

## SEEFA Policy Panel on Later Life and Ageing

### Summary of the Key Issues on: *How can people of all ages work together to make later life better for current and future generations?*

To launch a new and important theme for SEEFA's coming work, we held a Policy Panel on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2017 addressing the question: *How can people of **all ages** work together to make later life better for current and future generations?* The following is a summary of the key issues which were identified as a starting point for debate:

1. We are all benefiting from greater life expectancy, yet this is often not seen as a good thing but as a problem.
2. Increasing contact across generations and reducing barriers is vital. Current research at the LSE shows health and other benefits of cross generation family contact (see research conducted and evidence compiled at the LSE by Prof Emily Grundy, Marco Tosi and Thijs van den Broek and [www.SEEFA.org.uk/resources](http://www.SEEFA.org.uk/resources)).
3. All people hope to live to grow old. Ageing affects us all. Why do we see older people as a different group therefore?
4. What do we mean by inter-generational? For instance, older people are all different ages. There are different generations of people who are older people.
5. Older people are a national resource rather than a burden (see Policy Panel papers on ageing assets and valuing the contribution of older people at [www.SEEFA.org.uk/resources](http://www.SEEFA.org.uk/resources)).
6. Loneliness affects all generations. Why do we look at it through an age lens?
7. Having a healthy lifestyle when young can pay back benefits later.
8. Carers – do we support carers enough? Caring presents limitations on carers e.g. for education, employment, health. Carers must look after themselves as well as the one being cared for. Caring responsibilities affect all generations.
9. New and creative housing options are needed e.g. co-housing and sharing – living together across generations.
10. Housing being built now needs to be suitable for current and future generations of older people. Demographic trends must be taken into account.
11. Poor housing for older people has major implications for the NHS. Poor quality housing costs the NHS around £2.5 billion per annum (see the Government Office for Science's 2016 report on 'The Future of an Ageing Population'). This report cites a study by J Torrington (2015), writing in a Foresight Evidence Review, on 'what developments in the built environment will support the adaptation and future-proofing of homes and local neighbourhoods so that people can age well in place over the life course, stay safe and maintain independent lives.'
12. Adults without children – is this a neglected area?
13. Digital improvements – but – face to face contacts are vital. Are the young learning the skills they need to interact face to face and build relationships?
14. Assumptions, stereotypes and negative portrayal of ageing. Attitudes to ageing seem to underpin our concerns: where do attitudes to ageing come from? Children don't appear to have them

15. Age gets attached to problems which may not be about age at all. We should stop putting people and problems in age boxes. Problems affect all ages
  16. Other countries and communities do things differently. Can we look at what works better elsewhere in the world?
  17. We need to adopt life course approaches rather than age box categories. The concept of life-long learning and employment options for older people are still insufficiently prioritised. We need a life course approach for employment and offering a range of options for older people including retention in the workplace; skills refreshing and updating and life-long learning and opportunities. We'd like to see encouragement to consider and access different career options (e.g. internships and apprenticeships for older workers).
  18. A suggested way forward could be for SEEFA to identify one or two key focuses e.g. multi-generational approaches to tackling loneliness; identifying and promoting innovative housing solutions.
  19. *(From previous Policy Panel on ageing assets). Inter-generational planning. We are concerned that different age groups can find themselves apparently competing with each other for services and resources. Inter-generational thinking should be integral to all planning and the impact of decisions should be taken into account across all age groups. In particular we think much more could be done through education to make constructive opportunities for 'equal terms' social contact across age groups to promote good communication and understanding.*
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## **Examples of Good Practice – for further exploration.**

Ruth Rose: Living Books

Jane Minter: living together – co-housing and sharing options

Merilyn Canet: Joint housing development

Alan Burnett: Digital buddying schemes (he offered to let us have further info)

Jim Harrison: School initiatives in Hampshire where there are opportunities for young people to meet and do activities with older people, including in care settings. Also the National Citizen Service.

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**SEEFA is the South East England Forum on Ageing and aims to bring people together to influence later life strategies, policies and services to make life better for current and future generations of older people. SEEFA's Policy Panel comprises people who by virtue of their own life experiences are experts on later life and who can actively engage with policy makers and commissioners to influence later life policy.**

### **SEEFA contact information**

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