



NATURE FOR CARE, CARE FOR NATURE



Enhancing social cohesion through intergenerational learning

Written by Herman de Jongh, James Hindson and Jacky Burnell,
with contributions from the Nature for Care Team and
invited authors Tine Buffel and Mathias Gunst

Edited by James Hindson and Jacky Burnell

Summary

The background to the Nature for Care (NfC) Project is the growing lack of social cohesion in European society and the negative consequences of this for society as a whole. For the increasing proportion of elderly people this often means loneliness and few social contacts whilst for young people it means an increasing disaffection with society leading to lack of participation and sometimes even active antipathy.

The goal of NfC is to make a contribution towards solving this social challenge through bringing old and young together around the inspiring and relevant subject of nature and the environment.

The NfC project -supported by the EU Lifelong Learning Programme - has involved environmental organisations from six European countries. From January 2011 to December 2012 the partners have worked together to develop intergenerational learning activities bringing young people and elderly people together to learn about nature and their local environment. Altogether the project has developed more than 60 activities, worked out with 25 different groups of schools and care homes or senior clubs. All information about the project, together with the activities and images can be found on the project website www.natureforcare.eu

In addition to developing activities the partners have also undertaken research into the impact of intergenerational learning on both old and young learners.

This research supports our initial goals -

- that young and old learning together can have measurable benefits for both groups and contribute towards enhanced social cohesion
- that for young people it can enhance the effectiveness of their learning, change their views about elderly people and also increase contacts between the young and elderly outside a school and project context
- that for elderly people it can give them a greater sense of self worth as young people learn from them and create more positive views of young people
- that other topics such as sustainability, history, geography, food, culture, creativity, sports provide similar results and can also be used as a context for intergenerational learning

One of the main long term outputs of the project is this book in which we document our experience and also provide advice and support for schools, care homes and other organisations.

The book contains -

- useful and practical checklists for schools on how to work with the elderly and the main pitfalls to avoid
- advice on how to set up an effective intergenerational learning programme
- the benefits of intergenerational learning programmes
- some theoretical background related to intergenerational learning and social cohesion
- some example activities from each partner

The NfC project also makes a number of recommendations for stakeholders involved in education and care for the elderly.

The key recommendation is that if social cohesion is to be enhanced then intergenerational learning should become a core feature in school programmes and should be integrated into the curriculum is a systematic way by Ministries of Education.

The partners have had a great two years working together and with on developing programmes in their countries. Seeing the excitement and enthusiasm of young and old as they worked together has convinced us this way of learning is a valuable contribution to enhancing social cohesion – as well as being good learning and good fun.

All the partners are planning further activities to ensure the sustainability of our programmes and invite you to get in touch for more information and to join us!

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Recommendations

2012 was the EU year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations. As with all EU "years" the initiatives that take place should be seen as a springboard for continuing action.

The partners in Nature for Care are convinced that investing in intergenerational learning makes an effective contribution towards achieving one of the key goals of the Year - enhancing social cohesion. Based on our positive experience we would like to make the following recommendations for different stakeholders involved in working with young people and the elderly.

Schools

That every school and college should review the opportunities for intergenerational learning in their communities and set up an intergenerational programme that is a regular part of the schools education provision.

That Education Departments in local administrations encourage schools and colleges to develop intergenerational learning programmes and provide support for these.

Care homes

That every Care facility should investigate the opportunities make links with a local school and work towards developing a programme of intergenerational learning activities.

Experts and Research

That more research about the impact and value of intergenerational learning is needed especially in terms of social cohesion, positive benefits for the elderly, and learning benefits for young people.

EU/governments (national, local)

That the EU and National Governments recognize the benefits of intergenerational learning and establish systems to encourage the development of intergenerational learning programmes by schools and care homes, and provide the necessary support for these programmes.

Teacher Training organisations

That initial and on going teacher training organisations highlight the importance and value of intergenerational learning to new and current teachers through their programmes.

Environmental and Sustainability Education organisations

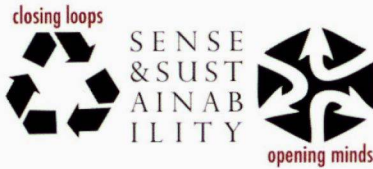
That Environment and Sustainability Education organisations work with care homes and schools to develop and support intergenerational learning programmes.

Funding Bodies (for care, education)

That funding bodies invest in and enable long term projects to develop and implement intergenerational practices structurally and develop innovative responses with partners on the challenges of an ageing society.

Colofon

Partners in Nature for Care



United Kingdom
Sense&Sustainability Training (SST)



Hungary
Magosfa, Foundation for Environmental Education and Eco-tourism



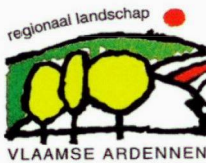
Veldwerk Nederland

The Netherlands
Stichting Veldwerk Nederland (SVN)



**BORROWED NATURE
ASSOCIATION**

Bulgaria
Borrowed Nature Association (BNA)



Belgium
Regionaal Landschap Vlaamse Ardennen
vzw (RLVA)



Czech Republic
Chaloupky o.p.s.



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Abbreviations

IP Intergenerational Practice

NfC Nature for Care

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About our project



Introduction

People today are paying more and more attention to the apparent growing lack of social cohesion and the negative consequences of this for society at large. For elderly people this often means they don't go out on a regular basis or meet others in a meaningful way leading to increased loneliness and other social consequences. This is a problem that is likely to grow with some estimating that by 2050 the proportion of elderly people in our communities will have grown from the 25% it is today to nearer 50%. At the same time the involvement of youth in their communities has declined.

Schools, community centres, social workers and also organisations for elderly people are looking for methods and activities to enlarge the involvement of everyone from young people to very old in their own neighborhood. The **Nature for Care, Care for Nature** project offers the interesting possibility of improving social cohesion through bringing old and young together around the inspiring and relevant subject: nature and the environment.

The Nature for Care, Care for Nature Project (NfC) has been project supported by the EU Life Long Learning Programme and involved six environmental and sustainability organisations from six European countries. For two years from 2011 to 2012 the partners have worked together to develop intergenerational learning activities bringing young people and elderly people together to learn about nature and their local environment.

The project was stimulated by the experience of the Dutch Project leader, Veldwerk Nederland, through a previous project in which Veldwerk worked with elderly people with dementia. The Dutch Trimbos Institute (Institute of Mental Health and Addiction) which reviewed the project, was impressed by the positive impact that the elderly and young had on each other both in terms of the welfare for the elderly and the learning experienced by the young people involved. Their main conclusion was that if old and young are brought together in focused context – in this case nature based activities - something good happens.

The partners involved in Nature for Care were inspired by this Dutch experience and are convinced that intergenerational learning offers huge possibilities for both enhancing the learning experience of young people in schools and improving the quality of life for many elderly people.

The partners have spent two years experimenting with different approaches working with different groups of school pupils and elderly and investigating ways in which intergenerational learning could be mainstreamed as part of the school curriculum and learning programme. All in all we have worked intensively with over 500 children and young people and same number of older people, with many more having some contact with the project and being exposed to the importance of intergenerational learning.

The partners in NfC believe very strongly that society has to be proactive and invest in intergenerational practices and organize and maintain contacts between different generations. It is not realistic to expect this to happen on voluntary basis or rely on ad hoc projects and activities to maintain links between the elderly and the younger generation. Intergenerational learning cannot be a matter of luck being dependent on where you live or who your neighbours are.

We believe that involving schools is a promising way forward and would encourage schools to engage in intergenerational learning in a structured way. We believe that integrating intergenerational learning into a schools programme is possible and brings huge benefits to young people's learning.

This publication traces the learning journey we have taken and hopefully will inspire schools and Care Homes to develop similar programmes.

The book is a mixture of theory and practice and if you are encouraged to create programmes and activities for yourself we encourage you to get in touch and visit the project web site - www.natureforcare.eu. Please get in touch – and we look forward to hearing from you.

If old and young are brought together in focused context – something good happens

Nature for Care, Care for Nature

The book is divided into six sections -

- The first section describes the background to the project – what we have achieved and hope to achieve, and a case study of how Veldwerk Nederland developed the intergenerational programmes that inspired this project.
- The second section examines some of the theoretical background – what is social cohesion, what is intergenerational learning and practice and the importance of learning outside the classroom – three of our key themes. This section is based on inputs from experts in the field of intergenerational learning and social cohesion.
- A third section describes how to put intergenerational learning programmes together - giving top tips and suggestions and sharing our experience.
- The fourth section describes the research we have undertaken into the effectiveness of our intergenerational programmes.
- The fifth section is a collection of activities from each partner that demonstrate the depth and breadth of the activities NFC has developed.
- The sixth section contains a number of appendices – useful web sites and publications.

The overall aim of the book is that it will communicate the excitement of the partners for intergenerational learning and encourage the reader to have a go with one of two activities themselves.

Join us at www.natureforcare.eu

Nature for Care, Care for Nature

About our project



"Nature for Care, Care for Nature" is an international project to promote intergenerational activities between elderly and young people in their own neighborhood. It is a response to the apparent growing lack of social cohesion between young and old. Elderly people are increasingly isolated and interact less and less with young people. Young people are increasingly feeling less part of their local communities and this can often lead to a range of negative social and behavioural challenges.

"Nature for Care, Care for Nature" is based on the experience of Veldwerk Nederland, an environmental education NGO from the Netherlands. Supported by a grant from the EU (Grundtvig, Lifelong Learning Program) in 2011 and 2012 partner organisations from six EU countries developed activities that involved young and old learning together in a variety of contexts and using nature and the environment as a topic.

The organisations involved in the project were

- Veldwerk Nederland – the Netherlands
- Regionaal Landschap Vlaamse Ardennen (RLVA) – Belgium
- Borrowed Nature Association – Bulgaria
- Chaloupky o.p.s. – Czech Republic
- Magosfa Foundation – Hungary
- Sense&Sustainability Training – the UK

Of the partners Veldwerk Nederland has a long experience of intergenerational learning, and RLVA has a programme of working in care homes on nature programmes, though not on intergenerational learning. The other partners are environmental and sustainability education organisations and are experienced in working with young people but not in a care home context. They joined the project seeing it as a way of delivering their core objectives of raising environmental awareness and creating a more sustainable society. A lack of social cohesion can

be seen as a barrier to sustainability and hence any project that engaged with society as a whole would enhance the chances of creating sustainable communities.

The overall objective of the project was to develop innovative approaches to promote intergenerational contacts between elderly and young people in their own neighbourhood.

The main objectives of the project were

- Enhancing social cohesion through 'bridging' old and young in communities.
- Caring for the welfare of the elderly.
- Adding pedagogical values to working with young and old.
- Developing intergenerational learning activities.
- Inspiring organisations through a website and other published information.

The main outputs of the project are

- Intergenerational activities in each country.
- Information for teachers and care home staff on how to develop and deliver intergenerational programmes.
- Good practice and experiences.
- Dissemination products and activities including a website, flyer, publication and national and regional conferences.

Three Phases

The project has involved a variety of activities over three phases.

In Phase One much of the first year was spent with teams from each partner being trained – largely by each other building on specific organisational strengths but also through research and inputs from external organisations. Project Team and Training meetings took place in the Netherlands, Belgium and the Czech Republic and involved not only workshops but visits to examples of good practice in intergenerational learning organised by the partners.

Based on this training in Phase Two each of the partners organised a programme of activities linking older people in care facilities with children in schools. Most of the partners worked with local primary schools and children aged between eight and fourteen years old. This was partly for practical reasons in that primary schools often have the most flexible approach to learning and the delivery of the curriculum. The care facilities we worked with were more varied. In some cases such as Belgium, RLVA worked with large residential care homes, whereas in the Czech Republic Chaloupky worked with older people who visited a day centre. In the UK, Sense&Sustainability worked with residents of sheltered accommodation. This variety reflects the fact that care structures for the elderly are very different in each European country compared with school systems which by and large are very similar. The programmes developed were also different from country to country and depended greatly on the level of confidence of the partners, the opportunities provided by the care facilities and the partners that each country was able to link with. Overall we worked with >450 older people in > 25 care homes and elderly clubs, > 500 children in > 25 schools.

Having said all this we are excited by the end result. We have developed a wide range of rich and rewarding activities that schools and care homes can use for intergenerational learning and we would encourage you to visit our web site and try some of them out for yourselves. Some require a level of expertise and equipment, but others can be done by anyone!

The third phase of the project involves dissemination of our experiences and building systems to ensure that the work we have done with schools and care homes continues and can also be expanded in some way. This publication is part of that process as is our web site, but each of the partners will be engaged in supporting and developing new programmes. Finally we have undertaken evaluation and research throughout the project. This has involved questionnaires to

children in schools and old people in care homes to assess the impact of the activities. In some countries we managed to do both before and after questionnaires and some partners also managed to undertake evaluation interviews with some of the participants.

The key success factor in any project is sustainability and each of the partners is committed to continuing to work on intergenerational learning and use the opportunities in each country to work with care homes and schools to development systematic and structured programmes. Please do get in touch with a partner in your country if you want to discuss more ideas or keep in touch through our web site www.natureforcare.eu



Nature for Care – the Veldwerk Story

Nature for Care started from the activities of one environmental education organisation in the Netherlands and it is worth telling the story of how their innovative programme of intergenerational activities got off the ground – hopefully as an inspiration to others. Veldwerk Nederland started life as a traditional environmental education organisation providing nature based courses for school groups from their three environmental education centres. In 1998 the organisation started to develop new approaches and focus on target groups other than schools and teacher education. New themes included farming, animal care, food and sustainability and many of the courses changed from learning *about* "nature" as the main goal to nature being a focus and tool to achieve other goals - learning *through* or *from* nature. At the same time educational activities and trainings were extended from schools to professionals in sectors like childcare and care for the elderly.

In 2002 Veldwerk ran their first course specifically for elderly people and, based on that experience in 2004 raised funding to work in ten care homes through a project called Natuurcircuit (Nature Circus). To start with project activities involved talks and demonstrations about different topics. For example a forester was invited to give a presentation about his work to a group of elderly people. These activities were an immediate hit. The elderly like to hear interesting stories about nature to see pictures, to feel stuffed animals or to touch objects and tools they used in own kitchen gardens or houses, retrieving memories of maybe more than 40 - 50 years ago. Nearly all elderly people also have experiences and memories of natural places perhaps that they visited on holidays or the nature in own surroundings. In common with children and young they are concerned about our planet, "not for me of course but for my children and grandchildren"

During the two years of the project around twenty care homes participated and in that period discussions took place about further opportunities, largely recognized by the staff from the care homes themselves asking questions such as, "Can you do this also for elderly with dementia and can we also go outside with elderly people"?



As a result of these ideas Veldwerk started another two year project in 2006 focused on elderly people with dementia, called Heden en Verleden (Now and Then). The activities in this project involved taking older people outside and also working with children. How children became involved and how the project became intergenerational, happened almost by accident. Veldwerk were invited to work in a care Home with 24 elderly people in wheel chairs. However, there were only 6 volunteers and hence they were faced with the prospect of disappointing 18 elderly people. The solution was to ask a local primary school to help by providing their oldest students to push the wheel chairs – and it was a great success! It wasn't known in advance but it turned out to be a great event for all participants, press and even passersby and traffic as the large group of 24 old people were taken to some nearby woods and did some activities with the children and older people working together.

In 2008 Veldwerk developed their work with care homes and young people through Nature Circus II, a three year project working throughout the Netherlands with seventy care homes taking part. In Nature Circus II the participation of children was normal as care homes were linked with nearby primary schools – nearly all of which were happy to have the opportunity to take part.

The next stage in the Veldwerk's learning journey was to focus on intergenerational learning with the specific goal of enhancing social cohesion. This took place 2010 and 2011 through work with two local projects in Amsterdam Centre and Nijmegen. The participants were from care homes and schools but also involved elderly people from clubs for senior people and young people from community centres. In both cities considerable time and energy was invested to encourage the four care homes and schools to create a sustainable and ongoing programme of links and activities.

The most recent development has been Nature for Care, Care for Nature which has the goal of promoting the approach to intergeneration learning through nature based activities more widely across Europe. Further learning is bound to take place and ideas for the future include the creation of a European Nature for Care network and perhaps developing Nature for Care into a branded product to offer to schools and care homes.

Success and challenges

Obviously the activities have been a success but this in itself raised challenges.

The Veldwerk staff are not experts in working with elderly. As environmental educators they have specific knowledge about nature and are creative and inventive in developing new methods and are convinced that learning by doing not only works with young people, but people of all ages. They felt challenged and went ahead looking for new ideas, cooperation and support.

Through working with the elderly Veldwerk has developed an experience of how to be more effective in their engagement with different groups. The organisation has learnt about the kinds of questions that should be asked, which resources are best at gaining the interest and confidence of different kinds of elderly people and so on. Veldwerk has come to realise that there are a lot of differences among the elderly, from people who have only just reached "old age" through to those with physical limitations or handicapped people and from people with dementia to people with a combination of a number physical, psychological and psychiatric conditions.

Staff at Veldwerk found that with some adaptations for different categories of elderly it is possible with empathy and the guidance of experts to do the same kind of activities. As Herman de Jongh said, "When the elderly are not able to do things for themselves anymore, we are their helping hands. If they can't go out, we can organize this. We can make efforts to speak more loudly and clearly and not for too long. For people with serious dementia and other limitations we restrict our efforts to only sensory activities with some individual talks".

Research

Veldwerk was excited by the activities but wanted to support their enthusiasm with research so commissioned the well known Dutch Trimbos Institute undertake research into the impacts of the 'nature activities' for elderly with dementia. The main conclusion they came to was that the nature focus worked well but that the most valuable part of the project was the intergenerational learning that was taking place.

As a result Veldwerk adopted a new mission and area of activities as it became clear that the organisation could play the role as an intermediary between old and young and use their expertise in the area of nature and sustainability. In Holland there is a saying "Look beyond your nose". Veldwerk looked and started to develop activities for elderly and young people with the subject "nature".

Of course, organising activities based in nature for older people is not something unique. There are care homes and organisations with similar kinds of programmes both in Europe and elsewhere. Not only that but many nature based organisations visit care homes to carry out different activities. Pet therapy for example is an example of a nature activity that is growing quickly, certainly in the UK, as older people love touching and caring for animals.

However, in the field of environmental education, intergenerational activities seem to be something new and it is this aspect that NfC has as it's focus. The moment older and young are brought people together then there are benefits for both groups. Many people in society are rightly concerned about young people in their communities and there is a growing conviction that if intergenerational contacts start at an early age, children are more likely to develop positive attitudes and values towards elderly and others in the neighborhood. Of course, such activities are likely to be one piece in a complex and long term puzzle, but Veldwerk was happy to start somewhere and create such programmes.



Why intergenerational learning?

The headline of an article in a Dutch newspaper for June 2012 stated that the European Championship Football 2012 contributed a great deal to social cohesion! However, this was only a transitory experience. After the elimination of the Dutch team the binding factor, the colour orange, disappeared quickly from the streets. What we need as a society are sustainable structures to strengthen social cohesion, not just temporary ones!

There is no doubt that how we look after elderly people in Europe is high on the agenda of most governments. Countries are struggling with the challenges that an increase in the number of elderly people bring. As the imbalance between income generators in country and those calling upon government finances for support in old age gradually changes, big questions are being asked about funding care for the elderly. Already in many countries these funding challenges create situations where care for the elderly is, putting bluntly, very poor, and with the economic situation as it is – likely to get worse.

The EU and national governments are also concerned about the growing ageing challenge not just for economic reasons but because it has consequences for the solidarity between generations. There is a general consensus that a lack of intergenerational dynamic is one of the causes of a perceived growing lack of social cohesion. As a result of this concern the EU named 2012 the European Year of Active Aging and Solidarity between generations in an effort to kick start greater concern in finding solutions.

The Year was intended to raise awareness of the contribution that older people make to society. It sought to encourage policymakers and relevant stakeholders at all levels to take action with the aim of creating better opportunities for active ageing and strengthening solidarity between generations. Active ageing means growing old in good health and as a full member of society, feeling more fulfilled in our jobs, more independent in our daily lives and more involved as citizens. No matter how old we are, we can still play our part in society and enjoy a better quality of life. The challenge is to make the most of the enormous potential that we harbour even at a more advanced age. The European Year sought to promote active ageing in three areas: employment, participation in society and independent living. The debate has already exposed a number of issues that are beginning to change people's attitudes towards care of the elderly and our ageing society.

One of the most important changes is that there is also a growing realisation that caring for the elderly is a societal challenge. It is not simply an issue for the care system of the health care organisations or a problem for politicians to solve. When the Dutch government has a discussion about whether elderly people in care homes have the right to a daily shower, then something is obviously wrong! Having said that it means that way in which care for the elderly is provided will also change in the future. In particular it doesn't seem possible that we shall be able to maintain the same level of care without fundamental changes in who is taking care for others in the future.

On European level the European Commission has formulated seven main policy goals to meet the future challenges of an ageing population that will be faced by nearly all European countries over the next 10-15 years (Futurage, see references p 63) -

- 1 A healthy live: adding life to years, not years to life.
- 2 Preserve and strengthen older people's mental abilities.
- 3 Integration and participation: allowing older people to be part of the society and the labour market.
- 4 Guarantee the quality and accessibility of social security and other services.
- 5 Opposing inequality and discrimination of age.

- 6 Making use of the knowledge of bio-gerontology.
- 7 Create conditions for people to age at home and in their own local community.

Of course economic and social issues are important aspects of the ageing debate but at its core is the quality of life that many people face in later life. For example, research has shown that old people living on their own often see other human beings only two or three times a week.

Can and should schools be involved?

The realisation that the challenge of ageing is linked with the wider issue of social cohesion leads naturally to consider how schools can be part of the solution. It is our aspiration that the NfC project will lead more schools to consider how to develop systematic intergenerational learning programmes with young people and older people learning together in a structured way – meeting the needs of both groups.

If this sounds radical it is not meant to. One of the things that surprised many of the NfC partners is how much intergenerational learning already takes place in some schools and communities. Having said that, much of what takes place is ad hoc and not a structured part of learning – often happening through special events and activities. There are huge possibilities for a more strategic approach.

Of course young people and old people have always mixed in a family context, and the research undertaken as part of NfC highlighted this. Whether they realise it or not, children have always learned things from their grandparents and other older family members. However, this doesn't happen for all, and it could be argued, is happening less. It is suggested that perhaps schools could provide more formal opportunities for old and young to learn together. After all, old and young living in the same community face many similar challenges – both for example, rely on public transport for accessibility, both use the same countryside for recreation, and both use the same footpaths, shops and places of worship.

Although schools are obviously places where children are educated one of the recent trends has been an increase in the number of adults other than teachers that are involved in young people's education. Children take part in many activities outside the classroom where they come into contact with people helping them to learn who are not formally trained teachers and many schools invite people into schools to share their experience and learning. The best schools are now much more integrated with their communities and beginning to see their communities as learning resources for children.

Of course the best schools have also always had contacts with older people in their community, but in our experience, these contacts have usually focused on particular events and seasons. For example, the school choir might visit a care home at Christmas time to sing and maybe act out a special Christmas drama.

Such changes are a great springboard for widening the concept of involving adults other than teachers and providing systems that encourage intergenerational learning – old and young learning together. The NfC partners believe that there are great educational advantages for the development of more structured programmes.

The education benefits

Most teachers reading these pages will immediately see the benefits of creating intergenerational learning programmes – but the key ones that we have experienced are listed below. There are probably others! -

- **Learning.** We have found that young people and older people have a lot to learn from each other and the activities in part five of this book highlight the kind of learning that has taken place. Children benefitting from old peoples knowledge of the natural environment and older people learning new games and skills from younger people are just two examples.

- **Enjoyment.** We have found that nearly all the children and older people taking part in the activities enjoyed themselves, although sometimes both groups were nervous to begin with.
- **Self worth.** We found that many young people had a greater feeling of self worth. They felt an enhanced responsibility pushing wheel chairs, or getting cups of tea for their elderly visitors and many had a sense of pride when showing them around their school. All sorts of social values can be enhanced. Young people also felt a huge sense of satisfaction when they worked with specific groups – such as those with dementia or those in wheel chairs who often have restricted opportunities realising that all people have value. One lady took part in an activity and sang songs she had not sung for many many years when the children from Adcote School visited a care home with a musical activity.
- **A new learning context.** We have found that when children are in a different context with older people they often behave very differently. The story in the text box on this page is an encouraging one.

"This boy"

In Amsterdam a primary school went for an activity in a care centre close to the school. Only one girl had been there before - "Because my mother works there". Before entering the big hall in the center the teacher spoke very firmly to his students telling them to behave themselves! He spoke so loud, we could hear him through the door. He was really concerned, especially because of one boy. The care home staff took the children in small groups to the different floors to pick up the elderly. After 5 -10 minutes they all came down pushing a wheelchair or walking arm in arm with an elderly person. So did 'this boy'. The old and young sat together around tables, chatted with

each other and started to play Nature Bingo. So did 'this boy', chatting, laughing and playing Nature Bingo. Rather emotionally the teacher whispered: "It's not the same boy I know, something has happened to him". That 'something' was a lovely, 91 year old, Amsterdam woman - his temporary grandmother. During almost 2 hours he stayed with her, side by side, did the sowing activity with her, made a nice card for her and at last he brought her back to her floor. He was one of the last who came back – not for the reasons that he was usually late in school, but because the experience had really affected him. 'This boy'? He will not forget this good experience.

The challenges

Of course any initiative has its challenges -

- Intergenerational programmes do not easily fit into the school timetable and there are management issues associated with staffing, time, costs and resources as well as child safety considerations. However, we have found that with good planning and management, these can be overcome, as they can be for any initiative that has obvious benefits for children.
- Schools are also naturally concerned that the curriculum is covered. Our experience was that curriculum can be an opportunity rather than a challenge as it appears that many aspects of different national curricula can be delivered through older and young working together including history, geography, biology, music and even sport! One of the most successful activities in the UK involved an elderly resident tracing the history and development of the village the children live in and then together generating ideas for the future of the community – ideas subsequently communicated to the local administration for the area.

- A third challenge is knowledge about nature and sustainability. A teacher might read some of the activities in this book and on the web site of NfC and think “well I don’t know enough – I don’t have access to stuffed animals” and so on. Nature is a great topic for engaging older people, but again there might be challenges in both children’s and teacher’s knowledge about different nature topics, and perhaps issues around access to some equipment and materials. If such concerns are the case then schools can call upon outside help, or focus on a topic where there is expertise with the school, or the care home or even amongst the elderly people themselves!
- A final challenge is about actually working with elderly people. Some of the chapters in this book describe some of the more basic techniques that are helpful in working with the elderly, from common sense ones such as speaking clearly and sometimes slowly, through to ones where some simple training and practice is needed, such as using reminiscence as a technique in conversations.

We believe that the challenges are worth overcoming but it is also worth pointing out that there is significant support available to do so. We have found that care homes themselves are very enthusiastic when intergenerational learning ideas are suggested and were often willing to put themselves out to fit in with the needs of schools. In the UK some of the bigger care home groups have people responsible for developing social programmes and making links with schools who are always on the look out for new ideas. It might even be that one of the elderly people in a care home has expertise that can be used and all a school has to do is bring them together.

There is also support that can be offered by many environmental organisations who would be keen to develop programmes together and if not then they can usually advise on other people who might be able to help. This is one way of overcoming the perceived lack of expertise in areas such as nature and the environment. Many local administration social departments see the benefits of the programmes linking old and young. Help in making links can be found on our web site and a later chapter in this book covers some of the ways in which these challenges can be overcome.

Many of the activities on the web site are also relatively simple, and don’t require a lot of background knowledge or equipment to be able to carry out effectively. Others can easily be adapted to different curriculum areas, topics and ages.

The benefits for care homes

We found that despite all the challenges or barriers, those in care homes are dedicated to caring for the whole person. Care involves much more than just making sure that people are comfortable and physically cared for. Although many elderly in care homes are separated from children and largely also from society many are still able to participate in different kinds of activities. Lifelong learning means just that.

We have found that the benefits of intergenerational learning for those in different kinds of elderly care included -

- **Life long learning** – many elderly people want to carry on learning – be it a new skill or new knowledge or experiences. In the UK the last activity of the year was a visit to a Stately Home where both young people and older people gained new insights into life in the past. In conversation, the children from the local school were also amazed to hear that one of the elderly people had just taken up a new hobby – archery!
- **Self worth** – During the NfC activities, many elderly people enjoyed sharing their knowledge and in doing so this had increased their feelings of making a contribution young people’s learning. Participation in intergenerational learning has increased older people feelings of self worth. In the UK NfC activities for example, one older person in the group always brings materials to meetings that he has downloaded from the internet as part of his preparation.

The feedback from the young people was that in the structured learning contexts we provided for some activities they learned lots of new things. They were amazed when one resident talked about growing up in their village – and how he shared one bed with his brothers and sisters – and had a toilet outside! It gave them a real insight into the not so distant past.

- **Company and conversation.** We have found that elderly people, especially those in care homes, often do not meet a wide range of people. Many are visited mostly only by their families and some friends, but rarely by younger people. Having young people around, even if for a short time, seems to generate a positive energy and excitement amongst older people. In Hungary the children were a little late for one meeting and sense of expectation amongst the older people was huge!
- **Supporting those with physical disabilities and with dementia.** Although working with these groups is a challenge for many children and young people, when they are involved in intergenerational activities they have the time to give to these groups that perhaps staff in care contexts cannot always share. The kind of activities based on nature, are often very tactile and this is a positive thing for those with dementia or restricted mobility. A chapter later in this book gives more background to working with these groups.

Of course there are challenges and for schools and environmental organisations or other intermediaries -

- **A lack of skills.** The biggest challenge is not having the professional skills to be able to work with some of the most challenging groups, especially older people with dementia. To work with these groups children and young people need guidance and support. We realise that the topic of nature is a great one to engage people, and we also realise that using reminiscence as a technique helps that with dementia, but guidance is needed to avoid making too many mistakes. With help from the care home staff we can build up experience and consciously learn through doing intergenerational activities.
- **Time.** Although care homes are very flexible, sometimes finding time for planning and doing activities is a challenge. The structure of a care home day is important especially at tea time! In this way care homes are very much like schools. Working with those in sheltered accommodation or through clubs of seniors is much easier.

So in summary intergenerational learning has major benefits for schools and society -

- 1 Strengthening social cohesion.
- 2 A feasible method to bring old and young together.
- 3 Social, pedagogical and educational values.
- 4 The welfare of elderly, including elderly with dementia.
- 5 A focus on learning goals to achieve this.

In finishing this chapter we would like to emphasise that Nature for Care is not just a “nice” project. It is not just a happy picture for the media but it is a real attempt to enhance young peoples’ learning and support people in the ageing process and building social cohesion as a result. This kind of approach can deliver a basic contribution to tackle one of the biggest, coming social challenges, that of our ageing societies. We all have to face that challenge.

And once again, we believe this is an area in which schools should play an important role. The goal for Nature for Care to encourage schools to develop structured and systematic intergenerational programmes so that such links with local care homes can become a normal part of what a school does in the community. The idea is that each child in primary school has regular planned and structured contact with elderly people as part of a programme of learning. A child having this experience at primary school will still remember it when he or she is 50 years old. Probably, and more importantly, children will realise that it is normal to interact with elderly and each other in the neighborhood and as a result communities will become stronger.

2 Some theory



Achieving social cohesion through intergenerational practice

by Tine Buffel et al*

Introduction

The Beth Johnson Foundation in the UK has a definition which states that "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 have to offer each other and those around them."

As suggested by this definition the debate about intergenerational practice is often seen against the background of a broader social aim - its contribution to achieving greater 'community' and 'social cohesion'. The endorsement by influential international organisations such as the European Commission and the World Health Organisation of *developing and reinforcing existing links between different generations* has further stimulated this discussion. This is reflected, for example, in the branding of 2012 as the European year of 'Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations', embracing a wide range of actions and campaigns that promote older and younger people's participation in practice and policy. Against this background, this chapter briefly outlines some of the key aspects of the debate about social cohesion and further looks at the nature and potential of intergenerational practice in this context.

It needs to be pointed out that so far in this book, the focus has been on intergenerational learning. In the field, the term intergenerational practice is more common, but is obviously broader than young and old learning together.

Social cohesion

Social cohesion is a multi-faceted concept used to describe the *bonds or "glue" that bring people together* in a given society. It refers to the institutions, norms and relationships that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions. The literature on social cohesion broadly emphasises two principal elements to the concept: first, the reduction of disparities, inequalities, poverty and social exclusion; and second, the strengthening of social relations, interactions and ties. In much of the literature the second element dominates and is closely tied to the concept of 'social capital'. Social capital is considered to be one, albeit central element of social cohesion, and is commonly defined as the 'information, trust and norms of reciprocity inhering in one's social networks'. Attempts to define the concept have generally focused on the degree to which social cohesion as a resource can be used both for *public goods* as well as for the benefit of *individuals*.

On the first of these, social cohesion is considered to have a number of benefits for contemporary societies. According to Robert Putnam, the best-known author on this topic, social cohesion facilitates *mutually supportive relations and cooperation*, and would therefore be a valuable means of improving social and economic development in modern societies. Social cohesion, thus, is seen to improve the efficiency and development of society by facilitating coordinated actions. Communities with high levels of social cohesion and cooperative networks, so called 'civic communities' are considered to be beneficial to society as a whole. Second, social capital, defined as 'networks and norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness' is commonly associated with a number of positive outcomes for *individuals*. People who are embedded in social networks are found to report higher levels of quality of life, better self-rated health and mental and physical wellbeing than those who are less socially involved. Social networks clearly have important value for both individuals and societies.

*See page 64 Authors

In order to promote social cohesion, it is commonly recognised that it is important to facilitate three complementary forms of social capital: *bonding*, *bridging* and *linking social capital*.

- **Bonding social capital** is generally defined as the relationships between close network members or *equals* in similar situations. It is the social cohesion that takes place between individuals of *similar* age groups, *similar* ethnic backgrounds or *similar* social status. Some examples of this type of social capital include the relationships between 'homogenous' (at least in some respect) groups of people, such as those between family members and close friends. Such relationships often act as an important social safety net, providing the network members with reciprocity and trust.
- **Bridging social capital** refers to the social networks and ties that *cross* social groupings. These are established between people or groups that are removed, or different, from each other in some way. Bridging social ties, in other words, concerns the links with people who are not like you, such as people from different cultural backgrounds, different age groups or social status. This type of social capital is more 'outward-looking' than bonding social capital because it encompasses people across different social divides.
- **Linking social capital** concerns the networks of individuals or groups with institutions or agencies in higher influential positions. Through linking social capital, people are able to access support, resources and information from organisations and networks. An example of linking social capital is the interactions that citizens have with their local government.

Intergenerational practice

There are different ways of defining Intergenerational Practice (IP). However, three aspects are found as the common denominators of intergenerational programmes -

- People from different generations participate in an IP.
- Participation in an IP involves activities aimed at goals which are beneficial for all those people and hence to the community in which they live.
- Thanks to IPs, participants maintain relations based on sharing.

Some experts suggest that to refer to 'intergenerationality', as just *being together* is not enough; rather, it is important to *do things and grow together*. Hence, *intergenerational relations* are based on consensus, cooperation or conflict, involving two or more generations or generational groups.

Initiatives aimed at promoting intergenerational relations are often characterised by small-scale and intensive projects, such as older volunteers mentoring 'vulnerable' children in need of support; intergenerational cookery groups involving having healthy lunches together; and projects which bring different generations together to explore their locality and the neighbourhood's past, present and future..

One benefit of such IPs involves the potential for children to meet the needs of older persons. Equally important would be the gains to children of being involved in meeting the needs of others. Service to older persons could be one of the most meaningful ways of teaching children that they can be productive and useful members of the community.

Other examples may involve programmes that enable people of different generations to participate in environmental service projects and become stewards of their environments. *Nature for Care*, *Care for Nature*, for example, aims to develop activities that involve young and older people together in a variety of contexts by using *nature* and the *environment* as connecting themes. Such initiatives have the potential to bring generations together to learn about, but also to improve the environment. Environmental education typically does not only take place in schools, but across different settings and across the life span. Themes such as 'nature' and 'environment' therefore provide an important yet under-utilised direction for programmes

concerned with IP. At the same time, IP provides a promising, but under-explored prospect for programmes concerned with environmental issues.

IPs may involve different forms of social capital. This can be illustrated through community action programmes bringing together older and young residents to identify issues of concern in their community, and to influence decision-makers to make changes. Promoting *bonding social capital*, in this instance, may reflect attempts to raise *older residents'* (i.e. one particular age group's) readiness and ability to change their situation and living conditions according to their own wishes and needs to maintain independence. *Bridging social capital* may take place when different groups of residents, old as well as young, are involved in planning, taking action and creating opportunities for social change in their neighbourhood. This may result in a range of interventions, such as improving access to high quality public space. Transforming single purpose places (e.g. schools) into multiple-purpose places where generations can come together and participate in their community, to take one example, represents an essential element of public life. In order to achieve such community goals, the availability of *linking social capital* often represents an essential success factor. Promoting *links* and *partnerships* with neighbourhood-based organisations, local action groups, policy makers and other community stakeholders may be especially important in realising the potential benefits of IPs.

What kinds of outcomes can be achieved through IP and for whom?

A recent review of the potential benefits for participants of IPs found that for *older people*, benefits ranged from individual (ability to cope with vulnerabilities, increased motivation, increased perceptions of self worth) to relational (making friends with young people, develop social relationships) and benefits for the community (reintegration, skill sharing, volunteering). For *young people*, benefits noted included: increased sense of worth, self-esteem and confidence; enhanced sense of social responsibility; better school results; access to adults at difficult times; less involvement in offending and drug use; better health; improved school attendance and greater personal resilience.

The aims of IPs – whether 'promoting networking among generations', 'connecting local schools to the community' or 'strengthening cooperation between nursery schools and care homes' – all reflect a view of citizenship that involves people of all ages as active participants in local issues. Social cohesion works effectively at both a community and neighbourhood level, and IPs reflect this as socially inclusive approaches to building community networks. The contribution of intergenerational activities toward building a more socially cohesive and caring society is therefore difficult to question. A remaining challenge, however, is to locate these approaches alongside broader social programmes that also address other challenges to social cohesion, such as reducing poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion.

"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".

Definition of Intergenerational Practice: Beth Johnson Foundation, April 2001

Intergenerational learning and learning outside the classroom

Enhancing social cohesion through intergenerational learning is bound to involve multiple goals and activities. This has been one of the challenges throughout the NFC project – developing activities with three common threads -

- old and young learning together.
- within the context of nature, the environment and sustainability.
- and doing at least some of these activities outside the classroom.

The goal of this chapter is to encourage intergenerational learning through an activity focused approach – especially through out of class room activities. Young and old people working outside the classroom has been one of the common threads through all the activities developed by the partners in Nature for Care.

Jan Ámos Komeský (Comenius)

The origin of learning outside the classroom can, with a little imagination, be attributed to **Jan Ámos Komeský** (Comenius) – the 17th century teacher and Bishop. He taught us to invest in natural learning:

“People need as much as possible to draw their knowledge not (only) from books, but (also*) from heaven and earth, from oaks and beeches. That means they should know and examine all kind of things themselves and not (only*) rely on other people’s perceptions about them.”*



Comenius

The Great Didactic, Great Educational Learning, 1657

**added by author*

Comenius promoted not only **Natural Learning** but also **Education for Everyone** (revolutionary in his time), **Learning by Easy Stages** (do it step by step and every first step paves the path for next ones), **Play** (learning by playing), **Lifelong Learning** and **Humanity**.

He was very ahead of his time but his words still count!

“Who is there that does not always desire to see, hear, or handle something new? To whom is it not a pleasure to go to some new places daily, to converse with someone, to narrate something, or have some fresh experience?”

“The proper education of the young does not consist in stuffing their heads with a mass of words, sentences, and ideas dragged together out of various authors, but in opening up their understanding to the outer world, so that a living stream may flow from their own minds, just as leaves, flowers, and fruit spring from the bud on a tree”.



Over the last ten years teachers in most European countries have become more aware of how children learn. No longer are children sat at individual desks listening to their teachers and copying information from the blackboard – as one of the authors of this chapter did when he was a boy! Teachers are aware of the importance of -

- the learning cycle – starting learning with experiences through an activity than can then be linked with more general concepts,
- multiple intelligences – which have redefined our view of what “intelligence” is,
- preferred and different styles of learning, meaning that teachers now see young people as individuals and try and tailor learning to each child, and
- the fact that children learn outside a school context – through talking to adults and interacting socially and with the media.

Awareness of these ideas, coupled with the skills to use these new approaches to learning have revolutionised learning for many young people.

Central to education is the question “how can we as teachers structure a child’s learning so that they can learn most effectively?” This is the mission for all teachers and education systems and we believe that intergenerational learning and learning outside the classroom are two approaches that support teachers in delivering high quality learning opportunities for young people.

The benefits of out of classroom learning

It has to be acknowledged that learning outside the classroom can be a huge challenge for teachers to manage within the context of a school and the school curriculum. There are issues to do with the time it takes, the management of groups outside the classroom, insurance and health and safety, the confidence of teachers as well as other practical issues such as the cost and cover for teachers out of school – who looks after their other classes when they take their groups outside?

Having said that there is a growing body of educational research that shows that if work outside the classroom is properly conceived, well planned and delivered, and followed up afterwards in the classroom, then young people's learning can be more effective in the long term. Such work outside the classroom offers pupils the opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in ways that give huge added value to their experiences in the classroom.

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) in the UK working with the University of London, quite clearly demonstrated the benefits of learning outside the classroom in an important report published a few years ago. Knowledge and skills, gathered in this way, really sinks in and stays for a long period of time.

In most schools children learn in specific subjects. Learning out of the classroom supports such subject based approaches but having said that most outdoor activities have great potential for interdisciplinary and more general learning as well. The NFER study highlighted that out of classroom learning enhanced -

- Cognitive skills (thinking, the ability to combine knowledge, long term memory).
- Affective skills (feelings, empathic skills, confidence, self esteem, individual growth).
- Behavioral skills (doing, reacting, cooperation, care for others, desire for action).
- Social Skills (reflection on processes, planning, working independently and in teams).

In particular they noticed that when the affective area of working was combined with the cognitive then this led to higher order of learning.

Out of classroom intergenerational learning

All these advantages for learning can also be gained when old and young people work together outside the classroom. In fact it could be argued that there are even more benefits because older people bring an entirely new dimension of knowledge, experience and enthusiasm to the context which will benefit young people. Although, as noted in a chapter below, there is a lack of research evidence about the effectiveness of young and old working together, the little we have and our experience seems to suggest that there is potential for significant added value. There are of course added pressures and challenges, but that is the case with nearly every educational innovation and step forward and experience tells us that any barriers are certainly worth overcoming.

As with out of classroom learning we believe the benefits of intergenerational learning outweigh the challenges in putting such programmes into place. Over the last twenty years, out of classroom learning has become the norm in many countries of Europe, In the UK 7 million school pupils engage in out of classroom experience during each school year and 86% of primary schools have a well organised out of classroom programme. We believe that schools and education authorities should develop a similar attitude to intergenerational learning and embed intergenerational practices in the own curriculum. Not only will young people's learning be enhanced but also social cohesion will be improved.

We have seen this happen. Old and young living in the same neighbourhood meet each other more often and say 'hello' on the street, in the supermarket, in the park or even maybe, some children go back to them for a visit. In the UK one of the most memorable occasions was when the children from Oakmeadow School who had been working with local residents of sheltered accommodation attended one of the residents 80th birthday party! It wasn't just for the cake – it was because they wanted to.

Similar experiences happened in Bulgaria where children interviewed elderly in a park in Sophia and in Holland where Veldwerk held an 'open activity' in a park in Amsterdam. Children went to the park, got instructions and started talking to the older people sitting there and even doing some activities and sharing the results with them. For the elderly this was a real surprise but one they highly appreciated.

The benefits of intergenerational environmental programmes

*Derived from the Environmental Protection Agency (USA) **

Intergenerational environmental programmes can take place at almost every type of location and setting, including schools, environmental centres, parks and playgrounds, community centres, city streets, fields, farms, and along stream banks. The Nature for Care project focuses on working with schools and elderly people but activities can also be provided by a wide range of environmental organisations or other locally based clubs and societies.

Environmental activities can fit into three broad categories -

- 1 Promoting environmental knowledge and awareness.
- 2 Conducting research on environmental issues.
- 3 Taking action to preserve or improve the environment.

However, while unique in some respects, these activities mostly are all integrated.

The added value of intergenerational environmental programmes

Learning involves activity, learning new knowledge, reflection and application. Of course, the age diversity determines which issues are the most appropriate for activities, discussion and debate between old and young. Intergenerational learning catalyses creative processes and opens ideas for exploration.

Intergenerational programmes can also give opportunities to make the environment seem more relevant. Activities can help participants learn how the environment can influence them on a personal level and teach important values. Intergenerational environmental projects can instill a greater sense of "environmental stewardship", as young people can see the impact of changing environments on the people they are learning from. As a result there is the potential to instill a lifelong ethic of community service, and the concept of working hard results in future returns.





Intergenerational environmental education can give an added impact to an understanding about how the environment changes over time – the older people in the group can explain to the younger members how things were in the past and investigate the processes that led to these changes. As the physical environment changes, so does the way that people interact with it. Such changes are often difficult to observe during a short-term program. Through intensive intergenerational dialogue, programme participants can piece together a longer-term view of the environment that includes the past and projects into the future.

And lastly, these intergenerational programmes - because they work with people of different ages, can promote inclusiveness and collaboration in local environmental improvement efforts. As well as providing added value for both old and young in working and learning together there are also benefits for each group specifically and for the wider community.

Benefits for the community

- Because intergenerational programmes bring together different age groups they can help to dispel negative stereotypes. Sharing talents and resources across ages help to create a unified group identity. Children, youth, and older adults are less alienated when the community recognizes that they are contributing members of society.
- Intergenerational activities have the potential to encourage more older people to be involved in community activities – older people enjoy activities that involve older and younger participants and hence are more likely to participate.
- It might seem a little financially selfish, but when groups representing young and old approach local funders, those funders are more likely to respond positively because they can see broad-based community support. Intergenerational programs can save money and stretch scarce resources by sharing sites and/or resources.

- Intergenerational programmes promote the transmission of cultural traditions and values from older to younger generations, helping to build a sense of personal and societal identity while encouraging tolerance.
- Intergenerational programmes can unite community members to take action on local community issues that address needs across the generations.

Benefits for youth and children

- Interaction with older adults enhances young people's communication skills, promotes self-esteem, develops problem-solving abilities, and fosters friendships across generations. Positive attitudes are developed regarding sense of purpose and community service.
- There is some evidence to show that for some groups intergenerational programmes increase school attendance and performance. We have evidence of this from the NfC programme where some pupils who did not perform well in school obviously were learning when working with older people.
- Children and young people gain positive role models with whom they can interact on a regular basis. Older adult volunteers often help to provide children and youth with consistency.

Benefits for older adults

- Older adults can still be productive, useful, and contributing members of society. The problem is that often society does not see them in this way. Interaction with children and young people can help to prevent isolation in later years.
- Older adults learn new innovations and technologies from their younger counterparts.
- Intergenerational programmes often afford older adults an opportunity to participate in a meaningful activity. This decreases loneliness, boredom, and depression while increasing self-esteem. Older volunteers report more enriched lives, a renewed sense of purpose, and increased coping skills for their personal struggles.
- Positive feelings about life generally contributes to the maintenance of good health, and can diminish the effect of psychological and physical diseases and disorders.



Setting up an intergenerational programme between a school and a care home

There is no formal set method to setting up an intergenerational learning programme between schools and organisations working with older people. No one school or one group of elderly people are the same. Every situation will be different and you will have to think creatively and develop activities and a programme appropriate for the older people and schools pupils you are working with.

This chapter contains suggestions and handy hints on how to organise a successful intergenerational programme and develop activities to support that programme. They are based on the experience of the partners in the Nature for Care project across Europe rather than any theoretical approach and we hope that they are helpful.

1 Getting started

You are keen and want to do something with intergenerational practices? That's how we felt when we joined the project. So how did we start? What did we learn?

- 1.1 Whether you are a non governmental organisation (NGO) or a school or a care home, do make sure that you have enough support from the key stakeholders and enough people to develop and deliver a successful programme. Intergenerational learning is something that can't easily be done alone. Also, be sure in your own mind that you can give enough time and energy to a programme. Although single activities have their value, a longer term programme over a year or during primary school time once or twice a year, brings greater benefits, especially to the older people. When children become 80 themselves they still will remember it as a 'normal' part of curriculum. There are specific challenges if you are an NGO as your initial role will be to bring schools and care homes together – be the inspiring intermediary. We have found that a key success factor is to find a "champion" in both organisations – someone willing to promote the project with energy and who might be able to continue it after your programme has finished. In the UK we found out that one of the parent governors of the school, was really keen on promoting the project. She has access to the school and head teacher that an NGO might not have.

It is also worth remembering that older people can be found in different contexts within a community. Care homes are the most obvious because they are physical structures with staff and in one way are the easiest groups to work with. However older people can be found in sheltered accommodation as well, and in many communities there are day centres for the elderly. Nature for Care also works for these groups. Old people also live alone and perhaps only get out a few times a week to things like lunch clubs, Church activities and so on. Making contact with other providers of activities for the elderly might also provide opportunities.

- 1.2 The next step is to meet the school and the care home staff before starting to create a programme. These meetings are important for a number of reasons.

Initial meetings are important in building trust between the different partners involved in developing any programme. It is important that you know each other and that you are able to make sure that expectations of both are going to be met in any programme that you plan together. This is especially the case with schools and particularly if you are thinking of taking older people into the school.

If you are an NGO setting up a link between a school and care home it is especially important that you have an understanding of how both organisations work – and the

constraints that both work within. For schools this will include the pattern of the school year, when exams might happen and when other regular events take place for example. Schools are usually very busy places with 101 different expectations placed on teachers' time. For schools it's important that it's not an additional activity but as much as possible part of the curriculum. Care homes are also busy places with the rhythm of each day being more critical, especially things like meal times, nursing, sleeping and visiting times.

There are also issues related to the sustainability of the programme. Most schools will say "yes" to many things if it does not cost them anything or if someone else does all the work and their staff are not put under pressure. Keeping the programme going after say an NGO has run it for a year is more of a challenge, especially if it is not a government or local education priority. This is not being critical of schools. It is just being very realistic.

If you are not experienced in working with older people then meeting with the care home staff is important in helping you to understand what it is like to work with older people. Getting some background knowledge is important and although you can learn by just doing it is better to have some knowledge first to avoid the most basic mistakes – hopefully some chapters in this book might help!

Initial meetings also enable you to be clear about the purpose of your partnership and programme. Is it for your pupils to learn from the elderly or elderly to learn from your pupils or a mixture? How often are you going to meet? Is there going to be a specific content focus for your activities? In the UK for example, the residents of a sheltered housing unit meet with a group from the nearby primary school six times over the period of a year and we found that this worked well.

- 1.3 The next step could be to have **meetings with the older people and the school pupils** themselves.

Before putting your programme together it is also worth having separate meetings with the older people and school pupils you will be working with. This will give you an opportunity to share your programme ideas with both groups and get their feedback – and also talk to them about what they feel they can contribute to the programme. It is also a chance to get discuss any worries that they might have, and perhaps give some reassurance. Some of the young people involved in NfC for example, were worried about what they would do if an older person became ill, or wanted the toilet. The older people were worried that they wouldn't have anything to say to the younger people. Meetings before the programme starts also give a chance to develop any skills needed, such as how to push a wheel chair. The Veldwerk Nederland programme on Nature for Care spent some time working with children on this kind of preparatory activities.

Meetings are also a way of finding out about the skills and knowledge of older people and how they can contribute. Real learning is all about giving and enhancing confidence and if older people are able – then giving them an opportunity to contribute to young people's learning is highly empowering. The talk given by one of the old people in Holland Close about the local community in the past for example was hugely memorable and was not only interesting, but also supported the History curriculum in school.

2 Creating your programme

- 2.1 In planning your programme it is useful to bear a number of points in mind. The KISS principle is a good one throughout - Keep it short and simple!

If this is the first time that you created an intergenerational programme then it is useful to work with groups that already have some contact with each other. For example, in the UK the partnership between Adcote and Isle Court Care home started when young children visited the care home to sing to the older people at Christmas time. This led to discussions

about ways in which the links could be developed and allowed a fuller programme to be created. This meant that there was already some support for a programme and the care home were willing to welcome more contact as a result of a previous positive experience. The partnership with Holland Close sheltered accommodation started because it was right next to the school and there had been some contact in the past that our project was re-energising.

- 2.2 Depending on your experience – start with situations you know you can manage and be confident with! Do be aware of the kind of elderly people your pupils are working with and prepare the children for them. In the UK the group we started work with are a fairly easy group! Some of the residents of the sheltered accommodation complex are in wheel chairs but most are mobile and all were able to take a full part in activities. We thought that this was a good way to start as we did not have much experience of intergenerational learning ourselves – and neither did the children or older people. The second school and care home we are working is more challenging and the next step up the ladder of learning for ourselves. It is difficult for young children to work with adults with dementia for example as they might not understand their silences or conversation or their specific needs. Having said that when we did start the work, the young people adapted easily to the elderly people and mostly felt that they were doing something good.
- 2.3 Be flexible. You might have something specific in mind and suggesting ideas is always good, but both the school and care home will have needs as well which means you might have to adapt. In the UK for example, the older people really wanted to share their physical education activities with the children – and although it was difficult to link this to the topic of environment or nature - we managed it! It was important to do because the idea came from the older people themselves and we wanted to demonstrate that we valued them and weren't just forcing our ideas and approaches on them.
- 2.4 Is your activity going to be a one off or part of a longer programme? As has already been said, any activity, even a single visit, will be worthwhile. However if you can build a number of visits into a programme and develop longer term links between a care home and school, this would be even better. It will enable young people and older people to get to know each other and build relationships that would have a longer term impact on the learning for both groups and social cohesion generally.
- 2.5 In the first instance, if possible, don't involve too many children. In the UK we worked with a small group of ten to begin with, and next year might involve more. Having said that in some countries such as Holland and Hungary, splitting a class of children up is more of a challenge and so they are used to working with larger groups and have developed strategies

The teacher who played piano

In the big community room of a care home 30 elderly and 26 children met each other for a joint activity. They all looked forward to it. "I leave it all up to you", the teacher said. During the activity he noticed that in fact he had 'nothing to do', but there stood a big piano. And he could play piano, rather well "Is it allowed to?" Nobody knew so I said yes. During the activities he played more than one hour a complete repertoire of old songs. A lot of elderly and children recognized them and several times some started to sing softly. A great atmosphere.

"We should do that more often", he said, "but unfortunately I don't know much about nature". "So why don't you come back for a also music event, a kind of intergenerational sing song" I said. "Yes, please," two girls behind us said. "I don't know", he said

I don't know if he did but in fact but I hope so..... Focusing on nature is good, but music can be a great medium for learning as well - and games, reading, some sports, creative activities The list is almost endless.



to do this. Older people appreciate regular contact with other people, not just one-off events. If you can form a small group of children who can get to know the adults over a period of time this will help to build relationships and trust and will help hugely with any learning process that is taking place. Taking the same children each time can be also important. In Hungary the experience was that the elderly were rather disappointed when different children came second time. The elderly expected the same children and had made gifts for them, but in school all the children wanted to go and so different children were selected. This is an issue be having clear communication as well.

Seeing too many different faces can also disorientate older people. Knowing and remembering names and faces is very important (even for people with dementia). The same goes for the number of elderly people as well. If there are too many this reduces the potential for interaction and on a practical levels means that you have to find larger rooms and more resources.

- 2.6 In creating your programme and activities talk to the care home about what might interest the elderly people and how your work fits in with their programme. Maybe this can provide a starting point. Isle Court care home for example, has quite a well developed programme of activities and so we had to make sure that we did not repeat anything they had already done. The staff there could also give ideas about what the residents enjoyed that we could build on. Our first activity was a quiz because we were told that the older people liked quizzes. Likewise – for schools, some topics might fit the curriculum better than others.
- 2.7 When planning the activities within your programme it is useful to -
- work with at least one of the 5 different senses - hearing, sight, taste, touch and smell. In Belgium we saw a programme about butterflies using all senses.
 - if possible go outside for a walk and taking a lot of various equipment with you such as butterfly nets, find maps, magnifying glasses, measure tapes etcetera.
 - prepare both indoor and outdoor activities – the weather is often unpredictable.
 - don't focus too much, or only, on learning! Have a balance between the overall experience and learning. Both groups should have fun. The children will remember things for a long time and tell stories at home. This is important for dissemination and gives some publicity.
 - don't underestimate the skills and strength of children!

- 2.8 Don't forget to keep the school involved in the whole process. Challenge them to see the contents as part of the curriculum.

3. Making your programme sustainable

- 3.1 Our programmes and activities have all been delivered as part of the Nature for Care EU funded project and all projects one day come to an end! The challenge for the organisations taking part in the project is to ensure that intergenerational learning still takes place between children and young people in schools and older people in different care contexts.
- 3.2 One success criteria is to make sure that at least one member of staff at the school and the Care Home is fully committed to the project and willing to take the project forward when the input from and external organisation changes be that input funding or people. This might take some time to develop. In the UK although we had significant moral support from both the Care Home organisation and from the head teacher and staff in the school, their time was limited and we had to find volunteers from parents who would continue to support the project and assist both school and older people to continue the programme.

TOP 12 MISTAKES in Intergenerational Activities

This list of the top 12 mistakes is based on research from across the UK and on experience gained from Manchester's "Generations Together" programme (2009-2011).

- 1 Not preparing the groups of younger and older people before they meet and work together, or working with one group more than the other.
- 2 Not having a mutually beneficial element for both younger and older people.
- 3 Parachuting younger and older people together and then separating them, never to meet again.
- 4 Ignoring the experiences and beliefs of participants. For example, not taking into account prejudice and mistrust towards younger/older people, or fatigue from over engagement, or participation in other activities.
- 5 Trying to recruit people to boring initiatives – why would people want to get involved in something dull?
- 6 Not sufficiently planning the project's aims, or how activities will be carried out, or how the project could be developed.
- 7 Not having committed or active partners.
- 8 Ignoring discussion points like different perceptions between old and young, conflicts between generations, how to build positive mutual relations and shared concerns. When these have not been considered, then aims have not been achieved.
- 9 Having a coordinator or development worker who has not been trained in intergenerational practice or who has no experience of working with younger and older people in community settings.
- 10 Not considering the appropriateness of the approach in achieving the aims, and not considering the time-commitment involved for participants.
- 11 Using a short term and one-off approach that doesn't develop into lasting projects with longer term benefits.
- 12 Not understanding the concerns of participants and what stage they are at in their lives – this can impact on how well the groups interact.

- 3.3 In developing activities it is useful to create those that can be copied easily and don't need huge external inputs. If you are an NGO then it is fairly easy to create a complex and highly resource and skills dependent activity. This is what you do well. However, once you have introduced the programme to the care home then the goal should be that the care home staff or other volunteers run the programme in the future on a regular basis. You will probably still need to give support, but make sure that the care home staff and school teachers have access to ideas for activities that don't have a huge resource input or take a long time to prepare. Perhaps you could leave the care home with a programme they could deliver easily.

The experience in Holland is that leaving a folder with information, instructions, activities, stories and a cd-rom with essential documents helps, but is not a guarantee that a school and care home will continue the programmes/activities. In Nature Circus II it was a duty for care home staff to attend 2 or 3 trainings afterwards and this has been more effective. Step by step they are repeating activities and inviting more schools to be involved.

- 3.4 Schools will continue with programmes not just because they are easy to do but also if the teachers, parents and pupils can see a value in the experience. Research undertaken by the Nature for Care project has demonstrated that there are positive benefits from undertaking intergenerational learning for both school pupils and older people. These benefits include learning as well as an enhancing social cohesion – for example through giving greater confidence about working with people of different ages. There are also informal benefits as well. The head teacher of Oakmeadow School has told us of how parents have come to him unasked, to say how much their sons and daughters have enjoyed the Nature for Care activities.



Creating activities for intergenerational learning – some suggestions



The success of your programme will depend largely on how well you know characteristics of the older people you are working with, how well you are prepared and how you interact with elderly, how you take evaluations in account and so on -

- 1 Encourage the school pupils and adults with you to respect older people and be interested in them – as individuals. It is very easy to talk to older people as if they were children. They are not – and for many their minds are as active as ever, it's just that their bodies haven't kept up! In the Isle Court Care Home we had three teachers in the group – including one ex head teacher from a large primary school in London. I reflected about the experience they must have between them and was challenged about how to transfer this to the young people they were working with. They certainly got more right answers in the quiz.
- 2 Make sure that all the activities involve children and older people working in groups – but don't overwhelm older people with too many children in a group. If there are too many they will talk to each other and not the elderly and someone will be left out. Generally one older person and two children is a good ratio. If you have a lot of children with a group of elderly it would be better to divide the group in two halves. One group is going to talk, play or work with the elderly, the other one is doing their own activity. Halfway groups can change positions.

Also make sure that there are lots of opportunities for talking and encourage the young people to talk through a series of structured activities. Without some guidance it is often difficult for young people to make conversation after they have exchanged names and ages. Games like eco bingo, or questionnaires or working together on joint activities creates conversation opportunities. At school you or the teacher can prepare with the children some questions they can ask. In most cases elderly and children come from the same place/town or they are born elsewhere, they went to a primary school, played (as a child) same or different

games, love sports (or not), had pets at home and so on. Around such questions you can start the activity with a "10-minute talk".

- 3 Before the activities make sure that everybody knows what the expectations are. The most important goal is that the older people can enjoy the activity as much as possible. To ensure that this happens the care home staff, any teachers and of course the children, need to know what their roles and responsibilities are and who they can go to if they need help.
- 4 Think in advance about the best way to introduce an activity. Older people may become confused if something happens or changes quickly. Care home staff will help here. An 'invasion' of 24 children or the announcement "we all go out in 10 minutes" can completely disturb their balance and confuse. Make sure that the elderly are prepared quietly – maybe in two or three steps - about what is going to happen.
- 5 Make sure that the activities don't take too long. We have found that one and a half hours is enough – with two hours at the most – made up of short activities from 20-40 minutes. Many old people get tired quickly so you might also need to pay attention that the spontaneity and energy of the children has not been a burden to the older people. Also bear in mind that some older people don't like to leave their familiar environments and have concerns that children will not have.

Match the number of topics to the available time and the participants. For the elderly it shouldn't be too much/too busy and for the children it should not be too long or too boring. Don't go too quickly otherwise older people might get lost and be flexible over timing – don't insist on doing everything you have prepared if it is obvious that you don't have the time. The activities and programme is for the older people and children to enjoy – it's not an obligatory curriculum you have to get through in the available time. It's good to have some activities, questions or stories in reserve if there is some time left or stop if you see/feel it's enough for that moment.

- 6 Working with older people with **dementia** can be a special challenge but it is important to realise that even elderly with serious dementia and other limitations can participate in their way! Activities with nature are great for people with dementia because of the focus on sensory perception. In relations to senses, the touch stays till the very last moments of someone's life. Those with dementia also enjoy looking at activities without active participation. But, involve them as much as possible!

Special advice on working with older people in wheelchairs

If you go out with older people in wheel chairs, give clear instructions to the children and demonstrate how to push people forwards and backwards, how and when to use the brakes and so on. This is especially important when children are pushing elderly people near or on a road, or for example when they leave the foot path, turn around to go backwards or to left or right.

For the elderly this information is important so they know what is going to happen and they feel safe. Sudden movements can scare them. Pushers are always looking at the back of the occupants head and so it is important to tell

them every movement or change to the person in the wheelchair. At crossings, lights, speed bumps, and when leaving the footpath, adults should be supervising. However, adults should only help with the pushing if necessary. Many children really don't appreciate it when they get 'unwished' for help! After all - it's their job!

Going out with wheelchairs two children for one wheelchair is ideal. All children like to push and with two they can change half way and whilst one pushes the other can guide it and carry resources for activities .

Most elderly people with serious dementia don't talk much by themselves. Sometimes it's good to ask about specific memories but don't expect and wait for immediate answers. Go on in a quiet way questioning others and later ask something different. Let children go around with pictures, old tools and toys to remind them of the past and if they don't know then the child can give the answer. You will find the response is probably much higher. Our experience is that sometimes NfC activities can unlock memories. One example is of a man who recognized an old tool and said aloud that it was carbide lamp. For the NfC team this was a normal reaction but the three care workers who were taking part said that this was the first time they had heard him speak in the two months he had been in the home.

Also pay attention to each individual in a way that shows that each person counts. Some elderly people don't like to talk in a group. You can help them. In a short conversation it might happen that he or she really has an interesting story to share with the whole group. Be aware of such signals and help them with what they want to tell. In this way you also do not overlook the more quiet elderly.

Repeat information by telling the same story or instruction in different ways. This allows most of the older people to get a chance to understand it. The same applies if you show things or do something. Do it in different ways and repeat activities.

- 7 Make sure that you prepare activities well and are prepared to be flexible. We found that the activities that work the best involved visual and tactile materials and produce a finished end product such as a nestbox or candle made of beeswax. It is also important to make sure that activities are well supported by resources. The resources also shouldn't be too small and difficult to handle, as some old people have problems holding things. Likewise, things like knives and even scissors could be a challenge. Care home staff will be able to tell if it's possible or even allowed. Don't arrange the program and resources at the last moment – but well in advance. It isn't only people with dementia that forget things. Be aware of your position and the position or number of resources you use. Make sure everyone can see you and the resources very well. Pass the used resources you use around so that older people can touch and feel them.
- 8 Don't be afraid of allowing certain space for improvisation to be able to respond to changes or unexpected comments or questions from the older people. Prepare the children for this so that they can respond positively. Having said that, the amount of spontaneity will depend on what the care home staff judge to be the best way of working with their residents. Some don't like unexpected - for others it's no problem at all, even refreshing.
- 9 Don't make either the children or older people do anything that they don't feel comfortable with. This means you need to be sensitive to what is happening in the group interaction and be prepared to intervene if necessary. Usually the leader will be the first one to notice if something doesn't go as planned but don't give up if you make mistakes. Be aware of them, learn from and obviously try and avoid them next time.
- 10 Matching activities to ages – health and safety. Some children can be very energetic and tire older people quickly. On the other hand, children who are timid and shy will sometimes find it difficult to work together with hearing-impaired elderly and conversation might be difficult. Children will also need to be encouraged to speak clearly, and depending on the hearing ability of the older people, loudly. Also, do be alert if the matching old/young doesn't seem to be working and change things so that everyone gets a good feeling and the learning works as well.
- 11 Do check out the rooms you will be meeting in. In the Czech Republic there were only small rooms in one care home for an activity with more than the expected number of participants and this made some of the activities a challenge. Some of the activities also require specific facilities such as access to hot water, or a cooker, or need a room where it doesn't matter if liquid is spilled on the floor for example.

- 12 When visiting older people in a care home, do make sure that you are on time and well organised! Getting groups of older people together in a room can take some time and if you are late then this disrupt the care home day!
- 13 Use help and inspiration from other organisations as well as any volunteers. In the NfC activities in Belgium some of the volunteers were a mine of information and support. Sometimes visiting family members have joined in as well and if visitors arrive during the activity invite them to join in rather than taking an elderly participant away!
- 14 Practice activities before hand if possible. It's useful to build up experiences with the activity, resources needed, time schedule and of course, to make sure that they work, and how to explain them.

Top tips working with elderly people

These top tips are derived from the Dutch Dementia Network and the Institute Alzheimer-Nederland. We believe most of this tips apply in general for everyone who works with "others", from young to (very) old.

Do

- 1 Approach elderly people from the front not from the side.
- 2 Make eye contact.
- 3 Sit on about the same level, if necessary bend your knees.
- 4 Speak calmly, clearly and at a normal speed.
- 5 Use common words in conversation.
- 6 Be friendly.
- 7 Look pleased when you are understood.
- 8 Repeat things if necessary.
- 9 Say what you're going to do in an activity or if you have to leave to if get something.
- 10 Give heartfelt compliments: 'Your hair looks beautiful'.
- 11 Provide security so that the elderly feel comfortable.
- 12 Ask about something the elderly might have experienced in life.

Don't:

- 1 Speak in a childish way.
- 2 Hurry elderly people through activities.
- 3 Interrupt too soon in a conversation if the elderly person is looking for an answer.
- 4 Ask too many test type questions - 'What have you eaten? Who has visited you this morning?'
- 5 Repeat twice, thrice, four times the same question.
- 6 Tell them they have done something wrong directly. For example, don't say "You have done that wrong", but turn it into a suggestion such as "Do you think this way is working."
- 7 Reproach elderly people 'You shouldn't do this
- 8 Prohibit - 'You are not allowed
- 9 Forget to say goodbye when you leave.

Working with people with dementia

by Mathias Gunst*

"It's been 84 years, and I can still smell the fresh paint. The china had never been used. The sheets had never been slept in." (Rose Dewitt Bukater – Titanic)

In 1997, "The Titanic" was one of the most popular films. Everyone remembers Rose's love story. As a result of the discovery of a well-preserved painting in the ship, she told the whole story again. Through her way of telling, you could see that she experienced the whole story again as if it was yesterday. With appropriate emotions and feelings in her voice, she takes the listener into her story.

Once a care home spontaneously started to tell about the first meeting she had with her future husband, André. He was throwing snow balls against the window of a barn where she was working. The trigger for this conversation was just a picture of a snowy landscape. She then proceeded to describe that day in minute detail, even remembering what she had eaten that night and what her André was wearing. This moment of more than 60 years ago must have been very special for her. Far sunk in her memory but brought to the surface by the snow picture. These are two examples of the phenomenon called "reminiscence" or the act or process of retrieval of past experiences or events, of recalling or narrating past experiences, hidden memories triggered by stories, tools, pictures, smells and so on.

What is dementia?

Put very simply, children develop in four stages -

- 1 Children first experience their environment mainly through their senses. Children want to grab everything and put everything into their mouth. Step by step they also become more alert to all sorts of movements they see – a sensory phase.
- 2 In the next phase they learn to sit, crawl, and walk - a psychomotor phase.
- 3 When children grow older they learn what is right and wrong, happiness and sadness - an emotional phase.
- 4 Later on the child goes to school and begins to study and solve problems single-handedly - a cognitive phase of development.

Child development is always a process that happens in that sequence.

When an older person is diagnosed as having dementia then the process is operates in reverse. The first things that disappear are the cognitive functions. This is not the same as being forgetful - we all forget things - it is that they cannot store new experiences anymore. Often it is difficult or even impossible to notice this in first contacts with people. You talk with them, they respond and connect what you say with former experiences. But if you ask some days later whether they remember your visit or what they have done over the last few days, then they probably cannot remember it anymore. The next phase is one of unrestrained, more uncontrolled emotions when elderly people can be or become very angry or upset. The third phase is shown through their movement. For example they walk by shuffling their feet and their step pattern becomes smaller and smaller. Ultimately, there only sensory perception is left. But even people in advanced stages of dementia can still recognize several tastes and smells.

Reminiscence

Everyone reminisces - old and young! Very often we tell stories about the past, without being aware that we are reminiscing. It makes us think back to our youth, our rather worry-free time when we were children. Reminiscence is a good technique to use when working with older

*See page 64 Authors

people with dementia or early onset dementia. The purpose of this section is to give some hints and guidelines about how reminiscence can be used.

Triggers

The purpose of reminiscence is that fun is central. It stimulates the self-image of the narrator and can confirm self-esteem. There are of course sensitive reminiscence topics and for those who are not experts in working with older people, these are best avoided. For people with dementia memories of the past often become real life again in their minds. Whereas 'normal' people recognize our memories as just that - as memories - people with dementia can effectively experience specific parts of their past again. Through reminiscence care workers often can discover and understand the causes of different patterns of patient behaviour.

There are several ways to practice reminiscence. It can be done in small groups, or with individuals. Working with individuals has the advantage that you can concentrate on only one story and one person, while within reminiscence groups you must take account of different stories. But on the other hand in a group, stories may complement each other as one person's stories spark off ideas in another. It is up to the person working with the elderly people to manage these conversations. The structure and flow and whether you work with individuals or a group will depend on the situation (time, location) and the personalities of the residents.

"Reminiscence is the retrieval of memories associated with one event and its specific emotions and feelings." However, this does not mean that other events cannot be discussed, because ultimately one story can lead to another. It is up to the person working with the elderly people how far to go and how to manage discussions. When young people are working with elderly people with dementia great sensitivity and care is needed.

Professional carers and therapists for example, will often work on "integrated reminiscence." This means that during all daily activities (like washing, lunch or dinner, coffee chats) memories of the past actively can be inspired. It is a means of getting in contact with the resident to build up a bond of trust. Developing the idea further, some therapists will also use a technique called life review which reconstructs a person's life story.

Reminiscence and nature

Using nature as a trigger for reminiscence is a good way to work with those with dementia as nearly all older people have memories about nature. To do this you have to think carefully about the objectives of the activity. Goals such as "learning about the nature" or "exchanging knowledge with each other" are useful but they are not about reminiscence as such.

Some ideas for reminiscence conversations and activities

Old and young can start conversations about things they have in common. Both have been born somewhere, go/went to school, have/had jobs to do, probably have/had a cat or dog at home, like or don't like some food or drinks, have a favorite sports club, animal or colour.

Old and young can do sensory activities together. Children and elderly can smell or taste things. They can hold things like old tools or stuffed animals. Or make sounds on music instruments elderly probably remember.

Old and young can go outside together. Older people can hold a measuring tape when children measure a distance. Or throw balls children can try to catch in a net. Or do other activities together.

Of course there are limits. Find them but don't exceed them. Align all activities with school teachers and care home staff.



Reminiscence will take place when you give residents the opportunity to tell about their own nature experiences themselves - these are about memories and not knowledge. As leader of the activity you can use some knowledge about nature to inspire memories but as soon as a resident starts to narrate their own story, give him or her the opportunity to do so - and be aware when others are willing to add own experiences. Flexibility and allowing elderly peoples reminiscences to flow are the key factors.

Almost all elements in nature can be studied through the senses - smell, sight, hearing, touch and taste and people with dementia usually greatly enjoy these kinds of activities. Indeed, with the very elderly or residents with severe forms of dementia only these sensory channels can be used.

It is also helpful to be aware of some of the key words that people might use when reminiscing – they are highlighted in bold in the sentences below:

"**I remember when I was young**, my mother was always angry that her flowers would not bloom in the garden. She never knew I always peed on them."

"When I consider how the **past was better**, today's youth would not be able to live then."

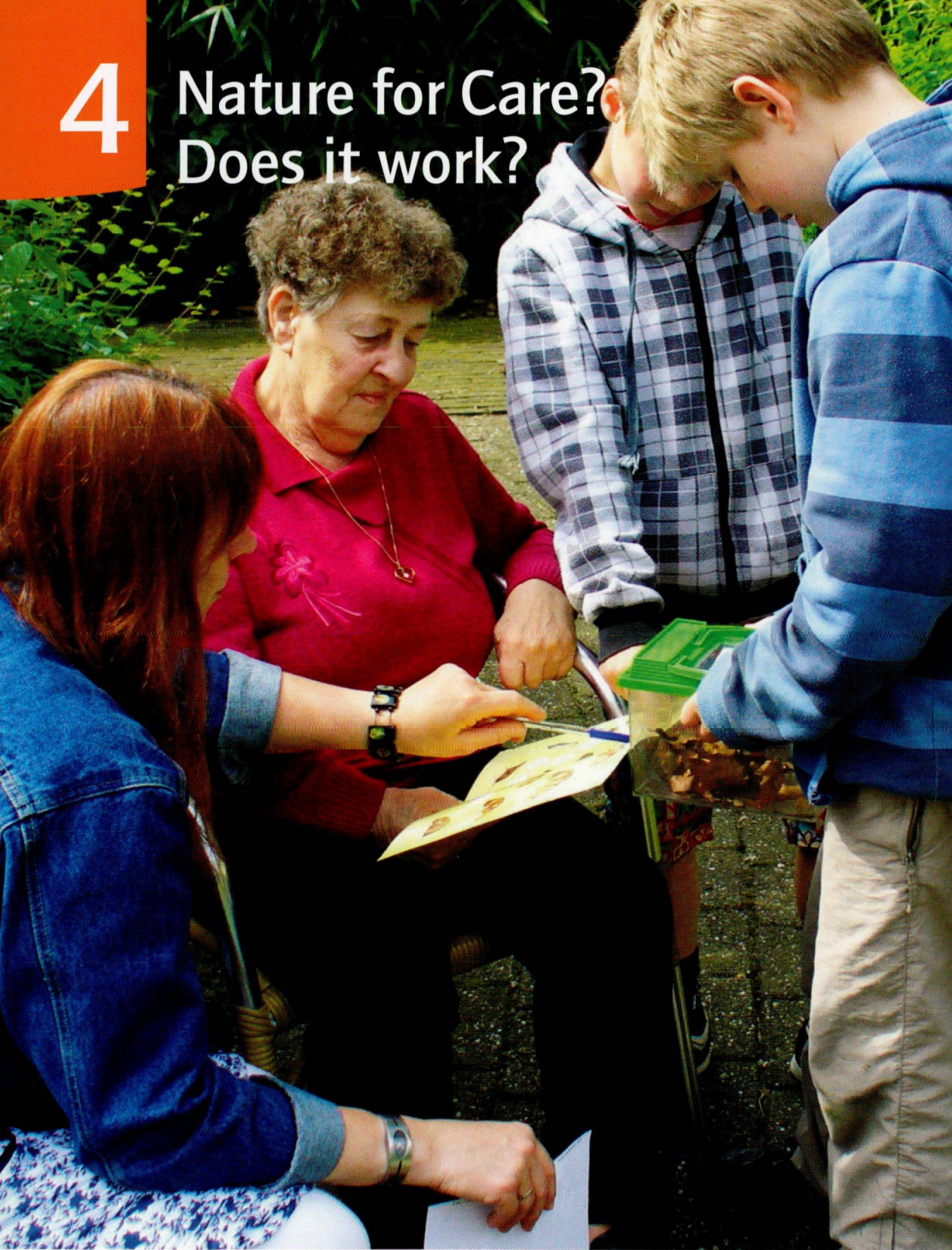
"The years fly by, and we are becoming greyer and greyer. But **we really have had a wonderful childhood**."

"If we are **baking waffles I always think about the street fair we had each year** in our neighborhood. It always smelled so good there."

"Reminiscence is the retrieval of memories, associated with one event and its specific emotions"

4

Nature for Care? Does it work?



The results of our research

The feedback gained from Nature for Care activities by each partner and country has been incredibly positive. The activities themselves have involved a lot of talking, doing and learning and the smiling faces of both the young people and elderly are proof that something good is happening and being enjoyed by all. Research by Veldwerk Nederland as part of a social cohesion project in Amsterdam has consistently shown evaluation scores of 8 and 9 out of a possible ten by young people, old people and teachers after each activity. This feedback has come from 180 people, and written comments have also been positive and encouraging. All the children and older people want to continue doing activities.

However one of the key questions we have to ask of our project is – “how are these activities contributing to social cohesion?” After all – strengthening social cohesion is one of the key goals of our Nature for Care project. Being realistic, it would be surprising if the unique and exciting approach of the NfC activities did not elicit positive responses immediately after the event. Children love missing school for part of a day – especially in countries where such out of classroom activities are rare. Of course they say they would like to do the activities again. Such feedback is of course necessary and a clear signal, but it is not sufficient on its own to demonstrate that social cohesion has been strengthened.

This chapter seeks to address this key question in two ways. Firstly, by describing the evaluation that has taken place within the project, and then secondly by briefly looking at research and feedback from other projects that have been undertaken with similar goals.

Project evaluation

Our project evaluation took the form of “before and after” questionnaires to young people and elderly taking part in the project. At the time of planning the evaluation it was recognised that questionnaires have a number of weaknesses as an evaluation tool for intergenerational learning and as a result we also planned to undertake a number of systematic structured interviews of different groups including school teachers and care home staff. For a variety of reasons however, these interviews did not happen in any formal or structured way and hence we have to rely on the questionnaire data. Having said that and recognising that there are issues to do with reliability and robustness of any conclusions several tentative conclusions can be made and these are described below.

The evaluation questionnaires and full tables of results can be found on our website www.natureforcare.eu

Although all the partners were asked to give questionnaires to the groups they worked with sufficient “before and after” data was received from three of the partner countries - the UK, Czech Republic and Belgium. Additional “before” data was received from Bulgaria and Hungary. The data for the UK, Belgium and Czech Republic was given by over 100 young people and 40 elderly people, in nine groups. It needs to be said that although all the partners used the same basic questionnaire, each partner adapted it and used a slightly different scoring system. Having said that, it was not a difficult process to align the scores to allow conclusions to be drawn.

The first is that around two thirds of the young people indicated that they had regular contact with elderly people, and about the same proportion of elderly had regular contact with young people outside the project. These were almost all family contacts and were associated with meals, recreation events, birthdays and grandparents looking after their grandchildren.

This result shows that perhaps assumptions about young and old being having decreasing amounts of contact might not necessarily be true when family contacts are taken into account. The major part of intergenerational activities take place within families. The amount of regular contact with between older and young people outside a family context was very low - under 10%.

Learn from each other

Another significant finding is that a number of the questions scored highly even before the project had started and were only little changed by the project activities. For example, young people said that they enjoyed being with older people, liked talking to older people, that older people were good to work with and that it was good for young people to get to know older people. It is also worth pointing out that the different groups of children and young people showed different results in terms of what changed before and after working on an intergenerational learning activity. So for example, in one of the Belgian groups only 14% of young people said before that they could learn something from elderly people, and although this rose of 24% after the activity, it doesn't come anywhere close to another school where three quarters of young people said that they could learn from elderly people – a proportion that just declined somewhat after the activity! The reasons for these differences are not obvious but could perhaps lie in the young people's family experience or in the nature of the activity undertaken. Some activities for example might provide more opportunities for young people to learn from elderly people than others. Another explanation could be in the way the questionnaires were managed and how much "help" some pupils had in completing them after the event.

Having said that there were three areas where positive changes seemed to take place as a result of the project. Young people -

- felt more confident talking to older people,
- considered that that they could learn things from elderly people and
- that there should be more contact between old and young.

In all three cases the proportion of young people agreeing with the statements strongly almost doubled from 50% to 90%. We felt that this result was significant in terms of creating more meaningful relationships between the generations and possibility encouraging more interaction. Further questions attempted to find out more detail from the elderly and young people about what they enjoyed and learned. The young people were incredibly positive – all of them (100%) said that they had learned something from the elderly people, with the exact details depending on the different activities they had taken part in each country. They were less certain that the elderly people had learned something from them – only one third were certain and another third thought that they might have!

What is also encouraging is that there is some evidence that these are long term changes. The questionnaire was repeated in one of the UK schools at the end of a year of activities and all the indicators of change remained high and in some cases the scores rose compared with the initial post questionnaire scores. For example, the results were even clearer that young people were confident that they could learn from elderly people and that the elderly could learn from them. Bearing in mind that in pre project questionnaires nearly everyone overestimates positive attributes and in post project questionnaires they tend to underscore, then the positive changes highlighted by the score are likely to be real and meaningful.

There were also some improvements in what the elderly people learned before and after the project. The most significant change was that elderly people's enjoyment of being with young people increased and that the elderly people said that they had begun to have a greater understanding of how young people think.

Again it needs to be emphasised that these results are based on a relatively small sample of elderly and young people and have to be treated carefully – but nevertheless they do show the

positive impact of the project on some indicators of social cohesion and this is encouraging.

It is important to point out however, that very elderly people were not enthusiastic when completing questionnaires. Many of them couldn't write very well in their old age and for them the learning was not that relevant. They enjoyed the activities, met nice children and had a great morning. They liked the nature stories and activities very much but didn't see them as learning. Questionnaires are probably best used with the "younger elderly".

Trimbos Institute

Research has also been carried out by other organisations on the impact of intergenerational learning which both supports and adds to the conclusions of the NfC research. Veldwerk Nederland for example commissioned research from the Trimbos Institute in the Netherlands to evaluate their intergenerational programme, especially their "Heden en Verleden" (Now and Then) programmes that largely focused on working with elderly people with dementia. The overall conclusion was that for the elderly people the programme was beneficial. The elderly people took pleasure in the activities which provided them with various stimuli and livened up their daily routine.

For schools, teachers indicated that the social, educational and pedagogical aspects of such activities are important and they also believed that children learn a lot from their participation, though without saying exactly what they learn. Having said that, teachers also see this kind of activities as "extra", not as part of the curriculum.

The Trimbos Research also highlighted a wider effect of intergenerational learning when it the activity took place outside. Not only was this an added dimension for the elderly people but the fact that it took place in public meant that other people in the community saw it happening and on several occasions members of the public applauded or complimented the group! Feedback from children to parents, family, friends and even neighbours is also positive and enthusiastic and highlight their appreciation of the activities.

The overall message from both the NfC and Trimbos Research is that intergenerational learning if planned and managed effectively, can bring immediate learning and social benefits to both groups and potentially make a contribution in the long term towards enhancing social cohesion.

However because much of the evidence is based on restricted case studies and limited numbers of people our conclusions and one of our recommendations is that more wide ranging and effective research is needed on the benefits of intergenerational learning and it's contribution towards building social cohesion. As stated at the beginning of this chapter – there is a lot of anecdotal evidence and obvious enjoyment of activities, but little research of the longer term impact of such work. More fundamental research will – as we strongly believe – confirm all beneficial aspects of this kind of activities.

5

Intergenerational Activities



Some examples and encouragement

Introduction

There is no room in a short publication of this nature to include all the activities developed through the Nature for Care Project. Instead we have selected one group of activities from each of the partners to share. All the activities can be found on our web site and can be downloaded from there.

On following pages there are 6 different activities - one activity from each partner or country - that were successful as intergenerational activities. Please feel free to use them, adapt them and improve them!

The themes are:

Bulgaria:	Family tree; activity about genealogy
Czech Republic:	Herbs and their use
Holland:	Outdoor activity
United Kingdom:	Recycling; making pom poms from plastic bags
Hungary:	The wonderful world of birds
Belgium:	Winter cold; a feel game around fur

If you are an individual teacher reading this book, then our recommendation for getting started is to look at your curriculum and find one or two places where you think that working with older people would be able to support and enhance children's learning and then contact a local care home to see a programme could be created. In our experience, most care homes will welcome you with open arms.

One or two activities each year per class are great – but if you want to create a more sustainable programme then obviously this will involve discussions with more members of staff and your head teacher. Having said that, change in schools often comes about through trying things out – and when they work and are successful, it is much easier to get others to do them and have them adopted as part of a whole school approach.

Some some quick ideas for pupils of different ages -

- 4 years old: go for a walk, go to the care home, blowing bubbles, drink lemonade.
- 5 years old: old and young singing new or traditional songs together.
- 6 years old: children read their first book to the elderly; the best public they can wish.
- 7 years old: playing (old) games together, do a nature quiz or nature bingo.
- 8 years old: geography lesson with maps/atlas, covering a national map with flowers.
- 9 years old: creativity time, drawing, making collages with natural or waste elements.
- 10 years old: gardening or sowing activity, making green snacks from fruits.
- 11 years old: going out, doing a water investigation, naming water animals, working with identification lists, measuring trees, making flower cards, looking for tracks.
- 12 years old: trip to the woods, a park, a super market or a garden centre.

So for intergenerational practices nature or sustainability is just one of the possibilities. In common all activities start with a "getting to know you" activity followed by an introductory talk, instructions and activities to do or make something together to eat or to give each other as present.

Family Tree

Summary

Family Tree is a short indoor activity about genealogy lasting about an hour. It's an example of an intergenerational activity that can be used with all kinds of subjects. The activity can be extended through using historical and contemporary facts related to the participant's families and family trees.



Objectives

Both the elderly and young people make their own Family Tree and show each other that this research is rewarding and fun. Young people will also learn the meaning of such vocabulary as genealogy, generation, surname, maiden name and pedigree.

Resources

Flip chart paper, coloured markers, glue, family photos (printed copies of old photographs), scissors, large clear glass gems (available at craft stores), transparent-drying glue and round magnets. Using these the young people and the elderly make their own family tree in words and pictures.

Description

It's safe to say that most people know the names of their grandparents and maybe even where they were born and their birthdays. But if you also know the names of your great-grandparents, you're doing better than most. By talking and asking questions about their own memories old and young can gather and record specific information about their families. With this activity we would like to provide you some ideas you can use in making a "Family Tree" activity for elderly and young working together.

Preparation

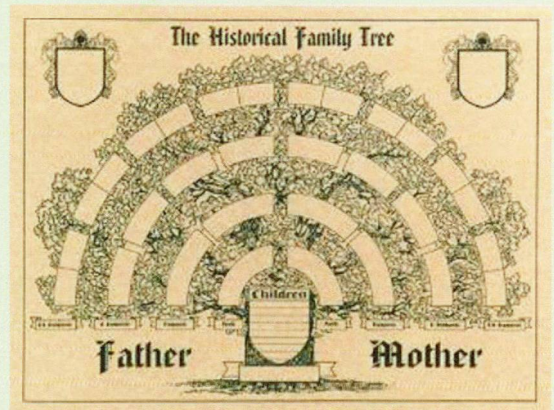
If it's possible you should do this activity in advance with the same students who will work later with the elderly on the "Family Tree". It's important to explain children that the word "genealogy" means the history of families. It is the history of their mother, father, grandmothers, grandfathers, great grandparents on and on into the past as far as they can go. Expand this family grouping by making a chart of all family members that each child has ever met in person, or spoken to on the telephone.

Activities

Make a Family Tree

The elderly and young people work together in small groups or pairs and talk about their own family and using their own format, make their own Family Tree. The picture on the right is an old picture of someone's Family Tree.

Each student makes their own family tree – if possible as preparation at school – and helps elderly to remember and talk about their relatives, possibly even celebrities in the family, and about different aspects in their life.





Make a Family Tree Book

The Family Tree activity can be extended with all kinds of historical or more recent information about the family. The young and old can ask each other questions such as: Where do you live, where has your family lived before (or maybe still lives)? What animals did you have at home and do you have animals now? Did you grow potatoes or vegetables and breed chickens yourselves? What kind of food do you like the most? Do you have a favorite book or region in the country? It can all be recorded in a Family Tree Book.

Tips for the Family Tree Book

Ask students to find and to bring from home (or from their relatives' homes) photos or printed copies of old family photographs. This will encourage them to find out more and to learn some interesting stories from relatives as well.

Bring some photo albums or magazines with pictures of the town and its most well known sights. Discuss with elderly and children why they think families are important and what they like or dislike about their families or situations in the past. After preparing this at school probably young and old can do this entirely themselves. But it's good to prepare some appropriate questions yourselves.

The best time to learn valuable family history and take group family pictures is during family reunions. Those photos also will be cherished when some family members are not with you anymore. Chatting with family members may provoke them or other family members to remember cute stories. Like almost any new activity Family Tree is valuable as intergenerational learning and social activity. Experience it yourselves and develop a method, instructions and forms for an own activity.

Both children and elderly can make a simple Family Tree Book. Preferably the children have already made one as preparation at school. During the meeting they first show and explain their Family Book to the elderly. Then together they make a Family Tree Book for the elderly by asking them questions to help the elderly remember their family members and aspects of their early life. It can make them feel special and at the centre of a specific group of people - their family. On www.natureforcare.eu activities like Family Tree are worked out and include questionnaires and a model for a Family Tree Book.

It's nice to illustrate the book with photos or copies of photos of the family members, old pictures and colored drawings or historical facts. Remember that this is just an introduction to genealogy, meant to reinforce the concept that all families have histories.

Make Picture Magnets or build a pictorial Family Tree on your refrigerator

Instructions:

- Cut a family photo larger than the glass gem (glass ball with one flat side)
- Put a small drop of transparent glue on the gem's flat side and spread it around with your finger.
- Press the gem onto the photo, centering over the face. Let it dry a while.
- Use your scissors to trim the photo as close to the gem as possible.
- Turn over the gem and glue a magnet to the back of the photo paper. Let it dry.





Herbs and their use

Summary

The Czech activity is a program for everyone to learn about herbs and their uses, to train the memory and to make butter from herbs as an example of a healthy food. You can do this activity at any time of year.

The activity takes around two hours and we did it with children from a primary school going to a care home in the neighborhood and working with the elderly in small groups.



Preparation

Some time before it is very good to give information about the activity both to care home staff and the children. Before starting the activity it takes some time to put all necessary resources on the table.

On each table there should be: a jug, glasses, bags with different herbs (mint, lemon balm, chamomile, thyme, lime (with descriptions of each), a strainer, honey, spoons, scented bags and coloured markers

To Start

At the beginning of the program the small groups of children and elderly have to do a puzzle to find out what herb will be the special herb of their group.



Activities

1 Each group is given a set of cards with a picture and description of their herb, together with labels for their jug and pointers with groups of flowers. The children then write everyone's name on the card and use it as a badge. The group read the text about their herb and then each group introduces their flower to all the groups.

2 After that the group has to prepare tea from their herbs. On the jug they put a label with the name of the group's herb. They give the pitcher to the trainer to fill with hot water and the group can taste their herb tea!

When this is finished, the learning game begins. On each table there are cards with questions about herbs.

Finally the trainer (or somebody else) gives the tea back to the group to drink the tea. When this is finished, the learning game begins. On each table there are cards with questions about herbs.

There are four categories of questions:

- Recognize herb as described
- Therapeutic effects of herbs
- Recognize herb by the smell
- Common names of herbs

The questions are divided into 4 groups according to difficulty with the simplest being worth 100 points and the most difficult 400 points. One group begins by choosing a question in one of the categories and the difficulty (1,2,3 or 4).

The trainer reads the question. When one of the groups knows the answer, they pick up their pointer with their flower/herb.

If the answer is correct, they earn points and they can choose other question. If the answer isn't correct, then another group has a go. At the end of quiz the winner is the group which has the highest number of points.

After the learning game each group prepares herb butter as a reward. Firstly everybody gets a small jar with some cream in it. They shake the bottle till the cream has become butter. They put the butter in a bowl and pour the remaining liquid into a glass. They add sliced fresh herbs to the butter and mix it thoroughly. Finally they spread it on a bread roll or another pastry and eat.



As a final activity the children help elderly to create smelly bags. They pour the dry herbs into small cloth bags and give them as gifts to the elderly people.



Note

When we worked with elderly people with memory disorders, it was necessary to use another activity for memory training. It is better to use some easy worksheet with puzzles, anagrams and crosswords.



Outdoor activity

Summary

A group of elderly and children aged from 10-12 years goes out to the gardens around the residence of the elderly or to a park or woodland in the neighbourhood for a nice walk or to do some activities together. All elderly are sitting in wheelchairs. After instructions the volunteers and children push the wheelchairs.



Objectives

Going out, enjoying the weather and discovering natural elements in the own neighbourhood are the most important. You can select different activities related to the environment – what kind of trees there are, whether you can see any insects or birds, or whether there is a pond or stream. The elderly and young can work together and the children can show the gathered plants or animals to the elderly. It's intergenerational! 'learning by doing'. They all like it before they start! Something is going to happen.

Plan

A group of elderly and young go out together for a walk and to do some activities. The children are given instructions and push the wheelchairs in a 'polonaise' to a garden, park or woodland. There the group is split up in 6 groups for a circuit of 6 different activities

All resources for the 6 activity items are preplanned and each group starts at one point and moves to the next after about ten minutes. At the end each group takes back the resources of the last item.

Preparation

Instructions are given to children school. At school or at the elderly home children get:

- 1 Wheelchair instruction: how to manage a wheelchair, to keep their distance, how to go over speed bumps or pavement edges, how and when to use the brakes.
- 2 Information about the route and activities including a plan of the route, the location of the activities, instructions to share with the elderly, how to use the resources, and how to record the data.
- 3 Instructions about how to work in an intergenerational situation: working and talking together, division of works/tasks, the importance of speaking loudly and clearly, how to use the tools together, how to show all the results, and caring for the elderly.

Examples of activities

- 1 Working with an identification list;** children push the wheelchairs to a tree where they can see and – if there is any possibility - touch the leaves; the elderly look at the leaves while a child is asking the questions on the list; all questions can be answered by the elderly with a 'yes' or a 'no'; at the end together they find the name of the tree.
- 2 A sporting activity, throwing balls;** the children put the wheelchairs side by side; each elderly gets 5 softballs and one by one throws them to a child who is trying to catch them in a net or bucket.
- 3 Water life;** wheelchairs are placed so that elderly can see what children are doing; using landing nets children catch water animals in the pond, they put them in a jar or small, white containers and show them to the elderly; on colored identification lists they can try to find some names; afterwards children put the animals back in the water.
- 4 Making cards 'all colors of the rainbow';** in the grass or along the bushes children gather small flowers, leaves or grass and stick them with double sided tape on a card; so they make a nice gift for the elderly.
- 5 Measuring trees;** with right angled triangle, young and old can determine 'exactly' where a tree should fall if you cut it down; from that point they can measure the distance to the tree; add to this the own length and work out how high the tree is.
- 6 Use of magnifying glasses;** children gather small flowers, mosses, insects, leaves or feathers, put them in jars or in white, flat trays and give elderly the opportunity to look at them with magnifying glasses.



Other possible activities

- Animal game: children take an animal-card and impersonate the animal and the elderly guess the name
- Looking for animal tracks and checking traps that were placed outside in advance.
- Mosses and grasses (find different species)
- Bird watching, using binoculars.

Challenge: Children as wheelchair pushers!?



Physically, children of 11-13 years old can push all common wheelchairs.

With firmly inflated tires and a good instruction you can walk with them without problems along the streets.

Traffic on the road should always give priority to someone in a wheelchair.



Recycling making pom poms from plastic bags

Summary

This indoor activity is about to learn from recycling and used as preparation for a physical exercise activity. It's important that we are very aware of the materials we use in our daily life. Some are very damaging our environment.

It's important to strive to reach a situation where eventually all products we make and use can be recycled, re-used again. You can do the activity with all ages.



Objectives

An activity for everyone to learn about recycling and to make a decorative pom pom from plastic bags.

Introduction

The activity starts with a presentation on plastic bags and how bad they are for the environment. Nature cannot decompose materials like plastics. Do a kind of quiz where participants try to estimate how long it takes before an apple core, a newspaper, a drink, a plastic bottle and other items can decompose.

Give the presentation in an interactive way explaining that the best thing to do is not to use plastic bags or packaging. In the short term though it is a good idea to find another use for plastic bags. One use is to make something nice like pom poms. These can be used in exercises that older and young people can do together.

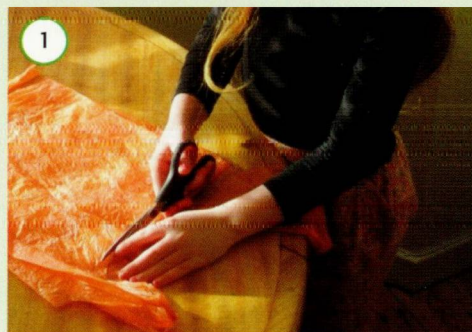
Preparation

Lots of clean, coloured, plastic bags are needed – as many as possible, scissors and tape.

DO practise yourself making a pom pom before trying to explain to anyone else!! Making pom poms is not difficult but you need about 10 – 15 plastic bags per pom pom..

Activity step by step, in six stages

Stage 1. The bag needs to be spread out flat on a table with the handles facing left and the bottom facing right. Cut off the handles at the top and cut the bottom off the bag.



Stage 2. Fold over from the bottom about 3cm in width and carry on until you are about 5cm from the top.



Stage 5. Starting from the right hand side holding the bag at the top start to roll over. Finishing with all the cut strips hanging down and a handle at the top.



Stage 3. Cut the folded part of the bag all the way along, making a cut every 2 cm. Snip across the folded part to about 4 cm from the top edge of the bag to the top.



Stage 6. Tape the top edge tightly so that all that bags stay together.

You should now have one completed pom pom.



Stage 4. Unfold the folded bag so that the cut strips fall down. This process from 1-4 needs to be repeated until you have cut around 15 bags. Then place them all on top of one another, with the uncut rim at the top.



What challenge do you suppose?

Repeat the process for your second pom pom. It's also a nice activity to do on birthday parties!

This activity is best done when linked with the physical activities that you can see in the photographs.



"The wonderful world of birds"

Summary

In Hungary an intergenerational activity was organized between elderly of the Care Home and Club of Vác and students of the Karolina Catholic Church School, a local primary school in Vác.

The theme of this indoor activity was focused on birds. After the success of the first meeting the interest to participate the new activity was so big that we were 'afraid' there was hardly enough space for all the participants to sit down.

Before starting

Already before nine in the morning in the Club of the Care Home all elderly people were in the room waiting for the arrival of the children. Even the local television was present to film the event. When the children arrived there was great excitement. Like the first time it was clear that something is going to happen if you bring old and young together to do a mutual activity.

The start

At each table two or three children joined the elderly and started a small conversation with them. To help the conversation sheets were placed in each table with photos of different kinds of birds in different situations, such as chickens in a poultry run, a thrush on a tree in wintertime, a bird feeder, ladies working with feathers and a bird's nest in the wood. These sheets were intended to inspire and act as a starting point for the elderly and children to talk about personal experiences about birds and to find common interests. In the background there was some soft classical music, Beethoven and Chopin.

sounds these birds make such as to chirp, to bur / whirl, to quack, to hoot and so on. The groups had to match the cards. The older people were really brilliant in this activity. They knew almost all names of birds and the sounds they make. Children learned a lot especially because of some ladies which couldn't stop telling a variety of idiomatic phrases and ditties about birds.



Activities

After the welcome each group started with a sequence of 5 activities. We describe them one by one. All separate activities, list, cards and pictures you can find on our site www.natureforcare.eu.

1 The first activity was called 'How does it sing?' Each group had two sets of cards. On one set there were names of different species of birds such as sparrow, swallow, pigeon, crane, owl, quail, magpie, and cuckoo. On the other set were verbs describing the

2 The second activity was about observations related to birds. Each group were given photos of three birds - a chicken, a sparrow and a crow, and six sentences about the behaviour of those birds in different weather conditions. The groups had to match two sentences with each bird. This was not such an easy task even though there were some hints in each sentence. However both the children and the elderly people were happy when they could get the right answer.



3 The third activity was focused more on the winter season, through thinking about how to feed birds in our gardens. Each group was given a blank sheet and had to formulate their "golden rules" of feeding and watering birds in winter.

Each group was very busy as they shared information and ideas and most managed to write a long list of rules. When each group had finished we gave them our prepared list so that they could compare it with their own ideas. Afterwards we invited one representative of each table to tell all participants about their findings, especially talking about those which were not on our list.

The result was a big surprise to some, because each group had two or three really remarkable things to tell about taking care of birds in wintertime than were on our expert list! This way of learning – through groups coming up with ideas before comparing their ideas with some preset ones - is an excellent way of encouraging debate and discussion and sharing.

Up until this point we had focused more on thinking activities – the last two activities were more practical and creative.

4 The song birds in our gardens are beautiful to see and to hear and also important for the health of our fruit trees as they eat a lot of small pests on the branches, trunk and leaves of the trees. The fourth activity was based on colours and shapes. On each table we put photographs of six different, colourful small songbirds and gave everyone a sheet with line drawings of these birds.

The pupils and elderly people had first to match the line drawings with the coloured photographs and then using coloured pencils, colour the line drawings. This was a challenging task because in

some cases the forms of the birds were very similar, and only small details differentiated them. Most of the children and elderly people chose the two or three most interesting for them to colour.

After colouring the birds they wrote their name on their paper, cut out the birds and gave them to each other as a gift.

5 In the last activity each group prepared bird feeders. To make the bird feeders we used a large plastic bottle. In the bottles we cut holes for the birds to go in and out. Plastic bottles are great to use as bird feeders because they are transparent so the birds can be seen as they fly in and eat the food. We also inserted a wooden spoon into each bottle for the birds to sit on.

In this activity children and elderly people worked mainly in pairs with the older people making the holes in the bottle and children doing the other tasks. When all holes were prepared and the wooden spoons were put in place we filled the bird feeders with seed.



At the end of the programme elderly people with the children went out in the garden to hang some of their bird feeders on trees and bushes, and in the evening they watched the event reported on the local television.

Of course improvements will follow after evaluation but this was a great success. Biggest challenge for the first time is just to prepare and to lead such activity. To see how old and young do the activities together is a great experience for all.



"Winter cold"

Summary

The Belgium contribution in this publication is a winter activity regarding the cold winter days in past and present. The main question is how people adapted to cold weather in earlier times compared with today. What can we learn from each other?

The activity consists of an indoor game and an outdoor activity to photograph the characteristics of the local environment in wintertime.

Objectives

The main objective of this intergenerational activity is to create a warm, pleasant and workable atmosphere for residents of a care home and children from the highest classes of the primary schools. From a social perspective these kinds of activities are very valuable. The subject is an appropriate topic for reminiscence for the elderly whilst children learn from the memories and experiences elderly gained in the past.

Start

At the start the elderly and children are divided into each with 2-3 children and 1 or 2 elderly.



It's important to take some time to allow elderly and children to get to know each other through asking each other questions, such as: "What's your name?", "In what year were you born?", "Where did you live before? Are you from here?", "Which primary or maybe secondary school did you attend?", "What do you like in nature? Did you have pets at home? Do you have a favorite animal?" and so on... Children answer the same question. Old and young may have much in common.

After getting to know each other there is an indoor activity - a feel game. The resources you need are items that animals have a covering such as fur, leather, wool, or feathers. Have one item in each feel bag.

Make laminated pictures (A4) of animals that are killed for fur or leather (like fox, mink, muskrat, seal, sheep, goat, lynx, squirrel). The results are written down on a worksheet.

1 A feel game about fur (Indoor)

Give each group a labeled feel bag and a worksheet. Ask them to feel what is in their bag and to write this down in the 1st column on the worksheet. They write down something like soft, hard, prickly, longhair or smooth. In the 2nd column they write which animal they think it comes from without looking what's in the bag! They discuss how it feels and what kind of animal they think it is.

The feel bags are passed around so that everyone can feel different furs.

In the 3rd column each group writes the answer after the objects have been plenary viewed and discussed.



This is followed by a plenary discussion so that the groups can learn from each other, focusing on questions like:

- What did people wear in the past? From what animal were their hats, jackets, shawls or gloves made? Were they very expensive? Did one of the elderly people themselves keep sheep? Did you use the wool yourselves? And what about rabbit or other kinds of fur?
- Hot and cold in winter. How do animals cope with temperature changes?
- The killing of animals for fur – can we make a list of pros and the cons.

In the small groups the elderly people can talk further with the children about fur, coats of fur, sheep wool, the pets of the children, how their hairy coats changes during the seasons – having a thicker coat in winter losing hair in spring.



2 Photo reportage of winter characteristics (Outdoors)

For this outdoor activity each group needs a digital photo camera. It's important the cameras have a blank memory card and that the batteries are recharged. Afterwards the photos are put on a computer. With a multi media projector the pictures of all groups are shown on a screen or a white wall. During the presentations appropriate music can be played.

After each group has received a digital photo camera, all groups go out for a walk in nature or a garden to photograph some typical images of the winter season. Each group takes maximum 6 photos – and are encouraged to be creative.



A member of staff puts the photos on the computer.

During the process of transferring photos on the computer, there may be a parlor game played to bridge the time, e.g. a game like Nature Bingo.

At the end the photo reportage is shown to the entire group. One person per group can give some explanation of their images. In the background you can play an appropriate piece of music like "The Four Seasons" by Vivaldi.

Something delicious - prepared in advance - can be served during playing the photo reportage (e.g. ice cream...)

Although you can do this activity in each season it's a challenge to go out in winter time. Especially when there is snow or it's rather cold. Of course the care home staff or the elderly themselves need to decide whether to go out or not. In preparation of the activity care home staff and school have to discuss this. If the elderly do not want to go out to take pictures, the children can do this alone for maximum 15 minutes and show the results to the elderly. For each situation there is a solution!



6 Appendices



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Intergenerational practices and learning

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European Commission. Active and healthy ageing is a societal challenge shared by all European countries. It is an opportunity for Europe to establish itself as a global leader that is capable of providing innovative responses. www.ec.europa.eu/health/ageing/innovation/index_en.htm

Futurage, a two-year project funded by the European Commission to develop a roadmap for the European ageing research for the next 15 years. www.futurage.group.shef.ac.uk/

Intergenerational Schools Project. The Intergenerational School (TIS) and the Near West Intergenerational School are free, high-performing public charter schools in Cleveland, Ohio. These schools have been nationally recognized for their innovative, intergenerational approach to learning. www.tisonline.org/

« generations@school », 2012, *Engaging students and older people in intergenerational dialogue*. Focus is on bringing together students and older people to engage in a conversation about what it means to get older, and how older and younger people can collaborate for a better life. www.11492009-gats.historypin.com/en/

P.A.U. Education is a private company based in Barcelona, Spain, founded in 1995 by Pierre-Antoine Ullmo (Paris, France). The projects are based on participatory educational schemes, community-building processes and innovative contents. www.paueducation.com/en/vision_and_mission

Vrije Universiteit Brussel, dept. of Adult Educational Sciences (Educatiewetenschappen) www.vub.ac.be/EDWE/ and the Belgian Ageing Studies (www.belgianageingstudies.be/)

Authors

This publication was written by the Nature for Care Team and edited by James Hindson from Sense&Sustainability Training (SST).

Three of the chapters were contributed by invited authors with expertise in particular areas related to Nature for Care.

The complete texts of the articles can be found on www.natureforcare.eu

1 Achieving Social Cohesion through intergenerational practice

This chapter is based on an article written by Dr Tine Buffel who conducted research on social cohesion at the Vrije Universiteit (Free University) of Brussels, Belgium, in the Department of Educational Sciences and Adult Education. The paper was co-written with Sarah Dury, Liesbeth De Donder, Nico De Witte, An-Sofie Smetcoren, Free De Backer, Tom De Mette, Koen Lombaerts, Jeltsen Peeters, Tom Vanwing, Dorien Brosens and Dominique Verté. *Contact:* tine.buffel@vub.ac.be

2 Working with people with dementia.

Using Reminiscence as a tool for working with older people with dementia

This chapter is based on an article by Mathias Gunst.

Mathias is a paramedic and occupational therapist at Sint Petrus, a care institution at Kruishoutem, Belgium.

3 The Benefits of Intergenerational Environmental Programmes

This article is derived with kind permission from pages on the EPA website.

Thanks to Alan Hatton-Yeo for sending this link to us. Alan is the chief executive of The Beth Johnson Foundation, founder of the Centre of Intergenerational Practices (CIP).

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Hungary

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The Czech Republic

- *Schools:* Přírodovědný kroužek Otakárek při ZŠ Příbryslav a Základní škola Velké Meziříčí
- *Centres for the Elderly:* Dům s pečovatelskou službou Velké Meziříčí a Klub seniorů Pohoda Příbryslav
- *Partner:* Městský úřad Příbryslav

The Netherlands

- *Schools:* De Touw ladder-Ugchelen, Theo Thijssenschool-Amsterdam en De Biezenkamp-Nijmegen
- *Centres for the Elderly:* Randerode-Apeldoorn, De Flesseman-Amsterdam en Kalorama-Nijmegen
- *Partners:* ANMEC – Amsterdam en MEC-Nijmegen

The United Kingdom

- *Schools:* Oakmeadow Primary School and Adcote School for Girls
- *Centres for the Elderly:* Holland Close Residents - Severnside Housing and Isle Court Nursing Home - Morris Homes

Partners in Nature for Care



Belgium

Regionaal Landschap Vlaamse Ardennen vzw (RLVA). The main objective of RLVA is to broaden and enhance a positive attitude towards nature and landscape. Therefore we conceive and develop collaborative projects with other stakeholders in the fields of nature conservation, nature education, leisure in nature, landscape management and local identity.



Bulgaria

Borrowed Nature Association (BNA). BNA is an environmental NGO founded in 1992. The mission and the long term aims are raising public awareness on environmental and human development; conducting campaigns, educational projects and dissemination information as investment in human resources. BNA regularly providing competent assessments of hot environmental issues and evaluates normative documents related to the environment.



Czech Republic

Chaloupky o.p.s. Chaloupky is a nongovernmental and not for profit organization founded in 1991. Key activities are: one day or residential environmental education programs for nursery, primary and secondary schools; teacher trainings; projects, guides and aids; organizing events (Earth Day, Day for Trees etcetera), summer camps and weekends for families with children; special camps for children and youth.



Hungary

Magosfa, Foundation for Environmental Education and Eco-Tourism. Magosfa Foundation has been working since 2003 in Börzsöny Mountains and in the Danube Bend. Main activities are outdoor education programs for children, outdoor and indoor teacher training courses, modules and agenda for the programs, guided eco tours to the nearby mountains, river cleaning projects along the Ipoly river, popularisation of local products. Magosfa has very strong collaboration with volunteers and other NGOs. Publications: one-page field guides, books of EE methods, book about ecotourism.



The Netherlands

Stichting Veldwerk Nederland (SVN). SVN, founded in 1977, operates nationally and internationally in the field of environmental education. SVN combines 'practice and research' in one organization. Main objective and mission is to involve people in issues concerning nature, environment and sustainability, by focusing on educational processes and the interdependence with society. SVN cooperates with a large variety of partners on various themes from recreation, agriculture to care.



United Kingdom

Sense&Sustainability Training (SST). The goal of SST is to promote and support critical approaches to education for sustainability in schools and communities – changing thinking from "doing the same thing but greener" to new radical approaches to sustainability. SST achieves this through running training courses in schools and colleges, working with community groups, writing publications and creating projects related to ESD in other countries. SST works in partnership with others and is closely linked with UK and European ESD networks including ENSI and CoDeS.



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

Grundtvig