

Generation Infinity Event 16th November 2010 *Inspiring Leadership across Generations*



The event

The Common Purpose Generation Infinity event was a free one-day event bringing together cross-sector senior leaders and young people to discuss the challenges, opportunities and rewards of being a decisive, courageous and passionate leader. The event took place at Sun Microsoft Systems in Linlithgow and was sponsored by Oracle and the Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice. It was attended by around 65 young people and their mentors, including teachers, parents and course organisers.

The objective

The Generation Infinity Event was structured around the aim for the day which was

to decide, as a collective, the three most important actions to inspire leadership across generations.

Participants were guided through this process with a packed schedule of speakers, group work, videos, discussions and a debate.

The day

The day started with an exploration of leadership challenges presented by four speakers; Caroline Stuart, the Director of Scotland Oracle Corporation UK Ltd, Janis Marshall, Youth Arts Coordinator at Impact Arts, Mike Stevenson, MD of Thinktastic, and Tam Baillie, Commissioner for Children and Young People. Each speaker challenged the audience with the big issue they wished to solve and the

participants, a mixture of young people and their mentors, discussed the challenges in groups before coming together to share ideas and possible solutions. Tam Baillie emphasised that leaders must have an active commitment to human rights and in particular the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and asked how we can ensure that Scotland is the best place for children to grow up in. Mike Stevenson asked how we can inspire young people in Scotland to have the confidence to be leaders and dare to stand out from the rest. Caroline Stuart played a video highlighting the changing nature of employment, learning and the economy and Janis Marshall invited solutions for disruptive behaviour on their programmes.



After lunch participants were invited to a session called Bright Sparks where around twelve groups were formed to share ideas, lessons and thoughts. Each group was led by a representative from organisations such as the Police, Fife Council, Castlemilk Youth Complex and Young Enterprise Scotland and two or three “wildcard” groups spontaneously sprang up as people felt they had issues or ideas to discuss. These groups were asked to start focusing on the outcome for the day - the three actions needed to inspire leadership across generations.

The day was spattered with text message polls about inspiring leaders and urges to make updates on Twitter, as well as Youtube videos, DVDs and the chance for young people to vote in Tam Baillie’s consultation, *a RIGHT Blether*.



The culmination of the event was the big debate through which the three actions would be formulated. Eight groups each sent a representative into the centre of the room where the debate took place. Each group had a time out card they could play to retrieve their representative and give advice, encouragement or swap another representative into the discussion. The first action took 30 minutes to decide, whereas the third action took 3 minutes. The final action list was:

- More opportunities for cross-generational communication from a young age
- More opportunities and trust in young people to make decisions about things that matter to them
- Be positive

An overwhelming theme from the day in general was that young people want to feel trusted to implement the ideas that they have and want to see less talk, more action from today's leaders.

Lessons

The event's success can be measured through the active participation of all ages of participants and positive comments about the day from young people and mentors, plus that the objectives of the day were achieved. There were several elements that contributed to the success of the day:

Fast paced

A variety of speakers, group work, videos, text message polls and debates meant that the day never lost momentum. Energy levels were kept up by rotating between three different rooms so that people were never sitting in the same seat for too long. A sense of urgency was created through text message polls, social network and a specific goal for the day.

Clear outcome

The day was well organised and provided a structured platform to produce a clear outcome. This helped keep debates and discussions focused. It was clear to all what was happening and Connie Young also provided clear conventions for participation, such as being respectful, listening, taking part and being curious.

Voices heard

There was an opportunity for everyone to participate either through small group work, in the debate or coming together as a whole group. This meant that everybody's voice could be heard. In addition the Wild Card groups meant that participants could lead a Bright Sparks group, which meant that participants felt empowered.

Variety

There was a good variety of speakers and organisations involved - from the Commissioner for Children and Young People in Scotland to an intergenerational project from Leith. In addition there was a variety of communication methods and activities, encouraging people to participate and contribute and keeping interest up.