



***"We can find ourselves in them,
and they can find themselves in us"***

***Evaluation of Intergen: Intergenerational
Understanding, Wellbeing and Social
Capital***

REPORT SUMMARY

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Summary

An evaluation was carried out to look at how Intergen organises its activities in schools and the impact of these activities. The evaluation found that despite the considerable changes that have affected Intergen, the project continues to do a fantastic job in working with more than 50 volunteers and supporting intergenerational activities in 9 schools in Trafford. The evaluation concluded that Intergen continues to make an important and valuable contribution to young people, older people, schools and communities.

Strengths of Intergen include:

- Its effective recruitment of volunteers via publicity and promotion, word of mouth and through the actions of Volunteer Coordinators.
- School Coordinators, who give volunteers an induction to the school and support volunteers and teachers who are part of Intergen activities.
- The wide range of activities volunteers carry out in classes which include baking, sewing, numeracy, literacy and computer work.
- Volunteer flexibility in choosing these activities – taking into consideration the needs of the school, pupils, teachers and the capability of the volunteers themselves.
- Flexibility of volunteers (e.g. in the type of activity undertaken).
- Flexibility of the school in meeting the needs of the volunteers.
- The positive relationship between volunteers and classroom teachers.
- The self-motivation of volunteers.
- The Volunteer Coordinators, who are an essential and pivotal part of how Intergen works.

Intergen benefits all those involved:

Volunteers enjoy their volunteering. They are satisfied, activities fill gaps in their lives and they obtain recognition for their work. Volunteers are also challenged, learn new skills and experience changes in themselves. As one volunteer said:

You get satisfaction and so much change. I've come out even after an hour or half an hour and I've come out and I've been a different person than when I went in. It's almost sort of a bit of a challenge really. Because we get old and cynical, you do change.

Volunteers also feel part of the school and make friends with school staff (some friendships carry on out outside of the school).

Pupils feel happy, proud and excited by taking part in Intergen activities. Older pupils feel relaxed and activities help reduce the stress of upcoming exams. Pupils feel proud of arts and craft work they produce and some continue these activities in their own homes. Pupils try new things, experience new challenges and learn new skills. As one pupil said:

I did one [craft activity], and I framed it and took it to my friend in Barbados because it said their names on it. It was a bear with a balloon. Its like you're learning how to do another talent.

Volunteers encourage and support pupils and help to address challenging behaviour. Pupils also have the opportunity to meet children from other classes (some schools have voluntary activities across classes) and have more chances to talk to their classmates.

Classroom Teachers gain physical, emotional and practical support from volunteers. As one volunteer explained:

They're so stressed. I think the teachers are so stressed with all the different things they've got to do, apart from teaching its the form filling and all this lot. Sometimes if they've got somebody to say 'come on you'll be alright'. We mother them!

The classroom improves as volunteers give one-to-one support to pupils and play a role in disciplining. As one volunteer said:

Anything I've picked up on with difficulties that they're [the children] are having or anything, the teacher's always quite happy for me point that out to her so that she can you know, just keep her eye on that little problem.

Primary Schools improve their profile, have something extra to offer compared to other schools, gain resources from volunteers and improve their student performance. As a School Coordinator said:

My year one teacher said to me there's a whole bunch of kids that are nowhere near their target for mathematics... I've been talking to our Intergen volunteer, and she's been mad keen to take a small group of children with maths each week for half an hour and do some real mathematical recovery work. So, I said ok... The work went in, kids a year later took their SATs and they made the target, and they were miles off the target, now that was a shift in attitude... because they can approach math in far more confident way...

Schools include their work with Intergen in their Ofsted report to show their links with community and intergenerational work. Schools also make links with other schools in their area that are also part of Intergen.

Intergenerational Understanding occurs as pupils change their attitude and learn about the experiences of older people. As one pupil said:

I changed my mind because when I came to school and I saw them [Intergen volunteers] I thought that if they're nice, every old person could be nice, and I changed my mind.

Volunteers also alter their attitude towards children as they learn about the pressures that pupils face, about the education system and how to interact with children better (which affects how they interact with children in their own families). As one volunteer said:

I think I've learnt a little bit how to handle children in some respects. Not having had any little ones in the family, but as I got to know them, from September to now, and then we'll have a new class, it's the different personalities, the different needs, the different attentions, the ones that are really just seeking attention or the ones that are struggling, and I think I can assess them quicker than I initially could.

The Wider Community benefits as the interactions in the classroom (between pupils and volunteers and volunteers and school staff) carry on in the community. Pupils greet volunteers in the wider community and in some cases this continues once the child leaves school. As one pupil said:

I've seen her [Intergen volunteer] like walking. I've seen her in the swimming pool a couple of times and I always wave at her and I think it's just nice that we know her and it's nice that we're waving to her

Other attitudes change through Intergen's work. For example boys have participated in what are considered female activities. As a volunteer said:

It was the same with the knitting first... 'it's not for boys that'. Definitely you know, 'that's the women that do that'. So we [Intergen volunteers] said 'well how do you think the soldiers and the sailors get on?' Cause I had an uncle who... during the war, he was on a boat. 'Where would they get new socks from if they didn't make them themselves' and things like that, and that's why they were quite willing after that.

Volunteers and pupils also share information and learn about different cultures and religions and some pupils look forward to moving through school. As one volunteer explained:

It's the like the younger ones, like whatever we've made, they come to see. And they know when they get into the top class they will come to us and they'll be doing that. So they're looking forward to getting to top class to come to us, aren't they?

Recommendations:

The evaluation made a number of recommendations for Intergen to continue working successfully in the way that it does. The overall aim of these recommendations is to make Intergen's work in schools more effective, efficient and wide reaching.

Table 1 summarises the recommendations for Intergen to work more effectively, and Table 2 summarises recommendations for work in collaboration with schools:

Table 1: Summary of Recommendations for Intergen to work More Effectively

Area	Recommendation	Aim
Recruitment	Focus recruitment efforts to obtain a more diverse range of volunteers	Increase the amount of male and ethnically diverse volunteers
	Use volunteers as resources for publicity and promotion and to continue to develop and disseminate publicity and promotional material	Increase the number of volunteers
	Introduce regular two-way communication between Volunteer Coordinators and the Administration Office	Increase effectiveness of Volunteer Coordinators' recruitment activities
CRB Check Process	Monitor the length of time taken for CRB checks to be processed	Improve the efficiency of the CRB process - increase volunteer satisfaction with Intergen and decrease time taken for volunteers to be placed in schools
	Reconsider the way in which the CRB process is administered – possibly making this the responsibility of Volunteer Coordinators	
	Volunteer Coordinators maintain contact with volunteers during the CRB check process	Increase volunteer satisfaction with Intergen
Relationship with Volunteers	Find ways to regularly communicate with Volunteers about Intergen and its organisational priorities (e.g. via a newsletter)	Improve relationship with Volunteers and their sense of belonging to Intergen
	Build on existing efforts to provide more opportunities for volunteer socialising and networking	Increase satisfaction for volunteers and opportunities to develop social capital
Volunteer Coordinators	Maintain support for volunteers throughout their activities rather than obtaining this from School Coordinators	Increase satisfaction for volunteers
	Provide more opportunities for Volunteer Coordinators to meet and share ideas about what works – the new office base may encourage this	Increase satisfaction for volunteers and support for Volunteer Coordinators
Voluntary Activities	Carry out a broader range of activities to generate intergenerational understanding	Increased intergenerational outcomes

Table 2: Summary of Recommendations involving Collaboration with Schools

Effective Working in Secondary Schools	Increase the number of volunteers interested in working in Secondary Schools through targeted recruitment	Improve InterGen's effectiveness within Secondary Schools
	Find effective means of contacting and communicating with Secondary School Coordinators	
	Explore new and/or different ways of engaging with Secondary Schools (e.g. by developing a database of volunteer skills and hold gatherings in Secondary Schools)	
	Consider possibilities for obtaining funding to support InterGen's work in Secondary Schools	
	Work with School Coordinators to tackle resistance from Secondary School teachers towards working with InterGen volunteers	
School Coordinator Role	Explore how School Coordinators carry out the induction for volunteers in each of the schools and share best practice through the development of protocols	Ensure consistency of best practice in volunteer induction across all schools
Volunteer Activity in the Classroom	Ensure volunteers are supported throughout their voluntary activities by Volunteer Coordinators and classroom teachers	Improve the experience of volunteers once they commence voluntary activities in classrooms thus potentially increasing volunteer wellbeing
	Request classroom teachers provide sufficient information to volunteers about classroom procedures and expectations around prior knowledge and skills are discussed	
	Request schools provide appropriate adult sized chairs for volunteers	
	Encourage ongoing discussion between teachers and volunteers about how activities can reach the maximum number of pupils and change negative perceptions of pupils towards certain activities	Increase the intergenerational impact for children
	Consider identifying projects which explicitly focus on intergenerational understanding	
Community links	Consider developing a strategy for community based impact	Focus activities to develop intergenerational understanding, wellbeing and social capital at a community level
	Consider working with schools to obtain funding to engage in community projects which develop intergenerational understanding	