

Back to Life – Our Intergenerational Project

Newbyres Nursery and Newbyres Village Care Home

By Mel Scrimgeour

“Connections between generations are essential for the mental health and stability of a nation” - Margaret Mead

Since opening Newbyres Nursery at the end of May 2016, one of our main aims has been to forge strong links with the community, having benefited from so much community support during the extensive renovation project.

Intergenerational work was and very much still is in its infancy, but having heard of centres over in the USA that combine preschools with care homes for the elderly and the incredible benefits that this brings to both the very young and the very old, I was keen to do more than the token visit to the local care home at harvest or Christmas time. I contacted Gail, the Activities Coordinator at Newbyres Village who was enthusiastic about the idea and welcomed us with open arms.

Intergenerational projects bring older and younger people together, building relationships and understanding between those who live and learn in the same community, but may not have opportunities to get together. Activities support sharing skills, memories and ideas between the different generations. We play indoor sports together, improving motor skills and turn taking; as well as baking, arts and crafts, and sharing songs from the different generations. We are able to cover many aspects of the Curriculum for Excellence, and obtain quality observations of the children’s learning and progress from our visits.

“Through sharing in an older adult’s interests, skills, and hobbies, children are introduced to new activities and ideas. Through their life experience, older adults can often bring with them a tremendous amount of patience. Knowledge, skills, and attitudes children pick up from elders tend to stick with them through life more than those picked up from other sources” – Susan V. Bosak

It wasn’t long before we realised that we had started something very special. Incredible bonds have been forged between children who in other situations can find interaction difficult, and elderly residents who seem to come alive with the breath of fresh air that the children bring to Newbyres Village each week. Their memory for everyday tasks may be waning, but suddenly they are brought back to the days that they looked after their own small children, reciting nursery rhymes and songs word for word that they may not have recalled for many, many years. The children are naturally calmed by the lovely environment at the care home, and are respectful and understanding of their elderly friends.

We plan to continue and develop our weekly visits to Newbyres Village. We are all excited about having an Intergenerational Float at the Gorebridge Gala Day in June, with our friends from the village. True and meaningful community involvement!

Some of the children’s comments about the project:

“I like making things with the people who live there”

“I like playing tennis with a balloon!”

“I like seeing the people and singing songs”