



Generations Working Together

Blog 2: Intergenerational Practice must generate mutual benefit

Our second blog considers another key intergenerational principle – the idea that intergenerational projects and relationships ought to be mutually beneficial.

As noted in blog one, a key focus for Generations Working Together is to challenge the narrative that intergenerational practice is ‘a nice thing to do’. This often plays out as younger persons acting in some way to the immediate benefit of older persons. Whilst activities like these, that are designed to generate some level of instant fulfilment or excitement can be valuable and heart-warming, it’s important that intergenerational relationships don’t stop there. Key to effective intergenerational practice is that the built relationships are non-transient; the benefits are lasting and crucially, mutually beneficial.

To ensure this is the case, and to fulfil our ultimate ambition to make Scotland an intergenerational nation, we must work to mainstream and normalise the organic growth of intergenerational relationships. Consider the impact of intergenerational housing programmes for example, which connect students with elderly persons. Elderly persons who are perhaps lonely and isolated, find themselves with a new companion with whom they can chat and share experiences with. The student is presented with a unique opportunity to live with and learn from an older person, whose knowledge and wisdom can be passed down, whilst benefitting from reduced accommodation costs. Homeshare is one organisation working to create these opportunities, with one Homeshare participant stating:

“It feels like I’m living in a home rather than just a faceless house with numerous tenants coming and going. It’s been great to build up a relationship with someone who cares about how I feel and what I’ve been doing.”

Another amazing example is 'The Garrick', Loreburn Housing Association's new intergenerational site, which includes an employment hub for young people, located beside 12 dementia friendly homes. With a focus on self-dependence, this site offers young people the opportunity to learn new skills whilst working and living alongside older groups. Young people gain a greater appreciation and understanding of older generations, leading to a subsequent reduction in ageism, improved communication skills, more positive outlooks on ageing, improved social cohesion, and the generating of new, meaningful relationships. At the same time, older persons suffering from dementia are able to connect with groups of younger people, learn new skills and again, overcome loneliness and isolation.

A further example of where mutual benefit of intergenerational practice is evident, is in one of our Excellence Awards Winner's projects from 2022, Citadel Love Stories. This creative story telling project brings together young and older LGBTQ+ persons and allies to creatively explore what loving relationships mean to them. Given the political and attitudinal changes towards LGBTQ+ communities that have been occurred in recent decades, fascinating intergenerational conversations on these changes, can be shared, discussed and written about, creating an amazing opportunity for intergenerational learning, growth and understanding.

Spaces and projects like these, that encourage not merely the coexistence of younger and older persons in the same place, but actively encourage the growth of intergenerational relationships, are what we at GWT believe to be the future. They are evidence that the existing cultural walls currently dividing generations can be broken down and they demonstrate the instrumental role of intergenerational practice in challenging problematic, ageist stereotypes and attitudes. Intergenerational practices can be the catalyst for reuniting people of all ages, to form long-lasting, meaningful relationships and to learn from one another. Evaluations and reviews of intergenerational programmes and initiatives consistently report positive outcomes to both young and older persons. We therefore want to see local and national policy begin to reflect this, so that we can continue on our road to building an intergenerational Scotland.

[Home - Homeshare UK](#)

[The Garrick, Stranraer \(loreburn.org.uk\)](http://loreburn.org.uk)

[GWT's Excellence Awards 2022 \(generationsworkingtogether.org\)](http://generationsworkingtogether.org)