



Linking Generations  
Northern Ireland



# Linking Generations NI

## Food for Life

### Get Togethers 2021

### Project Summaries

## **'Food for Life Get Togethers' 2021**

LGNI are delighted to be involved in this project, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, with lead partner the SOIL Association and other partners from around the UK recognising the value in using food to help support our ethos of bringing generations together. Get Togethers is for people of all ages and backgrounds and aims to connect people through food.

We were delighted to be able to run our Get Togethers grants scheme again in late 2021 and support 22 groups who have been awarded a small grant of £150, to connect generations during November and December through good food and growing activities in one or more sessions.

We have enjoyed seeing and reading about the positive benefits and joy of connection, whether virtual, social distancing, outside, face to face, or via post. Find out more on our [Food for Life Get Togethers](#) page.

Covid impacted on plans for activity delivery but organisations once again proved to be resilient at adapting. Events did take place when safe to do so, either social distancing or virtually by zoom, to address the overwhelming need for people to feel connected to others, enjoy activities and support each other.

By mid-March 2022, 22 groups/organisations managed to arrange their intergenerational activities in line with current guidelines at that time, keeping the safety of all paramount. LGNI offered ongoing support as groups adapted original ideas.

So many new connections were made. The benefits and knock on effects have been huge. LGNI hope that these connections will continue to flourish and develop throughout the calendar year. Here is a little bit about each of the groups that took part.



**A Primary School teacher commented:**

**I think it is important to promote/show other schools how easy it is to set up and I think keeping it simple in terms of activity is key. When we go each week it is very little extra on my workload so I feel the benefits to the children totally outweighs this.**



**660 older and younger people from nursery age to 80+ have taken part, to date.**



**participants enjoyed the experience and were keen to take part in another intergenerational activity**

**100%**

**A Primary School teacher commented:**

**Taking learning out beyond the four walls of the classroom, talking and mixing with people pupils wouldn't usually mix with; has built their confidence.**



### Participants came from

- Community groups
- Care homes
- Sheltered housing
- Sports groups
- Primary and post primary schools
- Youth clubs
- Community gardens
- Day centres
- Nursery/early years

### Comments from participants:

- *Great passing on our knowledge of seeds and planting/horticulture with the younger ones*
- *Young people bring out the best in the older generation*
- *We have rediscovered the importance of food in bringing people together*
- *Being able to see and hear the children lifted the morale of my residents*
- *I found out that everyone enjoys trying new things and making friends with people of all ages*
- *As I do not have children/grandchildren of my own, it was lovely to mix with young children to experience their enthusiasm and friendliness*

- *It was great watching older and younger people make new friendships, find out about new foods*
- *I thoroughly enjoyed participating in this scheme and think it is a great idea for everyone to have fun at the same time as learning*
- *The ladies who joined us for the four weeks had a lovely rapport with the children and very naturally got down to their level. Lots of interesting stories/ information to tell the children*
- *I want to do more of this stuff!*
- *It was good to chat with the younger folk to find out about their careers and hobbies. Also I'm bored talking to my own age group!*
- *It made me realise how much more informed children are now. In my childhood, we had very limited access to fruit and vegetables, mainly down to what we could grow ourselves*
- *Good to see that there is still a willingness of older and younger generations to get together and build relationships*
- *This highlighted the shared interests and pleasure that can be derived from two groups from different generations carrying out the same activity even if it is remotely*
- *I enjoyed the chat about food. Nice to be able to see the kids from up the street*
- *Such a great event and lovely opportunity to feel included and happy*
- *Great evening and something we as a club should do more often. We link generations while fishing so let's do it on a social side also*
- *I appreciated the company*
- *Enjoyed all 4 weeks together, loved every second, great idea everyone having fun whilst learning*
- *I loved walking to meet them and see where they live*
- *The pupils enjoyed participating in making and sharing food*
- *Enjoyed everything including the delicious food, the singing, fruit kebabs and lunch*
- *Great to meet our pen pals in person*
- *I liked being able to try new foods and vegetables*
- *Thank you immensely for helping us make memories with our grandchildren we otherwise wouldn't have been able to make at this time, and for keeping us safe*
- *Nice to get children involved in growing – the kids enjoyed the fun and asking lots of questions about seeds and how they grow!*
- *Good to see children get their hands dirty and get involved in planting seeds for the first time*
- *Helped me socialise and get to know people*
- *lovely experience chatting to young people and really how much we have in common over our ideas and hobbies*
- *This activity provided a rare opportunity to share time and life experiences*
- *I am new to this sort of thing but really enjoyed it and would like to do more - very worthwhile*
- *Great seeing the young people on the screen and outside the windows*
- *It really elevated my mood to hang out with children*

## **SUMMARIES:**



### **Act Community Garden, Belfast** 20 participants

Greater Shankill ACT community garden, in partnership with Small Wonders Play group made a 'We Remember' project using recycled products. With our children's groups we also made decorations and Christmas trees for the Greater Shankill winter festival. We have purchased all our seeds, compost and vegetable sets for Spring. The activities helped

people learn new skills and created a good community spirit.

### **Bradley Manor, Belfast** 40 participants



Our care home residents and Holy Cross Boys Primary School P7's met up for a Christmas party and shared food and treats and afterwards we sang Christmas songs and Carols together. We also invited a professional singer to join us and it made the event more magical. Great to see how naturally older and younger people connect. The best bit was getting to know each other and build friendship.



### **Carrickmore GFC Co. Tyrone** 65 participants

Acknowledging the role our club plays from a social perspective within a rural area we are also aware that our community is coming out of the restrictions resulting from Covid. This has had an impact on the elderly within our community. We are currently planning a social morning 1 day/week for the ladies of our community as we already have a group for elderly men which meets regularly. It is our intention to run a social event for both men and women before Christmas '22 and will involve our youth

in giving help at this event including playing musical instruments and carrying out solo singing. I learnt how to achieve goals of the project while ensuring the health and safety of a vulnerable group of people. I learned the importance of sharing the goals of this project with the Health and Wellbeing Sub committee within our club and our full committee. I also learned the value in reaching out to the elderly within our community and will never forget the appreciation shown by this group in respect of this project. I learned how to share the vision with the owner/manager of our local supermarket who was able to provide items at reduced price to allow the goals to be achieved within the project budget. I discussed with other clubs Health and Wellbeing Officers of our

project who have advised me their intention to repeat this in the future in their own club. The older generation within our community felt they were valued and included and for the younger generation to see how they are seen by the elderly in a positive light and sharing with them the links to the past. Through this experience the younger generation may have become aware of their sense of community. In summary it was a positive experience for all involved and provided a sense of place, fun and created the opportunity to reach out and value those who have contributed.

### **Footprints Women's Centre, Belfast** 76 participants

As we could not bring our groups together, due to Covid restrictions, we decided to deliver treat boxes to our members, to let them know we are still thinking about them. We asked a local primary school to get involved in our project linking generations and asked if they would make a Christmas card and add a drawing or special message inside to be passed on to our senior ladies and also our mum's and tots group. Each card was put inside the treat box along with a Christmas sandwich of Turkey stuffing and ham, some Christmas cake, Quality street chocolates and iced shortbread biscuits. Each box was then hand delivered by our outreach team. I believe our participants really enjoyed the feeling of still being connected to our centre and to each other as our project was delivered as outreach. In the future we plan to host our groups together again at the centre and bring generations together as we did in previous years.



### **Grange Park Primary School, Bangor** 35 participants

Each week we took a group of P1 children on a bus to the Bayview Day Centre. They completed a different activity every week working alongside the clients (70-94 years old) who have Dementia. This involved making Christingles, fruit kebabs and decorating ginger bread people. The children also got to sing some of their nativity songs and there was always time for a quick snack before we went back to school. We plan to continue this programme. Over the next few weeks we are going to do some planting and then in the summer term hope to arrange a trip out to the walled garden together. We will continue to run our project with Bayview for the children across primary 1. This will include weekly visits where they will plant, complete crafts and cook. We also plan to organise a trip out to the walled garden in summer. The P1 pupils gained so much from intergenerational work and it allowed me to see a different side to some of their personalities. Taking learning out beyond the four walls of the classroom, talking and mixing with people they wouldn't usually, built their confidence. I think it is important to Promote/show other schools how easy it is to set up and I think keeping it simple in terms of activity is key. When we go each week it is very little extra on my workload so I feel the benefits to the children totally outweighs this.



**Inverary Fold & Mitchell House school**  
**Belfast crafting and lunch** 20 participants

The Sheltered housing scheme linked in with Mitchell House school to arrange a Zoom crafting and lunch date as we were unable to meet in person because of Covid. We had a few technical issues but we pushed on through and had a lovely time having lunch and making Christmas decorations. The tenants really enjoyed the meal and craic they had with each

other. We hope to continue the links and explore planting and growing.



**Keady & District Angling Club** 21 participants

A great night was held by the members, young & not so young, as they talked about all things angling down through the years. The fishing adventures shared through the generations started in the 1940's, when fishing was a whole lot different to what it is today. To quote a young member - "They didn't always have fishing rods, they had a stick!"

Another quote from an adult was "hearing that the young one's like fishing with their Granda's". The benefits of running this event included meeting up with club members socially away from the banks of the lake; hearing stories of the past & making plans for the future. We plan on running another event similar to this in the warmer months so we can combine fishing & sharing food across the generations. All ages come together for fishing events but we don't do the social aspect. This is something we can improve on & this event helped with us starting to think about it.

**Kirkistown Primary School, Cloughey** 18 participants

We would like to invite the ladies who participated in our project to come and visit us in school and potentially involve them with our Outdoor Learning activities / visits to the local beach and community, when Covid restrictions ease. We enjoyed four weeks of activities around themes of food. We focussed on the Fairy Tales of The Gingerbread Man, Jack & The Beanstalk, by sampling a variety of fruit, planting beans, creating, then eating 'Santa' fruit kebabs using bananas, strawberries, marshmallows etc and decorating/ tasting and bringing home Gingerbread Men to eat. As a class teacher, it was truly wonderful to observe children make new friends so quickly and so well with the ladies in our group, including observing some of the quieter members of our class open up to the ladies and talk to them for long periods of time. They loved

'pairing up' with the ladies and completing the activities together. It was such a lovely experience and we very much hope to keep in touch with our new friends and involve them in more activities in our class. We really appreciated having them join us each week! We have made contacts/links with three of the ladies from the Cloughey and District Community Association. They play a very active role in our local Community and we would very much hope to build upon this link for the mutual benefit of our school and the wider community.



### **Maine Fold Tenants Association, Randalstown 38 participants**

The residents of Maine Fold and the pupils of Groggan Primary School have been building intergenerational links for the past year and a half. Due to the Sow and Grow project it was decided that we would have a morning over zoom to link in with each other and to taste test some different fruit and vegetables, such as peppers and celery. The fruit kebabs had been designed to look like Santa Clause which was perfect for the time of year! Lunch and snacks were also enjoyed by the residents and children and the highlight of the morning was hearing some lovely Christmas songs performed by the children. Pen pal letters continue to be written between the residents and children and we look forward to building further links with the school in the future. The benefits to both the children and older people was immense, the event was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone even though it was delivered via zoom due to restrictions. Being able to hear the children greatly lifted the morale of the residents and it made their Christmas. The lunch and food tasting was also greatly enjoyed and brought a sense of community to the morning for them. Our links have been further strengthened by the project.

### **Mid Ulster Victims' Empowerment (MUVE) Cookstown** 23 participants

A group of women recently completed the Women In Community Transition programme. The women all associated with MUVE were encouraged to build their own confidence, esteem, and improve mental health and well-being. At this point the 'MUVE Florettes' were established - New Growth, New Direction. Their purpose is to grow flowers and vegetables, and to grow as individuals. They have developed an action plan which will involve the children. The adults were delighted to share their knowledge and skills about planting seeds and growing in a fun manner with the children enjoyed this and learnt a lot. It was a great project to have been involved in and we plan to continue with the theme of growing fruit and vegetables. The next planned programme with the children is in April, which will be the launching and installing of spring flowers into planters for the Queens Platinum Jubilee. They will be provided with details of an APP that they can download, with parental approval, which can be used to identify different species of flowers and plants



### **Millverne Residential Care Home & South West College Students, Enniskillen** 33 participants

Both groups 1st met over zoom to introduce everyone to each other which was great. During our 1st meeting we discussed what we would like to do together and because we could not meet up in person due to Covid-19 we decided to do something for the other group. The residents were going to make reindeer hot chocolates for all the students and the students were going to make special Christmas jam jars decorated up and put a small battery candle inside and give some sweets to the residents. We had also planned to do a variety show where the students would perform songs, dance, poems and the residents showed a jingle bells routine that they had learned to perform over Christmas. The students and residents both appreciated the effort that was put in by both sides. At the end both groups enjoyed some nice buns and juice and crisps etc. The students walked down to the care home and we had another meeting through zoom through the window and exchanged our gifts. The residents waved out to the students and the students waved in to the residents. We were able to chat to the students and we were all dressed up with something Christmassy on whether it was a hat or a jumper. Both sides felt it was lovely to see the other group in person and both sides really enjoyed their time together. In the future we will get together again and keep the connection going. It has been a great time for all. We will probably do something to do with planting flowers as we will not be able to meet inside in person but can outside. Even though the students could not come into the care home building they were able to stand outside and talk to the residents inside by using a zoom meeting so a tablet could be used inside and outside which they really enjoyed. The students and residents enjoying making the different things for each other and both were so surprised by the gifts. the residents had never really been in contact with this age group but they took to them really well. We worked with students from the child care and Special education needs which we will continue to be in contact with them. They were able to make contact with a different age group which we have never done

before. It allowed both age groups to understand each other. It really brought a smile to the residents face to see these young people face to face on zoom and in person outside. Making contact with their community was excellent for both age groups

### **Newcroft Lodge Residents Group, Hollywood** 26 participants

In December 2021 two groups from different generations began to emerge from the hibernation brought about by a new phenomenon called COVID, as the world woke up we did so under the cocoon of ZOOM. The 2 groups had been left unsure what their new world was like and how it had been left by COVID so they stayed in their own bubbles, one in a care home, and the other in a classroom! When you emerge from hibernation you need to stretch and you are hungry so what better way than to bake and have a party! The residents stretched both physically and mentally using their memory power of how to bake and all it entails, and the children then were given an opportunity to use their skills of working together and decorate the shortbread- both groups celebrated this new dawn of friendship with a party.

We plan to carry out further intergenerational activities with a local primary school around the theme of nature and local wildlife. It was noted the benefits of intergenerational work and the shared interests and pleasure that can be derived from two groups from different generations carrying out the same activity even if it is remotely. This was an opportunity to reflect, to learn from different generations, shared pleasure, development of fine motor skills



### **Older People North West /Age Concern, Derry** 32 participants

There was a definite excitement of connecting (albeit remotely). We hope to keep up our connections and continue chatting to our P7 friends about topics that interest them and improve our technical connection skills so that we are constantly learning from and about each other and enjoying when it goes well and when it goes pear shaped as these are great life lessons to pick up whatever age we are. We learned that accessing a class via one iPad is not ideal but the experience created excitement and amused the children no end when one lady put her face right to the screen. It was a first experience for some of our older people to participate in a virtual event and it was memorable for that reason. It was also the first time since the pandemic that our lunch clubbers were able to engage remotely with the P7s up at Chapel Road PS and was therefore very special and a point of conversation both before and after the event. We also learned that it would be better to employ a projector to beam up a larger image that can be shared with the entire lunch club and will track down one to help us with future on-line gatherings. We have gained experience of zoom and Teams. The children in Chapel Road supported our Christmas Hamper programme going out into

the community by producing hand crafted Christmas Cards, which went down a treat with recipients in the community. We thought it would be interesting to set up a conversation between our lunch club participants about food and to get our older people to recall what their diet was like when they were 10 years old. They were able to chat to the children about what their favourite food was and compare it to their own experiences. There was the start of a conversation about which diet was better? Older people had less choice, more local and simpler food offerings such as porridge, potatoes, occasional meat on high and holy days than the children.

### **Ravara Court & LCDD Hip Hop, Bangor** 18 participants



Ravara tenants invited LCDD Hip Hop school to come and help prepare lunch and show some modern dance routines. In return tenants would teach some old time dances i.e. jive, waltz and 2 step. The girls arrived at 10am and helped to prepare a pot of stew & crusty bread with bread & butter pudding for dessert. While the stew was cooking the girls did some hip hop dance routines for the tenants, to the surprise of the girls and staff our tenants joined in wanting to learn new moves. Everyone stopped and had juice and biscuits before the girls sat at a table with a group of tenants. While staff served the hot stew it was noted that the girls were asking tenants a lot of questions about their life. Everyone enjoyed the lunch and it was time for the girls to learn some new moves. Tenants taught the girls to jive, waltz and the 2 step before staff joined in and we all did the Cha Cha slide and Macarena. More juice and biscuits for the girls and tea for the tenants while tenants gave the girls some life advice one of which being "don't drink alcohol, don't smoke, don't get married young, travel the world and enjoy life". This day was very emotional for the staff to see how the tenants and children got on so well. The children actually sat at the table and ate stew, interacting with the tenants getting life advice. We hope to have the kids come to Ravara Court in the summer to do some gardening and hopefully have nursery kids come.



**St.Colmcille's Primary School, Ballymena 85 participants**

A parent who owns a bakery came into school to deliver the sessions, working with small groups of pupils (Covid safe). Baking equipment was purchased as well as the ingredients for pupils to bake some seasonal treats for the residents of two local Care Homes, Rose Martha Court and Galgorm Care Home. We had worked with Galgorm Care Home last year and have kept in touch. The pupils weighed out the ingredients and mixed them to make the snowballs. The Year 6 pupils, in two groups, delivered the treats along with Christmas cards to Rose Martha Court House Care Home. The pupils who went to Galgorm Care Home sang some Christmas songs and had written cards for the residents. The Care Home manager brought some residents out to the porch so the children and the residents could talk with each other. Everyone had a great afternoon and we decided to keep in touch and link up the care home to do a project on the Winter Olympics. I learned that the young pupils really enjoyed doing something good for the residents and enjoyed the opportunity to go to the Care home (outside) and talk to the residents. This has promoted greater understanding of the different generations.



### **St Columb's Park House, Derry** 20 participants

We really appreciated the connections across community gardens which are naturally places where different ages meet - albeit mostly 45+ and that is why the intentional bringing together of people of younger age groups and nurturing the connections with food was really special. The importance of food and appreciating people, the importance of connections (both our events were making connections between community gardens), and the importance of doing something where everyone can have a contribution is so interesting (the seed saving/ packing was something everyone could do - including the busy mothers and small children albeit at a different pace than the others) We would like to do more on this and nurture these contacts and support. We wanted to make connections between different community gardens across Derry, Donegal and Tyrone - to share food, share skills and experiences and practically to help with packing up seeds that had been saved across this network with Social Farms and Gardens. We had two outings: the first was a visit to An Creágan to gather ideas and inspiration, the second was a seed saving evening. Both events had food which was a chance to acknowledge the volunteer muscle that makes community gardens happen, as well as a chance to stop what we are doing every so often and talk to one another, sharing stories and deepening relationships.



### **St Patrick's PS Ballygalget, Portaferry** 45 participants

We had hoped to have an intergenerational afternoon tea; this was not able to be facilitated because of Covid. Instead we asked a local company to make afternoon tea boxes for the children to take home and share with grandparents. We noted the importance of different generations coming together on a regular basis to share information, history. This needs to happen more often. The benefits were communication skills with grandparents, particularly during pandemic and knowing how important it is to share things with the older generation.

## **The Vibe Youth Club, Belfast - 45 participants**



Members of The Vibe Youth Club and Tuesday Break retirement group met together for a Christmas celebration. We enjoyed a buffet meal together, and afterwards took part in a light hearted table quiz, and members of each group shared Christmas memories from "when I was 8...". It was a relaxed and enjoyable event which everyone was keen to repeat. Our hope would be to make this an annual event and if possible, through future funding and Covid restrictions, to bring groups together in the Spring for a similar celebration lunch. Participant feedback was very positive, especially in being able to build friendships with people they did not know. Some young people were initially unwilling to take part, but came away with a very positive shared experience and were keen to do something similar again. The sharing of Christmas memories from "when I was 8" was a particular highlight and learning moment.