

CARE HOME FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS (CARE HOME FANS): INTERGENERATIONAL LINKING PROJECT FINAL REPORT

**Care
Home
FaNs**
Intergenerational
Linking

*“Discovering the untapped potential
and social value of connecting
younger people with older people
living in care homes”*



FEBRUARY 2023

My home life
England



**The Linking
Network**

AUTHORSHIP AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CONTENTS

1. Introduction	4
2. Background and context	8
Theoretical framework	8
Literature review	9
3. Evaluation methods for the design and delivery of the national intergenerational linking programme	15
Aims of the research	15
4. Setting out on an intergenerational journey	19
5. The Broker Experience	29
Characterising the role of the local broker	31
6. Intergenerational interactions	39
7. Outcomes and impacts for younger and older people	42
Impacts for children	42
Impacts for older adults living in care homes	51
Impacts on broader community	58
Summary of impacts	61
8. Reflections	62
Project success	62
Challenges experienced	64
What worked well and what could be improved?	65
9. The journey continues	70
Practical guidance for getting started with intergenerational linking	70
Implications for future intergenerational programmes	72
Conclusion	75
References	76
Appendices	78

1. INTRODUCTION

“Change begins with small steps, one person at a time. The enormity and complexity of world issues can make you feel that personal actions make no difference in the big picture. Intergenerational practice challenges the ‘me-centred’ mindset and encourages an outward-facing viewpoint where individuals can develop their own skills, values and attitudes, while benefiting other members of the local community.”

Local community broker #4, Nov 2021

Intergenerational practice refers to initiatives that bring together older adults and young people “in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities which promote greater understanding and respect between generations and contributes to building more cohesive communities. Intergenerational practice is inclusive, building on the positive resources that the younger and older have to offer each other and those around them” (Beth Johnson Foundation, 2009).

The Care Home Friends and Neighbours (Care Home FaNs): Intergenerational Linking project is a national social action project connecting young people aged 5–14 from schools and youth organisations with older people living in care homes across England. In total, at least 230 organisations (including 116 schools and youth groups, and 114 care homes) took part in the linking programme between 2019 and 2022. An estimated minimum of 4,000 young people and 2,000 older people living in care homes participated, making it the largest intergenerational programme and evaluation project ever to take place in England.

The project was funded through the **#iwill Fund**. The #iwill Fund is made possible thanks to £66 million joint investment from **The National Lottery Community Fund** and the **Department of Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS)** to support young people to access high quality social action opportunities. The **Dunhill Medical Trust** acted as a match funder for the project. The Dunhill Medical Trust represents the interests of older adults now and in the future by funding research and social change initiatives that support people to lead healthier more rewarding lives as they age.

This project is led by a partnership between **My Home Life England (MHLE)**, an evidence-based and practice-informed initiative that promotes quality of life and delivers positive change in care homes and other care settings in England, and **The Linking Network (TLN)**, a charity working with schools and local communities to help children, young people and adults to explore identity, celebrate diversity, promote community and champion equality. Care Home FaNs is an existing national programme led by MHLE which “makes it easier for care homes to open their doors up to their communities, helping everyone to feel connected through meaningful engagement”. Care Home FaNs: Intergenerational Linking thus combines MHLE’s expertise with older people and care homes with The Linking Network’s expertise with young people and schools and their successful **Schools Linking programme**.

Based on the TLN approach, the framework for delivery of the intergenerational linking project at a national level included 11 local brokers across England who acted as project leads and were each responsible for creating and facilitating 10 intergenerational links between schools and care homes in their local area, with support provided by the National Team and Sharing Network. (See Figure 1 for an illustration of the project structure and Box 1 for a glossary of key terms.)

Current best practice for intergenerational engagement includes using appreciative inquiry approaches and putting participants at the forefront of decision-making and leading (Kernan, 2019). Appreciative inquiry is a strength-based, affirmative approach to action research that aims to evaluate programmes by focusing on what works well, and design and implement future initiatives based on best practice. Therefore, building on previous action research produced by My Home Life England, appreciative inquiry informed part of the research ethos for the design, delivery, and evaluation of this intergenerational linking programme project. A mixed-method evaluation was conducted by collecting observational and self-reported data from local brokers, schools and care homes involved in the project

This report communicates the findings of this evaluation, in order to:

- document the observed impacts of connecting school children and older people living in care homes; and
- assess the effectiveness of the broker-led-model for programme delivery, in order to understand what works well and what could be improved.

The findings are presented and discussed in the broader context of the education and social care sectors in the UK, the international body of knowledge on intergenerational practice, and youth social action.

In addition, it is important to acknowledge the unique environmental context for this project in that it took place during the Covid-19 global pandemic. By the time the country came to a halt and Covid restrictions were introduced in England in March 2020, the planning for this project was well underway, and by midway through 2020 the pilot phase (Wave 1) had commenced and grants had been awarded to two local organisations to deliver an intergenerational programme under the 'Care Home Friends and Neighbours' banner. Given that the aim of the project was to connect people across the social care and education sectors - arguably the two sectors hit hardest by Covid-19 in terms of risk to health and safety as well as restrictions on access - adjustments had to be made for the rollout of Wave 2 of the project. Hence, our evaluation relies more heavily on data from the local brokers and school and care home leads, rather than directly from younger and older participants. The Covid-19 pandemic is a constant theme threaded throughout our findings. It is referenced both as a source of frustration and challenge to be overcome, and also as providing a unique context in which the opportunity of social interaction with others, particularly for those living and working in care homes, took on new meaning and value.

The ultimate aim of this report is to draw meaningful lessons from this unique project, which took place at a time of unprecedented social disconnection and human resolve, that will serve to inform future intergenerational initiatives and provide evidence-based support for embedding such programmes into local and national social infrastructure.

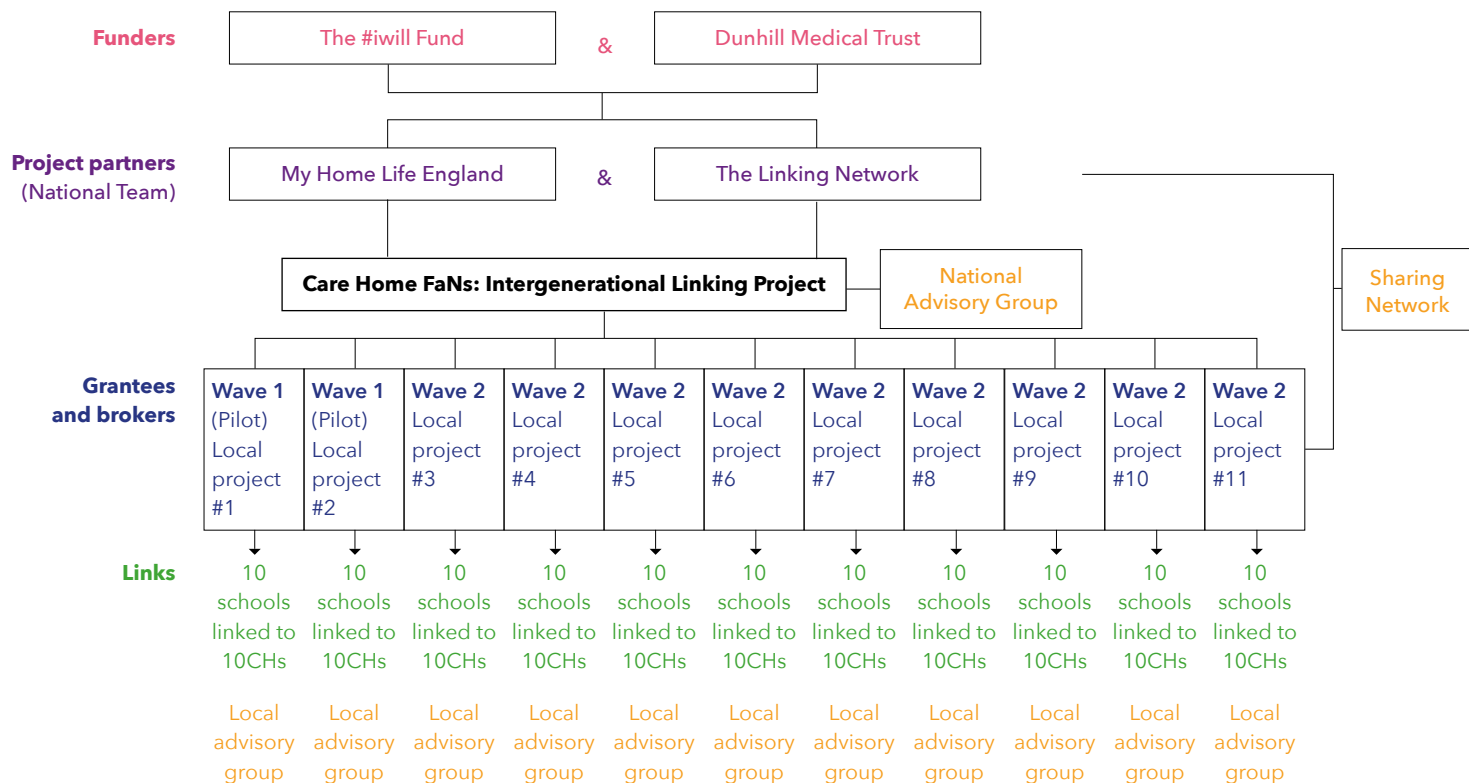


FIGURE 1: PROJECT STRUCTURE

Some local projects recruited slightly more than the required 10 links, leading to a total of 230 participating organisations (116 schools and youth groups, and 114 care homes).

Funding bodies and project partners	This project was funded through the #iwill Fund and the Dunhill Medical Trust. My Home Life England and The Linking Network are the partner organisations responsible for leading the project at the national level.
Local brokers (Local project leads)	Individuals employed by the various community organisations that received grant funding from the Dunhill Medical Trust and were tasked with leading the delivery of the Care Home FaNs: Intergenerational Linking project in their local area. Responsibilities of the local brokers included using their local knowledge and networks to identify and recruit suitable schools and care homes to participate, facilitating these links, and providing support for intergenerational activities to take place and relationships to grow.
Sharing Network	A supportive project management network for local brokers involved in the project. Facilitated by the project partners, the network provided an open space forum of monthly meetings to share ideas, progress, successes, challenges, good practice, resources, and advice on how to effectively develop and sustain intergenerational links between schools and care homes.
School and care home leads	A member of staff (e.g., teacher, youth coordinator, care home manager or activities coordinator) who was the direct point of contact for the project within their organisation. They were responsible for leading and championing the project in a practical way to support the link with their local school or care home and enable intergenerational activities to take place.
Intergenerational practice	Intergenerational practice refers to an initiative that brings together older adults and young people or children “in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities which promote greater understanding and respect between generations and contributes to building more cohesive communities. Intergenerational practice is inclusive, building on the positive resources that the younger and older have to offer each other and those around them” (Beth Johnson Foundation, 2009).
Intergenerational programme	An intergenerational programme is a form of human service that involves ongoing and organised interactions between members of the younger and older age groups for the benefit of all participants (Giraudeau & Bailly, 2019). Intergenerational programming is a form of social intervention, whose key element is intergenerational education, a non-formal and informal pedagogical approach that connects different generations, facilitating the transfer and exchange of knowledge, skills, abilities, and resources, allowing different generations to experience both similarities and differences by learning not only about others but also about themselves (Martins et al., 2019).
Intergenerational links	Intergenerational links refer to the specific groups of older and younger individuals connected through an intergenerational practice initiative or intergenerational programme. For this project an intergenerational link refers to the links between schools/youth groups and care homes in the same local area.
Intergenerational interactions and activities	Any activity that fosters cooperation, interaction, and exchange between two or more generations (Kaplan & Sánchez, 2014). For this project, intergenerational activities may have involved direct contact or communication between older and younger people (in person or virtually), or the preparation and receipt of letters, cards, gifts, or other materials sent between schools and care homes in the spirit of maintaining the intergenerational links.

Intergenerational community	An age-friendly community with a particular emphasis on social and physical environments that support social interactions, exchange, and cooperation across different generations (Generations United, 2016).
Appreciative inquiry	Appreciative inquiry is a strength-based, affirmative approach to action research that aims to evaluate programmes by focusing on what works well, and design and implement future initiatives based on best-practice.
Youth social action	<p>According to the #iwill campaign, “Youth social action refers to activities that young people do to make a positive difference to others or the environment”. These activities may be formal or informal and can occur in different contexts but often include volunteering, fundraising, campaigning, or supporting peers. The #iwill campaign identifies six principles that underpin high quality youth social action, and these were used as guiding principles in the design of this project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be youth-led • Be challenging • Have social impact • Allow progression to other opportunities • Be embedded in a young person’s life • Enable reflection about the value of the activity
Quality of life	Quality of life is defined by the World Health Organization as “an individual’s perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns”.
CQC rating	The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is the independent regulator of health and adult social care in England. The CQC conducts regular inspections of care homes to assess their performance against five criteria: safe, effective, caring, responsive, and well-led. Based on these criteria, an overall rating (outstanding, good, requires improvement or inadequate) is given to the care home to help people make informed decisions about care and encourage care services to improve.
Ofsted rating	The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) is a Government department responsible for inspecting and regulating services that provide care and education for children and young people. Ofsted inspection reports include an overall rating (outstanding, good, requires improvement, inadequate) based on four criteria: quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development, leadership and management). Their aim is to improve lives by raising standards in education and children’s social care.

BOX 1: GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The interest in intergenerational practice has increased substantially in recent years. A growing body of research evidence demonstrates that taking part in intergenerational activities can have wide-ranging impacts and provide benefits to all generational groups involved (Canedo-García, García-Sánchez, & Pacheco-Sanz, 2017; Drury, Abrams, & Swift, 2017; Giraudeau & Bailly, 2019; Gualano et al., 2018; Lee, Jarrott, & Juckett, 2020; Martins et al., 2019). We are continually learning about how to effectively design and deliver intergenerational programmes to enhance these impacts and benefits. This section provides a summary of relevant literature and theoretical frameworks that informed the design of the Care Home FaNs: Intergenerational Linking project and will be used to interpret its findings.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research project is interdisciplinary in nature, and as such, draws upon different bodies of scholarly work to underpin it. In addition to taking an appreciative inquiry approach to action research, the theoretical framework for this project is influenced by the main theories relevant to intergenerational practice, specifically the linking of school-aged children and older people living in care homes. These include intergroup contact theory, life-course development theory, youth social action, and person-centred/relationship-centred care for older people (Figure 2). Connections to these relevant theories are highlighted throughout the discussion of the relevant literature.



FIGURE 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK UNDERPINNING THE PROGRAMME DESIGN AND EVALUATION

LITERATURE REVIEW

The field of intergenerational practice has grown substantially in recent years. While a comprehensive review of the literature is beyond the scope of this study, the authors conducted a targeted literature review by searching five major databases (PubMed, Academic Search Complete, Science Direct, Scopus, and CINAHL Complete) accessed via City, University of London's library. They restricted the search to focus on systematic, meta-analytic, and scoping review articles published in the last five years (2017–2022). This search identified 14 review articles confirming a wide range of outcomes associated with intergenerational practice (Bagnasco et al., 2020; Burnes et al., 2019; Canedo-García et al., 2017; Gerritzen, Hull, Verbeek, Smith, & de Boer, 2020; Giraudeau & Bailly, 2019; Gualano et al., 2018; Jarrott, Scrivano, Park, & Mendoza, 2021; Krzeczowska et al., 2021; Laging, Slocombe, Liu, Radford, & Gorelik, 2022; Lu, Lan, Hsieh, & Lan, 2022; Martins et al., 2019; Peters et al., 2021; Ronzi, Orton, Pope, Valtorta, & Bruce, 2018; Zhong, Lee, Foster, & Bian, 2020). A brief account of the findings from this literature review follows.

Why take part in intergenerational practice? Evidence from the literature on potential impacts

Many studies have investigated the potential impact of intergenerational initiatives for children, young people, and older adults, including those living with dementia, and most have focused on measuring outcomes related to improved attitudes and overall wellbeing (Steward et al., 2023). Not only does research suggest intergenerational activities are enjoyable and lead to individuals feeling more valued (Ronzi et al., 2018), they also promote increased interaction between generations, fostering mutual understanding (Martins et al., 2019), empathy and respect (Bagnasco et al., 2020), improved health outcomes (Zhong et al., 2020) and the development of specific competencies such as academic and social skills, communication, and creativity (Martins et al., 2019). However, interpreting these findings can be confusing, given the broad range of outcomes measured and variation in study design and quality. A synthesis of findings from the 14 systematic reviews and meta-analyses identified the most commonly reported benefits that are best supported by the evidence. These include: (1) improvement in age-related attitudes; (2) positive effects on wellbeing and social connectedness; and (3) skills development and learning.

1. Improvement in age-related attitudes

Ageism refers to the formation of negative stereotypes, prejudice, or discrimination about oneself or another person based on age. The impact of ageism, particularly when it adversely affects older adults' health and wellbeing, is expected to grow given the increasing number of older people within an ageing population (Burnes et al., 2019). It is important to remember, though, that "ageism can cut both ways" (Drury et al., 2017, p.14), as ageist attitudes can also negatively impact younger generations. Increasing contact between generations may help reduce ageism. This is particularly significant in the current context given the way the Covid-19 pandemic changed the nature of interactions and reduced contact between generations (Drury, Abrams, & Swift, 2022).

THEORY LINK: INTERGROUP CONTACT THEORY

The idea that intergenerational contact could help to reduce ageism is supported by Allport's Intergroup contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954). This suggests that bringing social groups (e.g., different age or generational groups) together in positive interactions reduces prejudice. Conditions necessary to support positive attitude change include support from authority figures or policies; equal status of both groups such as enabling participants' voices to be heard; and collaboration toward a common goal (Weaver, Naal & Jarrott, 2019). This theory has been used in intergenerational research to help explain outcomes and to inform the design and delivery of intergenerational programmes.

Research evidence shows that intergenerational contact can improve ageist attitudes (Bagnasco et al., 2020; Burnes et al., 2019; Giraudeau & Bailly, 2019; Gualano et al., 2018; Krzeczowska et al., 2021; Laging et al., 2022; Martins et al., 2019). For instance, a 2019 systematic review of interventions to reduce ageism found that interventions that combined education and intergenerational contact showed the largest effects on attitudes towards older adults, particularly for adolescent and young adult groups (Burnes et al., 2019). Additionally, intergenerational programmes within care facilities may also result in younger generations having a more positive view of long-term care itself (Blais, McCleary, Garcia, & Robitaille, 2017). For older adults, Krzeczowska et al. (2021) found that cross-age attitudes and generativity (related to an increased sense of self-worth and ability to support, nurture and provide knowledge/guidance to the younger generation) were enhanced by intergenerational engagement. However, only one of the 44 studies of intergenerational interventions they reviewed was based within the UK (Alcock, Camic, Barker, Haridi, & Raven, 2011), reflecting the limited intergenerational research in this context. Nonetheless, the idea that attitudes toward another generation may be improved for both younger and older people is supported by Martins et al.'s (2019) systematic review which showed that intergenerational programmes contributed to the construction of new meanings in relation to ageing and older people, and increased older people's understanding of younger generations. In addition, a meta-synthesis of qualitative literature by Bagnasco et al. (2020) identified 'Building intergenerational empathy and respect' as one of the major themes of qualitative research exploring the experience of participating intergenerational interventions in older people's care settings. Overall, these reviews suggest that by reducing ageist attitudes, intergenerational programmes may contribute to the development of age-friendly communities (Krzeczowska et al., 2021).

2. Positive effects on wellbeing and social connectedness

As loneliness and social isolation are increasingly significant social problems, many intergenerational programmes aim to promote wellbeing and social connectedness (Petersen, 2022). Decreased social relationships and increased isolation and loneliness, particularly as one ages, has been linked to poor physical and mental health outcomes (Zhong et al., 2020). Studies have shown that participating in intergenerational programmes can have a positive impact on older adult's physical and mental wellbeing, including increases in physical activity, improved cognitive functioning and mood, and reductions in depression and anxiety (Giraudeau & Bailly, 2019; Gualano et al., 2018; Laging et al., 2022; Ronzi et al., 2018; Zhong et al., 2020). This is supported Bagnasco et al., (2020) who identified that participating in intergenerational interventions was "uplifting and energising" for older people in care settings. Additionally, Krzeczowska et al. (2021) found evidence of short-term benefit to specific aspects of cognitive functioning such as executive function and memory, as well as reduced anxiety and improvements to physical and mental wellbeing. In fact, they suggested that the volunteering associated with participating in intergenerational initiatives was linked to self-worth:

"Voluntary altruistic activities that are a part of social engagement may serve as a means to maintain older adults' quality of life and increase their levels of life satisfaction (Cipriani, 2007). They also promote their sense of purpose that, in turn, can contribute to improved wellbeing (Chippendale, 2013)." (Krzeczowska et al., 2021, p.26)

THEORY LINK: LIFE-COURSE THEORY

Erik Erikson's Life-course framework has been consistently used within intergenerational research. In particular, his concept of 'generativity' (Erikson, 1963) refers to the desire by older adults to pass on knowledge and guidance to younger generations in order to feel self-worth and a sense of purpose or legacy. Intergenerational practice may provide opportunities for older adults to share their life experiences and knowledge with younger people, increasing their sense of generativity and positively impacting their health and wellbeing (Warburton, 2014).

Alongside benefits for older adults such as reduced stress and depressive mood, Gualano et al. (2018) identified that programmes seemed to promote a sense of community for those participating. This suggests the positive impact of interventions on increased social inclusion and improved social relationships.

The improvements in wellbeing and social engagement may also be experienced by those living with dementia (Galbraith, Larkin, Moorhouse, & Oomen, 2015). A 2021 meta-analysis that focused on impacts for residents with dementia found that, although there was no significant impact on quality of life as a quantitative measure, participation in intergenerational activities did lead to improved pleasure levels and significantly reduced disengagement behaviours (Lu et al., 2022).

THEORY LINK: PERSON-CENTRED AND RELATIONSHIP-CENTRED CARE

Links between participating in intergenerational programmes and improved physical and mental health can be associated with person-centred and relationship-centred approaches within health and social care. For instance, health policy in the UK has advocated for older people requiring care to be treated as individuals through person-centred approaches that enhance the quality of their care. The concept of person-centred care has also been aligned with best-practice dementia care following the work of Tom Kitwood and others (Nolan, Davies, Brown, Keady, & Nolan, 2004). However, Nolan et al. (2004) argue that the emphasis on individual autonomy within person-centred approaches does not take relationships of interdependence into consideration. As a result, relationship-centred care, which still advocates personhood but acknowledges the network of relationships that lead to positive care experiences and health outcomes for older people is suggested as an alternative approach. Recent research has suggested that the supportive relationships and connections with the community that are promoted by intergenerational programmes involving older adults are a 'good fit' with the values of relationship-centred care (Rosa Hernandez, Murray, & Stanley, 2022, p.495).

Overall, Zhong et al.'s 2020 review of the impact of intergenerational interventions on health outcomes for older individuals concluded that, although interventions did not provide the same benefits for all participants, with some inconsistencies in wellbeing results across studies, intergenerational programmes can provide significant health-related benefits to older adults. They also suggested that the range of health benefits were most significant and broadest for programmes involving young children. However, the nature and quality of the evidence is mixed, as many studies focus on different sub-group populations (e.g. community-dwelling older adults, care home residents, people persons living with dementia, primary school students, university students, and young volunteers).

The benefit of intergenerational volunteering for young people is also supported by the literature. For example, Blais et al.'s (2017) review of intergenerational volunteer programmes within long-term care settings suggested that young people developed a range of social and career-related skills, formed reciprocal relationships and friendships with older adults, and experienced personal growth. Blais and colleagues also point out that youth volunteering has been associated with greater resilience and ability to manage stress. As loneliness and social isolation have been found to affect younger generations as well as older adults, this suggests that intergenerational volunteering is mutually beneficial, promoting wellbeing and social connectedness.

3. Skills development and learning

Intergenerational interactions may provide opportunities for lifelong learning through the sharing experiences, knowledge and values across generations (Martins et al., 2019). Several studies, (Gerritzen et al., 2020; Martins et al., 2019; Orte et al., 2018; Peters et al., 2021; Ronzi et al., 2018) found evidence that participation in intergenerational programmes contributed to mutual learning and knowledge transfer between generations leading to improved competencies, such as academic performance, communication skills (including how to interact with people with dementia), and social skills (including empathy and patience). Lee et al. (2021) noted the opportunities provided to young people to build relationships, learn about life-cycle developments and develop socio-emotional functioning both with non-kin and family members. In addition, Blais et al. (2017) suggested that intergenerational volunteering in long-term care facilities was suitable for young people who experienced difficulties learning in a traditional school or classroom environments and also drew comparisons between this type of voluntary activity and service-learning approaches in order to support career-related skill development.

THEORY LINK: YOUTH SOCIAL ACTION

Youth social action includes formal or informal voluntary activity which is led by young people and provides 'double benefit' - both to the young person and the community (Birdwell, 2013). In their report on youth social action in the UK, Birdwell and colleagues suggested that outcomes related to education were strongest. For instance, youth social action programme evaluations and research have shown that youth social action provides personal benefits such as self-confidence, sense of purpose, civic duty and social resilience, as well as the improved life outcomes associated with educational attainment and career development. Although little research has linked youth social action and intergenerational practice, these authors suggested that:

"Social action that focuses on inter-generational activity provides substantive social benefit especially as young people interact with older generations. This can help to bridge gaps in understanding, develop intergenerational learning and help to reduce the generational isolation felt by some of the elderly and the marginalisation felt by the young. All of these personal and educational benefits, when combined with the skills gained through participation, also offer social benefit by creating a happier, more able and more skilled workforce." (p.29)

In summary, studies generally report that intergenerational programmes have positive effects for those who take part, including: a positive impact on attitudes towards younger and older generations; improved mental and physical wellbeing and sense of community; and development of specific skills and lifelong learning. The theory and evidence-base in support of intergenerational practice continues to grow as different programme styles involving diverse populations are developed, implemented, and evaluated. However, it should be noted that there is wide variance in the quality of evaluation methodologies used, each with its own set of limitations (Canedo-García et al., 2017). Although the phenomena under study when evaluating intergenerational programmes may seem intangible and difficult to measure at times, it is clear these initiatives bring elements of joy, social connectedness and creativity into people's lives. This may account for why research on intergenerational programmes has often taken a qualitative approach - to record the experiences of participants and the diversity of delivery.

What does successful intergenerational practice look like?

There is wide variation in the nature of intergenerational programmes themselves - including the age groups involved, the settings in which intergenerational activities take place, the type of activities engaged in, and the desired outcomes - and few studies have focused on evaluating the specifics of programme design and implementation (Weaver, Naar, & Jarrott, 2019).

Some reviews (Gerritzen et al., 2020; Giraudeau & Bailly, 2019; Gualano et al., 2018; Jarrott et al., 2021), however, have identified key elements of successful intergenerational programmes and offer guidelines for best practice. For example, Gualano et al. (2018) acknowledge the importance of staff

training, organising activities meaningful to both sets of participants, and sharing results with families. In addition, they noted that the strongest intergenerational interaction occurred when activities encouraged conversation or were less structured. Martins et al.'s (2019) review suggested programmes should embrace social and political problems relevant to the generations involved. Peters et al. (2021) stressed the importance of including children and older adults as active agents in the planning, organisation and review of intergenerational activities, and suggested that practical factors such as geographic proximity and clear leadership affected sustainability.

These reviews echo the comprehensive list of principles put together by Jarrot et al. (2019), who distilled theory and research evidence into 11 best practice principles (see Theory link box below). While Jarrott and colleagues acknowledged that there cannot be a 'one-size-fits-all' approach for successful intergenerational programming, they aimed to create principles that provide practitioners with guidance that supports positive intergenerational interactions across diverse practices and participant groups.

However, it is important to understand that there is still limited evidence correlating programme design and impact, and a lack of evidence about best practice delivery in different contexts, therefore, greater understanding of what meaningful intergenerational engagement entails requires further research (Laging et al., 2022). As Peters and colleagues conclude, "we need to know if and how such programmes can capitalise on their potential" (Peters et al., 2021, p.12).

THEORY LINK:

Jarrott et al. (2019) drew on a range of theoretical approaches to develop their Best Practice Principles, including Allport's intergroup contact hypothesis and the person-centred philosophies outlined above. Taken together these principles reflect an ecological perspective which suggests that positive non-familial intergenerational contact requires the support and resources of those beyond the younger and older generations involved.

Best practice principles for intergenerational programs (Jarrott, Stremmel, & Naar, 2019)

1. Staff working with children and older adults collaborate to plan activities that are interesting and appropriate for participants. There is joint commitment to the partnership and regular communication.
2. Younger and older generations are involved in decision-making.
3. Participants are prepared for the activities in advance, either separately or as part of the intergenerational interaction. They are also given the opportunity to reflect on their experiences.
4. Participants are able to decide whether or not they take part. Participation is voluntary.
5. Activities reflect the shared interests or backgrounds of participants.
6. Activities are suitable for the ages and abilities of participants involved.
7. Activities provide opportunities to develop friendships by being regular, positive and helping to promote personal relationships.
8. The physical set up of materials, the space and furniture encourages intergenerational interaction and inclusion.
9. The number and mix of people from different generations as well as the facilitation strategies of staff support intergenerational interaction.
10. The equipment or environment is modified or adapted to suit participants' developmental and physical needs.
11. There is communication with parents and other stakeholders about the intergenerational activities. These activities and reflections are documented and the programme is evaluated taking into consideration a range of perspectives.

What are the knowledge gaps?

These reviews of the literature are helpful for understanding what we do know about intergenerational practice based on the latest evidence, but also what we don't know, which can be used to help guide future programmes and research. Currently, there are three major gaps in our knowledge about intergenerational programmes, which the current work may help to address:

- 1. Programme design and delivery:** As mentioned above, there is a need for a more detailed description of the design and delivery of intergenerational programmes and guidelines for best-practice based on successful outcomes. This is particularly significant given the impact of Covid-19 national and local restrictions, which meant that many intergenerational programmes had to stop altogether or adapt to provide different forms of interaction, including virtual and distanced activities. There is little research on such intergenerational programmes. However, pre-pandemic work by Canedo-Garcia et al. (2017) reviewed the difference between face-to-face and combined virtual and face-to-face programmes, finding that the mode of programme design had no significant difference upon effectiveness. Similarly, Belgrave and Keown (2018) investigated a combined virtual and face-to-face intergenerational music programme in which virtual elements helped generational groups to get to know one another, and found that close proximity was not required to foster relationships. This is supported by Paal and Peach's (2022) evaluation of a 'socially distanced' intergenerational music programme which took place within care home gardens in the autumn of 2021, when some Covid-19 restrictions were still in place. The results suggested that positive interactions and participant benefits occurred, despite limited physical proximity, as a result of the skilled facilitation of practitioners (Paal, 2022). However, Tan, Tee & Seetharaman (2020) contend that "virtual programs will never be able to fully replicate in-person sessions" (p.1331) and point out that physical closeness and touch may be important for those who experience physical or cognitive difficulties.
- 2. The risks and challenges associated with intergenerational programmes:** One of the few reviews to explore this was also one of the smallest. Bagnasco et al. (2020) conducted a systematic review and meta-synthesis of four qualitative studies on experiences of participating in intergenerational interventions in older people's care settings. One of the major themes identified - which few other studies have focused on - was "Engagement risks and challenges". These were linked to concerns around noise, physical contact, and the potential of some activities to "infantilize" older adults. Gualano et al. (2018) suggested that challenges also included needing an increased number of staff and access to resources. This is supported by Peters et al. (2021), who acknowledge practical barriers such as access to appropriate space, equipment and support for travel. Nonetheless, little attention has been given to documenting challenges and how they have been overcome within successful interventions.
- 3. Staff, community or environmental effects:** Effective intergenerational practice should provide benefits for all those involved; however, benefits to older and younger participants are predominant in the literature (Weaver et al., 2019). For example, although staff facilitating intergenerational activity are seen as crucial to the effectiveness of the programme (Sánchez & Kaplan, 2014), few studies explore this role in more detail (Weaver et al., 2019; Weeks, MacQuarrie, Begley, Nilsson, & MacDougall, 2016). A notable exception is a 2022 study of an intergenerational playgroup in Australia in which facilitators were referred to as the "glue" between families and older adults, and whose passion championed the continuation of the intergenerational initiative (Stanley, Allen, Tunks, Davenport, & Cartmel, 2022). In addition, most systematic reviews we considered contained no studies that addressed community or environmental effects. As Zhong et al. (2020) put it, "future research should investigate additional correlates and determinants of intergenerational interactions such as neighbourhood social and physical environments, demographic, and socioeconomic characteristics". Steward et al.'s (2023) review attempted to address this and explored agency/organisational as well as community benefit. Results suggested intergenerational programmes promoted age-inclusive environments which promoted engagement and expanded capacity within organisations, including by increasing the positivity of staff and alleviating workload, in some instances by providing support with caring responsibilities. Studies of community outcomes also suggested that intergenerational programmes promoted age-friendly communities and increased communication across individuals and organisations within communities. However, as the scoping review mostly concerned one-time or short-term programmes, Steward and colleagues recommend future research consider the sustainability of these outcomes to enhance community-level relationships across generations (Steward et al., 2023).

3. EVALUATION METHODS FOR THE DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF THE NATIONAL INTERGENERATIONAL LINKING PROGRAMME

In this section, we outline what Care Home FaNs: Intergenerational Linking set out to do, and describe the overarching study design for the project, as well as the specific research methods used to conduct the evaluation. Building on previous action research produced by My Home Life England, we adopted an appreciative inquiry approach, working with stakeholders at a grass-roots level to lead in decision-making, build on strengths, and learn from challenges in a supportive environment. This study additionally sought to explore the dynamics at play when youth social action is introduced into care homes for older people, and identify the extent to which intergenerational linking is able to demonstrate the #iwill Campaign's Six Quality Principles, in relation to not only young people, but also potentially residents, relatives and staff in care homes (Arthur, 2015).

AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The aims of the evaluation of the national intergenerational linking project were to:

4. assess the potential impact of intergenerational linking on younger and older people;
5. identify ways in which intergenerational linking can intersect with youth social action;
6. identify the extent to which intergenerational linking can contribute to enhancing quality of life for older people living in care homes;
7. better understand how intergenerational links between schools and care homes for older people can be most effectively established, supported, and sustained;
8. generate meaningful lessons learned to influence how future initiatives might be shaped.

Study design

In line with our appreciative inquiry approach, our research was interwoven with the development of the project itself, and changes were encouraged during the evaluation, rather than being left until after the research was completed. This was achieved by regularly asking local brokers, school and care home leads, and the National Team what was working; engaging in dialogue with these stakeholders about what was needed to implement desired changes; and supporting positive actions towards future aspirations.

Figure 3 shows a model of the appreciative inquiry process.

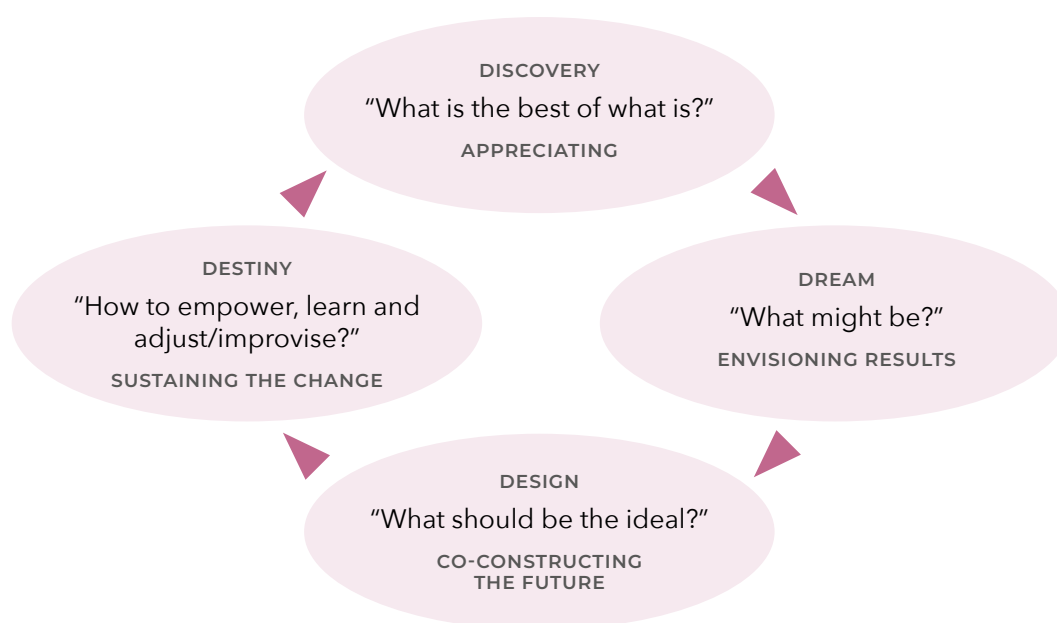


FIGURE 3: THE '4-D' MODEL OF THE APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY PROCESS (COGHLAN, PRESKILL, & TZAVARAS CATSAMBAS, 2003, P.11).

We used a mixed-methods study design to follow the learning journey of the 11 local areas, assess the effectiveness of the nationally coordinated broker-led model, and explore the impacts for individuals involved in intergenerational linking. This included a range of methods such as surveys, observations and semi-structured interviews - more detail on each is given below. The design of the research and initial survey data collection was led by Dr Ali Somers, while subsequent data collection and analysis was carried out by Dr Briony Jain and Lois Peach. Due to ethical and practical constraints, the researchers were not involved in the delivery of local intergenerational links, nor were they able to involve children and older adults directly in the research. This meant that local brokers and school and care home leads were actively involved in the appreciative inquiry approach by helping to conduct the research as well as being participants themselves. For instance, local brokers participated through Sharing Network meetings, completed reflective 'worksheets' (surveys) and helped to collect survey responses from individual school and care home leads. School and care home leads were asked to complete these surveys to provide details about their individual intergenerational link as well as to collect feedback from children and older adults about their experiences. As a result, in line with the participatory ethos of appreciative inquiry, the story of this project as told through this research was collaboratively constructed by all of those involved.

Participants and recruitment

The Care Home FaNs: Intergenerational Linking programme aimed to support the establishment of over 100 links between schools and care homes in 11 local areas across England. While the intergenerational programme itself centred on young children in schools and older people living in care homes, the participants of the evaluation research project were adults aged between 18 and 64 years who helped to facilitate these intergenerational links, either as project leads for the local areas ('local brokers') or as leads within the schools and care homes (e.g., teachers and care home staff). Here, we explain how local organisations and local brokers were recruited into the programme, and how they and the school and care home leads were invited to participate in the evaluation.

Local charity and community organisations were recruited to be involved in the project in two waves. Wave 1 was the pilot phase of the project which involved purposeful selection of two organisations located in Bristol and Bradford to work with the funding body and project partners to scope the work and understand how the intergenerational programme should be implemented nationally. Wave 2 involved a more formal recruitment and selection process. Firstly, a webinar was created by the project team to share the opportunity to be part of the national Care Home FaNs: Intergenerational Linking programme. Organisations that were in principle interested in bidding for funding were then offered an informal telephone conversation to hear more about the project, ask questions, and be given more detailed instructions on how to apply for the funding directly through the Dunhill Medical Trust. The Trust received 75 applications from local organisations across the country, which were shared with the project team and shortlisted according to their suitability and diversity. An interview process then took place and interviews were conducted virtually with representatives from each of the 19 shortlisted local organisations. To be selected for the programme, organisations had to demonstrate they would work with children aged 5-14 (through links with either schools or youth groups) and care homes for older people aged 65 years and over that served the least-resourced populations based on deprivation data published by the ONS. They also had to show experience of working with either demographic, and that they were able to embrace an ethos of co-creation with local partners. Following the interview process, a total of 10 grants were awarded. Shortly thereafter, one of the selected organisations withdrew their application, leaving 9 grantee projects recruited for Wave 2 and bringing the total to 11 for the project.

The 11 selected organisations were invited to set up 10 intergenerational links in each of their areas between local care homes for older people and schools or youth groups working with 5-14-year-olds, ideally linking schools and care homes within a short geographical range of each other. The process of identifying, approaching, and recruiting schools and care homes was handled by each local broker organisation, with guidance and support from the National Team. Brokers were also provided with template documents that could be issued to schools and care home leads to obtain their informed consent to participate in survey research, and for their information to be shared with the National Team for the purposes of this evaluation.

Finally, each local broker was encouraged to establish a local advisory group of individuals, representing older and younger people's voices and those of other experts and local stakeholders. Thus, the intergenerational programme involved approximately 341 facilitating adults across England (11 local brokers; 110 advisory group members; 110 school leads; and 110 care home leads). This group of people also formed the pool of participants who would be invited to participate in the evaluation through surveys and interviews. The structure for this programme is illustrated in Figure 1.

Data collection

Data were collected from multiple sources using several different methods over the course of the programme. This included collecting contextual data on the participating schools, youth groups, and care homes, and gathering feedback on their experiences through pre- and post-surveys. The primary source of information for this project, however, was local brokers sharing their experiences of facilitating the programme and feeding back observations from their links. This was gathered through reflective surveys, observation of the monthly Sharing Network meetings, and exit interviews with the local brokers.

1. Contextual data:

Local project leads submitted the names of the schools, youth groups and care homes that formed each of their local links. Most recruited the 10 required links, though some recruited slightly more, giving a total of 230 participating organisations across the country – 116 schools and youth groups, and 114 care homes (see Figure 4). These were collated into a database. Contextual data on the local area and participating organisations were then identified through desk-based research of publicly available information and input into the dataset. These included:

- Office of National Statistics population data
- Local area deprivation data
- School Ofsted rating and percentage of children on free school meals
- Care home size and service type
- Care home quality and safety rating

2. Survey data:

School and care home leads were invited by their local brokers to participate in the research project by completing surveys at the beginning and end of the project. It is important to note that schools, youth groups and care homes were not required to take part in the evaluation research in order to participate in the intergenerational linking programme. Participation was completely voluntary and was facilitated by the local brokers distributing participant information sheets, consent forms, and surveys to the schools and care homes, and collecting the completed materials. (See Appendix for example of participant information sheet, consent form, and surveys). These were then shared with the core team for analysis as part of this evaluation with the explicit informed consent of each participant. The cascading organisation of the data collection, with school and care home leads reporting participant feedback and passing their responses through local brokers to the National Team, was in part due to the restricted access to participants in these settings due to Covid-19. This may have impacted the quality and quantity of the information collected and therefore the study results. However, this does purposefully align with the aims of appreciative inquiry, which encourages collective discovery and collaborative design and action involving various stakeholders as active members of the research in this way.

The survey questions were derived from previously tested and applied research projects investigating intergenerational engagement, and intergenerational school-to-care-home linking (e.g. Together Old and Young (TOY) for Quality Programme Guide (2018); Evaluation of intergenerational programme at Nightingale House, London (2018); Evaluation of InCommon's intergenerational programme (2019); Generation United's Global Evaluation Toolkit (2019)). Survey questions included a mix of multiple choice and free text responses.

3. Local broker data:

Local brokers were asked to complete four quarterly surveys reflecting on their experiences during the planning (Nov 2021), recruitment (Feb 2022), delivery (June 2022), and future planning (Nov 2022) stages of the project. Each survey contained between 10 and 20 questions and used a combination of multiple choice and free text responses (see Appendix for copy of reflective worksheet questions).

In addition, local brokers participated in the national Sharing Network, a supportive project management network hosted by the Care Home FaNs project team. This provided an open space forum of monthly meetings where all 11 local project leads came together regularly to exchange information about the planning, recruitment, delivery, and exit stages of the project. It consisted of two-hour virtual meetings held every 3–4 weeks to encourage a grass-roots and connected co-creation learning model across the project. In these meetings and through use of shared online folders, brokers were able to share ideas, progress, successes, challenges, good practice, resources, and advice on how to effectively develop and sustain intergenerational links between schools and care homes. This was also intended to give the project team regular opportunities to provide support, share learning, and encourage the local brokers, and for the sessions to be observed for research purposes. A total of 16 Sharing Network meetings were observed and recorded for analysis, with written informed consent from the local brokers.

Finally, each local broker was invited to participate in an interview conducted by the researchers in October/November 2022. These lasted 40–60 minutes and were semi-structured. They began with a creative activity: the brokers were asked to bring an object that represented their experience and answer questions about why they had chosen it. Then they were asked questions about their observations of the impact of intergenerational linking in their communities, and were given an opportunity to share any final reflections on the project, particularly with regards to how it might be improved and/or sustained in the future.

Data analysis

Survey, interview, and observational data were analysed using thematic analysis and codes derived from recent research published on intergenerational interventions (Jarrott et al., 2021). The data were triangulated across sources to provide further supportive evidence for themes identified through the existing literature or that emerged from the project data. Minor themes were also documented to capture any novel ideas or issues of importance. Findings were interpreted through the following lenses to gain additional insights:

- The six #iwill principles: challenging, youth led, socially impactful, progressive, embedded, and reflective.
- The four conceptual frameworks of My Home Life England: developing best practice together, focusing on relationships, being appreciative, and having caring conversations.
- The Linking Network's Social Contact theory key conditions: meaningful interaction between individuals, equal status, intergroup cooperation, common goals, and support by social and institutional authorities.
- Comparison to known participant benefits and benchmarks for quality intervention design and delivery within intergenerational studies.

Ethical approval

The research protocol for this evaluation project was reviewed and approved by the School of Health & Psychological Sciences Research Ethics Committee at City, University of London on 25th August 2021 (#ETH2122-0141).

4. SETTING OUT ON AN INTERGENERATIONAL JOURNEY

The 11 local broker organisations who took part in Wave 1 and 2 of the national project were geographically spread across England and represented diverse populations in terms of age structure and socioeconomic characteristics (Figure 4). Unsurprisingly, the local area with the oldest population was Devon, while in comparison Bradford and Enfield had a much younger population. The types of organisations also varied, including charities across the education, youth, older age and disability sectors, as well as faith-based groups and a local theatre company.

Local brokers were encouraged to set up a local advisory board by identifying suitable people from their local community who would be able to provide more specific support for the project at the local level. In the first reflective survey, completed approximately six months into the project, brokers reported that they had assembled local advisory boards of approximately 5-10 people, generally including:

- Teachers/Headteachers
- Care home Activities Coordinators
- Primary school students
- Representatives from charities/organisations that work with older people
- Local councillors
- Care home residents or their relatives
- Members of the performing arts community
- Community volunteers
- Early Years specialists
- Dementia specialists
- Religious leaders

Across all local areas, 116 schools and youth groups providing services to children aged between 5 and 14 years were recruited to participate in intergenerational linking (Table 1). The vast majority of these were classified as primary schools (n=98, 84.5%) according to their Ofsted record, and of the schools with an Ofsted rating available, most were rated as "Good" (n=74, 63.8%).

The 114 care homes recruited for this project ranged in size from smaller to larger facilities, with an average of 49.5 beds per home (Table 2). Based on information available via the Care Quality Commission (CQC) registration data, the services provided by these homes commonly included nursing care, dementia-specialist care, and palliative care, while a handful were residential-only facilities for persons aged over 65 years. Similar to schools, the majority of care homes involved in this project had a CQC rating of "Good" (n=87, 76.3%).

Importantly, this project aimed to reach individuals in some of the most deprived areas of England, and this is reflected in the fact that the average percentage of children eligible for free school meals across all schools involved was 28.1%, higher than the 2021 national average of 20.8%.

Furthermore, data obtained from the Office of National Statistics showed that the areas in which participating schools and care homes were located were skewed towards being among the most deprived and disadvantaged local areas in England (Figure 5).

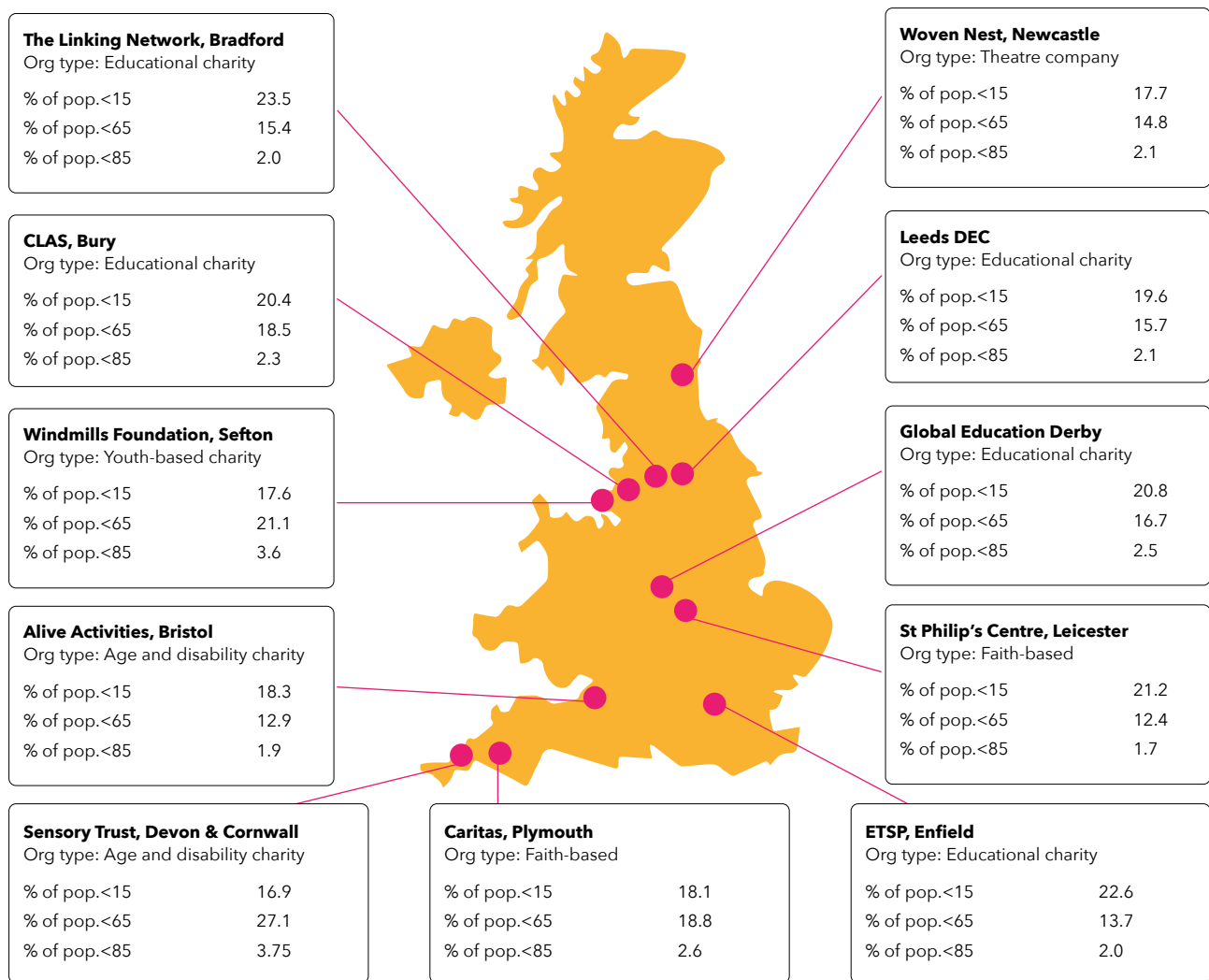


FIGURE 4: LOCAL AREA ORGANISATIONS AND AGE DEMOGRAPHICS

School and youth group characteristics		n	%
Type			
	Infant	2	1.7
	Primary	98	84.5
	Secondary	10	8.6
	Specialist	4	3.4
	Youth group	2	1.7
Ofsted rating			
	Outstanding	16	13.8
	Good	74	63.8
	Requires improvement	9	7.8
	Special measures	2	1.7
	None available	15	12.9
% of children eligible for free school meals			
	Lowest	-	3.8
	Highest	-	72.2
	Average across project	-	28.1
	National average (2021)	-	20.8
Total		116	100.0

TABLE 1: SCHOOL AND YOUTH GROUP CHARACTERISTICS BASED ON OFSTED DATA

Care home characteristics		n	%
Size (by number of beds)			
	Small (<20 beds)	4	3.5
	Medium (20-50 beds)	66	57.9
	Large (>50 beds)	44	38.6
Type of care provided			
	Residential only (for over 65)	6	5.3
	Nursing care	69	60.5
	Dementia care	91	79.8
	Palliative care	59	51.8
CQC rating			
	Outstanding	6	5.3
	Good	87	76.3
	Requires improvement	14	12.3
	Inadequate	2	1.8
	Not yet inspected	3	2.6
Total		114	100.0

TABLE 2: CARE HOME CHARACTERISTICS BASED ON CQC DATA

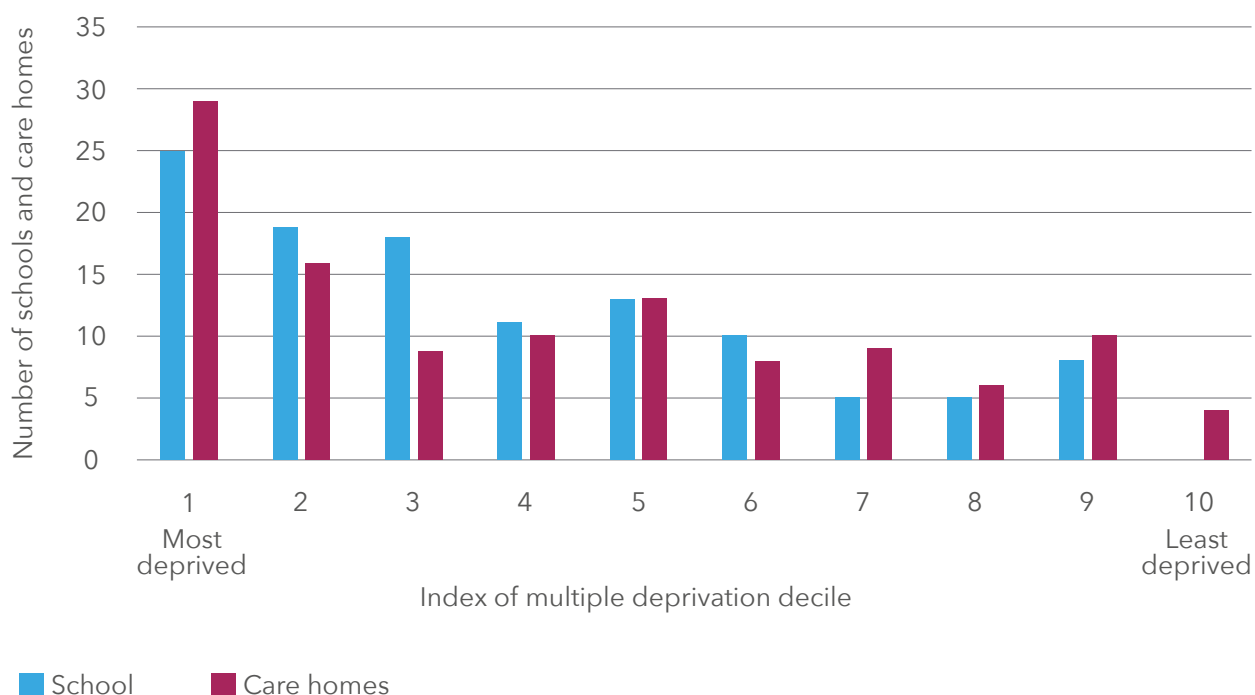


FIGURE 5: DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS AND CARE HOMES BY LOCAL AREA LEVEL OF DEPRIVATION

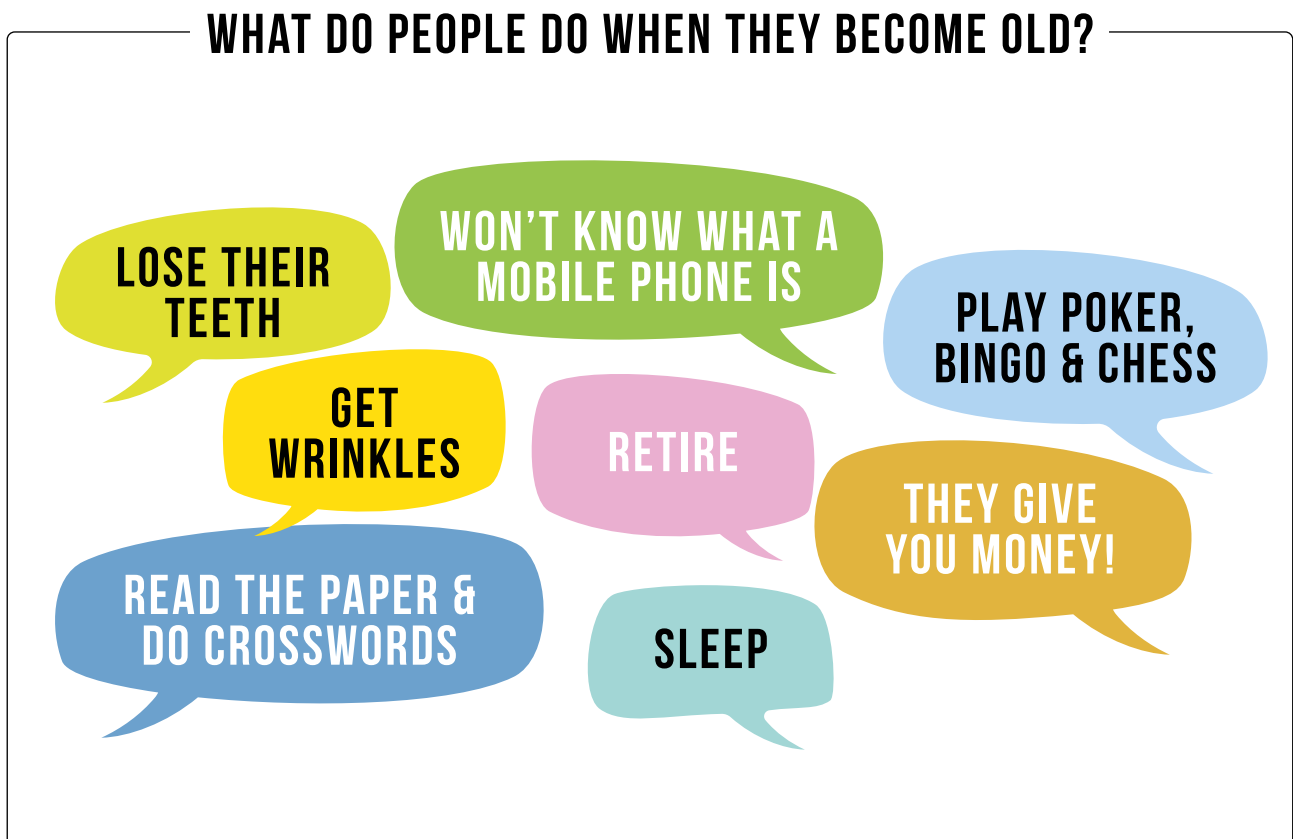
Notes: Figure shows the number of schools and care homes that fall into each deprivation decile (where 1 represents the most deprived 10% of local areas and 10 represents the least deprived 10% of local areas) (SOURCE: <https://imd-by-postcode.opendatacommunities.org/imd/2019>)

Children's perceptions and understanding of old age, care homes, and volunteering

School and care homes leads in each of the nine local areas involved in Wave 2 of the project were invited to complete a pre-survey at the start of their intergenerational journey. A total of 32 responses to the pre-survey were received by the National Team for inclusion in the evaluation. These were completed by school leads (n=22/100, 22% response rate) and care home leads (n=10/96, 10.4% response rate). Along with the pre-survey template, local brokers were also provided with a 'pre-meet activity' for distribution to school leads to use as a way to introduce the children and residents to the idea of intergenerational linking and lead discussions about planning and what to expect from upcoming interactions.

Based on responses to the pre-surveys, the pre-meet activity was more utilised by school leads (n=15/22, 68%), most of whom reported that they found it useful because it saved them time in preparing their lesson plans (n=12). On the other hand, only three care home leads reported using the pre-meet activity with their residents. Hence, the below analysis is limited to feedback on the pre-meet surveys completed by school leads. Nevertheless, it helps to provide insight into the level of knowledge and understanding their children had about old age, care homes, and the concept of volunteering at the outset of this project and prior to their first intergenerational linking session.

The majority of school leads reported that their children were a little familiar with care homes (n=11/15, 73%), and the children expressed mostly positive views (n=4/15, 27%), or a mix of some positive and some negative views (n=8/15, 53%) towards care homes. Similarly, the majority of school leads reported that their children showed at least some understanding (n=10/15, 67%) or a clear understanding (n=3/15, 20%) of the concept of volunteering. Some of the children's responses to these questions are shown in Figure 6.



WHAT IS A CARE HOME AND WHAT DO PEOPLE DO WHEN THEY ARE IN A CARE HOME?

WHERE OLD PEOPLE GO WHEN THEY ARE OLD, THEY PLAY GAMES TOGETHER & HAVE FUN

MAYBE THEY GET FOOD?

THEY EAT AND LOVE THEIR LIFE

PEOPLE GO TO BE TREATED PROPERLY, WHERE CARERS HELP OUT

A PLACE WHERE OLD PEOPLE GO IF THEY NEED A LITTLE HELP

PLAY OLDER GAMES LIKE CHESS, BINGO, MONOPOLY

WHAT IS 'VOLUNTEERING' AND HOW DO YOU THINK IT MAKES PEOPLE FEEL TO VOLUNTEER?

GIVING TIME

WANTING TO HAVE A GO AT SOMETHING

MAKES THEM FEEL SPECIAL

HELPING SOMEBODY

GOOD

WHEN YOU WANT TO HELP PEOPLE

WHEN YOU JOIN IN

HAPPY

FIGURE 6: QUOTES FROM YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF OLD AGE, CARE HOMES, AND VOLUNTEERING

Why do intergenerational linking?

The motivations for engaging in intergenerational linking were explored at the beginning of the project to better understand the expectations of individuals and their organisations, and what they hoped the outcomes would be for them and their local communities.

According to local brokers, the motivation for their community organisations to engage in this intergenerational linking programme largely fell into the following categories:

1. The nature of intergenerational work fit in well with their organisational values and/or strategic plan (n=7)
2. They had a desire to continue developing or expanding on previous work or existing programmes (n=4)
3. They had a desire to benefit younger and older people in their local area, and/or bring about broader social change (n=4)

"The aims and ethos behind Intergenerational Linking resonate with all the work of [our organisation] and it is a brilliant extension to the work we already were doing within our local community, to bring different communities together and strengthen the community."

(Local broker #6, Nov 2021)

For individual brokers, their motivations for being involved in the programme were similar to the above, but more directly linked to their own personal values. For some, it was a way to benefit children and older people in their local area (n=4), while for others it represented an opportunity for wider social action, particularly in the wake of the pandemic (n=4).

"A passion for building a sense of community amongst children and seeing the benefits and impact this could have for children - for their sense of self-esteem and identity but also to learn about others experiences that are very different from their own - promoting inclusivity and acceptance."

(Local broker #5, Nov 2021)

"I feel passionately about helping young people be the best they can be, to recognise their unique skills, and contribute meaningfully to their local communities and to every generation. Young people help to bring older people alive, recognising again their sense of purpose and contribution to a young life."

(Local broker #9, Nov 2021)

"Having seen first-hand, the impact of social isolation during the Covid-19 lockdown when this opportunity arose, I wanted to act."

(Local broker #4, Nov 2021)

"I was so excited about this fantastic project and where it could lead and how many people's lives it could touch, especially during the pandemic. I felt I could use my skills/talents to help make the world a better place."

(Local broker #9, Nov 21)

For school and care homes leads, there were four common themes among their reasons for participating in the intergenerational linking project: to bridge the gap and broaden understanding between generations (n=13); to establish or enhance links between the institution and local community (n=12); to achieve mutual benefits for children and older adults living in care homes (n=10); and as a continuation of existing community projects or work with local care homes (n=10). These are further illustrated by quotes in Table 3.

SCHOOL LEADS	CARE HOME LEADS
1. To bridge the gap and broaden understanding between generations	
<p>“As a school, good opportunity for children to meet others from a different generation.”</p> <p>“It is a great opportunity for the children at the school to develop/change their views on the older generation.”</p> <p>“We felt the children would benefit from meeting and engaging with people from an older generation, especially as many of our children don’t have grandparents or great grandparents around. We would like to increase their respect for older people.”</p> <p>“Good to build positive relationships between generations.”</p>	<p>“I wanted to do this project to continue to bridge the gap between elders and school age children.”</p> <p>“To broaden and widen the scope of contact for all residents with younger generations.”</p> <p>“The residents get so much out of the Intergenerational project, to see the children and residents building relationships over the project is magical.”</p>
2. To establish or enhance links between institution and local community	
<p>“As a school, it is important us to have links with members of the local community and support local projects.”</p> <p>“To link our school with the wider community and give them an understanding of other people.”</p> <p>“Strengthening community links and children understanding and respecting different groups.”</p> <p>“This is a perfect project to link us with part of the community which young people may not have much interaction with. It is also important, particularly since lockdown, for people to reconnect and feel part of something special and positive.”</p>	<p>“To enhance links between our care home and the community.”</p> <p>“To make a community link with our local school, for the benefit of our residents.”</p> <p>“This was important for us as due to the pandemic the last couple of years have seen a loss of community links.”</p>
3. To achieve mutual benefits for children and older adults living in care home	
<p>“We believe that young and old people alike can offer each other a huge amount of knowledge and happiness.”</p> <p>“To develop links between younger and older generation. To support and develop our young and older people’s perspectives on life. To have fun together.”</p> <p>“We want the children to have all the tools and skills they need for a successful life and this experience is definitely going to add to their knowledge – engaging with the elderly generation and understanding the past better as well as beginning to form an opinion on how life takes its course.”</p>	<p>“I feel the project can benefit both the residents and the children, enhance wellbeing and give a sense of purpose and enjoyment.”</p> <p>“I thought it would be enriching for our residents and would be helpful for the children to engage with older people in a positive way.”</p> <p>“I signed up because I have seen the benefits this offers to our residents and I believe it is also important for the younger generation to appreciate the older generation.”</p>
4. As a continuation of existing community projects or work with local care homes	
<p>“We have strong links within the community and already had links with care homes in the town – the project offered us the chance to develop and deepen this with an individual care home.”</p> <p>“Keen to build links with care home as similar relationships have been positive in the past.”</p>	<p>“We were very happy to continue the relationship with the school.”</p> <p>“The care home has had previous experience with intergen work and wanted to continue it.”</p>

TABLE 3: REASONS FOR PARTICIPATING IN INTERGENERATIONAL LINKING

Hopes for potential impacts

Improved links with their local communities also featured as one of the main outcomes that both school and care home leads hoped would result from participating in the intergenerational programme. For schools, their hopes for potential impacts for the children were also focused on learning and development of social skills. For care homes, in addition to the hopes expressed in Table 4, each care home lead also reported that they felt the intergenerational linking programme would “definitely” have an impact on improving residents’ quality of life and connections to community (n=10).

SCHOOL LEADS	n	%
I would like my children to link to their community in new ways	21	95.5
I would like my children to learn more about older people	20	90.9
I would like to help people connect after the isolation of Covid, particularly my children	18	81.8
I would like my children to experience volunteering	17	77.3
I am hoping to learn new skills	12	54.5
Other: I would like my children to gain confidence	1	4.5
TOTAL	22	100

CARE HOME LEADS	n	%
I would like our local community to know more about us	10	100.0
I would like my residents to have more contact with people outside of the home	9	90.0
I would like to provide more opportunities to increase quality of life for our residents	9	90.0
I am hoping to learn new skills personally	8	80.0
I would like my care home team to learn new skills	6	60.0
Other: To bring the young and old together	1	10.0
TOTAL	10	100

TABLE 4: HOPES FOR IMPACTS AND OUTCOMES OF PARTICIPATING IN INTERGENERATIONAL LINKING

Anticipated challenges

Alongside all of the positive outcomes that the intergenerational linking programme was expected to bring for children and residents, school and care home leads also anticipated several potential challenges to delivering the programme. The main anticipated challenges were, unsurprisingly, time restraints (n=9) and Covid-19 restrictions (n=9). It was also anticipated that there would be some challenges with the use of technology such as Zoom video calls for older adults (n=5), and from the school leads’ perspective there was some uncertainty around children’s attitudes and behaviours, and how well they would engage with the older adults (n=5). Other practical/logistical challenges included the distance between school and care homes, having adequate resources, maintaining effective communication, and managing staff or student absences on days where an activity was scheduled.

What would success look like?

At the outset of the project, we asked local brokers and school and care home leads what success would look like to them. There was a clear consensus among local brokers that success would include two key elements: that it be a mutually positive experience for all involved, and that the links be sustained beyond the end of the project. These themes were also reflected in how school and care home leads viewed success of the programme, but they also identified a third theme: that it provide an opportunity for learning and personal development (Table 5).

1. JOY: A MUTUALLY POSITIVE EXPERIENCE FOR CHILDREN AND OLDER PEOPLE	
LOCAL BROKERS: <i>"I will consider this project a success if..."</i>	SCHOOL AND CARE HOME LEADS: <i>"What 'success' for this project looks like for me"</i>
<i>"...meaningful and enjoyable interactions happen between the children and older people during the course of the project."</i>	<i>"Happy children and happy care home residents enjoying the chance to interact and share in positive experiences collaboratively."</i>
<i>"...we have created positive memories for all participants and the school/care home partnerships continue beyond the timeframe of the project."</i>	<i>"Happy children and older people, new connections and bonds, fun and laughter."</i>
<i>"...meaningful connections are made that enrich the lives of the people involved - both the children and older people. Perhaps even enriching for teachers and care home teams involved too!"</i>	<i>"The children linking with and creating positive relationships with older people in our community."</i>
<i>"...if we discover a way of working that benefits both the older people and children involved in the project."</i>	<i>"Children making good relationships with care home residents. Happy residents who are engaged in each project activity - making them think."</i>
<i>"...the school and the care home build a supportive, reciprocal relationship where they see the benefits and challenges for both partners, and find a way to create and maintain meaningful two-way interaction overcoming barriers and challenging stereotypes of young and old."</i>	<i>"Meaningful link with the care home and ability to enable children and older generation to engage in joint activities."</i>
	<i>"Positive interactions and an increase in social interactions between the elderly and children."</i>
2. RELATIONSHIPS & SUSTAINABILITY: LASTING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS	
LOCAL BROKERS: <i>"I will consider this project a success if..."</i>	SCHOOL AND CARE HOME LEADS: <i>"What 'success' for this project looks like for me"</i>
<i>"...the links continue after the end of the project, that would be real success."</i>	<i>"A lasting connection is made."</i>
<i>"...when it comes to an end, the schools and care homes continue to meet."</i>	<i>"At the end of the project we have developed a relationship that is firm and will continue."</i>
<i>"...relationships are sustained and continue beyond the end of the project."</i>	<i>"A relationship between school and care home that outlasted the project."</i>
<i>"...older and younger people can communicate and discover more about each other, and these [partnerships] are sustainable and continue even after this year ends."</i>	<i>"Children and the residents of the care home to make a connection and build a lasting partnership between the care home and our school so that we can do projects together in the future."</i>
<i>"...the links within the community are likely to continue after the project funding ends."</i>	<i>"For our relationship with the school to continue once the project is over."</i>
<i>"...relationships between schools and care homes are sustained and grow so that all the schools in our multi-academy trust will go on to develop a long term link with a local care home that benefits both the young people and the residents."</i>	<i>"To become ongoing projects, keep links with the school."</i>
<i>"...if every participant has thoroughly enjoyed the project so much that the relationships between schools and care homes continue and leave a legacy and the relationship is long-term."</i>	<i>"Ongoing contact and friendships."</i>

3. LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT: COLLABORATIVE AND RECIPROCAL ENGAGEMENT WITH MUTUAL LEARNING AND BENEFITS
SCHOOL AND CARE HOME LEADS: <i>"What 'success' for this project looks like for me"</i>
<i>"A project where everybody involved can learn something and broaden their perspectives."</i>
<i>"Children being able to gain understanding and compassion for older people in care homes."</i>
<i>"For the children to enjoy themselves and gain knowledge and experience."</i>
<i>"Children to have gained an insight into the life experiences of older people, to develop relationships within the community and to develop their confidence."</i>
<i>"Children would see the gap between generations as an opportunity to learn more about the stages of life, and gain an understanding on how behaviour, responsibilities, roles and attitudes change in life."</i>
<i>"Children would find it easier to engage with older people and see that it's actually good fun and a blessing to be around older people because of their experiences and desire to support the younger generations to make good choices in life."</i>
<i>"Residents and children talking and learning together, with residents feeling like they have contributed to a child's life experience and education."</i>

TABLE 5: PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON HOW SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAMME SHOULD BE MEASURED


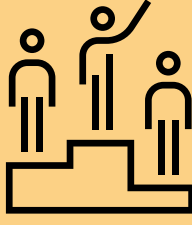
5. THE BROKER EXPERIENCE

A unique feature of this project was the approach of funding local broker organisations in each community to support the development and delivery of individual links between care homes and schools and youth groups.

While each of the nine local broker organisations in Wave 2 had some prior experience working with older or younger people on other programmes, for most (n=7, 77.8%) this was their first experience with intergenerational work and bringing the two groups together. Of the local brokers, five had a lot of experience working with children and little to no experience working with older adults, while the remaining four had some experience working with both younger and older people.

Local brokers completed a reflective questionnaire approximately every 3-6 months to document their experience of establishing, coordinating, and supporting intergenerational links between schools and care homes in their local area. Figure 7 illustrates the broker journey based on major themes for what brokers spent most of their time on at each phase of the project.

Along their journey, local brokers reflected on the elements of the project that surprised them, their sources of inspiration, and the tasks that they found easiest to accomplish. There were several common themes which are summarised in Box 2.

 <p>SURPRISES</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The factors that influence success, and the positive outcomes of successful links (e.g., "Success is led by quality of built relationships") 2. The enthusiasm of children, schools and care homes despite the challenges experienced (e.g., Covid) 3. In-person activities (e.g., how many or few were able to take place) 4. The amount of work, effort, and time required by local brokers to make things happen 5. Successful links and feedback on positive impacts (e.g., "How moving these relationships are and the quality of connection") 6. Communication issues (e.g., difference in communication methods between schools and care homes)
 <p>INSPIRATIONS</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The enthusiasm, excitement, passion and commitment of the children, teachers, care home staff and residents involved 2. The people, relationships, and successful links 3. Receiving feedback on successful links and examples of the positive impacts for children, older people, and the local community. 4. Generating and sharing ideas for thoughtful and creative activities 5. Support structures (advisory boards, Sharing Network, Care Home FaNs team)
 <p>EASY WINS</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Delivering information sessions and planning workshops in schools and care homes 2. Administrative tasks within broker's control (emailing, planning, sharing news on progress and best practice) 3. Working with engaged, motivated, and well-suited schools and care home links 4. Delivering in-person activities with schools and care homes 5. Recruiting and engaging schools 6. Support structures (e.g., advisory group set-up and support)

BOX 2: BROKER SURPRISES, INSPIRATIONS, AND EASIEST TASKS TO ACCOMPLISH



1ST REFLECTIVE WORKSHEET (NOV '21)

1. Identifying and contacting potential schools and care homes
2. Scheduling and running introductory meetings to explain project and recruit groups
3. Strategic planning (including training new facilitators)

2ND REFLECTIVE WORKSHEET (FEB '22)

1. Continued promotion, recruitment, and linking
2. Scheduling, organising and delivering information/training sessions
3. Liaising with stakeholders to maintain connections, support, and problem-solve
4. Developing ideas and creating in-person and virtual activities
5. Recruitment and development of advisory group
6. Strategic planning

3RD REFLECTIVE WORKSHEET (JUNE '22)

1. Contacting schools and care homes to review activities and offer support
2. Facilitating linking sessions including in-person activities
3. Maintaining communication channels
4. Maintaining and strengthening relationships between schools and care homes
5. Sharing ideas, news and good practice about project and activities
6. Looking for funding opportunities to sustain future of the programme
7. Strategic planning (for summer term and next academic school year)
8. Arranging and delivering workshops

4TH AND FINAL REFLECTIVE WORKSHEET (NOV '22)

1. Supporting existing links to maintain their connection
2. Celebration events, publicity, and marketing
3. Getting feedback from participants to support project evaluation
4. Helping to establish new links between schools and care homes
5. Strategic planning for continuation of the project



FIGURE 7: THE BROKER JOURNEY

CHARACTERISING THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL BROKER

In exit interviews, each local broker was asked to reflect on their experience and characterise the nature and importance of their role in intergenerational linking. A semi-structured approach was taken, using traditional interview techniques (e.g. open questions, prompts, and follow-ups), and incorporating a creative interview technique known as object interviewing (Woodward, 2016). Local brokers were asked to select an object or photo of an object which reminded them of their role. This aimed to co-construct an understanding of the broker experience through a process of reflection which gave each broker an opportunity to think about the object and their experience in a different way. As Woodward suggests, "Things have effects as they provoke participants to respond" (p.53). In this case, objects chosen as representative of the broker role included a map, a coin, an orange, an onion, a bottle of bubbles, artwork, Sellotape, a glasses case, a blank postcard, a suitcase, and puzzles. Quotes illustrating the reasons behind why brokers chose these objects are provided in Figure 8, and these are reflective of both the positive and more challenging experiences they had throughout the project.

What is a local broker?

The role of the local broker was perceived and characterised differently by individuals based on their previous experiences and the specific needs of their local area's links. For some, the broker role was an extension of their previous or current work as a community organisation – "we've never really used the term broker before...[but] I think the role of the broker is not really that new to us because we've been doing it in lots of different circumstances in the past" (Local broker #4). However, for many, what a broker of intergenerational practice 'is' or does was somewhat unknown. This provided an opportunity for brokers to craft the role into their own.

"You're almost like clay - you're just moulding yourself and learning along the way what it means to be a broker. I suppose that was something that we've learned as we went along because it's quite a unique role, isn't it? It's not one that we've done before."

(Local broker #9)

The opportunity to shape the broker role in response to local contexts and organisational circumstances meant that across the group there was diversity in how brokers approached the task of linking schools or youth groups with care homes. For example, there was variation in how involved brokers were in the delivery of the intergenerational links. Some who were directly involved suggested that this made establishing the links easier for the schools and care homes.

"Facilitating some of the initial interactions, I think has been helpful. So that someone else is doing it, leaving it less reliant on the care home and the schools to make that interaction. Having someone there that's physically doing something or delivering something to kind of break the ice, to get the relationship started."

(Local broker #6)

There were also differences in how the links themselves were run and creativity in the approaches used to foster connection. Nonetheless, all brokers reflected on how the most crucial aspect of their role was facilitation.

"It wasn't up to me to say 'this is what you've got to do and this is how you're going to do it'. I was there to facilitate and support and encourage and offer suggestions and resources."

(Local broker #3)

"You've facilitated something, an experience for both the younger person and the older person to enjoy, which perhaps they wouldn't have got that opportunity to before. And it just made me realise, some of those older people, they don't get a lot of contact with the younger people and what that does, and the benefits of it, it is just incredible. I think, gosh, I'm so enthusiastic to create more of these opportunities and facilitate more links."

(Local broker #11)

Regardless of the way they defined or performed their role, however, there were four common themes about what a local broker was required to be in order to facilitate the links between schools/youth groups and care homes.

1. 'Motivators'

One broker suggested that brokers needed to be "matchmakers and motivators" (Local broker #6). This was echoed by other brokers who spoke about motivating others by providing inspiration to schools and care homes who were struggling either to initiate a link or maintain one.

"Certainly at the onset, it was being the catalyst, it was building that momentum, that enthusiasm, and motivation into the project to get it off the ground. And needing that power behind it, that energy to get it going, to get the links going and to facilitate it for them so that it was going to be as easy as possible and as enjoyable as possible."

(Local broker #11)

"It's actually sharing the inspiration, and in some ways it is sharing practical ideas. But it's also sharing that sense of 'this is why we're doing it and actually it's really worthwhile' and some places need that at different times and can get it from hearing about each other as well."

(Local broker #7)

"I hope that as a broker, we've enabled and inspired. It's about getting people interested in the project because it's such a wonderful thing to do and giving people examples of the loveliness and the joy that it brings."

(Local broker #10)

One broker acknowledged that this inspiration was crucial, as whether or not a link would succeed, regardless of the broker's involvement, was still reliant on the commitment of the individual school/youth group and care home leads doing the linking.

"So much of any project is really, like I said before, it just hinges on the goodwill and the hard work of individual people. However many fantastic resources or amazing things you can offer, it actually just boils down to if those two people really want to carry on doing it and if they see the real reason for doing it."

(Local broker #8)

2. 'Communicators'

Throughout the project, brokers spoke about the difficulties getting in contact with school and care home leads who often had little time, limited mechanisms for communicating with external people, or different work routines. Brokers reflected on this in the exit interviews, suggesting that another key quality was being a good communicator in order to navigate the different schedules and approaches within schools and care homes.

"I think brokering that sort of communication channel, I think is the biggest thing because that's the hardest thing for the schools and the care homes."

(Local broker #6)

"You're smoothing the communication between the care home and the school, and you're making sure there's good communication."

(Local broker #7)

One broker described how they developed a 'knack' for communicating with these different stakeholders.

"It's made me think 'ohh, OK, I've got quite good organization skills to keep all of these sorts of relationships alive' because it does feel like you need to constantly check in with lots and lots of people and it's made me realise that I'm quite good at recruiting people onto the project... I think you just, over some time, develop a bit of a knack for AC [activity coordinator] language and teacher language and how to hook people in and so I've been quite pleased about that."

(Local broker #9)

3. 'Relationship Builders'

A central aspect of intergenerational practice itself is to foster relationships. This was replicated in the facilitation role brokers carried out between schools/youth groups and care homes. The ability to build relationships was seen as a crucial quality that local brokers needed in order for the links to be successful. Brokers described themselves as being the 'glue' that would hold the relationship together.

"You're kind of like the glue, aren't you?"

(Local broker #7)

"I would say that [you're] the glue. We stick the two of them together and I find it's so important to get the right teacher and either the care home manager or the Activity Coordinator. I think we have had the time to build the relationship where they may not."

(Local broker #11)

"I would definitely say we're the glue, we make it stick. Sometimes we may be cheaper glue because some of them don't stick that well but the majority of the time we're Gorilla [glue]."

(Local broker #11)

One broker commented on how the process of forming relationships was emotionally challenging but also resulted in them forming new friendships, both with the other broker within their organisation and working in partnerships with people outside of their organisation.

"I think it's been like a roller coaster, but for every low there's a high, for every high there's a low. So, it's just keeping it going. But honestly, I've never been so emotional and we maybe we'll message each other and go 'we've had the best day ever and I didn't want to come home' and it's just the friendships. I would say. I've made a lot of friends as well."

(Local broker #11)

4. 'Learners'

Finally, brokers spoke about the learning process they had been through and referred to facilitating the links as "a learning curve" (Local broker #4). Brokers suggested they had personally "gained a lot of confidence" (Local broker #11) through the process of having to work in different ways and build networks. One broker spoke about the monthly Sharing Network meetings as giving them confidence and supporting them in this learning process, by "reminding us that things didn't need to be complicated" (Local broker #9). This broker also commented about developing responsiveness in order to adapt to the changing nature of the project, especially given the Covid-19 context, and the constantly evolving circumstances affecting the links.

"It has felt like as a broker we've had the sort of opportunity to reinvent the project and really try different things as we're kind of like pivoting and responding to what's happening with the groups and in the world... I think no matter how much you think you've cracked it, there's always something to sort of surprise you, it's just a constant responding process."

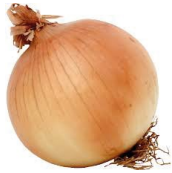
(Local broker #9)



A PLANT

"We kind of scatter seeds across [locality] and hope that some of those seeds take root."

"It's a lovely example of how something small can turn into something much bigger... [it's] really surprised us how much impact it's had for the size of the project."



AN ONION

"Finding a way in I guess and taking that time to sort of peel the layers away and spend time to connect with people...Because it's the beginning of lots of different types of meals...it's that thing of not quite knowing where it will lead... [sometimes] it makes your eyes sting a little bit... [and] once you cut the onion up, [it's] sort of like making a nourishing meal with it. So it's got that journey - you've been cooking with it and making something nourishing that people can enjoy."



AN ORANGE

"Sometimes you get really dried up, horrible tasteless oranges, or you get beautiful, sweet ones...and maybe even you could take that even further to the different segments inside the orange. Certain bits [links] have been good and other bits have been really disappointing."



A COIN

"The other thing about a coin is that it has two sides...where it works, it's where both [sides - care home and school] are putting in an equivalent amount of effort."



GLASSES CASE

"You need to look through a different set of lenses sometimes because you're working with different stakeholders."

"But having those lenses is a huge sense of responsibility as well, to make sure that they are looked after and making sure that box is safe so that anyone can take those lenses out whenever they need to."



A SUITCASE

"It's kind of foundational - it's what intergenerational linking is all about: learning from each other, making connections and thinking about who we are...This sort of journey of our lives...it symbolises that and helped make those connections."



A ROLL OF SELLOTAPE

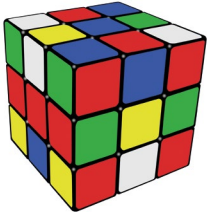
"So, I'm trying to stick people together and hopefully when the project is finished that stickiness will remain."

"The other meaningful thing about Sellotape is if you lose the end of it, it can be very tricky to find it again... sometimes it's felt like you you're struggling to find that end, you know something has gone wrong...but you've got to find that end and get it bonded together again."



A JIGSAW PUZZLE

"We were given the tools, we were given the bits of the jigsaw, we were given the picture, but we had to do with the pieces what we wanted to do. We had to follow a format, but obviously you had so many pieces and you had to get them matched up."



BRAIN TEASER GAME

"...And there's also an aspect of the unknown. You know, because you're manipulating it and things are happening and you have intent so you know what you're trying to do - you're trying to get the ball over the little holes, but there's a sense of uncertainty...I think that's sometimes the excitement of that kind of puzzle, as well as the project, and then of course the frustration when you knock them all out and you thought they were settled."



A MAP

"[During lockdown], the question: 'what do we miss in the city, and what shared memories do we have across the generations of those spaces?' was really poignant... There's nothing more tangible than a map [for] it highlighting restricted access really."



ARTWORK CREATED BY CHILDREN AND RESIDENTS

"A piece of artwork that was a joint creation between the residents and the children... it represents what we were trying to achieve."



A BLANK POSTCARD

"It's just quite nice that it's been like an empty space, I suppose there hasn't been really strict guidelines about what you should do...so I thought of something that's kind of open and then the thing about the pencil, you can kind of rub it out as you go...I've never felt as a broker, like 'oh no I've done something wrong, what am I going to do?' because its always felt like that's just the process we are all on."



BOTTLE OF BUBBLES

"Representing the joy and fun experiences but also speech bubbles - the power of the young person's and older person's words... it had such an impact on me and I think it had an impact on them as well."

FIGURE 8: OBJECTS REPRESENTING "THE BROKER EXPERIENCE"

LEARNING FROM THE BROKER EXPERIENCE: ADVICE FOR THE FUTURE

When talking about their role, many of the brokers spoke about whether or not brokers should be needed long-term for maintaining the intergenerational links. Brokers spoke about navigating the slight tension between continuing to help facilitate the link and their responsibility to step away in order to promote the independence and sustainability of the link.

"I sometimes feel like, actually, I think it could continue well with like an element of - I thought having a light touch kind of link with the links would be good but I do feel at this stage that there are a good handful of links that will continue almost on their own if we weren't there, you know. I mean I do feel positive about that. So, I guess just to say that I feel like obviously the ideal situation is that we have a broker role in place but I think what the project needs or what the links need will also adapt and change over time."

(Local broker #5)

Others reflected on how the broker role was particularly crucial during the pandemic, but perhaps in 'normal' circumstances the intensity of involvement of the broker could be greater for a shorter period at the beginning of the link.

"I may be wrong in thinking [this], but I think had we not been there to do that it, it may not have happened at all or it wouldn't have worked as well. It might not have been lasting, the impact, and sometimes, yeah, you have to keep on adding coal to the fire in order to keep it going or you know, keep that warmth going and that energy. And hopefully your role you can step away and step away as time goes on. But I think that energy is needed, that input is needed at the beginning."

(Local broker #11)

Brokers also reflected on how their role in the future could involve providing training within education or social care organisations to help develop practitioners' skills for maintaining links.

"One of the things you can do to make the role of activities staff in care homes and teachers easier is you can run training in things like making links with the wider community. Like engaging and managing supporting volunteers, how to create intergenerational links, because that training will then - you can then train the trainer - they can then train other people in the care home."

(Local broker #2, Wave 1)

"But then working with the Advisory Board, they were really keen for us to hand over some of the skills. So, then they were like, 'Oh well, what about if you worked with PSHE leads (Personal, Social, Health and Economic education leads) and you passed over some of the things that you're doing to them."

(Local broker #9)

Overall, brokers acknowledged that their role was to help links to run independently of the local broker, but suggested that this was not a linear path from dependence to independence but one that is constantly evolving as the context in schools, care homes and the wider community changes.

The brokers' experiences have resulted in numerous practical lessons for promoting intergenerational linking, which have been compiled into a practical handbook. In addition, during the exit interviews, brokers were also asked to reflect on what personal advice they would give themselves or someone else at the beginning of this process. As a result, a number of personal considerations reflect useful advice for replicating the broker role in the future.

AN INTERGENERATIONAL BROKER IN THE FUTURE SHOULD BE...

CREATIVE	<p>This refers to learning from brokers about being adaptable and embracing an openness to different ways of working. For example, one broker spoke about the uncertainty of the pandemic providing a positive opportunity for creativity, "so if I was speaking to myself at the beginning, I would say let go of everything you know, throw the rule book out the window and people will surprise you" (Local broker #2, Wave 1). One broker commented that a school's 'top tip' was "just go for it!" (Local broker #10). Others spoke about brokers doing things differently and resisting the temptation to compare yourself with other brokers as what might work in one locality is not necessarily true of another. "They [brokers] just don't necessarily have to do the same" and should focus on seeking that "wow experience" which gets people on board with the idea of intergenerational linking (Local broker #9).</p>
STRATEGIC	<p>All brokers reflected on the importance of building strong relationships with individuals within schools and care homes. However, a few brokers noted that in order to do this effectively, it is important to be strategic about which links to pursue. This included thinking about what factors will enhance the possibility of a successful link, for example thinking about geographical distance between institutions: "You know, choose a care home that's near [the school as] some of them felt that really made a difference" (Local broker #10). Additionally, others spoke about making it "clear from the outset that a commitment looks like this and here's the impact that might have on your time, on both accounts at the school and at the care home" (Local broker #6). Overall, Local broker #2, Wave 1 summed this up: "look for that one member of staff - go where the engagement is - so don't kind of plot that you want to involve X number of schools because they are geographically convenient and then panic and use up all your energy because they are not engaging. Cast your nets wide, and actually put all of your energy into those staff that are giving something back and they will run with it."</p>
AWARE	<p>Brokers commented that they had learnt about the difficult circumstances and capacity issues staff may be facing in social care or education contexts. "I've learned that our public services are on their knees, which I already knew, I guess. But I've learned that schools and care homes are pretty similar settings. To be fair, they're staffed by wonderful people who are overworked and underpaid and who have 100 different demands going on all the time, but they still want to do the best for the people in their care." (Local broker #8) Having awareness of the challenges facing staff in these settings led brokers to suggest that brokers in the future should "reduce the burden" (Local broker #6) where possible, particularly with administrative tasks or paperwork, and "just be persistent in communicating with people" (Local broker #7). The brokers also suggested that this should be reflected in their expectations of the process as "a long-term project" rather than something that can be "done" or "all finished" (Local broker #10). In, particular, brokers stressed the time it takes to form links: "I think that another big message has to be that, you know, partnerships take time and if you find that your partnership works immediately and you hit it off straight away and everything's hunky dory within a few weeks, that's brilliant. But that isn't normal really. That for some people it might take months, but it doesn't mean that you're failing. It just means that you've not quite found the right partner for your school or your care home yet. It's no reflection on you." This relates to the final theme - looking after yourself.</p>

SELF-CARING

Brokers advised looking for the positives, especially when things aren't going to plan. "Look for what you can do, don't look for the barriers, look for the opportunities" (Local broker #2, Wave 1). "Don't worry about it, just break it down into simple steps, which we did, and take it one step at a time. And don't set yourself too many deadlines that you're not going to be able to meet because I think that it takes a year really to start a project. After the year, it gets a lot easier. But I think that possibly we were trying to run before we could walk in some respects. So, I would just try and slow myself down and take deep breaths every now and then because it all, you know, everything worked well" (Local broker #4). This also included personal advice to brokers to remain positive either through celebrating successes or through more "positive self-talk" (Local broker #11). As one broker suggested, "Celebrate what's actually happened and celebrate the successes even when there's small successes...[because] actually, you know, when you we go back and look at the things that have worked and you go back to the beginning and think there was nothing there at all to start with, then you think, 'Oh well, yes, that did happen' so, yes, maybe not to worry so much" (Local broker #3). Most importantly, brokers advised themselves and others to "have some fun, a lot of this was really fun!" (Local broker #2, Wave 1).

6. INTERGENERATIONAL INTERACTIONS

Across all nine local areas involved in Wave 2 of the project, a total of 196 organisations (100 schools and 96 care homes) participated in the intergenerational linking programme. Of these, a combined total of 55 school and care home leads completed follow-up surveys after the programme for an overall response rate of 28%. The response rate to the post-survey for schools was 34% (n=34/100) and for care homes was 22% (n=21/96).

According to school leads who completed the post-survey, the number of students involved within each school group ranged from 8 to 100 students, with an average of 32 students per school. Extrapolating that out, it is estimated that at least 3,700 and possibly up to 4,000 students took part in intergenerational linking activities across the country.

It is unclear exactly how many care home residents participated, as this was not consistently reported in the post-surveys completed by care home leads. However, according to the pre-surveys, the number of residents expected to participate ranged from 5 to 25 per home, with an interquartile range of 10 to 20. Therefore, we estimate that across the country, between 1,140 and 2,280 care home residents took part.

The majority of school and care home leads (~70%) reported engaging in between one and six intergenerational sessions with their linked school/care home over a 10-month period, while a third of links engaged in more frequent intergenerational activities (seven or more over a 10-month period).

Generally these were in-person interactions, although at least one-third of interactions occurred remotely. The most common settings for intergenerational interactions was inside (32%) or outside at the care home (25%).

NUMBER OF INTERGENERATIONAL INTERACTIONS	n	%
1 to 3	17	30.9
4 to 6	21	38.2
7 to 10	7	12.7
10 or more	9	16.4

MODE OF DELIVERY	n	%
All in person	15	27.3
Mostly in person, some remote	13	23.6
Half and half	6	10.9
Mostly remote, some in person	10	18.2
All remote	9	16.4

LOCATION INTERGENERATIONAL INTERACTIONS TOOK PLACE	n	%
Inside at the care home	30	31.6
Outside at the care home	24	25.3
Online	20	21.1
Inside at the school	13	13.7
Outside in the community	8	8.4

TABLE 6: FREQUENCY AND NATURE OF INTERGENERATIONAL INTERACTIONS

Intergenerational activities

Local brokers reflected on some of the more effective intergenerational activities both in terms of the nature of the activity (Table 7) and the elements that worked to make it so successful.

Activities linked to seasonal events such as Christmas, Valentine's Day, or the Queen's Jubilee celebrations were some of the easiest to organise and most rewarding, as both settings were eager to engage in activities surrounding these events and they provided a good foundation for conversation, creativity, and learning. In-person activities generally yielded more positive and meaningful interactions between students and residents, although the virtual meetings were seen as good way to start to build and/or maintain those connections when physical interactions were not possible.

Another powerful element was when the activities were based on student- or resident-led ideas or were designed as shared experiences where the children and residents did or created something together, as opposed to a giver and recipient dynamic. Having a shared sense of purpose contributed to effective interactions - activities that involved some sort of social action (e.g., beach cleaning to help the environment) were commonly reported as being among the most successful. As one broker commented, *"Where common ground is carefully identified the mutual benefit is greater"* (Local broker #2, Wave 1).

Finally, many of the brokers reported that some of the most effective activities were also the simplest. They described these as *"regular"*, *"simple"*, and *"thoughtful"* interactions which *"have not been complicated or onerous for either the school or the care home"* and have *"enabled the children and older generation to become comfortable in each other's company"* and *"build a positive relationship"*. Examples of such activities included *"a small number of residents coming to a school and chatting or reading with small groups of children"* and *"taking the children to see where the care home is, even if they could only wave through the windows"*.

	<p>ARTS AND CRAFTS (N=12)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drawing outline of hands and sharing information about each other • Children asking older people for their “Words of Wisdom” based on their life experiences and recording these in writing, photographs, or video form • Personalised Christmas tree decorations • Christmas card design competition • Art competition for children that the residents judged and gave prizes for • Baking cakes/scones to share with the residents
	<p>EXCHANGING CARDS OR GIFTS (N=11)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postcards/letters • Christmas or Valentine’s cards • Photographs • Christmas-themed sensory packs • Creating and sharing pen portraits to help children and older adults get to know one another
	<p>GARDENING (N=8)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sending bulbs to be planted • Spending time in the care home garden • Planting flowers together • Growing herbs which were then used to make food to share
	<p>PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES AND OUTINGS (N=7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair exercises • Playing games together • Day trip to the local park to feed the ducks • Beach cleaning day
	<p>SINGALONGS (N=6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carol singing • Joint sing-along by learning the same songs • Rap-poems
	<p>STORYTELLING (N=5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents reading a story to the class • Storytelling exercises where children and residents write the story together • Theatre workshops
	<p>VIRTUAL MEETINGS (N=4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoom meets in small groups or larger groups of entire classes • Virtual tours of classroom/care home

TABLE 7: MOST EFFECTIVE INTERGENERATIONAL ACTIVITIES ACCORDING TO LOCAL BROKERS

7. OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS FOR YOUNGER AND OLDER PEOPLE

IMPACTS FOR CHILDREN

More than 79% of school leads reported that some of their children formed relationships with individual residents either in-person or virtually. Other frequently observed impacts on children were related to the enthusiasm and excitement generated by the intergenerational linking. Many children looked forward to the in-person visits to the care homes (76.5%), and spoke about the residents outside of the interactions (73.5%).

OBSERVED IMPACTS FOR CHILDREN		
Children looked forward to visits to the care home	26	76.5
Children spoke about the residents outside of the visits	25	73.5
Children formed relationships with individual residents (in person)	21	61.8
Children looked forward to remote activities with the care home	17	50.0
Parents mentioned the impact on their children to teaching staff	8	23.5
Children brought up the intergenerational sessions in other classes	6	17.6
Children formed relationships with individual residents (remotely)	6	17.6
TOTAL	34	100

TABLE 8: IMPACTS FOR CHILDREN AS OBSERVED BY SCHOOL LEADS

These observed impacts are supported by direct quotes from some of the primary school children who participated in intergenerational linking. Some students commented that linking with care home residents was enjoyable, both because of how it made them feel and also because they could see the positive impact for residents.

"The project made me feel joyful because we were linking with other people older than us and doing fun activities with them."

(Primary school student, Bradford)

"I enjoyed meeting the old people and having cakes with them."

(Primary school student, Sefton)

"When we went to do the singing it was really nice to see them inside and we could see them smiling."

(Primary school student, Plymouth)

Others enjoyed participating as it enabled them to have social interactions and initiate friendships with older people they would not otherwise have had the opportunity to meet.

"I enjoyed this project because I got to meet elderly people who I don't know."

(Primary school student, Sefton)

"It's good that we get to connect and meet up with residents."

(Primary school student, Plymouth)

"Before the project I was scared to make connections, but now I made a friend in bingo."

(Primary school student, Sefton)

Students also recognised that a positive aspect of intergenerational linking was that it provided unique opportunities for learning from and about others who have had vastly different experiences from their own, including what they as young people have to teach the older generation.

"Knowing about people who are much older than us is really interesting!"

(Primary school student, Derby)

"I liked learning about the person who crossed the Atlantic!"

(Primary school student, Derby)

"I would like the older people to teach me what they did when they were younger and when there was no technology back in the day and what they did for their job."

(Primary school student, Enfield)

"We can teach the older people about technology and play games with them."

(Primary school student, Enfield)

Opportunities for youth social action

A key aim of this project was to provide young people (aged 5-14 years) opportunities to take part in youth social action or volunteering in their local communities. During exit interviews, local brokers were asked about whether they felt that being involved in the intergenerational linking programme had created, or would create, opportunities for youth social action for the children. Several themes emerged from these discussions, including that being involved in intergenerational linking helped to bring the idea of volunteering to life, planted the seed for future involvement in youth social action, and promoted active citizenship and community participation among young children.

1. Bringing volunteering to life

Brokers felt that the programme helped children and young people to gain awareness of issues beyond themselves which brought the idea of volunteering and youth social action to life. Although brokers recognised that "the level of children's understanding would be different in different scenarios" (Local broker #4), several brokers suggested that children and young people understood that taking part in the project was more than just meeting residents, and instead formed a regular and active part of being involved in their local community.

"Like one of the schools had a lunchtime club that was specifically around this intergenerational work. So they were chosen and did something on a regular basis and therefore might have been a little bit more aware of what they were doing and why they were doing it and going back repeatedly, versus 'we're just going along to a care home this week because you're in the choir.'"

(Local broker #6)

One broker reflected on how the circumstances of the pandemic fostered a general sense of thinking about what others may be experiencing, which helped the young people to empathise with the residents during the project and recognise that being involved in the project was a type of volunteering.

"Yeah, there were children who were very aware that what they were doing was volunteering. So, it wasn't just another activity, what they were doing was going to have a positive impact. Particularly because the sentiment behind what they were doing, they could kind of empathise [with the Covid-19 lockdown] - they were like 'this is a difficult situation for people, and I can empathise with that because I can't see my friend and there are people out there who can't see anyone. And that combination of having to empathise and think on a community-wide scale, combined with them volunteering and doing something positive.'"

(Local broker #2, Wave 1)

Young people's awareness that their involvement in the programme constituted social action was also helped by the visible impact they saw.

"I think for all of them it's given them an insight into just how connecting with people in the community can have an impact on the people that you connect with."

(Local broker #8)

"I think this has added a really additional and valuable element to show young people how to live their faith in action, because rather than fundraising for [a general charity], this is actually a relationship and encounter with somebody that you might not otherwise meet, and in particular many young people would not have a connection with somebody as old as the people that they're meeting in the care homes."

(Local broker #10)

2. Legacies of youth social action

While the brokers acknowledged that this project had provided an opportunity for children and young people to get involved in volunteering or youth social action, many brokers focused on what the longer-term impacts or legacies of this may be. These included providing career inspiration, generating leadership skills, and encouraging further youth social action.

- Career inspiration

Young people's involvement with residents, especially within a social care setting, was recognised by some brokers as sparking young people's interest in older people, and more broadly, social care careers. Given the current difficulties within the social care sector, brokers recognised this as an especially positive legacy of the programme.

"The children were also saying that actually it inspired them to think about a career in social care or medicine, you know? So, it's another way of kind of inspiring young people to understand that whole world of social care and health, and to volunteer and take youth social action as a result."

(Local broker #10)

"So, one young person is going into the home in their own spare time because their parent works there. But that's because they've been inspired to do that because they've seen the difference it makes."

(Local broker #10)

- Leadership opportunities

Other brokers commented on how the organisation of the project within schools had enabled the youth social action to continue by integrating the linking activity with a specific class or year group. Not only did brokers comment on this as promoting the sustainability of the link, but they suggested this provided leadership opportunities for young people by encouraging them to pass on their volunteering skills to other students.

"I think the schools, they did brief the children and talk about the sort of social action and the impact and who wants to get involved in making a difference. So, some schools have just started again with a new year level, but they've kept three of the children from last year's group in this year's group to support the children who are new to it, which is really nice. It's just that continuity and then the idea is that the students have sort of a leadership role within their peer group."

(Local broker #6)

"Some schools have groups of children who join an [external organisation's programme] whose focus is on thinking about social action projects. So, in some schools they've taken this on as their project and they're then passing it on to the year fives for when they become year sixes to take it on. So, it's becoming part of that youth social action project for a particular group to pass on year after year, which is also I think, really positive. Rather than picking something every year you try and then you do something different. Actually, it's creating a sustained relationship, which I think is really positive."

(Local broker #10)

- Further youth social action

In some cases, children or young people engaged in further youth social action following their involvement in the linking project. For example, groups of children engaged in fundraising projects that were intended to support the Care Home FaNs project or the specific care home they were linked to.

"At one of the schools, the children that were involved, they called them their ethos group. Well, the children in the ethos group decided that they wanted to do some fundraising for My Home Life England actually...And so they had a cinema club and they chose the film and they did some fundraising. So, I thought, well, that's, you know, that's social action, isn't it?"

(Local broker #3)

"The children there did some fundraising for a Jewish organisation that the care home is part of, so I think that shows that the discussions are being had in schools with the children and that it's, you know, it's making them interested and making them ask questions and find out more, which I think will be good for their future involvement."

(Local broker #3)

One broker reflected on how engagement with youth social action through this project may enable young people to take an interest in wider community volunteering or development initiatives.

"There was one kid who was talking about there being some kind of council mission statement for clean air in the area by 2025, and they were like, 'I love to be involved in this'. So, I think some children are a lot more aware of environmental social action things, and after doing this kind of work, where they're engaged with the care home, I think those kids would be so much more up for volunteering and get involved in things like that."

(Local broker #9)

3. Active citizenship and community participation

The brokers' comments about youth social action all point toward children and young people having a greater awareness and sense of belonging in their local community. Whether through achieving a greater awareness of the lives of others and the impact they, as young people, may have on other people, or being involved in further volunteering activities within their own school, their local care home or wider community, young people's participation was associated with being a more active member of their community. This was reflected in the brokers' exit interviews where they referred to intergenerational work as being more than just youth social action and instead being a mutually beneficial activity that is not only good to do but fun.

"Obviously we want to encourage young people to be active in their community, but what we liked about that was the residents having control and ownership and that reciprocation, it's not just the young people helping the older people. It's kind of a two way. Yeah, respectful relationship, which is, yeah, really lovely and really important."

(Local broker #7)

"Perhaps we don't want the children to feel like they're doing social action. We want them to feel like they're just going something and having fun with people and doing fun stuff. So, there isn't this sort of 'We're coming to help you, we're coming to do things for you', it's a mutual, 'We're coming together' experience. Hopefully what that does is sort of imbue in them this idea that, you know, taking part in your society and getting involved with other people in your society is a good thing to do for everyone. And not in a sort of charitable kind of saviour, you know, 'I'm coming in to like help you', kind of thing, but that we're all in this together, and that we tried to make the project fun for everyone and not a one side doing something for the other. To give the older people that sense of life and of an important role in it there, you know? They're not just sitting there waiting to have someone come and do something for them. I think that's important."

(Local broker #8)

Impact for particular groups of children

A theme that emerged from discussions during the broker Sharing Network meetings was the observation by some brokers that particular groups of children in their local schools were responding well to the intergenerational linking, and it was considered that there may be added benefits for children with additional needs or those coming from particular backgrounds. We therefore asked all brokers about their experience with this during an exit interview at the end of the study, and identified the following themes: (1) children with additional social, educational, or behavioural needs; (2) children dealing with bereavement or who did not have grandparents of their own; and (3) children from diverse cultural backgrounds with English as an additional language.

1. Children with additional needs

Brokers reflected upon how well intergenerational linking integrated with the ethos and flexibility of specialist schools. This included some specialist schools being easier to recruit at the initial stages of the project.

"All of the specialist schools have been very committed from the start, they were the first ones that we recruited. And often they've had a meeting set up a meeting right at the beginning with the manager and the activity coordinator. And it was the idea that it would be not just a short-term partnership, but something that they could build on. Right from the beginning."

(Local broker #4)

Brokers spoke about the benefits for children with additional learning needs they had witnessed as a result of specialist schools' involvement in the project and these schools' particular desire to enable students to become part of their community.

"I think those children have benefited from it because the specialist schools have got a little bit more flexibility in their curriculum, and I think they also see the need to reach out beyond the school community because they want to prepare their children to live in the real world. So, this is another way of doing that."

(Local broker #4)

"One of my schools had arranged for a group of students with social and emotional needs to link with the care home and they had found it really powerful to see these children having this experience. It was a bit hit and miss in the beginning but they did ask to continue again this year, specifically saying that the kids had loved it last year. So, I think it had given them a good opportunity to, like, role-play social settings and, you know, actually go out and meet different people and practice the things that they might have been practicing in the classroom, you know? Greeting and meeting and that kind of thing and just working through whichever issues they might have."

(Local broker #8)

Local examples of benefits for children with additional needs

One broker spoke in detail about feedback they'd received from a teacher regarding the involvement of students with social and emotional needs or students who are non-verbal. In this instance, the teacher expressed the impact of non-verbal forms of communication between residents and children and how different forms of connection, such as touch, enabled a resident living with dementia and a student with autism to interact.

"A teacher at school for children with social and emotional needs said that what she liked about the link was just seeing a different side to her pupils, them taking responsibility, taking the initiative. She also talked for some of her pupils with autism when they met residents living with dementia. Almost a mutual understanding and the comfort of sitting in silence. The child and the resident, that kind of being together but not communicating as you might if you maybe didn't have those additional experiences or needs or whatever. She said it was really beautiful to see, and children's kind of honesty about the sort of the skin on the elderly resident's hand and stroking the skin. Yeah, it just sounded really lovely. That teacher was absolutely ranting and raving about how wonderful it had been for her children. But she said that it was really, it was really meaningful for her children."

(Local broker #7)

Another broker also reflected upon the particular benefits children with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties had gained from being part of the project.

"I mean an example in terms of the children. I think four schools have now said how struck they've been by how compassionate children are, so they spontaneously step up to help an older person, for example, [who] has decided they want to leave the garden and go back into the care home. And one school even said, you know they had a young boy who's not the most well-behaved child in the school and they were astonished about how thoughtful and gentle he was when he went to the care home. She said he was a different child. I'm so in terms of that opportunity for children to display that compassion and thoughtfulness and that has struck a number of schools that have been able to do face to face contact. Those sorts of things have been really striking."

(Local broker #10)

In another example, one teacher had told their broker about a strong relationship that had formed between a young lad and one of the residents and how this had changed the way staff at the schools interacted and supported this young person.

"There was one young lad in particular and he was - his behaviour was challenging at school - and even when he would come to the care home, he would have a few support staff kind of guiding him and what have you. And the teacher at the end of July said he was on the beach [as part of an activity], he was away off on his own. And they said, oh gosh, you know, how come he's away off now? Usually there's, you know, he's got support staff and they said the transformation in his behaviour is unbelievable because he had been given some responsibility. He befriended one of the residents and he planned his 100th birthday and they really just bonded because when we went, we were lucky we could see [the residents] face to face, but behind the pod [screen], and um, they were just talking about their ages and what they did when they were 14 and a lot of them were obviously not at school, they were fighting the war and that. Just it was like a light bulb went on and [the lad] made a connection, and then when he would go to the care home he would gravitate towards this older man. When he heard it was his birthday and we were planning something, he got really involved in it and it was him that had that responsibility."

(Local broker #11)

2. Children dealing with bereavement or who do not have grandparents of their own

Some of brokers reflected upon how the programme had impacted upon children who had lost family members. For instance, some suggested that this served as vital opportunity to interact with members of a different generation for those children who didn't have grandparents, as well as for residents who didn't have grandchildren. As one local broker pointed out, "Some residents don't have grandchildren and vice versa so you do get a different aspect, especially with different age groups as well" (Local broker #10). It was suggested that interactions between members of different generations could be a source of comfort or support for those who have suffered a loss of family member or bereavement.

Local example of benefits for children with additional needs

For one child, a teacher noticed how his relationship with a resident enabled this kind of companionship.

"There was a really nice moment where a little boy came that we went to care home and this little boy was like he... I think he recently lost his dad, and he was quite nervous and quite shy but he just really clicked with one of the men in the care home. And they just spent like an hour walking around the garden together and picking leaves and then they made tiles together in clay and everyone else was kind of doing it together but they were sort of starting separately on their own and then he sort of invited him to his table...they almost didn't want to be by themselves and [the teacher] said that was really lovely because and then at the end of the session, the little boy said 'I only live down the road and maybe my mum could come and spend time with you again', sort of thing. And he was really excited about that. So, the thing is kind of creating space for people to organically connect and not kind of managing it too much, but just letting that happen. And that was like a really nice moment where they just really clicked as two people."

(Local broker #5)

3. Children with English as an additional language

Language was a way that children could connect with residents, but was also a potential barrier, particularly for those learning English as an additional language. For instance, one broker commented on how language barriers may have hindered the inclusivity of the project for some children.

"If a child has English as an additional language, as probably elsewhere in the country, children are just developing their English if they're new to the country. And there so many challenges, particularly when you are doing things digitally, when you are working with people who are hard of hearing or who lip read, or are very softly spoken, and I'm talking about older people here, communicating with young people who are either just learning a language or haven't got older people in their community - basically inclusivity and proper representation in this project is really hard to get. I just felt for those children basically."

(Local broker #2, Wave 1)

However, another broker commented on how, when a child with English as an additional language is matched with a resident who also speaks a language other than English, this can be a fantastic way of forming a connection across generations. This was supported by a comment made by one of the pupils themselves.

"I am enjoying using my language skills to make a video for the old people, it makes me feel special for having a skill that not everyone else has."

(Primary school student, Enfield)

Local example of benefits for children from culturally diverse backgrounds

"So, we're at the point of all getting to know each other, and the care home did a video to show the children what a care home was like and show them around and then the school did a video. But the school found out that there was a Turkish, Italian and I can't remember another speaking resident there and they had children in the school that spoke those languages. And it empowered those children because normally in school you can only speak English, you know you're encouraged to do that. But they were able to use their own language and I think they did cards... So, in terms of impact on them, it had a big impact on them, and it was that school where one of the two children missed the session, didn't they? And then they were really upset because they wanted to go to the next one. So, but they were proud that they kind of had some sort of special advantage to help connect with those residents because I believe both of the residents barely spoke English. So even the care home staff wouldn't have had a great deal of interaction in a language those residents could have understood. So, they were actually reaching out to them beyond what even the staff were able to do. So, I think they were very proud of that."
(Local broker #6)

"Thank you so much for a wonderful afternoon. It's moments like this in teaching that remind you why you do the job! The children absolutely loved it and are already discussing ideas for another session."

School lead, Bradford

"It's an amazing project and because of the funding that was provided we were able to provide experiences that usually we wouldn't have the budget for."

School lead, Plymouth

"It's been brilliant - thank you!"

School lead, Newcastle

"It's been a very positive experience. Children have looked forward to every session, especially the care home visits. We have come back to school each time with positive things to talk about."

School lead, Newcastle

"We had a fabulous experience, never to be forgotten but are planning for the future joint projects already."

School lead, Sefton

"This intergenerational project has been so valuable particularly during quite a difficult year. It felt timely and so important to be a part of and the children understood why their contributions were so worthwhile. It has made them consider how other people live and the difficulty they face and linked them directly with others-relationships have been forged and memories made. I am in no doubt they will remember this project for years to come and may themselves get the opportunity to instigate something similar in the future as they embark on their own journeys in life."

School lead, Devon

"The opportunity to participate in the project has provided the children with real insight into how elderly people are no different to us. This may sound strange but young children in school are so disassociated with the lives of elderly people, especially after Covid, that they are unaware of how to interact with them."

School lead, Sefton

"As a school, it has improved our links with our local community. We have fully enjoyed all aspects of the project. Looking forward to next year!"

School lead, Sefton

"We are going to carry this link on next year. We think the children got so much from this project and so did we."

School lead, Leeds

"The potential for this project is huge. It is really exciting and I think we can make it a sustainable project very easily."

School lead, Plymouth

"Please can we keep the project going? There are so many elderly people needing that contact from young people. To see their faces light up is truly magical. Many still feel isolated and such contact is vital for them. It is our duty to be there for them in any way we can. They love seeing the children!"

School lead, Plymouth

"I feel that this is a fantastic project that should be rolled out on a much larger scale, this should really be a nationwide project."

School lead, Sefton

IMPACTS FOR OLDER ADULTS LIVING IN CARE HOMES

One of the most frequently observed impacts for residents who participated in intergenerational linking, according to care home leads, was that they described themselves as happier during and after intergenerational sessions with the children. Over 50% of care home leads also reported that residents were more talkative than usual and seemed to ‘come to life’ around the children. Furthermore, over half of care home leads (57.1%) reported that their residents were able to share skills, knowledge, stories and/or experiences with the children, adding to the enjoyment and value of the experience for them.

OBSERVED IMPACTS FOR CARE HOME RESIDENTS	n	%
Residents described themselves as happier during and after sessions	14	66.7
Residents shared skills, knowledge, stories and/or experiences with children	12	57.1
Residents were more talkative than usual	11	52.4
Residents seemed to ‘come to life’ around the children	11	52.4
Residents were more willing to do different physical tasks during the sessions	9	42.9
Residents asked after the children between sessions	9	42.9
Residents looked forward to sessions and expressed this to care staff	7	33.3
Residents moved around more physically during sessions than usual	5	23.8
TOTAL	21	100

TABLE 9: IMPACTS FOR RESIDENTS AS OBSERVED BY CARE HOME LEADS

We also asked brokers if they had observed any impacts for residents or had received any direct feedback from school or care home leads about residents’ participation. Several themes emerged from these discussions including: joy, opportunities for social interactions, building relationships (even during Covid), and opportunities for sharing knowledge.

1. Joy

Several brokers spoke about the enjoyment residents experienced as a result of the children visiting the care home.

“I think that the older people benefit through just the joy that’s brought into the home.”

(Local broker #9)

“Especially when the children have been able to go into the very centre of the care home. Like they went into the living spaces and kind of, even if [older] people aren’t necessarily engaging in the activity, they’re sort of surrounding the activity, and that they’re sort of smiling or looking at/watching things and kind of, I think, just seeing the ripple effects.”

(Local broker #5)

“And then there was a lovely story from one of the children recently who said you know they just go into the care home sometimes and they just play and said the residents love seeing the children, having the children there who play and then come over and chat and [they] have that kind of sense of, you know, that kind of joy at seeing children running around and having a good time. So that’s the sort of feedback that we’ve been getting about that joyfulness that the links bring.”

(Local broker #10)

One broker reflected that the joyfulness of children’s visits to the care home were not only felt in the moment but also lasted beyond the session and gave the residents something to look forward to.

“Kind of hearing from care staff. So, the week after the children have gone in and how people have been talking about it still and how they’ve kind of been out and almost like building anticipation around them coming back again. So, I think just kind of like bringing us a general sense of joy into the space.”

(Local broker #5)

Another broker suggested that taking part in the project supported the activity coordinator to involve residents who were reluctant to engage in care home activities.

Local examples of residents becoming more engaged in activities

One broker shared an example of a resident who hadn't engaged much with organised care home activities until the care home became involved in the intergenerational project.

"Just the other day, we were getting feedback from the care home activity coordinator, and she said one of the residents only got up that day out of bed because she knew the young people were coming to play bingo. And she said it's nothing short of - 'It's a miracle', she said. The transformation when she would do any activity, she said she'd walk into the room and the residents would shuffle out because it would be like, 'oh, you're here again, what do you want?' You know, that type of thing. Whereas [when the children were there] she said they came in and they stayed and they lasted the session. They didn't want to leave. And when we had them up singing, dancing, everything on Monday, it was just, it's as I said, it's magical...it's priceless, it really is. But the older people...they're like stropky teenagers, they don't want to get up before 11, they want to watch TV, but bringing young people in it just changes the atmosphere and all that."

(Local broker #11)

This was supported by another broker who spoke about a resident's engagement in a drama activity.

"I think one of the things I remember when there was a drama workshop at [care home] and someone said there was a resident who most often cried and on the day that that drama activity was going on, she was much more engaged and happier and they were playing with looks and things like that and I have seen a picture of it, she's, she's in the picture very engaged and enjoying that and the staff person from that home said, oh, you know, I've never seen her so interactive, that normally she's kind of in herself and not engaging and not reaching out."

(Local broker #6)

2. Opportunity for social interactions

The brokers were keen to point out that this project had provided residents with opportunities for new or different forms of social interaction or connection.

"Some of those older people, they don't get a lot of contact with the younger people. And what that does and the benefits of it, is just incredible."

(Local broker #11)

For some residents, this was the opportunity to learn about how education had changed since they were at school or become more involved with the school.

"One of the links had an introductory meeting with the children. So, first of all, the children came to the care home to meet with them, but then the residents also went to the school and talked to the children in the school. So again, I think, well, that was an experience that they wouldn't or might not otherwise have had if they hadn't made this connection through the project."

(Local broker #3)

For other residents, forming connections through the project also encouraged the development of friendships within the care home.

"It's actually causing the residents to communicate more with each other because they're all in the same room and they've been brought into and an activity which they're all sharing together. There's banter going on between them that perhaps obviously wasn't [there before] and the staff are really, you know, quite pleased with the fact that that's going on as well and the children have sparked [that]. Yeah, so there's definitely, um, you can see the huge benefits and want more and more of those experiences because it is so beneficial to them."

(Local broker #11)

This broker also reflected upon how the lack of opportunities for social connection for some residents was, at times, difficult to contend with despite justifying why their work and the project was valuable.

"But at the same time, it's actually quite sad that older people aren't a regular part of [children's] lives. And it was, it was mixed emotions really. You know, it was something so special that they were experiencing and you'd been part of enabling that opportunity to take place. But it was also the realisation of, you know, there needs to be a lot more interlinking. There's so many benefits both ways, and so many young people and older people are missing out on those experiences."

(Local broker #11)

3. Building relationships (even during Covid-19)

Brokers shared examples of how residents were able to build personal relationships with children through a variety of ways during the pandemic. For example, residents were involved in lunch clubs, reading groups over Zoom, and pen pal schemes with school children (see story box). One broker suggested that despite difficulties in establishing relationships between schools and care homes during the pandemic, the efforts to sustain relationships had led to positive outcomes.

"It's had its troubles, you know. Relationships broke down over Covid and they [children] weren't allowed to go [to the care home], but I think that you know, from what the people in the care home and this teacher have told me, they see it as mutually beneficial."

(Local broker #4)

Local examples of residents forming relationships with younger people

"There was an intergenerational lunch club that ran for 18 months in the end, in fact it ran for longer because it's still going. And every lunchtime a primary school class and a care home would eat lunch together digitally. And they've just met up, face to face, recently and had a tea party. And the older people were just beside themselves that they'd finally met people that they couldn't necessarily properly see on a zoom call, so that probably had a bigger impact for the residents. Seeing them in person, digital just doesn't replace that really."

(Local broker #2, Wave 1)

"And there's another young girl, um, she has been pen pals with this other resident, and it's lovely because they met at Halloween last year. We got to the care home, but we had to keep our distance. But she had letters for the resident and it was like a year had moved on and the two of them were still there this Halloween party exchanging cards again. So just that friendship, you know? And then obviously it stemmed to another young girl and she wanted to bring pictures and what have you. So I think there's a bit of competition and a bit of fighting over this resident, but it's just been joyous."

(Local broker #11)

"There were a couple of residents that took it in turns to do a weekly reading sessions with the school. So, they did it over zoom. And um, they would read a story and then that sort of led to another of the residents who was able to go out and visit. He went into the school and did the reading session in the school. So, I think, you know, for the residents that was a really positive experience."

(Local broker #3)

4. Opportunities for sharing knowledge

Throughout the project, brokers spoke about how activities had provided residents opportunities to share their knowledge with the younger generation. This was not limited to skills or specific knowledge but also values and life lessons. During their exit interview one broker reflected on an encounter where a resident not only shared knowledge of what it was like to grow up when they were younger, but also learnt from young people about how their school life was different to that experienced by the resident (see story box). This emphasised the reciprocal nature of the learning between generations.

Residents were also asked in some instances to be part of the local advisory groups set up by each broker to help inform the project. This provided an opportunity for residents to share their knowledge and experiences of the project first-hand.

“One of the residents joined the advisory group from time to time to take part and was very interested in doing that. So, for example, some residents who attended our advisory group with the activity coordinator and a number of times the activity coordinator has said that they would usually be asleep but they’ve stayed awake purposely, they want to be awake for this.”

(Local broker #3)

“When we had one of our advisory group meetings, we had two residents who’d been appointed resident ambassadors of their care home, and they came to the meeting and they spoke about how much they loved it. This was later on in the year, so they’d actually had face to face meetings with their children. And yeah, they were just saying, oh, it just makes us feel alive again, you know, just as simple as that. It just made them feel young again because they take apart in some little sports days, activities and things like that and they just loved it.”

(Local broker #8)

Local examples of opportunities for sharing knowledge and life experiences

“During the Queen’s Jubilee, when we did the posters... the older people were sat in the classroom. It was their experience of life now, and whiteboards and laptops and the way children communicate with the teacher, which was very, very different from how they used to communicate and sit in their class and ink pens and wooden desks and everything else. And they were telling the children about that and obviously it was the Queen’s Jubilee celebration. So they were talking about the coronation of the Queen. They remember, you know, all the kids in one person’s/neighbour’s house in the street because they had a black and white TV and it was teeny. And all of their memories of it, they were telling the children, and not only could the younger people, they’ve never seen a black and white TV before, but they couldn’t believe that, you know, everybody in the street was in one person’s house watching this big event on this teeny thing that was black and white, and they’d never get to experience that. And so they, they were in awe of the older people, that they’ve been through that experience and they had something so, so cool as that. Um, which made me laugh.”

(Local broker #11)

“And then a comment from an older lady and you know she was in a care home and this care home wasn’t one of the best, you know I’ll say that now, and you could tell that this lady had probably lived a bit of a hard life. She didn’t have a lot at all. But what she did have was obviously so sincere to her and meant so much. And that was her husband. She talked about her husband and she talked about her family and to me, these younger people just listened. And they were looking at her and they were kind of weighing her up and thought, you know, she’s old and she’s sitting there in a chair. It doesn’t look like there’s a lot going on here. Um, you know, she’s not on a football pitch cheering and she’s not on an Xbox or she’s not, you know, glam and got lots of stuff. But she sat there so happy and could tell those young people that she loved her life and she wouldn’t change anything. And I could see them just looking at her thinking, wow. We know that she’s old and there’s not much going on, but she’s really enjoyed her life and that, you know, it’s possible to be old and still enjoy your life and be happy.”

(Local broker #11)

Impacts on particular groups of older adults

There were also some strong themes emerging from the data from brokers, schools, and care home leads around the pronounced impacts of intergenerational linking for particular groups of residents, including those with dementia, depression, or sensory impairment, or those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

1. Dementia and depression

Brokers valued residents living with dementia participating in the project. For some, they commented that this positively impacted these residents' engagement with activities. For example, one broker spoke about a drama activity in which the uninhibited and in-the-moment qualities of participants living with dementia were a strength.

"I'd say that most of the residents that we've worked with in this project have had dementia. For storytelling, it is just incredible. Yeah. I just love doing storytelling workshops with people with dementia, because that filter of self-consciousness about what you're going to say is gone and there's no saving up this idea for it to come round to your turn. As you sometimes do when you are a self-conscious adult or whatever. It's so in the moment that there's just these moments of just brilliance that come out. So I think in that way it's been really great."

(Local broker #9)

Another broker spoke about how the involvement of people living with dementia in the project also positively impacted on children's experience and led to empathetic relationships between residents and children.

"There was also a lady or a gentleman with dementia. And, yes, the way that the children were with that resident was very patient, very calm, answered the question that was repeated several times. So in that way that resident was still part of the group and still was able to interact with those children."

(Local broker #10)

One broker shared feedback from care staff about a resident who had depression and how interacting with the children at the school and within the care home had had a positive impact on their mood (see story box).

Local example of impact on resident with depression

One broker shared feedback from care staff about a resident who had depression and how interacting with the children at the school and within the care home had a positive impact on their mood.

"Over the Jubilee celebrations the children invited the residents into the school and the children made a high tea for them and served them food and then they'd chatted together and told jokes together. And then the children were invited to go and meet the residents in the care home. There was a staff member from the residential home and they had said there was one particular gentleman who was very depressed, hadn't smiled, hadn't spoken much, didn't want to interact with anyone, who didn't stop smiling after that first meeting and was just a completely different person. And it was a marked change in his outlook and the way that he was after seeing the children and having that meeting with them. I think that's probably the most positive [feedback] that we've heard, and it was just such a lovely thing to hear."

(Local broker #10)

2. Sensory, hearing and sight impaired

Brokers commented on the challenges of inclusivity related to involving different groups of older people. For example, one broker spoke about how linking during the pandemic may have impacted on the involvement of those with hearing or sight impairments.

"I felt for the older people that couldn't see, in terms of inclusivity and in terms of if people need additional support with hearing and their sight and things, it was really difficult to do that, because screens and laptops are very small and even if somebody is posting a letter or doing a piece of artwork, unless it's done in really large print which the children don't default to, then it's quite hard for them, they often have to have it described to them."

(Local broker #2)

Despite these challenges, brokers reflected on how the expertise of practitioners within care homes, and even teachers with specialist knowledge, were able to employ specific strategies to include residents with specific needs.

"There's one of them [link], it's a primary age specialist school and they seem to have got a particularly strong link with their care home. And I think a lot of the understanding is based on the understanding that the teachers have got of specialist needs and applying that to say adults living with dementia, so they've made like sensory pouches and different things that can feel and a sensory garden that is made of things. So, they seem to have bonded well as professionals and sharing ideas and expertise."

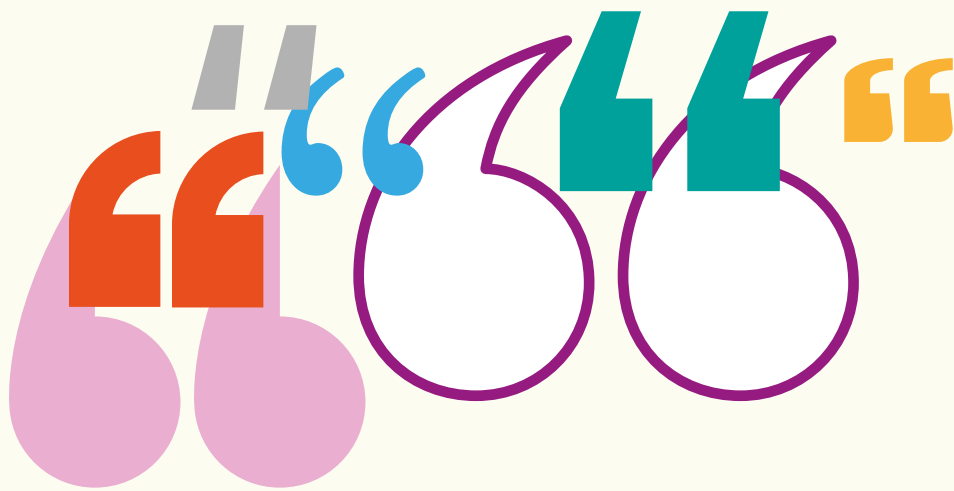
(Local broker #5)

3. Residents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

During the project, one broker in particular spoke about the success of links between children and residents who spoke multiple languages. This was seen to have a positive impact for the children, as mentioned above, but also was recognised as impacting residents who may have formed stronger relationships with these children through communicating in their shared language. This broker reflected upon how this was something that further intergenerational brokerage could explore.

"I think the language thing that we tried to work on in some of our links was one thing that I'd like to really try to focus on with some of my partnerships if this goes, you know, if we manage to continue and just to see whether that use of first language is positive for the residents that have multiple languages and is a kind of spark for them to have memories of when they were younger. Or whether that the children being able to use the languages is a sort of an impact. I mean, usually here the care workers will have those languages too, so it's not that those people haven't not got anyone to speak that language with them. But in some instances, it may be that you know you get a child that comes in and visits that can speak someone's first language. And I think that would be really, really good to see how that works."

(Local broker #8)



"I feel this should continue as the bond with the children and residents was lovely. It's so good to see the residents enjoying themselves and making projects for each other. The residents can't wait till the next event."
Care home lead, Sefton

"Our ladies and gents really enjoyed completing the word searches and they were humbled that the pupils had gone to so much trouble and put so much thought and time into creating them."
Care home lead, Bradford

"The residents received handprints from the children which was lovely, and they are going to do the same thing back for the children... it has probably felt quite insular for many residents recently and so it is lovely for them to connect with the outside world."
Care home lead, Plymouth

"Seeing the children always puts a smile on their faces."
Care home lead, Derby

"Residents and staff enjoyed immensely!"
Care home lead, Enfield

"It has been lovely seeing the children become more confident and making friends with our residents who look forward to seeing the children."
Care home lead, Enfield

"Residents had fun painting and exchanging the pebbles, not only involving the residents and pupils but also the staff and parents too. They found that sharing the artwork got everyone interested and excited."
Care home lead, Plymouth

"Just wanted to say a big thank you to you and your students for the beautiful cards they made for our residents. Seeing their names made some of our residents really smile, which was lovely to see."
Care home lead, Enfield

"We had an absolutely great time! Relatives already asking when are you coming back? It was just great!"
Care home lead, Enfield

"(The school video tour) led to a lot of conversations and reminiscing about their school days. That was fantastic because of all the memories it brought up for them."
Care home lead, Enfield

"The whole experience was very positive for us at the home and is something that we are intending to continue."
Care home lead, Devon

"I think the residents just love seeing how enthusiastic the children are about it, They were talking about it hours later and that's how you know that it's resonated with them."
Care home lead, Plymouth



IMPACTS ON BROADER COMMUNITY

While the primary intended beneficiaries of intergenerational linking are the younger and older people involved, the evaluation of this programme found that the positive impacts actually extended much wider, creating ripple effects for the broader community (Figure 9).



FIGURE 9: RIPPLE EFFECTS SHOWING THE IMPACTS OF INTERGENERATIONAL LINKING ON THE BROADER COMMUNITY

School community

In exit interviews, brokers reflected that the impact from the programme was not confined to children from a specific class, but could be felt more widely as schools started to embed their links and the social action ethos of the project within whole-school activities.

“There was wider interest throughout the rest of the school, and towards the end of the summer term, when there were end of term productions and some of the residents from different care homes were able to come and watch a rehearsal of the end of year production. So those sorts of wider ripples, if you like, those were taking place, yeah, which I think was good. And one of the schools, the children who did it last academic year and have moved up, they did an assembly for the children who are doing it this year to explain all about it. So, it’s broadening out to the whole school in a sense.”

(Local broker #3)

“Although I wouldn’t say it’s necessarily changed the way our schools approached youth social action, I think it’s given them a new opportunity that they might not otherwise have explored to make a very direct impact in their local community. Care homes are very hidden, aren’t they? They’re behind the door, behind a gate. You know people don’t come in and out all the time. You don’t see the residents moving around a lot, so it’s really given an opportunity to kind of break down that invisibility and do something positive. So, I think it’s changed the way schools are looking at that aspect of youth social action.”

(Local broker #10)

This was something brokers felt schools needed more support to do, which they may provide as part of their ongoing work to develop the sustainability of the links.

"I hope that some of the teachers are going to be inspired by some of the work and to take it on in their own schools. I think they will benefit from seeing it in action and really understand that this works and it does benefit the kids and the community, and so they can see that it is a good investment of time."

(Local broker #9)

These comments also reflect the impact that linking had upon care homes becoming more integrated within the community.

Care home community

A core aim of My Home Life England is to break down barriers between care homes and communities. Brokers suggested that, although engaging with care homes was difficult at times, those that took part in the project developed important links with not only individuals, but also organisations within their local community. One broker suggested involvement in this project may inspire more opportunities for similar activities and community links.

"I think when the staff are there, they see how great it is. It makes them a lot more open to having artist in [or] to taking up offers to be involved in intergenerational projects."

(Local broker #9)

Other brokers reflected on how the project had an impact on the care home community itself - for example, providing support and professional development to care staff, or having an impact upon residents' families.

"It's kind of, I guess it's sort of showing the care staff that people are able to engage if they have the right activity or something that they want to engage for. So, I think there's been learning around that for the care staff as well."

(Local broker #5)

Local example of the impact on care home communities

"There was another activity called songs for sharing whereby older people talked about pieces of music or songs they found to give them hope and younger people recorded it. There was one primary school where all the pupils did a section of a song. And like 200 children were involved. And for them, that was something they did that came and went very briefly. But the effect of 200 children singing en masse for a care home, along with pictures being held up, it was videoed, saying things like - perhaps you can see them here [looks in scrap book] - we are thinking of you, we'll get through it (Covid-19), it affected the care home residents but the care home staff were just in bits as well because they were having a really difficult time. So, in that instance, the biggest impact there were the care home residents, staff and peoples' families - the families of residents in the care home."

(Local broker #2)

Church community

Local links included schools and youth groups associated with religious organisations. Two brokers suggested that this provided opportunities for the impact of the project to spread throughout local parishes or church communities.

"[We found] that the link was then extending to include the church and the church community."

(Local broker #3)

"The goal is to also send that out to all of our parishes to encourage parishes to think about connecting with a local care home and maybe to have their youth groups connecting with a local care home. So, what we hope to do is to give it that wider impact, so it's not just a school link, it's a bigger parish link, and often the schools are linked to the parish, but not always. So, I think that's the impact on the broader community."

(Local broker #10)

Families

Brokers also referred to the wider impact that the project may have had on families. As mentioned above, this included the families of residents within care homes, but also the families of children who visited.

"The children will have gone home and talked to their families about it. The kids, they definitely reference going home and talking about it and also people referenced care homes talking to quite a lot of family members who are coming in. The kids going home talking about it, talking to other older family members you know aunts or grandparents or older people in the community. And I think it's certain that those conversations then go wider don't they, because then families, mums and dads, talk to their friends and you know, mention that. So, it begins to trickle into, cascade into local communities."
(Local broker #7)

In one case, where parents were often home-schooling children during lockdowns, families were encouraged to take part in the project together as a form of family volunteering or social action.

"I think it had an impact on a wider demographic - participants that we didn't think would even play a part of the project - so wider family groups getting involved in volunteering together, something that they might never have done, and those kinds of activities had a big impact on the community outside the care home."
(Local broker #2)

Local and organisational networks

Many brokers spoke about the impact the project has had on their organisation. This included forming links with other organisations and networks within their community or helping to develop the work of the organisation into new areas or sectors.

"Collaborating with different groups of people that are working within the sector, is one of the impacts for me. I've come across lots of different people and they have not known what I'm doing and I've not heard about them. And we've all kind of networked which is good for a community. I think it's probably the same everywhere, but people in [local area] we always say, there's loads of us doing this and we just don't know about each other. We're not very good at bringing everyone together. So, I've been speaking with them about whether there's a way they can use their project within my existing partnerships. I think is really useful not duplicating the same thing because we're all doing stuff, but just overlapping it and everyone's benefiting because you know, my partners are using a project that I've come across and that project are using my partners in that sense. So, we're all benefiting."
(Local broker #8)

"I think it's had an impact on our work as an organisation, it's really given us a new direction for those two areas [schools/youth groups and care homes]. In terms of that wider impact, this [organisation] is part of the [national organisational] Social Action Network, which links in with all of our dioceses in England and Wales. So they were invited to our online event and we will be sharing our report and everything in the hope that actually other [organisational] networks will pick up this project. Because we just think it's easy to do, but it makes such a big difference."
(Local broker #10)

This illustrates the impact of the local broker beyond the individual links between schools and care homes in forming and strengthening relationships across their communities.

SUMMARY OF IMPACTS

In summary, younger people who participated in intergenerational linking benefited by having positive interactions with, forming relationships with, and learning from older people whom they would otherwise not have an opportunity to meet. The positive impacts of these interactions were particularly pronounced for children with additional social, educational, or behavioural needs, children from diverse cultural backgrounds with English as an additional language, and those dealing with bereavement or those who did not have grandparents of their own. In addition, it was clear that intergenerational linking also created opportunities for youth social action by:

- bringing the concept of volunteering to life;
- sparking awareness of, and interest in, youth social action activities;
- promoting active citizenship and community participation; and
- providing leadership opportunities and inspiring future careers.

For many older people living in care homes, intergenerational linking contributed to an enhanced quality of life by bringing a sense of joy, renewed energy, and purpose. It provided opportunities for social interactions, building new relationships, and sharing skills and knowledge with a younger generation. Individuals who appeared to have benefited in particular from these positive social interactions included those with living with dementia, depression, or sensory impairment.

An added benefit of the intergenerational linking programme was that it not only facilitated relationship-building between younger and older people, but also between the teaching and care home staff who were involved, as well as their broader school and care home communities. This contributed to greater awareness, mutual understanding across sectors, and breaking down barriers between care homes and the local community.

8. REFLECTIONS

Appreciative inquiry principles were embedded into the design of the intergenerational project and its evaluation framework, providing participants with opportunities to reflect on the experience. In this section, we take a step back and look at the evidence gathered from stakeholders about whether the linking programme was successful, what aspects of the project worked particularly well, what challenges were experienced, and how the programme could be improved in future to overcome such challenges.

PROJECT SUCCESS

At the outset of the project, there was consensus among local brokers and school and care home leads that the main measures for success would be: (a) whether it was a positive experience for younger and older people and (b) that the links be sustained beyond the end of the project. Here we reflect on whether the Care Home FaNs: Intergenerational Linking programme can be considered a success based on these criteria.

Evidence for success: Positive experience

Overall, the quantitative and qualitative data generated through this national project indicates that for the vast majority of those who took part in intergenerational linking, it was a positive experience.

- 95% of care home leads who completed the post-survey reported that their residents appeared to enjoy the intergenerational interactions very much (n=20/21).
- 91% of school leads who completed the post-survey reported that their children appeared to enjoy the intergenerational interactions very much (n=31/34).
- 90% of school (n=31/34) and care home leads (n=19/21) reported that they would recommend inter-generational linking to others.

The feedback from schools and care homes on what surprised them most about the project was generally related to how positive the experience was for both children and residents. Both school and care home leads were surprised by just how much the children and residents enjoyed spending time together, simply being in each other's company and sharing experiences, and how much they looked forward to the interactions.

School leads were most surprised by the level of enthusiasm and engagement shown by the children and how well they responded to the programme and interacted with the residents. This included how considerate the children were, how well they adapted their behaviour to meet the needs of the residents, and how well they initiated conversations and formed relationships with the older adults. Similarly, care home leads were also surprised by how well the children interacted with the residents, noting "how gentle the children are when with the residents". "I was surprised by the ease of the children and the elderly coming together. It was so natural and some children went above and beyond to make the residents feel cared for and included."

Some school leads were surprised by changes they noted in the children, including how much more interested they were in activities like reading, writing, and making art when this was done with or for the residents, and also how much the children cared to produce their best quality work for the residents. It was also observed by some that the children's confidence in communicating with others appeared to increase. Observing similar impacts for the residents was a common theme for what care home leads found most surprising about the project - for example, residents being willing to join in and give things a go, reminiscing about their lives, and making new memories with the children. As one care home lead described: "I was surprised by the fact that the residents' attention, mood, energy, and enjoyment all increased when the students came to visit- they'd come alive. It is nothing short of a miracle!"

Being involved in successful intergenerational interactions and witnessing the positive impacts on children and residents first-hand were also among some of the things that school and care home leads were most proud of when looking back at their experience (Box 3).

WHAT ABOUT THE PROJECT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

Themes from school leads' responses:

- **The children's behaviour** (e.g., respectful, kind, and considerate towards residents)
- **The relationships formed between children and residents** (particularly after extended periods of isolation and difficulties in meeting up in person due to Covid-19)
- **Successful events and outputs from intergenerational activities** (e.g., Jubilee event, beach cleaning day, finished radio show, harvest parcel created for care home, and a class performance based on residents' musical tastes)
- **The level of enjoyment experienced by children and residents alike** (e.g. "Lasting memories for all")
- **The positive impacts for children** (e.g., sense of positive identity)
- **Being able to showcase the school and the intergenerational programme** (e.g., "that we are able to act as ambassadors and model to the local community how worthwhile and enjoyable such links can be.")

Themes from care home leads' responses:

- **The positive impacts for residents** (e.g., residents getting involved in activities, having opportunities for social connections, and getting enjoyment out of the experience)
- **Helping to bridge the gap between generations**, particularly for residents who don't have children or grandchildren of their own (e.g., "For one of our residents it allowed him to be a grandfather figure again, which he really enjoyed.")
- **Successful events and outputs from intergenerational activities** (e.g., making in-person visits happen, and their residents' enjoyment and pride in creating things for the school children)
- **The broader connections made for the care home** (e.g., with school and local community) and being part of a national intergeneration linking project

BOX 3 : SOURCES OF PRIDE FOR SCHOOL AND CARE HOME LEADS

Evidence for success: Sustainable

Similarly, quantitative and qualitative data collected from local brokers, school and care home leads demonstrates a strong desire for the relationships that have been established throughout the project to be sustained, and for the intergenerational linking programme to continue.

- 80% of care home leads who completed the post-survey reported that they would definitely continue or run an intergenerational linking programme again (n=17/21).
- 71% of school leads who completed the post-survey reported that they would definitely continue or run an intergenerational linking programme again (n=23/32).
- *"Everybody said that they wanted it to continue. Both the care homes and the schools could see the benefits for the residents and children and for those reasons they were keen for it to continue."* (Local broker #3)

Many brokers have been heavily involved in helping the schools and care homes in their local area to plan for how the intergenerational linking programme can continue on into the next academic year and beyond, as well as spreading the word and providing an opportunity for other schools and care homes to get involved.

“We’ve already had a meeting with the schools and they’re talking about how they’re going to go forward with it. We’ve already had three schools taking on new projects, new work with their care home, or indeed linking in with new care homes this term already. We’ve got a meeting with three other schools who are interested in developing links, so our goal now is to try to get every school in the [organisation’s network] to have a link with the care home.”

(Local broker #10)

Some brokers, however, have found that some links between schools and care homes have been so successful that they have established their own way of moving forward together.

“We definitely have nurtured, supported and enabled some really successful links that will definitely carry on at least for this academic year, if not longer... And I think with some of the links it’s almost like they don’t have to think about it anymore. It’s just like part of the culture now... [they just automatically make and swap things to celebrate events like Valentine’s Day or Easter]... and walking through the care home, they’ve got like kind of a jars of paper flowers there that the kids made and it’s just like the link is there in everything, which is really lovely... other links, they just kind of quite like it to be fairly spontaneous. You can’t be totally spontaneous with schools, but not too rigid. Just like someone comes up with an idea and they just invite the children along to come and join in. It’s nice that sense of it being embedded, that’s really nice.”


(Local broker #7)

While there is strong desire and commitment from those involved to maintain the relationships established and continue the intergenerational programme, there are several challenges that require wider support in order for the programme to continue successfully into the future.

CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED

Local brokers experienced several challenges in facilitating intergenerational links. These were reported in the reflective worksheets completed by brokers at various stages of the project, and are summarised in Box 4 (presented in rank order of the frequency with which they were reported).

While brokers often explicitly referenced Covid-19 as a challenge to their work, it actually ranks further down the list. However, the impact of Covid-19 had cumulative effects which contributed to the major challenges experienced by brokers. For example, the two most frequently reported challenges were a lack of engagement from some schools and care homes, and communication issues. Care homes and schools at the best of times are institutions where time and resources are constrained, and both the education and care sector have different ways of working which may not be necessarily understood by those working outside the sector. However, these issues were further compressed during the pandemic due to lockdown restrictions and associated staffing issues.

 <p>CHALLENGES</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of engagement from some schools and care homes 2. Communication issues 3. Providing appropriate support to maintain links 4. Covid-19 restrictions/lockdowns and the inability to meet in person 5. Staff turnover 6. Scheduling issues and cancellations 7. Recruitment 8. Evaluation administrative tasks (e.g., getting consent forms and surveys completed)
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BOX 4: THEMES OF MAIN CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY LOCAL BROKERS

From the perspective of school and care home leads, the main challenges experienced reported in post-survey responses can be summarised into three major themes: (1) Covid-19; (2) time; and (3) other practical or logistical challenges.

1. Covid-19

The impact of Covid-19 presented a huge challenge for the project beyond the control of all involved, and was reported as the biggest challenge by school and care home leads in their post-surveys. Health and safety measures meant that intergenerational activities were unable to occur in-person for a substantial period of time. Work-arounds meant that many intergenerational sessions were instead done remotely, which presented its own challenges in terms of the use of technology in some care homes with outdated equipment, or poor Wi-Fi connection. As restrictions began to ease and some in-person interactions could be arranged, these were sometimes cancelled at short notice due to a Covid-19 outbreak at the care home, or had to be held outdoors where the weather often presented its own challenges.

2. Time

School leads often reported difficulty in finding time within the busy school curriculum and daily schedule to devote to planning, arranging, and making an intergenerational session happen. Some care home leads also reported that finding the best day and time to meet that would be suitable for both the school and care home could be challenging, but this was mostly reported from the school side. As one broker explained it:

“You’ve got that really narrow window in the school day, which is so chopped up anyway because of budgets and things, between the timings of their break times and their lunch times, you can’t mess with the lunch times. Then even within that two hour window they’ve got to get to the care home and get back again without missing anything else. It’s really challenging.”

(Local broker #6)

3. Other practical or logistical challenges

School and care home leads reported an assortment of other practical and logistical challenges. Some of those mentioned by school leads included: facilitating travel to and from the school/care home, having enough adult supervisors to accompany group of children on visit, and getting consent from parents for photos to be taken of the children during their visit. For care homes, one of the practical challenges was managing the number of children visiting at once, particularly for smaller homes or on days where staffing was an issue. Another challenge reported by some care home leads was difficulty with technology during virtual interactions with schools.

WHAT WORKED WELL AND WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED?

Connecting younger and older people to facilitate intergenerational interactions doesn’t just happen. A huge amount of human resource effort and support structures go into coordinating an intergenerational programme on such a large scale. Local brokers identified five key aspects of how the programme was designed and delivered, each of which they felt should be considered a staple for future programmes but with some additional improvements. Their feedback on each of these aspects are discussed in detail below.

1. The Broker-led model

The broker-led model for this programme was considered to be an integral part of its success. “I think this would be quite hard to do without a broker and I think it’d be a very difficult project to set up and run without having this kind of role” (Local broker #6). The reasoning behind this was that, without a broker, the onus for all the work involved (identifying potential links, making contact, establishing a relationship, maintaining communication etc.) would fall on the shoulders of individuals in the school or care home who are already working with limited time and resources. Another broker reflected on that fact that having a broker who is separate from the school and care home has the added benefit of being viewed as neutral and a novelty – someone new coming in and helping to deliver a different experience that sparks greater engagement. Many brokers felt that this model should be continued in the future of intergenerational programming.

"I think we are going to replicate a broker-led model in our organisation going forward because we recognise that without stimulus and an impetus and encouragement, things don't just happen all by themselves."

(Local broker #10)

2. Support structures

Local brokers involved in this intergenerational project had several support structures to help guide them. These included support from the National Team, who provided resources and a direct point of contact for any queries or concerns raised by the brokers. The feedback from brokers on what they particularly valued about the support they received included: (1) that the team were approachable, helpful, and responded to queries in a timely manner; (2) the resources provided by the National Team (including promotional material, PowerPoint presentations, and activity worksheets); and (3) the knowledge, experience, and expertise offered by the National Team, particularly in regard to care homes given that the majority of these brokers were more familiar working with schools.

"It feels very empowering rather than managed, if you know what I mean, which I think is partly due to the great National Team, they've been very supportive and encouraging"

(Local broker #10)

"I think the support given by the National Team, I think it's been brilliant. I think it's been outstanding to be honest."

(Local broker #6)

The National Team also facilitated the Sharing Network. This enabled local brokers across the country to come together regularly in a virtual meeting to share their experiences and provide support for one another. The Sharing Network meetings were initially held every three weeks, but after a group decision this was changed to monthly, and this frequency proved to be much more helpful for brokers' time-management. The feedback on the Sharing Network meetings was that these were very well organised and led by the National Team and were extremely valuable in helping local brokers to: (1) feel connected, reassured and supported as "part of a nationwide community who are all working towards the same goal" (Local broker #6); (2) share their experiences, including successes and challenges; and (3) share their own ideas, approaches, tips, and resources.

Brokers unanimously felt that some sort of peer-to-peer network should be a staple for any future intergenerational linking programme.

"A peer-to-peer support network, even if it was digital and across the country. I think it would be really important for other people who are running this."

(Local broker #2)

"I think when you know that there's people you can turn to who got the knowledge of either the school or the care home or have done similar things in the past and know what the challenges are, then at least you do feel you are not alone. If you feel alone when you're doing something, it's easy to get discouraged. So I think for any future project they would need to be aware of that, and that need [for] ways to or places to turn to for advice and support. Not that the people that are doing it aren't capable of doing it. I'm sure that they are. But it's always good to know you've got a support network there."

(Local broker #4)

Brokers made a few suggestions for how the Sharing Network could be made even more helpful. These included more opportunities for in-person events where brokers can come together and share their experiences - something that was hampered in this project due to Covid restrictions and the geographic distance between some of the areas involved. Another suggestion was that the Sharing Network could be expanded to include participating schools coming together to share their experiences of being involved in intergenerational linking with their local care homes. This would also be a way of publicising the movement and inspiring other schools and individuals to get involved.

Finally, local brokers also worked with an Advisory Board made of experts and interested parties in their local area. In each reflective survey, brokers provided feedback on how the local advisory group supported the work of the project. They indicated that these were most helpful for: (1) supporting the project development; (2) providing ideas, suggestions, and advice; (3) capturing the voices and input of older and younger people; (4) celebrating successes, reflecting on good practice, and helping to overcome challenges; and (5) having discussions on philosophical or socially complex issues related to the project (e.g., demystifying dementia, different cultural perspectives on care homes, and death as a taboo subject in western societies).

At the end of the project, some brokers felt that they received more value from their advisory board than others.

"You wouldn't necessarily always have an advisory group for all the projects you do, but I think that's been really lovely as a kind of informal sounding board for reflection and getting their feedback. Because actually presenting to an advisory group means that you go through a reflective process, rather than just ploughing on with it, you've got to stop and take stock and present and then reflect on what they're saying and reflect on where things are going. And they have different perspectives as well from like a local councillor, a parent, a young adult and other kind of community workers, just sort of their different perspectives and thoughts on what we're doing has been really lovely, really useful. And then finally there was a bit related to thinking about continuity and opportunities for you to gain local support for the programme to continue."

(Local broker #7)

"One of the other reflections we've had when we've talked about it is, we didn't get a great deal of value from the advisory group. There was quite a lot of work at the beginning to recruit advisory. So that now in hindsight, seems like, wow, why did we spend all that time trying to recruit the advisory group? We never really had access to the children that were supposed to be representing the children's point of view on the advisory group. So that never went anywhere. And then a lot of the other people moved on from there. I think it was a shame again. I think had we may be met face to face it would have been easier, but we've lost quite a few people on the way because they've moved on to other things and couldn't commit the time, even though they thought there was value to the project. But yeah, there was a lot of effort that was put into that hasn't really paid off. I mean, we literally send them an update, we kind of just update them now with what we've been doing and they say, oh, that's great and yeah, it's very passive."

(Local broker #6)

3. Resources

As mentioned earlier, one aspect that brokers really valued about the support from the National Team were the resources provided (including promotional material, PowerPoint presentations, and activity worksheets).

"All of the resources that were provided at the start really gave us a flying start in terms of ideas and activities and I just think that kind of resource bank is really, really helpful just for keeping that energy and enthusiasm for things."

(Local broker #10)

When asked what additional resources the National Team could provide to improve the design and delivery of the project, local brokers suggested that a practical handbook should be produced as a form of guidance to 'show' people what they can expect or ideas for what they could do. This is now being developed by the National Team as a project output in collaboration with the local brokers.

"I would say going forward and what is going to be produced, this guide is brilliant because it's really accessible, it's really colourful. It's really useful in terms of a starting point or to enable more of these links to happen. Certainly having that kind of document going forward will be a really useful staple or for helping to encourage and sustain more links between care homes and schools or youth groups."

(Local broker #7)

"The facilitator handbook that would have been great to have 18 months ago. I think at times you can feel a bit overloaded with things. So yeah it's just the pressure of time on people, and sometimes there's so much you think, 'Oh, I wish I'd have seen that earlier', or I'd come across a list of books and then later think 'Where is that list of books? I can't find it.' It's just the sort of pressure that everyone's working under. And so I think it's, it's just how things are in society, it's the same with all the information out there and so much stuff that you could find useful, but then you've got limited time to actually absorb that information."

(Local broker #4)

One of the main aims of the practical handbook is to distil down the masses of information into some key messages and tips that will help interested schools and care homes make a start and also point them towards where they can find additional resources. In particular, other resources that brokers felt would have been helpful for them to have and will be incorporated into materials available for future intergenerational linking include:

- access to a resource pack of activity ideas and templates for schools and care homes;
- online and written resources that support intergenerational practice, including evidence about the value of linking for care homes and their residents;
- Care Home FaNs branded materials (posters, bunting, balloons, etc.) suitable for decorating for an event and promoting the programme; and
- video material showing successful links and events to illustrate why people should explore intergenerational linking for their institutions or local areas.

4. Training and coaching

A key suggestion for improving the delivery of the programme was to offer additional training and hands-on practical support. The nature of this support may include project planning advice, including estimates on how much time each aspect of the project may take and setting realistic expectations of the amount of work involved:

"We could probably have done with a bit of coaching around project planning... I don't think we really knew the time investment that it would take in terms of the delivery, the Sharing Network, and finding time to spend on reading resources more carefully, and just have more time to think about the research evaluation. We didn't account for how much that side of it would take. So, I think more coaching approach would've been good."

(Local broker #9)

Practical support and training may also include specific expertise and knowledge around working with care homes and busy care home staff (e.g. knowing the buzzwords, what they are looking for, and what will help them to do their job).

"I think it would be really important for other people who are running this, if they haven't come from an organisation that has worked with care homes before, to have some training around the organisational structure within a care home, who best to contact, the struggles that you might come up against and a kind of trouble-shooting document, what do to if there is no activities coordinator. So, yes, some training on engaging care homes and schools, equally, because I've never worked with schools. And actually, if you just send an email to the reception desk it just gets buried. So how to get an 'in' and how to maintain that connection."

(Local broker #2)

Other suggestions for training resources included sharing news about upcoming national training and networking opportunities for care homes, and assisting with identifying recommended providers of high-quality continuing professional development for care home staff.

5. Flexibility

Many brokers also noted their appreciation for the trust placed in them and the flexibility to take their own approach to delivering the project, while still receiving support and encouragement from the National Team.

"It is really important to say thank you to the people who funded this project because I've never known such flexibility amongst funders and also the management that were involved in the project and everyone that was overseeing this but not panicking. Some of these ideas were really out there, so it was so nice to have a supportive test-and-learn environment really, and I think a lot has come out of that."

(Local broker #2)

"We feel that we are trusted to run our project. They don't micromanage. They show genuine interest in the work that is happening on the ground and champion our efforts, which is encouraging."

(Local broker #7)

"It didn't feel too pressured. It felt supportive and more kind of developmental and that kind of gave us a bit of freedom to find our way with the advice provided."

(Local broker #7)

It was generally felt that having a certain level of flexibility embedded in the design and delivery of the project was an asset which allowed for a variety of local-level approaches to be tested, and for relationships to form organically, which contributed to the sustainability of programs and links.

"I think it was the flexibility. In fact, if things had gone according to plan, we probably wouldn't have learnt as much and expanded the project to a more diverse range of opportunities (e.g. family volunteering, Duke of Edinburgh programme). So in terms of staples, yes, flexibility - so nothing too prescriptive."

(Local broker #2)

In fact, many brokers advocated for even more flexibility in future programming to allow brokers to take advantage of their local networks and the opportunities that arose to expand intergenerational linking to different age groups (e.g. secondary schools, or youth groups with children over age 14), and different institutions (e.g. Scouts and community-based groups of older adults) and people from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

"Widening or broadening out into different spaces and age groups. We worked with entirely primary schools on this project, and hearing from other partners who have done it with secondary schools and how that's been really beneficial for those students, we feel like that would be that would be great to try that as well."

(Local broker #7)

"A little bit more freedom to think about other sources of older people other than care homes, like Age Concern, sheltered housing projects, memory café groups or things like that, where there are available groups of older people who may be meeting near a school."

(Local broker #8)

"This project was focused on low-income areas, which is really important, but that has resulted in a lot of links in the same area and one part of the city, which made it harder to link because obviously there's only a limited number. So some links had to go further away because of that. In future we would try focusing on different schools and care homes in different parts of the city to try and make those links a bit easier for them, and have a wider geographical spread across the city."

(Local broker #7)

9. THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

The last two aims of this appreciative inquiry evaluation research were to better understand how intergenerational links between schools and care homes for older people can be most effectively established, supported, and sustained; and to generate meaningful lessons to inform how future intergenerational programming should be shaped.

In this concluding section of the report, we draw upon feedback from the local brokers from various sources throughout the project (reflective worksheets, Sharing Network meetings, and exit interviews) to address these practical and future-focused aims. Specifically, we look at how we can build on the knowledge generated throughout this project to support other organisations to embark on their own intergenerational journeys, and how we can practically apply the meaningful lessons learnt to move the field of intergenerational practice forward for the benefit of children, older adults, and communities who need it most.

PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR GETTING STARTED WITH INTERGENERATIONAL LINKING

Firstly, for those who may be inspired by this report to become involved in intergenerational practice and are interested in establishing a link between local schools and care homes, we have compiled a tip-sheet based on feedback from the local brokers which provides practical guidance for newcomers on how to begin making a connection and establishing a relationship (Table 10). For more resources, including a step-by-step practical handbook, please visit the **My Home Life England** website.

PLAN AHEAD

- Try to develop, as much as you can, what the delivery of your programme will look like so you can be clear about what you are offering and what the expectations are when speaking to schools and care homes.
- Build in incentives for schools and care homes to be involved, such as aligning with the education curriculum and markers of quality that are based on regulator requirements (Ofsted for schools; the Care Quality Commission for care homes).
- Familiarise yourself with school and care home schedules (e.g., school term dates, best visiting times for care homes).
- Don't underestimate the time commitment this phase of the project can take.
- Set realistic expectations for how things will go and be ready to adapt as needed. It is always good to have a plan B and C in place.

START WITH SCHOOLS

- Find a link in by thinking laterally (e.g., building on any existing relationships you have with schools, approaching governors, posting leaflets, meeting in person).
- Get 'buy-in' from the top (i.e., support from head or senior leader of school).
- Work out the best mode of communication - an initial phone call, followed by an information pack sent via e-mail generally works well for most.
- Demonstrate how this project aligns with their school curriculum and meaningful activities in the care home and local community.
- Promote the student/resident-led approach as an incentive.
- Identify and focus on working with engaged and motivated people

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

- Before signing any schools up, look at local care homes nearest to the school which could be potential partners and give yourself a few options to choose from.
- Keep in mind that geographically closer links (i.e., those within walking distance of one another) may be more successful as it is easier for groups to visit one another.
- Consider contacting someone in your local area who has experience with care homes and asking their advice about which may be most suitable and responsive.

CONTACTING CARE HOMES

- Start with existing links or previous relationships between schools and care homes, if any are in place. Build on them by following up with the previous contact to revive the connection.
- Phone calls work better than email with many care homes when making initial contact.
- Ask for advice from someone with experience liaising with care homes about how best to approach each care home.
- Be specific about the potential partner school with the care homes from the start.
- Identify and focus on working with engaged and motivated people.

INTRODUCTORY SESSIONS AND MEETINGS

- Introduce the children to the project by offering an introductory workshop with a short presentation, followed by some activities to get them interested and thinking.
- Prepare children for what to expect from the first visit, building in some dementia awareness education if there are residents living with dementia in the care home.
- Encourage care homes to introduce the project to the residents and initiate discussions about what activities they can do together with the schools.
- Host an initial meeting between the school and care home to give the students and residents a chance to meet and introduce themselves (e.g., in person or via a Zoom call).
- Ensure that the first activity is scheduled soon after this introductory meeting to keep up the momentum and establish relationships.

NETWORKING AND SPREADING THE WORD

- Get involved with local organisations to build up your network of potential partners who can help spread the word or give you helpful tips and contacts (e.g., local city councils, education development trusts, Thriving Communities Networks).
- Promote the project through organisational newsletters or via an article in the local press.
- Ask schools/care homes to promote the project with other schools/care homes in their network.

PERSISTENCE AND FLEXIBILITY

- Be persistent, keep pursuing until you get a breakthrough.
- Not hearing back from care homes does not always mean they are not interested – just very busy.
- Be prepared to be flexible and willing to change track to make connections work.

TABLE 10: BROKER TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED AND MAKING A CONNECTION

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMMES

Taking a broader perspective, the findings from this evaluation have several implications for the future of intergenerational programming in England, the UK and internationally. Drawing upon responses from the 11 local brokers, feedback from the project's national advisory group, and relevant findings from the broader literature, we present and discuss three key recommendations for how the future of the intergenerational linking programme might best be sustained and built upon in the long-term: (1) knowledge sharing, (2) coordinated working, and (3) embedding intergenerational practice into wider infrastructure.

Knowledge sharing

A key aspect contributing to the success of the Care Home FaNs: Intergenerational Linking project was the approach to sharing knowledge across all stakeholders involved. The appreciative approach at the heart of the project meant that there were continual active processes of communication and information sharing. Local partners (schools and care homes), local brokers across different areas, the National Team, and advisory networks all shared information about successes, challenges and strategies for effective development and delivery of intergenerational programmes. The brokers were key to enabling this knowledge-sharing to be effective.

Local brokers not only served as a the 'glue' which held together care home and school or youth organisations at a community level, but also served as a vital coordinator facilitating the relationship between the strategic work of the National Team and advisory networks and local intergenerational links. In this way, the vantage point of the local brokers enabled them to provide recommendations for how best to sustain intergenerational linking (Box 5).

1. Provide access to funding.
2. Provide access to resources and training.
3. Embed into wider infrastructure.
4. Adopt and continue the broker model with greater flexibility at local level.
5. Identify and work with enthusiastic individual.
6. Focus on building long-term relationships.
7. Have staff handover procedures in place so that links can continue.
8. Get buy-in from the top.
9. Time for staff to plan and deliver intergenerational sessions and maintain the link.
10. Encourage and support collaborative working with other organizations in local area.

BOX 5: LOCAL BROKER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HOW TO BEST SUSTAIN INTERGENERATIONAL LINKING

Funding remains a significant challenge for sustaining individual intergenerational links as well as organisational networks. Having a funding source to support the programme was widely considered by local brokers to be the most important factor for sustainability. While some of the local broker organisations were familiar with the practice of identifying potential funding sources and preparing and submitting bids, many were not. Brokers shared ideas about how to source further funding, but when asked about what additional support the National Team could provide for the next phase of the programme, they requested the following:

- assistance with researching and finding future local and national funding opportunities;
- a list of potential funders for future intergenerational work in England; and
- help to identify and lobby potential sponsors or companies who share common values and may fund the project as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility policy.

According to local brokers, the second most important factor for sustainability was having access to the necessary resources and training opportunities. As mentioned earlier, local brokers recommended several resources that would be helpful in establishing and supporting intergenerational links between schools and care homes, including a practical handbook. They also suggested other resources that would help to sustain existing links and help to grow the intergenerational programme in the future. These included:

- development of a framework or roadmap guiding individual schools and care homes on how to sustain their links in the absence of a broker (e.g., planning ahead and agreeing on pre-set future linking dates);
 - marketing materials to advertise the programme through local area school/care home networks and websites, or for presentations at meetings to promote the work and recruit new organisations;
 - workshops for care home managers and head/senior teachers to promote the benefits of intergenerational linking and provide practical advice on how their care home/schools may get started; and
 - training opportunities for school and care homes staff to ensure sustainable links.
- In addition to the guidance resources mentioned above, the evaluation outcomes relating to impact and programme design from this project need to be shared as widely as possible through publications, conferences, workshops and training for school and care home staff to ensure all this learning is used to create more intergenerational connections. Sharing knowledge about the project in this way may help to promote the value of this work and encourage further funding opportunities for intergenerational projects in communities across England.

This information-sharing could be facilitated by a central resource hub, such as the one offered by advocacy charity **Generations Working Together** in Scotland. Previous coordination and information sharing in England was provided by the Beth Johnston Foundation, however this has not been sustained. The benefits of collaboration and resource sharing across the country through broker networks in this project suggest that creating a similar national platform for intergenerational practitioners to network and for information such as the resources developed through this project (i.e., this research report, the practical handbook, and video content), as well as evidence generated by other organisations working on intergenerational practice, would be beneficial within England. This would be an initial step towards creating a more coordinated approach toward intergenerational practice and building an even stronger case for intergenerational activity within England.

Coordinated working: develop a new approach for intergenerational practice delivery

In the same way that the underlying principle of intergenerational work is individuals from different generations working together for mutual benefit, so too should we strive to work together across organisations, sectors, and national borders to promote and develop intergenerational practice.

It is often said that the success of intergenerational practice rests on the effort and passion of enthusiastic individuals. Indeed, within this project, brokers acknowledged that identifying care home and school staff who were dedicated and invested in the idea of intergenerational linking was a key factor in ensuring the effectiveness of the link. This suggests that supporting individuals who are interested in setting up and facilitating intergenerational connections needs to be a priority if programmes are to be sustainable. The findings from this project suggest that adapting the broker-model for developing and delivering intergenerational practice within communities may hold some potential. Although not all attempts to establish links were successful, even with broker support, brokers were able to provide organisational and motivational advice to individual staff members and practitioners.

As another major challenge of this programme was time – a commodity of which care home and teaching staff notoriously have little. Brokers saw themselves as able to support these individuals and reduce the time burden associated with some of these activities. Additional suggestions for addressing this challenge included getting the necessary support from higher up in the organisation so that staff would be allocated time to devote to intergenerational activities, and nurturing relationships between schools and care homes. Another potential solution to this challenge is to seek alternate avenues of human resource support – for example, volunteers from interested charities, university student placements, or local families who are interested in getting involved to support their school, care home, or wider community. This would take some of the pressure off teachers and care home staff, and could help sustain and maybe even enrich the programme by drawing in other generations.

Ultimately, rather than the responsibility for sustaining intergenerational projects resting on the shoulders of a few passionate – but often under-resourced – individuals, the broker-model led to a more coordinated approach for developing intergenerational practice across the community.

Coordinated working also entails building links across sectors to help promote and sustain intergenerational practice. The results of this evaluation regarding the potential impacts of intergenerational linking can be linked to the desired outcomes of local and national government policies, public health initiatives, youth and education groups, care sector and older persons' advocacy networks, and organisations working with disadvantaged communities. Intergenerational activity has a really important role in tackling many of the wellbeing issues faced by older adults, children, and communities alike, to build back from Covid in terms of reducing social isolation and demand on healthcare professionals, and increasing self-esteem, self-confidence, and social and communication skills. Therefore, it is important that we work together across sectors and disciplines to design and implement a wide-ranging and sustainable programme built on the inter-disciplinary principles of intergenerational practice. Furthermore, seeking out other intergenerational linking projects that have already been established in the local community could be really helpful in planning ahead and working together to sustain existing relationships rather than starting from scratch or competing for finite resources when two organisations have the same goal.

Embedding intergenerational practice into wider infrastructure

Finally, one of the best ways to build on the foundation of this project, and expand the programme in a way that will ensure its continued success, would be to embed intergenerational practice into the existing wider infrastructure of the education and social care sectors. One of the most frequent suggestions was to embed intergenerational programmes into the academic curriculum and school co-curricular activities (e.g., the Duke of Edinburgh Awards programme).

School leads were asked in the pre-surveys where they felt intergenerational activities would fall within the school curriculum. All of the 22 school leads who completed the pre-survey selected Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education. Other subjects which were felt to align well with intergenerational linking included History (n=14), English (n=8), Religious Education (n=8), and Music (n=1). School leads also reported that they often expanded out their lesson plans in relevant subjects to include activities designed to stimulate thought or discussion about older people and the potential benefits of intergenerational linking. This included, for example, running PSHE sessions to discuss stereotypes, the concept of ageing and what it must be like to become older, how older people are viewed in the community, how to communicate with older people and what to expect, and reflecting on "how the visit with the care home went, why we are doing it, whether the residents/students enjoyed it and should we do it again".

Another suggestion for embedding intergenerational programming into education and social care culture was to align the aims and outcomes of intergenerational activities with the Ofsted and CQC quality assessment criteria. It was felt by brokers that this would act as an incentive for schools and care homes to get involved and be able to demonstrate another way in which they are providing opportunities for children's personal development (Ofsted) and care environments that are well-led, caring and effective in maintaining good quality of life for residents (CQC).

Together, these insights suggest that future intergenerational practice should be focused on the development of long-term strategies for sustainability. Advocating for intergenerational practice to be embedded into wider infrastructure includes education and social care sectors, but also could relate to community development initiatives, as well as local and national policymaking. A desire to build sustainability within intergenerational practice includes operational factors mentioned by brokers such as hand-over strategies, organisational buy-in and time-allocation for staff involvement, but it also requires thinking constructively about how intergenerational practice is funded, organised and legislated for across England.

CONCLUSION

The Care Home FaNs: Intergenerational Linking project represents the largest coordinated national initiative to set up intergenerational links between schools and care homes in England to date. Over 4,000 individual children and older adults were involved in local intergenerational links between schools and care homes, established with the support of local brokers in their communities. This project marks a significant step forward for intergenerational practice in England. The results of this research confirm that intergenerational practice of this kind can provide beneficial outcomes for individual children and older adults, as well as flow-on effects for the wider community.

Our analysis suggests that key lessons that can be learnt from the organisation and delivery of this project include: the success of the broker-model, the importance of support structures, and the value of a flexible and relationship-centred approach. Based on the outcomes of this evaluation, actions for the future sustainability of intergenerational linking include enabling a collaborative approach to knowledge sharing, embedding intergenerational practice into national infrastructure, and having the support of continued funding, resources and networks. These steps can help catalyse and inform future developments in intergenerational practice across the country.

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APPENDIX 1: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM

CARE HOME FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS INTERGENERATIONAL LINKING PROJECT

Research Information Sheet:

Exploring the impact of Intergenerational Linking in England between school children and older people living in care homes

Hello,

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether you would like to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. You will be given a copy of this information sheet to keep.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to follow the work of the Care Home Friends and Neighbours Intergenerational Linking project over the 2021-22 academic year to identify what works and who benefits as 110 schools and youth groups begin intergenerational activities with local care homes for older people.

Why have I been invited to take part?

As you have signed up your care home to participate in an Intergenerational Linking project, we want to hear from you about your experience. We are sending participant surveys to all the volunteers across England who join local Intergenerational Linking advisory groups, as well as to school, youth group, and care home leaders. This will allow us to gain important insight into how to best approach Intergenerational Linking in the future.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. If you decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form, and asked to complete two surveys- one now and one in June.

By completing the survey, you are giving permission for us to store your email address and send you the research report once it is published. We may also send you information about Intergenerational Linking. We will hold onto the survey responses for up to 5 years. This is because we may incorporate your feedback into future research projects.

What will happen if I take part?

To participate in the research, all you need to do is sign the consent form and email it to (insert project lead's details) along with the completed survey. We will send you one survey now, and a second one in June. The survey should take between 10-20 minutes to complete.

You can choose to complete one survey and not the other, and you can withdraw from the research project at any time. There are no possible disadvantages or risks of taking part, but if you do complete a survey, we will send you the completed national research report in return. Also, by sharing your experience with us, you can help us better understand your community and help future intergenerational practitioners.

We may also contact you at a later date to see if you are interested in participating in a short ten-minute telephone interview. If we do contact you, you can decide at that point whether or not you wish to take part.

How is the project being funded?

This project is being funded through the #iwill Fund. The #iwill Fund supports the #iwill campaign, which aims to make involvement in social action a part of life for as many young people as possible, by recognising the benefit for both young people and their communities. The National Lottery Community Fund and the Department of Digital, Culture, Media & Sport are each investing £25 million seed funding to create the #iwill Fund. The Dunhill Medical Research Trust is acting as a match funder and awarding grants on behalf of the #iwill Fund.

Data privacy statement

Your personal details (name and email address) and the responses to the surveys will be held by the (insert broker name) and then passed to the Care Home Friends and Neighbours team.

Your right to access, change or move your information are limited, as we need to manage your information in a specific way in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personal-identifiable information possible (for further information please see <https://ico.org.uk/your-data-matters/>).

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

The personal details we collect will be your name and email address. Your name and email address will be put onto a contact sheet for this project that the Care Home Friends and Neighbours Team can use to send you updates about the research and the national project. The Care Home Friends and Neighbours Team is comprised of My Home Life England and The Linking Network.

Once your survey is received, the information will be recorded anonymously into a database with along with the feedback from all the other people who respond. If anything you send is then quoted in a research report, this will be done anonymously. For example, the report might say, "A care home in Derby reported....". This information will be kept by our team for up to 5 years.

What will happen to the results?

We will use the findings from this England-wide 110 Intergenerational Link study to write publications for academic use, for practitioners, and for policymakers. The purpose of the publications will be to help train others interested in setting up intergenerational linking, and to keep a wide range of stakeholders informed as to what best practice looks like.

What if there is a problem?

If you have any problems, concerns or questions about this study, you should ask to speak to (insert local broker's name and contact details).

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

CARE HOME FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS INTERGENERATIONAL LINKING PROJECT

Exploring the impact of Intergenerational Linking in England between school children and older people living in care homes.

CONSENT FORM

Please tick or initial box

1	I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information dated September 2021, Version 1, for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions which have been answered satisfactorily.	
2	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw without giving a reason without being penalised or disadvantaged.	
3	I agree to (insert broker organisation) and Care Home Friends and Neighbours Team recording and processing this information about me. I understand that this information will be used only for the purpose(s) explained in the research information and my consent is conditional on (insert broker organisation) and Care Home Friends and Neighbours Team complying with its duties and obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).	
4	I would like to be informed of the results of this study once it has been completed and understand that my contact details will be retained for this purpose.	
5	I agree to take part in the above study.	

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

APPENDIX 2: INITIAL SURVEY FOR CARE HOME LEADS

May 2022

INTERGENERATIONAL LINKING PROJECT CARE HOME SURVEY

This survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

The beginning questions are about yourself and your care home, followed by questions about the Intergenerational Linking project, and the questions at the end are to find out if you did any activities to introduce the project to your residents. Please email the completed survey to (insert project lead) by [insert deadline date].

Your role:

Care home:

Post code for care home:

Part A: Multiple choice questions about you and your care home

1. Are you familiar with intergenerational projects?
 - a) No, I am not familiar with intergenerational projects
 - b) I know a little from reading and/or tv
 - c) I am familiar with intergenerational work and know a lot

2. Have you helped run or participate in intergenerational activities yourself in the past?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No

3. Have you ever worked with children before professionally outside of your current role?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No

4. How long have you worked at the care home?
 - a) Less than one year
 - b) 1-2 years
 - c) 2-4 years
 - d) 4-6 years
 - e) 6 years plus

5. How long have you worked in the care sector?
 - a) Less than one year
 - b) 1-2 years
 - c) 2-5 years
 - d) 5-10 years
 - e) 10-20 years
 - f) More than 20 years

6. Does your care home already engage with schools during the year?
 - a) Yes, sometimes
 - b) Yes, often
 - c) No
 - d) No, this is our first time working with local schools and children

Part B: In your own words...

7. Why did you sign up to be a part of this intergenerational linking project?
8. What would 'success' for this project look like for you?
9. What challenges do you think you might experience as part of this project?
10. Is there anything else you would like to share with us at this time about the project?

Part C: Multiple choice questions about the Intergenerational Linking Project

11. What are you hoping to achieve by taking part? (Please circle all that apply)
 - a) I would like my residents to have more contact with people outside of the home
 - b) I would like our local community to know more about us
 - c) I would like to provide more opportunities to increase quality of life for our residents
 - d) I am hoping to learn new skills personally
 - e) I would like my care home team to learn new skills
 - f) Other: _____
12. Do you think working with school children this year could help your residents connect to the community?
 - a) Yes, definitely
 - b) Yes, possibly
 - c) Not sure
 - d) No
13. Do you think working with school children this year could improve your residents' quality of life?
 - a) Yes, definitely
 - b) Yes, possibly
 - c) Not sure
 - d) No
14. How did you let your residents and their families know about the intergenerational project? (Please circle all that apply)
 - a) We sent it out in a newsletter
 - b) We posted the information on a notice board inside the hall
 - c) We told residents about it in a residents' meeting
 - d) We told residents informally
 - e) We told families when they were visiting with residents
 - f) We haven't said anything yet
 - g) We will let them know about it on the day of the first activity
15. How did residents respond to the idea of holding an intergenerational project? (Please circle all that apply)
 - a) They were excited to take part
 - b) They were somewhat positive
 - c) They were neutral about the idea, neither positive nor negative
 - d) They were not sure of the idea
 - e) They did not want to participate
 - f) Other: _____

16. How many residents do you think will take part in the intergenerational activities?

- a) 0-5
- b) 6-10
- c) 11-15
- d) 16-20
- e) 21-25
- f) 26-30
- g) More than 30

17. How will you decide which residents should take part?

- a) Anyone who wants to come will be able to
- b) We will choose those who are available when the sessions take place
- c) We will choose residents to attend who we think would particularly benefit from the experience
- d) Other: _____

18. To what extent do you think your residents will help you decide what kinds of activities you do with the school children as the year takes shape? (Please circle all that apply)

- a) We will ask residents what they want to do
- b) We will wait to see if residents volunteer their own ideas
- c) We will mainly use our ideas as care home staff
- d) We will rely on the partner school to generate ideas
- e) We will seek ideas from the local project lead
- f) Other: _____

19. Do you have an Activities or Engagement Lead at your care home?

- a) Yes, this is the role I hold
- b) Yes, they will help me on this project
- c) No, this role is shared across the team
- d) Other: _____

20. Did you run an activity or session to introduce your residents to the intergenerational linking project?

- a) Yes. If yes, please provide details _____
- b) No. If not, why? _____

21. Did you use the 'Pre-Meet Intergen Activity' handout as a guide sent out by your local project lead?

- a) Yes
- b) No

22. Would you recommend this sort of activity to other care home leaders interested in intergenerational linking?

- a) Yes
- b) Not sure
- c) No

Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX 3: INITIAL SURVEY FOR SCHOOL LEADS

June 2022

INTERGENERATIONAL LINKING PROJECT TEACHER SURVEY

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. It should take approximately 15 minutes to fill out. The beginning questions are about yourself and your school, followed by questions about the Intergenerational Linking project, and the questions at the end are to find out if you did any activities to introduce the project to your children. Please email the completed survey and consent form to (insert project lead) by [insert deadline date].

Class years you teach:

Number of students that will take part in intergenerational linking:

School:

Position:

School post code:

Part A: Multiple choice questions about you and your school

23. Are you familiar with intergenerational projects?

- a) No, I am not familiar with intergenerational projects
- b) I know a little from reading and/or tv
- c) I am familiar with intergenerational work and know a lot

24. Have you helped run or participate in intergenerational activities yourself in the past?

- a) Yes
- b) No

25. Have you ever worked with older people professionally outside of your current role?

- a) Yes
- b) No

26. How long have you been a teacher?

- a) Less than one year
- b) 1-2 years
- c) 2-5 years
- d) 5-10 years
- e) 10-20 years
- f) More than 20 years

27. How long have you worked in your current school?

- a) Less than one year
- b) 1-2 years
- c) 2-4 years
- d) 4-6 years
- e) 6-10 years
- f) 10-15 years
- g) More than 15 years

28. Does your school already engage with care homes for older people during the year?

- a) Yes, sometimes
- b) Yes, often
- c) No
- d) No, this is our first time working with a care home

Part B: In your own words...

29. Why did you sign up to be a part of this Intergenerational Linking project?

30. What would 'success' for this project look like for you?

31. What challenges do you think you might experience as part of this project?

32. Is there anything you are concerned about when it comes to developing the intergenerational linking project? (If yes, please summarise)

33. Is there anything else you would like to share with us at this time about the project?

Part C: Multiple choice questions about the Intergenerational Linking Project

34. What are you hoping to achieve by taking part? (Please circle all that apply)

- a) I would like my children to learn more about older people
- b) I would like my children to link to their community in new ways
- c) I would like my children to experience volunteering
- d) I am hoping to learn new skills
- e) I would like to help people connect after the isolation of Covid, particularly my children
- f) Other: _____

35. How did you let your students' families know about the intergenerational project? (Please check all that apply)

- a) We sent information out in a newsletter
- b) We told parents at drop off and pick up
- c) We told them by having them complete a consent form for a field trip
- d) We haven't said anything yet
- e) We will let them know about it on the day of the first activity
- f) Other: _____

36. How many students from your school do you think will take part in the intergenerational activities?

- a) 0-10
- b) 11-20
- c) 21-30
- d) 31-40
- e) 41-50
- f) 50 and over

37. How will you decide which of your children should take part?

- a) We will take whole classes
- b) We will take half a class at a time
- c) We will allow children to sign up and choose for themselves
- d) We will nominate children who we think would particularly benefit from the experience
- e) Other: _____

38. Where do you think intergenerational activities fall into the curriculum you will teach this year? (Please select all that apply)

- a) PSHE
- b) History
- c) English
- d) Religious Education
- e) Other: _____

39. To what extent do you think your children will help you decide what kinds of activities you do with the care home residents as the year takes shape? (Please circle all that apply)

- a) We will ask children what they want to do
- b) We will wait to see if our children volunteer their own ideas
- c) We will mainly use our ideas as a teaching staff
- d) We will rely on the care home to generate ideas
- e) We will seek ideas from the local project lead
- f) Other: _____

40. Did you run an activity or session to introduce your children to the intergenerational linking project?

- a) Yes
- b) No

41. Did you choose to use the 'Pre-Meet Intergen Activity' distributed by your local area lead?

- a) Yes
- b) No (if no, please share why)

The remaining questions are for those who used the 'Pre-Meet Intergen Activity' handout sent out by your local project lead. If you answered yes to question 19, please continue over the page. If you answered no to question 19 you may stop here, and we thank you for completing this survey.

Part D: Use of the Pre-Meet Intergen Activity handout

If you answered yes to question 19, please continue by answering the following questions which describes the approach you took with your children.

42. How many of the questions supplied did you use?

- a. I used all the questions provided
- b. I used some of the questions provided
- c. I added some of my own questions
- d. None

43. When in the school day did you choose to run this activity? Please circle all that apply.

- a. In the morning
- b. After lunch
- c. As part of form time
- d. In a specific lesson: _____

44. Did any of your children's answers to the questions surprise you? If so, please summarise.

45. How old do your children think someone has to be to be considered 'old age'?

- a. 40-50
- b. 51-60
- c. 61-70
- d. 71-80
- e. 81-90
- f. 90 and over

46. To what extent did your children appear to be familiar with what happens in care homes?
- They seemed very familiar with care homes
 - They seemed a little familiar with care homes
 - They did not seem to understand much about what happens in care homes
 - They did not seem to be at all familiar with care homes
47. Based on the class discussions you have had about this project so far, which of the following best describes your children's views of care homes?
- The children expressed mostly positive views about care homes
 - The children expressed some positive views about care homes
 - The children did not express any views about care homes
 - The children expressed some negative views about care homes
 - The children expressed mainly negative views about care homes
48. To what extent did your children demonstrate they understood what volunteering is?
- The children have a clear understanding of what volunteering is
 - The children have some understanding of what volunteering is
 - The children had limited understanding of what volunteering is
 - The children are still unclear as to what volunteering is
49. Did you find the activity helpful?
- Yes, it saved me time
 - It was neither helpful nor unhelpful
 - It was not helpful
50. Would you recommend this sort of activity to other teachers interested in intergenerational linking?
- Yes
 - Not sure
 - No

Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX 3: FOLLOW-UP SURVEY FOR CARE HOME LEADS

June 2022

INTERGENERATIONAL LINKING PROJECT CARE HOME SURVEY

This is the follow-up survey to the one you were invited to complete at the beginning of the intergenerational linking project. For a reminder of the aims of the evaluation and how the information you share will be used should you choose to complete this survey, please refer to the Research Information Sheet and Consent Form provided by your local project lead.

It should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Please email the completed survey to your local project lead (insert name) by (insert date).

Your role:

Care home:

Post code for care home:

Part A: Multiple choice questions about your experiences

For the purpose of this survey, an "intergenerational linking session" may include:

- any activity involving direct contact or communication between older and younger people (e.g., in-person meetings, online/virtual meetings via zoom); or
- the preparation and/or receipt of letters, cards, gifts, or other materials sent between schools and care homes in the spirit of maintaining the intergenerational links between older and younger people.

1. Roughly, how many intergenerational linking sessions did you hold between September 2021 and June 2022?
 - a) None
 - b) Between 1 and 3
 - c) Between 4 and 6
 - d) Between 7 and 10
 - e) More than 10

2. Where did intergenerational linking sessions take place? (Circle all that apply)
 - a) Online
 - b) Outside at the care home
 - c) Outside in the community
 - d) Inside the care home
 - e) Other: _____

3. Which of the following best describes how the intergenerational linking sessions were delivered this past year?
 - a) All our sessions were remote/ none of our sessions were in person
 - b) Most of our sessions were remote/ some of our sessions were in person
 - c) Half of our sessions were remote/ half were in person
 - d) Most of our sessions were in person/ some of our sessions were remote
 - e) All our sessions were in person/ none of our sessions were remote

4. Overall, did your residents appear to enjoy the intergenerational linking sessions?
 - a) Residents appeared to enjoy the sessions very much
 - b) Residents appeared to enjoy the session a bit
 - c) Residents appeared to be neutral, they neither appeared to enjoy or not enjoy the sessions
 - d) Residents did not appear to enjoy the sessions at all.

5. If you believe the intergenerational linking sessions benefitted your residents, what did you observe that supports your belief? (Please circle all that apply)
- a) Residents described themselves as happier during and after sessions with the children
 - b) Residents seemed to 'come to life' around the children
 - c) Residents asked after the children between session
 - d) Residents looked forward to sessions and expressed this to care staff
 - e) Residents moved around more physically during sessions than usual
 - f) Residents were more willing to do different physical tasks during the sessions than usual (such as using scissors, writing, reading)
 - g) Residents were more talkative than usual
 - h) Residents shared skills, knowledge, stories and/or experiences with children
 - i) Anything else: _____
6. How would you describe your relationship with the school you linked to? Please circle one.
- a) It was very positive
 - b) There were some positive aspects
 - c) It was not positive
7. Would you work with the same school again in the future?
- a) Yes, definitely.
 - b) I think so.
 - c) I am not sure just now.
 - d) No.
8. Do you think you would like to run an intergenerational project with a local school or youth group again?
- e) Yes, definitely.
 - f) I think so.
 - g) I am not sure just now.
 - h) No.
9. Would you recommend intergenerational linking to other care homes in the future?
- a) Yes
 - b) I am not sure
 - c) No
 - d)
10. Did your residents engage in any other activities designed to stimulate thought or discussion about younger people and/or the benefits of intergenerational activities?
- a. No
 - b. Yes. Please describe (e.g., how often, and what format these took):

Part B: In your own words...

11. What about the project surprised you the most?
12. What about the project are you most proud of- if anything?
13. Did you find anything challenging about running the intergenerational activities? If so, what?
14. Do you feel you learned any new skills as part of the intergenerational linking project?
- a) No
 - b) Yes. Please describe: _____
15. Looking back now, are there any resources you wish you had at the beginning of the project that would have helped you? Please describe.
16. Is there anything else about your experience you would like to share with us?

Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX 4: FOLLOW-UP SURVEY FOR SCHOOL LEADS

June 2022

INTERGENERATIONAL LINKING PROJECT TEACHER SURVEY

This is the follow-up survey to the one you were invited to complete at the beginning of the intergenerational linking project. For a reminder of the aims of the evaluation and how the information you share will be used should you choose to complete this survey, please refer to the Research Information Sheet and Consent Form provided by your local project lead.

It should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Please email the completed survey to your local project lead (insert name) by (insert date).

Class years you teach:

Number of students that took part in intergenerational linking:

School:

Position:

School post code:

Part A: Multiple choice questions about your experiences

For the purpose of this survey, an "intergenerational linking session" may include:

- any activity involving direct contact or communication between older and younger people (e.g., in-person meetings, online/virtual meetings via zoom); or
- the preparation and/or receipt of letters, cards, gifts, or other materials sent between schools and care homes in the spirit of maintaining the intergenerational links between older and younger people.

1. Roughly, how many intergenerational linking sessions did you hold between September 2021 and June 2022?
 - a) None
 - b) One per term (3)
 - c) Two per term (6)
 - d) One per month (10)
 - e) More than 10

2. Where did the intergenerational linking sessions take place? (Circle all that apply)
 - a) Online
 - b) Outside at the care home
 - c) Outside in the community
 - d) Inside the care home
 - e) Other: _____

3. Which of the following best describes how the intergenerational project was delivered this past year?
 - a) All our sessions were remote/ none of our sessions were in person
 - b) Most of our sessions were remote/ some of our sessions were in person
 - c) Half of our sessions were remote/ half were in person
 - d) Most of our sessions were in person/ some of our sessions were remote
 - e) All our sessions were in person/ none of our sessions were remote

4. Overall, did your children appear to enjoy the intergenerational linking sessions?
 - a) Children appeared to enjoy the sessions very much
 - b) Children appeared to enjoy the session a bit
 - c) Children appeared to be neutral, they neither appeared to enjoy or not enjoy the sessions
 - d) Children did not appear to enjoy the sessions at all.

5. If you believe the intergenerational linking sessions benefitted your children, what did you observe that supports your belief? (Please circle all that apply)
- a) Children formed relationships with individual residents (remotely)
 - b) Children formed relationships with individual residents (in person)
 - c) Children looked forward to visits to the care home
 - d) Children looked forward to remote activities with the care home
 - e) Children spoke about the residents outside of the visits
 - f) Children brought up the intergenerational sessions in other classes and made connections to coursework
 - g) Parents mentioned the impact on their children to teaching staff
 - h) Other: (Please describe)_____
6. How would you describe your relationship with the care home you linked to? Please circle one.
- a) It was very positive
 - b) There were some positive aspects
 - c) It was not positive
7. Would you work with the same care home again in the future?
- a) Yes, definitely
 - b) I think so
 - c) I am not sure just now
 - d) No
8. Do you think you would like to run an intergenerational project with a local care home again?
- a) Yes, definitely
 - b) I think so
 - c) I am not sure just now
 - d) No
9. Would you recommend intergenerational linking to other colleagues in your school and other schools in the future?
- a) Yes
 - b) I am not sure
 - c) No
10. Did your class engage in any other activities designed to stimulate thought or discussion about older people and/or the benefits of intergenerational activities?
- a) No
 - b) Yes. Please describe (e.g., how often, and what format these took):

Part B: In your own words...

11. What about the project surprised you the most?
12. What about the project are you most proud of (if anything)?
13. Did you find anything challenging about running the intergenerational linking activities? If so, what?
14. Do you feel you learned any new skills as part of the intergenerational linking project?
- a) No
 - b) Yes. Please describe:_____
15. Looking back now, are there any resources you wish you had at the beginning of the project that would have helped you? Please describe.
16. Is there anything else about your experience you would like to share with us?

Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX 5: REFLECTIVE WORKSHEETS FOR LOCAL BROKERS

1. What have you been spending most of your time on over the past x weeks/months?
2. What has surprised you the most?
3. Which tasks have been the easiest to accomplish?
4. Which tasks have been the most challenging?
5. What has frustrated you over the past x weeks/months?
6. What if anything has inspired you over the past x weeks/months?
7. How is the recruitment process going? (Reflective worksheet 1 only)
8. What steps have you taken to set up an advisory group? (Reflective worksheet 1 only) / How is your local advisory group supporting the work of the project?
9. Which intergenerational activities that have happened in your area, do you think have been most effective?
Can you explain why you think this?
10. How have the relationships between the schools/youth groups and care homes been?
11. Is there any support we can offer you, and if so, what kind? Please describe....
12. Is there anything else you would like to share?

APPENDIX 6: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR LOCAL BROKERS

Part 1: Object activity

The interviewee has been asked to choose an object or thing that resonates with them as an Intergenerational community broker or that reminds them of an experience they had in this role, and bring it (or a photo of it) with them to the interview. The following questions will be asked about the object the interviewee has chosen. Not all questions will be needed for all participants. Possible follow up questions in italics. Semi-structured approach should be taken to expand on participants' responses.

1. Tell me about your object
 - Where is it kept?
 - What do you like about it?
 - Is this object special to you or someone else? Why?
2. Describe your object as if I couldn't see it
 - What does your object feel like?
 - What emotions do you feel when you look at or hold your object?
3. Why did you choose your object?
 - What resonated with you about this object?
 - What did it remind you of?
 - How does/ could this object reflect positive aspects of your role?
 - How does/ could this object reflect negative aspects of your role?
 - Why was telling this experience/ event/ aspect of your role important to you?

4. How did you choose your object?
 - What thought process did you go through to choose your object?
 - Were there any other objects you considered choosing? What did they remind you of?

Part 2: Impacts for stakeholders

1. At the beginning of the project the main responses to the questions “what does success look like” were that it be a positive experience for all involved and that the links continue beyond the end of the project. Based on this criteria, do you feel your local project has been successful?
2. Can you provide some examples of when you have observed the intergenerational linking program having an impact on older people living in care homes?
3. In what ways do you think the delivery of this intergenerational linking program created opportunities for youth social action?
4. Are there any particular groups of children and/or residents that you noticed seemed to gain more from being involved in intergenerational linking activities? (Potential prompts: e.g. children with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, people with dementia, etc.)
5. Do you feel that the program has had broader effects on the local community?

Part 3: Process and how to improve

1. What aspect(s) of the design and delivery of this intergenerational linking project do you think worked best and should be a staple of any future intergenerational linking projects?
2. What aspects(s) of the design and delivery of this intergenerational linking project do you think requires improvement? Do you have any suggestions on how this could be improved?
3. How can the program best be sustained in the long-run?
4. How would you characterise your role as a broker if you were to summarise it and describe it to someone else?
5. What do you think you have learned? What advice would you like to give others following in your footsteps?
6. Anything else you would like to share?