



Intergenerational Practice

Shared Lives and Homeshare

Intergenerational Practice

In the United Kingdom the Centre for Intergenerational Practice run by the Beth Johnson Foundation is the lead and authority on Intergenerational issues. They produce guidance, undertake studies, determine standards and widely promote the benefits of Intergenerational Practice (IP).

Their 2006 Publication Intergenerational Programmes – An introduction and examples of practice 2006 introduces readers to Intergenerational Practice as follows:

“...Intergenerational practice aims to bring people together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities which promote greater understanding and respect between generations and may contribute to building more cohesive communities. Intergenerational practice is inclusive, building on the positive resources that the young and old have to offer each other and those around them.

These generations have become progressively disconnected from each other at an individual, family and community level due to a number of circumstances that has meant that the natural relationship between them has been affected. These disconnections include smaller families, increased geographical distance between family members, divorce and single parent households, the different expectations of working women and the impact of migration.

Alongside these changing family patterns has been the development of age segregated activities and living arrangements that have further distanced the old and young from each other. This has been exacerbated by the way that policies and services are normally around target groups or issues that are by their nature disjointed and discriminatory.

The aim of intergenerational work is to find ways to develop and strengthen these relationships and consequently become an agent of social change with benefits

to the whole of society. The middle generation has an important part to play in enabling and supporting this intergenerational exchange to take place.

The intergenerational relationship is significant for a number of reasons:

- It recognises that everyone has the capacity as human beings to learn and grow throughout the whole of the life span.*
- It breaks down the structures in society which perpetuate the fact that chronological age, at both ends of the life span, often excludes people from the mainstream activities; in addition the young and old are not seen as contributing to the economy and are therefore commonly described in terms such as burden.*
- It promotes a sense of social responsibility as a citizen because older people are able to support and nurture the young, whilst the young recognise that older people can become frail and need care as they age.*
- This social responsibility promotes communities that support and value all of its members in a culture of respect and mutual understanding.*
- It sees the young and old as active, participating members of their community contributing to the overall well being of those around them and creating more cohesive and healthy communities.*
- It acknowledges every human beings need for reciprocity, giving back something to others, at a time when the opportunities for this to occur naturally within families have diminished.*
- It demonstrates the mutual benefit that each group gains from the exchange and breaks down the barriers of perceived power between them.*
- It creates a synergy which strengthens and supports the young and old and so enables them to make changes which benefit everyone.*

This has led to an increasing recognition of the importance of looking at the issues of ageing through an intergenerational focus, for the following reasons:

- Older people are recognised as having a valuable role in society by serving youth in a way that the middle generation cannot. They can receive service from youth which recognises the responsibility of others to support elders when the process of ageing requires care.*
- It fills the need of the older generation to nurture the young and to pass on their experience of life to the benefit of future generations.*
- It develops an understanding amongst the generations of what it is like to be old and seeks to dispel the myths and fears.*
- It leads to greater respect for older people and recognises their contribution in striving towards a better society.*
- It removes the fears and prejudices that older people have of the young and builds a safer and more civilised society for all.*
- It allows ageing to be recognised as a continuum throughout life with different phases and transitions which are all of equal value.*

In summing up I would wish to stress my belief in the importance of protecting and developing productive intergenerational relationships. One only needs to look around the world at the impact of globalisation, migration, HIV/AIDS, the breakdown of families and increasing social tension to realise how important it is to find ways to mend the tears in the fabric of our societies.

Intergenerational approaches can provide at least some of the thread we need to work towards this.”

Intergenerational practice and Shared Lives

Shared Lives is a service provided by individuals and families (SL Carers) in local communities and is distinguished by the following features:

- Arrangements are part of organised SL Schemes that approve and train the SL Carers, receive referrals, match the needs of service users with SL Carers, and monitor the placements
- People using Shared Lives services have the opportunity to be part of the SL Carer's family and social networks
- SL Carers can use their family home as a resource
- Arrangements provide both parties with the opportunity to forge committed and consistent relationships
- The relationship between the SL Carer and the person who lives with them is of mutual benefit.
- SL Carers can support up to three people at any one time
- SL Carers do not employ staff to provide care to the people placed with them and as a result often get support from members of their friends and family network

People engaged in Shared Lives arrangements often forge strong, enduring relationships that enrich the lives of all participants. People living with Shared Lives Carers have the opportunity to forge links and friendships with the friends and family of the Carer and to become a real part of their local community. This can also be a reciprocal arrangement with the person engaged in Shared Lives bringing their own networks and contacts to the arrangement and giving the Carer and their family a chance to forge new relationships. This can often result in SL carers operating in a way that can be seen as intergenerational in its broadest sense.

For example:

- Parents, foster carers and child minders who are bringing up or supporting children in their home alongside adult Shared Lives service users
- Shared Lives arrangements for parents and babies

- Carers who have an older parent or dependent living with them alongside a younger person there as part of a Shared Lives arrangement
- Younger carers who have shared lives arrangements to support older service users and vice versa.
- Family and friends of the Shared Lives carer bringing opportunities for people of different generations to be together

[NB NAAPS has produced clear guidance for Shared Lives Schemes to ensure that households who support both children and adults at the same time have the skills they need to be able to manage this effectively and get consistent support and information from all the agencies involved in the arrangement.]

The benefit of this intergenerational contact cannot be underestimated and NAAPS is committed to supporting Shared Lives carers and Schemes to recognise when they offer intergenerational opportunities and then to celebrate the value these bring to participants and communities. NAAPS is taking active steps to enable Shared Lives practitioners to engage with the intergenerational aspects of their practice and to minimise any barriers that may arise as result.

Intergenerational Practice and Homeshare

Homeshare is a simple way of helping people to help each other. A Homeshare involves two people with different sets of needs, both of whom also having something to offer. Firstly, people who have a home that they are willing to share but are at a stage in their life where they need some help and support. These people are known as Householders. Secondly, people who need accommodation and who are willing to give some help in exchange for somewhere to stay. These people are known as Homesharers.

By putting these two people together Homeshare manages to find the Householder the help, support and security they need. At the same time Homeshare finds the Homesharer a place to call home, possibly rent free and maybe in an area or property that would have been financially out of their reach. Both people, their families and communities benefit from the arrangement and the costs are very low. Homeshare works particularly well for people from different generations with older Householders young people Homesharers able to help each other in a way that suits them both.

Many housing and/or support services inadvertently place the user of the services in the position of “recipient” and the people who provide that service in the powerful position of “provider”. However hard people try and minimise this obvious power imbalance it is always part of the arrangement and can affect the way the service is provided and received. Homeshare has the real advantage of being “power neutral”. Both the Householder and the Homesharer are gaining from the arrangement and can both be seen as “service users”. Both parties feel

valued and respected for whatever they are contributing and this allows them to enter the arrangement with dignity and enthusiasm.

Homeshare is run by a Homeshare Programme that employs a Homeshare Co-ordinator. The Co-ordinator has the task of finding suitable Householders and Homesharers and introducing them to each other. Co-ordinators also provide any help and support that the Householder or Homesharer need in order to keep the Homeshare arrangement working well for both parties.

The Centre for Intergenerational Practice (CIP) has produced a set of standards to measure the work of intergenerational programmes. The standards can be used to enable programmes to evidence their value and the CIP are then able to formally approve suitable programmes as “Approved Intergenerational Practice” providers. As part of its commitment to Intergenerational practice NAAPS has recently gained approved provider status for its two Homeshare pilot programmes

Conclusion

NAAPS believes that Intergenerational Practice has tremendous value to individual participants, communities and our wider society.

Shared Lives and Homeshare create natural opportunities for real and often lasting relationships to be forged between people from different generations and for a better mutual understanding to emerge as result. Engaging with the Intergenerational agenda may highlight difficulties and barriers and NAAPS is committed to working with practitioners and regulators to minimise these.

NAAPS is committed, with the support of the CIP to working with Shared Lives and Homeshare Coordinators and participants to promote the intergenerational aspects of their arrangements and to enable them to appreciate the benefits that these bring.