



Castlebay Children's Centre and St. Brendan's Care Home

Intergenerational Project

Evaluation Report 2018-2019



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This intergenerational project was an initiative led by NHS Western Isles Health Promotion Department in partnership with Bhuth Bharraigh, children, parents and staff from Castlebay Children's Centre, residents and staff from St. Brendan's Care Home in Castlebay, Isle of Barra in the Outer Hebrides.

NHS Western Isles Health Promotion Department would sincerely like to thank everyone who made this project possible; in particular, the nursery children and care home residents who participated.

Useful Term

Bhuth Bharraigh: Bhuth Bharraigh Ltd is a local produce shop on the Isle of Barra specialising in local crafts, food, whole foods, books, wool and fresh produce; as well as products from other nearby islands and Highland Whole foods.

BACKGROUND

Intergenerational work is not a new concept however due to the advancements in technology and travel, where families are more geographically dispersed; there is more of a need within local communities to raise awareness of and encourage the connecting of different generations.

Intergenerational practice aims to bring people together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities which promote greater understanding and respect between generations and contributes to building more cohesive communities. Intergenerational practice is inclusive, building on the positive resources that the young and old generations have to offer each other and those around them.

Some of the benefits of intergenerational work include:

- creation of age friendly communities.
- all generations have a lot to both teach and learn from each other and contribute to lifelong learning.
- tackles issues around stereotyping and ageism.
- increases understanding and respect between older people and younger people.
- chance to make new friends and combat social isolation.
- empathy, particularly in the youngsters.
- provides both generations with a sense of purpose.
- its lots of fun!.

Research also shows there are many positive mental health gains for the older people who engage with young children from their communities. There is also evidence to show that children need four to six caring adults to be involved in their lives for them to fully develop emotionally and socially.

Children can receive many benefits from close long-term connection with older adults. These include increased self-esteem, confidence, bonding and extended life skills.

Intergenerational bonds need not be traditional or biological and older adult mentors can make a significant difference in a child's life.

INTRODUCTION

Following discussions between the nursery staff of Castlebay Children's Centre, the manager of St. Brendan's Care Home and NHS Western Isles Health Promotion Department staff, it was agreed that there was a gap in partnership working between the nursery and the care home.

Following discussion with each organisation it became clear that both the nursery and care home could see the benefits for both residents and children. This meeting also gave us the opportunity to discuss how it had worked in the last intergenerational project based within Uist, and why it had been so successful.

It was agreed that the nursery would attend St. Brendan's Care Home every Wednesday morning and that staff from the care home would also take part.

The project was conducted during 2018-2019 and aimed at encouraging intergenerational activities between Castlebay Children's Centre and St. Brendan's Care Home, both based on the Isle of Barra in the Outer Hebrides.

Participants included nursery children between 3-5 years and care home residents whose ages ranged from 70 years to almost 90 years.

The project's purpose was to enable older people and young children, who would not otherwise have met, to forge friendships and to share experiences in a creative and safe environment.

The projects also promoted social inclusion and respect, as all care home residents were included, regardless of disability, health conditions or mobility issues.

During the project it was anticipated that interaction between young and old would help to:

- build community connections between generations.
- encourage community involvement and strengthen communities.
- enable joint learning and the exchange of experience, skills and knowledge between older and younger people.
- promote social inclusion, equality and mutual respect.
- develop enjoyable and fun activities for all involved.
- foster a real understanding between people of different ages.

Furthermore, the project expected to create a lasting link between Castlebay Children's Centre and St. Brendan's Care Home, leading to weekly visits by nursery children to the care home.

Due to the success of the intergenerational projects that have taken place between Cothrom Òg nursery and Sacred Heart Care Home, Saoghal Beag Nursery and Trianaid Care Home all of the nurseries involved have continued to visit the care homes and have made the residents a part of the life of the nursery.

Project Aims

The project aimed to increase engagement across generations in the community of Barra and Watersay benefiting participant's social, physical and mental health.

Project Delivery

Activities

Initially, it took the children some time to overcome their initial shyness and to begin forging friendships with the residents. In order to combat this, project staff designed a range of physical activities providing an opportunity for both care home residents and nursery children to enable new skills to be learned and cognitive skills to be developed.

It became evident that in order for both groups to fully engage with each other, activities were required to be developed which encouraged everyone to sit together at a table. Instantaneously there was increased interaction between the two groups, resulting in a much more relaxed atmosphere. This was also something that contributed to the success of the other two projects that had taken place earlier in Uist which resulted in a book of stories and scrap book being produced.

Another contributing factor to this success was that there was someone responsible for the creative activities and gathering all the photographic evidence and photographs to produce the end products. Sarah MacLean from the Bhuth Bharraigh was invited to become involved and it was agreed to produce a timetable of creative activities for both residents and the children to become involved with.

Those involved in the initiative agreed it would be beneficial to produce a keepsake as a memory of the project. A scrap book using pictures from the various activities was produced. This will be kept at St. Brendan's but the nursery will have access to it. This resource will be particularly beneficial to the residents with dementia as the pictures will hopefully help to stimulate memory and initiate conversation. Residents will be able to show this to their families and visitors and share their memories.

When the children were walking to the Care Home, they passed a new housing development and stopped to chat to the builders who talked to them about Health & Safety procedures and allowed them to try on hard hats and hi-viz jackets, which gave them plenty to excitedly share with the resident when they arrived at the Care Home, this generated a lot of interest and conversation as some of the residents due to ill health very rarely leave the Care Home but still have an interest in what is happening in their community.

The children and staff from the nursery will continue to visit the care home using the creative sessions to encourage engagement.

The first activity introduced was a poppy wreath for remembrance Sunday. This resulted in some of the residents reminiscing about their personal experiences during the war and as a result of this at singing time when the residents were asked to choose a song some of them began singing songs from this period.

Additional activities included planting hyacinth bulbs, paper bag kites, peg dolls creating visual designs e.g. sock puppets, potato printing and a cross mosaic and pom pom animals from different materials and when the creative activity was finished the children and residents would have a snack together in the dining room.

After snack the children would sing a song they had chosen and practiced. The children would then ask the residents "What's your favourite song" and the children would sing their chosen song. If the children did not know the song they would ask the resident to "teach it to us".

Each visit was concluded with a story, from the residents recounting their own childhood family stories or history, or by a storybook taken by the children to be read out by the residents.

Activities book launch

Once the scrap book was completed, an official launch was held in St. Brendan's Care Home to highlight the book as a community project.

The nursery children produced invitations and gave them to their parents and to the residents for sharing with their own families.

On the day of the launch it was very clear to all invited that the children had formed many special friendships with the residents as they were taking their parents around the care home and introducing them to the residents and telling them what their favourite song was.

The children were clearly very proud of the scrap book as they told everyone about the book and who did what.

This launch was deemed highly successful and it was agreed the activities book would be shared between St. Brendan's Care Home and Castlebay Children's Nursery.

Pictured below are two of the residents looking through the scrap book.



REPORTING

Castlebay Children's Nursery reporting

As each week passed, a noticeable difference was seen in the comfort and confidence of both the children and the residents who were excited by the visit.

Benefits to the children of participating comprised:

- they had the opportunity to work with a variety of materials.
- they had the opportunity to experiment with imaginative ways to represent the world around them.
- they were able to explore the local and wider community and discover the different roles people play and how they can help.
- language was greatly enhanced.
- showed respect for their elders.
- they learned about re-using and recycling resources to help care for the environment.
- given the opportunity to develop new friendships/relationships.
- children's behaviour improved.
- developed social skills.
- better understanding of language, adjectives and concepts was developed.
- development measured by using overview development charts, profiles, PLODS (possible lines of development).
- learning values, and how to interact with older people from different backgrounds.
- team working skills and sharing.
- learn new things see the world from a different perspective.
- enjoy fun activities while interacting.
- developed empathy skills.
- recognised residents challenges (dementia, fragile) changed behavior.
- very shy children became engaged/interacted with the residents (became quite bossy).
- the children and staff walked to the Care Home so the children developed road safety.

Comments from the children;

- "I liked making kites."
- "One of the children whose grandparents are on the mainland thought of two of the residents as his grandparents. And said "I like seeing my gran and grandpa".
- "I liked the singing".

St. Brendan's Care Home Care reporting

Care Home staff reported that the residents were very happy to see the children and a care home staff member also commented; "that after each visit the residents seemed less depressed, more physically active and seemed happier and much more willing to engage in conversation and after each of the children's visits, the residents seemed to have more energy and were more talkative, both with each other and with care home staff."

The residents also told visitors who came in about the children's visits and how everyone enjoyed the sessions immensely.

Care Home staff noticed there was also an increase in physical, mental and creative activity with the residents and that the children's visits also gave the residents more opportunities for social inclusion and the opportunity to feel useful and valued, and they enjoyed a sense of achievement.

As the project progressed the residents began looking forward to the children's visits, repeatedly enquiring as to what day it was and whether it was the day the children visited. This was particularly evident with residents who did not have regular visitors, where the children's visits were seen to reduce their feelings of loneliness and isolation.

There were also wider benefits to the project; it has created a better connection between generations, helping to build bridges and close gaps between generations. There was an improved social bond and solidarity between young and old. The project also provided an excellent opportunity to pass on collective community and life memories to the children.

Residents who initially did not want to become engaged with the project became involved and looked forward to the children's visits.

Two of the residents who were in different stages of dementia became quite emotional when asked to choose a song to sing, they shared their memories of the song with one of them saying "My mummy would sing this to me" and staff indicated that both of these residents became less agitated when the children were around.

Staff also stated that the residents who had dementia had a higher level of positive engagement when interacting with the children. The staff were also aware that the residents without dementia demonstrated a higher frequency of smiling and conversation when interacting with the children.

Staff themselves also reaped the benefits of the project, becoming very involved in all of the activities, taking part and sitting around the table. As a result of this, staff found the residents more engaging and communicative with them and overall obtaining increased job satisfaction.

Comments from St. Brendan's staff

- "Lovely to see the interaction between children and our service users smiles all round."
- "Great weekly event also for staff".
- "Service users enjoy the children visiting and interacting with them through activities and play."
- "The children brighten up the service users eyes. The sound of laughter is priceless. To see the interaction between the children and service users is amazing."
- "Great interaction great stimulation but most of all great to see plenty of smiles on faces of both children and service users."

Client Stories and Photographs

Story 1

Along the journey of producing the scrap book the children became more confident and it was clear that they had a real empathy with the residents offering support when needed.

Pictured right:
Child offering a resident support in painting his stone.



Story 2

One of the children telling the resident his news and asking him to join in the activity.

Pictured right:
Resident and child having a chat.



Story 3

As the project progressed, the children became more confident and it was clear that they had a real empathy with the residents. In the nursery this child asked the staff when was he going to see his Gran and Grandpa after a lot of questioning it was discovered that the child had decided that two of the residents in the care home had become his "Gran" and "Grandpa."

Pictured right:
Child supporting his "Gran" with this activity.



Story 4

One particular resident who had not wanted to join in at the beginning was now one of the first at the table to join in with the activities.

Pictured right:
One of the children showing
the resident what had been
made today.



Story 5

After the session the children were given fruit and juice. The residents all joined the children round the table to share their news.

Pictured right:
The children telling the residents about their day.



OUTCOMES AND CHALLENGES

During the project there were a number of focused and unintended outcomes. These included:

Outcomes

Focused outcomes:

- a recognised increase in both the physical and mental wellbeing of nursery children, care home residents and care home staff.
- a recognised increase in the confidence and self-esteem of both nursery children and care home residents.
- production of a scrap book, showcasing the jointly produced creative work.
- a launch of the scrap book where residents, their families and nursery children showcased their work with their families.
- the project was beneficial for the wellbeing of all involved.

Unintended outcomes:

- the children's listening and language skills increased
- the children began engaging more with care home residents in a community setting (out with the care home)
- nursery staff appreciated and became more aware of the diversity of care home staff roles.
- care home residents are now included in various events organised by the nursery e.g. the christmas concert and gardening activities.
- despite the project concluding, the nursery has continued to visit the care home, continuing to bringing generations together.
- children and their families visited the Care Home at Halloween to show their friends their costumes.
- residents with dementia engaged with the children/became calmer and shared memories.
- visits will continue.

Challenges

- Reluctance of some residents to engage with the project.
- Quite chaotic at the beginning.
- Had to become very structured – all sitting round the table – short sessions.
- Children walking to the Care Home.
- Death of a resident.

Conclusion

We believe this project surpassed its aims and expectations by building a strong community connection between the generations involved, benefitting both staff groups and the wider families involved.

Throughout the project children and residents developed very close relationships with one of the children referring to two of the residents as his grandparents. The children and their families also visit the care home out with the project in the evenings and at weekends.

It was also repeatedly demonstrated by the children that they have a unique ability to be empathetic to others; this was very evident particularly with one of the children who has challenging behavior, he changed his behavior dependant on the resident that he was with. If the resident was fragile he would sit with them and speak in a quiet voice offering them support in whatever they were doing and making sure that they had everything that they needed, if however the resident was a bit more robust then he would ask them to come and sit at the table to join in the activity.

At the beginning of the project the children were extremely shy and sometimes found it difficult to engage with the residents. However, as the project progressed, it quickly became evident that the children's self esteem and confidence were growing, this enabled them to enquire why a particular resident was not in the sitting room and what was wrong with them. Staff told the children that he was not well and just wanted to stay in his room, the children asked if they could go to his room and say hello which they did.

This project was particularly successful with residents who have dementia. The care home staff stated that after the visits by the children these residents became much calmer, more talkative and willing to share memories.

At all times the project aspired to ensure all residents to felt valued and important, regardless of disability, health conditions or mobility issues.

Recommendations

- The Care Home and nursery should continue to maintain the established relationships and work together to further develop this project.
- The children would benefit in becoming more instrumental in the organisation of future projects.



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