

Examples of intergenerational volunteering

A rich mix of examples was provided by the workshop participants which can be classified into three categories:

1. Youth volunteers engaging with and/or supporting older people

- College students on health and beauty courses providing support to older people using their skills/knowledge. Also gardening.
- Youth Philanthropy Initiative (YPI) – secondary schools initiating intergenerational projects – for example, family history work.
- ‘Flashback’ – 12 to 25-year-olds going into care homes via schools
- School pupils helping with social media and photography (specific skills which young people excel at and which older people often find challenging)
- Intergenerational conversations around cinema and reminiscing with young people visiting older people (e.g. in care homes) – ‘Screen Memories’?
- ‘Night at the Oscars’ (via Screen Memories)
- Befriending – high school pupils befriending older people in hospital and care homes
- Café – local high school catering class inviting older people from the community to the school café
- ‘Reading friends’ – high school pupils read and share experiences with older members of the community in a library setting. Based on 1 to 1 or 2 to 1 model. Building lasting relationships.
- Singing – primary school pupils volunteering in a sheltered housing complex – singing songs in English and Gaelic and doing basic words with residents.
- ‘Come and Sing’ – dementia friendly singing group where high school pupils volunteer. They help with a variety of tasks, participate in the singing and in befriending the older people. The young people are supported to become ‘dementia friends’ through training.
- High school pupils visit a local care home fortnightly to join in a variety of activities: music, singing, seasonal crafts, etc. Training sessions provided.
- Attracting young people to Western Isles and capturing heritage and tackling isolation. Pooling stories.
- ‘Screen Memories’ using memory books – life stories. Therapeutic through fostering intergenerational relationships and conversations.

2. Older volunteers engaging with and/or supporting young people

- Older adults volunteering to help young people with:
 - modern languages – specifically in primary schools
 - knitting groups
- Older adults transferring craft skills to younger people
- Mentoring – older people providing mentoring role for young people on a 1-2-1 model. Matching – with a focus on young people with behavioural/other challenges.
- Leadership training – for both high school pupils and young people in community roles. SQA accredited – employability skills and training unit. Retired participants sharing their skills woodwork, outdoor learning, etc.
- Erasmus Programme – older volunteers introducing foreign languages (1 plus 2) in primary schools: Italian, Spanish and French.

- Big Lottery
 - Building links between existing clubs to encourage volunteering and intergenerational engagement. EG. older volunteers supporting reading groups, Rainbows and Scouts.
 - Older volunteers supporting after-school clubs in primary schools
 - Care home and primary school linkages.

3. Older and younger volunteers collaborating together on joint projects

- Gardening club – primary pupils and dementia café volunteers working together in the garden.

Other examples of intergenerational volunteering where the volunteer-beneficiary relationship was less clear in terms of young people supporting older people, vice-versa or both:

- ‘Go for gold’ event – involving school pupils
- Litter picks, gardening and community activities
- Raploch example:
 - Knitting group (volunteer weekly – presume this is older people teaching young people). Focused on primary 7 children in two schools. Held at lunchtime on campus.
 - Gardening group – a mix of young people from nursery special needs school and two primary schools
 - Singing group – primary 7. Full community involvement – ‘Big Noise’.
- Quilt making – whole of Hampden Park? Marking memories

Lessons learned and priorities for the future - Key characteristics of successful IG volunteering:

- Mutual benefit and connection
- Fun and enjoyment
- Making it part of everyday life – for schools, care homes, clubs and cinema
- Taking away ‘the effort’ that it might seem to take – making it easy
- Normalising activities and conversations – ‘just talking’
- Resilience building

Lessons learned/challenges: Don’t make assumptions, be aware of challenges and how to keep volunteers

Priorities for the future:

- **Volunteer recruitment** - overcoming the barriers to finding volunteers in all age groups and walks of life.
- **Flexible volunteering** – providing flexible times for young people to participate in IG volunteering (esp. for those aged 16+ with exams, etc.)
- **Teacher training** – teachers learning about the importance of IG communication and relationships – breaking down barriers and removing ‘labels’ regarding older people.
- **Youth trustees** – young people should be on committees to facilitate their engagement with older people, to represent the youth agenda and improve their knowledge/skills
- **Youth training** – this covers a wide range of areas. Specific examples quoted in the breakout groups focused on dementia training.
- **Funding** – to support IG volunteering. This includes linking into national and other established programmes relevant to IG volunteering such as YPI and Big Lottery.
- **School engagement** – establishing good communication channels with schools to engage them on IG volunteering, and to address specific issues such as transport, school support (esp. for younger pupils/primary school pupils)
- **Disadvantaged areas** – we need to understand who we are targeting and why.