



Rebuilding Bridges Evaluation Report

Kathrin Paal¹ and Lois Peach²

¹University of Plymouth, ²University of Bristol

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Rebuilding Bridges was an intergenerational music intervention that worked with participants, aged 7 months to 100 years, in 3 care home gardens in the Torbay area of the Southwest of England.
- The project followed the intergenerational pilot intervention “Making Bridges with Music” which took place in 2017.
- Rebuilding Bridges was an innovative music and arts intervention that ran for 8 sessions (September to December 2021) and worked collaboratively with pre-school children, older people living in care homes, childminders and care home staff.
- The intervention team included emerging artists and social musicians with several years of experience working in community settings with diverse groups.
- Rebuilding Bridges was funded primarily by Arts Council England National Lottery Fund, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Torbay Music Hub and Torbay Early Years Advisory Team.

The intervention had the following aims:

- To reduce isolation and improve the wellbeing and confidence of older and younger participants
- To re-ignite and grow the intergenerational friendships that music-making can inspire, as we emerge from the pandemic
- To develop skills and knowledge of intergenerational practice for emerging artists, who will create their own artistic responses to the project
- To engage practitioners in reflexive practice, extending learning through CPD sessions

To achieve these aims, the following objectives were identified:

- To assess the effectiveness of the intervention in terms of wellbeing
- To provide opportunities for practitioners and emerging artists to engage in professional development
- To progress dialogue on intergenerational music practice, providing practical and inspirational resources
- To explore possibilities for conducting a longitudinal study of the impact of music-based intergenerational engagement.

The Evaluation

- The purpose of the evaluation was to assess whether the Rebuilding Bridges intervention was effective in achieving its aims and objectives, including whether it was effective in improving the wellbeing of young children and older people attending the sessions.
- The evaluation took place in one of the three care homes and used a mixed method design that included quantitative and qualitative methods to capture data from verbal, pre- and post-verbal participants.
- Research methods included the Arts Observational Scale (ArtsObs) and The Leuven Involvement and Wellbeing Scale. Data collection included observations (4 sessions in total), feedback from residents and children, 2 online video call interviews with childminders, one online video call with the care home activity lead and post-session reflections with the intervention team after every session.

Findings

- Across sessions the residents' mood changes registering satisfaction and happiness increased. The scores over all observed sessions range from a minimum of 4 to a maximum of 7. This means that over all observed sessions, the residents began the session in at least a calm and passive mood. None of the residents appeared to be sad, frustrated, upset, or distressed. By the end of the sessions, on average the residents appeared to be satisfied and focused, or even happy and receptive.
- Most of the observed children in all the sessions showed clear signs of involvement. This means they were engaged and focused on the activities but for some brief moments the attention was more superficial. For two sessions, two of the observed nine children were engaged at some point during the session. However, their attention was superficial, and the activities were short lived. In all the observed sessions, at least one child was completely absorbed in the activity. This suggests the children were differently engaged in the sessions.
- All observed children at all the observed sessions showed signs of happiness and excitement albeit not constantly present with the same intensity for the whole session. Based on the average for every session, the score for all the observed sessions varies slightly, with the children scoring the highest on wellbeing in the fifth session.
- The scores for both wellbeing and involvement correspond.
- Feedback from childminders and care home activity lead provided additional qualitative evidence of positive effects on the social and emotional wellbeing of residents and young children.

- Qualitative findings were grouped under four inter-related categories: expectations towards the project, feedback from participants, perceived benefits for the participants and (re-)connecting children and residents.
- The intervention had a positive effect on young children. Childminders reported that some of the children were speaking more, developed connections with residents even without physical contact, gained confidence and enjoyed the sessions.
- The intergenerational sessions preserved musical heritage, young children learned old songs and nursery rhymes; likewise, the older participants were exposed to new songs and both groups got involved in creating the lyrics.
- The intervention provided older people with opportunities to recall familiar songs and nursery rhymes, be mentally stimulated and be motivated. The sessions provided a sense of purpose and gave the space to (re-)connect with the children.
- Care home staff reported that interactive music and arts sessions are effective in increasing motivation and wellbeing in older people.
- Care home staff and childminders were crucial in enabling participation by adapting to residents' needs and supporting children for whom interaction with older people may be novel.
- The support of care home staff and childminders also helped the musicians and emerging artists to (re-)connect both groups.
- Childminders are keen to continue the relationship with the care home. With adequate support and training, childminders can be a key element in building strong connections between care homes, young children and families in the Torbay area.
- The emerging artists' involvement enabled innovative forms of practice to be collaboratively developed whilst providing professional development opportunities for each artist.

- In summary, the Rebuilding Bridges intergenerational music intervention achieved its key aims. It promoted learning, wellbeing, and interactions for two vulnerable groups at risk of isolation amidst a global pandemic.

Recommendations

- Funders and care homes should continue to invest in intergenerational music and arts interventions in key areas of Torbay, promoting longer term and sustainable programmes.
- Distanced, in-person intergenerational interventions should be supported to engage older adults with physical or cognitive impairments and young children who may face barriers to participating in virtual intergenerational programmes. This should include continuing to explore new ways to connect generations that are not reliant on physical proximity or touch.
- Torbay Council and local relevant organisations should continue to develop intergenerational music and arts CPD opportunities for childminders and care home staff. CPD should focus on the benefits of intergenerational interventions, exploring how best to support children and residents' engagement.
- Local arts and music organisations should continue to develop intergenerational interventions in collaboration with local care homes. Further opportunities should be created for emerging artists to gain skills and knowledge of intergenerational practice.
- Future research and evaluation approaches should continue to assess the impact of adapted and distanced intergenerational programmes. As it has been recommended that longer term projects be supported, there is the opportunity to develop longitudinal research approaches that consider the impact of intergenerational programmes on participants over a longer period of time.

INTRODUCTION

Intergenerational programmes bring generations together to increase interaction, cooperation and understanding amongst people of different ages. Through a range of activities, including music-making, intergenerational programmes aim to provide mutually beneficial relationships and enhance social connection within communities. With a growing ageing population and family life often involving geographically distant grandparents, intergenerational programmes are particularly relevant for young children and older adults (Peters et al., 2021). Research studies have consistently shown that intergenerational programmes can provide benefits for those involved (Drury et al., 2017; Giraudeau & Bailly, 2019; Gualano et al., 2018; Martins et al., 2019; Park, 2015) including for people living with dementia (Galbraith et al., 2015; Gerritzen et al., 2020). The most evidenced outcomes include increases in older adult's wellbeing and children's improved attitudes toward aging and older people (Stewart et al., 2021). Other benefits include enjoyment and feeling valued (Ronzi et al., 2018), increased interaction leading to mutual understanding (Martins et al., 2019), development of empathy and respect (Bagnasco et al., 2020), improved language and reading competency (Martins et al., 2019; Gerritzen et al., 2020), reduced caregiving stress (Peters et al., 2021), reduced social isolation (Gualano et al., 2018), and improved cognitive stimulation for people living with dementia (Gerritzen et al., 2020).

The growing evidence of the effectiveness of these programmes has increased interest in implementing intergenerational practice within the UK (Melville, 2016). For instance, in May 2019, the All-Party Parliamentary group for social integration released the report, *Healing the Generational Divide* (Dalton et al., 2019). In the report, it was identified that a decline in shared spaces and increasing geographical and political separation between generations was damaging for individuals, intensifying the risk of loneliness and ageist stereotyping. These effects have likely been exacerbated by the social divisions produced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Most intergenerational programmes were paused or modified due to the restrictions imposed at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak in the UK, and few have attempted to return to in-person delivery. Although there is some evidence of virtual intergenerational programmes being effective (Belgrave and Keown, 2018; Canedo-



Garcia et al., 2017), for young children or people living with physical or cognitive impairments, such as dementia, access to and meaningful participation in virtual intergenerational interaction may be limited (Tan et al., 2020).

Rebuilding Bridges aimed to use music to restore and grow intergenerational relationships between young children and care home residents living with dementia, separated since the start of the pandemic. Gently opening the doors of Torbay's care homes, the Rebuilding Bridges programme consisted of 8 weeks of collaborative music sessions taking place in three care home gardens between September and December 2021. Building on the design of the Making Bridges with Music pilot programme which took place in Torbay in 2017 (Blandon, 2017), the programme involved preschool age children and their childminders visiting local care home residents for a 1-hour music session each week. The sessions were led by two social musicians and supported by an emerging artist at each care home. Following the COVID-19 policies of central government and the local care homes themselves, children, childminders, musicians, artists, and the researchers stayed outside, whilst residents sat inside in a communal space which opened out onto the gardens. On one occasion, sunny weather enabled two residents to sit in the garden during the music-making, whilst maintaining an appropriate distance from the rest of the participants.

Whereas the Making Bridges with Music programme took place inside care homes and established the significance of touch for fostering intergenerational connection (Blandon, 2017), Rebuilding Bridges provided an opportunity to develop new 'distanced' practices for promoting intergenerational interaction using music as well as other creative activities. For this reason, this evaluation aimed to assess the impact and effectiveness of the Rebuilding Bridges intervention as a distanced, in-person intergenerational music programme.

The evaluation also aimed to assess the impact of the programme on the wellbeing of participants using quantitative measures, observations and interviews with residents, childminders, care staff, musicians and artists. This is particularly relevant as the Director of Public Health for Torbay recently acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the mental wellbeing of people in Torbay. For instance, the Public Health Annual Report (Torbay council, 2021) recognised,

“For older members of the community, COVID-19 has led to enforced inactivity and loss of physical fitness, increased social isolation and separation from friends and family as well as fears of going out again for work, hobbies, shopping or socialising”.

The report also acknowledged that wellbeing in children’s early life has a significant impact on development and noted that the pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on children already experiencing existing inequalities. For instance, the report showed that 29 out of 100 children were not 'school ready' by the end of reception. For those children eligible for free school meals this rose to 47 out of 100. This shows the significance of considering the effects of participating in the Rebuilding Bridges intergenerational programme on the wellbeing of both older adults and preschool children.

LITERATURE OVERVIEW

What do we know about Intergenerational Music Programmes?

“Music is a universal language and has the capacity to transcend age-related barriers” (David et al., 2018, p. 334).

Intergenerational programmes are increasingly incorporating music into their design due to its therapeutic potential and universality (David et al, 2018; Belgrave and Keown, 2018; MacDonald, Kreutz and Mitchell, 2012). Intergenerational music-making has been shown to provide opportunities for developing connection between generations (Belgrave, 2011; David et al., 2018), promote learning from and with another generation (Beynon and Alfano, 2013; Quinn and Blandon, 2020), improve children’s language and literacy (Detmer et al., 2020), enhance wellbeing (Belgrave, 2011; Jenkins, Farrer and Aujla, 2021), reduce loneliness (de Vries, 2012) and develop empathetic understanding (Pieris, 2020; Kirsh, Frydenberg and Deans, 2021). This section explores current research to discuss what is already known about intergenerational music programmes. Rather than separately discussing the benefits for children and older adults and contradict the aim of uniting generations within intergenerational programmes, the research is reviewed thematically. The final section of this review considers distanced or digitally facilitated intergenerational music programmes, although this area of research is still being developed.

Learning through Connection

Research evidence suggests intergenerational experiences involving music promote learning across generations, including for people living with dementia (Beynon and Alfano, 2013; Quinn and Blandon, 2020). A recent randomized control trial conducted by Detmer and colleagues (2020) found that children aged 3-4 taking part in an intergenerational music programme showed more improvement in three areas of language and literacy development than the control group. Similarly, David and colleagues (2018) study of the Hamilton Intergenerational Music Programme, a 4-week programme involving elementary school children and care home residents, suggested relationships were formed through older adults supporting children to gain new skills. They also noted that some older adults’ cognitive functioning improved.



“For example, one resident who presented as non-verbal at the beginning of the session was able to fully converse with others by the end. Individuals with dementia continued to sing songs that were part of the program for up to five days after the visit.” (David et al., 2018, pp. 335-336)

General music-making, not just singing, was incorporated into the Hamilton programme to foster the development of intergenerational relationships. This programme design enabled participants of varying abilities to participate in different ways and ‘paved the way’ (David et al., 2018, p. 336) for informal opportunities for connection such as sitting next to one another, having conversations, and engaging in non-musical activities. The research found these elements encouraged reciprocal learning that disrupted assumptions held about each generational group. This echoes previous research conducted by Belgrave (2011), which showed that interactions between children, aged 9-10, and older adults increased over the course of a 10-week intergenerational music programme, particularly during conversations and moving to music. Belgrave (2011) also found that children and older adults’ positive attitudes toward one another improved, suggesting that increased familiarity and comfortableness during interactions supported more positive views.

Preschool children having more positive views of older people has been associated with increased levels of empathy (Kirsh, Frydenberg and Deans, 2021). As empathy is linked to preschool children’s social and emotional development, fostering interaction and acceptance by sharing experiences with older people in intergenerational programmes may be beneficial. For instance, Kirsh, Frydenberg and Deans’ (2021) study of an intergenerational programme incorporating music and singing observed increases in children’s politeness, social skills and awareness of older adult’s needs. This reflects findings from Hayes’ (2003) study of a similar programme involving preschool children and older adults aged 63-95, which noted increased displays of *generational empathy*, involving assisting, helping or supporting older adults without being encouraged. Indeed, although Pieris’ (2020) research involved older children, aged 7, findings suggested that the shared goal of making music together facilitated children’s sensitivity and helpfulness during interactions with older adults, often with physical mobility or sensory impairments.

Together this research suggests that children and older adults may learn about and from each other through intergenerational music programmes. For example, De Vries (2012) study of the experiences of three Australian older adults involved in intergenerational music-making, noted that the older adults described learning new songs and technological skills from children, as well as children learning musical techniques from them. As Beynon and Alfano (2013, p. 128) note,

“learning music in an intergenerational situation can be a great equalizer.”

Quinn and Blandon’s (2020) research from the Making Bridges with Music programme, also showed how people living with dementia were capable of both learning and teaching within an intergenerational environment. Challenging deficit assumptions associated with dementia, their research sought to recognize other forms of learning which were not about speech and memory. Music facilitated non-verbal forms of communication, for example, shared curiosity about songs or instruments, playing together and other forms of physical interaction, such as touch. These forms of stimulation and connection were not solely reliant on words or cognition and were especially significant given the programme involved preschool children and post-verbal adults living with dementia. Rather than trying to identify the usefulness of knowledge gained or shared, Quinn and Blandon’s analysis focused on the possibilities for learning that occurred. For example, reframing residents’ wanderings in and out of the session as a more fluid form of engagement and opportunity for new learning to occur. As a result, Quinn and Blandon demonstrated the potential for alternative forms of connection and learning to happen during the intergenerational music programme.

Alternative forms of engagement within intergenerational music programmes were also evident in Beynon and Lang’s (2018) research of an intergenerational-learning-through-singing programme. Highlighting elements which contributed to the successful music intervention, they noted that the space within the residential care home was important for providing a non-pressurised environment for participants to join in as they wished.

“Hosting the learning program in an open space of the retirement home had the added benefit of allowing elders who stayed on the periphery to engage as they felt comfortable. Even though they sat on the periphery of the room, we do know from observations and interviews that many were deeply engaged in less obvious ways.” (Beynon and Lang, 2018, pp. 50-51)

Other research has also observed benefits such as smiling, laughter and attentiveness from people living with dementia located within an intergenerational environment, even if they are not directly involved (Hayes, 2003). This suggests that acknowledging alternative ways of participating and supporting those who may face barriers to participation such as a lack of confidence, changing vocal capacity with age, medical limitations, or emotional discomfort, may enable intergenerational music-making to provide “a shared, spontaneous, and emotional form of communication” (Beynon and Lang, 2018, p. 60). By providing different opportunities for engagement, intergenerational music interventions allow younger and older participants to connect and learn together.

Wellbeing

Research suggests that intergenerational music programmes may contribute to enhanced wellbeing, particularly for older adults. For instance, Belgrave’s (2011) study, mentioned earlier, investigated older adults’ psychosocial wellbeing, finding that older adults who participated in the intergenerational music programme had improved self-esteem after taking part and had higher self-esteem than the control group that did not interact with the children. Older adults who participated also expressed enjoyment and increased feelings of usefulness.

Detmer et al.’s (2020) randomized control trial aimed to address the limited evidence regarding older adults’ physical functioning and emotional wellbeing within intergenerational music programmes involving preschool age children. The programme they observed consisted of 22, 30-minute music therapy sessions, taking place in a childcare facility. Older adults were given Fitbits to wear to record their physical activity and pre/post measures were used to record their self-esteem. Although methodological difficulties impacted the findings related to self-esteem, older adults who participated in the programme had consistently higher step counts than the

control group and reported feelings of having benefited from the programme in post-session structured interviews. As increased physical activity has been linked to both physical and mental health benefits for older people (Blake et al., 2009), this suggests older adults who took part in the intergenerational programme may have also experienced wellbeing benefits.

Similar benefits have also been shown for other participants involved in intergenerational music programmes. For example, Jenkins Farrer and Aujla (2021) aimed to explore the impact of an intergenerational arts programme, *Hear and Now*, on the psychological wellbeing of all of those involved. This included young people in their early teens, older people with a diagnosis of dementia, their carers or partners and the project's artistic team. The Hear and Now programme involved participants engaging in music and dance over 4 weeks, culminating in a public performance. The research reported overall improvements in psychological wellbeing, with participants describing feelings of happiness, confidence and an overall sense of achievement. Older participants living with dementia and their partners and carers noted perceived health benefits, such as feeling emotionally, physically and mentally stimulated (Jenkins, Farrer and Aujla, 2021). This is supported by a systematic review carried out by van der Steen and colleagues (2018), which suggested participation in music-based therapeutic interventions may improve emotional wellbeing, quality of life and overall behaviour, as well as reduce depressive symptoms and anxiety for people living with dementia. Additionally, all participants in the Hear and Now programme reported feeling supported in the positive and creative relationships they formed, which the researchers suggested was significant as loneliness can affect both young and older people's personal and social wellbeing (Jenkins, Farrer and Aujla, 2021). As De Vries (2012) study also suggested, intergenerational music programmes may alleviate feelings of loneliness by promoting social engagement.

Distanced and Digital Intergenerational Programmes

Many in-person intergenerational activities were abandoned or adapted because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some programmes transitioned to technological solutions, and some modified their activities to be distanced or delivered asynchronously, for instance sending postcards or letters back and forth between generational groups. As

Jarrott, Leedahl and Butts (2021) explain, the desire for connections to continue caused traditional practices to be remodeled.

“The needs for safety precautions and continued intergenerational contact were both amplified during the pandemic, leading many to modify or innovate ways to engage generations rather than eliminate contact for extended periods. Technology has afforded new approaches to engage young people and older people with each other; non-technological ways have also proven effective.” (p. 402)

Research before the pandemic had started to explore the effectiveness of virtual elements within intergenerational programmes. For instance, Belgrave and Keown (2018) investigated an innovative intergenerational programme that combined ‘virtual’ and ‘live’ aspects over a 4-week intervention to address the common challenge intergenerational programmers face: finding agencies that serve younger and older populations within close proximity to each other. The virtual element of the programme involved asynchronous videos of each generational choir being watched to get to know each other before live sessions. The live half-day interaction developed a joint choir performance. Results suggested that the older people’s comfortableness when collaborating with the children increased as a result of intergenerational sessions. Also, attitudes of both generational groups towards each other increased and cross-age interactions were viewed positively. The authors concluded,

“These findings suggest that music therapists can foster cross-age interactions and relationships between generations that are not within close proximity of one another.” (Belgrave and Keown, 2018, p. 8)

Similarly, Canedo-Garcia et al. (2017) conducted a systematic review of the effectiveness of 50 intergenerational programmes, comparing in-person and combined in-person and virtual delivery. The results showed that there was no significant difference in the effectiveness between the in-person and combined programme designs. However, Tan, Tee and Seetharaman (2020) suggest that even though virtual intergenerational programmes have provided an innovative way to keep intergenerational connection going amidst the pandemic by reducing the likelihood of

spreading the virus and maintaining social distancing requirements, they potentially exclude those less able to participate over digital platforms, such as those with cognitive, hearing or visual impairments. For this reason, they argue that,

“Virtual programs will never be able to fully replicate in-person sessions.”
(Tan, Tee and Seetharaman, 2020, p. 1331)

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that isolation and separation between generations can have detrimental health effects, increasing the need for services that provide social connection (McGeorge, James and Abraham, 2021). Intergenerational programmes, including those incorporating music, that provide opportunities for connection, learning and enhanced wellbeing are increasingly important but research studying the effects of distanced, in-person activity is needed. This evaluation aims to contribute to this gap in knowledge about intergenerational music programmes operating during, and in spite of, the COVID-19 pandemic.

THE REBUILDING BRIDGES INTERVENTION

Rebuilding Bridges was designed to bring together older and younger people to use music as a way of bridging and connecting the generations, especially after social distancing requirements in times of a global pandemic. This intergenerational intervention worked with a diverse group of people aged from 7 months to 100 years with a wide range of abilities, experiences, needs and expectations. It included 0- to 4-year-old children and older people living in care homes as a target group, but also included the participation of care home staff, childminders, and visitors. This project was funded primarily by Arts Council England National Lottery Fund with the support of Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Torbay Music Hub and Torbay Council.

The intervention had the following aims:

- To reduce isolation and improve the wellbeing and confidence of older and younger participants
- To re-ignite and grow the intergenerational friendships that music-making can inspire, as we emerge from the pandemic
- To develop skills and knowledge of intergenerational practice for emerging artists, who will create their own artistic responses to the project
- To engage practitioners in reflexive practice, extending learning through CPD sessions

To achieve these aims, the following objectives were identified:

- To assess the effectiveness of the intervention in terms of wellbeing
- To provide opportunities for practitioners and emerging artists to engage in professional development
- To progress dialogue on intergenerational music practice, providing practical and inspirational resources
- To explore possibilities for conducting a longitudinal study of the impact of music-based intergenerational engagement.

The intervention included eight music sessions with old and young people in three residential care home gardens in the Torbay area in the Southwest of England from September to December 2021. The project was in partnership with Torbay Childminders, three local residential care homes, experienced social musicians and three emerging artists. The sessions were led by two social musicians and one



emerging artist in each care home, who used a combination of music-making and arts methods to engage participants. The musicians and artists used a rich variety of materials (including instruments, paint, fabrics and crafts) to guide the creation of artistic artefacts, stories, and songs. Each weekly intergenerational intervention lasted approximately one hour (10:30-11:30am). The childminders arrived with the children, and everyone gathered outside the patio door, while the residents took a seat on armchairs that were placed in a u-shape formation indoors, so all of them could see outside.

After every session, the intervention team reflected on the session for around 30 minutes; this included time to review the session and prepare for the following week.

The Rebuilding Bridges Artistic Team

Hugh Nankivell	Music Leader
Steve Sowden	Music Leader
Mo Johnson	Emerging Artist
Verity Soley	Emerging Artist
Harry Sewter	Emerging Artist

THE EVALUATION

A comprehensive ethics protocol was prepared for the evaluation and included customised information and consent sheets for all participants: children, their parents, childminders, care home residents, care home staff, and musicians/artists. A special effort was made to make information sheets and consent forms accessible to all participants, for example by creating forms that were easy to read (e.g., large font, concise sentences) and visually engaging (especially for children). Ethics protocols were approved by Plymouth University's Education Research Ethics Sub-Committee.

Involvement in the Rebuilding Bridges project aimed to conduct an evaluation to assess the impact and effectiveness of the intervention in delivering its objectives, with a particular focus on whether it was effective in improving the wellbeing of young children and older people attending the music sessions.

The main research questions are:

- a) What impact does the Rebuilding Bridges intergenerational music programme have on children and residents' wellbeing?
- b) What other benefits do children and residents receive from being involved in the Rebuilding Bridges intergenerational music programme?
- c) How were emerging artists involved in the programme and what skills and knowledge of intergenerational practice did they develop?

Methods

This evaluation used a mixed method approach that included both quantitative and qualitative methods to allow capture of data from verbal, pre- and post-verbal participants.

Data collection tools involved:

- observation of care home residents using the Arts Observations Scale (Fancourt & Poon, 2016) during sessions, and field notes,
- observation of children using the Leuven Involvement and Wellbeing Scale (Laevers, 2005), and field notes,
- semi-structured interviews with care home residents after the music sessions,

- reflective focus groups with the musicians and artists after the sessions and after the end of the project, and
- semi-structured online interviews with childminders and residential care home staff after the end of the project.

Sample

The data collection for this evaluation took place in one of the three settings because of time and budgetary constraints. Consequently, the view on children's and residents' experience is merely captured for the sessions in one care home.

The setting is a nursing home with 32 residents living onsite permanently at the time of the observations, looking after predominantly older residents with varying levels of nursing support required. The care home provides support to residents with diverse types of dementia and varied health care needs. In conjunction with Torbay Council, the care home has been at the forefront of intergenerational activities in the area for a number of years. It is also the only care home with a purpose-built room for childminders in the UK.

The sessions took place before lunch. Due to social distancing requirements, the residents stayed in a communal room within the care home with the patio door open, the children stayed outside, whereas the artists played by the patio door to connect the two groups. Four out of eight sessions in the care home have been attended by the evaluator - the third, fourth, fifth and the last session. Thereby field notes were taken and residents and children observed. Throughout the project, in total 15 children took part in the sessions at the care home. The children were between 7 months and 4 years old, seven girls and eight boys. Up to four childminders took part in the sessions. In addition, 14 care home residents took part in total. The residents were between 71 and 100 years old, seven women and five men. Up to four care home staff were present during the music session. The sessions were led by two artists and one emerging artist.

The project sessions in this care home took place between September and November 2021, with a two-week break after the first half of the project. Nine children between the age of 11 months and 3 years 9 months (average: 2 years 3 months), 5 girls and 4 boys, were observed by two researchers, using the Leuven Involvement and Wellbeing

Scale (Laevers, 2005). Nine residents between the age 71 and 100 (average: 85 years), five women and four men, were observed by two researchers, using the Arts Observations Scale (Fancourt & Poon, 2016). The children were chosen for observation by participation frequency to draw a picture across the project. This means the majority of the observed children took part in most of the sessions. It was anticipated to observe children across the age range, and different stages of language development (verbal or pre-verbal). The residents were also chosen for observation by participation frequency across the project. It was also anticipated to observe verbal or post-verbal residents. Two of the observed residents agreed to be interviewed at the care home after a session. Three childminders and the activity lead of the care home were interviewed online after the project had ended.

Instruments

[The Arts Observational Scale \(ArtsObs Scale\)](#)

The ArtsObs Scale is a mixed-methods tool to evaluate performing arts activities in health care settings. It is a data collection tool and has been specifically created to observe participants, concentrating on the direct effect the activity has on them. It allows quantitative data, such as demographic data, mood scores and other criteria that are relevant to the use of arts in the setting to be gathered. It also allows researchers to record positive and negative feedback from participants and relatives (Fancourt & Poon, 2015).

For this evaluation, the mood of care home residents before and after the session were scored. The mood score shows if the mood of the participant changed through the activity. The rating is based on a scale from 1 to 7, as represented in figure 1.

						
1 (visibly expressed)	2 (moderate)	3 (mild)	4 (neutral / unresponsive)	5 (mild)	6 (moderate)	7 (visibly expressed)
Angry	Frustrated	Sad	Calm	Satisfied	Happy	Excited
Depressed	Restless	Bored	Reserved	Focused	Receptive	Delighted
Aggressive	Anxious	Listless	Quiet	Alert	Entertained	Appreciative
Distressed	Irritated	Tense	Still	Relaxed	Interested	Enthusiastic
Hostile	Upset	Distracted	Passive	Content	Amused	Friendly

Figure 1: The ArtsObs Scale: Mood Scores (Fancourt & Poon, 2015, 11)

Positive and negative feedback from young and older participants, care home staff, childminders and artists were gathered and included in the field notes. Additionally, an overall rating of every session was scored, using the following scale:

1	Not at all	The activity brought no benefit or even negative effects to the ward, causing complaints, missing its target audience or getting in the way of staff.
2	Yes, a little	The activity helped lift the mood of the ward, bring a sense of calm or have a small beneficial effect on patients, relatives or staff
3	Very much so	The activity was almost universally liked, or made a significant difference to the feel of the ward.

Figure 2: The ArtsObs Scale: Overall rating of the session (Fancourt & Poon, 2015, 11)

The Leuven Involvement and Wellbeing Scale

The Leuven Scale is a scale used to measure the wellbeing and involvement of children within early years settings. Children are scored on a 5-point scale, ranging from “extremely low” to “extremely high” in wellbeing, as seen in figure 3, and involvement, as seen in figure 4.

For this evaluation, the children were observed throughout the session while notes were taken, and a final score based on the notes was given on both aspects for every observed child.

THE SCALE FOR WELL-BEING		
LEVEL	WELL-BEING	SIGNALS
1	Extremely low	The child clearly shows signals of discomfort: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • whines, sobs, cries, screams; • looks dejected, sad or frightened, is in panic; • is angry or furious; • shows signs feet, wriggles, throws objects, hurts others; • sucks its thumb, rubs its eyes; • doesn't respond to the environment, avoids contact, withdraws; • hurts him/herself: bangs its head, throws him/herself on the floor..
2	Low	The posture, facial expression and actions indicate that the child does not feel at ease. However, the signals are less explicit than under level 1 or the sense of discomfort is not expressed the whole time.
3	Moderate	The child has a neutral posture. Facial expression and posture show little or no emotion. There are no signals indicating sadness or pleasure, comfort or discomfort.
4	High	The child shows obvious signs of satisfaction (as listed under level 5). However, these signals are not constantly present with the same intensity.
5	Extremely high	During the observation episode, the child enjoys, in fact it feels great: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it looks happy and cheerful, smiles, beams, cries out of fun; • is spontaneous, expressive and is really him/herself; • talks to itself, plays with sounds, hums sings; • is relaxed, does not show any signs of stress or tension; • is open and accessible to the environment; • is lively, full of energy, radiates; • expresses self-confidence and self-assurance.

Figure 3: The Leuven Involvement and Wellbeing Scale: Wellbeing (Laevers, 2005, 13)

THE SCALE FOR INVOLVEMENT		
LEVEL	INVOLVEMENT	EXAMPLES
1	Extremely low	The child hardly shows any activity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no concentration: staring, daydreaming; • an absent, passive attitude; • no goal-oriented activity, aimless actions, not producing anything; • no signs of exploration and interest; • not taking anything in, no mental activity.
2	Low	The child shows some degree of activity but which is often interrupted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limited concentration: looks away during the activity, fiddles, dreams; • is easily distracted; • action only leads to limited results.
3	Moderate	The child is busy the whole time, but without real concentration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • routine actions, attention is superficial; • is not absorbed in the activity, activities are short lived; • limited motivation, no real dedication, does not feel challenged; • the child does not gain deep-level experiences; • does not use his/her capabilities to full extent; • the activity does not address the child's imagination.
4	High	There are clear signs of involvement, but these are not always present to their full extent: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the child is engaged in the activity without interruption; • most of the time there is real concentration, but during some brief moments the attention is more superficial; • the child feels challenged, there is a certain degree of motivation; • the child's capabilities and its imagination to a certain extent are addressed in the activity.
5	Extremely high	During the episode of observation the child is continuously engaged in the activity and completely absorbed in it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is absolutely focussed, concentrated without interruption; • is highly motivated, feels strongly appealed by the activity, perseveres; • even strong stimuli cannot distract him/her; • is alert, has attention for details, shows precision; • its mental activity and experience are intense; • the child constantly addresses all its capabilities: imagination and mental capacity are in top gear; • obviously enjoys being engrossed in the activity.

Figure 4: The Leuven Involvement and Wellbeing Scale: Involvement (Laevers, 2005, 14)

RESULTS

About the observed sessions

All sessions took place for around an hour in the morning before lunch. Due to social distancing requirements, the residents stayed in a communal room within the care home with the patio door open, the children stayed outside, whereas the artists played by the patio door to connect the two groups. During the third session, two of the residents were brought outside on the patio closer to the children but still maintaining social distancing. The total number of participants varied between the sessions, as seen in table 1.

Table 1: total number of participants per observed session

session	children	residents	childminders	care home staff	artists
3	8	7	2	1	3
4	6	11	2	4	2
5	14	11	4	3	3
8	9	10	3	4	2

During all observed sessions, the artists sang songs accompanied by instruments such as the accordion, ukulele, guitar, banjo, and tambourine. The artists also brought a variety of instruments for the children to choose from during every session, such as egg shakers, rain sticks, tambourines, drums, a ukulele, chime bars and glockenspiels. Due to hygiene requirements, the care home provided a similar range of instruments for the residents. The artists also sang songs without instruments. The artists chose new and older songs to cover a range of songs that were familiar either to young and older participants, or both (see Appendix A). In cooperation with the children and residents, the artists also created lyrics while singing songs (see Appendix B). In the seventh session, a microphone and speaker were provided for the residents to sing. Additionally, the emerging artist set up different painting activities for children and residents throughout the project.

Residents - The ArtsObs Scale

Mood score

Between 4 and 6 residents' mood was observed using the ArtsObs Scale. As seen as in table 2, the scores over all observed session range from a minimum of 4 to a maximum of 7. This means that over all observed sessions, the residents began the session in at least a calm and passive mood. None of the residents appeared to be sad, frustrated, upset, or distressed. By the end of the sessions, the average of the residents appeared to be satisfied and focused or even happy and receptive.

Table 2: resident's mood scores on ArtsObs Scale

session	number of	score	score	score min	score max
	observed residents	average before	average after		
3	5	4.6	5.4	4	6
4	4	5.5	6.5	5	7
5	6	5.33	6.17	4	7
8	4	5	6	4	7

After the third session, for 3 out of 5 observed residents the score on the mood scale increased as their mood visibly improved by the end of the session, for one resident out of the 3 residents the mood score increased by 2 points on the scale. For 2 residents the original score remained the same, and their mood appeared unchanged. After the fourth session, the mood score for all 4 observed residents increased by one point. For five of the observed 6 residents in the fifth session the mood score increased, by one point for three residents and by 2 points for two residents. For one resident the mood score went down indicating their mood was adversely affected, so they have started the session excited and enthusiastic (scale score 7) but became satisfied or focused (scale score 5) during the session. After the last session of the project, for three of the observed 4 residents the mood score increased, by one point for two residents and by 2 points for one resident. For one resident the original score remained the same.

Children – The Leuven Scale

Wellbeing

As table 3 shows, at all observed sessions five children have been scored. The aim was to observe the same children to draw a consistent picture of the children's wellbeing across all observed sessions. Due to absence, the observed children differ slightly with three children been observed at every session.

Table 3: children's wellbeing scores on the Leuven Scale

Child	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	average
Session 3	4			4	5	4		4		4.2
Session 4					4	4	5	4	5	4.4
Session 5		4			5	5		5	5	4.8
Session 8		4	4		5	4		4		4.2

It can also be seen that all observed children at all the observed sessions showed signs of happiness and excitement albeit not constantly present with the same intensity for the whole session. For instance, during the session in week 3, four of five observed children showed obvious signs of satisfaction. The children picked different instruments during the session, sang along with the artists, danced, and jumped around. However, these signals were not constantly present with the same intensity during the whole session (scale score 4). One of the children was happy and cheerful during the whole third session, singing confidently and playing along with different instruments (scale score 5). Based on the average for every session, the score for all the observed sessions varies slightly, with the children scoring the highest on wellbeing in the fifth session.

Involvement

The children were also observed regarding their engagement in the sessions. During every session, children had the opportunity to choose from different instruments the artists provided, they could sing along with the artists, dance, move freely around the patio, make suggestions to the artists for songs and lyrics within the songs. Looking at table 4, most of the observed children showed clear signs of involvement in all the sessions. This means they were engaged and focused on the activities but for some brief moments their attention was more superficial (scale score 4). In the third and fifth sessions, two of the observed children were busy at some point during the session. However, their attention was superficial, and their involvement in

activities was short lived (scale score 3). In all the observed sessions, at least one child was continuously engaged and completely absorbed in the activity (scale score 5). In these cases, the child was dancing or jumping, singing along with the artist, and picked different instruments.

Table 4: children’s involvement scores on the Leuven Scale

Child	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	average
Session 3	4			4	5	4		3		4.2
Session 4					4	4	4	5	5	4.4
Session 5		3			5	5		3	4	4.0
Session 8		4	4		5	4		5		4.4

Looking at table 3 and 4, the scores for both wellbeing and involvement correspond, thus being the same or deviate by one point. During the fifth session, one child was seen as happy and cheerful throughout the whole session, despite not being fully involved in the activities. The child placed themselves at the back of the group and watched, laughing openly.

Interviews

Two of the observed residents, Peggy and June, were interviewed at the care home after a session. Three childminders, Annmarie, Michelle and Paula as well as the activity lead of the care home, Paul, were interviewed online after the end of the project. They were asked about their expectations of the project and feedback they received from children and parents as well as residents. They were also asked what they thought the benefits of participating in the project were for the children and residents, as well as whether they thought both groups connected through the sessions. Findings from the interviews are grouped under the four inter-related categories: expectations towards the project, feedback from participants, perceived benefits for the participants and (re-)connecting children and residents.

Expectations towards the project

Care staff expected residents to engage in the sessions, as the care home’s schedule incorporates a significant amount of musical based experiences, which are popular amongst all the residents. One resident, Peggy, noted that she attended the sessions without any expectations other than enjoyment, commenting that she likes music and being around children. For the activity lead, Paul, a key expectation was that the music would facilitate interaction between residents and children.

“Despite the physical distance, [the project] would still engage residents [...] we still have that connection with an adapted approach from the musicians”, he said.

Two of the interviewed childminders were involved in the pilot intervention, Making Bridges with Music in 2017, as well as a gardening project in the care home. This meant that they anticipated the participants involved would gain benefits from taking part.

“I was quite passionate about being involved and being able to visit the care home, knowing the impact children can have on the residents. So, I was just really happy to be able to participate, really, and then to get the opportunity to come back again”, said Michelle.

Although, one childminder, Paula, was prepared for children to be reluctant to interact. This may have been because Paula had not been involved in intergenerational projects in this care home before but had taken part in a dance group where children and older people were brought together. As the dancing group project lasted for a short amount of time, she suggested that the impact on each group was missing.

“And that's kind of, I think, what I expected of the Rebuilding Bridges. I expected the children to be really reserved and kind of hold back and not really want to get involved”, she said.

In this case, Paula also anticipated children being unsure about the sessions as many have not had contact outside their family during the pandemic and so can often display shyness or feeling overwhelmed. As a result, although some children needed reassurance at times, Paula reported being pleasantly surprised when the intervention exceeded her expectations.

During the focus group, the musicians and emerging artists were also asked about their expectations of the sessions. Steve mentioned that he expected the programme to be more substantially influenced by the pandemic but was pleased that all but two of the scheduled intergenerational sessions went ahead. Two sessions were adapted to involve just one generation due to either residents or children having to isolate.

Hugh said he was unsure about the connections that could be built whilst being physically distanced, but he had,

“no doubt at all that the music side would work”.

Although emerging artist, Verity, was also initially worried that the chance for children and residents to connect would be reduced by the design of the project, she expressed that the adapted delivery model benefitted her own experience, having not participated in intergenerational programmes before. She reflected,

“...being outside and [the residents] being inside in this project and it being slower pace, it took me a while to understand what I was doing and what I wanted to get from the project [...] but I think the way we did it, definitely gave me time to process what intergenerational projects were”.

The intergenerational sessions were also an opportunity for the emerging artists to work with both the very young and very old and, as Mo pointed out, to learn *“how to form relationships with them”*. For the emerging artists, involvement in the intergenerational programme was expected to provide new experiences.

Feedback from participants

Residents responded positively to the visits by the children. For instance, throughout her life, Peggy worked a lot with children in youth clubs as well as mum and toddler groups. When talking about the music sessions she said,

“it was lovely to see [the children] coming in”, they brought “a bit of fresh air”.

As Peggy has difficulties with her eyesight, she noted that having closer contact and communication with the children would have been desirable.

“If I would have been nearer to them, I would have talked to them, [...] but that’s not possible today”.

For her there was nothing that could have made the sessions more enjoyable, apart from not being able to closely engage with the children. The weather for the third session of the project allowed two of the residents, including Peggy, to be outside on the patio, at a safe distance from the children, childminders, musicians, artists and researchers. Later Peggy said that,

“it was a bit better being outside, because we were a bit closer to the activities. Inside [...] I can’t see what is going on”, due to her visual impairment.

Commenting that singing and playing music always lightens her up and that she wished for the project to carry on as everyone was enjoying it, Peggy said *“I look forward to Tuesdays”*. This corresponded with comments made about the other residents by Paul, the care home activity lead.

Paul reported that some of the residents very much looked forward to the sessions each week and asked, *“Are the children coming today?”*. According to Paul, June could relate well to the children and the activities. In his opinion, the fact that June’s great-grandchildren are at the age of the children in the sessions supported her experience. Due to her dementia, June was not able to recall details of the sessions. Nevertheless, she mentioned on different occasions to Paul and her family that she enjoyed the sessions.

Parents also commented to the childminders that their children enjoyed the sessions. One of the children reported to their parents that they *“had such a great time”*. In the interview at the end of the programme, childminder Michelle commented that the music had particularly impacted the children.

“I think [they] enjoyed every minute of the music really”, Michelle said.

Paula even observed that parents were enthusiastic about their children’s involvement.

“The parents were so excited, and one mum got really emotional about the children [bringing a] boat home that one of the residents made”.

Benefits for the participants

The sessions were seen as beneficial for the residents, especially given the isolation care homes have experienced in recent times. As Paul reflected:

“At a time when residents have been deprived of direct contact with the wider community and have had limited time with their families and friends, the project has served as a beacon of hope and provided enjoyment to all”.

He also pointed out that the design of the music sessions was particularly suitable for residents living with dementia as the repetition of songs provided familiarity. He suggested that this familiarity was of value for all the residents and also for young children. Peggy also reflected that the songs generated memories. When talking about the nursery rhymes Peggy said, *“they all come back”*, and that the song, ‘There’s a hole in my bucket’ reminded her of the time she was a girl guide. Commenting that her children use nursery rhymes now and that it was fun to sing these songs, she remarked,

“All these nursery rhymes stay with you for life [...] and there is always a memory attached to it”.

The children were perceived to gain a variety of benefits from the project by the childminders. Most of the children were considered to have gained more confidence through the sessions and (re-)connected to people outside of their family and childminder group. In some cases, childminders noted children’s developmental progress such as improved speech.

Michelle mentioned about one of the children in her group whose *“speech is just starting to come”*, and that *“one of the days when we were driving towards the care home, [...], we were just all getting in the car. We were driving up [the] road, [the child] suddenly said ‘dance, dance’. So [she] knew where we were going, and that’s what we do. And then it became a bit of a routine, so when she comes in in the morning, she looks at me and she says “dancing?”.*

The childminders also described how the sessions have helped improve children’s personal, social and emotional development (PSED), especially as many children *“did take a step*

backwards” during the national lockdown, as contact with their peers was limited. As Annmarie explained,

“That’s one of the reasons why the sessions have helped [the children] to take those steps again quite quickly because it can take a long time. It is over a year [they] were in and out [of childcare] [...]. And the music sessions, the ‘Rebuilding Bridges’ [project], has helped them with their PSED quite a lot”.

In particular, childminders noticed that children’s confidence increased. For instance, Annmarie described that the children *“warmed up”* faster further into the project, and *“come in quite confident at the start of the session”*. She pointed out that the various ways to engage in the sessions also helped to enhance the children’s confidence. The children particularly enjoyed a sense of sharing and being in the project with the residents.

Increased confidence was also reported for all those involved in the project. For Steve, one of the musicians leading the sessions, a significant outcome was the growing confidence of everyone to join in with the singing. This may have been supported by the routine and predictability of the sessions, including repeating songs, with Steve and Mo, an emerging artist also facilitating the session, commenting that,

“we felt quite held by [...] that structure and it was quite a relaxed feeling”.

As the project progressed, children, childminders, residents and care home staff sang louder and got comfortable with singing. This was exemplified by the residents singing ‘Thank you for the music’ (by ABBA) in a performance for the artists and children at the end of the last session. As Michelle commented,

“I’ve seen the progression and the residents faces and the joy that it does bring to them. And the children loved it”.

During one of the sessions, the artists also brought a speaker and a microphone for the residents to transport the residents’ voices outdoors to the children.

“It was wonderful as [two of the residents] sang solo songs on the mic and the children outside really listened. It was a very special moment”, Hugh described.

Mo pointed out that the children were urging each other to listen silently to the residents’ singing, suggesting children also developed empathetic behaviours and respect towards the residents.

Although the children were not able to physically connect with the residents, the distancing requirements were not seen as inhibiting the benefits gained by the very young participants. During the focus group, Paula reflected:

“Certainly, our little ones that were born in lockdown, and even the ones that were born just before lockdown, they haven’t had that physical connection. So, the impact for them [of physical contact] possibly could have just been too much, perhaps maybe just a complete physical overload for them”.

Children were also perceived to have benefitted from increased exposure to, and time spent with, older people. During the pandemic, most of the children were able to continuously attend their childminder group, *“They are quite fortunate because they’ve managed to keep their little friendship group”*, Michelle said. Nevertheless, some of the children have not seen their grandparents due to social distancing requirements and travel restrictions, often staying in touch via video call. This was perceived to have impacted the children’s comfortableness in the intergenerational environment.

“Something that I’ve only just realized, when you asked me about the access that they have to grandparents. The two children that were the most reserved in my group [...], they kind of took the longest to get comfortable and they’re the two that don’t have [physical] access to grandparents.”

Additionally, Michelle suggested that interacting with older residents was likely to be a novel experience for the children. For instance, she commented,

“very old people can appear new [...] for the small children because their grandmas and grandpas are a lot younger than that”.

As a result, the project offered children an opportunity to (re-)build connections with residents and older people outside their family under safe conditions. As Michelle continued:

“And to be able to do this project, [...] gives them access to more people, [...] another person for the child to connect with, rather than just being in a complete bubble”.

As well as residents and children receiving benefits, it was evident that the facilitators involved gained knowledge and experience from taking part in the programme. For Paul, this included overcoming challenges to implementing the programme, learning about the residents and developing new techniques to facilitate their engagement. For example, he pointed out that for the residents whose eyesight is impaired, he described what was happening and what the children were doing. This person-centered approach, in his opinion, directly linked to the quality of engagement and interaction for the residents. He also commented that it was interesting to note how the residents, together with the children, eagerly joined in the key songs of the sessions such as ‘Hello, Hello’, ‘Goodbye, Goodbye’, ‘What Shall we do With the Drunken Sailor’, ‘My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean’ and ‘Tony Chestnut’. Reflecting on his personal experience, he added that he,

“valued the opportunity to explore another platform for connection with [the] residents during these unprecedented times, to share and learn from different perspectives and to also get just a glimpse of the potential benefits to the residents and children alike from intergenerational interaction”.

The musicians and artists also described being impacted by the sessions. For example, after the third session, Hugh noted the positive impact of having the two residents join in the session outside in the garden. Additionally, Mo, an emerging artist, commented that everyone is *“sharing the music”*.



Figure 5: two residents join the session outside on the patio

Paul concluded:

“Whilst social distancing, staffing and indeed the weather have proven to be challenging, the project has successfully delivered an enjoyable, engaging, and varied experience for the residents and children alike. Residents have delighted in the enthusiasm and exuberance of the children”.

(Re-)connecting children and residents

Over the course of the eight sessions, many involved commented on the differences in connection the children and residents may experience as a result of the socially distanced, inside-outside arrangement of the project. For some childminders, this was described as restricting the opportunities for interaction. For instance, Anmarie drew comparisons between the Making Bridges with Music and Rebuilding Bridges programmes:

“Before [we were] [...] actually in the room with the residents, the children could go up to the residents, give them instruments, stand next to them, [...] and they were doing crafts with them. [...] Last time the residents obviously watched the children, and that’s the enjoyment that they got out of seeing the children and listening to the children. Whereas this time, they could still see and hear but the children weren’t really interacting with the residents”.

Similarly, Paula described a situation where a resident wanted to share his instrument with one of the children by the doorway. He was sitting in an armchair and dropped his tambourine, kicking it towards the child because he could not reach to pass it to them.

“And that for me was [...] joyful and really sad. I think sad because, you know, we couldn’t have that physical connection with the residents. And they, as much as the children wanted to go in there, clearly wanted that physical contact with the children as well.”

This feeling of both joy and sadness being experienced when observing the interactions between children and residents, echoed comments made by the musicians and artists. For example, Hugh reflected after the two week pause in the project due to half term:

“On the one hand the project continues to blossom, and the love and sense of shared experience carries on, but at the same time we all seemed weighed down with the sense of what it could be if only...”

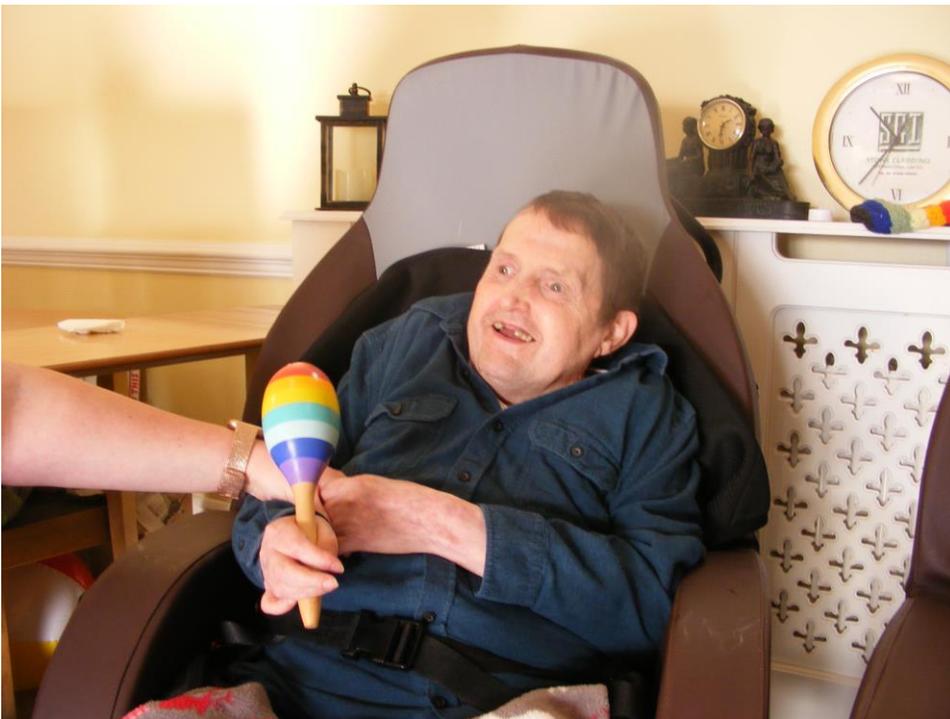


Figure 6: resident Bob engaging in the music with a maraca

For Mo, the project felt *“tidal”* with feelings of happiness and sadness coming and going as well as moving towards the doorway and the residents, and away from them. Not being able to step over the threshold into the care home and physically connect with the residents was upsetting for her every so often. However, she also pointed out that it felt quite natural and fitted with the title of the project ‘Rebuilding Bridges’ in terms of gradually developing connection with care home residents.

Despite these mixed feeling towards the physical separation required, childminders, musicians and artists all noticed moments during the sessions where the children and residents formed connections. For instance, the artists and musicians commented on the types of connection made through the sessions during post-session reflective meetings. These meetings were recorded and gave an opportunity for the artists, musicians, researchers as well as care home activity leads to discuss what had happened during the session and make arrangements for upcoming sessions. During these post-session reflections, the artists noticed different levels of enjoyment and connection. Some children started to connect with the residents, some with the artists and some children enjoyed the music whilst staying with their friends and childminders. The lead artist, Hugh, reflected after the first session that 3-year-old Zayn, who engaged with the residents instantly,

“really seemed to understand that this project is about connections”.

In a post-session debrief after the second session Hugh also commented that everyone *“started to reach closer to each other”*. He described Zayn, passing balloons to residents and *“several childminders and kids stood in the doorway blowing bubbles into the room”*. In the same conversation, Paul reported that the residents enjoyed receiving the balloons and bubbles from outside, suggesting

“these connections are the difference between life and living”.

The emerging artist, Mo, defined her word for the second session as *“reach”* and reflected that,

“the whole project is not about music and a ‘music session’ but about connections, and with these groups they happen in very different ways and when we don’t expect them”.

As these comments describe, the types of connection observed were different from other models of intergenerational programmes pre-pandemic, but still present. The children and residents made attempts to share their instruments, they also drew pictures for one another, waved to each other, and exchanged smiles.



Figure 7: children drawing pictures for the residents

During one session, the children were provided with paper and crayons, and after drawing for a short time, took their pictures to the doorway. Each child chose a resident to give their picture to. The care home’s activity lead, Paul, facilitated this by hand delivering each picture to each resident. He later said: *“In normal times, you would have had children automatically gravitate to different people”*. For him the connection was still there as the children pointed to the resident, they wanted their painting to go to, and the residents were delighted to be picked. One child made three pictures and Steve wondered *“if this was because she didn’t want anyone to feel left out”*. Peggy highlighted that receiving the pictures from the children

“makes you happy that you are part of the universe because you are doing something with [someone else]”.



Figure 8: two children with their pictures for the residents

Referring to the variety of creative pieces that were made by the children and residents and exchanged between them, a childminder, Annmarie, said,

“I think, the drawing and the painting and the boats, that were passed in and out, that did help with obviously being separated by the doorway”.

An example of this was at the beginning of the fifth session, children finger painted a sea on a big canvas accompanied by one musician, Steve, playing his ukulele, as shown in figure 9. The sea was painted for the residents and as part of the visualization of the project name “Rebuilding Bridges”. The canvas was then placed on the patio doorstep to metaphorically build a bridge between the children outside and the residents indoors.



Figure 9: children finger painting for the residents

Paula also mentioned that the exchange of the boats that children and residents decorated

“was a really positive kind of impact and positive connection between the outside and the inside”.

This showed that connection was not only about making music together, but about the non-musical exchanges made. As Hugh explained after,

“It really felt as if it was not just music today that was connecting us, but also visuals”.

Nonetheless, the music was recognised as a key aspect of the interaction. For Paula the choice of songs had a big impact on the connection between children and residents.

“There was a mix of younger songs that the little ones would know. And then older songs that they possibly wouldn't have [...] heard or wouldn't be familiar with. But obviously the residents would know them and recognise them. So, it was something familiar for them. So, I think that's quite a nice bridge between the two”.



Figure 10: the painted sea with the boats decorated by the children

Overall, there was a feeling amongst the childminders that the programme had made the best of the possibilities for interaction available.

“I don’t think we could have done much more in the situation we are in right now”,
said Annmarie, *“it was the best that we could do”*.

Paula commented, *“Obviously, if we hadn’t been in restrictions [...] the connection I think would have been a lot better but considering what we had to deal with [...], I think there definitely was still that connection”*.

Even though the interactions between the children and residents all happened at the doorway and no physical contact was possible, all interviewees reflected on situations that showed how children and residents connected. As Paula concluded during the focus group,

“there’s that recognition between the two that actually, you know, we’re singing together and even though we are physically separated, there is that connection still”.



Figure 11: children receiving paper boats decorated by the residents

The emerging artists pointed out that the design of the project gave all participants the opportunities to get to know each other slowly and to find ways to (re-)build connections. The distanced nature of the sessions gave the emerging artists the space to explore their role and to find their own way to engage in the session.

As all three of the emerging artists were new to intergenerational practice, they were initially asked to take on the role of a participant observer. This involved following the sessions from a distance or helping children to participate in the sessions. Harry mentioned that this time enabled him to find his own way of contributing to the sessions as an additional music leader. In the focus group with the other artists and musicians, he suggested that co-facilitating the session made him feel more part of the project and had a positive impact on the session itself.

“It completely changed how a lot of the music worked, adding a third member to the band”, Harry reflected.

The involvement of the emerging artists in the session facilitated the reflexive aspects of the project as they were able to notice different ways the residents and children participated, as well as forming connections with the participants themselves.

“I think the residents, the way they expressed that they were connecting to us and to the children, was different perhaps to how we would express that. It was more subtle, and yet when you go to the same home every week and you learn about these people, you remember them, they have their individual way of signifying that they are connecting and that their feeling us, sort of feeling our presence”,
Mo, emerging artist.

Despite this, the social distancing requirements meant that the relationship between emerging artists and residents was more difficult develop. For instance, Harry explained it was easier for him to relate to the children, and he experienced difficulties to *“empathise in the same way”* with the residents. This disparity for Steve underlined *“the need for intergenerational work”*.

Verity recognised that working with the environment, in the moment, helped to engage children and residents. She reflected,

“I think using nature as a starting block to build connection because everyone has been around nature [...] for example at [the care home], giving the leaves to the elderly residents and then them making us cards which resembled trees and flowers at the end of the project was a really nice way of us connecting because they got our presents as leaves and they gave us cards with nature pictures on them. It’s just something so easy to make a connection with, I think”.

As a result of participating in the project, the emerging artist expressed how they had discovered tools to help foster (re-)connection. Harry suggested that being reflective was crucial to making the project work:

“But the most important thing that we can do is listen [...] to understand what is going on, to react to what is going on, to be genuinely interested in what anyone is saying or doing at any time and that can lead in to finding that thing that can help the session grow [...] Listening, not just in a musical sense but on an emotional level is an incredibly powerful way of building any form of connection”.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess if the Rebuilding Bridges intervention was effective in achieving its aims and objectives, and whether it was effective in improving the wellbeing of young children and older people attending the sessions.

Amid a global pandemic with social distancing restrictions, the project and its participants faced a number of challenges to overcome. On the one hand, children and older people have missed out on physical contact since the start of the pandemic, and due to continued restrictions, experienced limited contact during the time of the project. However, touch and closeness after a period of isolation, especially with strangers, can be overwhelming. The children born just before or during the pandemic may not have had contact with people outside their immediate family. This is a new experience for them and needs to be approached carefully. During conversations with the childminders, it also became clear that the grandparents of the children involved are much younger than most of the care home residents who participated in the project, suggesting that many of the children may not have had contact with people at the age of the residents. However, the project offered both groups, for whom this kind of interaction may be novel, a chance to (re-)connect within a safe setting. For every session the musicians and artists found ways to connect all participants through music and art.

Overall, the findings suggest positive effects on wellbeing for residents and children, and high levels of involvement for children as a result of participation. Across the project, the residents entered the sessions with at least a calm and passive mood. The interviews with residents and the care home activity lead revealed that the residents were looking forward to days when the children came to make music together and were enthusiastic to come to the sessions. None of the residents appeared to be sad, upset, or distressed. By the end of the sessions, the average of the residents' mood was lifted to be satisfied and focused or even happy and receptive. This supports findings from previous studies of intergenerational music programmes which showed positive effects on older people's wellbeing (Belgrave, 2011, Jenkins, Farrer and Aujla, 2021).

In all sessions, most of the observed children showed clear signs of involvement. The children were engaged and focused on the activities. For some brief moments, children's attention appeared superficial, and activities were short lived. This may have been the result of some children feeling overwhelmed or having had limited contact with others outside of their family or childminding group during the pandemic. This suggests that some children may react

negatively or engage in alternative ways during in-person intergenerational activities of this kind. Future intergenerational programmes should plan for and assess the risk of this occurring both prior to, and during, programme delivery. This will also require finding new ways to allow children to be comfortable, as not involving these children in the sessions would have refused them the opportunity to slowly and carefully engage with others outside of their “bubble”. Indeed, all observed children at all observed sessions showed signs of happiness and excitement albeit not constantly present with the same intensity throughout. The scores for both wellbeing and involvement correspond. Childminders and parents fed back that the children enjoyed the sessions and were excited to visit the residents to make music for and with them. Children also gained more confidence throughout the sessions.

Childminders additionally pointed out that participation was beneficial for the children’s personal, social and emotional development as well as the speech development of some children. This confirms previous research that found positive effects on preschool children’s language (Detmer et al., 2020), and social and emotional development (Kirsh, Frydenberg and Deans, 2021). These positive effects could relate to increased interaction through the music sessions (Belgrave, 2011). The participants producing and exchanging pictures, as well as other creations, may have also contributed to children’s development of empathetic understanding, as children and residents shared in this experience together (Kirsh, Frydenberg and Deans, 2021). During this project children exhibited behaviours which indicated some empathetic understanding such as attempting to share instruments and balloons, creating additional pictures to give to excluded residents and listening intently. This is consistent with findings from Hayes’ (2003) study which showed generational empathy between residents and children developed over time.

In Hayes’ (2003) study, however, verbal communication and physical closeness or touch enhanced relationships between children and residents. This was not possible within the Rebuilding Bridges programme due to the nature of the social distancing restrictions. As a result, it is important to consider that the reduced opportunities for social contact may have limited the relationships formed between the participants. This may also have negatively impacted participants by contributing to feelings of isolation, as both residents and children expressed a desire to be nearer to each other. Although findings from this evaluation suggest that for some children this physical separation prevented them from being overwhelmed by the

interaction, for other participants limited close contact may have adversely affected the quality of the connections they established.

In interviews, respondents recognised that different practices were used to engage participants in different ways. As the care home activity lead pointed out, the repetition of songs and nursery rhymes was especially helpful for residents with dementia. Additionally, familiarity added value for both residents and children, increasing their confidence in the intergenerational and musical environment. Using familiar nursery rhymes helped residents to recall positive memories of their childhood and youth. These practices follow David et al.'s (2018, p. 336) recommendation to include "songs that are appropriate for both children and seniors (i.e., repetitive, simple, easy to learn) [and] [p]lay songs that are familiar to both groups to increase participation". Our results show that nursery rhymes were appropriate for both groups and appeared connective between generations. Also, Beynon and Lang (2018) discuss how participants may engage in different ways, describing how one older adult appeared to not be joining in but recalled after the session how a song had made them remember their mother. As a result, Beynon and Lang (2018, p. 57) noticed that "the levels of participation and engagement in the adults are as varied as the individuals attending". As the Rebuilding Bridges music sessions were physically distanced and included pre- and post-verbal participants, non-verbal forms of communication were observed. The results confirm Beynon and Lang's (2018) observations by showing that joy and engagement of pre- and post-verbal participants were apparent in less obvious ways but were not of less importance.

For the residents, close proximity enhanced the quality of experience they gained from the project. One interviewed resident and the care home activity lead mentioned that due to sight loss they were not able distinguish anything beyond the threshold and could not see children's activities outside. Thus, it was crucial that the sessions were supported by care home staff explaining to residents what the children were doing outside and helping the residents to engage in the activity of the session. The musicians and artists also employed narration, often through music (see Appendix B), to help explain what was happening both inside and outside.

The creative contributions of the emerging artists complemented the music-making. For example, the introduction of activities such as drawing pictures and exchanging crafted boats helped to develop new ways to foster connection between the residents and the children. The different roles the emerging artists took on during the project had different effects on them but

were equally beneficial. The introductory sessions allowed them to gain confidence in the new environment of the intergenerational programme and discover different ways to contribute to the sessions. Their exposure to intergenerational practice enabled them to gain new knowledge and experiences of this form of community work, engaging with both young children and older adults. Taking part helped them to develop transferable skills, such as empathy, communication and listening. Their active involvement in the reflective post-session conversations provided insights that informed the development of the sessions and helped to facilitate the connections between children and residents. Overall, the emerging artists' involvement enabled innovative forms of practice to be collaboratively developed whilst providing professional development opportunities for each artist.

Together, these findings highlight the importance of facilitators, including musicians, emerging artists, childminders and care home staff, in enabling (re-)connection. By responding to residents needs and supporting children who were unsure in this kind of environment, practitioners were able to develop, and adapt to, new ways of interacting. Comments made, particularly by the residents, about overcoming physical impairments to engagement through closer or facilitated interaction, confirm Tan, Tee and Seetharaman (2020) suggestion that in-person intergenerational activities are more suitable for older people with physical/ cognitive impairments. Similarly, indications from all interviewed participants that connections were possible despite being distanced suggests that beneficial interaction does not necessarily require being in close proximity (Belgrave and Keown, 2018).

Limitations

The Rebuilding Bridges intergenerational programme was designed for a time where social distancing requirements were needed to ensure the safety of all participants. This reduced and non-physical contact may have negatively impacted both children and residents, but the results suggest that this was a potential benefit to children for whom interaction outside their immediate family and with older members of the community was novel. The programme also provided benefits to residents in terms of wellbeing and gently opened care homes after a period of isolation.

The short-term nature of the programme prevented children and residents from developing deeper connections which may have further enhanced the impact on their wellbeing and

involvement. The limited duration of the project may have also compounded the isolation felt by participants once it had come to an end. It is therefore recommended that funding for longer term and more sustainable intergenerational programmes is provided in the future. This is especially relevant considering that this evaluation has shown that adaptations can be made to in-person intergenerational programmes to accommodate the continuing impact of distancing requirements on social contact.

Due to time and budgetary constraints, the evaluation of the Rebuilding Bridges programme took place in one of the three care home settings. Consequently, the view on children's and residents' experience is merely captured for the sessions in one care home.

A mixed method approach that included both quantitative and qualitative methods allowed this evaluation to capture data from verbal, pre- and post-verbal participants. This included observing sessions and conducting interviews with residents, childminders, the care home activity lead, and the musicians and emerging artists involved. The perspectives of young children were not able to be directly sought due to the practicalities of conducting the evaluation or due to the children being too young. However, the reflective approach adopted by the childminders enabled the evaluation to gain insight into the children's experiences.

The ArtsObs Scale proved to be a useful tool to observe the residents and capture the effects the music session had upon them. Its varied methods allowed demographic data and other criteria relevant to the programme to be captured. For this evaluation, interviews with residents, care home staff, musicians, and artists were conducted to further record positive and negative feedback from participants and relatives. However, it was essential to work closely with the care home staff to get to know the residents and learn to notice changes in residents' mood. Due to the diverse types of dementia and varied health care needs of residents, changes in mood varied in intensity and appearance. Thus, it is crucial to carefully observe the residents, in order to appropriately capture the effect that the use of arts has on the participants.

It proved difficult to capture the varied nature of the children's wellbeing and involvement using the Leuven Scale. The results show that all observed children at all the observed sessions showed signs of happiness and excitement albeit not constantly present with the same intensity for the whole session. Additionally, most of the observed children in all the sessions showed clear signs of involvement. For some brief moments the attention was superficial, and the

activities were short lived. The scales offer a framework for the observer to capture the degree of happiness and attention of the children involved in the activity. However, as with the residents, it was essential to work closely with childminders to consider children's diverse forms of expression of happiness and involvement. Additionally, at the time of the project some children had limited contact outside their immediate family or with older members of the community. Hence, it is recommended to adopt a holistic approach that allows the effects of the activity on children to be considered from various angles, such as observation of children, interviews with childminders and feedback from parents. It also recommended that future evaluations include interviews with children, subject to the age of the children.

CONCLUSION

“To be seen and heard was at the heart of the project, as it is an essential human need” (Steve, social musician)

During this very difficult time, with residents unable to meet or connect with their family, friends and local community, this project has provided much needed hope, interaction and enjoyment for all involved. The findings from this evaluation suggest that there is benefit in developing in-person, distanced intergenerational music programmes. The project not only gave residents and children the opportunity to (re-)connect with each other, it also improved mood, gave residents something to look forward to, and evoked positive memories. For children, observations revealed clear signs of engagement and happiness, although results varied in terms of duration and intensity. The sessions were also perceived to help children make important steps in their personal, social and emotional development, to gain confidence and stimulate their speech. This suggests the project achieved its aim of improving children and older adults’ wellbeing, as well as providing additional benefits.

Care home staff and childminders were provided with opportunities to develop their knowledge and experience of intergenerational practice, and successfully supported residents and children on each side of the threshold. The music and other artistic activities provided opportunities for alternative forms of engagement, communication and connection. Additionally, the musicians’ and artists’ dedication and responsiveness to all participants, regardless of age, made everyone feel seen and heard. Overall, the committed work of all those involved helped to rebuild the bridge between the care home and the community after months of isolation and despite on-going restrictions.

As Michelle beautifully summarised the project:

“It becomes a home from home [and] [...] I think, it knocks down a lot of walls [and] does do what it says on the tin, to build bridges between the very young and the old”

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Funders and care homes should continue to invest in intergenerational music and arts interventions in key areas of Torbay, promoting longer term and sustainable programmes.
- Distanced, in-person intergenerational interventions should be supported to engage older adults with physical or cognitive impairments and young children who may face barriers to participating in virtual intergenerational programmes. This should include continuing to explore new ways to connect generations that are not reliant on physical proximity or touch.
- Torbay Council and local relevant organisations should continue to develop intergenerational music and arts CPD opportunities for childminders and care home staff. CPD should focus on the benefits of intergenerational interventions, exploring how best to support children and residents' engagement.
- Local arts and music organisations should continue to develop intergenerational interventions in collaboration with local care homes. Further opportunities should be created for emerging artists to gain skills and knowledge of intergenerational practice.
- Future research and evaluation approaches should continue to assess the impact of adapted and distanced intergenerational programmes. As it has been recommended that longer term projects be supported, there is the opportunity to develop longitudinal research approaches that consider the impact of intergenerational programmes on participants over a longer period of time.

For organisations wishing to replicate this intervention:

- Make sure you have a team of artists who are curious, passionate and dedicated
- Meet up with the care homes, look round and check the spaces and the expectations; conduct risk assessment and discuss safeguarding policies for both young and old, especially with social distancing requirements.
- Be clear about the need to be flexible and adaptable but having a clear understanding of what the aims are.
- Work with someone who the childminders know and trust
- Make sure everybody can see and hear, e.g. carefully considering the seating arrangement for the residents and positioning of artists and children

-
- Make time for reflection with artists and the care home staff/childminders.
 - Be flexible and allow time to shift and slip
 - Be responsive and learn from the participants
 - Be prepared to change pace
 - Celebrate the unpredictability
 - Don't be afraid of repetition, noise and stillness
 - Don't be afraid of your own feelings
 - Find a way to refer to everyone by their name (e.g. 'Hello' and 'Goodbye' song)
 - Find ways to connect without physical touch, e.g. co-create songs with the participants, send pictures, balloons, crafts between both groups

APPENDIX A: LIST OF SONGS

3 Little Birds
Ave Maria
Bring me Sunshine
Chatnooga Choo Choo
Daisy
Do Re Mi
Drunken Sailor
Goodbye song
Hello Song
Ice Cream Song
Incy Wincy Spider
It's raining it's pouring
Knees Up Mother Brown
Little Fishes
Maria
My Bonnie
Oh I Do Like To be beside The Seaside
Old Macdonald Had A farm
Over The Bridge We Go...
Que Sera Sera
Row Row Row the boat
She'll be Coming Round The Mountain
The Quartermasters Stores
There's a hole in my bucket
Tony Chestnut
Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star
Wind The Bobbin Up

APPENDIX B: EXAMPLES OF CREATED LYRICS DURING THE SESSIONS

Wherever You Go (5th and 6th session)

Wherever you go I'll be there for you

Wherever you go I'll be there for you

Painting with my fingers

Blue and white

Painting with my fingers

Blue and green

Painting with my fingers

I just might

Painting with my fingers

What can you see?

(added 2nd verse at 7th session)

Drawing with our felt pens - purple and pink

Drawing with our markers - yellow and red

Drawing with our felt pens - tell me what you think?

Drawing with our markers - pictures in my head.

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