, establishing a dedicated agency or task force to oversee the implementation of age-friendly policies and initiatives provides a centralised focus and ensure accountability.

Additionally, during the research, some stakeholders reflected on how the coming together of generations can be met with fear as a result of segregations that currently exist in many places. This fear is a challenge that will need to be addressed if intergenerational approaches at numerous levels are to realise their potential.

'Fear of the unknown, fear of the other and how do you overcome that fear in those situations to bring younger and older people together? We've got to get the right balance between top down and community level changes…I think the real challenge is where there are people of different generations and there's no local champion, how do we get people together?'
Lord Kamall, Advisory Group

These fears have likely been encouraged through negative stereotypes about different generations can hinder the success of intergenerational living. Addressing these misperceptions requires open dialogue, education, and positive examples of successful intergenerational communities. By promoting understanding and breaking down stereotypes, we can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for people of all ages.

Developing deeper insights into local areas and designing for local places. This requires intentionality, looking at local data sets across sectors – housing, health, education – and using that alongside forging strong ties with communities themselves to inform home and community design, services, support and goals themselves.

At the same time, misperceptions about intergenerational living can lead to initial resistance, requiring careful community engagement and education Some people believe that living with multiple generations will inevitably lead to conflict and disagreement due to differing lifestyles, values, and expectations. However, with open communication, mutual respect, and a willingness to compromise, these differences can be navigated successfully.

Many housing developments lack universal design standards, within both the individual home and communal spaces, that support both accessibility and intergenerational use, such as direct access to a bathroom, appropriate seating for all ages and wide walkways that can accommodate mobility aids.

Whilst the UK may be further behind other parts of the world in establishing intergenerational strategies and practice, there are still plenty of examples of good practice approaches to be found that are making impactful change within their local communities.

Those with a specific intergenerational focus and intention:

Intergenerational Music Making & Intergenerational England

Intergenerational Music Making (IMM) and Intergenerational England (IE) are two interconnected organisations that share a vision of fostering intergenerational connections to build a more inclusive, cohesive, and empathetic society. While IMM operates as a delivery-focused body, spearheading innovative grassroots initiatives, IE complements this by taking on a strategic, policy-focused role to create systemic change. Together, they form a powerful ecosystem that blends hands-on creativity with thought leadership, research, and advocacy.

IMM is a national not-for-profit organisation dedicated to fostering connection and collaboration through music and creativity. Since 2019, IMM has worked across the UK with care homes, schools, hospitals, housing organisations, and cultural spaces, delivering over 2,500 projects and training 900 individuals, including care staff, young people, and volunteers.

Intergenerational England is a national not-for-profit organisation dedicated to advancing intergenerational practice through advocacy, research, and systemic change. As a strategic body, IE champions an "Intergenerational Approach" that leverages connections between generations and across sectors to address societal challenges, from loneliness and economic disparity to age segregation.

Intergenerational England and IMM have worked with partners like Clarion Housing and Homes England to co-design creative housing initiatives that promote connection, well-being, and inclusion across age groups. This includes intergenerational workshops, storytelling and movement programs in sheltered housing, thematic research on loneliness, community murals, care home-school links, and national consultancy on intergenerational housing design. They also launched a national Housing Steering Group to drive innovative models, influence policy, and embed intergenerational thinking in housing strategy.

Talking Generations is an award-winning campaign that places intergenerational dialogue at the centre of social change. Through digital engagement and public events, Talking Generations works to build empathy, understanding contributing to community resilience, and influencing policy and practice across the UK.

InCommon

InCommon is a charity that fosters social connections across generations, connecting groups of young people with older neighbours to learn and build friendships together. The main programmes are 'Connect', bringing primary school children and retirement homes together, 'Social Action', connecting younger and older people in the community to identify social issues for campaigning, and 'Empower', which supports housing associations, schools, community groups and individuals across the UK to deliver their own meaningful intergenerational activities.

With almost 2,500 people having connected and 3,000 hours volunteered by older people, the programmes are creating great impact, with 100% of engaged schools recommending the programme and 91% of older people feeling happier after a session.

Creating Intergenerational Communities Programme

Generations Working Together (GWT) is the nationally recognised centre of excellence supporting the development and integration of intergenerational work across Scotland. As the UK faces a growing challenge of social isolation and loneliness, particularly among older and younger generations, The Creating Intergenerational Communities (CIC) Programme, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, is a pioneering initiative from GWT to address this issue.

By bringing together people of all ages, CIC aims to foster stronger communities and combat the negative impacts of social isolation. Through intergenerational activities and projects, CIC seeks to:

- Reduce loneliness and improve mental health by connecting people across generations, alleviating feelings of isolation and promoting positive mental wellbeing.

- Challenge ageism and prejudice: Intergenerational interaction can break down stereotypes and foster mutual respect.

- Build stronger, more resilient communities: By working together, people of all ages can create vibrant, supportive communities.

GWT believes that high-quality intergenerational work can lead to significant positive impacts. To support this, they are developing a set of indicators and guidance to help organisations plan and implement effective intergenerational projects. By following these guidelines, organisations can ensure that their initiatives meet the needs of all participants and contribute to building a more inclusive and connected society.

Integrating supported living with children's day care provisions

Across the UK, there are a number of examples where care providers have integrated onsite day care for children, either by designing in from the start or adding the provision to existing sites.
These provide opportunities for young children and older residents to meet and connect often via facilitated activity led by paid staff on site. They also provide opportunities for less structured interactions between parents and older residents on site and increased traffic of different generations in a shared place.

One of the most prominent examples, came from the 2018 Channel 4 programme 'Old People's Home for 4 Year Olds'. This showed an experiment, inspired by a revolutionary American scheme, which brought together the very young and the very old for a six-week period to attempt to prove scientifically that these two generations can transform the physical, social and emotional wellbeing of the older volunteers for the better.

A team of geriatric specialists medically tested the impact the children had on the older group and the results demonstrated significant improvements in mood, movement and mobility of the older group. The first series had such a considerable impact that <u>St Monica Trust</u> in Bristol announced they would be establishing a permanent nursery at one of their sites.

The sequel extended the testing of the impact to the young children and found that they too benefitted from the intergenerational connection. The nursery manager shared that: "Being part of such a wonderful experiment has opened our eyes to the positive impact it has had on the children. We cannot ignore the fabulous journey that everyone involved has been on, and the relationships and bonds that have so quickly formed."

A new development in Scotland, <u>Powderhall</u> in Edinburgh, is building in daycare to a new project. It is the first of its kind in Scotland and includes an intergenerational, Passivhaus facility which combines an Early Learning and Childcare Centre for 128 children with 27 older person's independent-living homes above. This facility will offer health and wellbeing benefits for the residents, and new learning and social opportunities for children attending the nursery. Designed to meet the Passivhaus standard, the building will provide high-quality spaces that are comfortable, healthy and consume minimal energy. This will create an optimal learning- through-play environment for the children and help to address the acute housing needs of our ageing population.

Melfield Gardens, intergenerational co-living

This is an affordable, intergenerational housing development for older people and postgraduate students, with generous and welcoming communal spaces, designed to Passivhaus standard.

Melfield Gardens is a highly sustainable, affordable housing scheme on a constrained site in Lewisham. It is designed to Passivhaus as the first step towards zero carbon. Designed by Levitt Bernstein architects for Phoenix Community Housing, most of the new homes are for people aged over 55 years, with some accommodation allocated for postgraduate students from Goldsmiths, University of London, to bring the benefits of intergenerational housing. In return for spending a few hours each week with older residents, the students will be charged a lower rent.

It is hoped that these social 'contracts' and thoughtful design will enable the community to live intergenerationally and create the conditions to nurture the impact potential of intergenerational approaches in housing.

Kumar Medical Centre - Intergenerational service design for intergenerational communities

The Kumar Medical Centre in Slough has done a lot of work to build relationships with the local community and developed a strong understanding of local partners and the homes people live in locally. The team recognised that many families registered with the Practice, lived in intergenerational households and there were strong ties across generations within these families.

With the deepening cost of living challenges, the Practice reflected on how it could do more to support the community. It was already well linked with social prescribers and other agencies and came up with an idea to work with parents in order to understand the growing needs of older generations and young children, recognising that many parents were caring for grandparents and children.

Through this intergenerational approach, the Practice collected valuable feedback that they could then share with social prescribers and patients directly to connect them in with benefits they were entitled to and other support they could access. The intergenerational understanding and the following approach positively impacted on the financial wellbeing, health and care of a large numbers of people.

Those that encompass intergenerational approaches as part of their wider work

The Jo Cox Foundation

The Foundation was set up in memory of the late MP for Batley and Spen in West Yorkshire, in order to make meaningful change on issues that Jo was passionate about. One of the three strands of work is 'Stronger Communities'.

'Stronger Communities' strives to create less lonely, better-connected communities where everyone feels that they belong, by developing social connections. As part of this, the Foundation delivers a local project in West Yorkshire and 2 national programmes: 'The Great Get Together' and the 'More in Common Network'.

The Great Get Together is the UK's annual celebration of everything that unites our communities and is held over the weekend nearest to Jo Cox's birthday in June. In 2023, 65% of attendees felt inspired by their participation to volunteer at a local project; 100% said they knew some or lots of people locally after attending a Great Get Together, an increase of 19%; 97% of attendees said that attending a Great Get Together positively affected their health and wellbeing.

The More in Common Network is a collection of groups and partnerships across the UK who champion Jo Cox's 'more in common' message to bridge divides in their communities. All groups and partnerships in the Network aim to: Bring people from all backgrounds in the community together; Celebrate what we have in common; Promote mutual understanding and respect; Build a stronger community where everyone has a sense of identity and belonging.

Through the discovery research and conversations with a wide range of organisations, we have identified a range of outcomes and relevant measures that can be used to identify and understand the impact and value of intergenerational approaches in a housing context. These have been collated into an impact framework, which has been designed to enable organisations to start measuring, or develop their approach to measuring, the impact of intergenerational approaches. A high level framework summary is shared below.

The Impact Framework:

» Focuses on a broad cross section of outputs and outcomes that many housing associations and partners will be able to evidence through existing organisational record keeping and data capture. Other measures will require new evidence trails.

» Provides a practical model for recording the value that intergenerational approaches create and producing good quality data and insight for reporting.

» Provides a reference point for staff and partners who wish to see how their role connects to, and enhances, the impact created by intergenerational approaches.

» Will be a 'living' document that organisations can fine-tune. It is likely to evolve over time based on feedback and learning from its use, with organisations adding new measures that reflect positive outcomes for new activities or removing outcomes that prove to be less relevant.

The framework is based three pillars: Benefits for individuals; Benefits for neighbourhoods and communities; and Benefits for wider society.

Please note, the framework laid out on the next page is a summary. To find out more about the full framework, please contact
communities@hact.org.uk

Considering the impact of intergenerational activities through the outcomes identified in the summary framework below will enable organisations to consider the extent to which this type of work contributes towards vibrant, healthier and resilience communities underpinned by civic participation and community cohesion.

Impact to individual

Health and wellbeing outcomes
Outcomes
Improvements to physical health
Improvements to mental health
Improvements to confidence
Education and skills outcomes
Outcomes
Access training opportunities
Access work placements
Access employment opportunities
Access volunteering opportunities
Social inclusion outcomes
Outcomes
Feel belonging to neighbourhood/community
Access to advice or support
Reduced loneliness

Impact to community

Access to the community spaces
Outcome
Access to community infrastructure / local social groups

Community safety
Outcome
Not worried about crime or anti social behaviour

Community cohesion
Outcome
Community cohesion

Community pride
Outcome
Community pride

Address stereotypes
Outcome
Increased awareness of role different groups play in communities

Enhanced community infrastructure
Outcome
Strong community infrastructure

06 Recommendations

Intergenerational approaches in housing is a rapidly evolving field with immense potential to address societal challenges such as loneliness, social isolation, harmful stereotypes and the housing crisis. Social Value methods and metrics provide us with a shared approach and language that can travel across sectors and organisations and as such, help us forge shared goals, shared learning, new partnerships and new resource opportunities.

Throughout this research, we have adjusted and expanded the scope of conversations to enable the diverse range definitions and contexts around intergenerational approaches in housing to emerge and be explored. With these foundations, we have been able to discover what impact these approaches are felt to have and learnt that the benefits sit across three key levels and that Social Value methods can be used to help us measure the majority of these at an impact-on-individual level. However, when we look to measure impact at neighbourhood and societal levels, we've needed to expand our scope and advise on using wider impact metrics.

Throughout this discovery, we have also encountered brilliant organisations who are bringing people together across generations and fostering connection across the UK, giving us examples of what intergenerational approaches in a housing and wider community context can look like.

The following recommendations are shared with the hope that this discovery is the start of something; that it lays foundations for further collaborations, further research, and further interest in the potential of intergenerational approaches in a housing context.

1. Social value and impact measurement of intergenerational housing initiatives – applying the framework and demonstrating impact:

   » Housing providers adopt the impact framework and use it to record and measure the impact of the intergenerational approaches they are supporting or delivering, including the social value impacts.

   » Other organisations, including charities, health organisations, designers, architects, and community organisations adopt the framework and use this to record and measure the impact of the intergenerational approaches they are supporting or delivering, including the social value impacts.

   » Organisations use the learning they generate by applying this impact framework to enhance their delivery of intergenerational approaches in housing and wider work in this space.

   » Organisations socialise the impact framework and the social value outcomes with other sectors to foster awareness of the tool and also to attract and foster new collaborations in this space.

2. Social value and impact measurement of intergenerational housing initiatives – using the framework for design and instigating new partnerships:

The framework highlights the impact and social value potential of intergenerational approaches in a housing context. As such, it sets out what can be achieved when intergenerational approaches are embraced and the difference to individuals, neighbourhoods and wider society that can be achieved. As such, we recommend:

» Organisations, including housing, architects, designers and developers, use the framework to inform the design of homes and community spaces. The measures can act as a checklist that organisations can factor into their design process and look for ways to accommodate the potential impact from the very start.

» For organisations, retrofitting or re-modelling homes and community spaces, the framework can again act as a checklist that organisations can factor into these works and help guide what can be built into physical changes to spaces to accommodate the potential impact of intergenerational approaches.

» For housing and community organisations facilitating intergenerational approaches, the framework, and impact that the framework helps bring to the surface, can be used to engage new partners to support the work and broker new conversations with a diverse range of stakeholders.

» For the housing sector's supply chain partners, the framework helps illustrate the potential impact that can be created through intergenerational approaches in a housing context and a new area for Social Value contributions and efforts to be directed towards.

» For policy makers and funders, the framework helps identify the broad range of impacts intergenerational approaches can generate and as such encourages increased engagement to amplify existing great work in this area and investments in innovations in intergenerational approaches in a housing context too.

'Being able to demonstrate impact and value, I think gives us the legitimacy to join some of those other systems or those other conversations, like healthcare, economic fairness, community safety. I think being able to demonstrate that intergenerational activity plays its part, gives us the opportunity to think more intersectionally and systemically about wider societal issues and it's important how this research can feed into that.'
Clarion Futures

SNG

Our best hope is that we can start to routinely demonstrate the positive impact of intergenerational activity. Working across generations has benefits for not just housing but for community activities, social action and community cohesion and at SNG we want to do more of this. Our hope is that we'll move away from one generation versus another and look holistically at communities and intergenerational activity would become the norm.

Andrew Cooper, Head of Funding and Social Value

Intergenerational England

Our shared ambition is to develop a robust, evidence-based framework that captures the social, economic, and emotional outcomes of intergenerational work - moving beyond traditional metrics to reflect what truly matters to people and communities.
This is not just about building homes; it is about creating thriving, connected communities. An intergenerational approach is not merely a housing solution - it is a strategic framework that integrates people, places, and systems in a way that is inclusive, sustainable, and socially valuable. Through our work, we aim to embed intergenerational thinking across the housing sector, cultivating stronger, more resilient communities that support the wellbeing and contributions of all generations.
If we are to tackle the most pressing challenges of our time - loneliness, social fragmentation, health inequalities, and economic instability - now is the time for action.

To achieve this, we must prioritise the integration of social value metrics across sectors, ensuring that decision-making at all levels - policy, planning, and practice- reflects the broader societal benefits of intergenerational living.

This work forms part of our wider mission to dismantle siloes between generations, services, and sectors and to champion a more connected, collaborative approach to community development. We see social value not just as a measurement tool, but as a driver for systems change, enabling housing providers, health services, educators, and local authorities to understand, articulate, and invest in what makes communities thrive.

Our best hope for the next stage is to see this metric adopted across housing, health, care, education, and workforce planning, supporting organisations to embed intergenerational thinking into their strategies and delivery. In doing so, we believe we can demonstrate the lasting value of relationships across ages, and advocate for policy and practice that places connection, equity, and well-being at the heart of social infrastructure.

Emily Abbott and Charlotte Miller, Co-Founders of Intergenerational England

HACT

Our best hope is for the research and impact framework in this report to be embraced and activated across the social housing sector and beyond. Throughout the research, we've heard how passionately so many organisations feel about the benefits of intergenerational connections and the vast benefits that these relationships bring to individuals and wider communities.

This framework provides a vital step forward in deepening our understanding of the Social Value that can be unlocked when the appropriate attention and investment is directed towards intergenerational approaches in a housing context. We look forward to what happens next and supporting that journey.

Rebecca Rieley, Head of Communities and Projects

Clarion Futures is a charitable foundation, providing support and opportunities for people living in Clarion homes and communities. At its heart, our work is about providing people with the tools and support they need to overcome their challenges – transforming lives and improving communities.

SNG was formed in October 2023 through the merger of Sovereign and Network Homes. Our purpose is to provide good, affordable homes: the foundation for a better life, and our vision is thriving communities, over generations. The newly launched charitable Community Foundation has the ambitious goal of creating £1 billion of social value over the next decade and will deliver £100m of investment across our communities over the next decade. Our core priority is to create equality and improve the wellbeing and quality of life of our customers.

Intergenerational England is dedicated to bridging the generational divide, fostering connections across generations, sectors, and government to create a more inclusive and resilient society. They seek to foster meaningful relationships and value exchange between generations, an exchange that is built on mutual respect and collaboration.

HACT partners with organisations across the housing sector and beyond to drive value for residents and communities through insight-led products and services which encourage innovation and foster collaboration. Our work around social value, community investment, health, and the use of data, drive better understanding of the communities they serve and the social impact they have.

Our products, services, consultancy, and research help organisations:

- Develop new collaborations with the NHS that drives forward integration through our health consultancy and brokerage support.

- Identify cost benefits, evaluate performance, and deliver strategic insights through our programme of research and evaluation.

- Calculate their social value with rigour and objectivity by using our UK Social Value Bank.

- Measure impact, understand communities and demonstrate the value of community investment work through our insight tools.

- Provide a forum to network with partners to complement and strengthen success of delivery through our Centre for Excellence in Community Investment.

- Connect, share ideas and innovation, and develop sector specific tools such as the UK Housing Data Standards.

HACT is a leading authority on the connection between NHS Providers and Housing Associations, and has published a range of resources on integrating housing within care pathways and the role of housing associations in major NHS estates programmes.

HACT has supported collaborations between housing and health that unlocks the value of anchor institutions to address deep seated health inequalities in communities. They also lead the national network of community investment professionals in housing, through the Centre for Excellence in Community Investment, responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, and creating community-based collaborations alongside and in support of people living in social housing communities.

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10 Appendix: Stakeholders

Focus group participants:
- Clarion Futures
- InCommon
- Intergenerational England
- Kumar Medical Practice
- Levitt Bernstein Architects
- SNG

Advisory Group Members:
- Clarion Futures
- East Midlands Railway
- HACT
- Homes England
- Housing LIN
- Inspired Villages
- Intergenerational England
- Kumar Medical Practice
- Levitt Bernstein Architects
- Lord Kamall
- London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham)
- Make Architects
- Millennium Care
- NHS England
- Sheffield University
- SNG
- St Monica Trust
- UKRI Innovate UK
- YHA (Youth Hostel Association)

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