



Leicester Ageing Together (LAT)

LAT Learning:

Strengthening Intergenerational Connections

December 2018



About Leicester Ageing Together (LAT)

Part of the national Ageing Better Programme, [Leicester Ageing Together \(LAT\)](#) partnership is in its final year of a four year, £5 million programme to reduce social isolation amongst people over 50 living in Leicester. Working in conjunction with older people, the City Council and Health partners, our local programme consists of 23 projects delivered in five wards of the city that involved 17 voluntary sector delivery partners.

LAT has successfully reached over 5500 older people so far, nearly half of whom are aged 80+. The programme has recruited over 1,300 volunteers, as well as funding over £1.5 million of local jobs. We are working with people with higher levels of loneliness and poor wellbeing compared to local and national norms. We know that people's wellbeing has improved and loneliness has reduced following engagement with Leicester Ageing Together.

We have ambitions that Leicester Ageing Together will be locally relevant and nationally significant.

[Ageing Better](#) is a Big Lottery Fund programme that aims to develop creative ways for people aged 50 and over to be actively involved in their local communities, helping to combat loneliness and social isolation.

We produced this briefing in response to the recent call for evidence on intergenerational connections from the [All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration](#). Look out for their report due early in 2019, on ways to foster meaningful bonds between older and younger people.

LAT Learning: Strengthening Intergenerational Connections

Key messages

LAT projects build bridges between people of all ages, particularly as young people in cities are now less likely to live around older people, and 40% of LAT participants live alone.

- ✓ It's important to create age-friendly spaces building on the interests of all those involved.
- ✓ Sensitive facilitation of intergenerational sessions, allowing plenty of time for one-to-one conversations, helps to challenge age-related assumptions or negative stereotypes.
- ✓ Learning over a long period of time, but in short bursts, works well for older people who want to develop digital literacy. Patient family members, friends and volunteers can all help boost older people's confidence and skills in using IT to connect with others.

Building bridges between people of all ages

LAT partners told us how they were helping to bring people of different ages together, which is vital when [research](#) shows that over the past two decades different age groups have become increasingly segregated. Just 5% of the people living in the same neighbourhood as someone under 18 are over 65, compared to 15% in 1991.

"...We have often found that the lack of responsibility that both generations enjoy (neither have dependants to worry about) can create a sense of fun, which allows for laughter, risk-taking, and creativity." Matt Lilley, Director, Focus



Through LAT we know that 40% of our participants live alone, and 64% are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds and consequently are at higher risk of social isolation (see the national Ageing Better [Report 3](#) on Groups at Risk of Marginalisation).

Case Study – Crafting Relationships

East Midlands Homes (emh) and Beauty and Utility Arts jointly delivered [Crafting Relationships](#) bringing together older people and primary age school children in school and community group settings to work together on creative projects for up to eight weeks.

'Seeing older tenants learn new things or discover the joy of past interests and possibilities is remarkable. The dance and movement classes in particular had a huge impact on the health and wellbeing of the tenants that attended. Building up muscles and flexibility to prevent falls and reduce pain, the positive mental health benefits of laughter and being able to try new things and to be introduced to music from different cultures was enjoyed by all.' Maria Ward Sheltered Housing Manager, emh homes



Creating shared Age-Friendly spaces

It's important to create age-friendly spaces building on the interests of all those involved, and encouraging creativity and critical thinking.

Children are often surprised that older people are fun and have interesting stories to share. Older adults comment about children being well behaved. Often grandparents tell us they don't spend time doing creative things like arts or crafts so much. They often have to supervise homework, take to and from swimming etc. Their role has become more of a practical support.'

Katherine Brown,
Founding Director
Crafting Relationships

Case study – Learning for the Fourth Age (L4A)

Learning for the Fourth Age ([L4A](#)) work in Leicester and Leicestershire, providing learning opportunities to older people who receive care, in care homes, sheltered housing or in their own homes. Much of their work combines different generations, as they use a network of volunteer Learning Mentors – many of them young people – who form learning partnerships with older people. Musical Care Homes was a LAT project aimed to improve the confidence of older people receiving care, and stimulating a more positive outlook on life.



This picture shows two residents from Scraftoft Court preparing the seaside picture for the Musical Care Home event. This activity helped to build anticipation for the event. The lady painting the yellow background is recently blind and she loves to sing and has a soulful voice. She learns a new song every few weeks to exercise her memory and because she loves music and it helps her voice to practise. She sings acapella, “Danny Boy” and “Summer time” being two of her recent practice pieces. Through the Musical Care Homes project we have learnt people’s favourite songs and can add singing into other sessions, not limiting the impact to just the music sessions.

Source: L4A Musical Care Homes Final Report

Fiona Smith, CEO L4A, explained, “Active participation in group music-making has been found to impact positively upon physiological and psychological health, to increase happiness amongst individual members and to contribute to enjoyment, personal development and empowerment. Contrary to what some people believe, musical development and progression are entirely possible for older people. Researchers have tested musical aptitude amongst people over the age of 65 and have concluded that capacities for musical development are maintained with age.”

Tactile Textiles was a L4A project specifically targeted at older people in residential care and especially those with dementia. For an older person, the move to a residential care setting can often mean losing any sense of being part of a community. Whilst they may live surrounded by other people, individuals are often isolated and lonely due to a lack of genuine social ties, a lack of community connections, and a lack of meaningful communication and purposeful activity.

Tactile Textiles sought to address this issue by working over a sustained period with older people living in care homes and young volunteers drawn from the local community. Older and younger people engaged regularly as a group in meaningful and purposeful creative 'tactile textile' activities.

"Thank you, I so enjoyed that. I do look forward to you coming, being here (in the session) feels like I'm in another place; it's like a trip out..." Care Home Resident, Participant on 'Tactile Textiles

Due to its fully coordinated intergenerational nature, the project offered an enriched learning experience for the young people, who would be better equipped to bring about positive change for future ageing generations.



L4A were delighted when as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility approach, staff from the local ASDA supermarket volunteered support for a Musical Care Homes Project Christmas Party.

Rob Hunter, Chair of LAT Board, remarked *“These collaborations work best when part of a longer-term relationship between the company and the older people’s organisation. There is evidence that such involvement can contribute substantially to staff development through development in personal confidence, opportunities for taking leadership in activity outside the workplace, and that it allows managers to spot potential.”*

Changing perceptions of ageing and challenging stereotypes

Partners told us that whilst differences in language and cultural assumptions between people of different generations could be barriers, sensitive facilitation – allowing plenty of time for one-to-one conversations - can help create successful projects and challenge assumptions about younger and older people.

Case Study – West Indian Senior Citizen’s Project (WISCP)

West Indian Senior Citizen’s Project ([WISCP](#)) has existed in Leicester for 40 years, and provides a city-wide service to African heritage people. Through LAT they have been able to focus on promoting healthy ageing to a population who experience high levels of socio-economic deprivation (and high associated health risks) and who are at higher risk of loneliness and social isolation – for example as they may be the only Black resident in a care home. *Older and Bolder* project lead Pamela Campbell-Morris has led an intergenerational project, to create a touring exhibition Remedies and Reason, with support from the University of Leicester’s Wellbeing Matters team (funded through the Edith Murphy Foundation). Bringing local people from the African Caribbean Community together with an artist Emma Fay, the exhibition addresses health as a holistic aspect of life, and asks people to share their strategies for self-care and wellbeing.



29 - 09 - 18 / 06 - 10 - 18 FREE ENTRY

REMEDIES AND REASONS HEALTH MATTERS EXHIBITION

VISUAL ARTS EXHIBITION BY CONCEPT BODY ARTIST EMMA FAY

Co-ordinated by Pamela Campbell-Morris, and funded by the University of Leicester's 'Health Matters' community engagement project, thanks to the generosity of the Edith Murphy Foundation.

For more information visit www.le.ac.uk/health-matters

Mon - Fri 9am - 6pm; Sat 9am - 2pm African Caribbean Centre, Maidstone Rd, Leicester

EMMA-FAY.CO.UK



One beneficiary of the LAT project at WISCP has gone on to coordinate the kitchen services and has become a member of the WISCP Board of Trustees. Explaining her motivation, she said, "I didn't want to just go on sitting in my chair, when I knew I had the experience to help out. I love all the people here!"

The project also attracts a variety of younger volunteers. One student from the University of Leicester explained, "I just came across the project – I'm studying Sociology, and feel it's not just about what you learn from books, but to prepare for work you need to know what's going on in the community."

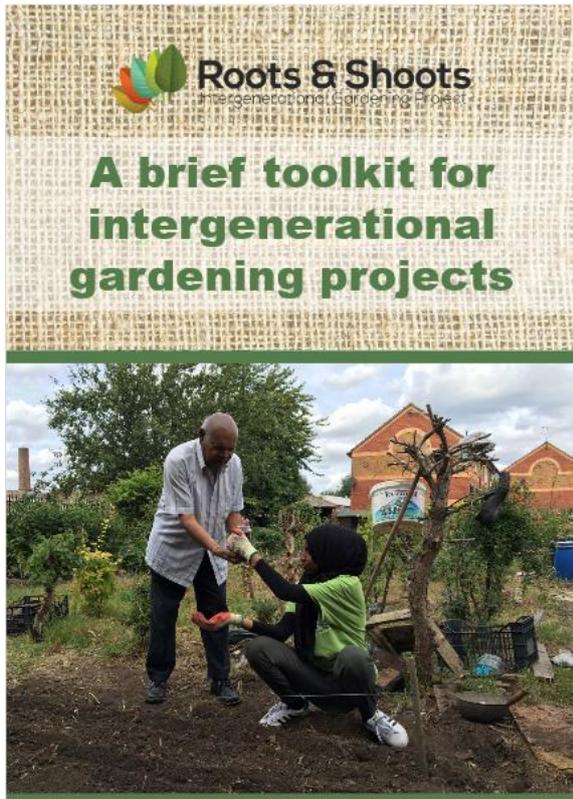
Case Study – Roots and Shoots Gardening Project

[Focus](#) is a charity that has delivered intergenerational projects throughout its 30-year history. Roots and Shoots was a three-year LAT-funded project that brought older and younger people together and used gardening as a start to their conversations.

Matt Lilley, Director of Focus explained the approach. *“We have, in the past, made an assumption that older people might assume that younger generations lack discipline and respect and might not want to engage with them. This has often proved to be a misconception as we have often found that the lack of responsibility that both generations enjoy (neither have dependants to worry about) can create a sense of fun, which allows for laughter, risk-taking, and creativity. This latter point is perhaps the most powerful lesson we have learned. Younger generations are learning to take risks, to make decisions, to take on responsibility and to develop a sense of purpose to their lives. Doing that in a real environment where someone else is relying on them is far more powerful than as a hypothetical exercise. And we know that for older generations (most especially those living within a care environment) the longer older people can feel that they are valued, useful and purposeful, the better their quality of life.”*

“We have always found that young people (we specifically target those aged 13 – 19) and older people form strong bonds, enjoy one another’s company and find a lot in common, once any initial barriers are broken down. This has not changed significantly over the years. We have often heard young people express surprise at how well they had got on with people from their grandparents’ generation and that they’d found interests in common.”

Matt Lilley, Director, Focus



Download the Roots and Shoots [toolkit](#) from Focus, which aims to sow a seed of thought and give some basic tips on developing intergenerational relationships through gardening.

Digital inclusion for all ages

Innovation such as social media is seen as having both positive and negative consequences. *“Social media can be a barrier and an enabler,”* comments Katherine Brown from Crafting Relationships. *“If grandparents are already using, or interested in learning about, social media then that becomes a way to keep in touch. Skype has been mentioned as a good tool when families live in different places and becomes part of a routine.”*

Research from [Ofcom](#) (2018) confirms that record numbers of older people are embracing smart and social technology, with a quarter of over-75s using tablet computers. Nearly half (48%) of internet users aged 65-74 now have a social media profile, and among over 75s, the proportion with a Facebook profile has nearly doubled – from 19% to 41%. However, some older people lack online confidence. A fifth (20%) of people over 65 describe themselves as ‘not confident’ online, much higher than the average (7%). Delivery partners told us younger friends, family members and volunteers can help boost older people’s confidence in getting online.

Case Study - WEA's Older and Wiser Project

The [WEA](#) found that courses on using a computer or mobile phone were most successful at drawing people into learning groups and keeping people engaged. Many people in these groups signed up for more IT.

Key learning points from this project include:

- Learning over a long period but in short bursts worked well for our learners, who wanted to learn to use IT but found it challenging to retain the knowledge and skills without sustained practice.
- We continued to offer the most popular courses where possible throughout the project. Regular attendance proved consistently problematic for many beneficiaries, for practical reasons e.g. hospital appointments, caring, short or longer-term illness and holidays.
- Beneficiaries needed flexibility to learn at their own pace and miss sessions as needs arose, knowing they would be welcome to return and supported to catch up.

Top-tips for intergenerational work

✓ Start with a 'getting to know you' session at the beginning with some different questions like: where were you born, if you could have a super power what would it be, which famous person from history would you like to have dinner with, and what's the strangest thing you've ever eaten?

✓ Grandparents' lunch clubs in schools and open invites to coffee mornings at care homes are a great start, low cost and not daunting. Following those up with inviting a local museum to bring handling objects relevant to the local area is another simple, cost effective way to add activity on.

✓ Bring children, young people and older people together to develop more community-led intergenerational initiatives and overcome funding silos and organisational boundaries.

What now?

To find out more about Leicester Ageing Together (LAT) or to get involved:

1. Visit our website <https://www.leicesterageingtogether.org.uk/> where you can find out about other LAT learning and future events
2. Send us your own information and learning from your delivery in this area and we will add it to our learning portal
3. Start a conversation and share your views online

 <https://twitter.com/LeicesterAT>

 <https://www.facebook.com/LeicesterAgeingTogether/>