Generations

Increasing the social connectness of older people

Ideation: starting to explore solutions

DECEMBER 2019

Māu anō e rapu he oranga, nā to rourou, nā taku rourou, ka ora ai te iwi.

You will find your own path to well-being, but with your basket and my basket we will flourish.

Contents

4 Background

5 Process

6 Emerging ideas

9 Prototypes

19 Steps towards change

24 Partners

Thanks to our co-designers

Ruth Busch, Maria Climo, Wendy Barr, Jyoti Dua, Vimal Kumar, Raymond McGrath, Allison Dobbie, Denise McDonald, Steve McDonald, Chander Satija, Heather Alford, Yatish Wadhera, Rakesh Chopra, Rosa Chow, Yazdi Khambatta, Edward Bennett, Tim Coffey, Dhananjay Joshi, Satish Sikri, Heather Carter, Anne-Marie Coury, Claire Conza, Karan Kalsi, Tim Lomas, Marjorie Cunningham, Teena Abbey, Rebecca Kruse, Valerie Wright St-Clair, Kevin Lamb, Rebekah Preston, Nissy Concisom, Megan Somerville Ryan, the residents of Selwyn Village, and everyone else who shared their ideas, thoughts and stories with us.

Thanks to our partners and supporters

Auckland Council, St John, Age Concern Auckland, AUT Centre for Active Ageing, Kāinga Ora, Selwyn Foundation

Innovation Unit, 2019

Emily Preston, Jess Haddock, Aimee Hadrup

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/

We love to hear where our work is being shared.
Email us at hello@generations.co.nz

Learn more about Generations at www.generations.co.nz

The
First Footsteps in East
Africa
Richard F. Burton
19
0

Looking back

Background

What is Generations and where did it come from?

The number of New Zealanders aged over 65 is rapidly increasing, and health and social care policy, services and programmes are already struggling to cope. Social isolation in older people has emerged as a key health and social issue, having a similar negative impact on the health of older people to that of smoking, high blood pressure or obesity. With a greater number of people living longer than ever before, the way we support older people needs to change and adapt for a better future for all New Zealanders.

Generations is a multi-year social innovation project to develop innovative solutions to reduce social isolation in older New Zealanders.

The goal of Generations is to ensure older people have positive social connections to friends, family, communities, work and other non-paid day activities that enable them to thrive, participate and contribute as full citizens.

At the beginning of 2018, Innovate Change brought together a co-design group of older people, technical experts, other stakeholders and external provocateurs, together we embarked on a process of discovery that led to the development of a set of insights into what helps older people to thrive, as well as five key **opportunities for change**.

How might we:

1. plan for ageing well?
2. have housing that connects - not isolates - older people?
3. create work that welcomes older people?
4. elevate the visibility of older people?
5. power-up community catalysts?

Read more about Generations here:
https://www.generations.co.nz/

Process

What we did in this project phase

In 2019 we took the five **opportunities for change, expressed in these 'how might we' questions,** and used them as a springboard to to start to develop potential solutions. Innovation Unit[1] sought out partners to join us in taking this next step: working alongside our co-designers to explore, develop and test potential solutions through the below four steps:

DESIGNING

We ran ideation workshops across Auckland. In these sessions participants came up with ideas and started to build potential solutions together.

REFINING

We identified emerging themes and ideas from the ideation workshops and started to develop them into 'prototypes' that could be tested quickly and cheaply.

TRYING

We held a prototyping workshop with a group of co-designers, who then went out and did further testing with their peers using a toolkit we developed. We then came back together to make sense of what they had heard.

REVIEWING

Finally, using the findings from these tests, we assessed the potential of the ideas in relation to the outcomes we were trying to achieve and refined them based on feedback from older people in the community.

1 Innovate Change merged with Innovation Unit ANZ, a not for profit social enterprise that creates new solutions for thriving societies, in July 2018.

Emerging ideas

Throughout this process we took practical steps to make sure as many older New Zealanders as possible who wanted to participate were able to do so. We held workshops in a range of locations (including a residential aged care facility), supported travel, and designed activities to meet the needs and preferences of co-designers.

The variety of perspectives represented led to a diverse range of ideas and considerations for new solutions. These were synthesised into themes which are outlined below, before being developed into a small number of ideas for further testing.

1. How might we... plan for ageing well?

What we learned in the discovery phase:

The physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, participation and social changes of ageing are different for everyone but can be suprising, overwhelming and traumatic. Often people report being unprepared.

We emphasise financial planning without consideration for how we might live if a partner dies or if health or ability declines significantly. The transition out of work is often celebrated as a great milestone, but for some feels more scary than joyous. Some have major concerns about what they will do with their time; how they will be of value; and how they will connect socially with others when work has often fulfilled many of these purposes.

What we heard in ideation:

- Planning needs to start earlier and be revisited often - ***'ageing awareness'*** should be part of everyday life.
- Planning for ageing feels daunting and dry. It needs to be more fun and accessible.
- We should plan for and invest in connection, health, positivity, spirituality. These are important and require forethought.
- Plans aren't much use without the resources or infrastructure to make those plans possible. Financial planning only works if you can save.
- Test runs and gradual transitions for major changes could help - breaking down fears about supported living, easing into a lighter workload rather than straight into full retirement etc.

"We need to move from 'retirement-ready to 'life-ready'."

2. How might we... have housing that connects - not isolates - older people?

What we learned in the discovery phase:

Good quality housing is a human right yet more and more people struggle to have stable, healthy, affordable homes. This issue affects some older people, especially those that do not own their own home.

Many other older people live alone in houses with lots of space. Living alone is a significant contributor to social isolation and loneliness for older people and living alone as you age may present significant challenges. The daily living tasks we all undertake at home are often shared by our family or flatmates. When we're busy or unwell, the people we live with probably help out a bit more. The people we live with are an essential part of our care and support network.

What we heard in ideation:

- Everyone is different - we need to acknowledge, respect and cater for different levels of skill and interest in connection.
- Neighbours are best placed to take the lead in connecting with neighbours.
- Spaces and places need to be designed for social connection. This is often not the case, especially in high rise living situations.
- Appropriate, attractive housing for older people exists, but is often unaffordable and unavailable to those who need it.
- Valuing and prioritising building relationships is increasingly overlooked as a vital part of caring and support roles.

"Why do we not know our neighbours?"

3. How might we... create work that welcomes older people?

What we learned in the discovery phase:

The traditional transition from paid work to retirement at age 65, or any age, is disappearing. Continued participation in work, in ways that older people want, could have significant positive impact on social isolation and older people having a strong sense of contribution and value. The word retirement means to withdraw. How do we make our workplaces and communities places that welcome older people, not require them to withdraw?

There is significant workplace discrimination against older people. Our workplaces need to age in ways that celebrate older people by creating roles and supports where they can provide real value.

Participation in work should not be limited to paid work only. We need to find new language and value for unpaid work.

What we heard in ideation:

- Older people bring unique, valuable skills and perspectives to the workplace, however employers need to think differently in order to recognise this.
- Discrimination is a real issue and many older people have been burned by it and lost confidence as a result.
- Where employers are genuinely interested in receiving applications from older people, this needs to be clearly stated.
- Flexible working conditions and processes could support older people to fully participate for longer e.g. jobshares, flexitime, in-person processes for hiring and information.

"Ageism is very real... workplaces don't realise they are missing out on skills"

How might we... power-up community catalysts?

What we learned in the discovery phase:

There are people in communities all around the world that play a special and significant role connecting others and creating supportive networks. These people often do not have formal roles, and often do the connecting and gathering in low-key, quite natural ways; but their impact is vast. They are the people that host a coffee group at the local cafe and invite the person at the table on their own to join.

We are calling these people community catalysts. They can play a significant role to include older people and in communities. They could be old or young; queer or straight; men or women. They could be of any ethnicity. They should represent the diversity of our rich communities.

What we heard in ideation:

- Community catalysts are intrinsically motivated and are most interested in support than enables them to do more good and reach more people in their communities.
- Connection with and peer support from others doing similar work is seen as very valuable.
- There are significant financial and time burdens on community catalysts.
- They are often not aware of existing support available.
- Events and celebrations could provide a good way to recognise the efforts of these special people.

"Connect the people, let them know what's happening"

How might we... elevate the visibility of older people?

What we learned in the discovery phase:

It is unusual to see older people in our media that are happy, healthy and part of communities, except media advertising retirement villages. Many older people experience discrimination. For older women, new migrants and older people with diverse sexual and gender identity the discrimination and exclusion they experience can be significantly worse.

What would happen if we see more images and stories of ageing that are full of joy and possibility instead of decrepitude and disability? By increasing the visibility of older people; using positive language when we talk to and about older people; and increasing opportunities for intergenerational connection, we will start to design older people in, not out of, our lives and communities.

What we heard in ideation:

- Organisations working with older people have a role to play in developing stories and profiles that challenge stereotypes.
- Older people need opportunities to get out there and be visible trying new things - 'have a go' events, scholarships etc.
- Opportunities for genuine intergenerational connection and friendship can be powerful - links to schools and early childhood education settings were mentioned, as was the power of pets to enable connection.
- Small everyday behaviours that encourage connection can make a big difference: smiling, avoid condescending to older people, sitting next to them
- We need to highlight the value older people already create, often unacknowledged: strike, protest, be loud, proud and visible.

"Older people contribute so much to the community but it flies under the radar"

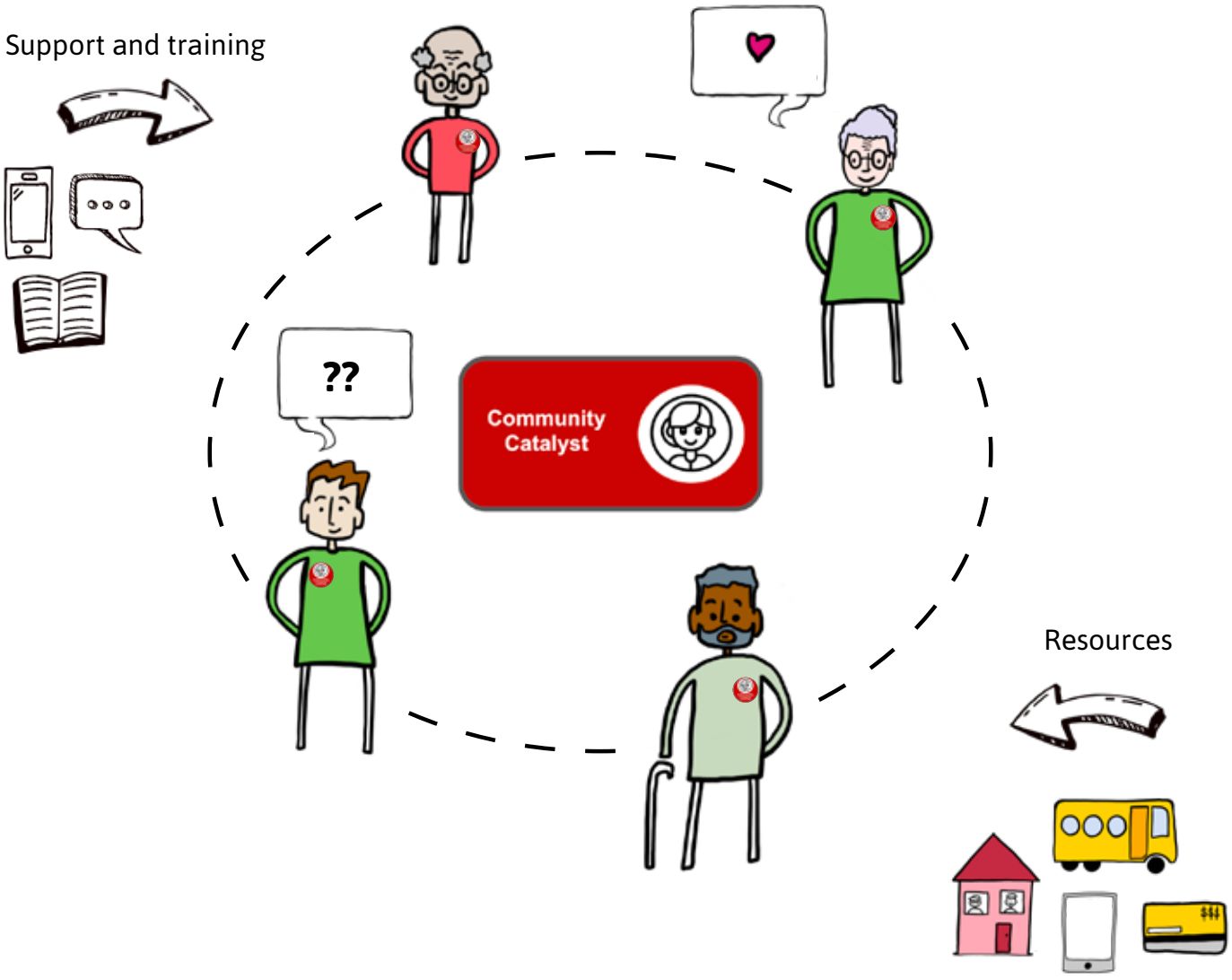
Prototypes

Four potential solutions were developed into prototypes to be tested with our co-designers, who then further tested them with their peers.

The following pages describe these emerging ideas, and what we learned from that those first rounds of testing.

IDEA ONE

Community Catalyst card



This idea emerged from exploration of the question:

how might we power-up community catalysts?

Idea features:

This idea involves providing those people who informally play a key role in connecting others with:

- An official identifier e.g. a badge or card.
- A pool of resources, support and training they could chose from to support them in their work.
- Access to a supportive network of other 'community catalysts' for support / encouragement / ideas.
- Awards and other forms of recognition for their work.

What we wanted to learn:

Some of the key questions we explored to see whether this idea had promise were:

- What types of benefits were attractive to those people who would identify as 'community catalysts'? Was there was any consistency?
- Was connection as a network(s) seen to be valuable?
- Was an 'official' status likely to be an enabler or a barrier

What we heard from our testers:

They liked:

- Opportunities to connect with peers across diverse communities, to enable sharing of ideas, skills and cultural insights
- Access to training (especially relating to mental health, elder abuse, computer skills and interpersonal skills).
- Access to resources and reduction of costs, especially rooms, catering, communication costs.
- Volunteer support - enabling them to reach more people, more easily
- Transport support - to enable more isolated older people to participate in the activities they ran
- A card with photo ID would help the people they worked with to feel safe and given them confidence
- This idea could build on existing resources and opportunities - making them aware of and helping them access things already in existence.

They didn't like:

- Testers saw a risk that if this was administered in a structured and formal way it would impinge on their ability to do what they knew worked for their communities.

They thought it would be even better if....

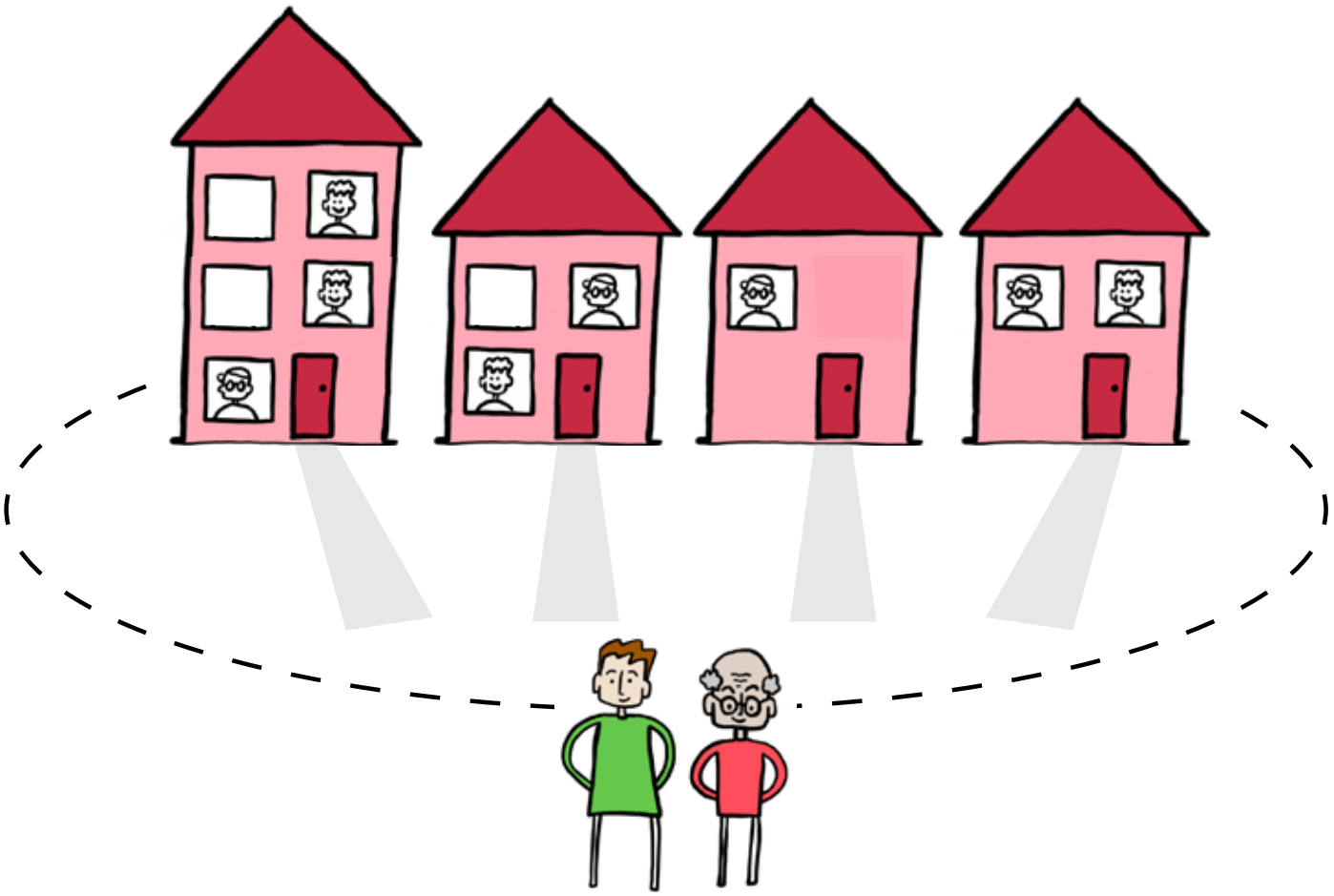
- This could give them access to grants and funding for their work
- There was access to language support and resources for the network
- The network could enable them to work together in groups on a range of things

Further considerations / next questions

- What resources exist that could be made accessible?
- How can we make sure administration doesn't create extra burdens on community catalysts or impinge on their work?

IDEA TWO

Connected living



This idea emerged from exploration of the question:

how might we have housing that connects not isolates older people?

Idea features:

This idea takes the community catalyst role and explores how an adapted version could work in a range of housing situations. It involves:

- Finding 'Community Connectors' to play a connection role in their neighbourhood - this might an older person, a volunteer, a staff member or someone else with the skills, interest and passion to take on the role.
- Resourcing and supporting them as appropriate (e.g. in an aged care setting they would likely be resourced by the organisation running the facility).
- Providing ongoing support, while empowering the Connector to perform their role in a way that is tailored to local needs.

What we wanted to learn

Some of the key questions we explored to see whether this idea had promise were:

- Are there people already doing / willing to take on this role in various housing situations?
- What are enablers and barriers to engaging as connectors or others?
- How do we enable / resource them to do it well?
- What does connection look like and mean to different individuals in different situations?

What we heard from our testers:

They liked:

- The flexibility to work with people with different needs and wants.
- The ability to build local connections across cultures.
- It was seen to address a really important need - making sure noone was left alone for 48hrs.
- It could help with other neighbourhood supports - identifying opportunities for community action over shared concerns.

They didn't like:

- Door-knocking - both from a privacy / safety perspective and because not everyone wants to open their door
- The risk that family might feel the community is taking over the care / monitoring of a family member and reduce their role / responsibility

They thought it would be even better if..

- drop in centres are provided and used as a open, opt-in space for connection;
- connectors work with resident associations, families etc. not just with older people
- intergenerational activities are a key focus for connectors (which people can opt into or not)
- the connector role is taken on by a group, not an individual

Further considerations / next questions

- How can we ensure older people feel safe to open their doors and don't feel their privacy is being invaded?
- How do we overcome language and cultural barriers in diverse communities?
- What other access barriers might exist and how can these be overcome?
- How can this be resourced in a range of contexts?

IDEA THREE

Senior skills transfer

This idea brings together themes and ideas which emerged from exploration of two questions:

how might we create work that welcomes old people?
how might we elevate the visibility of older people?

Idea features:

This idea connects older people who want to offer their skills, with those who would benefit from learning those skills. Similar to a traditional 'master / apprentice' model, it could draw on a wide range of skills and operate in various contexts. Features include:

- A mechanism to connect older people offering skills with those who want to develop those skills.
- A supported matching and connection process
- Ongoing, supported skills transfer as appropriate to the context (e.g. supervised by an employer, school, community organisation or training insitution)

What we wanted to learn

Some of the key questions we explored to see whether this idea had promise were:

- Is this something older people are interested in participating in?
- If so, what sort of skills would they be interested in sharing, with whom, and how?
- How is this different from existing offerings? How might it fit with them?

What we heard from our testers:

They liked:

- It encourages and allows for the growth of community capability through skill-sharing
- It meets a real need on both sides and feels like a meaningful contribution
- Sharing a skill and passing experience to the next generation was an attractive thought
- It was easy for them to identify skills they would be willing to share
- It's open and flexible

They didn't like

- The framing of the idea felt one-sided. A two-way exchange would be more beneficial and lead to deeper connection.

They thought it would be even better if..

- training in key skills for connection could be included during the sign-up or matching stage
- it could tap into existing offerings - maker spaces, men's sheds, pianos in libraries etc.
- it could be reciprocal - a two-way exchange of skills
- Knowledge could also be exchanged. e.g. policy advice, banking advice etc.

Further considerations / next questions

- Is there potential for this to be a paid role? How does this fit with the reciprocity element?
- What contexts would this work in? Trades training? Schools? Local government? Supporting recent migrants? (These were all areas of interest for testers)
- What support might be needed to ensure a positive experience for everyone involved?

IDEA FOUR

Life lessons

This idea brings together themes and ideas which emerged from exploration of two questions:

how might we plan for ageing well?
how might we elevate the visibility of older people?

Idea features:

This idea reimagines how we plan for ageing, putting the voices and experiences of older people at the heart of this process. It involves:

- A story-based approach to sharing lessons learned by older people on how to age well
- A broad, holistic scope. Subjects might include family, friendship, personal development, physical activity, spirituality etc. rather than just finances.
- Videos and materials available and accessible to people all ages
- Drawing on the expertise and experience of older people

What we wanted to learn

Some of the key questions we explored to see whether this idea had promise were:

- Are older people interested in sharing their experience with younger people?
- Are there specific subjects, stories, areas that people would like to talk about?
- Will this sort of informal, story-driven event attract people?
- Are there particular ways of sharing or groups of people to share with that appeal to our testers?

What we heard from our testers:

They liked:

- The focus on sharing and building connections across generations and cultures
- That this could easily fit alongside skill transfer
- The possibility of regular opportunities to learn from each other: 'every day is a learning day'

They didn't like:

- Using video as a medium would mean communication was one-sided

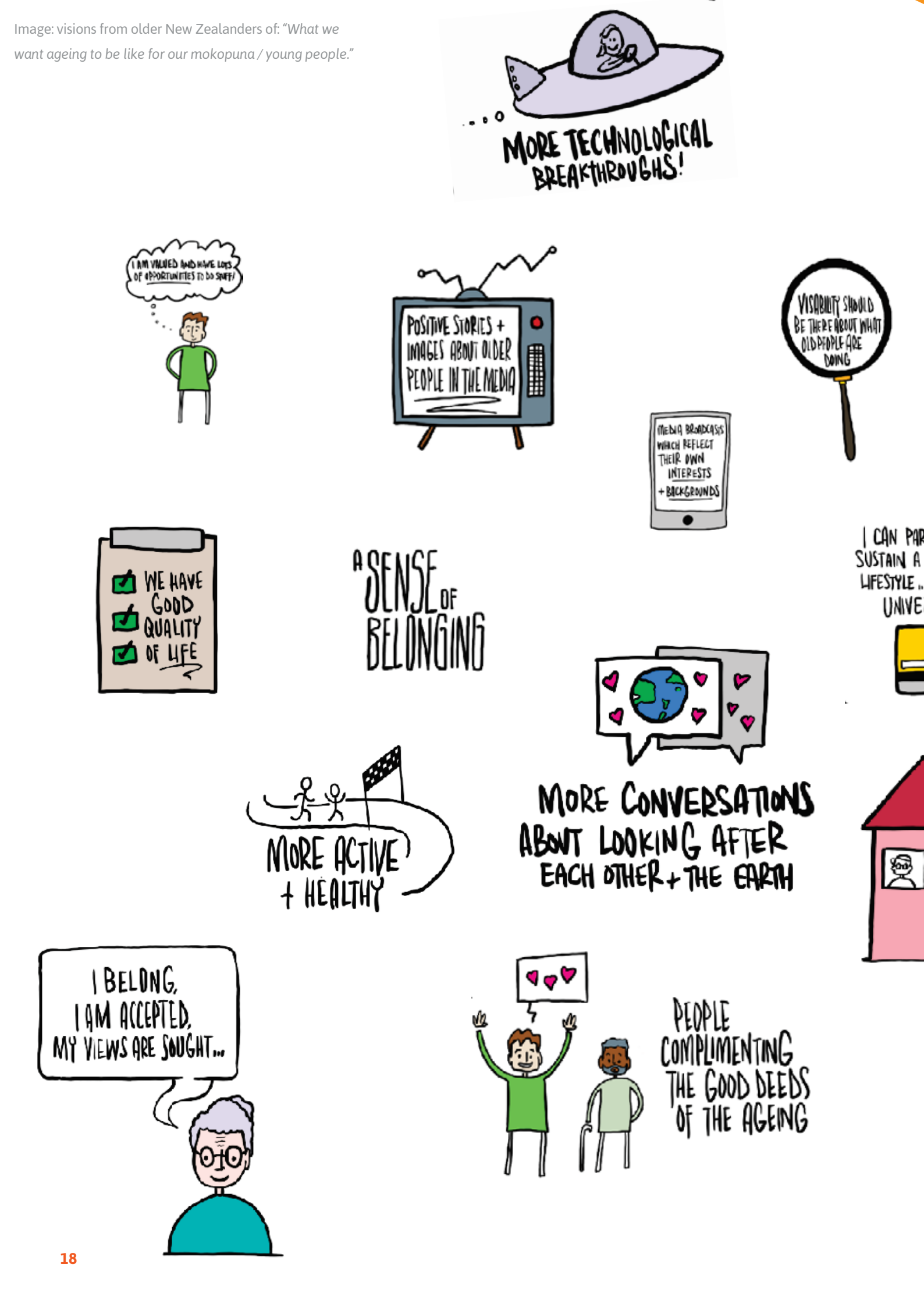
They thought it would be even better if:

- It could work as a two-way exchange or conversations e.g. through events, buddying, pen-pals
- It could build on existing programmes e.g. the human libraries programme
- It could be localised - testers prioritised being available to people in their own neighbourhoods

Further considerations / next questions

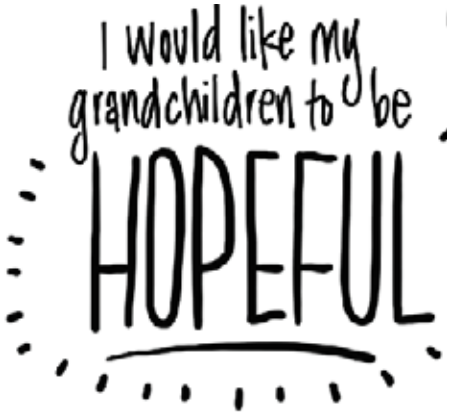
- How can we make this a two-way exchange, without losing the accessibility of video? Events? Adopt a grandparent?
- Are younger people interested in being involved? If so, what places, people, mechanisms would be attractive?
- What level / type of support would be needed to capture stories or facilitate connections?

Image: visions from older New Zealanders of: *"What we want ageing to be like for our mokopuna / young people."*



Looking forward

steps towards more positive, connected experiences of ageing



HOW CAN WE GET THERE?

1: Do different things

Our co-designers came up a variety of ideas to address the opportunities for change identified in the first phase of Generations, and increase the social connectedness of older people.

Opportunities for Change:

How might we:

1. plan for ageing well?
2. have housing that connects - not isolates - older people?
3. create work that welcomes older people?
4. elevate the visibility of older people?
5. power-up community catalysts?

Early indications are that those ideas which we started to test in this stage (pages 10-17) have the potential to create positive change.

Testing uncovered opportunities to strengthen the ideas, as well as further questions which need to be answered to give them the best chance of being effective in the real world.

We intend to continue to test, develop and strengthen these solutions, alongside our partners.

While we developed and tested four ideas in this phase, other interesting considerations emerged which we think are worth exploring (see pages 6-8). Some of these are listed below.

We encourage you to think about where there are opportunities to incorporate these ideas into your work and life. We also invite anyone who would like to work alongside us on developing these ideas to get in touch.

Additional ideas to explore:

- **Turning planning for positive ageing into actions - tangible tools and resources to support people to make their plans a reality.**
- **Putting the 'care' back into caring - showing we value relationships, not just efficiencies in key roles in aged care.**
- **Designing places and spaces for 'connection' e.g. conversation seats, drop-in areas, enabling connectivity in high rise accommodation**
- **Building everyday intergenerational connection through shared activities e.g. dog-walking**

"This variety of thinking reflects the concerns older people have for their way of life"

Co-designer

2: Do things differently

Along with this diverse range of ideas for new solutions, five key principles emerged from our work in this phase.

These principles emerged consistently throughout this phase of the Generations project and, while perhaps unsurprising, they serve as useful provocations for how we can do things differently, in a way which builds connection for and with older New Zealanders:

Key principles for working with older New Zealanders:

- **Provide opportunities to opt in, shape and be actively involved - not 'done to';**
- **Design for reciprocity - two-way engagement that values what older people have to offer as well as need;**
- **Think local - preferred connections were consistently personal and local;**
- **Foster peer connection as well as intergenerational links and,**
- **Connect around the positive: learning, growth and celebration are powerful starting points for connection.**

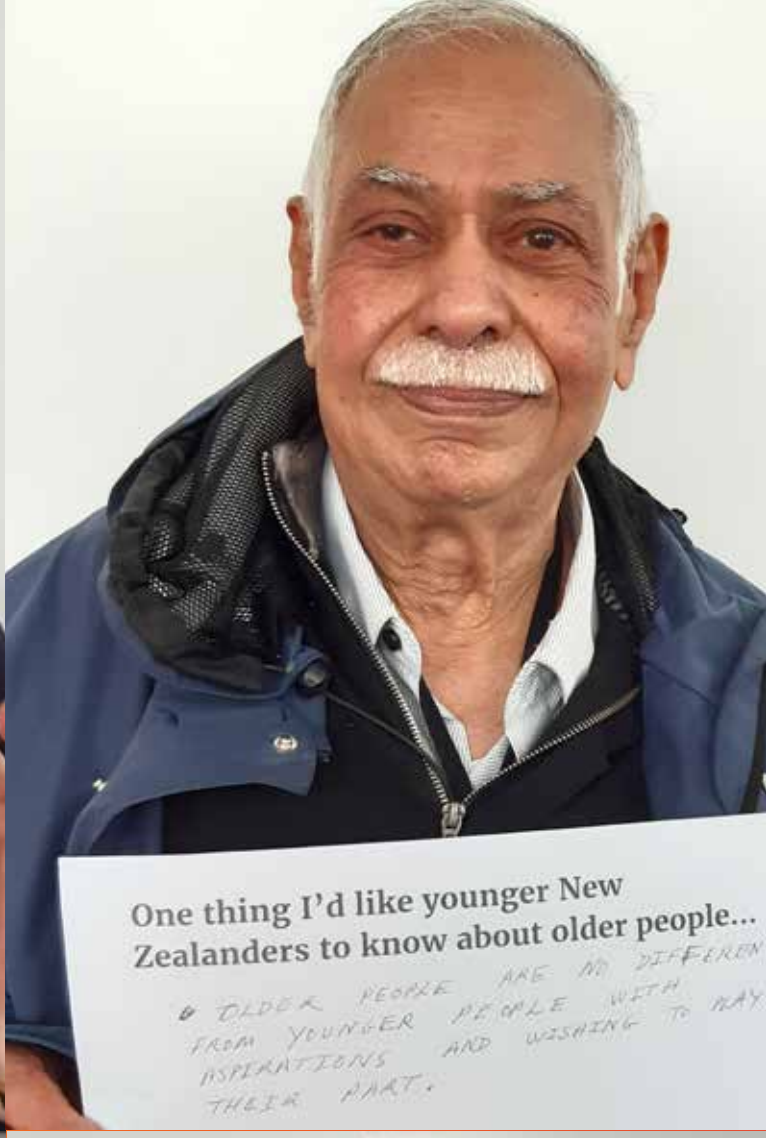
"Is it wishful thinking for us to be considered to have a part to play in modern society?"

Participant

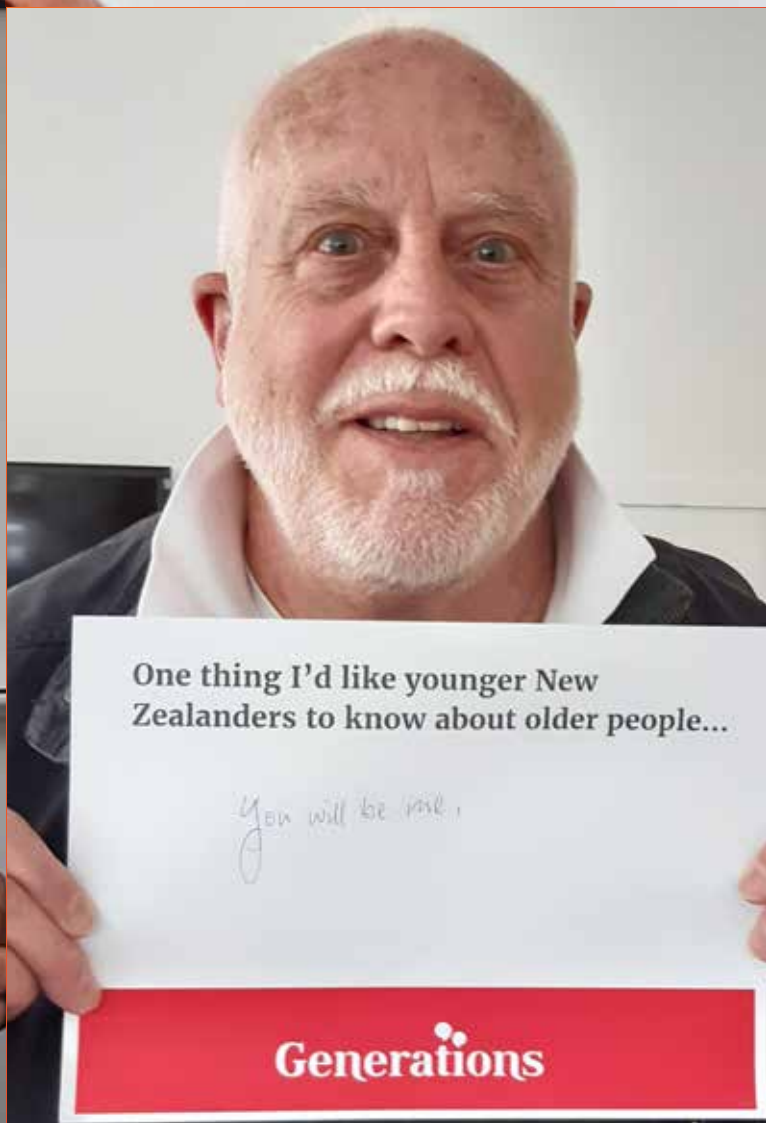
"We have a lifetime of experience..how can it be put to use?"

Participant

One thing I'd like younger New Zealanders to know about older people...
Older people are still young at heart.
~~and have the same~~
Not all older people are grumpy.
Generations


One thing I'd like younger New Zealanders to know about older people...
OLDER PEOPLE ARE NO DIFFEREN
FROM YOUNGER PEOPLE WITH
ASPIRATIONS AND WISHING TO MAK
THEIR MARK.

One thing I'd like younger New Zealanders to know about older people...
We are WISE!
Generations


One thing I'd like younger New Zealanders to know about older people...
You will be me!
Generations

We can only create this change by working together

If you are interested in these ideas, the next steps of the Generations project, or would like to talk to us, please email

hello@generations.co.nz

Core Partners

While we have worked with many others along the way, the below organisations were our core partners for this phase of Generations. We thank them for their contributions and hope they will continue to be a part of Generations into the future.

Age Concern Auckland have been involved in the Generations project from its early days, supporting the development of ideas and initiatives to better support vulnerable and isolated older adults across our Auckland communities. This work aligns with many of our core programs, in particular our Ageing Well and Social Connections activities, all of which aim to support and enable older adults to maintain independence, choice and purpose throughout their later years.

Auckland Council is committed to making Auckland more inclusive where everyone belongs and can participate. Being a partner in the Generations project from its inception provides an opportunity for council to help make a difference to the social connectedness of older people. This initiative also contributes to Auckland becoming an Age-friendly City

The AUT Centre for Active Ageing (ACAA) has the purpose of 'working with older people to live well. Its aims include 'co-creating research priorities and projects with older adults, communities and organisations' and 'translating research findings into policy and practice to advance community liveability.' These aims align with those of the Generations project and the Centre's Co-Director, Professor Valerie Wright-St Clair has been involved as a co-designer since the project's inception.

St John is busy throughout the community, delivering programmes which help people in many ways. In some cases they're practical, like transport to health appointments; at other times they're about emotional health e.g. Caring Caller: a volunteers-led service that St John provides for people who live alone or feel a bit lonely. St John has been a core partner and supporter of the Generations project since the beginning, due its strong alignment with our aims and values.

If you are interested in getting involved in the next steps of the Generations project, or would like to talk to us about this project, please email hello@generations.co.nz

What else is happening?

Age-Friendly Auckland - Tāmaki Tauawhi Kaumātua

Over 2019, Auckland Council and partners ran a number of workshops to get older people's ideas on ways they can maintain their wellbeing and active participation in the community. This is feeding into the development of an Auckland Age-Friendly Action Plan.

The Age-Friendly Action Plan will be used in an application to join the World Health Organisation Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities: a network that fosters information hsaring between cities worldwide so communities become more age-friendly

More information is available at: www.who.int/ageing/projects/age_friendly_cities_network/en/

Better Later Life - He Oranga Kaumātua 2019 to 2034

The Better Later Life - He Oranga Kaumātua strategy was launched in 2019 by the Hon Tracey Martin, Minister for Seniors and aims to drive action to ensure that older New Zealanders lead valued, connected and fulfilling lives.

The strategy was developed following public consultation, and with consideration of a large number of submissions from individuals and groups, including the Generations partners. It stresses the need for individuals, whānau, communities and organisations across sectors to work together to make the future better for New Zealanders as we age.

You can download the strategy from http://www.superseniors.msd.govt.nz/documents/better-later-life/better-later-life-strategy.pdf

Generations

Powered by:

Innovation Unit

Innovation Unit creates new solutions for thriving societies, and seeks bold change and impact at scale that enables a world where more people belong and contribute.