



Year one impact report
September 2023

VISIONS OF US



Ready 
Generations

IN PARTNERSHIP
WITH


BELONG
VILLAGES



CONTENTS

Introduction.....	4
The fundamentals.....	5
Moving from concept to action.....	5
Our working definition.....	6
First year of village life.....	7
Serious about impact.....	9
Reach in numbers.....	13
Shared frameworks.....	14
Championing sustainability.....	14
Our intergenerational champions.....	15
Storyteller in residence.....	16
Getting noticed.....	17
Building local partnerships.....	18
Sponsors and academic partners.....	19
The voices of our children.....	20
What our community says.....	21
Moving into year two.....	22



INTRODUCTION

In July 2023, we celebrated the first birthday of our partnership with Belong Villages to develop high quality intergenerational practice and integrate a nursery into the heart of their new Chester Care Village. This Report highlights what we have achieved together over our first year. It also presents important learning, identifying successes and the inevitable challenges we have faced. It finishes with a set of priorities for the second year of this pioneering partnership.

Ready Generations was established to research and consider a regenerative vision for care and education in this rapidly changing world, where it can sometimes feel that the power of meaningful relational connection has been overlooked.

Our fully integrated nursery represents a ground-breaking initiative for both care and education. It demonstrates what a sustainable intergenerational approach might look like and how it takes time, patience and a lot of listening to develop a care environment that engages the whole community of children and older people alongside their families and the professional workforce.

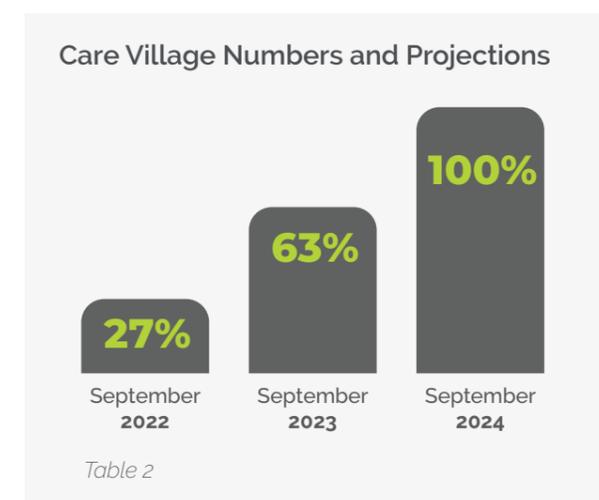
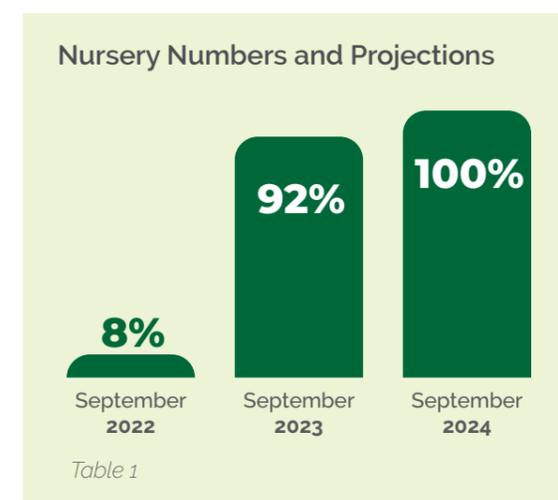
THE FUNDAMENTALS

The approach we have used builds from a clear set of fundamental principles which we have developed into a theory of change together:

- We put people first, placing children, older people and their needs and interests above all else. We notice and give value to the uniqueness of everyone.
- We think developmentally about sustainable change, systems thinking, evaluation and impact as we build a shared sense of what defines quality intergenerational practice.
- We are regenerative, exploring questions that move practice forwards, celebrating success and sharing examples of best practice so that everyone can benefit and make progress.
- We are firmly grounded in the belief that lives can be transformed by understanding what is really happening rather than what might be a perceived understanding of someone else's experience.
- We are reflective, always observing and using evidence based approaches to further our professional knowledge, skills and understanding.

MOVING FROM CONCEPT TO ACTION

We opened the doors of The Nursery in Belong in July 2022, making our home within a purpose-built and innovative environment, fully integrated within the care village and offering open access to a nature play and garden area. Over the year, we have constantly refined our strategy and priorities as the Nursery team has grown and children and resident numbers have increased.



Together with colleagues from Belong, we have also created a working definition of intergenerational provision that is helping to guide thinking and planning as we progress.



OUR WORKING DEFINITION

As intergenerational pioneers, we are developing an asset-based approach to bringing care and education together. This gives priority to the sharing of responsibility, ownership and power between children, older people, carers and their families. It enables us all to work together in equal, reciprocal and nurturing relationships for the benefit of everyone.

What we have observed and thought deeply about

- Sustained relationships grow and expand over time. Nothing of value can be forced or rushed.
- When people feel part of an inclusive and engaging community that offers nurture and nourishment, they tell us that individual responsibility and a desire to contribute becomes even more important to them.
- The emotional, social, health and learning factors which determine purposeful, confident living do not differ significantly with age.
- How environments are set up and presented, as well as the quality of resources, really makes a difference to engagement and participation.
- Involving children and older people in superficial decision making is easy. It is much more complex to go deeper into the issues that matter most to them and which have the potential to really change outcomes.
- Creativity is the best connector of all. It enables children and older people to be imaginative and playful and feels like real freedom!
- As professionals, we must be courageous enough to be honest about the systemic and structural factors that support success, as well as those that get in the way.

FIRST YEAR OF VILLAGE LIFE

There is something that feels very natural about bringing young children and older people together. Many global cultures still retain the intergenerational family structures that we have left behind. We have learnt much from these cultures and brought many of their ideas to our work.

We have found that children and older people intrinsically make a great fit. When invited to spend time together, and without much guidance, they quickly find they share many common interests. From the initial Open Days in early summer 2022, it quickly became clear that there was a genuine excitement around the intergenerational dimension of the new Village. This came from every age group with some older people actually choosing the Care Village as their new home because there would be children around on a daily basis. Many parents were keen to secure a nursery place for their child based predominantly on the additionality of having daily interactions with a community of older people.

Older people and their families commented on feeling joy at the prospect of seeing young children in the Village and being able to actively contribute to their learning and development. This early interest has continued and expanded to include residents and nursery families as they have joined throughout the year. The benefits have been diverse and over the year, have also included a growing number of local partners, supporters and friends. The following table distils this interest, although nothing can beat listening to the individual stories of how lives have been warmed and improved through connection and a heightened sense of belonging to something uniquely special.



Relationship centred care and learning



Table 3

SERIOUS ABOUT IMPACT

Our observations and data collection have enabled us to summarise the main benefits we have seen over the year.

Four strong themes have emerged from the collective feedback of stakeholders.



BELONGING

Young children and older people want to live life their way and fulfil the strong human need to belong and feel connected to a defined community.



MODELLING

Many older people are excellent role models, mentors and educators for children and young families. Children are equally good role models for older people, encouraging hope, joy, participation, curiosity and motivation.



PACE AND UNDERSTANDING

Everyone values being included at their own pace and understood for who they are and what they may bring on any particular day.



PLAYFULNESS

Invitations and opportunities that promote play and playfulness matter at every age. We all like to be playful!



Highlights for children's development and learning

Our evaluation evidence highlights the following impacts for children:



Improved emotional literacy, with both babies and children showing enhanced empathy, awareness and understanding of and for the feelings of others.



Daily access to a diverse range of interested adults who engage meaningfully in dialogue and rich conversational language enhances knowledge of words and vocabulary.



A calm, reassuring learning environment where experiences are slowed down enables all to fully engage.



Expanded range of learning opportunities, provocations and play experiences both in and outdoors.



Connection to a nurturing community where adults consistently demonstrate respect for children and generously prioritise their needs expands learning for children.



Rich shared love for natural world, led by older people's life-long experiences and engagement with nature.



Improved life skills, particularly observed in pre-school age-group e.g. self-regulation, planning, organising, problem solving, relationship building.

Highlights for older people

Our evaluation evidence highlights the following impacts for older people:



Improved wellbeing (body, mind, and spirit).



Reduced social isolation and loneliness.



Increased self-esteem and confidence, sense of personal control and engagement.



Enhanced inclusion of individuals with more complex physical needs and those living with dementia.



Joy in being around the children on a daily basis and forming close relationships.



Increased opportunity to become active, purposeful contributors in the care and education of the children.



Increased participation, playfulness and creativity.



Acquisition of new learning, interests and skills.



Increased physical activity and healthy lifestyle choices.



Increased involvement and engagement with wider families of both nursery children and other older people through family events and experiences.



Diverse opportunities to engage socially with people of all ages within and beyond the village.



REACH IN NUMBERS

Highlights for staff teams

Our evaluation evidence highlights the following impacts for colleagues from both Belong and our Nursery teams:



Opportunity to promote our shared values of person-centred care and education, equity, compassion and cooperation.



Increased awareness and understanding of successful cross-sector working.



Learning that there is no one size fits all approach and flexibility is central to our shared work.



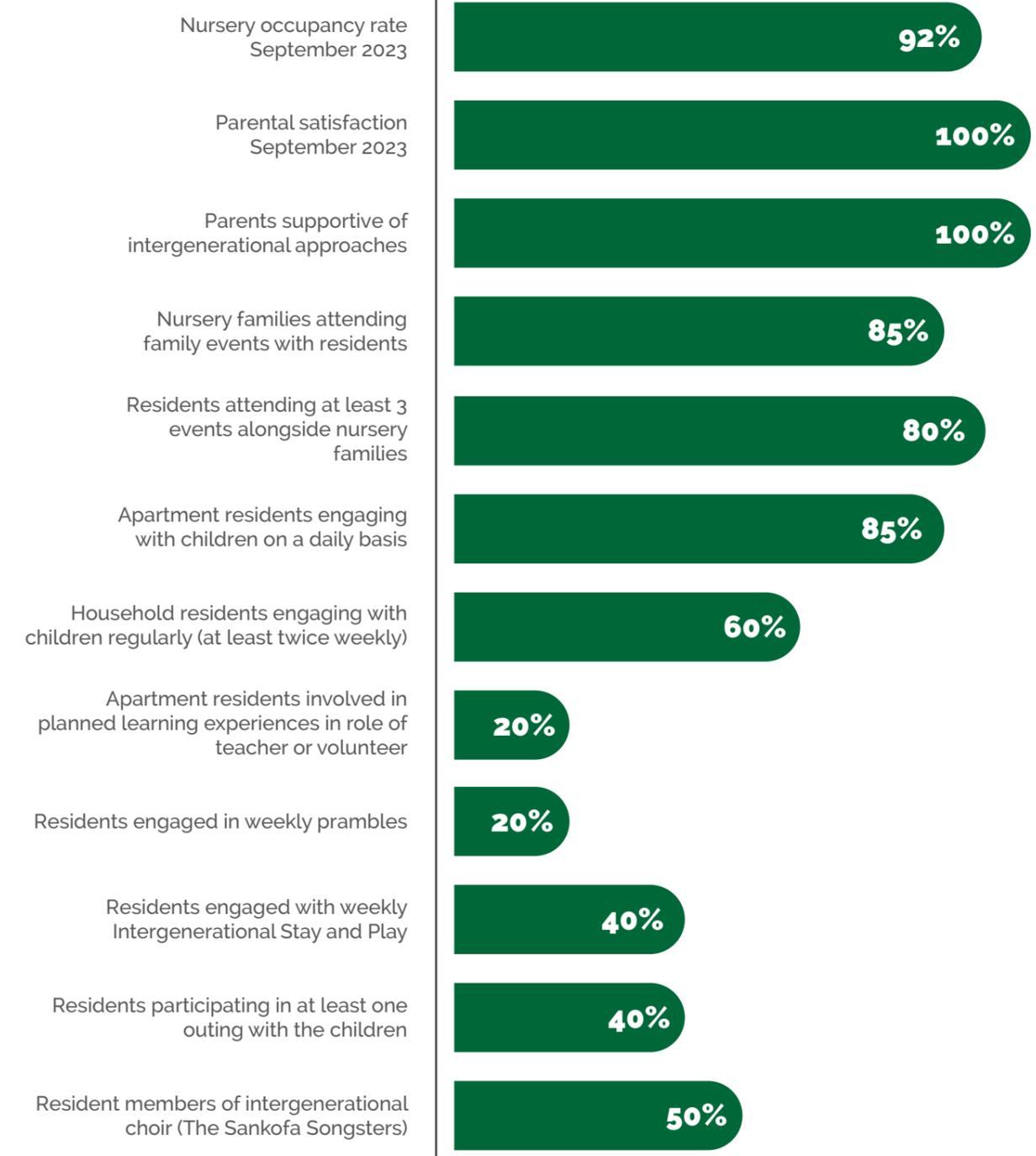
Opportunity to engage in groundbreaking research and innovation alongside a number of partnering universities.



Improved access to a wider range of high quality professional development.



Daily presence of children in the care environment has a positive impact on staff wellbeing and morale.



SHARED FRAMEWORKS

Over the year, we have developed our set of bespoke frameworks further in response to what we have learnt. The *Attuned Relationships Model*, *Good Life Measures* and the *Mirrored Curriculum Framework* have been introduced to both teams and a set of accompanying intergenerational leadership standards is now under development. Together, this suite of resources is becoming embedded into practice enabling consistent and effective planning, monitoring and evaluation.

CHAMPIONING SUSTAINABILITY

The Nursery in Belong supports the *United Nations Sustainable Development Goals*, which are an important part of our work and fundamental to helping children and residents to actively participate in helping to make the world a better place, even in the smallest of ways. Our *Gardening Green Fingers Club* has enjoyed its first harvest of potatoes, tomatoes and rhubarb! Residents have also decided that we should set up a *Village Sustainability Group* to help us widen our reach into the local community.



OUR INTERGENERATIONAL CHAMPIONS

At the beginning of our adventure, we started searching for intergenerational champions. We currently have seven highly engaged champions in the Village whose role is to:



Keep an extra eye out for the children at all times.



Visit the Nursery regularly to help with simple, everyday tasks.



Support children's table manners, socialising and eating.



Spend regular time outdoors with the children.



Advocate for the children and their families within the Village.



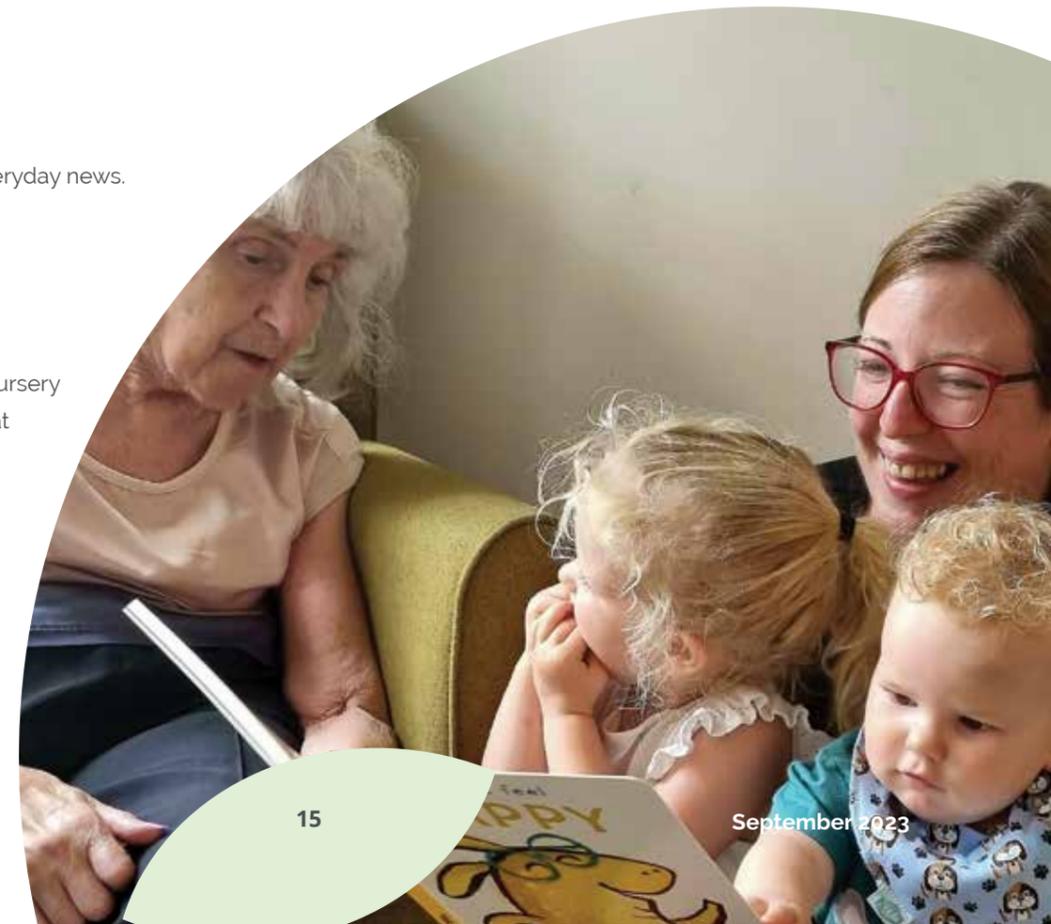
Regularly enhance children's play and learning with their own unique ideas.



Share books, stories and everyday news.



Engage regularly with the Nursery Team to talk about ideas that involve the children.





STORYTELLER IN RESIDENCE

Richard O'Neill is one of our favourite friends and is the Nursery's storyteller in residence. Richard is a world-renowned storyteller, playwright and author. He grew up in a large, fully nomadic Romani Gypsy family travelling through the North of England and Scotland. His storytelling has been passed down through generations. It has incredible power to spark imagination, inspire creativity and bring people of all ages closer together. Storytelling has been a constant in Richard's life for as long as he can remember. He learned his craft sitting around a campfire at the feet of some of the best travelling storytellers. Richard is also a skilled traditional toy maker and over the year, has introduced us to the wonderful Roly Yoly and the Dancing Dolls.



GETTING NOTICED





BUILDING LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

Over the year, we have worked hard to get to know other charities and services in the local area. This has been a really positive experience and we have made lots of new, amazingly supportive friends.



SPONSORS AND ACADEMIC PARTNERS

As a small charity with limited funds, we are hugely grateful to our sponsors and the funding organisations that have recognised the value of our work and funded us to move forwards with projects and ideas.

We have also raised over £2.5K from Local Giving sponsors and friends who have funded us to run around Sefton Park, Liverpool, abseil from the main tower of the Liverpool Anglican Cathedral and enjoy a sing-along pramble together in Grosvenor Park.



We are working with a number of Universities from across the UK to research and evaluate what we are doing. These include:

- The University of Northumbria
- The University of Stirling
- The University of Chester
- The University of Liverpool
- The University of Central Lancashire
- York St. John University
- Liverpool John Moores University



THE VOICES OF OUR CHILDREN

Our children have lots to say about their grand-friends. They love spending time together and inviting them to join in with the daily play and fun. Many children have built enduring and important relationships with particular residents based around shared interests and individual personalities.

“
I miss Bill.
Where is he today?
Can we go to find him
now?
Jacob aged 3
”

“
Norman here!
Yes!
Charlotte aged 2
”

“
I saw Ian in Tesco's
and I ran to him as
fast as I could. I shouted
'Hello Ian - it's Lionel!
Lionel Aged 4
”

“
Be gentle - Mary has
sore eyes today but she
can still see through them!
Ashleigh aged 3
”

“
I'm saying hello
to all my friends!
I like baking on the
households with my
friends.
Emmie aged 3
”

“
I want to show Bill my
plaster! He will know what
to do!
Henry aged 3
”

WHAT OUR COMMUNITY SAYS

“
Moving my child to
this Nursery was the
best thing I have done!
KS - Nursery Parent
”

“
My daughter
interacting with the
older lady in the Bistro
brought tears to my eyes.
AT - Nursery Parent
”

“
The best thing
about living here is
sharing time with the
children. They mean
everything to me!
IW - Resident
”

“
The children are my
joy, my new family and
my life. I know every one of
them and welcome every new
member. I love the Nursery
and visit most days.
BW - Resident
”

“
The children remind me
to live on the edge! I like
their curiosity!
CR - Resident
”





MOVING INTO YEAR TWO

A notable impact from the first year of our partnership with Belong Villages has been the shared sense of direction and focus developed by both organisations. Over the year, we have worked consistently to visit and revisit the vision, values and strategy for implementing our model of high quality intergenerational practice. This process of shared evaluation and action planning has helped us to highlight the key areas we need to discuss more, helping us to decide carefully what we need to progress next. It has also ensured we have a clear, evidenced and agreed set of goals and supported metrics.

Our priorities for Year Two:

- Developing a joined up approach to research and enquiry based learning by using the newly established Belong ethics committee to establish a coherent research programme with clear areas of focus.
- Establishing an academic advisory group that brings academic partners together to advise on areas of research and the availability of funding for more longitudinal impact studies.
- Researching more around the concept of *slow pedagogy*.
- Using a shared set of standards and associated measures of progress that could be expanded for use across other Belong Villages.
- Focusing on ensuring children, older people and families are fully involved in agreeing and developing the experiences they want to enjoy.
- Further developing our curriculum model to be clear about how we evidence *intention-implementation-impact*.
- Working in partnership to secure sustained funding and resources.

Thank you for **your** support and encouragement!

We hope this first Impact Report paints an exciting picture of what we have been up to! We are grateful to everyone who has helped us over our first year. A special thank you must go to our Trustees who have always been on hand with guidance and advice.

We are determined to continue to expand our work collaboratively, sharing knowledge freely and exchanging skills so that we can make further progress to secure a brighter future for everyone.





The Nursery in Belong Chester, City Road, Chester CH1 3AD

01244 445 566 | hello@nurseryinbelong.org.uk | www.nurseryinbelong.org.uk



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