

Swindon Does Arts – Intergeneration Project



The Intergeneration Project

Funded by: Swindon Borough Council, The Samaritans and The Lottery Fund through Swindon Children's Scrapstore

An arts and culture collaboration between children, young people and older people in sheltered accommodation, aiming to foster a greater understanding between the generations in order to reduce the isolation of older people and engage the community, as envisaged through Connecting People, Connecting Places and current work being undertaken by Swindon Youth Project.

Four generations came together to make bunting for The Big Arts Day and to attempt to break the world record for the longest bunting ever made.

The project was led by artist/facilitator Toni Dickinson of No Added Sugar, supported by Helen Miah, Head of Culture, Jeanette Grant, Team Manager Adult Social Care and Zita McCormack, Head teacher at Sevenfields Primary School.

The Groups

Year 6 pupils - Sevenfields Primary School, Penhill, Swindon

Older people - Residents from Penhill, Swindon

Young people - Kingsdown Secondary school

The Partners

Helen Miah - Head of Culture, Swindon Borough Council

James Griffin - Head of Policy, Swindon Borough Council

Jeanette Grant - Team Manager - Adult Social Care, Swindon Borough Council

Ian Bickerton - Director Access and Provision, Children Services, Swindon Borough Council

Zita McCormack - Head at Sevenfields Primary School, Swindon

Toni Dickinson - No Added Sugar Artists

Michael Ash - Head of Strategic Housing Services + Dep. Director of Housing, Swindon Borough Council

Ted Wilson - Joint Director of Service Delivery for Adult Social Care, Swindon Borough Council

Toni Dickinson - Lead artist



One of the barriers to unlocking the potential of the older generation is to develop a better understanding and perception of the positive contribution older people can make. With language such as ‘demographic time-bomb’, older people can be portrayed as a liability rather than a resource. This project has enabled older people from Penhill to really show the younger generation what a valuable resource they are and, at the same time, improving their own lives by giving them the motivation to organise their own projects. This project also addressed the negative misperceptions of young people today as a ‘hoodie culture’, threatening and uncaring to other generations and the young people involved have really enjoyed working and making relationships with the older people.

The project started with the artists visiting the three participating groups independently to find out their views on each other and to present the overall project. The three groups then met in school to make bunting for The Big Arts Day to try and break the Guinness World Record for the longest bunting length. They cut, painted, sewed and decorated their bunting with beads, sequins and embroidery. The artists had planned a series of workshops to be delivered throughout the sessions to teach painting and textile skills. However these plans changed when the older people started to take full ownership of the project by organising themselves as tutors to teach the children and young people.

The project culminated with a presentation of the bunting for decoration at The Big Arts Day. We ended the project with three individual review sessions to gain full evaluation from all participants.

Everyone loved the painting activity, however many of the children and young people found the sewing tasks challenging. The older people worked one to one with the children and young people to teach them the sewing skills, helping them to overcome their initial apprehension towards needlework.

The children took their role as hosts very seriously and attached themselves to individual residents from the lunch club, making sure that everyone felt welcome by making them tea and escorting them to lunch.



Busy participants relaxing and working at Sevenfields Primary



My favourite part of the project was talking to the old people because they told you stories”
Sam - Year 6 pupil

“I loved working at the school in a beautiful environment with the children, painting and sewing and also getting involved with their communication, this was a complete education for us all”
Yvonne - Lillian Lock resident

“It is a great way to get involved and change your views on certain aspects of life. If there was anything like this again I would gladly get involved”

Sarah Jane - Year 10 pupil

“I loved having a deadline and keeping busy making the bunting, working with the children really made my brain work”

Mary - Lillian Lock resident



Vivian, teaching sewing to year 6 pupils

Visit to Sevenfields School – a poem by Bill Gulliver

Look at the old folk who come down here
They lived through the war, and have no fear
All brave wonderful people, each one and all,
Who really smile when they come to your school.

You give them a reason, to forget their pain,
And working with you, they will come again,
They stitch, draw and paint, and look so grand,
As they all work so hard on the job in hand.

There is an old saying from many years ago
That out of interest, you ought to know,
'Children should be seen and not heard'
This is not only silly, but quite absurd.

Without you talking, we wouldn't learn a thing,
Or understand you children and the pleasure you bring,
But please understand, its not all one way,
For sometimes be quiet, and hear what they say.

You will be surprised in what you all learn,
And not only that, the respect you will earn,
Your teachers each one, should feel so proud,
You should be singing their praises out loud.

Sometimes in life, it's easy to act the fool,
But all of you are really so lucky at your school,
So remember be kind and enjoy all your play,
And thanks to you all for a real wonderful day.



Jeanette Grant, Team Manager in Adult Social Care played a significant and active role in the project. She joined activities whenever her busy schedule allowed and enjoyed engaging with the young people. The project allowed her to fully understand the benefits of social engagement through the arts.

'As we started discussions around the project, I very quickly realised that there was massive potential to do so much more in terms of improving understanding between the generations, which in turn would raise their confidence and self-esteem and feelings

Ivy worked really hard on the project, and prepared extra work at home for other participants to complete. She taught the children a variety of textiles skills and will be working further with the pupils in the new school year.

'The children were really polite and welcoming, they opened doors for us and made us tea. I really enjoyed taking work from the project home to keep myself busy'





The young people really enjoyed taking responsibility for the older generation and naturally demonstrated a caring and mature attitude throughout the project.

Although everyone arrived a little nervous on day one, good working relationships were made quickly through the creative activities. Boundaries were broken down through a sharing of experiences and stories between the generations.

The strength of the relationships formed during the project is now evident in the continuation of collaborative work between the participants.

The young people involved have returned to Lillian Lock Sheltered Accommodation to sing for the residents and the residents have taken part in arts activities in school with the children. Residents are also supporting the school's literacy programme by listening to children read.

Furthermore, the relationships that evolved during the project have eased the tension that the older people have around teenagers, especially in the streets.

They find they can talk more easily with other young people in their area and feel confident knowing the names of local children.



Yvonne was a brilliant communicator with the children and young people and is continuing to work with the children both at school, and with other young people in her community.

'All the people who have been part of this project have mixed with all ages. They have a better understanding of each other. They are now in the position to inform other communities of the importance of inter-generational projects. A wonderful experience for everyone.' Yvonne Adams

'At the start of the project, I was scared and not comfortable, but now I feel a lot more comfortable' **Eden, Year 6**

'I thought the painting with the old people went well, because you could help them out and learn more stuff about the old people' **Liam, Year 6**

'I would like to do something like this again because it was fun. My favourite part was listening to the old people tell stories, learning to make things, learning how to sew and interaction with the older people' **Tara, Year 6**

'Before the project, I felt as though the old people would be miserable, but then I gained a relationship with them' **Tyler, Year 6**

'I think the only thing that went wrong was the timing because I was just getting into it and then we had to stop' **Jesse, Year 6**

'I liked working with different ages as they did different types of things with us. They had different working methods to us...' **Sam, Year 10**

I really liked communicating with different groups of people and getting their views on every day things' **Sarah-Jane, Year 10**

When Toni said we were working with old people I was ok with it, but when she said we were working with young people I was nervous'
David, Year 9

'It was good fun meeting new people and I would definitely do something like this again outside of school if there was the right support and resources' **Ryan, Year 10**

Bill Gulliver – Resident of Lillian Lock sheltered accommodation

'The project took us to Sevenfields Primary School to work directly with the children and young people. Elderly residents were laughing and talking and enjoying their new experience of working with the children and young people, and the youngsters were happy listening to the stories that the old folk were telling them. This can only go well for the future with all people's attitudes changing. We are now setting up an Arts and Craft workshop, including painting, rug making and basket weaving. I am teaching the other residents and they will become instructors for young people. Some of the residents who usually do not come out of their rooms are now taking part in the arts activities. If the only thing the project achieved was to encourage some of the residents out of their rooms that would be a miracle on its own'.



Bill Gulliver with head teacher Mrs McCormack



Bill receiving his 'Swindon Does Arts Hero Award' from Helen Miah

Setting up for the Big Arts Day was a real community effort. Bunting from all over Swindon was brought by residents, which made participants feel that the whole of Swindon had embraced the project.

Young people helped to hang the finished bunting made by all the participants of the project. The work was used to decorate Lydiard Park.

The Big Arts Day provided a great opportunity to showcase the project and created a platform for the participants to show off their work and be proud of their achievements.



‘Thanks everybody, we love you with all our heart,
For you at Sevenfields, you’ve really played your part
Now we’re off to Lydiard Park, for the real big day,
We are World Champions, Hip Hip Hooray!’

Extract from a poem by Bill Gulliver

REAL SUCCESS

It's Saturday now, and it's the big day,
We're in our cars, and we're on our way,
Then we all arrive on time, at Lydiard Park,
It starts at twelve and goes on until it's dark.

Helen is in control, with her organisation,
If we had our way, she'd run the nation,
The weather is great, it's a really nice day,
And it's all free, they don't have to pay.

There is Tom and Jessica, they are on the stall,
The children make clay faces, and have a ball,
Carina and Rachael, are really great to everyone,
Part of Toni's team, they are both tremendous fun.

Up goes the bunting, in all sorts of places,
On trees, stalls, anywhere there are spaces,
We can't do it all, we would be too late,
So this is the time, we should delegate.

We ask Mums and Dads, and without a fuss,
They all want to help, and they all join us,
All around us, the entertainment is in full flow,
The singers, the groups, drummers all have a go.

Street entertainers, they were never a menace,
We're brilliant acting out their Wimbledon tennis
We can't imagine how many people came today,
But we know it's been a real success in every way.

It was great to see so many people get excited,
Was good for Swindon, and made them feel united,
Helen, well done, if we can make this rhyme,
Get your team to do it again, some other time.

Thanks most of all to Toni, for playing her part,
A fantastic wonderful woman, with a great big heart,
Gives so much inspiration to people with her skill,
And she won't give up, and she never will.

Thanks to the Samaritans, for the support they give,
Help everybody, all people, and the way they live,
Your organisation is great, you ought to be proud,
And everybody in the country, applaud you out loud.

The world record for the bunting, has been our aim,
But if we're not successful, we are all not to blame,
We enjoyed ourselves, and made so many friends,
And hopefully this will go on, and it never ends.

Bless to Toni and her beautiful team from us all,
For teaching us so much, down at the school,
And to you also Gordon, have a real lovely life,
Because we all know Toni is such a beautiful wife.

Bill Gulliver



Our bunting at 'The Big Arts Day', Lydiard Park

Final words

Toni Robinson – Lead artist, No Added Sugar

Working in partnership with Swindon Borough Council's Heads of Services has been a really exciting and positive experience for me. Their active involvement and passion for the success of the project allowed the artists to be really flexible in their delivery to truly meet the needs of those taking part and allow them to take ownership. The partners have been overwhelmed to hear how everyone is working so hard to take the work forward and the results have exceeded all of our expectations.

The older people have been a real inspiration and are keeping us informed of the numerous activities they have organised as a direct result of the project. For example:

- Lillian Lock residents are raising money through creative activities for young people.
- Lillian Lock residents and other older people in Penhill will be working regularly with Sevenfields pupils to help with literacy skills.
- Sevenfields pupils are visiting the older generation at Lillian Lock house
- Young people have secured funding for a partnership with the Older people and No Added Sugar artists
- Swindon Borough council are taking the learning into another area in Swindon in September 2010.

I would like to end by extending a big thank you to all at Sevenfields School our generous hosts.

Jeanette Grant – Team Manager, Adult Social Care

For me the success of the project was very clear and easily evidenced by the growth in confidence of all parties involved. The children bloomed, went all out to make the older people feel welcome in their school, formed personal relationships with many of the older people involved, recognising them when out and about in their own community, learning skills from them like sewing, embroidery, painting, drawing, box making, and engaging in conversations about 'in your day'.

I witnessed the older people go from being initially very anxious about being taken out of their own environment, to growing in numbers at each session as they enjoyed it and brought more friends with them. Having the focus of the Big Arts Day seemed to give them a purpose and they just grew in confidence and enthusiasm and were still doing craft projects outside of the actual sessions arranged. I personally am ensuring that I update other managers about the project and the long term plans for taking this to the wider community.