Creating a Dementia Friendly Generation

Inter-Generational Projects in Powys
More than 800,000 people are currently living with dementia in the UK and this figure is expected to reach one million by 2025. Most people will encounter this condition within their families and communities at some point during their lives, which means that creating a Dementia Friendly Generation which understands dementia without fear and stigma is crucial.

Over the next five years all schools will be implementing and embedding Successful Futures, the review of the curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales. Meaningful and purposeful pupil participation is intended to be a strong feature of the new curriculum and is central to the four key purposes. Schools should provide each young person with experiences that reflect all of the four purposes of the new curriculum for Wales and inter-generational projects address numerous aspects under all four areas.

The purposes will form the basis of everything that we do in schools and other settings. They include developing ambitious capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives; enterprising creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work; ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world; and healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society. An understanding of dementia and involvement in dementia awareness projects, looking at its impact on both individuals and communities, is one specific approach schools can adopt to develop ethical citizens of the future.

Pupils’ mental and emotional wellbeing is developed simultaneously with their confidence, resilience and empathy. Positive relationships are formed based on respect, with pupils seeing beyond the condition and recognising that there is more to the person than the dementia. They become ethical, informed citizens, better understanding the needs of others in their community and how to support them. Judgements of progress towards meeting the four purposes will be part of all future school inspections and reported on by Estyn regularly.

For this generation, dementia will be a major factor in the future and the skills developed via inter-generational projects will help the pupils engage with this contemporary issue in a positive manner, basing their actions on knowledge and values rather than fear and stigma. The pupils can see that their actions are having a direct impact on others, which is another key life skill. The level of respect generated in a real-life scenario is phenomenal and pupils become aware, via their involvement, of the diverse needs in the community.

In order to help make a difference, pupils involved in existing projects have often used their entrepreneurial skills to raise funds. They have been enterprising and creative in order that others will benefit. As ambitious and capable learners, they are continuously using communication skills, not only with the elderly but with their peers and adults when talking about dementia and their inter-generational work. Pupils have undertaken research and used it to present digitally to others. Above all, they have gained great enjoyment while learning about true citizenship. While this is not an exhaustive list, it exemplifies some of the benefits to the pupils, school and community of these projects linked to curriculum reform in Wales. Being part of dementia awareness gives real life context to this myriad of skills ensuring that children are learning with a purpose, which cements those lessons for life.
Inter-Generational Projects

Projects which involve and engage primary school pupils and senior citizens, many of whom are affected by dementia, are beneficial to all involved in many and varied ways. The children involved, all of whom have become Dementia Friends prior to a project being initiated, gain a very real understanding of, among other things:

- The different ways that dementia affects individuals.
- That no two people will experience dementia in exactly the same way.
- That there is more to the person than the dementia.
- The varied and interesting life experiences of older people.
- That people from different generations can form real friendships.
- That everyone has value and can contribute to our communities.

For the elderly people involved, experience shows that, almost without exception, the company of children brings enormous benefits, including:

- The enjoyment of being involved in a range of shared, fun activities.
- The pleasure and stimulation gained by chatting and laughing with young people.
- The enjoyment and pride in recounting stories from the past and sharing life experiences despite, in most cases, short-term memory loss.
- An enhanced feeling of wellbeing.

There is no downside to these projects! Karen Lawrence, headteacher at Llanfaes CP School, has stated: “The whole school community – pupils, staff, governors and parents – has benefited immeasurably from the dementia training and links with Trenewydd. Pupils have embraced the sessions, rating it consistently as their favourite activity in Year 6!

“It’s always a pleasure, especially to see them making Welsh cakes! It reminds me of my mother and of being a child.”

Megan Brookside Care Home resident

There is a natural rapport between our friends at Trenewydd and the children. The citizenship skills developed by the pupils are not quantifiable but essential and will last a lifetime. Inspiring is a word overused, but our Thursday sessions truly are, giving everyone who witnesses them great hope for the future with a generation of young people who understand dementia, don’t fear it and are willing to try to reach out to the wealth of life stories which can be unlocked simply by talking. That other schools are now also undertaking the training is wonderful as it will truly make a difference”.

The office of the Children’s Commissioner for Wales recently made a short video during one of the weekly visits of Year 6 pupils from Llanfaes CP School to Trenewydd Care Home which captures the essence of these inter-generational projects – go to [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AzbH2y7Fs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AzbH2y7Fs) to see the video.

The inter-generational projects which have been established already in the Brecon area involve primary schools and care homes located close to each other. Schools which do not have a care home within a manageable distance could nevertheless explore the possibility of developing a project with local groups within their community.
How It Works

- Contact the school to arrange to meet with the headteacher. At this meeting, explain the aims and objectives of the Dementia Friends Initiative (DFI) and specifically the goal of creating a Dementia Friendly Generation.

- Agree a date to deliver a DF session to staff and governors. In the interim between this meeting and the staff session, forward the introductory letter to the school (Appendix 1).

- Deliver a DF session to staff and governors – explain that the resources you will use with the children will be different to those used in the adult session. Agree a date to meet with Year 5&6 staff and at that meeting go through the children's resources with them and agree dates to deliver sessions to Year 5&6 pupils. It is also useful at this stage to discuss the possibility of establishing an inter-generational project once the children have attended the session.

- Subsequent to this, provide a pro-forma letter for the school to send to parents/carers (Appendix 2). The school can amend/personalise the pro-forma as required.

- On the agreed date(s), deliver DF sessions to Year 5&6 pupils, with a member of staff in attendance. At the end of the sessions, if agreed previously, discuss possible inter-generational projects with the children.

- Where appropriate, meet with the headteacher and relevant care home/day centre manager to explore ideas for a project and provide whatever input is needed to establish the project.

- Whether or not an inter-generational project is developed, maintain contact with the school and deliver DF sessions to Year 5 pupils each new academic year.

- Undertake the evaluation with the school and, where appropriate, care home within an agreed timescale following the awareness sessions and/or start of the inter-generational project.

Conclusion & Next Steps

The inter-generational projects already established in Powys have proved to be highly successful, effective and valued by all concerned. The schools and care homes involved are unanimous in their belief that these projects are extremely beneficial, in very many ways, to pupils, residents and staff.

The involvement of additional primary schools will make the aim of creating a Dementia Friendly Generation throughout Powys a reality and it is hoped that the opportunity to engage with this initiative will be welcomed across the county.

Not all primary schools will feel able to engage in an inter-generational project, however. Even where this is the case, having Dementia Friends Awareness sessions delivered for staff, governors and pupils is extremely beneficial and contributes towards the twin aims of creating Dementia Friendly Communities and a Dementia Friendly Generation.

Appendix 1

Dear......................................

RE: Dementia Friends – helping to create dementia friendly communities

Dementia Friends is an Alzheimer's Society-led initiative, supported by the Welsh Government. Dementia Friends aims to increase dementia awareness and change the way the nation thinks, talks and acts about dementia.

The objective of Dementia Friends is to create dementia friendly communities together by improving the understanding of dementia and inspiring people to act. Schools and youth groups are invited to play an important role in this initiative and to become Dementia Friends. By increasing understanding of dementia for children and young people as Dementia Friends, we can create a Dementia Friendly Generation.

A Dementia Friend is someone who has attended a one-hour information session and has committed to an action that will make the lives of people living with dementia a little bit better. Anyone of any age can be a Dementia Friend and every action counts – from wearing a Dementia Friends badge to spreading the word about dementia on social media.

Dementia Friends information sessions facilitate learning opportunities which contribute towards aims of the non-statutory PSHE aspects of the national curriculum. A Dementia Friends information session enables students to gain knowledge and understanding relevant to PSHE learning objectives across Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4, for example active citizenship, developing good relationships and respecting difference between people.

Dementia Friends information sessions are delivered by trained volunteers, called Dementia Friends Champions. As a Dementia Friends Champion, I would like to deliver free, one-hour information sessions to your staff, governors and pupils in which they will learn more about dementia and how they can help to create dementia friendly communities.

I'm delighted that you've invited me to deliver an initial session to your staff and governors on ................. which I'm really looking forward to and I hope that at the end of the session we can agree dates for me to engage Year 5&6 pupils in this initiative. If you would like to find out more about Dementia Friends please visit www.dementiafriends.org.uk or if you have any questions about running information sessions in your school, please contact me.

I understand that you may need to verify my identity and that I am a Dementia Friends Champion for the Alzheimer's Society. You can do this by emailing Dementia Friends at dementiafriends@alzheimers.org.uk.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,
Dear Parent/Carer,

During the ........................................ term, pupils in Years 5&6 will be learning about dementia and Dementia Friendly Communities as part of the PSHE curriculum.

Currently, approximately 425,000 in the UK have a Dementia diagnosis, 19,500 of whom live in Wales. It is predicted that in excess of one million people will be affected in the UK by 2025.

We believe that it is important for our children to learn about an issue such as this which affects us all and to equip future generations with as much knowledge as possible.

The information sessions which the children will attend will be delivered by an Alzheimer's Society volunteer who is a trained Dementia Friends Champion and will aim to increase their understanding of dementia and to break down the stigma around this condition.

Following on from the sessions, we are planning to work with the children in developing projects associated with dementia in order to facilitate their ongoing understanding.

If you have any questions, concerns or comments please let me know. You can also find out more by visiting www.alzheimers.org.uk or www.dementiafriendlybrecon.org.uk.

Yours faithfully,

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Primary School Questionnaire: Year 5&6 Pupils

Had you ever heard of dementia before you had the awareness session?

Yes               No

Can you rate how much you knew about dementia before the awareness session? (0 = nothing; 5 = a lot)

0             1             2             3             4             5

Since the session, how would you rate what you know about dementia? (0 = nothing; 5 = a lot)

0             1             2             3             4             5

If someone asked you about dementia now that you've learned something about it, what would you say?

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We'd like to know what you thought about the exercises, so can you rate how useful they were in helping you understand about dementia: (0 = no use; 5 = very useful)

The Brain:

0             1             2             3             4             5

Why?

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Getting Dressed:

0             1             2             3             4             5

Why?

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The Bookcase:

0             1             2             3             4             5

Why?

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Were you happy to become a Dementia Friend?

Yes               No

Why?

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Many thanks for taking part in this survey and for being a Dementia Friend

Appendix 4

What difference has ‘Working Towards Becoming Dementia Friendly’ made to the life of your school?

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Can you identify any differences in the pupils since they became Dementia Friends?

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Has being a Dementia Friend made a difference to you personally and/or professionally?

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If yes, how?

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Is there anything you’d like to add?

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Many thanks for taking part in this survey and for being a Dementia Friend
Inter-Generational Project Evaluation Questionnaire: Care Home Residents

Overall, do you think the project with the children has had a positive impact in your home?

Yes               No

If yes, on a scale of 1 to 10, how much impact has it had in the home?

1             2             3             4             5             6             7             8             9             10

Do you like the children coming in and talking to you?

Yes               No

Do you feel happier/more cheerful when the children are around?

Yes               No

Do you enjoy/look forward to the weekly sessions?

Yes               No

If yes, what do you personally like about the children coming in?

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Have you done any gardening/planting with the children?

Yes               No

Did you enjoy this?

Yes               No

Many thanks for taking part in this survey and for being a Dementia Friend

Appendix 5

Why do you think it’s important to be a Dementia Friend?

Yes               No

How much has being a Dementia Friend made a difference to you?

Not very much       A bit       A lot

Why?
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How has learning about dementia made a difference to your school?
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How do you think you can help people who are living with dementia?
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How much have you enjoyed taking part in the care home project? (0 = not very much; 5 = a lot)

0             1             2             3             4             5

What have you enjoyed most about it?
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Do you think the project helps the residents?

Yes               No

If you said yes, how do you think it helps them?
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Many thanks for taking part in this survey and for being a Dementia Friend
Inter-Generational Project Evaluation Questionnaire: Care Home Staff

Overall, do you think the project has been a positive experience within the care home?

Yes               No

If yes, on a scale of 1 to 10, how much impact has it had in the home?

1             2             3             4             5             6             7             8             9             10

Do you think it’s positive having children spending time with and talking to residents?

Yes               No

If yes, what’s different when the children are around?

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What difference(s) do you think the project has had in general on life in the home?

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Do you think the project has had an impact on any individual residents?

Yes               No

If yes, on a scale of 1 to 10, how much difference do you think it’s made to individual residents?

1             2             3             4             5             6             7             8             9             10

Appendix 6

Which other activities have you done with the children?

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Did you enjoy them?

Yes               No

Are there any other activities you’d like to get involved in with the children?

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Is there anything else you’d like to add?

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Many thanks for taking part in this survey and for supporting our Dementia Friend’s Project
Can you identify any specific difference(s) that you think the project has made for any individual residents?

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Have you enjoyed having this project in your workplace?

Yes               No

Has having the project in the home made a difference to you personally &/or professionally?

Yes               No

If yes, how?

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Can you suggest any ways that the project could be improved?

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Is there anything you’d like to add?

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Many thanks for taking part in this survey and for supporting our Dementia Friend’s Project