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## **Integrated working and intergenerational projects: A study of the use of sporting memories**

A paper for the Journal of Integrated Care

### **Abstract**

**Purpose** – This article aims to promote discussion about, and the development of the evidence-base underpinning integrated working for intergenerational working. It discusses perspectives on intergenerational work in general and specifically draws on case experiences of the use of intergenerational reminiscence based on sporting memories to highlight issues pertaining to integrated working.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The article presents a general discussion of issues of intergenerational projects and integrated working, with case discussions of the use of sporting memories as an intervention for focusing intergenerational contact.

**Findings** – It is concluded that intergenerational work has much to offer but that it is far from clear how best to organise integrated working for this type of work. There are interesting lessons to be drawn from the case discussions about intergenerational interventions and integrated working.

**Research limitations** – Although case studies can provide crucial in-depth knowledge they can be limited in developing evidence we can be sure is more generalisable across contexts. Hence, further research is required into the impact of intergenerational projects, and how best to maximise this through effective integrated working.

**Practical implications** – The discussion and case study materials suggest there is much potential in using intergenerational projects to achieve a range of possible outcomes but it is not clear how integrated working is best operationalised in such work. Care is required about clarity concerning the aims of specific projects, but practitioners and others should be encouraged to carefully explore this area of work.

**Social implications** – The challenges of an ageing society are significant, as is the need to maintain intergenerational contact, mutuality and the implicit social contract across generations. Specifically developing opportunities for such contact may help achieve this and a range of other positive outcomes.

**Originality/value** – This paper brings together a discussion of intergenerational projects with consideration of the challenges of integrated working, and adds specific case study lessons from the use of sports-based reminiscence.

**Keywords** integration, intergenerational, sporting memories, older people

**Paper type** conceptual paper and case study evaluation

## **Introduction**

In this paper we will discuss intergenerational work, i.e. activities that are specifically designed to bring together people from across generations, and some of the challenges this might present from the perspective of seeking to do this kind of work by integrating working across services and organisations. We are especially thinking about what we might call tradition integration between statutory services organised around specific groups of people and/or defined by needs which usually correspond to certain age groups.

We will explore the context of the population changes being experienced by society and why intergenerational work is potentially appealing. We explore in more depth what intergenerational work is from the perspective of practical considerations of what it is and seeks to achieve, and by examining various theoretical perspectives on it. This highlights some of the potential challenges for using integration of existing services and/or organisations to deliver intergenerational work. We conclude by examining some lessons for integrated working from pilot work to use sports-based reminiscence work as a focus for intergenerational work.

## **The context**

A key aspect of the current and developing social context is that of the much discussed ageing profile of the UK, in common with many other countries. The most recent report in the UK to bring together the evidence on this topic and examine projections for society was the Foresight report (2016). This reported that as people are on average living longer, whilst the number of people in the age group 0-29 is expected to rise from 24 million to 25.9 million between 2014 and 2039, those aged 60 and over is predicted to increase from 14.9 million to 21.9 million. By 2037 there are projected to be 1.42 million more households headed by someone aged 85 or over; an increase of 161% over 25 years. These developments will have implications for health and care services, for example, from 2015 to 2035 the number of people requiring state-funded home care services will rise by 86%, and demand for state-funded care home places will rise by 49%. Questions posed to society by this will how are we willing to pay for this and will we be able to find the workforce to deliver the needed care and support.

These demographic changes will also have an implication on that group in society sometimes called informal or unpaid carers, i.e. family and friends who undertake caring for someone. Between 2007 and 2032, the number of people aged 65 and over requiring unpaid care is projected to grow by more than one million. The number of hours provided by family carers has already increased, by 25% between 2005 and 2014 and may well continue to increase as demand increases. The analysis by Humphries et al. (2016) certainly

presents a bleak picture for access for older people to state-funded social care and the implications of this on more demand being placed on informal carers.

Amongst the challenges we will have to face are those of loneliness and isolation amongst older people. Currently, 36% of people aged 65 and over live alone, 2 million 75 plus year olds live alone, and nearly half of people aged 65 plus report that television and pets are their main forms of company (Age UK 2016). There is a particular concern about the experiences of older men, with over 700,000 reporting feeling a high degree of loneliness (Beach & Bamford 2014). Loneliness has been seen to be very harmful for health, increasing the risk of stroke by around 30%, and potentially a twofold increased chance of developing Alzheimer's disease (see for example Steptoe *et al.* 2012 and Holt-Lunstad *et al.* 2015 on links between isolation and illness and premature mortality).

This is a context, then, in which we can see a growth in the size and proportion of the older population, and significant numbers of them are experiencing potentially harmful loneliness and isolation. Whilst not all older people need statutory social services, and they are not necessarily the sole answer to addressing all needs, this growth in the older population is happening as we see a decline in spending in both absolute terms and as a proportion of local authority social care expenditure (Audit Commission 2013; Ismail, Thorlby & Holder 2014; Humphreys *et al.* 2016).

Further, modern societies are seen to rely on an intergenerational contract and solidarity (Gardiner 2016), i.e. a sense of intergenerational mutuality and fairness, bonds that may be tested in challenging times, such as economic austerity. Paying for pensions, for example, relies on an intergenerational contract of a shared sense of duty and fairness for younger people to work to help make these payments (Lloyd 2008; Keating *et al.* 2015). An ageing population profile can place greater fiscal demands on societies (Foresight 2016), and any concomitant reduction in intergenerational mutuality and the social contract to pay for these could place strains on intergenerational bonds and society. We need to understand how these intergenerational bonds can be best nurtured.

Changes in family patterns and more geographical mobility for some sections of society may mean fewer opportunities for contact across generations within families, and may make organisations and community-based intergenerational contact more significant to maintaining the intergenerational social contract (Lloyd 2008). With internal migration, parts of Britain, typically some urban areas, have seen a reduction in their pension-aged populations (with a lowering in the age-profile of the population), whilst other areas, for example coastal towns, have seen an increase in the proportion of their pension-aged population (Lloyd 2008). Each experience presents challenges for localities, such as ensuring there are enough younger people to provide care for older people in coastal towns, but also makes it more difficult for sustained intergenerational contact to occur.

Given these complex changes and the questions they pose for society we need to explore a variety of methods of supporting older people, to maintain and enhance their wellbeing and to address such challenges as loneliness and isolation. Intergenerational work may be part of the solution, especially as it is focused on relational aspects of living, notable as it has been argued that wellbeing ought to be seen as relational rather than as a quality solely of an individual (Taylor 2011; Barnes, Taylor & Ward 2013). There is, though, a gap in evidence to understand interventions to promote social integration for older people and when and how to intervene to enrich their social relations and connections (Glymour & Osypuk 2012).

### **Intergenerational work**

Here we will develop a better understanding of intergenerational activities and how they might help to address some of these relational wellbeing needs. We will subsequently examine some of the potential challenges this presents to integrated working, especially given that organisational boundaries are frequently drawn in terms of age groups in the populations, most starkly between children's services and those for (older) adults. As has been noted in regard to Intergenerational Practice (IP):

much remains to be done to promote integrated social policies for IP, which is complicated by the fact that IP requires a creative synergy of policies, resources and programmes formulated by many different sectors and offices at both the local and national levels. (Bostrum et al 2000:6)

The range of organisations and social policies relevant to intergenerational work can encompass "such sectors as education, social service, child, youth and family, health and welfare, employment, economy, environment and culture" (Hatton-Yeo et al 2000:10). Despite recognition that intergenerational projects require careful planning across this complex organisational landscape (Hatton-Yeo and Watkins 2004), there has been insufficient attention paid to how best to develop this, what integrated working means in this context and how to operationalize it most effectively. To understand intergenerational work in more detail, and begin to identify some of the potential barriers to good integrated working for IP, we will next examine various practical issues involved in intergenerational work.

#### *Processes and outcomes in intergenerational practice*

Social contact is our starting point in understanding the work IP. In general, social contact is seen to be good for people, whilst the opposite, feeling lonely or isolated, is, as mentioned above, often bad for people's wellbeing. This contact, though, is often within generations.

Intergenerational work aims to develop beneficial social contact within and between generations, often for its own value, but also frequently seeking additional benefits. Examples of the latter are the transfer of knowledge and skills between generations, sharing social norms and values and history, and countering negative stereotypes, stigma and discrimination such as ageism (Lloyd 2008).

Intergenerational work has been shown to have a range of benefits for participants. It can help individuals to express their identities, to improve their wellbeing, to share a sense of reciprocity, and to develop a better understanding of each other and of community connectedness (Gaggioli et al. 2014). It may also help to transmit skills, knowledge and important social values between generations (Chung, 2009; Gaggioli et al. 2014). This range of potential outcomes is encouraging but indicate the need to be very clear about the expected outcomes of such work, especially to avoid confusion or even unrealised expectations amongst, for example, commissioners of such work (see, for example, Clark 2014 for a discussion of such issues in relation to integrated working on arts and social/health care projects).

#### *Locations for intergenerational working*

There are many possible locations for intergenerational contact, including families, existing organisations (such as care homes or schools), or in community settings. Each will take different approaches to make positive intergenerational contact happen with various consequences for understanding integrated working. Two broad approaches have been identified by Lloyd (2008), namely i) the creation of inclusive spaces in which people from across different generations have opportunities to naturally mix, and ii) deliberate exposure of people across generations to each other to foster the kinds of intergenerational benefits discussed above. Examples of the first are making sure that community and civic spaces, public and commercial services and workplaces are age-friendly and provide opportunities for positive intergenerational exchange. Examples of the second approach include organising educational or social events that provide opportunity for intergenerational contact or working to include younger and older people in local sports or other clubs. Possibilities exist for mixing both broad ideas. Each has different implications for how integrated working would be thought of for intergenerational work.

#### *Integrated working for intergenerational work?*

As indicated, a key challenge in planning intergenerational interventions is considering which organisations need to be involved, what (leadership) roles they need to take and the degree to which they need integrated working to deliver the desired outcomes. Statutory services may be obvious organisations and departments to think about for intergenerational working given their social remits and (even in times of austerity) their resources. There is, however, such an extensive range of these services to potentially involve and their boundaries are often split across the generations that intergenerational interventions seek

to bring together. Similarly, third sector and community groups are diverse and often defined by generational divides. Developing a coherent rationale for a specific intergenerational project given the practical considerations of diverse process, outcomes and locations, can be a challenging process to ensure that it is coherent and relevant to parties with diverse generation-specific interests. Whilst some statutory organisations such as local authorities and locality-based commissioners of health services may have at a corporate level more of an overarching community-focus, and, hence, be potentially amenable to arguments about complex intergenerational outcomes, they are also likely to be organised in to departments and teams that are focused on age-defined groups. Even within the same organisations, then, it may be difficult to convince services to integrate their working for intergenerational working that has outcomes which to some degree transcend their immediate concerns.

We would not argue that a high degree of integrated working between all participating organisations is always necessary in IP as some could conceivably take a more passive role. However, some degree of integrated thinking, agreement and planning is required between participating organisations and services. Yet even a general level of joint commitment to an intergeneration project may be difficult across organisations and departments targeted at different generations, with particular age-defined lines of accountability, policies and even language. The goals that different organisations would articulate for their generationally-defined client groups may be quite different and not immediately recognisable as mutual nor as fitting to wider social goals, such as the intergenerational social contract discussed above. Arguments about integration as being rational and/or altruistic to achieve desired outcomes (never in reality very strong arguments to deliver good integrated working (Hudson et al. 1999)), are likely to appear different from the points of views of organisations working with children and young people and those with older people.

Evidence-based descriptions and analyses of more detailed, formalised models of intergenerational activities are limited, especially in terms of integrated working, partly reflecting the bottom-up approach from communities that has often typified developments in this area (Lloyd 2008). Indeed, to a large degree, this organic approach in which people come together around shared-interests and local resources and opportunities, is perhaps better than seeking to foist on (potential) participants an overly prescribed tool kit of intergenerational activities (Lloyd 2008). What is needed, though, are clear understandings of the goals of the diverse intergenerational approaches and strong examples of, with a robust underpinning evidence-base for, good intergenerational practices and principles and associated integrated working. This should help people to have a clear sense of what are the 'active ingredients' to achieve their desired goals and how these can best be mixed in a given context and supported by an appropriate model of integrated working. To help with developing this clear understanding and articulation with regard to intergenerational work (and integration) we will next consider the potential theoretical perspectives that may be employed to understand intergenerational working.

## **Theoretical perspectives to understand intergenerational work**

There is no integrated 'intergenerational theory' to help us to clearly articulate the kinds of arguments we are asserting are required for better understanding integrated working in this area. Rather, intergenerational work has generally drawn on a range of theories (Vandervan 2001; Kuehne & Melville 2014). Here we will highlight some key ones and consider their potential to contribute to our understanding and development of *integrated* intergenerational working.

The first set of theories we want to discuss encompass understanding the interactional aspects of intergenerational work i.e. the impact that might be achieved between the participants. Included in this set of theories is contact theory (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998), which posits that contact between groups can foster greater understanding between them and a more positive attitude towards each other. This, though, can only happen under certain circumstances (e.g. with a suitable degree of equality between participating groups) and better understanding of such conditions can help to achieve the outcomes that a program may be seeking. From the perspective of integrated working, however, it is not immediately apparent how this perspective would appeal across both younger and older people's organisations. An argument for intergenerational work based on the goal of reducing ageism amongst younger people towards older people, for example, might appeal to older people's services but might not be a priority for those working with younger people. This is not to say that contact theory is not an important aspect of intergenerational work, merely that it does not immediately seem like a strong focus for arguing for and developing integrated working. It may, though, be a useful perspective combined with others for developing projects with multifaceted goals that support integrated working.

A further theory aimed at helping us understand intergenerational work concerns social capital, i.e. an "investment in social relations with expected returns" (Lin 1999:30). Social capital theory seeks to understand these relations embedded within people's social networks (Lin 2001). From the point of view of intergenerational work, the interest is in how people use and build social capital from intergenerational interactions (Kuehne & Melville 2014) and how this social capital contributes to other desired goals, such as community cohesion or individual wellbeing. Often social capital is within specific generations and organisations would need to be convinced of a case for why they ought to support intergenerationally developing social capital.

A third theoretical perspective helpful for understanding the interactions in intergenerational work is provided by situated learning theory (Lave and Wenger 1991). This concerns how people learn in situations and relationships, such as apprenticeships. Potentially both services for younger people and those for older people might be interested in this perspective as a basis for developing integrated intergenerational projects, though they are likely to have different expectations about the desired learning outcomes. Again,

we are left with a complex picture of how to use the theory to articulate outcomes that would appeal across generationally-defined organisational boundaries.

Kuehne & Melville (2014) discuss another series of theories, namely those concerning individual development, and how these might help us to understand the work of intergenerational projects. These include the theory most often used to understand intergenerational projects, namely human development theory (Erikson 1963), which concerns the psychosocial and educational benefits which participants may experience. A second theory focused on individuals and used to understand intergenerational work is that of personhood (Kitwood 1997), concerning the rights and standing of an individual as a person. To develop arguments for integrated working to deliver intergenerational projects on the basis of these theoretical perspectives would need us to articulate human development or personhood goals for all participants. A risk is that these may be too general if seeking to encapsulate the same outcomes for all participants, or too focused on specific generations to appeal to organisations focused on specific generations.

Within these theoretical discussions about intergenerational work there is developing a more complex analysis and understanding of intergenerational work and relationships between people (Kuehne & Melville 2014). It is not clear, though, that any one perspective presents an immediately compelling case for integrated working on intergenerational projects, especially across organisations very focused on specific generations. Hence, articulating the goals and mechanisms of an intergenerational intervention in such a way that they are clear and appeal to organisations divided by age-defined boundaries will require a subtle use of several of these theoretical perspectives. At least explicitly understanding this makes it more likely that this can be undertaken carefully.

### **Lessons from sporting memories reminiscence intergenerational work**

We will now draw on some lessons about integrated working in IP from case studies of using sporting memories as a basis for intergenerational reminiscence activities. There is already good evidence to suggest that reminiscence is helpful for intergenerational work. Gaggioli et al. (2014) used a number of measures to examine the impact of intergenerational reminiscence groups and found it was beneficial to some aspects of social isolation and of perceived quality of life for the older participants, but not to all aspects of these nor some other measures used (e.g. self-esteem). The children developed a more positive attitude to the elders. Gaggioli et al. (2014) also found that the groups were enjoyable and involving for participants, suggesting they may do them again.

In a review of the evidence, Park (2014) found encouraging signs that intergenerational projects can have positive outcomes for people living with dementia, including on quality of life, stress, positive engagement and social engagement, and on reducing agitation. It may

also be that intergenerational interactions are more positive than uni-generational interactions based on the same activities. Intergenerational reminiscence offers the potential to share traditions, build a sense of shared rootedness in something, to transmit socially important values, and for reducing barriers and improving communication between generations (Chung, 2009; Gaggioli et al. 2014).

Sporting memories entails reminiscence drawing on sports to engage with older people, including those with dementia, and seeking to achieve a range of outcomes for them. The memories may be focused on specific sports clubs that people support, on sports stars or events (such as Wimbledon to the Olympics), or more generally on social history associated with sports, such as sports at school. Obviously, these sources of reminiscence can also be combined.

In previous papers we have described the use of sporting memories and their potential to help with the social inclusion of older people, particularly those suffering from various mental health problems including dementia (Clark et al. 2015). We have also described the potential for training staff in care homes to use sporting memories work to build connections with residents of the homes (Clark et al. forthcoming). This work was focused on older people, i.e. not intergenerational.

The Sporting Memories Network (SMN) was established to promote the use of sports-based reminiscence to help older people. The initial focus was on using the approach to better engage with older people living with dementia to help them have a higher quality of life, especially in care homes. This has since widened as it has become clear that sporting memories work can be employed in many more settings (e.g. community groups and different venues) and has potential to be used to target different outcomes (such as reducing loneliness/isolation). The work has evolved to also take on an increasingly intergenerational perspective in addition to the single-generational approach initially used.

In the rest of this article we will discuss the general and integration lessons from a number of projects that the SMN has been engaged in to promote intergenerational work using sports-based reminiscence. These initiatives have happened in existing sporting memories groups (in which younger people have been added as participants), related to collating memories of sports events (e.g. the London 2012 Olympics and the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow) and connected to sports clubs. The intergenerational work has to a degree been *ad hoc*, working with commissioners of services and sports organisations as opportunities have arisen. It has, though, increasingly taken on a high profile and focus of its own beyond the generation-focused reminiscence work as evidence has begun to accrue of its impact. This evidence has thus far developed by experience and reflection, drawing on direct examples of intergenerational working and extrapolation from the generational sporting memories work, and an evaluation report by Cronin (n.d.).

Intergenerational projects have included (all websites accessed 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016):

- the 2012 Spirit of the Games work (<http://www.spiritofthegames.co.uk/>) entailed activities bring together generations to share their memories of the Games. From this work the SMN created toolkits and activities to run sporting memories events to connect generations drawing on their memories of the 2012 Olympics.
- Rugby memories projects ([www.rugbymemories.org.uk](http://www.rugbymemories.org.uk)) in which individual rugby clubs have been supported to develop intergenerational projects. Examples have included a youth team in a club leading work to collate the history of the club, which resulted in connections being built across the generations at the club, the younger members developing skills, and a shared cohesion, heritage and identity for the club.
- Work in Scotland as part of the Commonwealth Games legacy ([http://www.sportingmemoriesnetwork.com/d1222/glasgow\\_2014\\_commonwealth\\_games\\_memories\\_day](http://www.sportingmemoriesnetwork.com/d1222/glasgow_2014_commonwealth_games_memories_day)) which especially focused on a memories day co-organised with a university to bring together students, older people already in memories groups, people involved in the Commonwealth Games, and others to share their memories of the Games.
- a British Open golf project in East Lothian ([http://www.sportingmemoriesnetwork.com/d1086/dirleton\\_primary\\_school\\_intergenerational\\_muirfield\\_memories](http://www.sportingmemoriesnetwork.com/d1086/dirleton_primary_school_intergenerational_muirfield_memories)) in which pupils of a local school collected memories about the Open championship from people older than themselves.
- In Bristol a group of students from a local school and participants recruited from local care homes came together for a day of activities, including sporting activities, displays and stalls, and an exhibition of local sporting memories and photographs (see Cronin n.d.). Around 70 older people attended, many with complex conditions including dementia. For the students the day was the culmination of activities (such as preparing for the exhibition and the event) aimed at helping them develop leadership and other skills for their future careers.
- Also in Bristol, 8 pupils from a local school worked with a local sporting memories group for one afternoon per week over 6 weeks. They collaborated on developing an exhibition of sporting memories (used at the event in the previous example) drawing on oral histories of participants in the memories group and materials from an archive.

These cases using sporting memories work for intergenerational activities produced a range of resources, including toolkits and guidance of further implementation, and memories being recorded to be made available through the SMN website to be used in other sporting memories groups.

Some general lessons from this work are the sporting memories approach to intergenerational interventions can be the focus for forming good interactions across generations, that a range of outcomes can be achieved, that local, bottom-up initiatives work well, and that it can be used flexibly (including modes of one-off contact and of

repeated contacts). Outcomes achieved included intergenerational contact as an end in itself, those focused on the younger people (including enjoyment, developing skills and a greater sense of empowerment and achievement, and challenging perceptions and expectations of older people (some living with dementia)), and those for the older participants (including pleasure, and connections helping to reduce feelings of loneliness). These outcomes relate to many of the theories discussed above, often several within the span of an individual intergenerational initiative. Of course, these projects themselves do not demonstrate the degree to which any of these outcomes were sustained. More is needed to examine the outcomes that may be achieved, how to do this, and what works in the short and longer term.

These projects also highlighted insights for integrated working for such intergenerational activities. Our reflections on these integration lessons are:

- Sporting memories intergenerational work potentially spans a wide range of organisations including sporting clubs, sporting charities (some of whom funded the work described above), educational organisations (e.g. schools and universities), and existing groups for older people. Some of these, such as a sports club, may be good locations for intergenerational work if their membership fairly naturally spans generations and, although some support may be needed to link these generations, they may require little to no integrated working with others. Others of those organisations involved in the SMN work were specific to a generation, such as schools, and, hence, provided little natural opportunity for intergenerational contact. Work in these contexts required some degree of integrated agreement, planning and working to produce the intergenerational contact. Thus far the SMN work has generated this integration on the basis of the shared enthusiasm of the organisations involved in the schemes, as is typical in many pilots of integrated working. More generalised roll-out of sporting reminiscence, or similar intergenerational work, may not be able to rely on such a high degree of shared-enthusiasm. In these circumstances it would be interesting to see if other means of securing agreement and integration can be successfully deployed, such as contractual agreements.
- The element of enjoyment seems to have been important to securing and sustaining the integrated commitment behind those projects that required it. Not only was this the ability of organisations to see “their” group of people enjoying the sporting memories intergenerational work, but also of the staff involved to collectively share in the sense the enjoyment from the activities.
- Funders of intergenerational work may not always be traditional funders/commissioners of health, social care or educational activities for young and older people. Much of the work described above was supported by sports clubs themselves, sports charities, and by charities with a broad social remit, for example the Big Lottery and Comic Relief. This latter group of organisations may be more

readily placed to understand the broader focus of intergenerational work and, hence, to support developmental, pilot and proof-of-concept work in this area than organisations with a specific focus on an age-defined client group, who may be too closely focused on specific outcomes for their client group. This could make the first steps in securing integrated working easier to achieve, as the hurdle of deciding whose budget(s) will pay for the work has been overcome. This is an issue worth further investigation as finding pump-priming money for social innovations such as intergenerational work can be challenging. This developmental work also allows time to develop the narratives and evidence to convince generationally-defined organisations of the benefits of supporting intergenerational work and show how they might integrate their work to achieve this.

- There remains, though, the challenge of ensuring the sustainability of intergenerational work (either as specific projects or interventions or as a more general concept) and integration. It can be challenging for a small, relatively new organisation like SMN to continue to lead on innovations in integrated intergenerational work at the same time as manage projects, chase funding, and try to collate the learning across projects. In addition to the social innovation funding discussed in the previous point, there is a need to consider the sustainability of intergenerational work and how to secure the experience of organisations like SMN to help others to most efficiently start such projects. Given the prevailing landscape of how organisations are funded this will require more integrated working across them to plan and fund a secure basis for intergenerational work.
- Understanding the mix of skills and experience in an intergenerational project and how to integrate these is an evolving area of understanding. In these case studies the SMN bought the experience of using sports-based reminiscence. The Network is increasingly bringing the specific knowledge of intergenerational working to projects. Other parties added their knowledge of working with older people or of educational work with young people. It is crucial to work out at what stages each area of expertise needs to be integrated in the project. Integrated working prior to the intergenerational contact was, for example, a crucial area in some of the projects discussed above. Young people had to be fully prepared by those with knowledge of dementia to understand what to expect when meeting someone with the condition and what the communication challenges might be.
- In some of the intergenerational work the initial interaction has been an opportunity to establish contact with people, such as isolated older men, and to use this as an opportunity to refer them to other support if needed. This aspect of using intergenerational work to integrate assessments and follow-up services is something that requires further investigation.
- Evaluation, in particular, can be a challenge for intergenerational projects, and especially for an organisation like SMN seeking to deliver projects and chase income (Cronin n.d.). Ensuring an evaluation plan that satisfies all parties and their interests

in the project can be difficult. Having an evaluation that has the time to look beyond outcomes to understand the processes of integrated working in the project may also challenge the commitment of funders of IP. The SMN has collected a large archive of materials about their work, including testimonials and content for sporting memories archives. But this is not independent material collating the range of (positive and potentially negative) impacts of the work and the in-depth analysis of integration. It can also be challenging as partners, such as schools and care homes, can want different outcomes information. Where longer-term relationships are a key target outcome from the work this can add extra complexity to tracking outcomes. Generally individual projects are small in scale (linked to funding opportunities) and so generating generalizable outcomes data can be very challenging. There may be possibilities to aggregate data across similar projects, but this requires planning and anticipation of the opportunity to collect data when it may not be known what projects are coming through in the medium term. The challenges of collecting data from particular client groups (perhaps older people unable to articulate their answers) can be time consuming, as can other elements of the research process, such as obtaining ethical approval and ensuring informed consent. These are all difficult to manage when projects are small scale.

The SMN is still in the process of learning how to articulate its activities and goals in relation to the different parties needed to be integrated in its intergenerational work, including funders. This, and experience from similar intergenerational work, needs to be more systematically evaluated, codified and shared to help others to short-circuit the processes of learning. Understanding how to develop narratives that cut across traditional age-defined boundaries of organisations, services and practitioners is experience that has been hard-gained, especially so for a small organisation that is probably typical in scale to those that have specific experience for intergenerational work.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper we have sought to examine some issues for integrated working in intergenerational projects and, more crucially, to raise discussion about these. We have seen that from the perspectives of both practical considerations and theoretical understanding of intergeneration work it is a highly complex activity. The range of possible outcomes, processes and settings for IP make it very challenging to clearly articulate the case for integrated working across services and organisations that in many cases have boundaries defined by age-specific categories. It is not always clear why a service for older people would want to invest its (often stretched) resources in a project that has a significant part of its goals aimed at a group of young people, and vice versa for younger people's services. Integrated working for more intergenerational practice requires some flexibility and wider perspective to understand outcomes than is generally common across current boundaries. Whilst commitment to wider social goals, such as community-level outcomes

and longer-term issues like the intergenerational contract may operate at a commonsense level, they are not easily operationalised across age-defined service boundaries.

We have added to the debate and understanding about integrated working in intergenerational projects by drawing on experience from the Sporting Memories Network and its use of sports-based reminiscence for building connections across generations. This has raised some interesting insights about funding issues and evaluations for integrated IP, but more work is needed to understand integrated working in these and other modes of intergenerational work.

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