

# Bringing generations together

## Unlocking community wellbeing with InCommon



InCommon is a charity with a mission to bring generations together to build more connected, inclusive and age-friendly communities. InCommon's brand new Empower Programme helps housing associations across the UK deliver impactful intergenerational activities, with the help of a simple online platform.

This summary report offers insights into the effectiveness of the online platform as a tool to enable intergenerational activity, as well as the social impact of InCommon's intergenerational activity. It follows an evaluation that was conducted by the Housing Learning and Improvement Network.

**InCommon**



**Housing LIN**

*Connecting people, ideas and resources*

## Why bring generations together?

We live in an increasingly age-segregated society, with few opportunities for young and old to interact within the community. This is harmful for all age groups, but especially older people that live in age-specific housing and have limited connections to family or the wider community.

Older people and younger people live further apart than before, weakening social bonds between generations. The share of over-65s who said they belonged to their neighbourhood is falling - from 84% in 1998 to 78% in 2017 (Onward, 2021).

This disconnect has a negative impact on individuals' wellbeing, our sense of community and drives ageist attitudes. Ageism is the most widespread form of discrimination in the UK, with negative attitudes about age beginning to form in children as young as three years old (Centre for Ageing Better, 2023).

According to the World Health Organisation, intergenerational connection is one of the most effective ways of combating ageism and it comes with multiple benefits for all age groups - from increased social participation to a greater appreciation of diversity.

**84%**  
in 1998



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SHARE OF OVER-65S WHO SAID THEY BELONGED TO THEIR NEIGHBOURHOOD

## Introducing Empower: facilitating intergenerational connections via an online platform

InCommon is a charity with a mission to fix some of these problems by connecting groups of young people with their older neighbours in retirement housing to learn and build friendships together.

Using their experience from delivering programmes in London, the online platform supports housing associations, schools, community groups and individuals across the UK in organising and delivering meaningful in-person intergenerational activities that make a difference.

Following a successful pilot with Clarion and Orbit they are now looking for new housing associations to partner with.

### The Empower programme:

- Improves health and wellbeing outcomes for older participants
- Boosts social and emotional learning for younger participants
- Builds community cohesion
- Tackles ageism
- Improves workplace satisfaction



## Here's what people said...

A teacher at Wisewood Community Primary School said:

“The initial video call and demo with Mel was beneficial, she explained really well how to use the platform. The design is so simple to use that I got the hang of it straight away. It makes enabling intergenerational activity a breeze!”

The scheme manager at Clarion Housing's LiveSmart scheme in Sutton Heights also commented:

“It was such a positive experience. Residents commented after that they enjoyed the whole experience of having the children visit children to visit their home. They enjoyed having interactions and learning about the children. They also appreciated being able to share their knowledge and skills”.

Henley Montessori School's headteacher said

“the online platform keeps everything all in one place which makes it a good organisation tool. The best thing is that it has enabled us to reconnect with Dell Court”.

Scheme manager from Dell Court, a sheltered housing scheme provided by Orbit, shared:

“Part of my role is to enable a sense of community here, but it can be a challenge with so many competing priorities. The online platform helps me to do fulfil this part of my job description as it is very easy to use and keeps everything all in one place!”





## How effective is it?

InCommon's online platform is an effective tool that enables schools and retirement housing to embark on their intergenerational activities with support from the InCommon team.

From May 2023 to February 2024:



**310 individuals** took part in intergenerational activities across **38 visits**.



Intergenerational sessions typically achieve a **40:60 ratio of older to younger participants** which helps foster intimate connections and meaningful conversations.



Intergenerational activity happened **nationwide**, in the following regions the South East (45%), West Midlands (31%), London (16%), East of England (6%) and Yorkshire and the Humber (South Yorkshire) (2%).



The platform's usability, efficient onboarding and user autonomy make it an effective tool to support retirement housing managers and school leads to organise activities that are designed to help the generations connect, get to know each other and learn together. Such activities help create a sense of community and offer opportunities for intergenerational connections that may not otherwise exist.

The online platform presents an opportunity for private and social providers across a range of older persons housing, from retirement housing, villages, extra care and care homes, to enable residents to reap the powerful benefits of intergenerational connections.

## A positive social impact on participants, local communities, the NHS and providers of retirement housing

The Housing LIN has estimated the social and associated economic impact of InCommon's intergenerational activity carried out in 2022/23. This involved 220 older people (20 retirement schemes) and 350 younger people (20 schools).

## Health and wellbeing outcomes for older participants

Participating in InCommon's intergenerational activities yields significant health benefits for older participants such as reduced loneliness and isolation, increased mental stimulation and increased sense of belonging to a community. These outcomes translate into estimated economic savings for local authorities, the NHS and retirement housing providers due to decreased reliance on health and care services by healthier and happier residents.

- Estimated cost savings to the NHS from avoided use of health and care services due to reduced loneliness and isolation is **£16,700 per year**.
- Estimated cost savings to the individual/NHS from avoided admission to residential care is **£47,448 per year**.
- Estimated cost savings to providers of retirement housing from reduction in voids due to avoided admission to residential care **£1,170 per year**.

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COST SAVINGS FROM AVOIDED USE  
OF HEALTH & CARE SERVICES

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COST SAVINGS FROM AVOIDED  
ADMISSION TO RESIDENTIAL CARE

**£1,170**

COST SAVINGS TO PROVIDERS  
OF RETIREMENT HOUSING

## Social and emotional learning for younger participants

Younger people experience improved social and emotional learning as a result of increased confidence and relationship building skills and increased opportunities for teachers to connect with pupils.

### Community cohesion

InCommon's intergenerational activities strengthen local and scheme-level communities. Meaningful connections are created enabling people to feel part of their community and as though they make a difference to other people's lives. Strong communities have been shown to have reduced instances of crime and are places that people want to live and invest in. Older people can also gain a sense of purpose from volunteering their time to support children's learning. Volunteering in later life helps with depression and even living longer. It's particularly beneficial for those with fewer existing relationships, lower levels of income and education, and poorer health.



## Tackling ageism

The opportunity to engage with people from a different generation is combating ageist attitudes and shaping participants' views on what it means to be an older or younger person.

## Improved workplace satisfaction

School leads, retirement housing managers and providers experience increased workplace satisfaction as a result of InCommon's activities. Seeing the positive impact on residents and pupils gives joy to those responsible for bringing the school and scheme together. Scheme managers are supported to fulfil their role in creating a sense of community at the scheme.

## Join InCommon's intergenerational movement

InCommon's intergenerational activities foster community connections, combat ageism and promote social well-being. They nurture friendships, support educational and emotional development in children, and enhance the overall health and happiness of participants of all ages. Additionally, they offer potential economic benefits by reducing healthcare costs, preventing transitions to residential care, and maintaining tenancies in retirement housing.

**The total estimated economic savings across local authorities, the NHS and retirement housing providers from InCommon's 2022/23 intergenerational activities is £65,318 per year.**

With InCommon's online platform facilitating others to create further intergenerational connections throughout the UK, they offer significant opportunities for social impact to reach a wide audience.

## Get involved!

To find out more, please contact:  
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Twitter/X:  
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