

Changing Britain for all ages:

ten intergenerational steps towards shared futures

One of the big challenges facing the new government is bringing Britain together. We are divided and fragmented in many ways, not least as one of the most age segregated countries in the world. That was also evident during the recent election when age was the best predictor of how people voted.

Now the votes have been counted and the outcome is clear, how can the new government change Britain for all ages while tackling modern scourges from child poverty and loneliness to inadequate housing and care? Can we create a Britain that is socially connected and economically just?

This paper identifies ten areas where intergenerational action involving people of all ages can promote togetherness while building a fairer and better country. Starting early in life is key, with a lifelong approach to prevention. Recognising that social connection is key to health and wellbeing and can also boost economic productivity. Revitalising communities, town centres and high streets and

building the homes we all need. Learning and caring together across generations. Sharing interests and experiences as we mix wherever we live, work and play. All underpinned by fairer taxation and use of resources as part of a new social and economic contract uniting the generations.

This is all possible but it's only happening in pockets. The intergenerational movement is growing again after Covid and needs more encouragement and support. It's time to imagine a Britain transformed for all ages – and make it happen. Start here, go where our imagination takes us.

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At a time when economists say that the new government faces serious financial challenges and trade-offs, the big question for the new administration will be how to lead radical change without incurring significant costs. That's why the ten intergenerational steps outlined in this paper include many cost neutral ideas and would help deliver growth and social security.

In the coming weeks United for All Ages will publish a series of briefing papers with more on these ten steps.

The intergenerational movement is growing again... It's time to imagine a Britain transformed for all ages



Ten intergenerational steps towards a Britain for all ages

1 Policies for all ages

Joined up government, with strategies and action nationally and locally, is central to changing Britain for all ages. It needs a renewed focus on core values and principles such as prevention across the life course, fairness and social justice, and universality. We should all aspire to be 'good ancestors' leaving a better legacy than we inherited. Here are changes we need:

- Joined up strategies and action across government and public agencies with a Department for Connection
- Tackling child poverty, baby bonds to encourage savings, while making childcare and housing affordable
- Public health starting early across generations for longer, better lives
- Supporting families and communities and recognising their assets and diversity
- Making Britain's wealth work for the whole country and establishing a commission on fairness in the tax system
- An older people's commissioner alongside a children's commissioner and a future generations commissioner in all four UK nations
- Assessing all policies for their intergenerational impact

2 Homes for all ages

Everything begins at home, whatever our age. But housing is not affordable for many, and homes are often overcrowded, inaccessible, cold and damp. Building new affordable homes would tackle this crisis and boost the economy – along with making existing homes warm, safe and secure. Here are changes we need:

- Building at least 300,000 homes a year for the next decade and building to lifetime homes

standards, along with a new focus on housing options for older people

- Scaling up homeshare schemes to enable more older people to share their homes with young people
- Shared spaces in housing developments designed for interaction and mixing
- More encouragement for multigenerational homes with three generations choosing to live under the same roof
- Planning guidance that facilitates and promotes intergenerational developments in town centres

3 Care for all ages

At some point in our lives, we will all be carers or need care. Care is central to our society and to our economy. Yet childcare and care for older and disabled adults are in crisis. Valuing care and all those who care is key. Here are changes we need:

- Intergenerational care – co-located care homes and nurseries – promoting relational care
- Affordable childcare and parental support, reviving the children's centres infrastructure
- Improved support for family carers as part of a national carers strategy
- Care homes as community hubs also providing social support and activities for older people living in the local community
- Radical care reform creating universal support that is fairer, simpler and sustainable
- Links between all care homes and older people's housing schemes and local nurseries, schools and college

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4 Work for all ages

Working longer is good for our health. There are now at least four generations in many workforces. That presents both challenges about working well together and opportunities for learning from each other. Here are changes we need:

- Advising employers on the benefits of multigenerational workforces
- Maximising innovation and productivity growth by promoting intergenerational connection
- Learning between generations through coaching and mentoring, team building and teamwork
- Flexibility and hybrid working for all who want and need it, recognising the breadth of caring responsibilities

5 Interests for all ages

Shared interests and experiences bring people of all ages together to pursue common passions and activities. These include a wide range of sporting and cultural interests that often lead to friendship between generations. Here are changes we need:

- From opera to football, gardening to fishing, supporting the growth of shared interests
- Team sports for young people are a crucial part of learning while walking football and similar later life sports maintain the art of collaboration
- Using the power of sport and culture to promote intergenerational interaction, fitness and health as well as volunteering
- Shared experiences – water cooler moments, TV events, sporting achievements – seem increasingly rare but still shine through, such as the ITV drama, Mr Bates vs The Post Office

6 Technology for all ages

Our world is changing faster than ever and technology is central to so many aspects of our lives and communication. Artificial intelligence can do so much to improve our lives and work. Yet many feel

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excluded and isolated with a growing digital divide. Here are changes we need:

- Making low-cost accessible technology widely available to people of all ages
- Young and older people learning together and sharing life stories using technology
- All public agencies to promote digital inclusion
- Investment in lifelong learning and technology skills
- Support intergenerational innovation through generations working together

7 Communities for all ages

Where we live, our neighbourhood and local community shape our common experiences. The spaces we share have changed rapidly in recent years as retailers and offices move out of town centres and other public spaces have been starved of investment. Here are changes we need:

- Every local authority should develop a strategy for communities for all ages
- More high streets and town centres could be reinvented with imagination and planning
- Shared spaces in local communities should promote mixing
- Centres for all ages would provide play where all ages could mix and share activities
- Public parks should enable people of all ages to play, exercise and simply enjoy life, while streets should encourage play, fun and togetherness
- Every council should hold conventions bringing together citizens of all ages to shape their community's future

8 Health for all ages

Longer lives have gone into reverse and often mean more years in poor health. Ill health is increasing across the life course – from obesity in childhood to cancer rates in middle age to mental health issues across all ages. Here are changes we need:

- Adopting healthy lifestyles is key to ageing well across the life course and across generations
- Positive mindsets throughout life will help everyone fulfil their potential at all ages
- Public health needs to promote fitness and wellbeing with sport for all ages
- Learning from other countries which invest in prevention and health promotion

9 Learning for all ages

Learning should be for life as the pace of change increases. Yet early education and schools are failing too many children and their life chances, while adult education has declined rather than flourished. Here are changes we need:

- Open University and University of the Third Age to enable lifelong learning for all ages
- Creating an intergenerational curriculum for learning, development and citizenship
- Schools could become community spaces for all ages during the week and weekends

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- Enabling students to train together with older adults on intergenerational projects
- Online mentoring to enable young people to use technology to learn intergenerationally

10 Security for all ages

Insecurity is one of the main features of 21st century lives – from work and income to housing and crime to defence and racism. One of the biggest challenges is restoring security in homes, communities and nations. Here are changes we need:

- Prioritising community safety, reducing domestic abuse and preventing youth crime
- Crime prevention starts with families, schools and communities, supported by neighbourhood watch and community policing
- Tackling ageism and promoting safety for young and older people
- Create a national day of unity as a new bank holiday to build understanding and trust between generations building on existing national days of community action

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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