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Intergenerational working: creating opportunities for young people through links with local providers of care for the elderly - YMCA Derbyshire

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Brief description

YMCA Derbyshire works with local providers of care for the elderly to provide training opportunities for young people studying courses in hospitality and health and social care. Residents and the young people have valued the opportunity to learn from, and respect, each other.

Overview – the provider’s message

‘We wanted our disadvantaged foundation learners, and our learners at the Pupil Referral Unit, to have the chance to develop their hospitality skills outside the confines of the YMCA. A local social care provider, Housing 21, had a vision of bringing the wider community to work with its residents, through the establishment of a training kitchen. It’s been such a success, it’s now expanding. Our learners have had to develop their communication skills, to find out what the residents want to eat, and what they think of what they are given! It’s improved their confidence, and they love it so much, they volunteer whenever we offer them the chance to be involved in more activities. It has also helped them to develop the skills and confidence they need to hold down jobs – of the last group of 12, half have gone into work, and two more have gone on to further education courses. The residents value it too – they’ve learnt to look beyond the ‘hoody’ and baseball cap.’



Tracie Tunnicliffe, Catering and Hospitality Coordinator

The good practice in detail



Mixing disadvantaged learners and older people who may be vulnerable sounds, on the face of it, a high-risk activity. But it can provide great mutual benefits, as YMCA Derbyshire's experience shows. And the benefits have been acknowledged – the training partnership with Housing 21 has just won a prestigious award offered by 'United for all ages.' It has also had tangible benefits for the learners, many of whom start off with very low levels of literacy and numeracy, and with disrupted home lives.

The programme offers them current real work-experience, and an up-to-date qualification, as well as the chance to improve their self-confidence and social skills. Over half of the last group to go through the programme gained a job or a place at college.

Partners in training

Housing 21's Handyside Court manager Pauline Reynolds had been looking for the opportunity to offer training in the Court's kitchen, and seeing an article in the local press about the YMCA's catering learners gave her the chance she had been looking for. The two organisations' values and aspirations were so similar, that it was relatively straightforward to put the project together. Pauline was particularly keen to work with the YMCA, because of their ethos of encouraging disadvantaged young people to be the best that they can be. This welcome has allowed YMCA's learners to work increasingly closely with the Handyside Court residents, developing the learners' skills in producing costed menus to meet their clients' needs. Learners also have the opportunity to improve their skills in customer relations.



Pauline Reynolds

Further developments

The project has worked so well, that the YMCA has begun to train health and social care foundation learners at Handyside Court. Managers from both organisations see the potential for this side of the partnership to grow even further and to offer level 2 training and apprenticeships in the future. Maureen Durham, the programme tutor, says 'the learners enjoy it so much that the difficulty is in ending the sessions.' Learners have taken responsibility for organising outings with the residents, and craft activities, which they have then had to evaluate in end-of-term presentations. This was particularly challenging and rewarding for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) students, who have gained enormously in confidence as well as skills.



The hospitality provision is also branching out into other partnerships with Derby Homes and the Anchor Housing Association.

'Win-win benefits'

Everyone involved in the project agrees that the benefits have far outweighed expectations. Apart from the opportunity for learners to develop their skills in the workplace, they have had to improve their communication skills. As their tutor says, 'they are no longer just grunting!' Learners who may well have had difficult and disjointed home lives have grown in self-esteem and have valued the opportunity to make and sustain relationships. Maureen and Pauline agree, 'it is like them having extra grandparents.' One of the measures of the success of the project is that learners instantly volunteer whenever opportunities come up for extra work with the residents, for example to celebrate the Royal Wedding. The project has also benefited residents; Pauline sees older people as being at risk of being marginalised in society, and so she is keen for the wider community, and in particular young people, to work with the residents. And their ability to get on with the young people has surprised and delighted everyone. They accept the learners as they find them, and do not judge them in terms of what they might have done in the past, even if they have fallen foul of the law. Residents are supportive of the learners 'having a second chance.' The experience has been even more successful than its instigators had hoped at breaking down barriers. As Pauline says, 'just because someone wears a hoody doesn't make him a criminal', and the residents at the home have learnt to see beyond the stereotypes. The young people have also learnt consideration, and to moderate their language so as not to distress their older clients.



Provider background

YMCA Derbyshire is a registered charity. The company contracts with the Young People's Funding Agency to provide Foundation Learning programmes for 16 to 18-year-olds. Learners are working towards qualifications in early years and playwork, health and social care, retailing and wholesaling, hospitality and catering, as well as literacy and numeracy.

Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We'd welcome your views and ideas. Get in touch [here](#).

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