



Linking Generations NI REAP What You Sow Through Art Project Evaluation Report



October 2025

**Kindly Funded and Supported by the
Rural Engagement in Arts Programme**

Introduction

Linking Generations NI were pleased to have received funding from the Arts Council Northern Ireland, Rural Engagement Arts programme.

The programme aims to use the medium of arts to create links between generations in rural communities to improve community connections through participation in the arts. It further aims to create sustainable opportunities for continued intergenerational arts by creating partnerships between schools and older people's groups in areas where these opportunities are limited due to locality, as well as providing community arts opportunities for local artists.

LGNI's coordination role in this project involved:

- Linking three older people's groups with three schools, 2 Primary and 1 Secondary.
- Identifying local artists to work with groups.
- Delivering 'What Does Being Intergenerational Mean' sessions with school pupils, teachers, older people and Community Leaders.
- Deliver a further workshop on 'exploring Our Artist Ideas' with both groups.
- Ensuring the delivery of 6 intergenerational art sessions based in each of the community 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 project's activity.

Thanks to our amazing partners & participants!



- **Portaferry Crafty Crew and Portaferry Integrated Primary School**
- **Saintfield Men's Shed and Saintfield High School**
- **Sion Mills Community Association and Sion Mills Integrated Primary School along with children's Grandparents**

Our local Artists!

- **Davy Holden**
- **Marketa B Art**
- **Leona Devine**



Impact of REAP What You Sow 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. LGNI used this project as an opportunity to make intergenerational links between three community groups, schools and local artists. The project followed a truly community development and people in the lead approach with participants suggesting the art genre and themes for the artwork. Although challenging this approach is much preferred by LGNI providing ownership for all involved. The provision of the artist and funding for arts materials provided a great incentive for the groups to get involved and relieved the pressures faced by leaders to provide the activities for the participants.. The intergenerational element involved bringing 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/reap-what-you-sow-through-art-project/>



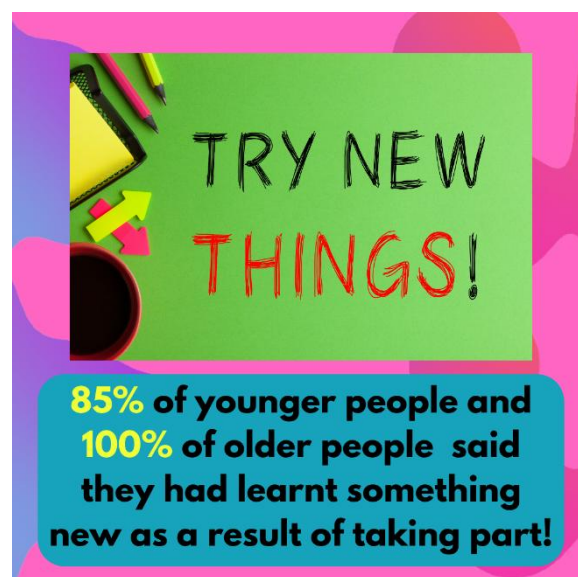
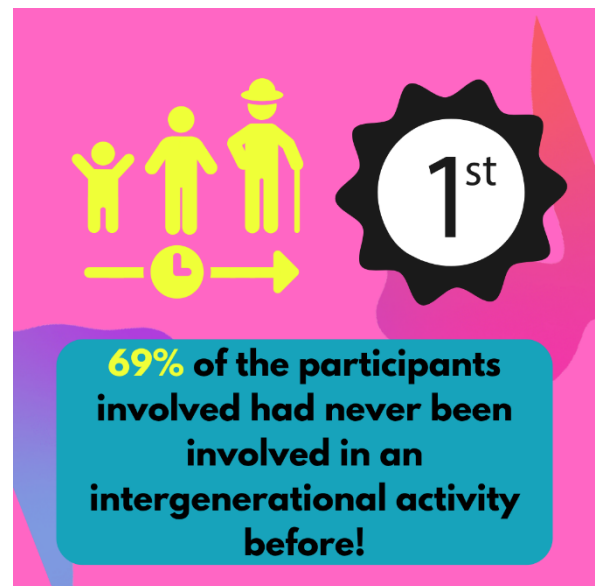
The Headline Findings for Groups & Participants

49 children aged 7 – 14 years took part and 33 adults aged 48 – 80+ years took part.

As part of this evaluation LGNI collected feedback from participants, artists, teachers and group leaders. The evidence provided showed that the project activities contributed to achieving the following:

- Improved mental health and well-being for all involved.
- Contributed to alleviating social isolation and loneliness of older people.
- Increased confidence of participants.
- Supported the learning of new skills.
- Challenged attitudes to ageing and increased understanding.
- Created relationships and connections between settings that can be continued.
- Managed the practical issues that arose and planned well for them.
- Raised awareness of intergenerational arts projects
- The project was a lot of fun which is a great benefit to everyone involved.

Some Vital Stats!



What the participants told us!

We asked the children the following questions:

- Were you looking forward to the project? **90% said they were.**
- When you met them, were they like what you thought they would be? **70% agreed they were.**
- I enjoyed being with the older people. **93% agreed they had.**
- The project has helped me to learn new things. **85% said it had.**
- The project has helped me to feel more confident. **58% felt it had.**
- The project has helped me to feel better about myself. **68% agreed it had.**
- The project has helped me feel more a part of the community where I live/go to school. **73% agreed.**
- Would you like to take part in another project with older people? **85% said they would.**



We asked the older people the following questions:

- Were you looking forward to the project? **86% agreed they were.**
- When you met them, were they like what you thought they would be? **67% said they were.**
- I enjoyed being with the younger people. **100% said they did.**
- The project has helped me to learn new things. **100% agreed it had.**
- The project has helped me feel more confident. **91% said yes.**
- The project has helped me feel better about myself. **91% agreed.**
- The project has helped me feel more a part of the community where I live. **100% agreed.**
- Would you like to take part in another project with younger people. **78% said they would.**





Foundations of Wellbeing

The REAP What You Sow Through Art 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 utilise their fine motor skills through artwork alongside the young people. Many of the young people also walked to the community 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 project's 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 REAP What You Sow Through Art activities and alignment with the Foundations of Wellbeing also contributes to the building of 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 REAP What You Sow Through Art Activities!

Portaferry Crafty Crew and Portaferry Integrated Primary School

Participants: 13 older people took part, all aged 60 – 80+. From the school, 13 pupils took part, aged 7 years old and 9 sessions were delivered, including the celebration event.

The project was delivered on Wednesday mornings at the Portaferry Community Services Hub where the Portaferry Crafty Crew regularly meet.

On week one of the project Joyce Savage from LGNI explored with the group what an intergenerational approach is and how they could take part.

On week two the group, with Joyce, explored what their art work would represent with local themes and landmarks standing out. The group also decided it wanted a two piece artwork, like the two sides of a best friend necklace, to be produced.



The first session with the artist, Davy Holden, explored these themes and looked at previous examples of his work and the way ahead was agreed. The successful arts sessions culminated in the creation of a fantastic mosaic art piece unveiled during a celebration event attended by the Deputy Mayor for Ards and North Down Council and Lorraine Calderwood from the Arts Council for NI.

Portaferry Integrated Primary School

At Portaferry Integrated Primary School, children are at the centre of the learning process, and a family atmosphere is promoted where children are nurtured as well as educated. Central to the ethos of the school is a quality of access and the fostering of good relations. Through effective provision for teaching and learning, we aim to cater for the diverse needs of all our learners. Provision is accessible for all pupils regardless of identity or background, and takes account of their needs and abilities.

We believe that happy, secure children learn more effectively, and that parents who are involved in the life of their school are confident and engaged more fully in the learning experiences of their children.

Artist Davy Holden commented “Arts activities are valuable to engage different generations. They break down the communication barriers when working on mutual, mixed projects. Communication was good and shared. It was relevant due to the project work and enjoyable to be part of as a tutor. I feel better equipped to deliver intergenerational project every time I participate in any. This mix of people of older and Primary 2&3 kids pushed me to program activities more specifically. It can be awkward to mix generations given the vastness of age difference but art can offer mutual

interests to work on. I enjoyed the themes we explored (Portaferry, buildings and landscape). This evoked memories for older people and gave kids insight into the experiences of people of their grandparents ages”.

Volunteer Leader, Crafty Crew, Portaferry Community Services Board Member, Moira

Ritchie told us: “The project brought the youth and seniors together ... created a piece of new work, gained new skills, shared skills and knowledge and outside of the project the young people and seniors are now able to say hello and chat. They have gained new connections and understanding of each other, increased communication, shared information and skills, gained new contacts and are looking forward to future projects together”.

Portaferry Integrated Primary School commented: “Pupils loved working with a new art media. They loved chatting and working with members of the community. They were truly spoilt and looked after very well each week. Teacher is in touch with a member of the community group and hopes to be involved in a variety of future projects linked to the arts. School has possible future opportunities with community groups.

We are extremely grateful for this opportunity. We are just waiting now for Davy to mount our Mosaic so that we can display it in school. We are very proud of it!!

**Pupil's comments included the following:
When asked what they had learnt about the older people, they told us:**

- That old people are kind
- Older people like different things
- That older people are kind and can do the same as younger people
- Older people like working with younger children
- That they like arts and crafts
- Older people aren't scary

When asked about what they liked about the project they told us:

- I liked that the older people helped me
- I liked putting all the colourful tiles together
- Meeting with the old people
- Having a snack with older people
- I really liked the food
- That we did it all together



Crafty Crew members told us the following:

When asked what they had learnt about the younger people, they told us:

- Everyone looked forward to seeing each other, week to week
- Patience
- Everyone was very friendly
- We all have different gifts and it's lovely to see this in action
- What was their different talents / patience's
- How talented they are

When asked about what they liked about the project they told us:

- I liked everything about it, especially connecting with kids
- The atmosphere
- Working with children
- Being with the children; seeing their talents and intelligence - enjoying youth.
- Seeing what the kids achieved
- Meeting kids; learning how mosaic was created



The Group Celebrating their finished Artwork!

Saintfield High School and Saintfield Men's Shed

Participants: 5 people aged 48 - 76 years and 9 pupils aged 14 – 15 years of age took part.

Vicki from LGNI supported this project making a new link between the two groups. The first sessions took place in Saintfield High School, first to talk about age and arts interest then with local artist Marketa B. Art Both young and old had expressed their interest in the art of 'Pyrography' which involves burning intricate designs and pictures onto wood. After exploring what art pieces could be created as part of the project, the group embarked on their art sessions, working together to use pyrography to create take home and community art! The sessions took place between both settings culminating in the creation of a stunning bench which was unveiled at a celebration BBQ by the Chair of Saintfield Community Association with local community and parents all in attendance!

Artist Marketa B stated: “This project was an amazing opportunity for me as an artist to do something very special and meaningful with the community. This experience boosted my confidence as an arts facilitator. And I am pleased with new friendships and connections made with both the Men's Shed Saintfield High School. I am hoping our new connections will lead to more projects in the



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I think this project enriched everyone who became part of it, including the teachers who accompanied the students”.

Men's Shed Coordinator stated:

Following on from the project we have discussed with the school principal how Saintfield Men's Shed (SMS) can become involved in other works with the school. Individuals within the school have /are supplying technology teaching for SMS. We felt that learning beyond the project includes the need appropriate project management and a more appropriate 'selection' process for participants and assistants.



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benefits of the project were, apart from learning/improving on manual skills, an opportunity to teach/guide and learn from younger people.

A challenge highlighted was that “creative time was lost while SMS, the artist and pupils had to develop a structure for interaction”.

Saintfield High School Leader stated: “All the pupils thoroughly enjoyed the project and are very proud of the bench they have created with the members of the Men's Shed. We hope that this link will continue over a number of years, now that the foundations have been made. Throughout this project the pupils learnt a new skill, pyrography. This is an excellent skill to learn, as going forward will be something they can use in their GCSE Art pieces. We hope to continue the strong links we have made with the Men's Shed Saintfield. The aim is to link in our school Eco Club and get them involved in making bird nests in order to achieve our next Eco School flag”.

Pupil's comments included the following:

When asked what they had learnt about the older people, they told us:

- I learnt that different people have different styles
- That ok to have fun and enjoy the time with older people
- Everyone has a different ability
- Everyone has a different level of skill and ability
- How different people draw and their styles
- Everyone has good stories to tell

When asked about what they liked about the project they told us:

- I liked learning how to solder designs on wood
- The people and getting to know them
- Using the new ways of making art
- Learning new skills, meeting new people
- Drawing out the design
- Burning on the wood

When asked about what they liked about the project they told us:

- Interaction
- The idea of bringing people together
- The approach involved everyone in deciding what did. We all learnt new skills

Men's Shed Members told us the following:

When asked what they had learnt about the younger people, they told us:

- Everyone has different talents
- Not everyone liked providing ideas and share, working with the project to complete
- Some talk too much!

When asked about what they liked about the project they told us:

- Interaction
- The idea of bringing people together
- The approach involved everyone in deciding what we did. We learnt new skills



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Sionmills Community Association and Sionmills Integrated Primary School

Participants: 27 children, aged 10 – 11, took part along with 15 adults, aged 60 - 84 from Sionmills Community Association.

LGNI's Elaine delivered her first session to the Sion Mills partnership on Friday 21st March. Together with local artist Leona Devine Ceramics the P7 pupils of Sion Mills IPS along with their grandparents and members of the Sion Mills Community Association, came together to discuss ideas and explore the use of different art materials. Leona specialises in ceramics and was able to show the group a variety of sample pieces to inspire them, before setting the task of creating their own miniature animals from air drying clay! The group also discussed the local area with knowledge from the older people bringing to light the meaning of the road name, that runs alongside both the school and community centre.



The word "Seein" in the road name loosely translates in Irish to "fairy mound". This mythical twist then inspired the groups project idea of creating a miniature village from ceramics. This will be displayed in the schools outdoor eco garden area, giving suitable lodgings for any local fairies that may want to inhabit the miniature dwellings! Aptly, the group have now christened their project as "Seein is Believing!"

Artist, Leona Devine commented: . The group were a real pleasure to work with. They took ownership of the project right from the beginning, working with clay for the very first time must have been a little bit daunting and completely out of the comfort zone for the adults but they fully embraced it, and it was so nice to see the team work going on at each table. For me the biggest challenge was not setting the project, which pushed me out of my comfort zone and built upon my skill set, I had to take the groups ideas and work out how to create them. It was great to see how the project expanded beyond the workshops, the care taker created an outdoor space for the pieces to be permanently displayed. This gave the adults and kids a real sense of achievement.

Both adults and children worked as a team at each table. The group mixed well, the adults tended to sit in the same seats every week but some of the kids would move tables each week. Having the project in the community centre instead of the school created a more relaxed atmosphere and you could see and hear both the kids and adults joking and really forming a friendship and developing a better understanding for one another.



Elaine Griffin, Sionmills Community Association told us: This project has developed stronger relationships with the school and how arts/crafts can bring many people out of their shell not only with interaction but creative skills.

The main benefit of the project was the positive connections made with the kids and the members of the community/ grandparents. The conversations and fun between all involved was heartwarming. Some of the grandparents had never been in our community hall and are now comfortable to come back and take part in other activities. From hopefully other funding applied for we will run further intergenerational arts and craft workshop

Sionmills Integrated Primary School P7 teacher, Krystal Cunningham, commented, From taking part in this project our pupils gained a clearer understanding of why we should make links with other generations, the ability to speak to those in a different generation and see similarities, as well as gaining new art skills. Benefits of the project included the children being more confident at having a go at a new skill, gaining communication skills and it added to the school eco garden and is a focal point for users.

Pupil's comments included the following:

When asked what they had learnt about the older people, they told us:

- That lots of people are really artistic
- I have learned to take joy in art
- That they're very artistic and fun to work with
- If you meet someone for the first time, you get along quickly
- To bond with different generations
- That everyone is different and that they have cool stories my Granny

When asked about what they liked about the project they us:

- How we are lucky enough to be a part of this and get our mushrooms which were really fun making
- How we got to make loads of things and how we got to see our family
- I like that I got to meet new, friendly people
- Everything about this project because we got to spend with new people
- Painting, making the things out of clay and meeting people I haven't before



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Sionmills Community Group members commented:

When asked what they had learnt about the younger people, they told us:

- We need to listen to children - they're smart
- We can all have fun together
- We share same interests
- Friendly and warm

When asked about what they liked about the project they told us:

- Meeting new people
- That everyone was making individual pieces that would all come together to make one big project
- Meeting the P7 class, lovely, interesting full of fun children. Very kind to each other / others.
- I liked meeting the children and working alongside my granddaughter at something fun



The pupils showing off the completed Artwork!

A short note from LGNI's Director:

We have once again been delighted to see just how powerful the medium of arts has been in bringing generations together in mutually beneficial activities, where so many positive outcomes have been achieved for all participating. This has yet again been a fantastic way to connect people within their communities and it's testament to the success of the project that these new partnerships will continue well into the future.

Thank you to the Regional Engagement Arts Programme for their support of our intergenerational arts activities and to all of our partners, artists and participants – without you our work wouldn't be possible!

Sign up and get involved www.linkinggenerationsni.com

Follow us on our social channels!

