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**HOUSING AND
CARE FOR
OLDER PEOPLE**

Creating Intergenerational Communities

Housing our Ageing Population:
Placemaking Intergenerationally

**This report was researched and written by
Lois Beech, Housing LIN, and funded by
Places for People and The Riverside Group**

March 2026





**HOUSING AND
CARE FOR
OLDER PEOPLE**



Image Credit (Above & Cover): Appleby Blue, United St Saviour’s Charity. Photos by Polly Braden

Thanks

Sincere thanks are due to all those who attended the Inquiry meetings and to our Panel of Parliamentarians and experts, as listed in Appendix 1.

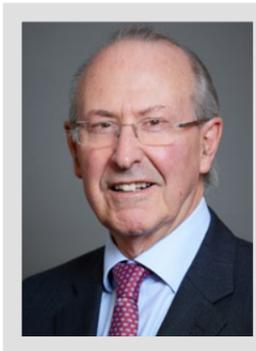
Special thanks go to Lois Beech, Ian Copeman and colleagues at the Housing LIN (Learning and Improvement Network) who administered the Inquiry, wrote and produced this report, and for the support provided by Lord Best’s Parliamentary Assistants, Ryan Coppack and Bruno Dunda. We are also grateful for the contributions provided by Places for People and The Riverside Group that has enabled the APPG to produce the report and host the launch event; as well as to Housing 21 for ongoing support for the APPG.

Sincere thanks are also due to those organisations/individuals who provided written evidence (listed in Appendix 2), and/or supplied images as well as cases studies for inclusion.



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Richard Best

Inquiry Chair,
Co-Chair, APPG on
Housing and Care for
Older People

Inquiry Chair's Foreword

This Inquiry brings together two separate themes: the need for more accommodation specifically tailored to meet the needs of an ageing population; and the desire for many people to live in mixed-age communities that bring different generations together.

Combining these twin themes was the starting point for the APPG on Housing and Care for Older People to launch this Inquiry into **Creating Intergenerational Communities**.

All of us can gain immeasurably from spending time with people of different ages. Communities that work for young and old can lead to mutual help with everyday activities, reduce loneliness, save health and care budgets and make life more rewarding for all.

And yet the way we are building new housing developments can increase segregation between generations in two important ways.

First, the major housebuilders in the UK, when building new projects comprising hundreds if not thousands of new homes, very seldom include housing specially designed for older people.

And second, developments for later living can sometimes specifically exclude contact with younger people from the design.

We believe a change is needed. The mainstream housebuilders and social housing providers, as well as specialist developers, need to recognise the opportunities for placemaking that creates intergenerational communities.

We visited some fascinating schemes which show what is possible. A social housing provider has created an innovative development with older and younger residents as neighbours. We saw a supported living development for young adults with learning difficulties and older people in need of some care; residents in the two age groups provide friendship and mutual support. In another scheme for 40 older people there are two shared apartments for eight university students who organise social activities, help with outings and shopping and assist with IT issues.

And yet projects like these that mix the generations in adjacent homes are unusual because they require flexibility from public sector funders and private sector financiers.

However, inclusive design, with level entrances and easy access in the home – meeting Part M4(2)/Lifetime Homes Standards – makes possible the creation of informal, “unintentional” intergenerational communities. There would be huge value in designing all homes in any new apartment block to be suitable for all age groups.

To secure mixed-age neighbourhoods, we are recommending planners – in Local Plans and strategic plans – require the inclusion of some accommodation for later living in every major development, sometimes with care available and sometimes simply to enable ‘rightsizing’ to more accessible, economical, safe and secure homes.

This approach to housebuilding not only secures more accommodation to meet the needs of older people but adds value to the places being developed, enhancing the lives of the old, the young, and the very young. The generations may not want to live in the same home or even the same building, but there are extensive benefits from living in the same location. Older residents may have the time and patience to attend to the community’s affairs and social activities; younger households can look out for their older neighbours in myriad ways.

We congratulate the architects and place-makers who are already producing designs that make “multi-generational” developments into “intergenerational” places where people are bound to mix and meet.

We also heard of “retirement villages” – whole communities designed exclusively for older people – being described as “ghettos for older people” depriving their residents of the chance to mingle with the rest of society. But we learnt from the operators of retirement communities, as well as from their residents, that successful developments can integrate an otherwise detached project into the fabric of its wider neighbourhood.

We heard evidence of brilliant schemes that ensure strong connections between the retirement community and the “outside world”: a café/restaurant that caters for the area around; a gym, or even a swimming pool, that has non-resident members; a club-house available for local events of all kinds; an adjacent day nursery and a mix of other uses. The wonderful development of Appleby Blue for older people in South London has, for example a busy community kitchen where old and young meet to cook and eat together.

Inevitably, shared facilities will sometimes mean disagreements between their users. The firm consensus from those involved, as residents or providers, is that intergenerational mixing adds immeasurably to the quality of life of all participants.

To the individuals and organisations who shared ideas and inspiration with us and to our expert panel of Inquiry Members, we offer sincere thanks. Our hope is that over the years to come, more and more of those planning, funding and building new homes will see the immense value of creating tomorrow’s intergenerational communities.

Richard Best
Inquiry Chair,
Co-Chair, APPG on Housing and Care for Older People
March 2026

Intergenerational communities

Intergenerational communities are not new. However, since the birth of the welfare state, housing delivery in the UK has increasingly separated generations; mainstream ‘general needs housing’ vs ‘specialist older persons’ housing’. As a result, new developments have often been designed primarily for families and single households, whilst new homes for older people are considered only as specialist provision that tends to be separated from the wider community.

The Inquiry Panel recognised that there has been a rise in multi-generational households in the UK. This is reflected in the ONS 2021 Census that shows that households are now more multi-generational compared with in 2011.¹ Furthermore, in some minority ethnic communities, multi-generational households remain more common, sometimes reflecting cultural preference and sometimes shaped by affordability and/or a lack of larger homes as shown by the recent Amar Bari Amar Jibon research funded by the Vivensa Foundation.²

However, this Inquiry focused on the intentional creation of intergenerational communities provided across separate dwellings not within individual ‘multigenerational households’. It considers how the design, planning and management of new housing developments can enable meaningful interaction and mutual support between generations.

Demographic change makes this issue urgent. The UK population is ageing rapidly and there is a shortage of intergenerational, age-friendly homes and neighbourhoods. Housing growth therefore needs to accelerate. And with a clear government mission to deliver significant numbers of new homes, towns and communities, there is a significant opportunity for new approaches to creating intergenerational communities. This will ensure that in future they can become a mainstream feature of how we plan, design and deliver a range of housing choices for an ageing population across all backgrounds.



Image Credit: Melfield Gardens, Phoenix Community Housing and Levitt Bernstein. Photo by Chris O'Donovan.

¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/articles/familiesinenglandandwales/census2021#multi-generational-households>
² <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/HousingOlderPeople/DiversityMatters/amar-bari-amar-jibon/>

How does this Inquiry define intergenerational communities?

Communities that have been intentionally designed so that people of different ages can live, interact, and support each other whilst living in separate homes.

The Inquiry Panel provides three typologies:

Sharing the building

People of different age groups live in separate, self-contained homes within the same building.

Sharing the location

People of different age groups live in separate homes – e.g. separate blocks of flats or houses – situated on the same site, neighbourhood or local area.

Separate but integrated retirement communities

Retirement communities that have been intentionally designed and managed to enable intergenerational connectivity in the building from the wider community.



Image Credit: Hanham Hall, HTA Design. Photo by Nick Harrison.

Current intergenerational communities and connections in the UK



Social Isolation

Nearly half of people over 75 live alone, which significantly increases the risks of loneliness and social isolation, both of which have severe health consequences.

(Source: Intergenerational England)



5% of children live in neighbourhoods with substantial older populations

(Source: Intergenerational Foundation, 2016)

7% of care home residents report regular interaction with anyone under 30

(Source: Care England, 2023)



17% of UK Adults regularly engage with people from a different generation in community spaces

This falls to 14% for those aged over 55.

(Source: YouGov / Intergenerational England Poll, 2023)



Intergenerational England YouGov polling shows there is strong public appetite for change.

The majority of people recognise the benefits of intergenerational connection:

81%

of UK adults believe mixing across ages

reduces loneliness



76%

say that intergenerational connection

improves mental health



86%

agree it **fosters mutual respect and challenges ageism**

The benefits of intergenerational communities

“Intergenerational communities facilitate exchange of knowledge and skills for mutual benefit (e.g., senior citizens can share wisdom from life experience and young people can share expertise in modern technology). Living in an intergenerational environment can give both young and old a sense of security, belonging, continuity, purpose, achievement and significance.”

The 2024 Older People’s Housing Taskforce report³

The evidence to the Inquiry indicated that intergenerational communities, as defined by the three typologies in this report, has significant benefits across all ages, for older people and younger people alike as well as to the wider community and system.

BENEFITS FOR ALL

Reciprocal relationships and everyday mutual support

From people of different ages with different skills and strengths living alongside each other. Repeated everyday exchanges can enhance trust and create neighbourliness from sharing advice and practical help to simply checking in on one another.

A stronger sense of belonging and place

By intentionally bringing people of different ages into regular, meaningful contact through shared spaces, providing mutual support and opportunities to contribute, so residents feel known, valued and rooted in their community.



Image Credit: Appleby Blue. Photo by Polly Braden (left) and Hazelmead Bridport co-housing. Photo by Rebecca Noakes (right).

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-older-peoples-housing-taskforce-report>

BENEFITS FOR OLDER PEOPLE

The evidence gathered through the Inquiry demonstrates that intergenerational communities can play a significant role in supporting older people to live well for longer. Of course, some older people will not be interested in mixing with younger age groups and have a right to privacy, undisturbed by sharing time or space with other generations. But the Inquiry was impressed by the enthusiasm we heard for intergenerational opportunities.

Reduced loneliness and social isolation

From greater opportunity for interaction with people of all ages either as a spontaneous interaction, from seeing children play, or more formalised interaction in a shared communal spaces.

This can be particularly important for older people living alone. At the time of writing, there is a separate Inquiry being undertaken by Intergenerational England, Secretariat to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Tackling Loneliness and Connected Communities.⁴ With a broader remit, one of its six key areas is on housing and the built environment and it will therefore be looking at how the design of homes and neighbourhoods can prevent loneliness.

Ageing in the ‘right place’ within existing community

Older people can remain connected to familiar neighbourhoods and social networks as their housing needs change because a mix of housing types have been provided. As such they can either ‘rightsize’ in the ‘right place’ in either specialist or mainstream housing or stay in their already suitable existing home for as long as possible.

Improved wellbeing and preventative health

Through stronger informal support networks within the community where neighbours can look out for each other, offer reassurance and small practical help as a complement to formal care and support services. While intergenerational communities are not a substitute for health or social care, the evidence suggests it can help delay or reduce the need for crisis intervention by strengthening social resilience, or as the Housing LIN coins it, ‘CollaborAGE’.⁵

Making ‘rightsizing’ more attractive and viable

As homes for older people are well designed, accessible and located within vibrant and attractive neighbourhoods, older people may be more willing to move earlier or before their home becomes unsuitable. This supports independence and wellbeing for longer while also contributing to better use of the wider housing stock.



Image Credit: Appleby Blue, United St Saviour’s Charity.

BENEFITS FOR YOUNGER PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

Stronger social networks and everyday support

Proximity to older neighbours can provide reassurance, companionship and practical support, particularly for parents with young children or those new to an area. These relationships are typically reciprocal rather than one-directional as younger residents also contribute to supporting older residents. The evidence suggests that such everyday connections can reduce isolation across all ages and increase confidence.

Opportunities for learning, mentoring and shared skills

From older people in the community who can act as role models and provide different perspectives. Opportunities to connect with older generations and build practical and emotional skills as well as receive life advice.

Improved housing affordability in some typologies

Particularly where students or younger adults are ‘sharing the building’ with older residents, the evidence highlights improved access to affordable and secure housing. In exchange for informal support for older residents, younger residents benefit from lower rents a huge benefit at a time of housing affordability challenges for younger people.

BENEFITS FOR COMMUNITIES AND SYSTEMS

Reducing ageism

By helping to normalise ageing as part of everyday life and creating visible and positive relationships between generations. When older persons’ housing is integrated into the local community it can change the public perception of ageing as older people are embedded into and seen as an asset of the community.

Stronger social cohesion and community resilience

Strengthened by everyday interaction, trust and mutual awareness across age groups. Neighbourliness, checking in, sharing information, offering small acts of help, complement professional services and contribute to community resilience by reducing isolation and preventing issues from escalating.

Reduced pressure on public services

From communities that are able to support each other. Stronger social connections are associated with improved wellbeing, earlier identification of care need and reduced reliance on emergency services. While the Inquiry does not suggest direct cost savings, the evidence indicates that intergenerational approaches align with policy ambitions around prevention, neighbourhood health and integrated care, particularly where housing, health and social care agendas are more closely aligned.

Creating attractive places people want to move to

The Inquiry highlighted that, as vibrant and attractive communities with a strong social infrastructure, intergenerational communities can increase demand for a place as people want to live in and move to them.

⁴ <https://www.intergenerationalengland.org/appgtacklingloneliness>

⁵ <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/collaborage/>

Recommendations

Overarching recommendation

1. All to recognise intergenerational communities as essential social infrastructure that fosters inclusive and reciprocal relationships and everyday mutual support between people of all ages and backgrounds.

Recommendations for MHCLG

2. Recognise in the government's forthcoming long term National Housing Strategy and growth plans the need for a balance of new mainstream and specialist older persons' housing to create intergenerational communities with a mix of housing choices.
3. In the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Building Regulations (2010), require M4(2)/Lifetime Home Standards as the default standard for all new homes market and social to enable ageing in place across all generations.
4. Build on the references to 'intergenerationality' in the National Design Guide (to be replaced by the Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance) and publish a practical 'how-to' guide in partnership with others that includes:
 - a) governance, safeguarding, and delivery models for shared sites/hubs,
 - b) long-term stewardship and operations,
 - c) how to avoid "co-location without connection".
5. The NPPF should recognise that planning intergenerationally means planning both for accessible mainstream housing that meets the need of older people and also for specialist older persons' housing as part of intergenerational communities.
6. The NPPF should recognise the benefits of planning for intergenerational communities and include a definition of intergenerational communities in the glossary which aligns with the definitions outlined in this Inquiry report.

7. Ensure local planning authorities have adequate guidance and advice on developing intergenerational communities.
8. Promote the use of s106 agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to fund shared spaces and service delivery models associated with the social value of intergenerational communities.

Recommendations for social housing funding bodies (Homes England and the Greater London Authority (GLA))

9. The Social and Affordable Homes Programme (SAHP) 2026-36 should explicitly recognise and incentivise intergenerational communities by introducing assessment criteria and prioritised funding that supports a mix of specialist older persons' housing within mainstream market and affordable housing developments across all tenures.
10. Value for money assessments of bids to the SAHP should take account of the additional costs associated with providing community and social spaces that are key ingredients of creating intergenerational communities.
11. Should consider land and the other capital funding streams at their disposal, such as New Towns and regeneration and through strategic partnerships/joint ventures increase the supply of intergenerational communities.

Recommendations for DHSC/NHS England/Integrated Care Systems (ICS)

12. Formally recognise intergenerational communities as a form of preventative health infrastructure within national health policy and the delivery of the NHS 10-Year Plan.
13. Ensure that ICS Neighbourhood Health Plans refer to the health and wellbeing benefits of intergenerational communities.

14. Encourage health and social care commissioners to support the development of intergenerational housing and communities so that it aligns with planned local preventative approaches to health and wellbeing and enables mutual support and social connections between generations.
15. DHSC should consider the case for future capital funding programmes for supported housing. This should build on the learning from DHSC's previous CASSH capital programme and should complement wider UK Government homebuilding programmes delivered by MHCLG such as the SAHP.
16. In scoping any new capital programme, DHSC should consider how a new capital funding stream can support new intergenerational housing developments, especially where there is a health or social care outcome.

Recommendations for combined and strategic authorities

17. Mayoral Combined Authorities should use their powers to embed intergenerational placemaking, for example within sub regional Housing Strategies ensuring mixed-age, mixed-tenure housing and integrated community infrastructure are secured at scale.
18. Spatial Development Strategies should explicitly embed intergenerational placemaking into masterplanning and support the delivery of major growth and regeneration sites as part of strategic land allocations, infrastructure planning, and design policies.
19. The regional SAHP should explicitly recognise and incentivise intergenerational communities by introducing assessment criteria and prioritised funding that supports a mix of specialist older persons' housing within mainstream market and affordable housing developments across all tenures.
20. The GLA should embed a clear intergenerational placemaking policy within the London Plan supported by Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Recommendations for local authorities (housing, planning and adult social care)

21. Include explicit policy requirements for intergenerational placemaking through Local Plans, planning guidance, site allocations and design codes.
22. Ensure training for planning staff on developing intergenerational communities.
23. Require larger housing developments to demonstrate how they will:
 - a) Provide a mix of housing types and tenures to create housing that is attractive to a wide range of ages
 - b) Provide shared social infrastructure (for example, community hubs and spaces, access to green space, public amenities)
 - c) Meet accessible housing targets (M4(2)/Lifetime Home Standards).
24. Where viable, use s106 agreements and CIL to create intergenerational communities by:
 - a) Securing/funding specialist older persons' housing within mainstream developments, rather than on separate sites
 - b) Securing/funding shared social infrastructure that enables interaction
 - c) Investing in an age-friendly public realm, such as level step-free routes, so people of all ages can use shared public spaces.
25. Require Housing Strategies, Supported Housing Strategies, Older People's Housing Strategies and Strategic Housing Market Assessments to explicitly address the delivery of intergenerational placemaking.
26. Produce flexible housing allocations policies that support 'rightsizing' whilst creating balanced intergenerational communities.
27. Council-owned land and estate regeneration programmes should be used strategically to develop intergenerational communities.

- 28. Proactively identify, foster and sustain relationships between housing providers and local voluntary, cultural, educational and community organisations to help activate shared spaces and intergenerational connections.
- 29. Adult social care should recognise the preventative quality of intergenerational communities to support ageing in place and improving health and wellbeing through mutual support.
- 30. Adult social care should promote intergenerational communities, for example in Market Position Statements, Needs Assessments and commissioning intentions.
- 31. Commission extra care housing and supported housing schemes that are:
 - a) Open to a wide range of ages (where appropriate)
 - b) Provided as a wider community asset.

Recommendations for social housing operators, designers and developers of mainstream housing

- 32. Build to high accessibility and adaptability standards in mainstream housing, including M4(2)/Lifetime Home Standards as a minimum and HAPPI design principles to support ageing in place.
- 33. Design, plan and deliver developments with a range of housing sizes, types and tenures to create housing that is attractive to a wide range of ages.
- 34. Provide high-quality and accessible shared spaces that help to facilitate an intergenerational community e.g. gardens and green spaces, cafés, play areas.
- 35. Embed intergenerational communities in project briefs, management plans and success measures.

- 36. Explore opportunities to work collaboratively with the other stakeholders in this recommendations list to develop intergenerational communities.
- 37. Consider evaluation of the economic benefits and social impact of delivering intergenerational housing and communities.
- 38. Embed intergenerational placemaking as a corporate responsibility that underpins mainstream housing operational and development activities.

Recommendations for social and private providers and designers of specialist older persons' housing

- 39. Work in partnership with local authorities, health bodies and mainstream housebuilders to integrate specialist older persons' housing within mixed-tenure developments, ensuring allocations, funding and service models enable different age groups to live well alongside one another.
- 40. Social landlords should work with local authorities to develop flexible local allocations and lettings policies that enable access to specialist older persons' housing or intergenerational communities that 'share the building'.
- 41. Design all specialist older persons' housing as part of the wider neighbourhood with shared spaces and community-facing facilities that enable meaningful interaction across age groups whilst maintaining privacy for residents.
- 42. Build to high accessibility and adaptability standards in specialist older persons' housing, including M4(2)/Lifetime Home Standards as a minimum and HAPPI design principles to support ageing in place (see Appendix 3).
- 43. Embed intergenerational placemaking as a corporate responsibility that underpins specialist older persons' housing operational and development activities.
- 44. Integrate the facilitation of intergenerational communities as part of existing staff job roles in specialist older persons' housing.

Recommendations for mainstream operators and housebuilders

- 45. Integrate homes for older people within major developments as standard practice, ensuring later living and mainstream 'rightsizing' options are located in the heart of new communities.
- 46. Recognise that creating intergenerational communities not only has social value but can potentially improve overall commercial value:
 - a) Placing specialist older persons' housing in the heart of new communities as community assets improves social infrastructure which can increase demand to live in an area as it enhances overall vibrancy and attractiveness of the wider development.
 - b) Diversifying housing mix, to include homes that serve multiple age groups can broaden the potential pool of customers which can improve market resilience and reduce sales risk.
- 47. Partner with Registered Providers and specialist older persons' housing operators where appropriate to de-risk delivery and incorporate expertise in older persons' housing within mainstream developments.

Recommendations for private funders and investors

- 48. To better understand the market for intergenerational housing and communities, for example to meet the demand for 'rightsizing' or moving to the 'rightplace'.
- 49. In investment portfolios and plans recognise that intergenerational housing and communities can have a positive return on investment and benefit local economies by creating attractive places that people want to live.
- 50. Partner/joint venture with other public and private funders to leverage a mix of housing and tenure types to create intergenerational communities.



Image Credit: Hazelmead Bridport co-housing. Photo by Rebecca Noakes.

Sharing the building

‘Sharing the building’ refers to housing in which people of different age groups live in separate, self-contained homes within the same building. The evidence to this Inquiry highlighted two typologies that intentionally create intergenerational communities in this way:

- Housing designated for older people that also accommodates students (or younger people) in the same building who tend to provide informal support
- People aged 18+ who have a range of support/care needs living in separate homes within extra care housing

Design considerations for intergenerational communities that ‘share the building’

The evidence from the Inquiry highlighted that successfully ‘sharing the building’ is achieved through deliberate and careful design that balances independence, accessibility and privacy with everyday opportunities for social connection. Where older people and younger residents share the same building, design becomes a critical enabler of continued social interaction and improved wellbeing.

Designing for independence and dignity across the life course

The evidence from the Inquiry highlighted that this typology must first work well as high-quality housing for older people. The evidence emphasised the importance of design that works for people at all life stages. This includes generous well-proportioned homes that meet M4(2)/ Lifetime Homes Standards as a minimum (including a proportion of dwellings to M4(3) standards) that flexibly adapt as needs change over time. Drawing on this APPG’s previous Inquiry⁶ and the HAPPI (Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation) design principles⁷, successful schemes provide ample natural light, dual-aspect homes, level access, generous circulation space and adaptable layouts that enable ageing in place without stigma or institutionalisation.

This is particularly important in extra care housing for all ages, where residents may have very different life circumstances but similar care or accessibility needs. Evidence from the Inquiry highlighted that schemes which adopt a tenure- and age-friendly design approach, so that ‘older’ or ‘supported’ homes are not distinct, are more successful as they create dignity and reduce stigma which supports long-term sustainability.

At Melfield Gardens in Lewisham, developed and operated by Phoenix Community Housing, we heard that older residents’ apartments adhere to HAPPI design principles and provide attractive, aspirational ‘one-bed plus homes’.⁸ This not only future-proofs the homes but helps to facilitate ‘rightsizing’ by creating beautiful homes that people want to move to in later life – creating a “letting chain”, freeing up much need general needs family housing.

6 <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Re-HAPPI>
 7 <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Design-building/HAPPI/>
 8 One-bed plus homes have one fully compliant bedroom plus an additional, flexible room that isn’t counted as a formal bedroom. The “plus” space typically means a secondary room suitable for real use (e.g., home office, nursery, guest room, or small double)

Case Study: Melfield Gardens, Lewisham, London (Phoenix Community Housing)

Melfield Gardens is the UK’s first intentionally designed intergenerational housing scheme that ‘shares the building’. It includes 30 ‘one-bed plus’ affordable apartments for residents aged 55+ designed to HAPPI principles and two four-bedroom apartments for Goldsmith University students. In return for a reduced market rent student tenants commit to spending time with their neighbours, building relationships and supporting community activities.

Phoenix Community Housing is a resident-owned and led Community Gateway Housing Association, managing c.7,700 properties in South Lewisham. Its development strategy sets out its ambition to provide homes that meet residents’ needs at every stage of their lives and eagerness to provide attractive housing choices for older people in Lewisham that supports ‘rightsizing’. This approach not only sustains the tenancies of older residents but also maximises the use of social housing for the whole community.

Melfield Gardens built on the learning from Hazelhurst Court, Phoenix’s 2018 extra care scheme which created a series of ‘chain lettings’ when residents from Phoenix’s family homes moved in. With 703 of Phoenix’s family homes occupied by one person, Melfield Gardens has so far enabled ten larger family homes to be released, and subsequent ‘chain lettings’ have directly impacted 22 people. Crucially, this has involved an agreed local lettings plan with London Borough of Lewisham prioritising Phoenix residents ‘under occupying’ their home.

Designed by Levitt Bernstein Architects to Passivhaus Standard, the scheme is split into two buildings that partially enclose a public route and pedestrian-prioritised central green space. Residents front doors overlook this space creating opportunities for people to naturally come together, increasing the chance of interaction and overall sense of community.

Total scheme costs: £16.7m
GLA grant funding: £3m
Phoenix borrowing: £13.7m



Image Credit: Melfield Gardens, Phoenix Community Housing and Levitt Bernstein. Photo by Tim Crocker.

Spatial layouts that enable everyday contact

The Inquiry found that intergenerational relationships in this typology are more likely to develop where the design supports informal and unplanned social encounters as part of daily life. Successful schemes avoid long internal corridors and instead use layouts where front doors, circulation routes and windows overlook shared spaces. At Melfield Gardens, we also saw how two buildings enclose a pedestrian-prioritised central garden with front doors facing onto this shared space to promote natural surveillance and neighbourly contact.

Similarly, evidence from the design of the ‘walk-up apartments’ and ‘intergenerational hub’ at Oakfield in Swindon highlights the role of clustered building forms, paired entrances and shared courtyards in fostering interaction while maintaining privacy. These designs are particularly important in housing designed for older people, where residents may be less mobile and less likely to seek out social contact unless it is embedded into the spatial arrangement of the building.

Evidence submitted to the Inquiry highlighted that the success of Humanitas, a care home in Deventer, the Netherlands, where university students live rent-free in exchange for providing social support and companionship to older residents is closely linked to its deliberately non-institutional design.

The building is arranged to feel domestic and homely with shared kitchens, dining spaces and living areas positioned along natural circulation routes. These spaces encourage informal contact as part of daily routines, such as cooking, eating or passing through the building.

Case study: Het Ouden Huis, Bodegraven, The Netherlands (Het Ouden Huis Foundation)

Het Ouden Huis is a purpose-built intergenerational housing scheme comprising 24 self-contained social rented apartments for older people, alongside accommodation for students and young adults. The scheme is aimed at older people, including those with care or support needs, with an average resident age of around 85. Older residents pay an affordable social rent while students live rent-free in return for a structured commitment of 30 hours per month focused on social wellbeing and everyday support.

A defining feature of the model is its partnership with an independent intermediary organisation, Connect Generations, which recruits, trains and supports students and mediates relationships within the scheme. Students are explicitly not carers but contribute through shared meals, activities and informal contact. There are clear agreements and service contracts in place and regular evaluation meetings provide stability and reassurance for all parties. The scheme demonstrates how intergenerational older persons housing can be delivered through clear partnerships, explicit expectations and light-touch management.

Shared spaces that are visible, flexible and welcoming

The Inquiry evidence stressed that shared facilities must be central, visible and usable by residents of all ages to ensure they are well used. In contrast, smaller flexible spaces located along natural movement routes, such as shared gardens, lounges or multi-purpose rooms, were shown to support both spontaneous interaction and organised activities.

Again at Melfield Gardens, the provision of a highly visible “garden room” at ground level was identified as a key design feature that acts as a social focal point for older residents, students and visitors. Evidence to the Inquiry suggested that where shared spaces are overlooked, well-lit and adaptable, they are more likely to be used by different generations.



Image Credit: Melfield Gardens, Phoenix Community Housing and Levitt Bernstein. Photo by Tim Crocker.

Managing difference through design

Evidence to the Inquiry also highlighted the importance of designing for difference between the generations. ‘Sharing the building’ works best where homes for different age groups are clearly self-contained, with appropriate acoustic separation, secure access and defensible private space. This reinforces dignity and reduces the risk of tension, particularly where residents have differing routines, lifestyles or care needs.

Intergenerational communities that successfully ‘share the building’ avoid forcing interaction, instead offering a choice of engagement and social connection. Design solutions such as separate but connected entrances, zoned communal spaces and clear thresholds were cited as effective in managing intergenerational living.

Case study: Lime Tree Court, Hackney, London (Agudas Israel Housing Association, Anchor and Hill)

Lime Tree Court is an intergenerational community designed by Levitt Bernstein Architects that brings together three different communities under one roof delineated subtly on the outside by different balcony configurations. It provides 41 independent homes for older people (for Anchor, previously Hanover) alongside with 38 private sale apartments (for Hill) and 28 affordable rent and shared ownership apartments for the local Orthodox Jewish population (for AIHA).

The design of each tenure is tailored to its particular needs. The private apartments are open plan with one or two bedrooms to suit first time buyers. Homes for Orthodox Jewish families have at least three bedrooms and include extra sinks and external space needed for religious festivals. The homes for older people follow HAPPI design principles with flexible layouts to help residents move around more easily.

All residents share a large green square to the front of the building which also has a small play area for children. Beyond that there is a Clapton Pond and green space which is a place where everyone meets. The homes for older people also have two enclosed gardens to the rear of the building one is landscaped and has seating areas for quiet respite, whilst the other has raised beds to encourage people to grow their own food.



Image Credit: Photo by Caroline Dove.

Integration with the wider neighbourhood

The Inquiry found that this typology is most successful where it is not inward-looking. Good connections to location amenities (shops, transport, parks and community facilities) help situate intergenerational communities that ‘share the building’ within everyday neighbourhood life. At Oakfield in Swindon, we learned that the integration of intergenerational apartments within a walkable, mixed-tenure neighbourhood and the inclusion of a community hub were a critical part of the social architecture to sustaining intergenerational contact beyond the physical architecture of the building and the wider built environment.



Image Credit: The Hub, Oakfield. PRP.

Managing intergenerational communities that ‘share the building’

Significantly, the evidence to the Inquiry indicated that this typology does not remain intergenerational by design alone but there are a variety of ways that ‘intergenerationality’ is managed and encouraged.



Image Credit: Melfield Gardens, Phoenix Community Housing and Levitt Bernstein. Photo by Tim Crocker.

Formal models of support - ‘managed reciprocity’

The Inquiry evidence highlighted a small number of formalised intergenerational support models in housing designated for older people where younger residents receive a tangible housing benefit in return for providing social support and connection to older residents, although crucially this isn’t a substitute for care.

At Melfield Gardens, students from Goldsmith University have reduced rent in exchange for a clearly defined commitment of social time with older neighbours. The contribution is modest (around an hour per week) and focused on companionship and shared activities not personal care. This arrangement is embedded within formal agreements that set expectations, safeguarding arrangements and boundaries. Delivery is supported by an explicit partnership between the housing association and Goldsmiths University, with monitoring through surveys and activity logs to ensure the model remains proportionate and safe. The framing is critical. Students are described as “good neighbours”, not volunteers or carers, and older residents retain autonomy over participation.

At Humanitas in Deventer, the Netherlands, students live rent-free within a care home in exchange for approximately 30 hours per month of social engagement. Het Ouden Huis, also in the Netherlands, provides shared student accommodation in independent living for older people. Currently there are three students for every

28 residents but it considers one student for every six residents a more workable model. In both cases, the intergenerational offer is embedded in tenancy agreements, onboarding processes and day-to-day management which ensures it continues following staff turnover and changes in residents.

Case study: Humanitas, Deventer, The Netherlands (Humanitas Foundation)

Humanitas is an internationally recognised example of intentional intergenerational living within specialist older persons’ housing. Operating across the Netherlands, one of its most well-known models involves care homes offering free or heavily subsidised accommodation to university students in exchange for a commitment to spend typical 30 hours per month with older residents.

They don’t provide formal care but students are expected to engage socially by sharing meals, offering companionship, helping with everyday tasks, or simply being present in communal life. This light-touch model has proved highly effective in reducing loneliness among older residents, while offering students affordable housing and meaningful social connection.

Intergenerational exchange at Humanitas is embedded into the management and allocation model and evidence suggests the presence of younger residents helps normalise daily life, brings energy into shared spaces, and strengthens residents’ sense of purpose and belonging.



Image Credit: Photo by Sander van Wettum.

Management considerations specific to all-age extra care housing

Evidence to the Inquiry showed that all-age extra care housing requires an active management approach to remain intergenerational. Providers highlighted the need to manage the age and care mix over time to prevent “care drift”, where higher-need referrals gradually dominate and the scheme becomes less attractive to younger or more independent residents. Allocation decisions therefore play a critical ongoing role. Schemes also require clear and consistent messaging to external agencies, families and professionals about what all-age extra care is and is not. Evidence

from social landlord The Riverside Group’s 3 all-age extra care housing schemes in Hull indicates that without this schemes risk being treated as care homes leading to inappropriate referrals that undermine intergenerational balance. Finally, we learnt that all-age extra care housing requires strong day-to-day operational housing management to accommodate different lifestyles alongside access to formal 24/7 onsite care, and clear boundaries to ensure intergenerational interaction remains social and voluntary, with formal care delivered by professionals.

Case study: Charlie Ratchford Court, Camden (London Borough of Camden)

Charlie Ratchford Court is a Camden Council operated extra care housing scheme designed by PRP. It comprises 38 one-bedroom and 6 two-bedroom self-contained flats with 24-hour care and support on-site. It is available to anyone aged 18+ with adult social care support needs meaning it accommodates working age adults with a learning disability, mental health need and/or physical disability alongside older people.

To develop the model, Camden Council conducted research into intergenerational schemes in the UK and oversees alongside extensive engagement with people who draw on support, carers, practitioners, stakeholders and residents. This involved a ‘Concept Day’ and six sessions which also involved with potential residents. As a result, Camden developed a model of support which can be ‘flexed’ to meet the changing needs of resident.

Camden uses a values-based recruitment model to ensure that staff values align with the vision of the scheme inspired by discussion with two of the designers of Buurtzorg⁹ and research into the working of Wellbeing Teams.¹⁰ Staff induction, training and coaching was initially provided by Wellbeing Teams, training the Charlie Ratchford Court leadership team in its methodology, which was adapted to suit the needs of the service. Management have also appointed a Community Connector to support people to get involved with whatever activities and events are ongoing with the local community.



Image Credit: Photo by Robert Greshoff.

Allocation, lettings and agreements that protect the age-mix

The evidence to the Inquiry highlighted that in the social housing sector, intergenerational communities that ‘share the building’ require flexible allocation approaches. Social housing allocation systems are usually structured around age-specific or needs-based categories. Delivering intergenerational communities in this way therefore requires bespoke allocation policies, coordination between multiple nomination routes and flexibility from local authorities. Evidence highlighted the

importance of early agreement between providers and local authorities on eligibility, nomination rights and local lettings policies. For example, Phoenix Community Housing sought early engagement with the London Borough of Lewisham to agree a lettings policy that prioritises ‘under occupiers’ ‘rightsizing’ to smaller homes. Where allocation criteria are aligned to a shared vision for the scheme, intergenerational occupancy can be sustained over time.

Easing resale problems?

As recent press reports have highlighted, the resale values of some retirement apartments have fallen significantly. Could more fully intergenerational blocks of apartments ease this problem? Some older people would prefer to ‘rightsize’ to a block of apartments that house people of different ages. And at the same time, changes to age-exclusive development could ease problems of falling values in retirement blocks.

The Inquiry Panel notes recent press reports have highlighted the difficulties for inheritors of homes that were built entirely for older buyers; not only have these sometimes proved hard to sell even at much reduced prices, but also the inheritors have had to pay onerous service charges while flats for sale remain empty.

Of course the retirement apartments may well have aged - e.g. the kitchen is in need of renewal - and space standards may be too low for today’s buyers. But the age restrictions on resales - sometimes limiting occupation to the over-60’s or even over-70’s - may also affect the saleability of the apartments.

Is the answer to remove the inhibition of a minimum age from retirement developments of this kind? Removal of age restrictions would open up the full market of potential buyers of all ages and create the intergenerational blocks of flats which many older people might prefer.

However, there are some real obstacles to this approach.

First, planning consent may have been granted on the basis of age restrictions because the local planning authority, very sensibly, wanted to see more accommodation for older citizens; a change in the arrangements could require difficult negotiations with the local planning authority.

Second, some of the existing residents could be unhappy with the idea of young neighbours since they specifically purchased their new home as an age-exclusive property. The objectors may well have incontestable legal grounds for opposing a change to their leasehold agreement.

Third, the financial structure for the retirement scheme would be disrupted if only a proportion of the occupiers needed - and paid for - extra services, for example some domiciliary care each week. If the level of service charges varied according to the requirements of the different age groups, the quality of provision for the older residents could be jeopardised.

Nevertheless, these arguments need not apply to new developments, especially if designed to accommodate intergenerational living from the outset. A sophisticated structure of pricing for varied services (perhaps using a rental model with “pay as you go” charges) may make this option worth pursuing for the future.

9 <http://www.buurtzorg.com/>

10 <https://wellbeingteams.org/who-we-are-and-our-story/>

Sharing the location

‘Sharing the location’ refers to communities where different age groups live in separate homes – e.g. separate blocks of flats or houses – situated on the same site, neighbourhood or local area. This was the most common form of intergenerational community presented to the Inquiry and the evidence suggested it is likely to be the most scalable approach within the UK housing system.

The Inquiry noted that the extensive housebuilding by private developers is often all rented or all owner-occupied (freehold or leasehold) for younger families only. Major developments can comprise 100% of homes designed to appeal to families with no age-friendly design features for older people, no housing designed to attract an older householder or to accommodate any future varying needs, lifestyle choices or living arrangements. However, the Inquiry heard of a few developments that see market opportunity to building a range of dwelling typologies and tenures on the same site from the outset to encourage more intentional intergenerational communities in both the social and private housing sectors.

Design considerations for intergenerational communities that ‘share the location’

A planned mix of housing types and tenures

Inquiry evidence highlighted the importance of deliberately planning for a mix of housing types, sizes and tenures from the outset. As the 2024 Older People’s Housing Taskforce identifies, “we also need to scale up intergenerational options for later life in order to offer wider choice”. Intergenerational communities that ‘share the location’ do not emerge by chance. Instead, schemes that include a range

of homes, family housing, smaller apartments, accessible and adaptable homes, and specialist housing for older people, are more likely to attract residents at different stages of life and enable people to remain in the neighbourhood as their needs change.

This approach is evident at Oakfield in Swindon designed by PRP, where the masterplan deliberately locates different typologies close together, including The Hub apartment block where older and younger residents live in the same building, and walk-up apartments with adjacent front doors leading to ground-floor homes for older people and first-floor homes for younger residents and family housing. This spatial proximity increases everyday encounters while allowing residents to retain private, self-contained homes. Similarly, the Inquiry learnt of Grange Park Estate a redevelopment site in Blackpool delivered by Blackpool Coastal Housing and Blackpool Council. Following a local Housing Needs Assessment and Sheltered Housing Review they saw the opportunity to combine new later living housing, family homes and green space adjacent to a school.



Image Credit: Chapelton, Places for People.

Case study: Oakfield, Swindon (Nationwide Building Society)

Oakfield is Nationwide’s first housing scheme designed by PRP and Metropolitan Workshop which set out to develop a new intergenerational community. Its 239 homes provide a mix of housing types and tenures for people at every stage of their life. PRP developed three distinct typologies placing older people at the heart of the community alongside homes for families and younger people, namely;

- The Hub - a focal point within the masterplan, comprising a community space and three distinct apartment types above it. These include designs specific for older people, younger people and wheelchair users.
- Walk-up apartments – with front doors located next to each other, leading to ground floor apartments for older people and first floor apartments aimed at a younger generation.
- Age in place cottages – to attract recently retired, active older people.

The masterplan also considered intergenerational placemaking by embedding the ‘15-minute neighbourhood’ concept that provides amenities nearby to encourage interactions whilst walking. Other intergenerational design considerations include the adjacency of front doors to promote neighbourliness, a range of ‘homestead’ gardens accessible by all generations and a larger new park for children to play.

Nationwide and its partners employed a full-time accredited Community Activator to involve people from the local community in decision making. The organiser conducted 300+ conversations with residents, held pop-up/drop-in sessions, and shared multiple design iterations back with the community. This co-production approach delivered a scheme that achieved zero objections at planning.



Image Credit: Age in Place Cottages (left) and Walk-up Apartments (right), Oakfield. PRP.

Shared social infrastructure as the connective tissue

The Inquiry evidence indicated that social infrastructure, rather than housing alone, plays a critical role in enabling intergenerational communities that ‘share the location’.

Shared amenities such as local centres, cafés, community hubs, parks, play spaces, allotments and leisure facilities provide spaces where different generations can meet.

Case study: Sutton Estate, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (Clarion Housing Group)

HTA Design led the refurbishment of Sutton Estate in Chelsea, transforming four residential blocks within a 100-year-old social housing development for Clarion Housing Group into homes that support housing and community needs across different age groups, ensuring the estate remains viable and inclusive for future generations.

The refurbishment created a broad range of dwelling types and high-quality shared spaces. The estate offers 1-4 bed flats, including specialist wheelchair-accessible homes on the ground floor, while all homes are step-free via lifts, enabling residents to age in place and remain within the community for longer. Landscaped spaces between the blocks and a new central communal garden, all with outdoor seating areas were provided and improved. These spaces encourage informal interaction, residents meeting in shared gardens, at the picnic tables and while “just walking by each other in the street.”

Early anecdotal feedback suggests that this design-led approach is successfully supporting an intergenerational, mutually supportive community without relying solely on formal service provision.



Image Credit: HTA Design.

The evidence suggested that these facilities are most effective when they are embedded within masterplans and as such as centrally located, accessible and designed for everyday use. In larger schemes, locating community facilities close to older persons’ housing has been shown to support participation and reduce barriers associated with mobility, confidence or declining health.

Homes and neighbourhoods designed for ageing in place

The Inquiry heard how designing homes that are accessible and adaptable across the life course is critical to sustaining intergenerational communities that ‘share the location’, allowing people to remain within the same area as their needs change. Where neighbourhoods include smaller homes, accessible housing and, centrally located older persons’ housing alongside family housing, residents are more able to age in place and maintain established social networks, supporting continuity and intergenerational stability.

This is particularly evident in large-scale New Town developments delivered by Places for People, including Chapelton in Aberdeenshire, Scotland where open spaces, local shops were provided alongside “the boxes”, early-phase commercial/ community pods used to seed a sense of place were developed to support intergenerational community life while the wider New Town builds out.

Nigel Saunders at Pozzoni Architecture emphasised that an age-friendly public realm is central to making the planned redevelopment of the North Manchester General Hospital site an intergenerational neighbourhood. Much of the early planning is not just about a mix of housing types but walkable and connected layouts alongside a public realm that supports movement and lingering to enable social contact.

Managing intergenerational communities that ‘share the location’

Unlike other intergenerational community typologies explored by the Inquiry, in those that ‘share the location’ ‘intergenerationality’ is not formally managed. Instead, it is maintained through design, location and everyday use of space creating repeated informal encounters in shared spaces such as streets, parks, shops and community facilities. For example, Hanham Hall in South Gloucestershire illustrated how an intergenerational community can occur naturally where homes of different sizes and tenures are arranged around shared public spaces.

While formal management is limited, the Inquiry evidence indicated that light-touch stewardship,

such as community development roles, or community organisations/charities that facilitate intergenerational connections can play an important enabling role when the right infrastructure is in place. At Places for People’s Chapelton and Gilston Park New Towns, community hubs, temporary uses and early provision of social facilities help establish patterns of shared use before the neighbourhood is fully built out. The Inquiry heard about how the charity InCommon provides formal intergenerational programmes that connect school children to nearby residents in older persons housing.

Case study: Gilston Park, East Hertfordshire (Places for People)

Gilston Park is a major new garden settlement in East Hertfordshire delivering 10,000 homes – at least 2,300 affordable – across seven distinct villages. 8,500 of the homes are being delivered by Places for People with 1,500 by Taylor Wimpey.

Places for People’s Head of Planning Dinny Shaw share with the Inquiry how the project has been designed from the outset to create an intergenerational community, combining private, affordable, retirement and extra care housing within well-connected village centres.

The masterplan integrates schools, healthcare facilities, employment space and community hubs alongside 660 hectares of green infrastructure and a sustainable transport network linking the villages to each other and to Harlow. Specialist older people’s housing is intentionally located close to amenities and village centres to promote visibility, accessibility and everyday interaction with other age groups.

Homes are designed to be adaptable over the life course enabling residents to remain within the same community as their needs change. By combining mixed tenure housing, social infrastructure and landscape-led design, Gilston Park aims to embed intergenerational living at the heart of a new settlement rather than treating it as an add-on.



Image Credit: Places for People.

Placing older persons’ housing in the centre of the community

Throughout the Inquiry it was stressed that embedding retirement and extra care housing within neighbourhoods means they can act as anchors for social activity, particularly where communal facilities are open to the wider community. The evidence indicated that intergenerational

communities that ‘share the location’ can benefit from this approach as it can strengthen intergenerational connectivity across the location/ neighbourhood. This is explored in more depth in the ‘separate but integrated retirement communities’ chapter.

Separate but integrated retirement communities

The Inquiry explored how retirement communities can be intentionally designed and managed to achieve meaningful intergenerational connectivity when residents of different ages do not live in the same building, so that the retirement community is ‘separate but integrated’.

Retirement communities that are embedded into the fabric of their wider neighbourhoods, whose communal spaces such as lounges, cafés, nurseries or kitchens can bring different generations together, are strong enablers of intergenerational communities. They also bring health and wellbeing benefits as illustrated by The Chocolate Quarter in Keynsham who shared that 79% of residents feel less lonely since living at the village and 87% of friends/family visitors like using the communal facilities/areas.

Design considerations of ‘separate but integrated retirement communities’



Image Credit: Appleby Blue, United St Saviour’s Charity. Photo by Polly Braden.

Located in the heart of communities as social infrastructure

Evidence to the Inquiry showed that retirement communities are most successfully intergenerational when they are located within the heart of existing or emerging neighbourhoods and when the facilities provided act as a social infrastructure to the wider area. Doing so creates opportunities for intergenerational connections within the scheme that spills out into the wider community.

David Williams, CEO, St Monica Trust highlighted that planning the redevelopment of the local area around The Chocolate Quarter in Keynsham enabled the retirement community to act as a community anchor that provides key services and injects vibrancy into the overall housing development that otherwise may not have been possible to deliver. He emphasised that the community infrastructure provided by the integrated retirement community delivered value not only in social terms, but also through higher market sale values for the 617 homes on the site developed by Taylor Wimpey.

Case study: The Chocolate Quarter, Keynsham (St Monica Trust)

The Chocolate Quarter purposefully sits within a wider mixed-age neighbourhood that includes family housing, schools, offices and sports facilities and was explicitly designed to serve people from all ages in the wider community. For David Williams, CEO, ‘intergenerationality’ is achieved by designing ‘for everyone, not just older people’. Facilities such as the café, cinema, swimming pool, studios, restaurant and GP surgery are open to the public, ensuring daily interaction between older residents, families, children, workers and students.

The Chocolate Quarter demonstrates that placing older persons’ housing within the heart of neighbourhood regeneration can be beneficial when it is provided as a community asset. The regenerated Keynsham site offers an attractive and vibrant community that people want to move to. Indeed, the Taylor Wimpey homes on the same site have been said to have increased in value due to the presence of the community facilities provided by The Chocolate Quarter making this an aspirational place to live. Residents have also reported reduced loneliness, increased feelings of safety and stronger family and community connections since moving to the scheme.



Image Credit (Above & Below): St Monica Trust.



In ‘separate but integrated retirement communities’, we heard how cafés, nurseries, gyms, health facilities or community spaces are not simply communal areas for residents; they are the primary means through which intergenerational connection is enabled. The evidence suggested that these spaces

are most effective where they are visible, accessible and attractive to both residents and non-residents. Positioning these spaces so they aren’t embedded deep within a scheme is crucial to encourage use by the public.

At Appleby Blue, a multiple award-winning almshouse in Bermondsey operated by United St Saviour's Charity, shared spaces are embedded within the building and designed to be publicly accessible, allowing people of all ages to use the facilities as part of normal community life. The Inquiry heard that this everyday use creates

sustained familiarity between residents and non-residents. Similarly, evidence from Belong Chester, a retirement village operated by Belong Villages, showed how the on-site nursery operates as an integral part of the village, bringing children and families into the building daily and enabling repeated informal interaction with older residents.

Case study: Appleby Blue, Bermondsey, London (United St Saviour's Charity (USTSC))

Appleby Blue, designed by Witherford Watson & Mann, provides 57 affordable homes for residents aged 65+ with a community centre and kitchen open to the wider neighbourhood and community groups at the heart of the building.

The intergenerational ethos is central to both the building's design and its daily life. The community kitchen and centre are set in the heart of *The Blue* and visible from the busy high street of Southwark Park Road with step-free access to and throughout the building. Activities range from baby and toddler music sessions and school-led cooking projects to community art workshops and intergenerational dinners. USTSC have found that when people of different ages share space, food and experience, mutual understanding grows.

The USTSC service model has been designed to support intergenerational activity, enabling the Appleby Blue Centre Manager and wider USTSC team to develop over 20 community partnerships that have ensured intergenerational connections reach beyond the building. Local charities use Appleby Blue as an affordable and accessible base for their programmes which strengthens Southwark's social fabric while giving residents opportunities to contribute their skills.



Image Credit: Photos by Polly Braden.

Balancing openness with residents' privacy

A central design challenge in this typology is balancing openness to the wider community with residents' need for privacy, security and a sense of home. Evidence to the Inquiry showed that successful schemes use design to manage this by using 'progressive privacy' approaches that clearly distinguish between public and private space to allow residents to control their level of social interaction while maintaining access to the wider community.

Appleby Blue provides a strong example of this approach, public-facing spaces are clearly distinguished from more domestic resident-only

areas which allows older residents to choose when and how they engage with others. Evidence suggests that this sense of choice is critical to residents' wellbeing and willingness to accept the openness of the Appleby Blue.

David Williams, CEO, St Monica Trust argues that older residents are more willing to live alongside public-facing intergenerational activity when their homes feel clearly private, calm and secure. Where private dwellings are not only generous in size but well-designed and well sound proofed (drawing on HAPPI principles), residents feel confident stepping into busier shared environments.

HAPPI design principles: a foundation for separate but integrated retirement communities

The Inquiry Panel heard evidence that HAPPI design principles are essential to retirement communities, and they also provide a foundation for intergenerational connection in 5 ways:

1. **HAPPI requires shared spaces that can be used by everyone:** By mandating the provision of shared facilities and/or retirement communities as community 'hubs' that emphasise generous space standards, natural light, clear layouts and step-free access.
2. **HAPPI normalises ageing:** Promoting non-institutional, home-like design makes retirement communities feel less clinical or for one age group making them more welcoming to all ages.
3. **HAPPI supports adaptability across the life course:** By enabling residents to age in place while ensuring homes and communal spaces can be used by residents and people of different ages and access needs from the wider community.
4. **HAPPI creates the conditions for informal everyday contact:** By encouraging shared entrances, overlooked walking routes, informal "in-between" and circulation spaces that encourages interaction.
5. **HAPPI supports staff and organisations to encourage intergenerational activity:** By providing flexible, accessible spaces that staff, volunteers and community groups can readily use to facilitate interaction.



Image Credit: Sandford Station, St Monica Trust

Building on this, Panel Members put forward a revised set of HAPPI principles incorporating intergenerational housing design features (set out in Appendix 3, pp.48-49).

Managing ‘intergenerationality’ in ‘separate but integrated retirement communities’

Evidence to the Inquiry indicated that intergenerational connectivity in ‘separate but integrated retirement communities’ does not only rely on design but on how schemes are managed and stewarded over time. The evidence demonstrated that there is no single model; instead, different approaches have evolved in response to scale, organisational capacity and context.

A consistent principle from evidence presented to the Inquiry is that intergenerational contact is enabled through everyday use of place. At The Chocolate Quarter, David Williams emphasised that management doesn’t deliver scheduled intergenerational programmes but focuses on creating a community space that is attractive for all ages.

In other examples, staff play more of a facilitation role. For example, at The Riverside Group’s Esther Randall Court, a small extra care scheme in Camden where local resident Mo Khan is the general manager, intergenerational practice is embedded into his management approach. The service uses intergenerational practice as one of its main tools for delivering wellbeing, dementia support and improved quality of life for residents. Crucially, he stated this approach doesn’t need to cost more as he taps into existing community assets such as local schools, faith groups and community organisations to create connections that don’t have an additional cost.

Case study: Esther Randall Court, London Borough of Camden (The Riverside Group)

Esther Randall Court is an extra care housing scheme providing 34 self-contained homes for people 55+ with 24/7 onsite care. It shows that creating intergenerational communities in extra care housing depends as much on management practice as on physical design. Central to this has been the role of the scheme manager, Mo, whose evidence to the Inquiry highlighted a deliberate and embedded approach to intergenerational engagement.

Mo does not view intergenerational activity as an optional or additional feature of extra care provision. Instead, he sees it as a core part of his role, integral to residents’ wellbeing and to the scheme’s relationship with its surrounding neighbourhood. Intergenerational contact is therefore built into everyday practice rather than delivered through discrete projects or formal programmes.

Crucially, this approach does not require additional funding. Rather than commissioning external services, Mo draws on existing local assets, including schools, community groups and voluntary organisations, enabling younger people to use communal spaces and interact with residents in informal, routine ways. Riverside are working to embed ‘Mo’s approach’ across all of its extra care housing sites.



Similarly, at Appleby Blue community partnerships developed by staff create a thriving programme of intergenerational activities that are available to residents and the wider community. However, they acknowledge that as a small charity, creating and sustaining intergenerational activity requires resource and they are exploring how to diversify income streams such as renting out space.

The Inquiry also learnt that embedding a distinct but separate service within a retirement community is another way that ‘intergenerationality’ can be managed. At Belong Chester, operated by Belong Villages in North West England, Ready Generations charity are responsible for overall management of the nursing, bringing specialist expertise in facilitating intergenerational connections alongside operational considerations such as safeguarding.

Case study: Belong Chester, North West England (Belong Villages)

Belong Villages is a housing and care provider, operating eight Integrated Retirement Communities (IRC) across the North West of England. Whilst these exclusively accommodate older people, all communal facilities are open to the public with the aim of fostering intergenerational connectivity by encouraging use by the wider mixed-age wider community.

In 2022, Belong Chester set out to create an IRC that was more intentionally intergenerational. Working with ‘Ready Generations’, a charity that brings generations together to build age-friendly communities, Belong incorporated a children’s day nursery into the building and fabric of the community.

While the nursery has its own secure space, it is not simply co-located. Planned and spontaneous intergenerational opportunities include shared reading sessions and lunches, ‘prambles’ (a ramble with a pram in tow), choir and art programmes, and a repair shop. Older people benefit from increased sense of purpose, creativity and joy, while nursery children gain a village of ‘educators’, promoting communication skills, respect for elders and empathy beyond their years.



Image Credit: Photo courtesy of Belong Villages and Ready Generations.

Taken together, the evidence suggested that although ‘separate but integrated retirement communities’ support a variety of different approaches, all the successful examples treat intergenerational connectivity as a core operational principle.

Intergenerational co-housing

Co-housing is a distinct model of intentional community living, in which people in self-contained homes share a range of communal spaces in a collective community that provides mutual support.

The Inquiry heard about how co-housing models have been used to develop intergenerational communities that ‘share the building’ and that ‘share the location’. As such co-housing is considered to be a mechanism to deliver intergenerational communities rather than a distinct typology. As Savannah Fishel, Winston Churchill Fellow and Intergenerational and Communal Housing Researcher emphasised co-housing is a social model rather than a fixed housing typology.¹¹

Design considerations in intergenerational co-housing

The design of intergenerational co-housing places particular emphasis on balancing privacy and proximity. Homes are fully self-contained, reflecting residents’ desire for autonomy, but are arranged to maximise opportunities for informal encounter through clustered layouts, shared courtyards, pedestrian-prioritised streets and overlooked communal spaces.

Shared spaces are a defining feature and include common houses, shared kitchens, gardens, workshops or multi-purpose rooms, providing the setting for shared meals, childcare, social activity and informal mutual support. Evidence from Savannah Fishel emphasised that these spaces function as social infrastructure, enabling ‘neighbourisms’ (informal practices of care that strengthen community bonds) to develop organically through repeated everyday contact.

Design tends to also support ageing in place across the life course. Homes are typically designed to be accessible and adaptable, enabling residents to remain within the community as their needs change. Importantly, intergenerational co-housing is not framed as specialist older persons’ housing, but as inclusively designed housing that works for and benefits all generations.

Whilst intergenerational co-housing shares with the intergenerational community typologies covered by this Inquiry a strong emphasis on ageing in place, what distinguishes it is the way this is achieved. In co-housing, ageing in place is supported through collective governance and internal flexibility, often allowing households to adapt or move within the same community as their circumstances change (e.g. moving between different homes, and/or by providing informal mutual support).



Image Credit: Hazelmead, Bridport co-housing. Photo by Rebecca Noakes.

Management and long-term stewardship in intergenerational co-housing

Intergenerational co-housing is sustained through active, resident-led governance. Communities are typically self-managed or co-managed through formal governance structures such as co-operatives, Community Land Trusts or residents’ associations. These arrangements give residents collective responsibility for decision-making, maintenance of shared spaces and the social life of the community.

Many co-housing schemes use these formal governance structures to explicitly commit to intergenerational communities as a core principle. When homes become available, these structures allow

communities to consider age mix alongside other factors. Savannah highlighted that this intentionality is critical - without it, even well-designed communities can drift towards a single age group.

To avoid becoming dominated by older or more affluent residents, some schemes incorporate affordability controls such as limited equity models, rental homes alongside ownership, or links to housing associations. These mechanisms seek to ensure that younger people, families or lower-income households can continue to access homes as they become available, sustaining a balanced mix of ages.

Case study: Wild Sage & Silver Sage Village, Colorado

This cohousing community comprises two adjacent cohousing schemes that come together to make a larger intergenerational community. Whilst Wild Sage provides 34 town houses for a mix of ages (0-92), Silver Sage has 16 homes for people aged 55+ including flats, duplexes and town houses. At both 40% of units are affordable through City of Boulder income and deed restricted to broaden access to the community from people with more limited financial means.

Silver Sage uses universal design and ageing-in-place principles to ensure the homes are suited to older people. Members of Silver Sage can engage with others experiencing a similar phase of life as well as serving as mentors and surrogate grandparents by sharing their experiences with the young residents of Wild Sage.

Both Wild Sage and Silver Sage are designed so that people leave their houses and become involved with each other as the private homes face the well-used Common House and green. Wild Sage’s Common House supports Holiday Neighbourhood functions and all of the events that are a part of the stream of life including, poetry readings, birth classes, men’s groups, life celebrations, wakes, weddings, book groups, baby showers, and community meals.



Image Credit: Atom Johnson.

¹¹ <https://www.churchillfellowship.org/ideas-experts/ideas-library/beyond-the-white-picket-fence-a-companion-for-intergenerational-communal-housing/>

Case study: Hazelmead, Bridport, Dorset (Bridport Cohousing CLT and Bournemouth Churches Housing Association (BCHA))

Hazelmead is cohousing community delivering 53 affordable homes secured in perpetuity through the Bridport Cohousing Community Land Trust (CLT).

An intergenerational cohousing community is created through both the physical design (designed by Barefoot Architects) and governance model. The development is mixed-tenure and comprises 14 one-bedroom flats and 39 terraced houses offering two, three, and four bedrooms, enabling families, single people and older residents to live side by side in homes that suit them. Everyday encounters are encouraged as homes are arranged around shared gardens, pedestrian routes, and a 'common house' with shared kitchen, dining, laundry and meeting spaces. Residents collectively manage the site, share meals and organise activities, creating structured and informal opportunities for mutual support across generations.

Part of the success of this award-winning cohousing development is down to the partnership with BCHA who helped secure funding, meet affordable housing requirements and support mixed tenures within the project. Half the homes are allocated for social rent, and the remainder for shared ownership, with 14 sold or rented at 80% of market value and 13 at between 25% and 80%. The remaining 20% of equity is owned by Bridport Cohousing CLT and BCHA which ensures affordability in perpetuity.

Cost: £10.4m



Image Credit: Photo by Rebecca Noakes.

Case study: Marmalade Lane cohousing, Cambridge (Cambridge Cohousing)



Image Credit: Photo by David Butler.

Marmalade Lane is a 42-home intergenerational cohousing community in Orchard Park Cambridge developed by the resident group Cambridge Cohousing and in partnership with developer TOWN, Scandi eco-house builders Trivselhus UK and Mole Architects.

Key to the intergenerational approach was providing a mix of housing types alongside shared communal facilities and spaces. This included terrace houses that range in size from 79m² to 125m², interspersed with a number of 'Tyneside' flats (terraces divided laterally into an upper and lower apartment, each with its own front door to the street). Separately, an apartment building houses ten generously-sized two-bedroom apartments that are accessed via the main door of the common house, and via an external deck access. These benefit from lift access and adhere to HAPPI design principles making them well-suited to older residents.

A 'common house' at the heart of the development provides a large dining room and catering kitchen and is the focal point for regular community meals and other gatherings. There is also a children's playroom, a laundry room, and two flexible spaces used for home working and group activities. A workshop offers a shared space for hobbies, a toolshare and gym. The development is focused around a large, shared garden for play, socialising and food-growing. A car-free street – Marmalade Lane itself – runs through the development and is the social heart of the community. Residents share responsibility for the running of the community and contribute financially through a service charge.

Intergenerational communities: what helps, what hinders

The Inquiry evidence demonstrated that developing intergenerational communities is possible and can have demonstrable value to society, yet they remain difficult to deliver at scale within existing housing, planning and funding systems. The barriers identified by the Inquiry highlight how current policy frameworks, delivery models and institutional practices shape what is built.

This section identifies what currently hinders intergenerational communities and, critically, what would help enable them to move from isolated examples to mainstream practice.

A system that treats intergenerational communities as exceptional

A theme from the Inquiry evidence is that intergenerational communities sit uncomfortably within a housing system segmented by age, tenure and perceived need. Older people's housing continues to be framed as specialist provision, planned and funded distinctly from general needs housing. This reinforces patterns of separation with housing for different age groups delivered in parallel instead of inclusively together or as a 'lifetime neighbourhood'.

As a result, mixed-aged developments that integrate older people, families and younger adults are often exceptions instead of a normal outcome of good placemaking. The Inquiry evidence suggested that this decreases the likelihood of the mix of housing being developed that forges intergenerational communities. The Inquiry evidence suggests that when stakeholders recognise intergenerational communities as an essential social infrastructure at the outset that foster reciprocal relationships between the generations these communities have been created.

The role of planning and policy frameworks

What would help is a clearer and more consistent recognition of intergenerational communities within national and local planning policy frameworks and

guidance. While the NPPF¹² (which was out for consultation at the time of writing) promotes mixed and inclusive communities in principle, it does not explicitly recognise intergenerational communities or require local planning authorities to plan for mixed-age communities in practice.

As a result, the Inquiry heard that Local Plans and decision-making often default to single-age or single-tenure housing models, with older people's housing treated as a specialist or separate land use rather than a mainstream component of new development. Strengthening the NPPF to explicitly reference and define intergenerational communities would provide a clearer policy signal for local planning authorities.

Fiona Howie, CEO, Town and Country Planning Association shared that there is also scope for the NPPF to recognise the needs of older people beyond planning for specialist housing, to ensure that intergenerational communities are designed from the outset to support older people to remain living in the community in accessible mainstream housing.

The Inquiry Panel welcomes the inclusion of 'liveable neighbourhoods provide a variety of homes to suit

¹² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/697b71c52ff8d10a830d5d4a/Draft_NPPF_December_2025.pdf

all needs and ages' in the Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance¹³ (PPG) which was in draft at time of writing (consultation closes 10th March). Following the publication of the PPG the Inquiry Panel suggests that there is scope for increased training and awareness for local planning authorities to ensure that liveable neighbourhoods are planned as intergenerational communities.

Market-led delivery models prioritise 'mono-generational' vs intergenerational communities

The Inquiry heard that mainstream housing delivery, particularly in the private sector, often favours single-age-group and single-tenure models. These approaches are perceived as lower risk and easier to finance, particularly in high-value or high-pressure markets. Intergenerational communities, by contrast, are often seen as complex, slower to deliver and harder to value within conventional appraisal models.

This dynamic is especially evident in large-scale developments, New Towns or settlements and urban extensions, where housing for older people is frequently under-provided or omitted altogether unless explicitly required. In these contexts, intergenerational outcomes tend to rely on local leadership rather than systemic expectation. The evidence suggested that intergenerational communities are unlikely to become widespread without stronger policy signals that shift delivery norms.

However, there is also scope for a stronger emphasis across the sector on the potential commercial benefits of intergenerational communities to drive change. For example, the Inquiry highlighted as vibrant and attractive communities with a strong social infrastructure, intergenerational communities can increase demand as these are places people want to live in or move to. In addition, a more diverse mix of housing broadens the potential pool of customers which can improve market resilience and reduce sales risk. Where this has worked well, a partnership approach between mainstream housebuilders, Registered Providers and specialist older persons

¹³ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/696a5c77e13af2b11d3b04a6/Design_and_placemaking_planning_practice_guidance_-_draft_for_consultation.pdf

housing operators has been taken. Witnesses also highlighted that mixed-age neighbourhoods can support 'rightsizing', free up family housing and enable people to move within communities over time, benefits that are rarely reflected in short-term viability assessments but are critical to sustainable housing markets.

Funding and viability do not reflect wider social (or commercial) value

Intergenerational communities can involve higher upfront costs. The provision of accessible and adaptable homes has been highlighted as a core component of these communities, but they may require a larger footprint which can increase costs if not planned for from the outset. Similarly, shared space and communal facilities can also create an additional development cost. The Inquiry heard that this creates particular challenges for 'separate but integrated retirement communities' seeking to act as community and inter-generational hubs.

While evidence from Aston University¹⁴ demonstrates that such models can reduce loneliness, support wellbeing and contribute to preventative health outcomes, these benefits are rarely reflected in capital grant rates or revenue funding decisions. The Inquiry recognises these financial constraints can be a barrier but stresses that the social and preventative value of intergenerational communities may outweigh this barrier.

What would help is funding reform that better reflects the full value of intergenerational communities. Whilst the Inquiry Panel is pleased to see Homes England's 2026-2036 Social and Affordable Housing Programme¹⁵ refer to funding "schemes which provide intergenerational living in mixed communities", it would be desirable to go further. It could introduce an assessment criterion and prioritised funding that supports a mix of homes for older people alongside homes for other age groups. Furthermore, more flexible capital funding could improve viability for schemes that deliver shared or publicly accessible space, or demonstrate

¹⁴ <https://www.extracare.org.uk/our-charity/our-research/>

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/social-and-affordable-homes-programme-sahp-2026-to-2036>

significant health and social care outcomes e.g., utilising the DHSC Care and Support Specialised Housing Fund.

Longer-term revenue funding for older persons' housing would support sustained intergenerational

activity. There is also a need for greater alignment between housing, health and social care to remove 'funding silos' which would help reposition intergenerational communities as part of social and community infrastructure rather than being considered solely in housing investment terms.

Case study: Birchgrove – exploring intergenerational living within retirement housing

Birchgrove develops and operates purpose-built private rental homes for older people typically aimed at people in later life who want to downsize without buying a leasehold retirement apartment. In 2024 they explored the potential to make the Birchgrove retirement living model more explicitly intergenerational, including by accommodating a small number of students within a scheme in North West London. The intention was to support social connection and create opportunities for informal interaction between generations while remaining consistent with Birchgrove's core offer of high-quality rental housing for older people.



Image Credit: Birchgrove.

During the valuation of one of Birchgrove's developments, the lender advised that allowing some apartments to be let at below full market rent (for example, to students) meant those homes were no longer treated as normal market rental properties. Instead, the discounted rent was assumed to apply indefinitely. This led valuers to conclude that the long-term value of the building had fallen, even though the number of discounted units was small and the intention was social rather than financial.

As a result, the lender calculated that the overall value of the asset had reduced by several million pounds and required Birchgrove to inject additional equity to compensate for this perceived loss. Faced with this risk, Birchgrove was unable to proceed with the intergenerational proposal.

This experience highlights how current lending and valuation practices can act as a barrier to innovation. Even limited reversible forms of intergenerational living may be treated as permanently reducing asset value creating a strong financial disincentive for providers seeking to introduce social or community-focused elements into retirement housing.

Stewardship and management are undervalued in delivery models

The evidence to the Inquiry makes clear that intergenerational communities do not succeed through physical design alone. Without active stewardship, schemes risk becoming intergenerational in form but

not in practice. Contributors to the Inquiry consistently emphasised the importance of staff roles, partnerships and facilitation in enabling relationships to develop and shared spaces to function effectively.

Despite this, stewardship is rarely embedded into delivery models or funding frameworks. Where it does exist, it is often reliant on individual local leadership or organisational commitment rather than systemic support.

The Inquiry suggested that stewardship of intergenerational communities needs to be recognised as essential infrastructure rather than an optional add-on. Supporting management and facilitation roles from the outset, enabling partnerships with community and voluntary organisations, and acknowledging that different typologies require different stewardship approaches would all strengthen delivery. This reframes 'intergenerationality' as something that is actively enabled over time, rather than assumed to emerge automatically.

Partnerships

Partnership working across different organisations emerged as a critical enabler in the delivery of intergenerational communities across each of the typologies.

Intergenerational communities that 'share the building' tend to benefit from collaboration with organisations that support with the operational management of the intergenerational element of the community. In relation to intergenerational communities that 'share the location', the Inquiry Panel heard that these intergenerational communities are unlikely to scale up without partnership-based delivery models, particularly strategic development partnerships between private developers and registered providers (see Lovell case study).

Case study: Moving from products to place (Lovell Partnerships)

Lovell is a mid-sized developer, through Lovell Later Living, it has developed in-house expertise that supports the integration of older person's housing within larger mixed-tenure schemes. Lovell works predominantly through public-private partnerships, regeneration schemes and local authority-led masterplans, where delivering a mixed community is an explicit objective from the outset.

Older persons housing is not a bolt-on but part of Lovell's core offer. A range of approaches are taken from partnering with housing associations as well as delivering older persons housing themselves. For example, at Lavendar Chase/View in Hunstanton, Norfolk, the 39 later living homes were delivered in partnership with Freebridge Community Homes who acquired 8 homes as part of the s106 obligation, this alongside a 61 extra care delivered in partnership with Places for People Living Plus and Norfolk County Council. The later living and extra care were integrated within a wider community of 60 family homes developed by Lovell Partnerships.



Image Credit: Sandcastles, Lovell.

At Sandcastles in Scarborough, an urban extension and regeneration project that has been built out in phases over several years, Lovell Later Living directly delivered 81 later living homes through a mix of bungalows, cottage apartments and houses situated alongside family homes.

Mary Parson's, National Regeneration and Partnership Director at Lovell Later Living shared that there is also a commercial benefit to intergenerational communities. Providing a mix of housing for different age groups attracts different buyer profiles and timelines, helping stabilise sales when the family housing market slows. Older persons housing can therefore smooth delivery across large sites by broadening the pool of people that might move in.

Mary emphasised that certainty drives delivery. Where local plans and masterplans clearly require mixed-age communities, and planning, housing and adult social care teams are aligned, Lovell can embed later living from the start. She concluded that 'good placemaking is good business' mixed-age communities enhance long-term value and strengthen repeat partnerships with local authorities.

In ‘separate but integrated retirement communities’ partnership working with local planning authorities and health partnership enable these to be located in the heart of the communities. A partnership approach to the operational delivery of intergenerational communities is also helpful, building connections with community and voluntary organisations to bring people of different ages into the building.

In relation to the delivery of intergenerational co-housing, partnerships with housing associations can act as an enabler by providing access to land, development expertise and public funding, including Homes England grant. Housing associations can underwrite risk, help build capacity, support mixed and affordable tenures, and provide long-term management assurance without compromising the resident-led governance approach (see Hazelmead case study).



Image Credit: Belong Villages and Ready Generations.

New Towns – an opportunity for intergenerational communities

With a growing emphasis on delivering substantial housing growth in the coming years, the Inquiry evidence identified New Towns and urban extensions as one of the primary opportunities to deliver intergenerational communities. The scale of New Towns allows a planned mix of housing typologies and tenures, including family housing, smaller mainstream homes attractive to older people, and specialist older persons’ housing, to be part of the development from the outset. As such they have the potential to create intergenerational communities that not only ‘share the location’ but that could include schemes that ‘share the building’ alongside ‘separate but integrated retirement communities’.

New Towns benefit from a high degree of masterplanning, a long-term framework that shapes land use, infrastructure, movement, and public space over decades. This approach enables homes for different age groups to be arranged around shared streets, village centres, green spaces, and local amenities, supporting everyday intergenerational contact. However, New Towns must explicitly state the requirements for the intergenerational communities in the early-phase of delivery (see Ebbsfleet case study).



Image Credit: Hazelmead Bridport co-housing. Photo by Rebecca Noakes.

Case study: Delivering a healthy garden city for everyone, Ebbsfleet (Ebbsfleet Development Corporation)

Ebbsfleet Garden City is one of the UK’s largest new town settlements in North Kent. Developing an intergenerational community where people can live across their lives sits at the heart of the healthy Garden City ambition.

To support this approach, Ebbsfleet is providing a diverse range of homes and tenures, aiming for 70% of the homes delivered by 2035 to be Lifetime Homes/ M(4) 2 Accessible Homes to enable people to age well in place and live independently for longer. Ebbsfleet worked with the Housing LIN to identify the specialist housing required which identified the opportunity for up to 500 aspirational right-sizing homes built to HAPPI principles for older residents.

Rather than treating intergenerational connection as an outcome of housing mix alone, Ebbsfleet has deliberately built in shared social infrastructure. Public realm design is central, parks, play areas, community hubs and high streets are positioned as shared community spaces to foster everyday interaction across generations. Schools, health facilities and community amenities are co-designed with new and existing residents from the outset to create spaces for all generations.

As an NHS Healthy New Town pilot, Ebbsfleet has brought together partners in health, housing and social care to explore opportunities for innovation. Although still at concept stage, Ebbsfleet is also proposing to develop an intergenerational health and wellbeing hub combining clinical healthcare (like GP services) with wellbeing and preventative functions, including spaces for therapy, fitness, creative activities, teaching, a café, gardens and community areas. Intergenerational housing could sit alongside the hub and incorporate a mix of housing types integrated with the public realm to encourage everyday interaction between generations. This could include homes for older people, supported living, keyworker apartments, alongside private rented, and mainstream housing options.



Image Credit: Ebbsfleet Development Corporation.

Cultural assumptions and risk aversion limit ambition

The Inquiry heard that cultural assumptions continue to shape housing delivery. Older people are still frequently viewed through a lens of dependency rather than contribution, while intergenerational communities are sometimes regarded as unconventional or difficult to manage. These narratives reinforce risk aversion among planners, funders and providers, even where evidence demonstrates success.

What would help is clearer national leadership and signalling that positions intergenerational communities as a normal and desirable response to demographic change. Sharing good practice, promoting successful models and reframing intergenerational communities as part of the solution to loneliness, health inequalities and pressure on public services would help build confidence across the system.

Conclusion

This Inquiry has shown that intergenerational communities can take different but equally valuable forms. Whether as separate homes that ‘share the building’ or ‘the location’, or as ‘separate but integrated retirement communities’, the Inquiry Panel concludes that age-friendly, intergenerational communities should become the norm.

The UK Government’s ambition to build 1.5m homes by 2030 presents us with an opportunity to ensure that all new developments create intergenerational communities. We need these new homes to include mainstream and specialist housing choices that are suited to older people alongside homes for families and younger households.

This requires us all to think ‘intergenerationally’ so that intergenerational placemaking is embedded across our neighbourhoods. Whatever the typology, intentional design of homes and communities that naturally creates opportunities for people to meet must be paired with formal and informal stewardship to ensure different generations are not just ‘co-located’ but can mutually support each other.

At the strategic level there is a market for intergenerational communities but we need better informed policies and strategies and the right tools and guidance to support delivery. From improved planning policy and design criteria, to investment in local infrastructure and funding new housing supply, our mainstream and specialist housing industry must recognise that creating intergenerational communities is not only the right thing to do but can incentivise a move and also create more balanced communities.

The prize for creating intergenerational communities is therefore significant. We have learned that not only are there health and wellbeing benefits from stronger neighbourliness and mutual support between people of all ages, but a better use of housing stock, increased demand for homes located in vibrant and attractive intergenerational places has economic benefits and makes business sense.



Image Credit: Appleby Blue, United St Saviour’s Charity. Photo by Polly Braden (left). Wild Sage & Silver Sage Village. Photo by Atom Johnson (right).

Appendices

Appendix 1: The APPG Inquiry Panel Members and witnesses

Inquiry Panel Members:

- Lord Richard Best (co-chair of the APPG on Housing and Care for Older People)
- Anna Dixon MP (co-chair of the APPG on Housing and Care for Older People)
- Emily Abbott, Co-Founder, Intergenerational England
- Jenny Buterchi, Partner Architecture, Later Living and Care, PRP
- Rachel Crownshaw, Group Managing Director Communities, Places for People
- Rama Gheerawo, President, Design for All Europe and Founder, Instill Global
- John Glenton, Executive Director, Care & Support Services, The Riverside Group
- Fiona Howie, CEO, Town and Country Planning Association
- Kevin McGeough, Head of Strategy and Placemaking, Ebbsfleet Garden City
- Charlotte Miller, Co-Founder, Intergenerational England
- Jeremy Porteus, CEO, Housing LIN
- Michael Voges, CEO, Associated Retirement Community Operators
- Frances Wright, Head of Community Planning, TOWN and resident at Marmalade Lane co-housing, Cambridge

The APPG Inquiry heard evidence from the following witnesses:

- Honor Barratt, CEO, Birchgrove
- Adam Birchall, Head of Planning and Housing Policy, Cornwall Council
- Jenny Buterchi, Partner, PRP
- Rachel Crownshaw, Group Managing Director (Communities), Places for People
- Caroline Dove, Project Director, HTA Design
- Savannah Fishel, Intergenerational & Communal Housing Researcher and Churchill Fellow
- Denise Fowler, CEO, Phoenix Community Housing
- John Glenton, Executive Director, Care & Support Services, The Riverside Group
- Angela Hardman, Head of Development, Phoenix Community Housing
- Mohammad Junayd Shah Khan, General Manager at Esther Randall Court, The Riverside Group
- Rob Lacey, Planning Policy Manager, Cornwall Council
- Kevin McGeough, Head of Strategy and Placemaking, Ebbsfleet Garden City
- Mary Parsons, Regeneration and Partnerships Director, Lovell Partnerships
- Vikki Piper, Chief Operating Officer (Housing Management), Blackpool Coastal Housing
- Nigel Saunders, Director, Pozzoni Architecture
- Dinny Shaw, Head of Planning, Places for People
- David Williams, CEO, St Monica Trust

Appendix 2: Individuals and organisations providing written evidence

- Apples and Honey Nightingale CIC
- Aspen Retirement Ltd
- Barefoot Architects
- Belong
- Chartered Institute of Housing
- Duries Property Consultants
- erosh
- ExtraCare Charitable Trust
- Generations United
- InCommon
- Independent responses from Dr Martin Field, Savannah Fishel, Steve Gost and Janet Taylor
- London Borough of Camden
- London Borough of Lambeth
- London Borough of Wandsworth
- National Housing Federation
- North Yorkshire Council
- Phoenix Community Housing
- Places for People
- Porto Dome
- PRP
- Ready Generations
- The Riverside Group
- St Monica Trust
- Stiltz
- The Almshouse Association
- The URBED Trust
- UK Cohousing Network
- United St Saviour’s Charity
- Vrije Universiteit Brussels
- Wellbeing Designs



The Inquiry Secretariat is also grateful for the conversations with the following:

- Jabeer Butt, CEO, Race Equality Foundation
- The Amar Bari, Amar Jibon research team including Manik Deepak-Gopinath at the Open University and Bashir Uddin CEO at Bangla Housing Association

The Secretariat to the Inquiry was provided by the Housing Learning & Improvement Network by Lois Beech, Assistant Director of Commercial and Partnerships, supported by Ian Copeman, Business Director, and members of the Housing LIN Team (Jerome Billeter and Alice Hodsdon). Editorial assistance was provided by Jeremy Porteus, CEO, Housing LIN.

Appendix 3: Intergenerational HAPPI design principles and features

Over fifteen years ago, the very first HAPPI report, *‘Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation’* (HAPPI 1), identified ten key design elements that can characterise attractive and successful housing for an ageing population. They have now been adapted by Inquiry Panel Members Jenny Buterchi, PRP Architects, Kevin McGeough, Ebbsfleet Development Corporation and Jeremy Porteus, Housing LIN, as highlighted in italics on the next two pages:

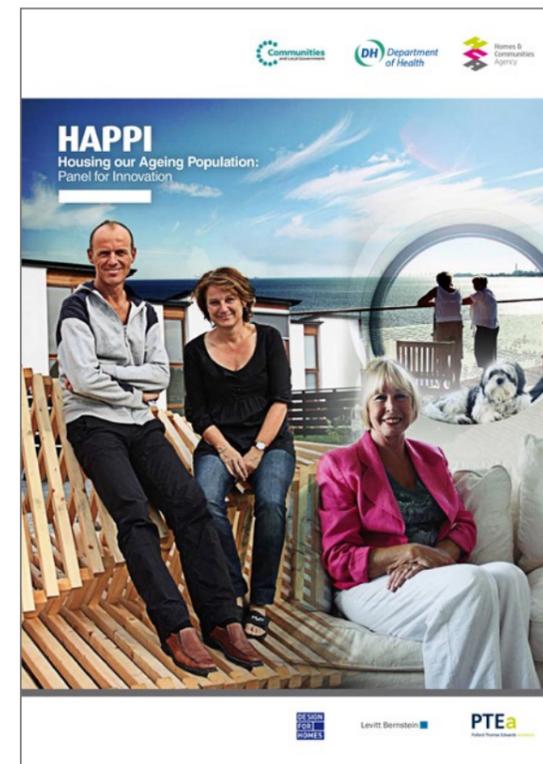


Image Credit: Hazelmead Bridport co-housing. Photo by Rebecca Noakes.

The ten HAPPI design principles (2008)	Intergenerational HAPPI features (2026)
1. Generous internal space standards with potential for three habitable rooms and designed for flexible layouts	1. <i>A spacious 1+ bedroomed apartment to M4(2)/ Lifetime Homes Standards as a minimum. Generous internal space standards that are familiar, safe, easy to understand, navigate and move around independently. Consideration of acoustic performance for a mixed of age groups, including internal, neighbour and outdoor environment. Generous circulation space in communal areas to foster opportunities for mutual support and interaction between neighbours.</i>
2. Plenty of natural light in the home and circulation spaces	2. <i>Plenty of natural light with good visual access, varied views and vistas to create a connection with the outside world and aid internal orientation. High levels of good quality daylight, avoiding glare, and artificial light at night. Ideally, east/west orientation for habitable rooms to ensure direct sunlight during the day. The provision of good daylight should be balanced with the avoidance of overheating.</i>
3. Balconies and outdoor space, avoiding internal corridors and single-aspect flats	3. <i>Balconies and ease of access to outdoor space that enable natural surveillance and everyday physical or visual neighbourly contact, avoiding long internal dead-end corridors and single-aspect flats. Consider benefit of balcony winter gardens and covered terraces.</i>
4. Adaptability and ‘care aware’ design which is ready for emerging telecare and telehealthcare technologies	4. <i>Future adaptability and modifications which are ‘care-ready’ for on-site or brought in care or that can foster opportunities for informal mutual support between neighbours for ‘ageing in place’. For home / site, include broadband connectivity to support digitally enabled technology or smart sensors, devices and equipment.</i>
5. Circulation spaces that encourage interaction and avoid an ‘institutional feel’	5. <i>Generous circulation spaces in communal areas that are recognisable, clear, step free and easy to navigate without reliance on signage, lead to an activity/destination or encourage social interaction. Domestic scale to avoid stigma or an ‘institutional feel’ or over stimulation. Provision of seating alcoves, views to the outside, effective colourways and points of interest to aid wayfinding/orientation.</i>

The ten HAPPI design principles (2008)	Intergenerational HAPPI features (2026)
6. Shared facilities and community ‘hubs’ where these are lacking in the neighbourhood	6. <i>Visible, flexible and welcoming access to outward facing, on-site shared facilities or community ‘hubs’ within easy reach so as to support and provide opportunities for engagement with other people and/or services in an intergenerational environment. Flexible spaces to provide opportunities for both social interaction and quieter, intimate scale spaces.</i>
7. Plants, trees, and the natural environment	7. <i>Providing helpful stimulation and clear orientation with easy access to green space, natural landscape with visual enhancing and fragrant planting that engages the senses, encourages bio-diversity and areas for points of mutual interest, exercise or resting and sitting places. Consider shared outdoor surfaces, textures and contrasts, looped paths and opportunities for purposeful activity e.g. raised planting beds for gardening clubs, planned or spontaneous activities, leisure, work or play.</i>
8. High levels of energy efficiency, with good ventilation to avoid overheating	8. <i>Energy efficient low carbon design and specification - affordable and comfortable, with the building orientation, use of shading and good ventilation to avoid overheating. Easy to use/ understandable and familiar looking controls for all ages and disabilities.</i>
9. Extra storage for belongings and bicycles	9. <i>Extra storage for personal belongings within individual dwellings and externally. Ease of access to mobility, other aids and/or equipment.</i>
10. Shared external areas such as ‘home zones’ that give priority to pedestrians	10. <i>Hazard free external environment, well-lit and appropriate use of signage/cues and good level pedestrian access with close proximity and connection to amenities and public transport. Accessible public realm inclusively designed for all ages.</i>

More information on HAPPI, including case studies on new purpose-built homes for older people that have been influenced by the HAPPI design principles, can be found at: www.housinglin.org.uk/HAPPI/

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Links to many of the resources listed in this Bibliography and a selection of Housing LIN case studies and thought leadership can be accessed at: www.housinglin.org.uk/intergenerational-housing/

This APPG Inquiry is supported and sponsored by Places for People and The Riverside Group.



Places for People

PfP is the UK's leading community-focused social enterprise, dedicated to creating places where people thrive. It owns or manages over 262,000 homes, including 77,000 for social rent, operates more than 100 leisure centres, and serves over two million customers. With the largest housebuilding pipeline in its sector, PfP delivers high-quality homes and resilient, connected Communities. It believes Communities only work when they work for everyone, so creates vibrant, mixed places that support individual needs and strengthen bonds across ages, tenures, and backgrounds. PfP goes beyond bricks and mortar – building Communities where friendships grow, opportunities expand, and lives change.

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The Riverside Group

Riverside is one of the largest not-for-profit charitable housing association groups in the country. We are a social landlord with over 75,000 homes nationwide and our purpose is to provide a range of homes and services for those who cannot meet their housing needs. We look to make a difference to the communities our customers live in. We are also one of the leading providers of care and support services operating in 130 local authority areas which includes over 200 Retirement Living and Extra Care schemes, as well as supported services for people affected by homelessness including specialist veteran accommodation, young people's services, and floating support. Our unique intergenerational extra care schemes in Hull brings together both young and older customers helping to maintain their independence as well as supporting each other, all with the security of knowing there is 24-hour care available.

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Housing LIN

Connecting people, ideas and resources

The Housing LIN (Learning & Improvement Network) is the secretariat to this APPG on Housing and Care for Older People Inquiry.

The Housing LIN is a sophisticated network that brings together policy makers and practitioners to champion better quality housing, health and care services for an ageing population and support sector improvement.

To access a range of other resources on intergenerational housing curated by the Housing LIN, visit: www.housinglin.org.uk/intergenerational-housing/

Copies of this report can be downloaded from the dedicated APPG Inquiry webpage on the Housing LIN at:

www.housinglin.org.uk/APPG-Inquiry-Intergen-Communities

And to access copies of this APPG's previous Inquiry reports, visit:

www.housinglin.org.uk/APPG-HCOP

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