

A YEAR OF INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTION

InCommon Social Impact Report
2019/20

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August 2020



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InCommon is a social enterprise that brings primary school children into sheltered housing through a facilitated programme that lasts throughout the academic year.

Older volunteers engage with children and their teachers in a range of activities that promote relationship-building, skill sharing and knowledge transfer. InCommon is unique in that it partners with Housing Associations to develop these community-anchored intergenerational programmes across the greater London area. In the past academic year alone, InCommon led 13 projects in 7 different boroughs, strengthening those 13 communities and initiating intergenerational connections between local groups that had never interacted previously.

This social impact analysis report was commissioned by InCommon to encompass the 2019-20 academic year. The purpose of this work was to provide an external appraisal of the quality of the organisation's work (80% of time spent), whilst at the same time building the capacity of the team internally to embed evaluation tools into their ongoing programme delivery (20% of time spent). The methodology used blends best practice from existing intergenerational evaluation techniques, social impact approaches, and real-world research design.

The data collected highlighted key areas of impact InCommon's intergenerational programme achieved across all its 13 projects. InCommon demonstrates success in:

1. Building more connected and age friendly communities
2. Facilitating relationships between young children and older volunteers
3. Enabling primary school children to gain self-confidence
4. Enhancing children's understanding of history as a subject
5. Reducing loneliness and isolation among older volunteers
6. Creating opportunities for older volunteers to feel valued

Intergenerational learning is still a new and growing field in the UK, and InCommon is the first social enterprise of its kind. This social impact report is unique in that it is specific to intergenerational programming, and seeks to share lessons learned to the widest possible audience.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Ali Somers is a social impact evaluator and intergenerational specialist, who founded Intergen Learning and Evaluation Services (ILES) in 2018. Ali is also the Co-Founder of the UK's first intergenerational nursery, Apples and Honey Nightingale, which opened in 2017. Dr Somers serves as an Associate Lecturer in the Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship at Goldsmiths College and is the 2019 recipient of the global Brabazon Award for Intergenerational Evaluation Research, presented by US non-profit Generations United. Dr Somers is also a tutor on the global online International Certificate in Intergenerational Learning (ICIL) course, run by Generations Working Together and the University of Granada.



INTRODUCTION

InCommon is a social enterprise whose purpose is to bridge generational divides. They connect groups of primary school children with their older neighbours in retirement homes to learn and build friendships together. Their official mission is to “bring young and old together to learn and to tackle isolation by connecting people across generations”.

The organisation began in 2017, when the two Co-Founders, Laura Macartney and Charlotte Whittaker met as Year Here Fellows. Both Charlotte and Laura featured in the top 100 Women in Social Enterprise 2019 list. Charlotte is a Fellow of the School for Social Entrepreneurs, and Laura won an UnLtd social enterprise award for her work with InCommon.

InCommon began by piloting short-term (3-5 session) intergenerational projects in 2018. After positive feedback, the team significantly expanded their programming in 2019-2020, launching 13 simultaneous projects across the greater London area. Eight of these were commissioned to run as year-long projects, while five were designed to initially last 6 months. With the disruption from the Covid-19 pandemic, the organisation pivoted and launched InCommon Buddies. Whilst in-person intergenerational projects had to be paused from March onwards, InCommon Buddies is an additional facilitated online and telephone intergenerational intervention, focused on building relationships. This pilot programme ran from April to July 2020.

INTERGENERATIONAL PRACTICE DEFINED

When evaluating InCommon’s approach to intergenerational practice, it is helpful to have a range of benchmarks against which to assess the quality of what the organisation provides to both primary schools and sheltered housing schemes, as well as local communities overall as the ultimate beneficiaries. The benchmarks included in this report represent established best practice gathered from twenty plus years of global intergenerational programming.

First, we begin with the definition of intergenerational practice provided by the Beth Johnson Foundation in 2001, which still holds true today:

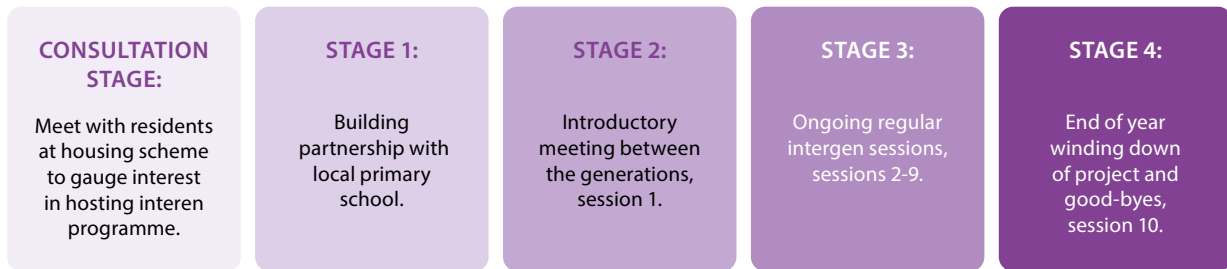
“Intergenerational practice aims to bring people together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities which promote greater understanding and respect between generations and contributes to building more cohesive communities. Intergenerational practice is inclusive, building on the positive resources that the young and old have to offer each other and those around them.”

HOW INCOMMON’S PROGRAMMES WORK

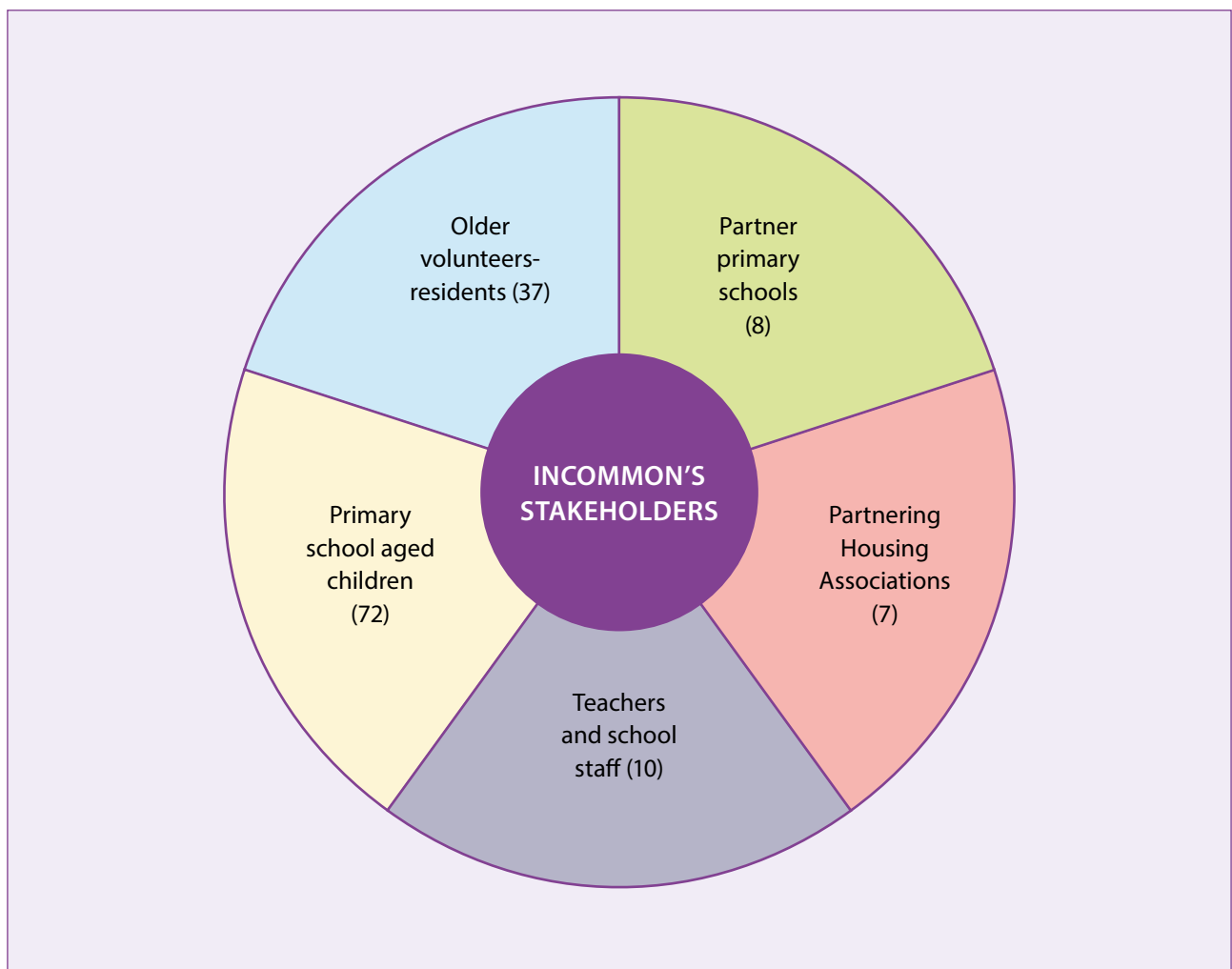
The first step towards intergenerational project building is the partnership InCommon cultivates with a housing provider. Proving successful in developing customers, in 2019-20, InCommon delivered projects for 8 housing providers; Orbit, Clarion, IDS, Origin, Gateway, Wandle, CCHT, and Mercers Almshouses. Next, in consultation with each housing provider, specific sheltered housing schemes are identified as having potential for hosting intergenerational projects. At this stage, the InCommon team meet with volunteers in these selected locations to assess interest in participation.

Once a location and a group of older volunteers are confirmed, InCommon approaches local primary schools. After buy-in is secured from both the Head Teacher and specific Year 3 and 4 teachers, a project is officially underway. The figure below shows the stages each year-long InCommon intergenerational project follows.

INCOMMON'S INTERGEN PROJECT FORMAT



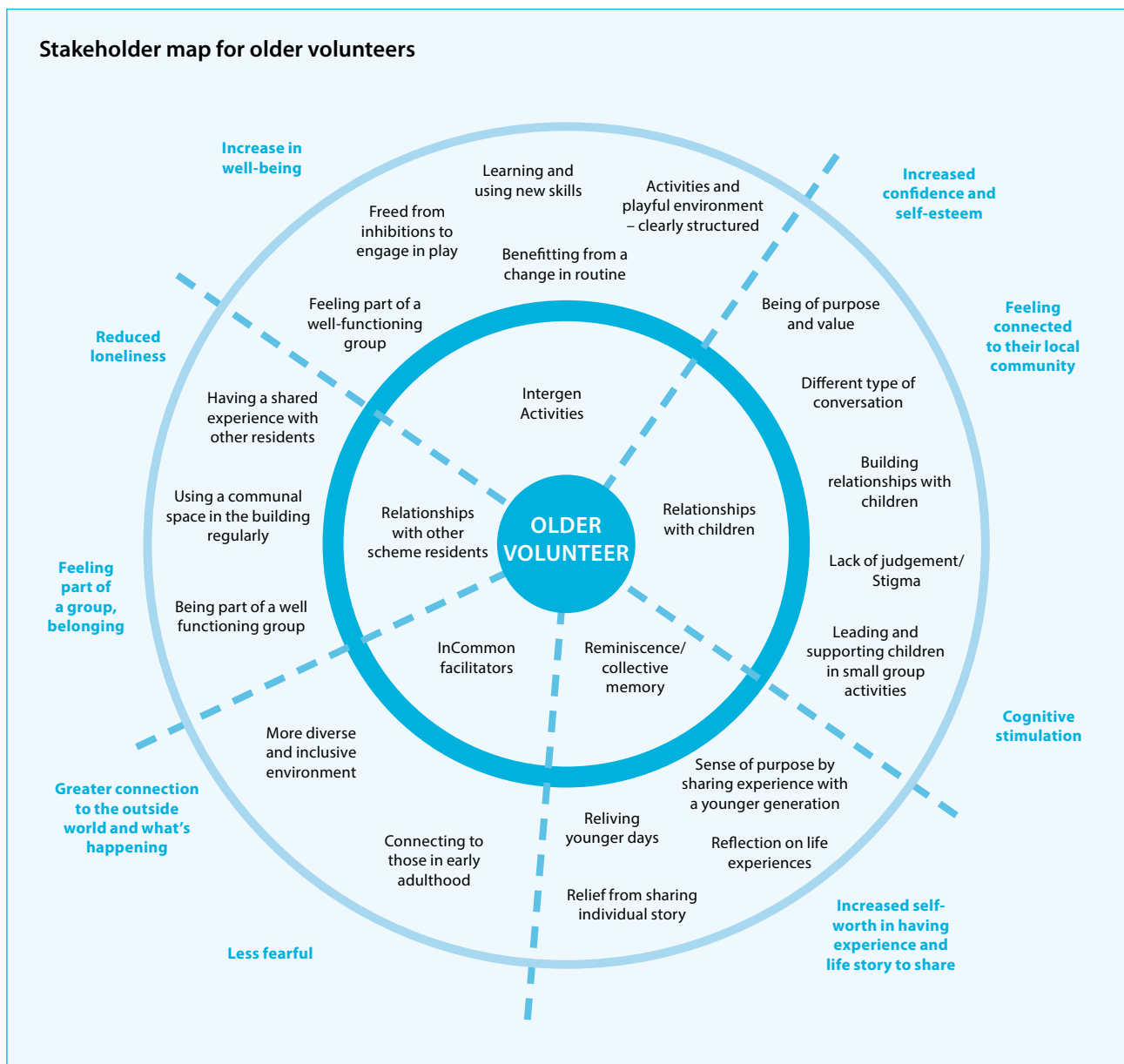
For the purposes of this evaluation, data was collected from the 8 ongoing year-long projects. The stakeholder map below identifies programme participants and the number who participated in InCommon's projects in 2019-20.



INCOMMON'S PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES FOR OLDER PARTICIPANTS

For older volunteers, it is hoped that participation in intergenerational sessions will:

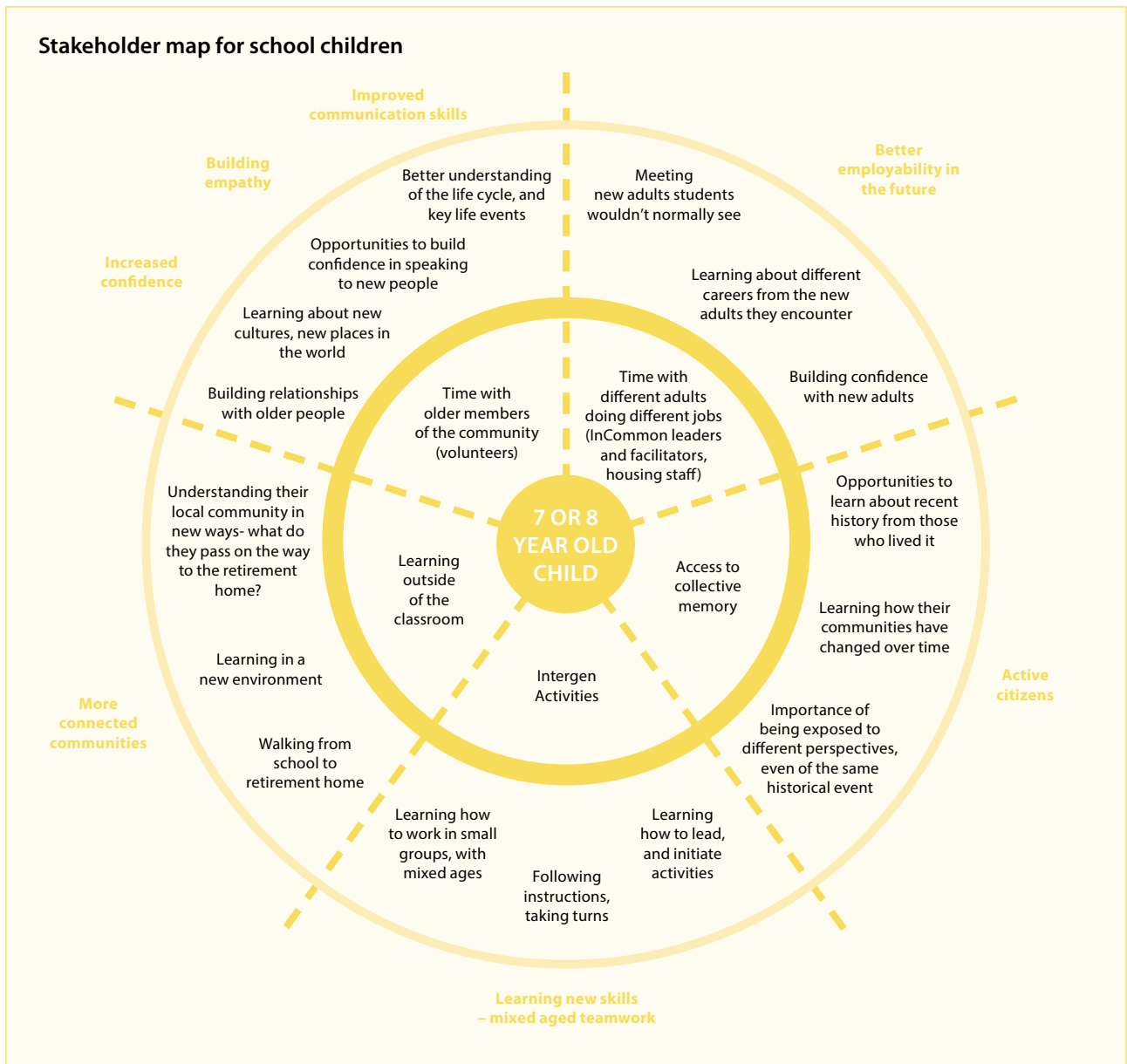
- ▶ Increase social connection
- ▶ Increase confidence
- ▶ Boost wellbeing
- ▶ Increase independence
- ▶ Provide benefits of sharing collective memory
- ▶ Increase sense of purpose
- ▶ Build social cohesion
- ▶ Maintain communication skills
- ▶ Provide cognitive stimulation (preventing depression and enhancing capacity)
- ▶ Reduce fear and anxiety



INCOMMON'S PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN

For school children, it is hoped that by engaging in intergenerational sessions, participants will:

- ▶ Experience higher levels of empathy
- ▶ Improve communication skills
- ▶ Understand what it means to grow older
- ▶ Gain access to collective memory
- ▶ Improve wellbeing
- ▶ Increase confidence
- ▶ Have more positive attitudes towards ageing
- ▶ Become part of more connected communities





From September 2019, through March 2020, InCommon delivered intergenerational sessions with 13 newly formed partnerships between local housing providers and primary schools.

KEY STATISTICS AT A GLANCE: IN PERSON PROGRAMME FOR SEPTEMBER 2019–MARCH 2020

119

Total number of older volunteers (residents) across all sites

285

Total number of participating school children

52

Number of intergen sessions delivered between September 2019–March 2020

29

Number of new working age adults present in intergen sessions- captures additional adults who take part in sessions (facilitators, volunteers, teachers, scheme coordinators, parent volunteers)

1:3

Older volunteer to child ratio across sites

614

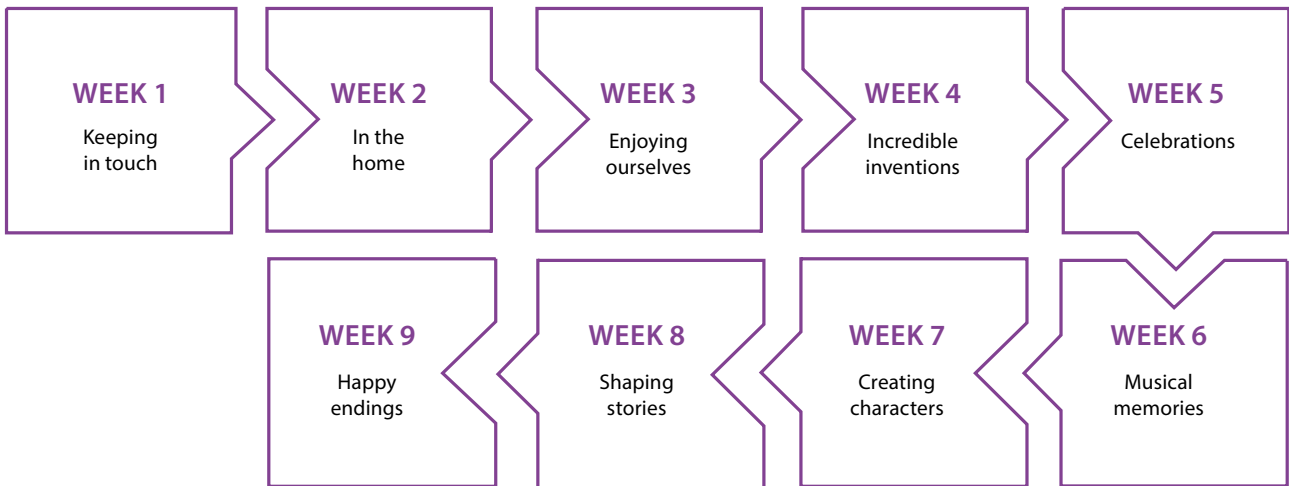
Total number of hours volunteered by older residents

 **KEY STATISTICS AT A GLANCE:
INCOMMON BUDDIES APRIL-JUNE 2020**

When the Covid-19 quarantine meant stopping the in-person intergenerational programme abruptly, InCommon reached out to existing participants and offered the opportunity to continue engagement over the phone and through online video calls.

Launching the new InCommon Buddies programme in April 2020, 16 residents were paired with 22 families for regular weekly intergenerational calls. This new programme ran for 9 weeks and brought children and older volunteers from the existing in-person programme together in new matches. While pairs were made from the existing total participant pool, many of the individual pairs were between children and older volunteers that had not met before, but were used to the way InCommon sessions operated.

The new nine-week programme covered the following weekly topics:



Participants received on average a one hour facilitated over the phone or video conference intergenerational session over a nine-week period, for a total of 112 additional hours of facilitated intergenerational programming.

INCOMMON PROJECTS ACROSS GREATER LONDON AREA 2019-20



INCOMMON'S ANNUAL INTERGENERATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS 2019-20

| Retirement Home | Partner Primary School | Programme Category | Housing Client | Year group | Sessions held | Local Council |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|------------|---------------|---------------|
| Bushey Court | St Paul's Slade Green Primary School | Annual | Orbit | 3 | 5 | Bexley |
| Edith Ramsay House | Marion Richardson Primary School | Annual | Gateway | 4 | 4 | Tower Hamlets |
| Hayley House | Lessness Heath Primary School | Annual | Orbit | 3 | 5 | Bexley |
| Lambert Court | Christ Church Erith Primary School | Annual | Orbit | 3 | 5 | Bexley |
| Navarino Mansions | Mowlem Primary School | Annual | IDS | 4 | 6 | Hackney |
| Pennethorne House | Christ Church Camden Primary School | Annual | Origin | 3 | 5 | Camden |
| Sherwood House | Christ Church Erith Primary School | Annual | Orbit | 3 | 5 | Bexley |
| Tidebrook Court | St Mary Cray Primary Academy | Annual | Clarion | 4 | 6 | Bromley |
| Woodville Close | St Winifred's Catholic Primary School | Annual | Clarion | 4 | 6 | Lewisham |

INCOMMON'S 6-MONTH INTERGENERATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS 2019-20

| Retirement Home | Partner Primary School | Programme Category | Housing Client | Year group | Sessions held | Local Council |
|------------------------|---|--------------------|--------------------|------------|---------------|---------------|
| Lady Mico's Almshouses | St Mary and St Michael Catholic Primary | 6 month | Mercers Almshouses | 3 | 2 | Tower Hamlets |
| Queen Elizabeth House | Belleville Primary | 6 month | Wandle | 3 | 3 | Wandsworth |
| Stepney Green Court | Marion Richardson Primary School | 6 month | IDS | 4 | 1 | Tower Hamlets |
| Vivian Court | St Augustine's Primary School | 6 month | C&C | 4 | 1 | Camden |

TOTAL PRIMARY SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS FOR 2019-20 PROGRAMME

| Participating School | Number of Groups | Total children |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Peareswood | 4 | 60 |
| Christ Church | 2 | 30 |
| Marion Richardson | 2 | 30 |
| St Paul's Slade Green | 1 | 15 |
| St Mary Cray | 1 | 15 |
| Belleville | 1 | 15 |
| Lessness Heath | 1 | 15 |
| St Mary and St Michael | 1 | 15 |
| St Winifred's | 2 | 30 |
| Mowlem | 2 | 30 |
| Christ Church Erith | 2 | 30 |
| Total participating children 2019-20 | | 285 |

SOCIAL POLICY SUPPORT FOR INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMMING

InCommon launched in 2017, amidst a growing national awareness of the harms of increasing social isolation, loneliness, and age segregation in Britain.

When considering the overall social impact of InCommon as an organisation, it is insightful to measure the social enterprise against how relevant and effective it is in addressing current social policy goals. The recent steps taken by central and local government emphasise the important role intergenerational initiatives have in improving the well-being of participants. Here, InCommon's work can be seen as effectively delivering many of the objectives of central and local government in improving connected communities and supporting age integration.

By way of background, intergenerational practice captured the imagination of the British public after Channel 4 aired "Old People's Home for 4 year olds" in July 2017. In the same year, the London Borough of Camden began researching and reporting on social isolation and loneliness as a means to identify how public spending could be re-directed locally to improve conditions in the area. Social isolation and loneliness were framed in many local policy agendas as public health issues that affect social housing, unemployment, and barriers to educational attainment¹.

Nationally, the UK Government also took steps to highlight the importance of intergenerational work in combatting social isolation and loneliness². The UK Government appointed its first ever Minister for Loneliness and published a strategy for combatting loneliness in 2018. An update report on the strategy was published in January 2020.

Parliament also played an important role. MP Jo Cox established the cross-party Commission on Loneliness. In 2019, the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Social Integration led an inquiry into intergenerational connection, and authored two reports on the topic.

Some of the national policy recommendations made include³:

- ▶ Prioritising funding intergenerational programmes instead of having separate pots of money for younger or older people.
- ▶ Using this funding to help existing intergenerational projects operate and expand, as well as to evaluate their work and share lessons learned.
- ▶ Changing statutory guidance for new PSHE subjects for all primary and secondary school aged children to include the requirement that they are taught about loneliness from September 2020⁴.

InCommon's intergenerational offer addresses many of the factors that drive social isolation and loneliness, as demonstrated in the findings section of this report.

1 See <opendata.camden.gov.uk> accessed 17th June 2020.

2 See <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/loneliness-annual-report-the-first-year>> accessed 19th June 2020.

3 See <www.socialintegrationappg.org.uk> accessed 18th June 2020.

4 See <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/loneliness-annual-report-the-first-year>> accessed 19th June 2020.

IDENTIFYING QUALITY AND IMPACT BENCHMARKS FOR INTERGENERATIONAL PROJECTS

Intergenerational projects are varied in their approach. However, recently, consensus around best practice has emerged from two specific multi-year cross country studies designed to review the work of hundreds of intergenerational projects from around the world (TOY Project & Generations United's Evaluation Toolkit).

These indicators of quality and impact are more appropriate benchmarks against which to view the work of InCommon, rather than referring to more generic scales that measure loneliness, depression, and well-being in the community at large⁵. These scales, while informative, are not specific to intergenerational programming in the way the TOY Project and Generations United have developed very specific models over time. While the key elements are summarised below, for more information please see Appendix 2.

The first guide to reference as part of this evaluation framework is the learning derived from the TOY project (Together Young and Old), which shares evidence gained from a multi-year cross European study funded by the European Commission⁶. The TOY project first identifies 5 goals of intergenerational learning. This is followed up by 6 dimensions of quality that should be in evidence in any intergenerational project, and a ratings system to determine the extent to which the different dimensions of quality are taking place. All three of these are summarised in Appendix 2.

Generations United, a US based non-profit with both a domestic and international reach, is a global leader in intergenerational programming with a 20+ year history. The organisation published their evaluation toolkit in 2019, and it represents more than a decade of work with hundreds of organisations, and takes into account scholarly work as well as direct learning in communities. Within this, they identify common goals for intergenerational activities (see Appendix 2 for more information).

In addition, there are numerous pre-existing scales and approaches that can be applied to measuring intergenerational outcomes. A detailed table is available in the Generations United toolkit on page 26 (2019).

Specific approaches that could be applied to the case of InCommon's approach to intergenerational learning are below:

- ▶ Empathy (Femia et al, 2008)
- ▶ Self-efficacy (Sherer et al, 1982)
- ▶ Geriatric Depression Scale (Yesavage et al, 1981)
- ▶ UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, 1996)
- ▶ Rand Well-being (Veit & Ware, 1983)
- ▶ Generativity (Gruenewald et al, 2015)

Interestingly, the Generations United approach is very different from the one put forward by the TOY project. This evaluation toolkit includes practical handouts with specific recommendations of how intergenerational project leaders can assess participants' experiences before, during, and after an intergenerational session.

5 See <<https://www.gu.org/resources/intergenerational-evaluation-toolkit/>> accessed 15th June 2020.

6 See <http://www.toyproject.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/toy_guidelines.pdf> accessed 15th June 2020.

INCOMMON EVALUATION MODEL

Using the work of the TOY Project & Generations United as a foundation to the evaluation design, the methodology used here was a combination of stakeholder surveys and interviews combined with observations of intergenerational learning sessions at a range of sites across the greater London area. Data taken from 7 of the 8 annual intergenerational projects is primarily used as the basis for this report.

Baseline surveys were completed by teachers, older volunteers, and the children themselves before intergenerational programming began. Many of the survey questions draw from the approaches used in the empathy, loneliness and generativity scales referenced above from the Generations United model. Outside of this evaluation, self-efficacy surveys have been used in children as young as 10. However, here, as the majority of participating children were 7 years old when the intergenerational projects began, self-efficacy methods were not used here. There is a recommendation to include these methods in future years.

Overall analysis of quality is taken from the TOY project approach. In addition, this evaluation work was cut short because of the impact of Covid-19. In-person sessions were cancelled from March onwards. However, the introduction of InCommon buddies, along with some initial ongoing evaluation from this pilot are also included here. This is important as social impact analysis takes place in the real world. Therefore, it must also be flexible to account for quick changes in programme delivery.

This evaluation also emphasises dimensions that are central to the work of ILES. These are based on ideas presented in scholarly work and gained from working with social entrepreneurs and intergenerational advocates over time.

The additional elements included in this social impact evaluation are:

- ▶ Mutuality
- ▶ Geography
- ▶ Reflective practice

For *mutuality*, this is the notion that when generations do come together to learn, they do so from a space that is equal to one another- as partners. While tasks may be different for each, what they engage in together should be done from a space of respect and the ability for each individual to benefit from a task.

Geography refers to looking at the physical spaces at community level and understanding how the built-environment can impede or enhance intergenerational connection. Similarly, by bringing new community groups together, such as taking school children regularly into retirement homes, these actions can have very significant positive knock-on effects long after an intergenerational intervention has ended.

Finally, this analysis highlights the importance of *reflective practice* for intergenerational programme leaders as a determinant of both quality and sustainability. The extent to which reflective practice is built in to ongoing project design and delivery can be a huge factor in determining the extent to which intergenerational learning is effective.

FINDINGS

The data collected is presented here as a journey across the year- with a beginning, middle, and end.

The first section summarises baseline data collected from participants. Next, mid-year interview data is shared. This is followed by a section that summarises information collected from participants after the programme switches from in-person to remote programming after March. Finally, the key findings are summarised.

A. BASELINE DATA

CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS OF OLD AGE

Before years 3 and 4 children attended their first intergenerational session, they were surveyed in order to provide insight into the extent to which they came into contact with older people, and had ideas of what life in older age might encompass. The survey data includes responses from 76 primary school children across 5 London boroughs. A sample of their responses is detailed below:

Time spent with older people...

- ▶ Although 32% of children said they spend a lot of time with older people, 74% of children had not been to a retirement home before, and the majority of children only interacted with older members of their own families rather than anyone else in the community
- ▶ Children thought on average, one had to be 69 years to be considered to be in "old age".
- ▶ **79% of children reported knowing someone who was "really old"**. Many of these children said it was through knowing their great grandparents and grandparents that they knew really old people. One child said it was by knowing the Queen!



79% of children reported knowing someone who was "really old"

Perceptions of life after retirement...

When asked what children thought people did when they retired (when they stop working in old age) the range of answers included:

- ▶ Make pancakes and tea
- ▶ Spend time with their children, and take care of their grandchildren
- ▶ They spend time with other old people
- ▶ Watch TV all day
- ▶ I think they make friends
- ▶ **I think they get good treatment and they are somewhere which is safe**
- ▶ They leave work with a lot of money and it happens when you are old
- ▶ **I think they remind themselves about their lives as a child and take a rest at their homes**
- ▶ They go home and sleep after hard work they did

Children expressed their ideas of how what older people can teach them

- ▶ About the past
- ▶ About delicate stuff and kindness
- ▶ How to become adults
- ▶ How to sit properly, how we should act
- ▶ Painting, writing, Spanish
- ▶ About homophones and split diagraphs
- ▶ Teach me how to cook and gardening
- ▶ How to fix my bike
- ▶ Maybe about World War 1 and World War 2?
- ▶ Spelling, reading, writing
- ▶ Nigeria in the past
- ▶ What life is for
- ▶ What to do in a war
- ▶ Maths and manners (*several children reported maths as being a key area where older people could help them)
- ▶ Morals
- ▶ How to knit, sew, and fold clothes
- ▶ How to get a job
- ▶ Their language
- ▶ What life is for.



Within the children's responses there was a lot repetition and agreement that older people could help them with core school subjects, such as writing and maths. This was a particularly interesting finding as all of the children's response included a positive and welcoming view of people in older age.

The children also felt strongly that older people could teach them about history as they were alive in a different time. For some children whose families had originated in other countries, they felt older people could share their stories, culture and language of other locations. Finally, the children clearly expressed their view that older people could set an example and teach them how to behave in a particular way that would be socially acceptable.

OLDER VOLUNTEERS' VIEWS OF CHILDREN

Before the intergenerational projects began, 37 older volunteers from across the different Housing Associations were surveyed to identify how much time they regularly spent with children and what perceptions they held about life as a young person today. Key responses are summarised below.

Previous life experience of volunteering

- ▶ Just over half (54%) of the older participants had volunteered previously in their lifetimes, and 38% of volunteers worked previously at some point with a school or youth organisation
- ▶ Youngest age of a volunteer: 58
- ▶ Oldest age of a volunteer: 101
- ▶ Median age was 75
- ▶ 78% of the older volunteers were women.

Ties to the local community

- ▶ Just under one-fifth of older volunteers lived in the area of their retirement home all their lives, while 30% of volunteers were born overseas
- ▶ **40% of the older volunteers had never been to the partner school, despite the schools being within walking distance of where they lived**
- ▶ 30% of the older volunteers do see children regularly, because they spend time with their grandchildren or great grandchildren.
- ▶ 54% of older volunteers describe themselves as busy, and rarely lonely
- ▶ Only 2 of 37 older volunteers described themselves as extremely lonely
- ▶ Just over one fifth of volunteers had lived with grandparents and their parents growing up.

Perceptions of children's lives today

When older volunteers were asked to circle all of the following statements they agreed with, they answered:

- ▶ 80% of older volunteers began the project by stating that younger people now have it easier than I did.
- ▶ 70% reported they felt younger people were growing up in a different world than they did. And 50% felt that younger people's lives were more complicated than theirs had been.

What worried older volunteers at the start of the project

Older volunteers began intergenerational projects with a lot of worries on their minds.



What older volunteers felt hopeful about

- ▶ Nothing. Nothing ever seems to get settled.
- ▶ The increasing awareness of ecology and green issues. The decreasing instances of racial prejudice in society.
- ▶ Seeing my grandchildren grow up to achieve their goals.
- ▶ I'd like to see all the countries be at peace
- ▶ That lives will get happier, and no nastiness around.
- ▶ Hope things work out well for government that they might the right decisions for peace
- ▶ Having a happy family
- ▶ Helping people
- ▶ Exiting planet earth
- ▶ All the time here is love and forgiveness in the world. There is always hope.
- ▶ You still meet a lot of decent children
- ▶ To get things sorted out. (Gangs and drugs). Children need somewhere to go after school.
- ▶ Being with friends

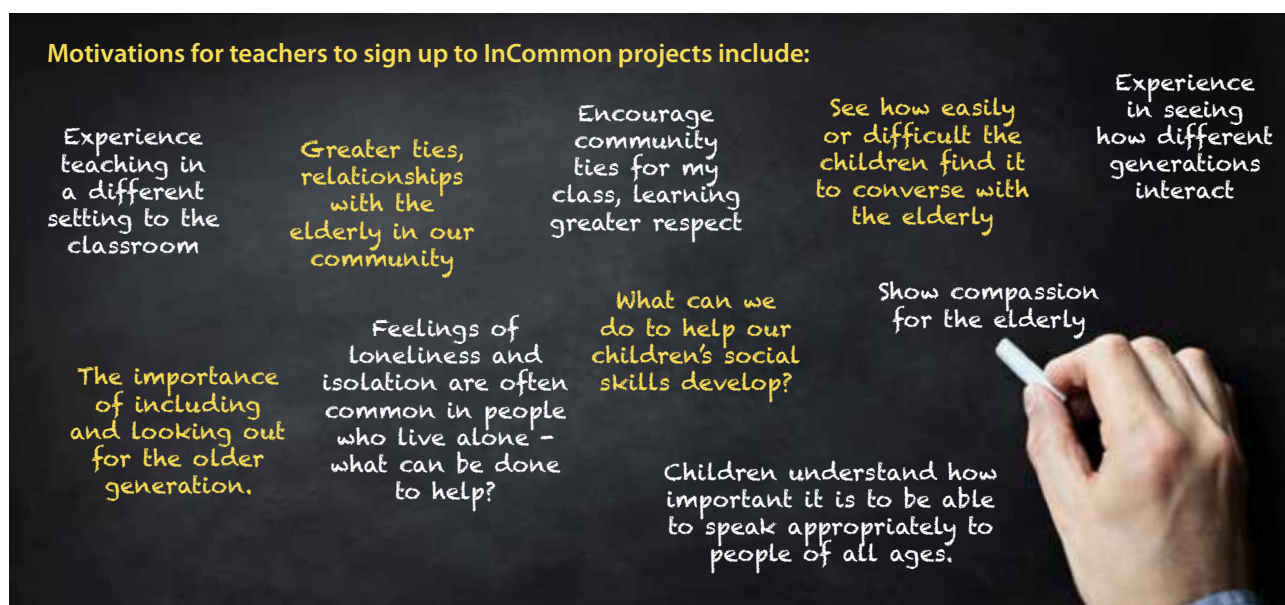
TEACHERS' MOTIVES FOR JOINING AN INCOMMON PROJECT

The data below was collected from teachers from 5 participating primary schools. They share why they chose to sign up to an InCommon intergenerational project, and what they hoped they would gain as a result.

Two of five teachers were in their first year of full-time teaching, while only 1 had more than 10 years of teaching experience. None of the teachers had previous experience of participating in intergenerational projects, although interestingly- 2 of the 5 teachers completed work experience in a care home when they were younger. This demonstrates the importance of early work placements in laying the groundwork to building a more age-friendly society.

All five of the teachers had been to a care home at some point in their lives, whether it was visiting family members or as part of a project with Girl Guides. However, none of the teachers had previously visited the sheltered housing scheme they were partnering with for this project.

The teachers reported a range of benefits they hoped to achieve by participating in an InCommon project.



How teachers hope their students will benefit from participating in regular intergen sessions

- ▶ Hopefully, they will get more experience in integrating with people different to them
- ▶ They will get more of an idea about the real world and what it entails
- ▶ Speech and language confidence
- ▶ Learn about local history
- ▶ Show compassion towards the residents
- ▶ Enjoy their time and want to spend time with older members of their family

Teachers reported most looking forward to

- ▶ Seeing the children interact
- ▶ Listening to the questions they ask
- ▶ Being part of a local community project
- ▶ Allowing the children to participate in a project that develops the “whole” child

Before the projects began, teachers were most worried about

- ▶ Children feeling shy or unwilling to participate
- ▶ Children being unintentionally rude
- ▶ That the children will not be engaged

B. MID-PROGRAMME DATA COLLECTION

HALFWAY THROUGH THE LIVE SESSIONS

Older volunteers shared their thoughts on participation in intergenerational projects so far:

- ▶ Today with the children, I remembered a lot of things. It brought back feelings and I giggled a lot.
- ▶ Keep up the good job!
- ▶ What a good thing you are doing introducing the elderly to the young!
- ▶ Being hard of hearing it is difficult communicating with young and old people.
- ▶ **It's a benefit for different ages to mix as things have changed and some children do not have large families**
- ▶ **I think it is good for different ages to mix when possible- just to learn new things together**
- ▶ **It is really lovely interacting with the children.**
- ▶ **I've enjoyed it very much. I always do with the children. I have 3 boys last time who made me special Christmas cards.**
- ▶ **Children must never be taught there is only one way to perceive the world!**
- ▶ I wish the pupils well

MIDWAY INTERVIEW WITH TEACHER JANUARY 2020

The purpose of the interview, transcribed below, was to capture a teacher's perspective on what, if anything, had changed for her students after attending 3 intergenerational sessions (one school term's portion) at Pennethorne House. The teacher brought one half of her class to Pennethorne in the autumn term, and then changed over in order to take the other half of her class in the spring term. In the summer term, it was planned that both groups would be able to participate. Below, this teacher reflected on what she observed over the previous term.

What happened when you brought half of your class for three intergenerational sessions last term?

"Even though we only came three times, the children really built strong relationships with the residents, especially during the Christmas session. I feel like they were always excited to see the residents, and to see certain people in particular. And if someone wasn't there, they were like 'where's Bill' and it was all really lovely."

I think from the more academic side of things; the children are learning about recent history. You presume they know about many events, but they don't. It's really helped their understanding of more recent history, which is really nice. And the (retirement) home is so close to the school, so putting even that in context for them is really nice."

Where do the InCommon sessions fit within your Year 3 curriculum?

"I think of it as PSHE and a little bit of history- not the topics we would plan to do in Year 3, but that is what I am seeing coming out of it, more history. And PSHE- knowing how to talk to people, caring for them. The students do care about the residents and it's really sweet."

If you could make recommendations on what you would like to have change in terms of the content, or anything else, is there anything you want to mention?

"I think what they are doing at the moment is really good. I think sometimes it can be a little bit bitty, with people coming in half way through but that can't really be helped."

Do you think the children from your class who attended last term talked about this project with those classmates who haven't come yet?

"As soon as the children return to school, they tell them exactly what they have done. The other group of children were always like- oh why can't we come?"

What do the other half of your year 3 class back at school do when this half are here at the retirement home for an intergenerational session?

"It depends on who is around. At the moment, they are with the Head Teacher for an hour and then they will have their music lesson."

Is there anything else you would like to add?

"I think it's been really great to be honest. To be part of the new setup and more, because we are that close, and we do have the link with Pennethorne House is lovely. Other classes come and do choir performances here. It would be nice if we did that more with more places, or other schools came here as well. I think it's been really great."

C. END OF YEAR ASSESSMENT: REMOTE SESSIONS AND THE LAUNCH OF INCOMMON BUDDIES PILOT

END OF YEAR FEEDBACK FROM CHILDREN AND PARENTS

At the end of this most unusual school year, data was collected from children and their parents who participated in an InCommon project both in-person and throughout. Key feedback is shared below:

- ▶ All of the children asked said they loved both parts of the project; in-person and remote.
- ▶ When asked which parts they enjoyed most, the children described playing games with older volunteers and for one child *"I liked learning about Pat's stories and her drawings and the games."*
- ▶ When asked if there was anything the children did not like about either the live projects or the remote time spent together, almost all of the children reported there was nothing they did not like. The exception was one child who did not like not being able to see the face of the older volunteer they were partnered with because the session took place over the phone, rather than through a video call.
- ▶ **The children were asked if they had many any friends amongst the older volunteers, and the majority of children shared that they did and then mentioned their friend by name.**
- ▶ The children had a lot to say when they were asked if they learned something from an older person over the course of the year. Their comments are below in their own words:
"Linda's life experiences. She worked in many places and met too many people around the world. I could compare the older generation life style with new generation."
"Yes, about different times in life. It was different when Anne was little to now."
"I have learned a lot. I have learnt how times have changed. How I have a lot more and able to communicate more. I learned a lot about Pat and her life. I learned that it doesn't matter the age difference you can still have lots in common and lots to talk about!"
- ▶ To conclude, the children were asked if spending time with older people helped them in any way...
"Yes of course. They (older volunteers) have lots of information, knowledge, life experiences. I have understood some extent that what they did when they were little like me."
"I learned a lot about the olden days."
"Yes. I learned lots of different things and we had lots of fun and laughs."
"I think it helped me to care more for other people and remember that some people need more company. It is nice to make someone else happy."
- ▶ Parents also had their thoughts to share once they were able to experience an InCommon project with their child during lockdown.
"It was lovely watching the friendship grow over weeks of talking."
"I really enjoyed every single moment with you. She had a great time especially all these lockdown periods. Now she has developed a new skill, which is how to go online and chat in a group discussion. Initially she was a bit nervous but after a couple of sessions she started to concentrate and focus well."
Thank you very much for everything you are doing, organizing meetings, choosing topics, flexible timing etc. Charlotte you are amazing and very supportive. Hope we will continue to have meetings soon."

END OF YEAR FEEDBACK FROM OLDER VOLUNTEERS

About the workshops specifically:

"It was nice to see the kids - it was just nice to talk to them really. And I think most people liked it, of course not everyone likes that kind of thing, but lots of people came and enjoyed it, it brought a bit of life to us all. It's good human contact!"

InCommon Buddies specific project feedback

"The calls have been good. He's a nice boy, and it was interesting to get to know him. We are living very different lives but we got on well. And I've been quite bored and lonely, so it was nice to have the call in the diary. The newsletter you sent arrived this morning and it's fantastic - what a great picture of us all on the call on the front! Now I have something to look at and remember it by!"

"Normally my life is quite busy and structured, but I haven't had much to do in lockdown, and having a weekly call has been a really nice structure. And I have really enjoyed the games, and stretching my mind and imagination. A is a lovely child and her Mum as well is very nice, so it was nice to get to know them."

ALL older volunteers, when asked, reported loving the entire year's programme.

When asked which aspects generally of the intergenerational project older volunteers enjoyed most, they shared...

"I just like to talk to the children and it's interesting to see how school has changed"

"Just being with the children, seeing how they see things now and how that's different to how we saw things. It's lovely having children around. The friendliness of it all!"

"Very interesting, children are so clever nowadays, they come out with such grown up things, you can hold a conversation with them and learn from them. It's been nice for me to speak to the children and hear their ideas."

"Being with the children, with B. It's such a nice combination of old and young. You don't feel the age difference so much. B doesn't make me feel that I'm old. The children talk to you in a way that doesn't make you feel old. They remember you every time they come to visit."

"All of it really. The enthusiasm and politeness of the children and the efficient running by the InCommon Staff, particularly as it moved to online. It was a trip down memory lane recalling my own childhood and comparing it with the children's. The topics/activities for each week were well thought out and designed to achieve maximum participation, as well as being fun, and helped to build a rapport with our Buddies."

Older volunteers were asked if was there anything they did not like about the programme, yet everyone responded they enjoyed all of it.

When asked if any specific friendships had developed with individual children, it was a resounding 'yes' and respondents went into detail about the children they had been paired with.

Older volunteers described the children they came into contact with. Samples of their replies are below in their own words...

"Very friendly, very outgoing, one was quite shy but she was coming out of her shell and that was lovely to see. Nice to see them so outgoing."

“Very clever, it amazes me how clever they are nowadays, when I was a child you’d have to think and you were very shy to answer. Very polite and sensible and friendly.”

“Honestly I thought they were lovely. Once they got over their shyness, they settled in really well. Yes, they were all lovely, I thought it was brilliant overall.”

“Polite, enthusiastic, imaginative, bright and fun.”

Older volunteers shared what they learned over the past year, when working with the children...

“I’ve learned more about how children are now, they seem more outgoing. I think technology has a lot to do with that.”

“I’ve learned that children are part of the world, they grow up quicker, they know what’s going on, children are more forward, more connected to the world now, seem more intelligent now, very interested in things and worldly.”

“I’ve learned that children like to mix with older people and are genuinely interested in older people and what life was like for us before.”

“Yes, some aspects of using IT that I was not aware of. They are experts at ZOOM and showed me some useful tips. I also learned something of their hobbies and interests.”

Older volunteers reported that spending time with children helped them in different ways and improved parts of their lives...

“Yes, I’ve always been a children and animals person! When you’re older you feel a bit lonely sometimes, even though I’ve got a big family, but they take that away. When I walk up the road now I don’t hear the children out in the playground anymore and I really miss that.”

“Yes, I think it does really, when you’re an elderly person you spend a lot of time on your own or speaking to people of your own age. Speaking to children makes you think different, lifts you for a while, it helps to connect with the younger generation.”

“Yes, it made me feel good, I don’t know quite how to explain it but yes. F is lovely as well, really nice.”

“The opportunity to engage with the children both face to face before the lockdown, and online during it, was a highlight to my week, it also gave some structure and it was fun to prepare for each session with drawings and diagrams. I will miss it when it ends.”

When asked what worries older volunteers at the moment, and what their views on young people today were, the answers shifted from the beginning of the year. Older volunteers were not as worried about how safe the world was regarding crime, as they reported before the project began. Rather, their concerns were focused on returning to a more normal life after Covid. More respondents felt younger children had it harder than they did growing up after getting to know them better⁷.

⁷ Because of the effects of the Covid 19 lockdown, only one-third of total programme participants were able to share findings at the end of the year, then at the beginning. However, the data included here comes from those volunteers who took part in both the live and remote portions of an InCommon project.

Older volunteers shared what they were most hopeful about...

"Just that the children are learning not be selfish and to think of others because I think this country has got to the stage where everyone is 'I want, want, want' but the children are now learning that you can't always have things and to be happy with that."

"Hope that lockdown will be less and less, looking forward to things being a bit freer, vaccine being found and things easing the virus, people learning and being more thoughtful going forward."

"Meeting family and friends again, hugging my grandchildren, big family party."

"That everything will be alright in the end..."

Final reflections from older volunteers...

"Only comment is that it would be nice if this could keep going on the phone, would be nice to have children coming again."

"Just to say what a pleasure it has been working with the children and the excellent InCommon staff who run a truly fantastic programme, which I believe greatly benefits us residents and the children, and I hope it will continue in the Autumn."

The ability of InCommon to adapt their intergenerational projects from in-person to remote engagement in a short period of time with limited resources was truly impressive. Even more, through InCommon Buddies, the team was able to demonstrate how meaningful remote engagement can be for both sets of participants across the generations.



D. SUMMARY FINDINGS

InCommon demonstrates their intergenerational programme is able to deliver impact across six key areas:

1

Building more connected and age friendly communities

- ▶ InCommon's intergenerational programme **builds more connected communities** by introducing sheltered housing sites to the primary schools closest to them.
- ▶ InCommon initiates **relationships between community institutions** (school and retirement home) **and individual relationships between teachers, school children, and retirement home volunteers.**
- ▶ **Trust and social capital are built** between children, teaching staff, and older volunteers.
- ▶ By walking from school to the retirement home, school children get exercise, and learn more about different parts of their community (**helps break down physical barriers that can lead to age segregation within the built environment**).
- ▶ The collective impact of running 13 programmes simultaneously means there are now 13 neighbourhoods across 7 of London's boroughs where thoughtful facilitated intergenerational programming is taking place. This will have a longer-term impact of **helping 285 children grow up more confident around older people** and more aware of their ability to share experience and wisdom.

2

Facilitating relationships between young children and older volunteers

- ▶ The InCommon programme has **helped children and older volunteers break down barriers in perception of different age groups.** Older volunteers are more connected to their local communities and gain reassurance that the world isn't as dangerous or scary as it may seem.

3

Enabling primary school children to gain self-confidence

- ▶ Teachers report the facilitated content of intergenerational sessions **supports primary school children in gaining confidence** in communicating and socialising with older members of the community.
- ▶ School **children gain self-confidence** after receiving attention from an older volunteer (as a one-off) and through friendships that are built (over repeated sessions).
- ▶ School children **learn more about significant milestones** and more generally about the life cycle by speaking with older volunteers about leaving home, going to work, going to university, and retirement.

4

Enhancing children's understanding of history as a subject

- ▶ Teachers also agree that sessions are a **new way to introduce important concepts** around recent history to Year 3 and 4 children, and that this form of **experiential learning helps students connect** to the academic subject of history in a meaningful way.

5

Reducing loneliness and isolation among older volunteers

- ▶ Older volunteers increase use of communal lounges and **connect to other scheme residents** through participation in intergenerational sessions. This **helps to build relationships and connections in the retirement home** that can cross over to other activity groups. The intergenerational sessions act as a primer for other initiatives and helps jump start connections.

6

Creating opportunities for older volunteers to feel valued

- ▶ The self-confidence and **feelings of self-worth for older volunteers increases after working with children in a session.**
- ▶ **Older volunteers are less lonely** and develop friendships with the InCommon facilitators as well as the teachers from the local primary school.
- ▶ During observations of intergenerational sessions, **children displayed confidence** at being able to initiate conversations and activities with older volunteers.
- ▶ Meaningful relationships were built: In all 5 sessions observed, no one ever displayed any signs of distress or upset. In fact, in every session, when it came to say goodbye- all children and volunteers extended their good-byes with lots of waving and hugging. The children remembered volunteers' names and greeted them personally and enthusiastically at the beginning of sessions.

ANALYSIS

BENCHMARKING DATA

Using the TOY project's quality dimensions and ratings, the InCommon intergenerational programme for 2019-20 would achieve the following:

TOY project's six dimensions of quality for intergenerational learning initiatives

| Dimension | Rating | Description |
|-----------|--------------|---|
| D1 | 4 (out of 4) | Building relationships and well-being |
| D2 | 4 (out of 4) | Respect for diversity |
| D3 | 3 (out of 4) | Interaction with and within the community |
| D4 | 4 (out of 4) | Learning with and from each other |
| D5 | 4 (out of 4) | Professional development and teamwork |
| D6 | 4 (out of 4) | Monitoring, evaluation and sustainability |

The reason Dimension 3 in the table above scores a 3, instead of a 4 out of 4, is due to where the InCommon projects are in terms of length of time operating within a local community. This past year was an expansion one for the organisation, where projects lasted one full school year. Once InCommon is able to deliver a project two or more years in a row using the same local school and sheltered housing scheme, the benefits that can accrue to a local area will increase and the rating would then rise in accordance. For more information on the criteria for each rating, see Appendix 2.

According to the TOY project's intergenerational goals, as listed below, InCommon's intergenerational programme from 2019-20 demonstrated impact across each of these areas.

| | |
|----|--|
| G1 | Building and sustaining relationships |
| G2 | Enriching social cohesion in the community |
| G3 | Facilitating older people as guardians of knowledge |
| G4 | Recognising the role of grandparents in young children's lives |
| G5 | Enriching learning processes of children and older adults |

The Generations United Evaluation Toolkit recommends assessing intergenerational programmes based on cognitive, social/emotional, and physical criteria. It was not feasible to identify changes in cognitive and physical behaviour as a result of cross generational engagement within the scope of this social impact report. However, through survey, interview, and observation data, many of the aspects of social and emotional impacts were captured.

In addition, against the benchmarks for mutuality, geography, and reflective practice, the InCommon team demonstrated the strength of their skill set.

InCommon delivered 13 high quality and effective intergenerational projects across 7 different London boroughs in 2019-20. Even with the disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic, the leadership team was able to adapt and launched InCommon Buddies from April-July 2020. Throughout the 12-month evaluation time frame, the two co-founders consistently demonstrated they were thoughtful and reflective practitioners. As evidence of this, once recommended to them, the team had three members of staff undertake and complete the International Certificate in Intergenerational Learning. When judged against any leading intergenerational evaluation framework or benchmark, InCommon delivers to a very high standard.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to continue to grow from strength to strength, two key recommendations are made.

1

First, in order to embed the learning that takes place in intergenerational sessions, a resource pack for parents, teachers, and older volunteers that reinforces the key themes from activities would help to lengthen the benefits experienced by participants in the times when they are not together.

2

Second, it is clear from the data collected over the past year that InCommon's approach to intergenerational learning, strengthening communities and bridging the age divide is highly effective. Therefore, it is recommended that InCommon works on scaling up the number of intergenerational partnerships it can support across not only London, but also the United Kingdom, so that more people may benefit from the thoughtful and creative work this organisation delivers.



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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: TOY PROJECT & GENERATIONS UNITED'S EVALUATION TOOLKIT

TOY Project's 5 Goals for Intergenerational Learning

| Goal | Title | Description |
|------|--|--|
| G1 | Building and sustaining relationships | A key goal of Intergenerational practice generally is to build and develop relations and reduce separation between generations. This aims to enrich relationships generally and counteract negative stereotypes and isolation of older people. One of the best ways of building relationships involving younger children is through shared activities. |
| G2 | Enriching social cohesion in the community | Intergenerational initiatives facilitate connection and understanding between citizens of diverse communities and different ages, providing a space for collaboration, connection and acceptance between different age groups and people with different backgrounds. Participants can find a place as active citizens, as all are encouraged to bring inputs and contribute to community development. This contributes to social cohesion. |
| G3 | Facilitating older people as guardians of knowledge | Older people's roles as guardians of knowledge, traditions and skills are central in a learning society. Older people are a vital link with history and cultural heritage and give children a sense of identity and perspective. |
| G4 | Recognising the role of grandparents in young children's lives | Grandparents play a central part in the nurture and socialization of their grandchildren. Grandparents' role as listener, storyteller, memory of family history is seen as complementary to the role of parents. This can be particularly significant when a parent is absent or unavailable for long periods of time because of family breakdown, illness or migration. |
| G5 | Enriching learning processes of children and older adults | Intergenerational learning offers a more innovative approach to learning for children where they actively engage with older people in meaningful exchanges. For older people it puts into practice the idea of education as an enterprise for life. This can be an empowering experience. |

There are two additional overarching goals for TOY:

1. Improved health and wellbeing of all generations, highlighting the importance of lifelong and life-wide learning to the health and wellbeing of all age groups.
2. Building all age-friendly communities.

(Module 1, Unit 2, Handout- TOY goals of intergenerational learning)

APPENDICES

The TOY project shares six dimensions of quality that should be present within intergenerational projects:

TOY project's six dimensions of quality for intergenerational learning initiatives

| Dimension | Description |
|-----------|--|
| D1 | Building relationships and well-being |
| D2 | Respect for diversity |
| D3 | Interaction with and within the community |
| D4 | Learning with and from each other |
| D5 | Professional development and teamwork |
| D6 | Monitoring, evaluation and sustainability. |

They also include language on the importance of identifying reflective practice among intergenerational professionals. In addition, each of the quality dimensions above attains a score, which is a rating on a scale of 1-4. The ratings are described below:

TOY project's four ratings for each quality of intergenerational learning

| Rating | Phase |
|--------|--|
| R1 | <i>Awareness phase</i> – the initiative or programme shows some sensitivity towards this dimension of quality, however little action has been taken to embody it |
| R2 | <i>Exploration phase</i> – the initiative or programme shows awareness of this dimension of quality and has taken some steps to work towards these goals |
| R3 | <i>Transition phase</i> – the initiative or programme is aware of the importance of this dimension of quality and is taking several actions to embody it in practice |
| R4 | <i>Full implementation phase</i> – the initiative or programme is successfully promoting the principles and actions involved in this dimension of quality |

GENERATIONS UNITED EVALUATION TOOLKIT

Generations United, a US based non-profit with both a domestic and international reach, is a global leader in intergenerational programming with a 20+ year history. The organisation published their evaluation toolkit in 2019, and it represents more than a decade of work with hundreds of organisations, and take into account scholarly work as well as direct learning in communities. Within this, they identify common goals for intergenerational activities.

Generations United's Common Goals for Intergenerational Activities

| Activities | Younger participants | Older participants |
|------------------|---|---|
| Cognitive | Expressing feelings, expressing preferences, problem solving, attention to detail, creativity, reflection | Creativity, attention to detail, problem solving, decision making, reminiscence |
| Social/Emotional | Cooperation, initiative, engagement, positive mood, communication, empathy, self-confidence | Nurturing, cooperation, initiative, independence, positive mood, communication, self-confidence |
| Physical | Fine motor, gross motor, hand/eye coordination, sensory development | Fine motor, gross motor, hand/eye coordination, range of motion, alertness, sensory stimulation |

In addition, there are numerous scales and approaches that can be applied to measuring intergenerational outcomes. A detailed table is available in the Generations United toolkit on page 26 (2019). Specific approaches that could be applied to the case of InCommon's approach to intergenerational learning are below:

- ▶ Empathy (Femia et al, 2008)
- ▶ Self-efficacy (Sherer et al, 1982)
- ▶ Geriatric Depression Scale (Yesavage et al, 1981)
- ▶ UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, 1996)
- ▶ Rand Well-being (Veit & Ware, 1983)
- ▶ Generativity (Gruenewald et al, 2015)

Interestingly, the Generations United approach is very different from the one put forward by the TOY project. This evaluation toolkit includes practical handouts with specific recommendations of how intergenerational project leaders can assess participants' experiences before, during, and after an intergenerational session.

APPENDIX 2: REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AND SHARING LESSONS LEARNED

When working with the co-founders of InCommon on this report over this past year, one objective was to gather personal reflections from session leaders in order to keep track of lessons learned. This also ensured ongoing quality was delivered across all 13 projects simultaneously.

As a summation exercise at the end of this academic year, the following five questions were asked to each leader. Key points raised are shared here.

1. Thinking about the start of this year, what were your hopes, assumptions, expectations and fears with regard to the pilots?

- ▶ Back in July 2019, I was definitely nervous as well as excited about our first year of annual programme delivery. InCommon had already done a year of intergenerational work, but it had been short projects of 3-5 visits each, so moving to monthly visits across the year felt like a big increase. **One of my big hopes for this year was that we'd see deeper, more meaningful relationships developing between some of the individual children and older people, and between the schools and the independent living schemes as well.**
- ▶ I was also excited to see how these deeper relationships might allow us to try out new kinds of activities - ones that felt more collaborative and creative, building up to something over a period of time.
- ▶ **I also had hopes for growth as a practitioner for this year.** Specifically, I wanted to improve my skills at managing groups of children, keeping them engaged, and supporting learning. A learning goal I set last July was to read into some material on teaching skills and look for opportunities to learn from primary teachers through observation and conversations with them. I hoped that I would become more relaxed and confident leading sessions from the front, and better able to deviate from plans and adapt materials to new situations.
- ▶ There were also some fears and worries I had about the switch to annual programmes, and the growth in the overall amount of intergenerational activity we were facilitating. I was worried about having groups that didn't work as well, particularly if we struggled with recruitment and low numbers of older volunteers, and how it would feel to lead a programme without good support from residents, or have to wind a project down for that reason.
- ▶ I was also worried about the scale of delivery, which was increasing significantly, and whether it would be too intense to be doing 4 or 5 workshops a week, especially alongside the business side of InCommon (making the partnerships, fundraising, operations, programme management are all quite time consuming). Another thing I was worried about in the back of my mind was safeguarding incidents, and whether we were following all the right procedures and would be able to deal with something inappropriate safely.
- ▶ I was also nervous about how some of the programmes would go. What if the older residents didn't want to come on a regular basis? What if people started to get bored of them halfway through? What if they weren't going to have the impact we thought they would?
- ▶ I've been surprised this year by a lot of the response from the primary schools we've been working with. It normally takes us a while to get the schools on side - they're busy and this kind of project often isn't a priority for them. I was worried that schools would think that we weren't delivering enough educational value in our workshops to continue them on a longer-term basis, but **schools have been really positive and enthusiastic about the impact it's having on their students.**
- ▶ I've also been pleasantly surprised at how involved some of the older residents have become. At some of our schemes they've been taking a really active role, going above and beyond at workshops by doing things like preparing and leading activities and making gifts. One moment particularly stands out for me - one of the residents at Woodville Close knitted a hedgehog for each of the children to keep and set them a homework project where they had to create an identity for their hedgehog then share it with us at the next workshop. **The children loved the hedgehogs and I had feedback from a parent last week that her son still cherishes his hedgehog now!**

2. **Not including the coronavirus, what about the work you have delivered so far surprised you the most? What disappointed you?**

- ▶ I was surprised by which programmes went best and which were harder - some of the groups I was most nervous about were brilliant and attendance was good, while one scheme where we'd worked before that I'd expected to be real positive was harder work. **I had some great surprises about relationships that developed unexpectedly, for example between a very enthusiastic school receptionist who came to the sessions, and one of the older residents.**
- ▶ I was surprised by the drop-out of one of our keen partner schools mid-way through the year, as a result of staff issues, and that was really disappointing as we'd seen some great relationships build up.

3. **What areas do you think you need to improve upon personally?**

- ▶ **I'd like to improve on my facilitation skills and in designing activities that really lead to the best relationships between those taking part.** I want to be able to step back as the facilitator more to let things happen more naturally, but still giving support and creating a good energy and tone for the session. I'd like to improve in my teaching skills and knowledge, and thinking about the learning objectives and how our session can be meeting them for every child. I'd also like to learn how to use other working age adults in the room better, especially teachers. Most of all, I'd like to improve at my co-planning with older people, as my most successful sessions have been where activities have been fully owned by the group, but this has been a challenging process to achieve.
- ▶ **Personally I'd like to improve my confidence in balancing the facilitation and relational work with the business side of things. I find that building positive relationships with participants and delivering high quality workshops requires a different skill set to the strategic planning and programme management.** I'd like to grow to a stage where I feel really confident doing both simultaneously.
- ▶ I'd also like to get better at designing really enjoyable sessions that are engaging for everyone, and making sure that the programme feels varied and fresh over time. Alongside this I'd like to become a more responsive and creative facilitator so that I feel able to draw the best out of everyone taking part in every group we work with.

4. **If you had more resources, what would you do differently?**

- ▶ It isn't necessarily resources as much as context that I think are the biggest barriers for us right now. I'd love to work with the same (slightly smaller) group of children/older people for longer and more regularly, so we could have the same 10 children/older people each time which I think would help relationships a lot. With more resources, and even without, I'd like to try getting facilitators from other backgrounds involved, doing more drama, art and creative activities, and perhaps some trips either to the school or to other community places.
- ▶ If we had more resources I'd have liked to expand our team to include some more specialisation, especially for our communications, programme design and different facilitation areas. Going forward I'd also like to add more elements of celebration, ceremony and performance to the programme that involve the wider communities (parents, other pupils etc.).

5. Describe what last year looked like. What are the main differences between last year's delivery of intergenerational work and this year?

- ▶ Last year (September 2018 - July 2019) we ran programmes that involved 3 to 5 sessions delivered over the course of 4 to 6 weeks. We ran these with 11 different groups in Bexley, Tower Hamlets and Orpington and all these sessions took place in the communal lounges of sheltered schemes for people aged 55+. The shorter programmes were a great place to start for our pilots - it was a manageable amount of time for all the stakeholders to commit to.
- ▶ **We learned a lot from those pilots - we tried out activities, developed our facilitation skills and realised that longer term programmes would be more impactful and effective longer term. That led to us transitioning to annual programmes that last for an academic year, and that has been the main change to our 2019/20 programmes.**
- ▶ **The intergenerational relationships this year have developed differently - they've grown more steadily and consistently on a monthly basis. It feels like each programme has its own character, and we've seen the activities change slightly in each place depending on the participants.** We've also redesigned the programme - we now have a theme for each school term (life in the past, skills exchange and learning together). This redesign included moving towards less of an emphasis on written activities with literacy value and more of a focus on activities that act as a stimulus for meaningful conversations.
- ▶ The biggest difference with the programmes this year (2019-20) is that they are annual programmes, and over a longer time each programme has taken on its own unique character. We also expanded the kinds of activities we did together, from our 'life in the past activities' which are more history/interview based and start off our annual programmes, to our skills sharing and learning together (interrupted by covid). The aim was that once relationships were a bit more established, we would move towards less structured/ more creative activities - and this worked well where we got a chance to do it - for instance at Tidebrook Court one of my favourite ever sessions was residents sharing a skill with the children practically (flower arranging; knitting; accounting).
- ▶ We've also grown our team this year to include a third core member, which has been an incredible experience and she has added so much to us as an organisation. **Obviously one of the main changes this year has been moving to an online programme during covid-19. We were intending to lead in-person workshops until the end of the academic year but instead we've launched Buddies, a way for children and older people to share joyful moments together over the phone or online.**
- ▶ More recently, with InCommon Buddies, our emphasis and the way we bring generations together has obviously changed a lot. It's been interesting to have lots of time in small groups that don't change week to week, because it's actually proving a lovely way to develop deeper relationships than we usually saw in sessions. I hope we've been on a path towards more relation-centric programmes, and it's been rewarding to see where there have been particular friendships developed.
- ▶ We've now facilitated over 50 calls between the older people and children who have met each other through our workshops and the materials are also available on our website for anyone to use with older friends and relatives. Buddies has been an unexpected change for us but it's been lovely to see more 1:1 relationships develop between the children and older people who are getting to know each other outside of the group context.

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