



Generations Working Together

Older People's Framework

OPSAF Funding Report

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Another suggested that GWT connect with health services, social prescribers and schools or possibly create a link between every care home and nursery/primary in Scotland.

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Background

GWT applied for £3,685 from the OPSAF funding opportunity to facilitate discussions with older people involved in GWT projects - Generations on Screen (Renfrewshire) and Connecting Generations (Perth & Kinross).

The proposal involved a development officer visiting 3-4 care homes to speak with older residents (approx. 15-20) and staff (3-4) who took part in Generations on Screen project. It was hoped that the relationships developed would allow the officer the chance to relax the residents making them feel comfortable enough to start asking for thoughts around what the older people's framework should contain and how we can combat negative perceptions and stereotypes.

We wanted to **identify barriers** that older people felt they were facing in making contributions to their local community and **hoped to identify ways they could be addressed**. In the case of the care homes we planned to speak with residents and staff and looked to raise the issue of intergenerational housing and intergenerational care asking their thoughts to the pros and cons.

A focus group and one-to-one interviews were planned to include as many of our 32 older volunteers as would be happy to get involved.

What we actually carried out:

During the months of January – February 2019 Generations Working Together held face to face consultation events and surveyed 33 older people who had in the past year taken part in an intergenerational project. We initially asked about 40 participants, but some were unable to make the interviews and a small number had sadly passed away since taking part in 2018. An option was also given for individual and phone interviews; however nobody picked this option.

Participants

The split of female to male participants was 30:70. This was random and not selected by the interviewer. The interviews took place in Renfrewshire (Paisley and Johnstone) care homes Kyle Court, Falcon Day Centre, Cochrane Care Home, and Ranfurly Care Home. Additionally, they took place in Perth and Kinross in the Community School of Auchterarder where the volunteers from both Community School of Auchterarder and Perth Grammar were present. The ages of participants and volunteers were 50+ and the oldest interviewee was 97. One of the interviewees in the Perth and Kinross project is in the age bracket of 40-50 and her answers are indicated in the report.

Questions

Questions asked were based on the framework topics, current issues faced by older people and on the intergenerational projects they took a part of. They were answered in a group and participants could answer any questions they wanted to. There was also an open

question at the end for anyone who wanted to add any extra information. Care was taken not to influence any answers and the interviewee stayed neutral throughout the interview. The participants have given answers anonymously and asked not to be identified, staff who have observed projects in care homes also gave answers based on their observations. Staff who answered questions were not connected or employed by Generations Working Together in any shape or form. Questions were kept the same for all participants (adapting the project names and locations) and can be found in the index in full.

Generations Working Together Intergenerational Projects

All the interviewees were part of two intergenerational projects organised by Generations Working Together in 2017-18, Connecting Generations and Generations on Screen. Both of these projects aimed to raise attainments, to tackle loneliness and to support isolation in areas of multiple deprivation.

Connecting Generations (2017 - present) is the first project of its kind in Scotland working closely with schools who contributed to the costs of the project through their Pupil Equity Funding. The project is currently half way through year two and takes place in the Community School of Auchterarder and Perth Grammar School in Perth and Kinross. The project aims is to raise attainment, specifically in literacy and numeracy by bringing in older volunteers to work with children at both primary and secondary levels in a variety of subjects including English, Maths and Science. A unique feature of this project is a specific intergenerational development officer recruited and trained by Generations Working Together. This officer is then able to recruit, train and support intergenerational volunteers, as well as helping to process documentation such as disclosure certificates. This has ensured that teachers are not given extra responsibilities and that older volunteers act as a friend and a source of help rather than a teacher or classroom assistant. This project has had a very positive feedback so far and coverage (including in TES) and has extended beyond its original purpose to include shared events such as The Big Lunch, reflective gardens and poetry slams.

Generations on Screen took place in 2018 in Renfrewshire in the following care homes; Kyle Court, Falcon Day Centre, Cochrane, Ranfurly. The aim of this project was to connect local care homes with primary schools and to create short films that would explore differences, similarities and stereotypes. Over 8 weeks the groups created films around themes such as toys and took part in a language workshop with Lingo Flamingo. Through this process they worked with an artist, built their digital skills and created friendships. After the project ended a film screening of the project was shown in the local Odeon Cinema inviting all participants (young and old) staff and family members to attend. One outcome of the project was to make connections between the care homes and the schools which would continue and develop long after our project finished. This has happened in three out of the four projects.

Results

Although there was no hypothesis and the research questions were qualitative, we expected to find that older people would have more positive attitudes to younger people as a result

of taking part in the project, this is reflected in many research studies undertaken and in our case studies on the website. Below are the themes that came out as a result of the research with direct quotes from participants.

Barriers faced by older people

The interviewees raised a number of physical barriers (poor bus service, poor roads, poor accessibility for disabled people) and psychological barriers (loneliness, isolation, safety worries) faced by older people.

- Every group mentioned that it can be difficult for older people to participate socially and this becomes harder when the older person does not have a close connection to their family.
- Physical barriers vary by geographical area, for example a participant in Perth and Kinross talked about the difficulty of travelling between Auchterarder and Crieff, while another mentioned that her bus service was good.
- Psychological barriers had no geographical variations with some participants saying things such as 'An older person cannot use a park and just talk to the children, people see the older person alone and think this is suspicious. They think the worst things. Things like this stop older people connecting and using the parks'.
- Another mentioned that she often has no contact with anyone outside the care home 'I just sit here normally and look at the birds or watch the tv. It's very hard without the family taking you out'.
- The research has shown that there is a variation in the loneliness felt by older people, while some have busy social lives and family close by, others don't or have families that live abroad resulting in very little connection to the world outside the care home.

Stereotypes

All the participants across all interviews mentioned negative stereotypes to older people. They were keen to address that they are not true, with one saying that 'We still have something to offer'. Another said that respecting people of all ages is key for our society as 'Age is a privilege denied to many and should be respected on both sides'.

Those who have been volunteers at the schools were especially strong on emphasising this point which may indicate that the longer older people are part of intergenerational projects the more they are likely to stand up to stereotypes and ageism.

All groups believed that intergenerational projects can counteract the negative stereotypes that people hold about age. Everyone reported that they had a very positive view of young people as a result of seeing them in an intergenerational project.

Media and Ageism

A question was asked about what they thought of the media coverage about younger and older people. All but one said that this was negative. The one who said it was positive mentioned that he saw intergenerational coverage – one article about Anam Cara and one about Older People's Homes for 4 Years Old which positively highlighted both younger and older people. Negative coverage they identified included stories about pensions, housing and care homes. One care home staff member mentioned that it makes it hard to change this perception when there is so much negativity but added that 'intergenerational projects show the care home in a positive light'. Older people also defended younger people, saying that they are often shown badly in the media as 'snowflakes', 'lazy' or a problem. One volunteer in Perth and Kinross said that she was initially cautious, but after meeting and working with the children there are absolutely no barriers, 'They no longer see me as an older woman, I am between a teacher and a friend'.

Intergenerational Ideas

Only 5 out of 33 people said that they were aware of intergenerational projects before taking part in them with Generations Working Together. Two out of 5 knew of them through the show Older People's Homes for Year Olds. Only one knew what an intergenerational project was beforehand in detail. Many also mentioned that they only understood the full potential after taking part in them, but now encourage others to get involved. One participant said, 'I get asked why I do this and I talk about how much both I and the kids get out of it'. The most common comment regarding intergenerational projects is that it is 'good for all involved', this was said by 15 of the interviewees.

As part of the interview at the start participants were shown photos of different projects around Scotland and what they do, all participants were surprised by how varied they can be, some were intrigued to find out that some projects were done with teenagers. This was particularly interesting because those groups who did not work with teenagers seemed to be more negative towards them. One comment being 'This is good, but I think it would only work with younger kids, not teenagers. This highlights the challenges we face in our society when bringing generations together, but also potential for future work in Scotland. Some were also encouraged to see the projects working in rural areas, two mentioned that this would be highly beneficial for areas where there is 'deprivation and isolation'.

Cohousing

Interviewees were also asked about cohousing, if they knew of the idea, what they thought and if they would consider it for themselves. Some groups were more interested in this topic than others. In Perth and Kinross 50% have not heard of this, in Renfrewshire this was 80%, it is important to highlight here that Renfrewshire residents were care home based. The positive responses about care homes included answers such as 'we need something like this', 'it's a good idea', 'it sounds like a good way to make connections', 'it would be good for young people who are now living further from their families and can't afford housing'. One of the participants also talked about how she was able to rent out her room to a teenager after answering an advert many years ago. She talked about being there for him as

he found a job, their friendship and mentioned that they are still in touch. There were also some reservations, with about 30% saying that they would not take it up if offered. Concerns included safety, ensuring there a good mixture of personalities and reservations about mandatory connections. All said that they would be keen to learn more and to see how this develops in practice. The importance of respect and privacy was also highlighted.

Project Experience

Out of all the participants 100% said that they would do the project again and that they found it useful. The most common comment regarding intergenerational projects is that it is 'good for all involved', this was said by 15 of the interviewees, this shows that participants understood that all intergenerational projects were meant to be good for younger, older people and the community. All mentioned how polite and nice the children were. All talked about the connections they made, and some referred to children as their friends. One interviewee talked about how much he had learned from the younger person about technology and added that after the project ended that he 'saw a younger person from the project at the shop and together they called another child via facetime...we didn't have things like that when I was younger, it was amazing'. This shows that even small connections can grow into deeper friendships and feelings of connectiveness help people feel better within their community. Additionally, it shows the learning potential in the areas of technology and connections.

The most common word used to describe the project was 'fantastic', some of the others were 'uplifting', 'fun' and 'interesting'. Many mentioned that the projects should be expanded and should include even more older people. One participant mentioned that she was sceptical at first but 'the children brightened my day'. This was echoed by all care home staff who have observed the project, many mentioned that it improved the mood of residents and gave them something to look forward to. One member of staff mentioned that it gave some the physical motivation to move more. One care home manager who was part of the project said that it also helped one care home resident who was new and anxious to settle into the care home.

Some challenges were also raised, including the short-term nature of the project in Generations on Screen and the initial reservation from some teachers in Perth and Kinross. The participants mentioned that a longer introduction session and a trial period would help. Connecting Generations praised the intergenerational development officer who was employed to support and train volunteers and work closely with the schools and one suggested that this is 'a good model for other schools to take'.

Ideas and Suggestions

Participants highlighted the fact that intergenerational projects are positive, and this should be highlighted in the media, both on social media and in traditional media. They suggested that both the Scottish Government and Generations Working Together should raise its

profile. One participant said that we should 'advertise, advertise and advertise' the project. It was suggested that we connect with health services, social prescribers and schools or possibly create a link between every care home and nursery/primary.

The case for cohousing was highlighted as an area that could help coverage too, one person said that 'if cohousing is an international idea, Generations Working Together should connect with international partners. Additionally, churches were mentioned as another key partner, as well as local government. One of the participants has written to a local politician to highlight the project and his experience and suggested that others should also do this, so that politicians could see the projects in practice.

The issue of accessibility was also raised throughout the interview with one person saying that 'we need better buses to connect older people', another mentioned the need to develop parks. One participant suggested that making things more accessible would be good for both older and disabled people.

Older people who were part of the projects also wanted to highlight that older people are not a homogenous group and therefore different activities and options should be offered where possible. Three people mentioned the need to do more research into intergenerational projects and the benefits for older people.

Other Comments

In regard to what the older people wanted to say to the Scottish Parliament, most wanted to highlight how much they enjoyed the project and that they wanted it to continue. Seven participants also mentioned that they wanted it to fight ageism.

Recommendations:

Following the interviews, we recommend the Scottish Government consider the following for inclusion in new framework for older people;

1. **Encourage public bodies** such as local authorities (education), police (community safety), health and national organisations to recognise the importance of good sustainable intergenerational work embedding the approach within strategies, policies and improvement plans.
2. **Provide** specific funding pots and **encourage** private & voluntary trusts and private businesses to offer short- and long-term funding which will connect and build relationships between different generations. At the moment projects need to fit in with funding priorities and both generations are often not recognised making it difficult to access proper funding for long term projects.
3. **Encourage businesses** to consider and change how older people are viewed and how within their workplace they can be a real asset helping develop skills and capacity of the young workforce and vice versa.
4. **Encourage voluntary and public organisations** to create more innovative opportunities for younger and older people to work, learn and live together building strong relationships and addressing local challenges in the community.

5. **European Day of intergenerational Solidarity** (29th April) should be celebrated annually, with new projects and events created and admired to highlight intergenerational work and how it fights ageism, busts myths and stereotypes and connects the generations sharing skills and resources. This would be a great media opportunity to celebrate success and innovation (in addition we could focus on legacy of YoYP, Older Peoples Day (Oct) and Youth work week 1-5th Nov).
6. **Encourage academics and researchers** to develop and deliver Intergenerational research projects in Scotland, addressing the lack of evidence we have for this approach in Scotland.
7. **Encourage organisations/builders and local authorities** to consider co-location and co-housing potential pilots in Scotland. Bringing services together such as nurseries, youth clubs, and care homes under the same roof,
8. **Create positive news stories** in order to counteract the negativity and ageism seen widely in the press. Almost all older people recommended this as one of the most urgent tasks. Celebrate older people's contributions in the community.
9. Both **younger and older people** should be consulted on areas together **not apart** including health, transport, care and housing, ideally in a space where people of all ages can have a discussion.

Generations Working Together (GWT) would request the Government looks at the current budget given to the national centre for intergenerational work in Scotland. GWT urgently requires additional support by means of funding to allow the organisation to continue to support projects, local and national, to gather impact and evidence and to ensure innovative ideas and projects can be supported in new areas of work for example in the workplace, education, digital and housing.

Appendix – questions asked at interviews

The interviews were given an introduction to the current Scottish Government's work on loneliness and isolation and were shown example of other intergenerational projects in Scotland. The questions asked were as follows:

1. Having heard about the variety of intergenerational projects and seen the materials. What do you think of them?
2. How familiar were you with the intergenerational projects before taking part in Generations on Screen/Connecting Generations?
3. Do you have a chance to communicate with people of different ages and if so where?

4. You were part of the project Generations on Screen/Connecting Generations where you worked with young children. How did you find this experience?
5. GWT is an organisation that promotes intergenerational projects, supporting and training individuals, groups and organisations to bring younger and older people together. What can we do at GWT to support older people to be more involved in intergenerational work?
6. Do you feel that younger and older people are represented positively in the media? Give examples.
7. How can we improve the dialogue between older and younger people?
8. Thinking of the services and places that you use, have you experienced any barriers? (Examples of GP, transport and parks were given)
9. If there are barriers, how can they be resolved?
10. How familiar are you with the concept of intergenerational co-housing and would you consider living in a co-housing complex or care home?
11. GWT sits on a cross party group for older people, what message would you like us to say about the project you took part in?
12. Any other comments?