



“Generations Talking Together”

Tuesday 22nd March 2011

Business Centre, City Chambers, Edinburgh



Introduction

“Generations Talking Together” brought younger and older people together from Edinburgh and the Lothians to look at issues of concern across the generations. The event was supported by the Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice, in association with The City of Edinburgh Council and the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP). It was one of a series of regional events held across Scotland in 2011 to showcase intergenerational practice and celebrate the work of the Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice.

The Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice is supported by the Scottish Government and works with public, private and voluntary sector organisations, as well as individuals and families, to gather and share best practice, provide information and support and develop new opportunities for intergenerational working in communities.

The topics for discussion were selected by members of the Scottish Youth Parliament and older people from the A City for All Ages Advisory Group from the Scottish Youth Parliament’s Youth Manifesto ‘Change the Picture’. The Scottish Youth Parliament is an independent organisation committed to ensuring that the voice of Scotland's young people is listened to by all decision-makers. The A City for All Ages Advisory Group works with the City of Edinburgh Council and partners to develop services and activities for older people.

50 people attended the event which was held in the City Chambers, Edinburgh.

The overall strategic evaluation of the event was very positive, welcomed and celebrated by the sponsors, organisers and participants.

"Thanks for the great event on Tuesday. I thought it was really valuable". (Brian McKechnie, Knowledge Exchange Manager, Centre for Lifelong Learning within the School of Education, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences University of Strathclyde)

“Often it seems like there is a divide between young and old which is greater than simply a difference in age, but this event showed us just how much in common we have. It was exceptionally interesting to share a forum where all were equal, with mutual respect, and to engage in healthy dialogue with another of Scotland’s marginalised groups. This is the first piece of real intergenerational work the SYP has been involved in, but I’m sure it won’t be the last – a really worthwhile experience all round.” (Derek Couper, Scottish Youth Parliament Chair)

“A good event and surprising meshing of interests.” (Ian Clement, A City for All Ages Advisory Group)

“The young people were very informed and interesting.” (Mary Scott Macfarlane, A City for All Ages Advisory Group)

“The discussion was lively and crossed all stereotypical barriers. It was good to see what can be achieved when the generations work together.” Yvonne Coull (Consultant, Edinburgh and Lothians Network Co-ordinator, Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice)

April 2011

Welcome

Brian McKechnie (Director, Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice) welcomed everyone to the event. Brian said that the Centre was very pleased to support this event as the work of the Centre was very much about encouraging people of different ages to work together and to do things together. The Centre was supporting a number of events across Scotland including Edinburgh's "Generations Talking Together". Brian encouraged everyone to have their voice heard, learn from what others say and share what you learn.

Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP)

Hamira Khan (Chief Officer, Scottish Youth Parliament) thanked the Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice for supporting the event. The SYP was 11 years old and had 150 elected young people who acted as volunteers, mentors and representatives for young people across Scotland in the 14-25 population. The SYP had received over 43,000 responses on the SYP manifesto 'Change the Picture'.

Derek Couper (Chair, Scottish Youth Parliament) said the SYP welcomed the opportunity to take part in "Generations Talking Together". The SYP was a youth-led organisation that went out to all young people across Scotland. The SYP works with the Scottish Parliament and the manifesto 'Change the Picture' included 49 statements for action and change. Derek said that young and older people have a lot in common and he looked forward to the discussions.

A City for All Ages Advisory Group

Joan Turner (A City for All Ages Advisory Group) thanked the Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice and The City of Edinburgh Council for the invitation. Joan said that the A City for All Ages Advisory Group strongly supported issues that were important to young people. A City for All Ages was 10 years old and had included intergenerational work from the beginning – for example, an event involving older and young people dealt with the fear of crime and produced an intergenerational Fear of Crime resource pack for use in Edinburgh. Joan said that she also looked forward to the discussions.

“Generations Talking Together” Debate

David Wright (Head of Schools, The City of Edinburgh Council) and **Gavin Crosby** (Youth Work Strategy Implementation, The City of Edinburgh Council) facilitated the conversations. Four topics were selected and one older person and one younger person introduced each topic to stimulate discussion. The key discussion comments are summarised in this report while it is recognised that it was not the aim of the event to reach a consensus on particular points raised during the discussions.

Topic 1- The Press Complaints Commission should recognise ageism as a form of discrimination.

Mary Scott Macfarlane (A City for All Ages) asked “what is ageism” and “who makes all these boundaries”. People are discriminated against no matter what their age. You can marry at 16, drive at 17 but not vote until you are eighteen. Once you reach the age of 65 you enter a whole number of different areas regarding pensions, benefits and entitlements. Mary referenced the “See the person, not the age” campaign launched by the Scottish Government to challenge negative attitudes about age, and help foster a greater understanding of the contribution that older people make to society.

David Leitch (Scottish Youth Parliament) said that the Press Complaints Commission (PPC) does not recognise ageism (young and old) as a form of discrimination in its codes of practice. 46% of people in a recent YouGov poll had agreed that young people were badly portrayed in the press. Attitudes such as the “hug a hoodie” campaign discriminated against young people. David suggested that the discussion could look at the wider issues around ageism and not only focus on the PPC remit.

Key comments

- Ageism is seen as the only form of discrimination not tackled and not viewed as serious as other forms of discrimination. We need to think of ways to highlight this so that it is not tolerated.
- Problem is the press representation of age – for example: young people are stigmatised by stories about crime while

older people are seen as a drain on resources. This kind of reporting can drive a wedge between generations.

- Because ageism can affect everyone no one stands up to address it. It should be addressed and the Press Complaints Commission (PPC) should be required to recognise ageism as discrimination.
- We should challenge words that are derogatory such as “hoodies” and “wrinklies”. A recent advert to attract students said “Dundee is less wrinkly” – this has been removed when it was brought to the attention that this was ageist and some people might find it offensive.
- Young people, particularly outside Edinburgh and other city areas, feel there is no place for them – a lack of community centres, shops and other places that cater for young people.
- We need to celebrate what old age is about – wisdom and experience. We need to respect old and young.

Topic 2 - Young offenders should receive compulsory, tailored education and training opportunities which will help in their re-integration into society. Young Offenders' Institutions should be twinned with Further Education Colleges to encourage learning and reduce re-offending.

Claire Ewing (Scottish Youth Parliament) said that 65% of young people who had responded to the SYP manifesto ‘Change the Picture’ had agreed with this statement. Young people said that it was vital that young offenders have the support they need to help them into employment and to tackle re-offending. Claire said that issues of crime and poverty were related – if you support young people out of crime you will also help take them out of poverty.

Donny Scott (Service Manager, Family & Community Support, The City of Edinburgh Council) said that the SYP statement was admirable, was inclusive and had education at its core. Donny said it was important for people to recognise that young people are affected by different systems. Young people aged 16 and under are more likely to be dealt with via the Children’s Hearings system and children’s services; those aged 16 to 17 may be dealt with by both children and adult services while young people aged 18 and under 22 years are most likely to be dealt with within adult services. Donny also said that the majority of young people who offend (70%) will not re-offend as they get older. The minority who will go on to re-offend will often come from the most disadvantaged

and distressed backgrounds. Those young people that go to prison/young offenders institutions often do not engage with support systems. Any proposals to help young offenders will require a range of support systems that are well resourced if they are to make a difference.

Key comments

- When a young person is imprisoned they can be dragged into a culture that they do not want to be part of. Education can help with social skills and provide support and core skills to help young people move on.
- Businesses and voluntary sector organisations should be encouraged to employ and provide volunteering opportunities to young offenders – this may be a better way than more formal educational support.
- Young offenders may be more likely to have literacy and numeracy difficulties.
- The development of the brain of younger people is often overlooked – there needs to be better research and understanding of behaviour. Young people experiencing difficulties need more psychological support.
- There needs to be more resources to tackling problems for children and young people within the community at an earlier stage to prevent offending. Many issues are around family support.
- Reference was made to the library service at HMP Saughton (Edinburgh). This service has won a ‘Libraries Change Lives Award’ for the way it addresses social inclusion issues amongst the prison population and provides support opportunities for education and employment. It was suggested that this was one way to engage with young offenders in a less formal way. It was suggested that library services could also use older volunteers to help mentor young people.
- There was a question about the use of the word “compulsory” within the statement. Some people were ill at ease with the use of this word and did not think it helpful. The system is already punishing the young offender and to be required to take up some form of “compulsory” education could be viewed as an additional punishment and could also be setting up vulnerable young people to fail. Others said that it needed to be compulsory to ensure that education was

available to all and that it would give the young person a structure that was lacking.

- Young offenders have a “right” to education.

Topic 3 - Greater investment in public transport is needed to ensure that young and older people can get where they want to go without a car. This is particularly important in rural areas.

Betty Milton (A City for Ages Advisory Group) said that there must be more investment in public transport. Betty referenced her 17 year-old grandson who has to pay a full adult rail fare although he is still at school. There was also a need for more evening and night time bus services so that people felt safe going out at night. Betty also mentioned the Equalities Transport Advisory Group (ETAG) which works with the City of Edinburgh Council on transport issues. ETAG would welcome the involvement of young people.

Grant Costello (Scottish Youth Parliament) agreed that this was one of the most important issues for both young and older people. Grant particularly highlighted this as an issue for people who live in rural areas where communities are more isolated and do not have access to regular bus services. People without access to a car are even more isolated and some services, including school transport, are being cut.

Key comments

- Transport affects all generations. Younger and older people who do not have access to a car are particularly disadvantaged.
- Although Edinburgh has a good transport service there are a number of black spots that mean older and disabled people are disadvantaged.
- Investment in public transport is needed in rural areas of Scotland that are particularly disadvantaged. Outlying districts and fringe areas outside all the main cities and towns have restricted bus services. Walking and cycling is often impossible because of the distances involved.
- Public transport is expensive – particularly for young people. For example: the ScotRail discount card is not available before 10.00am; Lothian Buses has increased its fares.

- Disabled access on some bus services is poor. Services that provide access usually only provide one wheelchair space.
- Young people use mobile phones to find out about services and when bus will arrive. More information should be made available but services will need to take account of digital inclusion.
- Scotland and UK lag behind other European countries in providing an integrated transport system. Services are often reduced at weekends. Switzerland provides an excellent 7 days-a-week service.
- The Scottish Government and the Road Safety Strategic Partnership Board have responsibility for road safety issues. The main focus is on young car drivers. The Government also needs to consider older drivers – clinicians may be reluctant to remove a driving licence because they know that the person relies on the car. Investment is needed in public transport where there is no alternative to the car.
- The Equalities Transport Advisory Group (ETAG) in Edinburgh brings equalities community representatives together with transport service providers. ETAG would like to have involvement from young people.

Topic 4 - Young and older carers and volunteers play a vital role in the life of Scots of all ages and should be shown appreciation and support. The Scottish Government should develop and implement a national youth volunteering policy for Scotland.

David Leitch (Scottish Youth Parliament) said that this topic was an amalgamation of two statements from the SYP manifesto. Young carers receive no allowance until they reach the age of 25. Caring responsibilities need to be recognised. There is a need for a young people's volunteering policy and to value the work young people put into volunteering.

Irene Garden (A City for Ages Advisory Group) said that all carers play a vital role in our society. Many do not recognise or identify themselves as carers – this can be particularly true of young carers and older carers who look after a spouse/partner. Carers who receive an allowance are often providing care at £1 or less an hour. Carers save the government million of pounds.

Key comments

- The National Forum on Older Volunteering would like to work with the Scottish Youth Parliament to develop a national volunteering policy for all ages.
- The Scottish Youth Parliament idea for a young people's volunteering policy is so that the volunteering contribution is validated and recognised in a formal way so that it can be counted as the young person moves into employment or education. For example: members of the Scottish Youth Parliament can contribute over 2000 hours of work.
- Social aspects of caring were highlighted. The wider society does not always understand what being a carer means – the cost in terms of time and other activities that carers have to give up.
- Young carers often have to make a choice between work and education in order to provide caring. They cannot afford to continue with education.
- Problems are often not spoken about and carers can carry a burden/guilt for the rest of their lives. Health services need to provide more support.
- It is estimated that carers save the government £7.5billion a year.
- Young and old do not shy away from their responsibilities and have positive things to say about caring and volunteering.

What we can do

The Scottish Youth Parliament and The City of Edinburgh Council through A City for All Ages and Children and Families will challenge ageism by:

- Seeking opportunities to celebrate what old age is about – wisdom and experience. We need to respect old and young.
- Hold local events that bring all generations together (not just the young and old) to share thoughts and ideas on tackling ageism and to break down barriers.
- Challenge ageist statements and comments.
- Work to have positive media stories about young and old people.

The Scottish Youth Parliament and The City of Edinburgh Council through A City for All Ages and Children and Families will promote positive destinations for young offenders by:

- Ensuring we have a better understanding of the complexities that are around this topic and what services and interventions are needed to tackle this issue and improve services for young offenders.
- Encouraging businesses and voluntary sector organisations to employ and provide volunteering opportunities to young offenders – this may be a better way than more formal educational support.

In terms of enhancing transport opportunities:

- **The Scottish Youth Parliament will** use the elections for the Scottish Parliament in May 2011 and the 2012 council elections to campaign for investment in public transport, particularly for rural areas in Scotland.
- **The City of Edinburgh Council through A City for All Ages, Children and Families and City Development will** explore the possibility of a Scottish Youth Parliament (Edinburgh) link/representative to the Equalities Transport Advisory Group.

The Scottish Youth Parliament and The City of Edinburgh Council through A City for All Ages and Children and Families will promote:

- Better recognition of carers, and
- Explore how all the generations can join together to promote volunteering and the recognition of volunteering both formally and informally.

Conclusion

Brian McKechnie (Director, Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice) thanked everyone for their participation in the debate which had been “lively, absorbing and insightful”. Each generation had made valuable contributions to the topic discussions which they could take forward within their own activities and encourage people across the generations to work together. The “Generations

Talking Together” event report will be published on the Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice website.



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Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice
<http://www.scotcip.org.uk/>

Scottish Youth Parliament
<http://www.syp.org.uk/>

A City for All Ages
www.edinburgh.gov.uk/acfaa