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Generations Working Together

The Scottish Centre
for Intergenerational Practice

Users guide to intergenerational learning



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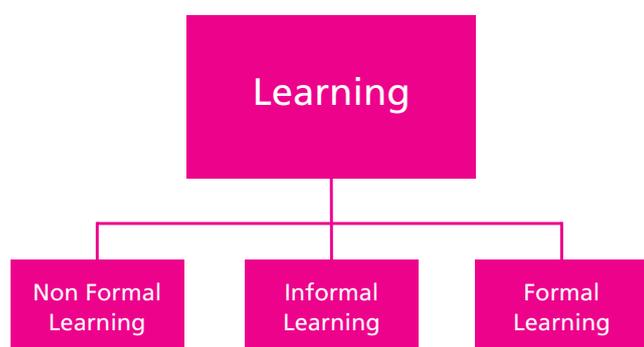
Users guide to intergenerational learning

This is a short guide describing intergenerational learning and the benefits of learning between generations. It contains the reasons why learning between generations is important, what some of the learning outcomes might be, along with some do's and don'ts if you are approaching this area for the first time. This booklet focuses on planned activities for generations coming together which have formal learning outcomes.

What is intergenerational learning and why is it important?

Many activities which constitute learning between generations – situations where generations share thoughts, feelings, activities and experiences in everyday life, take place informally. Examples of informal or non formal learning can be easily recognised. For example, when parents, grandparents and carers help children to read, write and do maths. When children encounter new concepts through interaction with others, these concepts and ideas are conceptualised into their understanding. This can work both ways, for example, children teaching an adult how to use an ipod or mobile phone. Capturing this experience for each generation involved through evaluation can show learning on both sides. While there can be large gains from such learning, by planning intergenerational learning into activities, the benefits can be even greater.

Formal intergenerational learning is where planned activities between generations result in achieving set objectives for each generation involved.



By widening the community for formal intergenerational learning it is possible to tap into an extensive storehouse of knowledge, expertise and information, enriching those on both sides of the experience. How learning will occur will be different across a variety of social, ethnic and economic backgrounds. Research has shown that intergenerational learning can help pupils achieve higher average grades, show an improvement in attendance and fewer referrals for disciplinary action.

Our global world and family relationships are changing. The changing nature of family units has altered the pathway for two way community support to occur naturally. Intergenerational activities based around defined learning outcomes provide a safe environment to build community links. It must be remembered however, that just like the younger generations, the older generation is not one homogenous group; those involved in formal learning activities might cross three or four generations.

Guiding, mentoring and shadowing are all techniques which can be managed to provide learning gains for all.

To be engaged together is active learning and can provide unique perspectives from all sides. Intergenerational learning is a unilateral transfer of knowledge, not just about passing knowledge from 'an expert' to a youngster but learning from each other.

In order for this to happen in a formal setting some planning, not only around learning outcomes, but in developing and delivering the intergenerational work will be required.

Learning should be inclusive for all and learning outcomes should involve both generations.

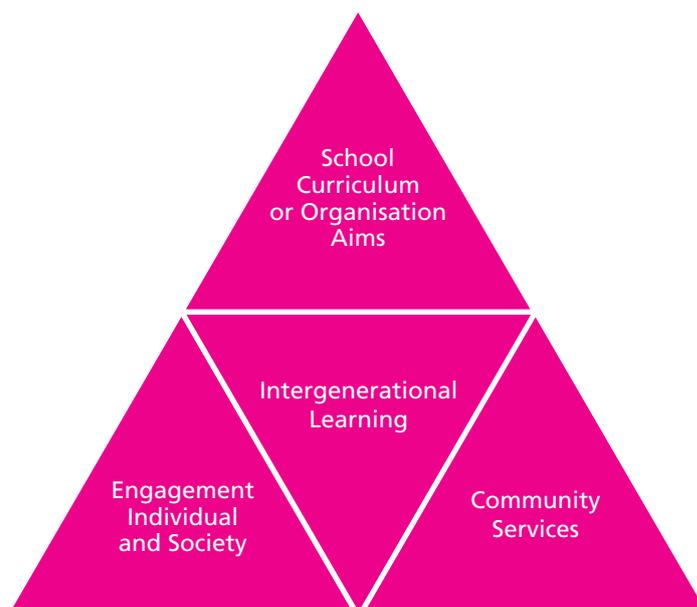
Why consider intergenerational learning?

Children and adults are members of a 'learning-age' culture, in which they can continually invent and reinvent their work and leisure activities, create and recreate their communities, master emerging technologies and continually acquire new skills. Whether acknowledged or not, learning and innovation will be central to their lives. Formal intergenerational learning differs from every day activity between generations where learning may take place but is not a specific aim of the activity.

Formal intergenerational learning should purposely planned between different (and possibly many) generations with its central aim being learning which will have a direct impact or benefit to all those involved.

Learning outcomes may be knowledge or attitude related and might include the following:

- developing sustainable links in the community to the benefit of the community, school or organisation;
- working together to achieve change for the better;
- solving problems and creating greater understanding for all, e.g. breaking down age stereotypes; creating stronger local communities;
- a change in services in the local community which improves life;
- increasing understanding within and between generations i.e. recognising the needs of others;
- improved communication and interpersonal skills;
- interactions between the work environment to increase knowledge and understanding;
- an understanding and awareness of the local or global environment;
- participation in political, social, economic and cultural life while being responsible citizens.



The above pyramid shows learning at the centre of the activity.

Today, the school curriculum extends beyond individual subjects to include:

- the ethos and life of the school as a community
- curriculum areas and subjects
- interdisciplinary projects and studies
- opportunities for wider achievement.

It can be seen that intergenerational learning, particularly through community engagement, is an element which can be introduced as a means of ensuring that learning takes place across a range of contexts and experiences within defined recognisable headings.

Actively engaging in the community should enable those involved to become more confident individuals who think creatively, learn (as part of a group) and develop communications skills with others. This helps those involved pursue active and healthy lifestyles, incorporating learning throughout life whether young or old!

Many activities and projects note that intergenerational activity has made a difference in the lives of those who took part and that after formal learning has been completed the contact and enthusiasm continues. Teachers and leaders note that children's self esteem can increase when involved and the pride they have when they feel valued by an adult is remarkable. There are a limited number of studies which have measured the effect of intergenerational learning.

The following outcomes have been reported:

- older volunteers reported a positive change in attitudes to children and their school and vice versa;

- children have higher levels of social acceptance, a greater willingness to help and greater empathy for older people;
- children have more positive attitudes, and are better able to self-regulate their behaviour;
- significant increases were found in the number of positive words used to describe old people, as well as a decrease in the number of negative words used;
- analysis revealed a narrowing of the generation gap and fostering positive relationships between young and old;
- Older people reported that being involved in meaningful activity had a positive impact on their well-being, self-esteem and health.
- Young people being supported to learn about financial issues;
- Older volunteers teaching young children to be aware of environmental dangers;
- Younger volunteers helping people with dementia with memory stories from the past around for example: football; the town; music; children's games; celebrations days or events;
- Conflict resolution in the community, creating understanding between various groups in the community, community safety and respect;
- Community arts projects to improve the local environment;
- Younger volunteers teaching older people modern technology, text messaging, iphones, emailing and the internet.

Some studies have suggested that involvement in intergenerational activities may keep older people in their own homes and out of care homes longer!

Who participates in intergenerational learning?

The term 'intergenerational' is a relatively new one, appearing in literature around the late 80s. As far as this publication is concerned it means 'between generations' with a generation being around 25 years.

Many people think of intergenerational activities as being between grandparents and grandchildren (which it is) however, most teacher/pupil, leader/scout or guide/youth group member relationships also are intergenerational. It is important to note that intergenerational learning can happen between later generations e.g. 55 year olds and 80 year olds! A scout/pensioner Christmas dinner allows several generations to interact in a safe welcoming environment fostering community spirit. It also dispels myths about the poor behaviour of youngsters as portrayed in the media. Intergenerational learning may include intercultural aspects. Anyone can participate in an intergenerational learning activity.

What is an intergenerational activity?

The Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice has both a 'Guide to Intergenerational Practice' and an area on their web site where local projects are showcased, see www.scotcip.org.uk/ There are also four case studies highlighting intergenerational learning at the back of this booklet. There are very many topics from which you can choose:

"When we worked on the intergenerational project I realised there was a problem for older people and they do sometimes find young people intimidating."

Young participant



Below is an example of integrating intergenerational projects into schools and the curriculum.

In September 2009, a North Lanarkshire development officer (Quality Improvement Service) attended the Generations Working Together Summer School and was inspired to set up a strategic approach to increasing intergenerational practice in six secondary schools in the area, in partnership with Housing and Social Work Services. The schools involved were Kilsyth Academy, Clyde Valley High, Dalziel High School, Coatbridge High School, Caldervale High School and Cardinal Newman High School. The specific projects can be viewed on the Scottish Centre for Intergenerational web site. (http://www.scotcip.org.uk/Local_Projects.html)

Here are two examples of the projects undertaken

Clyde Valley High School focused on an existing project – the Japanese matsuri festival (Matsuri is the Japanese word for a festival or holiday). It encompassed art, dance, story telling and a tea ceremony. They shared the festival with residents of Lawview sheltered housing complex. (23 pupils – almost a quarter of the third year – became involved.) They visited the complex and residents visited the school and they discussed how the young often speak about older people in general, and vice versa. For the initial event, the two groups were a little wary of the situation but by the end, all participants mingled happily. Lawview residents are now ‘friends of Clyde Valley’ and are invited to events, celebrations and shows.

Cardinal Newman High School hosted an event in October to celebrate International Older People’s Day. They brought together around 150 older adults with students from all the participating schools and lunch was provided. A wide selection of intergenerational workshops were offered around different themes that encouraged genuine interaction between older and younger participants. A DVD was made of the event. Evaluations carried out with staff, pupils and the older adults involved were extremely positive and the work was seen, not only as providing opportunities for reciprocal learning, but also as building community cohesion and breaking down some generational barriers.

Commitment and partnership were key to the projects’ successes. Staff in schools and social work understood the projects’ value and all efforts were underpinned by effective partnership working. The projects provided countless opportunities for interdisciplinary working, providing challenging, enjoyable and culturally relevant learning experiences – thus supporting the delivery of both the Curriculum for Excellence and entitlements set out in ‘Raising Achievement for All’ – Learning and Leisure’s overarching educational policy.

“I did it because it was something different and something that would challenge me as a person.”

Older participant

Planning activities to include formal learning outcomes

Some questions to ask are:

1. Who are the learners, from which generations?
2. What do we want our learners to achieve?
3. What learning opportunities will be provided?
4. How will we evaluate it?

Remember that learning outcomes should be SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time limited in order to be evaluated.

Capitalise on what is available in your local community.

There is no need to look very far afield when planning activities. There are many local organisations, employers and groups who will be very happy to become involved.

A few points to take into consideration are:

- Involve the participants in planning and design and discuss together how activities will benefit all age groups
- Be aware that not everyone will want to be involved
- Ensure a few dominant individuals do not exclude others
- Remember to include new arrivals and explain the project clearly
- Take health and safety into account with children, particularly in an outdoor environment or away from the school or when working with frailer older adults.

The importance of timing cannot be stressed enough along with advanced planning. When working with a school, fitting in with the school curriculum and avoiding exams is very important. Conversely, trying to start a project with a local company at the end of their financial year or at a seasonal busy period may prove difficult. Although it is possible to initiate an activity quickly in some circumstances, often planning should begin a few months in advance or if working with a school, planning may begin in one academic year and the activity start in the next. Additionally, if the project is not initiated by the school but an external organisation, it is important for planning purposes to take into account the curriculum objectives being put into practice by the school along with the objectives of the organisation.

Below is a table with a few Do's and Don'ts to start with.

Do	Don't
<p>Do think about the wider picture from the start, including sustainability – what will happen when the activity is finished.</p>	<p>Don't 'age' segregate and think that intergenerational needs to be young and the very old. The difference could be just a generation – or a mix of generations.</p>
<p>Identify someone who is the lead – don't leave it all up to one person. Do build capacity for collaboration.</p>	<p>Do not be overambitious.</p>
<p>Do identify learning outcomes and identify shared priorities which will be of interest to all those involved.</p>	<p>Don't think of older people as just one homogenous group. Needs of the younger old will be different from those of the older old.</p>
<p>Do prepare: involve all parties in discussions before the activity to ensure that your learning objectives are the same as theirs. Discuss fears, queries and worries taking action to lessen these where possible.</p>	<p>Don't automatically assume everyone can attend all meetings – caring roles may restrict times when convenient to meet.</p>
<p>Do identify key contacts within partner organisations, carers or families.</p>	<p>Don't exclude minority groups.</p>
<p>Do plan – participants could come from a wide range of backgrounds with a variety of differing needs.</p>	<p>Don't think disclosure is difficult and an obstacle. If in doubt contact Disclosure Scotland (see Further Information).</p>
<p>Do allow enough time for activities when working with frailer older adults, getting to and from the venue, support while at the venue and, if possible, offer to cover cost of transport.</p>	
<p>Do create some quiet time for adults and space for the young people to be active.</p>	

Things to do when introducing an intergenerational learning activity.

- i. At school or within your organisation, send out a note/email to everyone about who is coming in and why. Include names of all involved. Make sure all participants recognise needs of frailer older adults, if necessary.
- ii. Agree learning outcomes with both children and adults, ensuring all sides are learning (not just the children, or just the adults).
- iii. Agree time involved with participants.
- iv. Undertake disclosure if required. Provide support to complete if required.
- v. Prepare both parties for meeting before the start of the activity or event.
- vi. Allow time for induction of participants from outwith the school or organisation.
- vii. Review learning outcomes throughout project and review time input and demands being placed on all.
- viii. Ensure the project has a definitive end and all parties know when that is – rather than drifting off and participants feeling they have been forgotten about.
- ix. Evaluate, don't just report on how good it was and –
- x. Publicise!

Remember, if the project is time limited, let everyone have a copy of the final report/evaluation and any booklets produced. Encourage groups to keep in touch through further activities and that intergenerational learning becomes an integral part of your work.

There are a number of resources on the web to help plan your intergenerational activity as well as the Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice web site. You may wish to look at some of the web sites listed at the end of this booklet.

Curriculum for excellence

The purpose of Curriculum for Excellence is encapsulated in the four capacities (diagram on page 10) with the aim of enabling each child or young person to be a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen and an effective contributor.

The skills that children and young people build upon should provide them with a sound basis for their development as lifelong learners in their adult, social and working lives, enabling them to reach their full potential.

It can be seen that the skills encompassed through intergenerational learning include those in the Curriculum for Excellence, skills for learning, skills for life, skills for work:

1. Personal and learning skills
2. Literacy and numeracy
3. Core skills of: communication; numeracy; problem solving; information technology and working with others
4. Vocational skills.

Undertaking formal intergenerational learning will help the school in attaining external partnerships, developing a coherent and inclusive curriculum or objectives.

Intergenerational activities should be developed and become embedded within the school or organisation, ensuring the ethos and life of the school or organisation as a community benefits all.

Intergenerational activities can cover any of the learning areas within the curriculum: expressive arts; health and well-being; languages; mathematics; religious and moral education; science; social studies and technologies. All these topics can be covered in a broad range of contexts between the generations and within numerous settings: in the school or community; in the workplace; college of further education and universities; outdoor settings and beyond. There is also wide scope for cross curricular activity while at the same time meeting the needs of young people, working between the generations and developing partnerships.

It has been reported that for young people who have completed an activity where generations work together as part of a school experience, they are explicitly clear about the fact that there are very real learning outcomes for them and also for older people involved. They particularly value the fact that they have a say on the themes chosen, how the project is developed and how it progresses.

Successful Learners**with:**

- enthusiasm and motivation for learning
- determination to reach high standards of achievement
- openness to new thinking and ideas

and able to:

- use literacy, communication and numeracy skills
- use technology for learning
- think creatively and independently
- learn independently and as part of a group
- make reasoned evaluations
- link and apply different kinds of learning in new situations.

Confident Individuals**with:**

- self-respect
- a sense of physical, mental and emotional well-being
- secure values and beliefs
- ambition

and able to:

- relate to others and manage themselves
- pursue a healthy and active lifestyle
- be self-aware
- develop and communicate their own beliefs and view of the world
- live as independently as they can
- assess risk and make informed decisions
- achieve success in different areas of activity.

To enable all young people to become:**Responsible Citizens****with:**

- respect for others
- commitment to participate responsibly in political, economic, social and cultural life

and able to:

- develop knowledge and understanding of the world and Scotland's place in it
- understand different beliefs and cultures
- make informed choices and decisions
- evaluate environmental, scientific and technological issues
- develop informed, ethical views of complex issues.

Effective Contributors**with:**

- an enterprising attitude
- resilience
- self-reliance

and able to:

- communicate in different ways and in different settings
- work in partnership and in teams
- take the initiative and lead
- apply critical thinking in new contexts
- create and develop
- solve problems

Curriculum for Excellence, Building the Curriculum 4, skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

Young people recognise the value there is in being stretched and challenged to work with others (older people) in settings that differ from the traditional classroom environment. Whilst this is something they admit to finding daunting, ironically, it is also what they claim to enjoy most. Having benefited from the practical experience of being involved in these very relevant learning experiences, young people are keen to consider ways in which these can be expanded and developed to ensure they become part of life in school and not just a 'one off' opportunity for a small group of people for a short period of time.

It is clear that 'generations working together' by very definition needs to be built around the 7 design principles set out in Curriculum for Excellence: challenge and enjoyment; breadth; progression; depth; personalisation and choice; coherence and relevance – if it is to fulfil its purpose.

Evaluation

Evaluation is something we do all the time when we look back on activities. We tend to do it, in particular, when something goes wrong but we also need to do it when activities go well. Talking, listening and reporting the effect intergenerational learning has had within the school and community is often anecdotal. However, evaluation should be built into the work we do, so that when we come to plan we can look back and decide what to support, what needs changed and what has been successful. Another outcome of formally evaluating our work is that unintended outcomes can also be recorded. Do not think that when you undertake intergenerational learning activities that you have to incorporate a new piece of evaluative work – it should be incorporated into whatever system you are using to evaluate all your work.

Below are links to two documents which will help you to evaluate your intergenerational learning.

‘Evaluating intergenerational projects: a practical guide to useful resources.’

<http://www.scotcip.org.uk/resources.html>

‘How Good is our School?’

<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/hgiosjte.pdf>

In order for the learning to become embedded in the curriculum or learning objectives of your organisation, it is important to evaluate against the aims and outcomes of the learning activity. This means that you have to set learning aims and outcomes before you start!

It is also important that the journey from start to finish is recorded and that you know where your learners are starting from. A quick round of questions on day one about expectations and current knowledge is a good place to start. Remember at the end to revisit these expectations to see if they have been fulfilled.

“The experience was something I'm glad not to have missed and I would recommend it to anyone.”

Older participant

When thinking about the evaluation, make sure there are links between the activity, learning and teaching or instruction.

Here are some points to help you get started:

1. Document the activity and the learning aims and outcomes for all concerned.
2. What is your plan? Who is going to benefit and how?
3. Monitor and reflect on learning outcomes throughout the activity and how changes are occurring. What worked and what did not. This is important for improving practice.
4. Obtain feedback from all involved.
5. Evaluate the project as a whole and draw out sustainable elements which can continue.

Schools and organisations are striving not only for good practice but for excellence in the work they undertake. It is important to be able to provide the evidence of this excellence in the work which you undertake. This evidence could be in the form of a report, a display or on your web site. Additionally for schools, don't forget that a good place to showcase successful activities and share the work you do is on the Glow web site. (<https://secure.glowscotland.org.uk/login/login.asp>)



Conclusion

The benefits of intergenerational learning are being recognised by education and community services throughout the world. In some instances these are delivered on a very large scale, county or city wide, embracing this learning as an important educational tool. Apart from breaking down barriers, outcomes can include building or creating something new, creating connections and problem solving. The benefits to all parties involved can be tremendous. Children bring much energy, enthusiasm and support into the lives of others and the continuum of intergenerational activities seems endless. Older people have a wealth of knowledge but are also often surprised by some of the new things they learn in later life.

Learning between the generations gives an added perspective of developing knowledge about Scottish culture as well as living and working in Scotland today. A wide range of experiences across a range of curriculum areas provides all those involved with knowledge, confidence and skills to participate and live life to the full.



Two case studies



“We should do that again, because they’re helping us and we’re helping them!”

The Per-sev-ere project, Leith

Background

The project was collaboration between Pilmeny Development Project and Citadel Youth Centre. Older and younger residents’ opinions and views were not being reflected in the development of the area. Additionally, previous work had identified that there was little opportunity for interaction between local older and younger people. Older people had sometimes felt intimidated by groups of younger people.

The Project

The project was developed to address these issues and provide an opportunity for older and younger residents to have a say in the development of the area. At the same time it was hoped that, by collaborating in the project, intergenerational barriers and stereotypes would be broken down. 20 older people and 8 young people took part. Participants engaged in outings and activities in order to develop trust and build relationships. The ultimate achievement was the co-production of a DVD – *Per-sev-ere* which was presented to the Neighbourhood Planning Partnership. This contained their views and recommendations for improving participation and engagement of older and younger people in community development.

Benefits of the project

Older and younger people now have:

- Increased confidence, respect and interaction between the generations
- New skills and knowledge about each other
- Reduced barriers and fear between generations.

The local residents’ views have now been more equitably represented at community development level.

Lessons learned

- It is important to provide a safe and secure environment for all parties to ensure that participants feel at ease.
- Resources are key to success including – time, adequate finance, expertise in working with both generations and effective collaboration with committed and established partner organisations.
- Timing – this should take account of school terms and the fact that older people may not be confident to come out in dark evenings or colder weather. Transport should be provided for older participants.
- Organisations need to have confidence that positive outcomes will follow if the right environment is created.

Future development: further funding was obtained to take the findings forward in a project ‘New Spin’: information available from pilmenyproject@btconnect.com

Potential links to organisational or national outcomes

- Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens
- We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.

Pilmeny Development Project

www.pilmenydevelopmentproject.co.uk/olderpeople



“The experience was useful in that the students appreciated the needs of a group other than themselves, could put into practice what they had learned by baking a variety of goods and could appreciate the needs of an older relative more effectively.”

Recipe for life – the intergenerational kitchen

Background

The project took place in East Lothian and was developed following previous research which had indicated that frailer older people were at risk of losing interest in preparing, cooking and eating food. This could potentially have a serious impact on their health and well being. The research team wished to further develop a recipe booklet aimed at supporting older adults to eat well.

The project

The aims of the project were to reconnect older people with food and eating; to improve school pupils' knowledge of nutritional requirements in later life and of the challenges in meeting them. Additionally it was hoped that intergenerational barriers would be broken down. Two high schools, a care home and a lunch club from the East Lothian area worked with the research team on the project. Visits were made to all groups to explain about the project and what would be involved. Older people were keen to be involved and the high school teachers welcomed the idea as the project represented an opportunity to build links with the local community. Teaching staff ran three classes for pupils covering the topics of dignity and respect, nutritional requirements in later life, and snack recipe development. The project culminated in an afternoon tea event featuring food selected by older people. It was attended by school pupils and older participants. Questions on menu style cards were used to break the ice and to help gather the opinions of the older and younger participants about food likes and dislikes. Older and younger participants took turns at asking questions. Responses were surprising and were later used to inform the development of the snack recipe booklet.

Benefits of the project

- Pupils' nutrition knowledge had increased and they had a wider understanding of the impact of illness and ageing on nutritional intake of older people.
- The intergenerational kitchen was a vehicle for social interaction between older and younger generations which provided an opportunity to break down barriers and challenge stereotypes.

Lessons learned

- Planning is vital when working with schools to ensure that projects fit into the timetable
- Discussion with teaching staff is vital to ensure that the project meets the aims and outcomes of the curriculum
- Possible transport and accessibility requirements of older adults are taken into consideration.

Development: the snack booklet has been developed, published and is available on: http://www.qmu.ac.uk/copa/publications/documents/Snack_recipe_book.pdf

Potential links to organisational and national outcomes or the Curriculum for Excellence 'Experiences and Outcomes' and 'Health and Wellbeing: Food and Health: Nutrition'.

Responsibility of all: Social wellbeing.

Technologies: Food and textiles contexts for developing technological skills and knowledge.

The Project report

<http://www.qmu.ac.uk/copa/research/documents/NiLL%20Practice%20Development%20Report%20Nov08.pdf> Email: copa@qmu.ac.uk

Further information:

<http://www.bccare.ca/toolkit>

<http://www.scotcip.org.uk/home.html>

<http://templecil.org/>

<http://www.eagle-project.eu/welcome-to-eagle>

<http://www.centreforip.org.uk/>

<http://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk/>





You can receive regular updates from the Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice by joining the Scottish Intergenerational Network. Joining the Network is free, and you will receive the regular Newsletter, information on funding, meetings, new publications and updates on research and examples of best practice.

To join, simply email or write to Generations Working Together with details of your name, organisation and address.

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