



For All Ages

Bringing different generations closer together

In partnership with:

counsel + care 
for older people, their families and carers

Supported by:



CALOUSTE
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FOUNDATION



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Foreword

Our ageing society presents many challenges and opportunities. Ensuring that the contributions of older people are valued and encouraged is critical. Alongside this is perceived to be a growing gap between different generations, with the Office for National Statistics recently showing that the number of over 65s has overtaken those under 16 for the first time ever in the UK.

Yet we know that younger and older people recognise the benefits of bridging that gap. There are many examples across the country of projects that bring generations together. What we need to do now is to foster these through national and local intergenerational strategies. That is why the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation is working with Counsel and Care and other voluntary organisations to help address these issues in fulfilment of our missions to enrich and connect the lives of people. We are delighted to support this pamphlet jointly published by 4Children and Counsel and Care as a contribution to improving intergenerational relationships and building a society for all ages.

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

For All Ages

“Since 2001 there has been a growing recognition of the importance of intergenerational work as a way to value the contribution of all the generations in building healthier communities with greater respect and understanding of each other. However, we are still a long way from providing the structures, understanding and support necessary to realise the potential for intergenerational work to offer opportunities and support for our citizens.

“We welcome this pamphlet as an important contribution to the debate in laying out some of the key arguments for intergenerational approaches and recommending a series of actions for government to address these. In so doing, it makes a real contribution to supporting the many organisations and groups across England striving to build generational understanding and mutual support.”

Alan Hatton-Yeo

Chief Executive Officer
The Beth Johnson Foundation
Centre for Intergenerational Practice

The Centre for Intergenerational Practice was established in 2001 to develop a systematic, evidence based approach to the understanding and practice of intergenerational work. In particular, it was keen to work with partners across the UK to build an understanding of how bringing the generations together is an effective response to many of the concerns people have about our changing society. There is an increasing response by government across the UK to begin to build a policy framework to take this work forward.

A growing gap between the young and old is beginning to cause problems. Whereas once the extended family ensured that a vital connection between the younger and older generation was maintained and flourished, our changing lifestyles are increasingly meaning that we are living in more linear age groups.

Time and time again, younger and older people tell us about a lack of understanding and real concern about the other generation. Yet when young and old come together in a common experience, amazing things can happen with much to be learnt, perspectives and stories shared and new friendships forged.

This pamphlet argues for a new approach to build the connection across the generations. It argues that intergenerational approaches can deliver real benefits not only to individuals and families but to communities and wider society. It puts forward a number of recommendations for action. Together they form a crucial plank of public policy with far reaching impact across the policy spectrum.

We face huge demographic changes that affect the balance between generations in every way. And it's not difficult to see why. Today's way of life, changing family structures and increased geographic mobility mean that we are living longer, more likely to live away from our wider family, and simply have less time. As a result our families are more dispersed, and can often live in a much more linear generational divide. The traditional model of the small community with older and younger people living alongside each other is now a distant memory for many with both the younger and older generations saying that they have limited day to day contact with each other.

These changes have a profound effect on the way we live our lives and on the support we need. Whilst grandparents are more likely to be on hand to help with children if they live nearby, for instance, others need to organise formal support arrangements for every occurrence from childcare to babysitting. Care and support for the older generation follows a similar pattern, again with an increasing reliance on formal care in the absence of families close to hand.

But the impact is wider. Without the natural relations and associations across the generations within the family, the gaps between the older and younger generations can grow and

can become entrenched. This separation can be harmful as relationships and common experiences and understandings are replaced by negative perceptions and stereotypes. Many older and younger people report unease about each other, with the development of fear or concerns having a real impact on quality of life. At its most basic, there is simply a lost opportunity to learn and gain enjoyment from each other.

As society changes we need to ensure that the richness and diversity of intergenerational relationships are not lost. There is a need for a more purposeful approach to building relationships across generations, to bring the generations closer together again, improve understanding and increase the mutual support and respect that this brings.

And knowing and understanding about the lives and viewpoints of a different generation can do much more than simply stemming a separation. Intergenerational approaches enhance connections – between past and present and across generations. They build our sense of social responsibility as citizens, creating a sense of value for and empathy across generations and nurturing and supporting each other's vulnerabilities. This sort of social responsibility and mutual respect is crucial in building young and old as active, participating members of their community contributing to the overall well-being of those around them and creating more cohesive and healthy communities.

Intergenerational approaches make a difference

Intergenerational approaches have a strong track record as agents of social change, building more cohesive and inclusive communities and projects. The first intergenerational programmes were born in North America in the late 1960s and 1970s but have become more popular in the UK recently. Across the country it is clear that there are examples of excellent work, but the full potential of intergenerational approaches to transform our communities and create a sense of shared identity is only just beginning to be realised. Within the UK and Europe the Beth Johnson Foundation's Centre for Intergenerational Practice¹ has been the leader in taking this understanding forward.

Whilst there are a growing number of inspirational stories to tell about intergenerational developments, they remain largely as good one-off projects. There is a keen interest in intergenerational approaches, yet policy makers continue to look at solutions in isolation. If the connections aren't made at this level, we miss out on the valuable opportunity to build more age inclusive and stronger, supportive communities on the ground.

This pamphlet argues that the time has come for a more decisive push to reap the benefits of intergenerational work – to understand and codify what works, stimulate good practice and help embed this in a local and national strategic context.

An intergenerational approach has the ability to help promote and build a more cohesive society at a time when many worry that we are becoming increasingly fragmented. Negative perceptions between the age groups may be variable but stereotypes of older people persist – about their being in mental and physical decline, as a financial and social burden, and about their withdrawal from public and social life.² Young people, on the other hand, are variously viewed as having great value and potential, in need of protection, incompetent, unruly or out of control.³

Evaluation of intergenerational work has found that both older and younger people developed increased feelings of understanding, friendship and confidence as a result of taking part. For older people specifically, there were also health and well-being benefits (often as a result of being more active through participation) as well as reports of renewed feelings of self-worth and a reduction in loneliness and isolation. For younger people, intergenerational projects helped them develop confidence and self-esteem and where activities were linked into schools, links to improved academic performance were suggested.⁴

Building bridges between and within communities

The Commission on Integration and Cohesion also identified the potential of intergenerational approaches to foster mutual respect and civility, seeing the potential in terms of tackling older people's fear of young people. The Commission's report praised projects that have made use of the time older people may have to listen and to

befriend and welcomed the small number of schemes that have used befriending by older people as a way of helping new arrivals integrate into the community.⁵

Jim's Bicycle Project

When Newport City Council was looking for ways to integrate its high number of young Iraqi men into the community prior to the Iraq war, a senior volunteer was able to make a difference by using his bike maintenance skills.⁶ Jim's desire to use his skills at repairing and maintaining broken bikes to help engage young asylum seekers gave birth to the asylum seeker's bike project. The young participants had little to fill in their time and scarce funds but also needed support and reassurance in their new surroundings.

As Jim was fluent in Arabic, the council and Learning Links were able to put on weekly bike building sessions where the Iraqi youths could build their own cycle from bits of old bikes, which they were then able to keep and use as a way of getting round the city. Reported outcomes from the project included improved mental health and well-being of the asylum seekers whilst keeping them occupied in a friendly environment. The project also provided the young participants with their own mode of transport to increase their sense of independence.

Three generational families

While many intergenerational programmes focus on links outside the family, it is important to remember the importance of building generational support from within. There is, for example, a significant body of research on the positive impact of grandparenting on the lives of young people. An Oxford University study found that "a grandparent's active involvement was significantly associated with *better adjusted* adolescents", citing "fewer emotional and behaviour problems, and fewer peer problems".⁷ The study also showed the importance of the role that involved grandparents could play during family breakdown.

In a study of group discussions and interviews conducted by the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships, it was found that “some grandchildren conveyed that their general perception of older people was influenced by their particular experiences with their grandparents. Some suggested that through close involvement with grandparents, they found older people less ‘annoying’, appreciated that they may ‘need help’ and would offer this.”⁸ Widespread intergenerational activities could also serve to enhance the lives of more than one million UK children who are denied access to their own grandparents, either as a result of an acrimonious family split or after being taken into care.⁹

The value of intergenerational relations across a number of key social policies is significant – particularly in the area of health and childcare. A quarter of families with children aged under 15 use a grandparent to provide childcare (around 1,740,000 families) each week.¹⁰ Developing and valuing this bond across the generations therefore yields results in many different spheres. Similarly with our ageing population, more and more older people rely on family carers, often their children or grandchildren, to help with a range of practical and personal support.

Helping to tackle anti-social behaviour

Intergenerational work can also contribute to wider approaches to help limit anti-social behaviour and fear of crime. Whilst there are of course crimes committed by young people, they are in fact the small minority. However media reporting, combined with the decreasing contact between younger and older people, has contributed to a situation where not only do people feel unsafe but where this has become generalised to a growing antipathy and lack of tolerance between the young and old.

Academics have pointed out that perceptions of anti-social behaviour and fear of crime are closely associated with the activities of young people, such as ‘hanging around’, and therefore that tackling perceptions of what constitutes anti-social behaviour must play a key role.¹¹ An Age Concern Survey in 2002 identified that a third felt that fear of crime had affected their quality of life and made them feel lonely and isolated, 72% agreed with the statement that you are more likely to become a victim of street crime as you get older and, although the survey did not ask specifically about

young people's anti-social behaviour, many older people raised it as a highly relevant issue in making them feel unsafe on the streets.¹²

Concerns about young people 'hanging around' have remained a constant theme of complaint identified both in the British Crime Survey and from analysis of complaints to local government and police. The particular cause for concern about their presence in public space for older people is well recognised and widespread. Conflict with young people was a key negative aspect affecting older people's perceptions about the liveability of urban communities.¹³

And intergenerational exchange is not simply an idea promoted by policy developers. Recent research from the government's 'Full of Life' campaign showed a strong appreciation of the benefits of intergenerational work from the public themselves – with 69% of those surveyed believing they had things in common with people from different generations. Almost two-thirds of young people (63%) and those over 65 years old (65%) also dismissed the idea that they don't have things in common with other age groups.¹⁴

Intergenerational practice: an idea whose time has come?

We are at a key stage of development in intergenerational practice, building on the work of a number of organisations, particularly that of the Centre for Intergenerational Practice.

The benefits of intergenerational work have increasingly been recognised by national and local policymakers as a tool for social change. Central government has highlighted the potential of intergenerational practice in a number of key documents in recent years – for example, the 2007 *Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities* and *The future role of the third sector in social and economic regeneration* reports both recognise intergenerational volunteering and practice.

Most recently, government interest in the benefits of intergenerational practice has led to the formation of an intergenerational task force chaired by Children's Minister Beverley Hughes. The cross-governmental taskforce, which includes ministers from the Department for Work and Pensions and the

Department of Health, is expected to report progress shortly. However despite promising beginnings, there is still a long way to go before intergenerational work is firmly embedded in the mainstream of social policy and practice. Recent evaluation by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) concluded that more needs to be done to provide clarity around definitions of intergenerational practice.¹⁵ Similarly, the challenges of short-term funding also play a part in acting as a barrier to the mainstreaming of good work although the Centre for Intergenerational Practice highlights that the high loyalty commanded by projects working with older people means that volunteering projects often continue to exist after programme funding has finished.

The lack of resources to help guide the development of new projects is partly an inherent problem in that by their nature intergenerational projects are often preventative and their outcomes may not, therefore, be simple to demonstrate in the short term – which can make output driven funding difficult to secure. More needs to be done to stimulate the development of good practice using funding as a lever to achieve this.

Similarly, these projects' 'newness' as a concept means they have not yet become a regular feature in Local Area Agreements, Children and Young People's Plans or public health strategies. There are of course examples of good practice in this area but stimulating interest and ownership at this level remains a vital tool if we are to move forward with the benefits of intergenerational work more broadly.

Intergenerational Champion

Manchester City Council is proving that it is serious about intergenerational practice and committed to trailblazing intergenerational practice in the UK. The council has appointed the UK's first ever champion of intergenerational practice, Councillor Rosa Battle. Having launched the strategy 'Looking back Looking forward' in 2007, findings have indicated a "significant level of success and benefit to the community", through programmes such as mentoring for school children or young people starting their first jobs.¹⁶

The council has drawn on existing projects such as the environment which can prove a focus of mutual interest (litter picking, flower planting, bird box making, etc.), and also helps to develop a joint sense of local pride. The council's evaluation report is due out in October 2008 and it is planning to publish an online resource pack based on lessons learnt from demonstrational projects.

To create a long lasting legacy of intergenerational practice, greater advocacy and promotion efforts are needed to ensure work progresses systematically and effectively. Feedback from a 4Children and Counsel and Care conference on intergeneration issues held in June 2008 also highlighted how despite pockets of good practice, little was being done to build on and sustain the learning by plugging it into mainstream structures and processes of either youth or older people's policy and practice.

Despite the interest from central government, there is still not a national strategy which draws together the different strands and spheres of national policy and sets out a coherent framework of intergenerational practice as currently happens in Wales and Scotland.

Strategy for Older People in Wales

The Welsh Assembly recognised the value of intergenerational practice and identified it as a policy goal as part of its Strategy for Older People in Wales, launched in 2003. Noting that the “promotion of intergenerational practice will help build cohesive communities and reduce social exclusion”, the Strategy included a call to formulate an Action Plan for the fostering of intergenerational links in the aid of community cohesion.¹⁷

In June 2008, the Welsh Assembly published a Draft Intergenerational Practice Strategy for Wales as part of the ongoing Strategy for Older People in Wales and opened a forum for consultation with public stakeholders. The Draft draws upon good practice in Wales to develop a strategic approach to intergenerational practice for strengthening policy objectives.

The Draft Strategy includes wide-ranging measures focusing on:

Ageism and equality – by developing mechanisms to dispel negative perceptions of other generations; seeking to include ageing in the Personal and Social Education syllabus to inform young people and challenge their own perceptions of age; developing mechanisms that promote increased contact between the young and old to develop a better shared understanding of what they have in common as well as their differences; promoting intergenerational volunteering by young people to provide increasing numbers of positive models of young people to their community and elders; developing existing models of intergenerational volunteering by older people to provide positive support and encouragement to young people who would otherwise lack this in their lives.

Communities First/Communities Next – supporting and encouraging community programmes involving intergenerational practice developed in the Communities

Next Framework; exploring the potential for intergenerational programmes to contribute to the wider development of social and community cohesion across all areas of Wales.

Community focused schools – using community focused schools to help promote intergenerational practice via a toolkit.

Community safety – identifying existing examples of good practice and producing learning materials and training to disseminate this practice; working with partners from the media to explore how a more balanced reporting on youth and older people may be achieved in the future.

Culture and identity – to undertake and publish a series of case studies of intergenerational projects in the field of culture.

Engagement and participation – to identify opportunities for collaborative approaches to intergenerational engagement and participation, particularly linking youth forums and over fifties forums and using the formal consultation on this strategy as a way to identify existing and new models to take it forward.

Healthy and active lifestyles – using intergenerational practice to promote healthy and active lifestyles as well as volunteering; undertaking a study to identify the opportunities for intergenerational approaches to developing healthy lifestyles, and identify how intergenerational work across communities can contribute to people's overall mental health and well-being by developing self-esteem, self-worth and reducing isolation and loneliness.

Other developments in Wales regarding intergenerational practice have included the establishment of the Wales Centre for Intergenerational Practice (CCIP) in May 2004, as an initiative of the Beth Johnson Foundation, funded by the Wales Assembly Government and administered and hosted by the University of Glamorgan.¹⁸

Wales is also home to the first accredited intergenerational course in Europe, at the University of Lampeter.¹⁹

Intergenerational Practice in Scotland

In March 2007 the Scottish Executive published a strategy for dealing with the long-term effects of an ageing population. Entitled *All Our Futures: Planning for a Scotland with an Ageing Population*, the plan's number two priority for action is that Government will “act to forge better links between the generations”, setting the groundwork for the Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice.²⁰

This centre works across a range of sectors, including:

- Local authorities creating opportunities for older people and younger people to interact positively in their area – in schools (in classrooms and in the governance arrangements for schools); in youth work; in services for older people; and in sport, culture and leisure, for example.
- Businesses working on how their older employees might help develop the skills and capacity of young people – both within companies and in the wider community.
- Voluntary organisations developing further opportunities for older and younger people to work together and share experiences.
- Older people looking for opportunities to contribute to the development of young people – as grandparents; as role models; as experienced working colleagues; and as volunteers, for example.²¹

Creating a national agenda for intergenerational change

Services for old and young have traditionally been planned separately. This needs to change. At the earliest possible stage when commissioning projects and facilities in the community, it is vital to consider the role of intergenerational practice so that its ethos and value becomes a permanent fixture in the objectives of community cohesion planning.

To achieve this, a national strategy is crucial. This will draw together the interests from different government departments and strategies to provide a focal point and an impetus for change. But this alone would clearly not be enough. Better local priority would also need to follow if the real value of intergenerational work is to be realised. Opportunities to build intergenerational work into Local Area Agreements or plans and strategies for either the older or younger age group remain largely unused and both the LGA and the IDeA need to be engaged in the value of this sort of work in delivering cohesive, stable and sustainable communities which are very much the priority for local authorities.

The new framework of community services also provides a valuable opportunity to deliver intergenerational work. The Welsh strategy recognises the potential of “community focused” schools to mainstream this sort of experience and in England the extended schools initiative could offer a similar opportunity. Schools are increasingly seen as the heart of their community, with extended schools acting as hubs of support and activity – intergenerational work could play a key role in realising this.

Similarly, the new wave of children’s centre developments could almost certainly offer ways to help ensure that children and families using their services are able to benefit from intergenerational learning. There are particular challenges faced by parents and families who may well benefit from the experience and learning of older people. For example, The TransAge Action Project run by Age Concern Enfield has been running in Enfield since 1996 and there is a huge demand for this service. TAA is an intergenerational project which enables older people aged 50+ to befriend and support children and young people in a variety of placements including through nurseries, Sure Start, play projects, family centres and supporting teenage parents.

Many older people are already involved in children’s centres as community activists, as volunteers and as grandparents or great-grandparents. But the creation of 3,500 centres across the country provides an opportunity to develop these as community resources that also serve and include older people. At the same time, children’s information services are increasingly becoming family information services to provide easily accessible information and advice to people of all ages.

Quaggy Children's Centre, Lewisham

The Quaggy Children's Centre is run by a local development trust which has extensive experience of cross-generational projects. These include, for example, projects on 'where we live', 'healthy eating', 'mapping the local environment' and 'play', which have culminated in an exhibition. Activities include children singing to older people, parents cooking Christmas dinner for older people, and developing social events and projects together.

Other local projects include photography, with children and older people recording their lives; people sharing their favourite recipes and making a book; parents volunteering in the older people's lunch club; older people volunteering in the centre with storytelling and gardening; winter warmer sessions for the whole community; a food cooperative; and a local carnival.

The Quaggy Children's Centre is based at Morden Mount School in Lewisham and so is well placed to foster cross-generational activity. Greenwich Council plans to extend this approach to another local children's centre. Sharing food and sharing local history seem to be two key ingredients for the centre's success, while improved mental health in all generations is seen as a key outcome.

Vauxhall Children's Centre, Norwich

Vauxhall Children's Centre has recently opened and is based in an adult social services centre that has been in operation for more than 30 years.

Over many years the centre has been supporting disabled adults and older people, providing a range of day centre services, and increasingly it is developing other facilities such as IT to make the centre sustainable. The management committee of service users was fully involved in the integration of the children's centre. The wide range of resources, from café to gym, are available to people of all ages and the partnership will ensure that the centre continues to thrive in the local community. The adults using the centre are now providing a hitherto untapped resource to support children and their families.

A number of children's centres are now developing an intergenerational aspect, including centres in both Haringey and Merton. These groundbreaking centres aim to bring young people, families and older people together under the same roof to strengthen community cohesion, reduce crime and dispel negative stereotypes between different generations.

And just as children's centres could be extended to the wider community, older people's facilities could be the base for intergenerational work. In most local neighbourhoods there are sheltered housing schemes, extra care housing, day centres and residential care homes which provide a natural hub for activities involving older and younger people. Many care homes are isolated institutions which young people avoid and sometimes are actively discouraged from visiting. But there is huge potential to build links with their local community.

As people grow older, the neighbourhood becomes increasingly important in shaping the quality of everyday life.

When local shops and services are inaccessible or unsafe, older people can feel trapped in their own homes without the confidence or opportunities to get out, meet friends and access support. The Government's recent housing strategy for an ageing society emphasises the importance of lifetime neighbourhoods.²² These are designed to be welcoming, accessible and inviting for everyone regardless of age, health or disability. These have also been linked to the concept developed by the World Health Organisation of "age-friendly cities".²³ Lifetime neighbourhoods should be more sustainable as well as having transport, housing, public services, facilities and space that make it possible for people to have a full life and take part in their local community.

Given mutual fears about crime, Neighbourhood Watch schemes can also be the focus for strengthening intergenerational links.

Fishburn in Bloom, Durham

A Neighbourhood Watch scheme in Durham was instrumental in establishing the Durham Intergenerational Programme. Part of the programme, started in April 2003 and funded until June 2006, was 'Fishburn in Bloom'. This challenged isolation and promoted social inclusion by bringing together older and younger people through exchange of skills and experiences in different projects and activities. Fishburn in Bloom, started by Age Concern Durham, helped older and younger people to plant flowers, shrubs and thousands of daffodil and crocus bulbs. The town was runner-up for the 'Northumbria in Bloom' competition in 2004.

A good working relationship has developed with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership as well as the police and local Primary Care Trust. The project has helped improve understanding between young and old, reducing fear of crime and promoting social inclusion.

ShIPLEY Neighbourhood Action Plan

This project was not under the auspices of Neighbourhood Watch, but the Shipley area in West Yorkshire has been doing a lot of work to enhance community cohesion and safety, including intergenerational projects. Its Neighbourhood Action Plan has been doing innovative work to engage with local residents and help address priority issues such as difficulties between older and younger residents and issues relating to community safety.

Funding was obtained for “Make it Happen”, an intergenerational reminiscence project for the over-60s and older schoolchildren. The theme was ‘Our Street’, and the generations shared memories and experiences of how it was then and now. Out of this came small pieces of drama, writing, pictures and photographs. The project was very successful and more events are taking place, where the generations can meet and help break down barriers.

Surrey Avenue Neighbourhood Watch, Slough

This project was formed by two local residents when an older neighbour complained of being bullied by a nearby family. Seventy-six families work together to watch around 12 houses. The initiative has formed good community relations and helped drive down crime. The group holds street parties, organizes competitions for local young people, and publishes a regular newsletter. Surrey Avenue was the winner of the neighbourhoodwatch.net Group of the Month competition.

Community Mediation

Crime Concern has also undertaken some projects which aim to improve neighbourhood relations between older and younger people. One of these, Community Mediation, a countywide community service in Suffolk, held a meeting in a village north of Ipswich and addressed the fear of crime felt by older people and the concerns of young people who have nowhere to meet friends or to play ball games. The meeting was set up by Crime Concern, and was attended by 16 people including seven young people, parents, local older residents and the parish councillor.

As would be expected, there was some initial awkwardness between participants at the start of the meeting. However, Crime Concern reports that good preparation beforehand helped to ensure good attendance and a productive discussion followed. The older residents expressed the impact that the behaviour of the young people was having, and this was taken on board. The result of the meeting was that the parish councillor agreed to look into the possibility of laying an all-weather surface with lights for the young people to play ball games; the young people also agreed to keep noise down after 10pm.

On a more practical level, raising awareness with staff working with older and younger people about the potential benefits of intergenerational work can help to stimulate interest. The success and implementation of intergenerational work in the community is reliant on effective joined up working between relevant community organisations.

Linking with schools to create mentoring and volunteering ties are potentially lasting approaches which can help to raise the profile of intergenerational working throughout the community. The involvement of older people can also have immense benefits for schools in terms of offering additional support for pupils falling behind. Young people can also benefit academically from the extra dimension that older people can bring to history lessons. Likewise, young people can help older people to become more confident

in using the latest technologies and often feel empowered by the opportunity to adopt the ‘teacher’ role.

Maximising the potential of the third sector

The third sector is also successfully engaging in the intergenerational agenda and many examples of good practice are emerging.

One Age Exchange

One successful school based programme is One Age Exchange, a project run by Age Concern in Oldham which creates partnerships between older people in the community and local secondary school pupils. The ten week project begins by exploring young people’s often negative preconceptions around older people. Throughout the project students select age relevant subject topics such as the Second World War, the 1960s or first jobs, and create a report or life story on their older partner using the latest IT, images and interview techniques.

The project has been taken up in almost 100 local authority schools in the Oldham area and has helped to empower and reduce feelings of isolation among young and older people in the community. Evaluation reports have shown that older people enjoy the opportunity to learn the latest IT and communication skills and young people feel empowered by setting their own learning agendas.

Approaches like this need to be continued and extended.

Conclusion

The benefits of intergenerational work in helping to build bridges between generations within an increasingly fragmented society are becoming clear. But as yet, the concept of taking a more structured approach to intergenerational work is still a new one. We cannot simply rely on the passion of those who run, or are part of, intergenerational projects to keep the fires burning. Instead the challenge is to move from pockets of good practice to a more strategic and coherent approach where national level programmes build in the benefits of intergenerational work, where policy makers locally and nationally understand the value of these projects and are investing in them because they want to see results, and where people of different generations are engaging with each other in larger numbers than before – and communities are reaping the results of a more inclusive and cohesive society.

Our recommendations attempt to do just that – to set out an agenda which helps to raise the profile of the excellent work already ongoing and stimulates the interest of those on the frontline – but also to look more strategically at how we can use the new initiatives to create local and national changes from which this excellent practice can become the norm rather than the exception across the country.

Recommendations

1. To create an Intergenerational Strategy for England as a focal point and driver for activity and progress in this area.

It is recommended that the Ministerial Level group leads a national consultation on a strategy for intergenerational work.

2. To work with current national programmes of activity such as children's centres and extended schools in order to help mainstream innovative and good practice and move the agenda towards a more consistent approach.

This should include piloting a flagship programme of intergenerational centres which can help to showcase what

can be done within existing children's centres, as well as developing practical help such as guides for good practice and better information on how intergenerational approaches can help achieve improved Every Child Matters Outcomes and school standards.

- 3. To use the opportunity of high-profile events with mass volunteering potential and popular appeal, such as the Olympics, to help bring together young and old and to make intergenerational aspects a key part of their success.**

It is recommended that intergenerational work is made a priority for the London Olympics organising committee over the next four years.

- 4. To stimulate interest at a local strategic and operational level by working with local authorities to pathfinder intergenerational approaches to achieving their Local Area Agreement outcomes.**

It is recommended that intergenerational work is given a priority in Local Area Agreements and that outcomes are determined and monitored in this area. This might include working with the IDeA and other strategic agencies to set up an intergeneration "Beacon" scheme recognising local authority work in this area.

- 5. To undertake research to identify how families can be supported to offer care and increase connections across the generations.**

This would include supporting grandparent and family involvement in both childcare and eldercare, building on the national carers strategy. The forthcoming Green Paper on the future of care must address this issue as well as concerns about intergenerational equity. New approaches should be explored to help families stay in touch with enhanced access to new communications.

6. Government to stimulate activity through funding.

It is recommended that intergenerational work is made a funding priority for the Big Lottery Fund, with a national programme of intergenerational funding.

7. To help codify and share good practice.

Establishing what works in practice in achieving outcomes for young and older people will be key. It is recommended that national research is undertaken and disseminated through websites and publications. Funding for a national programme of evaluation for intergenerational work would help evidence the case for local level investment.

8. To introduce new intergeneration volunteering schemes to all schools and communities.

Establishing a new volunteering scheme would open up opportunities across the generations. Linking with schools will make this part of everyday life – expected in every community.

9. To create a national campaign with the media and celebrities of all ages to promote the benefits of intergenerational activities.

This would also address ageist stereotyping of older and younger people.

10. To have a renewed emphasis on the importance of the participation of young and older people across community development.

This would involve developing local participation schemes aimed at attracting older and younger people to build community cohesion, and joining up with current participation and engagement schemes to help build in cross-age working.

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For All Ages

4Children has been shaping and influencing national policy for the past 25 years. The national children's charity strives to place every child's and parent's needs at the heart of the community through the development of innovative, integrated support for children from birth to teens – providing a comprehensive and joined up approach from 0–19.

Our work helps stimulate debate and brings fresh thinking to old problems. In addition, 4Children plays a vital role in delivering the new Children's Agenda from running our own children's centres, to our contribution as partners in supporting the delivery of the children's centres and extended school targets.

4Children believes that:

- Support needs to be joined up and universal, with targeted support where required
- Prevention is better than cure
- Support is needed throughout childhood: from 0–19.

www.4Children.org.uk

Information Helpline: 020 7512 2100

Counsel and Care is a national charity getting the best care and support for older people, their families and carers. We do this by providing advice and information and by influencing future policies, services and funding.

www.counselandcare.org.uk

For All Ages

Bringing different generations closer together

A growing gap between the young and old is beginning to cause problems. Whereas once the extended family ensured that a vital connection between the younger and older generations was maintained and flourished, our changing lifestyles are increasingly meaning that we are living in more linear age groups.

Time and time again, younger and older people tell us about a lack of understanding and real concern about the other generation. Yet when young and old come together in a common experience, amazing things can happen with much to be learnt, perspectives and stories shared and new friendships forged.

This pamphlet argues for a new approach to build the connection across the generations. It argues that intergenerational approaches can deliver real benefits not only to individuals and families but to communities and wider society. It puts forward a number of recommendations for action. Together they form a crucial plank of public policy with far reaching impact across the policy spectrum.