



Linking Generations Northern Ireland

Final Report and Evaluation

Building an Age-friendly Linn Road

An intergenerational Project engaging residents of the Linn Road area in Larne

August 2017 to January 2018

Funded by NIHE Community Cohesion

Housing
Executive

About us

The Beth Johnson Foundation is a UK wide charity that works to make a positive impact on the lives of older people, to gain recognition for the valuable role that older people play in society and to challenge age discrimination and stereotyping.



Linking Generations Northern Ireland (LGNI) is part of the Beth Johnson Foundation. We are the development body for intergenerational practice, we work to promote the concept across all sectors. We advocate for the approach; offer advice and expertise; facilitate learning about its application; and run demonstration projects to help establish awareness, learning and skills

Building an Age-friendly NI

In 2007, the World Health Organisation launched a global Age-friendly guide, designed to encourage us to embrace the opportunities and challenges that the ageing population provides. Here in NI, local councils are beginning to embrace the Age-friendly agenda, with about a third of our local authorities now having, or developing, Age-friendly plans for their communities.

We want NI to be Age-friendly. An important part of this is that generations are respected, understood, connected and engaged together in their communities, and this is the role of intergenerational practice.

Intergenerational practice tackles ageism and brings people together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities. It is globally recognised as an appropriate response to both tackling the challenges and embracing the opportunities of our ageing planet. Based on our experience and research, we encourage focus on promoting greater understanding, closer relations and respect between age groups and provide opportunities to address shared problems.

Definition of Intergenerational Practice

*Intergenerational practice 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 and **builds on the positive resources** that the young and old have to offer each other and those around them.*

Core Principles of Intergenerational Practice

- **Mutual and Reciprocal Benefits**

Intergenerational Practice (IP) is based on the principle of all participating generations gaining benefit.

- **Participatory**

Successful IP is based on the aspirations of the generations participating; What do those participating want to and expect to get out of it, what do they want to achieve?

- **Asset Based**

IP is assets based. It works with the generations to help them to discover their strengths and then builds on these for success, understanding and mutual respect.

- **Well Planned**

The evidence is that the principles of good programme design are just as essential to successful IP as any other project.

- **Culturally Grounded**

There cannot be common programmes that will work in all settings. Whilst the principles behind the approach may be the same, the needs, context and attitudes of people may differ widely and need to be taken in to account.

- **Strengthens Community Bonds**

Its emphasis on positive connection, recognising and building on people's strengths, is an effective way of building stronger, better connected communities with citizens who are more engaged in local democracy and social concerns.

- **Challenges Ageism**

IP provides a mechanism for the generations to meet, work and explore together, rediscovering the reality of who they really are and what they have to gain from being more involved with the other generation.

- **Cross-disciplinary**

IP provides a vehicle and an opportunity to broaden the experience of professionals to working in a more inclusive way and to become involved with other groups to enable them to think much more broadly about how they undertake their work.

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

1. About the project

- **Preparation work**

LGNI has been involved in the Feel Safe and Sound Partnership, facilitated by Mid and East Antrim Age Well Partnership for several years. Through this partnership working, we have identified the need to build stronger and more positive relationships between generations in the Mid and East Antrim Areas. The local PSNI officers attending the partnership identified particular areas where they believed an intergenerational approach may be useful and LGNI Development staff worked with local groups in that area to submit applications to NIHE Community Cohesion Unit, in order to fund two projects. One of these projects was developed in partnership with Linn Road Community Centre Management Committee and the other with Ballykeel Together in Ballymena. This report refers to the work in Linn Road area in Larne.

The Linn Road Group is a constituted community group established in partnership with Mid and East Antrim Council in order to manage and run Linn Road Community Centre and promote community based use of the Centre. The Linn Road group worked with LGNI to develop and build an intergenerational project to help break down the barriers between generations and build a more cohesive and safe community in Linn Road.

- **Identify and engage**

In August 2017 William Ferguson from Linn Road and Lynn Johnston from LGNI met to discuss potential project activity and decided to approach the school in order to connect them better with the community centre. In September 2017 we met with Mrs Duff, Principal and the Cub Scout Leader, Gail Date, from Linn Road Primary School. We decided to work to engage older adults with the Cubs, who meet in school every Friday afternoon. The school had an internal courtyard garden that was in much need of a spruce up and so we decided that this would be the focus of the project.

LGNI produced this poster and flyers which were sent home with every child in school and also displayed around the community centre.



- **Plan and Develop:**

On 22nd September LGNI delivered an age awareness session to the Cub pack. This session is designed to help participants think about how we judge people on the basis of age.



The cubs drew images of stereotypes of older and younger people and then shared their thoughts about age with each other.

The project then started on 29th September. In the first session, we drew plans of the garden area and discussed with the older and younger people what plant might look best where and why. We also had time to go out the garden and start the clear up.

- **Deliver Project:**

The project then ran for a further 4 weeks to the end of October. During these sessions the Cubs and older people from the local community worked together to clear and plant the garden courtyard area in the school.



2. Project Evaluation

- **The Overall outcome that we set out to achieve was:**

Relationships between younger and older people in the Linn Road area will have developed positively, and as a result of taking part in the project, participants will:

- **Report an increase in their confidence**
- **Feel better connected to their neighbours**
- **Feel more part of their community**
- **Have more positive perceptions of the other generation as a result of taking part**



LGNI used an evaluation form to ask participants their opinion. The findings showed that there were 10 young people and 8 older people who participated in the project.

Of those that completed the evaluation form:

- 80% said it made them feel better about themselves
- 60% said it made them feel better connected to their neighbours
- 90% said it made them feel better connected to their community
- 80% said it made them think more positively about the other generation

- **Limitations and learning**

Recruitment of older people was challenging in this project. We sent home flyers with every child and LGNI staff telephoned local groups and visited groups meeting in the community centre in order to try and persuade participation. Larne AEL wanted to take part but the session clashed with other activities on Fridays. Although we had 8 older people come along, few of them were able to attend all the sessions, due to illness, hospital appointments and caring responsibilities.

We also engaged the support of Inver Garden Centre locally and the staff there (Gary) gave great advice and support around plant choice and garden design.

The weather was a barrier and, as it was a gardening project, it may have had better attendance if it had been in Spring. The nature of the funding cycle meant this was not feasible and as the cubs were so keen, we decided to try the gardening project in September and October, which are relatively mild months.



We had organised the final celebration event for family and community but this had to be cancelled at the last minute as the school was closed due to snow on 8th December 2017.

Conclusion

This project has met the objectives laid out in the application form.

The findings are evidence that this work connects to the communities in transition theme of the NIHE community Cohesion Strategy, because it built 'relationships within and between people and communities, promoted participation in community development... and encouraged greater community cohesion' within an NIHE estate (NIHE community cohesion strategy, quoted from page 18, Theme 3. Communities in transition).



Whilst the participation of older people was not as we would have liked, new connections have now been made between the school and the community centre

and LGNI have suggested that the school and community centre groups may find other things in common which could be the basis of future intergenerational work. For example, the Thai Chi group, or the craft group. These are two activities that young people from the school would be interested in engaging with. The participants really enjoyed the project and the school were very grateful for the investment of time and resources in the garden, which is now a space that everyone using the school can enjoy.

And finally.... some quotes from participants:

I didn't like getting dirty and I we needed more adults to help.

I learned about their life and how to garden.

Not only young people are intelligent. Old people are smart and fun!

I wish we had had more time to talk

I learned that older people can be active

I liked hearing the other generation's stories

