

GENERATIONS TOGETHER: EVALUATION

Section 1: Introduction

The concept of volunteering and particularly intergenerational volunteering are not new at all. However the unique aspects of Generations Together were mainly twofold:

1. Firstly in its partnership make-up - Plymouth Guild Volunteer Centre led the bidding process, with Groundwork Trust and CSV/RSVP as delivery partners and Plymouth City Council being the accountable body.
2. Secondly, the delivery mechanism and sharing of programme resources across many established community groups led to a wide spread of the benefits across a larger grouping and more diverse range of people.

Section 2: The Generations Together Programme

In June 2009 a new government funded programme was launched, seeking to engage new volunteers in new activities, through intergenerational projects and volunteering. Generations Together (GT) was funded as a 'demonstration project' in 12 Local Authority areas and was originally intended to deliver for 2 full years, although due to various bureaucratic processes start dates were delayed. In Plymouth the programme ran for 15 months (from January 2010 through to March 2011).

The projects and activities offered in Plymouth included **indoor and outdoor opportunities** – tea dancing and knitting, environmental conservation work and event stewarding; **educational** – reading in schools; **cultural** – growing traditional food stuffs and sharing cooking knowledge in the Chinese and Kurdish communities; and **leisure and entertainment** – tea dances, choirs and line dancing.

The partners who were to deliver were: Plymouth Guild Volunteer Centre, CSV/RSVP, Groundwork, the Befriending Consortium, Plymouth Kurdish Community (PKC) and the Devon and Cornwall Chinese Association (DCCA). Geographical need, as highlighted by multiple indicators of deprivation was reflected in the addition of The East End Development Trust, Stonehouse Action Group and the YMCA in Honicknowle.

The bid was built around the theme of DIALOGUE – between generations and across cultures. £400 000 of new money was secured for the City!

Nationally the programme listed projects and activities under 6 headings:

- Arts and Crafts
- Community and Democracy
- Education and Learning
- Health and well-being
- Sport and Leisure
- Support and Mentoring

Section 3: Definitions Used During the Programme and Evaluation

Intergenerational Work

There are three ways that this can happen:

1. Older people demonstrate their skill, knowledge or experience in a particular area – such as tapestry, historical reminiscence work , sports coaching and gardening – passing these on to younger people
2. Younger people share their skills with, or entertain older people, providing support and assistance where necessary – for example IT tuition, introduction to the world-wide web and internet, organising tea dances, singing and performing at functions
3. Older and younger people join together and learn a new activity together and/or share their experiences, talents – for example an intergenerational choir, beach clean days and creating woodland walkways

All three ways can bring successes and rewards, and as stated by one of our project partners:

“The journey of successful intergenerational work starts with successes specific to each generation”

‘eiling Wong (Devon and Cornwall Chinese Association: DCCA)

New to Volunteering

In the case of GT a volunteer is ‘an individual who undertakes any activity that will benefit others and gives their time freely.’ A person who was new to volunteering would never have done this before; it was an intention of this programme to recruit new volunteers.

Participants or Beneficiaries are those people who attend or benefit from an activity or event; they are not volunteering and in the case of the Plymouth GT programme there were no targets set for this group. However if a count was done the number would be in the thousands.

Section 4: Evaluation Methodology

It was planned that the evaluation would cover the following aspects:

- 1) The aims and targets from the successful funding bid will be reviewed
- 2) Quantitative data – gathered from ongoing records kept at the Volunteer Centre, within partnering organisations and individual projects
- 3) Qualitative data – relevant sections of case studies and quotes will be drawn from the interviews previously conducted for the publication (project review)
- 4) Further interviews will be undertaken – with agency staff, volunteers and beneficiaries in a number of projects
- 5) Focus groups and discussion with project participants – both volunteers and beneficiaries

It should be noted that it was not possible to acquire statistics from many of the smaller based community groups (2), however they were often able to provide detailed case study evidence demonstrating the positive impacts. And in terms of item (5) by the time the evaluation work was commissioned it was not possible to reach beneficiaries – in terms of volunteers and wider audiences, therefore the focus groups were not held.

Interviews have been held with 6 project workers, the GT manager and 8 active volunteers.

The evaluation has also involved some follow-up work, to support projects with proposals and funding bids for future work –this has been done with

Dramatic Results and St Peters Primary School, Stonehouse

Section 5: The Volunteers

The volunteers in Plymouth had the following characteristics/identity:

- There were 1895 volunteering opportunities created within 12 projects
- The target of 1032 younger volunteers engaged was reached, as final numbers showed 1272
- The target of 863 older volunteers engaged was not met as the final numbers showed 577
- 55% female 45% male
- 69% older, the vast majority being retired and 31% younger, mostly students or school pupils
- There were 58% employed and 42% unemployed, others being self employed or 'other'
- 83% were involved for up to 24 hours in their volunteering and people were mostly (87%) involved in volunteering activity for 1-2 months, or 6-12 month periods
- 45 of the total number of volunteers were from Black & Minority Ethnic communities (BME). This was the highest number and proportion from such groups across the whole UK programme, despite Plymouth only relatively recently having growing populations that are non-UK nationals and refugee/asylum seeker groups (Kurdish, Iranian, East African), compared to other parts of the UK where these communities are far more established.

This hugely positive outcome for Plymouth is directly related to:

- i) the innovative distribution of the GT money, with allocations going to Plymouth Kurdish Community and Devon and Cornwall Chinese Association (DCCA)
- ii) the proactive inclusion work with newer and ongoing projects in the City, such as the Improving Reach programme and Hope FC
- iii) the effective and robust partnership work happening across the City with PlymouthCentre for Faith and Cultural Diversity, Devon and Cornwall Refugee Support Council, PCC Social Inclusion Unit amongst others

Section 6: What happened?

The following section makes commentary on the original intended project outcomes and outputs.

To deliver quality volunteering opportunities that promote dialogue between younger people and older people

There are three projects that stand out in having met this objective: the gardening project with DCCA, the gardening project at Royal William Yard (Groundwork) and the Choirs. Although small in number the intensity of the working together on a shared task meant that these three projects created opportunities for meaningful interaction and therefore greater understanding across the generations.

To improve the perceptions that older and younger people have of each other

Through conversation and the photographic exhibition this has definitely happened

To empower participants to make their own decisions

With any projects and activities that improve self confidence and assertiveness, then this will also enable people to feel better equipped to make decisions, however having not directly interviewed volunteers/beneficiaries in any significant number the evaluator does not feel able to comment on this objective.

Commentary on Key Outcomes

{Note: YP = Younger People; OP = Older People; WC = Wider Community}

YP Greater resilience and motivation to avoid 'risky behaviour'

YP Greater participation in positive activities

- ✓ 45 young people were involved in the Kurdish heritage work in Stonehouse
- ✓ 16 young people volunteer as sighted guides for Visually Impaired older people at the Hearing and Sight Expo

YP Improved perceptions of older people by younger people

- ✓ "Young people begin to appreciate that older people still have a brain and something to offer" (Judith Cohen: RSVP Co-ordinator, Totnes)
- ✓ Young people were involved in befriending older young people through projects at the Befriending Consortium
- ✓ Young people were involved with the elders in the community at DCCA
- ✓ Storytelling projects bring generations together, inspiring and learning from each other
- ✓ Community choirs bring generations together, rehearsing and preparing for a concert together

- ✓ 25 Younger and older volunteers work together on a climate change stall
- ✓ 27 Young people are involved in the planning, delivery and evaluation of the Volunteer Centre's Annual Community Symposium
- ✓ Several example of environmental and conservation volunteering took place: a Beach Clean, work to improve Ham Woods

YP Improved self esteem

- ✓ Young people are developing an increased sense of self identity and culture through the work with DCCA

YP Stronger engagement in education

- ✓ 2 young people volunteer and support older people with IT at regular evening classes at the East End Development Trust

OP Improved sense of health and well-being

- ✓ An older men's supper club was established at East End Development Trust

OP Reduced sense of isolation

- ✓ 50 women aged 60+ were involved in arts and crafts activity at East End Development Trust
- ✓ 55 older people were involved in the Kurdish cultural, heritage and cookery project

OP Improved perceptions of younger people by older people

OP Increased ability to make a positive contribution to the life of the community

- ✓ There were at 3 school volunteers linked to a school, to support reading in schools via RSVP and the Befriending Consortium has made 4 links with older people's groups and the local primary school. [Note: in the UK, one-sixth of children do not have a book in their family home; 1 term of a volunteer's time – usually 3 hours per week, 20 minutes per child), improves the child's reading age by 1 year.]
- ✓ 15 older people were involved with the climate change stall
- ✓ 10 older volunteers were involved with the planning, delivery and evaluation of the annual Volunteer Centre Community Symposium
- ✓ 7 older volunteers have been involved in the delivery of reminiscence projects

OP Greater satisfaction with home and neighbourhood

- ✓ 4 older volunteers have become engaged in activities at the East End Development Trust
- ✓ 100 older people have engaged with events and activities facilitated by Attik Dance
- ✓ 98 Chinese older people were involved in activities with DCCA

OP Reduction in fear of crime

{ Note: For further commentary on the four key outcomes relating to older people, please see section below – Department of Health }

WC: Increased meaningful interactions between people from different backgrounds

- ✓ This outcome is met through the work integration work in Stonehouse with Plymouth Kurdish Community

WC: Increased social capital through volunteering activity, by both young and old

- ✓ All activities taking place within GT have contributed to this outcome

WC: Increased involvement of educational institutions in the local community

- ✓ There have been 8 schools involved – through Reading in Schools and the choir projects

Evidence relating to Department of Health Evaluation Requirements

1. Does involvement in intergenerational activity/volunteering help to improve older people's sense of worth and well-being?

Yes, as interviewees stated often, with their own and others' stories and examples.

2. Can being involved in such community based activity lead to greater involvement in community/society generally?

It is clear that any involvement in such activity directly leads to meeting others, of similar and different backgrounds, with similar and different interests and hobbies; this activity leads to sharing of ideas and experiences and enables people to generate new thoughts and ideas together; there is evidence of increased networking and opportunities to find out more about what is going on in the local community.

3. Are there any indications that being involved led to older people accessing a wider range of services and initiatives, especially those which are health and social care related?

This will completely depend on the activity and where it is being held – so a schools reading project may well encourage access to other services, through information on notice boards, or if the school is sited alongside the local health centre or social services building. If the activity or group – such as an RSVP Knitters Group - is located in an Age Concern building there are direct benefits of being co-located with services and groups that older volunteers may later become involved with. Some of the groups, for example the Knitters Group will set up guest speakers to take place during sessions – such as welfare/pensions, digital switchover and discussions on other local opportunities.

For Sheila Taylor her involvement in volunteering led to her signing up for IT classes in June 2010, without being involved with the Reading in Schools Project she would not have known of the other classes, groups and activities being held at the East End Development Trust (Resource Centre).

4. Are there any changes in the following?

a) Views/attitudes towards young people:

Through their involvement in intergenerational activities 60% of all older people involved will have an improved perception and opinion of younger people.

There were examples quoted of older people gaining increased understanding of the challenges faced by younger people, although it was often expressed by older interviewees that young people need more discipline and that they should be encouraged to work hard for something, set against the back-drop of the 'easy gain' culture that we are in.

Respect – or the lack of it – was a common theme: participants on both sides of the divide felt as though the other generation did not respect them, and many admitted that this influenced how they behaved towards members of the other generation. Everyone agreed that a lack of time spent together generated barriers between the generations, particularly for those who did not live near their extended families, and that this led to misunderstandings, misconceptions and 'the big unknown'.

[Intergenerational Practice: What Works? Catch 22 for The Home Office 2011]

b) Behaviour towards young people:

It was found that, through their involvement in intergenerational activities, 60% of older people will change their behaviour, in positive ways – towards younger people, such as approaching and talking to young people and making requests to them.

Sheila Taylor reported that she would now be more likely to initiate conversation with young people, feels more relaxed around them and has grown in her confidence and self-knowledge that she can communicate effectively with children and young people, as a direct result of her volunteering with GT projects.

c) Frequency of contact with young people: this will definitely increase during the project or activity, but cannot be proven to remain so afterwards

d) Views/attitudes towards the local community/neighbourhood: as people engage with a group or activity in the community then there will be positive spin-offs, for example school volunteers find out about a computer course in the school and attend; this may be an Adult Education class or a youth action project. Volunteers may then develop an interest in digital media and become interested in local history projects – often learning from the younger generation and then giving back this information through talks in schools etc. RSVP have gathered evidence showing that once an older person has taken this first step- by joining a volunteering project – then more often than not this 'stepping into the unknown' continues.

e) Sense of involvement and pride in the local community.

f) Reduced fear of crime: by engaging with young people and hearing about their lives older people can feel less in fear of crime. However it was also reported that despite older people having more understanding the 'hoodie' dress code, that because of the power of media images there is still fear when coming across a group of 'hoodie-wearing youths', especially when they are on their own patch.

“The Beth Johnson Foundation has recently argued that intergenerational work can tackle fear of crime and work towards community reassurance. Tackling the fear of crime is seen as different from tackling crime itself, and is often about easing wider intergenerational tensions and insecurities. The Beth Johnson Foundation report shows clearly that bringing the generations closer together busts the myths around young people and anti-social behaviour that can lead older people to fear that they will be victims of crime. It also shows that intergenerational contact is a way of opening communication within communities and creating respect among younger people for the older generation.

The Beth Johnson Foundation argues for a holistic process, monitoring fear of crime, diagnosing the problems behind it, taking action through intergenerational work, and evaluating what has been done.”

[Intergenerational Practice: What Works? Catch 22 for the Home Office 2011]

g) Views/feelings on personal health and wellbeing issues, particularly feelings of isolation:

As a result of becoming involved in volunteering projects and activities 80% of all volunteers report a reduced feeling of isolation. Others talked of the role being enjoyable, sharing stories with others, meeting intelligent and funny people and the benefits of spending time with people of all ages. Also with particular activities there are health gains, through physical activity – gardening, dance, cycling etc.

h) All round personal development, for example levels of self-esteem/self worth, motivation, confidence, communication skills, general happiness: anecdotal evidence from interviews with RSVP volunteers highlights that in all examples there will be at least one gain for an individual that can be described as a positive benefit in terms of ‘personal development’. Many older volunteers reported feeling more confident as a result of their volunteering activity.

“The volunteering role provides a structure and something that I look forward to” (Sheila Taylor)

*‘ Being with the youngsters makes me feel much younger.....
I really look forward to going to school ‘
(Joy – aged 80+, who goes in to schools to listen to children read)*

Kathy on visit to primary school to discuss her schooling and war time *‘how different classrooms are to my time...all this equipment and the children are so happy’*

Beattie on teaching 9-10 year olds to tea dance... *‘It has been great teaching younger people the dances that I love so much’*

Section 7: The Benefits of Generations Together

The **benefits to organisations** have been tremendous – the Consortium partners have successfully funded and facilitated community based organisations, neighbourhood groups and cultural groups to work in ways that embrace intergenerational work.

The programme has shown that organisations of different sizes and with differing missions can work together.

There has been a linking together of distinct neighbourhoods, through the creation of a city-wide offer – of intergenerational volunteering projects. New groups have met and worked together, for example a school (students) linked with an older people’s homes (residents).

This work strongly supports **family and community cohesion** and the city wide approach enables the greatest spread of learning and sharing of best practice.

The **benefits to the individual** – whatever their age are summarised in this statement from Simon De Groot: Volunteer Centre Manager:

“once you get a shared interest or passion age becomes irrelevant: age isn’t a barrier, it is the lack of opportunity to engage in a shared interest that is the barrier. The need is for a space, project or activity in which the generations can interact – and that is our responsibility to deliver, facilitate and promote”

Section 8: Key Findings

It has been interesting to hear repeatedly from older interviewees that the opportunities to share and engage with children and younger people, so that they can experience directly the wisdom and value of what older people can bring, are invaluable. The importance of this work must be set against a culture that is moving increasingly towards the teenager, the emphasis on celebrity, short term gratification, flooding of sexualised images and consumerism. So taking a stand and working on activities and projects such as those in GT are offering a more creative, meaningful and learning experience for all involved.

Another interesting angle that can separate, rather than unite generations, is the language used in social networking sites and texts that is exclusive to the younger generation, as they have been brought up with it, and have essentially created it. A concern that was expressed in relation to this is that younger people see what is happening ‘out there’ as being of greater importance than what is happening in their world right now, and that through these tools of technology we may well lose the art of empathic human conversation. There were many older interviewees who were concerned about our increasingly technology dominated world.

In many cases it was found that engaging in one activity through GT led to others – for example Sheila Taylor started with the Reading in Schools Project and then joined the gardeners at the Royal William Yard, and more recently has become involved with the Friends of Devonport Park – where volunteers are coming from all ages and backgrounds, and are integrated with and supporting those with mental health issues.

A huge benefit of intergenerational activities is the potential for younger people to receive guidance from older people – especially for those children and young people with more chaotic backgrounds and no real stable adult in their life.

Section 9: Plymouth City Council: Key Priorities in Respect of Volunteering

Generations Together has been able to meet the priorities of the City in the following ways:

Raising aspiration – volunteers are provided with new opportunities and gain confidence through their volunteering activities.

Individuals, groups, communities and organisations have their **capacity increased** and people are recognised for their skills, knowledge and experience, thus building **social capital**.

Intergenerational practice has been shown to fight prejudices underlying discrimination such as ageism, and it has enabled participants in this type of activity to build relationships across the generational divide. Such relationships often last beyond the life of the project and in doing so the benefits extend beyond any possible benefits to individual participants; they help create networks of trust within communities. This builds what is known as social capital: defined, as the creation of the 'networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit'. These networks of trust make an area feel like a community to those who live there; communities are places where people are willing to work together for mutual benefit, and care about those that live around them. The 'big society' vision of people taking responsibility for their local area can only be achieved where there is a high level of social capital, and people see needs in their area as something they can actively fulfil.

[Intergenerational Practice: What Works? Catch 22 for the Home Office 2011]

People involved in volunteering increase in confidence, feel valued for their contribution and evidence tells us that their **emotional and mental health and well-being improves**.

Volunteering projects based in the community bring people together – across generations, identity groups, nationality and culture, thereby increasing **community cohesion**.

In our view, to tackle entrenched intergenerational conflict we need to bring together participants who feel threatened or stigmatised, otherwise intergenerational practice will become simply voluntary work. We need more research to explore how work with more challenging young people can still be balanced with the needs of older people.

[Intergenerational Practice: What Works? Catch 22 for The Home Office 2011]

Section 10: Key Learning Within the Project Delivery

There are a number of factors that need to be considered when working with many partners and delivery bodies, agencies from different sectors and with volunteers that require time and support. For example:

- It can be quite a task to get into schools, so it is useful to make links early on in a project if a school is to be a key partner and really useful if you have an inside contact! Each project requires a named lead worker or volunteer and link person, who is responsible for all communications. This is particularly important when working in a large organisation or school.
- In some settings it has been difficult to identify the correct person, or a supporter with the necessary power and influence to achieve the desired results
- For delivery of targeted work the blocks created by bureaucracy can be particularly challenging. At times the need to follow policy or attend training can quash the interest and enthusiasm of the potential volunteer
- The requirements for CRB checks and the length of time these take, especially when working in institutions and school settings became frustrating, especially there were known grandparents involved.
- However, workers must have knowledge about the related policy frameworks, especially Safeguarding (of both children and vulnerable adults), as well as Health and Safety legislation and their responsibilities
- For the generation of 60 years + there are historical assumptions/references made about form filling and the stigma associated with being involved with the authorities, such as police or social services. This will require that staff have this understanding and can spend more time, have a flexible approach and a desire to work alongside the individual at his/her starting point
- When entering a volunteering project with tightly defined targets and focussing on groups of people who may have greater support needs,

“it is essential to have the resources (people and money) to properly support people so that they are fully involved and valued in their roles”

(Carole Hinkling: Befriending Consortium)

- Workers within GT found that clear important information, repeated regularly and available in a range of formats was crucial to the successful engagement of both younger and older volunteers. Texts may work best for younger people, whereas older volunteers often preferred a phone call.

All work involving a range of people, stakeholders and partner organisations will require a lot of time and preparation, discussion and dialogue.

- Plan, plan and contingency plan!
- Remember to build in this time requirement in all development plans and funding bids.
- New ideas may also take longer and require small pilot projects to test viability.
- When undertaking projects and activities with a broad age range ensure that all possible risks are assessed and that Health & Safety is considered.

There are arguments to be had about benefits and losses and about what constitutes success as the following two statements illustrate:

- There will need to be a clear understanding and strong reasoning to justify qualitative work over quantity – ie. smaller numbers of people, engaging in meaningful community development work, rather than high numbers of people with very little to remember or say about what they gained from the experience. In respect of the GT programme the time pressure resulting from the shortening of the programme put emphasis on delivery and meeting targets immediately, rather than the team having the creative space to plan and prepare for the most meaningful and beneficial activities
- As with all volunteering initiatives there have been opportunities provided and taken where individuals gained new skills and experiences, or had doors previously unopened, unlatched for them - meaning that some individuals moved into paid work, which although positive for them creates a loss for the project

Best Practice and Building Strong Foundations

The Workers and the Partner Agencies

- It was found that the skills required to give greatest success were: communication and attention to interpersonal relationship, project planning and project management - as well as a commitment to the values of community development work. With all community based projects it is important to be adaptable and work in ways that are flexible.
- Due to the nature of bringing diverse groups of people together, in terms of age, background and life experience it is important to start any group or activity with a plan, and then to be prepared to rework that plan many times, according to the needs of the group.
- Workers must create genuine relationships where they are trusted by people of all ages. The highlight of the project for Ricky McDowell has been - *“meeting the older volunteers, developing relationships with all those involved, especially in the longer term projects. I have enjoyed and been privileged to learn about volunteers’ backgrounds. hear about their lives and listen to people’s stories.”* (RSVP Project Worker CSV: Generations Together Consortium)

- Project workers will require diplomacy, flexibility, good people skills – communication and offering reassurance to volunteers. They will be required to be supportive and nurturing, especially with new volunteers and those who lack in confidence.
- It was a strength in the project that workers and organisations involved in the delivery had previous community work experience and a strong project team will be made up of diverse identities – across class, age, gender, ancestry and life experience
- The four partner organisations involved in the Consortium had shared goals and a common understanding of the overall project, which was essential; they ‘worked brilliantly’ together.
- For workers the opportunities to work together across these different agencies -sharing ideas, opinions and challenges has been invaluable.
- In terms of applying the key principles of community development it was found that the more successful projects were those from already established organisations, that already bring together groups of older or younger people -

“The University of the Third Age have come up trumps every time, with referring people to our projects” (Danny Phillips: Youth Worker Groundwork, Generations Together Consortium)

and/or those from specific identity groups eg. The Chinese Community, meaning that building relationships and networking had already begun.

The Volunteers

- As with any volunteering project it is important that all involved see the benefits of volunteers being involved and that the view of this being ‘free labour to replace what should be paid work’ is challenged effectively
- In terms of recruiting new volunteers there must be clear information and supportive induction, and a balance between the volunteer giving and understanding what they gain. It is best when volunteers have a clear understanding of their commitments and expectations.
- It is particularly important when working with volunteers to give consideration to external factors, such as health and family circumstances and how these might impact on project requirements and planned activities

Funding Fashions

- Work of this nature is fundamentally about building relationship, at every possible level, from the individual, community group, to partner agency and funder. It is long term work that demands commitment. The changing backdrop of funding fashions does not make this an easy pathway to navigate

“Short-term programmes have only a limited effect on older people’s perceptions of young people. If schemes are to not only improve mutual perceptions but also improve feelings of safety, they need to be run over several years and with a large number of young people. To make intergenerational projects sustainable work will be taking place in communities that feel that they have ownership of the project and that there is a continuous flow of both young and older participants”

[Intergenerational Practice – What Works? Produced by Catch 22 for the Home Office 2011]

Section 11: Key Recommendations for the Future

Publicity and Promotion

With short term projects such as these early attention and resources should be dedicated to publicity and promotion, and the methods to do this should vary widely – posters, word-of-mouth, digital media and social networking, local press – paper and radio, free papers, local newsletters, faith groups and outreach into other community based groups/networks, centres, shops, libraries, surgeries and waiting rooms

Linking up with other bodies and sharing costs/resources for publicity and promotion would be effective – eg RSVP and U3A

Volunteers

With a broad ranging programme such as Generations Together it is important to have a wide variety of projects available that appeal to individuals’ interests

Approach to the Work

Activities that are designed for learning or skill sharing have greatest impact when the approach is more hands-on and interactive

Practical Considerations

For all activities and projects it is important to look at the venue and the environment – as this will create an atmosphere that can influence initial engagement and the activity; when working in patches or local community settings find the most accessible building, and for city-wide projects, identify a location that is easy in terms of public transport, lighting and parking

It is important to ensure that all practicalities are given attention – such as room bookings, transport and provision of refreshments and that these are appropriate to the age range, time of day, weather and season

Ensure that all possible transport options and associated costs have been considered to maximise involvement; and that expenses budgets are available to support all volunteers and take a proactive approach to paying expenses

Choosing Partners

It will be a valuable exercise to consider the required outcomes and results when thinking about the partner agencies and those responsible for delivery, and therefore who to approach and the contribution that they can make

In the future the University of Plymouth Students Union Volunteer Manager would be a relevant and beneficial partner for any similar work, because of their experience and involvement with supporting intergenerational volunteering. (Please see Appendix)

Appendix to the Report: Stories and Case Studies

Reading in Schools

The concept of older people going into primary schools and supporting reading is being used in many areas across the UK, facilitated by a range of different agencies, often based in the voluntary sector. Here in Plymouth we were able to add value to Generations Together with the Retired and Senior Volunteers Programme through CSV. Volunteers were also matched through the University of the Third Age (U3A).

Volunteers join for a variety of reasons and motivations:

“After retiring in April 2009 I decided to volunteer. I enjoy feeling involved and am keen to have something to do. I like to be with people and felt that as well as giving I could gain. Having started my search for the right volunteering at The Plymouth Guild Volunteer Centre, for me I was referred to Ricky and the Reading in Schools programme. ”

(Sheila Taylor)

Sheila has now been in the same school for just under a year, reading in the same two classes with 9 year olds. She sees this routine continuing for the foreseeable future.

The motivation for Ruth Jordan is her...“passion for helping people meet their potential” and her knowledge from a career in teaching. She explained that “often children do not get the support they need in their education because of a parent being away from home, due to being in prison, or addiction, bereavement or just not having the confidence or time themselves.” She also offers additional language support to children from other countries – and this is a growing need in Plymouth.

The benefits of this volunteering role are that the adult volunteers feel needed and share their experience and time with the children; teachers’ feedback that they see the children gain trust in the volunteers as they are able to talk about their life at home and other issues, as well as practice their reading. And for the children they have the benefit of developing a relationship with an adult outside of the family – who is supportive, positive and encouraging.

**“The benefits of this type of volunteering are phenomenal:
building cohesive communities, reducing isolation, bringing people together,
giving people a sense of worth and feeling valued.”**

(Ruth Jordan)

Volunteers are recruited, matched, supported, and then linked to a specific school, a particular class and then attached to individual children requiring reading support. So far the schools involved include Leigham and Austin Primary.

The three most important qualities of volunteers selected for this project are: patience, empathy and an affinity with children (not necessarily either a parent or grandparent). The role requires the volunteer to provide the teaching and supported reading, as well as a pastoral care, counselling, support and guidance. The role and therefore the work done is achieved most when based on the values of love and respect.

One of the challenges faced was the requirement for CRB checks, that didn't progress smoothly. Volunteers reminisce that in their younger days, with their own children, as mothers they would help in the classroom with no need for such bureaucratic procedure.

"The idea was brilliant; I enjoyed it and the kids liked me being there. I was able to build a good rapport with those children that needed support – at times this was quite a significant need" (Liz Watson RSVP Volunteer).

For this work to be most successful it requires that the volunteer is matched with a child for a period of time and that the support given is tailor made to the individual. Volunteers with a teaching background, and an interest in literacy found that a planned approach, with specific objectives for the child or group of children was the most useful and brings real results.

Volunteers also need time to become familiar with the setting, especially if they are new to a school environment – the modern schools setting will be a vastly different arena to their own school days!

The school must fully support the programme and there must be effective co-ordination and communication between the school and volunteers for the reading support to have greatest impact for the children.

" The support from Generations Together and especially Ricky was superb – whatever we needed, by email, phone or in person he was always there to support us"
(Liz Watson)

There is great potential of such schemes to create stronger links between the school and wider community.

The new Volunteer Schools Organiser – Ruth Jordan has plans to develop links with the schools in Plymouth with the higher numbers of children receiving free school meals, such as Efford and Devonport. She would like to see up to 2 volunteers a week in 10 schools across Plymouth in the next 12 months.

Contact the Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme (RSVP) through CSV (Community Service Volunteers) at www.csv.org.uk

Befriending Services – Reducing Isolation and Providing Community Based Support

The Befriending Umbrella has 650 regular users on their books, all within the boundaries of the unitary authority in Plymouth. The menu of services provided includes one to one support, support groups – such as ‘Likely Lads’ and ‘Happy Club’, coffee mornings and lunch clubs, sport and craft and leisure activities, as well as trips and entertainment. The key purpose is to reduce the isolation experienced by older people, especially those in areas where there are lack of infrastructure, facilities and/or public transport. The Consortium is run by a group of committed Directors, several of whom have an educational background.

The Generations Together programme provided the Consortium with opportunities to enhance work that was already established and to extend their services across the areas of Plympton and Plymstock. Volunteers are welcomed from the age of 18 to the upper limits!

The main activity of intergenerational work is to link a local group of older people with a Primary School, and this has happened in Thornbury, Estover and at Drake. Specifically this would mean that when the curriculum subject was World War 2, the children would then receive guests who had lived and worked in Plymouth, as children, teenagers and workers. These older volunteers would recount their individual stories, such as women as dockyard workers, living through the blitz, returning from war and rationing. Older volunteers can bring history to life, showing treasures, mementos and photos from those times and children can see and hear what has remained the same and what is very different about Plymouth.

Another aspect of this ‘living history’ is where older volunteers pass on traditional skills and crafts that may become lost in time – arts, knitting, crochet and embroidery. Older volunteers can offer the time, patience and listening ear that some children need to develop their reading skills.

A new development in the Plympton and Plymstock areas will be a **mentoring support programme for children finding the transition from primary to secondary school a challenge.** This also brings another linking aspect between the local community and schools as older volunteers can provide the grounded support, guidance and attention that these children need.

The main benefit of this work for users of the Befriending Consortium is that they move from being ‘clients’ needing ‘support’, to ‘volunteers’ with valuable ‘skills to share’ and offer their time in schools, keeping alive the importance of different aged generations spending time together and having something to offer each other. Older people become more involved in their local community and their confidence to re-engage with other activities grows. They know they are valued and life becomes a meaningful pursuit once again.

Sometimes **the volunteering of time and activity is provided by the younger people to older members of the community, such as local groups providing entertainment –plays, singing and carols at Christmas.**

For older young people there are opportunities to volunteer as befrienders through the Student Unions at Plymouth University . Events are held that attract the attention of our parents and grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters, such as big bands, tea dances and lunch clubs.

The benefits for younger people here are that “we are perceived as positive, giving and supportive, not as rowdy drunks – which is often how students are seen” (Tamara 20)

On October 1st this year we held an older person’s day – ‘Full of Life’. All the publicity and promotion was done by older volunteers and younger people took part as volunteers and stewards. Cultural activities were offered, food from around the world and Jazz on the Hoe. This day was a ‘celebration of the lives, experiences and stories of older people.’

In the City Centre of Plymouth a high street shop has been refurbished as a drop-in centre for over 50s – especially for those who are most isolated and don’t usually access services. There is benefit and debt advice, jobs and volunteering opportunities and intergenerational activities, such as craft workshops and storytelling, provided during school holidays – enabling grandparents and their grandchildren to learn and do together. Some of the sessions are staffed by younger people on Achievement Training.

One of the newest demands is basic IT training, to enable this generation to use computers to keep in touch with others, to shop and bank on-line. The Consortium will be developing tailor made packages of training and support to meet this need.

Further Information : Carole Hickling, Befriending Consortium

01752 604 455 befriendingpcbc@btconnect.com

INTERGENERATIONAL CHOIRS

St Peters Church of England School

The school is located in an area that experiences immense poverty and disadvantage, placing the ward amongst the bottom three in the UK. Due to this, alongside negative experiences of education, third generation unemployment and a lack of confidence, individually and within the community – the adults in the area can be described as ‘hard to engage’. Therefore this choir of 10 local adults, including the headteacher (sending out an important message), parents and grandparents and 10 children, selected because of the interest in singing – has been highlighted as a real success for Generations Together. The approach was laid back and non-threatening, giving everybody the opportunity to become involved. Although when initially presented the idea of a presentation at the end was challenging for some, making sure that the audience was made up of children gave the adults the confidence to have a go.

As Jan Digweed (Head) stated....

”Watching a couple of the Dads spend this kind of time with their children was delightful, the environment was safe, the activity was free and we all had fun together”.

Part of the success of the choir here is undoubtedly engaging people in a new and non-usual activity – within this locality. The choir master worked hard to enable less confident participants to become involved, and as he put it –

“the cohesion of society depends in the generations getting on together and not allowing ‘enemy groups’ to develop.”

It is always challenging to work with people and facilitate a group process when those involved have a negative self perception and limited world view of potential and possibility. The intergenerational aspect of the choir posed challenges and the solution was to pitch the pace and style at the children.

In discussing the benefits of singing as an activity within the GT programme it was interesting to learn from the choirmaster, Christopher Fletcher that there is evidence that the benefits of singing, especially with others are many:

- Increased lung capacity
- Encouraging deep breathing (reduces stress)
- Particularly helpful for older people
- Bringing people together around a shared activity
- Working towards a common goal
- Sharing a joyful experience together

Hyde Park School

Groundwork’s Youth Worker, Danny Phillips worked closely with Musical Director, Christopher Fletcher and pupils from Hyde Park School to create a choir with a difference! The children invited their parents and grandparents to come and join them. The choir was made up of 25 people – aged 3 to 70!

Danny said:” We wanted to create the opportunity for children to sing together with their parents or grandparents and to learn new skills together. This project is all about giving the children and their parents or grandparents the chance to learn together. We are very grateful to Christopher Fletcher for leading the choir. The choir meets once a week and has been practicing a variety of songs some of which the choir have created very amusing actions.”

Mum, Claire March has joined the choir with her daughter Molly. Claire said: It is really great to do something with Molly. I don’t want it to end.”

Sue Westerman (65) has joined with her grandson Alfie (6):Alfie said: It is lovely singing in a group but Granny doesn’t sing in tune!” Sue said: I have never sung before but my daughter-in-law persuaded me to join and I really enjoy it. It is so lovely to have time for just me and Alfie.”

Anne Tillett, Groundwork’s Education and Training Manager, has also been involved in organising the practice sessions and sang in the final performance. Anne said: “We have such fun at rehearsals. Some of the songs have hilarious actions and it is not only the children having fun but the adults as well.” The choir met together for rehearsals for 10 weeks, with the hard work resulting in a performance in December to friends and family .

Devon and Cornwall Chinese Association (DCCA)

An Introduction: founded in 1975 the DCCA has four key aims:

- to raise the cultural profile of the Chinese population in the Southwest,
- to provide support and networking opportunities for community members,
- to develop effective working relationships with local government and key agencies and
- to provide information, advice and advocacy to the Chinese community

The Chinese Cultural Centre was opened in the mid 1980s and closed due to funding cuts in 2003 and in 1991 the Association was able to purchase a permanent base at Headland Park, Plymouth. After successful partnership work with the Race Equality Council (REC) from 2004-2009 and several projects including oral history and badminton, the Association currently has four established groups – an Elders Group, a Youth Group for British born Chinese, a Women’s Group and a Business Group.

Generations Together provided DCCA the opportunity to develop work across the generations in 2010; this came at a good time for all involved as strong relationships had already been developed with both elders and young people. As one young woman remarks about the positive aspects of doing this work - “I haven’t had the opportunity to work with so many old people and they are actually really cute.” Caitlan Wong 15

The idea was to find an activity that would bring the generations together and to create something that would last – and this came in the shape of a small community garden project, specifically the creation and maintenance of raised beds that are located at Tamfu House, within Sovereign Housing Association, where there is a Chinese worker based to provide support to residents.

The following tells us of the project’s success -

“I am happy with project because we can grow ‘Gai lan’. (a Chinese stem vegetable)” See Lam 89

“It was a lovely activity to get involved with because I have managed to learn from one of the elders how to plant spring onion seeds.” Ryan Ee 13

“I am looking forward to next summer when we can plant more crops and see them grow” Chun – Yee Chan 18

“It is good so we have something to eat when we harvest!” (laughs out loud) Loi Cheung 80

The purpose of intergenerational work for DCCA is “to develop greater understanding across the generations and to encourage both age groups to appreciate their different ways of doing things, whilst at the same time highlighting the importance of retaining traditional values and practices, especially pride in (Chinese) identity and the important role of discipline”.

M. Hong tells us that she really “liked showing the young people how to do things the old Chinese way, because these days they don’t learn very much of our traditions.” M Hong 66

The focus of gardening enables elders to share their knowledge of farming and for many is a reminder of the rural poverty that they left years ago. Shirley (73) tells me that “I would like to pass on what I learnt from when I was little back in Hong Kong to more young people” and Lily (69) agrees because “our Chinese children know so little about Chinese vegetables and we can use our allotment to show them, it is good for them to learn.” Lily 69

The older generation are very keen to instil strong values of commitment to education and determination to improve in life to the younger (British born) generations of Chinese people.

This work has been successful because many of the younger people involved can speak Cantonese, and are keen to spend time with elders - “The youngsters are very willing to help with the planting and spend time talking to us ” Tin Sung Chan 65

Sometimes they put on social events, such as a BBQ in summer.

“It was fab and I loved the BBQ!” Kieran Wong 12

Katie Chan (19) told me that the project “had been uplifting and revolved around friendship, talking, listening, having conversations and making sure that everyone felt comfortable”. There are 130 people involved, 32 of these being Under 25.

Despite challenges – particularly of suggesting a new range of activities and ideas for spending time in their retirement, for a generation that see this life stage as for ‘resting and shopping’ the project continues with growing support and numbers using their Facebook page and an intergenerational skill-share cookery course starting in the New Year.

The Generations Together project has been successful in opening up volunteering opportunities to new audiences, as Eddie Yip (24) puts it –

“Before this project I had no interest in gardening or volunteer work, but after taking part I realised how enjoyable it could be and in the future will set back time so I can get more involved.” Eddie Yip 24

To get in touch with DCCA, please contact office@dcca.info or look at the Facebook page below:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/DCCA-ying-guo-xi-nan-bu-hua-ren-xie-hui/123333331058164>

CONVERSATION AND CULTURE: CONNECTING PEOPLE

As an organisation the Plymouth Kurdish Community (PKC) was established in 2003 as a result of the growing numbers of Kurdish people living and working in Devon and Cornwall.

The key purpose of PKC is to enable community members to promote their cultural, economic, social and democratic rights, and to address any needs and concerns. The organisation works in flexible ways, responding to the needs of the changing community. There are British born Kurds, recently arrived refugees and a growing age range.

PKC operates at three levels:

- Providing a range of services to community members
- Promoting the needs of Kurdish people to partner agencies and mainstream service providers such as the local authority and health services
- Promoting the history and culture of Kurdish people, aiming to deepen understanding and strengthen harmonious interaction of different peoples living in neighbourhoods

The following describes examples of PKC's work:

- Across Devon and Cornwall advice and information is provided to Kurdish refugees, through the website, publications and in person
- Recreation activities – a Kurdish music, drama and dance group
- Education and training, including the Sunday Supplementary School for Kurdish children and English language support
- Cultural activities and events, including history, heritage and folklore projects, art exhibitions and promoting the work of Kurdish poets and writers
- Kurdish mother-tongue classes and interpretation services
- A safe space for Kurdish women and children

The Plymouth Kurdish Community was successful in bidding for Generations Together money to develop intergenerational projects that would bring older and younger people together. This has enabled PKC to employ 2 part time workers and support the Project Manager, Shoker Abobeker.

This began in March 2010 with a celebration of Kurdish New Year for the whole community, where people from all ages, backgrounds and cultural identity groups mixed, ate and danced together. The event also promoted new volunteering opportunities and ideas for new activities that would work towards greater integration of communities.

Next a food tasting programme was started, with pairs of younger volunteers taking a home based cookery service into family homes. Traditional Kurdish food would be cooked by older and younger people, sparking interest in all sorts of conversation, leading to greater understanding between British residents and Kurdish people.

“Successful intergenerational work requires a shared interest or activity as a starting point, and an enthusiastic attitude from the volunteers involved” (Shoker Abobeker)

The majority of Kurdish people living in Plymouth are in Stonehouse, and there has been a need to inform, educate and integrate the established residents with more recently arrived nationality groups. PKC has taken a unique approach to this and offers half day information sessions for anybody living in Stonehouse, finishing with a shared Kurdish lunch, social time and further

opportunities to meet again. 60 people have already gained from these sessions and a further two are planned for the New Year.

On Sundays at the Kurdish Supplementary School a new reminiscence project has begun. Older volunteers who have lived and worked in Plymouth all their lives are invited in to speak to the children about their experiences of the Second World War, and the children bring their own more recent experiences of the war in Iraq. The topics addressed are of history, migration and how neighbourhoods are often created as a result of external forces, such as poverty, economy, job opportunity, famine and war. All the time people are sharing their life experiences and personal stories and the truth is spread about why refugees arrive in a country and why people seek asylum.

The group also believe that doing fun things together is a positive way of encouraging more contact and connection across communities and the generations – there have been BBQs, boat trips, camping trips, sports tournaments, and beach days.

For PKC the Generations Together project has enabled them to develop new activities and projects, expand the numbers of volunteers and address identified community needs.

Contact Plymouth Kurdish Community at:

plymouthkurdishcommunity@msn.com

01752 242 156

www.pkc.org

A Snapshot of Smaller Stories from the Generations Together Programme

St Peters Church of England Primary School

At the school an overgrown, but potentially interesting, green space was reclaimed by a team of Groundwork volunteers. In the 'Secret Garden' created by a group of school children, parents and grandparents, work will start on an outdoor mosaic.

Hele School

At Hele School a day event was set aside for Generations Together, which involved worker time for 8 days in the four weeks leading up to it. There was a carousel of activities on offer to the student group, supported by older volunteers – knitting, First Aid, a beach clean and a woodland activity.

**The two main outcomes of this work were:
involving young people in activities that they wouldn't usually do and
opportunities for challenging stereotypes and perceptions that each age group hold of the
other.**

360 Degrees Festival

At this cutting edge arts event – showing panoramic film and photography - put on by Peninsula Arts, older volunteers were provided with opportunities to respond to questions from school pupils about the blitz and how being in Plymouth during the war had affected them as children. After watching a short film, school students brought prepared questions to a nominated volunteer at a cabaret style workshop session.

“It is important that younger people hear our stories and can reflect on how we felt as children. It is wonderful that we are given the chance to share our knowledge with others” (Stephanie 68)

Norman Hine (84) was delighted with his experience at the festival as “the students asked intelligent questions and wanted insight into my real feelings at their age”. Norman spent time with students aged 10 to 18 years old from Plymouth High School for Girls and Brook Green Centre for Learning, Whitleigh. Norman decided to tell stories that would directly relate to children – for example how sweet rationing worked, comparing this to the availability of sweets and sugary items today and how certain foodstuffs, such as bananas disappeared from the shelves, how hospital shipments were given priority and then looking at the huge range of fruit items available at supermarkets today.

IT Drop In on Monday evenings – East End Resource Centre

Norman Hine (84) has become one of our regular attendees at the Monday evening IT drop-in, supported by younger volunteers. As Norman is a regular on the ‘Talk Circuit’ - speaking about Plymouth’s Film star history and experiences during World War 2 he told me that having spent a decade using physical display boards that – “power point is the way forward”. He believes that it is “grandchildren that can show grandparents how to use modern technology” and that the older generation will have to catch up and understand the benefits that word processing, software packages, Skype and the internet can bring to all of us.

Stonehouse Carnival

A Community Fun Day and Street Festival was held in September 2010, and the Generations Together project team received the following feedback for their support with the event:

“The whole layer of Generations Together was really useful and will help us think of people’s time in a different way in the future and we definitely will want to organise more community workshops before the event next time to bring lots more people together from different streets, backgrounds and from different age groups. It is certainly something to build on in the future. Without the community workshops in the church we would have struggled to host community workshops so thanks for organising that. By making a start like we did, you just realise how important it is to hold events like this and to encourage people to get to know each other on a different level than just passing each other by.

Thanks for being so helpful and giving us the opportunity of the money as well as the opportunities for workshops.”

Wendy: Vice Chair of Stonehouse ACTION

RSVP Knitting Group

Sometimes people find their volunteering role through accident and sometimes via a real effort because of a feeling of 'there being a vocation, a purpose to life'. Barbara Harvey, 75 of Modbury felt that she had built up so much life experience and wanted to share this with others; so she went on line, searching for ideas and opportunities and came across CSV/RSVP. She met with John McCarthy – who came from London – at Plymouth rail station, to discuss what she could offer.

She has been knitting ever since she was a child, so becoming a member and then leader of a local RSVP knitters group seemed an ideal start to her volunteering. The group now runs from the Age Concern building in Plymouth. The women who knit are socialising and benefitting from a shared group activity, but they are also sharing their skills and knitting useful items for others – for pet charities they knit dog blankets; for an African charity they knit clothes and for the UK based Youth Cancer Trust they are knitting hats. The group meet once per month and will respond as they can to requests from charities.

Barbara feels very strongly that the benefits of intergenerational work are:

- ✓ **That negative perceptions of each are changed – older people no longer see young people as 'yobs' and younger people begin to realise that older people are human and have a life story**
- ✓ **Jobs and tasks can be done together**
- ✓ **Wisdom and stories can be shared**
- ✓ **For young people they get to learn about the past and the older generation enjoy re-living their memories, through reminiscence work**

One of the best projects she has seen is where young people on catering courses cook for the older people – lunch clubs etc.

PLYMOUTH GUILD: VOLUNTEER CENTRE

Challenges and Frustrations

There have been five significant challenges identified in the Generations Together programme in Plymouth - (1) the targets required delivery in terms of high numbers, as well as demanding meaningful engagement in sustainable pieces of work, (which generally means working with fewer numbers.)

“The short timeframe and programme expectations (set by the funder) led to a clash in the desire ‘to create opportunity for meaningful longer term interaction between the generations’, via shared passions – be it arts, music, identity or unemployment for example, with the competing ‘focus on high impact and the need to meet huge targets’, in terms of numbers and new volunteering opportunities created.”

Simon De Groot: Volunteer Centre Manager

(2) The changing focus of the delivery – initially described as a ‘demonstrator programme’, then becoming a ‘research programme’, under New Labour’s Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), funded by a combination of 5 departments; then in May 2010 the Coalition Government taking over and returning the programme to a ‘demonstrator’, and shortening the programme, to be completed by March 2011.

(3) The original 2 year timeframe was compressed to 21 months, and in reality for the Plymouth Consortium 15 months, due to the time taken to appoint staff. The newly created team started working in January 2010, although the bid was approved in June 2009. This reduction of timescale meant that the benefits resulting from the learning within the experimental activities could not always be integrated improve delivery in relation to the set targets.

(4) Within the chosen model of working – multi agency office, with line management coming from the employing body of each staff member - it was not always easy to identify how and who would take forward work started under Generations Together, beyond the funding stream.

(5) On several occasions, and causing immense frustration, the legal framework, rules and the interpretation of rules delayed interesting activity, for example delays created by the requirement to complete CRB checks.

Creating a Programme Team

However, on balance the decision made to bring the Generations Together Consortium partners’ staff into a shared office space was very exciting and the benefits of this were:

- Creating economies of scale and sharing responsibilities for larger projects
- Pooling resources
- Engaging volunteers in a range of opportunities more easily accessible to the individual
- Cross fertilisation and sharing of skills, ideas and contacts
- Development of useful evaluative techniques, ranking the impact of one-off activities, compared with longer term work facilitating development of long term relationships

8 STRANDS OF WORK AND CORE SUPPORT FROM THE VOLUNTEER CENTRE

Within the original bid there were 8 strands of work that would be delivered in Plymouth, built around inter-generational volunteering:

1. Growing vegetables and developing craft skills
2. Linking together older and younger unemployed people, through Job Centre Plus
3. Boosting volunteer recruitment through community events
4. Skill sharing
5. Environmental volunteering
6. ??
7. ??
8. ??

The idea behind larger organisations leading the bid and the Volunteer Centre having a core responsibility in offering organisational support was to ensure that experiences and best practice on the following areas was shared : training to volunteer co-ordinators, recruitment of volunteers, monitoring and evaluation systems, running events and publicity and promotion of services.

Creativity through Addition-ality

Monica Tavkam was commissioned to take a series of photographs to create an exhibition that would challenge, surprise and inform the younger and older generations (and everyone else in between!) about perceptions, misperceptions, lies, truths and stereotypes. This mobile exhibition has been shown at the University Volunteer Awards Ceremony, in schools, libraries, at community based events and at the Barbican Theatre.

A range of experimental and creative projects have also been delivered within the Generations Together Plymouth Consortium, including Mutley Greenbank Youth Club (young musicians), the Westerners (historical re-enactment), Hope FC (inter-generational sports day), Marine Biological Association (intergenerational fishing events), Plymouth Play Association (T-shirt workshop), and support given to various community events – University Open Doors day, Stonehouse Festival, World On The Green, Plymouth Mela and the Fun Day at the East End Development Trust.

Outcomes: Ham In Wonderland

It is best to describe the type of outcomes from intergenerational volunteering activity through looking at an example of project work. 'Ham In Wonderland' was about creating a shared space and improving the look and access of a local area of woodland.

As a result of working with community groups in the area the following were achieved:

- Numbers belonging to the Residents Association increased, from 3 to 10
- A local consultation was completed – Stepping Stones
- Families were delighted by listening to professional storytellers
- Fathers and children were getting active together, building bird boxes

- Knowledge was gained through woodland walks and plant identification
- The environment was improved through litter picking, clearance and general maintenance activities, led by Groundwork Trust
- New experiences were shared as Ham residents were introduced to Kurdish classical music
- There was an increase in the number of local volunteering opportunities created
- There were changed perceptions and feelings that people discussed in the review of the day:
 - ❖ Older people expressed that they would now feel safer in the woods
 - ❖ Older and younger people taking part in the activities now know each other and have greater respect for each other; it was heard that the biggest critic of the 'truths' tangled up in negative stereotypes associated with a particular age group would be from that age group!!
 - ❖ Several volunteers described their increased feelings of worth and self-esteem as their efforts and contributions were recognised and valued

“I witnessed for myself conversations on the day between people of all ages; Ham in Wonderland created opportunities for dialogue that local people are clearly very passionate about, but are very rarely, if ever, asked about”

(Simon De Groot: Volunteer Centre Manager)

Personal Highlights

The highlights overall from the past 15 months, for the Volunteer Centre Manager have been:

- ✓ Observing the strengthened links between the East End Development Trust and Black and Minority Ethnic Communities (BME) in the area
 - ✓ Observing the development of collaboration rather than competition as organisations are resourced and focussed on a shared mission, leading to benefits for the community in geographical neighbourhoods and communities of identity
 - ✓ In 2010 Plymouth Volunteer Awards Ceremony (run by The Herald, The University and The Plymouth Guild) introduced an Award for 'Young Volunteer of the Year'
 - ✓ The increasing range of numbers of interesting people from diverse backgrounds and identity groups that the programme has been able to engage with
-

The Westerners

The Tamar Valley Westerners are a dedicated group of volunteers who support 'early North American culture' particularly focusing on the life of the cowboy and Indian. The group is made up of volunteers predominantly over the age of 60, and has recently seen an increase in the numbers of those under the age of 25.

Over the last 25 years the group has performed thousands of live action performances of famous western shootouts and re-enactments of well known pieces of American history across the UK and have raised tens of thousands of pounds for various charities.

In recent years the Westerners have found things to be much more difficult, as members get older and the day of the schoolboy cowboy and Indian adventure gives way to the imaginary world of the Game Boy and Play station era, they have had to become much more than just performers, they became educators.

As part of the Generations Together project they are working to meet this educational role - purchasing an authentic reproduction of a North American Ti-pi which they use to showcase their work. They were present at the recent Intergenerational Fun Day which was hugely successful. Furthermore they will use the Ti-pi to continue their work in schools and community settings across the City.

In essence the **North American Living History Project** will promote learning and understanding of the life of the Native North American Indian and New World settlers in the late 18th and early 19th century, by allowing access to authentic storytelling and live performances of traditional campfire and Ti-pi re-enactments by a group of dedicated enthusiasts.

At the heart of the project sits the belief that education and engagement is a vital ingredient of preserving and understanding yesterdays' events.

Acting on this belief the Tamar Valley Westerners will utilise its membership of 35 volunteers, its 25 years of display experience and raft of resources, including authentic reproductions of a Native American Ti-pi, a hand built replica of an early 19th century chuck wagon and bespoke costumes and scenery - to visit numerous schools and community events, as part of a touring educational project, to show scenes from a truly unique bygone lifestyle of the American Cowboy and Native Indian that has often been misunderstood or romanticised in the movies.

Each interactive show will be created bespoke to the event however it is anticipated that each will involve 6 – 10 members of the Tamar Valley Westerners and will provide interactive question and answer sessions, storytelling both at the campfire and in the Ti-pi which can seat around 15 and a chance for beneficiaries to examine safe replicas of authentic guns equipment and costumes, whilst having the opportunity to try some common snacks of the period.

In terms of understanding if intergenerational working does benefit people?

As a group we would say yes, 'particularly in the long term' whilst working with people of all ages over the last 25 years, collectively the group has noticed that we as individuals do genuinely become enriched by our individual life experiences. Depending on the experience being positive or negative we will often pass them on to our children or

siblings. In our opinion the positive experiences that we have, do much more good than harm, we have noticed that no matter what the age or the demographic of those involved, people become; more responsive and willing to participate, learn or go on to try new things if the experience is stimulating and rewarding.

Recently we have seen a small influx of newer members since our involvement with the generation's together project, however as the North American history project rolls out we anticipate that younger members will get involved.

Intergenerational Volunteering: University Of Plymouth Students Union

As part of the evaluation, and to look at intergenerational volunteering from a different angle the evaluator spoke with the Volunteer Manager at the University of Plymouth Students Union. Between September 2010 and June 2011 there were 893 students volunteering, contributing 10 985 hours of voluntary time, of which 482 hours were spent with older people's projects – such as 1-1 Befriending Services; catering and kitchen duties, providing lunch clubs and refreshments at events ; organising and running tea dances; providing extra support at exercise and music classes through groups such as The Elder Tree and Befriending Consortium. [The hours were relatively low this year, due to there being no student project leader for older people's work; the most popular type of volunteering this year had been environmental/conservation].

Claire Massey stated that “it is of vital importance in a University of this type – where students are living in neighbourhoods – that they work directly with neighbours and the community, thereby creating a more positive image of ‘the student’ as good citizen and helpful neighbour”. Claire sees the benefits to students as their confidence grows, they become less isolated, develop social skills and common sense through their volunteering experience. She can clearly evidence development of skills in planning, organisation and leadership, and for the students, the addition of a positive outcome for their CVs. Students will often volunteer as part of a structured programme of personal development for themselves.

All students are offered Safeguarding, Health and Safety/Risk Assessment and Food Hygiene as compulsory training, related to their placement type. And then after 20 hours of volunteering they can access other training, for example Sign Language, First Aid etc.

Of intergenerational volunteering Claire stated that:

“this is such an amazing opportunity – the interaction with older people is so important; the learning for older people about issues affecting younger people and the understanding of life that younger people gain. Through the stories that are shared each deepens their understanding of the other.”