

## **This Paper**

This is a Briefing Paper for a Joint Meeting with the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Ageing and Older People and the APPG Children, at the House of Lords, on 18 October 2006.

## **Background**

Since its formation in April 1999, Age Concern Kingston upon Thames (ACKuT) has taken positive steps to promote greater understanding and respect between the older and younger generations and to challenge ageism. It has done this through a number of successful intergenerational projects. These initiatives enable older people to play an active role in community life and to volunteer their skills, talents, knowledge and experience in order to support primary and secondary school pupils with their learning and personal development and the young people to benefit from the expertise and positive role models provided by the older volunteers. ACKuT works closely with the Centre for Intergenerational Practice, the Beth Johnson Foundation and the UK Intergenerational Network of Age Concern England. ACKuT's intergenerational work fully accords with its Mission Statement – 'to be an effective organisation that is recognised as a leader, committed to involving and empowering all older people in Kingston'.

## **ACKuT's Intergenerational Projects**

### **Age & Youth school-based project**

This project commenced in June 2001 and is now firmly established at four primary schools in Kingston upon Thames. During the past year, thirty-two volunteers (male and female) have given freely of their time, working alongside children in literacy, numeracy, science lessons, etc. They have achieved remarkable results with a large number of children – many of whom are highly vulnerable. A Headteacher has stated that their 'expertise and understanding have enriched the children's lives and a huge impact has been made on their learning, attendance at school, homework and, above all, self esteem'. Of particular importance is the expansion of this project to include a –

### **Learning Mentor Project**

The success of this project during the past year has surpassed our most optimistic expectations. In Years 5 and 6 at one of Kingston's primary schools and now in Year 7 at their respective secondary schools (six in all), children have the invaluable support of a Learning Mentor. Twenty-one children and eleven mentors are currently involved with this project. With the mentors moving on to secondary school in order to maintain their support for the children at the crucial transition stage, for as long as it is needed, this is ground-breaking work – certainly in Kingston.

The potential for further development of the above two projects in Kingston (and throughout the UK) is huge. ACKuT has a waiting-list of schools wishing to be involved, but expansion will depend upon the access of appropriate funding.

### **Age & Youth Partnerships**

Introduced in June 2003, 'partnerships' between children from a Kingston primary school and members of ACKuT's Day Centre in New Malden and Active Age Centre in Kingston – the purpose being (i) to enable older people to pass on valuable craft skills to young people and (ii) to provide an opportunity for social interaction between the younger and older people. On a weekly basis during term time, groups of eight children at a time are taught by older people how to knit and sew; to do cross stitch and patchwork; how to make soft toys and puppets, etc.

The Headteacher was quoted in a local newspaper, saying that he was 'proud of the children's achievements and that he greatly valued the facility that Age Concern Kingston offered for developing positive relationships with older people'.

### **Intergenerational Discussion Forums**

This project, launched by Age Concern Kingston in November 2000, has enabled serious subjects to be discussed between 6<sup>th</sup> formers and older people, most of whom are members of the University of the Third Age in Kingston. The opportunity to debate with older people has been much valued by staff and pupils from the three secondary schools currently involved with the project and older people report that they are 'amazed at the topics the young people choose and the depths they reach in the stimulating discussions'. Given the amount of interest in this project, there is great potential for further development with other secondary schools in Kingston.

### **Community Concern at Surbiton High School**

This is a long-established and award winning project that includes a Community Visiting Programme, often involving around fifty pupils, and Friendship Hours in the school's 6<sup>th</sup> Form Centre. Older people are invited to the Friendship Hours in order to exchange life experiences with young people preparing for university and their own careers. This is, once again, a mutually beneficial project with older and young people enjoying the occasions to socialise and talk together. In Kingston upon Thames at the present time, visiting schemes to relieve the loneliness and isolation of older people are sadly lacking, but this project has played an important part in addressing and relieving the situation.

Friendship Hour has also been very successfully replicated by a secondary school outside the Kingston area. Advice and help given by ACKuT's Intergenerational Project Co-ordinator contributed to this success and was greatly valued.

### **Intergenerational Art Project – 'People at Play Across The Generations'**

Throughout our lives we spend time playing, from football to reading, from gardening to sky-diving, plus many, many more activities. At ACKuT we wanted to capture this sense of activity throughout peoples' lives and so, in the summer of 2004, the idea of creating a large mural showing people at play through the generations began to take shape. Pupils from two primary schools and two secondary schools in Kingston, plus older people – many of whom attend ACKuT's Day Centres – were invited to create paintings on the topic of leisure and recreation. Two local artists then faithfully copied, in whole or part, much of this artwork onto a 4m x 2m mural, against a backdrop of images relating to Kingston upon Thames. The youngest contributor whose work was incorporated in the mural was 7 years old and the oldest 85. The mural is on permanent display in ACKuT's Active Age Centre, where it will be enjoyed for many years to come.

### **Healthy Eating Workshops**

This is a new project that will comprise a series of healthy eating workshops, bringing adult volunteers together with children most at risk of poor nutrition and obesity from across the Borough. It will be organised at various venues in Kingston where the two age groups will partake in a 2-course lunch. The volunteers will support the co-ordinator in sharing healthy eating messages with the children. These will relate to nutrition and diet and also include the ethics and economics of food production. It is envisaged that six secondary schools will be involved with the project. The project is modelled on a highly successful intergenerational luncheon club, organised by ACKuT's Co-ordinator in another local Borough.

### **Sheila M Gent, Intergenerational Projects Co-ordinator**