Connect IT 25
Final Evaluation Report
February 2026
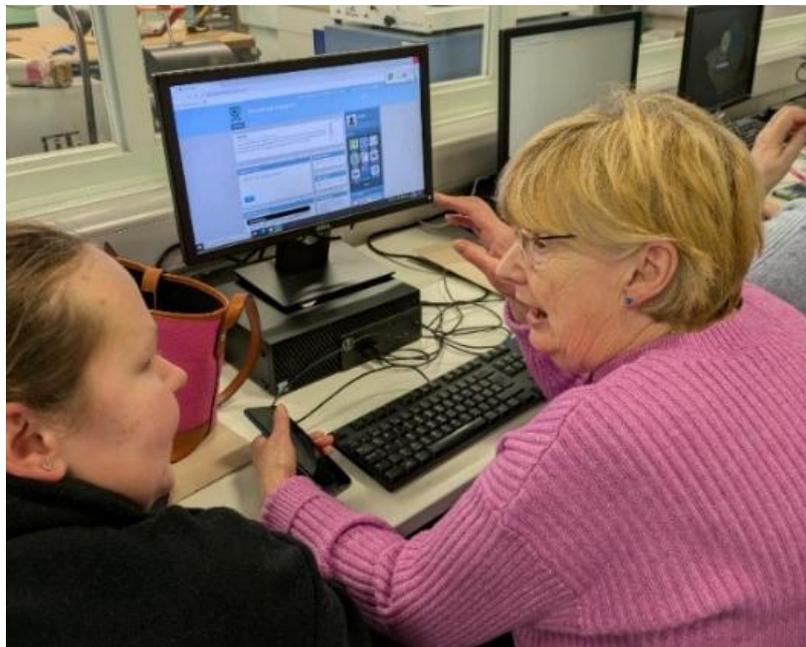
Introduction

With funding support from Go ON Ni (Department of Finance NI), LGNI were delighted to be able to work with four settings, bringing younger and older participants together to learn about the uses and benefits of IT.

The project began in January 2025 with the aim of creating two intergenerational linkages between schools and older people's groups and settings. In January 2025 a planning session took place between Bloomfield Collegiate School and Johnston Court sheltered living (Alpha Housing) to discuss the best way to deliver the project. The first joint session took place in February, followed by a further 5 sessions based in the school's IT suite. This involved a 1 to 1 approach with the young people supporting the older people with their interests and queries in digital technology and equipment.

Unfortunately, although several partners were recruited for our second intergenerational pairing, including Bangor Academy and Regent House School, we were unable to broker older people's groups willing to commit to the 6-week course. This resulted in a delay in kicking off the second stage of the project but we were delighted to begin work with Assumption Grammar in Ballynahinch and Grove House, also in the town, which is an Age NI Day Centre. This part of the project kicked off in October 2025 and also ran for 6 weeks. The older people worked alongside the young people to find out more about digital technology and utilised it to enjoy music together and also explore Christmas crafting ideas!

LGNI's coordination role in this project involved:

- Linking two older people's groups with two schools; both secondary level.
- Ensuring the delivery of 6 weeks of IT learning and intergenerational sessions based in each of the settings and supported by GoOnNI and teaching staff
- Providing a platform to showcase the impact of intergenerational activities via our social channels and network.

IT Connect Project Partners & Participants

- ➤ Bloomfield Collegiate School, 10 girls aged 17 and Johnston Court (Alpha Housing), 10 older people aged 65 – 75+.

- ➤ Assumption Grammar, 12 girls aged 13 - 14 and Grove House, Age NI Day Centre, 12 older people ages 65 – 75+

- ➤ Go ON NI staff who attended sessions and offered support and Barclays Bank Local Specialists who gave scam awareness sessions in Grove House

Impact of Connect IT 25 Project

The intergenerational learning activities as part of this fantastic and well received project, demonstrated how IT can be used as a successful medium to bring generations together. LGNI used this project as an opportunity to open the doors of two community settings and bring children and older people together. The provision of IT mentoring provided a great incentive for the settings to get involved and relieved the pressures faced by leaders to provide stimulation for their clients.

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 Generations Connect through IT – Linking Generations NI
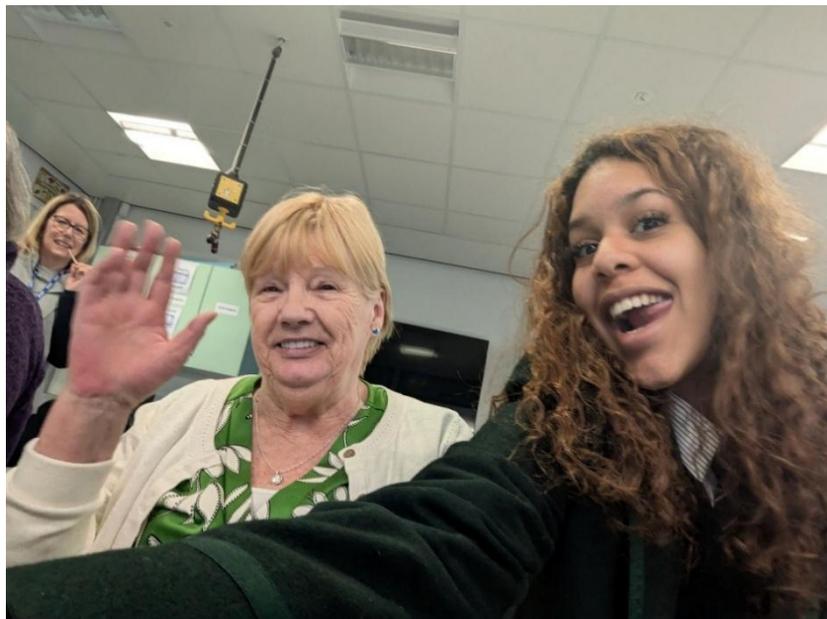
Selfie photo from participants of Bloomfield & Johnstone Court!
😊

The Headline Findings for Groups and Participants

22 young people aged 15 – 17 and 22 older people, aged 65 – 75+ took part.

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

- Increased confidence
- Lessened feelings of loneliness and social isolation
- Relationships formed between younger and older people that can be continued
- Better understanding of other generations
- More confidence in using IT independently
- Was well targeted at the individual abilities and interests of participants
- Managed the practical issues that arose and planned well for them.
- A good time was had by all

Leader's Comments

The group of girls who were involved in this project developed maturity, empathy, and enthusiasm throughout their involvement. This short but impactful initiative, generously supported and by Linking Generations Northern Ireland (LGNI), created a valuable opportunity for meaningful connection between younger and older generations. The discussions around ICT, digital devices, and everyday technology were especially beneficial. The girls provided clear explanations, encouraged questions, and helped older participants feel more comfortable with digital tools.

The pupils developed communication skills, confidence, and a deeper understanding of the importance of intergenerational connections. Participating in this has allowed them to see how shared experiences and simple conversations can build friendships and stronger community bonds. This project provided a rich learning experience for the pupils and a meaningful, uplifting extra-curricular experience.

Some Key Stats from our Participants

We asked the young people the following questions:

➤ Did you enjoy taking part in this project? **100% agreed they had**

➤ Do you think your confidence increased as a result of taking part?
100% agreed it had

➤ Do you think putting people together 1 -1 was a good approach? **100% agreed it was**

➤ If the school was to host this project again, would you volunteer again? **93% said they would**

➤ Did you use the resource sheets provided?
79% said they had

We asked the older people the following questions:

➤ Have you increased your online activity as a result of taking part in this project? **80% said they had.**

➤ Has your confidence in using digital technology increased as a result of taking part? **100% agreed it had.**

➤ How confident do you <u>now</u> feel about using technology on your own?
- **20% Very confident**
- **60% Quite confident**
- **20% Not very confident**

➤ Before this project had you had contact with groups of young people? **Yes 30%. No 70%.**

➤ Would you recommend this project to a friend? **Yes 100%**

➤ How often do you <u>now</u> use the Internet?
- **20% Every / most days.**
- **60% Once / twice a week**
- **20% Once / twice a month**

➤ How often do you <u>now</u> ask someone else to access the Internet on your behalf?
- **80% Sometimes**
- **20% Never**

Some more Feedback

Older People

70% of older people told us that taking part in the project made them feel more confident about using IT. **When asked to say in three words how the project made them feel** one person told us "Excited, Independent, Confident"! Another commented "Confident, Knowledgeable, Skilled".

When we asked them about their experience of working with the young people one person said "It was nice to engage with the younger generation and learn some new internet skils and language" and another told us "Everyone was very helpful and patient. I enjoyed spending time with the younger generation".

When we asked what their favourite part was they told us:

''Meeting all the girls which made it so enjoyable. It was great learning about the internet".

"Has taken away the 'fear' of the internet".

"Learning to go on the internet does not put me off anymore".

"How the younger half live! Use of social media, using search engines, Learning more about photos, Information gathering - expanding topics of interest".

"Chatting with the younger generation and learning how to get music on YouTube".

Younger People

100% of the younger participants told us that their confidence had increased by taking part in the project and, understandably the same percentage, **100% had enjoyed taking part. When we asked them why this was, they told us:**

"I loved talking to the people - they were all lovely. I found it so interesting to teach them about technology".

"I got to spend time with an older generation and play games and teach someone older than me".

"It was very fun learning about their life and background and we got to teach them".

When we asked them about their experience of working with older people they told us:

"It is amazing getting to listen and create bonds with older people and listen to their stories. I have been able to teach them new skills in technology and help them with their motor skills".

"It helped me be more confident and gave me a challenge to teach".

"It was nice because they told me stories that were really interesting and it was fun taking part in activities and teaching them".

100% of participants agreed that the 1 -1 approach was successful. When we asked them why, they told us:

"Good because you could target the areas they wanted to improve on".

"It was great and we had lots of good chats and taught each other lots".

"I think it was good because you could easily talk and explain things to them and help them faster. It was also good because you could easily remember names and faces".

When we asked them what were the best parts of the project, they told us:

"Seeing the older people able to use their devices and seeing them happy and proud of themselves".

"Hearing about people's lives and teaching them how to stay safe online and do crafts".

"Getting a break from school; knowing you're doing a good deed; it prepares you for the future".

Summary

Both intergenerational pairings of the project and the approach taken operated differently with requirements to meet the needs of the older people taking part. The Johnston Court / Bloomfield Collegiate partnership, where the older people were more ably active, took place in the School IT suite. Due to the mobility needs of the participants in Grove House, the girls from Assumption Grammar walked to the Day Centre which affected the availability and nature of IT equipment. However the greatest reported downside to the project was the lack of time, 86% of all younger people said it would have been better if they had had more time to work together.

The increase in use of IT and confidence in using it was clear, as was the increase in confidence overall for participants. The success of the intergenerational aspect of the project was most definitely evident from the comments from young and old alike. 100% of both younger and older participants said they would recommend taking part in a similar project to a friend.

As every older person taking part in the project said they were more confident in using IT and that it had taken away the fear of the internet, we believe the aims of the project have been well met.

It was a pleasure to deliver the project and a privilege to work with all settings involved. Thank you to Go On NI for the opportunity!

A massive thank you and well down to all involved!

Report compiled by Linking Generations NI
Check out www.linkinggenerationsni.com for more information