



## Access All Ages – Building Connections Fund

# Evaluation Report

July 2021

# Alive's aims

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**Alive is a charity dedicated to improving the quality of life of older people and their carers.**

## Our vision

A world where older people live lives full of value, meaning and connection.

## Our mission

To prioritise health and wellbeing into later life.

## Alive:

- **Engages older people creatively through meaningful activity**
- **Trains and supporting carers to enrich the lives of older people**
- **Reduces older people's social isolation by connecting them to their local communities**
- **Speaks up for the rights of older people to those with the power to improve their lives.**

## Our values

**User-led:** We strive to ensure our work meets the needs and aspirations of the older people we serve. We consult regularly with older people and develop and deliver projects and activity in line with their wishes and views.

**Dedicated:** We deliver, we train, we connect, we influence. We are a group of people who never give up and are fully committed to improving the quality of life of older people.

**Adventurous:** We are a charity who likes to try and test new approaches, new partnerships, new ways of working and aren't afraid of making mistakes and taking risks.

### Community focused

We fully understand the value of belonging and work hard to connect older people to their communities – wherever that may be. We value our own community and strive to create an inclusive and supportive environment amongst our staff, volunteers, and colleagues.

**Adaptable:** We constantly review, evaluate and adapt our work to ensure it is meeting the needs of those we serve. We are quick to change and find new ways of working when needed.

**Compassionate:** We love what we do, and who we work with. We are passionate about improving the quality of life of older people in whatever way we can.

**Collaborative:** We believe in working with others. We make more of an impact when we work together.

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# Executive Summary

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The Access All Ages project was funded by the 'Building Connections' Fund in 2019 to increase intergenerational activity and connections, and expand Alive's existing intergenerational activities out across care homes in the South West, as well as trialling gardening activities with two care homes in Bristol. Seventeen partnerships were established between schools and care homes in their locality. Co-production sessions were undertaken with residents and school staff prior to sessions beginning, and throughout the project, to ensure activities were participant-led. Gardening activity sessions began in May 2019, and all other more general activity sessions began in September 2019.

Unfortunately due to the coronavirus pandemic, from March 2020 activity sessions in this project could no longer continue in their current form. The project team began consultations to explore alternative ways to continue the established connections between the care homes and schools.

Of the seventeen partnerships, only five felt able to continue this work. A mixture of online sessions delivered via Zoom, and/or practical craft activities completed separately, then shared, began once care homes and schools were ready to engage again, in October 2020.

## Aims and Objectives

**The main aims and objectives of the project were to achieve:**

- 1. A reduction in social isolation of older people in care homes.**
- 2. Improvement of older peoples' wellbeing.**
- 3. Relationships between care home staff and residents improve.**
- 4. Care Homes value and prioritise meaningful engagement with residents, resulting in a cultural shift in practice towards person-centred care.**
- 5. Enhanced shared community spaces.**
- 6. Increased community engagement activity.**
- 7. Positive cultural change in care home activity provision.**

A mixed method approach was taken to evaluate the success of meeting these aims and objectives. This included interviews and surveys with care staff, school staff and Facilitators, as well observations of residents during an activity session using the ArtsObs assessment tool, where this was able to take place.

## Findings

### Interaction and Connections

Staff reported that connections had been made between the residents and pupils who had taken part, and teaching staff from all five schools reported positive connections had been made between the pupils and residents. For the majority of residents these were broader connections with the whole group, but details of some specific individual connections are given in the case studies on page 35 at the end of this report.



### Activity Engagement and interactions, pre-pandemic

Care homes reported high levels of engagement for face to face sessions overall. Schools reported a more mixed level of engagement for their pupils in the sessions, however this was attributed to pupils feeling nervous to start with, but soon settling in. Engagement in the gardening activity sessions, with the two care homes in Bristol, was found to be very high overall.

**Undertaking practical, craft or gardening activities were the main way that care homes communal spaces could be improved to increase interaction. Work produced by the residents or pupils would be displayed in the communal spaces in the home, as well as photos from the sessions. Care staff reported these acted as a prompt for memories of the pupil's visit, as well as conversation starters with other residents.**

### Online connections, post pandemic

The engagement levels for online sessions were found to be lower than face to face sessions. Most schools commented that this was a natural learning curve for everyone at the time, learning to use a new technology and format of delivery, and session engagement did improve over time for pupils.

**The main issue reported as a result of moving to online sessions, was that one to one connections between residents and pupils were much harder to make, if made at all, compared to face to face sessions.**

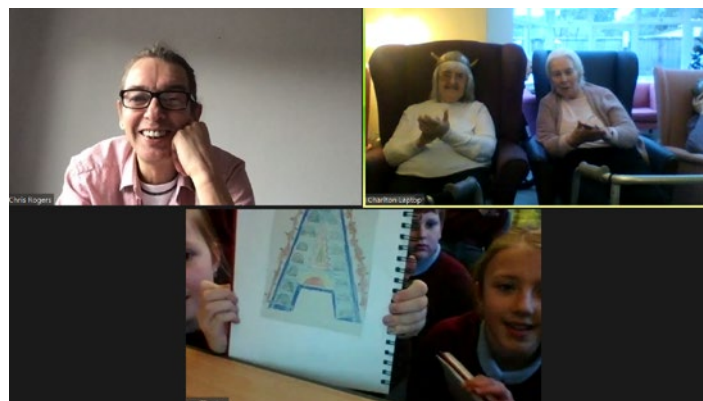
Many care home staff reported that their residents didn't really understand that they could interact with the people on screen, and often just thought they were watching someone on the television, although this differed depending on how advanced their dementia was.





In contrast, two of the four schools undertaking online sessions reported that pupils were very comfortable with activities over Zoom.

**One school stated they became more comfortable with Zoom over time, once we had worked out the right time length for sessions to avoid screen fatigue and keep everyone engaged.**



It is worth noting however, that despite the drawback from having online sessions, care staff in particular still highlighted that it has been worthwhile to do this and keep the connections going for their residents. Teachers also commented how much the pupils had missed seeing the residents, so using Zoom allowed them to see the people they had connected with before the pandemic.

### **Staff engagement**

**In addition to the Facilitators, both care staff and school staff played an important role in encouraging residents and pupils to engage and interact in the sessions, both online and face to face. The teachers and care staff who were engaged in sessions were found to have more effective activity sessions and partnerships overall, compared to those who would stand in the background and observe.**

For both care staff and teachers, this support level increased further once online sessions were introduced.

**A certain level of familiarity with using laptops or tablets, connecting these up to a projector or large TV, and using Zoom was required.**

In the early stages, staff at both sides had to act as a go-between, repeating back what people had said to either the residents or the pupils. Facilitators found that staff played a critical role, and their familiarity with the technology and new format improved over time.

### **Practical tasks**

Some care homes chose to also undertake practical, craft tasks in between online sessions and were rated to be equally as engaging as face to face visits.

**For hands-on tasks to be facilitated by the school, all those who undertook this found that a whole class or year group had to take part, as there wasn't enough time in the school timetable to have a smaller group go separately every month to undertake the activity.**

### **Alternative online connection - Seesaw**

For one partnership, an online platform called Seesaw was introduced for activities, following the pandemic. Seesaw is a free classroom app introduced by the school during the first lockdown, as a way for pupils to securely share work with teachers, and other classmates. Using this platform was incredibly successful.

**Both care staff and school staff found that using Seesaw has kept residents and pupils engaged in the project more than just having monthly sessions alone.**

Both partnerships are keen to continue using Seesaw to maintain connections, and the care staff have found that since introducing this platform, it has made them more likely to take photos and record events that happen in the home, compared to before.

### **Improvement to mood and wellbeing**

All care home staff rated that for face to face visits, there was a 'very positive change' in the mood of the participating residents. Residents also displayed signs of stimulation during activity sessions, and some residents interacted much more during the pupil's visits than at any other time. For some residents these were the only activity sessions they would leave their rooms to take part in. However, when asked if online sessions had made any change to residents' mood, all care staff reported that they had not observed any change.

**If they felt residents enjoyed it in the moment, there was certainly no lasting change once the session was over.**

### **Connection to personhood**

Care staff reported that sessions with the pupils were a way for residents to remember their own children, which was particularly relevant for those with more advanced dementia.

**Residents often enjoy helping the pupils with practical tasks, given them a sense of agency they do not necessarily feel when they are the ones being helped by carers.**



Sessions also allowed residents to connect to their personal histories in various ways. In some settings residents were able to take part in discussions with the children to share details about their lives, often prompted by care staff, allowing them time to reminisce and share their life stories. In gardening activity sessions, residents who were keen gardeners enjoyed passing on their knowledge and gardening tips, especially to the children.

## **Relationships between care staff and residents**

All Facilitators reported that communication between care staff and residents was positive. When asked if taking part in the project activities had increased care staff's knowledge of their resident's lives, only two care homes reported that it had. This is supported by the observations from Facilitators. All reported that the majority of Activity Coordinators know their residents very well, so taking part in these sessions enables them to prompt residents to share details about their lives, making for a richer session and knowledge exchange with the pupils to build connections.

## **Meaningful engagement and Co-production**

Meaningful engagement with residents, and the concept of person-centred care is a key component of care for the elderly. Including co-production activities throughout this project, ensured that the interests and wishes of the residents were at the core of all activities delivered. Care staff were actively involved in co-production sessions, both face to face at the start of the project, through ongoing discussions in activity sessions, and through a specifically designed 'Tree of Life' activity, during the second lockdown, when we were unable to go in and speak to residents.

All care homes felt their current understanding of co-production had either stayed the same, or improved since the beginning of the project. All five care homes reported that they currently run co-production activities with their residents, although the method through which this is done differs per home and is not necessarily updated.

## **Community Engagement and Connections**

Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, making and maintaining community connections became hard for all care homes and schools. This is why so many partnerships felt unable to continue in the project post-pandemic. Of those that did, this connection has been very valuable for all in such isolating circumstances, but there has been no increase in further connections beyond this project.

As restrictions have started to ease in June 2021, most care staff reported that they are now in a position to start re-connecting with contacts in their community that have stopped since the pandemic, such as local churches or festivals.

**All care staff rated their confidence in approaching other schools to link with their care home has increased since taking part in this project.**

All five care homes stated they wanted to continue connections with their partner school. For those currently having online sessions via Zoom, all the staff are now familiar with the technology, and until visits to the care homes can happen again, they feel able to accommodate this.



## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Given the circumstances of the global pandemic, the objective of reducing social isolation became of even higher importance, whilst at the same time bringing a much larger degree of difficulty. The bespoke response to each partnership, with a mix of online and/or practical tasks has enabled connections to continue in a way that works for them. The flexibility in delivery and activities that was achieved through a more bespoke approach should be a consideration for future intergenerational activities, rather than a 'one size fits all' method.

### **Face to face versus online**

The main problem identified with moving to online sessions over Zoom, was that pupils and residents could no longer really make individual connections. It is worth noting that the technology is there to facilitate individual conversations, but was not appropriate due to Safeguarding requirements.

The confusion that residents experienced understanding that online sessions were something they could interact with, is understandable, especially for those with more advanced dementia. However, it is promising that for some care homes they are finding resident's engagement and understanding has improved over time. The differences experienced as part of online activity were very much a learning curve, and could now be explained to any new participants wishing to take part in intergenerational activities online. As part of the outputs of this project, a guide on 'How To run intergenerational activities online' has been produced, for any care home or school who wish to explore starting activities together, as well as a series of videos to prompt activity ideas.

### **Co-production**

As care staff's knowledge of their residents and understanding of person-centred care was already high, undertaking co-production in this project was not necessarily needed to improve the co-production activity of participating care homes. Many already understood co-production through their own training and development and had found ways to embed it in their care home practice.

### **Community engagement**

Given the circumstances of the pandemic, the original project's aims of increasing community engagement became unrealistic. The focus instead turned to simply keeping the existing connections going. It is unfortunate that this was unable to happen for all 17 original partnerships. But for the five that have continued, the links made through this project have been sustained, and hopefully will continue given the majority of partners have expressed a clear wish to stay connected. The increase in care staff's confidence to approach other community groups to link up, as well as their development of in-house activity provision, can only be a positive change moving forward.

# Introduction

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The Access All Ages project was awarded funding by the 'Building Connections' Fund in 2019, a partnership of The National Lottery Community Fund and seven Government departments. Originally a 27 month project, it aimed to reduce social isolation by increasing intergenerational activity across care homes in Wiltshire, Hampshire, Gloucestershire and Bristol. Alive had already been running established intergenerational activity sessions with care homes and local schools in Bristol since 2012, and seen the impact and benefits of intergenerational work across many settings, for both young and old. This funding would allow Alive to further the reach of these sessions into the wider South-West region.

## Project overview

Seventeen partnerships were established between schools and care homes in their locality, with groups of approximately 6 – 8 pupils visiting the care home for hour-long activity sessions with a similar number of residents. The two partnerships in Bristol planned to run gardening and nature-based activity sessions twice a month during term-time, beginning in May 2019. The partnerships in Wiltshire, Hampshire and Gloucestershire (5 in each county) planned one activity session per month, beginning in September 2019. All activity sessions were facilitated by experienced Alive Facilitators, one per region.

Prior to the start of activities, co-production sessions were undertaken with the residents. These sessions gathered information on the lives and backgrounds of the residents, and what they enjoyed doing, to ensure the activities were participant-led. These sessions were also attended by a teacher from their partner school, to provide input of what the pupils would enjoy, how it may link to school activities (if appropriate) and get to meet the residents prior to the pupil's visits beginning. All of the information gathered during co-production shaped the content of the activity sessions, which began shortly after.

## COVID pandemic

Unfortunately, in March 2020 the coronavirus pandemic hit the UK. Care homes were closed to all visitors, and schools were also closed, meaning that all activity sessions in this project could no longer continue in their current form. All project staff were put on furlough until July 2020. Upon their return, the project team began consultations with Facilitators, care home staff and school staff to explore alternative ways to continue the established connections between the care homes and schools, if at all possible.

Of the seventeen partnerships, only five felt able to continue this work. No gardening sessions were able to continue, due to the requirement for face-to-face delivery and supervision. In addition, the tactile nature of the tasks would be difficult to safely deliver with the protocols in place around sanitising objects and hands, as well as social distancing.

Each partnership who was able to continue required a more bespoke approach, to meet their demands on issues such as staff time, health and isolation status of residents, pupil's school commitments and technology equipment available. A mixture of online sessions delivered via Zoom, and/or practical craft activities completed separately, then shared, was undertaken from October 2020 onwards. The project was granted a four-month extension, allowing it to run until the end of July 2021, to enable activities between the care homes and schools to try and continue wherever possible, until the end of the 2020/21 academic year. Obviously a second lockdown with school closures happened again at the beginning of 2021, with four of the five care homes sadly affected by significant COVID outbreaks during this time period. Four of the five partnership schools remained in contact with the care homes and continued facilitated activities once the schools returned in March 2021 and residents were no longer self-isolating. Delivery as part of this project finished at the end of July 2021.

This evaluation looks at the success of the activities both pre and post-pandemic.

## **Aims and Objectives**

### **The main aims and objectives of the project were:**

1. A reduction in social isolation of older people in care homes; More connected communities, stronger relationships in and across communities. Increase in meaningful connections between residents and others in the local community
2. Improvement of older peoples' wellbeing; improvements in mood, relaxation and interaction with others. Residents can make more choices in their lives and reconnect with their personal identity
3. Relationships between care home staff and residents improve; better communication and increased mutual understanding.
4. Care Homes value and prioritise meaningful engagement with residents, resulting in a cultural shift in practice towards person-centred care. Staff acquire the skills, knowledge, ability and confidence to deliver co-production and person-centred care.
5. Enhanced shared community spaces; Care home environments will be enhanced according to residents' wishes , and promote interaction.
6. Increased community engagement activity; Care settings build and grow their connections with the local community .
7. Positive cultural change in care home activity provision; Quality of activity provision increases, leading to a demonstrable impact on CQC rating.

# Method

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**This evaluation used a mixed methods approach, in order to measure these outcomes:**

- Care staff interviews and survey
- Teacher interviews
- Facilitator interviews
- Case studies
- Arts Observation tool – evaluates the impact of activities on older people, records demographic data, mood, relaxation, distraction, participant feedback and case studies

The Arts Obs tool is specially adapted for Alive by Professor Norma Daykin and evaluation experts Willis Newson. It is designed for people whose health and social care needs are such that they are not able to provide accurate verbal or written feedback. The majority of care home participants in this project were living with dementia, so the Arts Obs tool is the most appropriate to be used to collect accurate data from these groups.

**In addition the following was recorded during and at the end of the project:**

- Number of residents participating
- Number of pupils participating
- Number of care staff, school staff, volunteers or relatives engaged in sessions
- Meaningful and positive connections made between young and older people
- Care staff levels of knowledge of their residents' interests, life histories and understanding of person-centred care
- Levels of confidence of care home staff to engage with the community
- Project 'Lessons Leant' log by Project Manager.
- Care homes' progress in terms of CQC ratings (note – these may change outside of the project period)

## Changes due to the pandemic

A mid-point evaluation was originally planned for summer 2020, unfortunately at that point schools were closed. Care staff were incredibly busy either trying to keep their residents safe, with a reduced workforce due to other staff self-isolating at home. This meant that we were unable to gather any meaningful data from care home staff or school staff at the mid-point

of the project. However, semi-structured interviews were held with all Facilitators to gather their feedback on the project so far.

Some of our planned methods also changed, in response to the project's delivery. Originally surveys had been planned with teachers and care staff, rather than interviews. However, with a smaller number continuing to participate in the project post-COVID, it was felt that richer, more in-depth data would be gathered through semi-structured interviews, compared to surveys alone. In two cases, staff were not available for interviews due to going on maternity leave, or time commitments, so electronic surveys were sent instead. One school unfortunately decided to leave the project in April 2021, when the member of staff working on this project left their post. This person, or any other remaining staff at the school did not respond to any contact for feedback for this evaluation. However, their care home partner did provide input.

Post-COVID, observations using the Arts Obs tool could not take place as external visitors were unable to come into the homes. Instead, we attempted to gather information covered within an Arts Obs observation tool through the input from care staff. It is worth noting this data is therefore anecdotal as opposed to being observed by an external visitor. Just before the pandemic broke out, we were able to undertake observations using the Arts Obs tool at two gardening activity sessions though.

In this report all quotes have been anonymised, and individual's names have been changed in Case Studies.



# Findings

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## Project Partnerships

A total of 17 care home and school partnerships were established to participate in this project, 2 in Bristol, 5 in Hampshire, 5 in Gloucestershire and 5 in Wiltshire. The full list of partnerships can be found in Appendix One. Care Homes were invited to be involved based on their geographical location, and proximity to a school of less than 10 minutes walking distance.

Post-pandemic, only 5 partnerships felt able to continue. The following reasons were given for those who felt unable to continue:

- Lack of staff time, both care home staff and teachers, due to covering other staff having to self-isolate.
- For the care homes dealing with outbreaks, looking after their residents was their main concern, and several reported back that this activity was not a priority to them.
- For schools, in particular secondary schools, the workload of teachers had dramatically increased, and pupil's time in class to try and make up the work that had been missed became their priority.
- One home did not wish to continue because they felt the connection with the school was not particularly strong.
- Two homes stated they saw the main value of the project coming from the face to face visits, therefore they were not interested in any activities with the school until children could visit again for face to face sessions.

Of the five schools who continued post-pandemic, unfortunately one left the project in April 2021, due to a change in staff, and the Senior Leadership Team no longer wanting to continue the activity sessions.

## Participants

The total number of participants who have engaged in activity sessions during this project is as follows:

**155** care home residents

**198** school pupils

**26 members of care staff**

**19 members of school staff**

**2 volunteers**

The average number of participants for both school children and residents, was 7 per session. However, the number of school children participating increased during the second lockdown.

Three of the five schools continued their connections with the care home during this period, through asking pupils to send letters, artwork, videos, photos, and messages of hope to their partner care home residents. Teachers found this work was much easier to deliver if set for a whole class or year group, rather than just the original group of visiting students. It also had a wider impact, and raised the issues facing care homes to a greater number of children and their families.

For the majority of care homes, only one member of care staff would attend sessions, and only one staff member from schools would attend at any one time. The school staff contacts who attended sessions changed during the project at two settings, due to changes in staff timetables.

No relatives engaged in activities, but two volunteers assisted with the gardening activity sessions.

### **Activity sessions**

A total of 106 activity sessions were delivered through face to face visits across these settings prior to the pandemic. Of these, 33 were gardening-specific sessions.

Following the pandemic, each partnership who felt able to continue were consulted to explore the best ways for them to maintain their link and do activities with their partner care home/school. During lockdown, Alive Facilitators had started running sessions with other care homes over Zoom, with great success. By the time schools had returned, our Facilitators felt confident to offer this as a potential format for activities.

We found that each partnership had slightly different barriers, or options available to them. Each required a slightly more bespoke approach, and this had to change over time to adapt to further lockdowns, or virus outbreaks. However the same Facilitators were used for planning and delivering their activities, as the pre-COVID face to face sessions, to ensure continuity.

### **Partnership one – Harnham Croft and Harnham Infants School**

This partnership were the first to re-start activities, and requested online sessions over Zoom once a month. In addition, Harnham Infants School had started using a digital platform called 'Seesaw' during lockdown, for pupils to collaborate and share work with their teachers. It was proposed that we set up a dedicated page on this platform for their work with Harnham Croft care home, with access given to care staff and Alive project staff. This enabled pupils and residents to share photos and videos in between sessions too.

### **Partnership two – Chestnut Court and Ashley Junior School**

Originally this partnership started with just online sessions over Zoom. However, after a few sessions we found it didn't really engage the residents. After the second lockdown, they then moved to a craft activity to complete separately, then share. In April 2021 unfortunately the teacher left their job, and the school no longer wanted to be involved.

### **Partnership three – Pennwood Lodge and Kingswood Junior School**

Pennwood Lodge do not have wifi coverage in most of their home, therefore online sessions were not an option. Instead, both the home and school were interested in completing practical, hands-on tasks each month, around a theme set by our Facilitator. Over the course of the project this included making origami flowers, writing letters and sending artwork, making decoupage animals and composing music for a 'Carnival of the Animals'. What they produced was then shared and given to the residents/pupils.

### **Partnership four – Avalon Residential care and St Peter's CofE Primary School**

This partnership were keen to try online sessions over Zoom. Although they had previously enjoyed craft activities when visiting the home, the teacher felt there were too many time constraints on the pupils to undertake any craft activity as well as the online sessions.

### **Partnership five – Charlton Kings care home and Charlton Kings Junior school**

This partnership also chose to take part in monthly sessions over Zoom. Both the care home and pupils always reacted well to a clear theme to sessions, so this was planned in advance with staff input. Later in the project they also undertook a craft activity to share with the residents, in addition to the Zoom sessions.

Since October 2020, a total of 19 online sessions, and 5 craft activities have been facilitated.

## Meeting Key Objectives

### 1. Reduction of social isolation of older people in care homes

#### Interaction and Connections

One key aim of the activity sessions was to encourage interaction and allow residents and pupils to make positive connections, thereby reducing social isolation. Limited data is available from care settings who took part prior to the pandemic, but where this was able to be gathered, it has been included with the main data from those who continued participating.

In lieu of being unable to undertake ArtsObs observations during the project evaluation period, care staff and school staff commented on the interaction and engagement levels of residents in the sessions. Staff at four out of the five care homes reported that connections had been made between the residents and pupils who had taken part. One care home Manager was not sure, as the more advanced dementia of the residents in that particular home, meant that the residents could not always remember individual children.

Teaching staff from all five schools reported that connections had been made between the pupils and residents. One staff member at Harnham Infants school commented that it felt that the connection with the care home was actually the main connection established, rather than individual links between pupils and residents. They felt this was mainly down to the fact that the pandemic had stalled sessions, and residents had often changed as people passed away or fell ill.

Several positive connections were made between individual children and residents, more details of two of these connections is included in the case studies at the end of this report; Case Study One – The three Vals, and Case study Two – Gardening at The Gables. For other residents it was a much broader positive engagement with the group of children as a whole.

“

**One lady benefitted in particular, she went to that school when she was younger. We had a lady and a young boy who connected as soon as they first met, she looked forward to seeing him every time and always left her with a smile and would talk about him all the time to her family and all the staff. Generally - It made them smile, made them want to interact more, they interacted more with children than other residents.**

”

**Activity Coordinator, Pennwood Lodge**

“ We had a lady and a young boy who connected as soon as they first met, she looked forward to seeing him every time and always left her with a smile. She would talk about him all the time to her family and all the staff. He has behavioural problems in school, but shows none of this in the care home visits. She often brings photos of her life to show him. When she was ill he went over to visit in his own time to bring her some chocolates.

Care staff, Chestnut Court

”

“

Two male residents - They didn't want to do anything, apart from when they come in with the children. So the children brightened up their day, and they really did enjoy it.



”

Activity Coordinator, Harnham Croft

“

The Residents enjoyed the connection very much they spoke about the experience and what they got from it, seeing the children's faces and their reactions and answers. Sometimes like a breath of fresh air.

”

Activity Coordinator, Kingfishers Care Home

### Activity Engagement and interactions

Care homes reported high levels of engagement for face to face sessions overall. The only problems reported were from one of the Facilitators, who found there was a mismatch between what the pupils and the residents wanted to do in one particular partnership - residents wanted to chat, but pupils were very active and wanted physical activities. This was difficult to balance, especially as the school repeatedly cancelled sessions at short notice, so neither group engaged greatly in the joint activities, or made strong connections prior to the pandemic.

Schools reported a more mixed level of engagement for their pupils in the sessions, however this was attributed to pupils feeling nervous to start with, and needing encouragement. After a few sessions they had settled in, with support from their teachers. Care staff were reported to be very welcoming. Only one school reported somewhat lower levels of engagement to begin with, but felt this was partly due to the younger age of the participants (6 year olds). They also reported that this engagement had increased over time too.



“

I think it was a bit of a learning curve, I completely understand from your point of view is to sort of cater to the needs of the people in the home. But I think once we started to work together, it was much better because unless the kids could access it, they were sort of almost blocked out, it wasn't really worth doing.... But it felt also as, as we got to the end that actually what the kids could access was actually quite similar to what the people in the home can access. So they married really well together.... So it was a bit of a learning curve to begin with. But definitely towards the end, I think it was really good.

”

Teacher, Harnham Croft Infants

“

So at the beginning, it was quite, they were very cautious. They didn't really want to kind of talk, it's hard for them, isn't it, children. And then there's nothing really that we could have done to change that though, and everything was set up for hands on, musical, funny, lively stuff, but I definitely felt that they grew in confidence. And then those relationships came from that.

”

Teacher, Charlton Kings Junior School



Engagement in the gardening activity sessions, with the two care homes in Bristol, was found to be very high overall. One observation at each setting was able to be undertaken just before the start of the pandemic, using the Arts Obs tool. Of the total 14 residents observed, each were scored for their levels of interaction during the activity session, with the following ratings across the group:

- **9 residents** - 'Very much so' (many interactions with one or more participants)
- **3 residents** - 'A little' (some interaction with one or more participants)
- **2 residents** - No interaction with anyone in the activity session.

At one setting taking part in gardening activities (The Meadows), it was observed that a few residents enjoyed the session prior to the children arriving, and were keen gardeners, but would leave the session once the children were there. Some of the children had behavioural issues and were quite dominant. The Facilitator felt that they did not understand the session involved working alongside a resident, and interacting together. The care home Manager, and session Facilitator, felt that the link between the pupils and residents was not particularly strong in this partnership, and perhaps residents received the most benefit from the gardening activities alone, rather than the children being present. Often there were more children attending than residents. This was potentially also down to the many other activities offered by this particular home, or just general interest in intergenerational activity from the residents living there at the time. That being said, three residents in particular were observed really enjoying the sessions, with increased mood and interactions. The school reported that taking part had been of great value to the pupils too.



“  
That was very nice, the children do learn a lot. I enjoy seeing the children and hearing them chatting away.  
”

**Resident, The Meadows**

“  
I like seeing the elderly people because they make me feel very happy, they are very friendly and they put a smile on my face. I loved talking to them.  
”

**Pupil, Tynedale Primary school**





“

**It has been an absolute pleasure to attend all your gardening sessions. Every single child that has taken part in the intergenerational gardening scheme has thoroughly enjoyed it. They have developed a great respect and endearment for gardening thanks to the beautifully balanced, exciting and immersive activities that you set up. It was lovely to see how the children and residents worked enthusiastically and meticulously together to undertake and complete many exciting gardening tasks. Every session was flooded with endless broad smiles; happy chatter; pitter patter of children; positivity and respect; sense of belonging; helping hands and certainly ‘green fingers’.**

**Headteacher, Tynedale Primary school**

”



## Being present

Many care staff, as well as Facilitators, reported that even where residents were not able to engage in an active manner, for some, simply having the pupils present in their space, even if they couldn't join in with the activities was still beneficial for their wellbeing and reducing isolation.

“

**It is a lot different doing something virtually than actually physically having children in the room, because that's what they enjoyed, was having children around them. And I think that's that was the main kind of goal of intergenerational, because we're really mixing them together.**

”

**Care Home Manager, Avalon Residential home**

“

**In general, if the pupils are enthusiastic about an activity, then the residents tend to love it too, whatever it is! Just simply having young people around is what makes the difference. It's interesting that even when I am comparing and feeling that the pupils have not always been fully engaged, the residents have always been very positive about each session and I know they value them.**

”

**Facilitator, Hampshire partnerships**

“

**Because quite often, perhaps they wouldn't partake in what we were doing. But they would observe. And that would work just as well, they would be uplifted by that, if they saw the children making something, you know, they, they might not be able to pick up a pen themselves, but with a child standing by them or sitting at the same table doing it, that makes them smile.**

”

**Manager, Charlton Kings care home**

## Online connections

The engagement levels for online sessions were found to be lower, primarily as the pupils couldn't connect one to one with the residents. Most schools commented that this was a natural learning curve for everyone at the time, learning to use a new technology and format of delivery however, and session engagement did improve over time for pupils.

The main issue reported as a result of moving to online sessions, was that connections between residents and pupils were much harder to make, if made at all, compared to face to face sessions. This was reported by all care home staff, all teaching staff and all Facilitators.

“

**But you've got the technical issues. You've got the, there's a less of a connection there. We're still connecting, but not in the same way.... But that's harder to do when you're virtual, and six children round a laptop, rather than when we went there. And we would have a table over here, a table over here. And I would put like one child with each table, or whatever. So I think again, it sort of highlights that the virtual was quite difficult to do.**

”

**Teacher, St Peter's CofE Primary School**

“



**Since COVID, the bonds haven't been as good because it's very difficult to establish something when it's on a screen. But when they're here in person, yeah.**

”

**Manager, Charlton Kings care home**

“

**I mean, when someone's actually there, face to face, you know, there's a different connection, eye contact, and I think being in a resident's home, you know, obviously being older, their eyesight perhaps isn't so good. So they couldn't quite picture each individual one so much, and there was a lot more going on.**

”

**Activity Coordinator, Harnham Croft**





“ Well I suppose it was difficult for any of the children to have a conversation with any of the care home residents individually. Because, for one they could only see two people because in the care home they only had that laptop didn't they. And the residents couldn't hear what the pupils were saying. So that was the main barrier, that it was through me, the intermediary, you know talking to this person, then talking to the children, but they couldn't actually talk to each other. ”

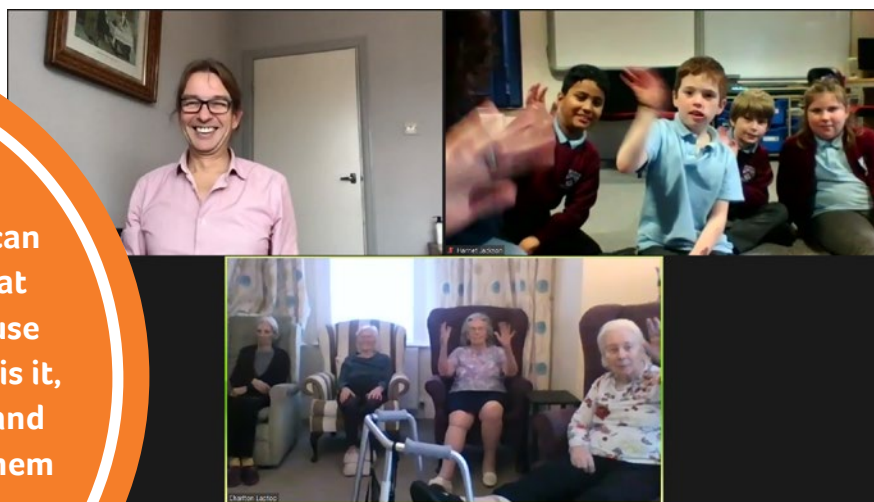
Facilitator, Hampshire partnerships

“

We've had to zoom so you can see quite the difference that makes and obviously, because it's not the same connection is it, being able to be that close and see smiling faces and hear them properly...we're missing that one to one connection.

”

Facilitator, Wiltshire partnerships



## Understanding of online sessions and technology

Many care home staff reported that their residents didn't really understand that they could interact with the people on screen, and often just thought they were watching someone on the television.

“ They couldn't really grasp that the children were there on the screen. They sort of, I think, probably a bit confusing to start with, because they thought when I said about the children being on a video call, they were like, oh, they're coming in. Not a video call.

Activity Coordinator, Harnham Croft ”

“ They really don't comprehend that person on TV is actually a real person behind at the school. I think we've been, over the ones we've done on zoom, we've really had to change the residents because they just wasn't comprehending it. They wasn't communicating very well. I think some of them were. But a lot of them were just kind of confused why they were talking to a TV. it's not the only thing we've done over virtually, but it's the most interactional, if that makes sense. 'Cos they have to answer questions talking to the TV, whereas musical movement and things like that you're just watching and kind of following along. So I think some of them felt a bit barmy talking to a TV. The just couldn't comprehend it was a real person.

Care Home Manager, Avalon Residential home ”

“ I think it's not as easy for them, because one or two of them believe they're just watching television, right? And it's very difficult sometimes to convince them that they can have a conversation with a person on television, because they just think it's a person on television, but I say 'you know, you can wave to them and they'll wave back.' And depending on how advanced their dementia is, it's difficult for them to comprehend the idea that a television can be talked to, and it will talk back to them. And so when they're watching, when we're split up into three screens, and I do project the screen up onto a big wall. So it's not television size, it's larger than life size. But even then, sometimes it's difficult for residents to acknowledge that it's not a TV that they're talking, or that they're not witnessing something like a programme.

Manager, Charlton Kings care home ”

“

**When we moved to online the residents found this a lot harder to make connections. Given that nearly all of the residents taking part have a diagnosis of dementia or early onset they could not comprehend really what was happening. They liked seeing the pupils on the screen but wasn't the same as face to face. The online session were good but the residents we had doing the online sessions just didn't take to it to well.**

”

**Activity Coordinator, Chestnut Court**

The resident's understanding of the online sessions was found to improve over time at Harnham Croft and Charlton Kings, but no increase was reported at Chestnut Court or Avalon.

In contrast, two of the four schools undertaking online sessions reported that pupils were very comfortable with activities over Zoom, with another stating they became more comfortable over time, once we had worked out the right length for sessions to avoid screen fatigue and keep everyone engaged. Schools found that online sessions would only work for 45 minutes maximum, 30 minutes for the younger age group (Year 2) at Harnham Infant School. Interestingly, this reduction in the session time together for pupils and residents was reported by care staff as another reason behind the reduction in connections made. Residents at Harnham Croft in particular would benefit from more time with the pupils, as they are only just getting used to the session by the time the children have to leave.

“

**I think they would have liked longer if anything, wouldn't they, cos we've just got in to it. And then they're like, 'Oh, is it finished?'**

”

**Activity Coordinator, Harnham Croft**

It is worth noting however, that despite the drawback from having online sessions, care staff in particular still highlighted that it has been worthwhile to do this and keep the connections going for their residents. Teachers also commented how much the pupils had missed seeing the residents, so using Zoom allowed them to see the people they had connected with before the pandemic.

“

**However, we mustn't overlook the fact that there was a lot of advantages to zoom. It's helped us maintain contact with the outside world. It's brought life into the care home, when life has been shut out at the front door and couldn't come in. So seeing the children run around and screaming and shouting on, on zoom, seeing Chris playing his guitar and encouraging us all to sing along. That's worked very well.**

”

**Manager, Charlton Kings care home**

“ So the first group when they first went online, it was quite funny actually, they, they really enjoyed it. They were really up for it. And they were kind of trying to spot who they knew. But that’s because they’d already been and met them. And they’d missed them. You know, they’ve not seen them for a while. So I think it was just so great that we could get involved again. ”

Teacher, Charlton Kings Junior School



### Staff engagement in the sessions

In addition to the Facilitators, both care staff and school staff play an important role in encouraging residents and pupils to engage and interact in the sessions. School teachers, in particular, set an example for the pupils to follow, if they feel nervous or unsure. The interactions between the teachers and care staff with the residents is also valuable in reducing their levels of social isolation.

A few teachers would stand more in the background and watch what was going on, but overall, teaching staff were rated as engaging very positively in sessions. Facilitators reported how much more successful the sessions and partnerships were, when teaching staff were more involved.

“ When they engage, they support the session and connected with residents, enthuse the pupils, but also keep kids in line when needed. ”

Facilitator, Hampshire partnerships

The teachers who were engaged in sessions were found to have more effective sessions and partnerships overall, compared to those who would stand in the background and observe. Two teachers in particular were singled out for how well they engaged with residents in sessions – from Ashley Junior school and Amery Hill Secondary, both based in Hampshire. Both teachers not only encouraged their pupils to engage with residents, but also spent time themselves talking to residents, and making sure that everyone was involved.

**“ When we were all together, he was very good at, I would often think ‘what is he doing?’ he would start a conversation with Frank down at the end who, to be fair, couldn’t hear what the children were saying. So he would sit with him and they’d be having their own little conversation. So that was wonderful. You know he would add things and he would ask questions of the resident’s as well, which of course, they loved. And he would be interested in what they’d brought to show. It was kind of like another co-production thing going on. ”**

**Facilitator, Hampshire partnerships**

At Kingswood Junior School, partnered with Pennwood Lodge, it was particularly noted how much the pupils were given a voice in session planning. The Facilitator felt the teacher had created an environment in which input from their side into session planning was pupil-led, rather than coming from teachers or the curriculum. This fits entirely with the core principles of co-production, behind all activities in this project.

Care staff also play a crucial role in sessions, both face to face and online. The majority of staff in this project were found by Facilitators to be incredibly supportive before, during, and in-between sessions. They encouraged residents to come to sessions when needed, and knew who would find the activities interesting or beneficial. Even if this was a resident who would benefit just from being in the room, and could not actively participate. They then supported during sessions themselves, by setting up the rooms, engaging in activities, making an effort to get to know the pupils, and supporting residents to engage as much as they were able. They chose certain residents to take part to ensure sessions ran smoothly, residents acted appropriately and that every resident had a voice in the session.

**“ The AC was always present and very engaged. Really knew her residents. She was good at encouraging residents to come to sessions in a really positive manner. She also understood that some residents benefitted just from the young people coming into the care home, even if they didn’t participate in the activity session itself. ”**

**Facilitator, Gardening sessions**



“ The difference with an activity coordinator who throws themselves into it is incredible isn't it? It makes for a much better session, and luckily they did enter into it. It was obvious, that this was quite an important activity for them, rather than 'oh they can do this for an hour'. Which is what you get sometimes with general sessions. People kind of leave you alone so they can get on with other things... With the AC at Charlton Kings, you always know when you went to the sessions that it was gonna be brilliant. A positive, wonderful time, where everyone's smiling and happy and what have you, because it's that energy that they've got. Yeah, an exceptional, exceptional carer. ”

Facilitator, Gloucestershire partnerships



For both care staff and teachers, this support level increased further once online sessions were introduced. A certain level of familiarity with using laptops or tablets, connecting these up to a projector or large TV, and using Zoom was required. Alive provided free training in using this technology early in the pandemic, which was made available to all care homes participating in this project. All session facilitators also received training on using Zoom for activity sessions, using the learnings that Alive had found delivering online sessions to care homes during the first lockdown of the pandemic. Although Facilitators could provide advice to care staff and teachers if needed, they were ultimately completely reliant on staff being able to set up the equipment and get online in time for the session to start.

In the early stages, when everyone was learning the right tech set up for the sound, staff at both sides had to act as a go-between, repeating back what people had said to either the residents or the pupils. This was absolutely vital to keep the flow of the sessions. It was quickly found that external microphones and/or speakers were required in nearly all settings.

“

**You need someone, you need somebody there on the other side who's playing the game, otherwise it's quite hard. What it comes down to, with the care home staff, make them really aware as to what can happen and to be very present with the residents.**

**Facilitator, Gloucestershire partnerships**

”

“

**But, you know, what I always encouraged anyway, from doing other sessions, was that when I was talking, if I was saying anything to the residents, or if the children were saying anything in the room, we were getting Paula [Activity Coordinator] to relay that information, because they, they just look quite blank at times. So they haven't heard properly, which was understandable. Especially before getting the microphone.**

**Facilitator, Wiltshire partnerships**

”

“

**So for me, it felt like I needed to make sure that the children can be seen clearly and heard, because the residents needed to gain more, I think, from the experience than the children. And I did explain to the children every time, I said, Look, I know we can't hear them very well, which is why I've got the speakers. And I said, you know, just if we can't hear them, don't worry, they can hear us, they can see you.**

**Teacher, Charton Kings Junior School**

”

Although the move to online sessions posed new challenges for staff engagement, all the Facilitators found that staff played a critical role, and their familiarity with the technology and new format improved over time. Of the four care homes who took part in online sessions, only one found that this format did not engage their residents due to their tech set up, and staff shortages found it hard to manage effectively so all residents could see the pupils on screen. This did not improve after several sessions, despite positive engagement from the school, so instead they moved to practical activities.

### **Practical activities**

For Pennwood Lodge and Kingswood Juniors, undertaking practical, craft-based tasks was decided to be the best way that this partnership could stay in touch, given the lack of wifi signal in the care home. There was also a keen interest in craft from the residents who were part of this project.

Since they resumed their connection in October 2020, they have aimed to take part in one craft activity per month, although this frequency reduced since the second lockdown and school closures in 2021. A theme is set by the Facilitator, in consultation with the care staff and

school teacher, and all materials are provided. The residents and pupils complete the tasks separately, then exchange what they have made with each other. For this to be facilitated by the school, they found that a whole class had to take part, as there wasn't enough time in the school timetable to have a smaller group go separately every month to undertake the activity. Involving the whole class also made the activity more inclusive, and enabled more children to make links with the care home residents.

“

We only used to take a small group to the care home, but working separately because of Covid meant that the whole class could be involved.

”

**Teacher, Kingswood Junior School**



So far they have written letters and drawn self-portraits, made origami flowers, christmas cards, composed pieces of music and made decoupage animals for their gardens.

The Activity Coordinator at Pennwood Lodge reported that although they don't have as strong a connection with the pupils as when they saw them face to face, residents do understand when they receive something from the school, that it's from the children, depending on how advanced their dementia is.

“

**Well I got out the animals this afternoon and they all looked at them, and explained they're from the children. And we wrote a letter to the children saying thank you and they we're going to make them some soon.**

”

**Activity Coordinator, Pennwood Lodge**

The residents tend to keep the objects in their individual rooms, although some are used in communal areas for events, if sanitised before and after.

Likewise, the teacher at Kingswood found that the pupils understood the purpose of what they were doing, and learnt a lot about older people through taking part. The activities set were rated to be equally as engaging as face to face visits.

“

**I think the children still understood that what they were producing was going to be enjoyed by the residents. They enjoyed receiving artwork back from the residents too. The children definitely gained a greater understanding of different people in their community as many had never visited a care home.**

”

**Teacher, Kingswood Junior school**

### **Combination of practical and online**

For those already doing online sessions, undertaking craft activities was completely dependent on how much time they had available, as it was not really something they could do in school hours, due to their other time commitments and school timetable.

“

**It would have to be something that they could do at home, though, that's the only thing I couldn't do it in school time. And they couldn't, they wouldn't have any more time really, to do anything else.**

”

**Teacher, Charlton Kings Junior school**

Only two schools undertook any practical activities in addition to monthly sessions on Zoom – Charlton Kings Juniors and Harnham Infants school. At Charlton Kings, this was a trial really to see how it worked, as both parties were keen to give an extra activity a try. The residents and pupils made decoupage animals for each other, in a similar theme to those done by Pennwood Lodge. This had mixed success, for a number of reasons. For the pupils, these had to be completed at home in their own time. The teacher reported that the pupils really enjoyed it, but she had found it difficult to enforce. The care staff reported that it was hard to

do as a group activity, without the enthusiasm of the pupils in the room also completing the same activity. So it took a lot of staff time to work on them one to one with each resident.

“ **I think in their minds, they're a bit timid about showing themselves up, you know, they're looking around saying, oh, I can't draw this or, you know, my hand's not so steady. But if a child's going 'Come on, let's do this! 'And they do it. They don't worry about what happens.** ”

**Manager, Charlton Kings care home**

At Harnham Infants, a wider group of children were involved when doing craft activities. In addition to the core group of pupils taking part in online sessions, a group of 15 children from military families joined them to make a joint mural for Remembrance Day. During the second lockdown an entire year group made artwork, sent photos or videos to residents, as this was easier to facilitate for a large group.

For craft activities, if they are run when visiting the home, or during an allotted time for this project, then they were found to be very successful and enjoyable. They only become problematic in some cases, when asking children to do them in their own time, or when there is a risk of children who are not taking part in the project seeing these activities and feeling left out.



### **Alternative online connection - Seesaw**

For the partnership between Harnham Craft care home and Harnham Infants school, the addition of a new online platform called Seesaw was introduced, following the pandemic. Seesaw is a free classroom app introduced in some schools during the first lockdown, as a way for pupils to securely share work with teachers, and other classmates, from home. Once schools returned in September 2020, the teacher from Harnham Infants suggested Seesaw could be used for the care home and school to share photos, videos and messages, in between activity sessions. Alive and the session Facilitator were also given access to the platform, to add any of our own photos or messages, as well as see how it was being used by both school and care home.



Using this platform was incredibly successful, and valued by all parties. It became especially useful during the second school closure in early 2021, as all school pupils were encouraged to send photos, videos, artwork or messages for the residents to see whilst they were all self-isolating in their individual rooms. Both care staff, and residents found these to be incredibly comforting and enjoyable, during such a difficult time of isolation for many.

**“ So the residents say ‘Oh, look at them! Which one is that?’ And yeah, I mean, even we sat and were quite emotional. Because we thought that was lovely, too. Yeah, so I think they’ve liked that, that’s been nice. And visually, I just think it brightens up their day, makes them happy. ”**

**Activity Coordinator, Harnham Croft**

It was reported by both care staff and school staff that using Seesaw has kept residents and pupils engaged in the project, and connected more than just having monthly sessions alone.

**“ Definitely has kept them engaged, and it just sort of reminds them, reminds them of the memory and like, ‘Look, you know, we did that,’ you know, so yeah, it has, it has given them something else to think about. ”**

**Activity Coordinator, Harnham Croft**

**“ Yeah, I think it did help with connections. And I think it was a bit late in the game.... if I was going to do it, again, I’d set it up right at the start. And maybe we would coordinate to do some sort of challenge, like monthly or something. So yes, I think it did help. I think it could have helped more. But, you know, it’s all learning curve isn’t it, you know, in future, I think it’d be a great thing to start right from the beginning. Because it’s so easy to do, you can easily put something on it once a week, which just, you know, it’s just like drip drip, rather than asking ‘oh do you remember that school?’ ”**

**Teacher, Harnham Infants**

Both partnerships are keen to continue using Seesaw to maintain connections, and the care staff have found that since introducing this platform, it has made them more likely to take photos and record events that happen in the home, compared to before. The Facilitator for the monthly online sessions for this partnership did not find that the content on Seesaw informed online session activities though, and felt it was a separate entity to the actual activities with everyone together online. This is primarily due to the type of activities that worked online with this partnership – as the children were very young (six year olds) they could only really concentrate for half an hour in sessions, so lively interactive activities such as quizzes, games or singing worked well and kept everyone engaged. Seesaw could then be used for more longer term, themed activities, set by the school and care home.

More details on this partnership and it's use of Seesaw can be found in Case Study 3 – Using Seesaw.



## Meeting Key Objectives

### 2. Improvement of older peoples' wellbeing

The second objective of this project was to improve the resident's wellbeing through activity sessions – this encompasses their mood, stimulation and interaction with others. Sessions should also connect residents with their personal identities and histories.

The Arts Obs tool was designed to capture this information, so is available for the gardening sessions. However, in the absence of undertaking an external observation at all the other homes, due to COVID restrictions, care staff and facilitators were asked to comment on any change to residents' mood, stimulation and interactions with others to try and capture this information.

#### **Resident's Mood**

All care home staff rated that for face to face visits, there was a 'very positive change' in the mood of the participating residents.

When asked for further details, all care staff reported that residents seemed happier, and their mood was 'brighter.' For some residents, it brought them more self-confidence and increased interaction with staff.

“ Some residents who previously did not engage appeared to come to life when mixing with the children. ”

Activity Coordinator,  
Pennwood Lodge

“ I would say there's a definite increase in mood or happiness. You know, they were, it was elevated. ”

Activity Coordinator,  
Charlton Kings care home

“ That's why children are good, because children's enthusiasm draws these people out of their shells. ”

Manager,  
Charlton Kings care home

“ Yes, the sessions absolutely lifted their mood. So the children brightened up their day, and they really did enjoy it. ”

Activity Coordinator,  
Harnham Croft care home

One care home specifically reported that sessions with the children had a clear calming effect on a resident whose dementia could cause problematic behaviours:

“ We had a number of residents who could display some behaviours. Like shouting out, spitting at staff. We weren't going to include one resident in with the project at first, as we weren't sure how she was going to respond. But actually when she saw children she just went through, like I'll come sit down, I'm gonna join you whether you like it or not! Her behaviors completely changed, at the sessions mainly. And then for a short time after the session. She just wasn't as challenging. But actually her behaviour predominantly changed and calmed when she got the chance to have children around her. And for a short period afterwards too. ”

Manager, Avalon Residential care home

When asked if online sessions had made any change to residents mood, all care staff reported that they had not observed any change. Or even if they felt residents enjoyed it in the moment, there was certainly no lasting change once the session was over.

“

**I mean, there might have been in in that moment, that Jade said they were getting things out of it. But not kind of long term after, it's just, you know, forgotten.**

”

**Manager, Avalon Residential care home**

For the gardening sessions able to be observed, there is a more mixed picture. A score from 1 – 7 is taken for each participant at the beginning and end of the session, rating their general mood or wellbeing. This allows the observer to tell whether an activity session made a participant experience a greater sense of wellbeing than they would have had without the session. For the 14 residents observed, 7 residents had an improved wellbeing score at the end of the session, 6 residents' mood stayed the same, and 1 resident had a lower mood than when the session started.

### **Stimulation and Interaction**

The Arts Obs undertaken at the gardening sessions found that 12 of the 14 residents participating, were stimulated to engage in many of the activities.

For the other partnerships, Facilitators reported they had observed signs of stimulation in the residents:

“

**Well you could certainly see foot tapping, hand movements and things like that, even in the online sessions. Absolutely, the atmosphere in the room changes. When you get into the room, the Activity Coordinator is there and it's silence you know? But of course by the end of it you can hear conversation.**

”

**Facilitator, Gloucestershire settings**

Care staff from Charlton Kings and Pennwood Lodge also reported that some residents interacted more when the pupils were there.

“

**It just made them smile, made them want to interact with the children more than they do with adults.**

”

**Activity Coordinator, Pennwood Lodge**





“

I would say, the interaction between individuals and children, they would speak more, or they would do more with them sometimes than they would do with the residents who they're with all the time, especially if their dementia was advanced. So that works quite well, there was definitely laughter there when sometimes they've been quite quiet through the day.

”

**Activity Coordinator,  
Charlton Kings care home**

### **Long-term impact on residents**

When asked if either session type had had a noticeable effect on residents after the sessions had finished, there was a mixed response. This seemed to be predominantly due to how advanced a resident's dementia was, with staff commenting that those with more advanced dementia live much more in the moment, so they would not expect to see a longer-term effect to wellbeing.

Several care homes reported that residents would talk about the pupils after and in-between sessions, asking when they would see them next.

“

**Residents were talking about the children long after they had left! They still are actually. The minute you mention children, 'Ooh I want to see the children'!**

”

**Activity Coordinator, Harnham Croft**

## Connection to personhood

Observations using the Arts Obs tool measure how much taking part in a gardening session connected an individual to their personhood. This is observed through the following signs – nodding, eye contact, responding directly, e.g. by laughing, initiating movement/contact with another, inviting someone to do something, articulating how an activity related to them, extending the activity by adding reflections, memories or making suggestions.

Of the 14 residents observed in a gardening session, they were rated the following for whether the activity connected them to their personhood:

**8 residents - Yes, very much (multiple reaction to events)**

**4 residents - Yes, a little (One or two reactions to activities evident)**

**2 residents - No connections evident**

For the other sessions, where observations could not take place, care staff reported that sessions with the pupils were a way for residents to remember their own children, which was particularly relevant for those with more advanced dementia. Residents often enjoy helping the pupils with practical tasks, giving them a sense of agency they do not necessarily feel when they are the ones being helped by carers.

“

**I think those residents whose dementia is more advanced, get perhaps more benefit about having seen children. Because there's, if they've had children, if they've got grandchildren, there's a connection there straightaway.**

”

**Manager, Charlton Kings care home**

“

**I've observed residents helping out and encouraging the children at times, when in everyday circumstances it is usually the other way around.**

”

**Facilitator, Hampshire partnerships**

“

**But when the residents were actually getting their hands and dirty and creating things, and the children were too, I think that's when they kind of changed their behaviour because they were, you know, helping the children. There was more interaction, in that sense.**

”

**Manager, Avalon Residential care home**

Sessions also allowed residents to connect to their personal histories in various ways. In some settings residents were able to take part in discussions with the children to share details about their lives, often prompted by care staff, allowing them time to reminisce and share their life stories with others. In gardening activity sessions, residents who were keen gardeners enjoyed passing on their knowledge and gardening tips, especially to the children.

“

**I was very happy to learn so many gardening tips from Mike (a former gardener). I also now know all the names of different gardening tools thanks to him.**

**Pupil, Tynedale Primary school**

”

“

**One resident, her father, he drowned at sea in the war. But she had a box with a letter in it, that was written by somebody else, who told her about how her father died, and what went on in the ship and everything. and that was around Remembrance Day, so we read out parts of that letter. And that was incredibly moving. So that was obviously really important to her, and really informative for the children. They were really wanting to share their stories.**

**Facilitator, Hampshire partnerships**

”

“

**An Irish gentlemen there had a really positive session with the pupils where he talked about his experience of the war and shared his story and photos. That care home is mainly talkative women, so he really appreciated having that time to talk to the pupils.**

**Facilitator, Gloucestershire partnerships**

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“

**Our Residents look forward to seeing and speaking with the children from St Peters school. I believe the interaction is brilliant and really makes them [the residents] feel good within themselves. The discussions we have, lets our Resident's minds go back in time and brings lovely memories to them.**

**Activity Coordinator,  
Avalon Residential Care Home**

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## Meeting Objectives:

### 3. Relationships between care home staff and residents improve

As part of this project, we aimed to ensure that there was positive communication between staff and residents, and that staff experienced an increase in knowledge about their resident's lives and interests. This would better inform their interactions going forward.

#### Communication

All Facilitators reported that communication between care staff and residents was positive. Activity Coordinators encouraged residents to get involved in sessions if they felt it would be beneficial. As the recommended number of participants was 6-8 residents, for some selecting these residents required careful thought of who would engage appropriately, who would benefit from additional company and contact and who would enjoy the activities. As mentioned earlier in the report, this also included consideration of who may benefit simply from being in the room and seeing the children, even if they were not able to actively participate in some activities.

Only one care home taking part in the project struggled with this task, due to a lack of understanding on the part of the Activity Coordinator. They often made assumptions of what residents could contribute, and would speak for them, instead of letting them engage as individuals in whatever way suited them. Despite guidance, for the first few sessions too many residents were brought in, which overwhelmed the children. They would also often override any session content planned by the Facilitator, that had come from resident feedback, and attempt to dictate session content themselves, based on their own opinions of what people would enjoy. When the pandemic began, they decided that the residents would not find it beneficial to take part until the pupils could visit again, so withdrew from the project at that stage.

## Knowledge of residents

When asked if taking part in the project activities had increased care staff's knowledge of their resident's lives, only two care homes reported that it had.

This is supported by the observations from Facilitators. All reported that the majority of Activity Coordinators knew their residents very well, so taking part in these sessions actually enables them to prompt residents to share details about their lives, making for a richer session and knowledge exchange with the pupils to build connections.

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**I think the AC was good, in that she had a good idea of things. So like ,‘Oooh I bet you didn’t know that Pearl used to work in the aircraft in the war.’ So she got stories about that, and pictures to show the children She knew a lot about the residents. Like bringing old letters, and Pearl’s folder with all the photos... she knew all their stories.**

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**Facilitator, Hampshire partnerships**





## Meeting Objectives:

### 4. Care homes value and prioritise meaningful engagement and co-production

Meaningful engagement with residents, and the concept of person-centred care is a key component of care for the elderly. It is included in Regulation 9 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008, and therefore assessed in CQC inspections of care providers. This extends beyond just day to day general care, and should also be part of a care home's activity provision.

By including specific co-production activities throughout this project, we wanted to ensure that the interests and wishes of the residents were at the core of all activities delivered. Care staff were actively involved in co-production sessions, both face to face at the start of the project, through ongoing discussions in activity sessions, and through a specifically designed 'Tree of Life' activity, during the second lockdown. As we were unable to go in and speak to residents in groups at that point, the 'Tree of Life' activity was designed by an Alive Facilitator as an exercise that could be done by care staff with their residents, to capture the same information. It consisted of an A3 sheet, with a tree design, on which were specific questions and prompts for care staff to ask residents, and write the information onto the 'Tree' (see Appendix 4). The design captured information on their background, family, and where they grew up on the roots of the tree, then moved up to collect information on their interests, favourite things, using open questions such as 'What makes you laugh?' With many care homes in this project going through outbreaks of coronavirus during the second lockdown, it was important to design something that could be done at a leisurely pace when staff had time, and could be completed on a one to one basis with a resident self-isolating in their room.

When asked to rate their understanding of co-production prior to this project, three care homes felt that they already 'Fully understood' co-production, therefore there was no change in this level by the end of the project. Two care homes rated their understanding much lower than this, but both reported an increase in understanding by the end of the project.

From the Facilitator's perspective, not all of the staff did understand the process and principles of co-production quite to this extent however, but they did clearly understand a lot about their residents, and person-centred care.

**“ The AC at Charlton Kings has a lot of input to session content, so not necessarily co-production in it's organic form, but they are always activities that the residents love, and he knows his residents extremely well which makes it easy to trust his judgement. ”**

**Facilitator, Gloucestershire partnerships**

**“ The AC at Cedar Lawn has a good knowledge of residents and is very caring and proactive in making sure residents get the most out of our sessions. She makes notes and takes photos at each session, and afterwards we have a brief discussion on how the session went and make plans for the following month. ”**

**Facilitator, Hampshire partnerships**

**“ At The Gables the AC completely understood co-production and it was always an ongoing aspect of resident’s care. She was very proactive at making events happen for the residents. ”**

**Facilitator, gardening sessions**

All care home staff felt that the co-production sessions ran by the Facilitators at the start of the project did inform the activities that were run. Facilitators found that some care home staff were able to make time to discuss how sessions had gone at the end of each face to face visit, and allow time at the end to speak to residents and get their thoughts for the next sessions, which was incredibly valuable.

**“ The school would only have a 45 minute slot, so during that time, alone with the residents then at the end, there was definitely a sense of discussion about what had happened in the previous 45 minutes. And so they were obviously engaged and that went on after the session. And so yeah, I would say they definitely felt it was for them. And appreciated that. And were part of it, you know. ”**

**Facilitator, Gloucestershire partnerships**

**“ The AC is active during sessions and afterwards we had time to discuss things with the residents over tea and cake and make plans for future sessions, worked well. ”**

**Facilitator, Hampshire partnerships**

This was not consistent though, and in the care homes where sessions were held in the morning, there was no time for this at the end of sessions as residents were quickly moved out the room to go and have their lunch.

Only one care home demonstrated a lack of understanding of co-production, or an unwillingness to incorporate it into session activities. The Activity Coordinator at this home put up a plan for the entire school year of what each session would involve, before any consultation with residents or the Facilitator. To resolve this, the Project Manager again had to speak with this staff member to clarify why this was not appropriate. As this care home left the project when the pandemic started, there is no information to measure whether their understanding of co-production and person-centred care has changed.

## **Trees of Life**

The 'Trees of Life' activity sheets were completed by three of the five care homes. Care staff reported that although useful, they had struggled to find the time to complete these. This is understandable, given the workload many of them had when COVID outbreaks occurred in the home. Care staff at one home found that some residents had become distressed when talking about their life histories to complete the activity.

Two care homes reported that completing the sheets had increased their knowledge about their residents, as the questions went beyond the information they would routinely collect. The remaining three care homes did not feel the information collected in the activity sheet would be used to inform their activities. They felt this information was already collected through their own co-production activities.

From the perspective of the Facilitators, their feedback was that the information obtained through this activity was limited. Facilitators suggested they would be better used as a tool for staff and residents to complete prior to a face to face co-production session. Having these conversations with residents in order to complete the activity would also get staff into the right frame of mind for what to expect in a face to face co-production discussion.

## **Incorporating Co-production**

All five care homes reported that they currently run co-production activities with their residents, although the method through which this is done differs per home.

- All the care homes collect information about every resident when they first move there, to build a picture of their lives and interests. This is usually supplemented by information from family. Whether this information is updated or conversations continue, depends on the home however.
- Pennwood Lodge hold regular resident's meetings, for them to provide feedback and input, and decide what activities they wish to do. The Activity Coordinator also understood that daily conversations on a one to one level with a resident are a way to collect this information, and be person-centred in their care. A log of resident's interests is continually updated.
- Avalon felt that as they are a small home, staff are able to be much more person-centred on a daily basis, as they spend more time with their residents one to one, and get to know them well.
- At Chestnut Court, staff work with residents to produce a 'Key To Me' box when they first move to the home, which is filled with objects of significance to that resident and their life. Each box is hung on the individual's door to their room. The staff there did find the co-production sessions and completing the Trees of Life very useful though, as a supplement to this.
- At Harnham Croft, the staff reported that information about a resident's life, their memories and interests is not updated, although they do spend time speaking with each resident as part of their person-centred care approach. Although they have a broad range of activities on offer and they try and meet people's interests, they would like to continue doing work in a similar vein to the Trees of Life with their residents, as this asked questions of their residents that they had not explored before.
- This was similar at Charlton Kings care home, where staff noted that this activity is done when residents first move there, but not updated, and they were aware this was something that needed extra work.



“

It's something we do when they first arrive. To be honest, I don't do it as much maybe as we should, in that we don't kind of review it. There's people here that said, 'Oh, yes, they love to do knitting and embroidery' when they first come in. And I've never seen them do it. Sometimes we get this information from their families, maybe the individual, and they, you know, perhaps it's when they saw their mum or dad do it they were keen, but doing it now? Not so much. Maybe you know, it's in the back of the mind, perhaps I'm not approaching it in the way I should? I don't know. It ends as a mixed package of ways, we get the information from the individual, but then we get quite a lot of information from families. That might not always be accurate, they might sometimes say what they would like their mother or father to be, more than what their mother or father is.

Manager, Charlton Kings care home

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## Meeting Objectives:

### 5. Enhanced shared communal spaces

Originally an aim of this project was to increase resident's enjoyment of the shared communal spaces in their home. However, this was problematic during periods of lockdown when residents had to self-isolate in their individual rooms. In addition, sanitisation regulations around any objects sent into a care home meant that some staff were unable to put up any arts or crafts from the school in communal spaces. They could be kept in an individual's room, once quarantined for 72 hours, then wiped with anti-bacterial wipes or spray.

Prior to lockdown, some carehomes did display either photos from the pupil's visits, or if they had made arts and crafts in a session, those would be displayed. Staff found this would prompt memories of the pupils visiting, for those with dementia.

**“ Right in the beginning, they made masks and craft things. if they did artwork together and things we had displayed in the dining room and those residents remembered they've done it, they remembered it. 'Oh, that was my one. That was my one.' And it prompted a lot of conversations at mealtimes. They would all talk about it again,..so that was always kind of in their memory, if that makes sense?**

**Manager, Avalon Residential care home**

**”**

The gardening sessions in particular had a positive effect on resident's communal spaces:

“

**Yes – decorations were always put up in shared spaces following sessions. If not, then residents often took them back into their own rooms to display. At The Gables, photos from sessions were also up on the walls. Bird feeders are worth mentioning, the residents really enjoyed having these out in the garden after making them. Some residents had their own patches of garden/planters that were utilised more due to these sessions.**

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**Facilitator, gardening sessions**

## **Meeting Objectives:**

### **6. Increased community engagement activity**

Through their very nature, any intergenerational project aims to increase community engagement for both the older and younger people involved. In this project, schools within walking distance of the care homes were chosen for this reason, as keeping the connection going needs to be as easy as possible for it to be successful long-term.

Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, making and maintaining community connections became hard for all care homes and schools. This is why so many partnerships felt unable to continue in the project post-pandemic. Of those that did, this connection has been very valuable for all in such isolating circumstances, but there has been no increase in further connections beyond this project.

### **Community Connections**

Three of the five final participating care homes had never taken part in any intergenerational activity before this project. Of the two that had, these connections were sporadic and had not lasted long, or had stopped since the pandemic. Although one or two care homes took part in wider schemes of letter writing with others across the UK during the pandemic, the activities in this project were the only active links or interactions held through lockdown, with their local community.

Most care staff noted in their interviews that they were now in a position to start re-connecting with contacts in their community that had fallen by the wayside since the pandemic, such as local churches or festivals.

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**All the connections we used to have, with the churches and things, we have to rebuild them now, 'cos they've all died off. Need to start rebuilding our links.**

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**Activity Coordinator, Pennwood Lodge**

However, one or two care homes also commented that this takes a lot of time, which they feel they should be directing towards the residents right now. So this project was particularly appreciated because an external organisation was doing this organisation for them.

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**I think you just get wrapped up in everyday sort of life, the running of the home. We've all got busy, you know, and you just get wrapped up in like what we're doing this week. And that's what happens. Sometimes you're not actually thinking out the box a little bit, you know?**

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**Activity Coordinator, Harnham Croft**

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**But it's quite difficult. It's quite a convoluted route I found is, it's....my time is for the residents. You know, trying to arrange something eats into the time you're meant to be spending with the residents. Yeah, it works much better because you're, you're doing that for me. It's great!**

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**Manager, Charlton Kings care home**

### **Keeping connections going**

All five care homes definitely wanted to continue connections with their partner school, however due to the change of staff at Ashley Juniors, Chestnut Court felt unsure that this would be possible. All four remaining schools also definitely wanted to continue activities and stay connected with their partner care home. For those currently having online sessions via Zoom, all the staff are now familiar with the technology, and until visits to the care homes can happen again, they feel able to accommodate this.

However, several schools made the point that for the children, some of the benefits are wider than just seeing the residents – the whole experience of walking over and back from the care home, having time out of their usual school timetable, and being outside the classroom environment are all very important to the children. It gives the sessions more of a sense of adventure, and a chance to speak about the residents and what they had done together

and how they felt. It allowed time to debrief, explain anything the children were unsure of and solidify memories. This walk back was also when teachers would notice the impact the sessions had on the pupils, as this was the time during which their mood seemed more positive and they would speak much more openly with the teacher, compared to in-school. Once back in school there isn't really time to do this, and as the online sessions don't involve leaving the school environment, that sense of occasion is lacking for the pupils.

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**It was nice, even just walking down to the home, because it's a really short walk, but we'd walk down and we'd sing and we talk about the things we were going to do. And we'd all talk about the people from last time. So it was a nice kind of 'Ooh do you remember Pat, remember Belinda' all the rest of it. And then we'd get down there. So it's kind of a bit more of an occasion, I suppose. And then we were there. And it was really nice to do that.”**

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**Teacher, Harnham Infants school**

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**Online is less of an adventure if you like, because the adventure was that they were sort of privileged to go out, you know, we walked there. We got there. We were welcomed. You know, we made the connections, you know, they had a drink and a biscuit, they had chance to chat face to face and laugh. And, you know, morning off school and all that, because by the time we got there, did the session and came back it was nearly lunchtime. So I think that for the children it was the whole package if you like and, and they loved it when they were there. When we had that walk back.... you can talk about what you did, how it made them feel? How did it make the residents feel? It was an opportunity for me to say, You've really brought joy to those people, you've really given them a lovely time. You pick out certain children as well, you know, you made Betty laugh or wasn't it great when you made Betty laugh, whereas again, you don't do that online.**

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**Teacher, St Peter's Junior school**

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**I think half the fun of the kids going was walking down there, walking through school, they'll always remember that, walking there, walking back, obviously being there. But that whole experience of being involved in something for their confidence, helping other people, going there physically doing something other than being in school is a great thing. I remember coming at Christmas, and we took our massive coats off and all our shoes off in one room and left them in this room. And that was so exciting. It was like going into someone's home, you know. And visiting properly, where you do kind of like, you go into a special room and you leave or, you know, cloak room or whatever. All those little things really stay with children, don't they. And it's funny because it's the whole package for them. It's not just the people, it's all the little stuff as well.**

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**Teacher, Charlton Kings Junior school**

No care homes gave a definitive answer as to whether they would still wish to use an external Facilitator. Now that the sessions would not be part-funded, care homes would need to pay the Facilitator's full rate per session, so it would be more costly.

Several schools commented that they would like to involve parents more, as this may enable pupils to be involved outside of school time, as well as open discussion within families about the link with the care home. One teacher commented that involving the parents was important to build a feeling of pride that their child is taking part in this activity in the community. Going forward, Harnham Infants would like to open out the activities to a whole year group, and embed the link with the care home in the whole school planning for the year. That way, a wide range of activities could take place and the care home could be more included in teacher's planning.

All care staff rated their confidence in approaching other schools to link with their care home has increased since taking part in this project. Even if they were fairly confident to do this already, staff now feel able to describe the benefits and the impact, having experienced it, and would therefore feel able to explain why it would be good to be involved with them.

“

**I think from doing it now, if I wrote to a school, it wouldn't just be asking, do you want to linkup? It would be, you know, we've done this in the past. And we've seen really positive effects and heard positive stories from the school pupils. And so I think by giving an example you might get a better response.**

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**Manager, Avalon Residential care home**





## Meeting Objectives:

### 7. Positive cultural change in care home activity provision

At this point in the pandemic, it is difficult for care home to say what further activities they are thinking of starting with their community. For some, now doesn't seem the right time and they feel a bit unsure of who they would contact, until they can have visitors again. After so many months in lockdown, care home staff have had to provide much more activity in-house. Several care homes reported that their thinking is now around how to expand on what they are providing in-house, by bringing in the community to contribute to this, depending on what is achievable. Harnham Croft in particular highlighted an activity recently themed around a 'beach day', where activities in-house were planned alongside members of the community who could contribute, in a COVID-safe way.

**“ We’re trying to push further out to make in-house things much bigger. So like we had a beach day. And we had a fish and chip van, a mobile fish and chip, and he came around the back. It was fantastic wasn’t it, and we had a sandpit and we had a little paddling pool. And like the kitchen did tropical drinks. And we had the local ice cream van as well, which is amazing. We are trying to think bigger outside the box, with connections in town. ”**

**Activity Coordinator, Harnham Croft**

However, there was no interest in starting more online activities with new community groups – care staff reported they wanted to wait until people could visit the home again.

### **CQC ratings**

The CQC rating of participating care homes was taken at the beginning of the project, and again at project completion. For the five care homes that continued with the project up to completion, their CQC ratings were as follows:

Care Setting	CQC rating at start of project	CQC rating at end of project
Harnham Croft	Good	Requires Improvement
Chestnut Court	Good	Good
Charlton Kings Care Home	Good	Good
Avalon Residential	Requires Improvement	Good
Avalon Residential	Requires Improvement	Good

So of the five care home participating, two had an improved CQC rating, two had the same CQC rating as at project commencement, and one had a lower CQC rating.

It is worth noting though that there have been disruptions to CQC inspections due to the pandemic, so any changes to CQC ratings may occur further on in time at a care home's next inspection.

# Conclusions and Recommendations

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The key objective of this project was to reduce social isolation and loneliness of older people. Given the circumstances of the global pandemic, this objective became of even higher importance, whilst at the same time bringing a much larger degree of difficulty in being achieved.

Whilst working with fewer partnerships after the pandemic began, meant the project could no longer reach as many older people, it did however give the project team more time with each partnership that did continue to work closely with them on a more bespoke approach. In addition to the constant changes brought to everyone because of the pandemic, each of the five partnerships had their own individual, ever-changing circumstances, that the Project Manager and Facilitators had to adapt to, often at extremely short notice. Flexibility and perseverance was key throughout.

Therefore, it is incredibly positive that for the five care homes who felt able to continue connecting with their local school, all participants felt that beneficial interactions and connections had been made between care home residents and school pupils.

## Face to face versus online

**The main problem identified with moving to online sessions over Zoom, was that pupils and residents could no longer really make individual connections. It is worth noting that the technology is there to facilitate individual conversations, but was not appropriate or safe to use in this project which has a format of group activity sessions. There are limitations on using Zoom due to Safeguarding requirements,** many of which had to be quickly put in place when the pandemic started, and schools started using these new platforms to connect online. Although the functionality is there to have private chats and breakout rooms, it would not be safe to run these without enough staff to be present in each individual breakout room to meet safeguarding criteria. The staff to pupil ratio would need to increase to use these features. In addition, you would need to facilitate more sessions, at more cost to the care homes, using further staff time and resources that they simply don't have.

**This difference in terms of depth of engagement should be explained to any new participants taking part in online intergenerational activities, to ensure expectations are realistic.**

The confusion that residents experienced understanding that online sessions were something they could interact with, is understandable, especially for those with more advanced dementia. However, it is promising that for some care homes they are finding resident's engagement and understanding has improved over time. This technology was new for all the care homes, whereas for schools and younger people it was perhaps more familiar, which would explain why pupils were found to be much more comfortable using Zoom to interact.

**Using an additional online platform, such as Seesaw, has also been incredibly effective at maintaining connections. For future intergenerational activities, using a platform such as Seesaw is definitely something Alive would encourage.**

Undertaking practical, craft-based activities has had mixed success, where combined with other forms of activity. However, for Pennwood Lodge and Ashley Juniors, where this is all that has been available, it has worked very well, probably due in part because they have residents and pupils who are interested in craft.

**For practical activities to work though, when completed separately by school and care home, they clearly need to be facilitated differently, and involve a whole class, rather than specific small group of particular pupils. Again, this bespoke response to each partnership has enabled connections to continue in a way that works for them. This flexibility in delivery and activities should be a consideration for future intergenerational activities, rather than a 'one size fits all' approach.**

It is unsurprising that engagement in activity sessions was found to be higher in face to face sessions. The importance of personal contact cannot be underestimated. However, where able to use Zoom for online sessions, or undertake practical tasks, this has still been valued by care staff in particular, as it has enabled the connection with the schools to continue, where other community connections have stopped.

**Even if on an individual level, relationships between pupils and residents have weakened, keeping the school and care home staff engaged with one another throughout a global pandemic, will hopefully mean that a longer term connection can be maintained, bringing benefit to more older and younger people over time.**



## Staff engagement

Our findings show that care staff and school staff engagement in sessions, both face to face, but particularly online, is crucial to a successful activity session. The settings who continued connections since the pandemic all had staff that were very engaged in the project from the beginning. For those that have taken part in online sessions, their knowledge of the technology and equipment has grown and improved. They are now at a point where they have the knowledge, and correct equipment, to run these types of sessions by themselves going forward.

In order to ensure that the staff who take part in such activities understand their role in the project, it should be explained to them clearly from the outset, to avoid confusion or weaker activity sessions further down the line.



## Mood and Wellbeing

Alongside addressing loneliness and social isolation, the fact that activity sessions also brought a positive change to residents' mood and wellbeing is a very encouraging outcome. For the majority of residents, increased stimulation and interaction, even if it does not necessarily last a long time after sessions end, is still beneficial to their mental and physical health. And connecting residents to their history, and sense of personhood is particularly important. It is interesting to see how much residents enjoyed helping the children with tasks, especially as for some, the rest of the time they are the ones being helped by care staff. Having a sense of purpose and agency is of huge benefit to residents' feelings of self-worth and confidence. This was not included in the project's original aims and objectives, but should be considered for any future projects with older people in care.



## Person-centred care and co-production

For all but one care home in the entire project, communication was found to be positive between care staff and residents. This is also reflected in the fact that care staff's knowledge about their residents, their lives, and interests, was already high. Therefore undertaking co-production in this project was key to ensuring activities were participant-led, but not necessarily needed as a way to improve or increase the co-production activity of all participating care homes. Many already understood co-production as a concept, and had found ways to embed it in their care home practice. However, for those who were not quite so confident in their knowledge of co-production, it was beneficial for an external organisation to deliver this activity, and act as a reminder of its importance. It was also beneficial to provide resources such as the 'Trees of Life' activity sheet for staff to refer back



to. The work done by Alive Facilitators around co-production with residents will hopefully act as a prompt for those care staff who are still working to incorporate this practice into their activities on an ongoing basis.

The Trees of Life activity was designed as a response to the pandemic, and was a trial of a potential new way to collect information when Facilitator's are unable to go into care homes. Although not necessarily successful in fully meeting their objectives, the information contained was still useful for some staff who are more unfamiliar with co-production. They can be added to Alive's resources for undertaking co-production, so more care homes can benefit from this resource. Perhaps using them in-house, when staff are not so busy as in the pandemic, they may prove to be even more successful for gathering information.



## **Communal spaces**

Improving the communal community spaces in care homes was obviously much more difficult during the pandemic. The gardening sessions clearly were more successful in meeting this objective, and if they had been able to continue there would have been much more evidence of improved communal spaces and gardens.

Displaying crafts was beneficial, but completely dependent on whether you have residents who are interested in taking part in craft activities in the first place. Displaying photographs from activity sessions should be encouraged for all participating care homes though – as a way to prompt conversations and memories, as well as display what activities your residents have been doing for external visitors.



## **Community engagement**

Engaging with any community groups or organisations became extremely difficult once the pandemic began. Not only were care homes closed to any visitors, and dealing with a rapidly escalating health emergency disproportionately affecting older people, but most community groups had stopped running and schools were closed. Therefore the original project's aims of increasing community engagement became unrealistic. The focus instead turned to simply keeping the existing connections going.

It is unfortunate that this was unable to happen for all 17 original partnerships. However, this evaluation's findings demonstrate that having an external organisation like Alive facilitating these connections meant that the parties who could continue found it easier, as someone else was able to organise and deliver sessions, acting as a point of contact for both school and care home. Without that external support it is possible that some of these partnerships simply would not have continued their connection. But for the five that have continued, the links made through this project have been sustained, and hopefully will continue given the majority of partners have expressed a clear wish to stay connected.

As restrictions ease, and community groups are able to meet again, and the schools return in September, community engagement activities may increase for these care homes. They now have a higher level of confidence to approach other schools and community contacts, having taken part in this project. By the last month of this project, some of the care homes had started to discuss whether pupils would be able to come over for outdoor visits – something that teacher's felt would be difficult to accommodate right now, but by the new school year this may become more manageable.



### **Positive changes in activity provision**

All the activity provision in this project had to change from the original project plan, moving from face to face to other formats.

There has clearly been a learning curve in terms of how to adapt activities during the circumstances of the pandemic, but these learnings can go on to inform further intergenerational activities. As part of the outputs of this project, a guide on 'How To run intergenerational activities online' has been produced, for any care home or school who wish to explore starting activities together. A series of six short videos have also been filmed, as a guide to prompt intergenerational activities between care homes and schools. The videos cover a range of activity types, and provide a starting point of ideas for any care homes or schools to begin activity sessions either separately that they can then share, or activities to do together when they are able to meet.

Although unexpected at the start of the project, these changes to activity provision are positive by their very nature, in that the care homes adapted to the situation in which they found themselves. The care staff and school staff tried something new, for the sake of their residents and pupils, to reduce their levels of isolation. They have also developed their in-house activity provision, all of which can only be a positive change moving forward.

# Case Study One - The Three Vals

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As part of the Access All Ages project, Charlton Kings Care Home were partnered with Charlton Kings Junior School, for a group of pupils to visit the home once a month and take part in activities with the residents. These activities were participant-led, and designed to encourage connections between the older residents and school pupils, to reduce social isolation.

Of all the pupils and resident's taking part, a specific connection was made between two pupils and a group of ladies who came to be known as 'The Three Vals'. Three ladies in the group of residents were called Val, and an almost instant connection was made between them, and two female pupils at the sessions. The three Vals were given names by the girls to separate them – Val with the buttons (she had a cardigan with large buttons on), Val with the glasses (who wore glasses), and then there was just Val. These names even became used by care staff, with resident referred to as 'Val B', and 'Val G'. Staff reported that as soon as the girls from the school arrived, they would head straight over to the Vals and give them a hug. They also sent cards to the care home with drawings of the Vals on, during the lockdown and school closures.

**“ It lifted their moods up tremendously. Yeah, big smiles and Val with the buttons, she was quite advanced in her dementia. I think children when they're young kind of see past barriers or don't acknowledge that those barriers are there. And they would, you know, come straight towards her and gave her a big hug. ”**

**Manager, Charlton Kings Care Home**

For all three residents this connection was incredibly valued. They always looked forward to sessions when they knew the children were visiting. Their moods were more positive, with big smiles on show as soon as the pupils arrived. Val 'with the buttons' had quite advanced dementia, and couldn't always hold a full conversation. This meant she often didn't attend activities in the care home or come out of her room. However, staff found that when the pupils were visiting, she would always attend.

Sadly, both Val with the buttons and Val with the glasses passed away during a coronavirus outbreak in the care home in January 2021. The special connection made with these two girls, who continue to talk about them with their teacher, will have been so meaningful to these ladies and helped reduce any feelings of loneliness or isolation in their final few years.

# Case Study One - Gardening at the Gables

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As part of the Access All Ages project, The Gables Residential Home were partnered with students from Hanham Woods Academy school, to take part in gardening activity sessions together.

The school purposefully chose pupils in Year 10, who were studying GCSE Health and Social care, as they felt they would really benefit from this interaction, and it would add to their experience of the course. This group were the only one with all-female participants, from both school and care home.

In the sessions, participants would explore hands-on gardening activities, planting seeds, growing vegetables, as well as nature-based crafts such as making birdfeeders. Residents enjoyed sharing the tasks with the girls, freely talking amongst themselves and sharing their interests and life history. The residents formed great connections with the students and they really understood one another.

What made these sessions stand out was that the pupils in this partnership understood that this activity was about more than just gardening, it was about forming relationships with the residents. They shared a lot about themselves, really connected with the residents and found them funny and interesting. They were able to relate to each other very easily.

One girl made a really good connection with a resident and ended up doing her work placement at the home. Another pupil formed a strong connection with a usually quiet resident called Jo. When they were paired up to work together, the pupil commented that she felt a bit shy. Jo responded by saying that she also felt shy a lot of the time too, so it was ok. They both understood each other's feelings of anxiety in social groups, and from then on would always sit next to each other and work together.

Teachers and care staff reported that this connection of finding someone to relate to, had really calmed both the pupil's and resident's feelings of anxiety in general. For all the pupils, teachers commented on how much the girls came out of their shells in the sessions compared to being in school, and really flourished. One teacher commented that "These girls are exactly the right temperament for this work, they've made really strong connections. This is great for their social skills and I wish we could stay longer."



# Case Study Three – Using Seesaw

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**Residents at Harnham Croft care home in Salisbury partnered with pupils in Year One at Harnham Infants School, as part of Alive's Access All Ages project.**

The pupils and residents formed a lovely bond, visiting each other every month for a variety of activities together. However, when the coronavirus pandemic began and lockdowns and school closures were introduced, they had to suspend their visits. As the first lockdown restrictions began to ease and schools re-opened in September 2020, this partnership were the first to re-start sessions online, via Zoom.

Through ongoing consultations with both parties, a flexible approach of using live online activity sessions, in addition to other practical activities in between, has allowed everyone to reconnect again. The online platform 'Seesaw' was also introduced, as a way for the pupils and residents to send messages, photos or videos to each other in between sessions. Seesaw is a free classroom app introduced in some schools during the first lockdown, as a way for pupils to securely share work with teachers, and other classmates, from home. A dedicated page on the platform was set up for this project, with access given to the care home, and project staff.



Teaching and care staff now send photos of the craft activities they have been doing, usually themed around events at the school or care home. They have also collaborated on shared art activities, such as creating a mural for Remembrance Day. They therefore have a mix of planned activities shared over Seesaw, and ‘in the moment’ online activities together.

During the second lockdown and school closure in 2021, Seesaw became especially useful. With residents isolating in their own individual rooms, every pupil in the year group sent a video or photo for the residents to see over Seesaw, with songs, drawings or messages of hope to keep people’s spirits up.

Despite the pandemic and its challenges, through adapting and trying a new approach the residents and pupils are now able to see each other on-screen, reconnect, share their experiences, play games and just have a lot of fun again! Both partnerships are keen to continue using Seesaw to maintain connections.



# Appendices

## Appendix 1 - Care Home and School Partnerships

Region	Care Home and School	Continued post-pandemic?
Bristol - Gardening	The Gables and Hanham Woods Academy	-
	The Meadows and Tynedale Primary School	-
Wiltshire	Buckland Court and Christ the King Infants School	-
	Holmwood and St Martins CoFE Primary School	-
	Harnham Croft care home and Harnham Infant School	Yes
	Willowcroft and Harnham Junior School	-
	Maristow and St Andrews CoFE VA School	-
Hampshire	Brendoncare Alton and Amery Hill Academy (1st group)	-
	Borovere and Amery Hill Academy (2nd group)	-
	Chestnut Court and Ashley Junior School	Yes
	Kingfishers and New Milton Junior School	-
	Cedar Lawn and Halterworth Infants School	-
Gloucestershire	Charlton Kings Care Home and Charlton Kings Junior School	Yes
	Pennwood Lodge and Kingswood Primary School	Yes
	Avalon Residential Care Home and St Peters CoFE Primary School	Yes
	Kingsley House and St Mary's Primary School	-
	St Paul's Residential and Tredworth Junior School	-

## APPENDIX 2: Data collection surveys

### ACCESS ALL AGES

#### School staff survey – End of Project Review

Thank you for taking part in the Access All Ages project with Alive, especially during such challenging circumstances over the past year.

In order to evaluate the activity sessions with your partner care home (both in-person and online), Alive are undertaking this survey with all school staff who have been involved.

Please could you answer the following questions in this survey, it should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete.

#### PARTICIPANTS

1. Name of School
2. In total, how many pupils have taken part in the Access All Ages activity sessions since the project began? This includes separate practical or craft activities in-between sessions.
3. What ages were these pupils?
4. Had your school taken part in intergenerational activity prior to this particular project?  
[Yes, No, Not Sure]
5. If yes, please could you provide further details, in particular the age groups of the young people involved and how often they had contact:

#### CONNECTIONS

6. Overall, do you feel that connections have been made between the residents and pupils?  
[Yes, No, Not Sure]
7. If yes, what was the impact of these connections on the pupils?

8. Could you tell us further details about any specific individual connections that you feel were valued by a pupil or resident?  
\*Please note this information may be used in a case study for the project. All names will be anonymised before any publication.
9. Overall, how would you rate the engagement levels of the activity sessions when they were face to face visits? Scale [Very engaging – Not at all engaging]
10. Overall, how would you rate the engagement levels of the activity sessions when they moved online? Scale [Very engaging – Not at all engaging]
11. When activities moved online, how do you feel the sessions changed for the pupils in terms of making connections?
12. Please rate how comfortable you feel the pupils were with online activity sessions with the care home, when they first started?  
[Scale - Very comfortable – Not at all comfortable]
13. Please rate how comfortable you feel the pupils are currently, with online activity sessions?  
[Scale - Very comfortable – Not at all comfortable]
14. Which activities do you feel have engaged the pupils the most to make connections with the residents?

## **WELLBEING**

15. Overall, have you seen any change in the mood or behaviour of the pupils following an activity session with the residents?  
[very positive change, quite positive change, no change, quite negative change, very negative change]

If there has been a clear positive or negative change, please could you give further details:



## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS MOVING FORWARD

16. Please rate how confident you felt to approach care homes in your community to connect with the school pupils, **prior to this project?**  
[scale –Not at all confident to Very confident]
17. Please rate how confident you feel **now** to approach other care homes in your community, to connect with the school?  
[scale –Not at all confident to Very confident]
18. Do you feel able to continue the connection with your partner care home beyond the end of this project?  
[Yes- very much, Yes – a little, No, Not Sure]
19. If no, please explain why. Is there anything Alive could provide to enable you to continue this connection?
20. Have you made other links with any care homes or older persons's groups in your community to connect with, since this project began?  
[Yes, No, Don't know]
21. If yes, please provide details:

## SUGGESTIONS

22. Do you have any recommendations for ways the activity sessions (both online and face to face) could have been improved?
23. Do you have any further feedback or comments relating to the project that you would like to share?
24. Do you have any photos or videos from the project activities that you can share with us, if not done already?

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.**

## Appendix 3 - Data collection survey

### ACCESS ALL AGES

#### School staff survey – End of Project Review

Thank you for taking part in the Access All Ages project with Alive, especially during such challenging times.

In order to evaluate the activity sessions (both in-person and online) with schools and your Care Home, Alive are undertaking this survey with all care staff who have been involved in the project since it began.

Please could you answer the following questions in this survey, it should take no longer than 20 minutes to complete.

#### **PARTICIPANTS**

1. Name of Care Setting
2. In total, how many individual residents have taken part in the Access All Ages sessions since the project began (including any separate practical or craft activities)?
3. Had your residents taken part in intergenerational activity sessions prior to the start of this project?  
[Yes, No, Not Sure]
4. If yes, please could you provide further details of these sessions, in particular the age groups of the young people involved and how often they had contact:

#### **CONNECTIONS**

5. Overall, do you feel that connections have been made between the residents and pupils who took part in this project?  
[Yes, No, Not Sure]
6. Could you tell us further details about any specific individual connections during the project that you feel were valued by a resident/s? What impact did they have?  
\*Please note this information may be used in a case study for the project. All names will be anonymised before any publication.

7. When activities moved online, how do you feel the sessions changed for the residents in terms of making connections?
8. Please rate how comfortable you feel the residents were with online activity sessions, when they first started?  
[Scale - Very comfortable – Not at all comfortable]
9. Please rate how comfortable you feel the residents are currently, with online activity sessions?  
[Scale - Very comfortable – Not at all comfortable]
10. If there has been an increase, how many sessions did it take for residents to feel more familiar and comfortable with online activity sessions?

## **RESIDENTS WELLBEING**

11. When you were able to have face to face sessions, did you see any change in the mood of the residents following an activity session with the pupils?  
[very positive change, quite positive change, no change, quite negative change, very negative change]
12. With online sessions, did you see any change in the mood of the residents following an activity session with the pupils?  
[very positive change, quite positive change, no change, quite negative change, very negative change]
13. Have you seen any change in the general wellbeing of residents as a result of the activities (both face to face and online)?  
[very positive change, quite positive change, no change, quite negative change, very negative change]
14. Have you seen any change in the resident's use of the care home's communal spaces or gardens, as a result of any activities with the school? Please provide details:

## **CO-PRODUCTION**

15. Has there been any change in your staff's knowledge and understanding of your residents' lives and interests through the activities in this project?  
[increased understanding, no change, decreased understanding]
16. Please rate your understanding of using co-production to inform activities, prior to this project?  
[scale -No understanding to Fully understood]
17. How would you rate your understanding of co-production with residents at this point?  
[scale -No understanding to Fully understood]

18. Do you feel the co-production sessions run by our Facilitators at the start of the project informed activities and themes of sessions?  
[Yes- very much, Yes – a little, No, Not Sure]
19. Did you complete the 'Trees of Life' activity with any of your residents?  
[Yes, No, Not Sure]
20. Do you feel the 'Trees of Life' activity informed/will inform future activities with your residents?  
[Yes- very much, Yes – a little, No, Not Sure]
21. Do you already run, or plan to run co-production activities regularly in your home to inform activities?  
[Yes, No, Not Sure]

## **MOVING FORWARD**

22. Please rate how confident you felt to approach schools or groups in your community to connect with the care home residents, prior to this project?  
[scale –Not at all confident to Very confident]
23. Please rate how confident you feel now to approach other schools or groups in your community, to connect with the care home residents, after this project?  
[scale –Not at all confident to Very confident]
24. Do you feel able to continue the connection with your partner school beyond the end of this project? [  
Yes- very much, Yes – a little, No, Not Sure]
25. If no, please explain why. Is there anything Alive could provide to help you continue this connection?
26. Have you made other links with any groups or schools in your community to connect with residents, since this project began?  
[Yes, No, Don't know]
27. Are you considering other groups to connect with, once this project ends?  
[Yes, No, Not Sure]
28. If yes, please can you provide brief details of the groups, and the activities you are thinking of doing:

## **SUGGESTIONS**

29. Do you have any recommendations for ways the activities (both online and offline) with the school could be improved?

30. Do you have any further feedback or comments relating to the project that you would like to share?

Do you have any photos or videos from the project that you are able to share with us?

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.**



# Tree of your life

**My name is.....**

What's your favourite Memory?

.....  
.....

What hobbies do you have?

.....  
.....

What is your favourite food?

.....

What places do you like to go?

.....  
.....

What makes you  
happy?.....  
laugh?.....  
excited?.....  
annoyed?.....

How do you like to spend your time  
indoors?.....  
outdoors?.....

I was born in

.....

I have

.....  
brothers and sisters

I went to school at

.....

My street was

.....



W [aliveactivities.org](http://aliveactivities.org)

E [info@aliveactivities.org](mailto:info@aliveactivities.org)

T 0117 377 4756

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