

**Care  
Home  
FaNs**  
Intergenerational  
Linking

**LINKING GENERATIONS  
BUILDING COMMUNITY  
CREATING JOY**



**INTERGENERATIONAL LINKING  
BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND CARE HOMES**

**A PRACTICAL GUIDE**

## ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook has been created by **Care Home Friends and Neighbours: Intergenerational Linking** - a national social action project that connected young people aged 5-14 from schools and youth groups with older people living in care homes across 11 areas of England during 2019-2022.

At the time, it was **England's biggest intergenerational project with care homes**, with over 4,000 younger people and 2,000 older people taking part.

This handbook shares **information, tips and learning** from the project, to help create more intergenerational connections between schools and care homes.



The Linking Network

**Care Home FaNs: Intergenerational Linking** was a partnership between two organisations - **My Home Life England** and **The Linking Network**, combining My Home Life England's expertise with older people and care homes with The Linking Network's expertise with young people and schools. The project was originally funded by The Dunhill Medical Trust and the #iwill Fund, from The National Lottery Community Fund and the Department of Digital, Culture, Media & Sport.

Proudly supporting youth social action



Department for Digital, Culture Media & Sport



COMMUNITY FUND



Remarkable research for healthy ageing  
THE DUNHILL MEDICAL TRUST

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT:

[MYHOMELIFE.ORG.UK/INTERGENERATIONAL-LINKING](https://myhomelife.org.uk/intergenerational-linking)

# WHAT IS INTERGENERATIONAL LINKING?

By 'Intergenerational Linking' we mean bringing younger and older people together to share in experiences that are purposeful and mutually beneficial.

## Why take part?

### Research has shown it can:

- Foster understanding, friendship and respect between generations.
- Challenge ageist attitudes and prejudices.
- Build stronger and more cohesive communities.
- Boost self-esteem and wellbeing.
- Empower and give a voice to both younger and older people.
- Help develop new skills and confidence.
- Spark motivation and agency to make a difference in the community.



"Children are now starting to think about older people in a different way. They see how they can learn from them."

TEACHER, LEEDS



"The older people encouraged us to follow our dreams and they gave us some hope for the future."

PUPIL, BRADFORD

"Taking part has allowed Fred to be a grandfather figure again, which he has so enjoyed."

ACTIVITIES CO-ORDINATOR,  
DEVON

"I love to talk to the children!"

BETTY, CARE HOME  
RESIDENT FROM  
BRISTOL

# BENEFITS OF INTERGENERATIONAL EXPERIENCES



## For older people

- Boost to self-esteem, confidence and wellbeing.
- Form new friendships and connections.
- Opportunity for knowledge exchange with younger generation and chance to reminisce.
- Become more active and engaged.



## For younger people

- Boost to self-esteem, confidence and wellbeing.
- Develop empathy and communication skills.
- Learn from older generations.
- Engage in social action and build community.
- Learn more about the care sector as a possible career path.



## For schools

- Enhances the wider curriculum, including writing for purpose, Geography, History, Art, Music, DT, RE, PSHE and Citizenship.
- Develops a connection with the local community.
- Promotes children's language development and communication skills.
- Meets SMSC requirements.



## For care homes

- Improved quality of life for residents.
- Meets CQC requirements, including connection with the community, person-centred care and wellbeing.
- Increased staff vibrancy and wellbeing.
- Increased care home footfall, transparency and improvement of practice.
- Attractive for prospective residents and families.

# FOR SCHOOLS - HOW DO I GET STARTED?

## Information about care homes

Care homes provide a safe environment where people can live, be cared for and lead as full a life as possible.

People might choose to live in a care home for many reasons, including those who have health issues and/or additional needs, those who've had an accident and/or those who are receiving end of life care.

Older people might also choose to live in a care home to receive additional support with daily tasks, such as getting dressed. For many people, care homes offer a level of care, safety, reassurance and interaction that they might not get elsewhere.



There are different types of care homes for older people (*usually defined as aged 65 or older*). These are usually:

- **Residential care homes** - provide 24-hour care and support.
- **Nursing homes** - like residential homes but also have qualified nurses on site at all times to provide nursing care.
- **Specialist care homes** - provide specialist care, where staff are trained to care for people with a specific medical condition, e.g. dementia.

Each person has their own bedroom, while communal areas, such as a lounge or garden, provide spaces where residents can interact and spend time together.

### Did you know?

Approx 70% of people living in a care home are living with some form of dementia.

Care homes can be busy and sometimes challenging places to live, work in and visit. They have the potential to be bustling, lively places, filled with joy, engagement, laughter and love, particularly when they are well supported by their community.

For some, care homes are still places of mystery and people are unsure what happens within them.

Intergenerational work can help to breakdown negative perceptions, ageism and other prejudices that children may have about both care homes and older people.



# FOR SCHOOLS - HOW DO I GET STARTED?

## Making a connection

- Firstly, are there any pre-existing links from your school to a nearby care home? A personal connection can be a helpful start.
- You can find out about different care homes in your area by visiting [www.carehome.co.uk](http://www.carehome.co.uk) Being in walking distance from the care home can be helpful.

- An important contact is likely to be the Activities Coordinator (*sometimes known as Wellbeing and/ or Engagement lead*). They plan activities, trips and meaningful engagement for older people to enjoy and they help ensure the care home is part of the community.

- The care home manager leads the home and can play a really important role in successful linking. Most managers are around from about 8.00am - 6.00pm.

- Try to make initial contact through email or phone calls. A letter will also help (*not all staff members have an email address*).

- Persistence may be required. Care homes are busy places so things can change very quickly, but keep going! Once you have a response, confirm the best contact and method of communication.

- Working around the care home's schedule will help communication.

**"I was really proud of the way the students engaged with empathy and authenticity with the residents."**

TEACHER OF STUDENTS WITH SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS



**"For the students they have been really keen to think of ideas that will stimulate and be fun for the residents - I have been impressed by the empathy they have shown."**

TEACHER IN BOURNEMOUTH

- There are usually three shifts - approximately:
  - Early:** 7.00am - 3.00pm
  - Late:** 1.00pm - 9.00pm
  - Nights:** 9.00pm - 7.00am
- At handovers when shifts change, there are generally more staff around for a short while as the shifts overlap.

# FOR CARE HOMES - HOW DO I GET STARTED?

## Information about schools

The school year runs over three terms:

### Autumn term

(September to Christmas, with a week break in October).

**Spring term** (January to Easter, with a week break in February).

**Summer term** (April to July, with a week break in May).

**“A lot of older people are kind and full of wisdom.”**

PUPIL, SEFTON

The school day usually runs from around 8.30 - 3.30pm (this can vary).

Most teachers are in school for an hour or two after the end of the school day, in meetings or having planning and preparation time.

Schools close for around six weeks from the end of July and most teachers won't be contactable during the school holidays.

## Making a connection



- Firstly, ask staff and residents if they already have a connection with a local school - e.g a relative who works there or attends.
- You can find local schools through a quick internet search of your care home's location.
- Try ringing the school office. The phone will probably be answered by administrative staff and you could ask to speak with the headteacher or member of the senior leadership team (SLT). It may be useful to explain your interest in linking to the administrative staff too.
- Sometimes emails work better (followed up with a phone call or even a quick visit).
- Other useful contacts are the PSHE (personal, social, health education) or community lead in primary schools or the Citizenship Department or Health and Social Care department in secondary schools. This information is likely to be on the school website.

# PLANNING YOUR CONNECTION TOGETHER

Once you've agreed to link, have a conversation with your new link partner at the school/care home and plan the next steps.

## Some things to consider:

- What do older people like doing?
- What do younger people like doing?
- Which year group/class will you connect with?
- How often will you connect?
- What are the best days and times for activities/visits?
- Is there a garden or lounge where visits can happen?
- Is there internet access for video calls?
- Is there wheelchair access if needed?
- What's the best way of contacting each other?
- What about if you need to cancel a visit or shared activity last minute?
- Are there any particular needs of the children or young people/residents that your link partner should be aware of at this stage?

## TIP

### Try holding the first planning meeting in the care home.

This will help the teacher become familiar with the care home environment so they can prepare the children/young people and complete their risk assessment.

It's also a good chance for residents and staff to meet the teacher and get to know each other!



Intergenerational linking works best when it's led by the younger and older people. So do take time to talk to residents and children, both at the beginning and throughout, about their ideas for engaging and activities they would enjoy doing together.

## SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding is a routine part of managing activities in both schools and care homes and so both should already have their own risk assessment and safeguarding policies in place. These can be used for visits and activity planning.

- Have a conversation with your link partner about safeguarding to ensure you both understand each other's procedures.
- Check what consent is in place for taking and sharing photographs/videos.
- Use only first names on artwork/ letters etc that are exchanged.



# PREPARING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR MEETING

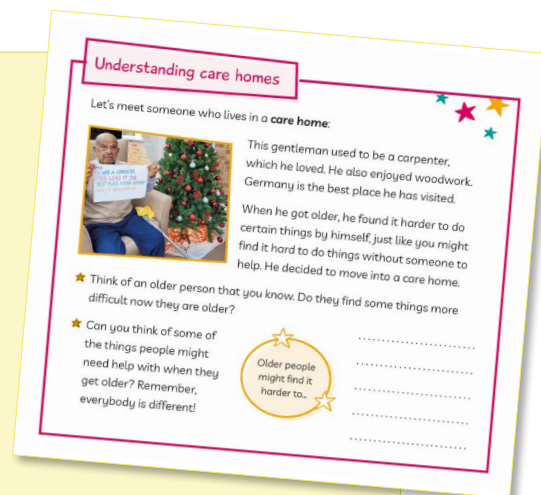
It's useful to provide young people with a route into connecting with their local care home by having some preparatory sessions.

**This might involve discussion and learning about:**

- Their perceptions of older people and ageing.
- Why people choose to live in a care home.
- The different people who live and work in a care home.
- Living with dementia.

See our resources section on our website for useful links, activities and book recommendations to support this and other introductory activities such as cards and photo messages.

You might want to provide parents/carers with some materials and/or mention in your school newsletter.



Help children and young people to think about the fact older people may find it harder to do some things. For example, they might not be able to walk as quickly, see or hear as well.

**You could consider:**

- How could games be adapted so our care home friends can enjoy them?
- How can we make sure our care home friends can read our letters?



## DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

In some communities there are cultural and religious expectations around caring for older relatives at home within the family unit.

Children may therefore find the concept of older people living in a care home more challenging.

For any child, visiting a care home environment might feel outside of their comfort zone.

## YOUTH SOCIAL ACTION

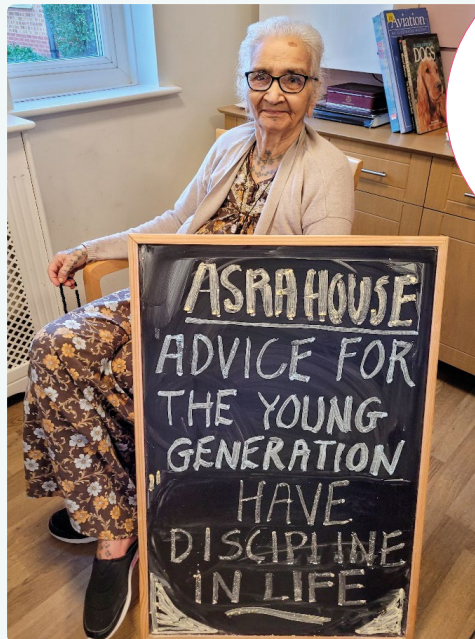
It's worth noting that Intergenerational Linking is an example of youth social action. Youth social action refers to actions and activities that young people do to make a positive difference to others and their communities.



For more information about youth social action, see [www.iwill.org.uk/the-movement/youth-social-action/](http://www.iwill.org.uk/the-movement/youth-social-action/).

# PREPARING OLDER PEOPLE FOR MEETING

- Explain the project and find out what older people would enjoy doing.
- Plan an activity before you meet which explores what residents think about childhood today, compared to in the past, and whether they have worked with children previously.
- Ask older people to reflect on what they could help children and young people with or teach them.
- Share with residents the introductory activities that children/young people have sent and send something back.
- Think about how you can support those living with dementia to engage with the link and what support they might need in a face to face meet, for example the impact of a change in noise levels.
- Be aware that some residents may be more excited than others at the idea of engaging with children and young people.
- Think about the best time of the day to meet and where the meet will happen.



**TIP**  
Send a class photo in advance for residents to see and have on display.

*“Whenever we see interaction - however it occurs - between younger and older people, it always brings such happiness to our residents. Building friendships no matter what our ages.”*  
CARE HOME MANAGER, BURY

## SOME TOP TIPS FOR LINKING

- Communicate regularly and be patient with each other.
- Go at your own pace - small and simple is often very effective!
- Tie in activities to key dates that schools and care homes are already marking.
- Partnering with local organisations that have resources to support intergenerational connections can help.
- Like all workplaces, staff at care homes and schools can change. Share your link with others so that it isn't reliant on one person.
- Don't forget the staff (in both care home and schools!) - a small exchange of festive chocolates to show they're appreciated can make such a difference.
- Keep reflecting on what has worked well and what could have been better.
- A scrapbook or photo album of your link can be a lovely resource to look back on.
- Make sure care homes are aware that during school holidays there won't be much communication from the school. You could make some bunting together to display in the care home during the summer holidays or encourage families to send postcards to their care home friends.

# IN-PERSON INTERGENERATIONAL SESSIONS

- Think carefully about the number of children/young people. Often it's best to only take a small group into a care home at one time.
- Remind young people before you arrive at the care home about what will be happening and what to expect, e.g. residents might be sleeping or not speaking, or alternatively they might shout out. Residents might come and go.
- Remind older people that the children/young people are coming and why.
- Plan the activities in advance and have the equipment ready.
- Starting with a short activity to introduce or remind each other of names is helpful.
- An extra facilitator can be helpful, especially for the first meeting.
- Keep it short and allow time to get to know each other - remember, the conversations and relationships are more important than the actual activity!



**"Taking part in this project has been like a second childhood."**

CARE HOME RESIDENT, CORNWALL

**"Our link with the care home has become part of our Year 6 life and we often talk about what residents are doing or how they may have been affected by different situations.**

**I can't stress enough that it doesn't have to cost a lot of money to make the link work - the simple things made by children are the very things that the residents and staff are thrilled with."**

TEACHER IN BOURNEMOUTH



**SEE OUR RESOURCES SECTION (P15) FOR USEFUL LINKS AND ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT YOUR INTERGENERATIONAL LINKING SESSIONS**

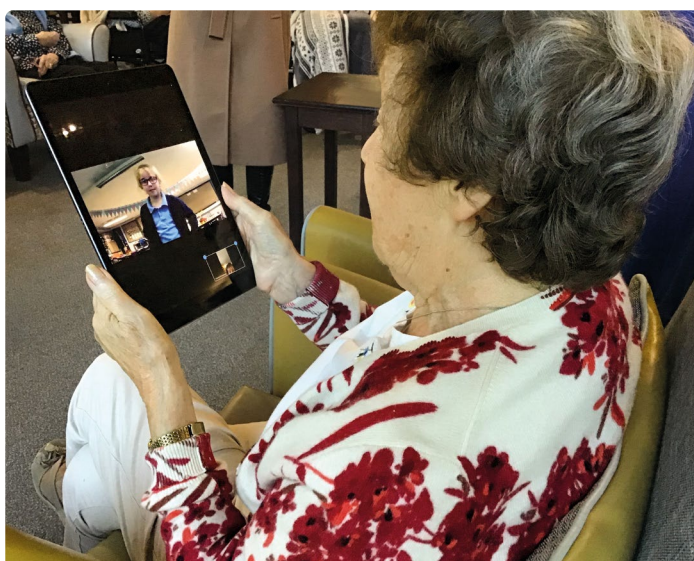
# ONLINE INTERGENERATIONAL SESSIONS

- Remind young people before the call about what will be happening and what to expect, e.g. residents might be sleeping or not speaking, or alternatively they might shout out. Residents might come and go.
- Remind older people that the call with children/young people is happening and why. You may want to practise with another member of staff first.
- Decide between the care home and the school who will lead the call so that you're not talking over each other.
- Plan your activities in advance and start with a way to say hello.
- Keep it short and allow time to get to know each other.
- Check your internet connection and audio settings in advance. Think about how easy it will be for people to see and hear each other.
- Consider using an external microphone and webcam rather than those built into a laptop.
- Always have a back-up plan and try to be flexible.
- Have fun!



"A video call between a group of Year 4 children and residents led to children asking about a resident's sensory blanket and learning about living with dementia. The children were really engaged and respectful throughout."

TEACHER IN LEEDS



SEE OUR RESOURCES SECTION (P15) FOR USEFUL LINKS AND ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT YOUR INTERGENERATIONAL LINKING SESSIONS

# ACTIVITY IDEAS

Here's an example of what an Intergenerational Linking year could look like.

These are suggestions of ways to develop relationships through both remote and in-person activities and exchanges. Visit our resources section on our website for more detailed information.

## SEP/OCT

### GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Write letters and exchange them.

### GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Ask some Curiosity Questions or play Ice Breaker games.



### GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Share a self-portrait or draw around your hand and annotate each 'finger' with something about yourself.

## NOV/DEC

### CELEBRATIONS

Make and exchange cards.



### GET ACTIVE!

Do some parachute games, armchair exercises and/or traditional playground games.

### ACTS OF KINDNESS

Do an act of kindness and in exchange ask older people to share their words of wisdom.



## JAN/FEB

### ART

Make a shared piece of art and display it in the school and care home.



### SHARED PHOTOS/ SCRAPBOOK

Make a scrapbook of your local area (or other topic) for your link partner to enjoy.

### FILM

Film a tour of your classroom/school/care home to share with each other.

# ACTIVITY IDEAS

## MAR/APR

### GROWING

Plant some pots with flowers and herbs for the care home/school garden or windowsills.



### STORYTELLING AND READING

Enjoy a book or story together, either in person or over video call.



### JARS OF JOY OR KINDNESS PACKS

Create thoughtful gifts filled with collected or handmade objects to make each other smile.

## MAY/JUN

### SINGING

Have a joint sing-a-long! It works well in person or virtually.

### NAIL PAINTING AND HAND MESSAGES (OLDER CHILDREN)

Call into the care home and treat residents to some pampering!



### LITTER PICKING

Is there somewhere local that could do with a tidy? Have a clean up and tell each other all about it.

## JUL/AUG

### BOARD GAMES AND BINGO

Have some healthy competition, either over a video call or face to face.



### GARDEN PARTY

Create invitations, think of some garden games and plan a menu for a summer celebration party. Invite your younger/older friends and get baking!

### TREE PLANTING

Plant a tree together in the school or care home gardens as a permanent reminder of your friendship.



# RESOURCE LINKS

Go to [www.myhomelife.org.uk/intergenerational-linking](http://www.myhomelife.org.uk/intergenerational-linking) to download a range of resources, including:

- Videos showing intergenerational activities.
- A contact sheet and planning template.
- A three minute video tour of a care home.
- Step-by-step activity ideas.
- An adaptable PowerPoint lesson exploring what a care home is.
- Book lists and curriculum links for Key Stages 1-3.



## A 10 WEEK PROGRAMME TO GET YOU STARTED

Take on our **'Become a Care Home Friend' Challenge**, aimed at young people aged 5-14.

Through a series of fun and engaging activity worksheets, young people will:

- Think more about different ages and different generations.
- Learn about care homes and the people that live and work in them.
- Make/write something to share with a nearby care home.



The activities are differentiated for Key Stages 1-3 and there are 'Notes for Leaders' to support adults in delivering the activities. This could be a great way to get your link started.

# CARE HOME FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS: INTERGENERATIONAL LINKING



The information, tips and learnings in this handbook have come from **Care Home Friends and Neighbours: Intergenerational Linking** - a national social action project that connected young people aged 5-14 from schools and youth groups with older people living in care homes in England during 2019-2022.

At the time, it was England's biggest intergenerational project with care homes, with over 6,000 younger and older people taking part.

A big thank you to all the organisations who made the project possible:



**Care Home Friends and Neighbours: Intergenerational Linking** was originally funded by The Dunhill Medical Trust and 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 this project and awarded grants on behalf of the #iwill Fund.