Linking Generations
Northern Ireland

Active Ageing
Age-friendly and
Intergenerational Practice

February 2021

Contents

Context

Intergenerational Practice

Intergenerational practice (IP) aims to bring people together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities which promote greater understanding and respect between generations and contribute to building more cohesive communities.

Intergenerational practice is inclusive, building on the positive resources that the younger and older generations have to offer each other and those around them. It is defined by **core principles** that are key to it being effective. These are given in the Annex.

Linking Generations Northern Ireland

Linking Generations Northern Ireland (LGNI) is the development body for intergenerational practice.

It has 550 members supported through its 11 council area Intergenerational Networks. LGNI also offers advice and support to build intergenerational capacity, provides small grants and runs an accredited Intergenerational training programme.

LGNI is part of the Beth Johnson Foundation, a UK charity based in Stoke-on-Trent that works to inform and influence discussion and good practice around age and ageing.

Age-friendly and Intergenerational Practice

The World Health Organisation believes that a key strategy to facilitate the inclusion of older persons is to make our world more age-friendly.

"An Age-friendly world enables people of all ages to actively participate in community activities and treats everyone with respect, regardless of their age. It is a place that makes it easy for older people to stay connected to people that are important to them. And it helps people stay healthy and active even at the oldest ages and provides appropriate support to those who can no longer look after themselves."[4]

The need to connect with others and counter ageism means you cannot build Age-friendly communities in age isolation and that intergenerational work is an integral part of building an Age-friendly Northern Ireland.

Linking Generations Northern Ireland provides infrastructure and support for high quality delivery of intergenerational work across Northern Ireland (NI). It does this through awareness raising, information, advice, advocacy, CPD training, seed funding and research.

Over the past two years, LGNI has established an IP cross-sectoral Network in each local government district, developed accredited IP training and provided over 200 micro grants to intergenerational projects across NI.

The Intergenerational Practice Network Northern Ireland

Scale and Nature

Each of the eleven local government districts has a functioning IP Network organised and administered by LGNI.

These Networks link directly with the local council area Age-friendly staff and Age-friendly alliances and provide an infrastructure for the development of intergenerational work in the Age-friendly context.

Network meetings have enabled people from all sectors to learn about practical intergenerational examples, find out about grants, meet potential partners for future work and connect with the Age-friendly officers and LGNI development team.

Before lockdown, 350 people from 187 groups met at local Network meetings and 195 people have joined online local and regional Network gatherings since.

People can also join the Network virtually, and 465 members have joined online. During lockdown, the entire IP Network became virtual, with local meetings being held via Zoom.

Network connections and communications are also maintained through social media. The LGNI Facebook page has 2,168 likes and 2,301 Followers. Posts are most often seen by around 600 people and regularly rise to double this. For example, posts promoting intergenerational week and resource pack posts reached between 1,000 and 3,000 and LGNI's Doing Christmas Differently campaign to share intergenerational inspiration marked up a 6,416 post reach and 732 engagements

LGNI has 1,245 Twitter followers. Its 2019 Sing a Song for Santa competition had 52,000 views.

"Having open discussions with a range of people can lead to the identification of possible collaborative streams of work"

"The contacts I made and the willingness to help were a breath of fresh air"

Sector Composition

Network membership is diverse, bringing a range of interests together to focus on improving lives for our older and younger citizens.

Almost half of those attending Network meetings come from voluntary, community or charitable organisations. Just over a quarter are from the public sector (local or regional government) and the last quarter was almost equally split between the education system and private sector.
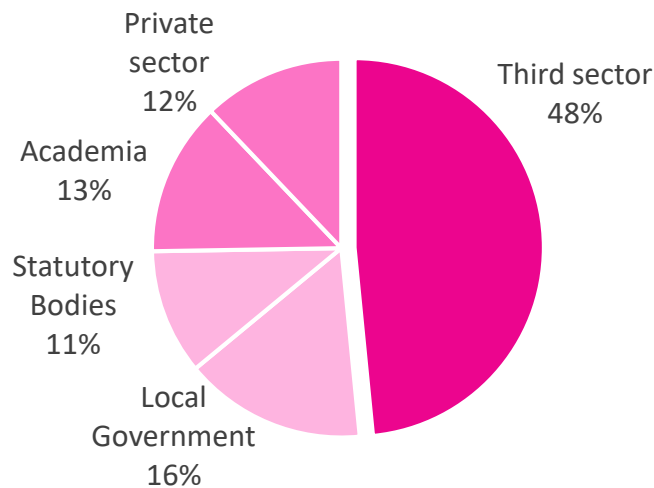
Figure 1 Sector of those attending Network meetings

Grant Making

LGNI also encourages interest in intergenerational work by distributing micro seed grants. Along with information and support, these allow older people's groups, schools and all sorts of youth and community organisations to safely pilot bringing older and younger people together for mutual benefit.

By way of example, in 2014 and 2015, LGNI managed the Celebrating Age! Grants through which groups across NI received between £50 and £150 to deliver an activity to celebrate EU Day of Solidarity between Generations. In 2015, 38 groups involved 1,573 people of which 32% were aged 56 or over and 94% of project leaders agreed that the project tackled the social isolation of older people in this community

Similar outcomes for engaging older people and building Age-friendly attitudes are found in more recent and ongoing grants. All Ages April, for example, offers £150 grants for intergenerational events each April. It attracts applications from many very small groups, including those that do not usually apply for funding. Between 2016 and 2019, LGNI made 185 All Ages April grants, which enabled local groups to engage almost 10,000 people of which 2,800 were aged over 60.

Grant making also builds connections and more than half the project leaders involved in All Ages April reported that they partnered with other groups in their grant funded work.

The effect of the IP Network and the system of small IP grants is to bring a wide range of people to the table to discuss and deliver intergenerational work on the ground. It harnesses interests across sectors - public, private, voluntary and interests older people, residential care, schools, youth groups, men's groups - to the cause of creating better outcomes for older people by working with across generations and interests.

Ageing: A Shared Vision

The main plans for ageing well in Northern Ireland are the Active Ageing Strategy, compiled by the Department for Communities, and the WHO aligned Age-friendly plans created by many local councils.

There is considerable common ambition between them and, as Figure 2 shows, solid alignment with the intergenerational vision pursued by LGNI

Active Ageing Strategy

An Age-friendly region in which people, as they grow older, are valued and supported to live actively to their fullest potential; with their rights respected and their dignity protected

Age-friendly

Environments in cities and communities to foster health, well-being and participation of people as they grow older

LGNI

A Northern Ireland where all generations are respected, understood, connected and engaged in their communities
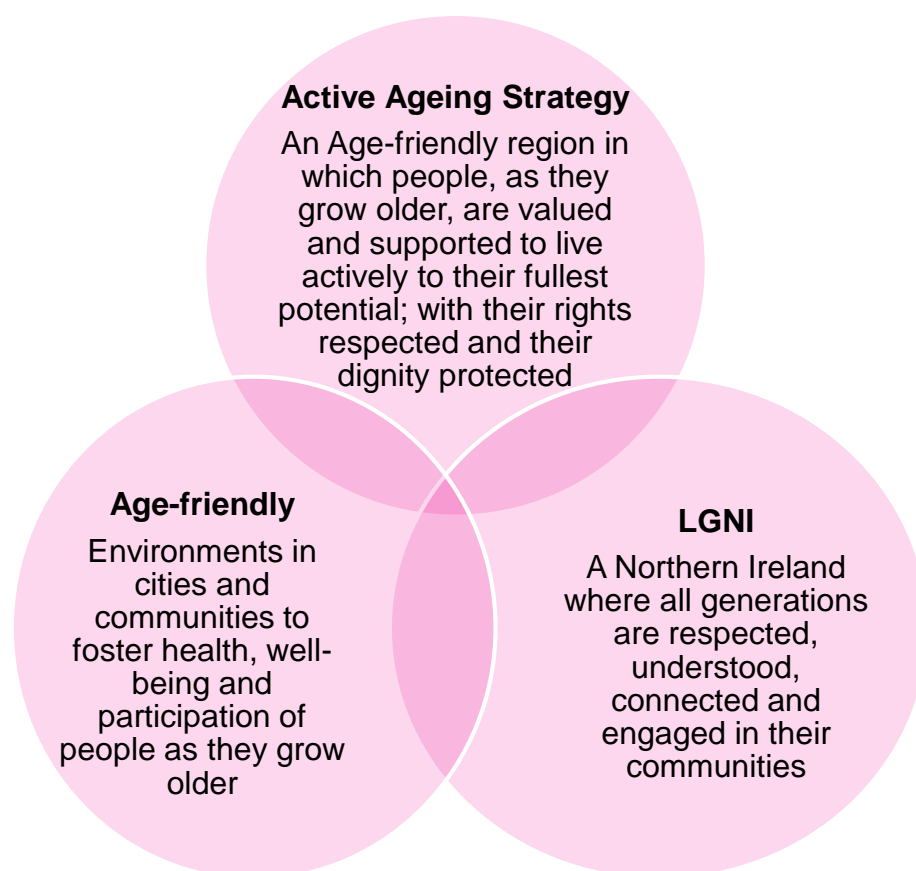
Figure 2 - Vision statements - Active Ageing Age-friendly and LGNI

The desired outcomes of each plan also intersect, as would be expected when central and local government planning is deliberately aligned.

In addition, there is considerable congruence with the outcomes shown to be delivered by, intergenerational practice.

- **United Nations Principles for Older Persons**

1. Independence
2. Participation
3. Care
4. Self-fulfilment
5. Dignity

- **Age-friendly Plans** (See Annex AF)

1. Outdoor spaces and buildings
2. Transport
3. Housing
4. Social participation
5. Respect and inclusion
6. Civic participation
7. Communication and information
8. Community and health

- **Active Ageing Strategy**

1. Older people live **independently** for as long as they can, free from poverty and in suitable, safe homes
2. Older people are **involved** in their family and community and in civic life
3. Older people are **healthier** for longer
4. Older workers remain in **employment** for as long as they wish or need to
5. Older people **participate** in cultural, educational and physical activity
6. Older people's **dignity** and human rights are effectively safeguarded

- **Prime indicator:** The confidence of the population aged 60 years and older as measured by self-efficacy

- **Intergenerational Practice (See Annex 3)**

- Older people gain health & wellbeing, reduced isolation, a sense of worth
- The community gains cohesion, diverse volunteering
- Young people gain skills and self esteem

Figure 3 – Outcomes for older people across plans and IP -

IP and Age-friendly Outcomes

Ten of the local government districts have created; or are in the process of creating, an Age-friendly strategy or plan. A review of these shows that few follow exactly the eight WHO Age-friendly domains. Rather they weave them together to relate more closely to their community plans.

In looking across the Age-friendly plans there are four domains in which IP has an obvious contributory role. These are set out below; followed by some examples of how IP has made a practical contribution to Active Ageing and Age-friendly outcomes.

Respect and Inclusion

Getting out, joining in and feeling included is easier if you have a reason to connect and believe you'll be safe and respected.

There is a sense that generations have lost contact with each other. Children meet fewer older people outside of the family and have become ignorant of ageing. Ageist attitudes and a stigma about ageing can make older people retreat from the community for fear of the reaction they might find.

Being seen more and known better challenges negative stereotypes. Intergenerational work provides the chance to gain positive experiences of a different generation. It creates space to build the mutual understanding that leads to respect. Helping children learn or bringing local history or crafts to life, allows older people to share their skills and be valued as a resource.

Civic Involvement

Actively contributing to and shaping the world feeds self-confidence and self-worth.

Elder volunteering brings skills and experience to the community and in return keeps older people in touch with local people and developments.

Intergenerational volunteering is not rare - think of the local GAA or football clubs - but is not as prevalent as it could be given the vast resource of older people in Northern Ireland.

Elders mentoring in schools, for example, brings extended benefits in terms of education and wellbeing. Generations working together can give each other new insight into issues and amplify one another's voices – blending experience, wisdom, new ideas and skills.

Community and Health

Making Life Better, the strategic framework for public health is clear that engagement in activities (e.g. sport, arts, culture), volunteering, communities and social networks impact positively on health and well-being, creativity, social inclusion and good relations.[ii]

Having a supportive network, feeling safe at home and able to go out without fear also means people can live independently for longer.

The Marmot Review found that socially isolated people are between 2 - 5 times more likely to die prematurely than those who have strong social ties.

When people move into care homes, maintaining community links can be a challenge but is important to sustaining well-being.

So whatever IP project engages older people with younger people, there will be clear opportunities for creating outcomes relating to Wellbeing Take 5[iii]

Connect with people around you

Be Active in some way each day

Take Notice of the world around you

Keep Learning to try something new

Give by doing something nice for someone else

Social Participation

Being part of local life means meeting people and maintaining friendships, avoiding isolation and keeping up with what is going on. It is a route to informal learning and support.

As the world changes older people can find that the past is a 'different country' and younger generations can lose stories about their culture and older technologies on which they can build and innovate.

Intergenerational exchange through arts and sport celebrates, passes on and develops local culture. It also helps to sustain community groups by engaging younger members who can ultimately become leaders.

Self-efficacy and Other Measures

Self-confidence is essential to feeling able to cope with whatever life throws at you. And being able to cope feeds a sense of self-worth, self-respect and pride - things on which dignity is built.

We often fall into seeing older people as less able to cope and fall into treating all older people as less able, but this not always true and does not have to be.

The specific and combined effects of IP on self-worth, confidence, connections, empowerment, health, and trust and access to support, all encourage the development of an individual's belief in their capacity to sort out and survive the problems of daily life.

In other words, the outcomes of intergenerational practice are all part of the recipe for increased self-efficacy - the prime indicator of success in the Active Ageing Strategy.

IP can also contribute to other measures found across the Age-friendly plans of the different councils, such as

- % of people aged over 60 who have volunteered in the past 12 months

- % of older people feeling safe in their neighbourhoods after dark

- % of older people living independently

- % of older people in fear of crime

The Annex presents further detail about the outcomes of intergenerational practice and gives examples of age friendly outcomes drawn from real life.

How Can Active Ageing and Age-friendly Further Benefit from Intergenerational Practice?

- **Tap into the existing Intergeneration Practice Network**

The IP /networks have already provided a platform for Age-friendly Officers to engage with local groups and agencies interested in creating positive outcomes for older people. The Networks provide an infrastructure for bringing Age-friendly to an audience beyond the age sector - schools, youth and community groups, nurseries - and a means to support people as they plan and deliver work that creates Age-friendly outcomes for older people and people of all ages. Building intergenerational practice into Age-friendly plans and supporting the IP Networks would bring new reach and resources to pursing the AF vision.

- **Invest in the support infrastructure for intergenerational approaches**

Age-friendly officers and groups will need access to advice, development support, training and resource materials to maximize the benefits of intergenerational work. LGNI has IP resources, activity models and community contacts, which along with its accredited training and skilled development team could be extended further to the Age-friendly sector through additional resourcing.

- **Enable local groups to test intergenerational approaches**

With small grants from the council and support from the LGNI Development Team local schools, youth clubs and voluntary groups could engage in creating Age-friendly outcomes.

- **Re-establish intergenerational contact post-Covid**

Whether working with PCSP partners to identify areas where fear of crime remains an issue or joining the Age-friendly Intergenerational schools pilot – intergenerational projects enable local groups to change inter-age attitudes and increase understanding. LGNI would provide project infrastructure, support and impact report.

- **Grow intergenerational volunteering**

This could be further advanced by LGNI working with the volunteering infrastructure (Department for Communities, Volunteer Now, Volunteer Bureaux) to offer local volunteer managers training in IP and managing intergenerational volunteers.

Annexes

Core Principles of Intergenerational Practice (IP)

- Mutual and reciprocal benefit - all generations taking part benefit.[iv]

- Participatory - works from what participants want to share and gain.

- Asset-based - explores and builds on the strength of each generation.

- Well planned - structured work based on good programme design.

- Culturally grounded - adapted to participant's needs and context.

- Strengthens Community Bonds - makes positive connections between generations and in communities.

- Challenges ageism - generations work together and rediscover what they can gain and offer each other.

- Cross-disciplinary - encourages inclusive and cross-sector work.[v]

Outcomes of Intergenerational Practice (IP)

When the local government education and children's services research programme reviewed the published data it found four sets of outcomes from intergenerational practice; those created for all participants, and those that specifically impacted older or younger participants, and those for communities, as shown in Figure 4.[vi]
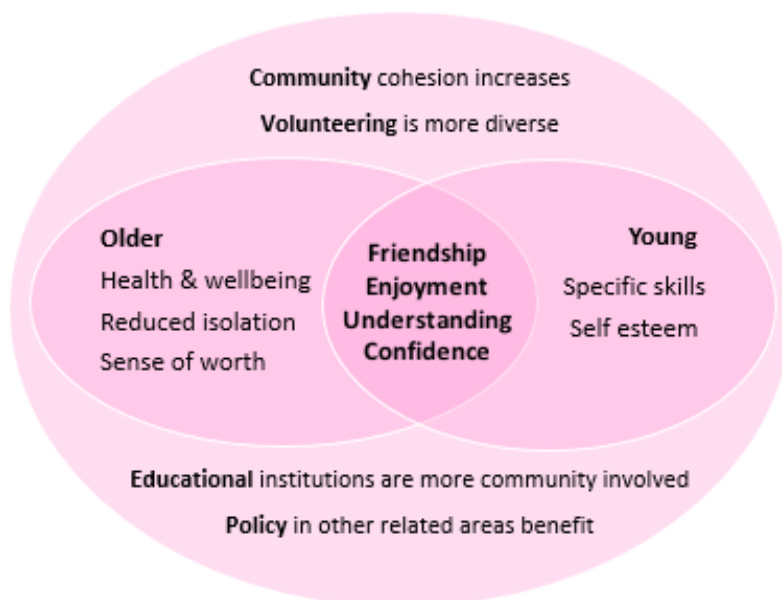

Figure 4 - Outcomes of IP for older and young people and their communities –

Over the past ten years, evaluations of intergenerational work delivered by and with LGNI to over 6,000 participants, have found similar of personal and community outcomes in Northern Ireland as shown in Figure 5.
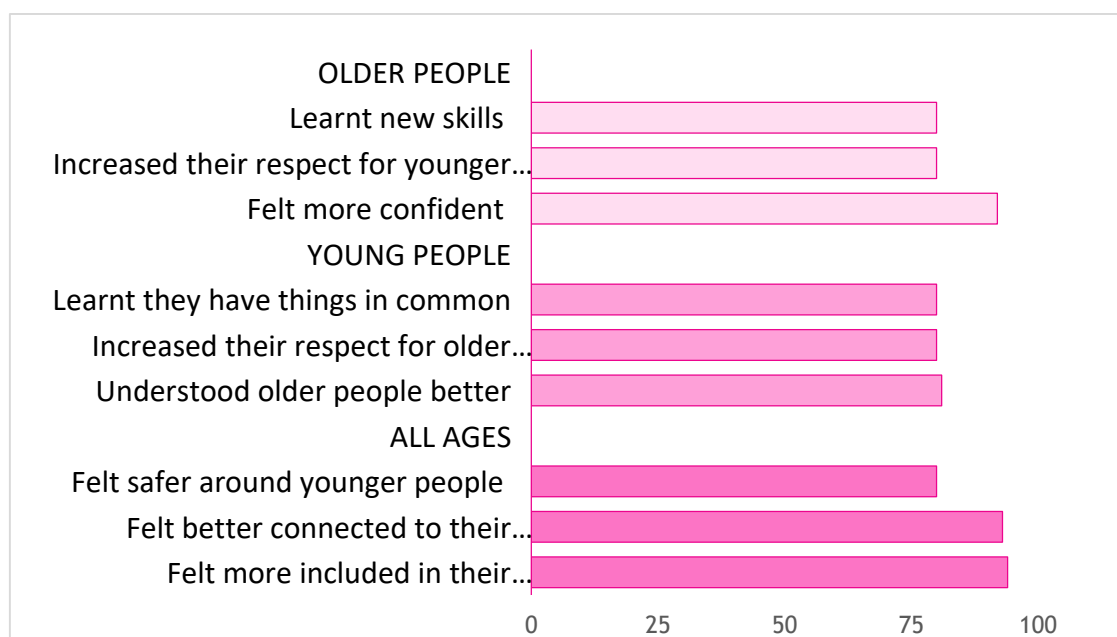
Figure 5 - Outcomes of IP in Northern Ireland delivered by or with LGNI -

Examples of Age-friendly Outcomes

IP changes attitudes to others

The **Age-friendly School Project**, supported by the Belfast Health Development Unit, linked a local community group and primary school to build a positive view of ageing and make Age-friendly neighbourhoods. It did this through physical activity, Bingo, IT sessions, drama sessions, a Christmas party and end event.[vii] Results included:

- Increased societal **engagement** between older and younger people.
- Older participants feeling increased community and social **inclusion.**
- Older and younger people had more positive **attitudes** towards other age groups.

IP builds community connections

The **Building an Age-friendly Neighbourhood** project in Larne[viii] involved the Feel Safe and Sound Partnership, the NIHE and the PSNI in an IP project between the local cubs group and local older people. The participants chose to take part in a sprucing up a local school yard as well as age friendly training.

80% said it made them feel better about themselves.

90% said they felt more connected to their community after the project.

80% said they felt more positive towards the other generation.

IP reduces fear of crime

The Intergenerational Safer Communities Project delivered with the policing and community safety family across all Council areas, enabled hundreds of people to get involved in intergenerational work to tackle the fear of crime and promote more positive perceptions of young people.ix

89% of older participant felt safer around other age groups.

71% felt safer in their own area.

100% of young participants felt more respect for other age groups.

"I think it's done wonders because the children all know us, ones that wouldn't have known us, and when they see you out in the street they shout your name and say hello to you and wave to us. Whereas before this all started I didn't know a quarter of them, so you get to know all the children."

IP creates digital inclusion

The **Digital Age partnership** comprised, over time, Go ON NI, Ignite It, Supporting Communities, the Housing Executive, DENI, the NI Federation of Housing Associations, LGNI, rural consortia. [x] It linked older people living in the community and residential

homes with post primary schools and youth groups to deliver intergenerational sessions that used ICT as a tool to create links leading to better understanding and interaction.

Of the older learners:

- 66% said their digital skills had improved.
- 62% felt more confident using technology.
- 84% reported changes in their use of technology and the internet - 48% reported that their usage had 'increased a lot', and 34% said 'increased a little'.

The **LGNI Digital Age toolkit** has also helped to create positive outcomes in **I Tea Time** across three post primary schools and older peoples' consortia with support from **'Go ON NI'** and Barclays Digital Eagles [xi] and **Connect IT** linking teenage pupils with older learners to get them online and engaged in using their own I-pads, tablets and smartphones. [xii]

PLACE-EE, an EU project, aimed to build older people's community connections in rural areas in four nations and to share digital skills through a skills exchange with local young people. Supported by LGNI, PLACE- EE engaged people in Fermanagh and Omagh council area.

Among other outcomes, the project:

- Created social capital through intergenerational exchange.
- Improved older people's capacity to engage with technology.
- Facilitated access to health and social care services.[xiii]

IP gives people a voice

The **Age Sector Platform** - **Northern Ireland Youth Forum** joint project gave older and younger people a voice on matters of social justice[xiv].

Alongside discussions to shape the project, the group went bowling, took part in a sexual health awareness session and held meetings to organise a residential and funding for this.

Discussions at the residential covered intergenerational equity, discrimination, equality; Age-friendly communities and peace building.

Acts of Intergenerational Sharing[xv] in Armagh City saw a group of 16-18 year olds and a group of 60-70 year olds meet in a series of discussions centred on housing, poverty, mental health and migration to explore areas of difference and commonality across the generations. Participants were encouraged to reflect openly and by project completion, empathy had been created for the ranges of challenges that both generations have faced in their lives. Following radio skills training, the project culminated in the production and broadcast of a community radio programme.

IP enables social participation through art and sport

Having a Yarn[xvi] brought together the older people in the 'Knit and Knatter' groups facilitated by the local libraries with three primary schools on the Ards peninsula. The age groups met, had fun, shared skills and chatted away designing and making items for yarn bombing and display in the libraries and schools.

Generation Art[xvii] Older people and primary schools on the Ards peninsula used arts to improve understanding and mutual respect between generations while tackling loneliness and social isolation.

EngAge Art[xviii] saw six care homes and six schools matched to take part in sessions facilitated by local artists. 76 residents living with dementia and 181 pupils worked side by side to create artworks that were then exhibited.

The project generated greater confidence, a sense of achievement and more energy in the older residents.

Ballymote Health and Well-being Intergenerational Project[xix] saw a special school, a local youth club and a local group of older people come together with coaches to take part in Boccia and New Age Kurling, IP supports well being

In Care homes

IP projects in care homes (such as EngAge Art, mentioned above) enable and exchange of ideas, experience and energy. Facilitating the older residents to guide and mentor the younger generation increases generativity and protects against stagnation as we age.[xx]

Active Ageing Outcomes and the Programme for Government

• 1 Older people live independently for as long as they can, free from poverty and in suitable, safe homes • UN principle: **Independence**	• 4 Older workers remain in employment for as long as they wish or need to • UN principle: Self-fulfilment
• 2 Older people are involved in their family and community and in civic life • UN principle: **Participation**	• 5 Older people participate in cultural, educational and physical activity • UN principle: **Participation**
• 3 Older people are healthier for longer • UN principle: **Care**	• 6 Older people's dignity and human rights are effectively safeguarded • UN principle: **Dignity**

Draft Programme for Government Outcomes

- 1 We prosper through a strong, competitive, regionally balanced economy
- 3 We have a more equal society
- 4 We enjoy long, healthy, active lives PfG
- 5 We are an innovative, creative society where people can fulfil their potential
- 6 We have more people working in better jobs
- 7 We have a safe community where we respect the law and each other
- 8 We care for others and we help those in need
- 9 We are a shared, welcoming and confident society that respects diversity

Programme for Government Indicators

- **49: Confidence of the population aged 60 years and older as measured by self-efficacy**
- 5: Satisfaction with health and social care
- 17: Economic inactivity rate excluding students
- 27: Per cent engaging in arts or/ cultural activities
- 26: A Respect index

i http://www.who.int/ageing/age-friendly-world/en/

ii Making Life Better: A whole system framework for public health (2013-23) www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/health-policy/making-life-better

iii NEF 2008 Five ways to Wellbeing. neweconomics.org/2008/10/five-ways-to-wellbeing

iv The first principle underpins positive results under both the social exchange and equity theories that appear to moderate the impact of IP on psychological wellbeing outcomes such as life satisfaction, and self-efficacy, confidence and esteem. See Su, Yan, "Impact of intergenerational programs on older adults' psychological well-being: A meta-analysis" (2017). Graduate Theses and Dissertations. 16224. lib.dr.iastate.edu/etd/16224

v Adapted from "Guide of ideas for planning and implementing intergenerational projects Together yesterday, today and tomorrow" MATES, Teresa Almeida Pinto et al, 2009

vi Springate, I., Atkinson, M. and Martin, K. (2008). Intergenerational Practice: a Review of the Literature (Local Government Education and Children's Services Research Report F/SR262). Slough: NFER.   For more recent research on the outcomes for young people see A-La Park (2015) The Effects of Intergenerational Programmes on Children and Young People. Int J Sch Cog Psychol 2: 118. doi: 10.4172/2469-9837.1000118

vii Age Friendly School Project www.linkinggenerationsni.com/portfolio-posts/age-friendly-school-project/

and www.linkinggenerationsni.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/age-friendly-school-report-report-2015.pdf

viii LGNI. Building an Age Friendly Neighbourhood: Linn Road & Ballykeel (2017) www.linkinggenerationsni.com/portfolio-posts/building-an-age-friendly-neighbourhood-linn-road-ballykeel/

ix LGNI. Evaluation of the Intergenerational Safer Communities Project (2015) www.linkinggenerationsni.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/intergenerational-safer-communities-evaluation-2015.pdf   and www.linkinggenerationsni.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/intergenerational-safer-communities-report-2015.pdf

x Digital Age Project 2017, LGNI www.linkinggenerationsni.com/portfolio-posts/digital-age-project/

xi LGNI 2016 www.linkinggenerationsni.com/portfolio-posts/i-tea-time/

xii LGNI 2017 Connect It www.linkinggenerationsni.com/portfolio-posts/connect-it/

xiii PLACE EE reports www.linkinggenerationsni.com/portfolio-posts/place-ee/ And vimeo.com/401067721

xiv LGNI, The story so far for intergenerational practice www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/34347516/to-view-the-story-so-far-centre-for-intergenerational-practice

xv LGNI, The story so far for intergenerational practice www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/34347516/to-view-the-story-so-far-centre-for-intergenerational-practice

xvi LGNI, 2017, www.linkinggenerationsni.com/portfolio-posts/having-a-yarn/

xvii LGNI www.linkinggenerationsni.com/portfolio-posts/generation-art/

xviii LGNI,2019 www.linkinggenerationsni.com/portfolio-posts/engage-art-2017-2019/

xix LGNI, 2012 www.yumpu.com/s/BKRe3myntSkhelQy

xx Erik Erikson coined and defined generativity as the "ability to transcend personal interests to provide care and concern for younger and older generations." verywellmind.com/generativity-versus-stagnation-2795734