



Linking Generations Northern Ireland



***Report of the 'EngAGE Project
March 2018 – March 2019***

**Clareview Nursing Home Ballyclare
Bradley Manor Crumlin Road Belfast
Blair House Newtownards
Castlelodge Care Home Antrim
Abington Manor Upper Crumlin Road Belfast
Sunnymead Residential Home Armagh**

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Arts and Older People Programme**

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1. Introduction

LGNI were funded through the Arts Council Northern Ireland (Arts and Older People Programme). It involved working with residents of care homes and linking them with students from local schools to complete an art project, facilitated by a local artist.

The EngAGE Art (part 1) project involved working in three care homes. Namely Clareview Nursing Home Ballyclare, Bradley Manor Crumlin Road Belfast and Blair House Scrabo Newtownards. They were linked with students from Ballyclare Primary School, Holy Cross Girls School Belfast and West Winds Primary School Newtownards respectively.

The EngAGE Art (part 2) project involved working in three care homes. Namely Castlelodge Nursing Home, Antrim, Abington Manor Upper Crumlin Road Belfast and Sunnymead Residential home Armagh. They were linked with students from Antrim Primary School, Mercy College Belfast and Royal School Armagh Preparatory Department respectively.

Each project involved preparatory sessions with the older and younger people on singly to outline the aims of the project and discover the art genre that was most suitable for the project along with Focus Groups to ascertain how older people engaging with art had positive or negative outcomes. All the students in the year of the pupils engaging in the project in Dementia Awareness Training. Pupils were then selected to participate in the project.

EngAGE Art Project



2. The overall aims of the project agreed by the Arts council are:

- **Engage older people in intergenerational arts projects with school children as a method of addressing social isolation and to have a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing**
- **Use the medium of arts to create linkages between generations in communities improving older people's community connections, participation in the arts**
- **Create sustainable opportunities for continued intergenerational arts by creating partnerships between schools and care homes**
- **Showcase and recognise arts produced by older people as part of each intergenerational arts project at an event that connects all groups involved**
- **Provide community arts opportunities for local artists**

Each of the first three project facilitated six sessions in each care home beginning in April and ending in a Celebration and Exhibition in June.

The second three projects commenced between December 2018 and February with the last of the celebration events happening in March 2019

The arts sessions were facilitated by a local artists. Creating art that would be a permanent display in the care home and in the school.

The care homes provided the venue and snacks for residents and pupils. They also arranged celebration events in each care home. The schools transported the pupils to the care homes and back to school. In most cases this involved walking from the school to the home and back.

3. The Projects

Part 1 Projects

3.1 Clareview Nursing Home and Ballyclare Primary School

Following a meeting with the residents and the activities to talk through the options and the benefits of being engaged in an intergenerational art project, Dementia Awareness Training was delivered to seventy five P7. From this number pupils volunteered for the project

Ten residents engaged with eighteen pupils in the Project. The art facilitator was Jude Lunn. The first session involved getting to know each other and doing some simple art work to relax participants and decided that the art work to be created was a wall hanging for the dining room of the home.

Some pictures of the sessions and the final wall hanging.





3.2 Bradley Manor and Holy Cross Girls Primary School

The same approach was used in this project namely engagement with each group individually and dementia awareness training for the school pupils. Then six art sessions plus a celebration and a celebration reveal of the art work in an open session.



During the six art sessions the produced ceramic tiles which decorated a wall of the residents' garden the sessions were facilitated by Grannie Keilty. These session were of great value to both residents and children. The art work produced gave a great sense of achievement and was an inspiration to residents, pupils, families and staff.





3.3 Blair House and West Winds Primary School

The same approach was used in this project namely engagement with each group individually and dementia awareness training for the school pupils. Then six art sessions plus a celebration

The six sessions were facilitated by Rosie Moore. Incorporating weaving, cutting materials, patterns and drawing on canvas.





Part 2 Projects

3.4 Castle Lodge Care Home Antrim and Antrim Primary School.

Ten residents joined in the sixteen art session plus the celebration event. Creating a wall hanging representing young and old. Pieces were created for display in the home and in the school.





3.5 Abington Manor and Mercy College North Belfast

Twelve residents and eight sixth form students from Mercy College took part in 6 art sessions and a celebration event in a range of art genre including pottery, painting and wall hangings.







3.6 Sunnymead Residential Home Armagh and Armagh Royal School Preparatory School

Fourteen residents engaged with fourteen pupils in a ceramic project to produce a piece that would fit on a wall in the residents' sensory garden.









4 Facts and Figures and Responses

Pupils engaged in Dementia Awareness Training 426

76 Residents engaged with 181 pupils (31 of these pupils attended alternate sessions so 16 one week 15 the next)

Each project had 10 sessions

1 Single Identity in preparation for the project

Plus two focus groups for the older people to discuss what they thought of the project and how they found the project at its conclusion

There were 6 arts sessions

One celebration Event

Total 60 sessions 90 hours of engagement

Report of the Focus Groups for the older people

Total Attendance at the Celebration Events 247

5. Focus Groups Report

All the participants had dementia in some degree. Some had slight signs others were more advanced. While they could communicate, the process of filling in a participant's questionnaire even with help, became so difficult that we decided to hold groups in each care facility prior to the project and after the celebration event.

At the 'Entrance' focus groups there was a great deal of positive feedback on how they would appreciate the art project and an artist facilitator and the happy response to the idea that young pupils would be coming to join in the project. There was a positive expectation about involvement.

In other Arts projects I have found that older people had a reluctance to engage in art because of negative experiences in school days with the teaching of art as a subject.

The staff in all the care homes were active in talking to residents about what was coming up and at the first joint sessions there was a real sense of joy at the expectation of what was to come.

At the 'Exit' Focus Groups comments were noted and questions asked and staff gave their observations and comments.

The artists started each project with art activities that drew everyone together and lead to full participation in all the sessions.

Residents' responses to the project.

"I look forward to Thursdays and love helping the children; I think we've done great work together."

"I used to be a Girl Guide Leader so this just reminds me of all the arts and crafts we did together, it's been great fun".

"I think **that** all these young people are fabulous I have made some real friends' "

"I love to see the children coming in and I like helping them"

"It really made me feel alive."

"I had such fun, such lovely children."

"Lovely to see so many children having fun in here. Most of the time they are with their mums and dads and sit like wee mice, I liked seeing them being able to be themselves"

"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"

"I'm learning to live my life again!"

"Getting to know the children and make friends was really enjoyable."

"Lovely being with children. I was very touched by them bringing me a present."

"I never did anything like this before. Can we do it again?"

"I never worked with clay and colours before."

"Really entertaining a real bit of craic."

"Nice being with folk from outside the home."

"One of the children drew me – I was delighted."

"Lovely learning something new."

"That I have something in common with children."

"Doing art was great."

"Brilliant."

"It makes such a difference. It lifts my heart."

It really makes me feel younger."

The following questions were put to the groups.

Question	% In agreement
Did you enjoy being with younger people?	100%
Did you enjoy doing art?	100%
Has the project helped you learn new things?	100%
Has the project helped you feel more confident?	100%
Has the project helped you feel better about yourself?	100%
Has the project helped you feel more a part of your community?	100%

It needs to be understood that these questions were put to groups with a range of ability in communication. It was a gentle engagement and explanation about the questions. In such a groups there are some who would follow what others would do. So in a show of hands 100% was shown but some would follow

6. Staff Comments

"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 and promote a whole new sense of purpose, leading to better mental health and wellbeing."

"An intergenerational project allows the Care home resident engage with their local community. Some residents may have not been able to do this for a long period before coming to live in care due to health or wellbeing issues."

"We feel that the intergeneration art projects are invaluable and will feature as a regular element in our activity planning for the foreseeable future."

"Our activities co-ordinator has been inspired and wants to ensure that such activities should form an integral part of our home life."

"It has shown how beneficial art is to the health and wellbeing of our residents."

"Engaging with the community is really positive for our residents."

"Building relationships outside the care home is of crucial importance."

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."

"Doing intergenerational art created a dynamic creative atmosphere."

"Relationships were formed that have lasted after the project."

"Sometimes they (residents) might not remember but the good feeling lasts a long time."

"Professional artists made a difference and demonstrated ways to engage when some dexterity issues have arisen."

"Though not planned singing and telling stories became a really enjoyable part of the project."

The project broadened the community for our residents and overcame feeling of isolation."

"Sharing skills and ideas brightens the mood and we notice that the residents involved were able to eat better."

"Sometimes in a care home residents feel forgotten and cut off. The children remember their names and pop into see their new friends after school. Really positive."

7. Students' Involvement

Total Number of forms completed 91

65 Girls 26 Boys

Under 11 - 58

11-14 - 26

15-18 - 6

18+-1

Before this project have you ever taken part in a project with older people?

No 67% Yes 37%

WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THE PROJECT?

Question	Yes	No
I enjoyed being with the older people	95%	5%
The project has helped me to learn new things	92%	8%
The project has helped me to feel more confident	84%	16%
The project has helped me to feel better about myself	79%	21%
The project has helped me to feel more a part of the	89%	11%

Recorded Comments

Question 1 -What did you like about the project?

Everybody got to do stuff

Being with older people

The art

Helping with art

Talking

They loved getting to know us

Getting to know new people. Making new friends

Good experience talking to OP

Getting to spend time with older people

Being creative

Hearing about their lives

This was a step outside my comfort zone

The good communication

Question 2 - What did you not like about the project?

Most answered - Nothing!

Too short room was small.

Room very warm (temperature for residents)

Tutor was strict! (Note: The room was small. Not enough chairs for children Difficult to keep all the pupils engaged. The bigger room was out of action.)

Wait another week until the next one.

That it will not be on every week.

That some of the OP were not able to do some of the stuff.

Question 3 -What have you learnt about older people taking part in the project?

OP are really good at art

OP are really funny. Some are shy.

We need to be confident and chatty

OP still have fun

OP are friendly and welcoming

No matter what are you are

They are very friendly

They are normal despite dementia

OP Can be really creative

They have lots of stories

They are just like us and can have fun

We need to speak loudly

We have learnt a lot from OP

What it is like living in a care home.

How older people live

More to OP than you would think

To have patience and listen carefully

8. Audience Response to the Celebration Events

Gender: Male **7** Female **22**

What **age** are you? Under 16 **3** 17-34 **3** 35-44 **5** 45-54 **4**
55-64 **7** 65-74 **5** 75+ **1**

Apart from today, have you been to **see an arts event** (e.g. concert, play, exhibition, musical) in the last 12 months? Yes **19** No **10**

Do you belong to any **arts/cultural interest groups**? Yes **3** No **26**

Have you **taken part in an arts activity** (e.g. music, drama, dance, painting, creative writing) in the last 12 months? Yes **9** No **20**

What was the **main reason** that you decided to come here today?

Friends/relatives taking part **16**

I like this type of event **2**

I like to support local events **6**

Because it is free

Other (please state).....Visiting a friend **1** Staff **4**

What did you think about the **quality** of this event?

Very Good **28** Good **1** Average Poor Very Poor

Overall, how **satisfied** were you with this event?

V. Satisfied **27** Satisfied **2** Neither Dissatisfied V. Dissatisfied

The Arts & Older People Programme aims to **engage & stimulate older people through the arts**.

Do you think that this event has helped meet this aim?

A lot **28** A little **0** Not at All **0** Don't Know **1**

To what extent has this event made you **more aware** of the issues facing older people?

A lot **20** A little **1** Not at All Already Aware **7** Don't Know **1**

Has this event **made you think more positively about older people?**

Yes **16** No **0** Already positive **13** Don't know **0**

9. Outcomes from EngAGE Art Project

9.1 Increased understanding of the nature and outcomes of living with dementia

100% of younger participants said they were more aware of the range of dementia symptoms after the dementia awareness training. Understanding that people can still live fulfilling lives and enjoy relationships really helped the younger participants interact with the residents in each care home.

9.2 Increase in confidence of older people in engaging in art.

Completing a creative art project produced greater confidence in residents to engage with younger people to complete works of art that would be on display for public display. The residents expressed a real sense of achievement in being affirmed by those who attended the events to reveal the work completed.

9.3 Linking people in a care home with the community was positive.

All of the care homes had a range of activities arranged for residents on a regular basis. These were greatly appreciated. Bringing the community into the care home added a further dimension. There was engagement from outside the home context.

It over came feelings of isolation. There was measurable more energy displayed by the residents. They were so happy that on many occasions they broke into song while working together. The room was filled a sense of joy singing old songs and everyone joining in.

9.4 Increased contact between age specific organisations – care homes and schools

The first project provided linkages and engagement between age specific organisations most of which plan to continue with the linkages established. All of older participants said in their post discussion focus groups that before this project they had not had contact with groups of young people. When asked why they enjoyed the project a young person stated; 'It allowed me to speak to new people from different backgrounds and ages;' 'Improved my confidence and to socialise and engage in art; 'and an older person who missed outside socialising said' It really made me feel alive.'

9.5 Increased support and empathy between the generations

All of young participants in this project said they had enjoyed it and that they would recommend it to a friend and would volunteer again to engage with care home residents.. Many of the pupils said that they would consider being involved in a caring profession. Those of older participants who could verbalise their response said that they would recommend the project to others. The following comments demonstrate empathy and support when asked about working with the other age group 'I found it easy to get on with my partner.' 'The children were wonderful and really well behaved. I did not think that young people were as and good today as they were years ago. They are even better.'

9.6 New ways to engage older people and younger people together

Following the project the following joint initiatives have taken place;-

Formation of an all age choir; a simple baking group; a reading group; and handcraft group.

Instead of the pupils coming to the home to perform. They now come to practice in the home. They perform in the home to the other residents, families and friends. They also go to the school to perform at concerts and special events such as harvest festival.

9.7 All participating groups want to explore more ways of working together

All the care homes and the schools have recognised the value of this project and have stated that they want more residents and further classes to be able to experience such a positive experience.

9.8 Organisations have signed up to the Networks formed in their local council area.

Realising just how these projects have had such a positive outcome to those participants and how beneficial it has been in building greater community involvement they have joined the Networks to ensure that this type of work grows and develops in local communities by networking, training and forming sustainable linkages across the area from many different disciplines such as Education, Youth and community, Health, voluntary organisations working with local government officers to help build closer communities and develop the Community Plan for the area.

9.9 EngAGE Art has created a sustainable legacy that can be rolled out across

Northern Ireland

This model of good practice can be delivered across communities in NI and can have the same positive contribution to the use of Art in engaging older people. Using an intergenerational approach can help build more united communities. Moving over and beyond projects to communities working more positively together.