

Cothrom Òg Nursery and Sacred Heart Care Home

Intergenerational Project

2017-2018

Evaluation Report



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This intergenerational project was an initiative led by NHS Western Isles Health Promotion Department in partnership with the Arora Project, children (and their parents) and staff from Cothrom Òg Nursery, Re-Store, and the residents and staff from Sacred Heart Care Home in Daliburgh, Isle of South Uist 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.

List of useful terms

Cothrom: meaning opportunity in Gaelic, is a Community and Development organisation which enables inclusion and encourages full participation in the economic, social and cultural life of the Outer Hebrides. It is based on the Isle of South Uist.

Re-Store: a furniture refurbishment and textile recycling service, established by Cothrom in 2006, based on the Isle of South Uist.

The Arora Project: a project that includes intergenerational working with local children and young people. It connects those living with dementia through the use of art projects to enable people to share ideas and skills.

BACKGROUND

Research 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.

One of the many issues emerging from our modern world of technology is that many young people experience large amounts of peer socialisation, too much contact through computers and texting, and not enough one-on-one, personal time with mature adults.

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.

A staff member also said that children like to be watched, and to have someone to laugh with them, "A lot of children these days don't necessarily have attention from the elderly, but that connection is a special bond, and this kind of interaction helps to bridge this gap in a way. It is important to encourage children to appreciate the elderly, rather than seeing them as invisible, not as quick as others."

The residents were very happy to see something different, and enjoyed reminiscing about their own childhood or their own children or grandchildren. They really liked a little hand to hold if the child was happy to offer, and the benefits to more frequent visiting are that the children became more relaxed and happy to be close to the residents who would no longer be strangers.

Some intergenerational activities provided the opportunity for the residents to pass down some of their memories.

INTRODUCTION

The project was conducted during 2017-2018 and aimed at encouraging intergenerational activities between the Cothrom Òg Nursery and Sacred Heart Care Home, both based on the Isle of South Uist in the Outer Hebrides.

The ages of those who participated were nursery children between 3-5 years and care home residents whose ages ranged from 75-101 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.

This project also promoted social inclusion and respect, as all care home residents were included, regardless of their 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 Cothrom Òg Nursery and Sacred Heart Care Home, leading to weekly visits by nursery children to the care home.

It was also an aspiration that the efforts and achievements realised within this project would be adopted by other nurseries and care homes within the Outer Hebrides.

Project Aims

The overall aims of the project were to achieve:

- increased physical activity and mental health wellbeing with young children from Cothrom Òg Nursery and residents of Sacred Heart Care Home.
- increased confidence and self-esteem with children, residents, nursery staff and care home staff.
- a recognised achievement from those involved.

PROJECT DELIVERY

Following discussions with the manager of Cothrom and the manager of Sacred Heart Care Home, NHS Western Isles Health Promotion Department identified a gap in partnership working between Cothrom Òg Nursery and Sacred Heart Care Home.

In order to rectify this, it was agreed that the nursery children would attend Sacred Heart Care Home every Wednesday, bringing with them a packed lunch, enabling them to socialise at lunchtime with the care home residents.

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 the children's shyness, 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. Once this happened, it was immediately noticeable that there was increased interaction between the two groups, resulting in a much more relaxed atmosphere.

The Arora Project was also invited to become involved and it was agreed to utilise the local story of 'Loch Bee,' as it was well known by local residents and included fairies, tractors, animals and crofters.

Those involved in the initiative agreed it would be beneficial to produce a keepsake as a memory of the project and a book compiled from activities tied to the story was introduced. The weekly development of the activities book further encouraged friendships to be forged between the children and care home residents.

The first activity worked upon was tractors, generated by interest from the 'Loch Bee' story, with tractors being fashioned from Harris Tweed fabric.

Additional activities included tie dyeing session, the making of small hand puppets, creating visual designs e.g. animals from sheep's wool, and scrap boarding vegetables from different materials for inclusion in the activities book.

During the sessions the children would also sing songs to the residents and the residents would suggest some songs that they knew to be sung.

After the creative activities, the children and residents would then eat lunch together in the care home dining room.

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

As the completion of the activities neared, Re-Store staff Maria MacDonald and Chris Steele were contacted to assist in putting the activities book together. One of the residents who knitted squares kindly agreed to knit the activities book's front cover, with assistance from her own granddaughter Kirsty MacLeod, who also assisted in finalising the book.

Activities book launch

Once the activities book was completed, an official launch was held in Sacred Heart Care Home to highlight the book as a community project.

Launch invitations were produced by the nursery children who provided them to their parents and to the residents for sharing with their own families.

The launch was deemed highly successful and it was agreed the activities book would be shared between Sacred Heart Care Home and Cothrom Òg Nursery.



Above: The completed activities book

Comments made by family members, residents and children on the day of the book launch included:

“Mum absolutely loved the children’s visits. Her involvement in the book provided her with lots to occupy her time; she got a huge benefit from the project.”

“Fantastic book and amazing to see how the children and residents interact so well. Positive for all.”

“Really enjoyed my visit, very impressed with the joint work and the finished product. Great atmosphere in this room - everyone seemed to get so much out of it.”

“It’s our book. We all made it!”

REPORTING

Cothrom Òg Nursery reporting

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

There were a number of impacts that the visits had on the children.

- 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 norms, 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.

Comments from the children;

- "I liked making the tractor and the puppets."
- one of the children speaking about the day of the launch of the book said, "When the grownups were there that was really good."
- one of the children said that they enjoyed one of the residents making rugs

Sacred Heart Care Home Care reporting

Care home staff reported that 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 Deputy Manager also stated that it was a great project and that the care home felt very lucky to have been a part of it; she also stated that the residents definitely had a buzz about them and spoke fondly of the children.

The residents also told visitors who came in about the children's visits and how everyone enjoyed the sessions immensely. There was also an increase in physical, mental and creative activity with the residents. 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.

More and more, each of 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. 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.

Staff themselves also reaped the benefits of the project, with staff finding the residents more engaging and communicative with them and overall obtaining increased job satisfaction.

CLIENT STORIES AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Story 1

Along the journey of producing the book, the children became more confident and it was clear that they had a real empathy with the residents. When one of the children realised that one of the residents was sitting on his own, the child went straight over to him to show what had been made that day and asked him to join him at the table.



Above: Child showing a puppet made out of felt to a resident.

Story 2

One of the children informed a 92 year old resident that all the nursery children were his friends and enquired as to where her own friends were. The resident replied that they had "gone" and after repeated questions by the child as to where they had gone, the resident reluctantly told him that her friends had died. The child then put his hand on her shoulder and said "It's ok, I'll be your friend."



Above: Activities preparing for Halloween

Story 3

Making handprints to be put onto Harris Tweed and to be included in the book.



Above: Picture of a handprint used in the activities book.

Story 4

As the project progressed, one particular resident who had not wanted to join in at the beginning was now one of the first to join in the activities.



Above: Creating finger puppets for inclusion in the activities book.

Story 5

The children and residents showing and telling their families the story of the book. This event brought together three generations from the one family.



Above: Children, residents and their families looking at the Harris Tweed handprints in the activities book.

Story 6

Everyone waiting to see the book.



Above: Children, residents and their families looking forward to seeing the book.

Story 7

Finally having a chance to see the book.



Above: One of the children showing his parents the finished book and telling them the story.

Story 8

One of the residents, who was known to be more socially reluctant at joining in with activities, preferring his own company, showing the children how to make rugs and allowing the children to choose the colours to use.



Above: Choosing the colours to use in the making of the rug.

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 both nursery children and care home residents.
- a recognised increase in the confidence and self-esteem of both nursery children and care home residents.
- an activities book produced showcasing the jointly produced creative work.
- a launch of the activities 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.
- during lunchtime the children independently decided where and who they wanted to sit with.
- the children began engaging more with care home residents in a community setting (outwith 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.

Challenges

- scheduling and relationship forming took longer than expected.
- sacred Heart is better set up to receive children than the nursery is to host older people.
- the nursery had to provide cover for the staff who were accompanying the children. this increased the costings of the project.
- there were health issues highlighted for both the children and the residents when one of the children had chicken pox. There was a discussion around when would it be safe for the children to be in contact with the residents, whose immune systems might be low. It was also important that activities were structured, accessible and carefully thought-out.

CONCLUSION

We believe the Cothrom Òg Nursery and Sacred Heart Care Home Intergenerational Project surpassed its aims and expectations by building a rich community connection between the generations involved, benefiting both staff groups and the wider families involved.

The process of producing the project's activities book encouraged the sharing of experiences, skills and knowledge between the generations. The importance of creative activities being held at a table provided the children and residents with a sense of purpose and alleviated any fears that the young children may have had of the older residents. Once this happened, it was immediately noticeable there was much more interaction between the generations.

At the beginning of the project, the children were extremely shy and 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 and both the children and residents were becoming increasingly confident in their communication with each other.

It was also repeatedly demonstrated by the young children that they have a unique ability to be empathetic to others, without an expectation of receiving personal gain. This in turn fostered understanding between different age groups and the children have made lasting friendships. The children reacted well to mixing with men at Sacred Heart Care Home. A staff member stated that, 'The kids loved the male attention, there is a difference between how men and women play with children, and the way in which men play can help children grow their independence. The staff at the nursery are all female, and having male attention really interested the children.'

The benefits of developing intergenerational relationships include health improvements, such as feeling less depressed, better physical health with less aches and pains, emotional support, feeling more active and enhanced socialisation skills for the elderly, according to the organisation Generations United. For children, these relationships decrease negative behaviours, provide positive role models and teach appreciation for people and the past.

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

Following on from the success of this project, the nursery has continued to visit the care home, continuing to bring generations together in the future.

Recommendations

Since reviewing the project, the following recommendations were suggested, should similar projects be adopted in future:

- clearer aims and objectives working towards a specific goal or finished product.
- ensure clear understanding of project by both nursery and care home staff for improved partnership working.
- discuss options for creative activities and seek to recruit those with relevant skills to assist in their production in advance of project commencing.
- transportation of children and staff to be discussed in advance of project commencing.
- review recording mechanisms such as videos, photography, at all times adhering to appropriate consent requirements.

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