# Table of Contents

1. Introduction
2. The story so far: ethos, mission & purpose
3. Key targets
4. Youth social action
5. At a glance
6. Intergenerational links in Bradford
7. The Intergenerational Linking journey
8. A case study
9. Feedback from participants
10. Key learnings
11. What next?
Introduction

In November 2019, The Linking Network (TLN) were delighted to start a partnership with My Home Life England (MHLE) in an exciting £1 million project to promote young people’s engagement with care homes for older people through the Care Home FaNs: Intergenerational Linking project.

The project is funded through the #iwill Fund. The National Lottery Community Fund and the Department of Digital, Culture, Media & Sport are each investing £25 million seed funding to create the #iwill Fund. The Dunhill Medical Trust is acting as a match funder and awarding grants on behalf of the #iwill Fund.

In Phase 1 and 2 of this project, TLN received a grant from The Dunhill Medical Trust to deliver an Intergenerational Linking project in Bradford as a pioneer area. This grant covered the period from July 2020 – March 2022. The following report aims to capture the impact of this work.
The story so far

Ethos & Mission

This project aimed to link children and young people aged 5-14, particularly from less advantaged socioeconomic backgrounds with older people living in care homes.

Both young and older people are affected by ageist attitudes and societal marginalisation. Through giving individuals from these groups, the opportunity to come together (remotely or face to face), particularly individuals that may otherwise never meet, we aim to challenge pre-existing prejudices, positively influence attitudes towards one another and break down barriers on both sides. Reflecting on each other’s similarities and differences will deepen the groups’ understanding of each other, how we all live together and how diversity should be embraced and celebrated. Through conversation, group activity and a focus on relationships, we aim to broaden and transform perspectives, and for both groups to develop empathy, awareness and respect.

We know that intergenerational relationships can have a wide range of benefits for older people and further research (e.g. Martins et al, 2019) shows that there are also benefits for children and young people in terms of developing language, empathy, social skills, specific skills, history knowledge as well as the longer term benefits of instilling a culture of volunteering and social action and promoting awareness of the health and social care sector. TLN’s work is centred about the PSHE curriculum and promoting the social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) development of children and young people. The benefits that intergenerational connects can bring are therefore embedded in our core aims and principles.

Our Purpose

TLN’s work is structured through four key questions (Who am I? Who are we? Where do we live? How do we all live together?) and intergenerational linking will provide valuable learning opportunities for children to explore the identity of themselves and others and think carefully about how different generations live together in the same community.

Intergenerational practice:

- Improves confidence
- Generates understanding and mutual respect
- Reduces feelings of isolation and disconnection
- Connects communities
Key targets

1. Provide intergenerational opportunities with 10 schools/youth organisations and 10 care homes.

2. Reach 300 young people

3. Work to create a local project advisory group

Gain the views of the local advisory group on existing work to engage children and young people with care homes, their thoughts on what might work well and opportunities for local intergenerational linking.
The arising intergenerational relationships formed from these interactions will constitute meaningful youth social action, developing young people as well-rounded individuals with an intergenerational volunteering habit, whilst also instilling value within older people and ensuring they are cherished by their communities, supported to deliver their potential and included in society in a meaningful way. The six principles for high quality youth social action as developed by the #iwill campaign were used as guiding principles in the design of this project.
At a glance

- Christmas cards & letters
- Photo & video messages
- Gardening
- Shared artwork
- Sharing hopes, dreams & words of wisdom
- Sharing memories
- Video calls

- 465 children and young people
- 12 schools and youth groups
- 12 care homes for older people
## Intergenerational links in Bradford

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Care Home</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Year Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Willow Bank Care Home</td>
<td>Beckfoot Allerton Primary School</td>
<td>2 x Year 5 classes then Year 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bingley Wingfield Nursing Home</td>
<td>Beckfoot Priestthorpe Primary School</td>
<td>1 x Year 2 class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formations Care Home</td>
<td>Shipley St Paul’s Rainbow Group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langdale Residential Home</td>
<td>St John’s CE Primary School</td>
<td>2 x Year 5 classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howgate House Care Home</td>
<td>Thorpe Primary School</td>
<td>1 x Year 3 class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurel Bank Nursing Home</td>
<td>Wilsden Primary School</td>
<td>1 x Year 3/4 class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acorn Nursing Home</td>
<td>All Saints CE Primary School</td>
<td>School Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bierley Court Care Home</td>
<td>St John’s CE Primary School</td>
<td>2 x Year 4 classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossley House Care Home</td>
<td>Dixons Allerton Primary School</td>
<td>Year 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mill Lodge Care Home</td>
<td>Feversham Primary Academy</td>
<td>2 x Year 4 classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwood House Nursing Home</td>
<td>Parkwood Primary School</td>
<td>1 x Year 5 class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Avenue Nursing Home</td>
<td>Clayton Village Primary School</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Intergenerational Linking journey

Each link between a school or youth group and care home was unique and bespoke to the context and needs of those participating. However a loose structure was given to support the link, ensure it was manageable and to keep momentum for the project.

Many links engaged over an academic year though some started their link part way through the year.

- Initial recruitment conversation with a school, youth group or care home interested in Intergenerational Linking finding out their hopes for the project and needs

- Once a link was found, key staff from the school and older people’s setting met to have a planning meeting.

- Whilst every link was unique and took its own journey, we recommended that the link begins with preparation and mutual exchange of information between the younger and older people.

- Young and older people were then supported to make choices about further activities that they engage in.

- Often the work was shared across school with families of the young and older people, across school and with the wider community.
A case study

Once the link had been established, TLN, the lead teacher and the activity coordinator met together for a planning meeting. The school were keen for the project to fulfil PSHE objectives including children understanding that they can make a difference to the world around them. Willow Bank wanted opportunities for the residents to connect with children.

Initially Christmas cards were exchanged and photo messages from the residents with a little bit about themselves. During this time, the UK entered another national lockdown and schools were closed so many children responded to messages whilst learning from home. TLN supported children’s understanding of older people and care homes with lesson resources and books.

Residents also shared with the children some of the things they liked and disliked. These led to a special connection between a resident, Mike, who used to be a professional boxer and a child who had a particular interest in boxing.

Children created wordsearches for the residents which were personalised with their likes and dislikes. Residents said they were honoured to receive them.

Later on in the year, the children and older people created a ‘Tree of Togetherness’, a shared artwork piece which incorporated the hopes and dreams from the children and words of wisdom for achieving these from the residents.

This link has continued into the second academic year. Unfortunately, at certain times, residents had to isolate in their own rooms due to Covid-19 in the care home so the children decided to create ‘kindness packs’ full of pictures, messages and puzzles to keep their older friends entertained during this period.

Around Remembrance Day, children sent questions to the residents and the residents enjoyed sharing their memories and experiences of WW2 with the children. The teachers reported that this brought the topic to life for the children and helped them to connect children’s learning to their own community.

Video calls have also been held to bring together the children and older people. First children shared some of their favourite stories with the residents to celebrate National Storytelling Week and one of the residents, Raymond, enjoyed sharing a poem with the children.

Next time, they joined together on a video call for a game of bingo which was fast-paced and enjoyed by all!

Willow Bank Care Home and Beckfoot Allerton Primary are looking forward to arranging some face-to-face meetings in the summer term; possibly a garden party at the care home.
Feedback from participants

"The project made me feel joyful because we were linking with other people older than us and doing fun activities with them." – Husnain, Year 5

"Our ladies and gents really enjoyed completing the wordsearches and they were humbled that the pupils had gone to so much trouble and put so much thought and time into creating them." – Care home activity coordinator

"Thank you so much for a wonderful afternoon. It’s moments like this in teaching that remind you why you do the job! The children absolutely loved it and are already discussing ideas for another afternoon Zoom session. They were made up to see Connie and Julie too." – Teacher involved in Intergenerational Linking

Thank you for the books – they are just what we needed to get the kids interested and involved in the project." – Teacher involved in Intergenerational Linking

"I was really happy with how the video call went. It’s a big benefit for the residents and kids." – Care home activity coordinator
What has helped a link to work well?

Gathering contextual information from schools, youth groups and care homes in the initial stages was important (e.g. year group, needs of residents, what they hoped to get out of the project.) This enabled the local broker from TLN to support the link in the most appropriate way.

The local broker from TLN provided a lot of logistical and admin support for some links. This involved arranging meetings and picking up cards/messages etc and exchanging them. In the time pressured environments of schools, youth groups and care homes, this support was greatly received and contributed to the success of a link.

Supporting with preparatory work, particularly for children, was important. This involved helping children to understand more about older people and care homes, what to expect and how to behave. Lesson resources and suggested book lists were created by experienced teachers at TLN.

Whilst the project aimed to keep young and older people’s voices at the forefront, staff in schools, youth groups and care homes valued some structure and ideas, particularly in the early stages as confidence was growing among participants.
What has helped a link to work well?

Smaller activities to start with helped to launch Intergenerational Linking, enabling young and older people to find out more about each other, whilst remaining manageable for those involved. Examples of the suggested activities can be found on TLN’s website here.

Using key calendar days for intergenerational activities worked well as these were already being celebrated in schools, youth groups and care homes. E.g. Easter, World Book Day, Remembrance Day.

Having flexibility was key; every link was different and having a diverse selection of activities was vital. Video calls and virtual connections worked well for some but not others. Some links engaged with craft activities but for others this wasn’t for them.

Whilst TLN has vast experience of teaching and working with schools, young people and community, Intergenerational Linking was a new project. Therefore, professional development for the local broker was vital in order to support the links appropriately. This involved connecting with local and national organisations and accessing training e.g. Age UK, Bradford Care Association, Generations Working Together.
What challenges have occurred and how have these been overcome?

The backdrop of Covid-19 has had a significant impact on Intergenerational Linking and has understandably led to some challenges.

Social distancing restrictions, particularly visitation restrictions in care homes, have meant that face to face linking wasn’t an option for a long time and are only just moving into a stage where young and older people can physically come together in a safe way.

Therefore TLN has really had to diversify and think creatively about activities that facilitate meaningful relationships between generations whilst still being safe for all involved. Sometimes these activities might not have had as much meaning and impact as we would have wished, particularly for older people who might be living with dementia, but activities that built a link between school, youth group and care home were still important. TLN’s commitment and aim was to establish long-term links so every activity helped to build this and prepare participants for face-to-face visits when allowed.

The third national lockdown in January 2021 was challenging for the project especially as schools and youth groups were once again closed. Flexibility was needed here; some links built Intergenerational Linking into remote learning whereas others needed to pause for a while and keeping the relationship with partners supportive was most important of all in this challenging time.
What challenges have occurred and how have these been overcome?

TLN found high staff turnover rates, particularly in care homes which was possibly exacerbated by the pandemic. This meant that relationships needed to re-established. Again, the role of local broker from TLN was important here to fulfil these admin tasks and helping the links to continue and thrive.

The pandemic has caused ongoing staffing challenges in all settings meaning sometimes there has been limited capacity for Intergenerational Linking, despite a desire to be involved in the project. In addition, ongoing lockdowns and residents having to isolate in their own rooms in care home settings has meant that sometimes planned activities have had to change quickly or be rearranged.
What next?

The over-time funding for this project has meant that as an organisation, TLN has been able to develop its thinking about intergenerational work going forward.

Intergenerational Linking now forms part of TLN’s core work with the aim that schools will have Schools Linking in one year group and Intergenerational Linking in another thus creating a complete approach to community cohesion.

TLN now look to widen the Intergenerational Linking offer in Bradford, engaging with schools, youth groups, care homes, sheltered accommodation and older people’s community groups.

As restrictions begin to ease, there is a real appetite to resume some in-person intergenerational activities alongside the remote activities that have been developed. TLN aim to continue to develop its knowledge about intergenerational best practice, liaising with other organisations to share expertise.
We thank you for your ongoing support of our programme

Acknowledgements

With thanks to My Home Life England, Dunhill Medical Trust and the #iwill Fund from The National Lottery Community Fund.

https://myhomelife.org.uk/community-engagement/intergenerational-linking/