

Prevention is better:

How intergenerational action can boost social and economic wellbeing for people of all ages

We believe in a Britain where everyone can prosper and fulfil their potential. Where people can live longer, healthier and happier lives. Where they get the best possible start in life and are supported and encouraged to thrive throughout their lives. While mixing with people of all ages.

In July 2024 United for All Ages published a briefing paper for the new government on 'Changing Britain for all ages'. This pointed to ten areas of social and economic life where intergenerational action could create a Britain for all ages.

This paper follows up with a focus on prevention across the life course. At every age we can take effective action that will make our lives longer, happier and healthier - individually and collectively. The key is starting early and sustaining action throughout life so we can all age well, thereby

tackling ten of the biggest challenges Britain faces in the 2020s and 2030s: from poverty, loneliness, wellbeing, crime and housing to education, families, care, health and communities.

These are all issues that concern Britons today, as identified in regular surveys by the Office of National Statistics. Universal action by and for all ages on these issues would reduce inequalities and bring our communities together.

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Being 'fit for life' requires positive mindsets and positive relationships with those around us. That's a key lesson from those who have already lived long lives. And a lesson for all of us whatever our age.

As the government plans its spending review and longer term plans, prevention must aim to help us all become fit for life, whatever our age. Acting together will make a bigger difference for us all. Government can change Britain through joined up action.

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Starting early, ageing well - ten priorities for prevention

1 Education for life

- All children under five should be able to access quality affordable childcare and early education to give them the best start in life and prepare them for school
- Positive mindsets at every stage of life are critical to making the most of our opportunities and should be instilled through school workshops
- As we live longer, lifelong learning is becoming more critical to ensure that we are all equipped for our fast-changing world whatever our roles

Social connection is vital to all of us at any age and should be the starting point for successful social prescribing bringing us together

- Supporting family carers who provide the majority of care for all ages in our society should be top priority to enable them to balance their responsibilities
- There are several transition points across the life course when our need for care may increase and when early intervention could avoid formal support

2 Healthy lives

- We know what promotes good health whatever our age - diet, exercise, mindset, social connection and not smoking and drinking, with sport for all encouraged
- Ensuring take-up of vaccines is vital to universal public health as seen during Covid and when future pandemics emerge as well as dealing with common conditions
- Tackling inequalities in poverty, housing and work will have a massive impact on reducing ill health and increasing participation in our society

4 Shared homes

- Action to provide affordable homes and reduce loneliness through Homeshare schemes could benefit people of all ages
- An increasing number of intergenerational housing schemes in our reimagined high streets are making them places where all ages can mix and prosper
- Preventing homelessness and building 300,000 new homes a year would make the biggest contribution to health and wellbeing in a generation

3 Better caring

- The crisis in care calls for new solutions such as intergenerational care where co-located care homes and nurseries bring multiple benefits to people of all ages

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5 Wellbeing together

- Social connection is vital to all of us at any age and should be the starting point for successful social prescribing bringing us together
- Meaningful, purposeful lives are central to wellbeing at all ages and need to underpin our services, activities and government at all levels
- Mental health support and services for all ages are woefully undervalued with huge cost to our country and to millions of families' wellbeing

6 Safer communities

- Hate crimes continue to blight lives in every community and ageism reduces opportunities for young and old alike
- Youth crime prevention should become the focus for neighbourhood watch schemes to create communities and streets where all ages can flourish
- Intergenerational mentoring can provide mutual support between generations and support parents and families facing difficulties for the first time

7 Poverty action

- Ending child poverty should be the priority for the government as the ultimate preventative action for the benefit of all future generations
- Advice for all ages on maximising income and financial security should start in schools and be available throughout life
- Action to support people of all ages to deal with the cost of living could have the biggest impact for those on the lowest incomes

8 Extended families

- Increasing numbers of children are being brought up by their extended families where parents are unable to do so and kinship care needs to be better supported
- Everyone has grandparents and they could play

a bigger part in families and wider society with encouragement and support

- Early family help could give new parents and their children support when they need it and prevent developmental issues later in childhood

9 Working life

- Enabling people of all ages to undertake meaningful work and to continue working longer would have significant social and economic benefits
- Multigenerational workplaces are increasingly common and need to be nurtured through effective communication, training and intergenerational mentoring
- Healthier work environments, better management and more flexibility will help reduce stress, promote good sleep and healthier, longer lives

10 Big lifetime issues

- Underpinning these measures we need mixing between all ages, conversations and conventions that reach common visions and conclusions on the big issues that face all ages from immigration to climate change.
- We need intergenerational fairness to dominate a review of the future direction of taxation, welfare and public spending. All proposals must be subject to intergenerational impact assessments. And we need greater investment in housing and community infrastructure to build a better Britain for all ages.

United for All Ages is a 'think and do' tank and social enterprise that brings younger and older people together to build stronger communities and a stronger Britain.

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