



HACT

age2age

PROJECT



Age2Age Evaluation Briefing 2

November 2010

Findings from the first year of Age2Age grants in Cumbria

Introduction

This briefing forms part of the programme evaluation of Age2Age. It focuses specifically on the first year of community grants awarded in Cumbria 2009-2010. The briefing begins with an overview of the programme, before describing the context of the work and what has been achieved so far. A discussion of the findings is then followed by key messages and learning from Cumbria.

Background

HACT, the housing action charity, is a charity that works with housing providers, so they can improve the wellbeing and living conditions of poor and marginalised people. Projects aim to deliver lasting change by harnessing the energy and enthusiasm of local people, housing providers and other organisations.

Age2Age¹ is a series of intergenerational activities centred around housing which aims to embed sustainable approaches of bringing generations together into housing providers business. The initiatives are operating in three geographical areas: Cumbria, East London and Mendip. Age2Age is testing two models of intergenerational exchange:

The first model focuses on Cumbria and East London and supports locally based community projects to engage generations in joint community activities

The second approach is to support the development of Homeshare arrangements in Somerset and Cumbria, bringing together older people with a home and younger people who need accommodation and are threatened with homelessness

The evaluation is looking at four success factors for Age2Age by 2012:

- A greater understanding of the role of housing in promoting intergenerational activity in communities;
- 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 feeling less isolated;
- Influencing the wider social housing sector to develop sustainable intergenerational approaches in all aspects of its work;
- The Homeshare model contributes to generating confidence and increased understanding between generations.

This briefing looks at the progress towards these success factors from the first year of Cumbrian grants.

¹ Age2Age is funded by The Glasshouse Trust, The Headley Trust, Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales, The Rayne Foundation, The Paul Hamlyn Foundation, the John Ellerman Foundation and 'V'.

Age2Age Community Projects in Cumbria

There have been six initiatives taking place in West Cumbria: four in the coastal areas of Whitehaven and Workington and one in each of Eden and Carlisle.

- Salterbeck Resident's Association, Impact Housing has brought the generations together to develop a mural for the community centre. The local residents wanted a mural that reflected their communities past, present and future.
- Woodhouse Community Action Group, Copeland Homes and part of Home Group North West are involving young people from the local Youth Partnership in the residents meetings and in carrying out a range of activities together
- Mirehouse Residents Group, also part of Home Group North West, are establishing a residents group and supporting community activities which involve all generations
- Nine residents groups took part in European Neighbours Day in a range of events. For example Greenbank Community garden, Home Group North West, have developed a community garden for older and younger people to grow vegetables at the community centre
- Eden Rural Foyer,(Impact Housing) and Age Concern Carlisle and Eden ran a pilot scheme of intergenerational activities at the Foyer
- Centre 47 Carlisle, Impact Housing organised a community day to bring generations together and plan further activities.

Setting the scene

Age2Age is operating in three areas of Cumbria: Whitehaven and Workington in west coastal Cumbria; Denton Holme in Carlisle and in Eden district which is inland and made up of rural and isolated communities.

Workington

Salterbeck estate is on the edge of Workington and was originally built to house workers from Scotland who came to West Cumbria to work in the steel works. When the steel works and the mines closed the economic heart of this part of West Cumbria was severely effected. This resulted in long-term unemployment and second-generation unemployment on the estate, contributing to Salterbeck going into a downward spiral. A regeneration project was developed in the mid 90's and the housing stock was transferred from the local authority to Impact Housing. The estate has now started to become a place where people want to live.

Four or five generation families are quite common on the Salterbeck estate because families did not move very far away and tended to want to stay near their parents. There are some multigenerational families living together but most people like their own independence and want their own property. However, in spite of lots of developments and an improvement in community confidence, young people and older residents still do not have a great understanding and respect of each other and it was felt that intergenerational work was important in the next stage of development.

South Whitehaven

Mirehouse and neighbouring Woodhouse estates in South Whitehaven were originally built by Copeland Council and were part of the stock transfer (3787 homes) to Copeland Homes/ Home Housing that took place in 2004. The estates are situated south of the town in an inaccessible area, poorly served by transport and any local facilities. Mirehouse is a compact estate, very similar to Woodhouse in size and type of housing, that is old well built council housing, but the areas have suffered from a bad reputation particularly associated with drug abuse. Unemployment is high amongst estate residents and employment opportunities are very limited. The Mirehouse Residents Group could only readily identify one two-parent household on the estate, although the community is settled. Many residents have lived there all their lives and people rarely leave. Money is scarce and there is little to spare for children to have treats or trips.

With the tenants on Woodhouse and Mirehouse estates experiencing many of the same difficulties, the neighbourhood team leader from Home Housing has been encouraging them to cooperate and work together on similar intergenerational issues.

Carlisle

Denton Holme in Carlisle is the main base for Impact Housing Association and was once a long established and close community. In recent years the community has changed as the factories, which traditionally provided employment, have closed and people have had to move for work. Employment locally is now focussed on small shops or people work in the city centre. Impact owns properties in the Denton Holme area but these are scattered and spread out over streets of old terraced houses.

Over some years Impact has established the area around its offices. There is now a furniture store, offices for other organisations and Centre 47, which provides a cafe and conference centre. The cafe could be a good facility for local groups and though open to the public and to some extent used by them and by local groups, it has not been a place where different generations have come together to build a greater understanding between them.

What has been achieved so far?

Numbers and age range

It is estimated that at least 300 people from across the generations have been directly involved in a range of Age2Age activities. For example, **62** people at Salterbeck aged between 8 and 100 years, of whom half were between 10 and 20 years of age, attended a community consultation exercise to decide on creating a piece of artwork that would be appreciated in the local community centre and replace the existing artwork; **50** people in Mirehouse from all generations attended a fish and chip supper followed by a game of bingo at the local community centre; in Carlisle **50** people came to a planning event to decide on activities that younger and older people could enjoy together. The vast majority of people were White British, which reflects the ethnic make up of the area.

Activities and opportunities

Opportunities for the generations to come together have happened in a number of different activities and in ways that had not happened before. There have been several multigenerational **planning meetings and consultations** that have acted as a mechanism to support the development of further community generational activities. There have been **community events** such as bingo sessions and a 'cook and sell' cake sale to support community involvement. In Woodhouse young people have joined the **local Residents Action group**. There have been **outings** to football matches and community fun days held; a **mural** has been developed and is on permanent display in Salterbeck Community Centre, reflecting the whole community's view of the past, present and future of the estate; in Greenbank a **community garden** has

been established. Mirehouse Residents Group now have a meeting room in the community centre, creating a space for different generations on the estate to come together.

New and strengthened partnerships

Through the development of intergenerational and multigenerational activities, new partnerships are emerging. For example in Woodhouse, the Resident's Action Group has partnered with Young Cumbria, the local youth partnership supported by Home Group North West. Prior to Age2Age, the groups operated separately. Now there have been joint interests developed. For example the intergenerational baking day and subsequent cake sale was to raise funds for a Young Cumbria sponsored charity initiative.

The interim evaluation report in April 2011 will explore this theme of partnerships in greater detail, in particular the significance of these partnerships for the housing sector.

Signs of trust across generations and breaking down stereotypes

There are signs that those that have been involved in Age2Age activities in Cumbria are developing trust and confidence between each other and stereotypes that fuel a generational divide, are beginning to break down. Here are some quotes from Age2Age participants:

"If I'm in town, (the young people) shout and run over and talk to you. Saw them in a completely different light" resident in Woodhouse

"Important for people to have a chat, people really start talking – young people (from the youth partnership) would not have talked to me before" older resident in Woodhouse

"It brought people out on the street, barriers gone down" community event in Carlisle

"Because we can get to know new people even if they are oldies" young person in Salterbeck

"It has got the younger ones talking more and helped the older ones to think younger" older resident in Salterbeck

"Once you get to know each other you can have your say. (You can) get on with each other, just like us" young person in Woodhouse

In order to develop the mutual trust between generations and break down barriers, the activities have focused on a common interest. This catalyst was the activities that the groups chose to work on and was of mutual benefit to all generations. The creativity of young people has been particularly acknowledged by the older generations.

The importance of developing and maintaining that trust has been recognised by the older people on the estates who felt strongly that they must not let younger people down.

"Standing up for young people and not going back on promises, carry out what you said you would do" older resident on Woodhouse

In one area there was opposition from some residents to suggestions for activities for young people. The Age2Age group felt that all young people were being stereotyped and that it was important that they spoke up in the defence of them.

Benefits to the community

Age2Age activities in Cumbria are beginning to show wider benefits to the communities they work in. Residents in Salterbeck felt that for too long people on the estate were hooked into thinking everything was bad in relation to anti-social behaviour, fear of crime and crime. They felt that by facilitating activities between all generations those fears were reduced. On another estate, there was evidence that where problems did exist, such as drug dealing, Age2Age made it clear that these were unacceptable to the community. For example, a resident was not encouraged to attend an event because he had a reputation as a drug dealer.

There is recognition by older residents that young people are the future of the area and through Age2Age activities and the demonstrable support between the generations, residents in the community could see that other generations are being supported to develop communities where all ages want to live and thrive.

“Community can see you are building a different generation, pass on the good things....” Salterbeck residents

“We want younger people to be part of developing the community, more responsible but (the way they participate) may look different” Housing Community worker

“They (other residents) see young people in a different light” Woodhouse residents

There was evidence across the projects of the generations interacting and supporting each other's ideas, in spite of opposition. The young people on Woodhouse are delighted that the Residents Action Group is working with them to develop a 'teen shelter' where young people can meet together with their peers and avoid trouble spots.

It is early days in the project, but there are signs that the aspirations of those involved in Age2Age is increasing through higher levels of self worth and confidence in what can be achieved when generations all work together.

Working towards housing providers priorities

The role of Impact Housing and Home Group North West's community staff in bringing the Age2Age participants together is an important finding. The benefit of their close connections with residents, tenants and communities, where they are known and trusted, should not be underestimated. This has been significant in the projects being able to engage residents and move the initiative forward.

In Whitehaven the role of the community wardens has demonstrated the multi generational approach of Age2Age in a housing setting. The wardens live in the local community and they span a variety of ages so they can relate and 'get along side' different generations. Their role could be further enhanced and developed through active facilitation of intergenerational activities.

In Workington, an established and experienced community development team have been able to use their experience and knowledge to reach into and engage the community in Age2Age.

The activities and approaches of Age2Age are in line with the objectives of the housing sector. For example, Impact Housing seeks to improve people's lives through action, and Home North West aims to create neighbourhoods where people choose to live and flourish. Housing providers are interested in how Age2Age can meet their objectives and in a way that makes commercial sense for their business. They want to have less empty properties, less vandalism and residents working together on communal activities that improve their quality of life. Age2Age is beginning to build the business case to show that intergenerational/ multigenerational approaches can meet these objectives in Cumbria.

Learning from the first year of Age2Age community grants in Cumbria

This briefing has presented emerging evidence that Age2Age is developing understanding of the role of housing in promoting intergenerational activity in communities, and improving the quality of life of both younger and older people through increased confidence and raised aspirations.

A number of important lessons have been learnt in this first year on how to create opportunities that bring generations together and these should be taken forward into the next developments of the Age2Age programme:

1. The use of small grants to stimulate and build on existing ideas and initiatives is an effective way to introduce an intergenerational/ multigenerational approach into communities. They can provide the foundations on which further community work can be built and embedded within organisations.
2. Intergenerational practice is built on, but is more than, community development. There has been considerable learning in the first year of what works and does not work to bring generations together. It has been shown that just inviting different generations to come to an event does not create intergenerational understanding and runs the risk of reinforcing stereotypes. Active facilitation is required and preparation work done with each generation separately if outcomes are to be achieved.
3. In the next stage of grants it would be beneficial for housing staff and possibly some community volunteers to have awareness sessions in how to bring generations together. The Beth Johnson Foundation's Centre for Intergenerational Practice has considerable expertise in this field and HACT can build on its existing partnership with Beth Johnson to engage the sector in training activities.
4. Intergenerational practice has been shown to be an approach, a process that requires a theme or purpose to focus activity. The challenge for Age2Age activities is to spread their efforts wider to include and engage larger numbers of people therefore creating a critical mass for change.
5. There should be greater acknowledgement of the different needs of generations, particularly in relation to where and when activities can take place. The rationale behind some of the Age2Age projects is the recognition that a large number of activities are age-specific and do not provide or encourage generations to come together. For example, in Whitehaven the Age Concern group meets in the same building as the Youth Partnership but at completely different times. This presents a major barrier to embedding intergenerational approaches and requires some flexibility.
6. Age2Age has shown the importance of understanding and acknowledging the context in which it is operating and the need to measure the 'distance travelled' by participants towards objectives. Age2Age in Cumbria is working in communities that have less advantages and opportunities than many others and where community relationships and interactions have been damaged in the past. The success of Age2Age will be to show how it is building the foundations to develop greater community inclusion and participation. This supports the Coalition Government's vision of 'The Big Society'² backed by a range of newly agreed policies, which propose to transfer power from central to local government and encourage people to take an active role in their local community.

² The Cabinet Office (2010) 'Building the Big Society.'

7. The value of the Cumbrian projects participating and engaging in the Age2Age learning events and seminar has contributed to the outcomes and should not be underestimated. The opportunity to share the learning from their activities in a national context and the acknowledgement of their successful efforts to bring about change in their communities has increased the self confidence and self esteem of the participants and given significant encouragement to the groups.
8. For Intergenerational Practice to be mainstreamed through housing organisations, Age2Age will need to make the business case based on outcomes. HACT needs to be specific on how evidence from Age2Age meets the priorities of housing organisations, links to regulatory and assessment frameworks and that make good commercial sense. These issues should be taken forward in partnership with the sector.

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