

How To...

Set up an inter-generational Digital Inclusion Project



Why should I set up an inter-generational digital inclusion project?



Digital exclusion occurs when vulnerable groups or individuals cannot reap the benefits of digital; often due to lack of access, confidence, or skills. It can have a strong negative impact on an individual, making day to day tasks more difficult and time consuming (and in some cases impossible) than necessary.

There are now more people online in later life than ever before, however over 55's make up 94% of everyone who has never been online (4.5 million). These people, who are already likely to be poorer, less well educated and in worse health than their peers, are at risk of being left on the wrong side of the digital divide.

Based on the current rate of digital skills training for older people, it will take 30 years to train and support today's population of older people in the UK. It is important to reduce this timeframe, so we are exploring ways to increase both the volume and effectiveness of training delivery. Inter-generational training programmes are one solution to this, and offer a number of benefits across both younger and older generations, such as:

Development of common understanding between generations

Increased participation of older people in lifelong learning

Improved perceptions between older and younger people

Development of essential employability skills for younger people

More active citizenship among both younger and older people

Mental and physical health benefits for older people, resulting in higher levels of life satisfaction¹

What type of organisations should I engage with?

There will be a number of different organisations in your community that you can reach out to in order to set up an inter-generational digital inclusion project. You may have already worked with some of these organisations on other projects, so make use of existing contacts where possible.

2. SCHOOLS

Local primary and secondary schools may be interested in engaging their young people in Digital Inclusion project work. You may want to deliver extra-curricular activities or suggest delivering a class to build students awareness and skills about digital inclusion amongst older people, and how they can best support them. Schools are most receptive to requests towards the end of term when there is more free time to deliver activities outside of the curriculum.

1. COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Local colleges and universities may be interested in working with your Digital Inclusion project in order to offer their students a volunteering opportunity to improve their employability skills. It may be worth attending your local university's Fresher's Fair to promote the project. College and university students should be able to provide more on-going support than school children, and could even set-up their own club.

3. YOUTH CLUBS

Reach out to local youth clubs and uniformed groups. These informal youth settings are always looking for extra activities that young people can get involved in to develop new skills. They do not follow a set curriculum and therefore have more flexibility as to what the young people they work with can get involved in. These youth clubs and uniformed groups usually run outside of work/school hours, so bear this mind when planning activity as it will often need to be on evenings and weekends.



It is important to remember that there will be differences in capability and interactions depending on the age of the younger person that you are engaging with, for example activities with primary school children will be very different to what you would expect to deliver with university students. Make sure that your resources are focussed to the age group you are working with, as badly targeted resources could put young people off (e.g. if they are too patronising or too complicated).

CASE STUDY



Age UK Blackburn with Darwen worked in partnership with Marsden Heights Community College to develop an inter-generational digital skills project. Age UK staff first delivered a short training session to 10 students from the college to support them to deliver digital inclusion awareness sessions, focussing on the needs of older people, after college.

Students then met the older people in an initial session to get to know each other and find out more about the project. They then returned during the summer holidays to deliver a number of informal digital sessions, which are still on-going.

As well developing new digital skills, both the students and the older people involved got to share experiences and knowledge with groups they otherwise wouldn't have, in a positive atmosphere.



Follow us on twitter

@OneDigitalProg | @Age_UK

Things to consider when delivering an inter-generational project

While individuals respond to different activities in unique ways, there are some simple rules to follow, initially at least, to ensure that all participants are comfortable and confident when undertaking what can be a daunting learning process:

- **Choose** an activity that requires cooperation between age groups and reduces competition
- **Sharing** goals between the two groups is one way of encouraging cooperation
- **Have** a focus for the project that is a shared issue. Don't just put the older and younger people in a room and expect them to get on!
- **Create** a code of conduct – sit down together and agree ground rules of respect and confidentiality
- **Check** regularly to make sure both groups are happy with the way things are going
- **Work** towards a defined outcome and evaluate what you have done

Once young people have volunteered to get involved, it's important to work with them before starting intergenerational activities. Get to know more about their interests and encourage them to consider how they might find common ground with older people. Actively using their ideas as inspiration can have a positive effect on their motivation and commitment. ¹

When developing your inter-generational digital inclusion project, it is best to avoid:

- **Patronising** communication towards any participant
- **Communication** from older adults that is overtly personal
- **Unequal** groups (either size, or status)
- **Situations** where individuals can avoid contact altogether
- **Situations** where one group is dominant over the other
- **Environments** unfamiliar to, or uncomfortable for, either group
- **Situations** or tasks that confirm negative stereotypes of either group
- **Observers** or onlookers who are not participating in the programme¹

Inter-generational projects are a powerful tool for achieving positive outcomes across a wide range of issues. It is not however, a 'magic wand' and it is useful to be aware of some of the problems that can occur when working across generations.

¹ <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/brandpartnerglobal/southlakelandvpp/documents/publications/finding%20cg%20sml.pdf>

What are the risks to running this project?

Reinforcing negative stereotypes – Both younger and older people suffer from negative stereotyping of one another and from society more generally. Both generations are often seen from one perspective, and young people in particular are often demonised in the media. Inter-generational work can risk reinforcing these negative stereotypes.

Culture – people from different cultural backgrounds will often have different experience and expectations around how young people should act around older people, and these differences may also reflect the gender of those involved. If inter-generational activity is being co-ordinated with a range of people from different backgrounds, their cultural heritage should be factored in and different customs recognised ¹

Safeguarding and Safe Recruitment - Children and adults with care and support needs, may be targeted and placed at risk of harm or abuse. Any risk posed to them should not be increased by their involvement with the project. You must ensure the organisations you are working in partnership with, have a safeguarding policy in place, which complies with your own safeguarding policy. Both organisations must sign up to a joint safeguarding procedure for the project. These procedures must include, ensuring that appropriate checks and assessments are made for all volunteers and employees working on the project. Guidance on who is eligible for a check is available on the home office website

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dbs-eligibility-guidance>

Any failure to do so would be of regulatory concern to the charity commission who are the independent regulator for charities. Employees and volunteers must understand what action they need to take to reduce the risk of harm and how to respond if they have concerns.



What are the costs to setting up this project?

You should consider these particular costs:

- **Marketing resources** – for example:
 - Leaflets and posters to provide to local youth provisions
 - A stall to showcase at schools/colleges/universities/youth clubs
- **Staff** – you will need a staff member to oversee the project
- **Volunteers** – you may want to pay for marketing when recruiting volunteers
- **Technology** – to use during sessions – why not ask the local organisation if they have a computer room that you can make use of to reduce this cost

Evaluation: why is it important?

It is important to assess and adapt your activities to improve your services and ensure that they are effective as they can be. By collecting evaluation information, it will enable you to demonstrate your project's successes and impact, and allow you to communicate your learnings with anyone else who may want to set up a similar project in their local community or potential funders.

When evaluating your intergenerational digital inclusion project, you could consider:

- Using survey printouts to gather the views of both the older people and younger people you are engaging with at the point of interaction
- Holding a focus group, bringing together older and younger people
- Holding interviews with individuals, both younger and older, to get more in-depth information

It is best practice to develop and design your project with evaluation in mind, ensure to collect data regularly and use these to improve your project.

