SCHOLARSHIP

We encourage readers to consider submitting papers that inform us of their work and interest in intergenerational program development, research, and policy. We welcome papers that reflect how intergenerational concepts can be integrated within multiple academic disciplines and can contribute to collaborative efforts within human service and community development initiatives. We look for submissions that examine a variety of research questions that will provide insights about intergenerational relations in formal and informal settings and that explore the social and global implications of this growing area of inquiry.
Recreating Social Capital:
Intergenerational Programmes
and Bridging Networks:
An English Model–Phase 1

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ABSTRACT. This paper describes the establishment of a pilot neighbourhood-based intergenerational programme and its evaluation in one town in England. It sets this in both the context of English intergenerational programmes involving schools and of English social policy. The latter is currently influenced by Putnam’s concept of social capital. It argues that intergenerational programmes of all kinds are likely to be useful contributions to the development of social capital. The paper reports how the evaluation of the pilot has lead to the refinement of
the original model. The pilot highlighted the need for more systematic measures of the process and outcomes, including the project’s contribution to development of social capital. The revised model is being implemented in a number of contrasting neighbourhoods and will be evaluated in both outcome and process terms. These developments will be reported in further articles. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <http://www.HaworthPress.com> © 2004 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

**KEYWORDS.** Social capital, schools, neighbourhood programme, evaluation, development

**SOCIAL CAPITAL AND THE ENGLISH POLICY CONTEXT**

The concept of social capital has become significant in the development of English social policy in the last five years. It has been argued that social capital is declining in many countries. The evidence for the UK is ambiguous. Some indicators show decline, such as social trust. Others such as volunteering appear stable. Aldridge and Halpern (2002) summarise the evidence that is available to demonstrate the many beneficial effects the generation of social capital appears to have. These are economic effects and social outcomes that include, for example, high levels of growth in GDP, higher educational attainment, lower levels of crime and better health.

Social Capital refers “to connections among individuals—social networks and the norms and reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (Putnam, 1999, p. 19). Putnam describes two main types of social capital, that which is bonding or exclusive and that which is bridging or inclusive. He cites as his examples of bonding social capital: ethnic organisations; church-based reading groups and fashionable country clubs. Writing in the American context he gives as examples of bridging social capital: the civil rights movement and many youth service groups and ecumenical religious organisations. Bonding social capital reinforces reciprocity and solidarity within groups, to the exclusion of those outside these groups, providing significant psychological, social and economic support for group members. Bridging networks, he argues, are better for linkage to external assets and for information diffusion. Intergenerational programmes in whatever form they take would
seem to be excellent examples of the bridging form of social capital. It is significant that they not link the old and the young but that these groups are equally undervalued in many industrial societies. Intergenerational programmes clearly provide a possible bridge between what are currently exclusive networks. Putnam’s definition of bridging social capital describes intergenerational programmes well. He states that “to build bridging social capital requires that we transcend our social and political and professional identities to connect with people unlike ourselves” (Putnam, 2000, p. 411).

Commenting on policy developments in England, Aldridge and Halpern (2002) have pointed out that a range of existing policies and programmes contribute to the accumulation of “beneficial social capital” even if they are not necessarily articulated in social capital terms (p. 57). They cite, for example, the Connections Service, which was rolled out in England between 2002 and 2003 and which will give all young people aged 13-19 a personal adviser who can offer help with choosing courses and careers. Another policy, which exemplifies their argument and which they cite, is the home zones policy to restrict access to residential streets by vehicles not owned by residents. The Government’s youth and senior volunteering programmes (the Millennium Volunteers and the Experience Corps, respectively) promote existing community links via voluntary organisations. Current poverty programmes are designed to increase returns to work. The citizenship education programme, which has become part of the national curriculum, focuses on the importance of active citizenship.

Aldridge and Halpern (2000) state, “social capital underpins a healthy and functioning democracy, both locally and nationally” (p. 52). It is arguable that intergenerational programmes and the systematic evaluation of these can make a significant contribution to both the development of social capital and our understanding of the mechanisms for this development. Exploring and developing better research methods that focus on the benefits of intergenerational programmes can contribute to the development of measures to help us evaluate social capital.

Yet, in all of the policy documents of the last ten years in England, little if anything is to be seen in relation to intergenerational programmes. These programmes take many forms. They have been growing in number as well as variety, in England and more widely in the UK. Granville’s survey reported in 2000 a wide range of programmes bringing together older people and children in both the primary and secondary school sectors in England. Not all of these involved the older citizens directly in the life of the schools themselves. Age Concern England had estab-
lished a unit specifically to develop these kinds of programmes. The unit, TransAge Action, has reported on the outcomes of a number of these programmes some of which involve schools as the settings for programme (Ivers, 1999). Magic Me, a London-based programme established 10 years ago, has involved a number of schools with older people in the neigbourhood on a range of arts projects. In these the pupils visit the older people in their homes (Langford and Mayo, 2001). Other programmes involve older people directly in activity within the school. The longest established of these in England is the Generations in Action programme started by the Salford Education Business Partnership. More recently, the Beth Johnson Foundation Year 7 Intergenerational Mentoring has been established and reported on (Granville, 2000). Nelson (2001) describes how a sheltered housing complex for older people was the initiator of a series of different kinds of intergenerational programmes with both primary and secondary schools in the City of Salford in England. These included history telling, a drama project and a gardening project. Nelson reports on the importance of planning prior to contact between the generations as a crucial element in successful contact and on the positive outcomes for the pupils and older people in the projects. Similarly, positive outcomes are identified both by Ivers and Granville for the older volunteers and the children involved in the projects that they evaluated.

Intergenerational programmes and projects both school based and operating in other settings have been growing in number in England. However, the significance of this growth of intergenerational projects for the development of social capital seems to have been overlooked. Research about them has been thin on the ground. The project described below focuses on the school as a key neighbourhood community institution (Hobman, 1993). The model established in this pilot programme draws on community development theories and was planned from the outset to be evaluated both in outcome and process terms. The pilot project is designed as the first step in identifying the sustainable elements of school-based intergenerational projects and the outcomes for all of the parties involved.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEIGHBOURHOOD-BASED INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMME: PHASE ONE

The programme, whose evaluation in its initial phase of development is described in the rest of this paper, both promotes social capital and
builds upon its existence in a neighbourhood. It is focused around local schools in the primary and secondary sector. In England the split between primary and secondary schooling usually occurs when the child is aged 11 and proceeds to a secondary school. Sometimes these are selective. Admission to them is by examination or interview only. Sometimes the secondary schools are accessible to all children in a local neighbourhood. In the Borough of 200,000 people in which this intergenerational development occurred there were different kinds of secondary schools. At the inception of this programme a selective school with two feeder primary schools within one mile of each other were identified as component schools for the programme. The programme was given the name INTERGEN and set-up in 1998, following a pilot in one school in 1996. The objectives included:

- reducing the social isolation of older people,
- increasing their engagement in the community,
- breaking down intergenerational stereotypes,
- and bring young and older people closer together.
- to locate the activity to do this in three schools in a clearly defined neighbourhood.
- to enable the generations within our local community to learn from each other and through this improve their quality of life.
- to increase fun and pleasure through mutually valued contacts in an educational setting.
- to promote partnerships between education and the voluntary (not for profit) sector, and young and older citizens by building effective links between retired older people and children and teachers in schools.

A Steering Group was established, comprising staff from the three schools, and members of local agencies and organisations that could be expected to have an interest in the project. A voluntary Co-ordinator was appointed to liaise with the schools and recruit volunteers.

The procedure for selecting volunteers was first to approach the schools and find out what they wanted the volunteers would do. These requirements were then matched to the skills of the volunteers, and to their willingness to carry out the tasks.

**EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT**

This paper covers two distinct phases of the project, planning (September 1998-August 1999) and operations (September 1999-July 2000). For
clarity these are referred to below as the Planning Year and the Operational Year.

**METHODOLOGY**

An independent researcher was commissioned to evaluate the project and study the effects on schools, children and volunteers. Since the project was small and new, a mainly qualitative approach was taken so that detailed descriptions of process and progress could be generated, which would be useful in replicating the project and in designing a larger evaluation study at a later date. Data were collected at specific points during the Operational Year as follows:

- Observations of Steering Group meetings, meetings with volunteers, and end-of-term INTERGEN gatherings.
- Individual interviews with volunteers, teachers and Steering Group members.
- Group interviews with a class of secondary school pupils.
- Observations of class discussion periods (‘Circle Time’) in three classes in a primary school when the subject of ‘Older People’ was under discussion.
- A Social Relationships questionnaire, designed to measure volunteers’ sense of engagement in their local community, administered at the start and end of the Operational Year. This was based on the work of Newman, Faux, and Larimer (1997).
- End-of-year questionnaires sent to volunteers to gather information on their experiences of going into schools.
- End-of-year questionnaires sent to the teachers involved to gather information on their experience of having INTERGEN volunteers in the schools.

At the end of the Operational Year the data were analysed. The field notes, interview responses and end-of-year questionnaire responses were examined and major themes identified. The bulk of the evaluation was written on the basis of this qualitative data. The Social Relationships questionnaire was used to provide information on the volunteers, but because numbers were so small, the pre- and post-test results from this instrument were not included.
FINDINGS AND OUTCOMES

This section is divided into four parts:

1. the effects on the schools;
2. the effects on the children;
3. the volunteers characteristics and effects on them; and
4. organisational issues.

The Effects on the Schools

The schools regarded the project as entirely beneficial:

Now we’re reaping the benefits in our school. We’ve only had good things from it. It’s actually bringing people in and they’re working alongside children. (Primary school Head teacher)

The experience of bringing the volunteers in had led to discussion in one school about the needs of visitors, parents and occasional visitors as well as volunteers. The school had appointed an adult liaison officer, so that visitors had a person to contact if the Head was not available, and had developed a map of the school, to help people get around.

Moreover, the experience with INTERGEN had encouraged staff to think more positively about visitors in the classroom. Recent changes in education regarding technology, numeracy and literacy sometimes left teachers feeling threatened when visitors came into the classroom, because of the number of new skills and procedures they were required to use. The experience with INTERGEN though seemed to be breaking down the reluctance to have visitors.

One Head pointed out how unusual it was for children, and for the school, to have people in it who work at a different pace:

We have one volunteer who comes in. She is very slow in terms of how she moves, and how she responds, and we’ve put her with the little ones. They love it. And in fact we are never slow in the way we respond. We always want that answer now. Often we have just not got the time. (Primary school Head)

For teachers, a further benefit was help with the amount of work they had to do:
The main benefit is that the volunteer has more time to talk to individual children. Also, I would not deny that it is a help for me “getting through” the readers. (Year 4 teacher)

It has helped immensely with my day-to-day tasks and given me a much needed extra pair of very capable hands. Almost all aspects of my administration tasks can be tackled by my volunteer. (Secondary school staff member)

As the year went on, it was noticed that the INTERGEN volunteers were becoming better known, especially at the secondary school. Their work was getting talked about, and other teachers were asking for their help, especially for some of the routine tasks associated with information technology. The INTERGEN volunteers, by talking to the staff, were breaking down some of the barriers between professionals and visitors, and by agreeing to work on other things were beginning to change their own job descriptions. Several people attached to the schools reported a change in their perceptions of elderly people as a result of working with the INTERGEN volunteers:

I am used to older people, but not older people who volunteer and want to contribute. Although I knew intellectually they would have a lot to offer, I’m not certain how much I knew they had to offer until I actually got them in and started to talk to them, and realised what a wealth of experience and time they could offer us. (Head)

The Head also reported an initial wariness about how the volunteers would fit with the school.

When we started off, we were very narrow about what we wanted volunteers for. I couldn’t visualise volunteers as classroom assistants, washing out pots. I saw them listening to readers. But it’s widened now because you need to balance their skills and expertise and the things they want to offer with what we wanted. I was wary at first as to whether we were going to be able to match that.

There was some concern that INTERGEN may be asking too much of teachers, in particular that teachers would not want to stay behind after school for the INTERGEN gatherings. However, in practice, this did not seem to be a problem, and even when invitations to one gathering
were limited to “volunteers only,” several teachers attended. When asked, teachers said they had not experienced any problems in having an INTERGEN volunteer in their class or department, and that it had not produced any extra work or extra pressure.

Effects on the Children

Overwhelmingly, the children enjoyed and appreciated the visits of the volunteers, and it was reported that relationships were being built up between volunteers and the children. This was made clear many times during Steering Group meetings and INTERGEN gatherings:

The Head of one of the primary schools informed Mrs L. that the children enjoyed her visits. This was welcome news for Mrs L. She said her experiences in the school have been very enjoyable, and she has been invited to attend the school nativity. She is looking forward to this. (December 1999 Gathering–Field notes)

A real benefit was seen to be the opportunity for young children to develop relationships with older people. Many of the children came from homes where their contact with adults was limited, either by family break-up, large families, sick family members or working parents. The chance for them to talk one-to-one with an adult was seen as very important:

In Year 4 we have extra money for literacy development, and we already have a teaching assistant, which we share between three classes. So we don’t need the volunteer for remedial teaching help. The volunteer listens to any child read, remedial or not, and the real benefit for the child is the opportunity to talk one-to-one with an adult. It’s good for the children’s social development. (Year 4 teacher)

A Head said they had a lot of children who never see their grandparents, and never talk to anyone older than a teacher. She saw it as a particular bonus for them simply to talk to someone older.

In the secondary school, only one volunteer worked directly with children. As an experienced and practising artist, he worked with small groups of Year 8 children in an art class, helping them with a particular project. The children found his relaxed and encouraging approach very stimulating and different from the pressure of class work. They said that
he had taught them some useful techniques and that they enjoyed working with him in the small group situation. They felt they treated him differently from the way they treated teachers. They felt more protective of him, and there was less of a barrier to understanding between them. They also said that they respected his skills, and felt pleased to have a real artist working with them. Although these children were older, the interviews demonstrate that they too appreciated the opportunity to talk at some length with an adult.

Primary school children’s perceptions, collected through the observation of ‘circle time’ class discussions, did not advance the evaluation. Discussions were directed towards older people in general rather than the volunteers in particular, and numbers were too small to provide reliable comparisons between groups which had experience of a volunteer and those which did not.

The Effects on the Volunteers

Information from the Social Relationships Questionnaire suggested that volunteers already had a high level of engagement in the community, and a high sense that they play a part in the community. Thus, for example, as a group, they keep up to date with local issues, they usually feel they can do something to change things, they find it easy to meet new people and have several really close friends. A second set of questions about social activities revealed that as a group, INTERGEN volunteers often see members of their family, or at least keep in touch, that they go out everyday or most days, that they see one person they feel close to at least twice a week if not every day, and that they regularly attend social functions especially religious worship, social clubs, voluntary work, sporting activities and entertainment.

The two volunteers who left the project early differed from those who stayed in that they reported very little engagement in community activities (social clubs, classes, religion, etc.). The numbers here were too small, however, to do more than suggest an avenue to follow up in a larger study. A total of 12 volunteers were recruited.

The primary school volunteers largely wanted to listen to children reading in one-to-one situations. These volunteers were each attached to a class, and the class teacher arranged with them when they would come into the school, and whom they would work with. As time progressed, some of the volunteers with particular skills or interests took on other types of work, and helped with class projects. One volunteer who played the piano helped with the songs for the Christmas production.
Other primary school volunteers had particular interests, which they wanted to pursue from the start, e.g., orienteering skills. Because there were fewer opportunities to work in these areas, the volunteers were encouraged to come into the schools and get to know the children, by working with them on less testing projects. Again, these included one-to-one reading, and one volunteer helped the children to establish a school garden. As the year went on, opportunities arose which fitted in with volunteers’ original requests. One volunteer accompanied a class on a weeklong field trip, and worked with them on field studies and activities.

Whereas all the primary school volunteers worked directly with the children, those at the secondary school generally helped behind the scenes. The exception to this was one man who worked with an art class of 12-13-year-olds, taking one small group at a time and teaching them some of the art skills required for a particular project. The other volunteers in the secondary school helped in the library, and with some of the background requirements of the computing and information technology work of the school.

Christmas and Easter gatherings were held for volunteers and teachers, and were a means of celebrating the work of INTERGEN and bringing people with common interests together that would not normally meet. Food was provided, and entertainment from the volunteers, and there were speeches from the INTERGEN Chair and the Head teachers.

Most of the information from volunteers was gathered through informal discussion with them at INTERGEN gatherings. Some was collected through a questionnaire administered at the end of the project.

One volunteer spoke about his feelings before he had gone into school for the first time.

He said he had felt very nervous and his stomach was churning. Now, after being in the school for a while, he was enjoying it very much, and felt the work done by the students in the school was excellent. (Field notes, April Gathering)

Some of the volunteers spoke about what they actually did in the school.

Mrs. P. said that when she goes into the classroom, the children put their hands up to read to her. She usually listens to six children,
and then goes to Mrs. A.’s class. She takes them to a quiet corner to hear them read, while the teacher gets on with other things. It’s not part of the literacy hour. She says she hears four pages at a time. (Field notes, April Gathering)

Mr. B. works with teachers, doing things they haven’t got time to do, like formatting disks. Mrs. C., sitting next to him, said: “Oh, we’ll turn our hands to anything,” and told me she had swept the floor the other day, because the cleaners don’t go into the central computer area where she works, so it gets left. (Field notes, April Gathering).

Over the year Mrs. C. worked on a variety of tasks: sticking pictures into folders to make project materials, helping to compile a stock-taking list of computer equipment and sorting out PIN numbers with the children. During the year she had moved from the library, which was well staffed, to the computer department, which had more need of her (Field notes, Summer Gathering).

They also felt welcomed by the schools:

It’s a pleasure to come in because we are made so welcome by staff and children. There seem to be no barriers. There could be barriers with volunteers, but they haven’t happened here. It could be edgy and uncomfortable, but it’s not. (Volunteer, April Gathering)

The questionnaire returned by volunteers reported that they found the school staff helpful and could think of no ways in which the schools might have made things easier for them.

Volunteers were not specifically asked why they had joined the project. One woman said she had felt on retiring from a senior post that people felt her working life was over, and that she had looked for stimulation through voluntary activities. The difference between her other activities and INTERGEN was the experience of mixing with young children, and the opportunity to learn new things, such as listening to children read.

One volunteer said that whilst he felt it was good for children to be able to read to him on a one-to-one basis, he could not say whether it helped the children to progress, as this was entirely unlike anything he had done before, he had no other experience to base his judgement on. However, others were clearer about the contribution they were making.
Mrs. L. said “They like me because I’m not a teacher.” She feels she can relate individually to the children, whereas the teacher does not have so much chance to do this. She gave an example of one little girl who wanted to move onto the next reading book, but did not like to ask the teacher, and so Mrs. L. asked for her. The child was pleased and came to Mrs. L. to say thank you. (Field notes, April Gathering)

Two volunteers mentioned the time factor. They come into the school and they have got the time to spend with the children. “We’ve got time. Most adults haven’t.” (Field notes, April Gathering)

Several volunteers mentioned the things they had learned since beginning their work with INTERGEN. In particular they had been faced with some of the realities of modern day life, such as a computer-game generation, which was not so attracted to books, and the prevalence of one-parent families.

One little boy said he was going to his dad’s for a couple of nights. I think it’s terrible, all this divorce and one-parent families. Terrible for the children. (Mrs. L., April Gathering)

Mrs. L. went onto say that she made mistakes when talking to the children. For example, she had been reading a book with a little boy about a boy playing with his dad in the garden, and she asked him about his dad, and he said, “I haven’t got a dad.” She went on to say that she told her daughter about this, and her daughter, who is a teacher, advised her not to mention families or take anything for granted about a child’s background.

It’s so different from when I was a girl. Children had lost a father through death. But you could generally expect children to have two parents. Nowadays I don’t think a lot of children have got two parents. (Mrs. L., April Gathering)

One volunteer had found that some children had very little input from their parents, for various reasons. One family didn’t seem to care and one family was busy visiting the hospital because another child was so ill. “It’s easy to condemn the parents, but often you don’t know the circumstances” (Mrs. H., April Gathering).
Many of the volunteers said that they felt pleased to have the opportunity of getting to know children:

Mrs. C. said she was really enjoying meeting children again. Her own were grown up. She said she was amazed at how big they were—especially the sixth formers.

Mrs. T. says it is rewarding when the children come up to you in the volunteers also talked about their impressions of the school. Unless they had grandchildren themselves, and had taken an active part in their upbringing, none of the volunteers had any familiarity with modern day schools. They were impressed by the general atmosphere of the schools, by the level of commitment of the staff and by the work of the children, and said that they had not realised how much work goes on in a school. (Field notes—December Gathering)

Several volunteers also reported that they got a lot back from the children. One volunteer mentioned to a boy that she never had found out what happened at the end of one of the stories she listened to, because she only ever heard four pages of it. The child went and found the book, and showed her how the story ended. “It wasn’t just me helping the child; it was the child helping me” (Volunteer, April Gathering). Another described a little girl who was worried because a family member was ill:

She can confide in me. I’m like a Granny. I always ask how he is. And then she says to me: “And how are you?” It’s lovely. I get more out of it than I put in. (Volunteer, April Gathering)

One of the aims of the INTERGEN project is to increase the sense of inclusion that volunteers feel in their local community. Two incidents were reported which suggest that to some extent this was happening. On one occasion, a volunteer met one of the children out with his mother, and he said “hello” to her, and told his mother that this was the lady he read to. On another occasion, a volunteer’s dentist rang her to ask for the telephone number of the project. One of her patients had seen the advertisement on her notice board, but by the time he wanted to take the number down, the advertisement had gone.
I thought that was amazing. I’m at home and someone knew I worked for INTERGEN and rang me at home. (Volunteer, April Gathering)

Many of the volunteers commented generally on the positive aspects of working with the schools.

“Getting to know each child is a special pleasure. They are so open and friendly. It restores my faith in humanity.” It’s easy to become selfish in old age. Helping a little in schools puts life in perspective and helps me greatly. (Volunteer, questionnaire response)

The questionnaire found that the benefits reported by volunteers included having the company of young children, acquiring new knowledge and interests, having renewed social confidence and feeling more part of things, and having the opportunity to contribute. This was supported by the findings from the informal observations.

**Organisational Matters**

The organisational structure of the programme evolved over the operational year with (a) differences between the primary and secondary schools emerging as well as (b) issues for the steering group, (c) developmental tensions in the role of the neighbourhood co-ordinator.

**Differences Between the Primary and Secondary Schools**

From the beginning there were clear differences between the primary schools and the secondary school. We have summarised these in Table 1.

It was generally recognised that there were differences, and that it was to be expected that it would be more difficult to attract INTERGEN volunteers to secondary schools, and to keep them there. Two jobs never got filled—managing the ingredients for food technology classes and looking after a prominent notice board . . .

In connection with the size of the schools and their organisation two comments made by the Head teacher of a primary school and the Chair of INTERGEN illustrate the issues.

In the secondary school staff room there can be forty-odd people. We would find it hard to get to know people. Here there are only a few. People chat about their weekends, and outsiders gradually in-
tegrate, but in the secondary school it’s not so easy to get in. (Primary Head teacher)

Primaries are inherently more open than secondary schools. Once a child goes to secondary school, the parent is shut out. So it’s an interesting challenge to see how INTERGEN can be a part of secondary school life. We can’t just pick up a primary school model and plonk it into a secondary school. It just doesn’t work. (The Chair of INTERGEN)

**Issues for the Steering Group**

In the planning year the Steering Group met twelve times to plan and develop the infrastructure for the project. It comprised the Chairman, Head teachers of the primary schools, two senior teachers from the secondary school and representatives from the residential care sector for older people and voluntary organisation Age Concern. Thus, from the beginning, the project was rooted in the knowledge and experience of a group of people with expertise in school organisation and gerontology.

During the planning year, members of the Steering Group began to feel that things were not moving fast enough:

We had a long gestation period which seemed to go on forever and at times we got pretty frustrated with it, because we just wanted to get these volunteers and get them in. In retrospect, I think we did it right. (Head teacher)

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<th>Primary Schools</th>
<th>Secondary Schools</th>
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<td>Requested all volunteers to work with the children, e.g., listening to children read, play piano</td>
<td>Requested volunteers to work behind the scenes, e.g., managing library books, information technology and notice boards</td>
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<td>Schools were represented on Steering Group by Head teachers</td>
<td>School represented on Steering Group by two senior staff members</td>
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<td>Already experienced in working with outsiders (e.g., students doing projects and parents)</td>
<td>Little previous experience of working with outsiders inside the school</td>
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<td>Small staff group makes it easier for new people to integrate</td>
<td>Large staff group can make it hard for new people to join in</td>
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The Head teacher went on to explain that a lot of procedures needed to be put in place. Although both the primary schools had experience of having volunteers in, they were usually parents who knew them, not strangers. The secondary school did not have the same experience of volunteers. “It’s very different bringing somebody in who doesn’t know the school doesn’t know the way we work and doesn’t know the staff.”

Developmental Tensions in the Role of the Neighbourhood Co-Ordinator

The Project Co-ordinator on appointment joined the Steering Group. The Co-ordinator was herself retired, had a background of administrative and organising experience and voluntary work. There had been some hope that funds could be raised to pay the Co-ordinator, but bids were unsuccessful, and the job remained a voluntary one throughout the period of the study. Therefore, the role of the neighborhood co-ordinator and co-coordinator were assumed by one person integrating both paid and voluntary responsibilities.

The duties of the Co-ordinator were set out in a document that contained a job description and person specification approved by the Human Resources Department of the Local Education Authority. On a practical basis, much of the organisation of the project was either done by her, or through her. In the operational year there emerged problems with the clarity of the role and some confusion over the authority and nature of the role and communication. Although the job did have terms of reference, there was nevertheless a lack of clarity about the role, which resulted in the Co-ordinator being unsure about her authority to act in certain situations and passing some decisions up to the Chair.

The work of co-ordinating the project was formally expected to take up about one and a half days a week. However, since the job did not fall neatly into a one and a half day slot, the Co-ordinator found herself spending a higher proportion of her time on INTERGEN work than was originally anticipated and INTERGEN became a major focus of her energy and attention.

At the same time, the Chair and members of the Steering Group had numerous other calls on their time. For them, INTERGEN was only one of the many interests they have, and cannot always be given top priority. Since the authority was vested in the Chair and the Steering Group, a situation thus arose wherein the person who spends the most time and energy on the project seems to have had the least authority to act, and was regularly in the position of trying to contact busy people to ask their advice.
Essentially, the continuity of the INTERGEN project was achieved through the work of the Co-ordinator who provided a consistent point of contact for everyone involved. In both a practical and symbolic sense, the Co-ordinator held the project together, and allows everyone else to attend to other things, knowing that the day-to-day management of INTERGEN was taken care of. One of the difficulties for the Co-ordinator was that at times she was expected to manage INTERGEN, while the Chair and Steering Group got on with their other work, and at other times, for example, at meetings or in decision-making, she was expected to take a more supportive role.

Another lack of clarity about the role concerned the amount of contact the Co-ordinator should have with volunteers once they are settled in the schools. As much as possible the Co-ordinator pursued a policy of non-interference.

I feel there’s a relationship between me and the volunteers and if there was a problem, either the volunteer or the school could ring me up. I’m in the middle and both of them could come and appeal to me. That’s the role I see I have as a Co-ordinator. To iron out problems, not to interfere. (Co-ordinator, August 2000)

However, she began to wonder whether others expected her to be more pro-active in monitoring the progress of volunteers. Again there was a lack of clarity or explicit agreement over how exactly she should carry out the role, and this was felt to be unsettling. The situation was exacerbated by what the Co-ordinator perceived as a difference between the relationship she had with the two primary schools, and the relationship she had with the secondary schools. The secondary school was more distant, more difficult to communicate with, and she was not always sure that the school would contact her if a problem arose. She had become aware that the hands-off policy relied heavily on the willingness of the schools to monitor and assess the situation of the volunteers, and report any difficulties, and could foresee problems arising if this chain of communication was to break down.

A further problem for the Co-ordinator was a feeling that she lacked information about certain issues. Regular monthly meetings were held between the Chair of the Steering Group and the Co-ordinator, but nevertheless there were times when information did not get from one to the other and the outcome was that the Co-ordinator found some aspects of the job difficult to manage because whilst she expected to have up-to-date information, she did not always feel she possessed it.
The co-ordinator’s interview responses suggested that there has been a “natural rhythm” to the INTERGEN year, in that the work swung between the activity and “buzz” of working with the volunteers, and the slower, more isolated work of profile-raising, recruitment, talks to organisations and advertising. Whilst the first provided a sense of progress, community and achievement, the second being necessarily quieter and more isolated, did not and as a consequence there were periods in the year when the Co-ordinator had felt uncomfortably “in limbo.”

The foregoing may give the impression that the work of the Co-ordinator was entirely problematic. This was not the case. Two quotes collected on different occasions illustrate how the Co-ordinator, saw herself as not only an organiser, but also a beneficiary of the INTERGEN project.

As a result of being on INTERGEN, they’ve put me forward to be on the AGM of the Council of Voluntary Services. They nominated me and I got on. As a result of that I’ve now found myself on the Elderly People’s Forum, on the Millennium Committee, on this thing and that thing. So in the end, yes it has filled a gap and given me an interest. I’ve enjoyed doing it and met a lot of people. And going into the schools has opened my eyes a lot. I’m really impressed with them. (December 1999)

I’ve enjoyed it so much. All the friends I’ve made have been wonderful. I know they support me as much as I support them. (August 2000)

**DISCUSSION**

Whilst the evaluation of the project was able to show benefits to older people and teachers and to some extent the pupils in the schools it clearly identified significant organisational issues and research evaluation issues.

The organisational issues are key to the sustainability of any social capital development. Looked at in social capital terms the difficulties in recruiting volunteers have much to do with the bonding nature of the social capital in which they are invested. The separation of the current worlds of older and younger people and the exclusion of older people from central community institutions such as schools except
as passive recipients of annual entertainments is a strong inhibitor for older people to become involved in school-based intergenerational programmes. Exploring ways of overcoming this would generate the kind of linking social capital that intergenerational programmes represent.

Key in sustainability too appears to be the voluntary nature of the key role of neighbourhood Co-ordinator. The significance of the confusion surrounding this role both in terms of its content and the issue of whether it should be a paid or voluntary role was well highlighted in the research evaluation. In the development of the role fund raising elements have been removed and focus is on recruitment and retention of volunteers with the support of the Development Manager. The Steering Group has become a strategic body.

The evaluation clarified the problems of research instrumentation and the issues surrounding the numbers of volunteers in the project from the point of view of decent research design. This forced a concentrated effort on the part of the researchers involved in the programme to explore other methods of obtaining information both about process and outcomes for all of the stakeholders and to consider a design which would enable the small numbers of people in the programme to be taken account of.

**SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS**

The Steering Group following this evaluation agreed to a Business and Development Plan. Clarification of the Co-ordinator’s role was agreed and funding was obtained for a Development Manager post. The model was rolled out into two contrasting neighbourhoods. Exploration of systematic measures of the impact on older people in terms of their health and social isolation were identified and the measure of social stereotyping developed by Newman and her colleagues (1997) was determined as the preferable way of exploring the reduction in stereotypical behaviour of children about older adults and a version of this for older adults was developed. A measure of health which is needs based has been identified and a pre- and post-design to evaluate the outcomes for older and younger people involved in the programme has now been established. Systematic analysis of the process issues in terms of recruitment, induction and support are being carried out.
CONCLUSION

In terms of the achievement of the aims of INTERGEN, much of the report rests on anecdotal evidence collected through interviews, observation and questionnaire responses. The overwhelmingly positive nature of these reports suggests that the direction of the effect of INTERGEN is towards achieving the aims. However, attempts to measure the extent of changes brought about by INTERGEN have proved inconclusive, due to the very small numbers involved. This will be addressed in later evaluation work by the establishment of a cumulative database, to which the responses of new generations of INTERGEN volunteers could be added.

The roll out of the programme into additional neighbourhoods so that nine schools will be involved and ninety volunteers engaged across the schools will enable a more systematic evaluation of the project. In policy terms it will also allow us to explore the way in which an intergenerational programme contributes to bridging social capital and identify the factors which enable the negative effects of bonding social capital to be overcome in the recruitment of volunteers amongst older people and in different socioeconomic and ethnically mixed neighbourhoods.

NOTE

1. One of the authors of this paper.

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