



# **Cenedlaethau Cymru'n Cydweithio Generations Together Cymru**

## **Intergenerational Shared Spaces**

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# Intergenerational Shared Spaces

## Background

In 2003 the then Welsh Assembly Government identified the development of intergenerational relationships as a core element of its Strategy for Older People. Since then the Welsh Government has been working with the Beth Johnson Foundation (in partnership with RSVP Cymru since 2009) to embed intergenerational work in its approach to promoting positive ageing and building strong communities. One area that has gained increasing interest has been that of how shared spaces can enable or not the development of relationships across the generations. This review has been commissioned to develop our understanding of the potential for such approaches and the pre-requisites to increase the likelihood of successful impact.

This report:

- 1) Undertakes a review of the current literature on Intergenerational Shared Spaces (IGSS) and relates this to a Welsh policy and practice context.
- 2) Based on this analysis, discusses the relevance of IGSS to Wales with reference to current political and economic drivers and circumstance;
- 3) Makes recommendations to people with a policy or practice interest in Intergenerational Practice (IP) or Age Friendly Communities (AFC) in Wales;
- 4) Provides a list of general resources for further reading.

## Reviewing the evidence for Intergenerational Shared Spaces

The purpose of this report is to assess and evaluate research, policy and practice evidence relating to the potential development of intergenerational shared sites/spaces in Wales. This report begins by providing a rationale for, and focuses on, terms and definitions before examining some of the specific benefits and limitations relevant to this concept.

For a full review of the relevant literature this study drew on the unpublished MSc dissertation 'A critical, library based review of intergenerational shared sites' and PhD thesis 'Promotion communication and fostering interaction between the generations: A study of the UK's first purpose-built intergenerational centre' (Melville, 2009 & 2013). This was then used as a framework to explore key texts in much greater detail.

## Rationale and Background

Many changes in society, such as increased geographic mobility and improved technological advances, have led to generations frequently becoming segregated from one another - especially young people and older adults (Hatton-Yeo & Ohsako, 2000). It has been argued that naturally occurring opportunities for exchange and interaction between the generations are not as prevalent in contemporary society as they perhaps once were. This means that young people and older adults are now more likely to spend a significant

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amount of their time in age segregated settings. Children often spend their days in school and/or childcare centres, younger people with their friends, and many older adults in age-isolated facilities such as senior centres or retirement homes and communities (Mannion, 2012). This perspective has been echoed in a survey of European citizens who felt there were insufficient opportunities for the generations to meet and work together, via associations and local community initiatives (European Commission, 2009). IGSSs have therefore been promoted as a unique opportunity for frequent, structured and informal activities with the potential to establish an age-integrated community that can meet the diverse needs of various generations (Generations United, 2005).

### **IGSS Defined and models**

Whilst acknowledging that there is no single agreed definition of IGSS – and because of the, as yet, lack of UK work on them - the following North American definition has been used to frame this report:

Intergenerational shared sites are programs in which children and/or youth and older adults participate in ongoing services and/or programming concurrently at the same site (or on the same campus within close proximity), and where participants interact during regularly scheduled, planned intergenerational activities, as well as through informal encounters. (Generations United, 2005: 13)

The development of IGSSs over the past 20 years has resulted in a wide variety of models being established and as such, understandings of what IGSSs are vary greatly. The North American model of IGSSs is arguably the most prevalent (having been around the longest) and is based primarily on a physically constructed shared site, in contrast with more naturally occurring shared sites such as public spaces or parks, for example. In North America, this single model typically consists of a day-care facility for children based within an older adults' long term care facility (Kuehne and Kaplan, 2001). Consequently, the majority of IGSS have been limited to the very young and frail older people both receiving services at the same site.

The majority of literature and examples of IGSSs is from North America and as such, is shaped by a particular cultural and political context. Whilst we proactively looked for literature in Wales and the UK, the majority of examples found were either a single generational facility, such as a school, children's centre or residential home, which engaged in specific contained and time limited intergenerational activities or a community setting that promoted use by people of all ages but activities were not intentionally intergenerational and usually age-segregated. While IGSSs programmes continue to grow in the US, with over 280 documented sites now in existence (Generations United, 2005), shared sites in the UK are a relatively new phenomenon. At the time of writing, few IG sites/spaces with explicit intergenerational focuses were identified in the literature. It should be noted that there may be other sites/spaces in which older adults and young people share facilities, but these facilities do not offer or actively encourage 'shared' activities (Vegeris and Campbell-Barr, 2007). As a result, listed below are two examples in Wales of programmes designed to establish and organise places and spaces in the local community which have an element where the generations can potentially come together in a number of ways and for a variety of reasons.

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1. Community First is an £80m government-funded initiative running until March 2015 which helps communities come together to identify their strengths and local priorities in order to plan for their future and become more resilient. It will fund both new and existing community groups. Community First consists of two elements: a £30m Neighbourhood Matched Fund programme for some of the most deprived areas in Wales and a national £50m Endowment Match Challenge. This is being achieved by working with several organisations to deliver the Community First programme to identify local priorities, support local groups through fundraising efforts and linking to the Community Organisers programme wherever possible to further support social action in communities.  
The programme has created a communications pack, with tips and advice for contacting the media, creating your own website, and sharing the stories of how Community First funding is having an impact on the ground.  
(<http://www.cdf.org.uk/content/funding-programmes/community-first>)
  2. Community Focussed Schools provides a range of services and activities, often beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of its pupils, their families and the wider community. The ethos of this programme is based on research which shows that there is a range of factors outside schools which impact on children and young people's well-being and their ability to effectively learn and achieve in school. The community focused schools approach is a way of working where schools, in partnership with councils and others, address these factors to meet the needs of children and young people as well as supporting the core role of schools in improving learning and well-being and, through working in this way, the needs of families and communities. Since 2005, the Welsh Assembly Government has provided funding available to 22 local authorities in Wales to develop community focused schools approaches.  
([http://www.continyou.org.uk/wales\\_cymru/community\\_focused\\_schools/](http://www.continyou.org.uk/wales_cymru/community_focused_schools/))

### **'Intended/Potential' Benefits**

Generations United make significant claims for the benefits of shared sites, particularly for the pre-school child and older people with dementia or some form of cognitive impairment. They do, however, note that the research base is still weak and we would caution that there is a need to be careful in extrapolating from what are often very small samples (Generations United, 2005). Outside the narrow definition of IGSSs there is a stronger emerging body of evidence that IGSSs are beneficial for all participants, and can yield positive outcomes for individuals, both younger and older, for staff, for the organisation itself, for local communities, and for the wider society.

One of the fundamental outcomes noted for participants was that they enjoyed the activities (Martin et al., 2010). Springate et al. (2008) identify four main outcomes for both younger and older participants: increased understanding, friendship, enjoyment, and confidence. Benefits specific to older adults relate mainly to improved health and well-being, reduced isolation and social exclusion, a renewed sense of worth and belonging (Springate et al., 2008; Jarrott and Bruno, 2007) and increased social interaction (Jarrott, 2011). Outcomes particular to young people include gaining specific skills, improved self-esteem, and greater empathy for older adults (Springate et al., 2008 Jarrott and Bruno, 2007). Results also

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indicate that skills development for young people – verbal, cognitive and practical, is greatly enhanced in comparison to their counterparts in non-IGSSs programmes (Rosebrook, 2008).

Another consistent theme in the literature is the benefits for staff involved, such as the ability to learn about the role and importance of other populations that they do not normally work with (Jarrott et al., 2004). It has been shown that staff in most IGSS programmes also report positive feelings about their programmes which contributes to lower staff turnover and improved staff morale (Jarrott et al., 2004).

There was also anecdotal evidence that there was cost and resource savings from such shared initiatives, however, there is no detailed evidence for this as yet.

A number of beneficial outcomes for the wider community have also been identified. These include: improved community cohesion; addressing other community-related social issues; building social capital and developing community capacity; growth in volunteering; and educational institutions becoming more involved in their communities (Springate et al., 2008). IGSSs have been also identified as key developments in local communities with the potential to explore solutions to conflicts over public space, contribute to regeneration projects, enhance active citizenship among generations, improve community cohesion and deliver aspects of neighbourhood renewal schemes (Pain, 2005).

Finally, IGSSs have been shown to be potentially cost-effective with the unique ability to ‘expand funding options’ by attracting new grants drawing from traditional children, young people and older adults’ services and/or sources, as well as the use of shared sites and services (ie. shared child and nursing care) which can result in a decrease in total expenditures and a lessening of programme costs (Jarrott et al., 2008).

### **Role of the environment**

A review of the literature has clearly demonstrated that one of the critical issues emerging within the intergenerational field is a lack of attention to how the built environment plays a crucial role in influencing intergenerational interaction. As Mannion (2012: 391) states: ‘interpersonal relations are always located in a place’. Therefore, the development and management of shared spaces must consider both the environment and, specifically, people’s relationships with their environment.

Kaplan and Kuehne (2001) in their informative paper ‘Evaluation and Research on Intergenerational Shared Site Facilities and Programs’ introduce the novel idea of the intergenerational quotient (IQ) where a community with a high ‘IQ’ would consciously ensure that community settings would be developed to be elder and child/youth friendly and where the design would put intergenerational exchange as a high priority. Kaplan and Kuehne (2001) go further and identify a number of core principles that are central to developing successful IGSSs:

- 1) Adopting a life span perspective for training staff on human development;
- 2) Cross training of all staff in an interdisciplinary model that ensures everyone has bought into the model is an absolute priority;
- 3) Partnership is central to success;
- 4) People need to be clear what the purpose of an IGSS is and consequently how success is defined.

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## Age Friendly

Building on the World Health Organisation (WHO) programme to develop Age-friendly Cities and Communities (WHO Guide for Cities 2007) the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012, developed a vision for a European society for all ages. This has gained visibility with an increasing number of stakeholders now interested in this effort to achieve fair and sustainable solutions that promote the best use of financial and human resources to develop age-friendly environments. There is now a vision for an All Age-friendly Europe by 2020 which Wales is playing a leading role in through its Ageing Well programme that has Age-friendly communities as one of its three core themes.

In many ways, the development of intergenerational shared spaces mirrors findings emerging from the World Health Organisation on Age Friendly Cities and Communities concept of considering the needs of all the generations in planning and allocating resources and services as an essential principle for community planning.

In an effort to achieve fair and sustainable solutions that promote the best use of financial and human resources, the development and use of existing shared spaces is even more important and pertinent.

AGE's Manifesto for an Age-Friendly European Union by 2012 outlined a list of benefits from creating an age-friendly European Union. While all benefits listed have relevance to this report, the four highlighted here were particularly significant:

1. A positive attitude to ageing that recognises the value of all age groups' identities and contribution to society;
2. Goods and services that are adapted to the needs of all highlighting the need for solutions that are based on the concept of Design-for-All and Universal Design – essentially intervention for environments with the aim that all ages can enjoy participating in the 'construction' of our society with equal access to use and understand their environment with as much independence as possible;
3. Accessible outdoor spaces, buildings and transport as well as adapted housing and physical activity facilities that promote participation in society for longer, while increasing opportunities for exchange within and across generations;
4. The opportunity to actively participate in volunteering, cultural, sport and recreational activities thus creating and/or maintaining their social networks, gaining new competences and contributing to their personal fulfilment and wellbeing.

According to WHO, the physical and social environments are key determinants of whether people remain healthy and independent throughout the life course. Demographic change is a major challenge facing all EU countries, Wales included. As such, promoting age-friendly environments is an effective approach for responding to demographic change. Creating age-friendly environments means adapting our everyday living environment in order to empower people to promote social inclusion, active participation and maintain an autonomous and good quality of life in later life. What is more, such a solution has the potential help our society's better cope with demographic ageing in a way that is fair for all generations.

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This review is written at a time when there are significant change happening in Wales which are particularly pertinent to this study and report. These include a refresh of the Strategy for an Ageing population, the Social Services Bill, the Ageing Well Programme, Communities First, and the work on developing Community Cohesion, as well as the development of a strategy to counter poverty. At the same time the commissioners for both Children and Younger People and for Older People are continually stressing the importance of a country where its younger and older citizens are respected, valued and able to participate in their communities and wider society.

Wales has a rich tradition of community development and has been a leader in the development of Intergenerational Practice in Europe. The development of a more systematic approach to considering the spatial dimension of cross-generational relationships will be a foundation for its aspiration to be an age-friendly nation.

To conclude, the North American model of IGSSs, as has been illustrated, is a particular model based primarily on a physically constructed shared site. Although such initiatives have existed for over 20 years there is still a real lack, and depth, of evidence or theoretical underpinning to this work. What we do have is a much deeper understanding of how to develop successful intergenerational programmes more generally. This review has shown that the literature has primarily focused on interactions within age-segregated environments but there has also been an increase and recognised growing need in the field to consider older and younger adults' engagement with and attachment to age-integrated communities and spaces. As such, more recent literature has focused on the use of different public spaces in urban areas that are shared by many generations. Therefore, a growing interest in exploring public shared spaces and places that are intergenerational is not only increasing but essential as we develop new integrated models to address the aspirations of citizens in a time of significant demographic change. The climate of austerity means we have to develop new models for community planning and building that are both more effective and efficient and have the potential to achieve multiple outcomes across the life-course.

### **Intergenerational Shared Spaces & 'Age Friendly Places': A new concept for intergenerational interaction**

To date we have consistently used the term 'site' in reviewing the literature and evidence. In the US, and other contexts, IGSSs has come to signify a physical environment deliberately constructed or redeveloped to enable two or more groups of different ages to more readily interact in a location designed to primarily provide a service to each group separately.

While much of the literature has focused on IGSSs as the main option that could help to foster interaction between the generations, in the current economic climate there is unlikely to be sufficient funding for building new shared site facilities. From the limited evidence available, we would question whether replicating such a model is necessary given the opportunities to utilise existing spaces (i.e. public libraries, local community centres, church) that already promote opportunities for mutual exchange between the generations.

It is our suggestion that a more fundamental re-appraisal needs to be made of the purpose

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and outcomes of such initiatives before we start fixing the nature of the delivery model. Therefore, we propose the idea of ‘shared space’, rather than site, as a way of suggesting that the aims of an IGSS can be met by a broader range of environments than just co-located services. Such a strategy would be more efficient in terms of time, personnel, and use of (limited) resources that already exist.

Therefore, a pilot programme in Wales, based on the notion that many spaces currently being used for the sole purpose of one generation (i.e. schools, retirement homes) - or spaces utilised by various generations independently (i.e. library, community centres, sporting facilities) - could in fact be used ‘intergenerationally’. What is more, this model or concept should be developed to include outside spaces such as parks, town centres, and playgrounds.

From the review of existing evidence we suggest that for a shared space to be successful, it must possess a number of essential attributes:

- 1) People of different generations are able to enjoy regular contact, both formally and informally.
- 2) Participants from different generations are actively involved in the planning and running of all activities.
- 3) All staff are cross trained and have an understanding of human development from a life-course perspective. Staff undertake ageism training and understand and promote the benefits of integrated working.
- 4) Staff and participants approach risk assessment as a positive opportunity to build safe relationships and partnerships.
- 5) However the space is constructed or defined, everyone continually questions how it can be made more ‘age friendly’ to facilitate interaction across the generations.
- 6) There is an explicit understanding of the fundamental aim to allow all generations to collaborate on positive activities of shared interest and benefit.

In addition we believe that it is the combination of design, including both the physical design of a space, as well as the furnishings within a space, that can contribute to potential interaction across the generations. We wish to stress that people who are considering embarking on the process of developing a shared space need to give equal weight to the activities, programmes and services - what happens within these spaces, as to various design principles and the end users involved. Moreover, it is critical that practitioners involved in this process consider how the environment and activities intersect, and the importance of staff and participants (end users) have an equal a role to play from the outset. Adapted from Kaplan’s categorisation of intergenerational programmes using a depth of engagement scale, we suggest using “How interconnected is your generational space?” which provides a diagrammatic illustration of the depth of engagement (or increased ‘IQ’) in different types of settings (see annex 1).

The need in Wales is to create or use existing spaces, inhabited by trained staff who are committed to thinking across the life course, that can become focal points and catalysts for regular intergenerational interaction. Such interaction will be promoted and achieved by removing barriers and challenging the stereotypes that too often shape our thinking.

We also suggest that a model based around communities of interest rather than

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constructed around short term projects is more sustainable with greater long term impact. By communities of interest we refer to those whose primary focus may be such topics as the environment, food, sport, or the arts, that create a space for people to come together around shared aspirations and interest. If the aim is to create spaces that build generationally connected communities, we would argue that it must be based on the aspiration of communities and their vision of success. This work will need to link to the current debates on localism, community assets and the work of organisations such as the Community Development Foundation on promoting sustainable models of community activism.

To conclude, our review of the literature on the potential of shared spaces and intergenerational places suggests that these models of working are relevant to Wales at both a policy and practice level. However, we caution that the development and use of such models will take considerable time and understanding, involvement of potential users and thoughtful planning. Consequently our recommendations, suggested further reading and proposed pilot programme are predicated on the idea that many spaces currently being used for the sole purpose of one generation (i.e. schools) or spaces utilised by various generations independently (i.e. library, sporting facilities) could be used 'intergenerationally' as spaces fostered to promote interaction between the generations.

## **Recommendations**

A review of the literature has highlighted a number of key aspects that are essential to the development of effective intergenerational shared spaces. These do not require significant investment to achieve but are predicated on finding different ways of working that stress:

1. Thinking in a more integrated way, across boundaries and siloes,
2. Using co-production methodologies to engage local people of all ages in the design of space and interventions
3. Developing training for professionals and volunteers of training that crosses boundaries to give people the understanding, skills and confidence to work across the generations and seek solutions that are age inclusive
4. Implementing an audit based on the engagement framework to determine how age inclusive programmes and spaces really are and using this as a basis to plan and evaluate improvement.

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## Suggested resources for further reading:

AGE Platform Europe (2012). Towards an Age-Friendly European Union by 2020. (<http://www.age-platform.eu/en/age-policy-work/solidarity-between-generations>)

Beth Johnson Foundation (2010). Towards More Confident Communities: A review of community reassurance at neighbourhood level and Practical guidance on intergenerational approaches.

(<http://www.centreforip.org.uk/res/documents/publication/Towards%20more%20Confident%20Communities.pdf>)

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(<http://www.bjf.org.uk/web/documents/page/Creating%20Age%20Friendly%20Places%20Final%2020.2.13.pdf>)

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**Table 1 - IGSSs Engagement Model - How interconnected is your generational space?**

<b>D E P T H  O F  E N G A G I N G M E N T</b>	Centre involved in occasional 'one off' intergenerational activities	Annual concert with older people invited to attend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjoyment of occasion</li> <li>• Can be starting point for greater future engagement</li> </ul>
	Centre that has underutilised space for hire to external groups. This may include some organised intergen activities.	<p>Primary school with community rooms with separate access</p> <p>Children's centre that uses spare space to generate income</p> <p>Community centre rooms may be hired for intergen projects for defined groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Centre has additional resources</li> <li>• Wider usage of centre by different groups</li> <li>• Some benefits achieved for participants as a consequence of specific activities &amp; potential informal interaction</li> </ul>
	Site that has a programme of regular intergen activities that are time limited with small group facilitators	<p>School that has a regular allotment project</p> <p>Intergenerational mentoring project</p> <p>Time limited skill sharing project e.g IT skills, craft etc</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific outcomes for participants from activities</li> <li>• Some friendship &amp; relationships developed</li> <li>• One or two intergenerational 'champions' in setting (but IP seen as their responsibility)</li> <li>• Pool of potential volunteers &amp; partners developed</li> </ul>
	Centre with core programme intergen activity that also gives opportunity for informal contact. All staff trained to do IP and work in a cross-disciplinary way	<p>Community Library in school as focal point for whole school activity including volunteering &amp; skill sharing</p> <p>Community food co-op involving people all ages, volunteering, employability, cookery skills</p> <p>Environmental Garden Project involving whole community</p> <p>Archaeology site recruiting people of all ages to work together &amp; learn together</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships and respect between generations developed as a natural consequence of regular interaction</li> <li>• Generations learn to collaborate, listen to, share and support one another</li> <li>• Staff naturally work with partners to look for multiple outcomes and added value for activities as appropriate</li> <li>• The whole community is engaged and demonstrates greater confidence &amp; capacity</li> </ul>

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