



## **Equality and Diversity Forum Research Network seminar Intergenerational equity: a fair basis for sharing resources?**

Date and time: 4-6pm, Wednesday 4 November 2015  
Venue: Equality and Diversity Forum, Tavis House,  
1-6 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9NA

Intergenerational equity was identified as a concern a few years ago. It can be understood in different ways but debates sometimes risk pitting one generation against another in polemical terms, for example arguing that young people are unfairly shouldering the burden of supporting an ageing population. As a pan-equality forum addressing all discrimination grounds and their intersections, the EDF Research Network is keen to highlight analysis and discussion that challenges such simplistic portrayals and is holding this seminar to do so.

### **In discussion following speaker presentations, the following issues were addressed:**

- One participant – whose son was at that time outside parliament campaigning about tuition fees – pointed out the gender implications of any redistribution of resources from older to younger people in terms of disadvantage to women.
- Regional differences were addressed, for example many people in the north of England are still living in negative equity.
- Wealth differences are huge – there is a danger of conflating different groups of older people when there are very separate discussions to be had in relation to rich and poor people. In this sense it was suggested that age is a red herring – economic inequality is the issue.
- There are important arguments about universal versus means-tested benefits.
- One participant had been part of the campaign against a default retirement age some years ago. People then were arguing for greater life and work choices. Now there are 1 million plus people working post retirement age and from a legal perspective, retirement age is virtually gone. However, socially we haven't kept up with the law. We need to think about what a state entitlement based simply on being old means.
- Inheritance tax was a focus of discussion. People who wouldn't dream of evading income or council tax will happily try to reduce the amount of inheritance tax they have to pay.
- Looking at intergenerational and migration research together may throw up different solutions to issues of resource allocation. In Germany for example, there is recognition that migration can help deal with implications of ageing population in increasing the working age population.
- Media reporting of resource issues in relation to generations was recognised as being unhelpful and inflammatory.

- It was suggested that there might be solutions to questions of resource allocation in the devolution agenda on a community or local level.
- One participant pointed out that debate so far has ignored questions of sustainability. As well as thinking about who gets a slice of the cake, we should think about the size of the cake and whether we should eat all of it. In other words, what are the implications of growth and allocation of resources for future generations?
- It was argued that until we address affordable rents and housing, arguments about intergenerational equity are misplaced. There should be more work done on housing taxation.

Karen Rowlingson argued that we don't talk about tax enough; that raising inheritance tax as she proposes could mean to reductions in other taxes and increased resources elsewhere.

Angus Hanton said that the Intergenerational Foundation has produced a Fairness index and is keen to look at the practical changes that can benefit all generations.

John Macnicol welcomed a focus on practical measures and repeated his concern that there is an implicit blaming of the older generation in this debate.

Gay Moon, seminar chair, thanks all the speakers and participants for taking part in this important debate. As someone with a particular interest in multiple discrimination, she is particularly aware of the issues here for different groups such as women, and in relation to class, showing that the situation is more nuanced than is often presented and backing up the case for further research and more measurement to make sure that societies resources do not simply pass from the wealth of one generation to the wealthy of the next generation.