



**Linking Generations NI  
Connecting Care Homes  
and Communities  
Project Report**

# Introduction

LGNI are very grateful to have secured funding from the **LFT Charitable Trust** for a care sector pilot project working in partnership with three care homes during 2021/22.

In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic and in response to the increasing isolation of older people and the staff in care homes, LGNI saw the opportunity to build intergenerational capacity within the settings themselves. We wanted to empower care settings to take the lead on developing intergenerational connections in their communities that kept residents connected in a safe way to the outside world.

LGNI's approach was to work alongside 3 Care Home Settings to build intergenerational capacity through training, provision of staff support and resources. Settings also received a small activity budget and supported connection to one another via peer support zoom sessions.

All 3 settings took part in LGNI's CPD Accredited training delivered via Zoom over 3 modules and were provided with LGNI's draft intergenerational toolkit for care settings, an activity budget and joint or one to one support calls, as appropriate, to develop their connections.

By connecting the settings and their staff with LGNI's intergenerational expertise, best practice examples and CPD accredited training we have increased their capacity to develop and implement their own intergenerational work, increased their knowledge and confidence, connected them to their peers and supported them to develop intergenerational links in their communities.

Although the project was challenging due to the impact of Covid-19 we were inspired by the dedication and enthusiasm of our care partners. We aimed to create sustainable intergenerational connections that support the achievement of care home standards and hope these can be further embedded and sustained in their settings throughout the year and into the future.

A final '**Practice Toolkit for Care Homes & Settings**' has now been produced which will be an important element and legacy of the project for those already trained and for the development of our work further with new settings.

## Project Outcomes

LGNI have continued to build relationships with the staff in the settings, linking them in with our NI network, sharing ideas, resources and supporting them to create intergenerational to develop these ideas. As a result:

- Staff in all of the participating care settings have been equipped and empowered with the skills and confidence to develop their own intergenerational links and have delivered intergenerational activity.
- All settings have established an intergenerational link in their local community which they plan to further develop in the future – see plans mentioned in updates below.

- Care setting residents and younger people have been involved in intergenerational activity albeit at a distance
- Awareness of intergenerational practice as a tool for care homes and impact of project increased through ECHO care home grouping & ICP. We continue to attend these monthly meetings to share LGNI opportunities for intergenerational activities and training, as well as through network meetings, Loneliness networks and others. We strive to develop new enthusiasm for engagement with intergenerational practice and are developing relationships with more care homes as a result of the Sharing Learning online event and additional training offerings.

## Feedback from Participants

A key aim of this project focuses on Care Homes and Settings to see intergenerational practice as a way to do things differently to achieve existing care Home standards meaning sustainability would be more likely. Participants told us that intergenerational work can help them achieve care home RQIA outcomes and most definitely benefit residents' lives.

**This is what they did:**

### Phoenix Clinic, Newtownards

32 residents in Phoenix Clinic & Resource Centre aged 22 – 78 and 30 children aged 6 months to 11 years of age from Kindergarten Kids Day Nursery took part in card making and exchange, a colouring in competition, sunflower planting and bird watching, separately but sharing the images of what took place with each other. They have plans in place for a sponsored walk, teddy bears picnic and other activities during the summer, face to face as Covid restrictions relaxed.

### Rose Lodge, Lisburn

To date, Residents participated in 2 Zoom sessions with primary school pupils but unfortunately due to a change-over in home ownership and staff, activity is on hold. LGNI continue to liaise with new Manager and Activity coordinator will support to pick up the links created with local school to plan and deliver activities. The School Principal is also keen to reconnect.



### Newcroft Lodge, Holywood

Continued strong links with the local Holywood Primary School and teacher. 20 Residents in Newcroft Lodge aged 67 – 90 and 25 pupils aged 10 took part in exchanging cards/letters and planting activities separately, sharing photos of activity.

## **Participant comments:**

### **1. Sam McMahon, Newcroft Lodge Manager:**

This initiative is definitely something I would encourage others including my colleagues to get involved with as I find the support and activity ideas are fresh and give staff renewed energy to continue with activities outside of the project. All within Newcroft lodge have received something from being involved in this project-when you work with residents whose communication, concentration, and ability to engage has been affected by the disease process to different extents and you see them take an active interest in gardening, making cards, decorating Christmas decorations, and other seasonal crafts-when you see other residents who are expressing distressed reactions as they get frustrated trying to communicate-yet for 5 or 10 minutes have a window of an oasis were they are again at peace because they are having meaningful activity-then you get a window into why we support this project.

We are very grateful for the established links that exist between Linking Generations and other schools etc. and were so pleased when we were told Holywood Primary would partner with us-and thus a rather unconventional partnership began on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December with Holywood Primary School-since then we have exchanged regular correspondence, various crafts and suitable seasonal greetings. Obviously the last year has brought its own pressures and being able to engage in any sort of meaningful activity and engagement with groups outside of the home has been challenging-however while the partnership was never face to face it has not prevented us from ensuring it happened and sharing the outcomes.

Personally the stand-out event for me was the work we carried out with the residents when we made up the planters for the school as I saw the impact first hand of residents of different stages in their dementia journey still being able to get involved-even to see residents touch the compost, make the space for the plant, for others to interfere and decide no that colour of plant should be moved to there or planted somewhere else in the pot-and then to recall their own experiences of planting in their own gardens.

For us this is not the end of the journey-but the beginning-already the teacher in the school and myself have agreed when it is safe and the appropriate education and health authorities permit it we would like to have some face to face contact-whether it is joining us for some Christmas Carols or at a garden party we will definitely be following it up!



Re meaningful activities in nursing and residential homes – I strongly endorse these partnerships as a way of providing fresh energy and enthusiasm and resources to staff who are expected to be involved with it-but who up to now have not always had the support.

Sam commented: ‘when we made up the planters for the school I saw the impact first hand of residents of different stages in their dementia journey still being able to get involved-even to see residents touch the compost, make the space for the

plant, for others to interfere and decide no that colour of plant should be moved to there or planted somewhere else in the pot-and then to recall their own experiences of planting in their own gardens’

## 2. Teacher, Holywood Primary School

It has been a lovely project this year and we are keen to carry on our links with Newcroft Lodge next year. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we have not been able to meet face to face, but we would like to arrange some meetings next year and the pupils have some great ideas for what we could do!

The pupils and staff in the school have responded well to the project and I believe it is beneficial for both the children and the residents at the care home. The children can learn from the residents, it makes them feel good when they make other people happy, and it is always good for them to think of others.

## 3. Pupils, Holywood Primary School

We sent Newcroft Lodge some videos and crafts at Christmas time. On the video, some classes performed in a talent show and other year groups sent videos of them singing some of their Christmas songs. In the talent show, some pupils told jokes, played their instruments, danced or did some stand-up comedy. Other year groups made Christmas crafts to decorate Newcroft Lodge. The crafts included stained glass windows and paper chains. One year group wrote Christmas cards to the residents of Newcroft Lodge.

For Easter each class made Easter bunting for Newcroft Lodge. The younger year groups wrote a short message on their bunting and then the older year groups wrote some acrostic poems in the Summer Term – HPS was delighted with the lovely flowerpots that were kindly planted and gifted to them by Newcroft Lodge. The pupils liked seeing the photos of the residents planting the flowers and enjoyed planting flowers for the care home. Some comments:

*“It hopefully made them feel very happy because they know people care about them and are thinking about them”.*

*“They got to see children having fun and it would remind them of what they used to do when they were a child.”*

*“It might make them happy because we might remind them of their grandchildren.”*

*“I liked doing the Easter bunting because it was a fun activity and it would look nice in the care home.”*

*“My favourite activity was the talent show because we all got to show off our talents”!*

*“It was nice to see people at the care home planting the flowers as they looked happy”.*

#### 4. Residents, Newcroft Lodge

All within Newcroft Lodge have received something from being involved in this project-when you work with residents whose communication, concentration, and ability to engage has been affected by the disease process to different extents and you see them take an active interest in gardening, making cards, decorating Christmas decorations, and other seasonal crafts-when you see other residents who are expressing distressed reactions as they get frustrated trying to communicate-yet for 5 or 10 minutes have a window of an oasis were they are again at peace because they are having meaningful activity-then you get a window into why we support this project.



As well as these examples, all participating settings have provided feedback on their experience of the project and via the training been equipped with the resources and knowledge to collect this from their participants – see above, beneficiaries section and also below profile of resident impact.

### Promotion of the Project – Sharing the Message

Throughout the overall project there has been continual promotion of progress via LGNI Facebook and website and attendance at ECHO Care Home Activity coordinators monthly zoom meetings, highlighting care home intergenerational training for Activity coordinators and staff across NI. This training continues.

We held a **Sharing the Learning** event in 2022, watch here:

[https://youtu.be/w\\_1XMk-ZzTs](https://youtu.be/w_1XMk-ZzTs)

The event shared the intergenerational journey so far for the settings taking part in the pilot initiative. Over 40 registered with 20 attendees, including care home representatives, HSCNI, and Commissioner for Older People NI, Eddie Lynch who opened the event – see relevant LGNI news item:

### [Connecting Care Homes & Communities Share the Learning Event – Linking Generations NI](#)

We asked attendees what they had learnt from the event. They told us:

*“How much exciting and valuable work is being done between care homes and schools” and “Potential benefits for young people & older people There's so many benefits for the care home residents and the pupils. The presentations really brought this to life, they were excellent. Great hearing from them directly”.*

## Project Overview

This project has involved a range of beneficiaries which we believe to be the staff trained, older & younger people who took part, the settings themselves and LGNI's wider contacts. See details below:

- 9 staff in participating settings have been equipped with the knowledge, confidence, resources and support to develop their own intergenerational links and activities
- 9 staff in participating settings have been equipped with the knowledge/confidence/resources and support from LGNI to develop their own intergenerational links and activities
- Staff in all settings have had the experience of running their own intergenerational activities and have fostered working links with other settings for future work – schools, nurseries and community groups
- All staff have made the link between intergenerational practice and Care Home standards and have been equipped with the knowledge/skills/resources to evaluation and report back impact

### Benefits to Participants, older and younger:

- Increased community involvement
- Awareness of each other's issues
- Increased wellbeing, mood, confidence and feeling of inclusion
- Feeling more a part of the community and feeling valued

### Benefits to Care Settings:

- Creating links within the community
- Accessing new ideas
- Expanding friendships,
- Building on working relationships between staff and residents
- Sustainable practice

### Project Challenges:

Planned as a face-to-face project, the Covid-19 pandemic brought many, ever changing, restrictions. Ongoing outbreaks in both the Care and School settings meant many rescheduled sessions. Sessions that took place, over Zoom, were subject to staff shortages due to illness but the tenacity of those involved meant the project was successfully delivered to the benefit of all participants, young and old and to the schools and care settings taking part.



## Project Legacy

This pilot project enabled LGNI to specifically focus work within the area of care and to create our '**An Intergenerational Practice Toolkit for Care Home Settings**'. This resource has already been utilised with a further group of 10 Care Home setting as part of LGNI training as of August 2022.

Our promotion of this project, sharing learning event and training opportunities have inspired other care homes to get involved and increased the number of care setting staff and providers onto our networks.

We will continue to showcase the work of the participating settings via our networks to inspire others and the cycle will continue!



For more on training opportunities, click here:

<https://www.linkinggenerationsni.com/news/accredited-intergenerational-training-for-care-homes-registration-open/>

To join our Network, click here:

<https://www.linkinggenerationsni.com/sign-up/>

For our website, click here:

<https://www.linkinggenerationsni.com/>

## Linking Generations NI

### September 2022

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