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Foreword

Our work over the last year has inevitably been impacted and changed by the pandemic. Before we knew the word 'lockdown', we ran our intergenerational programmes from communal lounges in sheltered accommodation schemes. These lounges stood empty for most of the year, closed to residents in line with social distancing restrictions. Similarly, the schools we partner with have faced closures during term time and Covid bubbles bursting. Like many organisations, we have had to find ways to work remotely with our participants.

While we have felt the loss of in-person contact keenly, we have also found new opportunities for creating much-needed intergenerational connections during this time. In spite of the challenges posed by the pandemic, we have expanded our work this year.

Our flagship programme, InCommon: Connect, has continued to grow, pairing children in primary schools with residents in local retirement homes through post, phone and video calls, and outdoor fun and games. Meanwhile, we have partnered with Clarion Futures to develop a social action framework which inspires young and old to come together to create positive change for the future. Our small team has grown to accommodate wider delivery; our pool of talented programme officers have been recruited through Year Here's social innovation fellowship and the government's Kickstart Scheme, aimed at supporting young people to find permanent employment.

As we emerge from a long period of social distancing, intergenerational connection is more important than ever. We are immensely proud of the work we have done this year to bring people of all ages together, fostering strength and solidarity, and we hope that you will enjoy reading about the impact of our work in the pages that follow.

Laura Macartney Charlotte Whittaker Co-founders & Directors

September 2021

The evidence behind our work



INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTION BENEFITS OUR COMMUNITIES

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



VOLUNTEERING IMPROVES OLDER PEOPLE'S WELLBEING

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



FRIENDSHIP ACROSS **GENERATIONS SUCCESSFULLY REDUCES AGEISM**

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

The year at a glance

Programmes we've run this year

OLDER PEOPLE

YOUNG PEOPLE

VOLUNTEERING HOURS BY OLDER PEOPLE

Programmes we've supported this year

OLDER PEOPLE

YOUNG PEOPLE

Our mission

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

Our values

We believe in purpose We value delight We are all learners We make things happen together We include everyone



At a glance

Our flagship programme brings together primary-age children and older volunteers in their local communities.

On each programme, we connect a retirement home or an independent living scheme with a nearby school across a 12 month period.

Together, older and younger participants take part in creative, educational activities, which facilitate intergenerational learning and fun.

This year, we have delivered most of the programme remotely in accordance with social distancing guidelines.

Programme themes

LIFE IN THE PAST

This year our older volunteers shared all sorts of memories, from their experiences as evacuees, to watching the moon landing, and some of the songs they danced to as teenagers.

SKILLS & HOBBIES

We heard from our older volunteers about past jobs as lamplighters, seamstresses and care workers, while children we spoke with dreamt of careers as scientists, footballers and YouTubers.

KINDNESS & GRATITUDE

Our older volunteers told us about the ways that people in their communities have supported them during lockdowns and periods of isolation, while children put forward their ideas about building a kinder world for the future.

How we connected

This year, we adapted the programme in response to changing Covid restrictions and connected with participants in a range of ways.

INTERGENERATIONAL PHONE & VIDEO CALLS

Our older and younger participants got to know each other over regular phone and video calls, during which they took part in games, activities and discussions.

POST

Children and older volunteers sent one another postcards by way of introduction in October. The children sent more cards to residents to mark Christmas and Faster.

CRAFTS & CREATIONS

During the winter lockdown, we compiled a magazine of children's artwork, poetry and messages of support for the older people we work with. In the summer term, children created Kindness Calendars following their discussions with older volunteers about acts of kindness.

IN-PERSON WORKSHOPS

At the end of the summer term, we were able to hold some outdoor sessions, during which our older volunteers and children met in-person at independent living schemes across London.

WELFARE CALLS

Our team made regular calls to our older volunteers to catch up and check in on their wellbeing during this difficult year.

Programme engagement











IN THE POST

OLDER PEOPLE

SHELTERED SCHEMES

CHII DREN

SCHOOLS

SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT 20/21 INCOMMON: CONNECT 8



WINTER TERM



OCT

SEPT

We matched 12 participating accommodation took part in an schemes with 10 nearby schools.

Children & older people initial postcard exchange, introducing themselves in writing and pictures.

NOV

Phone and video calls between children & older people began. Children interviewed older people about their life stories, and together they compared a school day today with a school day some

60 years ago.

Children sent Christmas cards, read poems and sung carols to older people over Zoom, as well as taking part in a festive music quiz together.

DEC

Schools closed and another national lockdown was enforced. Parents at our participating schools signed up for children to continue their calls with older people from home.

JAN

FEB

calls between children & older people continued. Meanwhile. children submitted poems, drawings and puzzles to a magazine for their older neighbours.

MAR

SPRING TERM

Phone and video InCommon's lockdown magazine, The Children's Press, was distributed to 336 older people. Calls continued, in which older and younger participants shared their skills and hobbies with one another.

APR

Children returned to school and sent Easter cards to older people.



SUMMER TERM

Children and older people took part in a series of calls themed around kindness and gratitude.

JUNE

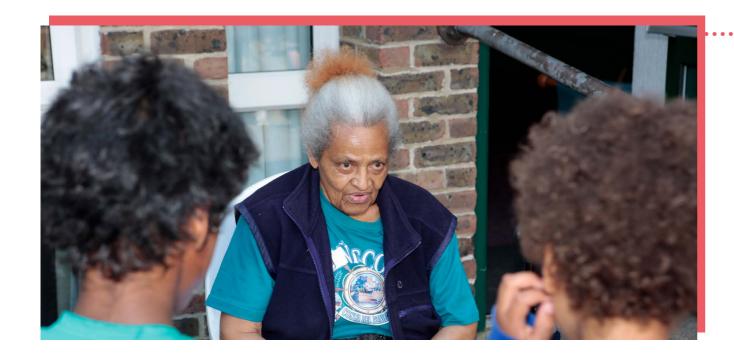
InCommon facilitators hosted coffee mornings at participating accommodation meeting in schemes in accordance with lockdown restrictions

easing.

JULY

Children and older people took part in outdoor workshops, person for the first time. They played Human Bingo and Summer Pictionary, before creating Kindness Calendars for the holidays.

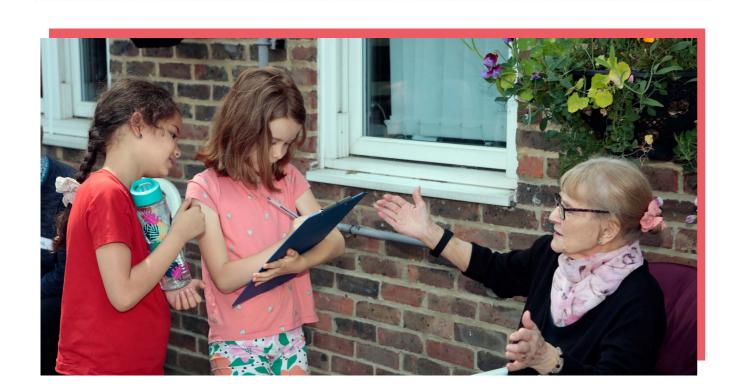
9 SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT 20/21 INCOMMON: CONNECT 10





This is an amazing project to be part of – it's so nice to see the children so happy and engaged. Having the opportunity to make other people happy is really bringing out the kindness in them.

Teacher, Chalk Ridge Primary School



Feedback from participants



100% of older people report feeling happier after an InCommon call or workshop



After the calls and the workshops, there's a sense of achievement – like you've just done something good, valuable and worthwhile, you know?



Older volunteer, Wandle Housing



100% of older people feel they have offered valuable support to children in their learning through taking part in the programme



I've loved every minute of it. It's to do with education, you see. Education is so important. I wanted to teach when I was young. But I had two babies to support and it was difficult in my day to get help with that. I couldn't make it happen. So I've loved doing this project because I feel like a teacher to these children. It's been lovely at my time of life to have this.

Older volunteer, Guinness Housing





96% of older people would recommend InCommon to a friend

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Feedback from participants



88% of older people feel that they have learnt more about young people today through taking part in the programme



I'm not married and don't have children, so the programme has allowed me to keep up with the way children are in this day and age.

Older volunteer, Guinness Housing



76% of older people feel more confidence in themselves after taking part in an InCommon programme

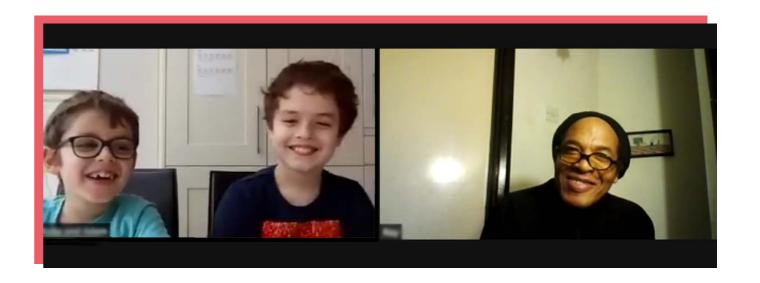


The calls with the children gave me a boost – I felt more positive for the rest of the day.

Older volunteer, Sovereign Housing



72% of older people feel a greater sense of belonging to a community after taking part in the programme



66

Thank you for allowing my son to take part in these calls. It was definitely a proud moment hearing his confidence shining through during the last call. It has been our pleasure to be a part of this amazing project.



Parent, Holmleigh Primary School



Participants on an intergenerational call sharing objects that are special to them

13 SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT 20/21 INCOMMON: CONNECT 14

Linda

OLDER VOLUNTEER, SOVEREIGN HOUSING

"The pandemic has been particularly hard. One day I was able to mix with people and then quite literally the next day, within hours, it was all cut off. I found it difficult to get my head round. It was like a bereavement. Before the pandemic, we used to organise coffee mornings and trips for the residents who live here. We've missed out on so many trips over the last 15 months.

I'd never done anything like InCommon's programme before. Of course I have my own children, but they're considered adults now. My oldest daughter is 40! So I was a bit nervous before our first Zoom call with the children, I didn't quite know what to expect. But they were such a great bunch of kiddies. The thing is, there's no pretension about children. Their reactions are so natural - whoever they're talking to. I loved seeing the expressions on their faces - especially when I told them about my family. You could see their eyes popping out of their heads when I said that I have 11 siblings!

It's been good for me to reconnect with young people during this time. I think the calls have helped the children, too - helped them to feel a bit more confident in themselves. I'd recommend InCommon's projects to others at the scheme especially to those who are housebound for whatever reason. It's been like a window onto the outside world."



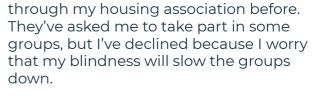
Linda (left) on an intergenerational call, sharing her favourite toy



It's been good for me to reconnect with young people during this time. I think the calls have helpd the children too - helped them to feel a bit more confident in themselves.



I've loved talking to the children, hearing about their ambitions and about what inspires them. I've talked to them about kindness, and how it's better to give than to take. And also about how to budget!



I haven't joined any other activities offered

"During the pandemic, I listen to the radio

a lot, as I can't watch the television. In 1991 I was registered blind; I've got very

little vision. I do try my best to read the newspaper and keep up with what's going on. I must be the only blind man to buy five

newspapers a day!

To be honest, I didn't expect the InCommon programme to be as good as it was. I've loved talking to the children, hearing about their ambitions and about what inspires them. I've talked to them about kindness - and how it's better to give than to take. And also about how to budget! It's strange that people don't talk about that these days. Budgeting is one of the most important things, you know.

Something that really made my day was when I got an envelope in the post from InCommon and it was really bulky. When I opened it, I discovered it was a talking card! I've never seen or heard anything like that before! I could hear the voice of the little girl who made the card when I opened it. She was telling me to look after myself. I thought that was lovely. I've got that card by my bedside and I open it up occasionally.

as you like. I'll keep joining the calls. I've told my friends all about the programme -I've loved it."

You can ask me to take part as many times

Kenneth

OLDER VOLUNTEER. WANDLE HOUSING

15 SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT 20/21 INCOMMON: CONNECT 16

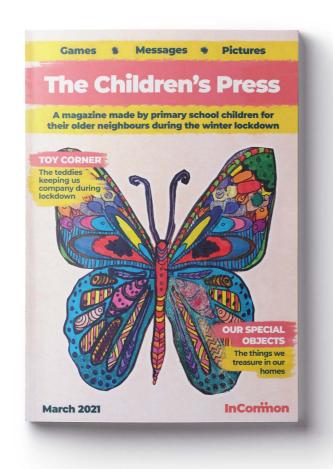
Connecting from a distance

During the winter lockdown, children from our Connect programmes created a lockdown magazine for their older neighbours.

In January, we found ourselves back in lockdown. We wanted to give children on the programme a project to work on at home, and to give our older volunteers something that might lift their spirits at a difficult time. We invited children to contribute to a lockdown magazine for their older neighbours. They submitted word searches, puzzles, jokes, poems and paintings, which we compiled in *The Children's Press*.

In the centre spread was 'Toy Corner', a feature in which children told us about the toys and teddies that kept them company during lockdown. Many of the older people who read the magazine remembered dolls and stuffed animals from their own childhoods. Some of those teddies are long gone; we heard tales of bears left in parks and dolls pushed down toilets! But others have survived to this day, threadbare but well-loved, still safe in their owners' homes.

The magazine was distributed to 336 residents in 12 different accommodation schemes. 20 children from 6 different schools made contributions.





Spreading summer kindness

In the summer, residents and children came together in person to create kindness calendars for the upcoming holidays.

In the summer term, we themed our activities around kindness and gratitude. We wanted to reflect on the year just gone, bringing to the fore the moments that featured warmth, generosity and positivity. We also wanted to invite our participants to think together about what a kinder world might look like for people of all ages.



We started the term by sharing things we felt grateful for and celebrating acts of kindness on our intergenerational calls. At the end of the summer term, we were able to arrange some in-person outdoor activities, at which our older volunteers supported children to create Kindness Calendars for the summer holidays. On each day, children wrote an act of kindness. We created digital copies of the calendars and distributed them to our participants, as well as making them available to download from our website for any other children looking to spread kindness during the holidays.

Acts of kindness that older volunteers and children came up with included:

- Be kind to the environment by picking up some litter in your local area
- Cheer someone up by telling the a funny joke
- Help someone in your home with cooking dinner
- Be kind to your body by eating your vegetables
- Stand up for a cause you believe in





At a glance

Our intergenerational social action work brings people of different ages together to find common ground and a shared vision for the future of their communities. It encourages purposeful, reciprocal and participant-led interactions which bring about a sense of social cohesion and fresh energy for positive change.

Increasingly, we see narratives of intergenerational conflict in the media, rising levels of loneliness at either end of the age spectrum, and negative ideas about ageing and what it means to grow older. Age segregation has only been worsening during the pandemic, with far fewer opportunities to foster connection and solidarity across generations. Intergenerational social action seeks to repair these issues, bringing people of all ages together to imagine a better future.

Young people have stepped up for their communities in many different ways during the pandemic, from helping their older neighbours with shopping, to writing letters to care home residents and planning garden parties as restrictions eased.

Our social action work has been made possible through our partnership with Clarion Futures, the charitable foundation of Clarion Housing Group, and the #iwill Fund, a 50 million joint investment from The National Lottery Community Fund and the Department for Digital, Culture Media and Sport (DCMS).







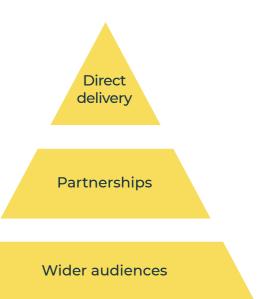


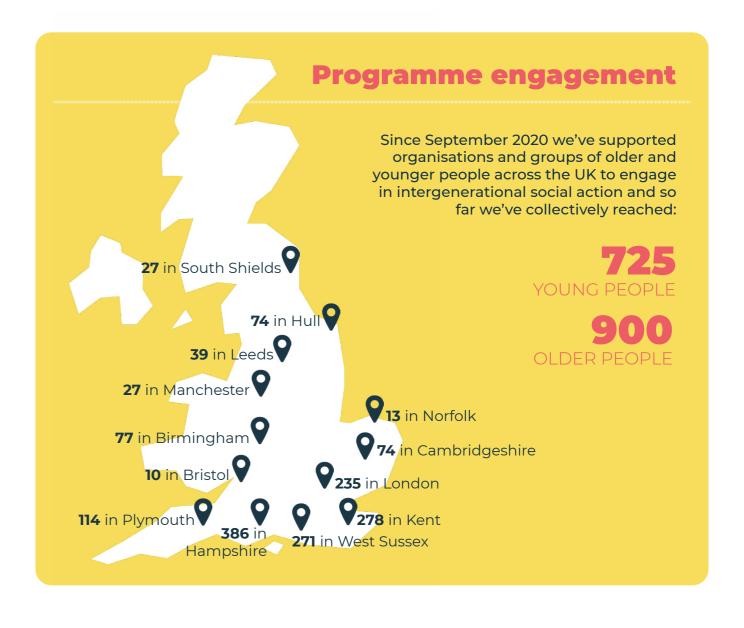


How it works

We have adopted a 'design and cascade' approach, which sees our model for intergenerational social action disseminated across three strands: direct delivery, partnerships and wider audiences.

What does this mean in practice? We think design is best done in context, so we've started by designing and delivering our own resources, trying things out on the ground with participants. Then we've shared those methods and resources with partners, supporting them to engage younger and older people in social action in their own communities. Finally we've shared our learnings and approaches with wider audiences in the Housing sector and beyond.





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Social action in nature

CASE STUDY: DIRECT DELIVERY

Following an initial card exchange during lockdown, residents at Lady Mico's

Almshouses in East London set local children the challenge of making a bug hotel for their communal garden.

As man-made spaces continue to fill the natural world, there are fewer spots for bugs to nest. Bug hotels create a safe place for insects to shelter, lay their eggs, raise their young and take refuge from predators. As a visual feature, they spark conversation about the natural environment and the creatures that live in it. For children and residents in East London, where



air pollution is high and insect ecosystems are at increasing risk, the creation of a bug hotel made for an apt and important social action project.

Children at local primary school, St Mary and St Michael, set about building their bug hotel

with cardboard tubes, moss, pine cones, deadwood and soil. Each child created and decorated a tube - or a hotel room - before giving a name like the Minibeast Mansion or the Beetle Boudoir. The tubes came together to create a five-story home for minibeasts (pictured left).

The project ended with an intergenerational workshop, at which the children delivered their bug hotel to Lady Mico's. Together, older and younger participants learnt about the bugs that will stay at the hotel, such as ladybirds, spiders, bees and woodlice. Children were amazed to learn that if bees became extinct, the world would be a very different place - our supermarket shelves would look rather bare without the fruits that rely on bees for pollination! Today, the bug hotel at Lady Mico's is an increasingly popular spot for East London's creepy crawlies.



When restrictions on outdoor contact were lifted, young people in East London put their heads together to plan a special celebration for their older neighbours.

In June, InCommon supported young people from Spotlight to plan a party for residents at a local retirement home, timed to coincide with lockdown restrictions easing. Over the course of four workshops, the young people did everything from sending personalised invitations to residents to baking shortbread for the party, creating bunting and decorations, and preparing 'conversation cards' to spark chatter on the big day.

After four weeks of planning, the day of the party arrived. The young people arrived early to prepare the outdoor space, putting up the decorations and laying out the food they had prepared. The older people arrived to find their communal garden transformed; they were delighted to hear speeches from the children, to be served food, and to be engaged in conversation about memories of their own adolescences. After more than a year of fluctuating lockdown restrictions, this felt like a joyful indicator of things to come.









Throwing a party for a different generation

CASE STUDY: DIRECT DELIVERY

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Alongside direct delivery, we have supported youth partners up and down the country to connect generations through social action.

As part of this support package, we have developed and shared a range of resources that promote purposeful intergenerational connection in community contexts. These resources range from risk assessments to help partners with getting projects off the ground, through to ready-made arts and crafts packs enabling young people to create gifts for local care homes.

In addition, we have hosted 9 group training sessions for youth workers who were seeking to integrate intergenerational connection into their projects, while providing 1:1 support to 23 different youth organisations across England. Through the year, we have sent a fortnightly bulletin to 50+ stakeholders in the housing and community sectors, in which we have shared regular inspiration and ideas for new intergenerational social action projects.



IN THE FRAME

We distributed arts and crafts packs to our partners, enabling young people to make upcycled magnetic frames in which they placed messages, artwork and calendars for older people in their local communities.



GENERATIONS SWAP COOKBOOK

We provided recipe cards to community groups across the country, encouraging young and old to share their favourite dishes with one another. Meanwhile, at InCommon we are in the process of compiling these recipes into a 'Generations Swap Cookbook', which will be distributed to all who have taken part.



COMMUNITY TIME CAPSULE

We developed and distributed a guide to creating a community time capsule that captures different generations' responses to these unprecedented times.



AUDIO CARDS

We supplied our partners with the resources for young people to create 'talking cards', in which they recorded audio clips wishing their older neighbours well while strict social distancing measures were in place.

Youth groups take action

CASE STUDIES: PARTNERSHIPS

Here are a selection of stories of intergenerational social action from some of our youth partners.

AGE FUSION, SELSEY

Young people in Selsey made daily phone calls to older people in their community during the winter lockdown, and they subsequently held a workshop to help their older neighbours learn how to use technology.



Although I have left school and gone on to college, I am staying with Age Fusion as a Junior Leader because I think we give an important service to the elderly community in Selsey.

Young participant, Age Fusion

CHILD DYNAMIX. HULL

Child Dynamix set up a visit to a local retirement home with InCommon's support. During the visit, the young people from Child Dynamix did some gardening for the residents at Herbert Pollard House. They transformed an unloved corner of the scheme's outdoor area into a colourful flower bed for residents to enjoy during the summer months. The young people have since asked to do more of this kind of activity; they enjoyed growing their skills in the garden while helping their older neighbours in the process.

THE YOUTH ASSOCIATION, LEEDS

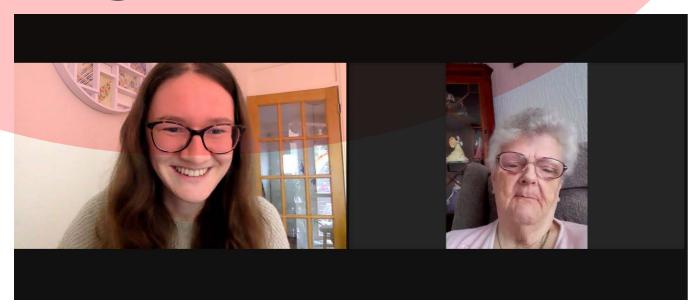
In February, 9 young people from The Youth Association packed food and positive messages into 30 food hampers for older people. They were supported in this project by an older member of the community, who signposted them to local services and organisations to whom they distributed the hampers.

TAMARVIEW, PLYMOUTH

14 young people in Plymouth created a Pebble Trail in a local wooded area, which others could follow in a socially distanced way during the pandemic. 100 people of all different ages completed the trail.



Digital Inclusion



At a glance

With funding from the Social Entreprise Support Fund and support from Tech TakeBack, we provided some of our residents with tablets and data, enabling them to get online for the first time and take part in video calls with children.

When we went into lockdown, life moved online. Younger people hosted pub guizzes and birthday celebrations on Zoom, while many older people found themselves without the means or knowledge to access digital spaces. In short, the pandemic exacerbated the digital divide between old and young.

At InCommon, we were keen to help some of our older participants who felt digitally excluded during this time. We offered them devices and data, as well as ongoing telephone support and a copy

of InCommon's 'Guide to Getting Online' (pictured right). Some participants were able to exchange emails for the first time. access video calling and online shopping, and even play socially distanced digital card games with friends and family members. This marks a first step in our digital inclusion work, and one we are keen to build on in the years to come.

> **DEVICES DISTRIBUTED** TO RESIDENTS

> TECH SUPPORT CALLS TO RESIDENTS

At the start of the pandemic, I took part in InCommon's activities over the phone. I didn't have a tablet back then. I'd never used the internet. But when InCommon got funding to buy some devices, they asked if I wanted one. I was a bit nervous because I didn't think I would be able to learn the technology. But the team at InCommon helped me a lot; they've been very patient! They showed me how it all works and they came over to my flat to show me how to top up the data.

Having the tablet has helped me to keep in touch with people over email. Friends have sent me photos of their grandchildren and their holidays, that sort of thing. You feel that you're more in contact when you get to see pictures as well as talk to people on the phone. I've also done church meetups over Zoom. It's been amazing for me, especially during the pandemic – I think I would have felt a lot worse without the tablet.

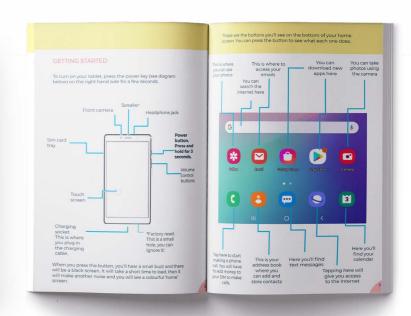


It's been amazing for me, especially during the pandemic - I think I would have felt a lot worse without the tablet.

OLDER VOLUNTEER, IDS









At a glance

At InCommon, we have made a renewed commitment to tackling prejudice, discrimination and oppression of all kinds.

Following the Black Lives Matter protests in the summer of 2020, we have held a monthly forum for the team to consider issues around identity, prejudice and privilege. At this forum, we have cocreated an anti-prejudice charter for the organiation, setting out our role in challenging inequality in our team, our programme and the wider arenas in which we operate.

In addition, we have:

- Developed a framework for challenging any prejudice that might arise within our workshops
- Worked to address potential biases within our recruitment process
- Taken steps towards creating a more inclusive team environment
- Made adjustments to our programme curriculum, ensuring that our materials and activities are accessible to all participants and celebrate a variety of cultures, experiences and beliefs

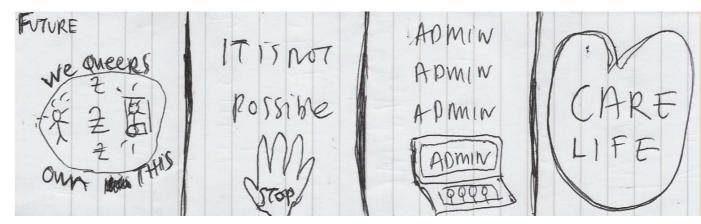
Queergen

As part of our anti-prejudice work this year, we ran an intergenerational project for LGBTQ+ people of different ages. This marked the first time at InCommon that we have delivered a programme that is specific to a marginalised group.

The project was led by our Programme Officer, Alex, who highlighted a lack of work in the intergenerational field that affirms LGBTQ+ identities. This is against a context of continued homo-, bi- and transphobia in society, and the legacy of Section 28 – a law that existed until 2003, forbidding the teaching of homosexuality in schools.

So we partnered with Tonic, a housing and community provider for LGBTQ+ people who are over 55, and Metro, a charity that celebrates the power of difference and diversity. Alex ran three workshops: one for older LGBTQ+ people, one for LGBTQ+ 16-18 year olds, and finally an intergenerational workshop which brought the two groups together. Participants were invited to consider the idea of 'welcome'. They thought about what they need to feel welcome in a new community, what 'welcome' means in the LGBTQ+ community, and acknowledged the pain of not feeling welcome in certain spaces.





A drawing from a Queergen workshop



Hearing the young people's stories was very moving. I enjoyed explaining about the significance of the pink triangle. Chosen pronouns are new to me having been out of touch with the LGBTQ+ community for so long.

Older workshop participant, Tonic Housing

6 OLDER PEOPLE **6**YOUNGER PEOPLE

3WORKSHOPS



As September comes around again, we have an excited, back-to-school feeling at InCommon. We're looking forward to the year ahead and the opportunities that await us as we continue to emerge from the pandemic.

Our older volunteers are pleased to be back in touch with their younger friends after the school holidays. Our programme activities this year will seek to forge strong relationships, encourage lifelong learning and focus more than ever on wellbeing and reflection at a time when we are still processing the changes happening around us.

Our intergenerational connections will continue to be remote while schools settle

back into a routine now that all Covid restrictions have been lifted. We're looking forward to resuming our regular in-person activities when the time feels right.

Alongside delivering our primary schools programmes, we're excited to continue building our social action work with youth groups and developing our support offer for other organisations who would like to deliver their own intergenerational activities.

Over the last year, we've been moved by the younger and older people who have come together to create inclusive, age-friendly spaces. We believe that these connections will be at the heart of our communities going forward, and we can't wait to see the intergenerational friendships that grow in the year to come.

InCommon's 2020-21 Team

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Thanks & Acknowledgements

Thanks to all of our younger and older participants.

Our housing partners: Clarion Housing Group, Orbit Homes, Guinness Care, Sovereign Housing Association, Wandle Housing Association

Our school partners: Belleville
Primary School, Chalk Ridge Primary
School, Christ Church Erith Primary
School, Holmleigh Primary School, St
Mary Cray Primary Academy, Lessness
Heath Primary School, Park View
Primary School, St Paul's Slade Green
Primary School, St Winifred's Primary
School, Walnut Tree Walk Primary
School

Our funders: The Social Enterprise Support Fund, The Mercers' Company, Clarion Futures and the #iwill Fund, a joint fund of the National Lottery Community Fund and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)

Our friends: Year Here, UnLtd, the School for Social Entrepreneurs, Spring Impact

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