

Link Up Whitfield



Link Up Whitfield is a project that uses the strengths of people and their community to create projects of interest in which people can participate. From September to November 2013 Link Up ran taster sessions to test the idea of an intergenerational craft project. This evolved through engaging with groups of both younger and older residents of the community to consult, design and develop the sessions. Three 2 hour sessions took place which explored the issues of stereotypes and then focused on working together on a craft activity. Link up applied for an award from the Small Grants fund after participants fed back that they would like the project to continue and expand.

Link Up were awarded Small Grants funding to deliver a 6 week inter-generational arts and craft project which would run on Thursday evenings. The project looked to engage 10-14 participants, half of which were to be aged over 60 and half aged between 10 – 18 years of age. The purpose of the project was for older and younger people to share personal stories and experiences through craft to break down barriers, create greater understanding of different generations and form new relationships. The 6 week project aimed to encourage participants to explore their own creativity and work on developing an art piece that could be displayed or used in day to day life. This was supported by Sheila Roussel, a qualified arts tutor and Link Up staff.

In total 7 sessions of the 'Linking Generations' Project took place. This was due to an additional session running to allow participants to complete work and have a celebration and feedback event. The initial session was an introductory one where a younger and older individual spent time getting to know one another and feeding back and introducing each other to the rest of the group. This was successful as participants commented on how much they enjoyed finding out about each other's lives. By starting off the sessions this way, people felt more comfortable with sharing thoughts, ideas and skills with one another throughout the 6 week project.

Over the next 5 weeks, participants learned new skills and techniques such as felting, knitting, sewing, jewellery making, metal work, photo transfer. They created mood boards to explore their creativity and to draw inspiration to make a final art piece to be displayed in a photo frame. All participants shared skills and offered to support one another as one lady showed the young people how to use a sewing machine and another taught two young girls how to knit. As the weeks progressed there was a definite sense that relationships between the two generations were being built and there was a lot of support and encouragement from both ages. One of the older people said "the young people surprised me – I didn't think they'd be so interested or attentive....I don't think age makes a difference when you're doing things like this". This project successfully brought different generations together and showed them that they could have similar interests. It broke down the barriers and stereotypes that existed about older and younger generations.