NEWS RELEASE

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**CALL TO BOOST LIFE CHANCES OF ‘THE NEXT GENERATION’ BY INTERGENERATIONAL MIXING**

**New report shows how greater interaction between older and young people can help tackle crises facing children and young people and counter ageism in divided Britain**

Bringing young and older people together can help tackle some of the big social ills facing the next generation – from poor health, anxiety and loneliness to educational attainment and social mobility. Intergenerational projects can boost confidence, skills and opportunities for children and young people while changing attitudes towards ageing.

Urgent action is needed to tackle the worsening crises facing children and young people, according to think tank United for All Ages in its new report, ***The next generation***, published today (8 January 2019). It calls on every nursery and school, every children’s and young people’s organisation and every local authority to link with older people’s care and housing providers, volunteers and organisations and mobilise together for the next generation.

The report’s analysis of recent research shows the gap is widening on key indicators from early education and childcare to school achievement and social mobility, while young people report rising levels of loneliness and anxiety and are fearful about the future as services and support are cut. *(See page six of the report for key statistics)*

At the same time Britain is one of the most age segregated countries in the world, particularly for the oldest and youngest generations. But the new report highlights the growth in 2018 of projects that bring different generations together to mix and share activities and experiences.

The next generation report shows how these projects bringing younger and older people together can give children a good start in life, raise educational attainment, change attitudes, solve tough issues and shape the future. Examples included in the report include:

* **Starting early**: with the importance of the first three years of a child’s life widely recognised, there are a growing number of co-located care-home nurseries and parent and toddler groups set up to visit care homes, where meaningful play and development of communication skills are linked to the early years curriculum, with positive impacts on children’s well-being, language use and acquisition, social interaction and empathy, as well as delivering economic benefits for providers of care and childcare
* **Raising attainment**: children involved in intergenerational projects have better reading and communications skills, are more school ready, and demonstrate more empathy; for example they are engaged in interactive learning with older people about history and ageing through InCommon’s work in London, while building relationships that nurture emotional intelligence with Full Circle’s older volunteers in schools in Oxfordshire
* **Changing attitudes**: ageism stops people of all ages from maximising the tremendous opportunities of our ageing society, but intergenerational projects that build relationships between young and older people change attitudes towards ageing and the issues we all face whatever our age, through shared experiences and bonding across generations – all the projects featured in the report offer examples of raising awareness and changing attitudes
* **Solving tough issues**: from improving health to tackling poverty, promoting social mobility to reducing crime and waste, intergenerational projects can help solve some of the tough issues facing the next generation, whether it’s through online mentoring nationwide with Brightside or ‘mix and mend’ cafes in Liverpool or healthy exercise in Teesside – or simply creating opportunities and building confidence for disadvantaged children and young people
* **Shaping the future**: engaging the next generation of care and childcare students in intergenerational interaction through their Activate Learning college placements in Berkshire and Oxfordshire with providers of care for older and young people, thereby creating a lasting impact across three generations while promoting recruitment and retention for hard-pressed care and childcare workforces

The next generation report features contributions from some twenty national and local organisations concerned about improving relations between the generations - ranging from the Children’s Commissioner, Child Poverty Action Group and Nesta to Anchor Hanover, Pre-School Learning Alliance and Grandparents Plus.  They have all shared ideas and projects that tackle tough issues facing children and younger people through intergenerational interaction.

The report makes eight key recommendations:

1. Every nursery, childminder, parent/toddler group and children’s centre should link with a local older people’s care home or housing scheme – and vice versa
2. Every primary and secondary school should involve and engage with older people in their community – from hosting older volunteers and services to linking with care providers
3. Every community should explore opportunities to develop places where younger and older people can mix and share activities and experiences – creating 500 centres for all ages by 2023
4. Every local authority should develop a strategy for building communities for all ages where meaningful mixing is part of everyday life – involving local people and providers
5. Every children’s and young people’s charity and community organisation should look at how to solve tough issues facing the next generation through intergenerational projects
6. Funders should support projects that promote positive relationships building trust and understanding between younger and older people – working with the media to rid Britain of ageism
7. Investors should look outside the box of age-related silos to invest in imaginative co-located care, learning and housing schemes that bring younger and older people together
8. Government should support and promote mixing between different generations through intergenerational care, learning and housing, explaining why it’s key to creating better services, stronger communities, a stronger Britain and an end to ageism

Writing in the report, Anne Longfield, Children’s Commissioner for England, says: “Last year I heard how one Italian town was helping teenagers, and it has really stuck with me. Concerned about teenagers’ anxiety, boys were encouraged to try out traditional pasta making with some of the older women in the community. Working on the pasta together there was no real pressure to talk about themselves, but rather a sense of acceptance as they contributed to the communal effort and achievement.

“It’s something we can learn a lot from. Whether it’s grandparents or members of the local community, a strong relationship across the generations can be a real anchor for children growing up in today’s hectic, 24/7, digital world. Offering children time, companionship and a fresh perspective to today’s challenges can go a long way to building the confidence and resilience children so desperately need. It might not mean making pasta, but I think mixing up the generations has so much to offer young and older people.”

Stephen Burke, director of United for All Ages, said: “There is no bigger challenge than creating a better future for all our children and young people. The scale of the challenge in Britain is massive as the next generation faces a crisis in childhood and beyond – from poverty to mental health, crime to family breakdown, educational attainment to work and housing. These issues can be tackled by action nationally and locally, not least by much greater intergenerational interaction between young people and older people.

“More meaningful mixing can create opportunities for children and young people – from building confidence and communication skills to getting school ready and achieving potential to networking and social mobility. Bringing older and younger people together can increase mutual understanding and tackle ageism. By starting as early as possible in children’s lives, we can change culture and attitudes for the long term.

“Research shows that there are lasting benefits of a good start in life. Given the concerns around social mobility, closing the attainment gap, improving school readiness and developing young children’s language and literacy skills, intergenerational action could and must make a much bigger contribution to this agenda.

“Every pound invested in the kind of projects included in The next generation report produces dividends across the life course of individuals and for our society as a whole. The return on relatively low levels of investment and the more fulfilled lives which result are why we need concerted support for early intervention, engaging people of all generations to help the next generation.”

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

‘The next generation: how intergenerational interaction improves life chances of children and young people’ can be downloaded from 8 January 2018 at [www.unitedforallages.com](http://www.unitedforallages.com) The report contains a wide range of projects, ideas and case studies illustrating the key recommendations.

For advance copies of the report, media enquiries, interviews etc, please contact Stephen Burke, director of United for All Ages on 01692 650816 or 07714 334510 or stephen.burke@unitedforallages.com including contacts for contributors to the report.

United for All Ages is a ‘think and do’ tank and social enterprise that aims to build a stronger Britain and stronger communities by bringing younger and older people together. Launched in 2010, United for All Ages

works with policymakers, councils, charities, universities and companies to make ‘a Britain for all ages’ a reality. United for All Ages focuses on how action for and by all ages can tackle some of Britain’s major social and economic issues. The social enterprise is working with nurseries and schools and older people’s housing and care schemes to create shared sites across the UK. In spring 2019, United for All Ages is running regional workshops for organisations interested in developing intergenerational projects. [www.unitedforallages.com](http://www.unitedforallages.com) @united4allages