



Linking Generations NI

LinkAGE & Arts Project Evaluation

2022-2023



Kindly Funded and Supported by the Arts for Older People Programme

Introduction

Linking Generations NI were pleased to receive funding from Arts Council Northern Ireland Arts for Older People Programme for their LinkAGE & Arts project. The project aimed to create linkages between care home residents and local school pupils to enjoy exploring a variety of art mediums to address social isolation and have a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing.

LGNI coordination role in this project involved:

- Linking Four care/nursing homes and four primary/post primary schools
- Identifying local artists to work with groups
- Delivering Dementia Awareness sessions with school pupils, teachers and artists
- Ensuring the delivery of 6 weeks of art intergenerational sessions based in each of the care settings facilitated by local artists.
- Organising and hosting celebrations for each individual project to showcase success
- Providing a platform to showcase the impact of intergenerational arts activities

The settings have been encouraged to develop the links that have been created and enjoy further connection opportunities acting as an important legacy of this projects activity.

LinkAGE & Arts Project Partners

LGNI would like to thank our amazing partners!



- Movilla House Nursing Home Newtownards
- Movilla High School Newtownards
- Marina Care Home Magherafelt
- Woods Primary School Magherafelt
- Ringdufferin Nursing Home Killyleagh
- Killyleagh Integrated Primary School
- County Care Home Enniskillen
- Model Primary School Enniskillen

Our amazing artists!

- Diane Henshaw
- Trisha McNally
- Diane McCormick

And all of our participants!



Impact of LinkAGE & Art Project

The intergenerational arts activities as part of this fantastic and well received project demonstrated how the arts can be used as a successful medium to bring generations together. Following the extremely challenging times faced by Care Homes and their residents during the Covid pandemic LGNI used this project as an opportunity to open the doors of four care settings and bring children, young people and artists in. The provision of the artist and funding for arts materials provided a great incentive for the settings to get involved and also relieved the pressures faced by Activity Coordinators to provide stimulation for their residents. The intergenerational element involved bring groups together that wouldn't normally have the opportunity to interact with one another challenging perceptions, creating new connections and forming friendships. We see the benefits across the board for those involved and it's great to see how 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. Check out our webpage <https://www.linkinggenerationsni.com/project/linkage-arts/>

The Headline Findings for Groups & Participants

As part of this evaluation LGNI collected feedback from participants, artists, teachers and care home activity coordinators. The evidence provided showed the following:

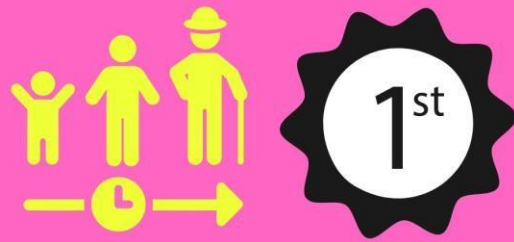
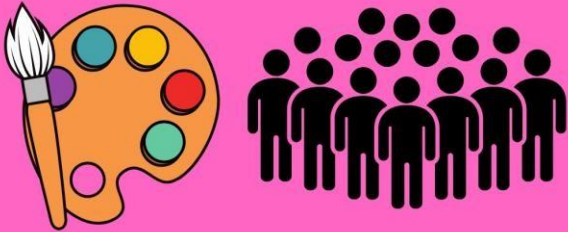
- Great for the mental health and well-being for all involved;
- Contributed to alleviating social isolation and loneliness of older people;
- Increased awareness of Dementia;
- Supported Care Home standards and educational outcomes;
- Increased confidence of participants;
- Supported the learning of new things;
- Challenges attitudes to ageing and increased understanding;
- Created relationships and connections between settings that can be continued;
- Manage the practical issues that arose and plan well for them;
- Raised awareness of intergenerational arts projects with key stakeholders – Commissioner for Older People NI, local politicians, Councils and more;
- The project was a lot of fun which is a great benefit to everyone involved.



Some Vital Stats!

94

Participants
took part!



81% of participants said they had never been involved in an intergenerational activity before!



89% of participants felt more connected to their community as a result



99% of participants said they enjoyed being with people of a different generation!



82% of participants said they had learnt something new as a result of taking part!

We loved reading the feedback from all involved!



Foundations of Wellbeing

The LinkAGE & Arts Project showcases fantastic work and gives evidence to support the impact of intergenerational arts 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 as well as the contribution of staff in each setting

Be Active:

- Older people in the project were encouraged to leave their rooms and utilise their fine motor skills through art work alongside the young people. Many of the young people also walked to the care setting to engage in the project.

Take Notice:

- Participants were given the opportunity to engage with groups they would not usually engage with. Dementia awareness provided a wider understanding of ageing issues

Keep Learning:

- Across the projects activities participants learnt new art skills, life skills and new things about one another

Connect:

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

The evidenced outcomes of the [LinkAGE & Art Project](#) 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 LinkAGE & Art Activities!

Ringdufferin Nursing Home, Killyleagh residents linked up with **Killyleagh Integrated Primary School pupils** to have fun exploring being creative together, facilitated by Artist Trisha McNally. This intergenerational project provided opportunities for everyone to have fun getting to know each other whilst discussing seaside memories and culminating in a collage for each setting designed and created by everyone. Participants: 10 – 15 older persons aged 75 years+ (6 – 8 male & 8 – 10 female) (Attendees fluctuated weekly). 18 pupils aged 10 – 11 (12 male & 6 female)



CHILDREN'S ART: Children from Killyleagh Integrated Primary School visited Ringdufferin Nursing Home last week to show residents some of their art work. Included are (back row, from left) Leanne Vennard, Lynne Bennett, from Linking Generations, Cllr Callum Bowsie, Mr McFerran, teacher, and (middle) Trisha McNally, artist leader, and Victoria Slack, activity therapist

Artist Trisha McNally stated: “The care home staff were essential in the success of the project. They brought positive and enthusiastic energy and provided a welcoming and suitable space for the workshop, showing great respect to the residents and pupils, appreciating the value of all the activities and encouraging the residents to have a go. So much thought and care were put into the final celebration event by the staff, making the event extra special for the residents, decorating the venue, providing special treats etc. This helped add value to the celebration, recognising the work achieved by both groups and acknowledging their efforts by having a local Councillor and newspaper there.

Despite Covid outbreaks and Public holidays delaying the project, everyone managed to be flexible and keep the momentum and relationships going. This project provided an opportunity for older adults to connect to their community and lift them out of isolation. The residents looked forward to the pupils coming each week, with both groups enjoying the interaction with one and other. During the sessions there was always lots of conversation, laughter, and even singing. Conversations increased over the weeks and the residents seemed uplifted after the sessions. Great memories were shared of experiences at school, past careers, family, home life, hobbies, holidays, donkey rides and even favourite ice-creams. With the pupils also sharing their current experiences, acknowledging the similarity or differences.



Participants learned new skills in clay work and developed skills in painting, working in different mediums such as water colour, experimenting with mark making and collage, working in 2d and 3d. Learning new skills helped foster pride and self-esteem. Participants young and old were apprehensive at times with their abilities but through the arts they were able to see that everyone can be creative and there is no right or wrong in expressing oneself creatively. The art provided a safe process to take everyone out of their comfort zones and to try something new, in a fun yet relaxed environment. With support from myself and the pupils the residents were encouraged to forget any physical limitations, and to have a go, with process being the most important thing and not end result. Witnessing the pupils try something inspired the residents to also try and not be intimidated.



There was improved confidence in the ability to express themselves creatively. The pupils became more confident and comfortable around the residents as the project continued, they worked collaboratively on parts of the art project, with both groups encouraging each other when working on individual pieces. Relationship were established, and pupils were quick to bag the chair nearest to their favourite resident. Pupils showed great empathy and attachment: some young and older people became very attached to those they were working with over the course of the project, noticing when certain participants were missing if they weren't able to attend. There was increased alertness and energy from the residents over the weeks and they seemed uplifted by the presence of the children's energy and enthusiasm. It was important that the participants were co-creators of the project, providing a starting theme point of seaside/ summer memories in the first session gave structure, stirred up memories and encouraged engagement and conversation between both groups. Objects, imagery and sensory material was bought in to help stimulate the senses and memories through colours, textures, scents and sounds. These initial memories and stories were then used as inspiration to create two canvases of seaside scape. Both pupils and residents were able to find things in common and shared experiences from discussions on the theme. The art created at these sessions will be put on display at the school and care home, which will go onto improve the environment at the home, this encourages the participants to feel a great deal of pride and accomplishments in their creations and will encourage reminiscence about the project, leaving a legacy within the care homes".



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Ringdufferin Nursing Home Activity Coordinator stated: "The project brought great joy to the residents. They loved to see the children coming. No matter what mood the residents are in, when they knew the children are coming their mood lifts. The genuine interest and enthusiasm from the children was amazing. We intend to keep active links with both the school and Linking Generations. We were amazed at how well everyone interacted. The dementia awareness course that Linking Generations did with the children was most definitely beneficial. We have been very honoured to be able to participate in this programme and will be praising the programme to other care homes, to encourage them to participate, if given the chance".

Killyleagh Integrated Primary School teacher stated: "We would like to continue links with the Ringdufferin possibly through more art projects like this one. The pupils developed a number of

skills beside art - patience, respect, compassion etc. They built relationships with elderly that we wouldn't usually have the opportunity to".

Pupils' comments: *"I enjoyed talking and getting to know the older people and doing the art together – it makes me happy"; "I liked talking about what school was like when they were in school"; "I have learned that the elderly are actually the same as us and nice and funny and kind"; "They are loads of fun and they talk a lot still"*
"no matter what age you are you can always have some fun in art".

Residents' comments: *"The children were fantastic, good craic, lively, well behaved"; "all the bonding we did - all the staff and residents and kids - sure it was great, everyone smiling through the whole thing - the wee children's faces, their smiles would brighten anyone's day"; "chatting about how different life is now compared to when I was a young chap"; "I liked the wee giggles from the youngsters and the chats we had"; "they weren't afraid of the older people like myself. I thought they may have been strange when they saw me in a wheelchair, but they weren't at all frightened"; "The fun helping each other to stick and glue and paint and seeing the big picture made was great".*

Marina Care Home & Woods Primary School Magherafelt

Marina Care Home, Magherafelt residents linked up **with Woods Primary School pupils** to have fun exploring being creative together, facilitated by Artist Diane Jameson. This intergenerational project provided opportunities for everyone to have fun getting to know each other discussing favourite mantras/sayings whilst exploring mark making and clay, culminating in making their own clay tile. Participants: 8 older persons aged 70 - 102 years (1 male & 7 female) .8 pupils aged 10 – 11 (4 male & 4 female).



Artist Diane McCormick stated: “The care home residents were very engaged when the children came to work with them. From not wanting to participate, they seemed to really enjoy the presence of the children and joined in with activities while the children helped them. Their enthusiasm rubbed off and the children were able to coax them along by singing and conversation. One resident who couldn't remember what he did for a job suddenly became more talkative and told us about his job in the ejector seat factory, he became less agitated as the session went on and the children have more of an insight into past lives. They enjoyed experimenting with mark and pattern making using clay then designed and painted clay circles showing their favourite



proverbs/quotations”.

Marina Activity coordinator: “Our residents were so excited to see the children every week - it brought life to our home. We were thrilled to have such pleasant children visiting us. The children learned how life was for our residents growing up and our residents learned how life is today for the children. They had wonderful conversations together. The children and our residents built friendships through games and clay art, singing and story-telling. Memories made with friendships to cherish!”



Woods Primary School principal stated: “Thank you for this opportunity. The children enjoyed the experience of getting to know residents and staff of the care home. This project helped in developing children’s confidence and communication skills and empathy with others”.

Pupils’ comments: *“they have lots of interesting stories and have a good sense of humour”, “older people are very kind and chatty & sunny”, “they are actually quite smart and can remember things from over 80 years ago”, “I have learned that they have loads of fun and they talk a lot still”, “I liked the older peoples' energy and hearing their interesting stories”, “I liked doing the art together and singing songs”, “I liked talking to the residents about what it was like during the war or olden times”*

Residents’ comments: *“I enjoyed how the children brightened the atmosphere & the singalongs together”; “They are full of beans and brought joy to everyone”; “I never seen anyone who wasn't smiling while we did the classes they are so full of life and rightly so”; “It actually gave me fresh energy to look at them and enjoy time together”.*



County Care Home & Model Primary School Enniskillen



County Care Home residents and The Model Primary School P5 pupils joined together with local artist Diane Henshaw to work on a display for the Home garden. The children also produced mobiles to individually take home. The P5 class split into 2 groups of 15 pupils who took part in the project on alternative weeks. (15 girls and 15 boys). 11 older people took part (4 male and 7 female), aged 70 – 80+.

The artist, Diane Henshaw, commented: “I found the project tremendously impactful on all beneficiaries involved a hugely impactful project of which more should follow and contact should continue with the older people and the creatives involved. A difficult group of elderly folk with no artistic activities happening so this project really lifted their hearts also they loved the links with the young people. Some of the kids found the project quite challenging perhaps in future an older group may have worked better so less fear was there of the sickness and disabilities they encountered”. Diane brought rare catalogues of the artist William Scott (1913 – 1989) along for inspiration and the pupils and residents drew on the images portrayed of Enniskillen islands and locations, birds and fish to inform their work.

The Activity Coordinator from County Care Home commented: “The joy when you see the older generation interact with the younger kids is lovely to see and it gives young ones a better understanding of how to respect the older generation. They gain a mutual respect for each and really enjoyed it. Their involvement in this project was very good from start to finish and was really supportive”.

The P5 class teacher, Mrs Terri Clifford commented: “The children thoroughly enjoyed working with the older residents and they are more aware of dementia and how some older people suffer from this. As the care home is in close proximity we intend to keep connections maybe through reading or art”.





Pupil's told us what they enjoyed about the project: "Getting to know the people there and bonding with them". "I enjoyed getting to know them and painting with them". "Working with the residents and making the mobiles". "Hearing the residents talking about their memories".



The residents told us what they likes about the project: "The fun / inetraction we had doing the art project with the kids from model school". "When the school kids were calling to do arts project it gave us a wee lift every week and we had such good fun". "The kids joining us at the Care Home - they brought so much joy / laughter to us at the Care Home especially when our days can be long". "Each time the school kids came it was a real boost to us and it gave us something to look forward to and brightened up our days".

Movilla House Nursing Home & Movilla High School



Movilla House Care Home residents and **Movilla High School pupils** came together with **Artist Trisha McNally** to produce a piece of art to display in the Care Home and improve the day to day experience of the residents. The art work focused on memories of the Seaside 12 older people and 14 students took part.

The Artist Trisha McNally participants learned new skills in clay work and developed skills in painting, working in different mediums such as water colour, experimenting with mark making and collage, working in 2d and 3d. Learning new skills helped foster pride and self-esteem. Participants young and old were apprehensive at times with their abilities but through the arts they were able to see that everyone can be creative and there is no right or wrong in expressing oneself creatively. The art provided a safe process to take everyone out of their comfort zones and to try something new, in a fun yet relaxed environment. With support from myself and the pupils the residents were encouraged to forget any physical limitations, and to have a go, with process being the most important thing and not end result. Witnessing the pupils try something inspired the residents to also try and not be intimidated. There was improved confidence in the ability to express themselves creatively,



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Working on this project provided myself with an opportunity to reflect on my practice and adapt and develop my skills for working with older people and people living with dementia. It provided new challenges in tailoring activities that would be suitable for the short time frame, working with individuals from different age groups challenged the me to adapt my teaching methods and techniques to accommodate varying learning styles, abilities, and interests. This enhanced my teaching skills, as I continued to learn to effectively communicate and engage participants of different generations. Contributing to the creation of meaningful connections was deeply rewarding and contributed to my personal and professional development. It was inspiring learning about older participants' life experiences, to see their confidence increase and gain great enjoyment from the engagement with the pupils. I also took great pleasure personally from relationships that I built with the residents, getting to know them as people and not just participants. Working along with

professionals at the care home provided peer learning and illustrated best practices for working with people living with dementia. Having the school come in improved the quality of life for the sometimes socially isolated residents, the art helped stimulate the senses, encouraged reminiscence and provided stress release and improved their physical wellbeing. Pupils developed empathy, respect, and appreciation for the perspectives and life experiences of older individuals. Through the arts barriers were broken down between generations, working together on a shared creative endeavour, encouraged collaboration, effective communication, and teamwork, fostering positive social interactions between generations.

The Activity Coordinator, Sandra from Movilla House Care Home told us that the benefits to their residents were that they enjoyed the interaction with the children, and hearing their ideas. Hopefully the pupils will continue to have a link with Movilla, coming on special occasions and playing games, doing art work with and residents and children sing a long.

Movilla High School teacher Mr Morrow told us that care home staff were essential in the success of the project, they went out of their way to provide a welcoming and suitable space for the workshop, making the pupils feel welcome.

Pupils told us what they liked about the project: “Learning all about the lives the older people had”. “Meeting and talking to the older people”. “The conversations we had”. “Everything about it”. “Meeting the older people”.



The Residents told us what they liked about the project: “Meeting the young people”. “I really enjoyed chatting with the young lad at my table”. “It really suited me. I enjoyed the conversations with the young people”. “Chatting with the young people and the art activities”. “Getting to know the young people”. “Being in the company of the pupils”.

A short note from LGNI’s Director:

I’m delighted to see the amazing contribution the amazing intergenerational arts projects have made to the enrichment of the lives of all involved. Although these types of projects can be seen as nice to rather than essential it is evidence from the feedback included in this report that intergenerational approaches are a great way to achieve a range of outcomes right across the board. The arts activity was thoroughly enjoyed by all but some of the key achievements will be seen for years to come. When LGNI work with new partners to develop intergenerational activities we place an emphasis on sustainability equipping those involved with the inspiration, ideas, and enthusiasm to continue their links. It’s great to see that this projects activities will have a legacy through sustained connections between settings, improved practice of artists and setting staff and the increased understanding an empathy fostered across generations.



Linking Generations
Northern Ireland

Thank you to the Arts for Older People Programme for your continued support of our intergenerational arts activities and to all of our partners, artists and participants – without you our work would be impossible!

Sign up and get involved www.linkinggenerationsni.com

Follow our social channels!