



Linking Generations Northern Ireland *Evaluation of the 'ConnectIT' Project*

January to March 2017



With Support from:



Belfast
City Council



Report prepared by: Vicki Titterington, LGNI Manager.

1. Introduction

LGNI were funded through the Department of Finance and Personnel's 'Go ON NI' digital inclusion programme to deliver intergenerational sessions in Belfast City Council Community Centre in partnership with local schools as a vehicle for getting older people online and engaged in using IT equipment.

The 'ConnectIT' project involved working in four BCC Community Centre's linking with four schools. The following community centres and schools were involved: Glen Road Community Centre (Black Mountain Men's Group) and De la Salle College, Morton Community Centre and Victoria College, Inverary Community Centre and Ashfield Boys School and North Queen Street Community Centre and Little Flower Girls School.

Each project involved preparatory sessions with the older and younger people on their own to establish the learning needs of the older participants and to provide the younger people with advice on online safety. These sessions were followed by four intergenerational IT sessions, which were supported by Barclays Digital Eagles volunteers. The sessions focused on using LGNI's Digital Age Project (DAP) toolkit as a resource for the younger people to assist the older people using a one-to-one, tailor-made approach to learning. This approach enabled the older learners to learn at their own pace and to focus on their own interest areas. It also maximised the use of the digital skills of their younger partners and the DAP toolkit.

The four Community Centres kindly provided the use of their IT equipment and internet access and Barclays' volunteers provided additional support when necessary. The sessions had the overarching outcome of improving older people's digital skills but also had the added social element of increasing contact between generations.

The evaluation shows that the projects worked very well. They were welcomed by the community centres, schools and the younger and older people involved. The input from Barclays Digital Eagle Volunteers was greatly welcomed as an extra resource and feedback from the volunteers on their enjoyment from the project was very positive. The programme was showcased at a joint GoONNI and Belfast City Council event when the Mayor presented certificates to participants and a promotional video was shown.

**B: Post Project Evaluation forms –
Summary of responses of older participants**

28 forms received

Sex	Male 9	Female 19
Age range	50-54 1	
	55-59 0	
	60-64 5	
	65-74 15	
	75+ 7	

Q 2: Your Use of Digital Technology (Tick box)

Question	Yes	No answer provided	Total
Have you increased your online activity as a result of this project?	26	2	28
Has your confidence in using digital technology increased as a result of taking part?	26	2	28

Q 3: Please indicate how often you NOW use the following (Tick box)

(Some questions no response)

	Very often	Quite Often	Sometimes	Never
Smart phone	5	3	7	5
Desktop Computer	3	1	2	5
Laptop	6	5	2	5
Tablet Computer	11	4	7	1

**Q 4: How confident do you NOW feel about using technology on your own?
(Tick box)**

(27 responses out of 28 forms)

Very Confident	2
Quite Confident	22
Not very Confident	2
Not at all Confident	1

Q 5: Before this project had you had contact with groups of young people?

Yes	5	No	22
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Q 6: Would you recommend this project to a friend?

Yes	27	No	0
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Q 7: Please use the space provided to make a comment about your experience working with the young people:

“I enjoyed the conversations and learning new things”
“They have helped me so much with my laptop”
“They have been helpful, patient and well-motivated”
“So enjoyable, I learnt to text. The young people were so patient”

Q 8: How often do you NOW use the internet?

Every day or most days	14
Once or twice a week	8
Several times a month	0
Less than once a month	4
Never	1

Q 9: How often do you NOW ask someone to access the internet for you?

Very often	2
Quite often	3
Sometimes	12
Never	8

Q 10: Please write three words that describe how you now feel about computers and the internet:

“Now I am encouraged to buy a tablet!”
“I’m going forward at last”
“I am more confident”
“I’m less afraid”

Q 11: What was the best part about taking part in this project?

“Nice to meet friendly young people”
“The one to one instruction was very beneficial and lovely to meet the young people who were so supportive of me”
“Learning voice recognition on my tablet”
“Being taught by someone who was patient and understanding”

Q 5: Please comment about working 1:1 – Good and bad points

“Easy to explain things one to one”

“It was good as you could work on and help tackle the same problem by focusing on the same problem with the same person every week”

“Working one to one allows the older individuals to learn what they want and therefore increase their confidence”

“One to one was good for flexibility but maybe lacked structure”

Q 6: If the school was to host this project again would you volunteer?

Yes 40

No 2

Q 7: Did you use the resources provided?

Yes 12

No 27

Q 8: Please use the space to tell us how useful these were in your teaching:

“Useful for meanings and terms”

“I knew majority of things but used them for things I didn’t know”

“It helped me explain things better”

“I could show my partner how to find the things she didn’t understand”

Q 9: What was the best part of taking part in this project?

“Getting to know the other person and being able to help them be more confident using technology”

“Being able to teach those who enjoy the internet but don’t know how to use it”

“Helping people and building friendships”

Q 10: How could we improve this project?

“Improve wifi connection”

“More time to work with your partner”

“A guide on different types of tablets”

“Nothing it was great”

3. Conclusion

The data above strongly and clearly demonstrates that the project has achieved all of the outcomes that it set out to achieve:

Outcomes

1. Increase in digital and online activity by older people

100% of older participants who answered this survey question (26) agreed that they had increased their online activity as a result of this project

2. Increase in confidence of older people in use digital technologies

The preliminary survey figures showed that 77% of older participants felt not very or not at all confident before taking part in this project. The post evaluation survey showed us that this had changed with 86% feeding back that as a result of taking part they now felt very or quite confident using technology on their own. 100% of post evaluation responses from older people said they had increased their confidence in using digital technology as a result of this project.

3. Increased contact between age specific organisations – schools and older people’s groups

All 4 projects provided linkage and engagement between age specific organisations most of which plan to continue linkages. 79% of older participants said in their post evaluation surveys that before this project they had not had contact with groups of young people. When asked why they enjoyed the project a young person stated “It allowed me to speak to new people from different backgrounds and ages. Improved my confidence and socialising skills” and an older person “very pleasant as I live alone and it was a joy to meet the young people...they were kind and good company and I had a really good time.”

4. Increased support and empathy between the generations

100% of young participants in this project said they had enjoyed it and 97% would recommend it to a friend and would volunteer again. 100% of older participants also said they would recommend the project to a friend. The following comments demonstrate empathy and support when asked about working with the other age group “I found it easy to get on with my partner, I definitely had to be patient but it was a good experience” and “Very pleasant attitude from the young people they were very patient with me”.

5. Increased use of Belfast Super Connected Hubs

All four projects took place in Belfast City Council Community Centres (Superconnected Hubs). As a result of this the older people involved are now more aware and equipped to use the IT equipment and wifi available in these centres to continue their learning. Many of the young people involved in the projects had never

been in the community centres where the projects took place and are now aware of the services and activities available.

It has also been very rewarding to note that the young people involved also feel that they have improved their confidence by working alongside the older people. 95% of the young people stated that they would volunteer to take part in this project again. The projects big strength is the 1:1 element which seems to work really well and offers an opportunity to work at a pace suitable to the individual but also to form relationships.

Getting IT Savvy

Participants involved in the Live life to the Full project at Abbeyfield Belfast have been getting IT savvy with A' level pupils from Victoria College through a Connect IT initiative co-ordinated by Linking Generations NI.

Based at Belfast City Council's Morton Community Centre in Lorne Street BT9 and supported by staff from Barclays the initiative is funded by GO ON NI and aims to bring generations together in order to build positive relationships and enable older participants to develop their digital and on line skills.

Margaret, who has been taking part in the four week programme said;

"I have learned how to set up email and skype and have been able to get in touch with family and friends overseas. Being involved in this project has made me more confident about how to operate in a digital world. It has been less daunting than I thought as we have been paired 1-1 with the pupils and this has made such a difference to my learning. The pupils who are studying A' level Health & Social Care have been very supportive and have made the project fun and enjoyable."

Participants involved in the initiative have been using the Digital Age



Syiffa and Sheila making connections

Project toolkit which is a free resource that can be downloaded from www.digital-age.org.uk

The Life to the Full Project is for people 60+ living in the South & East Belfast area. For further informa-

tion about the project please contact Dawn Beckett, Project Manager at T:90381332 or E:dawn@abbeyfieldbelfast.org.uk

The Life to the Full Project is funded by The Big Lottery.

The project generated considerable media publicity with the East and South Belfast projects getting coverage in community papers (see left and below). All projects were highlighted on LGNI's website and social media accounts and a video has been produced.

Super Connections at the RECY

North Queen Street Community Centre teamed up with Trinity College, Barclays Bank and Linking Generations NI to deliver an innovative project in their Superconnected Communities Hub. The project brings students and older people together to help older participants develop their digital skills. This includes increasing their use of digital and online technology and improving their digital confidence for everyday tasks like keeping in touch, shopping and accessing services online. The project also helped increase:

- Contact between age specific organisations – schools and older people's groups;
- Support and empathy between the generations; and
- Use of Belfast Superconnected Hubs.



All participants were given an IT toolkit to support their learning. We hope they continue their learning and IT use at the Superconnected Hubs across Belfast.

The evaluation concludes that this has been a worthwhile project that could be valuably extended and adapted into the next financial year. The findings show that the participants thought it enjoyable and a good use of their time. We will use these findings and our learning in this project in creating a new proposal. .