Creating Connections, Breaking Down Barriers

Manchester's Intergenerational Practice Toolkit

"One belief is that by merely coming into contact with one another, young and old will immediately connect and understand each other and that bonding and relationships between the generations will occur magically and automatically, without any need for outside assistance.

It takes planning and concentrated effort to successfully prepare young and old to be comfortable with one another.

Intergenerational connections may be magic but magic takes work."

From 'Developing an Intergenerational Programme in Your Early Childcare and Education Centre' in *A Guidebook for Early Childhood Practitioners* (Penn State University)

MAKING MAGIC HAPPEN IN MANCHESTER

Stronger communities. Better relationships. Less fear.

The potential of intergenerational practice to improve the lives of younger and older people in Manchester is considerable.

This toolkit explains what intergenerational practice (IP) is and why you might want to make use of it. It brings together tools and advice based on years of experience and research. It will help you set up, deliver and evaluate a successful intergenerational project or programme of your own.

The toolkit was developed by the Valuing Older People Team in Manchester's Joint Health Unit and the Beth Johnson Foundation, a national organisation that seeks to make a positive impact on the lives of older people.

Both of these organisations have developed other learning resources on intergenerational practice. This toolkit works alongside them – you will find details on .

Who is this toolkit for?

It is primarily aimed at people working in community development, neighbourhood management, and regeneration in Manchester.

If that's you, we've assumed that you'll already have some of the skills needed to deliver a community project:

- Experience or training in project planning and strategic planning.
- Ability to communicate clearly to a range of audiences in different ways.
- Ability to give a good presentation.
- Ability to facilitate meetings with colleagues and project participants.
- An open minded, adaptable approach.

So we're going to focus on challenges that are specific to intergenerational projects, rather than community projects in general.

(If you want help to develop the skills listed above, have a look at the Community Engagement Toolkit or book a training course on community engagement skills. The Intergenerational Practice Training Workshops will also be useful – see for details.)

Although we've aimed this booklet at people with a certain level of experience, it's designed to be accessible to all – and it could serve as a first step for learning more about this area of work.

Contents

UNDERSTANDING INTERGENERATIONAL PRACTICE

The first task for anyone wanting to establish an intergenerational project is to get a clear understanding of what intergenerational practice is, and how it has been used successfully in the past.

What it is

In Manchester, intergenerational practice is defined as follows:

"Intergenerational practice brings people from different generations together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities. These can promote greater understanding and respect between these generations and can contribute to building stronger communities. Intergenerational practice builds on the positive resources that the young and old have to offer each other and those around them."

Intergenerational practice is based on the principle that older and younger people work together in an equal power relationship, for their benefit and the benefit of their local community.

By giving people a time, place and structure to do this, it helps different generations share their past, present and hopes for the future.

The benefits

The benefits of intergenerational practice vary according to the aims of the project. Manchester's Generations Together programme, which delivered 13 intergenerational projects between 2009 and 2011, resulted in the following benefits for participants:

- An increased sense of wellbeing, confidence and belonging in the community.

- New skills such as cooking, growing food and DIY.

- More positive perceptions of different generations, including less fear of young people.

- Greater connection to opportunities in the community, such as volunteering.

- Better relationships with people from different backgrounds as well as different generations.

- More participation in the local community and stronger feelings of citizenship.

These benefits show how intergenerational practice contributes to the aims of Manchester's **Community Strategy** and **Strategy for Ageing**.

The Community Strategy can be viewed here: manchesterpartnership.org.uk/

Manchester's Strategy for Ageing can be viewed here: [Manchester : A Great Place to Grow Older 2010-2020](#).

Where to learn more

This toolkit works alongside several other learning resources which will help you deliver a successful intergenerational project.

The Beth Johnson Foundation Intergenerational Practice Toolkit
This has a range of useful resources and case studies.
www.centreforip.org.uk and www.bjf.org.uk/default.aspx?page=21961

Manchester's Generations Together programme 2009-2011
This has local case studies showcasing different intergenerational projects.
www.manchester.gov.uk/generationstogether

Manchester's Intergenerational Practice Training Programme
Training options include 'Introduction to IP and Core Skills', 'Training the Trainer', and 'Training for Officers and Partners Working with Young People'.
www.manchester.gov.uk/generationstogether

The Manchester Community Engagement Toolkit
This covers key community engagement skills such as planning, facilitating, presenting, writing and communication – all essential in intergenerational practice.
www.manchester.gov.uk/communityengagement

The Manchester Community Engagement Strategy
This explains what community engagement is and what we want to achieve through it in Manchester.
www.manchester.gov.uk/communityengagement

DEFINING YOUR INTERGENERATIONAL PROJECT

Once you have a good understanding of intergenerational practice, it's time to get a good understanding of your own project.

For an intergenerational project or programme to succeed, it needs to have a clear set of aims and objectives, and a clear planning process.

Below are the key questions you need to ask yourself about your project in the early stages of planning. Once you've considered these, you will be ready to fill in the project planning table on the next page.

1. Who are you working with?
Ensure you know which groups of younger and older people will be involved in the project, and which other organisations will help you deliver it. Look at existing intergenerational projects and structures before you start and consider who you could work with.

2. What work or activities are you doing with them?
Know what types of community engagement you are using within your project. Learn about previous intergenerational projects but remember that what works in one area might not work in another. Keep an open mind and always be ready to change your approach if need be.

3. Where will you be doing it?
Consider which neighbourhoods and wards you will be working in and why. Then look at what location or facility you will base your activities in.

4. When will you be doing it?
What is the timescale of your initiative? If it's a project, will it be a one-off or a first step to services changing how they operate with younger and older people?

5. Why are you doing it?
What do you think the outcomes will be? What added value does an IP approach bring?

6. How are you doing it?
What resources do you need, including time and money? Consider how you will communicate your aims to participants and partner organisations.

Project planning table

This table was developed through Manchester's Generations Together programme. It will help you define the main areas of your project or programme.

Project name:
Lead contact: (name, email and phone number)
Project summary: (paint a picture of what you will do on the basis that the reader knows nothing about it)
What you are aiming to achieve from your project and why you are doing it: (for example, what will success look like, what will be changed or developed, and what are you basing the need for this work on?)
How it will be carried out: (the key steps or milestones which you will go through)
Where it will be carried out: (which ward or neighbourhoods)
Who it will be carried out with: (partnership organisations and details of their project lead, numbers of younger people/older people)
Timescales: (as specifically as possible set out when you will start and finish and important dates for the milestones and outputs of the project)
Cost breakdown: (detailed budget breakdown for each project)
Expected outcomes: (for example number of volunteers from this, and benefits for participants)

How the outcomes will be measured: (for example describe how you know the outcomes have been met)
Expected outputs: (what will be produced, for example a film, cookbook, exhibition)
Risks and how these could be mitigated:

PREPARING TO WORK WITH YOUNGER AND OLDER PEOPLE

You've got a clear picture of how your project will work and what it will achieve. Now you need to think in more detail about how you will work with younger and older people.

These are two age groups with different identities, abilities and levels of experience. Your challenge is to balance their contrasting approaches, while also letting them shape these as the work goes on.

This isn't an easy task but if you follow the advice below, most difficulties should be avoided.

1) Be clear about your role

Are you the facilitator, project manager or programme manager? Or all of these at different stages?

2) Be clear about the role of participants

Adults become used to having power over young people and the idea of devolving some of this power may seem strange. How will you prepare them for this?

3) Know what the project is based on

Was the project your idea, or an idea that originated from younger and/or older people? Or has it come from elsewhere?

Get a good sense of the reasons behind the project. For example, if you are basing a project around a perceived problem with young people in a park, find out what these perceptions are based on, and what the expectations are of those holding these beliefs.

4) Plan the pace of the work

How will you balance the needs of younger people with the needs of older people? And how will you help your participants develop this balance themselves?

5) Make communication accessible

Consider how you will communicate with older and younger people.

Avoid confusing jargon and acronyms and ensure that the text and design of written communication is accessible. Don't presume that everyone has access to the internet or email. Also, ensure that your communication is interesting and exciting. Why would anyone give their time to be involved in something boring if they don't have to?

6) Make sure you've done age-related checks

If participants are under 18 you will need parental permission to work with them and people involved in the project will probably need Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks. The field of CRB checks is often changing and requirements can vary (for example schools may have different policies). Older participants may (but of course may not) need a venue that is accessible to people with limited mobility. Don't forget to consider vulnerable older people's needs. Below are three links to find out more:

http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/s/safeguarding%20young%20people%20on%20work-related%20learning%20including%20work%20experience.pdf

www.manchester.gov.uk/downloads/731/protection_of_vulnerable_adults

www.crb.homeoffice.gov.uk/

7) Be prepared for ageist attitudes

Older and younger people might hold negative perceptions of each other. If this is the case, how will you deal with this? Also, be aware that your participants may have had to deal with negative attitudes towards themselves in the past – these experiences need to be factored into your approach.

The next section looks at how you might do this.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS BETWEEN GENERATIONS

There are various ways of addressing the gaps which may exist between people of different generations. This section looks at how you can bridge these by bringing the two age groups together through a gradual process with careful planning. It then suggests a number of discussion points that will help people explore ageist assumptions.

Meeting the two age groups separately

Older and younger people may not have regular contact with each other and there could be an element of fear or distrust, particularly amongst older people who know very few young people.

One way to avoid difficulties between your older and younger participants is to begin by building a separate relationship with the two age groups before they meet.

This helps by:

- Enabling each generation to develop its own voice and share initial anxieties.
- Allowing people to get to know each other and gain confidence in a smaller group.
- Making people aware of the challenges and encouraging them to address negative attitudes.
- Starting the process of sharing ideas about where the project is going.

Issues to discuss together at this stage include: appropriate boundaries, language and physical contact; confidential information; child protection; recording the work (for example use of photographs); and creative outcomes.

A key talking point at this stage is the similarities and differences between the generations. The discussion guidelines on page 15 and 16 will help you here.

Your first meeting with both age groups

Once you have built a relationship with the different generations separately, it is time to bring them together. Participants may still feel doubt or distrust. To help overcome this, always plan and manage your first meetings well.

1) Know who is coming and what the meeting space is like

It is always helpful to visit the space where you will first meet and/or carry out your project or programme. Know the safety issues, where the toilets are, any planned fire drills, availability of refreshments, the size of the space, and accessibility issues.

Where possible use venues that are neutral to both age groups or discuss the venue choice with participants before activities start.

2) Be clear about the purpose of the first meeting

Have clarity in your own mind and communicate this to participants. If possible, send them information or speak to them about the meeting's purpose beforehand.

3) Be clear about the purpose of the project

Talk to participants about why you are doing the project, the scope for it to change, how it will be carried out, and the timescales.

4) Have back-up plans

What will you do if something doesn't go to plan? As far as we know you can't see into the future, but try to be prepared to deal with tricky or surprising questions or responses.

5) Be aware of what has happened in the past in that neighbourhood

You could duplicate things that didn't work, or ask questions which people have already answered (for example if you are running a consultation) which will just serve to annoy people. Consider what you could build on, such as existing partnerships, networks and learning.

Meeting checklist

This checklist is based around resources developed by the Beth Johnson Foundation. It looks at some practical issues you need to address when bringing together younger and older people at a venue.

Additional information on good meeting set-up can be found in the Manchester Community Engagement Toolkit (www.manchester.gov.uk/toolkit)

Pre-planning	All required policy and insurances are in place. For example child protection, safeguarding and CRB checks.
Preparation /marketing	Everyone has been informed of what the project/work is about. Information is accessible (minimum size 12 font) and partnerships finalised.
Paperwork	Partnership agreements and contracts set up, consent forms for photographs/trips, and registers. Confidential database set up and protocols for use established.
Location	Transport requirements identified. Is the area safe and well lit and accessible by a range of travel options?

Venue	Check: • Disability access • Equipment available • Room size and space for your use • Seating • Risk assessment completed • Hearing loops • Access to building • Contact for any problems
Facilities	Know what facilities are available, such as: • Toilets • Kitchen • First aid • Refreshments Check: • Fire alarm tests
Staffing	• All staff informed about the work • First aider available • Adequately trained staff • Contact information

Volunteers	• Contact information • Training • Support	• CRB if required • Volunteer policy which includes arrangements for support
Activities	• Risk assessment has been completed • Equipment has been checked • Impact of activity on individuals • If outdoors, are there sheltered areas?	• Equipment is accessible for everyone • Data protection

Participants	• Informed about what's going to happen • Have realistic expectations • Have awareness of individual needs

<u>Exploring stereotypes of younger and older people</u>

The discussion points below will help people explore their underlying assumptions about younger and older people. They could be used as part of a planning session involving participants, or as part of the intergenerational project itself.

People commissioning, planning or delivering intergenerational projects will also benefit from considering these issues.

Discussion 1
Perceptions of younger and older people

If you pick up a newspaper, turn on the TV or radio, or log onto a website, you will often hear something that implies young people are out of control and older people are a burden. Both groups are viewed as problems to be solved rather than as citizens who can be an asset to society. We also often hear that things are much worse today than in the past.

But why is this and what are these views based on?

- Was society better in the past?

- If so, what evidence do you have and who was it better for?

- Are young people a problem today?

- If so, why? If not, why?

- Are older people a problem today?

- If so, why? If not, why?

Discussion 2
Conflict between generations

Relations between older and young people are often characterised as pretty poor. Some people think that they have been getting worse for some time. According to this scenario, young people spend their time dreaming up new ways to frighten and harass people, and older people have had a collective humour by-pass.

But what information is this really based on?

- How would you describe relations between younger and older people today?

- What evidence do you have to support this?

- Do you think that some conflict between the generations is inevitable?

- Is generational conflict a bad thing?

Discussion 3
Building positive relations between generations

It is often said that there are now fewer opportunities for different generations to meet one another. This implies that they met often in the past, and that if they met more frequently nowadays, relations and understanding between the two would be better. But we know from experience that just bringing together two generations and hoping for the best can be unhelpful.

We assume that more contact between generations would be a good thing for those involved and for the wider community. And we tend to focus on what young people can learn from older people so that they can change for the better, without considering how older people can change.

- Is it important for younger and older people to make conscious efforts to meet?

- What would be the purpose of creating such meetings?

- What do you think young people have to learn from older people and why?

- What do you think older people have to learn from younger people and why?

- Do all older people automatically have things of value to share with young people?

Discussion 4
Shared concerns of younger and older people

Younger and older people often say that people in positions of power and responsibility don't really listen to them.

- What do you feel are the key concerns of older and younger people today?

- What knowledge do you base this on?

- Do younger and older people have concerns in common or are they very different?

- Can you identify three areas of common concern and suggest how these could be addressed – by older and younger people co-operating, by the wider community, and by local and central government?

TOP 12 MISTAKES IN INTERGENERATIONAL PROJECTS

This list of the top 12 mistakes that can be made in intergenerational projects is based on research from across the UK and on experience gained from Manchester's Generations Together programme.

1) Not preparing the groups of younger and older people before they meet and work together, or working with one group more than the other.

2) Not having a mutually beneficial element for both younger and older people.

3) Parachuting younger and older people together and then separating them, never to meet again.

4) Ignoring the experiences and beliefs of participants. For example, not taking into account prejudice and mistrust towards younger/older people, or fatigue from over engagement, or participation in earlier intergenerational projects.

5) Trying to recruit people to boring initiatives – why would people want to get involved in something dull?

6) Not sufficiently planning the project's aims, or how activities will be carried out, or how the project could be developed.

7) Ignoring the discussion points on page 15 and 16. When these have not been considered, the quality of work has often diminished and aims have not been achieved.

8) Not having committed or active partners – for example partners not transporting young people to and from events.

9) Having a co-ordinator or development worker who has not been trained in intergenerational practice or who has no experience of working with younger and older people in community settings.

10) Not considering the appropriateness of the approach in achieving the aims, and not considering the time-commitment involved for participants.

11) Using a short term and one-off approach that doesn't develop into lasting projects with longer term benefits.

12) Not understanding the concerns of participants and what stage they are at in their lifecycle – this can impact on how well the groups interact.

EVALUATING YOUR PROJECT

Evaluation is central to any intergenerational project. You must be able to demonstrate that what you plan to do will deliver value for money and have a positive impact on Manchester residents.

So every project or programme must have:

- A clear purpose or objective.
- A clear process to carry this out.
- A clear process of evaluation, based on the purpose of the project, at the start, middle and end.
- Results – especially in terms of the work's impact and what it has changed.
- A clear rationale for developing it further if future work is planned.

For further information on monitoring and evaluating intergenerational projects, look at:

- Manchester's Generations Together website, where each project has set out how they evaluated their work.
  (www.manchester.gov.uk/generationstogether)

- The Manchester Community Engagement Toolkit
  (www.manchester.gov.uk/toolkit)

Our final piece of advice. To make your intergenerational project successful, always be clear on what you are doing, why you are doing it, who you are doing it with, where you are doing it, when you are doing it, and how you are doing it.

For more information on intergenerational practice in Manchester, including training for staff and development of projects, email Patrick Hanfling at p.hanfling@manchester.gov.uk

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