

# Insights & Learning Report Participatory Research

Exploring Intergenerational Connections and Community Safety

Our final insights and learning story from our 1-year participatory research, funded by the Community Knowledge Fund, initiated and facilitated by Generations Working Together from October 2023 to September 2024. Research facilitated and report by Bella Kerr.



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## 1. Our research story

Generations Working Together (GWT) sought to test the strengthening of intergenerational bonds and if it could play a significant role in community safety. The research was conducted in collaboration with **4 communities** (in Glasgow, Scotland) involving **138 participants** (See Table1 for breakdown). By applying an intergenerational lens to our participatory research approach, each project concentrated on the key relational element of intergenerational practice and engaged in dialogue to connect generations to see if it enhanced community cohesion and community safety. This report feeds back on the project’s participatory actions, conversations and change which took place. It tells the story of our research, explains the impact of the work and how it has contributed to the aims of the Community Knowledge Fund.

### The Participants / Co-investigators

1. [Yoker Resource Centre](#) and Princes Trust Glasgow - Zine making Workshops.
2. [Active Seniors Glasgow West](#) and Ignite Young Peoples Drama Group - Drama Workshops.
3. [Govan Craft Café](#) and young people from Aberlour –conversations about IG connections.
4. [Garnethill Multicultural Centre](#) with Art Students/children – film, art/ graffiti, workshops.

Participants	Garnet hill	Active Seniors	Yoker Resource	Govan Craft Cafe
Number older people	13	18	8	40
Age older people	68 - 84	56 - 79	70 - 94	
Number younger people	24	26	14	4
Ages younger people	Young adults 16 -22  Children 5-8	6 - 22	16 - 24	17 - 20
Totals	37	44	22	44

Table 1: Projects breakdown of age across projects

## 2. Participatory action process

This participatory action research involved asking participants to take more of an active role, through attending learning workshops x5, research workshops x2 and action workshops x4 and being involved in regular advisory group meetings x4 in year. Each group signed partnership agreements which gave the stages of workshops and other action that they would be involved in.

### **Learning workshops x5**

Discussions took part with each group preparing them to meet with the other generation. We discussed community safety; each group had a different thought about what that was for their community (feeling unsafe was considered to be drug taking, burning bins, fighting, littering, vandalism including graffiti, acting in an intimidating manner, being disrespectful). Each group (apart from Govan Craft Café who had less time) took part in 5 x 2-hour learning workshops to promote a better understanding of the following:

- Ageism and stereotypes
- Media representation of crime
- Intergenerational work x2 sessions
- Storytelling as a means of evaluation

### **Research Workshops x2**

These sessions covered participatory methods and qualitative research of community safety and intergenerational connections looking at Theory of Change and the Most Significant Change technique.

### **Advisory Groups x4**

These meetings were held in person and shared the progress and process of each research project, allowing time to share and connect with other projects and learn together.

### **Guidance Information Group x4**

These meetings were hosted online with members of YouthLink Scotland, COSLA, Scottish Pensioners Forum, Interfaith Scotland and Scottish Community Safety Network. We shared the progress and process of the projects and asked for any guidance or information that would assist the overall process.

### **Action Workshops x4 - Zine Making**

Relationships were fostered over an 18-week period by older and younger people learning about each other, working with an artist, and then coming together to share and learn. They talked about what a good community looked like and what made them feel safe and looked at their understanding of younger people and older people. They produced artwork in the form of a zine (publication) together, to express their feelings and thoughts on community safety between generations.

### **Drama**

Participants produced an innovative drama written and performed by older people encouraging them to express themselves in new ways using scenarios and role play. Younger and older people were brought together in workshops over a 20-week period. They facilitated dialogue about connections between each other whilst exploring community safety. Two final productions took place with each generation sharing their story.

### **Documentary Style Filmmaking**

Exploring younger and older people's ideas of community safety and connections between generations over a 20-week period. The generations unfortunately couldn't connect in

person due to having to vacate the shared premises that they both met in. Some guided interviews with film maker explored thoughts on community safety with the generations.

### **Graffiti Workshops**

Over 20 weeks the groups took part in sessions with artists with two groups of young people of differing ages, visit to Graffiti space and did own artwork, some art workshops, community engagement [IG film Martha: A Picture Story](#) hosted at GFT exploring ideas about the origins of graffiti, (about photographer and graffiti artists in USA and across the globe). Followed on by a proposed Tag Mosaic collaboration with a wider community group.

## **3. The impact for people, communities and place**

Participants reported that they now view each generation differently. Each is now more aware of the other, although some of the groups had taken part in previous intergenerational work it was mainly with schools and short term. It is noted that it has been difficult to engage with young people and although 2 of the projects did not engage as well as they had planned (due to outside challenges) there is a keenness to get things done and they will continue to connect and encourage intergenerational connections. Young people can often be blamed for anti-social activities, and this was seen clearly when we discussed crime in communities with all groups during the learning sessions. A sense of ownership of space is something we explored through making a zine publication, creating a drama, looking at graffiti, and guided conversations.

### **Yoker & Princes Trust**

Younger and older people said that they had benefited from the project and meeting each other. They shared ideas and relaxed in each other's company. They would never have met with out the process of intentional intergenerational building.

[Link to zine](#) [Link to film](#)

### **Active Seniors and Ignite Theatre Group**

The younger people benefited from the joint workshops with the older people, they had never taken part in an intergenerational project before and felt it was a unique experience getting to work with adults as equals through drama workshops. It made them think differently about older people and they realised that they had a lot in common. Everyone wanted to feel safe in their communities, to have access to transport, to feel connected and respected. At the end of the project both groups had mutual respect, empathy and a better understanding of fears and expectations.

[Link to film](#)

### **Govan Craft Café and Aberlour Govan**

We started late with these groups and in the process of carrying out the research they lost access the venue that the met in. We overcame challenges and although not as advanced as the other projects there are plans to continue this work and link in together and look at future work in the community.

[This short film covers all 4 x projects.](#)

## **Garnethill Multicultural Centre**

Both generations benefitted being in touch with each other and sharing thoughts and concerns around community safety. The groups tried to understand their differing ideas about graffiti which became a very challenging topic with feelings and emotions becoming contentious involving the much wider community. There was a divide on views around graffiti and little compromise could be attained. Young people saw it as art and older people viewed it as vandalism. The impact for people was learning about the origins of graffiti and the reasons behind it and uncovering that it was not necessarily teenagers and young people who were the people who did the graffiti. This challenged who has power / sharing power acknowledging each other, working together to make change. Progress has been made and the community are talking and working together with Glasgow City Council and the local police to bring about change. The intergenerational work is continuing and [Garnethill want to connect across generations in the community](#).

## **Generations Working Together**

We talked about future connections with the charity and all projects requested that GWT stay in touch. GWT assisted by writing up the overall research, methods, actions, and change so that each project could use the information going forward to look at sustainability and future funding for additional intergenerational work in the area of community safety.

## **Comments from older people:**

- *Changed my mind about where graffiti came from thought that it was all young people. I have a change in my thinking.*
- *Liked the different age groups often have perspectives based on their environment e.g. Gen Z have their own mobile phones.*
- *Not a lot of differences between the generations.*
- *Think lots of issues are now being heard and thankfully in some areas being used.*
- *More about my attitude to teens not to be scared to approach them.*
- *Make more effort to speak to younger people and get involved in community activity.*

## **Comments from younger people:**

- *Sometimes we see things different.*
- *Young people need places to hang about where they are comfortable.*
- *I intend to care more and speak.*
- *Don't judge people, don't assume things and be nicer.*
- *Older people think young people are bad, older people are involved in crime too.*
- *Surprised that antisocial behavior doesn't come from teenagers as much but from men under 21, 31, and 40.*

## **Outcomes for older people**

- Reduction in fear of crime
- Reduced sense of isolation / loneliness
- Improved perceptions of younger people
- Increased ability to make positive contribution to the life of the community
- Greater satisfaction with home and neighbourhood.

## **Outcomes for younger people**

- Greater resilience and motivation to avoid risky behaviour
- Greater participation in positive activities
- Improved perceptions of younger people by older people
- Enhanced sense of social responsibility.

## **Challenges**

- Not being able to involve younger people at first though this grew through building trust and getting to know you time.
- Two projects had to look at new approaches as what they had originally planned was not working. Working through the challenges and adapting the project to suit the next stages we realised that although things never went as planned there were more positives and strong impacts emerging.
- One project led by younger people ended within the first quarter and as a result we started working with a new project led by older people. These challenges brought change and further insight and opportunities for future development.
- Social spaces in Govan for both groups to meet became a challenge. And this meant that connecting young and old did not take place.
- Commitment is another challenge, and it is noted that each group had to fit their project within their busy lives and calendars.
- The teenagers from the drama refused to meet with older people in the beginning and the project adapted to meeting with younger children. However, the teenagers changed their mind and connections were made.
- Throughout each project time constraints due to holidays and sickness were experienced and adaptations to programmes were made to suit.
- Accessibility considerations were required with some of the older people (living with dementia) who did not like the use of PowerPoint during learning sessions. These sessions were adapted to conversations instead.
- Challenge in accessing youth groups, more work is needed to encourage this to happen. GWT and some of the project participants/leaders are presenting at Youthlink Scotland's National Conference, November 2024. We together hope to create more collaborations with youth groups.

## 4. Community engagement approaches

### Methodology developed and tested

Completion of the [first phase CKF research](#) offered a baseline starting point for this research. This 2<sup>nd</sup> phase used [Theory of change](#) and the technique [The Most Significant Change](#) (MSC) (See Table 2: for an overview of the process of the MSC technique) gathering qualitative data to help with monitoring and evaluation using participatory interpretation of stories of significant change which focused the direction to more fully shared thoughts and values from participants, continually asking what has changed throughout the process of learning, research and participatory action workshops.

What?	Why?
1. Meeting participants, going over research and MSC.	Familiarising the participants at the very start with what we will be doing and what kinds of questions we will be asking each other along the way.
2. What process will be used to log difference and any meaningful change (Domains of change)	This involved written and verbal feedback throughout the research period. Feedback participant's thoughts and any change during learning workshops. The Domains related to the change in perceptions of community safety after dialogue and workshops, more in-depth work on intergenerational connections and taking part in the participatory action projects.
3. As above	Research workshops acting as a conduit for the project participants to take back to whole group.
4. Collecting stories throughout	Gathering thoughts if things are working, are there changes, if not why not , what are the changes ? asking questions and encouraging participants to come up with their own questions thoughts or ideas.
5. Reviewing the stories	Going back over the stories asking again what participants felt. This provides a direction of learning taking place and work needing to be done.
6. Verify stories	Check over that participants thoughts on change are what they have said.
7. Quantification	Show quantification across the 4 x projects – is there a difference between projects
8. Identify main themes and revise the MSC technique	Offering a story about change? Encourage further research. Share the story with others. Look at what has been learned and decided on further work to generate knowledge and recommendations.

Table 2: Overview of steps from Most Significant Change Techniques Adapted from Source: Rick Davis and Jess Dart 2005. *'The Most Significant Change'(MSC) Technique: A Guide to Its Use, Manila, Available: [www.mande.co.uk/docs/mscguide.pdf](http://www.mande.co.uk/docs/mscguide.pdf)*

## 5. The Future, sustainability & contributions to wider impact

Intergenerational connections can strengthen community relationships across generations. This research offers a sustainable solution to work nationally to strengthen connectedness between generations and a further study is required to look at this. Community safety and community cohesion through intergenerational links may alleviate fears in the community. **This piece of research has stated that people have learned from each other and realise that many of their stereotypical thoughts of each other have been broken down and shown to be false.** The funding from CKF was short term and has opened the topic of community safety and intergenerational relationships to more scrutiny and awareness. What level of impact could we realise if, in the future, we considered addressing community safety through an intergenerational lens? More development and ongoing work are required to facilitate the outcomes fully. This research can be used as a catalyst for change taking each of the four communities to the next stage, building on their intergenerational experiences and skills to address community safety but also benefiting from making new friends. We have learned that all generations need space in their community and the need echoes the needs of the whole community and sometimes these specific needs are not met, further dividing younger and older people. Participants reported that community spaces should be used more by both ages and conversations led to the future of how to connect younger and old people, actively involving them together in community discussions.

### **Key accomplishments**

**Yoker** plan to continue to work with the **Princes Trust** and at the same time look out for other youth groups who may wish to connect. They will keep in touch with GWT and join their local intergenerational network to tap into free resources and keep their intergenerational practice going. Together Yoker and GWT will present a workshop to youth workers at the 2024 [Youthlink Scotland Conference](#), (Community Safety: Breaking Down Barriers and Connecting Generations) and host a workshop at [National Interfaith Conference](#).

**Ignite Theatre** has secured further funding to continue drama workshops for older people and **Active Seniors** will continue their intergenerational work connecting with younger people.

**Garnethill Multicultural Centre and their community** plan to continue to connect with more young people and attract them to use the local centre. They will focus on establishing connections for future opportunities. A legacy from the work with Yardworks engaging with residents across generations and the graffiti community with a willingness to look at restoration work for the future.

**Govan Craft Café** pledge to continue IG work and look at safer communities.

## **Stakeholder Event and Online Research Session**

GWT hosted a stakeholder event in Glasgow to share the learning with interested parties and offer each project the opportunity to talk about their experiences and what it meant to them. An online event was also held sharing the research with 65 organisations who showed a keen interest in their work.

## **Generations Working Together**

This research offers opportunities to explore larger scale work and take the learning from this initial pilot stage. GWT are keen to speak to stakeholders directly and work collaboratively connecting generations in local communities across Scotland. GWT will continue to share this research with our local and thematic networks across Scotland, the UK and Globally.

Younger and older people need to be valued and listened to, if their own skills and knowledge grow, they will feel able to do more in their community. Both groups exist outside decision making networks of stakeholders yet both have power in themselves and would be an asset to local communities and local government. For sustainable change to take place we need:

- More work using a participatory approach to allow participants to build on skills and knowledge that people have learned.
- More effective intergenerational work to break down the barriers of stereotyping and challenge assumptions of why people feel unsafe.
- Scope to take intergenerational work forward with more communities, learning from the research and looking at other ways to engage especially when generations are separated.
- To encourage more involvement across different generations in decision making, with more power to say what they would like to see in their community.

## **Policy Areas**

The research will be of interest to the following policy areas:

- [Community safety – we live in safer, healthier and happier communities.](#)
- [Social isolation and loneliness: Recovering our Connections](#)

We need more places and spaces in communities where generations can come together organically. The community projects involved in the research are proud of what they have achieved in the small space of time in their journey over the past year.

All projects plan to continue building intergenerational connections and relationships. They wish to stay connected with GWT and continue to learn with the help of the charities support. There are legitimate fears around community safety and the groups desire to be more of a collective voice so that together they can work towards building communities that are connected and intergenerational, then we can have communities that are safe to grown up and grow old in.

## Links to further information

1. Learning Workshops CKF Ageism and Stereotypes

<https://generationsworkingtogether.org/downloads/66eee835d70c3-ckf-ageism-and-stereotypes-session-oct-23.pdf>

2. Learning Workshops CKF Media Representation of Crime

<https://generationsworkingtogether.org/downloads/66eee81ad8279-ckf-media-representation-of-crime-and-intergenerational-connections-nov-23.pdf>

3. Learning Workshop CKF Intergenerational Work 1

<https://generationsworkingtogether.org/downloads/66eee86a06753-ckf-workshop-intergenerational-connections-23.pdf>

4. Learning Workshops CKF Intergenerational 2nd session

<https://generationsworkingtogether.org/downloads/66eee88734446-ckf-2nd-session-ig-connections.pdf>

5. Research Workshop1 CKF

<https://generationsworkingtogether.org/downloads/66eee9050a89f-ckf-participatory-research-workshop-2024.pdf>

6. Research Workshop 2 CKF

<https://generationsworkingtogether.org/downloads/66eee98746381-ckf-participatory-research-workshop-2-2024.pdf>

7. Terms of Reference CKF Research

<https://generationsworkingtogether.org/downloads/66eee7f2b3628-draft-tor-advisory-group-ckf-23-to-24.pdf>