Linking Generations NI
All Ages April 2022
Report

HSC Public Health Agency

Introduction

With funding support from Public Health Agency NI Linking Generations NI were delighted to be able to award 28 small grants, of £150 each, in early 2022, to enable intergenerational events across NI in the month of April and to promote the grants scheme as part of Global Intergenerational Week 2022.

This All Ages April 2022 grants scheme saw a great dedication by groups and settings to try and connect generations despite the obstacles of continuing Covid Guidelines. The groups involved have all been resilient and versatile in developing creative plans to hold their varying All Ages April events.

So many new connections were made with a total of 1,164 participants, from nursery age to 80+, taking part in intergenerational activities! The benefits and knock on effects have been huge for the people who took part, the community leaders who developed the activities and the groups/organisations and settings that hosted them!

Impact of Grants

The grants act as a catalyst to create sustainable connections bringing older and younger people together. The impact of these connections is detailed below but as well as creating new opportunities, it also builds confidence and expertise to develop and implement intergenerational projects.

We see the benefits across the board for those involved and it's great to see how one small idea and a connection with another group/organisation/setting can provide positive outcomes for the participants, learning for the organisations/leaders and, in most cases, sustained links between people and organisations who go on to work intergenerationally as a result

This short evaluation report gives some feedback and statistics from this wonderful programme – (258 participants and 27 group leaders were surveyed)

The Headline Findings for Groups & Participants

They told us about the practical benefits of taking part in the project. It gave them the confidence to:

- Try intergenerational activities and something new
- Manage the practical issues that arose

- Problem Solve - from navigating Covid restrictions, to thinking about steps to enable the very young and the very old to come together with consideration to their varied access and accommodation needs

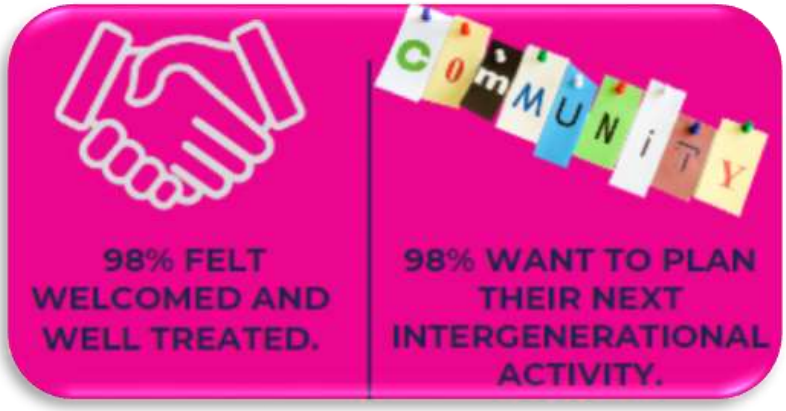
Intergenerational benefits reported included:

1. Increased understanding by young people of the community and personal fears of older people
2. Learning about the personal stories, experiences and community spirit of older people who lived through 'The Troubles'
3. Younger participants learned that they should be more appreciative of what they have got after listening to stories of the poverty and hardship of an older generation
4. Older participants increased their awareness of the serious mental health issues affecting young people these days

We loved the feedback from the All Ages April participants!

Comments from participants that took part included:

- The ones we met were energetic, enthusiastic and committed, as well as talented – it was very encouraging to meet them and share chat
- They showed a deep commitment to learn
- They have a hopeful outlook'
- Being born in 65, learning more from others that had more life experience of the time'
- Interesting to find younger people's perceptions of the past
- I learnt about women's rights in the 1960s and how far they have advanced since
- The food in the 1960s was very nice
- The event gave me the opportunity to meet and greet relatives of the children. The fact that it was inclusive of age, children and staff
- Joy on children's faces for their grandparents visiting
- Felt special to celebrate the different generations in my grandson's life and see his school and staff
- How totally different life for parents is now compared to 35-40 years ago when we were parenting



Some Vital Stats!

Our evaluation responses show that through developing connections with people of another generation in their community and taking part in All Ages April intergenerational activity participants felt more connected to their community, welcome and respected and were keen to engage in further intergenerational activity!

- **87%** stated that as a result of their involvement they now felt more connected to their community
- **98%** said they would like to take part in more intergenerational activity
- **98%** stated that as a result they felt more welcome and connected in their community

Feedback from the Community Leaders

The projects funded not only provided great learning for the young and old people taking part but also for those who planned, organised and delivered the initiatives, We have highlighted their feedback under each of the 8 core principles that our intergenerational work adheres to (Pinto et al, 2009).

1. ***Mutually and reciprocally beneficial* - each generation participating learns with and from each other. Project leaders told us:**

- Despite the challenges, it was lovely to see again how much the generations enjoyed interacting with each other
- Although it took some time to plan activities that would suit everyone and to organise for the children and adults to attend at an agreeable time/day, it was worth it in the end. The joy in everyone's faces during the session was so lovely to see. They were all buzzing afterwards. The older people particularly liked hearing the young people perform

2. ***Participatory -*** ***based on the aspirations and needs of those participating. Project leaders told us:***

- No matter the age we all have links between us, spending time with each other and listening to their stories and songs. It has had a massive impact on myself which I knew it would as to see both generations linking together it is nothing less than magical

3. ***Assets based*** ***- working with the generations to help them to discover their strengths. Project leaders told us:***

- The project gave elderly participants a chance to develop their cognitive skills and draw upon their memory
- I learned that children and adults alike can get nervous when using their learned language and meeting new people and that simple, interactive events such as these can be of huge benefit to all ages

4. ***Well planned*** ***- project leaders told us:***

- We learnt about making all the arrangements for the event to happen. We liaised with the schools to arrange suitable dates. Purchasing everything required for the project i.e. food, sunflower seeds, compost etc. We asked the photographer from the local paper to come along and take a photo. We have completed this evaluation of our event and we thank LGNI who have helped us through grant funding to complete these events
- I learnt how to engage with another group over zoom and technology is very good but sometimes when you can't get it to work it can be hard
- I was reminded of how important it is to be flexible when it comes to planning these kinds of projects, particularly as we had to rearrange some dates due to scheduling conflicts with the school and care home
- The fact that we also had a back-up plan in place was also obviously important as we weren't able to go ahead with the second in-person session due to the Covid outbreak in the care home

5. ***Culturally grounded*** ***- tailored to the individual needs, context and attitudes of those participating. Project leaders told us:***

- Sustainability to be able to compliment activities and ensure flexibility in response to older people's views, interests etc.
- Virtually all the residents taking part were living with some form of dementia so we also had to accept the limitations that meant for how much they could contribute to the sessions with the children
- We have learnt that everyone works at their own pace and will eventually get there by gaining confidence and experience from others in the group. Our group is going from strength to strength

6. ***Strengthening community bonds* - promote active citizenship. Project leaders told us:**

- I would like to have the older people who we have now developed a relationship with to continue to come into school on a monthly basis

7. ***Challenges ageism* - Project leaders told us:**

- Connections developed with a younger generation can help older adults feel a greater sense of fulfilment. In fact, linking older adults with young children and adults provided advantages for both groups

8. ***Cross-disciplinary* -providing a vehicle for broadening the experience of professionals and encourage more inclusive working. Project leaders told us:**

- I would like to have the older people who we have now developed a relationship with to continue to come into school on a monthly basis. It will take planning to fit their visits in around curriculum learning
- I really want to explore activities integrated into curriculum – 'World Around Us' for instance

- ***Over half of the leaders stated they had never run an intergenerational project before (15 out of 27)***
- ***Nearly all of the leaders stated they planned to do it again (25 out of 27 and 1 maybe)***

Foundations of Wellbeing

All Ages April always showcases fantastic work and gives evidence to support the impact of intergenerational approaches to address health and wellbeing, social isolation, loneliness and improve **Community Connections. 100 %** of participating groups and individuals practiced at least one foundation for wellbeing:

***Give*:**

- All projects involved an element of mutual volunteering: older people share with younger people and younger people with older

***Be Active*:**

- Many projects involved physical movement - dancing, nature walks, moving about displays and making things

***Take Notice*:**

- Participants may have taken more notice of the world because the event was out of the ordinary for them

***Keep Learning*:**

- Across the projects older people explained things like typewriters and old games to young people who discovered these 'new' things and in return helped older people learn about IT and re-discover the enthusiasm of youth

***Connect*:**

- Participants connected with new people of different ages and expressed huge desire to keep connecting

Age Friendly Network NI

Department of Education

Department of Health
www.health-ni.gov.uk

The evidenced outcomes of **All Ages April** activities and alignment with the Foundations of Wellbeing also contributes to the building an **Age-friendly Northern Ireland** particularly the themes of respect and social inclusion and social participation. Considering the number of schools and education settings involved makes a considerable contribution to the **Department for Education's Every School a Good School Policy** by supporting the establishment of school links with the community. The high numbers of Care Home settings involves aligns All Ages April outcomes with the achievement of The **Department of Health Care Home Standards** relating to Contact with Family, Friends and the Local Community.

The All Ages April Activities!

Aghadrumsee Primary School

On Monday 4th & 11th April we were visited by 6 older people from our local community. During the first session the children were put into groups and asked each older person questions about their childhood - in particular relating to their school days and games they played. Then everyone played a selection of traditional games e.g. snakes and ladders, knocking down skittles, target practice etc. During the second session the children worked alongside one older person and planted a selection of vegetables and herbs in the school poly-tunnel. The older people shared their experiences of growing at home from their childhood. We agreed that the group would continue to visit us every month to see how the plants were growing and to keep contact with the children. I felt that the older people benefited by having time together before each session to have refreshments and talk. It was clear from their faces and engagement with our pupils how much they were enjoying the interactions. All visitors stated how much they had enjoyed it and asked if they could return. Our pupils benefitted greatly as the small groups enabled great talking and listening opportunities. The children enjoyed having 'new' people in school and hearing about life in the past. They also enjoyed playing the games and learning new games.

Benefits:

- Self esteem
- Relaxation and fulfilment
- Being part of a project and seeing it through to its completion
- Enjoyment/fun enjoying new and familiar activities
- Making friends with someone from another age group
- The importance of valuing older people in our community
- The fantastic talking and listening opportunities for our pupils
- Not to presume that children know about games and practices from the past

Aughabrack and District

Through the intergenerational project we set out to develop an event that would see the generations come together to plant up six planters, which were made by some of the older generations in the men's shed. New Horizons garden centre in Strabane provided the plants and we advertised via Facebook, local schools, posters in local shops, direct mail outs, and linking with local groups about the events and invited local families to come along. The morning of the event was a lovely bright

day, just perfect for the event and the families came together and saw the creation of six beautiful planters which now adorn the front of our community hall. The two local papers sent photographers and we were delighted to have lovely articles in both papers.

Benefits:

For many of the younger people it was their first experience of planting and they also enjoyed working with their parents and grandparents. One child spoke about how beautiful it was to see all the plants together and how colourful they were. The older men in the group especially those involved with making the planters really relished seeing the fruits of their labour and enjoyed working with their grandchildren. For some of the men's shed participants it was their first visit to the community hall and they felt welcomed and enjoyed the event. As a mainly catholic area, through this project we were able to not only see the mixing of generations but also religions and we saw new friendships developed.

Ballygowan Seniors

The Ballygowan Seniors Group participated in the project in the following way. We joined with Alexander Dickson Primary School and Carrickmanon Primary School to complete the projects. At both schools we worked with p3 and p4; we were in the school's new outdoor classroom in the school grounds. At both schools we planted sunflower seeds, the children coloured in pictures of sunflowers and we brought sweets to do an outside sweetie trail. At our event on Friday 29th April, we were pleased that Lynn Heatley from LGNI was able to join with us. Both the children and the adults derived great benefits from participating in both events. It is great to have the different generations coming together to learn from one another. We worked together at planting the seeds, and at Carrickmannon we watched the children as they coloured in and we were chatting together as we did this.

Benefits:

The children learned about planting and growing, some of the children may never have done this before. The children and seniors were all participating in these projects together, as we worked we were chatting and talking, and sharing with each other.

Creggan Preschool & Training Trust

As it will be Easter week the children with the 50+ group participated in a movement and music session facilitated by Coochiecoo. All participants had the opportunity to explore through dramatic play, social interaction, movement and action and music and rhyme. We then had a treasure hunt where the young children received an Easter egg and the 50+ group made Easter cheesecakes. Together everyone socialised over lunch.

Benefits:

With developing connections with a younger generation it can help older adults feel a greater sense of fulfilment. In fact, linking older adults with young children and adults provided advantages for both groups. For example, such relationships

- Provided an opportunity for both to learn new skills
- Give the children and the older adult a sense of purpose
- Helped to alleviate fears children may have of the elderly
- Invigorate and energize older adults
- Help reduced the likelihood of depression in the elderly
- Reduced the isolation of older adults (the effects of and through the pandemic of Covid 19)
- Filled a void for children who do not have grandparents available to them
- Help keep family stories and history alive -Tell jokes
- Learnt new skills i.e. older adults learnt to cook and younger children learnt new songs etc.
- Discussed hobbies and sharing examples

Participants left feeling empowered and exhilarated, happier and healthier. Dance brings an awful lot of different values to the process of getting physically active. As well as it being a physical workout, you also have the input of music, the social benefits, the different way in which your brain processes the patterns in dance and the direct physical contact with other people.

DEEDS Old Library Trust

We started with the Park Nursery, the children had made wonderful Easter Cards for our Members and then our Members had made cards also for the children, which the DEEDS Group enjoyed making fun Easter Cards and chatted about what they got for Easter so it became also a reminiscing session too.!! The children then came in and sang "Little Peter Rabbit", handed out their cards and received a card and Easter Egg each; so it was wonderful to have them enjoy the session. The children also received educational play packs, how to tell the time, numbers with trees and numbers with trains. Our Mellow DEEDS Choir had the wonderful Surestart children up to sing and perform for our Members and the Members also sang to them as they are practicing for the ‘Every Voice Festival.’ Our Hillcrest DEEDS Group made up packs for our Mothers and Toddlers and each toddler

was given a pack of Easter goodies. Shantallow DEEDS Group had the pleasure of the P1's of Steelstown Primary School come and sing their play to us. It was truly amazing to see both generations come together throughout this wonderful project and I am so excited to do more in the coming year.

Benefits:

It has had a massive impact on myself, which I knew it would as to see both generations linking together it is nothing less than magical. It does not matter the age we all have links between us, spending time with each other and listening to their stories and songs. Some of our members have told me that they do not really see a lot of children of that age anymore, which is sad, but to see them together chatting about toys, songs it really benefits them as it helps their mental health, confidence to speak to adults from a child's perspective, learning from both age groups likes and dislikes, laughing together and having fun.

Dementia Friendly South Belfast

South Belfast Kindness Post Box was launched at Belvoir Park Primary School on Friday 10th June with P5-P7, along with some members of the Belvoir Men's Shed who created the post boxes (3) and Alzheimer's Society who facilitated Dementia Awareness' to Belvoir Park Primary Kids. The young children in Belvoir Park took part in a Dementia Awareness Session to understand what Dementia was and the purpose the post box. The young children were very engaging in the session and interactive with several questions being asked. The artwork, poems created be Belvoir Primary will be given out to Memory Lane service in South Belfast this month.

Feedback below from Pamela Jones, Principle of Belvoir Park Primary School:

"We were honoured to be asked to participate in this scheme. The children responded so well to the assembly and many pupils and staff have relatives with Dementia. The video and talk really helped children understand the condition. They were so keen to draw pictures, write poems and make cards to make others happy and feel loved. We would love to see the post box come back again in the future."

Belvoir Park Primary and Belvoir Men Shed were delighted to be asked to be involved in a South Belfast Wide Project; as both groups are keen to be involved in a community based project. For South Belfast Dementia Friendly Steering Group; it was welcomed to have such great interaction and engagement with the organisations. The benefits for the participants were getting the school environment to come together and to learn about Dementia and how it can have an impact in our communities and how we as a community have a responsible to made it more dementia friendly**.**

Distorted Reflections

Distorted Reflections are an alumni student arts company from SERC that provide real-life social history sessions through intergenerational immersive theatre by focussing on a period in history to create an environment for reminiscence, storytelling, and sharing of ideas between generations. The company has generated short films that were used as a multimedia aspect of the immersive Bangor Museum. They have also conducted immersive theatrical productions in local nurseries to teach the children about the seasons. Distorted Reflections held a one-off event comprising a real-life social history learning experience through intergenerational immersive theatre on the Swinging 60s and created an environment for reminiscence, storytelling, and sharing between generations. The event was educationally innovative and provided a positive approach to getting different generations to communicate. Immersive props, theatrical production, music, news, and food from the 1960s were used to stimulate memories of the era amongst the older people in attendance, and they were encouraged to tell the younger people about their times in the 1960s. Key elements of the production included themes such as The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Elvis, Doris Day, Marilyn Monroe, JF Kennedy Assassination, Martin Luther King Assassination, Lawrence of Arabia movie, trifle, sardines, spam, Woodstock, Thunderbirds etc. Attendees were encouraged to dance, eat, reminisce, and share stories

Benefits:

It tackled loneliness and helped people to meet each other in their community. It also helped younger people to learn about their community 60 years ago and for older people to really enjoy reminiscing. The happy faces, the laughter, the singing together, the enjoyment of the food, the generations sat together at tables talking and the positive verbal and written feedback has demonstrated that all aims were achieved and that the event was a success.

DSG2010

We held our Candle Making Workshop on Saturday 9th April 2022 and we invited Willow & Wonder to come along and demonstrate how to make candles. We designed and printed a label for our candles. We had a wide range of age groups taking part in our Workshop from six to seventy-five and everyone who took part really enjoy making their candle and they all got to take them home afterwards. During the workshop, the participants discussed different topics from how candles were made and used in the olden days to light people's homes. We talked about our local Folk Park and events held there, we also discussed baking bread and jam making. Everyone who took part said afterwards how much they enjoyed the workshop and they really had a good time talking to other people in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Everyone left with a feel-good factor, which had a positive impact on their health and wellbeing. We were delighted that our workshop was such a success and are grateful to April All Ages for funding towards the running of this event.

Benefits:

Improved mental health due to social interaction. Participants got to take home their bespoke candle to use in their homes. It is very interesting to get different generations together and listen to their stories.

Gaelscoil Eoghain

We invited adult Irish speakers in the locality to their school to have an Irish conversation circle. The format was similar to speed-dating; a wheel was spun to choose a topic and the children rotated in groups around the different adults to discuss each question. The children and adults alike then had the opportunity to mingle and use their Irish with people of all Irish speaking abilities (ranging from beginner to fluent.) Each adult left with a small Easter token from the children as a memento of what was a wonderful event and all participants had a really enjoyable morning. The adults left the most amazing feedback on their forms, including feeling more confident in speaking Irish and on the bright future of the language in the area. The children thoroughly enjoyed getting to know the adults and although they were shy in the beginning, eventually the children stepped out of their comfort zones and left the event feeling very proud of the event we had put together. I think the participants of all ages enjoyed the event especially in the wake of Covid-19 and left our classroom feeling uplifted. I believe this event could become a yearly one after its inaugural success.

Absolutely made contacts! Irish speakers of all ages connected on a love of language and lots of conversations were had regarding Irish language resources and organisations that are in the locality and could be of use to our Gaelscoil.

Benefits:

It was clear to be seen that participants left the event feeling uplifted and full of joy, having made connections, had lots of laughs and of course a chat over a cuppa! In addition, participants of all ages benefitted from the opportunity to use their Irish, grow in confidence and learn from each other. Personally, I learned a lot about funding and how best to use grants for events. I learned that children and adults alike can get nervous when using their learned language and meeting new people and that simple, interactive events such as these can be of huge benefit to all ages.

Gillygooley Youth Club

On 25th April 2022, Gillygooley Youth Club organised to run an afternoon tea for our senior group, ‘2nd Youth’. This event was very successful and both the children and adults involved; thoroughly enjoyed themselves. The members from 2nd youth were very complimentary of the children involved and their behaviour. During the afternoon tea, the children and adults enjoyed a flower arranging session.

Benefits:

The opportunity to enjoy spending time with the older generation in our community.

Gillygooley ‘2nd Youth’ 50+ Club

We are an older people's group in the hamlet of Gillygooley over the years we have connected with the local rural primary school to take part in intergenerational activities this year we planned a pot planting day with our members and P6 and P7. The children and members arrived excited to get planting under the helpful instructions of Austin a gardening enthusiast; the compost and plants got scattered and shared around. The interaction between both age groups was lovely to witness. The result was 45 beautiful planters completed to everyone's satisfaction and the joy on the faces was a sight to behold; as everyone proudly carried their handiwork back to the table. Tired and ready for some refreshments everyone enjoyed an excellent afternoon tea. Now some relaxation as Austin completed a beautiful floral arrangement and presented it to the teacher for the school to enjoy.

All went home with their beautiful planters and are looking forward to a future visit to the school for a further intergenerational day and a time to renew friendships. This has been made available through the funding received and thanks to all involved.

Benefits:

How important it is to interact with your peers and lively young people, it was an excellent project for both mental and physical wellbeing.

Gilnahirk Primary School

We purchased a selection of pots and plants from a local Garden Centre. The primary 7 pupils potted the plants themselves and identified someone in their neighbourhood who was older / potentially lonely. They called along with their parent to the person's house and presented them with the flower and a little card entitled, 'Something to Make You Smile.' The project was extremely well received and we will definitely be incorporating it into our annual plans.

Holywood Steiner

We invited the grandparents and friends of our Class 7 (Year 9 equivalent) pupils to join us for a coffee and board game morning. Unfortunately, due to the risk of Covid amongst that age cohort, there was little enthusiasm for coming onto the campus. Many grandparents also live a distance away. So, instead, we brought the board games out to them! Each student was encouraged to play with their grandparent or elderly neighbour, in a domestic setting, with either their own board game or one of the new ones bought for the occasion. We had 6 families who participated. The children really enjoyed spending dedicated time with the older generation and got a lot of fun out of teaching

grannie’s new games! We would like to attempt to host another games morning, in the school, after the summer.

Benefits:

The participants need to be involved in the design of the project. The project lead can think they have the best idea ever; only for the participants to not summon up the same enthusiasm for it. Time spent by grandparents with their grandchildren is special and having a focus on a board game to bring people together was welcomed. The children loved feeling they were doing something special and different with the older generation - it brought out some kindness in them and consideration of their grandparents' needs (given they were reluctant to join with others for fear of Covid).

Kirkistown Primary School

We organised an intergenerational Easter Tea party at our primary school. We decorated the tables with Easter themed tableware, chicks and balloons etc. There was lots of fun discussion amongst the children and adults during this time. All participants enjoyed having fun in the Easter photo booth and some of our elderly friends really got into character pretending to be the Easter bunny! The children then completed their Easter egg hunt with help from the adults. All of the children had excellent fun and we received positive feedback from their parents who stated how much the children talked about the event at home. Some of the elderly residents expressed how the invitation to the event really helped to lift their spirits after the effects of lockdown. Some had never been in our school before and stated how they had such a wonderful time and felt very welcome. We would love to organise future events with some of our older classes.

Benefits:

They had fun, improved mood, improved social communication, helped to combat social isolation and loneliness after Covid.

Knocknagor Primary School

Our outdoor area was in need of some TLC, so we invited grandparents and their friends to come in to help paint fencing, planting boxes, benches and to help plant up the garden and pots. We also asked families to donate a plant each to help give each child a sense of ownership of the project. The event on the day was organised so that all children had the opportunity to take part in activities with the older generation and not necessarily people they knew. The older children worked at the painting work for the full 2 hours. The younger children came out in groups to plant window boxes with flowers, raised beds with vegetables and sunflower seeds. Afterwards everyone went to the canteen where tea and scones, juice and crisps and a good chat was enjoyed by everyone. We have all our raised beds planted, the fence, playhouse and seating looks great. Younger children and older generation including staff, really enjoyed the morning. There was lot of chat, fun and learning happening. We hope to hold another event in the Autumn term, perhaps a craft or dance activity. We also have plans for more development of outdoor learning area, which will need support from the community.

Benefits:

They enjoyed having their grandparents and friends here and 'showing them off' to their peers. It gave a sense of pride and ownership to the children in regards to their environment. It increased awareness of the vast knowledge people from an older generation have. The sense of fun and level of engagement they have with others was evident.

Magheraveely Community & Development

On Saturday 16th of April, we held an all ages afternoon of Easter Fun! This event was run by our village development association. We emphasised and promoted the fun afternoon for 'All Ages' of our community and in attendance we had people of all ages; helpers and villagers. We all participated in Easter arts and crafts, making rice filled sock bunnies, painted wooded eggs, made Easter bonnets and had a competition and also had an Easter theme treasure hunt around the village. It was a brilliant afternoon of fun for all!

Benefits:

Intergenerational connections, having the elderly revive their youth, in helping with the kids with crafting. Kids have connected well with the older people and aren't 'afraid to chat', the elderly can be quite competitive too! (Easter bonnet competition)

I think that having this grant available was just fantastic as we had never really thought of linking generations before. It gave us a push to deliver this event for all ages - and it really was enjoyed by all!

Maine Fold Tenants Association

With our grant we were able to purchase life size games of Connect 4, Dominos and Snakes and Ladders to be able to use when the children came to visit. These were invaluable as it helped those who could not see as well to be able to play. We organised for the children to come to the fold and had prepared hot chocolate and marshmallows for their arrival. We had tables set up outside where the children and the residents were able to sit together and play various games. The children brought with them a selection of games including Uno, Ludo and draughts. We spent the morning playing all the various different games. The children also brought some arts and crafts materials and a few enjoyed colouring in the Intergenerational Easter Egg with the tenant's. This was a fantastic opportunity for the residents to meet their pen pals who have been writing to them since the 1st lockdown. One resident who wasn't able to attend due to ill health was delighted when her 2 pen pals called down to her to speak and deliver her lunch. This made the resident feel part of the day and also feel very special. The event was finished off with lunch for everyone. We were also delighted to welcome our community policing team of Constable Graham and Sergeant Tate who provided us with a Gazebo and also provided the children with goodie bags from the Policing & Community Safety Partnership. This was the first time the children had been able to come to the Fold and there was great excitement felt throughout the morning, it felt like the children had always been coming in to visit! We hope to meet with them again before they finish to head on to their new schools in September.

Benefits:

Meeting the resident's face to face and being able to enjoy the games together was an immense benefit as we have only been meeting on zoom beforehand. We gained so much for the event in terms of a connection with the children and also further build a relationship with the school staff.

Milverne Residential Care Home

Millverne Residential Care Home linked up with Ballinamallard Primary school and decided to hold an Easter Egg Decorating Competition. Both groups designed an Easter egg on paper and they were sent to be judged by the other group, we then both judged the Easter Eggs and choose 1st, 2nd and 3rd winners. We had organised a time then to come on to a zoom call before Easter holidays and announced the winners. As the residents didn't want the children who didn't win to get nothing they wanted them to get a small chocolate egg where we put the chocolate egg in to a clear plastic bag with paper shavings and tided a ribbon around it and these were given to the children who didn't come 1st, 2nd or 3rd also the residents that didn't win received a small chocolate egg also. On the zoom call the children told us about their plans for the Easter holidays and the residents told the children what they were doing also and showed us some art that they had made that day. After the Easter holidays the children and residents planted sunflower seeds and flowers for each other and swapped them so that when they saw the flowers they can be reminded of each other. The children hope to come up to Millverne Residential care home in June for an outside visit and it will be lovely to see the children face to face. This has been so beneficial to the residents as they don't get to see other age groups from the community and so it makes them feel more connected with other children and after 2 years of not getting to see many people this was something that the residents looked forward to. When we displayed the children's art work at Easter time to be judged the residents took much pride in judging and felt that they were all good! There were many smiles throughout this project and I can definitely say they really enjoyed connecting up with a new group.

Benefits:

It definitely boosted the resident's mood; even thinking of the children and they were talking about judging the competition Easter Eggs. They definitely feel more connected to the community around them and their faces light up when they see the children on the screen. They loved asking them questions and finding out the answers. It was a very worthwhile project with a new group. We hope to keep the connection going next year also.

Mountfield Community Association

Mountfield Community Association recently organised a crochet group. The group is made up of members from our local community and surrounding areas and is a cross community group. We have young and old from primary school, young mothers, teenagers, and pensioners. The group decided we would like to make a blanket together to achieve something together as a group. A local lady donated wool which we could use and purchase some additional wool to complete the project. Our crochet tutor found a pattern for a granny square blanket in which there was a square that everyone could do whether you were a beginner or experienced at crochet. Our tutor agreed to hold longer crochet classes instead of 1hour class, the class was extended to two hours. Participants could learn new stitches and practise these at classes before making squares. The grant awarded meant that we were able to achieve this. Everyone took part in this project and enjoyed it. The old taught the new and it was good craic. It didn't always work out to plan but we got there eventually. The group have decided that any of the remaining wool from their individual projects will be kept together for another blanket or idea later in the year, which the group can raffle and maybe have a meal together at Christmas from the proceeds. The group has bonded together and new friendships has been made while learning a new skill.

Benefits:

The old teach the young new skills, which can be passed on to future generations in a fun and friendly environment which is enjoyed by all. Every day is a learning experience and we rely on each other's experience and confidence in planning and carrying out successful activities. We have learnt that everyone works at their own pace and will eventually get there by gaining confidence and experience from others in the group. Our group is going from strength to strength.
The participants gained a new skill by learning different skills to create new crochet items i.e. blankets baby clothes. The old taught the younger members who picked up the new crochet stitches easily. Everyone continues to benefit from the crochet class and this is reflected by the numbers who attend weekly.

Newtownards Elim Church Youth Council

Newtownards Elim Church Youth Council have had to postpone their plans until September due to Covid. Their aim is to build friendships and to develop social skills and connections both for the youth and older generation. Creating space for younger and older people to chat and share stories and experience, break down stereotypical thoughts about both generations; therefore, creating opportunities for all to feel valued and part of a wider community. It is our hope this would help to reduce loneliness and social isolation for both groups and is something we can continue to foster moving forward.

Northern Ireland War Memorial

For All Ages April I facilitated two intergenerational sessions bringing together P7 pupils from Holy Cross Boys' Primary School and residents from Bradley Manor Care Home in Ardoyne in North Belfast. The children and the residents had previously taken part in an online intergenerational

activity in 2021 and this was an opportunity to bring them together for an in-person project. On Wednesday 6th April - 23 children visited 12 residents in Bradley Manor where they took part in a show and tell activity from behind a protective screen with each of the boys sharing a favourite object with the residents. Many of the boys shared objects such as sporting items and pictures they had drawn including Tiarnan who brought along a picture he had drawn of his mother's memory box, something that he shared in person in the second session. The residents were very pleased to meet the boys and they asked them questions about their objects. Some of the boys also asked the residents questions about what jobs they had done, whether they liked art as well etc. Unfortunately, due to a Covid outbreak in Bradley Manor we weren't able to have another in-person session. We therefore set up an online session on Zoom which took place on Monday 25th April. I brought objects relating to the Second World War into the classroom and the boys were able to hold those up to the camera to encourage the residents to share their memories of the war. Some of the residents also shared objects that meant something to them such as Henry, a former Northern Ireland boxing champion who showed the boys a photograph of himself and his father and brother holding boxing trophy cups. The project was an opportunity for the boys and the residents to connect with each other, particularly as they shared their objects with each other. The boys also had the opportunity to learn more about the Second World War and both they and the residents enjoyed looking at the objects from the museum's handling collection.

Benefits:

I was reminded of how important it is to be flexible when it comes to planning these kinds of projects, particularly as we had to rearrange some dates due to scheduling conflicts with the school and care home. The fact that we also had a back-up plan in place was also obviously important as we weren't able to go ahead with the second in-person session due to the Covid outbreak in the care home. Virtually all the residents taking part were living with some form of dementia so we also had to accept the limitations that meant for how much they could contribute to the sessions with the children. Despite the challenges, it was lovely to see again how much the generations enjoyed interacting with each other. I had done a couple of preliminary sessions with the boys as part of an NI Museums Council project so they already had some knowledge of the Second World War, which I think was useful for the online session we did with the residents using WW2 objects. On the whole, the care home staff were helpful although communication in arranging the project was challenging at times which may be due to the fact that they don't seem to have a permanent activity coordinator yet in place. Orla Brooks, the P7 teacher, was particularly helpful and both she and Tony, the classroom assistant, were extremely supportive of the project. Their buy-in was definitely essential to the success of the sessions. The children's confidence was boosted by sharing their objects with the residents and they had the chance to connect with older people living in their local community. They

also had the chance to learn about their local history by using the Second World War objects to engage with the residents in the online session. I think the residents also enjoyed connecting with the children and hearing about their lives and interests in the show and tell session. It will have had a positive impact on their wellbeing to have the children take an interest in their lives and encourage them to share their memories.

Seaview Intergrated Primary School

On Tuesday the 5th of April, a number of pupils from Seaview IPS visited a local friendship group for the elderly. As part of our project we spent £150 on board games modern and old-fashioned. The children were so excited to work with the elderly community and play a range of games. When we arrived, there was approximately 10 adults from the friendship group awaiting us. The children set up games such as dominoes, guess who, connect four, hungry hippos etc. and invited an elderly member to play with them. As the children are ages 5-7 they needed help from the elderly community to play the games correctly. It was a wonderful opportunity for the elderly members to teach the children how to play. This also gave these members the chance to discuss games they used to play and games from the past. A number of the pupils discussed how delighted they were to work alongside such kind, patient and knowledgeable adults from their community. A member from the club requested we brought down the children again. In the future, we would love the opportunity to run another activity with the elderly community as we feel it benefitted all those who participated.

Benefits:

We feel there are many benefits the participants achieved through this projects. Firstly, it gave the elderly participants a chance to develop their cognitive skills and draw upon their memory. It also gave everyone the opportunity to socialise.

St Colmcilles Ballymena

St.Colmcille's Year 7 pupils celebrated Intergenerational Week with the residents of Galgorm Care Home. The Year 7 pupils visited Galgorm Care Home and had the opportunity to chat with the residents in their garden. The residents and the Year 7s discussed a wide range of topics, comparing school days, leisure activities, favourite flowers and plants. Doreen from Galgorm told the boys and girls that she really loved the smell of lavender, while Tom originally from Randalstown told Tom from Year 7 that as a young man he loved to cycle. Doreen recalled that she attended school during World War 2. The Year 7 pupils used all this information to plan some planters and herb pots for the

residents. Lisa the manager from Galgorm presented the Year 7 pupils with sunflower seeds and onion bulbs to plant when they went back to school. Mya Robinson's aunt is the cook in Galgorm Care Home and gave the pupils some treats to have on their return to school. After Easter the Year 7s returned to Galgorm Care Home to present the residents with their planters and pots. The residents were waiting in the garden for the Year 7s and everyone was delighted to have another catch up. The pupils were quickly engaged in conversations with the residents and remembered conversations from their last visit. The pupils had a real connection with the ladies and gentlemen from Galgorm and were genuinely interested in listening about their lives. We left Galgorm with a promise of a return visit before the pupil's finish at the end of June.

Benefits:

Pupils developed their talking and listening skills along with respect for the older generation. The older people were patient with the pupils and enjoyed their conversations. The pupils and older people respect and enjoy each other's company.

The Prom Friendship Group

The Prom Friendship Group was set up to help support people affected by Dementia, their carer's and family. They approached The Music Yard to ask us to facilitate a music and wellbeing session with funding they had secured from Linking Generations. We also invited members from our Dementia Friendly Choir, volunteers and some young students who attend music lessons at The Music Yard.

We started the session with some ice breakers, light movement activities, vocal warm ups, and they we sang a mixture of old and modern songs that most of the group would know. We then moved on to drum ball which consists of exercise balls being hit with drum sticks to modern day classics such as Queen's We Will Rock You!!
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqLM3mFaSGs

Then it was time for the young student performances. They sang musical theatre solos which went down a treat with the audience and they all received a rapturous applause. This really helped with the children's confidence.

Although it took some time to plan activities that would suit everyone and to organise for the children and adults to attend at an agreeable time/day, it was worth it in the end. The joy in everyone's faces during the session was so lovely to see. They were all buzzing afterwards. The older people particularly liked hearing the young people perform.

Benefits:

Overall there were many benefits to all involved during the session including increasing confidence, feeling valued, feeling a sense of cohesion, discovering new activities, making friends, finding out about the different stages of life and interests, enjoying light movement exercises together without realising it and much more. Both young and old really enjoyed spending time together, taking part in activities they hadn't tried before. Some of the older attendees really bonded with the children and were firm friends by the end of the session. The children felt they were contributing to their community in such a positive way and they all said they would do something similar in the future.

Tullymeadow Community Association

We organised an intergenerational event involving people of all ages and from different groups. Our adult singing for fun group performed for the first time to an audience. They in turn were then entertained by young highland dancers and Irish dancers. We also had young people reciting and singing. Our gardening group prepared pots of kindness and seeds of hope, which were distributed to all who attended. This was very entertaining evening and had a diverse form of involvement, from music, dance gardening and singing for fun.

Benefits:

We learnt how important it is to involve all age groups and learn from each other. Everyone enjoyed the evening and learned more about other participating groups

Woodgreen Healthcare

We connected the new residents living in our recently built facility Willow Tree Lodge where we care for adults from diverse backgrounds that may have physical and mental health needs aging from 18yrs - 60yrs, with the older residents in Wood Green which is our home for the elderly and those living with dementia. Our workshop was a great success and made even better when we were actually able to meet up in person at Willow Tree's purpose built activity suite rather than by zoom. We hired a professional artist who guided our group to create some beautiful water colour art and messages that were placed inside recycled plastic bottles which were also decorated with art. The bottles were then made into a beautiful mobile, which is now on display in Willow Tree Lodge. There was a lot of laughter and residents chatted very naturally and made friends very easily. We are now planning to meet up again soon and have another art workshop together and also correspond with each other as pen pals.

Benefits:

How important and beneficial for health it is for people to meet up from all different ages and be able to chat and share life experiences. Being able to chat and make new friends and learn new art skills.

Summary

All of these fantastic All Ages April activities have been inspirational, inspiring and testament to the commitment of local communities to a better future for all ages. This year they formed part of the annual Global Intergenerational Week campaign which aims to inspire individuals, groups, organisations, local/national government and NGO's to fully embrace intergenerational practice, connecting people of all ages especially the younger and older generations. The campaign celebrates good practice, ideas, moments and opportunities for different age groups to come together, and intergenerational friendships to be formed.

Linking Generations are here to help support the development of intergenerational connections all year round so please get in touch or sign up to our free network via Sign Up – Linking Generations NI. We have lots of resources, ideas and opportunities to inspire and support groups and individuals to come together to share, recognise and value the contribution and connection between all generations in our communities!

Linking Generations Northern Ireland