

# Written Off? Learners' Perspectives on the Efficacy of an Intergenerational Project.

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### Summary:

Intergenerational Practice (IP) can be defined as : *Structured activities, projects or programmes that enable younger and older people to work together to their mutual benefit, promote greater understanding and respect between generations and help to build more cohesive communities and promote lifelong learning.*

Building on the success of the University of Glamorgan's Widening Access programme and engagement with a diverse range of learners, an intergenerational project was developed and piloted in 2000-2001 as a collaborative venture between the University of Glamorgan, local comprehensive schools and local communities. The *Write-On! Learning Through Life* project was then continued between 2001 and 2007 and further developed as a programme to encompass the delivery of one-off events, and collaboration with sheltered housing complexes. The main aims of the programme were to improve communications between the generations, to break down negative, age-related stereotypes (Keune, 2003), and to inculcate the desire to engage with lifelong learning.

Monitoring and evaluation was carried out for each cohort of learners but the aims and objectives of the research to which this paper relates were to evaluate the long-term impact of engagement with the *Write-On!* programme

through the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, utilising questionnaires and interviews.

**Background to the project:**

The initial concept underpinning the project arose from working with schools and in collaboration with groups of older learners. The objective was to address the issues of social exclusion and disaffection as well as the key skills shortages that existed, primarily in Rhondda Cynon Taff (Welsh Office, 1999) where the university is situated. Commitment was sought from individuals to return to and continue learning, and to develop self-reliance, flexibility and breadth of knowledge, in particular through nurturing competence in generic skills, especially communication, through a programme of training, group workshops, field trips, and guest speakers.

The view that lifelong learning has social as well as economic outcomes was fully supported, and the planning of the project addressed the aims of the National Assembly for Wales towards developing an inclusive society, by bringing together members of communities who would not, necessarily, seek each other's company (National Assembly, 2001).

*Write-On!* was developed within the University of Glamorgan's Centre for Lifelong Learning in 2000 as a European (Objective 1) funding proposal and recruited its first intake (six groups) in September 2001. The project ran for a subsequent five years with a total intake of 264 young people (aged 12-18) and 95 adults (aged 50+), with a yearly number of project groups ranging from three to five. Additionally, two, one-off events were facilitated to gauge

interest in the project and to widen recruitment. A total of 130 young people and 66 adults attended these. The overall aim of the project was to widen access and increase participation in lifelong learning by:

- breaking down barriers to learning
- addressing social exclusion
- facilitating the development of a range of skills (with a specific focus on communication)
- making learning fun

The initial recruitment strategy highlighted the sharing of information about common life experiences in relation to local social and economic history, and also personal development. Based on feedback, and on the principles underlying Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory, that social collaboration can enhance the capabilities of human cognition, the focus was shifted to that of a volunteer role for the adults, stressing the value of their input in the young people's development and the shaping of future behaviour and attitudes (Hendry & Kloep, 2002). In recognition of Bruner's theories of cognitive growth and cultural psychology, and to ensure active participation from both generations, a method of bringing two generations together through the investigation and recording of common life experiences through the ages, based on personal testimony was designed (Bruner, 1966 & 1996). There was an underlying theme each year and these were: *Schooldays; Being a Teenager; Leisure Through the Ages; Idols, Heroes & Role Models; Food & the Environment, and Games.*

During the pilot phase participants attended for two hours per week over 30 weeks. This was later reduced to 25 weeks as school examinations, work-

experience, and other activities for the older generation, resulted in a falling-off of numbers during the final sessions. During the planning stage of the programme, and based on the theories of educationalists and psychologists such as Kolb, Entwistle and Ramsden, there was a deliberate move away from the tutor delivery mode to interactive workshops, with a focus on group work, discussion and debate, and team building, which stressed peer support, mentoring, reflection, and learning through doing (Kolb, 1984, Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983). (For full details of the background to, development and implementation of the Write-On! project, see Fish, 2001 & 2002; Fish & Addicott, 2006. For details and analysis of the effectiveness of the different approaches used, see Addicott, 2006. )

Throughout the project, weekly monitoring and end-of-year evaluations were carried out throughout the six years of the project's life and modifications were made each year in response to feedback. A number of strategies were employed to gather feedback from participants, partners and facilitators, including: questionnaires; group evaluation exercises/activities; journals and overviews; facilitator logs, and continuous verbal feedback.

Formal evaluation, carried out anonymously, resulted in a 44 per cent response from the pilot year and over 80 percent in consecutive years. This increase was attributed to the fact that, initially, the evaluation forms were distributed by post, whereas subsequently they were distributed during the final sessions. Those who that felt that the project met their needs or expectations, adequately through to fully, rose from 83 per cent to 98 per cent, positively reflecting the changes made. Negative responses generally focused

on issues such as, transport, retention, and formal/informal structure. The main benefits highlighted were increased confidence; communication skills; team working skills; broadened horizons; new perspectives, and self fulfilment. Overall, results were positive and analysis demonstrated that objectives had been met.

## **Research Methodology**

To assess the extent to which the project has had a lasting effect on attitudes to lifelong learning and on personal and interpersonal skills, together with any impact from engagement with the one-off events, structured questionnaires were used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Follow-up interviews were conducted to explore responses in more depth. This approach was designed to 'uncover the interplay of significant rather than produce widely generalisable findings' (Crossan & Osborne, 2004)

### *Questionnaires*

A structured questionnaire was distributed to all former participants of the Write-On programme, who were at a distance of between one to five years from their engagement with the project or event (Appendix A). Learners were asked to reflect (anonymously) on their experience and to assess or comment on any impact on their:

- communication skills
- intergenerational attitudes
- views on lifelong learning

To minimise questionnaires being discarded before opening, or not being returned if undeliverable, a sticker was attached to the envelopes stating that this was not a circular and including a return address.

A letter was included with each questionnaire explaining the aims and the significance of responses. For existing school pupils under the age of 16, a letter for parents/guardians was also included, seeking permission for the pupil to complete the questionnaire, and requesting support, but not influence. A pre-paid envelope was included to encourage a greater return. Seventy four forms were sent to adult participants and 261 to pupil participants. (A number of adults and pupils had repeated the project and a few adults had passed away, so numbers differ slightly from those quoted for total project participation). At the time of analysis, 23 percent of adults and 7 percent of pupils had completed their forms. Only ten envelopes were returned marked 'addressee gone away'. However, as delivery for 74 percent of letters to the young people depended on being forwarded by the schools, delivery rates could not be verified.

### *Interviews*

An additional form was sent asking for volunteers to take part in follow-up interviews. Former pupils and adults were offered the choice of telephone or face-to-face interviews, as mobility issues or relocation might have influenced decisions if only the latter were available. For current school pupils, interviews were conducted on school premises with an attendant teacher. An additional pre-paid envelope was included, to return separately from the questionnaire, to ensure anonymity. A total of 12 adults and 7 pupils responded.

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken to collect qualitative data (see Appendix B for interview questions). Interviews were audio recorded, with interviewees' permission, so that a full transcript of responses could be made and analysed in depth. This also freed up the interviewer to probe further and follow up interviewees' answers, which would have been restricted by note taking.

It was intended that a cross-section of respondents to the interview request form were to be selected, in relation to: age; project/event; time since engagement with the project/event; tutor; site, and accredited/non-accredited. However, given the relatively low number of respondents, all were interviewed. Despite this, interviewees did meet the cross sectional requirements above.

The interviews were designed to elicit illustrative examples of whether, and how, the project or event had impacted:

- a) on the bullet points above (questionnaires)
- b) in any other aspect of participants' life/development/attitudes

and also to identify whether, and how, this experience influenced learning activities or engagement with learning.

Hayes (2003) highlights the 'methodological challenges in conducting intergenerational evaluation research' and emphasises the importance of 'developing a multi-pronged approach to gathering data'. Thus, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods of research, as outlined

above, provided the opportunity for breadth and depth of both data and analysis, and limited the level of bias which might have resulted from the use of a single research method. In particular, the qualitative method described allowed for a flexible approach, which encouraged learners to respond openly and expansively, thereby providing rich data which could not be preconceived.

‘Research that is grounded in concern with meaning and relevance rather than measurement and typology can shift the ground from which we seek to understand experiences of adult learners. It has the capacity to enrich – and to redefine – theory and practice related to adults learning’ (Merrill, 1999).

### **Ethical issues:**

Due thought was given to the rights and feelings of the learners involved in this study. Learners were informed that participation in the research was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. Only one respondent subsequently withdrew from taking part in a follow-up interview. Data protection laws were adhered to and anonymity was assured in respect of the final report. The learners’ informed consent was sought and for those under 16 years of age, informed consent was sought in writing from parents/guardians and head teachers. The format of the questionnaire and interviews was appropriate to the diversity of the learner groups.

### **Results**

#### i) Questionnaire analysis

##### *Communication Skills*

Sixty one percent of both young and adult respondents indicated that they had gained or developed skills or abilities by working on the project. Sixteen point five percent felt they had not, with 22.5 percent being unsure.

The majority of those who identified communication skills as being developed highlighted greatest improvements in: listening and patience; having greater confidence; presentation skills; working with others; team work; helping less confident participants voice their opinions, and understanding different points of view.

Other skills developed were ITC: from overcoming fears of using computers, to making powerpoint slideshows more creative with artwork. Respondents also pointed to increased: general knowledge; knowledge and understanding of the 'other' generation; ability to connect with young people and identify with 'young ideas', and greater tolerance.

Significantly, 81.5 percent of all respondents stated that they had had the opportunity to use these skills or abilities since leaving the project on a fairly regular basis, in a range of situations. Additionally, having had experience of communicating with another generation, both age groups remarked that they had been able to transfer the skills into their everyday lives. For example, adults had used their improved presentation skills in voluntary activities such as public speaking or chairing meetings, and a number of young people in work-related situations.

### *Intergenerational attitudes*

A similar proportion of each age group had or had not heard of the word 'intergenerational' before taking part in the project. Forty one percent of adult and 37 percent of young respondents had heard the word, while 59 percent of adult and 63 percent of young respondents had not.

Ninety four percent of adult respondents and 79 percent of young respondents felt that the project had developed an understanding of each generation's point of view, giving the opportunity to meet regularly, which they would not otherwise have, and a chance to interact, realise similarities and develop friendships. One young respondent stated that in the sessions, 'both points of view were aired and taken into account'.

The importance of the informal structure of sessions was highlighted as activities and topics such as food and clothes prompted discussions: one young respondent wrote, 'it always keeps people thinking and occupied'. Others pointed to specific activities which were completed together such as computer tasks.

Respondents also pointed to the importance of equality of roles in sessions as opposed to the more traditional senior (expert), to junior (novice) roles. One adult commented, 'we were able to converse on a level playing field'. Another young respondent stated, 'I got to see that other generations don't always have different views on things'. The project had given the different generations a chance to find out what they had in common: it 'bridged the generation gap'.

Ninety four percent felt that the project had had a medium to significant impact on relationships between the generations, and that this impact was positive. All pointed to the level of enjoyment of sessions, shared experiences and activities which built relationships. This had developed over time as people began to feel more relaxed in each others' company. One young respondent commented, 'I felt that I learnt from other generations and that they can learn from us too'. Relationships built as commonality was discovered, and another young respondent stated, 'You realise that they had the same issues but with a different twist on it'.

The project allowed participants to gain an insight into what life is/was like for each other, and facilitated an exchange of perspectives, particularly for the adults. One stated that the project, 'gave me an insight into the low expectations of the less academic and the lack of support they got to achieve what ambitions they had'. Another had gained, 'an understanding how young people coped socially and education wise'. Young respondents indicated that they had had the chance to get to know the adults' feelings and thoughts, and one commented on, 'how refreshing some old people's views were'.

For the minority who did not feel the project developed an understanding or had impacted on relationships, the main reason given was the small number of participants of either generation in their particular group which limited the level of interaction.

Seventy percent of adults felt that their participation in the project had shaped or changed their perception of the different generations moderately or a lot.

Forty seven percent of young respondents agreed, with 33 percent feeling it had done so only to a small extent. Thus, the project had more impact on negative views and stereotypical expectations of older people about young people. One adult stated, 'The pupils restored my faith in the young'. Adults commented on discovering how helpful and interesting young people can be and that some youngsters are intimidated by the older generation. This was similar, but to a lesser extent, for the young respondents. They were more surprised to discover that the adults could be so approachable: 'It was good to meet people with open views, keen to learn how the younger generation live'. It was apparent that many of the young respondents already had a positive or neutral attitude to the older generation.

The majority of adults felt this change in perception also applied outside the project group, with a smaller proportion arguing that it had an impact on perceptions and attitudes to family, in particular with grandchildren. Comments included: 'I think it made me more tolerant of young people in general and more confident to converse with them'; 'I now speak to teenagers that I do not know and mostly they will answer'.

For those few respondents who did not feel the project had significant impact, the reasons they identified were poor contributions and attendance from one group of young people, and for another group the boys were cited as being particularly disinterested.

Finally, in answering questions about knowledge gained from the project, one young respondent reflected: 'A little time spent with old people showed me

that a little time goes a long way. All ages can improve a community, more community activities would improve the areas in which we lived’.

### *Views on lifelong learning*

When asked about their engagement with further learning opportunities, voluntary or paid work since taking part in the project, fifty eight percent of adult and 42 percent of young respondents had done some. For adults this had ranged from computer classes, family and local history societies, calligraphy, craft, first aid, maths, to volunteering at a British Heart Foundation shop, and sitting on a local health board. A number of adults had gone on to volunteer as teaching assistants.

For young respondents experiences had ranged from Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme; rugby coaching; teaching in an after school nursery work scheme; work experience such as veterinary work, and Saturday or part time jobs in shops, to volunteering to work with international students at a local youth summer centre; with people with disabilities, or in a care home.

For both age groups approximately 50 percent of this engagement had been intergenerational. For 74 percent of all age groups the choice of learning or other activities had been partially or fully influenced by their experience with the project.

When asked if there was anything unexpected that they learned during the project, both age groups highlighted surprising things they had learned about the ‘other’ generation, thus combatting stereotypes. One adult responded:

'The vulnerability of the pupils, despite their behaviour as self sufficient young persons.' Young respondents commented: 'We learnt that old people can be fun and don't just knit all the time and their stories are interesting, not boring'; 'I did not expect to become friends with older generations and I did not think that we would have so many similar interests'.

The most important things identified as learned from the project concerned not judging or making assumptions of other generations, giving others the opportunity to express their views and valuing those opinions even if they're different. One adult wrote, 'if treated with respect one receives respect whatever generation one belongs to', while one young respondent argued, 'that it is possible for the older and younger generations to relate to one another and bond'.

## ii) Interview analysis

### *Communication skills*

The majority of interviewees maintained that the project had played a part in improving their communication skills. The impact was predominantly on their general confidence: some young people identified that they had been quite shy with anyone they did not know, prior to the project, particularly with adults. Comments included: 'I've got a bit more confident now when talking to older people' and 'When I go somewhere new now I'd probably strike up a conversation, whereas before I would not have.'

Since completing the project, one young person has worked as a voluntary assistant at an after school group for primary pupils. She commented that:

'In the Write-On project we were communicating with the older generation but this was the total opposite... (I was ) communicating with the **younger** generation, and they were probably thinking what we went through ... I wondered what they were going to be like towards me (the same way) I was towards the older generation.'

Some adults highlighted that they found themselves negotiating with the more vocal, confident, young people to allow and encourage quieter members to have their say, or to facilitate those more able or responsive to take the lead and persuade others to take part. One adult, who described herself as lacking confidence, commented 'I learned about myself, and I did push myself a bit forward: things that normally I would have let somebody else do'. A number commented on how freely the different generations were able to communicate by the end of the project and believed its structure and facilitation encouraged this.

Others specifically pointed to the impact on their presentation skills. 'We were encouraged to speak and stand up in front of others, which was a good thing for me because I've always been a bit afraid of standing up in front of a group... it gave me confidence to try that'. Some adults remembered specific aspects of communication skills they had learned about, such as the need to ask open questions to encourage people to answer and talk.

### *Intergenerational attitudes*

It is clear from the interviews that the project had a significant impact on attitudes from both generations' perspectives. Predominantly, this impact was

on the generations expectations of each other, which allowed them to see past the 'stereotypes'. For example, a number of young people indicated that the project had given them an opportunity, that they would not otherwise have had, to get to know older adults, and they were pleasantly surprised that these adults were interested in young people and wanted to get to know them. They commented about pre-conceptions: 'Older people are supposed to be more difficult to communicate with, but they weren't, and that's what we found out'. 'It is evidence ... that they're the same as us. Just because of age, doesn't mean you haven't got anything in common— just have to discover it.

Many young people discovered an unexpected, common interest with the adults. This resulted in them becoming 'More sympathetic towards them, and more open to listening to them'. One commented, 'They're not ready to be put away ... they still should be talked to ... it's their community, it's not their time to be really quiet and not have a voice'.

Another young interviewee had been surprised at how in touch the adults were with younger people: 'I don't think there's that much of a gap between the generations as people make out.' He also highlighted that he had gained a lot more respect for the adults because of what he learned from them and the things they had been through in their lives. Significantly, the project had changed this young person's opinion of sheltered accommodation; having read stories of mistreated adults in homes, he found instead that the residents were happy and said 'I'd like to retire somewhere like that'.

Adults were surprised at how interested in them the young people were. They enjoyed finding out the young people's views and commented: 'Everybody seemed to want to learn and the ideas were swapped around from older to younger', and '(The project) certainly broadened my outlook on the younger generation ... not having any children, and it helped me to talk with them'.

The adults also indicated that getting to know these young people gave them a better understanding of their point of view. As a result, instead of having negative reactions to young people, such as being intimidated by seeing a 'gang' on the corner, they came to understand that 'ninety percent of them are up to no harm: there's nowhere for them to go, and they stand on corners talking'. They learned that young people often experience a negative reaction which in turn makes them view older people negatively. The project gave them a chance to discuss and understand this, increasing their tolerance. 'Well, when I see a group of teenagers now, I walk past them and say 'hello', I don't just cross the road'; ' If you talk to them (young people) and treat them with respect, you get respect'.

Some adults already had regular contact with young people, either their grandchildren or through work or voluntary work, and their experience in the project confirmed or reinforced their positive views of the potential of young people: 'I think that the project consolidated what I already thought, and felt more strongly that the community wasn't providing outlets for these young people outside of school.'

For other adults with similar contact, the project enabled them to overcome more negative views: 'I run a youth club ... and I've probably had a slightly jaundiced view about the young generation... I'd almost got to the stage of saying they were a write-off. (However), I came out of there (the project) feeling that I'd re-established links with the modern generation, which I was in danger of losing touch with completely. It made me more tolerant – I'd lost a lot of that.'

Many adults commented on their wish to find out what had happened to the young people they had worked with. Where this contact had continued through a third party, such as the school, the adults identified a continued sense of connection and relationship with the young people and this had prolonged the satisfaction of the experience. Similarly, some young participants were happy when they had 'bumped into' an adult participant, or found out how they were, or attended a follow up event.

### *Views on lifelong learning*

The majority of interviewees had heard the term lifelong learning, and their understanding was similar: that learning does not stop when you finish school or university; you can learn something new every day, and 'learning in life is a journey'. One young interviewee whose project group had worked with residents of sheltered accommodation said, 'When you go in to an old people's home you should not stop learning then ... I haven't gone a day without learning something and I don't think those adults in the centre have either.' All of the adults interviewed had been involved in learning or voluntary

work since taking part in the project, and were seeking learning opportunities in their retirement.

Most interviewees had gained some insight into lifelong learning through their participation in the project and could see a role for the project in encouraging lifelong learning. One young interviewee said, 'I've learned a lot, and learned from what they've learned in their life as well, and integrated them together'. Another commented: 'I did not really see it like that at the time, but if you look back you remember things they (older people) said and if you repeat it to other people and then they pass it on – it's like a chain, really.' Others were surprised at some of the adults' lack of formal academic education, as their experience of them was as intelligent and 'quick witted'. 'Lifelong learning has served them well and the project showed that to me.'

Some of the adults pointed out specific information they had learned during the project, for example regarding recycling, healthy eating, and local heroes. Others highlighted how much the project had brought back memories and led to further enquiries and learning: 'in looking at things in a different way years after they actually happened, you actually improve your own knowledge, you understand yourself. You're opening a lid to see what you're capable of ... it took away the boundaries of 'when you're this age you can only do this' ... It showed that at any age in life you can move on, do different things, learn different skills.' The kinds of examples interviewees gave highlighted the role the project had had in learning about social history, particularly on a local level. Most indicated the opportunity the project gave for learning from each other.

### *Other aspects of their life/ development/ attitudes*

A number of the young interviewees highlighted the influence on choices of career and the work or voluntary experience they have sought in order to study for this career. For example, considering a career in medicine, one found the project reassured her that she did want to work in this field and gave her the confidence to communicate with different people and age groups. Describing her work experience: 'I was on some wards with old people ... they just love talking ... I used to go sit by them and just have a little chat'. She also arranged to do some voluntary work in a nursing home. Some tried to organise work experience in a local care home as a direct result of their positive experience with the project, while others described how it inspired them to choose voluntary activities which involve older people, such as WRVS. The project had given them an insight into what to expect from these experiences as well as confidence.

Others were influenced to work with people younger than themselves, such as a Brownie club, and commented, 'we're teenagers and we tend to just dismiss the other generations but now when I'm talking to the younger ones, they're similar but there's differences as well. So it's healthy to link all the ages.' Another described her part time retail job where many customers were older people: '(the project) ... just taught me to have patience ... you still should go into the conversation because they may not have another chance to talk to younger people'.

An adult commented: 'The project gave the opportunity to understand other people better ... It's easy to criticise people without understanding the buttons you have to press that really affect their lives', and 'I go around giving presentations to schools. So it's a knock on effect because I would have thought prior to that (project) that to go and stand on a school platform, I might have got beaten up and thrown through the window, but instead I find just the opposite – they want to listen, they're attentive – that's fine'.

*Learning activities /engagement with learning.*

A number of adults and one young interviewee highlighted that they had gained IT skills through their involvement with the project and they have continued to use and develop them. Adults commented: 'I had to do the research, which made me get on the computer, which had petrified me up until then'; 'After being there, I went to a computer class the next year. Since then I've bought a little laptop. '

*Influence on others/ relationships with others*

A common theme that emerged from the interviews was the impact the project had on participants' relationships with family and friends outside the project. A few adults discussed how their involvement and relationships built with new young people had improved relationships with their grandchildren.

Interviewees also argued that the project had a wider impact than on project participants. One young interviewee highlighted how the project inspired him to help older neighbours with chores. An adult described seeing a young participant at the supermarket with her mother, who was delighted with the

effects of the project, saying, 'we can't stop her talking when she comes home (from the project) 'Mam did you do this, were you dressed like this, did you play 'scotch in the street?'. It's become a talking point in our household'.

A number of young interviewees from the same project group described how their participation had strengthened their friendship, and improved relationships with their grandparents. Relationships with friends who had not taken part were also affected as they were keen to hear about it and became almost as enthused. Some have since encouraged these friends to volunteer with them in the activities described above e.g. WRVS and Brownies. One of these young interviewees commented 'Even my mother was taken aback by all my voluntary work. She will probably look into doing something'.

## **Discussion**

As demonstrated in the project's yearly evaluation processes, there was a limited response to paper surveys once participants had completed the project. However, for this study, no other suitable method of data collection was appropriate given the nature of the population and available resources (Wikipedia, 2008)

The adult response rate of 23 percent was fair, considering the length of the questionnaire (Bogen). While efforts were made to maximise returns, as noted in the Research Methodology section, a number of additional factors have been identified by interviewees as contributing to a disappointing seven percent response from the young people, especially timing, in relation to those still in the education system, whether at school or in higher education. For the

adults, factors were cited as relocation to care homes, poor health, or increased family commitments. However, the respondents did represent a cross section of past participants according to the criteria in the research proposal.

Whilst the response rate, especially for young people, limits any significant quantitative analysis, (RDSU) the combined responses allow for a level of qualitative interpretation which, in conjunction with the interview analysis, has provided a rich source of data.

There was a high degree of consistency between adult and young people's responses, yet there were some significant variations. Adults highlighted more change to negative perceptions and preconceptions of young people, than vice versa, as young people were more neutral or already positive about adults before the project.

A greater number of adults than young people felt that they had learned some unexpected facts. These were mainly about the young people's interests and views, and the ease of interaction that the project facilitated. Finally, a greater proportion of young people than adults felt that the project had had an impact on them since completion.

Responses to both the questionnaires and interviews, clearly demonstrated that engagement with the intergenerational project, Write-On! had had a long-term, positive impact on all generations. This was particularly foregrounded in relation to communication skills and intergenerational attitudes and this

echoed the evaluation responses throughout the project years. However, what has become evident for the first time, is the extent of the long-term, positive impact on other aspects of their lives/attitudes/development, and on family, grandparents, grandchildren, friends and others outside the project.

In the light of interviewees' comments regarding the potential for prolonged satisfaction of the intergenerational experience through continued contact, and to maximise impact with future projects, an appropriate mechanism should be built in to facilitate this, within statutory protection guidelines both for children and vulnerable adults.

While one of the project aims had been to engender a desire to engage with learning, feedback from the pilot phase clearly indicated that a formal, rigidly structured approach did not work. The project was redesigned to allow a more flexible, student-centred, informal approach, incorporating the principles of learning through doing. This was well received and the research questionnaire feedback highlighted the influence that the project had had on respondents' choices relating to further learning or voluntary activities. Interviewee responses indicated a similar theme, with comments on the facilitation and format of sessions and belief that this had contributed to positive outcomes, especially improved communication and confidence: '... the atmosphere was there to encourage you to talk ... It came down to creating that environment which made everybody feel comfortable'. Responses also confirmed that this intergenerational approach had effectively engaged young people who had a wide range of academic abilities and levels of motivation.

While lifelong learning was not overtly highlighted during project sessions, interviewees asserted that, on reflection, they had gained an insight into the role that **Write-On** played in engaging people of all generations in lifelong learning and in encouraging further participation in a range of activities.

All of the adults interviewed indicated that they had thoroughly enjoyed the project and would have liked to take part in it again. Many of them had not been involved with young people, other than grandchildren, since the project either in voluntary activities or in their community. This highlighted the limited opportunities that exist for adults to meet and get to know young people, and the need for planned, structured and sustainable intergenerational activities, events and projects.

One young interviewee said of the project, 'something like this is really beneficial to you as a person ... you could not learn it in a classroom, even in social lessons ... this is so hands on ... it really gives a good experience of older people'.

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