
H&F Research Briefing

*Policy and PMO
Clancy Connolly*

Intergenerational challenges & opportunities



Contents

Introduction	3
Social Inclusion in H&F	3
Benefits of intergenerational work	4
Barriers, risks and limitations to intergenerational work	4
Opportunities for Intergenerational practice at H&F	5-6
Intergenerational practice case studies and enablers of success	6-7
Appendices	8-14
References	15

Introduction

1. This research briefing considers the definition, benefits and potential role for H&F in supporting intergenerational challenges and opportunities.
2. According to the Beth Johnson Foundation, intergenerational practices aims:

“To bring people together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities which promote greater understanding and respect between generations and contribute to building more cohesive communities.”
3. Intergenerational practice (and learning) is inclusive and builds on the positive resources that younger and older generations have to offer each other and those around them. It is an important part of Lifelong Learning, where the generations work together to gain skills, values and knowledge. Furthermore, it fosters reciprocal learning relationships between different generations, and helps develop social capital and social cohesion.¹
4. Intergenerational practice can help to address issues of social isolation and loneliness, and can help to combat associated medical issues. Social isolation and loneliness are key areas of concern for H&F, with a rising elderly population. Studies suggest that social engagement may decrease the risk of dementia. As loneliness increases the risk of dementia, social engagement can influence individuals' physical and mental conditions through cognitive physical training, thereby delaying or preventing cognitive function decline.²
5. Intergenerational programmes are social engagement strategies that can promote cooperation, interaction, and exchange among individuals from two or more generations. Programme content can be diverse; they can include arts, culture, music, information and communication technologies.

Background – Social Inclusion in H&F

6. Families in urban areas, such as London, are moving further apart - compared to families in more rural locations. A 2021 study concludes that intergenerational proximity and family interactions in urban areas are becoming more distanced, with key drivers for this being access to further education, employment opportunities, and viable far-distance travel.
7. This mobilisation is one factor behind recent generations of younger people moving further away from their family homes. This also increases the numbers of elders in urban areas being left without close family ties nearby.³
8. In 2019, the Older People's Commission for H&F reported that 43% of elderly residents in H&F were living on their own – the fourth biggest proportion in the country at the time. Not only are our elderly increasingly living alone, but an increasing

¹ Generations Working Together, '*Intergenerational Practice*', [Available here](#).

² National Library of Medicine, '*Effectiveness of intergenerational participation on residents with dementia: A systematic review and meta-analysis*', (March 2022). [Available here](#).

³ Kalmijn, M. '*Long-term trends in intergenerational proximity: Evidence from a grandchild design*', (May 2021), [Available here](#).

proportion are in a state of acute need. One in five of elderly residents at the time of the Older People's Commission were considered to be living in poor / very poor health, whilst more than half were living with long-term health issues (sometimes multiple issues) or disability. One in four elderly residents was deemed to be living in poverty, whilst a third of elderly residents was receiving pension credit.⁴ It is worth noting that more recent data from the Census 2021 revealed that 87% of residents reported their health as very good or good, **the eleventh highest** proportion in the country.

9. At the time of Census 2021, 27% of H&F households were estimated as single person households, compared to 29% in 2011. According to the Census, the proportion of single person households that are elderly residents has stayed at a similar level between 2011 and 2021, at 9% of those aged 66 and over.⁵

Benefits of intergenerational work

10. The benefits of undertaking intergenerational programmes and activities can include:

- **Improved health and wellbeing:** Including reduced feelings of loneliness and improved physical and mental health outcomes.
- **Improved social connections:** Between people of different ages, which can have numerous benefits for mental health and wellbeing. Improved understanding and respect between different generations can also help to reduce negative stereotypes and prejudices.
- **Community cohesion:** The Local Government Association (LGA) finds that young and older people who have met through intergenerational activities will stop and speak to each other. Some are more likely to speak to older or younger people they have not met before, as they understand the other generation better, and are more confident about interacting with them. In addition, where projects bring together young and older people from different ethnic groups, there is a potential for broader cultural understanding to grow - enhancing cooperation, inclusivity and understanding throughout communities more broadly.⁶
- **Enhanced learning and development opportunities:** For both younger and older individuals, affording the opportunity to mutually teach and learn.
- **Increased volunteering and civic engagement:** Bringing benefits for both the individual and the community.⁷

Barriers, risks and limitations to intergenerational work

11. The LGA highlights some of the challenges encountered in several areas of intergenerational practice including:

⁴ H&F, 'Older People's Commission – Final Report', (March 2019), p.11-12. [Available here](#).

⁵ Office for National Statistics, 'How life has changed in Hammersmith and Fulham: Census 2021' [Available here](#)

⁶ Local Government Association, 'Intergenerational Practice: Outcomes and Effectiveness', (June 2010). [Available here](#).

⁷ Generations Working Together, 'Intergenerational Practice', [Available here](#)

- **Low uptake and interest:** Initial challenges are likely to include low uptake and/or a reluctance to socialise with other participants attending. Those involved in running the sessions will find that they are time-consuming exercises. Finding a suitable time-slot and venue for young and older people to work together can be problematic. It can also be difficult to ensure the commitment of partners, such as volunteers.
- **Contrasting availability and interests between generations:** A schedule needs to be carefully judged to fit the schedules of target older and young people. Research suggests that younger and older people have different needs and different motives for attending intergenerational projects. Ensuring activities are appropriate and maintaining the interest of both groups can be a challenge. The organisation and logistics of intergenerational work can also be challenging. Activities involving young and older people require considerable preparation and supervision to be successful. The weather was noted to affect attendance too.
- **Barriers to engagement demographics:** It can be difficult to engage sufficient numbers of older people for effective intergenerational practice. Older people, particularly those who are lonely or have conditions such as hearing loss, may be embarrassed, lack confidence and have concerns about working with young people. Working with groups who are more likely to benefit from the engagement such as NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and young people exhibiting challenging behaviour, for example, could be more difficult.
- **Potential Negative consequences:** Whilst the outcomes for intergenerational work are generally positive, there is the potential for negative stereotypes to be reinforced. If groups are not overseen and delivered in a skilful way, negative experiences between generations can reinforce negative stereotypes which can discourage participation in the project.⁸

Opportunities for Intergenerational practice at H&F

12. The most relevant 2022 H&F Labour Manifesto commitment in this area is set out below:

“We have a high number of people living in single unit housing, particularly older people without family or support living nearby, which exacerbates isolation and loneliness. We will provide better practical and social support to these people and maintain an individual connection through local council staff and NHS and community workers to support them in the round and spot unreported issues quickly”

13. Back in 2019, a social isolation and loneliness board had been established at H&F. The Covid pandemic then stopped this developing further. It is possible to review and restart the work, depending on new priorities. Intergenerational opportunities could include:

- Dementia project
- Youth Council & Mental Health project

⁸ Local Government Association, ‘Intergenerational Practice: Outcomes and Effectiveness’, (June 2010). p.8-12. [Available here](#)

- Social isolation & loneliness
- Nursery school and residential homes/sheltered accommodation
- Secondary school children coaching older people re- IT skills
- Older people coaching younger people reading and writing/maths skills etc.
- Fully sweat the 3 Sector Improvement Fund (3SIF) and fast track projects schemes for intergenerational possibilities.

14. Previous experience in this area, and wider research, shows that to deliver successful programmes there needs to be enough capacity to establish and run any schemes. Having carried out a short desktop benchmark it appears that where this is done well, the third sector have been commissioned to carry out the schemes. The key components of an effective Intergenerational programme are outlined in a diagram at appendix 1.

Intergenerational practice case studies and enablers of success

15. According to 2019 research from the Welsh Government, key enablers of successful intergenerational practice are:

- **Funding**, which doesn't need to be substantial because the activities are usually low-cost. But funds are likely to be required for staffing, equipment, transport, and professional facilitators (e.g. artists commissioned to run sessions).
- **Preparation for participants**, such as informing young people about dementia and its effects. Keeping participants well-informed can help establish confidence, understanding and put people at ease.
- **Enthusiasm**, which usually stems from a committed individual or organisation which is keen to effect change.
- **Specific purpose**, responding to local and social needs - rather than doing something for the sake of it.
- **Working in partnership with existing networks**, such as organisations that already support vulnerable or isolated people, will often provide a better platform for intergenerational practice.
- **Activities** guided by the input of participants will offer a sense of ownership and empowerment for residents.
- **Developing relationships**, by allowing participants the opportunity to network informally and establish meaningful connections.
- **Themes, access and benefits**, that mutually benefit and appeal to target demographics, such as sharing skills in reading, arts and crafts.
- **A sense of purpose**, such as exhibiting art work or showing performance art will add to the achievement for all participating.
- **Fostering mutual respect between participants**, ensuring they feel safe and welcome in the space created.⁹

16. **Appendix 2** sets out six case studies, to highlight how other local authorities are tackling issues of social isolation and loneliness amongst elderly residents. Several strong themes and critical success factors have been captured and are set out below:

⁹ Welsh Government, 'Review of key mechanisms in intergenerational practices, and their effectiveness at reducing loneliness/social isolation', (May 2019). [Available here](#).

Co-production and facilitation: Council's typically champion intergenerational work but many case studies show that the council's role is often facilitative and arm's length, with programmes co-produced and delivered with communities. Understanding the needs of participants is critical to success - preparation sessions with individual groups is advised, before embarking on larger-scale intergenerational work.¹⁰ Activities need to be tailored to the needs of both groups (the elderly and younger demographics) around mutual or shared interests. Involving participants in the planning and design of activities and the use of interactive activities are also important approaches.¹¹

- **Funding:** Larger scale and more council-led initiatives require funding for a range of areas in order to deliver successful interventions, including for: venue hire, staffing, transportation costs, procurement of food/refreshments, and resources for activities.
- **The range of potential interventions is vast:** Support offers provided by younger people to older people such as dog-walking, shopping or face-to-face chats are low-key and relatively bespoke options which may be facilitated through volunteer support. However, other activities may require greater resource and coordination, such as sports/exercise classes, knitting, arts and crafts, singing groups, digital inclusion courses, preparing affordable meals etc. Following the pandemic, more residents have learned to use digital devices to participate in activities through platforms, which can bridge the gap for people who were previously digitally excluded.
- **Volunteer participation is vital:** A strong and reliable involvement from volunteers and the third sector will be key, as will building relationships with residents and delivering a dependable and consistent offer. It is important to have a 'hands on' approach to challenge misconceptions and to agree a code of conduct from the outset. These factors are critical for avoiding the reinforcement of negative stereotypes between demographics.¹²
- **NHS involvement:** Regular engagement and contributions from the NHS and/or public health can help to introduce awareness of health issues and the importance of GP registration for participating residents. Health services can also act as a point of contact or oversight which can raise health concerns and initiate a referral, where the need arises.
- **Access to transport and venues:** Older residents may be more dependent on public transport and may have greater transport needs. Younger people will equally have their own transport needs that may need to be considered depending on the specific activity.

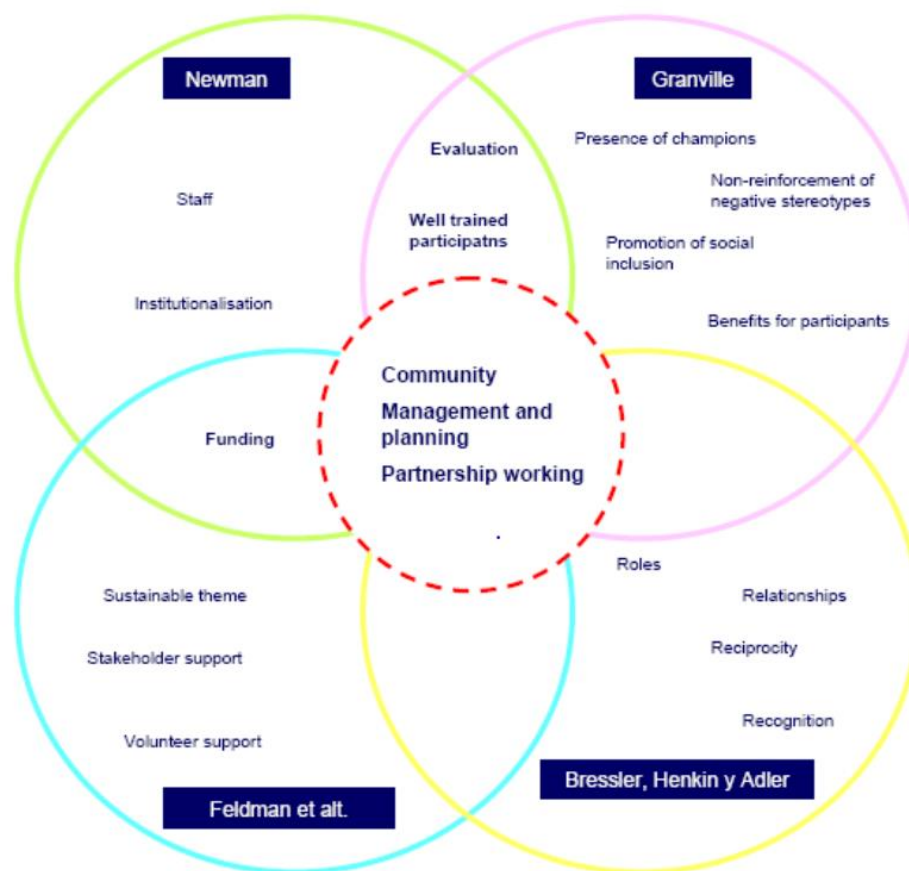
¹⁰ Local Government Association, 'Intergenerational Practice: Outcomes and Effectiveness', (June 2010). [Available here](#).

¹¹ Local Government Association, 'Intergenerational Practice: Outcomes and Effectiveness', (June 2010). [Available here](#).

¹² Local Government Association, 'Intergenerational Practice: Outcomes and Effectiveness', (June 2010). [Available here](#).

Appendices

Appendix 1: Key components of an effective Intergenerational programme.¹³



¹³ Intergenerational Programmes Evaluation available [here](#)

Appendix 2: Six case studies of local authorities

Case Study 1

[Reigate and Banstead](#) Borough Council has a team of community development workers who work with local people to develop community-driven projects. They cover the areas/neighbourhoods which rank highest on the index of multiple deprivation.

Head of Community Partnerships, Justine Chatfield:

“The team are not there to do stuff to our communities, to run or provide services. Instead the goal is to enable communities to develop their own schemes.”

Impact:

- A ‘good neighbour’ scheme in one area where a network of volunteers has been set up to support the frailer members of society who may struggle to access services. This includes everything from taking them out to activities and to do their shopping, to tasks such as walking their dog, or just sitting and chatting over a cup of tea.
- A South East Asian women where they socialise and exercise together.
- An intergenerational arts and crafts group on one estate, which sees young families and older residents gather together once a month.
- Grant-backed football sessions for local people, where attendance costs just £1.
- A voluntary sector-run singing group for people with learning disabilities, including the option to attend remotely.

Lessons Learned:

- Stronger relationships developed between the local authority, NHS and voluntary sector – and a better mutual understanding of each area at a functional level.
- GPs better equipped to identify non-medical interventions for local people.

Next Steps:

- There is available £300k funding from the local authority. In some cases this supports voluntary sector initiatives
- Following the pandemic, some venues are reopening and connections being re-established.
- Hybrid sessions are now more available for those who want to be involved in an activity but are better suited to attending remotely.
- Taking the running of three community centres back in-house.

Case Study 2

[Leeds City Council](#) - Leeds Neighbourhood Networks aim to support older people to live independently and participate in their communities as they grow older through a range of activities and services provided at a local level. They include advocacy, activities to improve health and wellbeing and social opportunities from painting groups to befriending support.

Some are run directly by the networks, while others are supported by them. The networks have developed over the past 30 years and there are now 37 individual networks across Leeds.

The council has always supported the networks with funding, but from 2010 started directly commissioning them as part of the wider integration agenda. Their priorities include – reducing social isolation and loneliness, increased contribution and involvement, increased choice and control and enhanced health and wellbeing.

Impact:

- A digital health hub, which provided vital support during the first lockdown, training more than 50 older people about how to get online and access platforms such as Zoom.
- Allotment projects, organised walks picnics and assisted shopping for elderly residents
- A 2020 [review](#) by *Ageing Better*, praised the work done and recognised it as an essential part of the councils community-based approach.

Lessons Learned:

- Regular engagement with the Leeds Council Third Sector Development manager, in the form of monthly sessions, so that Network members can drop in to discuss practices, whilst specialists are invited to offer advice and training to improve the Network.

Next Steps:

- Following the pandemic, restarting face-to-face activities.
- Working with the networks and their local communities, this could involve working more with younger people as part of a wider range of ages.
- Intergenerational projects, such as events for young families, putting on sports sessions for children and organising trips to local attractions, such as children's farms.

Case Study 3

[Calderdale Council's](#) *Staying Well* Programme commissioned since 2014, originally as a pilot to help tackle loneliness and social isolation. Supported by council and voluntary staff, it is now well-established - covering the whole of the borough.

Activities include - chat and craft groups, gardening schemes, walking football and luncheon clubs. Each locality also has two *Staying Well* workers who deal with referrals in from GPs, nurses and social care staff – although self-referrals are also accepted. The workers help people find local activities as well as volunteering opportunities.

Impact:

- An evaluation of the *Staying Well* Programme by the University of Sheffield said it was having a “positive impact” on people’s lives. It said the support provided had been “instrumental” in helping them rebuild their lives after adverse events, helping to reduce social isolation and loneliness.
- One of the biggest successes has been the number of local residents who have been encouraged to volunteer which is helping to keep people socially active as well as giving something back to the communities and helping ensure the activities remain sustainable.
- The programme has an impressive reach. In the year before the pandemic the service received more than 600 referrals.
- During the pandemic, the network of volunteers delivered essentials, shopping and medicine to residents who were vulnerable and shielding.

Lessons Learned:

- It is vital to ensure the voice of local people is heard. Community panels have been set up across Calderdale.
- The panels are used to help decide what activities and groups are funded as well as what support should be given by the *Staying Well* workers.
- Transport is an important challenge to consider. Many of the people we work with are not confident or able to use public transport so the network has to explore solutions such as taxis.

Next Steps:

- Re-establishing the service face-to-face offer, following the pandemic.

Case Study 4

[Stockport Council's DigiKnow Alliance](#). Established in 2018, in collaboration with a number of delivery partners to help ensure digitally excluded residents gain the skills, confidence and access they need to use the internet to benefit their work, health and life. Approximately 40% of the population were making limited/no use of the internet.

“The three main barriers to getting online are lack of motivation, lack of skills and confidence, and the cost of equipment to access the internet. Motivation has been a significant barrier among the older population, but digital exclusion is something that can affect people of any age.”

The council took the strategic lead, but the programme is delivered by the *Starting Point Community Learning Partnership*, which trains local volunteers to become digital champions. The champions provide one-to-one support to people as well as running group/community activities.

A new helpline was also launched as well as a DigiKnow library, which lends residents devices and provides them with data. This was funded with the help of money provided by the Department for Education, O2 and council funds. A recycling charity helped repurpose devices that residents and businesses wished to donate – which could be dropped off at any library in Stockport.

Impact:

- Approximately 1,000 devices loaned out.
- Hundreds of skills sessions delivered remotely.
- More than 8,000 residents supported prior to the pandemic, with thousands more during the pandemic.
- Increased online access has improved residents health, wellbeing, and helped tackle loneliness.

Lessons Learned:

- The fact that the service is viewed as a service separate from the council is a real strength. It is seen as a community initiative, collaborating with local organisations and people.
- Devices tend to be loaned out for three months and are often returned in good condition – adding to a sense of collective achievement.

Next Steps:

- A steering group meets fortnightly. A wider alliance group that meets quarterly. The focus for both will be how to maximise reach. Developing digital skills is now more important than ever.
- *“We want to build on the network of champions and increase the numbers and look for more opportunities to support our communities. It is not just about social isolation – it is about work and education opportunities as well.”*

Case Study 5

[Middlesbrough Council](#) – supported The *Ageing Better Programme* was launched by Middlesbrough and Stockton Mind. The Council is a key partner and takes a strategic lead, chairing the steering group. The programme aims to tackle loneliness and isolation among the over 50s.

Grants of up to £5,000 were made available for community groups and there were more than 300 activities available (pre-pandemic) to tackle social isolation. These included digital inclusion support, luncheon clubs, knitting groups, a DIY group for women, chair-based exercises, dementia-friendly activities, and arts and crafts activities.

A network of voluntary “befrienders” has also been established for those who need one-to-one support.

Impact:

- Pre-Covid, over 4,000 people were involved in the programme.
- During the pandemic, more work was done to offer residents support to become digitally included.
- Tea & Technology classes have proved to be very successful.
- Delivered online support: bingo sessions, quizzes, armchair exercises and history projects.
- Distribution of digital devices to residents.
- Journey Assistance Cards have been distributed to residents who may be frail or have an unseen disability. The carrying and displaying of the card lets those around know that the card-holder may need additional support or for seating to be made available.
- The ‘*Please have a Seat*’ initiative (in which venues can display a salient window sticker) is aimed at encouraging restaurants, cafes and retail outlets to allow people to use their premises to go to the toilet or have a rest or glass of water.
- An interactive map, has been developed to signpost people to Dementia friendly activities and support.

Lessons Learned:

- Middlesbrough is aiming to achieve the World Health Organisation’s [age-friendly status](#). This looks to interconnect eight domains, including housing, transportation, and social inclusion, to ensure that a specific place is accessible for older people.
- The steering group includes older people who can offer their perspective when it comes to issues such as transportation or access to outdoor spaces.
- Transportation is a key enabler to allow residents to attend and join in the many groups and activities that are available to them.

Next Steps:

- Post-pandemic engagement includes offering to those most at risk of social isolation, with bespoke drop-in facilities for those with dementia and also residents with vision and hearing impairments.

Case Study 6

[Norfolk County Council](#) launched its Healthy Libraries initiative - in partnership with public health. Staff receive training in Mental Health First Aid Lite, dementia and autism awareness, and health information literacy skills. In addition, a range of initiatives to promote good health and wellbeing among users have been promoted, which can positively impact wellbeing and tackle isolation.

Offers have included:

- A cup of tea & a chat (including a remote offer during the pandemic, which proved highly popular).
- Reading volunteers, who will read (by phone or online) to residents who are housebound.
- Singing groups.
- Colouring groups for adults.
- Knitting groups.
- A volunteer musician (a harpist) would come and perform.

Impact:

- Prior to the pandemic, around 60,000 people a year were taking part in the activities laid on.
- The activities included both older people and young families.
- The work of the Norfolk library service has been recognised by the Library and Information Association, winning a *Libraries change lives* award.
- *“Health and wellbeing has really become embedded in our service, taking a county-wide approach with colleagues in public health, Active Norfolk, adult learning and the NHS – and that is making a real difference to social isolation and loneliness.”*

Lessons Learned:

- There are still many groups who remain socially isolated.
- Women tend to use libraries more than men.
- In rural communities, you often find there are roles in work for men to work on their own. So aiming offers at men in particular is important.
- More work addressing digital exclusion is required.

Next Steps:

- The service is now focussing on offering both online and face-to-face options.
- A new project, *NHS Connect*, is being explored in partnership with the health service. It will be aimed at people with cancer and low-medium mental health issues. The aim is to supply digital devices with data included to help residents link in with some of the opportunities that are available locally.
- Tackling social isolation and loneliness are key priorities in this regard.

References

- Generations Working Together, '*Intergenerational Practice*', [Available here](#).
- H&F, '*Older People's Commission – Final Report*', (March 2019). [Available here](#).
- Kalmijn, M. '*Long-term trends in intergenerational proximity: Evidence from a grandchild design*', (May 2021), [Available here](#).
- Local Government Association, '*Combatting loneliness: A guide for local authorities*', (January 2016). [Available here](#).
- Local Government Association, '*Intergenerational practice: Outcomes and Effectiveness*', (June 2010). [Available here](#).
- Local Government Association, '*Loneliness Case Studies*', (October 2021). [Available here](#).
- National Library of Medicine, '*Effectiveness of intergenerational participation on residents with dementia: A systematic review and meta-analysis*', (March 2022). [Available here](#).
- Office for National Statistics, '*How life has changed in Hammersmith and Fulham: Census 2021*' [Available here](#)
- Welsh Government, '*Review of key mechanisms in intergenerational practices, and their effectiveness at reducing loneliness/social isolation*', (May 2019). [Available here](#).