**Intergenerational Befriending at Woffington House**

**Why did we do it?**

From observations we learnt that schools would visit at Christmas time and that residents really enjoyed their visits and both children and residents engaged well. But this only happened at Christmas, so felt that it would be a great idea to pilot visits in the Spring term.

**How did we do it?**

The HM visited each school to try to engage with headteachers/leaders in the local community, the HM established what the school’s strengths were and implemented activities specific to that schools strengths.

We also wanted to support elements of the curriculum within schools and as IT/Literacy appears to be a focus, children and residents either write and post letters, whereas some schools prefer to email and send photos to their pen pals and the residents did the same in return. One school posted a short film on a disc for their pen pals to watch from as far as West Yorkshire.

Examples:

* One school was developing the Digital Heroes work through DC Wales and so children from that school provide DH sessions with residents.
* Another school was very creative and had a focus on the arts, they came to us and created a mosaic to celebrate the NHS at 70.
* One school has its own allotment and so residents have been growing vegetables and plants from seed, they have also been making bird feeders and items for birds to eat during the cooler months.
* Another has a strong choir and comes to perform for residents.
* One local Comprehensive school came to the home with students and built a chicken coop for one resident that used to keep chickens.
* Schools have invited the residents to end of year assemblies/performances/picnics
* The home has held a BBQ for one school on their visit

Schools have also planned tea parties and celebration events, one for winning the ‘Shimmer my Zimmer’ competition and another to provide opportunities for residents to meet their pen pals over tea and cake. Residents have been invited in to schools to celebrate them achieving a Dementia Friendly status as WH have supported them along this journey.

WH developed a ‘term timetable’ for when the children were in school to plan such sessions as oppose to having a whole year planner.

**What were the obstacles?**

The HM ensured that there were those staff that were more engaging with intergenerational befriending, to allow those that weren’t the time to come on board, these staff now are, having been given the time to hear about how well activities have gone.

Certain schools appeared disengaged, possibly through the different views by school leaders. However, we note that intergenerational community connectors have been employed to support and educate on the mutual benefits.

Travel costs between schools to the Home have been an issue, thankfully, through making the right partnerships this has supported some funding being gained via the ‘Dementia Friendly – Tredegar’ group, via a donation made to them through Tredegar Town Council.

Resources – ensuring that the right resources were on site to support the appropriate activities, weekly team meetings take place at WH on a Thursday allowing for ordering to take place, whether it be from Tesco’s or Amazon.

**What have been the outcomes?**

* People are more engaged with one another
* People are more alert
* Anti-psychotics are reduced by 100% (PRN)
* Anti-psychotic prescribing by professionals reduced by 50%
* Residents will get up and have better personal care, in readiness for the children visiting
* Call outs to WAST have reduced by 29%
* As a Woffington family, we are more engaged with the community
* Children’s names have to be put into a hat and names are drawn for one school for those that can visit (due to them all wanting to visit)
* Children are stating that they want to work at Woffington when they are older
* The stigma associated with mental health appears to be reduced – there are no negative comments throughout visits.

**What do we want to do next?**

Discussions are taking place for:

* Intergenerational school trips
* Intergenerational playtimes
* Intergenerational sport days
* Supporting school partners to have their own chickens
* Residents holding lessons to support children’s learning from their own first-hand experiences
* Pigeon racing
* Intergenerational Choir with professional recording by Steel-house Productions