

# Age2age: taking a whole community approach to building resilient communities

Final evaluation report  
March 2013

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Dr. Gillian Granville

### About HACT

Founded in 1960, and relaunched in 2012 with funding and support from a range of leading housing providers, HACT is a charity, social enterprise and industry-focused think/do tank established by the housing association sector. We seek to influence and innovate in ways which help all housing providers deliver more effectively within their communities.

HACT believes that the provision of housing is about more than just bricks and mortar – that housing providers are at their most successful when they focus on the social value they create, engage with and invest in their communities and actively seek to identify and meet the needs of those who live in them.

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## Summary

HACT is a think/do tank established by the housing association sector, which seeks to influence and innovate in ways that help all housing providers deliver more effectively within their communities.

In 2008, HACT began a five-year programme centred on intergenerational initiatives to learn how the housing sector could address the issues of an ageing society through bringing generations together in communities. Evidence from the early scoping exercise in 2007 supported the programme design:

- A long term programme over 5 years, including an integrated evaluation to feed in learning and shape it's development
- Small grants between £3-4,000 awarded to housing associations and their community partners in East London and Cumbria, offering a new dimension to existing community activity
- Projects could reapply annually for further grants to help sustain and embed their activities
- HACT development workers would support local projects in East London and Cumbria to adopt an intergenerational approach
- Projects would be brought together at regular intervals to share emerging learning
- Learning more about the Homeshare<sup>1</sup> model in rural settings.

Age2age has developed in a policy landscape that has shifted significantly in the UK, particularly in the areas of public services provision, housing regulation and welfare reform. The new policy agenda is particularly relevant to the findings from age2age. Age is an important dimension of interconnectedness in communities but it is often overlooked in debates around cohesion and resilience. The transfer of power and

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<sup>1</sup> Homeshare is an initiative that brings together two people who can help each other; a householder who is willing to share their home but is at a stage in their life where they would benefit from some help and support and a homesharer who needs accommodation and is willing to give some help and friendship in exchange for somewhere to stay.

responsibility from government to communities needs to engage people from across the community and strengthen their interaction with each other. Age2age presents one of the solutions.

The evaluation framework for the programme was developed using a theory of change approach with realist<sup>2</sup> principles. This style of evaluation is particularly suited to complex social change programmes that are set within a diverse range of project contexts with different populations, political, social and economic conditions. It focuses on the potential impact and outcomes of a programme and is flexible and dynamic to take account of changing contexts. It also takes account of why the change occurs and identifies the key drivers of change.

### Scope and scale of age2age community activities

Age2age funded a total of 15 projects in East London, Cumbria and Somerset over the five-year period. The funded projects covered a range of activities, settings and focus.

In East London, a total of seven grants were awarded in the first round of grants. Seven housing associations and organisations were engaged ranging from small specialist housing associations (e.g. Karin Housing) to large groups (e.g. Tower Hamlets Community Housing and Genesis Housing Association). Three groups had further funding in the second and third grant funding rounds, and one group continued its activities from the first year grant into year two.

Six community grants were awarded in Cumbria in the first year of age2age, and six further grants in years 2 and 3. Homeshare schemes were developed in Mendip, Somerset and Carlisle and Eden district in Cumbria.

The total investment was £108,590 for the community grants and £140,000 for Homeshare. It is estimated that at least 3,383 people from

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<sup>2</sup> Pawson R and Tilley N (1997) Realistic evaluation, London Sage publications

across the generations have participated in age2age although that figure is likely to be significantly more because at large community events, not all the participants were included in the data collection and work is going on beyond the timescale of this evaluation.

### **Role and involvement of the housing provider**

The housing organisations involved in age2age had a key role in taking the work forward in different ways; they were able to facilitate the engagement process through linking with tenants and local residents, as well as providing free venues for activities to take place. They had an important function in brokering local partnerships with other voluntary and community organisations and local statutory organisations and offered support to small organisations in obtaining additional funds.

Age2age took root quicker where community involvement and engagement was part of the strategic approach of the housing organisations. It was the housing association staff, or staff of local community organisations with which the housing associations had close working relationships, who often carried out the community work on the ground. Similarly, an individual or small group of committed residents in residents groups, were often the trigger for the involvement and engagement of the wider local community; without this grass roots understanding and drive less would have been achieved.

Another factor that enabled age2age to develop was offering small amounts of money to enhance activities or take forward existing ideas. Small amounts of money in the context of age2age meant two or three hundred pounds, rather than thousands, and these small grants acted as a

catalyst for communities coming together in shared activities.

### **Findings: a whole community approach**

Age2age is an intergenerational activity that offers a whole community approach to more effective community investment and can build the resilience of neighbourhoods. Age2age provided a mechanism for building bridges and engaging people across the generations, which in many communities had not happened before. The findings are presented in 8 key themes:

1. Age as part of community investment
2. An integrated equality approach to local issues
3. The significance of a catalyst
4. Building resilience and self-reliance
5. Improvements to wellbeing
6. Beyond tenant participation
7. Communities in place
8. A housing option that builds generational relationships

The evaluation approach explored not only what but why the changes had occurred. These were identified as:

- HACT funding and development
- Involving housing organisations
- Changing policy agenda
- Partnerships, alliances and breaking down organisational silos
- Encouraging learning and reflection
- Making the business case through cost benefits

The final section of the report offers thoughts and ideas on how housing organisations can use the learning from age2age to invest in their local communities. The tips cover different functions of housing organisations such as tenant participation, housing strategy and management and community development.

# 1. Introduction

HACT is a think/do tank established by the housing association sector, which seeks to influence and innovate in ways that help all housing providers deliver more effectively within their communities.

In 2008, HACT began a five-year programme centred on intergenerational initiatives to learn how the housing sector could address the issues of an ageing society through bringing generations together in communities.

This report is the evaluation of the age2age programme between 2008 and 2012. It begins in chapter 2 with the background to the programme and its development over 5 years. The evidence on intergenerational programmes is discussed as well as the relevance of the changing policy context in Britain to the programme and the changes at HACT.

Chapter 3 briefly outlines the evaluation approach and methodology within a theory of change framework.

The activities of the age2age small community grants programme are described in chapter 4. Chapter 5 describes the learning from the Homeshare initiative, which is the second element of age2age.

Chapter 6 focuses on the main findings from the evaluation

Chapter 7 explains why these changes occurred and the final chapter offers ideas and useful tips to the housing sector for building more resilient communities through a focus on age.

## **Who should read this report?**

The report is aimed at senior managers and practitioners in housing organisations. It will be of interest to policy makers and to community development staff wishing to build stronger communities and more inclusive approaches.

## 2. Background

Chapter 2 presents the aims and features of the age2age programme and discusses the rationale and evidence base for intergenerational practice. The influence of the changing policy landscape on the development of age2age is also explored.

### About age2age

The ideas for age2age began in 2007 and developed from the findings of HACT's Older People's Programme. The programme's advisory group identified intergenerational work with a housing focus as an area needing attention. In particular, social isolation was considered a key issue for people living in rural communities and there was an interest in finding innovative ways to address this. The Glass House Trust (one of the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts) had also shown an interest in investing in intergenerational work. They initially funded a small scoping study in Cumbria and West London and subsequently agreed a grant over five years to pump prime neighbourhood confidence-building work.

As a result, HACT developed the age2age programme to learn how the housing sector could use an intergenerational focus to build stronger communities. The aims were:

1. To promote intergenerational activities in communities by understanding and improving the role of the housing provider
2. To overcome negative stereotyping, increase intergenerational understanding and improve the quality of life for both groups
3. To influence the wider housing sector

Evidence from the early scoping exercise in 2007 supported the programme design:

- A long term programme over 5 years, including an integrated evaluation to feed in learning and shape it's development
- Small grants between £3-4,000 awarded to housing associations and their community partners in East London and Cumbria, offering a new dimension to existing community activity

- Projects could reapply annually for further grants to help sustain and embed their activities
- HACT development workers would support local projects in East London and Cumbria to adopt an intergenerational approach
- Projects would be brought together at regular intervals to share emerging learning

In addition, HACT was interested in the Homeshare<sup>3</sup> model but very little was known about how it worked in rural settings. Consequently, one Homeshare project was set up at Mendip Care and Repair in Somerset and later another one at Age Concern Eden<sup>4</sup>, Cumbria, which used the learning emerging from Mendip.

Age2age was to bring the findings from the neighbourhood activities and Homeshare together to create a meaningful dialogue with housing providers and policy makers. The integrated evaluation would chart the programme's journey and capture the projects' experiences as they happened rather than in retrospect. HACT was committed to creating a space for projects to think and learn so they could take away learning and apply it to their projects.

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<sup>3</sup> Homeshare is an initiative that brings together two people who can help each other; a householder who is willing to share their home but is at a stage in their life where they would benefit from some help and support and a homesharer who needs accommodation and is willing to give some help and friendship in exchange for somewhere to stay.

<sup>4</sup> Now Age UK Carlisle and Eden

## Intergenerational practice

From the beginning of the idea, HACT had been keen to interrogate the traditional view of intergenerational practice as concerning only older people and younger people without the generations in between<sup>5</sup>. Intergenerational practice had mainly consisted of self-contained, project-based activities rather than an approach to working with communities.

In 2009, HACT formed a partnership with the Beth Johnson Foundation Centre for Intergenerational Practice to bring together the expertise of the Centre with the housing sector. A joint seminar was held in January 2010 to share learning and to take a more strategic look at the issue. The seminar was well attended by housing organisations and people recognised the importance of sharing experience and spending time with those actively involved, rather than just reading reports.

The evidence base for intergenerational practice in the UK has been developing over the past decade, particularly from the devolved nations in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland. Individual studies from across the world show the impact intergenerational practice can have on older people, younger people and communities. These include more positive attitudes to members of other generations, improved self-reported health among older adults, improved school and psychosocial outcomes for young people and strengthened family relationships between elders and young people.

However, concerns remain with policy makers, practitioners and researchers<sup>6</sup> that the evidence base needs to be broader and stronger, with a greater focus on distinctly intergenerational

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<sup>5</sup> Beth Johnson Foundation, (April 2001): *“Intergenerational practice aims to bring people together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities which promote greater understanding and respect between generations and contributes to building more cohesive communities. Intergenerational practice is inclusive, building on the positive resources that the young and old have to offer each other and those around them”.*

<sup>6</sup> Kuehne, V S (10<sup>th</sup> July 2012) Presentation at Europe House: *Telling the Story: Measuring the Impact of Intergenerational Practice*

outcomes. Longer-term funding for programmes and research is required to produce evidence on the lasting changes an intergenerational approach can make in communities.

## A flexible and changing policy landscape

During the five years of the age2age programme, the policy landscape in the UK has shifted significantly, particularly in the areas of public services provision and welfare reform. The austerity measures brought in by the coalition government in 2010 to address the deficit in public finances have resulted in a reduction in public services and the need for communities to become more self-reliant. The concept behind the Big Society flagship is to take power away from politicians and give it to the people. This was enshrined in the Localism Act passed in 2011, which devolved greater powers to councils and neighbourhoods and gave local communities more control over housing and planning decisions.

In order for localism to work, there needs to be greater investment in communities through mobilising activity, developing capacity and building resilience. There is a great deal of interest in the role that housing organisations can play in supporting and empowering communities through developing the potential of their local presence, asset base, income stream and financial stake to invest in wider services to local communities<sup>7</sup>. HACT has argued that whilst housing organisations have always recognised the value of investing in communities they have not always taken a strategic approach to it, and there is a pressing need to refresh, prioritise and extend the sector’s best practice in supporting communities<sup>8</sup>.

The changes to housing regulation will impact on the relationship housing organisations have with their tenants and the wider residents living in the community. Historically regulation has focused

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<sup>7</sup> Mullins D (2011) *Community Investment and community empowerment: The role of social housing providers in the context of ‘Localism’ and the ‘Big Society’*, Third Sector Research Centre, University of Birmingham

<sup>8</sup> Thomas S (2013) *Developing a Community Investment Strategy: a framework for practitioners*, HACT



on economic viability, value for money, tenant's participation and housing repairs. In recent years this has shifted to a focus almost entirely on economic viability and value for money. In addition the inspection regime that underpinned statutory regulation has been abolished and what constitutes 'good' is much more in the hands of individual housing providers than it is of the regulator. Housing providers are now looking to describe their value in terms not only of the housing they provide, but also of how they engage with and invest in their neighbourhoods.

It is important to note that not all housing associations view community investment as something for the whole community. Some view it quite narrowly in terms of tenant participation. This is becoming an increasingly strained issue as the impact that welfare reform has on the ability of tenants to pay rent and therefore some housing organisations may focus resources on tenants only; this is likely to create pressure in the system.

These changing policy drivers are creating other tensions in communities and across society as a whole. The population is ageing with more people over 50 than under 50 and there is disagreement on how this shifting age profile is managed. The debate is fuelling intergenerational conflict and opens up debates about intergenerational justice. Some commentators<sup>9</sup> argue that older people are, for example, occupying housing that should be for the younger generation, so that younger people are unable to enter the housing market and are in danger of being disenfranchised. Against that, young people are also demonised in the media creating a fear of the young generation by older people, and promoting a society that undervalues the contribution young and old people make. Many people want to see intergenerational fairness and the debates more focused on a model of social justice.

One way forward is developing the growing movement around the World Health Organisation's Age Friendly Cities initiative<sup>10</sup>. Making cities and communities age-friendly is

thought to be one of the most effective local policy approaches for responding to demographic ageing. It considers eight dimensions: the built environment, transport, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication, and community support and health services.

During the time of age2age there have also been changes at HACT. In 2011 a new CEO came into post and the organisation is moving away from providing grants to community groups looking to deliver housing solutions in their neighbourhoods, towards a more social enterprise model that helps housing providers build stronger and more resilient communities. Innovation and partnership remain central to their approach.

## Summary

The new policy agenda is highly relevant to the findings from age2age. Multigenerational activities provide one of the solutions for building communities to be more resilient and able to manage the demographic challenges ahead. It does this through providing a whole community approach to enabling effective community empowerment and investment. Age is an important dimension of interconnectedness in communities but it is often overlooked in debates around cohesion and resilience.

The current policy drive offers housing providers an opportunity to redefine their social value and how they work with and within neighbourhoods. How they approach issues across generations is important; both older people and younger people are frequently viewed as 'problems' for social policy and social programmes, rather than as assets. The transfer of power and responsibility from government to communities needs to engage people from across the community and strengthen their interaction with each other

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.if.org.uk/>

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.who.int/ageing/age\\_friendly\\_cities/en/](http://www.who.int/ageing/age_friendly_cities/en/)  
(December 4<sup>th</sup> 2012)

### 3. Evaluation approach and methodology

HACT favours an integrated style of evaluation that feeds in the emerging learning as the programme develops. The evaluator joined the project team in 2008 in order to capture the programme's journey and measure its impact.

The evaluation framework for the programme evaluation was developed using a theory of change approach with realist<sup>11</sup> principles. This style of evaluation is particularly suited to complex social change programmes that are set within a diverse range of project contexts with different populations, political, social and economic conditions. It focuses on the potential impact and outcomes of a programme and is flexible and dynamic to take account of changing situations. It also takes account of why the change occurs and identifies the key drivers of change.

A logic model was developed and three outcomes for the age2age programme were agreed in September 2009:

1. A greater understanding of the role of housing in promoting intergenerational activity in communities
2. Improvement in the quality of life of both younger and older people, with younger people feeling more confident with increased self worth, and older people will be less isolated
3. Influence the wider social housing sector to develop sustainable intergenerational approaches in all aspects of its work

A fourth outcome was added in April 2010, which focused specifically on the Homeshare element of age2age.

4. Homeshare model contributes to generating confidence and increased understanding between generations.

Indicators were developed for each outcome and data collection sources agreed (appendix 1). A series of evaluation questions were also

developed to cover the three levels of the evaluation: programme, project and individual changes (appendix 2).

#### **Building evaluation capacity in organisations: a self-evaluation approach**

Embedded within the evaluation design was a commitment to support local projects to self-evaluate their work. Simple evaluation plans were developed and projects encouraged to think about the impact they wanted to make and how they would know they had been successful. This had the advantage of developing an evaluation culture in organisations as well as capturing project data to support the programme evaluation.

#### **Learning events**

A total of 5 learning events were held throughout the project, 3 of which were 24-hour events and two were one-day events in East London and Cumbria. These were opportunities to share knowledge and experience between the projects as well as reflect on the learning that was emerging from the age2age projects. The projects in East London and Cumbria carried out some exchange visits and provided peer-to-peer learning for the evaluation.

The two development consultants with age2age completed monthly reflective diaries appendix 3. The purpose of the project diaries was:

- To capture the development and process of the programme
- To draw out themes and issues on an on-going basis and feed back into the programme
- To encourage reflective practice by providing a structure for reflection
- To provide a simple means of communication and support among the field work team

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<sup>11</sup> Pawson R and Tilley N (1997) Realistic evaluation, London Sage publications

## **Main data sources in this report**

- Regular grant monitoring and evaluation forms from Cumbria and East London projects
- Previous reports and documentation
- three rounds of fieldwork visits to community projects in Cumbria and East London, including one to one interviews and focus groups with beneficiaries, local stakeholder interviews, interviews with co-coordinators and project staff and observation of activities
- Fieldwork visits to Homeshare in Mendip and Cumbria
- Five learning events in Cheshire, Manchester, Cumbria and East London
- Development staff monthly project diaries
- Quarterly project team update reports
- National stakeholder interviews (appendix 4)

A thematic analysis has been applied across the programme findings, which is presented in section 5.

A number of interim evaluation reports have been produced, some of which are available on the HACT website.

## 4. Age2age activities in the community organisations

Age2age funded a total of 15 projects in East London, Cumbria and Somerset over the five-year period. The funded projects covered a range of activities, settings and focus, some of which are briefly described in this section<sup>12</sup>.

### Scope and scale of community activities

In East London, a total of seven grants were awarded to community projects in the first round of grants. Seven housing associations and organisations were engaged ranging from small specialist housing associations (e.g. Karin Housing) to large groups (e.g. Tower Hamlets Community Housing and Genesis Housing Association). Three groups had further funding in the second and third grant funding rounds, and one group continued its activities from the first year grant into year two.

Six community grants were awarded in Cumbria in the first year of age2age, and six further grants in years 2 and 3. Homeshare schemes were developed in Mendip, Somerset and Carlisle and Eden district in Cumbria.

The total investment was £108,590 for the community grants and £140,000 for Homeshare. It is estimated that at least 3,383 people from across the generations have participated in age2age although that figure is likely to be significantly more because at large community events, not all the participants were included in the data collection and work is going on beyond the timescale of this evaluation.

### East London

East London is a diverse area covering a number of London Boroughs, including Hackney, Newham, Havering, Tower Hamlets and Barking and Dagenham. It is an inner city area with a rich multicultural population and the inter-relationship between ethnicity, age and

generations was an important consideration in locating age2age in east London.

**Karin HA**, a small specialist housing association which aims to meet the housing and support needs of the Somali community by delivering an inclusive housing service, wanted to bring older and younger people of Somali heritage together to develop better understanding and mutual respect, pinpointing areas of conflict and positively addressing changing roles. Karin used separate gender groups of older and younger women and older and younger men to discuss the issues for their community. Initially the groups were separated by age as well as gender, but towards the end of the project they all came together as a conference. **Magic Me** facilitated the initial groups. A total of 45 people were involved, 21 young men and women, aged 16-25, and 24 older men and women. At the end of the project, the community were clearer about the problems facing the young people, and which appear to be especially acute for young men, and both generational groups appear to be more willing and more able to understand each other views.

In Poplar, the age2age grant was awarded to a housing and regeneration association **Poplar HARCA**, in partnership with a local organisation, **Neighbours in Poplar**. The focus of this project was to improve the interaction of the different age groups at a community centre, which had historically been used by older people. A young resident described the segregation of the generations:

*“Nowadays kids are seen as causing trouble and stuff, all of us are not trouble. Gone are the days when you can just walk outside, everyone knew their neighbours. I think it is nice to talk to people from a different generation”.*

A small group of women and men aged between 17 and 84 initially worked together to create a community garden and as a result relationships started to develop. In the second year of the grant a number of activities such as a Jubilee party involving other members of the community

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<sup>12</sup> Please see more details in Granville, G (July 2011) *Bringing generations together: early insights from age2age, a HACT housing and support project* HACT website

and an art instillation project have consolidated the relationships between the generations and changed negative stereotypes. One 'party goer' claimed: "

*"How wonderful it is to have all those young people here, they're not all bad!"*

It appears that as relationships within the group continue to solidify so does people's freedom to express and share opposing opinions.

**Tower Hamlets Community Housing (THCH)** worked in partnership with **The Rooted Forum (TRF)**, a youth and community charity operating from one of the THCH community centres. The focus of the project was a response to older residents' requests for IT sessions. The project involved young men from the community sharing their skills and learning with the older people. Although initially there was only a small group of people involved, THCH are spreading the model to their other community centres in the Borough. IT has shown it provides an excellent focus to bring generations together and develop mutual understanding.

**Manor House Development Trust** in partnership with **Genesis Community** developed an age2age project on a large housing estate in North East Hackney. A previous seven year housing regeneration scheme had left community spirit dampened by the number of changes the estate had faced. Age2age focused on a series of arts projects to bring all ages in the community together; the community is rich in diversity so flexible arts mediums allowed residents to express themselves. After piloting a pottery class, a community choir and a dance group, the pottery element was developed further in the second grant period. It has led to the community members sharing and developing their skills and has created new friendships between different age groups and cultures.

**Old Ford Housing Association** has redeveloped more than 1,000 homes on three estates in Bow and established a thriving community development programme for residents and local people. Old Ford applied for an age2age grant in partnership with **Newtons primary school** to develop an intergenerational gardening project on a local estate. The work began in a small way,

with two older people, a younger adult and twelve primary school children involved. The age range was 7 to 9 year olds, with two adults over 80 years. Both males and females were involved and the ethnic backgrounds were diverse. This project culminated in an intergenerational consultation process leading to the purchase of shrubs and plants and the consolidation of the intergenerational gardening work that had taken place.

### Cumbria

Cumbria is a large rural county in the North West of England. In 2011, its population was 499,800<sup>13</sup>, and is projected to increase up to 2030, in particular people over 40 years old. The proportion of the population in Cumbria from black and minority ethnic groups is estimated to be 3.5% compared with 19.5% in England and Wales<sup>14</sup>. It was chosen in order to compare *age2age* in a rural area against an inner city environment.

The majority of the projects were held on West Cumbrian housing estates where it is quite common to have 4 and 5 generations living together. When the steel works and mines closed in the area the economic heart of this part of Cumbria was severely affected, resulting in long-term unemployment. A regeneration project was developed in the mid 1990s but in spite of some improvement in community confidence, young people and older residents still do not have a great understanding of each other.

**Salterbeck Residents Association** and **Impact Housing** engaged people of mixed age groups from the community to develop a mural for the community centre. The process of developing the artwork created opportunities to share history, new ideas and what the future would be. A core group of younger and older residents did a follow on project developing a DVD about life on Salterbeck, which has been shown at community events. The consolidation of the project helped establish the relationships that were developing and increased understanding between the age groups. It also helped Impact Housing to engage

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<sup>13</sup> 2011 Census

<sup>14</sup> 2011 Census data

young people in their residents' communication. One Salterbeck resident explained:

*"The community can see you are building a different generation, passing on the good things...."*

**Mirehouse Residents Group** and neighbouring **Woodhouse Action Group** are on estates in South Whitehaven, which are situated in an inaccessible area, poorly served by transport and local facilities and with the tenants experiencing many of the same difficulties. The neighbourhood team leader for **Home Group** encouraged them to work on similar intergenerational issues. There was little history of community development activities on the estates and age2age provided an opportunity for developing community spirit and bringing the whole community together for support. As a result both residents' groups have gained confidence in their ability to make changes on their estates.

The Neighbourhood Regeneration and Resident Involvement team at **Home Group** used their first years grant to encourage local community groups to hold intergenerational events as part of the European Neighbours day. Nine groups took up the challenge and developed confidence and more understanding about working across generations. Home Group followed up the events with an intergenerational learning event attended by over 30 people from Home Group regeneration staff and local residents groups. There was information on running intergenerational events and sharing of practice activities.

**Distington's young people's club** received a one-year age2age grant to build on previous intergenerational activities and to continue to break down the barriers that exist between younger and older residents. **Home Group** officers have supported their activities, with over 200 residents taking part in activities over 12 months. As a result more people have been willing to take part in planning and holding events, as they realise they all have something to bring to the events, whether its knowledge, hands on experience or simply attending. This is beginning to build a stronger community.

**Impact Housing** also carried out age2age activities in Carlisle where it owns a few properties in the Denton Holme area but these are scattered throughout the community. Impact Housing was keen to engage the whole community in order to build a greater understanding between the generations and build a more supportive community atmosphere. Initially a community day was arranged for residents, resulting in a mixed age group of residents willing to come together to plan an outing. The follow on grant built on this initial work and another more ambitious community day was held planned and run by local residents of all ages. 300 leaflets were delivered by the young people around the area and 200 people attended the event. It was considered extremely successful in providing a good opportunity to bring the community together that did not cost a great deal of money for the families.

### **Role and involvement of the housing provider**

The housing organisations involved in age2age had a key role in taking the work forward in different ways; they were able to facilitate the engagement process through linking with tenants and local residents, as well as providing free venues for activities to take place. They had an important function in brokering local partnerships with other voluntary and community organisations and local statutory organisations and offered support to small organisations in obtaining grants.

Age2age projects were started in areas where there was already some signs and interest in developing community activity. Some of these projects were originally focused on younger people, such as Poplar HARCA and Distington, whilst others were concerned with older people, such as Old Ford; some were interested in developing cross community activities such as Manor House Development Trust, and Tower Hamlets Community Housing and others, such as Karin, were concerned with housing management.

Age2age took root quicker where community involvement and engagement was part of the strategic approach of the housing organisations, for example in Impact Housing, Poplar HARCA and Tower Hamlets Community Housing. It was

the housing association staff, or staff of local community organisations with which the housing associations had close working relationships, who often carried out the community work on the ground. Similarly, an individual or small group of committed residents in residents groups, such as in Mirehouse and Woodhouse, were often the trigger for the involvement and engagement of the wider local community; without this grass roots understanding and drive less would have been achieved.

Another factor that enabled age2age to develop was offering small amounts of money to enhance activities or take forward existing ideas. Small amounts of money in the context of age2age meant two or three hundred pounds, rather than thousands, and these small grants acted as a catalyst for communities coming together in shared activities.

### **Embedding and sustaining age2age activities**

Many of the age2age projects have been successful in sustaining their projects and spreading and embedding their activities in the local community. For example:

- Mirehouse was successful in receiving a two-year grant to employ a full time community co-ordinator to take the work forward in the community
- Homeshare Carlisle and Eden has received a two year grant from the County Council to run Homeshare in Cumbria
- Woodhouse Action Group has secured funding for a long awaited play area on the estate
- Tower Hamlets Community Housing (THCH) secured a grant from Awards for All and also from Tower Hamlets Borough Council, enabling THCH to develop two additional intergenerational initiatives modelled on and inspired by the original age2age proposal
- Manor House Development Trust secured a *Communities Living Sustainably* Big Lottery funding, which has an all age group approach to sustaining the community
- Karin is developing a feasibility study in order to apply for a larger grant to support Somali young men

- Impact housing is incorporating cross-generational approaches in its engagement processes with the local community and in its work to raise the aspirations of local young people

## 5. Homeshare

Homeshare is an initiative that brings together two people who can help each other; a householder who is willing to share their home but is at a stage in their life where they would benefit from some help and support, and a homesharer who needs accommodation and is willing to give some help and friendship in exchange for somewhere to stay.

The Homeshare model has been developing for a number of years and in 2007 NAAPS UK (now Shared Lives) was awarded funding to run Homeshare programmes with local authorities in West Sussex, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire. The evaluation<sup>15</sup> concluded that Homeshare is an effective choice for some people; the concept was sound and works in practice, albeit on a small scale.

As part of the age2age programme, HACT was interested in how this model of housing would develop as an intergenerational exchange for mutual benefit. HACT was also interested in learning about Homeshare in rural communities, as very little was known about it outside urban environments.

Consequently, the first age2age Homeshare project was set up in Mendip, Somerset hosted by Mendip Care and Repair between 2008-2011. In 2009, a second age2age Homeshare scheme was under development in Cumbria, using the learning emerging from Mendip. A group of local agencies in Eden district, Cumbria, formed a steering group to explore the need for Homeshare in Cumbria. A research report<sup>16</sup> was commissioned which recommended the appointment of a Homeshare co-ordinator to develop the scheme in Eden. The report found that Homeshare would be a convenient and beneficial arrangement for students, particularly post graduate and overseas students who would

tend to be older and have more life experience. In 2010, funding<sup>17</sup> was made available to develop Homeshare in Cumbria, and Age UK Carlisle and Eden hosted the scheme. An advisory group was formed to take forward the scheme in Eden and a co-ordinator took up post in September 2010. An interim evaluation report was produced in December 2011<sup>18</sup>.

### Achievements

- Overall there were 150 enquiries to the scheme over two years
- Five intergenerational matches took place in Eden and Carlisle
- A promotional film<sup>19</sup> was designed and carried out by an intergenerational team with support from a local filmmaker and the Homeshare co-ordinator
- Numerous relationships and partnerships have been made in support of Homeshare. This has included housing organisations such as Cumbria Rural Housing Trust, Impact housing, Home Group and Eden Local Authority Housing; voluntary sector organisations such as the Northern Fells Group, Avalon respite care and Cumbria Youth Alliance, as well as numerous community groups and clubs. The NHS health improvement team have been represented on the advisory group
- Homeshare was included in Eden District Council's Housing Strategy
- Inclusion of Homeshare in Cumbria County Council's Neighbourhood Care Programme
- Part of Age UK Eden and Carlisle business plan to promote intergenerational relationships
- Homeshare Carlisle and Eden has created an online presence of over 400 followers having online conversations. It serves to keep people in touch with developments and has led to direct enquiries from homesharers

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<sup>15</sup> Coffey, J (July 2010) An evaluation of Homeshare Pilot Programmes in West Sussex, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire: Oxford Brookes University, School of Health and Social Care

<sup>16</sup> Bulmer, Caroline (January 2010) Homeshare Research Report, produced for the Homeshare Steering Group Committee Cumbria

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<sup>17</sup> Funders: Headley Trust and Charles Hayward

<sup>18</sup> Granville G (2011) *Homeshare Carlisle and Eden: what has been achieved and what is the learning from the first year?* <http://www.hact.org.uk/homeshare>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.hact.org.uk/homeshare>



- The project is registered on some accommodation websites
- Feature article in the national press<sup>20</sup>

## Sustainability

Homeshare Carlisle and Eden have received funding from Cumbria County Council to continue the scheme. It will be available county-wide and will cover the biggest area for a Homeshare scheme in the UK.

## Learning

Age2age Homeshare brought together a considerable amount of learning in the five years of its development, particularly regarding activities in a rural area:

The culture of rural communities often means there is a lot of history and established networks. It takes time to reduce suspicion, build trust and get known before a new scheme can be introduced. A paid co-ordinator is essential to establish the scheme and link people together.

It is essential to build in development time for the Homeshare co-ordinator to invest in the local community, establishing trust with community leaders, organisations and stakeholders. This requires the co-ordinator to have good community development skills and in the case of age2age, an understanding of intergenerational approaches.

In Cumbria, development was possible because the host organisation, Age UK Eden and Carlisle was a trusted, well-established organisation, accepted by the community.

The sharers in age2age came primarily from a generation of young working adults who had moved into the area for work. Housing is scarce and expensive in Cumbria and Homeshare was a solution for this age group, working in the service industry or as students on vocational courses. The householders were mainly older women.

To date, no young men have been placed with householders although the majority of Homeshare applicants are young men. The householders have expressed concern about what their neighbours would think if they took in a young man.

As Homeshare in Cumbria developed, the importance of adopting a common sense approach that worked for people rather than a fixed model became apparent. Flexibility was the key in creating shares, or matches, where each individual's circumstances and motivations were different. There was no fixed time for a match; some could be very short to fill an emergency need, whilst others may be long term.

It also required a responsible and considered approach to risk and that decisions were jointly taken with householders, homesharers and the co-ordinator. Criminal Record checks (CRB) were important and should be undertaken by both parties.

Linked to the above learning point, once the share was established, the role of the co-ordinator was light touch; if a lot of supervision was required then the share probably was unsuccessful.

There is a constant need for promotion of the scheme and opportunities found to create new partnerships and alliances. A variety of media should be used to reach people, tailored to the characteristics and preferences of the generations. Homeshare in Cumbria recruited nearly all its homesharers through social media sites, and the co-ordinator had a high profile on twitter. Word of mouth was also a very powerful way for the scheme to be promoted, particularly within village communities.

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<http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2012/mar/16/homeshare-unlikely-housemates>

## 6. Findings: a whole community approach

Age2age is an intergenerational activity that offers a whole community approach to more effective community investment and can build the resilience of neighbourhoods. Age2age provided a mechanism for building bridges and engaging people across the generations, which in many communities had not happened before.

Community activities are often designed as age or interest group specific which limits the amount of contact between the generations; activities focus on the particular needs of one generation, they are held at times that suit one generation but not another, and often take place in separate buildings or spaces. Prior to age2age, in one community centre for example, the Age UK group met at one time of the day and the youth group at another time, so the two groups never met each other.

Therefore, many approaches to developing cohesive communities and solving community conflict are seen as one generational solutions. The findings from age2age show that by working together with different ages and generations, other equality concerns that arise such as race, ethnicity and gender and issues of loneliness and isolation and low aspirations can be tackled effectively.

The findings are broken down into 8 themes:

- 6.1 Age as part of Community Investment
- 6.2 An integrated equality approach to local issues
- 6.3 The significance of a catalyst
- 6.4 Building resilience and self-reliance
- 6.5 Improvements to wellbeing
- 6.6 Beyond tenant participation
- 6.7 Communities in place
- 6.8 A housing option that builds generational relationships

### 6.1 Age as part of Community Investment<sup>21</sup>

Age2age established that engaging with different generations across the life span strengthened and enhanced the investment in communities. Community development approaches, which build communities based on justice, equality and mutual respect<sup>22</sup> in order to affect change for themselves, often work with one age group to find solutions for the whole community. Learning from age2age projects showed other mechanisms as well as community development were required if whole Community Investment was to occur. One housing manager described age2age as: *“More than community development”* Bringing a whole community together for events may not necessarily strengthen the relationships between generations; particular attention needed to be paid in *age2age* to the existence of different attitudes of generations within broad age bands, otherwise there was a danger that little will be achieved; at worst negative stereotypes will be reinforced<sup>23</sup>.

Age2age used the wealth of experience and knowledge across different generations to seek to achieve communities' goals. On an East London estate, the older people met in a community centre and had strong ownership of the space; young people on the estate did not use the facilities and there was community friction between the differing needs of the generations. As a result of the housing association introducing the age2age project, the older and younger people have now developed a community garden at the community centre, and the younger people meet at the centre to carry

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<sup>21</sup> Community Investment is designed to help create, support and / or develop more self-reliant communities, which have a positive and equal relationship with local service providers and have a measure of control over their own neighbourhoods. Definition from HACT (2013) *Developing a community investment strategy*

<sup>22</sup> Definition: Community Development Exchange [www.cdx.org.uk](http://www.cdx.org.uk) (January 2<sup>nd</sup> 2013)

<sup>23</sup> Moore S and Statham E (2006), *Can intergenerational Practice offer a way of limiting anti-social behaviour and fear of crime?* The Howard Journal: 45, 5: 468-484

out their Duke of Edinburgh awards. The group have joint celebrations and outings, enjoy each other's company, have developed a greater understanding of each other and consequently have offered mutual emotional support. The coordinator explained the difference it had made to an older woman who had never spoken before about a traumatic experience in her childhood:

*"The (intergenerational) group support enabled an 'over 50' to express herself through poetry without fear or prejudice from her own peer group"*

In addition, the housing manager from age2age observed:

*"Down the market – I step back and think 'that older person is talking to a younger person'. You don't normally see that, but now a big group of younger people know the elders (on the estate)."*

In the age2age initiative, the focus moved from working with traditionally two generations, the old and the young, to engaging up to 5 or 6 different cohorts or generations. The generations may be next to each other, as in for example, an East London project when Asian women of working age took part in creative activities with young people; or young adults showing people aged over 70 how to use computers.

In each project the needs and expectations of different generations and their different characteristics resulting from, for example, schooling or housing, were taken into account. Some project staff learnt that they were more effective in building cross-generational understanding if they initially facilitated discussions with the generations separately; this enabled myths, prejudices and stereotypically held views to be brought into the open. There was also a strong feeling among the housing staff that supported age2age that they had a responsibility to facilitate the group to help with decision making.

Historically, in some communities where age2age projects were set up, the investment in community activities and local services had been very low. In these communities, adopting an intergenerational, multigenerational approach meant the communities started to come together.

In Cumbria, an age2age project was working in a neighbourhood that had few opportunities for bringing people together. A multi generational event attracted over 200 community members of all ages and genders; one young person said the best thing about the event was that: *"Everyone was smiling"*. There are more activities planned in order to build on the momentum from the event.

At another project in West Cumbria, a community member when asked what had changed since the age2age project, replied: *"Things get done round here now"*. The community's influence with local policy makers had increased as a result of a more powerful, multigenerational voice.

## 6.2 An integrated equality approach to local issues

Integration of different communities has traditionally focused on race and ethnicity with less attention paid to age factors. In age2age, age and generational differences was added to the other equality issues with interesting results.

One specialised housing organisation for Somali people brought together young men and women with older men and women in a range of discussion groups. In gender groupings, followed by a conference together, Somali men and women were able to have an open and honest dialogue, which showed how the cultural values and beliefs were being interpreted by the different generations living in Britain. The housing association co-ordinator of the age2age project told us:

*“Although the relationship between the generations was exceptionally negative, I noticed at the end (of the event) that they were listening to each other, respecting the different perspectives between them”.*

The result was that the community understood many of the reasons why Somali young men have found it difficult to be part of British life and this had led to finding new ways to tackle it.

A housing manager from another age2age project in East London was pleased with the outcome of age2age:

*“A Bangladeshi group who have been very hard to engage (on the estate) is now attending the pottery classes, which is a massive breakthrough here”.*

In another project in East London, young Bangladeshi men were teaching older white men and women to use computers. The focus was on using the skills and knowledge of one generation to support another generation from becoming excluded from a range of services and social contacts in the future. Whilst this was achieved, far more took place; the focus on age highlighted the race and ethnicity dimension and created a way forward for a more integrated and supportive community. The potential for the relationships between different cultures to

develop beyond the small groups in age2age was evident; an older white man told us:

*“I understand more about young people now. It is changing community relationships. There is such a barrier between the young (Bangladeshi men) and old that it has a negative impact on the community. Now, we shake hands when we see each other in the community; before I would have crossed to the other side”*

There are now more examples of housing associations having estates and neighbourhoods with mixed tenure, resulting in bringing together people who would not do so naturally. One housing provider gave this as an example of why housing organisations needed to invest in communities if cohesive neighbourhoods were to thrive. In age2age, one regeneration area in East London had a new community centre in the middle of a mixed tenure estate; through their experience of intergenerational activity, they hoped to use age as a focus for community activities and which would cut through social barriers.

Age2age has shown that age is as important as race, ethnicity, gender and disability when approaching equality issues in a changing demographic society.

### 6.3 The significance of a catalyst

It is now well documented in intergenerational practice that the generations need to be brought together through a common interest or task<sup>24</sup>. Age2age added further evidence that, in order to successfully engage different generations, there needed to be a common purpose. One young man in East London explained it this way:

*“Everyone needed something to talk about. If you just got together, no-one is actually going to talk to each other, different generations don’t usually talk to each other. But having a focus is good, talk about one thing and then it grows from there.”*

The age2age projects recognised that in many communities, generations from different families do not naturally come together. Examples of catalysts included making pottery, planning and developing a community garden, creating a space to bring people together for discussing issues of community concern, learning digital technology, going on outings and making a community collage.

There is an underlying assumption that generations within families have meaningful contact with each other but we discovered in age2age that this was not always the case. We had evidence that families welcomed new opportunities to engage with other generations in their own families. This was particularly true in communities in Cumbria where four to five generations of one family lived on the estates but different economic, political and social circumstances meant the life experiences of each generation were very different.

Age2age introduced a focus and common purpose, which helped to build intergenerational understanding within families. On one Cumbrian estate where there had been very few community activities, events organised by the age2age project brought out grandparents and grandchildren to share activities and meals together. The group explained what had changed as a result of age2age activities:

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<sup>24</sup> For example, Granville, G (2012) *“We just clicked”*: Connecting communities through digital inclusion: an Independent Programme Evaluation of the MiCommunity project, Age UK London

*“We are getting to know people we didn’t know before”*

*“People look out for each other”*

*“People are more friendly”*

In another Cumbrian estate where families had lived for generations but which had had many challenges through long term unemployment and low aspirations, the housing association brought together older and younger members of the community, some of whom were related, who chose to produce a DVD about life on the estate. The DVD was produced from three perspectives: the older generations view, the younger view, and a shared view. The catalyst was the film making but it was in the process that intergenerational understanding and tolerance developed: each generation understood more about the different pressures and priorities of each other, and also became more conscience of stereotyping and labelling.

Most significantly, this particular intergenerational group had done a community project in the first round of age2age funding. Through that process their relationships had matured and in the later project above they were able to challenge and question each other in meaningful ways. The young people were unhappy with the way the film appeared to stereotype old age, and they wanted to change that. The older people were surprised but encouraged by the young people’s response. The co-ordinator explained the changes:

*“The group members are much more relaxed with each other; the ‘them and us’ syndrome has gone. They are all more confident to say what they feel upfront to each other and there is mutual respect between them all. Age doesn’t matter anymore”.*

In the development of age2age, there was a conscious attempt to build on early ideas of engagement and community needs rather than impose a ‘new’ project. Boxing is very much in the culture of East London and this was used as a catalyst by one housing association<sup>25</sup> to bring

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<sup>25</sup> This was not a specifically funded age2age project but Old Ford Housing association shared the learning

together four generations – ranging from the expertise and experience of a retired elderly boxer, to the older recently retired man as coach, to the young men who were learning the skill and acted as mentors and partners to young members. It also illustrates the point above 6.2 because this brought generations of men from different ethnic backgrounds into a supportive and nurturing environment<sup>26</sup>.

## 6.4 Building resilience and self-reliance

Resilience is a term that is increasingly being used in the policy sphere, and suggests the creation of self-sustaining community activities that help residents withstand economic, social or environmental shocks<sup>27</sup>. Age2age shows evidence of how local communities can develop resilience through using skills and experiences from within the whole community. This was evident in an East London project when the older members of the group were supportive and non-judgmental of the young people trying out their brick building skills.

Another example was bringing out the skills and talents of local young and adult women through making pottery. They now sell their crafts to the local community; the confidence of the group has increased and there is talk of developing a business model to support local trade. The pottery teacher explained:

*“They (women) are not teachers, but advanced learners. They show the community what can be done and give inspiration”*

One of the essential factors in resilient communities is empowered local people who can inspire their own community. The grants from age2age helped to support local community members to make changes in their community. One community in Cumbria had found it difficult to get any grant money to improve life on their estate; their environmental conditions were poor, and there were no safe play facilities for the children. When HACT awarded them a £4,000 grant, they felt more confident and valued because an organisation had felt they were worth investing in. There was a new feeling of optimism and the community leader’s confidence and self-belief is increasing as a community spirit returns to the estate.

*“Everyone is pulling together now, we never had this before”*

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from this previous intergenerational project with the age2age team

<sup>26</sup> Granville, G (2009) Age2age Evaluation briefing: Old Ford Housing Association Boxing Project: intergenerational aspects, HACT

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<sup>27</sup> Lucia Caistor-Arendar, Nina Mguni (2012) *Rowing against the tide: making the case for community resilience*, The Young Foundation

Age2age also had examples of how a small amount of funding could support communities to develop their own solutions to problem. A tenants group who received funding agreed that in order to tackle drug problems on their estate, it would initially focus on all generations in the community coming together for social activities and having fun; this has started to build trust between families and stronger networks, and forms the foundation for a more resilient community. The members feel a greater stake in the wider community by taking part in activities and events. One community member described the impact of a community outing to a local theatre:

*“Some of the children were taken to the (theatre). When it was suggested, the kids said, ‘it’s not for people like us’. Well, they went and had a fantastic time. It’s getting them to believe they are as good as the next person. But when people keep telling them they are not, it’s hard to make them believe at times.”*

One housing provider explained that age2age had developed the organisation’s thinking on building young residents’ resilience against the negative influences that lower their aspirations. The project had enabled young people to teach skills to older people, and doing so had increased their confidence. One young man explained:

*“It has increased my personal skills and confidence through speaking to people we don’t know”*

The older members of a Cumbrian group where low aspirations among the young is endemic showed support for another age group”

*“The younger people on the estate know that we care about what happens to them now”*

In one project, the older people explained how they influenced other members of the community who were not directly involved in age2age activities:

*“We take things back to the older people’s clubs, we talk to our friends about the young”*

In another project a woman explained the impact age2age had had on building a stronger community:

*“Young people think in a different way to us, they speak their mind and are less inhibited and they have more imaginative ideas, which is why it is good to organise things together. We have got to communicate more and understand them, then we don’t see the age difference, we forget about age”*

The Young Foundation’s current programme on community resilience and housing<sup>28</sup> focuses on understanding local need, engaging people and developing innovations that help strengthen communities and turn strangers into neighbours. One of their conclusions is that whilst community resilience is a powerful tool to enable communities to thrive in difficult times, services and support are still required from public services. Age2age has demonstrated how a whole community approach, in partnership with housing organisations and public services such as the police and planners in the local authority, can start to use community assets to build stronger and more self-reliant communities.

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<sup>28</sup> <http://youngfoundation.org/our-work/resilient-communities-housing/>

## 6.5 Improvements to wellbeing

Improving wellbeing has been a focus of the age2age activities, as one of the areas that improves quality of life for all. Wellbeing was measured in a number of ways: through improved self-esteem and self worth, improved confidence, reduced fear of crime and less social isolation and loneliness.

There were many examples of improved self-esteem, self worth and increased confidence in community members. In Cumbria, residents developed new skills to run activities and work more closely with housing organisations and gained satisfaction from seeing positive changes in their neighbourhoods. One community member who was a volunteer with the residents group and had organised a fish and chip supper explained:

*“The biggest victory of that night as far as I was concerned was when bingo finished about a dozen of mixed ages sat around a table and listened to the older ones talk about their lives. The bonus of that is people listened to each other, some even had hoodies on (well the young ones did) and nobody was scared”.*

One young person spoke of the difference intergenerational activity had made to him:

*“We get to know new people even if they are oldies”*

An East London project showed how age2age addressed social isolation in its residents. Bangladeshi women, who professionals had found hard to engage, came forward to take part in age2age. One woman expressed it as:

*“Coming here has made me feel much better. I have met people I did not know”.*

Another woman had become very isolated on an estate through what she described as harassment from young people and this had affected her mental health. A friend had finally persuaded her to join the age2age activity at the community centre, which she subsequently enjoyed. She now felt happy to come out of her house, she had got to know some young people and her confidence and mental health was improving.

One housing development manager described this improvement in wellbeing through making age2age connections:

*“You see people greet each other across the estate, there is a sense of community, relationships forming, people coming together who would never have done before”.*

One project in East London told how by coming together they had less fear moving around their community. It was understood that all generations feared gangs, the younger ones as well as the older ones, but they were stronger if they came together. One woman explained the change through age2age:

*“We are all together, so they (gangs) don’t want to know you, they steer clear and look for easy targets if you are a unit” (older woman);*



## 6.6 Beyond tenant participation

Age2age, as a means of connecting members of different ages in the community, showed that local residents could become more involved with their local housing provider. Historically, tenant participation has been a way for housing associations to receive feedback on their services, particularly concerning house repairs, rent arrears and complaints. This is now changing as more housing providers seek to improve the neighbourhoods where their tenants live, and ensure residents are part of local decision making.

One example from age2age was an estate in West Cumbria where the local action group had received a grant that enabled them to be involved in local planning for a playground on the estate. In East London, one local age2age group is influencing the use of public and community spaces in its neighbourhood, and the housing association is spreading its intergenerational activities to other areas of the estate.

Tenant participation traditionally engages with older and disabled people and this only provides one viewpoint from the community. A housing association in West Cumbria, since developing age2age initiatives, is exploring new ways to encourage tenant participation from all sections of the community. Through building confidence in engaging other age groups in age2age they are looking at different models of participation, tailored to the generations. For example, social media is becoming a popular means to engage young people. One housing manager explained:

*“We want younger people to be part of developing the community, to be more responsible but the way they participate may be different”*

In another area, young people got involved with organising a housing organisation community event through communicating with facebook.

In some areas, housing organisations were involving tenants and non-tenants in cross-generational activities, particularly where they had a strong presence. For example, the staff in an East London project, which was part of a major regeneration initiative, recognised that in order to build a stronger, more engaged

community they needed to work with all the local residents. One mechanism they used was open board meetings. In another housing association, the housing manager explained:

*“There is now more recognition that community engagement needs to be embedded (in the organisation). It is part of being a good landlord and an integral part of what we do”*

There were similar examples in Cumbria of involving tenants and non-tenants through a multi-age approach to facilitate community involvement.

## 6.7 Communities in place

Age2age set out to develop intergenerational activities with housing organisations in an inner city area, East London and a rural setting, Cumbria, in order to understand more about communities in place. The original assumptions were that there would be striking differences in the way intergenerational activities took place. Through the evaluation and learning events we learnt there were some similarities as well as differences.

The key difference was the added dimension of black and minority ethnic populations in London and how this was a factor in the intergenerational activities. The London projects explored the impact of multi-culturalism on intergenerational activities. In rural Cumbria this dimension was not a prominent feature, but the family links and relationships were much stronger. The Cumbrian estates had 4 to 5 generations living on the same estate and with far less movement or migration.

Transport was a major barrier identified by the rural communities for participating in activities; this was not an issue for Londoners. The more unpredictable weather in rural Cumbria was also considered a barrier to participation. The group thought available resources were less in rural communities and that local authority services had to cover larger areas with smaller populations.

Similarities included the need to have a catalyst to bring the generations together, the importance of taking a multigenerational approach and the skills required to facilitate and empower all ages of community members to participate.

## 6.8 A housing option that builds generational relationships

Homeshare in a rural area provides a viable housing option for some people. It is not a scheme for everyone but offers a flexible alternative to particular housing needs.

With a focus on different generations, Homeshare demonstrated how it could build up trust and understanding between generations and provide mutual benefit. One householder sharing with a young woman who was a mature student said he would certainly consider another share when this one ended:

*“Yes I would, I know now what it would be like. I have space in this house and young people who have tuition fees have high debts”*

One home sharer found out about Homeshare at Age UK Carlisle and Eden through an accommodation website. She didn't have much money as a student, and as she was going to be working with older people as an occupational therapist, she saw Homeshare as an opportunity to improve her communication skills.

In another share, the sharer showed the householder how to develop her computer skills in order to skype and join facebook. The householder's response was:

*“I have never been so excited for years, it means a lot to me; I never thought I would manage it (use IT)”*

Whilst evidence showed that Homeshare could be a viable alternative housing option, learning from the two pilots in Somerset and Cumbria showed that it takes considerable time and effort to establish and maintain a scheme of sufficient scale to give an economic return on investment. This presents a key barrier to offering it as a solution to the affordable housing crisis for young people in rural areas. However, as in the case in Cumbria, it can become part of a package of preventive measures, which support and maintain residents in their communities.

## 7. Why have things changed as a result of age2age?

A theory of change approach examines the changes that have incurred as a result of an intervention and also takes into account why the changes took place in a particular context and for which groups of people. There were a number of factors, which drove the changes discussed in section 6 above.

### **HACT funding and development**

Small grants which were repeated two or three times over a period of 3-4 years allowed community projects to build on what works. Traditionally, many small projects get one off grant funding, which does not give the projects enough time to establish and take forward change in communities. Age2age showed how a small investment can create real change if put in the hands of creative, committed people, and can lead to life changing experiences for individuals and communities.

In addition, the age2age development workers had a role in finding projects in East London and Cumbria linked to housing organisations that already had ideas for developing their communities through intergenerational activities. Their role in development was key because it embedded the work in communities from the beginning rather than trying to pose ideas from outside.

### **Involving housing organisations**

The link with housing organisations was important for mobilising resources. Associations where there was a strong focus and understanding of community development were easiest to engage with; additional resources, such as a dedicated community development team, were available to support community groups to move forward with the additional expertise of the age2age development staff.

In housing organisations where there was a whole organisational commitment to engaging communities and an interest in developing intergenerational approaches, the changes are more likely to be sustainable. Organisational

restructuring and changes to staff roles can destabilise fragile community developments.

There was learning too for housing providers. Developing intergenerational and multigenerational skills opened up opportunities for them to gain new insights into their communities. For example, it was unexpected that older and younger generations may feel the same about issues in their community, such as fear of crime, or that groups of young and old people could share a similar sense of humour.

### **Changing policy agenda**

Evidence from this evaluation shows that taking an all age approach to engaging communities is an effective way for housing providers to establish new relationships with their tenants and residents. It is also in line with the policy direction towards more services being localised and communities becoming more self-sufficient as the public sector declines.

The emphasis of the housing sector is changing from developing housing associations to investing more in communities. The welfare reforms and changes to housing benefit will require housing associations to offer more support to residents. The changes to regulation mean that housing organisations will be moving to co-regulating their services with their tenants and residents. This necessitates a change in relationship between the housing provider and the residents; age2age showed that taking a cross-generational approach was an effective means to engaging a more representative group of residents and ensuring their participation.

### **Partnerships, alliances and breaking down organisational silos**

All the projects developed a range of partnerships and alliances in order to deliver a cross generational approach to community involvement. These partnerships were across a number of sectors as well as between teams in

housing organisations, and were a vital part of success. They included voluntary and community sector organisations, tenants and residents groups, statutory partners such as the police and local authorities.

Examples of partnerships with housing associations in Cumbria were between Age UK Carlisle and Eden and Impact Housing. In East London, Magic Me, an arts based intergenerational voluntary organisation, offered their expertise and supported intergenerational activities with Karin Housing Association and Look Ahead Housing and Care. A school has been a partner with Old Ford Housing Association to develop an *age2age* project and a local MP attended an *age2age* event with Mirehouse Action group, offering his support. Manor House Development Trust on Woodberry Down integrated *age2age* with a larger initiative they were involved in, Well London, introducing an intergenerational element to a community health improvement initiative funded through the London Health Commission, Well London Alliance.

Residents' groups and tenants organisations have taken the lead in some *age2age* projects, offering the potential to embed intergenerational practice in communities. These groups have been supported by housing associations such as Impact Housing and Home Group in Cumbria and Poplar HARCA in East London. Funding has also been given to small community groups in Cumbria to develop their own intergenerational initiatives. Woodhouse Resident's Action group partnered with Young Cumbria, the local youth partnerships supported by Home Group. Prior to *age2age* the groups operated separately. Now they have developed joint interests; for example the intergenerational baking day and subsequent cake sale was to sponsor the local young people for a charity initiative.

There are other examples of partnerships across housing organisations with teams working together to achieve common goals; there were signs of breaking down organisational silos through demonstrating how *age2age* could meet different organisational goals. One housing manager stressed the importance of working across departments because:

*"Twelve community development officers in one team can't influence the culture of an organisation (if it does not have a community development culture)".*

In Impact Housing, the community investment team received resources from the housing team to support their objectives. Similarly, the team working with young people in foyers is looking for ways to forge links with the extra care housing team. In Home Group, the Young Cumbria activities are now linked in.

One housing association has used the learning from its *age2age* partnership with HACT to successfully apply for a large grant from another funder in order to build on its intergenerational activities and embed it in the housing association's work. Another housing association manager spoke of the essential 'glue' that grassroots voluntary sector organisations can provide between housing organisations and the community.

HACT had a partnership with the Beth Johnson Foundation, a charitable trust, which runs the Centre for Intergenerational Practice and offers expertise and resources on intergenerational practice. It has extensive networks of organisations, including housing, that carry out intergenerational activities.

### **Encouraging learning and reflection**

HACT's commitment to encourage a culture of learning and reflection was a key factor in supporting change. An independent evaluation established at the beginning of *age2age* ensured that a focus on outcomes and change were embedded from the beginning; projects were encouraged to focus on the impact of their work as well as how they got there.

Creating space through the regular learning events for project co-ordinators and managers to reflect on their work and learn from other projects helped drive *age2age* forward. Practitioners welcomed the opportunity to have 'time out' to think through the issues and problem solve with other projects. The peer-to-peer visits facilitated learning in practical settings.

Age2age participants were part of a national programme and in some cases this led to increased confidence and self worth; they found through contact with other projects that they did indeed have a contribution to make.

Through being involved in an evaluation and learning project, the value of evaluation was recognised by many of the projects, and this has been taken forward into their work beyond age2age.

### **Making the business case through cost benefits**

The housing directors and managers consulted in this project were keen to know the cost benefits to their business in carrying out intergenerational activities particularly as resources become more limited. One housing managers described it as knowing whether activities are “*nice to have or essential*”. Whilst acknowledging that a full cost benefit analysis would be useful, it is a time consuming and costly exercise and on this occasion was outside the scope of the evaluation’s resources.

We are aware that anti-social behaviour, vandalism and criminal damage incur significant costs to housing organisations as well as to the residents and tenants living in their properties. Over recent years, housing providers have been encouraged to take the lead in neighbourhoods in tackling anti-social behaviour and spend considerable resources on it. One housing group manager involved in *age2age* identified the advantages for business of having a more connected community because of the impact on anti-social behaviour and reducing vandalism:

*“The impact of anti social behaviour and vandalism on a society that is connected up and is not isolated (is less) because it is much more able to respond to these things.”*

In a time of tight resources, it is necessary to look at other ways landlords can invest their resources that have both a direct and indirect impact on reducing anti-social behaviour and the associated costs. Feedback through this evaluation has identified that intergenerational work has the potential to have a beneficial effect on addressing anti-social behaviour.

## 8. Learning for housing organisations

This final section offers ideas on how housing organisations can use the learning from age2age to invest in their local communities. The tips cover different functions of housing organisations such as tenant participation, housing strategy and management and community development.

- See all the generations as assets in the community rather than focusing on one or two generations; they all have something different to offer
- Think age groups and generations rather than a traditional two-generation model of young children and elderly people. There may be 4 or 5 generations living in your community all with different life experiences and expectations
- Take time to understand what each generational cohort has to offer a self-sufficient community; find out the different skills they have developed throughout their lives, eg social media with young people, employment skills in older people
- Take an issue-based approach to problems rather than single age groups, and engage all generations in the solutions. Think isolation or fear of crime rather than groups of youths, or isolated old people
- Use the resources and training opportunities offered by the Centre for Intergenerational Practice at the Beth Johnson Foundation. There is now a growing body of international knowledge on engaging generations in communities, which can give you a head start to work across all ages
- Get organisational buy-in from the top. You probably need a commitment throughout the whole organisation to take a whole community approach. Making the business case will help senior involvement and leadership
- Include an 'all age' approach in community staff job descriptions; this will ensure that staff are offered development and training to work across different age groups
- Use resources efficiently and act as brokers to mobilising grass-roots community organisations that are usually very close to their communities
- Consider using cross generational approaches to reach sections of the community that don't readily engage, including adults who are often time poor; it is finding a hook for their interests, skills and knowledge
- Develop simple monitoring and evaluation tools to capture impact so that you know if what you are doing is producing the change you want. This leads to a better use of time and resources. It also helps engage partners and opens funding opportunities.
- Remember to measure 'distance-travelled' rather than ambitious goals as some communities are just beginning to develop community activities; understanding the small steps can lead to bigger changes
- Use data to measure social and economic impact; if you collect evidence, that evidence can provide a cost benefit analysis based on existing statistics
- Think how to spread and scale up what works from projects to other neighbourhoods and whole communities; encourage shared learning so that people learn from what didn't work as well as what did. Remember what worked in one area may need to be adapted to work in another area because no situation is exactly the same
- Remember to have a fun and relationships will flow!!

## 9. Appendices

**Appendix 1: Age2Age Outcomes and Indicators table**

<b>Programme Outcome: What would success look like?</b>	<b>Indicator: What will we measure to find out if we've got there?</b>	<b>Target/ assessment mechanism: How could we measure it?</b>
1. A greater understanding of the role of housing in promoting intergenerational activity in communities	<p>Increase in the housing organisations who are developing intergenerational activities that connect housing and community</p> <p>More intergenerational/ multi generational projects run by housing associations and foyers</p> <p>More enquiries from housing associations and the wider social housing sector about how to bring together different generations within communities</p>	<p>The number of grants awarded and whether over subscribed</p> <p>Carry out a survey among housing organisations</p> <p>Stakeholder interviews from a purposeful sample</p> <p>Evidence from the grants programme and Homeshare</p>
2. Improvement in the quality of life of both younger and older people, with younger people feeling more confident with increased self worth, and older people will be less isolated	<p>Younger people giving examples of being more confident.</p> <p>Older people demonstrating improved quality of life through involvement in their neighbourhoods</p> <p>All generations identifying improved wellbeing through involvement in intergenerational activity</p>	<p>Interviews and focus groups with younger and older people using 'Most Significant Change' approach and quality of life indicators</p>
3. Influence the wider social housing sector to develop sustainable intergenerational approaches in all aspects of its work	<p>Intergenerational activities/ approaches cited in key strategy documents and action plans</p> <p>Evidence of intergenerational practice in mainstream housing policy at local, regional, national levels showing an increase in activity since Age2Age began</p> <p>Increased resources given by housing associations to</p>	<p>Document review; evidence at housing sector events, in publications, etc.</p> <p>Mapping of intergenerational activity that is part of mainstream activity and not fixed term on project funding</p> <p>Interviews with housing associations' decision makers and other housing policy</p>

	stimulate intergenerational/ multigenerational approaches	makers
4. Homeshare model contributes to generating confidence and increased understanding between generations.	<p>matches between older householders with young people needing affordable accommodation</p> <p>House Holders have greater independence and choice over their care and support</p> <p>Home sharers feel they are making a worthwhile contribution to their community</p> <p>House Holders and Home Sharers show examples of positive attitudes and behaviours towards different generations</p>	<p>Monitoring data</p> <p>Separate and joint interviews with older and younger people</p> <p>Case study examples</p>



## Appendix 2: Evaluation questions

The evaluation questions cover three levels: the programme level, the project level and the individual (beneficiary) level.

### Programme level

Overarching evaluation aim: to generate confidence and increased understanding between generations by supporting initiatives that bring older and younger people together through neighbourhood based intergenerational activities and Homeshare arrangements.

Evaluation questions to be addressed at programme level are:

1. To what extent has *age2age* supported initiatives that bring older and younger people together? How sustainable are these relationships?
2. What locally based initiatives can be identified that brought older and younger people together? What are the core elements of these initiatives that can be replicated elsewhere, and which are the elements that are determined by the local context?
3. How has housing been used as a focus to bring different generations together?
4. What were the similarities and differences in intergenerational needs in urban and rural areas? What differences do the housing context in urban and rural areas mean to intergenerational needs, experiences and challenges across and within different communities?
5. In what way has *age2age* demonstrated the importance of meeting current and future housing needs?
6. Has *age2age* contributed to community cohesion and better quality of life for all? If so, what were the successful mechanisms and which were less successful?
7. How successful has *age2age* been in leveraging in support from housing association partners and other funders? Who were the partners and why did they support the project? Has this led to sustainability of intergenerational practice in the selected areas? What else has enabled/ not enabled the sustainability of projects?
8. To what extent has intergenerational practice been embedded in housing association policy and practice? What influence has *age2age* had in housing policy and practice, and if so, how and at what level - national, regional, local?

### Project level

Overarching evaluation aim: to develop a self-evaluation framework for the local projects to measure their success against project assumptions and indicators of success.

There are two strands to the project level evaluation:

- The Homeshare activities are testing a model of intergenerational work that can be replicated elsewhere
- The neighbourhood activities are testing approaches and concepts to intergenerational relationships to learn what is important in the context of housing.

Evaluation questions to be addressed at project level are:

### All projects

9. Has housing been used as the focus to bring generations together? If so, how and for whom?
10. Were the projects able to demonstrate increased community cohesion and if so, how? Did they demonstrate increased intergenerational understanding, and if so, for whom?
11. Are the models sustainable? Have they influenced local housing policy and practice? If so, how?

### Homeshare

12. What are the characteristics of the Homeshare model that contribute to generating confidence and increased understanding between generations?

13. What are the key elements of the Homeshare model that identify it as an *age2age* intergenerational activity? What elements have been added, or excluded, in order to adapt to the local context? What core features of the model are required in order for it to be replicated elsewhere?

14. Who are the principle partners involved and to what extent does Homeshare meet their organisational objectives? What central support is required to enable a Homeshare project to be delivered?

15. What specific approaches are needed to ensure Homeshare benefits the groups HACT is working with (i.e. working with two vulnerable groups, older people and young people leaving homelessness)?

### **Neighbourhood activities**

16. What are the characteristics of the neighbourhood intergenerational activities? Which elements are central to the concept and which need be adapted to a local context? Who is engaged in the projects?

17. Can the local conditions be identified that enable an *age2age* intergenerational neighbourhood approach to take place? Who are the key partners? Was it possible to lever in resources, and if so, how and from whom?

18. What does this approach tell us about housing's role in building intergenerational relationships in neighbourhoods and communities?

19. Has the housing associations' involvement in *age2age* activity led to mainstreaming intergenerational approaches in their wider activity and strategy? If so, what? What helps or hinders this?

### **Individual level**

Overarching aim: to measure the impact on the different generations as a result of being involved in *age2age*. Evaluation questions to be addressed at this level are:

20. Is it possible to identify critical factors that generated confidence in individual young or older people? If so, what were they? Were they different for young people and older people?

21. What were the main features that increased understanding of generational differences in individual young or older people? Were the features different for each generation?

22. What were the barriers that prevented confidence building and understanding between the generations in individual older and younger people?

### Appendix 3: age2age template monthly reflective diaries

## Age2age Project Diary

#### Suggestions for use:

- It is subjective so it is your experiences – there are no right or wrong answers
- Complete quickly, don't dwell for too long – about 5 minutes maximum
- Complete electronically on a (monthly or sessional) basis

Name:.....Date:.....

What 3 things did I expect to happen this month?	
What 3 things did happen?	
What has been the <b>most significant</b> thing that happened this month?	
What have I learnt?	
How do I feel now?	

#### Appendix 4: List of final national stakeholder interviews

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Babu Bhattacharjee	Director of Communities and Neighbourhoods, Poplar HARCA and HACT trustee
Gillian Connor	Head of External Affairs Hanover Housing Group
Lisa Denison	Community Investment Director, Sovereign
Suzie Dye	Fund manager Paul Hamlyn Foundation
Alan Hatton-Yeo	CEO Beth Johnson Foundation
Alison Jarvis	Project manager, Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Matt Leach	CEO HACT
Mike Muir	CEO Impact Housing Association
Jeremy Porteus	Director of Learning and Housing network, Housing LIN
Emma Stone	Director of Policy and Research, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

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