NAPA

ACADEMIC EXPERTS AND RESEARCHERS' FOCUS GROUP CONSULTATION REPORT

Development of the DRAFT National Intergenerational Engagement Standards for Care Homes

Session: Focus Group 05

Supported by Hallmark Foundation® Bold Action for Better Ageing

University of Chichester

University of Hertfordshire UH

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Hosted by: National Activity Providers Association (NAPA)
Facilitated by: Professor Denise Turner, University of Hertfordshire, and Dr Sandra Lyndon, University of Chichester, NAPA's partners on the project

1. Executive Summary

NAPA hosted this focus group as part of the consultation and co-production process for developing the National Intergenerational Activity and Engagement Standards for Care Homes. The session brought together academic experts, researchers and specialist practitioners, referred to throughout this report as attendees. It was facilitated by Professor Denise Turner and Dr Sandra Lyndon, NAPA's university partners on the project.

The discussion emphasised that intergenerational practice should support meaningful, reciprocal relationships and become a sustainable part of care home life. Organised activities can create opportunities for connection, but their value depends on the experiences and relationships that develop.

Attendees identified continuity, individual choice, inclusive planning and opportunities for everyone to contribute as essential features of good practice. They also highlighted the organisational conditions needed to sustain it: leadership commitment, staff time, training, shared responsibility and effective partnerships.

The standards should provide clear expectations while accommodating different populations, resources and stages of development. Safeguarding and proportionate risk management should enable safe participation. Evaluation should consider relationship quality, wellbeing and belonging alongside attendance and session numbers.
Feedback on the draft focused on clearer navigation, reduced repetition, a defined scope, traceable research references and practical supporting resources.

Seven research and development priorities emerged: reviewing the evidence base, evaluating outcomes for all generations, understanding relationship development, examining implementation, strengthening evaluation methods, testing the standards and identifying training needs. These are proposed areas for further work rather than agreed research commitments.

NAPA will develop a research repository on its website, guidance notes and a short e-learning course to accompany the standards and help care homes embed them in everyday practice. Attendees are welcome to contribute further feedback and relevant research by contacting Anqa Tirmazee-Kaleem at NAPA.

1. Introduction and Background

NAPA is leading the development of National Intergenerational Activity and Engagement Standards for Care Homes to support high-quality, person-centred, inclusive and sustainable practice.

Intergenerational engagement can involve schools, nurseries, universities, families, community organisations and other local partners. It may range from initial encounters to sustained relationships and more integrated forms of everyday contact.

The project recognises that bringing people of different ages together does not automatically create a positive or meaningful experience. The standards therefore address the conditions needed for connection, including consent, accessibility, communication, preparation, partnership working and organisational support.
This consultation contributed evidence-informed perspectives and practical experience to the wider co-production process.

2.Project Aim

The project aims to provide a practical framework that helps care homes and their partners:

- Develop meaningful and reciprocal intergenerational relationships.
- Respect individual interests, preferences, identities and choices.
- Enable safe and inclusive participation.
- Build workforce confidence and shared organisational responsibility.
- Establish sustainable community partnerships.
- Evaluate experiences and outcomes.
- Use evidence and reflection to improve practice.

The framework is intended to support development without prescribing a single model for every setting.

3.Co-production and Purpose of the Consultation

The standards are being developed through consultation with residents, people living with dementia, families, care teams, activity professionals, younger people, community partners and those with research and practice expertise.

These contributions provide complementary perspectives on what matters, what works and what support is needed.

The purpose of this focus group was to examine:

- The evidence and principles underpinning the standards.
- The conditions that support meaningful relationships.
- Barriers to implementation and sustainability.
- Appropriate approaches to evaluation.
- The clarity and usability of the draft.
- Priorities for further development, testing and learning.

4.Session Approach and Attendees

NAPA hosted the session, with facilitation provided by Professor Denise Turner and Dr Sandra Lyndon. The discussion drew on expertise spanning social care, dementia, palliative care, psychology, education, music, co-production, economics, inclusion and intergenerational practice. It included feedback on the draft standards and a presentation from Ready Generations about a nursery situated within a care village.

This report presents a thematic account of the supplied notes rather than a verbatim transcript. The session date and delivery format were not recorded in those notes.

Attendee	Organisation or affiliation
Anqa Tirmazee-Kaleem	NAPA
Hilary Woodhead	NAPA
Professor Denise Turner	University of Hertfordshire
Dr Sandra Lyndon	University of Chichester
Natalie Ravenscroft	NAPA
Isabelle Latham	Hallmark Care Homes; NAPA RIAG Expert
Jenni MacRitchie	University of Sheffield; NAPA RIAG Expert
Liz Ludden	Belong / Ready Generations
Nancy Preston	University of Lancaster; King's College London
Fran Hallam-Bowles	University of Nottingham
Raphael Wittenberg	LSE
Professor Victoria Tischler	University of Surrey; NAPA RIAG Expert
Pat Brown	Nellsar
Jeanette Bell	University of Chester
Richard Vytniorgu	University of Hertfordshire
Ellie Robinson-Carter	University of Hull
Jacqueline Damant	LSE
Helen Kingstone	Royal Holloway University

5.Findings from the Focus Group

5.1 Relationships, Continuity and Reciprocity

Attendees consistently emphasised that relationships should be central to intergenerational practice. Activities can help people meet, but meaningful connection requires time, repeated contact and opportunities to learn about one another. The Ready Generations presentation illustrated the potential of everyday shared experiences within a care village. It highlighted opportunities for people to contribute without assuming that one generation must teach or help the other.

Informal conversation and spontaneous interaction should therefore be recognised alongside planned sessions. Both younger and older people bring knowledge, interests, experiences and companionship to a relationship.

Implication for the standards: Describe quality through meaningful interaction, reciprocal contribution and continuity, as well as the opportunities provided.

5.2 Person-centred and Inclusive Participation

Attendees stressed that planning should begin with individuals rather than assumptions about age or care needs. Relevant considerations include personal interests, communication preferences, health conditions, sensory needs, pace, group size and the support required to participate. The discussion recognised the diversity of care home populations, including people living with dementia, people with learning disabilities and LGBT people. Inclusion also requires genuine choice. Some people may prefer a different form of contact or may not wish to take part. Consent should remain ongoing as circumstances and preferences change.

Implication for the standards: Make individual choice, accessibility and adaptable support explicit expectations.

5.3 Leadership, Workforce Capacity and Shared Responsibility

Intergenerational practice can become vulnerable when it depends on one enthusiastic staff member. Staff turnover, competing demands or the departure of a champion may interrupt established relationships. Attendees identified the need for leadership support, clear responsibilities and sufficient staff time for preparation, coordination, facilitation and review. Training and professional development should help teams build confidence and respond to different needs.

Implication for the standards: Support whole-organisation ownership and integration into everyday care, with practical expectations for staffing and development.

5.4 Safeguarding and Proportionate Risk Management

The discussion recognised safeguarding, infection prevention, supervision, health needs and environmental factors as important considerations. Some younger people may initially feel uncertain around older people, and an activity that appears suitable may need adaptation once people meet. Noise, group size and differing levels of vulnerability can also affect the experience.

Attendees supported an approach that assesses and manages risk thoughtfully while preserving opportunities for engagement.

Implication for the standards: Provide practical guidance on safe participation, individual support, consent and clear safeguarding responsibilities.

5.5 Sustainable Partnerships

Partnerships need shared aims and an understanding of what each organisation hopes to achieve. One example concerned different groups of children attending each visit. This may allow more children to take part, but can reduce continuity for those seeking sustained relationships. Attendees also questioned whether practice should be confined to care homes and schools. Nurseries, other residential settings and community spaces may offer valuable opportunities.

Implication for the standards: Help partners agree purpose, roles, continuity and review arrangements, while recognising wider community connections.

5.6 Different Contexts and Stages of Development

Care homes vary in their resources, resident populations, staff capacity and existing partnerships. They also have different levels of experience with intergenerational practice. Attendees cautioned against a one-size-fits-all approach and highlighted differences between initial contact, sustained relationships and more integrated ways of sharing everyday life.

Implication for the standards: Promote a flexible approach that recognises the individuality of each care home, enabling homes to adapt intergenerational practice to their residents, communities, resources and stage of development while maintaining shared principles of quality, inclusion and safety.

5.7 Evidence and Meaningful Evaluation

Attendees highlighted the need to make the evidence underpinning the standards accessible and traceable, including through a references list. They also questioned how outcomes should be assessed. Attendance and session numbers describe delivery, but do not show whether relationships are developing or whether people feel included.

Evaluation should consider:

- Quality and continuity of relationships.
- Wellbeing and emotional experiences.
- Connection and belonging.
- Reciprocity and opportunities to contribute.
- Experiences across generations.
- Conditions that enable or hinder sustainable practice.

Implication for the standards: Encourage manageable, co-produced evaluation that involves residents, younger people, families, care teams and partners in deciding what matters, shaping evaluation methods and interpreting findings. This should capture diverse experiences, support shared learning and inform improvements in practice.

6.Feedback on the Draft Standards

Attendees offered five main suggestions to improve the draft's usability:

Improve navigation
Include a contents page and make important sections easier to find.
Reduce repetition
Review length and duplication so the framework remains clear and manageable.
Clarify scope
Explain the forms and levels of intergenerational engagement addressed.
Include research references
Enable readers to trace the evidence supporting recommendations.
Provide accessible supporting formats
Use concise guidance, standalone summaries and visual resources to help different audiences apply the standards.

The draft should remain useful to care home leaders, care teams, activity professionals and partner organisations, with supporting materials tailored to their practical responsibilities.

7.Research and Development Priorities

The discussion identified seven priorities to strengthen the evidence base and support the development and implementation of the standards. These are proposed areas for further work, rather than agreed research commitments.

1. **Review the Evidence Base** - Identify existing research, systematic reviews and evidence gaps relating to intergenerational practice in care settings.
2. **Evaluate Outcomes for All Generations** - Explore the experiences and outcomes of older people, younger people, and the staff and organisations involved, recognising that benefits and challenges may differ across these groups.
3. **Understand Relationship Development** - Investigate how continuity, reciprocity and repeated contact influence the quality of intergenerational relationships.
4. **Examine Implementation** - Identify the organisational, workforce, safeguarding and partnership conditions that support or constrain good practice.
5. **Strengthen Evaluation Methods** - Develop practical approaches for assessing wellbeing, connection and belonging alongside participation figures.
6. **Test the Standards in Practice** - Gather feedback from care homes with different levels of experience and different resident populations to assess the framework's clarity, relevance and usability.
7. **Identify Training Needs** - Map existing learning and development provision and establish where further support is required to help care home teams and their partners implement the standards.

These priorities can inform future research, testing and the development of supporting resources. Relevant papers shared by attendees will help strengthen the standards' references and the planned research repository. Findings from testing and the review of training needs can also inform the guidance notes and short e-learning course.

The meeting outlined further revision of the draft standards, development of learning provision and a testing phase. At the time of the session, ten care homes had expressed interest in testing the standards.

8.Contribution to the Wider Co-production Process

The consultation strengthened the project's consideration of evidence, implementation and sustainability. Its findings complement the young adults consultation, particularly on individual choice, reciprocity, suitable environments and meaningful connection. This session added emphasis on leadership, workforce capacity, partnership continuity and evaluation.

Taken alongside contributions from residents, families, care teams and community partners, these insights will help ensure that the standards reflect both personal experiences and the practical conditions required for good practice.

9.Further Feedback and Supporting Resources

Continued Contributions - All attendees are warmly invited to share further insights, reflections and feedback by contacting Anqa Tirmazee-Kaleem at NAPA. They are particularly encouraged to share relevant research papers, systematic reviews and other evidence that could strengthen the references underpinning the standards and inform the supporting materials.

Research Repository - A repository of research papers relating to intergenerational practice will be developed on the NAPA website to accompany the standards. It will complement the reference list and help care home teams, practitioners, researchers and community partners locate evidence for practice, learning and further enquiry.

Guidance Notes and E-learning - A range of practical guidance notes and a short e-learning course will also accompany the standards. These resources will help care homes and their partners understand the framework, review existing approaches and identify achievable improvements. They will support planning, inclusive participation, safeguarding, partnership development and evaluation, helping teams embed the standards within everyday care home life.

Continued contributions from attendees will help keep these resources informed by relevant evidence and practical experience.

Conclusion

The focus group highlighted that meaningful intergenerational practice depends on relationships supported by individual choice, continuity and mutual contribution.

Embedding this approach requires organisational commitment, confident staff, effective partnerships and practical guidance. The standards should combine clear expectations with flexibility, enabling care homes to develop approaches suited to their residents and communities. The proposed research and development priorities provide direction for further enquiry and testing. The planned research repository, guidance notes and short e-learning course will support implementation.

The central measure of success will be the quality of people's experiences: whether they feel connected, valued, included and able to contribute.

National Activity Providers Association (NAPA)
In collaboration with the University of Hertfordshire and the University of Chichester

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