

From Generation to Generation via Intergen:  
An Intergenerational Approach to Active Ageing

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From Generation to Generation

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## Abstract

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In the paper we describe the growth of an intergenerational organisation called Intergen from its development in one municipality in England through to a national pilot of the model in four different municipalities. We report on the model which was developed to promote intergenerational activities in local neighbourhoods and the changes made to the model following initial evaluations. Intergen is the name of the organisation which is the operational arm of a charity From Generation to Generation. The national pilot of the model was carried out from 2010 to 2012. Details of the way in which the model operates are described. In addition we describe the changes to the model which have been introduced and the reasons for this.

We describe the views of all stakeholders on the organisation and the impact of the services it provides for them.

The implications of our findings for the generation of work opportunities to assist in the development of active ageing from this are reported in terms of the benefits of the service and the difficulties in providing it which have been experienced.

Sustainable Work opportunities; active ageing.

## Background

From Generation to Generation is a charity registered in England which exists to promote and support initiatives that encourage intergenerational activities. It is a not for profit NGO designed to sustain intergenerational contact. One of the organisations it supports is called Intergen. In essence Intergen aims to promote and create opportunities to:

- Enrich learning
- Raise aspirations
- Discover learning is fun
- Build stronger communities

It does this by bringing older and younger people together to share experiences in their local schools. Its website [www.intergen.org.uk](http://www.intergen.org.uk) provides details of the schools involved and a brief history of its development over a period of 14 years. Starting with a pilot in one secondary school in one municipality, bringing older and younger people together in the context of performing arts, Intergen was further developed and evaluated for 10 years in several schools, both primary and secondary (Raynes and Rawlings, 2004). The schools were located in contrasting neighbourhoods in the one municipality. Several internal evaluations were carried out of aspects of the model that was being developed to deliver replicable and sustainable intergenerational activities. In addition two external evaluations were commissioned. One was carried out in the pilot phase and the other after 10 years of development (Rawlings, 2004; Sidiquee et.al., 2008).

The findings from the evaluations confirmed that the model which had been developed was sustainable and provided benefits to all the stakeholders involved. That is the older volunteers, the pupils, the teachers in the classroom and the head teachers (principals) of the schools. There was also some evidence that social capital was being built and the communities in which the intergenerational activities took place were stronger as a result, with negative stereotypes of the young by the older members of communities and vice versa being broken down.

It was agreed that a national roll out of the intergenerational community based model developed by Intergen should commence with a national pilot in different parts of the country. The national pilot engaged with 12 schools in 4 different municipalities in England. The national pilot took place between 2010 and 2012. This demonstrated that the model of three schools working together in a neighbourhood supported by an older person contracted to recruit other older people living locally, as volunteers to work in the schools, could and did work in different parts of the country, both with secondary and primary schools.

The group of schools have become known as a cluster. The older person supporting them to recruit volunteers is known as an Intergen coordinator and the volunteers are called Intergeners.

This year a further ten schools, in three clusters, have agreed to participate in the programme. These schools are located in three different municipalities with very different socio-economic neighborhoods from which the Intergeners are to be recruited by the coordinators for each of the clusters.

One of the clusters has four schools which is further testing the robustness of the model. The key issue is can the coordinator recruit enough Intergeners for four schools. The decision to base the model on three schools evolved during the research and development years. In that time a trial with four schools resulted in the withdrawal of one school from the cluster. The head teacher decided the Intergeners were not being recruited fast enough for the needs of her schools.

## **The Model**

Intergen works on a local community basis bringing older and younger people together through local schools. Local clusters of three schools (normally a secondary and two primaries) are established. The schools' needs are identified and a local Intergen Coordinator recruits volunteers (Intergeners) to work in the schools. All the Intergeners are retired and live within a two mile radius of the schools.

## **How is Intergen organised?**

At the heart of Intergen are the local partnerships it creates with schools, building through them what we call local Intergen clusters.

A cluster is usually a secondary and two feeder primary schools, though there are now different versions of this model. The key elements of an Intergen cluster and Intergen itself are that they promote:

- localness
- the schools
- the link between the schools and older people living close to them.

Linking the schools, Intergen and the older people who volunteer at the schools are the Intergen coordinators. They also live locally and are appointed jointly by Intergen and the schools.

The Intergen coordinators contract with Intergen and are trained and supported and paid by them to recruit the Intergeners from amongst retired people living within one or two miles of the schools.

The clusters and the Intergen coordinators are all supported by the Board, the Executive Director, and the Service Manager. We all depend on each other to assist in the growing of these local clusters into strong parts of the local community enriching the lives of many people in them in many different ways.

We all play equally important but different parts in doing this.

### **The Board of Intergen CIC**

The Board is made up of five Directors, including the Executive Director. Four of the directors are retired. It is responsible for setting strategic direction, financial management of the company and reviewing and supporting the work of the CEO. All the Directors and the Executive Director are unpaid and give their time freely.

### **Intergen Advisers**

Intergen has advisers from different sectors. They provide advice and guidance to the company and meet once a year to discuss development and growth of Intergen and also give their time freely.

### **Intergen's Office**

Intergen has a head office in London at the Michael Young Foundation and a base in Manchester at the Young Advisors' Head Quarter.

### **Intergen's Administration**

#### **The Service Manager**

Intergen has one paid member of staff: the Service Manager who manages the London office and supports the Board, the Executive Director and the coordinators. In addition she manages the business aspects of school clusters (e.g. contract negotiation, recruitment of Intergen coordinators and chairing cluster business meetings, and written termly updates).

#### **The Executive Director**

This is an unpaid role. The Executive Director is responsible for:

- Recruiting schools to become Intergen partner schools
- Strategic planning
- Corporate fundraising and Trust and grant revenue raising
- PR and increasing national awareness of Intergen
- Managing European projects which involve Intergen CIC
- HR and personnel

#### **Intergen Coordinators**

- All Intergen coordinators are contracted to provide services to the company as a self-employed contractor.
- They live or work in the local communities in which the Intergen schools with whom they work are located.
- They recruit local volunteers (Intergeners) to work in the schools, raise awareness of Intergen locally, fundraise for Intergen locally and

- are the first Intergen contact for both their cluster schools and the local Intergeners.
- They meet as a group once a term to share ideas and solutions to problems and following their meeting they meet with the Directors of Intergen.
  - They also meet annually, along with the Directors, at the Intergen Away Day to reflect on achievements in the past year and create ideas for the future.

### **In-school Intergen coordinators**

- Members of the school staff are appointed by the Head teacher to link with the Intergen coordinator and the teaching and support staff of their school
- They attend the once a term business meeting and help organise the once a term social gathering which each school in a cluster takes it in turn to host.

### **The local Intergen steering group**

- There is one Intergen steering group per cluster and consists of the Intergen coordinator and the in-school coordinators.
- The steering group meets for a business meeting three times a year, once in each term.
- During the autumn term business meeting, the schools identify their particular needs to enable the Intergen coordinator to recruit suitable Intergeners to meet these. Dates are set for the termly social gatherings and the remaining two business meetings.

### **Intergeners**

- The Intergen volunteers, known as Intergeners, are recruited from within one or two miles of the schools in the Intergen cluster. They are retired people living locally with time, skills and knowledge they want to share with younger members of their community.
- They choose the school in the cluster in which they want to volunteer and the days of the week and times at which they wish to do this.
- All of them are CRB checked and are asked to provide the names of

- two referees from whom a character reference can be obtained.
- Each year they are presented with a certificate of appreciation for their work for Intergen at the end of year social gathering, which is held in one of the Intergen cluster of schools.
  - Every year they are also invited to the National Intergenerers Away Day to share their ideas and thoughts about Intergen.

## **The National Pilot**

### **1: Organisational issues**

There were 12 schools, three high schools and nine primary schools recruited for the national pilot programme. A number of significant changes were introduced into the original Intergen model. These were:

- The inclusion of a cluster comprised of primary schools only
- The payment of the Intergen coordinators
- Charging a fee for the services provided by Intergen
- The appointment of an in-school coordinator
- The Introduction of a national Intergenerers day

In all other respects the values and organisation of Intergen services remained as they had been developed over the ten years work in one municipality in England.

The first changes were introduced at the request of primary schools when the secondary school in the cluster being formed pulled out of the negotiations saying that it wanted to use if finance for other community based purposes. The two primary schools were eager to go ahead with the initiative. They recruited a third primary school with as many pupils as some of the secondary schools in the pilot, a fact that the schools themselves were quick to point out. They also negotiated a revision in the pricing of the service on the grounds that the national system by which schools are resourced in England meant that a lower amount of money was allocated to primary schools. We agreed to this new price as for us it was an opportunity to see if we could recruit Intergenerers to a cluster in which only the opportunities provided by Primary schools were available. This cluster

completed the two years of the pilot. Twenty one Intergeners were recruited by their Intergen coordinator and retained across the three schools. At the end of the two years one school dropped out on the grounds that it no longer had the resource to fund their share of the payment to Intergen. It retained the Intergeners who had been recruited and the two remaining schools identified a new third primary school to become a member of their cluster. This cluster is now completing its third year of operation.

The payment of the Intergen coordinators was introduced following the realisation that this role was pivotal in the success of Intergen and needed some recognition. During the ten year research and development period, when the role was a voluntary post, Intergen had found difficulty recruiting to this position. A set fee for service level was agreed. The set fee of two thousand English pounds was to increase the attractiveness of this role to older people. This payment amount was decided upon so that it would not impact on state pensions. In addition all expenses incurred by the Intergen coordinator on Intergen business were to be paid.

The coordinator was to receive an induction and further training and a handbook designed to assist them in recruiting Intergeners for the schools and all the other tasks that their role required of them. A job description was written and a process of recruitment and selection developed. Intergen carried out the recruitment process. The schools shared in the selection process with a representative of Intergen.

During the pilot it was also found to be hard to recruit to this post. Placements were made in all four of the national placement clusters but in three of the settings it took longer than anticipated to complete the recruitment and selection process and in two cases the appointed person terminated their contractual relationship with Intergen within a term of their appointment. This meant negotiating with the schools and repeating the recruitment process, resulting in a delay in recruiting Intergeners to the schools. The schools seemed not to be concerned about the delay. In two of the three cases we offered the schools a term free from fee payment. As a result of the pilot findings in this aspect of the service we have learnt to start

the recruitment process for this job earlier in the year and try to complete it by the end of the summer term prior to the start of the schools contract for the following school year.

Interestingly, this job does not seem to be one that is attractive to older people. Due to employment law in the UK the job advert cannot specify an age so younger local people have applied and been interviewed for the posts. In one case a younger person was appointed but due to personal reasons had to tender their resignation unexpectedly. A second recruitment process was implemented which successfully appointed a retired policeman to the post.

Charging a fee for the services provided by Intergen was agreed to be essential if we were to achieve one of our goals of making Intergen sustainable. Without a fee for service the organisation would be reliant on bidding for funding. It was on this basis and volunteered time that the research and development years had been based. Obtaining funding from trust or government agencies through a bidding process is always a precarious way of obtaining funding and labour intensive with no guarantee of a return for effort expended. It is also usually dependent on the skill of one individual and most fund raising specialists cost significant amounts of money.

The pricing model was based on identified overheads to support the service delivery. Schools were told the price of the service for the cluster and asked to determine amongst themselves what each would contribute to this. The schools have been able to do this and inform the Intergen office so that individual invoices for the fee can be sent to schools. All schools get a copy of the contract for the service and an end of year review of the hours and activities contributed to their school by the Intergeners.

All schools agree to host a social gathering once a term and to attend the once a term business meeting for their cluster. The meeting is serviced by the Intergen coordinator and held at one of the schools in the cluster. The schools arrange the social events for all Intergeners in the cluster and the Intergen coordinator organises the transport to enable the Intergeners to

get to the school. These social events enable Intergeners from each of the schools in the cluster to meet each other and be entertained. The schools have always provided refreshment at these events and they are usually linked to something already planned in school like the rehearsal of the Christmas play or the end of year celebrations. Some Intergeners have been reluctant to go to schools in which they are not working but most find these events add value to their experience of being part of the Intergen workforce as they are enjoyable and provide opportunities to meet new people and find out what they are doing.

In the national pilot the appointment of in-school coordinators was introduced into the contract with the schools following the development of the model. Initially contact had been made with the heads of the schools with and sometimes Head teachers delegated responsibility for working with the Intergen coordinator to a colleague. In some schools this was seen as a development opportunity for younger members of staff in others it was delegated to a deputy Headteacher. Without this identified contact person the work of the Intergen coordinator was very difficult as there was no simple way of contacting staff in the schools and head teachers were reluctant to spend their time inducting new Intergeners. To ensure that the school made such an appointment the requirement that they did so was included in the legal contract they were sent to identify the services they would receive and what was required from them for the partnership to work.

The introduction of a national Intergeners day took place in the second year of the national pilot. It was decided it was important to do this for a number of reasons. These included hearing what the Intergeners had to say, learning from them how could improve our services and identifying their perception of the benefits. It also enabled them to have an additional day out, a social event which would let them see that they were part of the bigger organisation. This event is now part of the Intergen Annual calendar. It includes social activities and afternoon tea as well as opportunities to be asked and ask questions. All of Intergen's coordinators and Directors are present at the event. All transport costs are paid for by Intergen.

## **2: Findings relating to the stakeholders**

A sample of the Intergeners in each of the clusters was interviewed at the end of the first year of the pilot to ascertain their views of Intergen. In the second year it was decided to invite all Intergeners to a National Intergeners day to get their views on the strengths and weaknesses of Intergen and to provide an additional social event in which they could participate and get to know each other. Examples of the findings from the two sources are given below.

“Helping out in the art class has prompted me to join an art class at adult education to try and improve my own artwork”

“It’s nice to be offering skills that aren’t part of the curriculum, especially old fashioned skills like knitting and sewing.”

“I know the children well because I helped them with their school play. Now I’m learning a lot especially in the numeracy lessons (I think my brain nearly packed up during the grams and kilograms session) but I came through the problem solving involving times table rather better.”

“The Christmas party in school was a lovely occasion and good to meet other Intergen volunteers who are also at that school as well as other schools.”

At the national Intergeners day the volunteers were asked six questions.

- 1 What is the impact of Intergen on you?**
- 2 Is there anything special for you about being a volunteer in an Intergen school as distinct from being a volunteer in another School?**
- 3 What else do you think you can contribute to Intergen?**
- 4 What else could Intergen do for you?**
- 5 How would you like for people to ask for your opinions so that you can be heard? (Local/annual event, Skype etc) and would you like a meeting for just volunteers (rather than coordinators)**
- 6 What ideas for fundraising and sponsorship do you have?**

Full details of the responses can be found in the report of the day. The responses to the first question on the impact of Intergen on the Intergeners' lives fell into 6 categories:

- **Being valued, for example**  
“I love the welcome and recognition by the children”; “The work gives me a sense of purpose.”
- **Its impact on health was described as follows**  
“My health has improved. I suffer from arthritis in both legs and feet. Being involved with Intergen makes me get out of the house and takes my mind off illness. I enjoy it.”  
“ I love interacting with the children whilst having no ultimate responsibility or planning to do.”  
“It makes me happy. Gives me a routine.”
- **Its contribution to intergenerational contact was illustrated by comments such as**  
“ It gives me contact with a wide range of young children.”  
“Good interaction and respect between ages”  
“it means I am keeping in touch with younger generations and helps me understand my grandchildren more.”
- **Giving back - Intergners made comments such as**  
“Getting involved in the lives of the children. Helping them to understand that very little changes i.e. they go to school so did their parents & grandparents and they were taught the same things albeit in different methods.”  
“I like sharing my skills with the children. My job was as a special mechanist, and would like to think I can add this to their experience.”
- **Giving back**  
“ it lets me contribute something to my community”  
“provides some opportunities to grow in cycle training, first aid and safety on roads”
- **Learning from and learning with**  
“Opened my eyes to how differently children learn to read.”  
“Being with young kids and improving my spelling.”  
“I must admit, it helps me to understand and listen to their stories.”

- **Decreased isolation , for example Intergeners said**

“Meeting young people – including the teachers, really helps.”

“ It provides me with an opportunity to socialize.”

“Contact with other Intergeners at the same schools reduces isolation.”

This year we will be building on the event ensuring that it is both enjoyable and fun as well as enabling Intergeners to have their say. We learnt in 2012 they thought they could do more for the organisation if they were given the opportunity. Last years event included learning opportunities for the Intergeners and the coordinators and directors as we used a laughter specialist to teach about the health benefits of laughter and include some opportunities to practice and hone our laughter skills. This year we will be including the opportunity to learn Morris dancing.

### **The Headteacher views of Intergen and its impact**

Head teachers

“You should start the process earlier. From the school point of view we need the coordinator in place by the holidays so they can start process in September” and “The timing –it has been appalling .far too long to get off the ground. 1 volunteer only gives us 3 hours a week.”

“Been frustrated by how long it takes –partly due to other schools” and “Initially disappointed , but yes they have been met .there is good communication even if it’s been frustrating. 5 up to this point it’s 5.”

### **About the support from Intergen**

Head teachers

"We were informed, the leaflet said something. It is so much more successful than we ever imagined, the model felt remote but it fits like a glove, recruitment was taken out of our hands because we interview everyone who comes into school –now we know your product and what you do and we trust the way you do it. It’s been fully supportive, obviously we were dubious when it started but this is one of the initiatives that have followed up and a lot of support from the Intergen Coordinator.”

“It’s been excellent. We have accommodated a coordinator going and sorted it out. Been very supportive of us” and “My expectations have been

met there have been meetings, contact, emails, choosing, support to this point. Up to this point I would say it was very good.”

“Some teething problems, they are not necessarily negative, it’s probably better to have this now than further down the line. “

“It’s not just that you drop off the volunteers, you monitor, you come back and discuss and that’s the key to sustainability. If volunteers have issues they can discuss with us and vice versa.”

### **About the Intergeners (the volunteers)**

Head teachers

“They do more because of their own experience of life, they have emotional stability, calm, they are unassuming, and they deal with things on a calm, quiet basis. They deal with upset children; they sit with children and parents. They offer things like solace, a member of staff can’t provide. They can say it won’t last long. Because they have been parents. Across the board there are things that no other person can do.”

“Our year 5 volunteers –she talked about her grandparents –what she remembered. You can’t do that with a video-you can watch a film but she is quite different –she volunteered to do that. She comes to school early and she talks to them as they come in and they chat to her –she is part of the school.”

“The teachers are thrilled to bits, can’t manage without the volunteers because they have made such inroads and rapport with staff and children. Children know who they are. They are so willing to do anything to help in the classroom and they come with their ideas too, e.g. the one in reception she comes in and she is willing to work with any child.”

“To see what a valuable part they can play in helping our children become good citizens of the future. I would like them to see how we work and get in board with our whole ethos.”

### **The views of the in school coordinators**

“Intergen teaches us to accept volunteers as part of the working day.”

“ I thought they would be probably a little less flexible than they are. I thought they would have a role and stick to it and that would be that. I am

surprised at the amount of time they dedicate, asking if they can stay all day and having lunch with the children and going in to the yard at playtime to chat with them; they are really really reliable.”

“At first I went to assistant heads-the head of years- because I thought they would take care of the volunteers but now other people have seen what the volunteers they want one . They have one for KS1 but she serves the whole year. I was amazed that she has helped us with the tricky boys -they want to impress her.”

“The outcome is for children. They enrich the curriculum in a way we couldn't, they are extra hands and skills the school don't have. M made loads of costumes, we are getting more than we expected. X brought her tales of Kenya, in some cases it's exceeded. When we find a volunteer with those skills it will be just as successful as others

As the review shows not everything was not perceived as perfect by the Headteacher a. We have tried to improve our processes to shorten the time they wait for volunteers and we have taken responsibility for the checking required for volunteers before they can enter a school in England . This is speeding up the process to some extent. Our end term review sent to all head teachers and asks three simple questions to get their view of the services provided and changes they would like plus the all important question ‘will they renew their contract’. The table below shows what the volunteers contributed in the second year of the pilot across the 12 schools.

**Table 1: Activities of the Intergeners in the 12 pilot schools in England in Year 1 of the pilot.**

	<b>Cluster1</b>	<b>Cluster2</b>	<b>Cluster 3</b>	<b>Cluster 4</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Intergener Hours</b>	<b>1884</b>	<b>1821</b>	<b>720</b>	<b>552</b>	<b>4977 hours</b>
<b>Age of children</b>	<b>4-10</b>	<b>4-18</b>	<b>4-18</b>	<b>4-18</b>	<b>4-18</b>
<b>Types of activity</b>	<b>Number work Talking and listening Table games As requested</b>	<b>Number work Talking and listening After school clubs History Experiences of war</b>	<b>Number work Talking and listening Sports Gardening</b>	<b>Number work Talking and listening Music Computing Cycle proficiency</b>	

### **The Intergen coordinators**

They meet with the directors of the charity every term-three times a year and put their views about the company to them. They have been both critical and constructive in their views and are actively involved now in the development of a training programme for them. As a result of their input a new handbook for coordinators has been written and produced in a format which is easily portable. Similarly a new handbook for the Intergeners has been produced following a survey of the Intergeners view of the original handbook which was bound in an A4 ring binder. The new one is colourful and A5 sized but still personalized for each new Intergener.

### **Conclusion**

At the end of the first year of the national pilot the Executive Director wrote a paper for the Intergen Board about scaling up the company. It set out a plan to recruit thirty schools and create a total of 10 contracts for

Intergen coordinators paying them a fee for their services who would recruit 300 older people as Intergeners. The plan is being implemented. The process is slower than anticipated. We know that to break even to be sustainable as an intergenerational organisation providing work opportunities for older people we must have 30 schools contracted for the services we supply. Our goal is to have 80% of our income come from contracts and 20% from donations and grant income. Within the next 12 months we will be able to see if this goal is achievable or we have to rethink our financial plan. We have sought the aid of all our coordinators to help us achieve our aim of becoming a sustainable intergenerational organisation which achieves its goals and explores further its benefits to its stakeholders in promoting active ageing and building social capital (5).

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