



Linking Generations
Northern Ireland

Care Homes and Intergenerational Practice



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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 contributes 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.

Care Homes in Northern Ireland

One in every six people in Northern Ireland is aged 65 or over. This will rise to nearly a quarter by 2043.

While the draft Programme for Government seeks to support people to live at home as long as possible this is not always appropriate.

There are 482 registered care homes in Northern Ireland, equally split between residential care homes- staffed 24 hours a day, providing board and general personal care - and nursing care homes providing 24 hour nursing care. These homes provide 16,080 beds of which two thirds are in nursing care. The majority of homes (92%) are independently run, with 19% of residential and 2% of nursing care homes being publicly owned services.

i

Care and Intergenerational Practice: Shared Benefits

Intergenerational work offers many benefits to people in care and to the people who provide that care.

Bocioaga's 2020 review for the Evidence Search and Summary Service, presents a summary of evidence of the benefits of IP for older people from a range of studies, and these include:

- Satisfaction and happiness.
- Social and emotional well-being.
- Opportunities to learn and be inspired.
- Being physically active and motivated.
- Self-worth and wellbeingⁱⁱ.

Intergenerational activities also support the standards for care set by the Department of Health. ⁱⁱⁱ Taking an intergenerational approach contributes to three standards in particular and if done with LGNI for expert support and advice, to a fourth:

- Contact with the community.
- Enjoyable, purposeful and appropriate activity.
- Creative activity, learning, sharing and memory stimulation
- Safe and appropriate volunteering and support.

The Annex gives more details of these.

Good Practice is Important to Good Benefits

Research across three care homes in England found that residents welcomed non family IP as long as it was "guided, time limited and purposeful; drawing on and providing a mutual exchange of lifelong skills, but also opening opportunities for acquiring new skills."

They also found that IP projects work when well-planned around more than short-term outcomes, do not infantilise older adults by focussing on "childish" activities and involve them in decisions about the work or activities.

Overall they note that "The presence of specifically trained staff appeared to be extremely important for the good outcome of the intergenerational activities."^{iv}

LGNI: A Resource for the Care Sector

Linking Generations Northern Ireland have worked to promote the relevance of IP to care homes for some years.

As well as delivering demonstration projects, as described below, they have connected with local Age partnerships to share contacts and ideas and about intergenerational approaches at their connecting care home events and presented at the Health and Social Care Board Network meeting for care home activity coordinators.^v

The IP Networks in every council area are an LGNI resource available to any care home wanting to explore an intergenerational approach, make contact with local schools, learn about good IP practice or discuss how to plan a project that works.

LGNI has wide and direct experience of working with and connecting care homes to schools, colleges and youth groups. This expertise is shared through the LGNI advice service.

This expertise has been built through pilot projects, as described in the next section, and through micro grants to help homes and community groups' pair up. The reports on the All Ages April and the Food for Life Get Together grant programmes show how even £150 can support positive intergenerational contact for older people living in care homes.^{vi}

Safe and Appropriate Volunteering and Support

Care homes setting up IP projects with LGNI support have access to accredited staff training, the guidance of a skilled IP development worker and a pool of potential partners in the local IP Network. Homes can also draw on LGNI's contacts in the art, history and cultural worlds to locate the ideal session facilitators.

This supportive infrastructure helps homes to plan activities that follow IP principles and best practices. By finding local partners and drawing on LGNI advice, homes can create an open IP environment in which older and young people can engage in mutual exchange while all involved are implementing best safeguarding policies.

IP Example: Contact with the Community

Linking, Learning, Growing Together

Linking, Learning, Growing Together, sought to test an intergenerational approach to connecting care homes to the community. Sparked by conversations with promoters of the 'My Home Life' initiative and funded by The Big Lottery NI the project involved a partnership between LGNI, Kirk House care home, local schools and a youth group in East Belfast.

The project ran in three stages. The first saw P6 children from Gilnahirk Primary School take part in an arts project with the Kirk House residents. The local nature of the project meant that the participants met in both the school and the care home, which are just 10 minutes' walk apart.

The School Principal saw the project as

"A great way to 'de-mystify both the care home and school environment – two spaces that tend to exclude other people and other age groups. I think we should continue with this, we could easily do it, it doesn't have to cost anything."

In the second stage, Kirk House linked with Tullycarnet Youth Group in a series of reminiscence sessions using memory boxes from the Ulster Museum, culminating in a celebratory fashion show with vintage fashions modelled by participants of all ages.

The final part of the project saw Kirk House link with Our Lady and St Patrick's College where, as in all the stages, the younger participants took part in dementia awareness training before the project started.

The key findings of the evaluation were:

- Older people enjoyed the social contact, felt valued and happy as a result of taking part in the project.
- Approx. 100 participants engaging in art, reminiscence, digital and relationship-building across generations over 11 months.
- Many of the participants recognised that their pre-conceived notions of 'old' and 'young' were wrong.
- Kirk House deepened and widened its connections with the local community. ^{vii}

IP Example: Creative Activity, Learning, Sharing and Memory Stimulation

EngAge Art^{viii} saw six care homes and six schools matched to take part in sessions facilitated by local artists. Funded by the Arts Council NI. Some 76 residents living with dementia and 181 pupils working side by side to create artworks for permanent display in the schools and homes.

Each project involved preparatory sessions with the older and younger people singly to look at the aims of the project and find the art genre that best suited. All the students in the year of those engaging received Dementia Awareness Training before pupils were selected to take part.

The students visited their local home to work with the residents and artist over six sessions and then for a celebration end event.

Creating the joint artwork produced a sense of achievement and greater confidence in the older residents and they had measurably more energy.

Older people said:

"I went to that school. My children went to that school, my grandchildren went to that school, great to see them coming to see us old folk"

"At my age, I thought I had learned all I was going to, but the children taught me that you can teach an old dog new tricks, and I loved it"

Care home staff said:

"I cannot express the importance of this kind of project, for the Residents, it is more than applying paint or sticking materials to canvas, this is a meaningful activity, it involves the Residents at every level, and provides the Resident's with a purpose and an end result. Most of all it's fun."

"Sometimes a resident will say "But I've never done that before" but with a little encouragement and a cup of tea, they will surprise themselves by learning a new skill. This can make them feel useful."

"Sharing life experiences has such a positive for our residents. The pupils were so interested in all that our residents did in school in their day and asked numerous questions."^x

IP Example: Enjoyable, Purposeful and Appropriate Activity

Sing a Song for Santa sought to promote intergenerational contact through festive meet ups around Christmas.^x LGNI called on people of different generations to come together, video their gathering on their phone, upload to Facebook and tag LGNI. The 13 videos uploaded attracted 52,210 views and 6,798 engagements.^{xi}

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, and rural consortia. 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 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.'^{xii}

PCSP East Belfast projects brought together a local residents' group, residents of a care home and primary school pupils in a range of community based projects such as a community clean-up and a creative arts project.^{xiii}

EngAge in Newtownards involved an all-age singing group, P6 pupils visiting residents in a care home and work to explore the potential for an intergenerational mentoring project.^{xiv}

Also, part of EngAge, the Ards and North Down PCSP supported a project between students studying A-level Health and Social Care at Glastry College and a local care home. Students visited for an hour a week over six weeks, doing arts and crafts activities with the residents, many of whom are living with dementia. The school and care home described outcomes including the development of multiple skills and capabilities such as communication, confidence, listening, patience, empathy, organisation and teamwork.^{xv}

How Can Care Homes Further Benefit from Intergenerational Practice?

- **Increase awareness of IP benefits for older people in care.**

The Health and Social Care Board is well placed to grow awareness by working with LGNI on a dedicated campaign to promote IP and its benefits across the care home sector.

- **Enable every care home to test intergenerational approaches to sustain standards of care.**

The Health and Social Care Board could super-boost the spread of intergenerational work in care homes by working with LGNI and other partners to offer and administer small incentive grants to initiate projects.

- **Invest in the support infrastructure for IP in care homes.**

Care home activity coordinators and staff will need access to advice, development support, training, and resource materials to maximizing 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 to the care sector through additional resourcing.

- **An intergenerational project to reconnect care homes with their community as part of recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.**

A widespread returning to school programme of safe and supervised connections between older people in care homes and young people. Care homes partnered with a local school would receive a small grant for activities, the choice of one of three expertly devised IP activity plans, an evaluation sheet and free IP training for the project leaders in both partners.

LGNI would provide project infrastructure, support and impact report.

From the perspective of a care provider, IP in care homes means^{xvi}

Both generations are entertained

Children say the funniest things. Many residents may not have any grandchildren in their life, and would otherwise miss out on the joys of being entertained by children. Similarly, children at the nursery may not have grandparents in their life- and would otherwise miss out on the entertainment that the older generation can provide.

Residents can partake in activities they might not otherwise make time for

Sometimes it can be hard to feel motivated to try new things. Having energetic children around may provide the right encouragement to get out of a chair and have a walk around or do some gardening or painting.

Visits improve the children's language and communication skills

As a child develops, their communication skills must be nurtured in order for them to be capable of expressing themselves. By talking to older adults, who likely use a different language than that to which they're accustomed, their vocabulary will develop along with their confidence, too. The ability to communicate effectively is a key skill, and the better we are at it, the better our quality of life will be.

The residents teach valuable lessons

There is no better way for children to learn than talking to adults with important life experience. What's more, children love stories, and care home residents have hundreds of them to dish out.

It's an opportunity for social interaction

Social isolation among the elderly typically comes about for reasons such as lack of transport options in the area, a lack of a sense of purpose and living alone in an unsuitable and isolated environment. Regular visits provide that social boost allowing them to connect. Social interaction presents some important health benefits for older people, including a potentially reduced risk of dementia and an extensive range of physical problems, such as high blood pressure, arthritis and cardiovascular activities.

Annexes

Core Principles of Intergenerational Practice (IP)

- Mutual and reciprocal benefit - all generations taking part benefit.^{xvii}
- 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.^{xviii}

Care Standards

Residential care: extract of relevant standards^{xix}

Standard 2: Contact with family, friends and the local community is facilitated for residents.

2.1 Each resident is encouraged and facilitated to maintain, as far as possible, their existing links with family, friends and the local community.

2.6 Residents are consulted about visits by community groups and volunteers and the manager or senior member of staff on duty monitors these visits to ensure they benefit residents

Standard 13: The home offers a structured programme of varied activities and events, related to the statement of purpose and identified needs of residents.

13.1 The programme of activities and events provides positive outcomes for residents and is based on the identified needs and interests of residents.

13.2 The programme includes activities that are enjoyable, purposeful, age and culturally appropriate and takes into account the residents' spiritual needs. It promotes healthy living, is flexible and responsive to residents' changing needs and facilitates social inclusion in community events.

13.3 Residents, including those residents who generally stay in their rooms, are given the opportunity to contribute suggestions and to be involved in the development of the programme of activities.

13.10 The programme is reviewed regularly and at least twice yearly to ensure it meets residents' changing needs.

Standard 26: Volunteers contribute to the home in the best interests of the residents.

26.2 Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults checks are carried out on volunteers and students before they participate in a volunteering role.

Nursing care: extract of relevant standards

Standard 8: Contact with Family, Friends and the Community

Residents maintain contact with family, friends and the community according to their wishes and preferences.

Standard 10: Memory, Life Story Work and Reminiscence

Memory, life story work and reminiscence are used as part of the process of effective engagement and activity for residents.

3. A range of methods are used to stimulate memory, including reading from old books or newspapers, music, listening to or watching old broadcasts of radio or television programmes and using objects such as packaging of household products to introduce conversation.
8. The programme includes activities that are enjoyable, purposeful and age- and culturally-appropriate and takes account of residents' physical and emotional needs and interests. It promotes healthy living, is flexible and responsive to residents' changing needs and facilitates social inclusion in community events.
10. There are opportunities for creative activity such as story-telling, music, song, dance and poetry.
11. Residents, including those who prefer to stay in their rooms, are given the opportunity to contribute suggestions and to be involved in the development of the programme of activities.
15. The programme of activities is reviewed regularly (at least twice yearly) to ensure it meets residents' changing needs.

ⁱ Data sets used:

health-ni.gov.uk/topics/doh-statistics-and-research/care-not-home-statistics

health-ni.gov.uk/topics/dhssps-statistics-and-research-social-services/social-care-statistics <http://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/cc-adults-ni-19-20.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Bocioaga, A, 2020: Impact of Inter-generational Activities on Older People. ESS iriss.org.uk/resources/esss-outlines/impact-intergenerational-activities-older-people

ⁱⁱⁱ DHSSPS, 2011 rqia.org.uk/RQIA/media/RQIA/Resources/Standards/care_standards_-_residential_care_homes_August_2011.pdf

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^{iv} Cook, G. Bailey, C , 2013, Older Care Home Residents' Views of Intergenerational Practice. Journal of Intergenerational Relationships, 11 (4). pp. 410-424. Taylor & Francis p.13
nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/16900/1/Cook%20G_older%20care%20home%20residents.pdf

^v hscboard.hscni.net/christmas-activities-top-agenda-ni-care-home-echo-network/

^{vi} Evaluation of Food for Life grants linkinggenerationsni.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ffl-evaluation-2019-published-june-2020.pdf and All Ages April linkinggenerationsni.com/portfolio-posts/allagesapril/

^{vii} See the video here linkinggenerationsni.com/living-learning-growing-together-connecting-kirk-house/

^{viii} linkinggenerationsni.com/portfolio-posts/engage-art-2017-2019/

^{ix} www.linkinggenerationsni.com/portfolio-posts/engage-art-2017-2019/

^x linkinggenerationsni.com/portfolio-posts/singasongforsanta/

^{xi} See the winning care home here www.linkinggenerationsni.com/portfolio-posts/singasongforsanta/

^{xii} linkinggenerationsni.com/portfolio-posts/digital-age-project/

^{xiii} linkinggenerationsni.com/portfolio-posts/communities-for-all-ages-east-belfast-pcsp/

^{xiv} linkinggenerationsni.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/pcsp-engage-evaluation.pdf

^{xv} LGNI,2020, An Intergenerational Approach to Improving Skills and Educational Outcomes for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland.

^{xvi} newcrosshealthcare.com/insights/care-work/benefits-intergenerational-projects-care-homes

^{xvii} 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. Su, Yan, 2017, Impact of intergenerational programs on older adults' psychological well-being: A meta-analysis. lib.dr.iastate.edu/etd/16224

^{xviii} T A Pinto et al, 2009, Guide of ideas for planning and implementing inter-generational projects MATES

^{xix} Per end note iii