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Generations Working Together

The Scottish Centre
for Intergenerational Practice

A Guide to Mentoring Across Generations

by Alan Hatton-Yeo and Scott Telfer



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Ann Barnes and Mary Hendren

South Ayrshire Council

Luke Ferguson and Fiona Wright

North Lanarkshire Council

Penny Halliday

YANA

Jean Inglis

Glasgow Volunteer Centre

Pat Scrutton

South Lanarkshire Council

Contents

Introduction -	
What are 'Intergenerational Programmes' and Why are they Important?	4
What is Mentoring?	5
Overlaps between mentoring and other roles	7
What makes an effective Mentor?	9
What Impact does Intergenerational Mentoring Have?	11
An Extra Layer of Support in People's Lives	11
Older People Supporting Younger People	12
Younger People Supporting Older People	13
Support for Families	13
Categories of I/G Mentoring Programmes	14
Eradicating Negative Age-based Stereotypes	14
Learning New Skills	15
Learning How to Survive and Thrive	16
Skills Transfer in the Workplace	16
Fostering an Appreciation for Rich Cultural Heritages, Traditions, and Histories	18
What Makes Effective Mentoring Programmes?	20
Establish Aims and Objectives of the Programme	20
Identify the Target Group	20
The Role of Staff	21
Recruiting and Screening Mentors	21
Training Mentors and Orienting Mentees	21
Providing Ongoing Support and Supervision of the Mentoring Matches	21
Choosing and Planning Activities	22
Monitoring and Evaluation	23
Conclusion	24
Appendix	25
Links to Key Resources	25
Additional Reading	25

Introduction - What are 'Intergenerational Programmes' and Why are They Important?

Increasingly over recent years there has been a growing recognition of the need for and importance of projects, activities and programmes that bring people from across the age spectrum together to participate with each other for their mutual benefit. Such work can be given the label 'intergenerational' but it can also be seen as a way of creating liveable communities.

When community residents across age groups get to know and care about one another, they learn they have much in common, including a desire to live in a community that is safe, fun, and filled with opportunities to learn, grow and contribute meaningfully to the lives of other residents.

Definition

For the purpose of this guide we are not using the term intergenerational to describe the myriad of encounters between people from different generations that occur informally on a daily basis. Instead, we will use the term to describe the nature of the relationships that are formed between participants in planned activities and programmes deliberately designed to stimulate change and growth by capitalising on the differing life perspectives brought by people from across the age spectrum. We define intergenerational practice as:

"Intergenerational practice aims to bring people from different generations together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities which promote greater understanding and respect and contribute to building more cohesive communities."

Settings

Intergenerational programmes and activity are found in a diverse range of settings, including workplaces, schools,

families, parks, arts centres, allotments, community centres, clubs, health care settings and retirement communities. Wherever they are found, they provide an important venue for mobilising the talents, skills, energy and resources of older adults in support of younger people, and vice versa. For example, some initiatives enlist older adults as tutors, mentors, school volunteers and child care workers. In other initiatives, younger people serve as visitors and befrienders to isolated older people in the community, oral historians, volunteers to help elders with chores and as tutors for those older adults interested in learning more about computers and the Internet. More recently, programmes have been evolving in which younger and older people together serve their communities. All of these initiatives provide opportunities for younger and older people to participate in meaningful activities, share involvement with others, and increase their responsibility in their communities.

An underlying rationale for developing intergenerational programmes can be summed up in one sentence:

"When there are open lines of communication, caring, and support between the generations, we are better off as individuals, and better off in our families, communities, and as an overall society."

What is Mentoring?

This guide focuses on one area of intergenerational work, namely 'mentoring'. Mentoring has become a widely used term over the last decade with almost two thirds of the Scottish adult population now reporting having heard the term at work or in the media and feeling that they have an understanding of what it means.

Research carried out by the Scottish Mentoring Network (2008) suggested that approximately 1.5 million adults in Scotland consider themselves to be currently acting as a mentor to others. 90% of them are carrying out the role informally for a colleague at work, as part of their job/role (e.g. teachers, clergy), for someone within their community (e.g. as scout/guide leaders, sports coaches, music teachers or just as a friend) or in their role as a parent. Those involved are unlikely to be calling what they are doing 'mentoring', but they are adopting a mentoring approach to assisting someone else to grow and develop towards their potential, manage changes and grasp opportunities or find ways out of challenging situations for themselves. 10% (150,000 adults in Scotland) are involved as mentors in formal schemes or programmes.

There is no one universally accepted definition of mentoring. As the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation in England notes, this is because the definition depends very much on why, where and with whom it is being used.

Mentoring and the role of mentor have existed as long as human beings have congregated together. There has always been a role for experienced individuals to draw on and share their experience and knowledge with others going through rites of passage and major transitions, for example,

the transition into adulthood, married life, parenthood or community leadership. There has also always been a need to ensure that traditions, values and a sense of connection to ancestors is passed between generations.



We have also seen new ways of mentoring develop. In addition to the traditional one-to-one relationship based on face-to-face meetings, we now have mentoring for groups of people (so that they can learn from and share experience with each other as well as the mentor), mentoring by peers (who have the advantage of sharing a particular experience in common) and telephone/text and e-mentoring (these allow people to become involved who are separated by geographical distance or who have mobility issues).

Mentoring as an approach has always existed and, as has already been noted, the vast majority of mentoring activity occurs informally as part of everyday life. This is as it should be. However, there are circumstances where informal mentoring breaks down within communities and it is no longer possible for people to pass on their knowledge and experience to other generations. This may be due to extended families now being much more geographically widespread, the loss of apprenticeships for young people and mistrust/fear between different sections of the community. In these circumstances it can be beneficial to set up formal mentoring schemes to 'bridge the gap' between potential mentors and those who would benefit from their experience. These schemes can help reduce the barriers within and between different sections of the community and re-create a sense of communal purpose and belonging.

A key element that differentiates Mentoring from other forms of learning and support is that it is specifically designed to benefit all participants. Research consistently finds that mentors report having benefited as much from the process as those they have been mentoring. Pre-conceived ideas about how things should be done, attitudes, memories, experiences and skills are all re-visited in the process of acting as a mentor. New perspectives can be discovered and forgotten knowledge and skills re-discovered.

Mentoring also focuses on the person's potential for longer-term development and touches on their growth as a 'whole person'. This makes it a very effective complement to other forms of learning and development, often increasing their effectiveness.

"At school, teachers take a positive interest in him [her mentee]. He needs someone to take a special interest in him... I allow him to be who he is. I'm not into 'moulding' him... I am different than the school people who make demands... I do enjoy his company and he sees that."

A 60-YEAR OLD WOMAN WHO IS A MENTOR IN A SCHOOL-BASED LITERACY PROGRAM IN FLORIDA, U.S.

This woman quite obviously finds joy in her relationship with the person she is mentoring. She sees herself

History of Mentoring

The phrase 'mentor' was coined nearly 3,000 years ago to describe the relationship in Homer's 'Odyssey' between Odysseus's son Telemachus and Mentor, who was appointed by Odysseus to act as his son's guardian and adviser in his absence.

The role of mentor can also be found in the relationship between 'master' and 'apprentice' found historically in the Craft Guilds, the martial arts and in religious orders and in the notion of 'protégés' found in the professions and the business world more generally, where a partner or senior person takes a more junior member of staff 'under his/her wing' and grooms them for success. More recently we have seen the advent of 'developmental' or 'person centred' mentoring based on the premise that we are all capable of achieving much more than we currently do, or think that we can, and that the introduction of a mentor can help us to better unlock the potential that we have and achieve the goals we have in life.

How Some Organisations Define Mentoring

“Mentoring concerns activities that give... people the tools and confidence to take control of their own pathway. It is about empowering people to plan their own future and capitalise on their own potential.”

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY (1997)

“Mentoring is the support of one person by another within a relationship developed through regular contact over a period of time, in order to achieve a stated objective.”

NEW PHILANTHROPY CAPITAL (2007)

“Mentoring is a goal oriented process that seeks to complement and add value to other sources of learning, development and support. Mentoring is a form of learning; a process in which a (usually) more experienced person (the mentor) passes on know how to someone less experienced. Mentoring sets out to capture the informal learning, knowledge, experience, networks and skills that exist... making it an exceptionally effective developmental tool for companies, communities, groups/teams and individuals.”

GLASGOW MENTORING NETWORK

as doing more than teaching him to read; they make personal connections with the stories they read together and this strengthens the bond between them.

Overlaps and differences between Mentoring and other roles

Although Mentoring has its own distinctive set of skills and processes for promoting the growth and development of another person, it shares things in common with other ways of influencing and assisting people to grow. Mentors will at times in their mentoring relationships find themselves taking on the roles highlighted above. This is to be expected as they each have something to offer as a way of encouraging someone to reach their potential. Bear in mind though that if the person being mentored wants the mentor to play one particular role most of the time, then it may be that the mentor will need to advise them to refer themselves to an agency specialising in that approach.

Counselling

Unless they possess an appropriate qualification, Mentors are not trained counselors and should not be tempted to act as if they are, but they do use basic counselling skills (for example, active listening/reflecting and asking open questions) and follow a similar process to counselling. It is also important that the mentor's focus is to attempt to see the world from the other person's point of view. Counselling is generally though not as focussed on goals and tasks as mentoring and does not encourage the sharing of life experience and learning by the counsellor as part of the process.

Advocacy

The Community Housing Advocacy Project says that:

“An advocate offers support to help a person, or group of people, to voice their opinions about issues which are important to them. Advocates work with people by supporting and advising them



on how to have their views heard by people in authority. The process should result in the person feeling that they have greater power and influence over key areas of their life.”

The notion of boosting a person’s sense of control over the course their life is taking is an important part of a mentor’s role, as is challenging discrimination, prejudice, stereotyping or any type of injustice which is preventing a person from achieving their potential. A mentor would not be expected to intervene directly on behalf of the person they are mentoring but the process should result in the person feeling that they have greater power and influence over key areas of their life.

Coaching

Both coaching and mentoring are processes that enable individuals to better achieve their potential.

Coaching and mentoring share many similarities. They both:

- Encourage people to explore their needs, motivations, desires, skills and thought processes to assist them in making real, lasting change.

- Encourage people to think through and identify solutions and actions for themselves rather than direct them what to do.
- Support people in setting appropriate goals and methods of assessing progress in relation to these goals.
- Rely on observation, listening and asking questions to understand the person’s situation.
- Are supportive and non-judgemental of the person, their views, lifestyle and aspirations.
- Seek to avoid people becoming dependent on the person assisting them.
- Encourage people to develop supportive relationships and networks to achieve their goals.

Teaching

The Shorter English Dictionary defines teaching as ‘the imparting of instruction’. Teaching assumes that the teacher has skills or knowledge that the ‘learner’ does not. The role of the teacher is to present a pre-packaged body of knowledge in the hope that

the recipient will learn from it. There is no guarantee though that what is taught will result in lasting change for the recipient.

This differs from mentoring in that the mentor assumes that the person they are mentoring already possesses much of the knowledge and skill that they require – although they may not be aware of it. The role of the mentor is to bring it out.

Befriending

Befriending Network Scotland notes that:

“Befriending offers a supportive, reliable relationship to people who would otherwise be socially isolated.”

As with befriending, the foundation for a positive outcome in most mentoring is the development of an honest, trusting relationship. Without it, the person being mentored is much less likely to set him/herself goals which take them out of their ‘comfort zone’. It is therefore important that mentors have the skills to be able to form positive, supportive relationships.

Unlike befriending, the development of this relationship is not the goal. The relationship provides a springboard for the person being mentored to identify and work towards goals and tasks that are important to them. The notion of support being goal or task focused is a central feature of Mentoring. In befriending, goals and targets may develop naturally as the relationship progresses but this is secondary.

Role Modelling

“We all aspire to have the qualities exhibited by people we admire.”

OXFORD DICTIONARY

There is no doubt that we all aspire to have the qualities exhibited by certain other people. This is an important part of motivating ourselves to grow and develop.

There is no doubt that if you are able to form a positive, supportive relationship with another person then they



will be influenced by your values, attitudes, interests and experience of life.

Within the mentoring process, mentors are not required to stand on a pedestal to be admired. Our expectation is that the person being mentored will learn from the mentor but that equally the mentor will learn from and be influenced by the person they are mentoring.

We do expect mentors though to role model the attitudes and skills required to develop a positive supportive relationship. This includes valuing and respecting the other person, problem solving rather than blaming when difficulties arise, providing positive feedback and giving credit where it is due.

What Makes an Effective Mentor?

“In practice, mentors provide a spectrum of learning and supporting behaviours, from challenging and being a critical friend to being a role model, from helping to build networks and build personal resourcefulness to simply being there to listen, from helping people work out what they want to achieve, and why, to planning how they will bring that change about.”

DAVID CLUTTERBUCK ('EVERYONE NEEDS A MENTOR', 4TH EDITION, 2004)

Historically the majority of intergenerational mentoring has been with the older person as mentor. For example, in the U.S.A, where intergenerational mentoring has a very long

Can Anyone be a Mentor?

It is often assumed that because mentoring has been around throughout history and also that the vast majority of mentoring occurs informally, outwith mentoring schemes and programmes, that anyone can be a mentor. This is not the case! Many people do have an intuitive understanding of a mentoring approach and others can be taught the necessary skills. However, some people will never grasp the approach, or may grasp it but the timing is not right for them. All good quality mentoring programmes have induction and screening processes to check out suitability prior to taking someone on as a mentor. An unsuitable mentor can cause harm to the confidence, well-being and future success of the person they are mentoring. They may be more suitable for other volunteering roles because of their interests and personal skills and the selection process is the opportunity to direct them towards other, more suitable, forms of voluntary activity in a sympathetic and positive manner.

history it is focused almost exclusively on the older person as mentor. Within Europe this has changed significantly in recent years with the recognition that younger people also have valuable knowledge and experience to share for the benefit of older generations. Perhaps the best developed of such programmes is around technology involving things such as teaching computer use and texting on a mobile phone or in environmental projects.

The most successful mentors have good listening skills, a supportive and non-judgmental approach, an ability to form and sustain positive, supportive relationships and an interest in the personal development of other people. They tend to have a style of communication that can be characterized as 'person centred'. They find out what people value, get input into decisions about activities, and allow their partner to determine topics and the pace. In contrast, the least successful mentors tend to be those who lecture or insist on their way of doing things. They are often less accepting of the individual's style and capabilities.

Another factor that contributes to the success of a mentor, whatever their age, is the feeling that it is important to contribute meaningfully to the lives of others. For many, this sense of service and citizenship responsibility is quite intense and urgent, as illustrated in the following succinct quote from Maggie Kuhn, founder of the Gray Panthers in the U.S.A.:

"We don't have a single person to waste".

We are now witnessing an emerging group of active older adults who are more healthy, more vigorous, and more educated than the elderly population of any other time in history. Involvement in mentoring schemes and other civic enterprises, presents alternative pathways for being 'productive' and for contributing to society as a whole.



What Impact Does Intergenerational Mentoring have?

There are many types of intergenerational mentoring programmes. They are found in a wide variety of community settings, and designed to address a variety of objectives.

One thing that all mentoring programmes have in common is that the outcome for the vast majority of participants is 'incremental' change. For a small percentage of people, involvement with a mentor is truly life changing. For the vast majority, life improves and the seeds of future growth and development have been planted, but it is difficult to attribute this change solely to the introduction of a mentor. Good quality mentoring complements other learning and support that is going on in a person's life.

The length of time mentoring relationships last is entirely dependent on the nature and purpose of the mentoring programme. It is not uncommon for relationships to progress on the basis of weekly meetings over a period of 9-12 months.

Quality mentoring programmes are not free of costs, in spite of the fact that most mentoring activity is undertaken by volunteers. Effective outcomes for participants depend on programmes being adequately resourced. The biggest resource required is programme co-ordination. Ensuring that any programme is safe and effective is time intensive. Budgets also need to be built in for recruiting and inducting participants and for meeting the costs incurred by mentors and those being mentored in participating in the programme. The key building blocks of safe and effective mentoring programmes are contained within the Approved Provider Standard at:

www.scottishmentoringnetwork.co.uk/defaultpage121c0.aspx?pageID=67

This section aims to highlight a range of intergenerational mentoring approaches and the benefits associated with them.

An Extra Layer of Support in People's Lives

"No one can remain untouched. It is an experience of human and community involvement that reinvests all of us in the power of the person to make a difference in another's life."

BILL WERTHEIM, INTERGENERATIONAL SPECIALIST



Generations United, the U.S.A.-based umbrella intergenerational organisation, gives a powerful illustration of why intergenerational mentoring has been embraced in the U.S.A. They describe the following picture:

“Children, young people and older adults face many serious challenges. Some are different, but many are similar. Young people sometimes have difficulty navigating the path of early life and adolescence. The challenges they face are often exacerbated by factors outside of their control such as difficult family situations, poverty, and troubled communities. Older adults are sometimes challenged by loneliness and isolation from their families and communities. Both young and old seek meaningful relationships and positive interactions to address challenges and improve feelings of self-worth. Together young and old are assets to the community and can offer support to one another through meaningful interaction. Mentoring is one forum for such interaction.”

BILL WERTHEIM, INTERGENERATIONAL SPECIALIST

Older People Supporting Younger People

A common context for establishing mentoring programmes involves older adults supporting younger people who have encountered problems ranging from trouble with the law, alcohol and drug abuse, and poor academic performance. Whether based in schools, community youth centres or some other community setting, older adult mentors play a significant support role in the lives of younger people in crisis.

Analysis of case studies (Kaplan 2001, Hatton-Yeo 2006) in the UK as well as in other countries clearly indicate that when young people who are deemed ‘at risk’ participate in intergenerational mentoring programmes they show improved attitudes toward school, the future, and older adults; feel better about themselves; display strengthened critical thinking skills; and become less likely to participate in offending or alcohol and drug misuse.

A study from Beth Johnson Foundation (Ellis 2003) of intergenerational mentoring in secondary schools reported an array of positive outcomes for young people, 10 to 13 years of age, identified as at risk of failure and who had been ‘marginalized within the system’. Outcomes for young participants included improvement in academic achievement, self-confidence and self-esteem. In addition, young people reported having a special bond with their mentor and feeling

Case Study

When Liz Parnell retired from her post as PA to the Chief Executive of a national organisation, she decided to become involved in CSV’s Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme (RSVP). For the last 6 years Liz has been volunteering one morning a week to support children with their reading and arithmetic in Balgreen Primary School in Edinburgh. She is currently involved supporting children in Primary 6 at the school. Liz’s grandchildren live a distance away, so being in the school helps keep her up to date with the latest fads and cool toys. Whilst not formally being regarded as a mentor, contact with the children does result in a lot of life experience being shared. Liz also makes a point of sending postcards to the class when she goes on holiday. She brings mementoes back and writes up sheets of interesting facts about where she has been. The contribution Liz makes is valued highly by the school as a complement to the work of the class teacher. For Liz, the satisfaction and enjoyment she gets from her role is reward enough and the fact it ‘keeps her a bit younger’!

that someone was available to them who cared about their well-being.

Mentors benefit from their relationships with young people in several important ways. They report improvements in their physical health and quality of life. They note feeling better about themselves, gaining confidence, being more engaged in the community and having a sense of 'giving something back'.

A number of successful schemes now operate that link intergenerational volunteering to a positive attitude to employment in the field of health and social care working with older people. The Workforce Development Team in Manchester have set up a partnership programme with local colleges and 'ambassadors' from older people's resource centres to provide placement opportunities and mentoring support to young students to help them develop an interest in working with older people in the future.

Younger People Supporting Older People

When young people are cast in the role of mentor, we see a parallel set of benefits. Volunteering by young people is recognised as an increasingly important mechanism to gain self-esteem, a sense of civic responsibility and the essential life-skills necessary for employment and successful relationships. The link between youth volunteering and personal well-being and competence has been effectively demonstrated in many studies. Intergenerational volunteering by young people will become more important in the future because of the ageing of our population.

"It's the opposite of a thread you pull and the sweater comes unraveled. You pull on this thread, and you find yourself connected."

LAURIE CHILCOTE, DISABLED PERSON FROM ONE OF THE US EXPERIENCE CORPS PROGRAMMES (QUOTE TAKEN FROM 'PRIMETIME: HOW BABY BOOMERS WILL REVOLUTIONIZE RETIREMENT AND TRANSFORM AMERICA' BY MARK FREEDMAN)

Support for Families

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Case Study

When Home-Start was founded in 1973 no-one involved in this unique parent-to-parent support service imagined that one local scheme would be so effective and popular with families that it would expand to well over 300 schemes within 30 years. We help to increase the confidence and independence of families by:

- Visiting families in their own homes to offer support, friendship and practical assistance.
- Reassuring parents that their childcare problems are not unusual or unique.
- Encouraging parents' strengths and emotional well-being for the ultimate benefit of their children.
- Trying to get the fun back into family life.

We carefully match our volunteers to families, based on what the family's needs are. Many of our volunteers are grandparents. Some of them have grandchildren who live some distance away from them. Many of our families include young parents, particularly mothers, who benefit greatly from the emotional and practical support and life experience that an older volunteer brings. The relationship is therefore definitely one of mutual benefit, in lots of ways.

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Categories of I/G Mentoring Programmes

Support for Grandparents Raising Their Grandchildren

Mentor UK is an example of this and is targeted at families where there are specific issues around substance abuse. Other examples include the New Fossils Grandparents Group in Glasgow and YANA in Stranraer. While these are not primarily mentoring projects all have an element of peer mentoring where grandparents support other grandparents to achieve better results for their young charges and themselves.

Foster Grandparent Schemes

In these cases an older person befriends and advises a young person and their mother or father where they don't have other reliable older adults in their lives. Projects have worked particularly with young mothers to support them in their parenting practices. One example is in Sandwell where older female workers from an ASDA store have become mentors to young teenage mothers attending a specialist support unit. One of the main aims of this project has been to support the young mothers to remain in education and gain qualifications.

Support to Young Carers

Significant numbers of young people help to look after a parent or grandparent. Some young carer's schemes have used older adults to provide support and encouragement for the young person. In Harrogate a pilot scheme matched older mentors to young people leaving care. This is a particularly difficult transition where young people can be particularly vulnerable and the mentor provided essential support to enable the young people to make the move towards independent life in the community.

Specific Skill Sharing

For instance groups of older women working with young mothers to help them learn cooking skills and in the process they befriend and offer support for one another. ZEST in Manchester is one example of such a programme and has led to unexpected outcomes such as people becoming involved in producing their own cookbook of local delicacies, such as Manchester Tart.

Eradicating Negative Age-based Stereotypes

Social and demographic changes in society are contributing to reduced intergenerational contact, both within family networks and within the wider community. One of the undesirable side effects of this trend is that with less personal experience and knowledge about people of other generations, they are more susceptible to age-related stereotypes, e.g. viewing old age as a time of disability, passivity, and isolation, and views of young people as being loud and disrespectful.

Fortunately, from the communication sciences literature, we have clues as to how to counter stereotypes. It is through people working together (one-to-one or as part of a group) on shared projects/activities, the sharing of experiences and regular contact that attitudes are changed. This holds true for influencing people's attitudes about other age groups; research suggests that positive attitude change is greatest when there is prolonged contact as in intergenerational mentoring programs. As participants get to know one another on a personal level, they learn firsthand how popular age-related stereotypes are often inaccurate and should not be allowed to affect how they view and relate to others.

Once stereotypes are removed from the equation, people are more likely to acknowledge each other's talents and strengths, and this in turn contributes to the potential for building more positive, productive relationships.

Many people who work with young people report great success when approaching them as resources to be tapped rather than as problems to be solved.

Case Study

South Ayrshire Council's Morrison Gardens Sheltered Housing Complex has become the hub for a range of intergenerational activities as part of the Council's Help Unite Generations initiative. Young women studying for the SVQ Level 2 in Social Care at Ayr College have been involved in learning about all aspects of running a sheltered housing complex. This has meant them becoming involved in joint projects with the residents including – running a food co-op, healthy eating initiatives, arts projects, vegetable growing and making hanging baskets. In the process the young people have been taught by residents how to make soup and to bake. Some activities have been turned into competitions with each student paired with a resident to compete against other pairs to grow the biggest vegetables or produce the best hanging baskets.

In return, residents now attend college on a Monday with the students to engage in joint activities there. All the residents involved are over 80 years old and none have been to college before. According to Mary Hendren, the Warden, the residents are "loving the experience". They have also now formed a "computer group", have had broadband installed in the complex and all have e-mail addresses. Mary noted that the experience had given both groups a greater understanding of each other and a sense of what they share in common. Friendships have also developed.

As part of the HUG Initiative a number of Sheltered Housing Complexes across South Ayrshire have now been paired with local schools.

When a young person is in the mentoring role, such as when paired up with an older adult to help them develop IT skills, they are playing a role that stands in stark contradiction to the very negative attitudes that many have about today's young people. This is well illustrated in the new set of case studies recently published by the National Youth Agency in the UK at:

www.nya.org.uk/youthactionprogramme

Learning New Skills

A number of programmes exist where older volunteers teach specific skills. This can range from arts and sciences to older bikers working with excluded young men to teach them motorcycle repair skills as a route in to employment. In recent years more and more schools are using older volunteers to help with gardening, cookery and environmental projects. At the same time there is a growth of young people sharing technology-related skills with older adults in the community.



Case Study

After a long career in Nursing and Midwifery, Anna Ross decided to undertake the Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) course and then spent a number of years teaching English in Asian countries. On her return, she found retirement to be “a bit boring” and so signed up as a volunteer with the CSV Retired and Senior Volunteers Programme. Now she spends time supporting two students at Invergordon Academy for whom English is not their first language. Both are able students and want to go to university. Anna felt that her TEFL training and the fact that she had lived abroad and in the process learned new languages herself made her ideally placed to help out. She is able to complement the work of the school’s English language teachers, particularly around grammar and pronunciation, provide individual support and encouragement, and share her experience of the challenges and the rewards of becoming multi-lingual. Anna has found the experience very rewarding and satisfying and takes great pleasure in seeing the students achieve the results they are capable of. In return, her contribution is highly valued by both the teaching staff and the students she is spending time with.

As noted above, the mentoring relationship is different than that of teacher-student. Yes, information is delivered, but there is also concern and rich discussion regarding how the newly acquired information and skills will be used in the future and how it might enhance the mentee’s life options and quality of living.

With the mentor’s encouragement and support, what a young person learns may have a significant influence on his or her career options. Conversely, the adult who becomes adept with how to use email may find new life breathed into their relationships with their own family members living far away.

Learning How to Survive and Thrive

From the perspective of young people struggling to learn practical life skills, older adults are great assets. Older adults know how to open a bank account, how to go for a job interview, how to survive! If you ask some inner city teenagers who are caught up in the swirl of ganglife, survival into their 20’s is something that’s hard to envision nevertheless plan for. But have them speak to someone who has overcome loss, recovered from strained family relationships, fought in and survived WWII. It’s not only the issue of seeing how

someone survives to late adulthood that is impressive, but also their ability to transcend adversity that makes older adults such wonderful role models. Such support can be particularly important for groups such as care leavers or young carers.

At the same time, some young people can be quite inspirational figures for adults. For example, they may stand as excellent role models for how one might embrace technological change, whether it is learning a new system for programming one’s DVD/Blueray at home or figuring out how to correctly set the timer on a digital thermostat.

In Newport a partnership has developed between a sheltered housing complex and the Sports and Leisure department of the local university. Students now organize a range of healthy living activities including exercise sessions, healthy living advice and health mentoring for older people living in the sheltered housing to stimulate the physical and emotional well being of the older residents.

Skills Transfer in the Workplace

One of the consequences of an ageing society is

increased generational diversity in the workplace. People from different generations often have different sets of experiences, perspectives, and core values. This poses certain challenges as well as opportunities for the workplace.

One of the key recommendations from Scotland's Futures Forum Report, entitled 'Growing Older, Growing Wiser Together: A Futures View on Positive Ageing' (2007), is the creation of mentoring schemes for older workers to pass on their skills to younger generations. The authors of the report note that employers across a variety of sectors and sizes of organizations indicate that they feel that older workers are better at interpersonal skills, and that there is merit in adopting an intergenerational mentoring approach to share skills amongst employees of all ages.

This approach is echoed in the 'Skills for Scotland: A Lifelong Skills Strategy' (2007) report produced by the Scottish Government, where the ability to obtain a job is now seen alongside the need to develop a set of 'employability skills' that enable workers to remain

employable in a fast changing environment. In this type of environment older workers may find that in return for sharing their interpersonal skills, their younger colleagues have much to offer in terms of strategies for coping with change (see also the Age Employment Network seminar report on Cross-Generational Relationships in the workplace).

When there is a greater understanding and more effective communication between the generations, it is likely that there will be a more positive working environment for all employees.

Though a multi-generational workforce may be complex to manage, it is not necessarily a liability. In fact, it can be a great asset for bringing diverse perspectives and experience sets to bear on the diverse challenges facing an organization. This is reflected in the Department for Work and Pensions 'Age Positive Campaign' which promotes the benefits of employing a mixed age workforce that includes older and younger people.

www.agepositive.gov.uk/about/about.asp

Case Study

"Having a diverse workforce is important for B&Q. Not just because it's the right thing to do, but because it makes business sense. We like to employ people from every kind of background. It gives us different perspectives - and a much richer mix of experience. It also means we're better equipped to understand the needs and priorities of all our customers."

"B&Q is an Age Positive Champion. At B&Q we recruit people of all ages. The aim is to get the best person for the job, including young people with new skills and older people with life experience and knowledge of DIY. B&Q's older employees enjoy working with younger people as part of a dynamic team, while younger employees appreciate the extra skills and life experience which mature workers bring to the job."

"B&Q now employs around 40,000 people and 26% of our workforce is over 50. Interestingly, 24% of our workforce is under 25."

LEON FOSTER-HILL, B&Q DIVERSITY ADVISER

www.diy.com/diy/jsp/aboutbandq/social_responsibility_2007/pdfs/agediversity_sept07.pdf

Case Study

The most valuable resources any company has are the skills, knowledge and experience of its workforce. The Intergenerational Mentoring (IGEM) Project was set up to help share the valuable experience and life skills of members of the childcare workforce with each other, particularly those recently entering work.

This European Social Fund funded project assisted people working or wishing to work in childcare in Renfrewshire to connect with new learning opportunities, develop better skills and increase their employability. In practice this meant that:

- New members of staff were allocated a dedicated mentor to help them gain the skills they needed and get over that tough initial period of settling into a new workplace and getting to know co-workers.
- Mentors received special training and support to help them develop their mentoring skills, as well as gaining experience in providing guidance and leadership.
- Companies benefited from having a mentoring system in place, supporting new workers, developing staff skills and increasing overall staff effectiveness.

Fostering an Appreciation for Rich Cultural Heritages, Traditions, and Histories

There are cases whereby participating adults and young people have similar backgrounds of belonging to a minority culture. Regardless of who is the mentor and who is the mentee, they can have engaging and productive conversations about ways to navigate through the demands of living in a dominant culture while maintaining cultural identity from their community of origin.

These conversations may lead to closer bonds as well as an increased sense of awareness and respect for their cultural backgrounds and experiences. Such dialogue also provides an important space for older adults to share their knowledge about cultural traditions and values. In the role of 'conveyers of culture', older adult participants might share their knowledge and feelings about cultural arts, festivals, language (and ways of communicating), recreation, and religious practices.

Beyond contributing to participants' sense of cultural pride, participants might learn valuable lessons regarding



Case Study

Morningside Baptist Church in Edinburgh runs a mentoring programme for members and others attending the church. The programme has been going informally for a number of years but has become more formalised in the last couple of years. Training is offered to mentors. Mentoring is open to anyone who asks but it is particularly targeted towards new and teenage Christians.

More than 50 members of the congregation are currently being mentored by other members.

Mostly the mentoring is time specific and is based on the study of specific material on a weekly basis. Both mentors and those being mentored find great value in discussing and sharing their faith.

“I have just become a Christian, I new nothing about the bible but reading the bible with another person has brought it alive.”

“I have gone to church for most my life but my faith was dry since meeting with someone I have grown in my faith and I have become alive again!”



how to effectively share distinct aspects of one's cultural with others in the community, and hence to reduce the potential for being stereotyped and misunderstood.

What Makes for Effective Mentoring Programmes?

Whilst recognising that the vast majority of mentoring activity in Scotland is done informally, research carried out by the Scottish Mentoring Network suggests that as many as 150,000 adults are acting as mentors in formal mentoring programmes.

We do not seek to formalise all mentoring relationships. The process should only be formalised where these informal processes are not occurring naturally or where they have broken down. Formal mentoring programmes offer an opportunity to rekindle and support mentoring activity within and between communities.

The many benefits associated with intergenerational mentoring programmes do not come 'automatically'. There needs to be careful planning and there needs to be policies and procedures in place to both minimise the risk to participants and maximise the effectiveness of the mentor-mentee meetings. The Beth Johnson Foundation has developed an on-line resource library of policies and procedures from organizations working in the field. These can be accessed at:

www.centreforip.org.uk

Mentors need to be carefully recruited and screened, and they need training, ongoing supervision, access to support from staff and other mentors, and recognition for their accomplishments. Among other things, programmes need strategies for matching participants and guidance in what activities are appropriate and allowable. The following key building blocks of safe and effective mentoring programmes are also contained within the Approved Provider Standard:

www.scottishmentoringnetwork.co.uk/defaultpage121c0.aspx?pageID=67

Establish the Aims and Objectives of the Programme

It is important that objectives are established from the outset. What do you seek to gain by the use of mentoring? What resources, funding and time will be allocated to the programme? Will it be sufficient? How do you see this particular form of developmental relationship complementing the other learning and development tools you already use? How will you measure success for both the organisation/group and the individuals involved? How much of any progress made, or not made, will you be able to realistically attribute to the provision of mentoring?

Be wary of making grandiose claims for mentoring. For some people the experience is life-changing but, for most, the gains made will be modest but meaningful.

Also be wary of the language you use. Mentoring is about better enabling people to achieve their potential and contribute fully, not solving problems (it is not a cure-all). Mentoring works best as a complement to other supports and not as a stand-alone intervention.

Remember to build start-up time into your programme. It can take 6-9 months from agreeing in principle to provide mentoring to matched pairs starting to meet.

It's also better to start your scheme small – with 10-20 matches initially – and grow it over time.

Most schemes that fail do so because they promise too much in terms of targets/outcomes, are under-resourced (done on the cheap) or have done insufficient research in advance and have not targeted their programme appropriately.

Identify the Target Group

How is it anticipated that mentoring will aid the development of this particular group at this particular point in time and/or stage of their development? Mentoring works best at, or in preparation for, points of transition – when our tendency to think and operate through habit and routine is challenged and we become open to growth and change.

It is important to remember that mentoring is not a panacea. There are no guarantees that it will work and even the best programme will not work for everyone. Mentoring only works if involvement is voluntary so don't make it a 'have to'.

Is your intended target group big enough for a viable programme if people choose not to participate? Is it small enough that you will not be overloaded with applicants and unable to meet the demand created? How will potential recipients of mentoring be identified/referred? Can individuals self-refer?

The Role of Staff

It is important to have an agreed contact person/point for all the parties involved where information and support are available. Many of the larger mentoring programmes have a structure in which there is a coordinator who serves a case management role. This individual tends to be the one who arranges for training for the mentors, makes or oversees the process of making mentor-mentee matches, and provides ongoing supervision and support for mentor-mentee pairings as relationships evolve.

Recruiting and Screening Mentors

Not everyone has the skills, attitudes and qualities necessary to be an effective mentor. Potential mentors therefore need to be assessed for their suitability for the particular roles they are being asked to take. For example, a young person who is signing on to be a technology mentor for an older adult should have a fair amount of patience and respect for adults as well as technology-related skills.

A common error made in recruiting mentors is to underestimate the amount of time, resources, and energy required to target and enlist a committed, quality group of mentors.

Effective recruiters do their homework in terms of finding out what motivates and interests the target audience. This includes finding out beforehand what types of incentives (such as school credit, gift certificates and recognition awards) are likely to be considered most desirable. Volunteers expenses (transportation, meals, activity costs etc) should be paid as a matter of course and should not therefore represent a barrier to involvement.

Another benefit of knowing the target audience is that the recruiter will be better able to present the mentoring opportunity in a way that is consistent with family and cultural traditions and values of the target audience.

Training Mentors and Orienting Mentees

All participants – mentors and mentees alike – need to be clear about programme goals, guidelines and parameters as well as the roles they are expected to undertake.

Staff members have an important role in ensuring that participants have information about those with whom they will work, as well as appropriate expectations regarding the types of activities and relationships in which they will be engaged. They also need to accurately convey the level and types of support that participants can expect from staff.

Considering the prevalence of age-related stereotypes in our society (as noted above), it is likely that some mentors and mentees will have stereotypical notions about people of other age groups. Hence in pre-programme orientation sessions for mentors and mentees, there should be a component in which they are able to explore how people of other groups think and experience the world.

Induction training for mentors should also provide information about how relationships develop. It helps for them to know that the communication dynamic and the kinds of activities that work best for strengthening relationships will change over time. Early meetings most naturally begin with superficial conversation. Over time, as mentors and mentees get to know one another better, they could start moving up the 'continuum of intimacy'. It becomes more appropriate to discuss personal interests, thoughts, beliefs, and values. When a deeper level of intimacy is attained, conversations can more naturally allow for personal disclosure, e.g. personal difficulties encountered in one's life.

Providing Ongoing Support and Supervision of the Mentoring Matches

Here are some considerations, noted by the Scottish Mentoring Network, for providing support and supervision for mentor-mentee matches:

"In bringing people together in a mentoring relationship, staff members take on a responsibility to ensure that the experience is a safe, positive and effective one for all involved. This involves the programme co-ordinator ensuring that each matched pair have agreed a joint agenda/action plan and are progressing towards it. It means giving and receiving feedback on a regular basis and providing support and assistance when required."

"The performance of mentors has to be supervised, not only to ensure that they are operating within the policies and procedures and ethos of the programme, but also to ensure that they are growing and developing from the experience. Supervision of mentors can usefully involve a combination of face-to-face sessions with the co-ordinator, group sessions with other mentors to network and share practice, and more informal telephone/e-mail contact with the co-ordinator as and when required."

Formal and informal meetings among volunteers could also provide them with another valuable source of support and information.

Choosing and Planning Activities

Where as staff members can provide mentors and mentees with guidance and support in planning structured activities, mentors and mentees are often encouraged to be proactive in setting activity goals and plans together.

Some activities provide better venues for intergenerational engagement and relationship building than others.



Passive activities such as watching a movie together, or observing a presentation together do not tend to provide needed discussion and 'getting to know you' time. However, with some forethought and planning, e.g. carefully selecting a movie that addresses a topic of relevance to the life issues currently being experienced by the mentee, even such passive activities can be used to stimulate the sharing of stories, experiences, personal reflections, and points of view.

Of course planning for cross-generational sharing does not necessarily entail a formal, structured planning process. It could be as simple as setting aside a time and place to come together to pursue a common interest. Activities might involve anything from cooking, kite flying, storytelling, singing, playing games, looking at photographs, performing some sort of community service, and even singing in the rain.

Activities also need to be 'developmentally appropriate'. This entails taking into account competencies (e.g. readiness to create and explore) as well as limitations (such as in terms of mobility and cognitive functioning) of both mentor and mentee.

Monitoring and Evaluation

It is crucial that the development of mentoring relationships and overall progress towards goals/targets is monitored. This maximizes the likelihood of resolving problems or conflicts at an early stage.

'Monitoring' involves gathering evidence on an ongoing basis to ensure that relationships are progressing as planned. Simply asking those involved what they are getting out of it can be productive. Various tools exist for measuring progress made or "distance travelled". Asking others closely involved with the mentee (with their permission) what changes they have seen can give a more rounded picture. Monitoring also usually involves the collection and collation of statistics, write ups of meetings between mentors and mentees etc.

'Evaluation' needs to provide evidence of outcomes measured against the original aims and objectives of the programme. Appropriate tools to gather this evidence

need to be decided on at the start of the programme. Worth considering is whether the evaluation should be carried out in-house, or whether funding might exist to commission an independent evaluation. An effective evaluation will not only evidence performance against targets from the perspective of a range of stakeholders, but will provide feedback on how to make the programme more effective in the future. A simple to follow guide can be found at: www.scottishmentoringnetwork.co.uk/uploads/documents/Evaluationresourcepack.pdf



Conclusion

In Scotland, there has been a huge upsurge in public recognition of mentoring activity and what constitutes a mentoring approach over the past few years. We have also seen a steady growth in mentoring programmes that establish relationships of mutual caring, commitment, and trust between younger people and people with more experience.

Strong intergenerational relationships do not just happen – they tend to require time, a prolonged period of interaction and, oftentimes, careful planning. Through careful attention to recruiting and training mentors, creating appropriate mentor-mentee pairs,

planning cooperative activities that appeal to both generations, and providing ongoing support for mentors as well as mentees, mentoring programs are making a positive difference in the lives of younger and older participants and in the communities in which they live.



Links to Key Resources

Websites

- **The Generations Working Together (Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice)**

Contains information on intergenerational programmes and activity in Scotland.

- **The Centre for Intergenerational Practice**

Has an entire section highlighting examples, research, and resources on intergenerational mentoring. It also has a wide range of other supporting material and links on intergenerational practice both within the UK and internationally.

www.centreforip.org.uk/default.aspx?page=11198

- **The Scottish Mentoring Network**

Has a suite of resources on mentoring. They provide a list of 10 key steps in developing mentoring programs:

- Establish the aims and objectives of the programme.
- Identify the target group
- Recruit mentors
- Train/induct the mentors
- Recruit and induct the client group
- Set targets and goals
- Establish administrative and support procedures
- Ongoing support and supervision of the mentoring matches
- Monitor progress
- Evaluate

www.scottishmentoringnetwork.co.uk/defaultpage121c0.aspx?pageID=17

- **Generations United**

Generations United, a national membership organization that deals with intergenerational policy, programmes and issues in the U.S.A, put out a factsheet entitled, 'Intergenerational Mentoring: A Unique Response to the Challenges of Youth'.

www.gu.org/documents/A0/Mentoring_11_05.pdf

- **Experience Corps**

With programs located in 19 cities across the U.S., Experience Corps actively engages adults (over 55) in meeting challenges in the community through tutoring and mentoring youth.

<http://www.experiencecorps.org>

- **LEARNS**

An interactive Web site that was created to prepare national service members (Corporation for National and Community Service, U.S.A.) and other volunteers who mentor and tutor youth.

www.nwrel.org/learns/resources/seniorcorps/index.html

Additional Reading

- **BNS, SMN and ESS (2006). 'Evaluation Resource Pack for Befriending and Mentoring Projects'.**

This pack has been developed to provide a set of processes and tools that befriending and mentoring organizations can adapt and use to monitor and evaluate their work. Copies can be downloaded freely from the Scottish Mentoring Network website.

www.scottishmentoringnetwork.co.uk/uploads/documents/Evaluationresourcepack.pdf

- **Ellis, S. W. (2003). 'Changing the lives of children and older people: Intergenerational mentoring in secondary schools'.** Intergenerational Mentoring Project: Phase 3 Evaluation Report. Beth Johnson Foundation/Manchester Metropolitan University.
- **Taylor (2007). 'Mentoring Across Generations: Engaging Age 50+ Adults as Mentors'.**
This paper is number 8 in the 'Research in Action' series commissioned by MENTOR (the US National Mentoring Partnership) to take current mentoring research and translate it into useful, user friendly materials for mentoring practitioners. <http://www.scottishmentoringnetwork.co.uk/uploads/documents/researchinaction8.pdf>
- **Kaplan, M. (2001). 'School-based intergenerational programs'.**
UNESCO, Institute for Education. [part of occasional paper series] Hamburg, Germany.
www.unesco.org/education/uie/pdf/schoolbasedip.pdf

You can receive regular updates from the Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice by joining the Scottish Intergenerational Network. Joining the Network is free, and you will receive the regular Newsletter, information on funding, meetings, new publications and updates on research and examples of best practice.

To join, simply email or write to Brian McKechnie, with details of your name, organisation and address.

Brian McKechnie, Director
Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice
c/o Centre for Lifelong Learning
University of Strathclyde
40 George Street, Glasgow G1 1QE
Tel: 0141 548 2492
Email: brian.mckechnie@strath.ac.uk

www.scotcip.co.uk

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