

# Think Community

An exploration of the links between intergenerational practice and informal adult learning



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NIACE has a broad remit to promote lifelong learning opportunities for adults. NIACE works to develop increased participation in education and training, particularly for those who do not have easy access because of class, gender, age, race, language and culture, learning difficulties or disabilities or insufficient financial resources.

The family learning team at NIACE work to support the development of a broad vision of intergenerational learning opportunities for all families.

You can find NIACE online at [www.niace.org.uk](http://www.niace.org.uk)

Cover pictures (from top): Image 1. Courtesy of the Centre for Lifelong Learning, University of Glamorgan; Image 2. Courtesy of the Freud Museum; Image 3. Courtesy of MagicMe; Image 4. NIACE ©; Image 5. Courtesy of the Freud Museum; Image 6. NIACE ©



## About NIACE

NIACE is the national organisation for adult learning in England and Wales. We exist to promote excellent practice in the delivery of learning and to encourage more and different learners to engage in all kinds of learning activities. NIACE's activities include dedicated research, development and consultancy; advocacy to inform and influence public policy; the provision of information and dissemination services; publications and conferences. We are also actively involved in campaigning to promote and celebrate the achievements of adult learners. NIACE is an independent non-governmental organisation, a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee.

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## Background to publication

The Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills funded this research as part of a project on intergenerational learning aimed at improving practice through case study and policy analysis. The project formed one element of a wider research programme, building on the Informal Adult Learning review and initiating development work on the access strand. The full research reports for this and the other project strands will be available from the NIACE website in due course.

## The social context for intergenerational learning

*'Thinking intergenerationally' provides a framework or approach to many of the common circumstances that people are seeking to change in their own communities.<sup>1</sup>*



Courtesy of the Freud Museum

<sup>1</sup> Hatton Yeo, A (undated) *Intergenerational practice: active participation across the generations*. Stoke-on-Trent: Beth Johnson Foundation

Positive intergenerational relations have been identified as a key factor in the transmission and exchange of human capital, life skills, culture, values and knowledge within society.<sup>2</sup> The UK has an ageing population, with the number of people of state pensionable age now outnumbering the number aged under-16,<sup>3</sup> resulting in increasing distance between the youngest and oldest members of society. Economic and social changes in society have resulted in a reduction in positive contact between different generations as family patterns have changed, traditional community structures have declined, activities and living arrangements have become increasingly age-segregated, and policy interventions and services have been targeted at specific groups.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, media images of young people and older people can be very negative, portraying young people as perpetrators of anti-social behaviour, members of gangs and criminals, and older people as a burden. These social changes have led to a growing interest in approaches that seek to increase intergenerational contact, based on evidence that positive contact between the generations leads to recognition of commonalities, reduced ageism, increased positive perceptions, improved cognitive performance and reduced feelings of intimidation.<sup>5</sup>

Within families, the intergenerational transmission of success has been increasingly recognised.<sup>6</sup> Family background and influence are identified as key factors in children's attainment and aspirations, and the role of parents in preventing anti-social behaviour is seen as crucial. These issues have led to

increased interest in learning within families, as a way of breaking the cycle of disadvantage and enhancing parenting skills.

## Defining intergenerational practice and learning

Intergenerational practice in the UK is a relatively late development, not really taking off until the 1990s, and borrowing but distinct from ideas and activity already well established in the USA and Europe. Until recently, it has tended to be dominated by older people's organisations, concentrating on the contribution of and benefit to older people.<sup>7</sup> It has also tended to focus on work with older people (usually defined as over 50 or 55) and young people (usually defined as under 25), with the middle generation being seen as facilitator rather than participant, and on work with individuals who are not related. However, it is beginning to be seen as potentially broader.<sup>8</sup>

In a parallel development, intergenerational learning within the family has been shown to be an effective way of engaging parents and tackling poor skills within families. This has focused on both literacy, language and numeracy, working with children and parents and also a broader curriculum including wider family learning activities and the involvement of different family members such as fathers and grandparents, as well as other carers. Furthermore, the outcomes of family learning have been shown to be extensive, including enhanced relationships with the family and community.<sup>9</sup>

2 Lloyd, J (2008) *The state of intergenerational relations today: a research and discussion paper*. London: ILC-UK

3 <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=949>

4 Granville, G (2002) *A review of intergenerational practice in the UK*. Stoke-on-Trent: Beth Johnson Foundation

5 Lloyd (2008) op cit

6 Feinstein, L et al (2004) *A model of the inter-generational transmission of educational success*. London: Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning

7 Granville (2002) op cit

8 See Mariano Sanchez's speech to the NCVO seminar: Intergenerational Connections, 20 October 2008, available from [http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/uploadedFiles/NCVO/What\\_we\\_do/Research/Social\\_Capital/Intergenerational%20Connections.pdf](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/uploadedFiles/NCVO/What_we_do/Research/Social_Capital/Intergenerational%20Connections.pdf)

9 Lamb, P et al (2008) *Families, learning and progression: a resource pack for practitioners and managers*. Leicester: NIACE

The most commonly-used definition of intergenerational activity is that used by the Beth Johnson Foundation, the leading organisation in England promoting and supporting intergenerational practice:

*Intergenerational practice 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.<sup>10</sup>*

There are three particular areas of debate around how intergenerational practice is defined: whether it should be limited to younger and older generations; whether it should include members of the same family; and whether it should include more than two generations (ie multigenerational.) Looking at the aims of the particular activity helps to identify whom it is most appropriate to include and in what way. It is vital, however, that activities should be *purposely* intergenerational/multigenerational.<sup>11</sup>

A distinction needs to be made between intergenerational activity in its broadest sense and intergenerational learning. It can be argued that all intergenerational practice, if carried out effectively, involves learning. However, it is necessary to look at the aims of the particular activity to identify to what extent explicit learning outcomes are sought. A distinction can be made between activities where learning may take place but is not an explicit aim of the activity, and those where learning is a central aim. Table 1 demonstrates the different levels of learning arising from intergenerational practice:

## A suggested definition of intergenerational learning

Our definition of intergenerational learning seeks to be as inclusive as possible:

*Intergenerational learning arises from activities which purposely involve two or more generations with the aim of generating additional or different benefits to those arising from single generation activities. It generates learning outcomes, but these may or may not be the primary focus of the activity. It involves different generations learning from each other and/or learning together with a tutor or facilitator. Depending on the aims of the activity, it may or may not involve members of the same family.*

## Support for and development of intergenerational activity

Since the 1993 European year of solidarity between generations, there has been a growth in intergenerational work, mostly small scale and one-off projects. In 2001, the Centre for Intergenerational Practice (CIP) was established by the Beth Johnson Foundation (BJF) in order to provide a focus for infrastructure, development and evidence collection. CIP has nurtured a more strategic approach within both the devolved administrations and local authorities. Wales and Scotland have both developed an intergenerational strategy, as have several local authorities, including Derbyshire and Manchester. Manchester City Council and the Beth Johnson Foundation have recently jointly appointed a national intergenerational strategy development officer to continue to develop Manchester's intergenerational work, whilst working with BJF and a number of identified local authorities to

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.centreforip.org.uk/default.aspx?page=23455>

<sup>11</sup> Hatton Yeo, A (2008) *The EAGLE toolkit for intergenerational activities*. Erlangen: Institute for Innovation in Learning

Table 1: Multi/intergenerational practice 

	Multi/intergenerational learning	
	Tacit learning <sup>12</sup>	Explicit learning <sup>13</sup>
<b>Might include:</b>	<b>Might include:</b>	<b>Might include:</b>
Parent/grandparent and toddler groups	Parent/grandparent and toddler groups	Supporting young parents
Volunteering in day centres	Volunteering in day centres	Participation in community consultation
Befriending	Befriending	Working together to achieve change in a community
Childcare	Childcare	Discussion and debate
Supporting young parents	Supporting young parents	Mentoring
	Participation in community consultation	Skill sharing
	Working together to achieve change in a community	Family learning
	Discussion and debate	Activities in schools, linked to the curriculum
		Learning a new skill together
	<b>Learning outcomes</b>	<b>Learning outcomes</b>
	<b>Might include:</b>	<b>Might include:</b>
	Improved communication and interpersonal skills	Improved communication and interpersonal skills
	Changed relationships with community and/or family	Changed relationships with community and/or family
	Increased confidence and understanding	Increased confidence and understanding
	Interest in developing skills	New/retained skills
		Opportunities for further progression

support the development of their local intergenerational priorities and strategies.<sup>14</sup> The London Borough of Merton is in the process of developing the country's first purpose-built intergenerational centre.

As previously mentioned, much intergenerational activity has focused on the older people dimension, being taken forward by

older people's organisations and linked to events such as the 2008 Older People's Day. However, recently there has been an increasing focus on the benefits for younger people. The National Youth Agency in particular has been working in partnership with the Beth Johnson Foundation, a partnership which was recently successful in applying for funding from the

<sup>12</sup> We are defining tacit learning as learning that arises from activities not explicitly designed to generate learning outcomes – learning as a by product of other activities.

<sup>13</sup> We are defining explicit learning as learning that takes place as a result of activities with planned learning outcomes.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.centreforip.org.uk/Libraries/Local/949/Docs/Intergenerational%20Strategy%20Co-ordinator.pdf>

Department for Children, Schools and Families' (DCSF) Children, Young People and Families grant programme, to produce resources and training for youth organisations and workers.<sup>15</sup>

The DCSF has also been instrumental in leading an informal cross-departmental ministerial group, championed by children's minister Beverley Hughes. The group is considering what more can be done to encourage intergenerational practice, in particular to embed an intergenerational element into existing and forthcoming work, to raise the profile and highlight the benefits of intergenerational activity and to offer guidance and examples of good practice to groups interested in running intergenerational projects.<sup>16</sup> The Centre for Intergenerational Practice has already made substantial progress in developing good practice, including the establishment of an approved provider standard<sup>17</sup> and the development with the University of Lancaster of a certificate in intergenerational practice.<sup>18</sup>

In terms of intergenerational learning, the EAGLE programme (European Approaches to Inter-Generational Lifelong Learning) explored the interconnection between intergenerational activity and lifelong and lifewide learning across Europe.<sup>19</sup> It developed a toolkit for intergenerational activities, highlighted the holistic nature of intergenerational activities, and advocated for the future opening up of intergenerational activities to all generations, including multigenerational learning. It also recommended the opening up of existing institutions such as schools to the wider community and encouraged cooperation and

integration between different institutions and programmes under a common approach. It identified the need for sustainable funding, both from the perspective of making more funding available, but also the re-structuring and re-direction of existing funding streams into a holistic funding approach. Plans are in development to take forward the EAGLE work, developing a model of intergenerational learning across Europe and a web-based clearing house of intergenerational work. Volunteering is being recognised as an engine for driving forward intergenerational learning and is a central strand of the UK Government's new £5.5m demonstrator programme, Generations Together!<sup>20</sup>

Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funded family learning programmes cover two strands of activity – family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN) and wider family learning (WFL).<sup>21</sup> Both strands aim to encourage family members to learn together, as or within a family. FLLN focuses on improving literacy, language and numeracy skills for both adults and children and funding covers several prescribed types of courses, varying from 2–4-hour workshops to 60–72-hour programmes, and including children aged from 0 upwards. Wider Family Learning aims to encourage families to learn through a variety of curriculum areas, including sport, healthy eating, law and order, family history etc. It can be central to community capacity-building and regeneration. It is aimed at learners in disadvantaged communities, and those without level 2 qualifications, but curricula are less prescribed. Most LSC-funded family learning is provided by local authority adult learning

15 <http://www.centreforip.org.uk/default.aspx?page=23454>

16 See Victoria Dare's speech to the NCVO seminar: Intergenerational Connections, 20 October 2008, available from

[http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/uploadedFiles/NCVO/What\\_we\\_do/Research/Social\\_Capital/Intergenerational%20Connections.pdf](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/uploadedFiles/NCVO/What_we_do/Research/Social_Capital/Intergenerational%20Connections.pdf)

17 <http://www.centreforip.org.uk/default.aspx?page=23457>

18 <http://www.volstudy.ac.uk/intergen/index.html>

19 Fischer, T (ed) (2008) *Intergenerational learning in Europe*. Erlangen: Institute for Innovation in Learning

20 [http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/SocialCare/Deliveringadultsocialcare/Olderpeople/DH\\_097784](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/SocialCare/Deliveringadultsocialcare/Olderpeople/DH_097784)

21 See the LSC's Family Programmes Guidance 2009/10 (February 2009)



services, but family learning also takes place in other organisations, such as museums, libraries, archives and voluntary organisations, funded through sources of funding such as the Museums, Libraries and Archive Council (MLA) and the Big Lottery Fund.

NIACE is the leading non-governmental organisation helping to shape strategy and supporting good practice in family learning. The National Family Learning Network, a partnership of the Campaign for Learning, NIACE and ContinYou provides support for family learning practitioners. In Wales, NIACE's work on family learning is integrated with other forms of intergenerational learning and supported through the Family and Intergenerational Learning Network.<sup>22</sup>

## Government policy

Intergenerational and multigenerational approaches cut across a range of policy areas. It can be argued that many issues are multigenerational in nature, ie they impact on more than one generation. Therefore, solutions that involve the different generations will be more effective and sustainable.

Intergenerational and multigenerational approaches can contribute to the following key policy areas:

- **Community cohesion:** by bringing together different generations through meaningful activities and interactions, intergenerational/multigenerational learning helps to break down barriers within communities.

<sup>22</sup> <http://niace.rcthosting.com/en/fil/>

- **Community safety:** by increasing understanding between generations, breaking down stereotypes and providing positive role models, intergenerational/multigenerational learning helps to prevent anti-social behaviour and challenge perceptions.
- **Health and wellbeing:** by bringing different generations together to exchange skills and knowledge and by enabling older people to feel useful and productive, intergenerational/multigenerational learning helps to improve health and wellbeing.
- **Older people:** by challenging stereotypical images of older people and by enabling them to contribute to society in a meaningful way, intergenerational/multigenerational learning helps to create an 'age friendly society' where people are enabled to 'live well in later life.'<sup>23</sup>
- **Children and young people:** by developing strategies and activities that bring children and young people together with the wider community, intergenerational/multigenerational learning contributes to the agendas of schools and children's centres and to the *Every Child Matters* agenda.
- **Families:** by enabling families to support their children's learning, intergenerational/multigenerational learning contributes to *Every Child Matters*<sup>24</sup> and to the *Think Family*<sup>25</sup> agenda.

## Intergenerational, family and informal learning

Intergenerational learning, as defined above offers an approach which encompasses family learning and purposeful learning activities developed to bring together young and older people. The learning dimension also offers an opportunity to develop and refine innovative ways of bringing different generations together, exploring a potentially new way of addressing social issues and generating new outcomes. Examples of this might include:

Family carers of older adults sharing financial skills and knowledge, bringing together the money management skills of the older generation with the IT skills and market understanding of the middle and younger generations.<sup>26</sup> This also has the potential to address issues of elder financial abuse, by increasing communication about financial issues within the family and by increasing awareness and understanding of financial abuse.

Complementing apprentice schemes by bringing together new workers with more experienced workers to learn and share non-work related skills, thereby increasing cohesion and teamwork within the workplace.

The Intergenerational Learning Typology on page 11 suggests a possible but not exhaustive list of the age and target groups, activities, settings, aims and outcomes that can be combined in different ways to generate ideas for intergenerational learning programmes.

The new white paper, *The Learning Revolution*,<sup>27</sup> offers potential opportunities to take forward intergenerational learning in new

23 Department for Work and Pensions (2009) *Empowering engagement – a stronger voice for older people: the government's response to John Elbourne's review*. London: DWP

24 HM Government (2003) *Every Child Matters*, Cm 5860. Norwich: The Stationery Office

25 Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Task Force (2008) *Think family: improving the life chances of families at risk*. London: Cabinet Office

26 Atkinson, A et al (2006) *Levels of financial capability in the UK: results of a baseline survey*. London: FSA

27 Department for Innovation, Universities & Skills (2009) *The learning revolution*. Norwich: TSO

and innovative ways. The core principles of 'learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be' tally with those of intergenerational learning, and intergenerational learning is specifically mentioned as a way in which informal learning can benefit individuals, families and communities. The paper specifically mentions targeted action to improve learning opportunities for older people, for families and in the workplace. It also highlights the importance of learning for older adults in supporting social contact, maintaining mental wellbeing and the contribution of older people as volunteers, as well as the role of informal learning in countering age discrimination.

The paper highlights the role of local authorities in coordinating informal learning activity and ensuring that it plays a strong role in other local authority strategies, joining up with different local authority services and wider partners and integrating it in local strategic partnerships. There are obvious possibilities for embedding intergenerational learning across local authority policy areas. A new £20m. transformation fund will be available to test new ways of working and innovative approaches across the whole of Informal Adult Learning and this might be an ideal source of funding for developing intergenerational learning within a strategic framework of collaborative intergenerational activity.

Intergenerational activity necessitates the working together of professionals across a range of areas, including schools, youth work settings, care settings, older people's organisations, museums, libraries, archives, third sector organisations, local authority adult learning providers etc. The white paper advocates the opening up of public spaces for informal learning as well as an improved learning offer for adults from museums, libraries and archives. There is the potential to open up spaces originally designed for one group (eg children's centres, workplaces, older

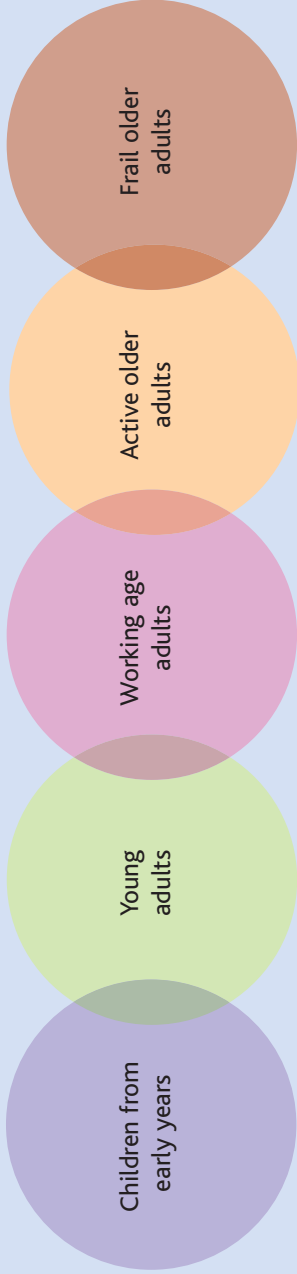
people's centres as well as schools) or for a specific purpose (eg libraries, museums, theatres, sports centres) as centres for intergenerational learning.

## Moving forward – strategically

There is huge potential for intergenerational and multigenerational practice to contribute to government policy and to addressing social issues. Intergenerational and multigenerational approaches are holistic, and focus on the contributions that different generations can make to each other and the wider community. In the same way that the 'Think Family' approach asks us to consider the family as a whole, rather than dealing separately with each individual outside of the family context, intergenerational and multigenerational approaches ask us to consider the community as a whole, looking at each generation within the context of its relationship with other generations.

The specific learning dimension of intergenerational practice has been underexplored. Bringing together learning approaches and inter/multigenerational approaches can be a powerful catalyst for change, as has already been demonstrated through the development of family learning. There are possibilities worth investigating of bringing the good practice developed in the learning field, and particularly in family learning, into intergenerational activities. Equally, it would be useful to explore the added dimension that intergenerational and multigenerational approaches could bring to learning practice, beyond family learning.

Family learning itself focuses on the learning relationship of mothers, fathers, carers and extended families with their children. Intergenerational practice has tended to focus on bringing together older people with children and young people. There is, however, potential to explore relationships between other



Target Groups	Activities	Settings	Programme Aims	Outcomes for learners
<p>Families</p> <p>Looked after children</p> <p>Specific ethnic groups</p> <p>Those living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods</p> <p>Young people not in employment, education or training</p> <p>Young people with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties</p> <p>Universal</p>	<p>Reminiscence</p> <p>Horticulture</p> <p>Mentoring</p> <p>Using technology</p> <p>Community development</p> <p>History</p> <p>Cooking</p> <p>Creative arts</p> <p>Performing arts</p> <p>Volunteering</p> <p>Skills development</p> <p>Reading, writing and language development</p> <p>Storytelling</p> <p>Discussion and debate</p> <p>Childcare</p>	<p>Schools</p> <p>Care homes</p> <p>Community centres</p> <p>Community settings</p> <p>Museums/libraries/archives</p> <p>Children's centres/nurseries</p> <p>Workplace</p> <p>Voluntary and community organisations</p>	<p>Widening participation in learning</p> <p>Social cohesion</p> <p>Improving school attendance and performance</p> <p>Improving health and wellbeing</p> <p>Reducing anti-social behaviour and perception of anti-social behaviour</p> <p>Providing role models</p> <p>Learning specific skills / gaining knowledge</p> <p>Making sure the voices of different generations are heard</p> <p>Enhancing employability</p>	<p>New/retained skills</p> <p>Gains in confidence and understanding</p> <p>Improved communication</p> <p>Changed behaviours</p> <p>Changed relationships with community and/or family</p> <p>Improved health and wellbeing</p>

generations both within and outside families, and to investigate how developing meaningful interaction through learning might both improve learning outcomes and contribute to wider agendas.

There is little consistency of practice with regard to funding streams. Most funding is for small ad-hoc projects and comes from charitable sources. Because projects often cut across several policy agendas, it can be difficult to access statutory funding. There is a need to integrate intergenerational learning into different funding priorities and funding streams. Furthermore, it has been shown that longer term funding allows imaginative approaches to be developed that can be flexible to meet needs identified as projects progress.

Intergenerational activity involves bringing together not only different generations, but also different agencies. NIACE's work on multi-agency working with families, parents and family learning<sup>28</sup> shows that working across different disciplines and agencies can create conflict, anxiety and misunderstandings that impact on team working. If intergenerational practice and learning are to be embedded in wider policy agendas, it is important that these issues are addressed. Some of the same elements necessary in bringing generations together are also key to bringing together different agencies – shared aims, objectives and strategy; time to build up trust; a culture of openness and shared learning and support. The Lyons-funded study on multi-agency working<sup>29</sup> referred to above demonstrates the usefulness of cross-agency training, which enables professionals from different fields to understand each other and work together.

There can be a danger in 'reifying' intergenerational issues, assuming that intergenerational relations are always problematic,<sup>30</sup> and that intergenerational approaches are the answer to everything. It is important to maintain a focus on the nature of the particular issue being addressed, the community involved and the aims to be achieved, and to ask whether or not an intergenerational/multigenerational approach is appropriate.

There is potential for co-locating services for different generations. However, co-location on its own will not bring about meaningful intergenerational activity. Learning acts as a catalyst that brings the generations together and promotes understanding. It is important, therefore, that co-location is accompanied by purposeful intergenerational learning activities. Furthermore, there is a danger that co-location of services that happens through a top-down approach may not meet the needs of users. It is therefore key that potential participants and users are involved in the planning processes.

## Moving forward – on the ground

The following points are identified by practitioners as helpful in developing intergenerational/multigenerational learning:

### *Strategic level*

- Make sure that intergenerational/multigenerational learning activities link with broader strategies, in order to generate a wide-ranging and sustainable impact.
- Establish good joint working arrangements with partner agencies. This is particularly important in institutional settings such as

28 Meade, C (2009) *What helps and hinders multi-agency working in work with families, parents and family learning?* a paper delivered at the NIACE/FLLAG conference, 'Families, learning, impact and the national agenda', 22-23 January 2009. [Available from <http://www.niace.org.uk/sites/default/files/families-learning-impact-conf-papers.pdf>]

29 Ibid

30 Pain, R (2005) *Intergenerational relations and practice in the development of sustainable communities: background paper for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister*. Stockton-on-Tees: Wolfson Research Institute)

care homes and schools where there may be structural barriers to overcome.

- Think about how the gains from the programme can be built on and sustained.
- Involve individuals with open and enquiring minds: imagination is a key ingredient, first of all in identifying how intergenerational learning can help to address a particular issue, and secondly in designing innovative and engaging projects.

#### *Programme level*

- Plan programmes thoroughly, but maintain flexibility to meet needs, ideas and circumstances as they arise.
- Make sure that the purpose and aims of the intergenerational activity are clear. Ask whether an intergenerational approach will meet the aims and is the most appropriate, how many and which generations should be included, and whether families should be included or excluded.
- Involve potential participants in the design of the programme.
- Make sure that access issues such as transport, communication and physical accessibility are addressed.
- Carry out initial preparation work with each generation group separately, to answer questions and address expectations. Adopt an open and honest approach.
- Devise embedded methods to capture outcomes for individuals, families and communities where possible. Use these as part of ongoing monitoring and evaluation to

ensure continuous improvement of the project and transferability of lessons learned to other projects.

- Finish the programme with an end-product and celebration activity, in order to acknowledge the participants' contributions and compound the learning experience.
- Take a thorough but proportionate approach to risk analysis and management. Ensure that children and vulnerable adults are safeguarded.
- Where projects involve one group supporting another (eg mentoring), put frameworks in place to support the mentors.

#### *Session level*

- Plan sessions around the needs and potential levels of contribution of participants.
- Use structured learning activities rather than just bringing people together for unstructured conversation.
- Make sure that session facilitation is effective and appropriate, to ensure intergenerational communication, and that tutors and facilitators are able to work with all generations involved.

### Recommendations

Based on the research carried out for this paper, and the research report for the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, the following recommendations have been made.

*Strategic recommendations*

We recommend that:

- the definition of intergenerational learning proposed in this paper is adopted across government departments, to generate a broad and inclusive view of intergenerational learning;
- a national indicator is developed for intergenerational learning to ensure that this valuable work, which helps to meet a range of PSA targets, is recognised and built into local planning structures;
- specific encouragement is included in the guidance for the Learning Revolution transformation fund to develop new and innovative intergenerational learning approaches, including intergenerational learning in the workplace and within various family structures;
- effective research is carried out on the impact of the projects funded through the transformation fund, with a view to integrating the approaches into longer term funding streams that allow projects to be developed in imaginative and flexible ways;
- each local authority includes a plan for developing intergenerational learning, as part of the Learning Revolution strategy. This should include plans for developing space and facilities to facilitate intergenerational learning, linked with agendas for extended services, 21st Century Schools as well as children's centres, libraries and museums. It should also include plans for bringing people and agendas together, linking with the work that the Centre for Intergenerational Practice is currently undertaking to map local area agreements and support local authorities;
- a professional development unit for intergenerational learning is developed, to sit alongside the national family learning practitioner qualification framework and the certificate of intergenerational practice, providing a linkage between the two areas;
- lessons learned from the Lyons-funded NIACE project on multi-agency working are examined for their transferability to intergenerational learning, including the development of cross-agency training;
- that NIACE and the Centre for Intergenerational Practice are included in the proposed national advisory forum for the Learning Revolution, to advise on the implementation and steer of its future development.

*Operational recommendations*

We recommend that:

- quality and best practice principles in intergenerational practice and adult and family learning are mapped against each other, to produce a quality guide for intergenerational learning;
- a best practice website on intergenerational learning is produced, including ideas, practice and schemes of work, that demonstrate best practice and help to generate ideas. This should link with the proposed clearing house website being planned to follow from the EAGLE programme.

## Inspirations

The following case studies provide inspirational examples of the ways in which intergenerational/multigenerational learning can transform lives and meet policy objectives.

### Case study 1: First Taste, Derbyshire



*First Taste* is a charity working with care homes in the Derbyshire Dales, to promote and provide learning for staff and residents, many of whom have profound support needs. The project is funded by the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, Arts Council East Midlands and contributions from the 15 participating establishments. As part of this project, First Taste have developed intergenerational work, bringing together older people in care homes with young people aged between 11 and 17, from Highfields, a local school.

Their intergenerational work has included a group of 16 to 17-year-olds visiting one of the residential homes, gathering stories of the residents' school days and creating a performance based on this; a group of 12 to 13-year-olds making masks with residents and creating a performance using the masks; 12 to 13-year-olds using old and new cameras with residents to take photographs and producing a film show of the images; a group of 11 to 12-year-olds working with residents on a piece of drama based on 'cities'.

This general work with the young people and care home residents has been built on, at the request of the school, to develop a project with pupils with behavioural issues. A group of boys aged 12 to 13 went to one of the homes and worked with residents to prepare for the spring fair, potting plant cuttings, making clay pots and producing scarecrows for the village competition. As a result of the success of this project, the school agreed to fund the tutor directly to develop further intergenerational work in the care homes, specifically targeted at pupils with higher support needs. It is intended that this project will shortly become fully independent.

Staff at the school and at the homes have noticed changes in the behaviour of the school students and the residents. The young people have increased in confidence and, in some cases, have raised their aspirations. Residents have commented: *'I love to see the children they liven up the home'* and *'the living room becomes alive again when the children are here'*. The intergenerational activities also help care home staff to see a different side to the older people as they interact with the young people, and to see them as individuals with life histories, as well as older people with needs.

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## Case study 2: The Freud Museum, London



Courtesy of the Freud Museum

The Freud Museum worked in partnership with South Camden Community School and Combat Stress (Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society) on *The Archaeology of Conflict – Unearthing the Psychological* with the aim of creating a better knowledge and understanding for young people of the psychological impact of conflict. The project used Freud's theory and methods to underpin a series of interviews carried out by A-level psychology students with veterans of a variety of conflicts, from Korea to Bosnia. The veterans were aged from mid-30s to 75.

GCSE drama students then worked with playwright Ben Davis to produce *Not yet nervous*, a performance inspired by the unearthed memories in the veterans' interviews. The transfer of the project from A-level students to GCSE students added a further dimension of intergenerational interaction, as different age groups in the school would not usually have much emotional contact with each other. The project also brought together students from a multicultural school with veterans from a predominantly white cultural background.

The performance of *Not yet nervous* was shown to students from all years at South Camden High School, and the issues raised by the performance and the project were discussed with a panel, after each performance.

The personal benefits from the project were felt by students and veterans alike. Students described it as an experience they would never forget. They gained in confidence and felt proud that they had contributed to something worthwhile. The project helped to feed their enthusiasm for their subject areas. Veterans, who often feel ignored and not understood, had the experience of being properly listened to and of feeling that their experiences were valued and might help the young people:

*'The whole process has helped me in my fight to put into place my problems directly relating to harrowing incidents. An added form of therapy as it were.'* (quote from veteran participant)

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## Case study 3: MagicMe, Tower Hamlets, London



Courtesy of MagicMe

The *Our Generations* programme is a three-year programme of intergenerational arts work due to finish in June 2009 and is part of the overall programme at Magic Me, an organisation dedicated to intergenerational work. A report of the project will be available in May 2009, on the website, [www.magicme.co.uk](http://www.magicme.co.uk).

*Our Generations* aimed to initiate some new models of intergenerational working and to actively bring lessons from one project to bear on others within the programme. Projects showcased the talents and ideas of younger and older people to a wide audience and provided new arts opportunities, particularly for older people, including those with dementia.

One of the projects in the *Our Generations* programme was Pen Friends. This was a new model of intergenerational work, where a group of creative writers aged 25+ met to develop writing skills and contact isolated older people living alone who were unable to attend a group but had great stories to tell. The

writers used exercises from their creative writing sessions to stimulate new stories from their 'pen friends' which were included in a book of creative writing, *Moments in time*. The project provided a low cost and sustainable way of providing contact for isolated older people, enabling them to feel valued and able to contribute to the life of the borough. As one at-home participant noted:

*'For thousands of people like me in our isolation, a phone call, a visit, a humane approach brings us back to life. Gives us strength to face the difficult tasks and makes us productive once more.'*

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## Case study 4: Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland

*The legacy of Partition, exploring relations between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in 1947-8 and in the UK today* aimed to gather memories of those who lived through the partition of India and Pakistan, together with archival material, bringing together eyewitnesses of Partition to work with children and young people on lessons to be learned from the conflict. As well as involving eyewitnesses aged between 68 and 90 and school children aged 12 – 16, the project also involved volunteer workers whose ages ranged from mid-twenties to mid-sixties, and families were involved through events and activities. The record office, libraries, museums, local community groups and schools worked together to reach communities, hold events, interview eyewitnesses, archive materials and develop teaching resources. It brought together a range of professional perspectives, including archivists, librarians, outreach workers, oral historians, teachers and community liaison officers.

Following a series of events and interviews carried out with eyewitnesses of Partition, an event was held where people debated the outcomes of Partition – good or ill. The project then began work with local schools, to develop teaching and learning resources. The testing of these resources will involve bringing together the eyewitnesses with the school children in order to bring the history to life.

The project has created a new archive about Partition, and has generated community engagement with some of the contentious issues arising. It has resulted in community elders feeling valued for their contribution to the project and by young people for the insights they have on the past. The project links in with the city and county councils' community cohesion strategies and supports the aims of extended schools to work with young people, their families and wider community.

Project Director, Margaret Bonney, comments:

*'We have worked across the generations, the young learning from the elders ... we have discovered that the bitterness brought about by Partition still lurks not far below the surface of many lives, despite the time that has passed, and the hundreds of miles between Leicester and the Punjab ... But what we have been able to show is that every community suffered ... if they were caught up in this conflict. This has come as a surprise to many of our participants.'*

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## Case study 5: Age Concern Enfield, London

The *Transage Action* project, run by Age Concern Enfield, London, brings together volunteers of ages ranging from early fifties to mid-eighties to work with children in a variety of ways and in a range of settings. Activities include helping very young children, some of whom have problem backgrounds, learn to play and socialise; helping with school and nursery activities such as lunch time clubs, creative play, gardening projects and community farms. Volunteers work in primary school classrooms with children identified by the teacher as needing support with reading or numeracy. They also contribute to the citizenship curriculum in secondary schools by participating in discussions with pupils and have formed a *Question Time*-type panel to talk to and answer questions from sixth formers about their careers.

The project works with a range of organisations, including Enfield Temporary Accommodation Play Project (working with refugees and displaced people), nurseries, primary schools and secondary schools. It is currently in discussion with an FE college. All volunteers go through a thorough application, interview and training process.

Volunteers report improvements in their health and mental health, as well as maintaining physical fitness. They appreciate getting to know young people and feel less isolated following retirement. Many have been bereaved and say that their volunteering lessens extreme grief. They feel valued by their community and derive great pleasure from knowing that they are helping the next generation.

The children value regular contact with an older person, particularly as many have fragmented family lives. They appreciate having an older person who isn't a teacher to listen to them and, particularly for children with behavioural problems, talking to an older adult they trust can be very helpful:

*'They are more of a friend than a teacher and you can go to them if you're lonely'* (a participant child's response quoted in the project newsletter from summer 2008)

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## Case study 6: Write on! Learning through life, Wales



Courtesy of the Centre for Lifelong Learning, University of Glamorgan

From 2001 to 2007, a team from the Glamorgan Outreach Unit, within the Centre for Lifelong Learning, successfully ran an intergenerational project *Write-On! Learning Through Life*, to address the issues of social exclusion, disaffection and skills shortages that existed in Rhondda Cynon Taff.

The project sought to engage older adults and young people to return to and continue learning. A programme of training, group workshops, field trips and guest speakers helped them to develop self-reliance,

flexibility and breadth of knowledge, by nurturing generic learning outcomes such as communication skills. The two generations came together to investigate and record their common life experiences through the ages, based on personal testimony. The groups were encouraged to investigate different ways of locating, collecting and recording data, and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of both 'traditional' and 'electronic' means. Those participants lacking in ICT experience were introduced to the world of technology, with a specific emphasis on the application of IT skills.

A range of media was used and skills were developed including interviewing (communication and listening), making notes, using libraries, using audio and video equipment and digital cameras, drawing, word processing, using scanners and photocopiers and internet searching. The project allowed people to meet and work with others of a different generation, to work within a team, and to learn other valuable skills such as time management, development of personal action plans and goal setting. The older age group benefited from the practical benefits and value of sharing their experiences and contributing, not only to the development of the younger generation, but also to their own wellbeing. The younger people brought energy to the project, their knowledge of technology and opportunity to share it (or acquire it) and took control (even if a small part) of their own future. A young interviewee said of their experience of the project:

*'Something like this is really beneficial to you as a person ... you could not learn it in a classroom, even in social lessons ... this is so hands on ... it really gives a good experience of older people.'*

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## Case study 7: Merton Intergenerational Centre

The London Borough of Merton is in the process of developing the country's first purpose-built intergenerational centre, built around a planned children's centre. The centre will be located close to two schools and aims to offer a base to sustain, develop and hothouse intergenerational projects, as well as developing a pool of volunteers to support intergenerational working. In addition to the children's centre and meeting areas, there will be a kitchen for joint food preparation activities, a growing space for horticultural activities and plans for an intergenerational adventure playground. Activities covered will range from healthy lifestyles to skills exchange; mentoring and mediation support for young people, particularly those in the NEET group; intergeneration dialogue and mediation, including faith and cultural groups; culture and arts; and IT skills. Connections are also being made with the borough's family learning service which already offers much provision in children's centres. An external evaluation study will ensure that what is learned through the centre's development and delivery will be captured and disseminated.

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## Case study 8: A Woman's Place, Manchester

This project was carried out by the National Co-operative Archive, together with URBIS exhibition centre in Manchester. It aimed to explore the rights of women in Greater Manchester today and to examine the ways in which women have fought for their rights and protected their families across the world. It used materials from the First World War and Second World War, through to more contemporary military conflicts. The project brought together year 8 pupils from five schools, with members of Mothers Against Violence (MAV) and other women's groups, in workshops which gave them the opportunity to use materials from the National Co-operative Archive and other sources to understand the lives of women in other times and from other backgrounds and experiences. The resulting discussions helped the participants to be able to 'think themselves into' those other lives and to understand how experiences can influence people.

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## Case study 9: Conflict and Change, Scarborough

*Conflict and change: The Second World War and the effect on Scarborough's fishing industry* was a project run by North Yorkshire Libraries and Community Services in partnership with Scarborough Urban Forum from September to December 2008. It emerged from a consultation which showed a feeling of mutual mistrust between generations, and a grassroots desire of Scarborough residents of all ages to see more leisure and learning opportunities allowing for positive interaction between Scarborough's younger and older communities.

The community-based project aimed to generate a link between older and younger people through a programme that brought together a number of national and local objectives targeted at younger people (particularly those at risk) and provided a meaningful work programme with older people. It also intended to foster a mutual understanding between 'at risk' young people and older generations and breakdown existing stereotypes, contributing to greater community cohesion and understanding.

The project was based on a series of trips and workshops, incorporating reminiscence work and including researching archive material from Scarborough Library, County Record Office and Maritime History Group, visiting Scarborough harbour and Eden Camp Museum and a trip aboard a boat involved in the Dunkirk evacuation. Exhibition materials and a video diary were also produced, which will be made available at various community venues and via a website.

A group of about ten young people aged 11–19-years-old were involved in the project, along with eight older people aged 50 and over, all of whom were former fisherman or connected with the fishing industry. The project ran for just one week, which enabled it to maintain momentum and prevent the 'drop-out' expected from a project running over several weeks.

The project enabled a two-way sharing of stories and experiences and resulted in a celebration of Scarborough's maritime heritage and of some of the people involved in it instilling a common sense of pride. Feedback was gathered from participants on an ongoing basis, and a joint evaluation report from the project partners will identify the generic learning and social outcomes.

It brought together the current work of North Yorkshire County Council, delivering recommendations from 'Fulfilling their potential' specifically in relation to young people's access to services in Scarborough. It also gave library services the opportunity to work in partnership with a number of organisations including 'Connecting Youth Culture' and '4Youth' and to further develop a relationship with 'U-turn' (formally Restorative Justice). The project also fitted in with the Adult Strategic Partnership and their engagement plan for work with older people. The partnerships built will enable future projects to be developed, and the team are currently looking at ways to build on the successes and develop future intergenerational activities, using the project design as a blueprint.

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## Case study 10: The Two-Minute Silence, Huddersfield



This project aimed to bring older people and younger people together to explore the themes of conflict and peace, through focusing on the Remembrance Day silence. At one secondary school, it expanded on an existing programme, 'Bridge the Gap', where older people visited on a regular basis, mainly to chat amongst themselves, with the pupils providing refreshments, and also support for shopping excursions. The project provided a focus for interaction by working with the young people to help them interview the older people

about their memories of, and thoughts about, the Second and First World Wars. The pupils knew very little about the two-minute silence and what it stood for, and using this as a focus for discussions meant they began to think about the peace they take for granted. They became very involved in asking questions and recording the answers, realising that they were listening to 'living history'. The young people learned new skills such as questioning and using digital recorders.

The project was funded through a £10,000 grant from the MLA.

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# Think Community

## An exploration of the links between intergenerational practice and informal adult learning

This booklet was produced by the family learning team at NIACE, April 2009.

NIACE has a broad remit to promote lifelong learning opportunities for adults. NIACE works to develop increased participation in education and training, particularly for those who do not have easy access because of class, gender, age, race, language and culture, learning difficulties or disabilities, or insufficient financial resources.

You can find NIACE online at [www.niace.org.uk](http://www.niace.org.uk)

The family learning team at NIACE works to support the development of a broad vision of intergenerational learning opportunities for all families. For more information, contact:

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