



Persevere

An intergenerational project in Leith

Pilmey Development Project

20 older people and 8 young people worked together on the Persevere project in the summer of 2008.

The focus of Persevere was to look at how older and younger generations feel about community planning and the ways they could be engaged or share their views with the Leith Neighbourhood Partnership, their local community planning structure.

The project was a collaboration between Pilmey Development Project, Citadel Youth Centre and Leith Community Involvement Project.

Together the older and younger people produced a DVD - Persevere - which was presented to the Neighbourhood Planning Partnership, containing their recommendations for improving participation of older and younger people.

Citadel Youth Centre



The Persevere Project, an intergenerational project looking at community involvement in Leith, led to a recommendation by older and younger people to “create more opportunities for young and old to come together”.

The partners involved in developing the intergenerational project conducted a project review with fourteen of the older people who had participated in the project.

This report of the review helped us to understand the experience of intergenerational work for participants, and to learn from the project. We will use this learning to develop future initiatives and good practice in which young and old can be brought together in ways they enjoy.

“We should do that again, because they’re helping us and we’re helping them”



“I didn't know any young people in Leith”

The older people were asked ‘**what did you think of young people in Leith before the project?**’

Most of the group agreed that their impression of young people was affected by seeing young people in groups in a number of areas where local young people are known to hang around. Some agreed that walking past groups of older young people could be intimidating, although all agreed that *“you can't tar them all with the same brush”*.

Some group members said that if they

saw one of the younger people they had met through the project in a group with their friends, they would feel much more confident now to say hello.

Although some members of the group have grandchildren, some have no contact at all with young people on a regular basis.

All of the group agreed that the contact they had had with young people through the Persevere project would not have happened without a special effort by workers in the partner organizations to get them all along and facilitate getting to know each other.

“I felt confident. They were intimidated by us at first.”

‘**How did it feel meeting new people at first?**’ The participants had a range of views.

Many of the group felt very pleased with the way the young people had worked with them - *“I thought they were charming”, “it was very enlightening!”*

However, in response to this question there was also a lot of discussion about respect and how to ensure young people were well behaved - *“it's the way you talk to young people, you don't put them down”*. All of the participants felt the young people they met were respectful and very well behaved, but the discussion

revealed that perhaps the older people do want a sense of reassurance that the situations where they meet young people will be controlled.

When asked if **they would prefer 1:1 contact with young people**, there was a unanimous feeling that meeting as a group was preferable - *“it's got to be in a group, it feels more relaxed. If it was 1:1 you'd feel more responsible.”*

In terms of the **preferred age groups**, the older people seemed to prefer older young people, in part to avoid a sense of responsibility for a younger child, and in part because they felt conversation would be easier with an older young person.

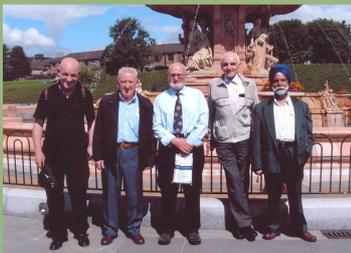


“We were there when rock and roll was invented!”

During the evaluation session it was clear that the older people were already a strong and cohesive group. There was a lot of friendly banter and laughter, and people from different ethnic backgrounds (a Sikh and a Chinese member of the group), with different experiences of childhood and parenting and of old age, were obviously made welcome and felt at home in the group.

This may have been one factor in the success of the intergenerational project and the ease the group felt with young people. Likewise, the young people were already known to each other as a group.

Time taken to develop relationships between peers involved in an intergenerational project, may be an important factor in supporting relationships between generations.



“We all like recognition. If we take time with them [young people] it’s great”.

“The authorities set up barriers”.

Some of the older people had previously had frustrating experiences of trying to share their experiences with young people. One of the group members told of how his grandchild had been undertaking a school project on the Second World War. He had offered to go into school and talk about his experience of growing up in the war, but his offer had not been accepted because of the need for Disclosure checking.

However one member of the group also described the personal hesitation older people might feel about getting involved, *“We create barriers. You reach a stand off at a certain age – become quite stand off-ish”.*

But when asked: ‘what do you have in common with young people?’ the older people felt life experience was the thing that was shared between the generations during the project - *“We were all young once. Young people forget this!”*

For some of the exchange, the young people had obviously been curious enough about the young people to ask

questions and learn more about their lives: *“It was largely about our past. They were getting more information about us”.*

However, all of the group agreed that going on a day trip together had done a lot to build relationships between older and younger people: *“I think they did tell us about themselves on the day trip”.*

The opportunity of the day trip provided a number of positive benefits which all the group mentioned in their evaluation of the project as factors which they enjoyed and which enhanced the inter-generational aspect of the project:

- The choice of destination provoked a lot of discussion about past and present (the People’s Palace, Glasgow)
- The length of time they spent together - getting to know people better
- Having lunch together
- Having the workers set tasks for the young people to ask questions and find out things, helped initial conversation

“There’s a lot of good in some young people”.

During the discussions, it became clear that the older people had a lot of empathy for the younger generation. They did not feel that all of the new technology and increased freedom always translated into a better childhood.

Respect between older and younger people was a strong theme of their views on young people, for people of all ethnic backgrounds in the group. People recognized that parenting, today in Leith, carries many pressures which impact on young people, such

as growing up in a household where both parents work, leaving children with less attention and fewer boundaries than they might need.

The group agreed that investing time in younger children would pay off in young people growing up to feel more positive about their future.

Members of the group who do have grandchildren talked of a strong sense of enjoyment of grandparenting and of contributing to their grandchildren’s personal and social development by being there to talk to and have fun with.





“Make it a bit longer”

The group was asked: ‘what could be done to make the experience of an intergenerational project even better?’ All of the group felt longer meetings and trips would help them to get to know young people - some felt that they were just starting to get to know the young people.

The group felt that to get more older people involved, word of mouth would be the best way - *“ask them, they can say yes or no, you’ve lost nothing”*, but they also felt the idea would have to be explained to people: *“you have to have a reason to come along, a purpose, something to get people along.”* In terms of the reason to come, what could older people get out of intergenerational projects?

- *“Humour”*
- *“Satisfaction. If you’ve helped them.”*
- *“Enlightenment. Of all the problems facing young people in today’s society.”*
- *“Older people have more time to listen.”*
- *“Respect is earned not given”*
- *“Give 100% of your attention, keep your mouth shut and their ears open”*



And what could younger people get out of it?

- *“The older generation could pass knowledge onto them.”*
- *“Young people can tell us how they feel about things.”*
- *“You’ve got to converse to be respectful. You can’t beat that.”*
- *“Motivate a child”*
- *“Answer their questions.”*

The older people felt they had more to share. They were asked what skills or hobbies they might consider passing on to younger people:

- *“I like Scrabble, and I’m in a Barbershop Quartet. I could share those things.”*
- *“I could teach them to make a curry and pakora. Teach them about different spices and foods.”*
- *“I’d like a team challenge, like a treasure hunt or scavenger hunt. If you were going somewhere with them you could have things hidden to find, rather than walk around aimlessly.”*
- *“Play games from years ago – kick the can, marbles.”*
- *“I like jigsaws. If they were into that we could do that”.*



Workers involved identified several features they felt were essential to future projects:

- **Transport** - many of the older people do not come out at night, and may struggle to get there during the day if they are not very mobile
- **Preparation time** - give thought to facilitating the relationships
- **Budget** - trips and eating together is a good way of developing relationships
- **Collaboration** - workers with experience working with older people, and youth workers, working together, sharing their contacts with community knowledge, was essential to getting the project off the ground.

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