

Care home play date brings joy to old and young alike

Capital embraces Old People's Home for Four-year-olds

by FIONA PRINGLE

FOUR-YEAR-OLD Imogen beamed from ear to ear as a room full of friends sang her happy birthday.

Smiling faces laughed and giggled as the refrain started a second time, instead this time celebrating Cathy's special day.

She is now 91. And in the sunny day room overlooking the Pentlands from Blenham Care Home just off Calder Road, young and old tucked in to tea, cakes and juice while enjoying each other's company.

Echoing scenes from the hit Channel 4 show *Old People's Home For Four-Year-Olds*, Caldergleng nursery children regularly spend their play time with their elders in a pilot programme linking the generations for the benefit of both.

In a society where social isolation is a growing problem, impacting both the physical and mental wellbeing of swathes of the population, the concept linking children and

older people is thought to help break down the barriers between the different strata of the social spectrum.

For activities co-ordinator at the care home, Debbie Heaney, rolling the programme out across Edinburgh is a no-brainer.

She said: "I think more children need to come into nursing homes. It makes the residents' day. They were all mothers and fathers and I think a little bit

"It is about spending meaningful time with us and valuing our residents for the life experience they have" MANDY ROGERS

of advice from another generation is a good thing. Residents can sometimes be really down and they join in for five minutes and end up staying. This will be them for the whole week - it's amazing what it does."

The trial was set up after Senior Early Years Officer at Murrayburn and Caldergleng Early Years Campus Cheryl Lee saw the Channel 4 programme. She linked up with the lifelong

BONDING: Clockwise from main, care home resident Helen with Imogen; Ann enjoys a dance with the nursery kids; Imogen and Scott with resident Cathy

learning team Gate 55 who helped organise collaboration with Blenham House.

"I thought why are we not building residential homes and nurseries together - imagine that? Imagine the work we could do together?" Cheryl said. "We're such a fragmented society and it's vital that we try to close those gaps. The older generation have got just as much as our children have to give."

She said singing had been the key to success, a mutual bridge between the kids and the residents. "Song has been the part that has lifted everybody, with light actions that we can all do together. We're all going to get old at some point. So if we start the respect from here, hopefully as we grow older it will stay with us."

The group played games together, sung and during one

poignant moment listened intently as Cathy Browne told an anecdote about her children going to nursery and paying lunch money in ha'pennies. She finished: "It was lovely seeing you all, so cheerful and bouncing about - the years just floated away."

Early years practitioner Karen Allan said the impact on the kids is important. "We live in a very fast-paced society and I love how it brings the children down to a slower pace but also there's lots of energy in the room - the two generations meet in the middle."

Blenham House senior manager Mandy Rogers added: "It is about welcoming the wider community to come in, spend meaningful time with us and valuing our residents for the life experience that they do have."

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PM repeats Norway refusal

THERESA May has again rejected a Norway-style deal with the EU after Brexit.

The move comes after some Tories suggested a temporary "Norway for now" option to soften EU withdrawal.

Norway is a member of the European Economic Area (EEA) and has full access to the single market in exchange for



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Report finds football worth £1.25bn to Scots economy

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The research - thought to be the first of its kind looking at the social and economic impact

benefits, including in crime reduction.

Scottish FA chief executive Ian Maxwell said: "The professional game in this country will always take a lot of focus, but I think, to a large degree, we take cross roots football for