



Generations Working Together

Blog 3: Intergenerational work encourages reciprocal intergenerational learning

Our third blog explores the requirement for intergenerational practice to encourage reciprocal learning. Quite fittingly, it comes at a time where the Scottish Government has requested a call for view for its National Discussion on Education. This blog will therefore consider the ways in which intergenerational practice can be utilised and embedded into school curriculum, to encourage reciprocal learning, build intergenerational friendships and break down age barriers. As addressed in previous blogs, our communities are largely siloed, more so than in recent history. Young people don't engage with older people for a range of social, political, cultural and environmental reasons. Sadly, this leads to a lack of understanding of people from different generations, resulting in the creation of negative stereotyping and stigma. This is not inevitable however, and there are several ways in which we can challenge this, one of which is through education reform.

GWT envisages a Scotland where intergenerational relationships are seen not just as a nice, heart-warming one—off experience; rather are considered a necessary practice in the development of children and young people. We therefore call on the Scottish Government to embrace intergenerational connections, by embedding progressive and innovative intergenerational projects into new education legislation and curriculum. Older people have years of wisdom, knowledge and skills that are potentially invaluable to younger generations and this huge wealth of knowledge remains largely untapped. But as long as generations remain divided, many of these skills will be lost. It is so important that children recognise the value that older people have both brought, and continue to bring, to the world.

Intergenerational practice can be embedded at all stages of education. At GWT we support the idea that 'play' should be at the forefront of early years development. Evidence shows that children under 7 are far more likely to develop better social skills and go on to perform better in school, when encouraged to play more and aren't introduced to numeracy and literacy at too early an age. Intergenerational practice can be employed to support this play and is something we have done extensive work on – check out our [Play and Storytelling Toolkit](#)! There are further opportunities for older students to learn from intergenerational mentoring programmes, arts and crafts opportunities, men's shed experiences, cooking projects and more! There are countless examples of mutual and reciprocal learning from intergenerational programmes that you can find on our [website](#). There are also countless programmes whereby older people are supported in developing digital skills, allowing them to become more connected through new digital technologies; representing an opportunity to overcome loneliness and social isolation. The new skills gained by the older person could be pivotal to their mental wellbeing, whilst the younger person is filled with a sense of social responsibility and satisfaction.

In a changing world, where the number of older people is increasing, there is a need to change the ways in which our communities communicate and work together. The introduction of mandatory intergenerational programmes in schools presents a powerful and innovative way to do so, generating reciprocal learning opportunities for all of those involved whilst challenging some of the social disconnectedness that society suffers from. Look out for our response to the Scottish Government's Call for Views on education reform, which we will post on socials, where these ideas will be explored in more detail.