



Linking Generations
Northern Ireland

Creating Intergenerational Connections Project



Evaluation Report

May 2024

Kindly Supported by



Project supported by the PHA



The Creating Intergenerational Connections Project

LGNI were delighted to receive funding from the Halifax Foundation for Northern and Public Health Agency NI for this fantastic project supporting LGNI's vision.

The LGNI vision: *Northern Ireland will be a place where all generations are respected, understood, connected, and engaged together in their communities.*

The aim of this intergenerational project was to create intergenerational connections by bringing older and younger people together. This short report tells the story and impact of the project's activities.

The participants had the opportunity to spend time, share and learn new skills, have fun, develop greater understanding and respect between the generations and improve health and wellbeing of all ages. Four schools were matched with four older people's settings who we will encourage to sustain their new connections and to enjoy other activities and calendar date celebrations together.

Pupils were given a short Dementia Awareness/Age Awareness session in preparation for meeting and engaging with the older people (mostly care home residents) to ensure that they feel confident and comfortable in their interactions and are now 'Dementia Friends'. All activities were supervised by Teaching, Care Home and Independent Living staff.

The pupils visited the residents in their setting for four supervised sessions of around one hour to engage in conversation, and meaningful activities and of course enjoy refreshments. Participants were involved in design of project activities including arts & crafts/armchair aerobics/games/singing/Halloween/ growing in poly tunnel/ etc.

LGNI initially facilitated Planning Meetings between organisations involved, highlighting good practice and scoping and utilising the existing resources that the settings had. Then the Linking Generations NI Development worker met separately with the residents and staff in their settings to discuss their views and experiences of young people, discuss the proposed project and what activities they could enjoy together.

A fun first joint age session was then facilitated by the Linking Generations NI development worker with 'getting to know you activities' and plans for future activity sessions, building on the interests and abilities of the older and younger participants.

The settings have been encouraged to sustain and develop the links they have created to engage in activities, conversation and social interaction throughout the year.

A final session/party celebrated what has been created/ enjoyed and learned. Feedback has been gathered from all involved and this short report prepared.

Louisville Nursing Home & St Oliver Plunkett Primary School

Participants: 25 residents aged 55 – 91 years and 26 pupils aged 10 – 11 years

Linking Generations NI have enjoyed supporting pupils from St Oliver Plunkett PS in Belfast to link up with their neighbours, the residents in Louisville Private Nursing Home, to enjoy a number of activity sessions, getting to know each other and having fun through drawing and art, gentle exercise, games etc. In preparation for engaging with the residents the pupils received a Dementia Awareness session and are now all 'Dementia Friends'. In their first session they enjoyed finding out about each other, learning each-others' names and enjoyed actions of 'Baby Shark' song together finishing up with drawing portraits of each other. Some great artists of both generations in this group!



The intergenerational group met over 4 weekly sessions of around 1 hour with pupils walking from the local school who had previously had no links to the setting.

Activities in other sessions included, large soft ball games, armchair aerobics and singing together. At Halloween everyone enjoyed pumpkin carving and then creating Christmas tree decorations. A final celebration party and singalong was held with a reporter from the Andersonstown News local newspaper attending and taking photos and talking to everyone about their experiences. Please see newspaper article above.



St Oliver Plunkett PS was also recently awarded the Lord Mayor's Certificate by Belfast Lord Mayor Ryan Murphy recognising the Year 7 intergenerational project with Louisville Nursing Home.

Teacher stated: "Thank you for the sessions, the children loved their visits to Louisville"

Louisville PNH Care Home Activity Coordinator stated that "This was the first time the care home and staff were involved in an intergenerational activity and they plan to continue the links. Our residents got so much out of the children coming in - a lot of residents who would normally not engage with activities really looked forward to seeing the children and it really did make their day. Linking in with the children was so beneficial as the residents really seemed tuned in with the children especially the residents who have dementia. Thank you for this amazing opportunity, it really

did bring a lot of joy to our residents and helped break down the barriers. Some people can forget that even though someone might be in ill health they still have a lot to offer.”

Three Nursing Home staff who were involved in supporting residents during the sessions were keen to take part in Intergenerational activities again and noted:

“The residents got so much enjoyment out of meeting the children; I liked the atmosphere it created in the care home; It’s important to educate the pupils about people with dementia – I liked that they got to learn about dementia before they met residents; Great to see how keen the children were to get to know about the residents.”



Making the News!

18 November 2023

Links forged between primary school and care home

Residents and pupils form close relationships

BY CONOR MCPARLAND
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AN intergenerational project between a West Belfast primary school and a nursing home has concluded with a party for all involved.

P7 pupils from St Oliver Plunkett Primary School on the Glen Road have been visiting residents of nearby Louisville Nursing Home for the past five weeks.

Each week, the young and the young at heart took part in various activities, including a meet and greet, games and pumpkin carving for Halloween. On Wednesday, the pupils were once again at Louisville for a party to celebrate the finale of the project.

Residents and pupils enjoyed a sing-song from Peter Murray, whose wife of over 50 years Lorraine, is a resident at the care home. The music was

followed by a spread of tasty snacks.

Oonagh Molloy, Activity Co-ordinator at Louisville Nursing Home, said the project has been hugely beneficial for the residents.

“The residents have been beyond themselves with excitement every week waiting on the kids to come in,” she said. “Every week we have had a different activity such as meet and greet, games, pumpkin cut-outs.

“We wanted to introduce knowledge to the children

what life is like with dementia and utilising the resources that the young and old can offer each other, sharing and creating new skills, creating understanding and respect between generations and improve health and well-being of all ages.

“It has really brightened up their day.”

“This week is all about celebrating what the last few weeks have been about with a bit of a celebration and party.”

Eimear McGale, P7 teacher at St Oliver Plunkett Primary

School, said she has loved bringing her class to Louisville every week.

“I did a course with Linking Generations NI charity last year and we got a relationship developed between the school and Louisville Nursing Home which is so close to us,” she added.

“The project has really brought out the caring side of the pupils. Their interactions with the residents has been brilliant and some of them have really built some close relationships with the residents.

“They come back to school buzzing. It has been a really worthwhile and feel good project.”

Lynne Bennett, from Linking Generations NI charity, who helped organise the project is hoping both the school and nursing home can continue their relationship.

“As an intergenerational charity, we believe it is a positive experience for young and old people to meet,” she said.

“We helped create the link between St Oliver Plunkett Primary School and Louisville Nursing Home.

“It was a five-week project and it has been really positive. The hope that the relationship between both can continue.”

TOGETHER: Peter and Lorraine Murray

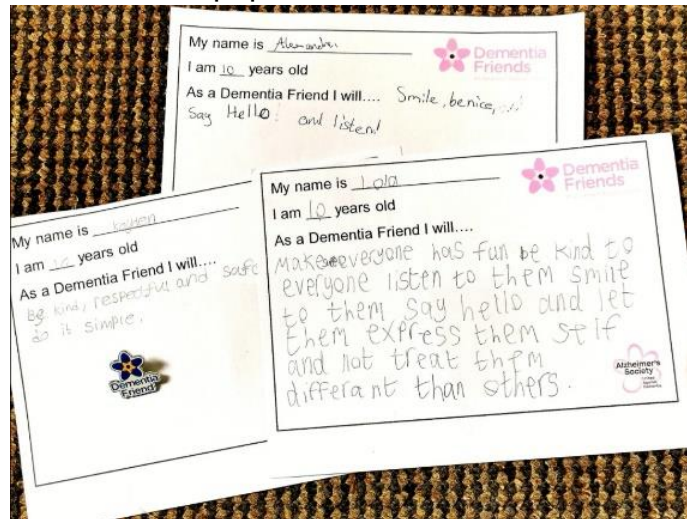
INTERGENERATIONAL PROJECT: P7 pupils from St Oliver Plunkett Primary School with staff from Louisville Nursing Home

Camberwell Court Independent Living Scheme linked & Currie Primary School, Belfast

Participants: 21 pupils aged 10 and 11 years and 5 residents aged 60+

Currie Primary School and Camberwell Court Independent Living scheme in Belfast linked up to enjoy getting to know each other. The pupils also received a Dementia Awareness session before meeting the residents and they are now 'Dementia Friends' and have understanding and knowledge about how to support those with dementia.

Their first joint age session was a whirlwind of getting to know each other through questions and chat, a quiz about Belfast, a poetry performance from the pupils and enjoying the Scheme Coordinators' delicious pancakes!



Residents were then invited to the School Harvest festival and 3 attended along with the Scheme Coordinator

This particular project was unexpectedly impacted by the health and ability of residents to attend plus the teacher leaving the school. It is hoped that the links between the settings will continue with new staff/participants as they are in close proximity.

The teacher commented: "Without LGNI we would not have been involved with this project. Taking part gave the children a sense of empathy towards our senior citizens. Managing times for meeting up and encouraging the older residents to join in was the most challenging aspect of the project for us."

It was noted that a new resident had taken part in the first session and was made to feel welcome by her fellow residents and the children and she stated how much fun she had and now was feeling more a part of her new residential community.

Laurelhill Care Home & Laurelhill Community College Lisburn

Participants: 18 Care Home residents with dementia aged over 70 and 12 younger people aged 16 took part.

The pupils from Laurelhill Community College, 4 male and 8 female, all Health & Social Care students met up with residents with dementia from Laurelhill Care Home to get to know each other and experience what a career in this area would entail.

Because of the capabilities of the residents, some of whom were non-verbal, activities were confined somewhat. They included colouring in, knitting, playing catch, looking at reminiscence books and playing with the interactive table.

The Care Home Activity Coordinator told us “Our group enjoyed the interaction with the young people in the local school. it brightened their day and gave them something to look forward to”. She added “i would like to thank LGNI for making this all possible and hopefully we can do it again in the future”.



Because of the limited communication issues for the residents, we do not have individual assessments from them.

The teacher from Laurelhill Community College told us: “We have built good links with the care home and some of the pupils will volunteer to go back to see the residents. We will also continue this 6-week project next year with a new group of students. It benefits hugely in terms of the HSC course the pupils are studying. They have to look at communication and policies etc. and this will help them in their coursework. It also will help them to know if this is an area they want to go into as a career. They have built relationships with the residents, and it has been most worthwhile. It was a brilliant experience all round, thank you for the opportunity”.

When asked specifically what skills pupils had learnt, she commented: *“Learning about people with dementia and all aspects of this. Learning about communication within this setting. Lots of life skills learnt”.*

Pupils told us: *I didn't like that I wasn't able to talk to everyone as they weren't able to” and “Some weren't capable of communication” and “The repetitiveness of it for them”.*



When we asked them what they had learnt through the project **pupils told us:**

“I learnt that not all dementia patients are the same: some of them are non-verbal, some can talk, some don't remember anything, some only remember some things” and “I have learnt that everything turns out happy in the end. As a young person who is trying to decide what to do with my future it was reassuring hearing about all the older people's careers and what they achieved in their younger years” and “Some still like being active and doing games”.

Pupils told us they really enjoyed: *“Talking to everyone and singing different songs to them”, “Spending time with them and doing different activities”, “Brightening up their day” and “Doing activities with them”.*



Overall, we feel that this was a very worthwhile relationship for the participants, young and old, with many life lessons learned.

Johnston Court Supported Living & Bloomfield Collegiate School East Belfast

Participants: 32 older people, 4 male and 28 female, aged 50 – 92 and 18 girls aged 16 – 18 took part.

Bloomfield Collegiate School pupils volunteered to take part in this project following an Age / Dementia Awareness session delivered by LGNI. The pupils engaged in a joy filled relationship with older people aged 50 – 99 from Alpha Housing's Johnston Court supported living setting. Together they took part in intergenerational activity sessions including Boccia, Arts & Crafts, singing and dancing as well as board games.



The **older people** were very positive about their engagement in the project and commented: *"We learnt about their different personalities, school interests. Wish to learn more", "I found that this group especially were not what I expected, being polite and willing to share their life experiences", "That they are keen to meet and talk to older people" and "I love working with them".*

When asked what they liked about the project the **older people** told us: *"Interacting, chatting, engaging with the young people and having a laugh. Enjoyed music, tea and dancing. Listening to the girls", "Talking with younger people and learning about their hopes and attitudes".*

Prior to meeting up the **pupils** made assumptions of what the older people would be like they told us: *"Initially I thought it may have been hard to make a connection with the residents given how different our lives could be and the fact we are growing up in a very different world compared to what they did", "I was nervous that the older people would not be very talkative, maybe easily irritated or uninterested in us" and "I was nervous that I wouldn't have anything to talk to them about".*



When asked what they liked about the project the **pupils** told us: *“Meeting new people; being able to get more closely involved with the community”, “I liked the way we got to play games with the older people. It was a nice and chilled environment, and we weren’t assigned to anyone specific so we were free to chat to everyone there” and “I liked being able to hear about their past experiences and advice that they would give me”.*

When asked about what they had learned about older people from taking part in the project the **pupils** told us: *“I learnt that we are not as different to them as we may think. We are very similar”, “I have also got to reinforce what I always say to other people about the importance of living life to the fullest, having fun and travelling, because now I know that it truly is these things that matter, now that I have heard it from the people who have lived a huge amount of their lives. “I learnt how funny they are, and how they aren’t scared to speak their minds, or be honest on how they feel about things” and “That they have all experienced different things and that people shouldn’t be too quick to judge someone. They were all incredible to talk to”.*

The **Scheme Coordinator** told us: *“The benefits and impact this project has had the fact that the tenants and School girls have had an opportunity to come together in a warm welcoming friendly environment, to get to know each other and learn from each other. They were able to talk about their different experiences growing up and can learn from each other whilst taking part in activities or whilst enjoying cups of tea and enjoying music and dance. The young people brought out a sense of what is like to be young and full of ambition and a real sense of joy, laughter and fun was had by all”, “We have learned that no matter of age it is good to share our experiences with one another. We definitely feel there are so many benefits individually for everyone who takes part in these projects and for future projects for different people /groups” and “I do feel this was a very enjoyable and very worthwhile project, even though it added more to my busy work schedule, I would hope we can do something in the future for the benefit of all concerned”.*



The **Teacher** from Bloomfield Collegiate commented: *“It was extremely helpful at teaching pupils the benefit of listening to others and hearing others’ stories. They learned different communication skills and were able to learn new games”. And finally, “It was an excellent project and our pupils enjoyed it thoroughly! Thank You! We would love to continue this but it depends on whether or not staff are required or if we are able to fund it ourselves”.*

Another really fruitful relationship that will hopefully continue.

Summary Findings

The project met both its objectives as stated below:

Objective One:

Levels of skills, self-esteem and self-worth amongst older and younger people and increased Intergenerational practice capacity within communities and organisations will increase.

Objective Two:

Decreased loneliness, isolation and fear amongst and between people of all ages, more positive attitudes and empathy towards other generations and increased connections to community.

Statistics for the project reveal that:

- **88%** of respondents said they would like to take part in another project;
- **71%** said they felt better about themselves;
- **84%** that they had learned new things;
- **74%** of younger participants indicated that they felt more confident;
- **90%** of older people felt better about themselves;
- **100%** felt more active;
- **70%** were surprised at what they could do.

Further funding from The Halifax Foundation allowed three out of four settings to carry on an activity related to Global Intergenerational Week. The week falls between 24th – 30th April and aims to inspire individuals, groups, organisations, local/national government and NGO's to fully embrace intergenerational practice, connecting people of all ages especially the younger and older generations.

Global Intergenerational Week – Linking Generations NI

To find out more about the Creating Intergenerational Connections Project please visit our webpage:

Creating Intergenerational Connections Project – Linking Generations NI

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