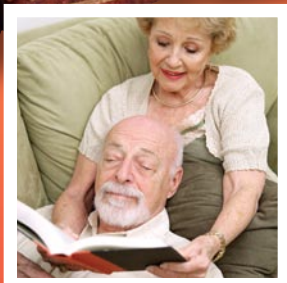
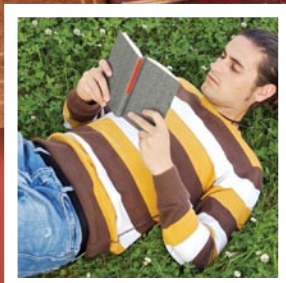


Book Group Project



Derbyshire Intergenerational Strategy





Project Plan

To set up and run an Intergenerational Book Group with young people from a secondary school and older people from either a residential home, sheltered housing complex or the community.

Aims and Objectives

- To break down the barriers between the age groups through a shared activity that is enjoyable and life-enhancing.
- To enable younger and older people who are avid readers to read and discuss the same book on a monthly basis.
- To enable older people who are unable to access community based book groups to engage in an activity that has meaning and importance to them.
- To run the group on the basis of equality of membership with each member, whatever their age group, being part of discussions and decision-making.

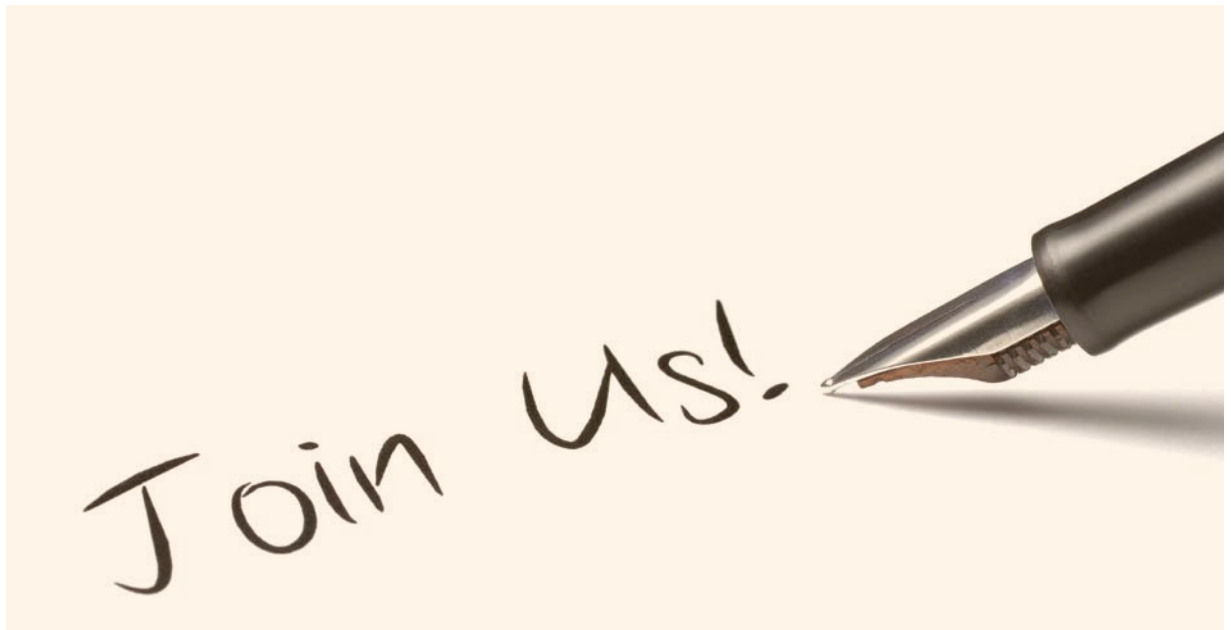
Setting up the Project

Recruiting Group Participants

The younger people were selected and approached by members of staff at the school. Consideration was given to their willingness to be involved and to commit the necessary time to reading the books, as well as their love of reading.

There was no differentiation between more outgoing young people and those who it was felt would be less vocal. Some of the young people were identified as being gifted and talented.

Recruitment of older people was through the manager of a residential home, the warden of a sheltered housing complex and an older persons' group.



Dissemination of Information

Full discussion took place with the manager/warden and posters were distributed to all older people in the home/sheltered housing, briefly describing the book group and the titles of books that would be read. Further information was given to those who showed interest in being involved. A visit was made to the older persons' group to explain the aims of the project.

Venue

In each case, a room was made available that was both quiet and free from interruptions.

Book Selection

This was undertaken in collaboration with staff from the Libraries Department of Derbyshire County Council. Titles were selected that would give a broad reading experience and included a poetry book and autobiographical work as well as fiction.

Some titles were intended for adult readership, others were for teenagers but bridged the gap between adult and young persons' reading.

Book Stock

Books for the younger people were purchased from the DIgS Project budget whilst those for older people were obtained through the Libraries Department. Where possible, the books for older people included audio versions of the books and large print editions.

Transport

Where the venue was not within walking distance, approved taxis were provided for the young people. These were funded through the DIgS Project budget.

Author Visits

Two of the selected books were written by local authors to enable an author visit to take place when the book was being discussed. The visits were funded through the DIgS Project budget.

Book Tokens

Members of the group were each given a book token to buy a book for a member of the group who was not of their generation. This was funded through the DIgS Project budget.

Organising and running an Intergenerational Book Group

What are the benefits of the project?

It will give readers from both age groups the opportunity to discuss books which enables them to broaden their perspectives not only of literature but of life.

It will enable them to build friendships, irrespective of age, and encourage respect for other people and their lifestyles and experiences.

Meeting in a residential home or sheltered housing setting separates it from school activities but it has links to the curriculum in terms of citizenship, literacy and social and communication skills, which in turn leads to improved confidence levels for all group members.

Will it take much of my time?

There is no exact answer to this. So much depends on your own circumstances, how quickly people get back to you, how successful you are at persuading younger and older people to return the books on time.

Planning is vital and, as with all plans, they never go exactly according to plan. If you think it will take three days to plan - timetable in four! There is a timetable in Appendix 4d.

Where do I start?

Why not begin with the book list? With the huge amount of books on the market it should be easy, shouldn't it? Not necessarily so. The books need to be accessible and enjoyable for both the older and younger people and the subject matter needs to offer areas for discussion.

Some adult fiction will be appropriate i.e. murder mysteries, classics, poetry. Others, such as autobiographies, can be hard work and won't be read.

What does seem to work for both generations is very well written fiction for teenagers which crosses the readership age divide. Some examples are *Dear Nobody* by Berlie Doherty and *Private Peaceful* by Michael Morpurgo. You will find a sample book list in Appendix 4h.

This is the point where you talk it through with the District Librarian or the Young Persons' Librarian at your local library. They are one of your most important resources and will be heavily involved in terms of accessing books, large print books and audio versions for the older people.

If you do not have sufficient stock of the books in your school library the local library service may be able to help you. If you have



any funding to help you buy books, your own supplier may offer competitive prices.

You will need to have the first set of books ready to take along to the 'Getting To Know You' meeting.

If you do have funding available you might like to think about using the book of a local author for one of the meetings and inviting the author along to be part of the discussion. This has proved a very enjoyable and an informative experience for group members and the authors used in previous book group meetings have been very supportive of the idea of intergenerational book groups. Costs vary; some authors charge a nominal amount whilst others charge anything up to £200.

Who will run the group meetings?

Certainly there does need to be a facilitator to ensure the meetings run smoothly, to instigate discussion and to encourage everyone to have their say. That person could be the school librarian or the Young Peoples' Librarian from your local library. Perhaps a member of the group would like the challenge of taking on the role.

If you have an interest in book groups it might be something you would enjoy and would give you the opportunity not only to join a stimulating group but also to evaluate the project on a regular basis.

How do I find older and younger people to take part in the project?

Identify a residential home for older people or a sheltered housing complex in your area that is within walking distance of your school. If at all possible avoid having to use taxis to take



the young people to the meetings; turning up at the wrong time, getting people back to school after the bus has left, sometimes not arriving at all, just adds to your workload and disrupts the group.

Contact the manager for an informal discussion about the group. The majority of managers are delighted to have young people coming to meet with older people. The residents also welcome the opportunity to take part in something that, through age or infirmity, they are not able to access within the community and also to be involved with younger people. If the manager is enthusiastic it will make your job much easier. Book groups are more effective if they have a maximum of twelve people so you are only looking for six older people to be involved.

Send along a flyer for distribution. Use it to briefly describe the group and ask for them to either contact you or the manager if they are interested. The manager will no doubt have information on who might be interested and of people who are desperate for some mental stimulation. There is a sample flyer in Appendix 4g.

When you have identified the older people

who will be part of the group, send out a letter giving details of the 'Getting To Know You' meeting along with a CRB permission form. A sample letter is in Appendix 4a and the sample CRB permission form is in Appendix 4c.

If you want to take photographs at any of the meetings you will need a signed permission slip from each of the older people. One can be found in Appendix 4d. Refusing to have their photograph taken need not exclude them from joining the group but it does give you prior warning of those who would prefer not to be photographed.

Select the young people who might be interested in joining. This time it is your insider knowledge that will identify the young people. They do not have to be outgoing, full of confidence, ready to take on anything. They do need to be avid readers. This is not a literacy exercise and is no place for someone who struggles with reading. Ideally they would be between the ages of thirteen and eighteen years. Again, only six young people will be needed to form a functional group.

Talk to them about what would be involved, how long they would have to read each book, how the sessions would be run and how many you plan to hold. It is useful to tell them you would expect a commitment from them that they would attend the meetings for the agreed length of time, for example, six months, a year. The idea is to enable the group to take on its own identity and for friendships to develop over the months. Changes of membership, although sometimes unavoidable, slow this down.

You will need letters for their parents/carers explaining what the group hopes to achieve and also permission forms for the parents/carers to return to you, agreeing to their son/daughter being involved in the group. Again, if you wish to take photographs this needs to be included on the permission form. You will find a sample letter to parents/carers in Appendix 4b and a sample permission form in Appendix 4e. If you are running CRB checks on the young people you will need permission from the parent/carer and the relevant information. A sample CRB check permission form is in Appendix 4f.



Plan the 'Getting To Know You' meeting for the group. This is the chance for group members to break the ice, introduce themselves, talk about books and reading.

Maybe they could pair up, one older person, one younger, and talk to each other about themselves before introducing their partner to the group. Perhaps they could tell the group about their favourite book and why it has a special meaning for them.

It is also the time to work out when the group will meet and where. Monthly meetings give plenty of time for group members to read the book. Meetings need to be held in a quiet room where they will not be interrupted by someone switching on the television or deciding it is a good place to hold a loud conversation.

The timing of their meetings needs to take into account the circumstances of both younger and older people. It is necessary for residential homes to have a routine with set meal times and the meetings need to accommodate those. The school too has its routines and the meeting times need to be

the least disruptive to the school day. It may be that an after school meeting would suit everyone better.

This is the time to set in place your arrangements for returning the books once the meeting has been held, and for the distribution of the next set of books. Getting this right can save you no end of time. It is certainly easier to nominate one person to take on the task. He or she would then come to you if there were problems.

Where do I go from here?

Everyone in the group, the manager of the home and the librarian who is working with you will need a list of meeting dates and times with the selected book against each one.

And that is it. It is up and running and, apart from checking that all is going well, there should be nothing more to do.

Apart, that is, from seeing both the older and younger people enjoying an activity that has meaning for them, becoming more confident and realising that people are just people, whatever their ages.



Timetable for an Intergenerational Book Group

STEP 1 Book Selection – one title for each meeting;

- > Discuss group and book selection with Young Persons' Librarian at local library regarding stock and delivery;
- > Assess school library stock levels;
- > If required, order books;
- > Prepare flyers for Residential home/ Sheltered Housing Complex/Community.

STEP 2 Identify and approach local residential home/sheltered housing complex to discuss group;

- > Deliver flyers;
- > Set date for initial meeting;
- > Prepare letters and permission forms for parents/carers and permission forms for older people.

STEP 3 Select young people to be involved in the group and discuss the project with them;

- > Send out letters, permission forms to parents/carers and list of meeting dates and times. Ensure local library has a copy.

STEP 4 Run initial 'Getting To Know You' meeting where first book to be read will be distributed;

- > After discussion, nominate a person who is willing to be the group facilitator and one who will be the book monitor;
- > If you are including an author visit, contact the author with possible dates.

STEP 5 Book group meetings begin.

STEP 6 Short evaluation/chat with younger people and facilitator.

STEP 7 Short evaluation/chat with older people and facilitator.

STEP 8 Ongoing monitoring.

Case History

Context

Three book groups have featured in the evaluations. The fourth group is still meeting.

Mill Hill School at Ripley is a mixed gender school providing education for 1313 students aged eleven to eighteen years of age. It holds Arts College status. Students from Mill Hill School met with older people from Peveril Court Sheltered Housing Complex in Ripley.

William Allitt School at Newhall, South Derbyshire, has 975 pupils aged eleven to sixteen years. It is a mixed gender school with Arts College status. Students from the school met with older people who live at Castle Court Residential Home in Castle Gresley.

Deincourt Community School is at North Wingfield and has 475 students in the eleven to sixteen year age range. Students from



Deincourt Community School met with older people from The Gables Retirement Home in Holmewood.

Purpose

The focus of the project was to enable older people living in residential care or sheltered housing, who would find it difficult if not impossible to join a community based group, to meet with younger, enthusiastic readers to discuss books.

Book discussions would have a greater depth through the meeting of people from different age groups.

An author visit would give greater insight into their book and offer the opportunity for group members to explore the practicalities as well as the creative process of writing a book.

Planning

This was undertaken with staff from the Libraries Department of Derbyshire County Council, staff from the schools, and the managers of the residential homes.

Book selection was discussed with staff from the Libraries Department who agreed to

source books, large print books and audio versions for the older group members.

Books for the young people were supplied by the DIgS project.

Taxis were available to take the young people to the venues.

In partnership with the Libraries Department, a facilitators' training session was arranged for a person from each group.

Funding

Approximately £1,500 was allocated from the DIgS budget to set up and run the three groups. This included purchasing books for the younger people, author visits, book tokens and taxi costs.

Process

Books were either taken to residential homes or collected from the library. These were returned after the meeting and a new set collected.

Books for the younger people were sent directly to the school.

Meetings were held in quiet rooms where there was little risk of disturbance.

Author visits were arranged to coincide with the book discussion centred on their work.

Book tokens were given to each group member to purchase a book for one of the group who were from a different generation.

All of the groups required transport for the younger people.

Learning

Book discussions led to wider discussions that included the life experiences of group members. The group engaged all members and offered the opportunity for discussion

that enabled insights into the lives of others and broke down barriers.

The author visits were very much enjoyed both in terms of talking about the specific book and also in offering helpful advice to some group members who wish to become writers.

For a book group to run successfully there are several key points; the selection of suitable book titles is crucial. Some books were withdrawn from the groups and replaced with more appropriate titles.

Delivery and return of books needs to be well organised to ensure all readers have the time to read the book before the meeting. This was a difficulty and a new system was put in place to overcome the problems that had been experienced.

For all but one book group the use of taxis to transport the young people to the venue caused difficulties. A venue within walking distance of the school is preferable.

Outcomes

All members of the book groups have welcomed the opportunity to 'talk books' with other readers. The discussions, not only about the books but also about the issues that arose from the text, have been wide ranging and illuminating. These have led to a greater understanding between the generations and more insight into the lives led by other people from a different generation.

The older people who live in residential homes particularly appreciated the company of young people and having the opportunity to get to know them and build relationships.

Two of the book groups are continuing to meet after the life of the project. One of the schools involved is applying for funding to run an oral history project with the people they have met at the book group. This will compare the young lives of the older people with those of teenagers today and will be used to produce either a book or a radio play.

Evaluation

In evaluating whether the aims and objectives of the project have been met, feedback has been gathered from group participants, teachers involved with the groups and DigS staff.

What worked well?

Library Department staff were enthusiastic and the meetings held with them to discuss book selection were helpful and positive.

Staff from the schools were also enthusiastic, willing to approach young people who could be part of the group and to arrange for them to have time out of the school day to attend the groups.

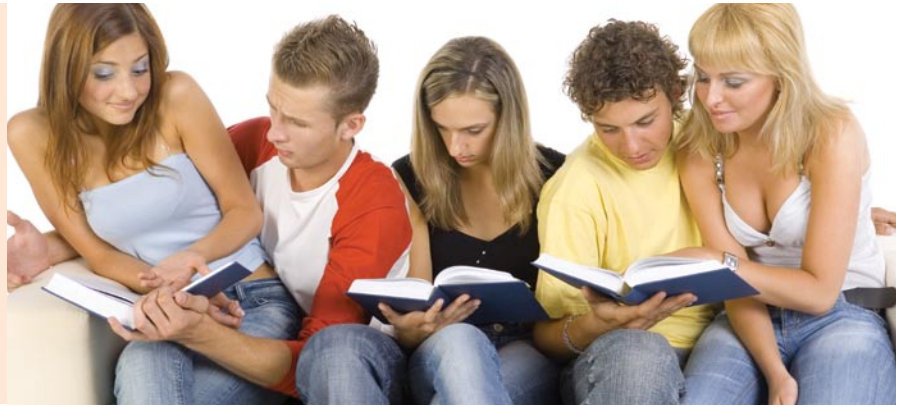
The younger and older people involved themselves immediately and were friendly to all group members.

The managers of the residential homes/sheltered housing complexes made the young people welcome, provided refreshments and ensured rooms were available specifically for the use of the book groups.

Older people who live in residential homes particularly valued the company of the young people.

The author visits have been very popular

'I didn't know there were young people like this around today.'



with interesting and open discussion about the book in question. They also gave group participants the opportunity to discuss where ideas came from, how to form character studies and the writing process as a whole. Some members of the group would like to become authors and the discussions were both informative and encouraging.

Towards the end of the projects each member of each group was given a £10.00 book token to buy a book for a group member from a different generation to themselves.

Whilst this was a good idea in theory, in practice it proved difficult to follow through, particularly for older people in residential care, some of whom have mobility problems.

In the event each group, independent of the others, took the decision to buy a book for themselves and to share their reading experience of it with the group. This was another indication as to how well the groups had built up a level of openness and trust which enabled them to make decisions based on discussion.

After several meetings group members began to see the person, their experiences and the lives they lead rather than the person with an age attached to them.

What did not work well?

The original book selection produced some interesting books that were read and discussed but some titles did not meet with approval. Criticisms were levelled in terms of uninteresting content, inaccessible writing and books that did not appeal to both generations. Half-way through the project several new books were bought in to replace those that were unsuitable.

For two groups accessing the books from the Library Department did not always run smoothly, resulting in books being delivered late and, on one occasion, the wrong book being delivered.

Schools did not always return books on time which, in turn, resulted in the next group having very little time to read the book before the meeting.

A new system for book distribution and collection has been put in place which will improve the situation.

Transporting the younger people to the venue via taxis has been difficult. With the exception of one firm, who have been totally reliable, the others have caused disruption by not being on time, resulting in school buses being missed and meetings being cut short. One school decided to transport the young people rather than risk a similar event happening again.

Future book groups will be set up to ensure, wherever possible, that the young people are within walking distance of the venue.

What has changed because of the project?

Both older and younger people have really enjoyed the opportunity to 'talk books', something that rarely happens in general conversation.

The content of the books has opened up areas for discussion that neither age group would have had the opportunity to explore without the project groups.

Friendships have developed to the delight of everyone and, in particular, to one man who had been walking his dog when he heard someone shout: 'Jack! It's me.' One of the girls from the group had seen him, walked over and had a friendly chat.

The book discussions also gave insight into the lives of the group members. The young people have more understanding about the

lives of the older people in relation to how very different living conditions were in their youth. This formed part of the discussion when a book was discussed that was based at the time of World War 2.

Equally, the older people have recognised that whilst the young are materially much richer than they were in their youth, they also have far greater pressures in terms of achieving at school, street credibility, the youth drug culture and, in many ways, having to grow up too fast.

Two of the groups are looking to the future. A very practical and organised girl is taking on the role of group co-ordinator and will arrange for the books to be delivered via the library and organise their collection and return.

This group of young people are also hoping to begin another intergenerational project with people from the same residential home, gathering the memories of the older people and contrasting them with their own lives.



'I thought all old people were boring but they're not, are they?'

Waiting to download pic – 2036331 Seniors on notebooks

The outcome will be either a book or a radio play.

The young people are liaising with the manager of the residential home, who feels the book group experience has been very positive for the people involved and is keen to encourage further intergenerational projects.

Young people in another group have invited the older people to visit their school to work on IT with them. As none of the older people have any IT experience and feel they are being left behind, they are looking forward to learning with the young people.

Word has spread about the book groups; at one school two more young people wish to be involved. After discussion with all members of the group, this was agreed.

Some members of a group will be asked

to speak about their experiences of an intergenerational book group to an audience of educational staff. This will give both older and younger people a voice, enable them to develop their communication skills and provide an opportunity for them to take part in public speaking.

‘This project has altered my opinion of children. I had a very poor view of the youth of today but it’s done some good working with these young people. They are lovely children.’

Appendices

Appendix 4a

Dear

THE REED HOUSE BOOK GROUP PROJECT

I am delighted you would like to be a member of the Reed House Book Group Project.

Our 'Getting To Know You' meeting is on:

Date: Insert

Time: Insert

Place: Insert

This will be an opportunity for group members to get to know each other, discuss their favourite books and plan their meetings.

It would be useful for me to be able to take photographs to record the progress of the project and I need your permission to do this. I have attached a permission form for you to complete and return to me at the first meeting. Refusing to have your photograph taken does not mean you will not be able to be part of the group.

I am sure you are aware that any groups that involve young people require the adults involved to have a Criminal Records Bureau check. This is a routine check, at no cost to yourself, that is completed purely to safeguard the young people from our community. All that is required is that your name and address are forwarded to the Bureau, under a strictly confidential procedure. Again, I need your permission to put the check in motion and have enclosed a permission form. I would be grateful if you could return it to me at the above address.

I am looking forward to meeting you at your 'Getting To Know You' meeting and I am sure you will enjoy being part of the Reed House Book Group.

Yours sincerely

Your Name

Your Job Title

A Westmeads School Intergenerational Project

Appendix 4b

Dear Parent/Carer

THE REED HOUSE BOOK GROUP

I am delighted that your son/daughter would like to be a member of the Reed House Book Group.

The book group provides an opportunity for young people and people over the age of fifty to be involved together in an activity that is for them both meaningful and enjoyable, leading to the breaking down of barriers between the generations.

The Book Group will meet once a month at Reed House, Vicarage Lane, Farthingdale , from <insert time> to <insert time> and will be run in the same way as other community based book groups. All books will be provided by Westmeads School and Derbyshire County Council's Libraries Department.

An initial meeting for group members to get to know each other and collect their first book will be held at Reed House on:

Date:

Time:

Place:

There is a list of the meeting dates attached.

For your son/daughter to become a member of the Book Group it is necessary for you to give your written permission. Also, at certain points of the project, it would be useful to have a photographic record of the group, for which I also need permission. If you would prefer your son/daughter not to be photographed this will not exclude him/her from taking part in the group.

I have attached a permission form for you to complete and I would be grateful if your son/daughter would return it to me at the first meeting.

I hope your child enjoys being involved in the group.

If you would like to discuss the project please contact me on <insert telephone number>.

Yours sincerely

Your name

Your job title

A Westmeads School Intergenerational Project

THE REED HOUSE BOOK GROUP

*I am willing/not willing to have a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check.

(*Please delete as appropriate)

To complete the check we will need the following information.

Your full name, including previous names _____

Your Date of Birth _____

Your full address, including post code _____

Signed _____

Printed _____

Date _____

Thank you for completing the form. Please return it to me at the address below.

Your name

Your job title

Your address

Your contact number

This is a Westmeads School Intergenerational Project

Appendix 4d

THE REED HOUSE BOOK GROUP

*I am willing/not willing to have my photograph taken. (*Please delete as appropriate)

Signed _____

Printed _____

Dated _____

Thank you for completing the form. Please return it to me when we meet for our 'Getting To Know You meeting on <insert date and time>.

Your name

Your Job title

Your contact number

This is a Westmeads School Intergenerational Project

Appendix 4e

THE REED HOUSE BOOK GROUP

*I give/do not give permission for my son/daughter to take part in The Reed House Book Group. (*Please delete as appropriate).

*I give/do not give permission for photographs to be taken of my son/daughter. (*Please delete as appropriate).

Signed _____

Printed _____

Dated _____

Thank you for completing the form. Please return it to me at the address below.

Your name

Your Job Title

Your address

Your contact number

This is a Westmeads School Intergenerational Project

Appendix 4f

THE REED HOUSE BOOK GROUP

Permission form for Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check.

Please complete the following.

Young person's full name and any previous names

Young person's date of birth _____

Young person's full address including postcode _____

Signed _____

Printed _____

Dated _____

Your relationship to the young person

Thank you for completing the form. Please return it to me at the address below.

Your name:

Your Job Title:

Your address:

Your contact number:

This is a Westmeads School Intergenerational Project.

- **DO YOU LIKE READING?**
- **WOULD YOU LIKE THE CHANCE TO DISCUSS THE BOOKS YOU'VE READ?**
- **WOULD YOU LIKE TO MEET ONE OF THE AUTHORS?**



A Book Group is being set up for people who live in Reed House and some young people from the Westmeads School.

It will meet once a month at Reed House, everyone will have the same book to read, provided by Derbyshire County Council, and, if at all possible, they will be available in large print, cassette tape and normal print format. The book list offers something for every taste.

Dear Nobody by Berlie Doherty

An award winning story about two high-flying teenagers, set for university, whose plans are suddenly turned upside down.

The Land Girls by Angela Huth

The chance to experience life through the eyes of young women who worked the land during World War 2.

Black Dog by Stephen Booth

A who-dun-it, set in Derbyshire, that will keep you guessing to the end.

Private Peaceful by Michael Morpurgo

A poignant story from the first World War, centred on the Peaceful family.

The Nations Favourite Poems

For those of you who love poetry, have your own favourites and would like to share them.

Noughts and Crosses by Malorie Blackman

An engrossing read that takes a very different look at racism.

This is a Westmeads School Intergenerational Project

Books suitable for Intergenerational Book Groups

This selection is not intended to include only the latest fiction, in fact many were written a decade ago. Neither does it include the ‘Harry Potters’ of the book world that everyone raves about.

What it does offer is first rate fiction that, because of the subject matter and the excellent writing, crosses the age divide and offers many discussion areas.

There are, of course, many more authors writing fiction appropriate for this type of book group and they can be found on numerous websites. The following are intended only to give you a few ideas to get you started.

**indicates authors that are local to Derbyshire and usually available for author visits.

Skellig by David Almond

Storm Catchers by Tim Bowler

Billy Elliot by Melvin Burgess

Dear Nobody by Berlie Doherty**

I’m the King of the Castle by Susan Hill

Who’ll Catch the Nightmares by Linda Kempton**

Red Sky in the Morning by Elizabeth Laird

Jay by Elizabeth Laird

Private Peaceful by Michael Morpurgo

A Boy Called It by David Pelzer

Silkscreen by Caroline Pitcher**

The Amber Spyglass by Philip Pullman

Northern Lights by Philip Pullman

Flying Blind by Malcolm Rose

Star Girl by Jerry Spinelli

This is a Westmeads School Intergenerational Project

Book Group Project





Derbyshire Intergenerational Strategy