

The responses below were submitted by Savannah Fishel to the APPG on Housing and Care for Older People and do not necessarily reflect the views of the APPG.

INQUIRY INTO 'CREATING INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNITIES'

Initiated by the APPG on Housing and Care for Older People

CALL FOR EVIDENCE

Introduction

Earlier this year, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Housing and Care for Older People (chaired by Anna Dixon MP and Lord Richard Best) established an Inquiry into 'Creating Intergenerational Communities'. The aim is to explore the advantages and the challenges of new housing developments consciously seeking to bring people of all ages together.

The Housing LIN was engaged to provide the Secretariat, and a Panel of policymakers and practitioners has been assembled to consider the issues. Three meetings have been held to date with those with experience of building intergenerational communities for people of all ages.

The Inquiry is now at a mid-point, and we are issuing a call for evidence to those interested in contributing ideas and evidence.

1. The scope of our Inquiry

The Inquiry is about 'communities' not individual households. Out of scope are:

- consideration of intergenerational living in a single home, e.g. for an extended family that incorporates children, parents and grandparents.
- schemes like 'Home Share' where a young person lives one-to-one with, and provides some support for, an older person.
- housing conversions that produce 'granny flats' within family homes.

All these forms of living may be of value but are beyond the scope of an Inquiry considering 'communities'.

Moreover, the emphasis of this Inquiry is on the intentional creation of new intergenerational communities, not on studying existing naturally occurring communities where households of different ages have lived together for decades.

We expect our audience for the Inquiry report primarily to comprise the providers of housing in the social and private sectors, together with the bodies that regulate,

finance and support them. We hope our report will provide practical advice, greater understanding of the advantages and challenges of intergenerational living, and the basis for any necessary changes to policy and practice for the future.

2. The emerging evidence

The Inquiry has identified three different types of intentional intergenerational communities that are in scope although there may in some instances be overlap:

A) Mixing age groups in different homes in the same building: A residential building that contains individual homes or apartments for people of different generations (e.g. older adults, young families, students), all housed in separate homes under one roof.

We have noted that examples of this type, where intentional intergenerational communities are created, are few and far between but can be separated to:

i) Mixing age groups in different homes in the same building in specialist older persons accommodation: Purpose-built or adapted facilities (e.g. extra care housing, retirement housing or villages) designed primarily for one age group, but that integrate other age groups for mutual benefit.

We have noted the considerable success of specialist housing where older people live adjacent to students or working age adults with physical and learning difficulties.

ii) Mixing age groups in different homes in the same building in non-specialist older persons accommodation: We have found a few examples of intergenerational co-housing of this kind where people of all ages live alongside each other in a block of flats. Inquiry members have witnessed the benefits to residents of all ages of these inter-generational living arrangements through mutual support and friendships. However, less common are examples where different generations live alongside each other in different homes in the same building in ordinary housing but where creating intentional intergenerational communities has been considered.

B) Mixing age groups in different homes in the same area/neighbourhood: Separate homes (e.g. houses, bungalows, flats) situated in the same area, neighbourhood or street, designed to appeal to different age groups. Deliberately mixing age groups in different homes in the same area/neighbourhood typically in mainstream housing but it could also include the provision of specialist older persons' housing.

The Inquiry has noted that the extensive housebuilding by private developers is almost exclusively 'all rented' or 'all owner-occupied' for 'one age group'. Major developments can comprise 100% accommodation designed for families with no housing designed for older people or mainstream housing designed to attract an older homeowner. In the social sector, we have heard of a few developments that

involve building a range of housing typologies and tenures on the same site to encourage more intentional intergenerational communities.

C) Deliberately designing and managing retirement communities/villages to incorporate intergenerational connectivity: We have heard how some retirement communities – which are villages separate from their neighbourhood – can nevertheless contain significant intergenerational dimensions. Joint facilities such as fitness centres, cafes, nurseries can bring different generations together despite their physical separation.

3. Call for evidence

It would be helpful to the Inquiry to receive evidence and comments from those with experience of creating or living in the three different types of intentional intergenerational community we have identified (above).

Deadline for submissions is Friday, 17 October 2025.

Please tell us the basis of your interest (e.g. as an older person living in a multi-generational development; or as a provider of intergenerational housing, whether in the 'same building' or in the 'same location'; etc).

My interest stems from personal and professional places. Personally, as a renter in London, with friends starting families, I have often looked around and seen so much disconnection, so little intergenerational support, and a perpetually worsening housing crisis.

Professionally, I have worked in politics, health policy and social innovation, where I currently work at Innovation Unit as a Senior Service Designer and Innovation Consultant. Almost every issue we are trying to tackle, at its core, centres around loneliness and disconnection. So I have done lots of work on this topic, including on sparking and sustaining intergenerational friendship in East London.

But, lots of work to bring people together, although crucial, can be situational and momentary. How can we weave connection into housing, building homes which function as social not just physical infrastructure?

This question brought me to my most recent work. As a Churchill Fellow I journeyed to 54 intergenerational communal housing projects across the United States and Australia. My focus has been on understanding how housing can intentionally nurture connection, resilience, and wellbeing across generations. My output, *Beyond the White Picket Fence: A Companion for Intergenerational Communal Housing* was published July 16th and I have a regular blog exploring themes around housing, connection and inequality at thinkitforward.net.

I now do lots of advocacy on intergenerational housing and connection and tackling loneliness, including recently speaking on BBC London live news.

Do you have any examples - in the UK, or abroad - of the three different types of intentional intergenerational community that are in the scope of this inquiry?

- 1. Mixing age groups in different homes in the same building**
 - a) In specialist accommodation**
 - b) In non-specialist accommodation**
- 2. Mixing age groups in different homes in the same area/neighbourhood**
- 3. Deliberately designing and managing retirement communities/villages to incorporate intergenerational connectivity**

My research encompassed a broad scope of models, including cohousing, urban and rural cooperatives, supported social housing blocks with an intentional focus on relationships, ecovillages and more, with a focus on long-term living arrangements where people can age in place or start families.

My companion spotlights 20 examples, and lists all 54. I have picked some out below.

1a)

- Hifi Collective (Los Angeles). It is a social supported housing community – in a single five-storey building – for people who need stable housing and struggle with chronic physical and mental health issues. Intentional community-building is central. At community meetings, residents make joint decisions and air grievances. Regular rituals — like birthday celebrations, cooking demonstrations, and daily coffee mornings — are key for cultivating long-lasting belonging. Organic intergenerational reciprocity thrives, for instance younger neighbours teaching older residents about technology and elders giving parental-like support and advice.
- Camphill, Soquel, is a life-sharing community where individuals with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities live, grow, and work together with a deep sense of autonomy, interdependence, and belonging. Each different sized house has its own amenities, routine and character, housing a mix of co-workers, international volunteers (on a one-year programme) and ‘friends’. People move households based on need/life stages. Everyone has a mentor and there is a strong emphasis on personal growth and self-advocacy. Routine is inbuilt through a weekly programme of activities; residents both have fun and contribute through meaningful work and activities which they choose based on skill and interest, such as gardening, preparing meals, weaving, and maintenance – utilising the range of shared spaces.

1b)

- Urban Coup (Naarm/Melbourne, Australia): This is a multi-storey cohousing block with residents aged 5 to 81. It uses self-governance processes (sociocratic model) and shared indoor/outdoor common spaces, with meals paid for via a community currency, to foster connection.
- A very different example is Open Field Coliving where multiple families and individuals share an ecologically sustainable rural home in Castlemaine

(Australia). Born from frustration with isolated, insecure rental housing, Open Field Coliving Homestead is a chemical-free, near-zero-energy home featuring permaculture systems, regenerative agriculture, and off-grid water and waste. One resident said, “As new parents, having mutual support on the parenting journey and other children for our child to grow up with is worth more than anything.”

- Similarly, in Denver, Queen City Cooperative hosts 9 residents in a single family home. There is a large shared kitchen space and multiple separate living areas. Residents participate in budgeting, governance, and maintenance, and monthly housing costs of \$750 cover food and utilities. The founders changed state law to allow unrelated adults to cohabit, initially fronting personal equity to make the model viable.

2)

- Murundaka (Naarm/Melbourne, Australia): An all-rental cooperative blending cohousing with an ecovillage ethos (ages 3 to 81). As \$1 shareholders in the co-op, residents collectively control and manage their housing, paying 25% of their income as rent.
- Anita May Rosenstein Campus (Los Angeles, US) is an example of communal and intergenerational staffed specialist accommodation. This campus includes separate, but close, senior (55+) and youth (18-24) housing for members of the LGBTQ+ community with experience of homelessness. Intergenerational programming and wraparound support (e.g., employment, mental health) are used to connect the two age groups.
- Christie Walk (Adelaide, Australia) is a biodiversity-rich community designed for sustainable and connected urban living. The social fabric is strengthened through mid-monthly ‘working bees’ and end of the month communal dinners, often with films, local walks or updates on community activities. Green spaces help promote spontaneous interaction, and people care share with 13 parking spaces between 27 apartments. Numerous residents have lived out their lives in Christie Walk. There is a palpable commitment to care, which “across the board, takes the form of a neighbourly interest in each other, without being intrusive.” Buyers purchase units on the open market, whilst around one quarter of homes are rented, often by residents who have become central to community life. Shared spaces include a laundry, bike shed, community room and gardens. Voluntary groups manage garden planning, maintenance, bicycles, social opportunities and wellbeing, recycling, laundry and tours. As legally mandated by the strata system, decisions are made by voting but the community works hard to achieve consensus before decisions are made.

3)

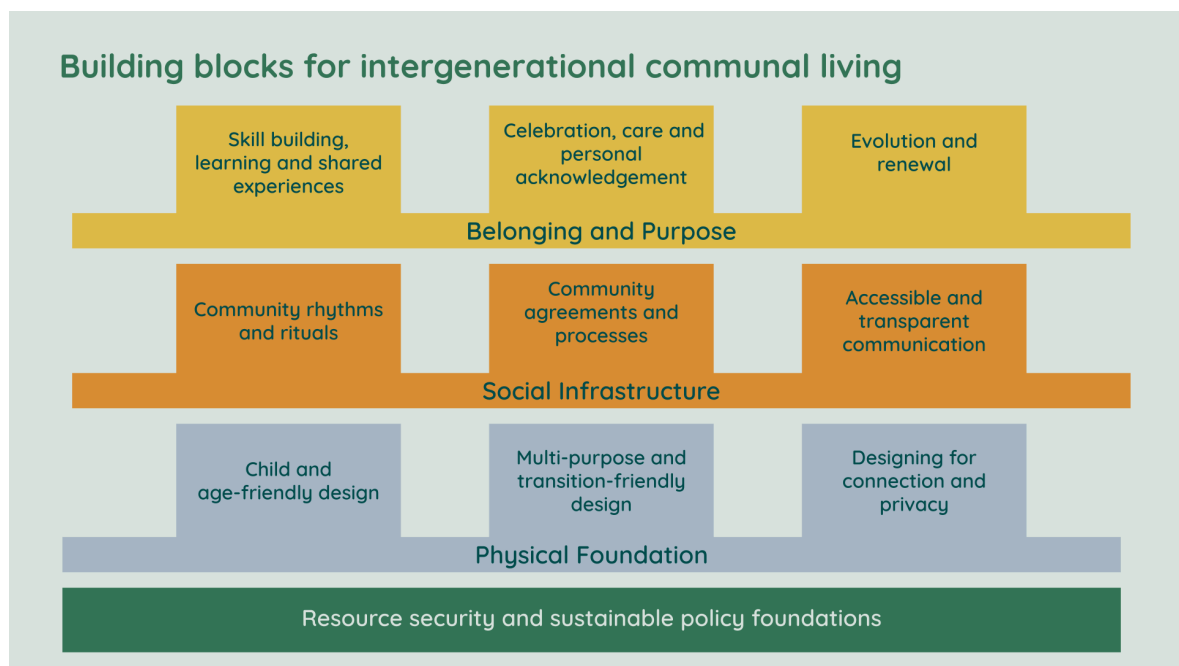
- Wild Sage & Silver Sage Village (Boulder, US): These are two adjacent cohousing communities—one intergenerational (Wild Sage) and one senior-specific (Silver Sage). They run some joint activities, but maintain separate designs and cultures, recognising that parents and seniors often

have different schedules and expectations around noise. 40% of their units are affordable.

- Bridge Meadows (Portland, US): This intentional community houses youth impacted by the foster system, their families, and individual elders (55+) in need of affordable housing. It uses "community as an intervention" to help children heal and tackle loneliness in elders, with staff running trauma-informed social programming.

What design considerations are important in bringing together different ages?

I found that key design considerations for creating thriving intergenerational communal living environments fall under three main areas: Physical Foundation, Social Infrastructure, and Belonging and Purpose. These elements, when intentionally cultivated, create the conditions for informal acts of mutual support, or '[neighbourisms](#)' (a word I coined), to flourish. In *Beyond the White Picket Fence* I include and explain the below visual.



1. Physical Foundation (Built Environment)

The architecture and layout must proactively encourage spontaneous, everyday interaction while maintaining respect for privacy.

Connection-Orientated Design, Balanced with Privacy:

- Arrange buildings around a central common space (e.g., a green or courtyard) to maximise visibility and potential for interaction.

- Cluster utility areas like laundry rooms and postboxes to serve as natural gathering spots for chance encounters.
- Create pedestrian-friendly areas and pathways that connect homes, encouraging residents to walk and casually meet, with vehicle parking located on the edges of the community.

Child and Age-Friendly Design:

- Ensure the design is safe, accessible, and supports ageing in place for all residents.
- Include green spaces and play areas that attract both younger and older people, such as a playroom visible from a common dining area allowing adults to socialise while supervising children.
- The built environment should remain accessible across life stages, for people with disabilities, and for children.

Multi-purpose and Transition-Friendly Design:

- Incorporate flexible multi-purpose community rooms or common houses that can host a diversity of activities, from formal meetings and workshops to spontaneous art sessions and celebrations.
- Plan for transition opportunities as residents' needs change throughout life, for example, the chance to move to a larger unit as a family grows, or to a ground-floor unit as accessibility needs evolve.

2. Social Infrastructure (Systems and Practices)

Intentional systems and frameworks are often useful to manage cooperation, community engagement, and challenges of living in close proximity (which do emerge, as a natural part of more proximity and less isolation). In some housing models as reflected in my broad scope, conflict or management processes can be held or facilitated by external staff. The extent to which established processes are needed varies, depending on how 'intentional' the community is, or needs to be.

Community Rhythms and Rituals:

- Establish regular social and task-oriented events to build trust and routine.
- Prioritise food as 'social glue,' incorporating planned activities like shared meals, potlucks, and co-developed communal food systems.
- Organise frequent 'work parties' or 'working bees' for shared maintenance, gardening, or cleaning tasks, offering low-pressure opportunities for

cross-generational bonding – with the caveat that people contribute in different, and sometimes less visible, ways.

Community Agreements and Processes:

- Many communities found it useful to develop clear community agreements and processes, especially for decision-making and conflict resolution.
- Many communities found it useful to develop build structures to address conflict proactively, seeing it as an inevitable part of healthy community life, rather than something to be feared. This may include regular 'clearings' or check-ins at meetings.

Accessible Communication:

- Ensure all residents, regardless of age or digital literacy, can access information.
- Use a mix of tools, such as physical community noticeboards alongside digital communication platforms.

3. Belonging and Purpose (Culture and Identity)

The culture must be intentionally cultivated to foster mutual reliance and give people a sense of value across their lifespan.

Sharing Skills, Learning, and Experiences:

- Encourage individuals to share their knowledge and expertise, promoting mentorship and skill exchange across generations (e.g., teaching technology or DIY).
- Ensure opportunities for meaningful contribution are flexible, so those with limited physical capacity can contribute through activities like cooking or organising.

Celebration, Care, and Personal Acknowledgement:

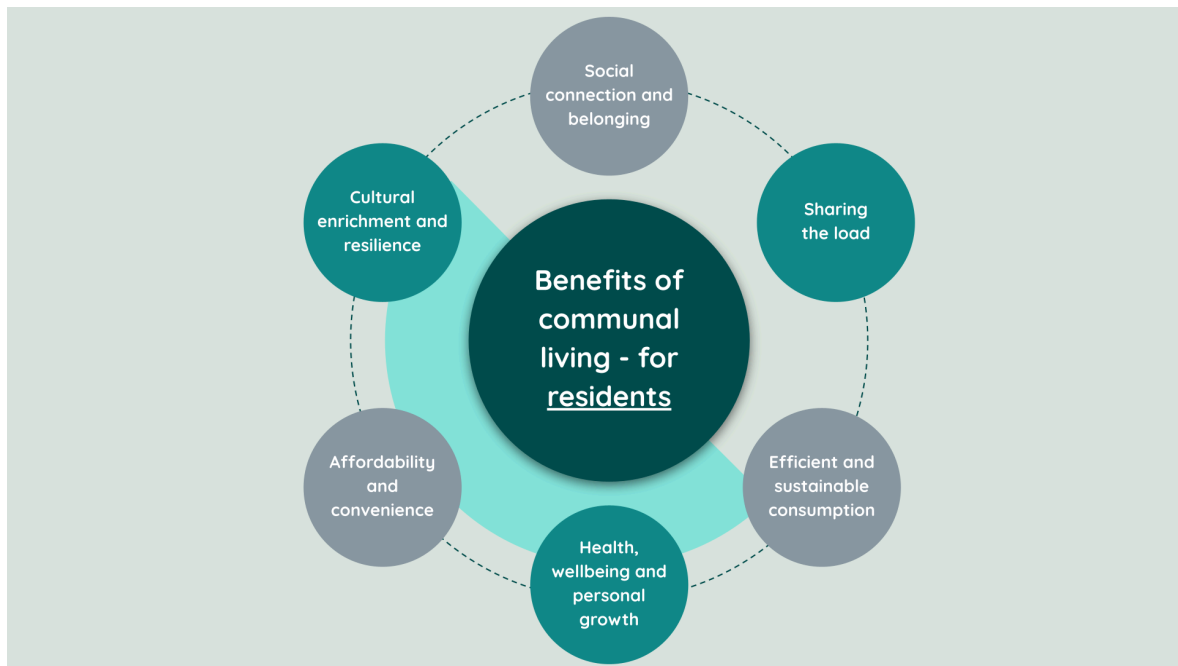
- Implement systems for mutual aid and informal support, such as a buddy system for mutual aid and check-ins.
- Promote a culture of gratitude and personal acknowledgement to show residents their contributions matter.
- Foster an environment where older adults feel purpose and belonging, rather than isolated.

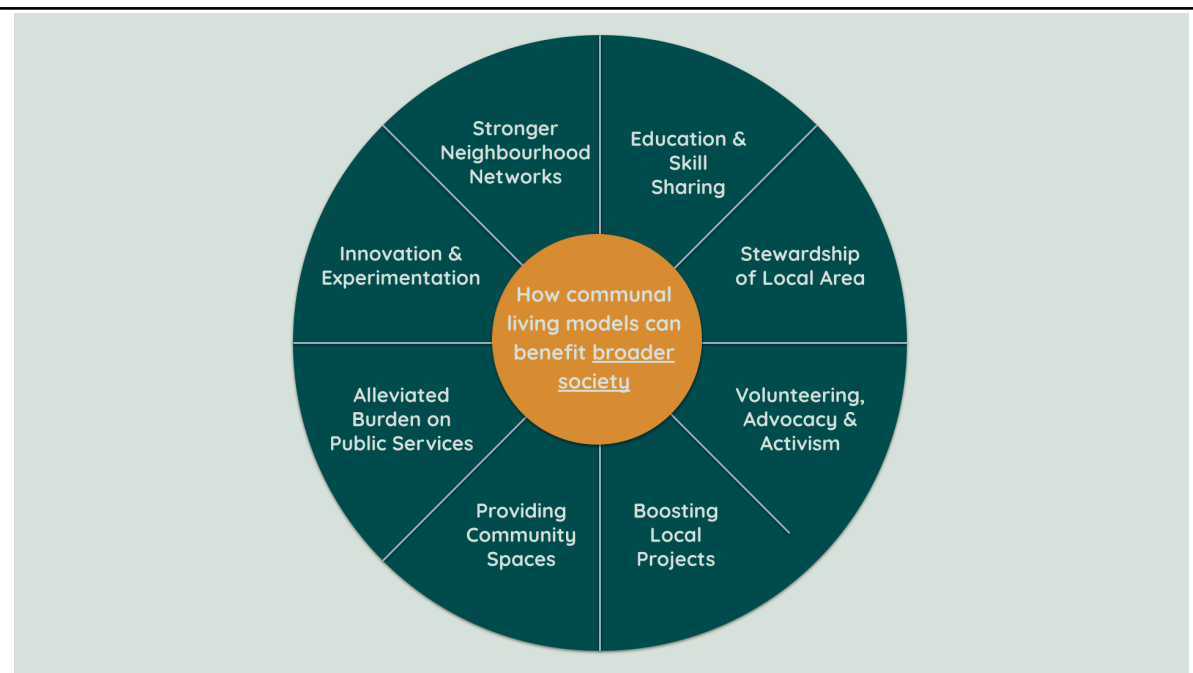
Evolution and Renewal:

- Embrace the changing dynamics of the community as people join, leave, or age - and as broader context shifts - integrating newcomers and being open to evolving the community's vision.

Do you have any evidence of the benefits of intentional intergenerational developments (e.g. that more older people could be interested in 'rightsizing', health and wellbeing benefits etc)?

The below visuals are taken from my output, *Beyond the White Picket Fence* which has a huge amount of qualitative evidence of the benefits - both for residents, and stretching out into communities more broadly. I give a written overview below.





Intergenerational communal living is a practical, proven response to major social challenges, delivering tangible benefits across all age groups.

Health and Wellbeing Benefits:

- **Reduced Loneliness and Isolation:** Elders report getting a "new lease of life" and avoiding the isolation of living alone. The presence of children is described as "enlivening and invigorating".
- **Preventative Health:** The cultivation of "neighbourisms"—small, frequent acts of care—builds informal support networks that can interrupt negative health cycles and relieve pressure on professional services.

Affordability and Security:

- **Stable Housing:** Models with affordability mechanisms (e.g., Murundaka's capped rent, LA Ecovillage's land trust) provide a crucial security to age in place and raise families affordably.
- **Shared Resources:** Collective purchasing and shared use of amenities (tools, laundry, cars) leads to efficient and sustainable consumption and cost savings.

Cultural and Social Resilience:

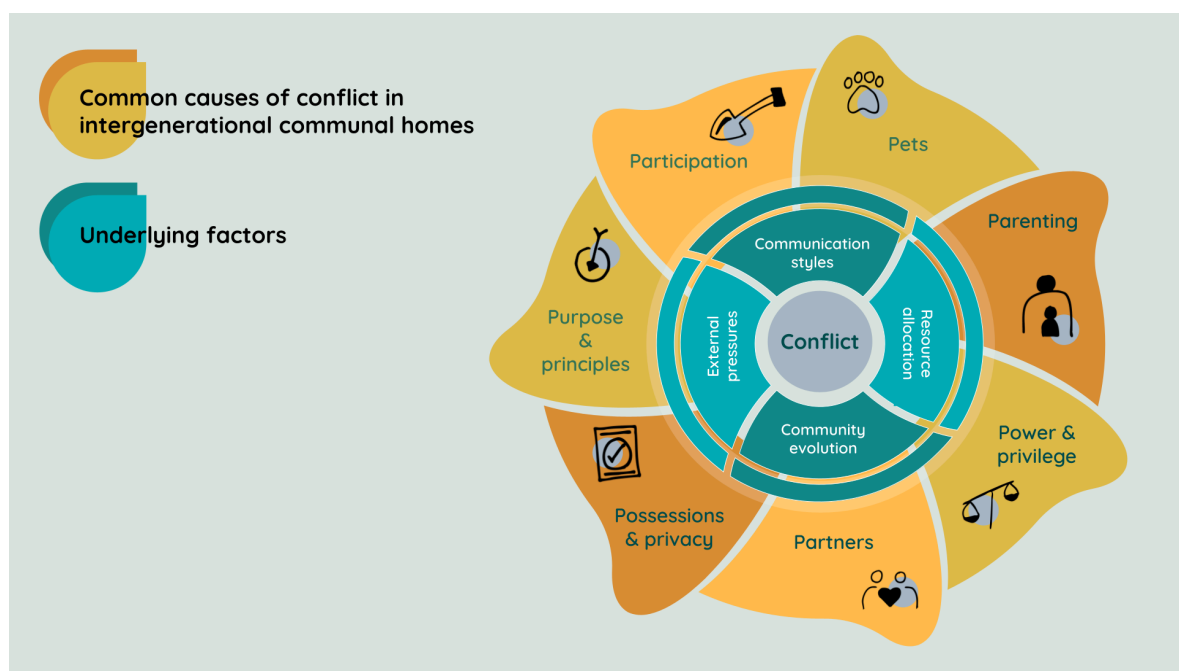
- **Village-like Support:** Parents gain a support system, making tasks like childcare less isolating and more affordable.
- **Bridging Divides:** Exposure to diverse perspectives fosters empathy and reduces polarisation, countering the narrative of generational conflict.

Broader Societal Impact: Communities enhance local social capital through volunteering, education, and activism, acting as "catalysts, not bubbles" for positive change.

Can you share any insights of the challenges of creating intentional intergenerational communities (e.g. tensions between older and younger residents over social activities or service charges)?

- Inevitable Conflict: Conflict is considered a necessary part of community, and the goal is to manage it proactively rather than avoid it. Common friction points include:
 - Intergenerational Tensions: Differences over noise levels, activity timings and expectations for social activities.
 - The "Seven P's" is a framework I created (below): Conflicts often arise around areas such as participation and contribution, parenting and pets.
 - Operational Challenges: relying on shared labour (cooking, maintenance, governance) can lead to resentment if contributions are perceived as unequal. Slow decision-making: many self-governed communities use consensus-based processes, which, while inclusive, can be time-consuming and frustrating for urgent issues. Cultural differences: tension can arise between newcomers and founders/early joiners over community direction or adherence to original agreements and traditions.

Of course, these aren't relevant to all models. Some have staff to help navigate these differences, some are much looser or less 'intentional' so do not have many structures in place. There is no right or wrong, but it's important that residents have a say.



Are there institutional obstacles to creating intentional intergenerational communities (e.g. planning difficulties or funding barriers)?

Yes, significant systemic barriers exist as policy was largely designed around the traditional nuclear family and age segregation as default.

Financial Disincentives and Funding Barriers:

- VAT Inequality: The 20% VAT on existing building reuse (retrofitting) compared to 0% on new builds is a major barrier to repurposing vacant properties for communal use.
- Financial Exclusion: Funding streams and mortgages often exclude alternative ownership models (like limited-equity co-ops) needed to ensure long-term affordability and inclusion for low-income residents.

Legal and Regulatory Gaps:

- Lack of Clear Policy Home: Intergenerational living lacks a clear policy home and is often excluded from legal and planning frameworks, making it complex and time-consuming for groups to establish new projects.
- Restrictive Zoning: Zoning laws often favour single-family housing, hindering the development of medium-density, communal models that require shared spaces and non-traditional household compositions.

Cultural Obstacles:

- There is a lingering cultural suspicion and narrative that isolated home ownership is the only 'valid' way of living, which limits demand and political will to support alternatives. We should be supporting communal living instead of disincentivising it, especially as we have so many people, so few resources, climate breakdown and rising cost of living.

What factors would enable intentional intergenerational communities to be more prevalent in the UK?

Prevalence can be increased by addressing barriers and recognising communal housing as a priority for social infrastructure - which should be a core part of preventative health and care.

Policy and Design Reform:

- Integrate intergenerational design into mainstream housing policy, incentivising features with social value, such as communal spaces, shared amenities, and adaptable homes.
- Repurpose empty spaces and remove financial obstacles like the 20% VAT on building reuse to facilitate adaptive reuse and retrofit projects.

Financial and Legal Innovation:

- Prioritise economic inclusion and long-term affordability, supporting models like community land trusts, mixed-tenure arrangements, and public land transfers.

- Tackle systemic barriers by developing more flexible legal categories and planning codes to explicitly legitimise communal homes.

Cross-Sector Leadership:

- Cultivate cross-sector collaboration between housing, health, social care, and planning to unlock shared resources and embed communal living into preventative health strategies.
- Revive loneliness on the political agenda with sustained commitment and joined-up leadership to tackle age segregation.

Advocacy and Evidence:

- Invest in impact capture to track the social and economic benefits of these schemes (e.g., using social value frameworks) to build the evidence base for greater investment.

Although my research focuses on Australia and the US, and more ‘formal’ living arrangements, it is critical to recognise that there are many more ‘informal’ communal living arrangements across England (and elsewhere), which bring great value to residents, and reduce resource use, such as the ‘warehouse’ communities in London. These should be protected and supported, instead of consistently hampered and endangered. One resident of a 14 person unit in London said to me, “as a Liverpoolian in my late 20s, Warehouse living has provided viable alternative living scenario that has allowed me to move to a new city, build real community, live more affordably, benefit from sharing and a circular economy, and avoid falling into insular living simply because it is the status quo”.

Do special considerations apply in respect of diverse groups of people, particularly those with protected characteristics?

Yes, intentional design and commitment to social justice are vital to ensure these spaces are inclusive and address intersecting needs.

- **Social Justice and Affordability:** My research intentionally spotlighted models prioritising affordability and social justice to counter exclusivity. These models use limited-equity or subsidised housing to include low-income individuals across age, race, and class.
- **Trauma-Informed Design:** Communities serving vulnerable populations (e.g., homeless youth, foster families, individuals leaving incarceration) must provide wraparound staff support and use trauma-informed principles to support healing, trust, and belonging.
- **Addressing Intersecting Divides:** Communities like LA Ecovillage and Canticle Farm intentionally strive for diversity across age, ethnicity, gender, and income. This practice is necessary to ensure the community does not perpetuate inequalities and works actively to bridge cultural divides.
- **Accessibility:** Physical design must accommodate varying mobility and sensory needs to truly support individuals with disabilities and allow people to age in place.

Is there anything else you would like to make us aware of?

I would like to make the Inquiry aware of two key concepts that emerged from my research:

1. Housing as Social Architecture: The importance of intentionally creating social architecture—the intentional structuring of social interactions through activities, governance, and cultural norms—to build trust and resilience. This ensures housing truly serves as a foundation for connection, not just a physical unit.
2. "Neighbourisms": This term describes the small, organic, frequent acts of everyday care and interest that flourish in successful communal living environments but are rare in wider society. These informal acts—such as checking in on a sick neighbour or offering technology support—are the building blocks of a resilient society and provide a critical layer of prevention against loneliness and crisis. Policy should look beyond formal care structures to actively enable this culture to flourish.

Deadline

Please send submissions to Lois Beech, Consultancy and Partnerships Manager at Housing LIN, by Friday 17 October at: research@housinglin.org.uk