



Generations Working Together

Blog 4: Intergenerational Practice Adopts a Life-Course Perspective

Our fourth blog explores our next key principle of intergenerational practice; that it must adopt a life-course perspective.

Within intergenerational practice, a life-course perspective looks at how an individual's experiences and opportunities are shaped by social, economic, and historical factors throughout their life. Adopting a life-course perspective in intergenerational work can help to understand the complex and dynamic relationships between different generations and the ways in which these relationships are influenced by broader social, economic, and historical forces. It can also highlight the importance of considering the different life stages and experiences of individuals, as well as the ways in which these experiences can vary across different social groups.

For example, a life-course perspective can help to shed light on how an individual's early childhood experiences, such as access to education and family support, can shape their later life outcomes. It can also help to understand how economic and social changes, such as technological advances or shifts in the labour market, can affect the opportunities and challenges faced by different generations. We can also better understand the existing preconceptions and stereotypes about different generations and how they came to be; allowing us to hopefully undo these, in time. By recognising and accounting for varied socioeconomic and cultural circumstances, intergenerational programmes become more inclusive and widely accessible.

Another important aspect of intergenerational practice through a life-course perspective is the recognition that different generations may face different challenges and opportunities. For example, younger generations may face challenges related to education, employment, and housing, while older generations may face challenges related to health and social care. By acknowledging these differences and working together to address them, intergenerational practice can help to build more inclusive and supportive communities for people of all ages. Programmes can be shaped to generate mutual benefit to these groups – an intergenerational mentoring programme, for example, can challenge social isolation and loneliness in an older participant, whilst improving educational attainment for a younger participant.

Furthermore, incorporating a life-course perspective into intergenerational work can help to identify potential points of intervention where policies and initiatives can support individuals and communities in building stronger intergenerational connections. For example, initiatives that focus on supporting early childhood development or providing education and training opportunities for older adults may be particularly effective in promoting intergenerational understanding and cooperation.

Overall, the life-course perspective is a useful framework for understanding and addressing the complex issues involved in intergenerational work. By taking into account the different life stages and experiences of individuals, and the ways in which these experiences are shaped by wider forces, intergenerational programs and initiatives can be developed and tailored to better support the building of strong, inclusive communities for people of all ages.