



Linking Generations NI

All Ages April 2020

Report

Introduction

Linking Generations NI were delighted to be able to award 30 small grants of £150 in early 2020, to enable intergenerational events across NI in the month of April.

Unfortunately, due to the Covid 19 pandemic only 21 groups took up the offer in the spring of 2020.

LGNI extended the delivery deadline a number of times, knowing the benefit intergenerational engagement, either safely social distancing or remotely via technology would have on the participants of all ages in communities. Final returns and paperwork deadline was extended to 31st January 2021. It's taken almost a year but some events did take place when safe either social distancing or virtually by zoom! Organisations demonstrated their patience and skills at revising and adapting activities safely, as they realised the overwhelming need for people to feel connected to others and to meet up either social distancing or virtually to enjoy activities and support each other. Intergenerational work is needed now more than ever!

Despite a number of lockdowns throughout 2020, **15 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 and the remaining 6 groups plan to deliver activities by end of Spring 2021, Covid restrictions permitting.

Most groups original project/activity plans had to be revised. Groups proved to be very creative in adapting to the current safety restrictions at the time. A number of groups supplied individual resources to participants' homes beforehand and then conducted the linked up activity via zoom. Some participants found this experience ok, others missed the face to face aspect of engaging with others.

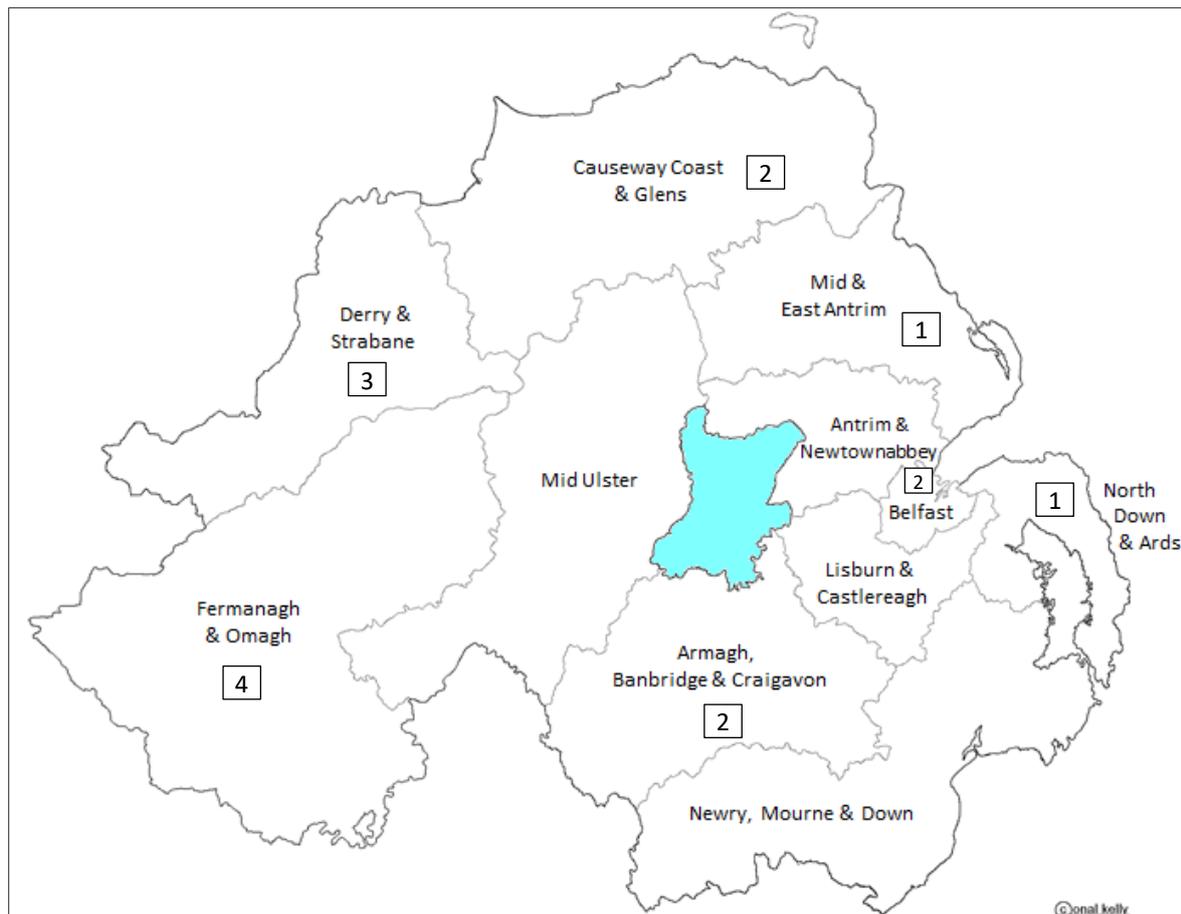
As Care Homes went into total lockdown, this affected the plans of a number of groups. It also proved difficult to collect feedback forms from participants.

A total number of **427 older and younger persons** from nursery age to 80+ have taken part, to date.

- **100%** enjoyed the experience and felt welcome and included.
- **93%** would take part again/ plan another event
- **60%** gained new contacts, resources and links
- **100%** felt LGNI were supportive in all aspects of their All Ages April experience
- **100%** felt supported through the application process of the grant

So many new connections were made; the benefits and knock on effects have been huge.

Distribution of Grants across Council Areas.



Participating groups came from:

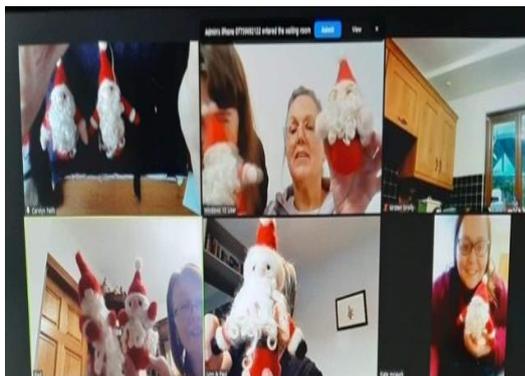
- Nursing homes
- Primary schools
- Pony clubs
- Girl Guides
- Community groups
- Sports groups
- Nurseries

Comments from Participants:

- *'Working together is more beneficial than one age group merely providing or presenting to the other group.'*
- *'Chatting and sharing knowledge and experiences is very enjoyable.'*
- *'It was a sense of connection with the community in these difficult times.'*
- *'Creating art to give to others to create joy.'*

- *'Meeting new people.'*
- *'Hearing stories of the past.'*
- *'Listening to the youngsters different way of looking at life.'*
- *'Opportunity to chat, even on zoom!'*
- *'I enjoyed singing with everyone and feeling included.'*
- *'Residents enjoyed the flowers the children created for them.'*
- *'So enjoyable, laughing, singing and storytelling together.'*
- *'I felt valued and included, participating with my son.'*
- *'Zooms have been a lifeline in lockdown.'*
- *'We explored common interests, sharing knowledge and experiences.'*
- *'Everyone can bond over music at any age.'*
- *'Older people can teach us lots'*
- *'It was nice to hear about young people's daily lives.'*
- *'The sense of humour amongst participants was amazing to behold.'*
- *'Great to make community links to develop.'*
- *'So many similarities in people of different ages.'*
- *'Meeting online lifted everyone's spirits.'*
- *'It was a really great idea to get everyone together.'*
- *'A real sense of enjoyment.'*
- *'It was great to actually witness people laughing.'*
- *'The children felt a sense of connection to their community.'*
- *'We have all developed our art skills.'*
- *'Great opportunity to create and build with a different age group.'*
- *'It was nice to get out of the house to socialise.'*

Good News Stories!



Dungiven Regeneration Club We had to cancel the planned event due to the pandemic. We then got approval for an online needle felting class for 12 plus years of age. The group met via zoom with needle felt tutor to make a Christmas decoration. All materials were delivered to participants prior to class. Most participants have now enrolled in further classes with us.



Mitchell House School We purchased birdhouse kits to be constructed in parallel with a residential care home. The participants involved were year nine pupils from Mitchell House Special School alongside residents of Inverary residential Fold. Due to restrictions on the meeting of groups and all participants being designated as vulnerable, we were unable to proceed as planned. To overcome this, we decided to deliver the construction activity within Mitchell House School, photograph and document the activity then deliver the remaining kits to the residential fold and ask the participants and staff there do the same. The aim then was to host an online get together where both groups could display and share their experiences from the activity and discuss a potential project they would like to plan together next. There was a positive attitude by pupils to engage with other generations.

Age Concern Causeway

We discovered the similarities of people of various age groups and the incredible amount of altruism that exists in the community. There is a certain degree of this from older people towards younger people and a project such as this helps to reduce that fear and ease stigma. Undoubtedly the sense of humour shared among the participants was a joy to behold. They all treated each other with respect. The analogy between one of the participants using a rectangular slide at school and a modern day tablet was fantastic. There was a hesitancy from some of the older participants as they had never engaged with a group of younger people. That was soon dispelled which was a very positive outcome. A number of participants surprised themselves with their artistic achievements.



Seskinore Harriers Due to covid we had to arrange an alternative activity to the one applied for. We delivered 2 sessions. The Pony Club committee zoomed and organised a 'hack and snack' for all pony club members and prospective members. We had 26 people during the day, ranging from 3 to over 50! We arranged group rides, including parents. Children rode their ponies and parents walked with them for their hack and then came back to the courtyard for soup, rolls and mince pies. Children all enjoyed getting together just before Christmas as a Pony club again, albeit staying in their family

bubbles. Because our whole day was outdoors we were able to socialise from a distance, which was invaluable for everyone, children and adults. Parents were able to meet new parents, as one family had joined a few months ago but hadn't been to group rallies. One prospective family came along with their 3 boys and had a chance to meet other families and children and joined the club on the day!



Devenish Partnership Forum

Health programme organised an intergenerational day for the local community. We had ages of 13 to 75 attend, both male and female. The activities available were bushcraft, baking and gardening. Having split everyone into 3 groups they were able to take part in each activity. In bushcraft each group learned about building different types of huts and shacks from different generations of life. They were able to build these from different materials from the gardens and allotments. They also learned how to safely build and light different types of fires. While taking part in gardening participants learned how to plant flower bulbs for the current season and learned information on how they will grow throughout the year. Groups built hedgehog habitats and bird houses with food. We have a goal to protect the animals in our nature reserve and we hope by starting this we achieve our goal. In our final activity, the group baked scones, our tutor explained how this would have been done 40/50 years ago and how methods and utensils have changed throughout the ages. Finally we ended the day by having soup and sandwiches, sharing stories from participants' childhoods and how they grew up in the same community and how much it has changed for the better for our current young people.



Aughabrack & District Community Group

During the event we were able to see how valuable our community centre is to the local community. This was the first time different generations had come together to work and learn from each other and it was a huge success. We now know that more events such as this should be run more during the year, more now than ever, as many of the

older generation have been in isolation for many months. Aughabrack and District Community Group aimed to have a Spring Planting project earlier in the year. We aimed to bring family members across the generations, grandparents, parents and children together so participants could share stories, experiences and knowledge as they worked together planting bedding plants in containers. The activity was to provide ongoing care and communication over the months as they took their plants home. A sense of pride and achievement in working together and nurturing their plants together would require regular communication and getting together. Covid 19 restrictions meant we had to be creative as the activity could not take place at our community hall and the facilitator could not attend. We advertised on Facebook and local Parish bulletin. We invited families to participate in an Autumn plants and bulbs project and carry out the activity at home within the safety of their own family bubbles. We asked participants to collect packs, share photos with us and complete questionnaires. Working together is more beneficial than one age group merely providing or presenting to the other group. An activity that generates chatting and sharing knowledge and experiences is much more enjoyable.

Enniskillen Integrated Primary School



Due to covid 19 we had to change our original project. We contacted the Graan nursing home knowing the residents were in total lockdown since March. They provided us with a list of every residents' name. Our year 6 pupils matched with a resident. To write and post a letter to - linking the project to the curriculum. The children made every resident a Christmas card which were delivered with a gift of a chocolate orange. Nursing home staff read out the cards and letters to residents. They reported this as being the highlight of the residents' Christmas. When covid restrictions are lifted the children are being invited for afternoon tea to the nursing home. Even a simple project that connects different generations brings joy to both sides. For children - a sense of connection with the community in these difficult times and for Residents in the nursing home - a 'light in their window' that somebody cares.



Caring Breaks

Usually put on a show/performance every year but of course this year we couldn't due to covid. The project allowed us to put together a choir through zoom using a facilitator who assisted us to choose songs and really brought out the best in the group to perform and gave them the confidence to do this.

We thoroughly enjoyed our sessions and everyone had a chance to perform as part of the choir and in a solo capacity. At the end of the 6 sessions, we put on a show for our chief Executive and the families and everyone felt they were part of something. It has led to us now having a choir that meets every week through zoom. We learned that it doesn't matter what age you are to participate together – the younger clients learnt from the experience of the older clients, and the younger clients were able to share their knowledge of popular music etc. The group made friends with people they would not normally come into contact with when they are out and about on a face to face basis – also by using the facilitator we have gained a contact for future activities. 10 people age 18 to 80 took part.



Sion Mills community Association

As a committee we learnt that the simple things in life are very effective and what can be done on a small budget. Grandparents enjoyed explaining to the kids how bingo works and the excitement when they win a prize. For the older participants having fun with children was engaging and got grandparents out of their home. The intergenerational activities increased self-esteem, reduced loneliness and reduced the feeling of isolation. It aided social interaction, feel good factor and memory and cognitive development. Children will reap the benefits through developing their social skills and interaction with a group they may not usually interact with. Holding this type of event also shows that the community association is here to help all ages of the community. Due to Covid 19 restriction we had to limit our project on what we could do, although it worked really well. We invited kids from the youth club and their grandparents to attend an afternoon tea with games, due to the Covid 19 restrictions. It was on a first come first served basis. Before the afternoon kicked off we had a multicultural small event in conjunction with the rural Housing Association. Kids and grandparents watched and had a hands on experience with a variety of multicultural activities such as Dragon dancing, drum beating and dancing. The small group then took part in the afternoon tea event with buns to the excitement of the kids and sandwiches/refreshments. We hired a local singer from the community to MC the bingo, great fun was had by all, with prizes also given out. Kids also played Connect 4 and other board games, with some colouring in with their grandparents.



Kildoag Womens' Group

They had a small pamper night, which included facials, massage and manicures. There was a wide age range from 30 to 80 years plus. All the ladies thoroughly enjoyed the evening from start to finish. The evening finished with refreshments. One of the volunteers from the Womens' Group was approached by one of the ladies who regularly attends events in the hall to praise the group and this event as she recently became widowed and was experiencing loneliness and expressed her thankfulness for this form of local networking. As a group we hope to expand our networking branch and build confidence, strength and spirit within the local rural community. I learned that all ages can communicate and get on together



The Ark Day Nursery

Whilst we had planned to complete a gardening project with a local nursing home, the pandemic meant we had to rethink our plans. We then decided that the young children at the nursery would create various plants and window boxes, which were then transported to the nursing home for the residents to enjoy and care for. Both settings then shared photographs with each other, showing the planting taking place, and then the residents receiving the plants. The children also sent some Christmas cards along with the plants. This increased respect for others, knowledge of plants and flowers, building self-esteem by helping others, developing friendships, and companionship. Age is only a number. Children love to engage with all ages and the residents of Sandringham love to see our children.

The Prom Friendship Group

We had two facilitators from the Music Yard and members of The Prom Friendship Group arranged the zoom session and organised a Halloween themed music and celebration event. We invited 4 of the young music students, along with members from a local support group 'the Base'. Everyone attending wore fancy dress and the activities including singing, storytelling, quiz games, party games and musical performances from the young music students. The group were still able to make lovely connections with each other albeit online. There were many laughs throughout the session and both the younger and older people enjoyed interacting with each other which, more than likely, improved their sense of wellbeing. The younger children particularly liked listening to some of the older members 'ghost stories' and likewise the older people really enjoyed the childrens' performances. All agreed at the end of the session that they would enjoy further similar sessions in the future. Young students appeared to gain as much from the session as the older people did. The session was

a means to escape certain difficulties or issues the people affected with dementia and their carers are faced with. Even during the challenges we are facing during this pandemic the project was still possible to successfully deliver, albeit online. The enjoyment everyone experienced was clearly evident and the advantages of intergenerational activities can be gained from both young and old alike.



Kircubbin Community Nursery

I learned that no matter how small the gift is, older people especially like the feeling of belonging. Before the lockdown and Covid 19 took hold, we had planned originally to plant containers in the nursery school with a selection of Grandparents. Unfortunately this did not happen as our grandparents started to get fretful. We then changed our project to include Key Workers' children and the rest of the nursery children at home. The title of our project was "Sending a little love". The children made cards and painted pictures which were then distributed to grandparents, their friends and older people in the community. We liaised with 'Care in the Community', a new contact for us, who distributed to 8 older residents. The benefits were fantastic. The art work from the children brought many smiles to their faces and it was like giving them a big hug. The children developed their skills in art and communication - children who are usually very quiet were talking about their grandparents and were excited to give their art as presents. Older people were extremely grateful and felt a sense of belonging. It definitely was bringing the community together. Future projects will hopefully be involving all the children in school in outdoors planting and growing in partnership with Peninsula Healthy Living Group.

Edgarstown Residents Association

We brought together our Senior citizens and young girls to try and build relationships between generations and remove hostility and fear between them. Due to the weather we brought them for afternoon tea. We chatted about how life was different in the past and how far we have come. It is so important to bring all ages and sections of our community together to learn and build upon relationships. It gave them an opportunity to gain respect and understanding as often our older people tar all our youth with the same brush - making trouble and causing ASB.

1st Enniskillen guides

Originally this was to be a gardening project with guides, their parents and grandparents, but due to covid we were unable to meet in the hall to complete this. To ensure the project went ahead, leaders arranged for daffodil bulbs and pots to be delivered to each Guides' home where they were then able to plant these with their parents and grandparents where possible. These bulbs will grow in the houses to start with and then the girls will transplant them into their garden to have for future years. As our guides are home schooling they are unable to meet up with the other girls. We have arranged zoom sessions to give them a chance to meet up virtually but the majority of girls told their parents that they did not want to participate in zoom as they spend all day working on computers for their schoolwork and just want to meet face to face with their friends so unfortunately we had a very poor uptake on our zoom. The guides are all delighted to receive their bulbs and have all planted them. They are looking forward to replanting these outside and have something to see growing year after year. It will be a memory of what they did during Covid 19.