This paper will review evidence of the potential benefits and that intergenerational programmes and approaches can offer and will seek to identify elements contributing to the success of such programmes.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The population of the developed world is aging and is predicted to continue ageing as people live longer healthier lives. In recent years an increasing social distance has grown up between generations. Each age-cohort has a growing tendency to associate with and value their contemporaries to the exclusion of other age groups. As families become more geographically dispersed, intergenerational contact within the family has reduced and this can in some cases result in a gap in understanding between old and young. These factors have given rise to a growing potential for conflict between generations in.

In response to what was perceived as a potential intergenerational conflict, intergenerational programmes first originated over forty years ago in the United States. Ireland currently has a relatively young population but as the proportion of older people in society grows, it will become increasingly important to ensure that positive attitudes and mutual understanding are developed between young and old to avoid such potential conflict over scarce resources.

Intergenerational programmes have been shown to offer many benefits for young and old including; building better more cohesive communities; improving the physical and mental health of older people and the academic performance of young people and children. Finally has the potential to improve the economic viability of service provision and the coping skills of families. It is important that those considering the development of new initiatives would look to existing models and seek to build the elements of best practice into new programmes.

Research has found that, in order to develop and implement a successful intergenerational programme there are a number of key considerations to be borne in mind. These include;

- The needs of both generations must be prioritised equally and programmes must ensure that both generations benefit. The activities should also be of genuine benefit to the participants and their communities.
- Programmes need to be of sufficient duration to ensure the development of meaningful relationships
- They should have clearly defined and agreed aims and outcomes, developed with participant groups as far as possible.
- Including so-called ‘hard to reach’ groups can lead to more meaningful and effective outcomes.
- The setting should be one in which both generations feel comfortable.
- Young and older people should enter the programme on an equal footing, and have equal involvement in the planning and delivery of the programme.
- Outcomes should then be measured using a range of quantitative and qualitative evaluation techniques. Because of the likely nature of outcomes, qualitative measurement may often be most appropriate.
SECTION 1  INTRODUCTION

The population of the developed world is aging and is predicted to continue ageing as people live longer healthier lives. By comparison with many EU states, Ireland is quite a young country. In 2010, Ireland had the highest proportion of young people in the EU, and the lowest proportion of old people. The proportion of the population aged 0-14 years currently stands at 21.5% (CSO 2010) while in 2010 those aged 65 and over made up 11.7% of the total population.

Recent predictions suggest that the total number of people aged 65 years and older will more than double between 2011 and 2041 and the number of those aged 85 years will quadruple. (CSO 2009) These trends are expected to continue in Europe and other developed countries for many decades to come.

As proportion of older people in society grows over the coming decades, development of positive attitudes and mutual understanding between young and old will become increasingly important. Intergenerational programmes have been shown to offer many benefits for young and old, including; building better more cohesive communities; improving the physical and mental health of older people and the academic performance of young people and children. In addition they have the potential to improve the economic viability of service provision and the coping skills of families. It is important that those considering the development of new initiatives look to existing models and seek to build the elements of best practice into new programmes.

This paper will review the literature on intergenerational programmes; it will identify the key features and benefits to be gained from such programmes and will review evidence of best practice that intergenerational programmes can offer and finally will seek to identify elements contributing to the success of these programmes.

WHY DEVELOP INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMMES

Many of the demographic changes outlined above have given rise to increasing concern about the impact of ageing on the economies of EU states, a concern that is frequently expressed in apocalyptic terms, suggesting that older people will drain the economies of resources and put strain on existing health and care services.

Older people can often be stereotyped in a number of ways often based on assumptions about their competencies, beliefs, and abilities across different areas (Cuddy & Fiske, 2002). When these assumptions are based on one of the negative stereotypes about older people, ageism can result (Greenberg, Schimel, & Martens, 2002). Research has found that stereotypes about older people have been identified across different cultures as being a combination of warmth and incompetence, (“doddering but dear”, according to Cuddy & Fiske, 2002, p. 3).
In an international study of ageism, (carried out in five countries - Belgium, Israel, Japan, Costa Rica and Hong Kong), older people were given far higher scores in benevolence but lower scores in competence (Hardwood et al., 1996; Koyano, 1989; Tien-Hyatt, 1986–1987). Attitudes towards older people in Ireland are relatively positive, a 2012 survey on active ageing showed that 76% of people in ROI perceive people over the age of 55 in a positive light, compared to an EU average of 61%. In the UK, 68% of respondents perceived the over 55 age group in a positive light. However there are positive and negative aspects to relations between young and old generations. When asked in 2009, a clear majority in the EU (85%) disagreed that older people are a burden on society, but significantly a majority (69%) agreed that young and old people do not easily agree on what is best for society. While 70% disagreed that companies employing mostly young people perform better than others, 56% agreed that as people work until older ages, fewer jobs will be available for older people.

The potential for intergenerational conflict is frequently expressed in concerns about the ‘rule’ of older people through their greater numbers and more active political involvement leading to increased spending on pensions or a veto on the reduction of spending on older people to the detriment of spending on younger people or those of working age. This theory has been around for quite a while and as far back as 1948 it was suggested that as the median voter grows in age, age biased policies will become the norm and the generations will pursue their own respective self-interests at the expense of others (Black 1948).

In recent years a number of factors have contributed to an increasing social distance between generations. There has been a growing tendency for the generations to associate with and value their contemporaries to the exclusion of other age groups; an increased emphasis on self-sufficiency also contributes to intergenerational ‘distance’ and finally as families become more geographically dispersed, intergenerational contact within the family has reduced and this can in some cases result in a gap in understanding between old and young.

Research in the UK found that significant numbers of younger people are isolated from older people in their communities: a third (36%) say they ‘never’ or ‘hardly’ speak to people over 40, other than parents, teachers or people at work, while older people often have very little personal contact with younger people outside their immediate family circle (Prince’s Trust, 2008). Since age segregation contributes to a lack of understanding people tend to fall back on stereotypes, which in turn reduce the possibility of contact between the generations. (Moore and Statham 2006)

In the UK a research study on younger people’s perceptions of age found that they feel older people regard them as ‘hoodie-wearing, knife-wielding, label obsessive’ (London Youth, 2010: 2). In turn, younger people think older people are: ‘boring, very grumpy, weak and unkempt, with “one foot in the grave.”’ One younger person said that older people have ‘lost touch’ with what it was like to be young. (London Youth, 2010: 9)

In many communities this distance between generations contributes to a sense of distrust and manifests in a fear of crime and feeling of lack of safety among older people.
Psychologists argue that perceptions of risk are linked to a person’s understanding of the social and physical make-up of their neighbourhood’. (Holloway and Jefferson 1997) This may help to explain why many older people have a fear of crime that is not linked to their actual statistical likelihood of being a victim of crime and can often be associated with older people’s perceptions of young people as a threat.

When community development organizations seek to engage members of the community they tend to engage older and younger people separately often for both structural and logistical reasons. This often leads to further distance and potential conflict between generations as they identify priorities for community development. (Raynes, 2004).

Differences between the generations become apparent in the priority they give to various community issues. Young people express concern about road accidents, teenage pregnancy, education, and safe public spaces while older people tend to prioritise transport and other services, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour. (Pain, 2005). In the UK the focus of the ‘neighbourhood renewal’ agenda is on establishing and building on the common ground held by various generations. One shared priority is the lack of safe public spaces in which to congregate (Pain and OPDM 2005). Regeneration projects are viewed as a context for nurturing intergenerational cooperation (Pain and OPDM 2005).

Pain (2005) has identified a particular problem in deprived neighbourhoods where conflict between the generations is increasingly publicised. She states that this conflict is reflected in contests over the use of public space as well as crime and disorder. It manifests in unequal involvement in community activity, local policy initiatives and consultation, with young people being the least likely to participate. (Pain and OPDM 2005)

BACKGROUND AND DEFINITION

In response to what was perceived as a growing distance and potential confrontation between generations, Intergenerational programmes first originated over forty years ago in the United States. They can now be found in a wide range of settings such as schools, child/adult day-care programmes, youth community programmes, universities, and others (Hanks & Ponzetti, 2004; Hatton-Yeo & Ohsako, 2000).

The International Consortium of Intergenerational Programs (ICIP) defined them as “social vehicles that create purposeful and ongoing exchange of resources and learning among older and younger generations.” The Beth Johnson Foundation definition is also frequently used “any activity which aims to bring people together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities which promote greater understanding and respect between generations and contributes to building more cohesive communities.” (Beth Johnson Foundation, 2001).

While there are many models of intergenerational programming, the most common types are (a) those in which a service is provided for young people by the older person, for example mentoring programmes (b) those in which the young people provide a service or support to the older person (eg befriending or visitation programmes (c) programmes where the two
generations collaborate on activities as equal partners, often providing a service to others in the community and (d) older people and youth engaging together in learning/social activities (e.g., singing) (Centre for Intergenerational Practice, n.d.; Hatton-Yeo & Ohsako, 2000).

The common features of Intergenerational programmes are that they involve at least two generations and that these two generations are involved in activities which are mutually beneficial and facilitate relationship-building outside the family sphere. They often involve the sharing of skills, knowledge and experience between young and older people (Ventura-Merkel and Liddoff, 1983).

In general the age of participants is considered important to ensure that the interaction is truly intergenerational. The Beth Johnson Foundation (BJF) suggests that those involved should be 25 or under and 50 or over, others suggest different ages. Pain (2005), for example, defines older people as those aged over 60. Some programmes also take a multigenerational approach which includes the ‘middle generation’ (i.e. aged 25–50) as participants rather than as facilitators (e.g. Magic Me, 2005).

One of the central aims of these programmes tends to be a desire to bring the different age groups together in order to resolve conflict and tension in local community settings (Granville 2002, p. 24). Those who are involved in developing intergenerational practice see it as a way to encourage meaningful and productive ‘engagement’ between the young and old in order to improve and enhance the quality of life for the young, old and general community. Or as Kaplan (2001) puts it, the consistent theme articulated is that “we are better off—as individuals and as a society—when open lines of communication, caring and support exist between the generations” (p. 2).

The range of activities which can be considered intergenerational is vast and can include simple interaction in communities which support multi-generational living or joint activities such as community development or environmental activities. It can also involve experiencing art or culture together through community initiatives to open up collaborative spaces such as community centres or work places. It can also include activities which bring generations together in playing, acting or performing together (e.g. arts, theatre, music, festivals, workshops).

Finally it can include more structured activities which promote learning between generations (e.g. skills and capacity development, education and training, digital literacy, employment, oral and local history, reminiscence, preserving cultural heritage) or programmes which offer ways of helping and supporting each other through, for example childcare support for single parents, mentoring and mediation for children and young people, support for migrants, or interaction between day care centres for children and retirement homes.
SECTION 2  OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS

The outcomes of intergeneration programmes tend to be linked to their aims. According to Pain (2005) programmes in the UK aim to promote general well-being through the building relationships, changing of negative attitudes and increasing community cohesion. They can also produce specific benefits for the individual involved such as providing skills to help address anti-social behaviour or supporting the learning of participants.

Many also aim

- to help build communities and sustain services through volunteering,
- to increase the self-confidence and well-being of both old and young
- to recognise the mutual dependency of young and old.
- to increase social integration and collaboration;
- to strengthen family relationships
- to increase knowledge, skills, personal and social development

(Greengross, 2003; Hatton-Yeo & Ohsako, 2000; Mercken, 2003; Thang, Kaplan,& Henkin, 2003.)

Pain suggests that in some cases, where the main aims of the projects were addressed by getting young and older people to interact together, the actual activities taking place were of secondary importance (Pain, 2005)

BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN AND OLDER PEOPLE

Because of the diversity of intergenerational programmes, the range of potential benefit is similarly vast. It is therefore useful to classify the benefits in relation to the aims and expected outcomes of each of the programme. For example in relation to children many programmes aim to produce improvements in health; knowledge or academic ability; attitude towards older people. There are many programmes designed to provide adult intervention into the lives of young people. Many of these programmes involve older adults in a mentoring relationship with needy children. The mentoring often focuses on health or education needs as well as socialization and companionship.

MacCallum et al. (2006) recently analysed over 120 intergenerational programmes in Australia. They found that benefits can range from the more personal benefits such as ability to cope with difficulties associated with ageing (mental health or cognitive difficulties) as well as more social benefits such reduction in social isolation and ability to interact with young people. There were also clear benefits for the community through greater interaction between generations.
The full range of benefits identified include;

- Better mood, more vitality
- Increased ability to cope with physical and mental illness
- Increased perception of self-worth
- Opportunities to learn
- Escape from isolation
- Renewed appreciation for their past experiences
- Reintegration in the family and community life
- Receipt of practical help, such as for shopping or transport
- Spending time with young people combats feelings of isolation
- Increased self-esteem and motivation
- Sharing experiences with an audience which appreciates their achievements
- Respect, honour and recognition of their contribution to the community
- Learning about young people and development of skills, especially social skills and the use of new technologies
- Transmitting traditions, culture and language
- Enjoy themselves in physical activities
- Friendships with younger people and exposure to diversity
- Increased strength to cope with adversity

(MacCallum et al. (2006).

HEALTH AND WELLBEING CHANGE

There is abundant evidence that social and civic engagement keeps older people healthy and active and that for many older volunteers the experience of volunteering improved their life in some way, with over 20 percent reporting better health. (Lum & Lightfoot, 2005; Morrow-Howell et al., 2003; Musick & Wilson, 2003). Morrow-Howell, Hong and Tang (2009) The benefits of volunteering are not confined to the individual as over 90 percent of the volunteers felt that the community served by the volunteer programme was also better off as a result of their service (Morrow-Howell, Hong & Tang, 2009).

Older people tend to receive additional health benefits as a result of the experience of volunteering when the activity involves children and young adults (Hernandez & Gonzalez, 2008; Tan, Xue, Li, Carlson, & Fried, 2006) One study found that when Experience Corps volunteers partnered with children, not only did the children show an improvement in educational outcomes but the older people increased physical, cognitive and social activity (Tan, Xue, Li, Carlson, & Fried, 2006).
There are a range of evaluated programmes which show the benefits for children and older adults. This section will highlight some of the many benefits produced by intergenerational programmes through a brief description of the programmes.

**Family Friends;** This programme was established in the US by the National Council on Aging in the mid-1980s, and began with older volunteers mentoring parents of children with various disabilities. It now works with families experiencing various forms of challenge and disadvantage, including teen mothers, families reported to authorities for child abuse and neglect, and those raising children with HIV/AIDS. Evidence from the evaluation reports suggest that participating families had fewer contacts with physicians and fewer hospitalized days for their children than they did before the programme. Parents also describe their children as having improved self-esteem following the program. (Rinck & Hunt, 1997).

**Across Ages;** This programme is based on concept of mentoring and it matches older people with young people in a school-based setting. The children are offered life skills education and community service opportunities (Taylor et al., 1999). The evaluation has shown that participating students can demonstrate health-related outcomes such as improved sense of well-being and safer, healthier responses to situations involving drug use. Students also showed more positive attitudes toward school, the future, and older people.

**Police Working With Youth Programmes;** In the US a range of different programmes have been developed to address crime and anti-social behaviour and to improve relations between police and disadvantaged young people, many of which showed varying degrees of success. An evaluation of ‘Police Working With Youth Programs’ contrasted young people in the programme with young people recruited from local high schools. The aim of the research was to show that young people who participated in the programmes showed more positive changes than young people in the comparison group in four general categories.

The outcomes included indicators of personal adjustment, social competencies, positive connections with adults and positive connections with the community. The research found that one particular group – those who entered the programmes with low levels of psychosocial functioning showed significantly more positive changes than the comparison group on several of the outcomes. These included self-assertive efficacy, self-regulatory efficacy, and empathy for others. The vast majority of young people regarded their participation in Police Working With Youth Programs as a very positive experience. (Anderson et al 2007)

**SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC BENEFITS**

Research has found that young people involved in mentoring programmes were less likely to get involved in violence and drug abuse and were more likely to attend school, have more solid academic outcomes and be able to build healthier relationships (Tierney, Grossman & Resch, 1995). A Canadian study showed that intergenerational mentoring programmes enhance literacy development in the children and young people involved (Ellis, Small-McGinley and Hart cited in Intergenerational Strategies, 2004).
**Ballymun Intergenerational Local History Programme;** In this programme older members of the local community (over 55s) volunteer to visit primary school students in their classroom to tell them what life was like when they were in school. The volunteers receive training in Child Protection and Storytelling. This aim of the programme is to build a connection between young people and older people from their own community and reduce the isolation of older people by encouraging them to become involved in voluntary activity. It also seeks to increase knowledge of local history among the children and their teachers.

The evidence suggests that the programme offered benefits to the volunteer, student, and teacher. The school was supported in meeting objectives of the history primary school curriculum; volunteers gained many benefits from sharing their knowledge and stories; students gained great knowledge of what life was like in the past as well as many interesting stories relating to sites and events in their locality. Evidence suggests that even greater preparation and follow-up visits might help to enhance the learning experience for students. Also, the expansion of the programme to new volunteers might offer benefits to other members of the community who may be feeling isolated and who are willing to give their time. (Finn and Scharf 2012)

**Wizards of Words (WoW);** This is an intergenerational reading programme that pairs trained volunteers over the age of 55 years with children from first and second class. The older volunteers work with children who need help with reading, throughout the academic year for two to three 30-minute sessions per week. WoW uses a guided-reading approach where the volunteers adopt a three-stage process during each one-to-one session. Children are withdrawn from the classroom for WoW - all reading assessment data and anecdotal information is fed back to teachers and parents at regular reporting times throughout the year. The programme’s goals are to improve children's emotional well-being, and increase reading achievement in four key areas (i.e. vocabulary, phonics, comprehension, and fluency). An experimental evaluation of the programme is nearing completion and will be reported on during 2012. The evaluation also includes an assessment of implementation issues.

**ATTITUDINAL CHANGE**

Perhaps the most common aim of intergenerational programmes is to bring about a change of attitudes towards older people or a reduction in the level of ageism or age-related stereotyping. In the US many of these are sponsored by schools and day-care facilities and their primary aim is to reduce distrust between children and older people (McCrea & Smith, 1997, and Newman 1997).

Pain (2005) suggests that negative attitudes among young people are not difficult to overcome and what is needed is greater levels of contact between the groups. If greater understanding is achieved it can lead, in some cases, to a reduction of misunderstanding and tension between groups. For example, Whitworth (2004) describes a project involving young people and residents of sheltered housing, which engaged them in activities together. Following the project, the number of complaints to police from the sheltered housing
regarding ‘youth disorder’ dropped significantly, as residents became more tolerant of young people.

A Spanish study which sought to analyse the effect of an intergenerational programme on the stereotyped attitudes that older people have towards themselves and that young people have towards older people. Many of the older participants were slightly depressed and had a negative stereotyped view of ageing. They found significant changes in the wellbeing and state of mind of the older people who participated in the programme, particularly among those who interacted with the young people; those in the control group who did not interact showed a significant dis-improvement in their state of mind. In fact both young and older age-groups who interacted with each other reduced their stereotypes while those older people with no interaction with the young people increased their stereotyping attitudes. (Hernandez and Gonzalez 2008)

Intergenerational programmes can also be aimed at promoting positive development in young people. Research on one programme found that developing good relationships with older adults, over time, facilitated young people’s engagement in learning a range of skills relevant to careers, in addition to improving their self-management abilities and developing capacities to function effectively in the world around them. The research also found that young people benefit from the information, encouragement, and contacts they gain from developing relationships with highly resourced adults in the community (Jarrett, Sullivan, & Watkins, 2005). In brief, strong relationships can promote youth empowerment—young people can become more confident, skilled, and connected.

**The Learning and Growing Together intergenerational (IG) programme** was developed to bring groups of young and old together and foster relationships and understanding between the generations. To evaluate the impact of the programme, students in the three classes were asked to provide descriptors of “old people” before and after contact with older people in the IG programme. On completion of the programme significant increases were found among some children in the number of positive words used to describe old people, as well as a decrease in the number of negative words used. The difference in the impact of the programme could be attributed to the level of contact between the children and the older people and those who had considerably less contact with older people receiving less benefit from the programme in terms of the level of change in their attitudes compared to the other two classes. (Bales et al 2000)

**REDUCING SOCIAL ISOLATION**

Increasing social connection and networking in the community has been found to have a range of health and wellbeing impacts for older people. (Ryff, 1989). Many of the benefits for older people derive from the creation of more active roles in their communities which add significance to their daily lives. These active roles can include involvement in intergenerational programmes or paid work and the provision of support to families, either their own families or those of others.
Active Ageing – Liverpool UK - The Active Ageing Programme in Liverpool grew out of concern that many older people were not participating in community life, due to a desire to avoid antisocial behaviour associated with the young people in their communities. The programme has evolved since its inception in 2002 and has now expanded to include a designated site, The Sunflower Centre, a public building situated across the street from the secondary school. In this centre a variety of shared activities are organised such as training courses (e.g., addiction prevention, family genealogy, language learning). An evaluation of the programme found that while both generations benefited from the specific learning activities, one of the main benefits was the greater understanding of one another developed through the interaction. Older participants reported reduced fear of young people and there was a perceived reduction in anti-social behaviour in the area.

Experience Corps - This US school-based programme links the local retired community with primary school children. The evaluation showed that after four months of intensive participation, the older persons showed a reduction in depressive symptoms, watched less television every day, developed more problem-solving skills and increased their mobility (measured, for instance, by how long it took them to stand from a seated position). No changes were found in overall happiness (Fried et al., 2000).

A UK review of intergenerational programmes found that many older people gained a renewed sense of worth through their involvement in programmes as they felt they were contributing to the lives of young people (Hatton-Yeo, 2007; Stanton and Tench, 2003). As one older person commented:

[A girl with behavioural difficulties] has been left to run wild on the streets with her brothers since she was about three or four. She finds it difficult at school but I get her to sit next to me and I tell her she’s wonderful. She’s really changed over this time and she takes part much more now. (Whitworth 2007a pp.10–11)

Intergenerational programmes can be developed to share the skills and experience of the generations. One report described a programme in Germany in which young people helped older people to maintain and update their technological skills required while older people could offer the young people models for complicated decision-making processes, for formulating long-term developmental projects, and the technical and social skills required in the world of work. (UNESCO

**BENEFITS FOR COMMUNITIES**

There is a widespread view in the literature that intergenerational contact improves community capacity. According to Kaplan (2004) “At the root of these intergenerational programs, priorities, and practices is a firm belief that we are better off-as individuals, families, communities, and as a society—when there are abundant opportunities for young people and older adults to come together to interact, educate, support, and provide care for one another.”
In many communities older people tend to have a stronger voice in community development than young people because of their greater involvement in civic activity. Riseborough and Jenkins (2004, 42) conclude that over the last decade older people have gone from participating in some regeneration programmes almost as an afterthought, to ‘achieving a growing prominence in regeneration and in related policy areas on housing, support, services, care and health’. In this sort of activity, the older people who get involved tend to be better organised, more confident and more highly skilled, and the voluntary groups which support their interests in this area. (Pain 2005)

Pain also suggests that many young people resent the way they are labelled, they feel misunderstood in their use of public space, and they have no faith in older people to support them or help with their problems. Community based intergenerational activities have produced benefits in a variety of policy areas such as community safety and regeneration. (Springgate et al 2008)

A range of other potential benefits have been identified in the literature such as helping promote work between different community groups, breaking down barriers and stereotypes about the young and old, enhancing and building culture and providing volunteers and workers to create community facilities and activities (Intergenerational Innovations, 2004).

For example, Granville (2002) has identified the potential of intergenerational practice to deliver aspects of the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, suggesting that it could make a significant contribution to strengthening community cohesion. She gives a number of examples of projects, including:

- A Citizen’s Forum in Bournemouth made up of older and young people explored how generations felt about the past and future of the town and its public spaces, and their perceptions of each other (Hatch 2003).
- Edinburgh Youth Social Inclusion Project brought older and young people together to develop a space where young people felt they had a right to be and could spend informal social time. It also sought solutions to conflict beyond the police asking young people to move on (Young 2003).
- Getting On in Camden: enabling meaningful contact between generations to help in formulating Community Plans.
- Generation X on the Ely estate in South Wales: confronted prejudices between older and young people in area of high crime and intergenerational tension.
- LifeLink in North Tyneside: addressed regeneration issues through tackling fear of crime among older people by improving contact with young people. (Granville 2002)

Kuehne outlines three ways in which intergenerational programmes strengthen the community: (1) through building collaborative partnerships; (2) through developing a community’s assets, capacities and abilities; and (3) through promoting relationships and
culture. Collaborative partnerships involve organisations such as service providers, schools and retirement homes working together on intergenerational projects.

**Newcastle Coalfields Intergenerational Community Development Project (NCICDP, 2005)**

The Newcastle Coalfields Intergenerational Community Development Project was funded by the Health Action Zone and the Primary Care Trust (PCT). It has two facets. Firstly, ‘community action programmes’ bring young and old together to work together over a series of weeks to identify issues of concern within their communities, and then influence decision-makers to make changes. Secondly, ‘supporting role programmes’, which are varied, and are used to introduce participants to intergenerational work before starting community action programmes or as stand-alone projects. As a result of the projects there has been increased social interaction between the generations and positive changes in attitudes towards each other.

Some intergenerational programmes are developed to fill a community need and provide an effective and cost-efficient way of providing services in the community. By working together both generations can help build social cohesion in the community, pooling resources to help respond to the needs of others. This can mean that both public and private groups are better able to meet the needs not only of young and older people but the community in general. One US example of such a programme is the Hope Meadows community in Illinois.

**HOPE MEADOWS – ILLINOIS, USA**

“Hope Meadows”, is a planned intergenerational community in which families receive rent-free housing in exchange for parenting three or four foster children, most of whom have been in very disadvantaged family situations.

In addition older people are given housing at a reduced rent if they participate in volunteer activities in the community, including playground supervision and tutoring activities. The real benefit of this programme is that children with difficult family backgrounds who would otherwise be raised in institutional environments and group homes, are provided with an adoptive family environment within a caring community supportive to all its members, both young and old (e.g., Eheart, Power, & Hopping, 2003). While it was difficult for the evaluation to ascribe direct improvements in children’s health status to the programme, it clearly offered a better future for the children involved while reducing pressure on the state services. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, April 2001).
The evidence outlined above suggests that intergenerational programmes can offer many diverse benefits. However it is essential that good practice is understood and followed to ensure that the programmes developed deliver on their potential. Several authors have analysed the literature to identify the essential features of successful intergenerational programmes. For example Bressler, Henkin and Adler (2005) identify five essential elements of successful intergenerational programmes;

1. Roles: All programme participants should have an assigned role, a position and a task that they understand and that is meaningful to them.

2. Relationships: IPs go beyond the organisation of a service; they seek to ensure that their participants develop personal relationships and positive feelings (affection, support, trust, companionship, etc.).

3. Reciprocity: All participants should experience giving to and receiving from people who are not of their age group.

4. Ongoing recognition of each participant’s contributions to the programme. Experience shows that this type of recognition serves as a wonderful source of motivation for IP participants.

5. Capacity to respond to community needs: The programmes that focus on satisfying real and clearly identified needs are more likely to be successful” (Bressler, Henkin and Adler 2005)

This section will summarise the main features of successful programmes as identified in the literature.

Planning;

Many authors have highlighted the need for careful planning around clear goals and careful organisation of ‘meaningful and mutually beneficial activities’ in order to ensure that both age groups are engaged. (BJF, 2009) The following are a number of considerations project organisers should bear in mind when planning intergenerational activities;

- It is important to clearly identify the goals of the programme as well as the needs it intends to meet. These goals should be clearly outlined to potential participants and the goals identified should be linked to usual practices of the community programmes.

- Both groups should be involved in the preparation of the project plans in order to ensure that the activities are of interest to and tailored to the needs of both. It is particularly important that young people be given meaningful involvement in planning and organising projects. They should be given responsibility for areas such as recruitment, organisation, fund raising and budgeting.
• The needs and abilities of participants in both groups should be carefully considered, to ensure that everyone is fully able to participate, without risk to health or well-being. For example, the physical capabilities of older people with limited mobility, and any special support or facilities arising from those mobility problems, need to be factored into the design of a project. (BJF 2009)

Length of Programme:

The duration of the programme is also a factor that contributes to or detracts from its success. The key point is that intergenerational programmes can last long enough for relationships to be established and stereotypes eliminated. In programmes where contact is established but no relationships formed, there is evidence that the positive impact is short-lived. The general recommendation in the literature is that a programme should ensure that the contact between groups of younger and older people is sustained rather than intermittent. It is difficult for groups to establish relations and develop trust if the opportunities for engagement are limited, as in the case of one-day events or short interview sessions.

This has been established by evaluations of a number of programmes for example Cool Girls, Inc. This was a programme which offered mentoring, academic enrichment, and an after-school programme to inner-city elementary and middle school girls. The evaluation examined changes over 1 academic year in four domains. It found that differences in duration were closely linked to the variation in outcomes and that the young people who received more mentoring sessions received the greatest benefit. (Karcher, 2005b). A similar finding resulted from the evaluation of a programme which offered intergenerational workshops lasting five hours on one single day. The research found that the programme did not produce any positive effect on students’ stereotypes of older adults (Couper, Sheehan & Thomas 1991)

Recruitment

The project plan should also include a strategy for recruitment and adequate preparation of both groups before interaction. Other suggestions for recruitment of participants include;

• Organisers should allow sufficient time for effective recruitment. As mentioned above responsibilities should be shared between stakeholder organisations, ensuring that each of the groups carry equal responsibility for recruitment.

• Organisers should aim to recruit roughly equal numbers of younger and older participants so that everyone will have equal opportunities to be fully engaged in intergenerational activities. Recent research suggests that the ratio of younger people to older people is ‘a key factor for achieving successful outcomes’ and recommends a ratio of 1 younger person: 1 older person (Martin et al., 2010: vi).

• Particular efforts should be put into ensuring that marginalised or hard to reach groups are included. In order to reach more isolated older people project information could also be more widely advertised in the places many older people
frequent (e.g. supermarkets, church halls, community centres, GP surgeries etc). (BJF 2009)

**Preparation of participants**

Having recruited participants, the advice from the literature is that both age groups should be given opportunities to meet separately before the programme begins to explore the issues. They should have an opportunity to discuss attitudes to and perceptions of the other generation and to identify their personal goals. They should also be given the opportunity to identify potential challenges and, as far as possible, to prepare participants (e.g. younger people working with frail older people; confident older people working with shy and retiring younger people).

It is also important that all potential partners receive clear communication about projects at the recruitment stage, to encourage informed participation and ensure potential participants are aware of the intergenerational focus and the commitment involved.

The involvement of champions can be essential to the success of the programmes. This means people who can outline the merits with enthusiasm and commitment and who, with their work, promote the programme and inspire other people to become involved.

**Developing the capacity of communities**

The best IPs succeed in raising levels of competence, trust and status among persons of different generations within the community. This results in more unified communities capable of successfully solving their problems and increasing their development.

**Research and Evaluation**

The need for an evidence base: Intergenerational work usually is based on anecdotal evidence that alludes to some specific aspect of the programme rather than its general impact. Where there is a well-founded and systematic IP evaluation, there are greater achievements.

**CHALLENGES AND POTENTIAL BARRIERS**

It is important to be aware of potential barriers to success in advance of programme development. A Canadian study (Ayala et al 2008) identified a number of potential barriers to successful implementation of intergenerational programmes which may equally apply in any country. They include the following;

**Resources**; These can include specific difficulties with funding, staffing, time, and facilities to develop, implement, and sustain intergenerational programmes. Many programmes are developed with short term or project related funding which can present problems for sustaining the relationships developed through the project.
Accessibility: Difficulties accessing the programmes were identified as potential barriers either because of lack of suitable transport or because of costs involved. The timing or scheduling of intergenerational programmes can present difficulties as young people are in school during the daytime, which is when older people are most available to attend. Finally, the physical and/or emotional health of older people, including mobility, may impact their ability to participate.

Capacity: The skills, attitudes and knowledge of organizations, staff, and participants can also act as a barrier to successful implementation of an intergenerational programme.

Recruitment: Many participants in the Canadian research found that creation of interest in the programme was an ongoing challenge. Participants concluded that both youth and older people’s organizations need to be made aware of the potential benefits of intergenerational programmes.

McCallum et al (2006) also identified recruitment as a potential problem, suggesting that this reflects the fact that many young people and older people begin by feeling threatened or unsure about the other generation. McCallum suggests that this is made more difficult in institutional settings such as schools, because of a lack of contacts with community groups or others who may be able to assist. In addition, the burdens associated with obtaining police clearances, attending training sessions and keeping records were all cited as added difficulties.

Conclusion - Lessons learned

- The needs of both generations must be prioritised equally and programmes must ensure that both generations benefit.
- Programmes need to be of sufficient duration to ensure the development of meaningful relationships
- They should have clearly defined and agreed aims, developed with participant groups as far as possible.
- They should have clearly defined and agreed outcomes.
- Including so-called ‘hard to reach’ groups can lead to more meaningful and effective outcomes.
- The setting should be one in which both generations feel comfortable.
- Young and older people should enter the programme on an equal footing, and have equal involvement in the planning and delivery of the programme.
- It has been suggested that greater levels of resources are needed to sustain the involvement of young people (Pain 2005) and therefore that more resources and a greater level of support should be devoted to sustaining their involvement.
- To facilitate monitoring and evaluation programmes should outline their clear aims and potential outcomes in advance.
Outcomes should then be measured using a range of quantitative and qualitative evaluation techniques. Because of the likely nature of outcomes, qualitative measurement may often be most appropriate.
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