

InCommon

Impact Report 2022-2023



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Foreword

This past year at InCommon has been one full of delight, purpose and togetherness.

In our first full year as a registered charity, we have been busy behind the scenes strengthening our governance, onboarding new trustees, and embedding our transition from a founder-led organisation to a co-owned model as a charity.

We are at our best when we do things together and want to maintain this ideal as a cornerstone of our governance. This spring we hosted our first Vision Day as a charity, bringing together InCommon's founders, staff team, trustees and advisors to collectively set our new strategic objectives. We also hosted our first Intergenerational Panel, giving programme participants – younger and older – a space to contribute their invaluable insights and experience into our governance. We are also actively looking to recruit someone with lived experience to our board.

We have also been busy on the ground, bringing delight to over 500 programme participants. It has been a real joy watching intergenerational friendships blossom, particularly through our flagship programme Connect.

Now in its fifth year, the programme continues to regularly bring primary school children and older social housing residents together throughout the year, offering a space for shared learning and companionship.

Older and younger people have also forged some delightful connections through our social action projects. Together they have championed fundraising efforts, advocacy campaigns and deepened their understanding of social issues that touch their communities.

We want to be able to scale our impact in a sustainable, community-led way. So, it has been full steam ahead working to develop a digital platform to allow primary schools and retirement homes to deliver their own intergenerational projects with our resources. We have entered phase two of the project, and we are enjoying building and testing the model with a wider group of pilot locations.

Thank you for joining us on this journey – we hope you enjoy learning more about our work and its impact in this year's report.

**Anthony Wheeler, Chair
November 2023**

We bring generations together to build connected, inclusive and age-friendly communities.



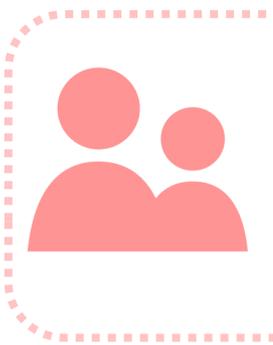
The year at a glance



120 intergenerational workshops



10 London boroughs



220 older people

from 20 retirement schemes

350 younger people

from 20 schools and youth groups



662 hours volunteered by older people



12 intergenerational workshops arranged via our digital platform

Why it matters



INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTION BENEFITS OUR COMMUNITIES

Studies have found that regular contact with children can improve physical and mental health among older people, while reducing social isolation and improving trust within communities. (See United for All Ages publications 'Mixing Matters', 2018, and 'The Next Generation', 2019).



VOLUNTEERING IMPROVES OLDER PEOPLE'S WELLBEING

At InCommon, older people volunteer their time to support children and young people. Recent research has shown that volunteering improves older people's sense of wellbeing and social connection, particularly for those with fewer existing relationships, lower levels of income and education, and poorer health. (See Centre for Better Ageing: 'The State of Ageing', 2019.)



FRIENDSHIP ACROSS GENERATIONS SUCCESSFULLY REDUCES AGEISM

Evidence suggests that negative ideas about ageing begin to develop as young as 6 years old. Friendships across generations are the most effective and reliable form of contact for reducing ageism. (See Royal Society for Public Health: 'That Age Old Question', 2018.)

I love coming down to meet the children. It's the highlight of my day.

OLDER PARTICIPANT, HAYLEY HOUSE

”

Impact at a glance

Older people

91%

report feeling happier after an InCommon workshop

96%

would take part in an InCommon programme again

76%

felt a greater sense of companionship after being part of the programme

100%

of retirement scheme managers would recommend the programme

Schools and young people

100%

of schools would recommend InCommon's programme to another school

93%

of schools reported an increase in communication skills among children and young people after taking part in a programme

100%

of schools said the programme helped children develop empathy/kindness

97%

of children rated the programme 'good' or 'very good'

Challenging ageist stereotypes

In our end of year survey, we asked children to describe the older people they had met at InCommon workshops.

The words written by the children were all positive and a far cry from the negative stereotypes associated with older people, for example, 'boring', 'grumpy' or 'sad'. [1]



Beautiful
Smart **Lovely** **Fun**
Kind **Funny** **Clever**
Creative **curious**
Interesting **Loving**
Respectful

[1] <https://ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-03/Exploring-representations-of-old-age.pdf>

How it works

Activities



Intermediate outcomes



Ultimate goal

InCommon bridges generational divides and builds more inclusive, connected and age-friendly communities

Programmes



All of our programmes are designed to help participants grow in confidence, make friendships, engage in mutual learning experiences, and feel a greater sense of belonging to their communities.

This year, we delivered our Connect and Social Action programmes across 10 London boroughs. We were delighted to be together again in person for our first full year following the Covid-19 pandemic.

How older people take part

Older people participate in our programme as volunteers, offering their time to support young people's social and emotional learning.

We want our programmes to be co-led with our older volunteers so we make time to regularly check in with them. We do this by attending coffee mornings at retirement schemes and holding informal consultations. This is a great opportunity to meet residents at the schemes and gather their ideas on the activities they'd like to do at intergenerational workshops.

We also stay in touch with older volunteers through regular welfare calls. This is a chance for us to ask them about their general wellbeing and also check how they're finding the programme and what they'd like to see more of.

This year, we held 15 consultations and had 204 welfare calls with older participants.

Connect Programme

Connect, our flagship programme, brings communities together by linking up children from primary schools with older volunteers from nearby retirement homes.

We run monthly intergenerational workshops to support mutual learning, exchange and friendships. This year, we returned to fully in person workshops and explored the themes of learning together, creating together and celebrating together.

Over the course of their time together, younger and older people interviewed each other, learned about the world around them and threw their own intergenerational end of year parties

This year, we ran 11 Connect programmes across 9 London boroughs, working with a total of 152 older participants and 198 children.



Feature: Skill Sharing Workshops



In the spring, we ran a brand new workshop where participants shared their skills with the children. Children learned how to juggle, play golf, knit, make cards, do tai chi, understand morse code - and much more!

One of our older participants said: "They had no clue about a lot of the things we showed them, the kinds of things we learned when we were young. I'd like to think we planted a seed in their minds that day so that if and when they see these skills again, they'll be reminded of us."



81% of older people learned more about young people today after taking part in a Connect programme

My grandchildren live far away so these sessions mean I can still engage with younger people. It makes me feel like I am with family.



OLDER PARTICIPANT, RUPERT HOUSE



100% of schools said InCommon's Connect programme offers learning experiences the children wouldn't otherwise have at school

The children learn about what it's like to be an older person. They did yoga with one resident which really challenged the stereotypes we have about older people.



SCHOOL LEAD, HATFEILD PRIMARY SCHOOL



92% of older people felt like they had offered valuable support to the children in their learning

The children keep my brain active, they ask such interesting questions.



OLDER PARTICIPANT, SONALI GARDENS



90% of schools reported an increase in confidence among children after taking part in a Connect programme

The sessions have enabled my relationships with more reserved pupils to flourish. We can talk about the sessions and use them as a tool to get to know each other.



SCHOOL LEAD, HUNGERFORD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Feature: Intergenerational Panel



We were delighted to run our first ever Intergenerational Panel this year. The purpose of the Panel is to provide a mechanism for us to be able to listen to the needs, wants and priorities of the people that we work with and to give them the power to shape InCommon's future for the better.

The first Panel meeting was held in June 2023, and was made up of four older participants from different sheltered housing schemes across London, one scheme manager, one primary school teacher and seven children from Walnut Tree Walk primary school. It was lovely to see the commitment from some of our older volunteers who travelled across London to ensure their voices were heard.

In the first meeting, we collected ideas from participants that would feed directly into workshop design. We discussed what they'd like to see in the future as well as giving everyone an opportunity to think more broadly about what more could be done to connect generations across the UK.

Ideas ranged from bringing children's relatives to sessions to holding an end of year musical concert. There was a unanimous sense that there needs to be more opportunities, more funding and more partnerships to support intergenerational work.

At the Panel, I saw genuine involvement and dedication of the people around InCommon. I had a conversation with the Chair and he made me feel like I have a lot to offer society after I retire. It made me stop and think about what's possible.

HAVOVI, OLDER PARTICIPANT AND INTERGENERATIONAL PANEL MEMBER

Social Action Programme

Our Intergenerational Social Action programme brings younger and older generations together to make a positive difference on the issues that affect their local communities and wider society.

It encourages a participant-led, purposeful and reciprocal approach to social change, where young and old come together to tackle a social issue that they both care about and explore different ways to create lasting impact.

Our third year of the programme saw us build on the successes of previous years. We delivered four programmes across three boroughs in London, working with over 100 young people and older volunteers as well as supporting youth groups across the UK to develop their own intergenerational social action programmes.

This year, we ran 4 Social Action programmes across 3 London boroughs, working with a total of 44 older volunteers and 105 young people.



Feature: Celebrating Alice's 100th birthday



On the 1st December, our intergenerational social action group in Bow gathered to celebrate Gawthorne Court resident Alice's 100th birthday. After two years of friendship, this was an important milestone for the group. There was cake, karaoke and lots of conversation.

One of the younger participants from Spotlight Youth Centre said: "My favourite memory from Gawthorne Court was when Alice turned 100 and she received a letter from the Royal Family. It made me happy that she was appreciated."



of older people would recommend the Social Action programme to a friend

In these workshops we've been able to step into the young people's worlds and learn about what's really happening out there.

”

OLDER PARTICIPANT, GAWTHORNE COURT



of schools said that young people taking part in the Social Action programme felt like they were making a difference

I've learnt about other people in need, such as when we learnt about the Cost of Living Crisis and what we can do to support them.

”

YOUNGER PARTICIPANT, SPOTLIGHT YOUTH CENTRE



of older people felt happier after taking part in a Social Action workshop

If I didn't come here, I wouldn't speak to anyone all day, apart from the TV. I love speaking with the children. They make me laugh.

”

OLDER PARTICIPANT, GAWTHORNE COURT



of schools said that young people learned about personal and local history after taking part in the programme

I live with my grandparents but they don't speak English. The residents are like extra grandparents, I can communicate with and learn from.

”

YOUNGER PARTICIPANT, SPOTLIGHT YOUTH CENTRE

Feature: Raise our Voices Lower Prices



This year younger and older people came together to create their own cost of living crisis campaign #RaiseOurVoicesLowerPrices. They developed key campaigning skills including writing speeches, letters to their local MP, designing information posters, as well as scripting and filming a powerful video to support their campaign.

As part of their campaign, the young people worked in partnership with Age UK, distributing resources to the older residents to help inform them about the support available if they are struggling to pay heating bills this winter.

They also ran their own intergenerational fundraising campaign to raise money for Depaul, a youth homeless charity. Younger and older participants made cards, knitted blankets and baked cakes, raising more than £200.



If there's one thing I take away from these sessions it's that the future is in safe hands.

OLDER PARTICIPANT, GEROGUE PADMORE HOUSE

Elaine

OLDER PARTICIPANT, DOLIFFE CLOSE



I've always enjoyed being around kids. I see my grandchildren on a weekly basis and I look after them regularly. What I like about InCommon's workshops is that I get to be around different children. Mitcham has a diverse community - there are lots of different experiences and personalities to learn from.

One child that stands out for me is a Spanish boy. He had recently moved to Mitcham from Spain and English wasn't his first language. Over the course of the sessions, I saw him grow in confidence and I felt like I helped with that, supporting him with his language and breaking down words.

I vividly remember telling him my family were from Spain and he had a big grin on his face - this is something we had in common.

InCommon is now my most regular volunteering activity. I've volunteered at other places but it tends to be more light touch, just when they need me. As a volunteer, I've enjoyed being a part of the children's learning, helping them think outside of the box and share their ideas.

I also attended the Intergenerational Panel, which was interesting - especially meeting children from different boroughs.

I vividly remember telling him my family were from Spain and he had a big grin on his face - this is something we had in common.



James

OLDER PARTICIPANT, QUEEN ELIZABETH HOUSE

I've not taken part in anything like this before, so I was intrigued. I'm a social person and I like meeting new people, but I don't have that many interactions with young people. There's my grandnephew who's 18, but he's not that young any more!

The workshops are a great joy. I always leave them feeling uplifted. They have definitely enhanced my life and others too. In this retirement home, we're 43 or 44 elderly (or not so elderly people - some of us are quite young), but we are all living separate lives so it's wonderful to get the chance to meet others and be social. It's an organic thing and it's really nice.

It's great for the kids to be able to relate to different types of people that they might not normally meet. They like to know about what we've been up to and our past. They are very curious - curious in the sense that they want to know more (in latin 'cur' means why). The children are a bright bunch. They're very clued up and they've taught me to be humble.

I know we won't work with the same children next time, but you never know when we might bump into each other. The French have an expression: le monde est petit - the world is a small place.



The workshops are a great joy. I always leave them feeling uplifted. They have definitely enhanced my life.

”

Geraldine

OLDER PARTICIPANT, TRINITY HOSPITAL



I was excited to join the intergenerational workshops, especially having worked at a school for 20 years. There is a bit of a divide between older and younger people. Younger people usually talk to younger people and older people talk to older people, so when I heard about the project I thought it was a brilliant idea. Absolutely brilliant.

Having the children come along and show an interest in older people's stories was so special. We really enjoyed the children's company and I loved every workshop. After each session, I would feel exhilarated - on top of the world! My own daughter would often ask to come along.

It was a joy watching the children grow in confidence. You can see the trust form from the very first session. A special moment for me was when we discussed valuable possessions and a little boy told me about a locket with his dad's ashes in it. That he felt safe enough to disclose this with me showed that we'd created a space of trust.

I think when we get older we get less trusting, we put up barriers. To see the children come in with that innocence and trust reminds you to give a bit yourself instead of being cut off, something you can forget as you get older. Spending time with the children has made me feel like part of the wider community.

Having the children come along and show an interest in older people's stories was so special.



Havovi

OLDER PARTICIPANT, THE OAKS

I first got involved with InCommon during the pandemic when we had Zoom calls with children. I enjoyed the calls, but I really enjoy face to face. The workshops are a nice break in the day and they always leave me in a better mood. Myself and the residents will often talk about the children after they have gone.

I like that the workshops are a two way street. I take something away and so do the children. The activities are always interesting. I particularly enjoy the quizzes because I get to use my brain and learn new facts. It's also fascinating to see how young minds work.

They have a mature way of thinking and they're all so different. Some of their comments really surprise me. Often, I think, 'Wow, what makes them say that?'

.....

I like that the workshops are a two-way street. I take something away and so do the children.

”

.....



Sophie*

YOUNGER PARTICIPANT, LESSNESS HEATH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Sophie's teacher said:

The programme has improved Sophie's confidence. Sophie will now happily approach others and start conversations. When she first started, she didn't want to talk to the residents but within just a few visits she was more vocal and enjoyed taking part in the activities. She started asking on a daily basis when the next visit was going to happen! She was often the first one in line on the days that we visited. She built a particularly strong relationship with a resident called David. Her mum said that she would come home and talk about their conversations.

*name changed

Sophie said:

- "I feel more confident putting my hand up in class."
- "I've learned how to talk to new people that I have not met before."

Sophie will now happily approach others and start conversations.



Hassan*

YOUNGER PARTICIPANT, QUEENSBRIDGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Hassan's teacher said:

Hassan has really benefitted from the sessions. He's loved seeing the residents and his confidence has grown, as well as his empathy for others. He has autism, so he can find appropriate social communication challenging to navigate but the sessions scaffolded the types of conversations he could have and supported him to be successful. His personal favourite moment was during a drama session when one of the residents got him a wig to wear and he was acting out a character. Everyone was laughing so much.

Hassan told me that it's important to visit the residents because sometimes they get lonely. He said young people can be like their grand children and help make them happy.

Hassan's confidence has grown, as well as his empathy for others. ”

*name changed



Digital platform



We have continued to develop our digital platform with funding from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) as part of the Healthy Ageing Challenge

The platform enables primary schools and retirement homes to schedule and run their own intergenerational workshops and access free online resources. Aimed at making such projects easier to set up and deliver, it allows us to extend our reach outside of London and connect more people across the generations.

This was our second year working on the platform after developing the first iteration in March 2022. In March 2023, we hired our first full time staff member to manage the development of the platform and run our second round of piloting.

This year, we continued working with Clarion Housing Group to pilot the platform and also partnered with Orbit Homes. Our aim has been to work with more communities, and we've now grown the pilot from six locations to 20.

One teacher involved in the pilot commented on the usability of the platform. She said: "It's so easy to use. It makes planning the sessions no hassle at all, everything I need is in one place."

It is encouraging to see the positive impact the platform has had so far on communities and individuals. We are continuing to learn a lot from the process and are looking forward to continuing to scale our work and bring the benefits of intergenerational connection to more communities across the UK.

Looking ahead



We are currently working on a strategy that will drive forward the next two years of InCommon's work. We are proud of what we have achieved so far and are excited about InCommon's future as a sustainable charity.

We are looking to improve our programmes and understand our impact better. Over the next two years, we will develop an intergenerational methodology and a robust evidence base for our programme.

We are also committed to our anti-prejudice work and embedding this into every area of the organisation.

We know that there is more that we can do to engage people from marginalised communities (those that have the most to benefit from intergenerational connection) and this will be a big priority for our Programme Team.

We believe in collaborating with the wider intergenerational sector and building a positive movement in the UK for bringing generations together. This year we continued to co-facilitate online opportunities for intergenerational organisations to meet and share ideas and best practice, attended by representatives from over 20 organisations in this space, and we're keen to prioritise growing these strong relationships going forward.

We're looking forward to everything that the new year brings – but most of all, to creating more intergenerational connections in inclusive, age-friendly spaces throughout our communities.

InCommon's Team

InCommon Team

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Premila Sattianayagam
Alan Morton

Thanks & Acknowledgements

Thank you to all our younger and older participants.

Our housing partners and funders

Clarion Futures, Orbit Homes, The Guinness Partnership, Places for People, Peabody, Sovereign Network Group, St Hilda's East Community Centre, United Saint Saviour's Charity, Wandle Housing Association, Innovate UK (UKRI), #iwill Fund, The Mercers' Charitable Foundation, Merton Giving, McCarthy Stone Foundation, Tower Hamlets Community Fund, School of Social Entrepreneurs

Our school and youth group partners

Belleville Primary School, Hatfeild Primary School, Jenny Hammond Primary School, Hungerford Primary, Langdon Park School, Lessness Heath Primary School, Liberty Primary School, London Meed Primary, Southway Junior School, Spotlight, St Alfege with St Peter's C of E Primary School, St Margaret's Lee Primary School, St Mary C of E Primary, St Mary and St Michael Catholic Primary School, St Nicholas Primary School, St Paul's Slade Green Primary School, St Winifred's Primary School, Walnut Tree Walk Primary School, Warden Park Primary, William Davis Primary School, Queensbridge Primary School

Our friends

Allia, DIF Capital Partners, Spring Impact, UnLtd, Year Here, Second Home, Split Banana, 4GOOD