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**Connected homes for older People: Role of family and locality
in combating Climate Change
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Abstract

The adverse impact of climate change on older people has become well documented and studied over the past decade with the increasing realisation that people of vulnerable conditions and situations are more likely to struggle with their physical and mental health issues in the face of climate emergency than others (OHCHR 2021). As we have seen in the flooding of Pakistan, Greece and the United States, or the wildfires in Australia and Southern Europe, Older People are the most vulnerable victims, hard to mobilise to reach in case of natural disasters or climate emergencies. At the same time, older people contribute to strategic visions and solutions regarding building institutional and community resilience in combating climate change through connected communities and localised practices of care, health, and wellbeing.

With the changing demographics, Older People have a larger role to play in the socio-economic dynamics of the home with more needs for health and social care. Older people and their living patterns have become critical in shaping our attitudes towards climate change. Over the past two decades two, fundamental changes have occurred, affecting the practice and experience of the family and homes of older people: the substantial increase of the ageing population and the encroachment of technologies in the way the home functions on a daily basis. Both challenged conventional operations in the home and are enabling new modes of communication and support that can be mobilised at times of need, as we saw during the global pandemic.

Between 16th March and 1st June 2020, the United Kingdom was subject to a Nationwide lockdown as a preventive measure to limit the spread of COVID-19 Pandemic and its impact. Older people faced challenging periods where support and services were cut, accessibility was either very limited or causing high risks and lived in self-isolation for months. This was an ultimate test of the remote operational capacity of homes, information and assistive technologies and e-infrastructures of the domestic space. To the surprise of many, Older People adapted quickly to technology, with online services and supplies being provided. Homes of Older people made use of mobile technology, eShopping and medical support, facilitating an instant transformation of the city from carbon-heavy to become carbon-neutral. This living pattern and technology-

supported lifestyle can enable further development of best practices and as a guide for sustainable living, this paper argues.

Driven by the global pandemic, nevertheless, Climate Change and its impact on the health and wellbeing of older adults are to be considered as a more existential threat. Data-driven systems of work and care during the COVID-19 Pandemic, for example, maintained an uninterrupted flow of information, personal data, and communications from the home to both workplaces and caregivers. Barriers have fallen; new links have been established. This paper studies the notion and best practice of connected homes in the United Kingdom, using the period of the pandemic lockdown as a test bed to recalibrate the mission, function, and lifestyle of older adults in their homes towards the permanent and sustainable way of life that contributes to the Zero-Carbon cities. It analyses the useful role of technology-assisted operations in the care of old people and its impact on energy consumption and climate change. It offers good insights into the readiness of global societies to help and support older people living independently at home.

*Full paper is being prepared for publication. Further details to be announced.