

## Background: To the Creating Intergenerational Communities (CIC) Programme

Communities across the UK are becoming increasingly fragmented and siloed, with fewer opportunities for different generations to live, work, and play together. The need for social distancing during the pandemic only exacerbated these issues, with one million more people in the UK becoming **“chronically lonely”**. We are facing a mental health crisis in the UK: recent research from Scotland indicates **34% of people over 50** feel their mental health has gotten worse in the last five years. At the other end of the age spectrum, 16-24 year olds are one of the groups with the highest reported rates of loneliness – **48% of those surveyed reported being lonely at least some of the time in the previous week, against an average of 35%**.

What differentiates **intergenerational practice** from other methods of achieving social cohesion is how it provides reciprocal benefits for people of all ages. This broad, inclusive approach can bring about lasting intersectional change for society by bridging social divides, forming bonds of trust and solidarity, reducing prejudice and racism, and combating ageism and inequality.

Applying an **intergenerational approach** to our communities is not just a nice thing to do, instead, it is rapidly becoming an **essential** response to our changing, ageing society.

The Creating Intergenerational Communities Programme (CIC) was funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, Bringing People Together. The CIC is a unique programme because for the first time four United Kingdom nations worked together to bridge the generational divide in our ageing society, using an intergenerational approach.

### CIC programme

The aim of the CIC pilot programme was to develop and trial a toolkit of potential indicators of intergenerational good practice with 30 pilot projects – from various settings, in various fields, (care, education, youth work, and third sector organisations), all working with different generations.

The pilot took place in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland and ran from January 2023 to July 2025. Sadly, despite best efforts, there was no organisation in Wales that could lead on the programme, although the learning from the programme will be shared with Wales later.

### Pilot Projects

The [map](#) on the main CIC webpage shows all the projects who tested the quality indicators toolkit to help create intergenerational communities. Alongside the UK pilots we were also joined by the Macrosad Chair in Intergenerational Studies at the University of Granada, in Spain. They trialled the Quality Indicator Guidance Toolkit and provided an international perspective.

## One Spanish Pilot at Three Different Sites



One Spanish intergenerational centre and two intergenerational projects participated in the piloting phase of quality indicators within the framework of "Creating Intergenerational Communities".

- The centre is the Macrosad Intergenerational Reference Centre located in Albolote (close to Granada), which brings together, under the same roof, an older adult day centre and a nursery school for 0–3-year-olds. This centre, founded in 2018, is the only one in Spain that works in collaboration with a research and knowledge transfer team, that from the Macrosad Chair in Intergenerational Studies at the University of Granada. This Chair provided the overall monitoring of the CIC pilot.
- *Harmonía* is the name of one of the participating intergenerational projects. Launched in 2020, in the context of COVID-19 pandemic, this project connects older and younger people through weekly telephone conversations that often also include face-to-face meetings. The idea is to facilitate relationships between people from different generations that who would otherwise have little chance of meeting and bonding.
- In addition, Padre Manjón Primary and Secondary school has joined through their long-lasting intergenerational project involving older people at Macrosad's care home in Las Gabias. This second project consists of older and younger pairs completing intergenerational diaries to encourage them to get to know each other more deeply and for a longer period of time. These diaries are based on a series of key questions emerged and evaluated in previous intergenerational initiatives. Participants gradually establish stronger and deeper links as they converse and interact.

### CIC Programme & training

By training and upskilling communities, the CIC Programme set out to foster a sustainable legacy of effective intergenerational activities, reduce social isolation and improve wellbeing. Two Project Leads from each generational setting were required to complete intergenerational training and quality indicator Toolkit training. This was then extended to include evaluation training.

### National CIC Pilot Network

All projects and organisations that took part in the pilot were invited to join the National CIC Pilot Network. Network meetings were held online approx. every six weeks and lasted for one hour. Meetings varied and were an opportunity to meet

others undertaking the Pilot, discuss the Toolkit or share about individual intergenerational projects. Projects participating with the CIC Pilot also received a newsletter following each of the CIC Pilot Network meeting.

## **Celebrations**

To share the outcomes from the CIC Pilot, each county held a celebration event and invited project leads from the pilots to attend, along with other organisations and individuals interested in improving the quality of intergenerational work in the UK. Participants from some of the pilot projects spoke at each event, sharing the benefits they personally felt from their involvement, which was moving to hear.

## **Outcomes**

The full outcomes, evaluation and legacy from the pilot can be found on the main Quality Improvement training webpage. What is particularly exciting is that when looking at the contribution of the Creating Intergenerational Communities project, **£3.7 million social value** has been created through increased skills and knowledge across the sector in establishing and growing intergenerational practice, and through that, increased physical and mental health, increased wellbeing and improvements in school and in cognitive skills for young and older people.

This means that **£6.97 was created when using the CIC programme and toolkit, for every £1 invested** (based on £529,760 funded by the National Lottery Community Fund), which is very exciting.

## **What's next for the CIC programme?**

The CIC evaluation report demonstrated that if you follow the new principles and standards set out in the CIC programme and toolkit, the chances are your intergenerational project will be of better quality and have greater impact, improved outcomes and sustainability. With this result, the decision was then made to continue with the CIC programme and toolkit and open it up to other individuals and organisations developing intergenerational work in the UK.