

CLIF Impact Project

Community Learning and Digital Inclusion

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niace
promoting adult learning

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1 Overview

This report presents the findings of work to identify the impact of community learning on digital inclusion, undertaken as part of the Community Learning Innovation Fund (CLIF). The evidence gathered from CLIF projects shows how modest amounts of investment can produce significant outcomes for learners, families and communities. The report will be of particular interest to national and local policy makers, digital inclusion projects, commissioners of public services, community learning providers in local authorities, colleges and third sector organisations, and managers of volunteering organisations and initiatives.

With grant funding from the Skills Funding Agency, CLIF supported the delivery of 96 new community learning projects across England to run from September 2012 to August 2013. The projects aimed to empower adults, particularly those who are socially and economically disadvantaged, to improve their own lives and those of their families and communities. Through new partnerships and a wide range of creative approaches, CLIF projects engaged more than 15,000 learners, many of whom were from groups that are among the most excluded and least likely to participate in learning. Most projects have firm plans in place to continue at least some elements of the work initiated through CLIF, highlighting the way in which diverse sources of funding can create sustainable opportunities for learning in communities.

The report is one of a series of six thematic papers demonstrating the contribution of community learning to key policy areas produced by NIACE (the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education) as part of its management of CLIF.¹ NIACE is an independent charity which promotes adult learning across England and Wales. Through its research, development, publications, events, outreach and advocacy, NIACE works

¹ See also the thematic reports on *Employability, Families, Health, Socially vulnerable groups* and *Volunteering*.

to improve the quality and breadth of lifelong learning opportunities available to all adults. As part of its commitment to strengthening the role of learning in communities, NIACE has undertaken a considerable amount of research and development work in relation to the learning needs of socially vulnerable groups, including older people, offenders and ex-offenders, people with learning difficulties and disabilities, and people who are homeless or vulnerably housed.

Recognising that the consequences of digital exclusion are particularly severe for already excluded groups, and that digital inequality itself creates new dimensions of exclusion, NIACE has a longstanding and ongoing commitment to digital inclusion and the development of adults' digital skills.

Like social exclusion, digital exclusion is multi-dimensional with inter-related causes and NIACE's work has consistently promoted the wider benefits of learning in reducing social isolation, improving physical and mental health, improving community cohesion and encouraging civic engagement, as well as the specific outcomes of learning in raising levels of knowledge and skills.

NIACE currently works with a range of UK and other European partners to address the issue of digital inclusion and digital skills development for niche groups, including older adults, victims of domestic violence, racial minorities, homeless adults and those with little formal education.

1.1 Key messages

Evidence from CLIF projects demonstrates that adults who are currently excluded from the digital world and are most difficult to reach can be successfully engaged by community-based programmes which build on their individual motivations, inspiring them to access and use the internet and empowering them to develop their digital skills to attain their individual goals and enhance their lives.

- Community learning successfully engages hard-to-reach or disadvantaged adults and motivates them to go online by keeping digital skills relevant and useful to their real-life needs.



Overview

- Community-based learning takes place in non-pressurised learning contexts where people understand learners' needs and treat learners equally, thereby increasing their confidence and self-esteem.
- Community-based learning providers and third sector organisations successfully co-ordinate and support digital champions and mentors, who have an important role in offering effective support to digitally excluded adults.
- Community-based digital inclusion programmes empower adults as well as train them, enabling them to take responsibility for their own learning and develop the skills they need for the future.
- Local digital inclusion initiatives benefit from the co-ordination of existing community access points.
- Smart mobile devices are making digital skills easier to learn and many programmes use tablets rather than PCs with their learners. Their use is particularly effective with particular groups, such as older people and adults with low levels of literacy. However, PCs are useful in developing digital skills for employability.
- Many successful approaches to digital inclusion used cross-sector partnerships to recruit from niche groups.
- Many successful projects made effective use of volunteers to engage, recruit and support learners, creating added value and supporting local digital inclusion agendas.

1.2 Actions

The project findings suggest a number of actions which would facilitate the effective involvement of community learning providers in supporting the digital inclusion agenda.

- Seed funding is essential as a catalyst for innovation but resources to replicate successful models are also required.

- Local community learning partnerships/networks are appropriate vehicles to encourage and support collaboration between community learning and national and local digital inclusion initiatives.
- The community learning reform programme has huge potential to address digital inclusion and embed it within service delivery. The programme should include measures to address digital inclusion, by ensuring cohesive local action, building strong local partnerships, adopting integrated, multi-partner approaches and preventing duplication of effort and resource.
- National organisations such as the Education and Training Foundation should lead the co-ordination of training and support for volunteers and intermediaries, including health visitors, library staff and community learning champions in the use of technology to support digital inclusion.



2 Introduction

This report presents the findings of work to identify the impact of community learning on digital inclusion, undertaken as part of the Community Learning Innovation Fund (CLIF). It is one of a series of six thematic reports demonstrating the contribution of community learning to key policy areas, as evidenced by CLIF.²

CLIF provided grant funding from the Skills Funding Agency for 96 community projects across England to run from September 2012 to July 2013. One of the primary objectives of CLIF was to generate robust evidence on the impact of community learning, in order to help strengthen the case at both national and local levels for sustainable and diverse funding for the sector in challenging economic times. NIACE was commissioned to manage the fund. As part of that role, it supported projects to collect, analyse and report evidence on the difference that their work made for learners, families, localities and delivery partners.

The evidence in this report comes from two main sources: the final evaluation reports submitted by CLIF projects in August 2013, and the data returned by the 31 projects that opted to take part in an additional exercise to collect quantitative evidence from a sample of learners at the beginning and end of their episode of learning to show 'distance travelled'. NIACE did not stipulate what methods and tools individual projects should use to collect data. Instead, it assisted in identifying and applying the approaches that were most appropriate for the projects' context, learners and learning activities.

Projects were, however, required to apply a consistent framework to their evaluation. The *Wider Outcomes Planning and Capture Tool* is an innovative model for identifying the wider social outcomes of community learning.³ It was developed by NIACE to address the need for resources to

² See also the thematic reports on *Employability, Families, Health, Socially vulnerable groups* and *Volunteering*.

³ www.niace.org.uk/communitylearning

support the community learning sector to engage with the growing public policy agenda on wider social outcomes. The tool supports all stages of evidence collection, analysis and reporting, and encourages a clear focus on capturing outcomes in the key areas of mental and physical health, family and social relationships, volunteering, employability, progression and personal agency. This approach has enabled data from multiple projects to be collated to build up a picture of the focus, scope and scale of the outcomes achieved with CLIF funding.

A technical annex, including a detailed description of the additional evidence collection exercise and data charts and tables, is available to download.



3 Policy and research: community learning and digital inclusion

3.1 Why is this work important now?

One in five (11 million) adults in the UK do not have basic online skills. Of this number 7.1 million have never been online, with the remainder, who have been online, unable to send and receive emails, use a search engine, browse the internet, complete an online form or keep safe online. Yet by 2015, 90 per cent of all jobs will require ICT (information communication and technology) skills. In addition, the UK government's 'Digital by default' agenda will result in local and national services which are mainly accessed online, with those who are digitally excluded having increasingly limited access to information, learning, cost savings and communication.

'Digital exclusion is a symptom of a wider exclusion but also a cause.'⁴ It is strongly linked to social deprivations, such as low income, unemployment, poor education, ill health and social isolation yet, despite numerous national initiatives, the demographics of the digitally excluded remains largely unchanged, with the majority being elderly people, those with a disability, socially excluded groups, people who are unemployed, those with low incomes and people with low levels of education, i.e. the target groups of community-based learning.

Barriers to digital participation include a lack of motivation, confidence, skills and access, so any cohesive programme which aims to bridge the digital divide must address each of these issues. While some initiatives have been successful in supporting people to go online, they have had less success in engaging those most hard to reach. They can be unsustainable and/or have concentrated on the mechanics of access, without providing

⁴ Digital Inclusion Action Plan: Response by National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) to the consultation launched by Department of Communities and Local Government (NIACE, 2008).

support to embed the use of technology in people's lives, which would give people opportunities to sustain and develop their digital capabilities in meaningful contexts.

'It is effective to identify paths to inclusion that are distinct and highly contextualised to the needs of excluded individuals, small geographical communities such as neighbourhoods, and specific communities of interest.'⁵ Community learning provision applies a range of formal and informal methods to successfully engage and work with socially excluded and niche groups. Community learning providers are highly experienced in developing learners' confidence, motivation and resilience and their activities can be largely sustained through existing funding mechanisms.

The community learning reform programme offers the opportunity to place responsibility for digital inclusion in the heart of local communities. It has the potential to embed digital inclusion in community-based learning, enabling new and innovative partnerships to deliver cohesive and integrated support for access, engagement and digital skills development for the whole community. Community learning providers with a long history of effective outreach and delivery of learning based on response to local need could, within flexible funding arrangements, ensure that digital inclusion is addressed within their whole learning provision.

CLIF included a digital inclusion theme to take advantage of community learning expertise, infrastructure and networks to reach and support those most vulnerable to digital exclusion and to trial and evaluate different approaches to addressing the issue. As such, CLIF has demonstrated and exemplified how community-based learning can support digital inclusion and has identified replicable and sustainable models of support.

⁵ An Analysis of International Digital Strategies: Why develop a digital inclusion strategy and what should be the focus? Research report. (Tech 4i. DCLG. October 2008 p.9).

3.2 The evidence base for community learning and digital inclusion

The role of education and training – formal and informal – is key to overcoming digital exclusion, as it is to addressing social exclusion. Barriers to digital inclusion include a lack of motivation, confidence, skills and access:

- **Motivation:** Lack of motivation for using the internet is commonly cited as a primary reason for digital exclusion.⁶ Lack of interest is the top barrier to getting online, with one in three non-users saying they don't need to go online, and one in four saying they are not interested.
- **Lack of confidence:** Approximately 25 per cent of adults who are not online lack the confidence to go online.⁷
- **Skills:** 11 million people are estimated to have poor 'basic online skills', meaning they can't send an email or search the web.⁸
- **Access:** Approximately 20 per cent of those not online lack sustained access to the internet.⁹ Tablets are viewed as the main method of connecting to the internet by a third of owners and this is predicted to increase further.¹⁰

There is substantial evidence to indicate the effectiveness of community-based learning and approaches to bridge the digital divide:

- Eurostat states that 'The benefits of digital inclusion are best transferred through intermediaries who are well acquainted with the target group and know how best to motivate them. Many initiatives reported that the first contact was often the most important and the hardest challenge was to convince people to try technology for the first time'.¹¹

6 Dutton, W. H. and Blank, G. (2013) *Cultures of the Internet: The Internet in Britain*. Oxford Internet Survey.

7 BBC/Ipsos Mori (2012) *Media Literacy: Understanding Digital Capabilities*.

8 BBC/Ipsos Mori (2013) *Media Literacy: Understanding Digital Capabilities follow-up*.

9 Office for National Statistics (2012) *Internet Access – Households and Individuals*.

10 Ofcom (2013) *Adults' media use and attitudes*.

11 Digital Literacy Report: A review for the i2010 eInclusion initiative (Commission Staff Working Document) Information Society and Media with the support of DG Education and Culture and Eurostat.

- Studies in a range of countries have shown that parents are more likely to use the internet than adults without children,¹² so family learning programmes are likely to engage the most excluded groups in digital participation through family interactions.
- According to BIS, the acquisition of basic digital skills in an informal setting can be the first step along the road to more formal learning and sustainable employment for those who lack confidence and qualifications, placing community-based learning at the heart of the digital inclusion agenda.¹³
- NIACE research shows the need for a digital inclusion outreach programme that recognises the need for support at all levels – of understanding, skills and learning to counteract the effect of market forces that will cater to middle- and high-income consumers.¹⁴
- The Department of Communities and Local Government demonstrates that local planning should include recognition of digital needs, both in terms of infrastructure and knowledge and awareness of the issues in order for communities to make genuine choices about ‘digital planning’.¹⁵
- The DLit 2.0 transnational programme worked with digitally excluded adults from a range of niche groups in seven European countries. Evaluation found that flexible and learner-centred activities worked best to support and engage socially excluded adults in digital participation.¹⁶

12 See Helsper and Eynon (2010); Lenhart *et al.* (2011).

13 Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2011) *Review Of Informal Adult And Community Learning*.

14 National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (2008) *Shaping the Way Ahead: The response of NIACE to the consultation on the future of informal adult learning*, p. 31. Leicester: NIACE.

15 Department of Communities and Local Government (2008) *Delivering Digital Inclusion: An Action Plan for Consultation*, p. 4.

16 National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (2014) *DLit 2.0 evaluation report*. Leicester: NIACE.



4 What does CLIF tell us?

Evidence from CLIF projects confirms that community learning has an essential role to play in supporting adults to become independent, competent and confident internet users.

4.1 Addressing digital exclusion

Twelve CLIF projects specifically reported having good evidence that their learners had become more digitally included as a result of participating in the project.

The projects were successful in reducing digital exclusion by:

- motivating adults to use the internet safely and effectively
- engaging adults by highlighting the relevance of digital skills to their needs and interests
- providing opportunities for learning, support and access in learners' own communities, in non-threatening learning environments, supported by experienced staff and trained volunteers.

For some CLIF projects, such as the Omega Family Carer Community Learning Support Project, developing learners' digital skills was a principal aim of their work. For others, it was indirectly approached, with learners developing their skills and confidence to use new technologies in the context of learning activities based on local history and heritage, media broadcasting, storytelling and household budgeting. Supporting learners to gain the wider benefits of digital inclusion, such as accessing information on jobs and health matters or communicating more effectively with friends, family and the wider community, was central to the aims of many of these projects.

Projects focused on developing learners' digital skills have been working with a wide range of target groups, including older people, adults with learning difficulties and disabilities, job seekers, offenders and ex-offenders, carers, unemployed young people, adults with mental health issues and adults with a history of substance addiction and misuse. Some of

these are among the most socially and digitally excluded groups in society. They used an impressive variety of digital tools, ranging from more 'traditional' technologies, such as local radio, to iPads, apps, social media and other Web 2.0 tools.

4.2 Benefits to learners

CLIF projects used multiple approaches to digital inclusion, which have been effective in overcoming barriers to digital participation. Many projects embedded digital inclusion in relevant learning contexts, resulting in multiple impacts which include:

- increased confidence in the use of digital technology among older people
- increased use of new digital skills for other activities, e.g. job searching and accessing further community information
- increased confidence in using digital skills, resulting in learners having a desire to share their knowledge with other group members and with the wider public
- increased digital literacy, with an increased production of learner-generated digital content, including video and high-quality films.

Seventy-nine per cent of the 115 learners sampled in one project stated that they had a greater awareness of the laws and ethics surrounding online and social digital media, while 91 per cent reported that the information provided has increased their online safety.

In the ICICLE project (see Case study 2), weekly computer use by learners increased from 30 per cent to 57 per cent. Learners identified and pursued 150 personal goals in their profiles online about raising community participation and taking steps to employment and voluntary work.

Learners from the Money Matters in Kensington project showed an impressive improvement in their digital capabilities. Many used their skills to access dedicated NHS websites, researching conditions such as diabetes, asthma and sickle cell anaemia, which are prevalent in the Kensington community.

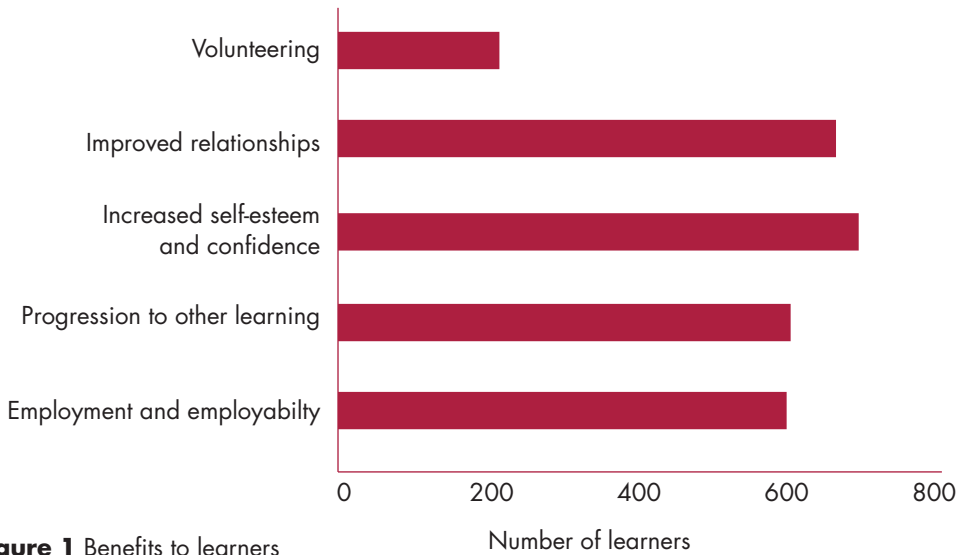


Figure 1 Benefits to learners

4.2.1 Life changes

Many learners experienced significant life changes as a result of the increased digital skills which they gained through CLIF.

Recovery Rises (see Case study 1) used online recovery programmes and support for substance abusers. Out of the 180 distinct learners, 41 are now completely abstinent from substances, while others show much improved recovery progress, e.g. substance reductions, health improvements, training, education and improved employability skills, and no criminality. They achieved this through use of virtual communities such as Faces and Voices of Recovery, UK Recovery Federation and recovery-focused Facebook groups, together with engagement in online support meetings and therapy.

GG is a 47-year-old male who is long-term unemployed, with no ICT skills or previous adult learning and 30 years' addiction to heroin and crack cocaine. As a result of increasing his digital skills, GG's life has completely changed. He no longer feels that he has to depend on drugs and alcohol to get through his days and his confidence, attitude, self-esteem and self-belief are steadily returning.

It's been brilliant, I never thought I'd be able to use a computer and now I can.

Thank you so much to all of you, not just for the course but for your kind words and making me believe I can recover – and I never thought I'd say that.

The Memory Box project introduced older adults to non-threatening digital technology which is directly relevant to their lives in familiar, supportive environments. Learners used iPads to develop short audiovisual digital stories of their memories and experiences of life in Newcastle. Thirty-nine digital stories were uploaded to the free 'Memory Box' app which the project developed and published on the Apple Store.

Participants learned how to find, scan and store photographs, create storyboards and use iMovie to combine sound with images. Many bought iPads as a result of the programme and are using them regularly in their everyday lives to email their families, create multimedia family histories, find information, shop online, read e-books and access tourist information while on overseas holidays.

Mick was born in 1939 in a 'back-to-back slum' in Newcastle and has lived most of his life within a few miles of his birthplace. Mick left school without being able to read and write properly and went straight into heavy manual labour.

It was brilliant... I didn't know how to switch the iPad on even... and she showed us how to get pictures and that and it was brilliant because it was like one to one... it's the same as the adult education centre, the teachers are so good and they encourage you, it's not like when you were a kid and it was like 'Shut up and sit down!'

As a result of his involvement in the project, he bought an iPad and is now working with local residents and schools to produce a CD of oral history and an associated photographic archive.



4.2.2 Employability

Fifteen CLIF projects reported that learners who improved their digital skills also increased their employability and employment prospects.

MK People in Action – Transforming Communities supported 206 job seekers, offenders and mentors/volunteers through 53 taster sessions, 23 short, non-accredited learning courses and a volunteering and mentoring academy as an entry pathway into work or further learning.

The Shropshire Heirloom project used family history research to support older and physically disabled people who were digitally excluded. JC had a great fear of computers, expecting to fail in any task she was set.

JC learned about email and online databases, so was able to access online job data and file reports to the job centre. This gave her the skills and the confidence to apply for jobs and she is now permanently employed:

I wouldn't have been confident enough to apply for this job, but the patience and skill in taking me through the different packages in a supported environment encouraged me and I am enjoying my new job.

4.2.3 Progression to other learning

All the CLIF projects that focused on digital inclusion reported that some of their learners intended to progress or have progressed to further learning.

Learners from Living Life and Taking Part have already planned their learning for the next year. The project worked with adults with physical disabilities from two occupational and social centres, using technology, including social media, to reduce social isolation and support collaborative learning. Learners themselves have planned to sustain their learning in local history, media studies literacy and fun maths.

The Networks project delivered learning activities, support and resources for women offenders. Fifty-five per cent of participants said that since attending the Networks course they had aspirations to go on and do another course, 75 per cent were more active in mental and physical wellbeing activities and 61 per cent said that they were more active in arts and cultural activities.

4.2.4 Increased self-esteem and confidence

An increase in learners' confidence and self-esteem was reported across all the digital projects, including that which resulted from a reduced fear of technology.

STRETCH delivered digital storytelling workshops to offenders, producing over 50 films and increasing learners' digital, basic literacy, communication and English language skills, as well as increasing their confidence in their abilities. Fifty-two of the 63 participants reported increased confidence and feelings of wellbeing.

Over the course of the project, I saw the women transform. I know they will remember this for the rest of their lives. (Education staff, HMP)

Learners' comments echo this sentiment:

It helped me to think positively about my life. (Learner)

In Back to the Future (see Case study 4), 123 learners began with low levels of technology skills. An end-of-project evaluation showed that they are all now more confident technology users.

Support workers for the Networks project noted a marked increase in learners' confidence in their skills and increased self-esteem.

In the ICICLE project (see Case study 2), learners' feelings of personal failure decreased from 30 per cent to just six per cent over the project timeline, a valuable result for people whose difficulties with learning at school have frequently had an adverse effect on their sense of personal achievement.



4.2.5 Improved relationships

Stronger social relationships were widely reported by learners taking part in digitally-focused projects.

This included improvements in family relationships, such as those experienced by participants of Recovery Rises and Money Matters in Kensington.

It also included the establishment of wider social networks in the ICICLE project (see Case study 2), where learners used a closed online system to make social media 'friends' with whom they could share multimedia content and chat. Friends included other people with learning disabilities and volunteer students. Many learners became peer mentors, developing their communication skills and friendships with each other.

The Omega Family Carer Community Learning Support Project developed learning opportunities for carers, making them better equipped to care for themselves and the relatives they look after. Carers established strong social relationships with their peers and improved relationships with service providers, so now feel more supported in their care responsibilities.

Carer learners have kept in touch and continue to support each other. Learners reported:

- an increased ability to deal with professionals and people in positions of authority
- making genuine friendships
- being able to relate to other people in similar caring situations
- feeling less isolated.

4.3 Impact on families

CLIF demonstrates the ways in which improved digital skills can support and strengthen aspects of family life. The learning activities which were reported to foster stronger families were as diverse as managing household finance and digital storytelling for families.

Money Matters in Kensington focused on the need for disadvantaged families to be more in control of the family finances, an issue which is increasingly important in view of the wide-ranging changes to the welfare benefits system currently taking place, with digital skills a prerequisite for future access to Universal Credit. The project provided financial capability sessions, embedding the use of online resources and the development of learners' digital skills. Digital activities ranged from claiming benefits, applying for a passport, shopping online, dealing with school enrolment and applying for jobs. The learners used their digital skills to produce a 'Survival guide for parents' on money matters, using content sourced from session courses and the internet.

The Omega Family Carer Community Learning Support Project delivered a range of learning opportunities, of which 'Computing with Confidence' provide the most popular, with 48 carers attending these sessions. According to the Oxford Internet Survey 2013, almost 70 per cent of non-users, who include the most socially excluded, access the internet via a proxy user.¹⁷ Carers are well placed and motivated to support family members who cannot move into the online world, so the development of their digital skills is crucial in making the internet accessible to many who would otherwise be offline completely.

Learners used their digital skills to meet their own needs as well as the needs of those they cared for, including carrying out research, shopping online, receiving email support from Omega, using Skype to stay in touch with family and friends, engaging with a new hobby or interest and finding information online.

The ICICLE project (see Case study 2) evidenced positive and meaningful support from participants' families, linking supporters and tutors in the community with family supporters. The software used in the programme enabled family members to be actively involved in the participants' learning and planning for the future.

¹⁷ Dutton, W. H. and Blank, G. (2013) *Cultures of the Internet: The Internet in Britain*. Oxford Internet Survey.



4.4 Volunteering

The 15 CLIF projects with a focus on digital inclusion attracted 209 volunteers who engaged successfully with adults from niche groups, signposting them to learning opportunities, identifying their individual needs and interests, and motivating and supporting them to go online and develop their digital skills.

Additionally, many learners acted as ambassadors for their projects, increasing engagement and dissemination.

@SidwellStreetOnline trained 15 volunteer Community Learning Champions and offered a coherent framework of support and development so they could successfully support others in their community. Champions promoted and delivered courses to 183 learners, including 'Coffee and Computers' drop-in sessions, sessions in care homes, short taster sessions and longer (ten-hour plus) courses. Volunteers came from diverse backgrounds and had a wide range of previous IT experience.

One volunteer said:

I get extreme satisfaction and pleasure from being able to help somebody and I'll do that regardless of getting paid for it, the money side is immaterial. The fact that I am able to help somebody put a smile on their face and something's clicked, the penny's dropped, is an immense satisfaction. So yes, volunteering is an amazing thing.

Learner E started out demonstrating how to use the BBC iPlayer. After taking part in the CLIF project, E wanted to improve her own computer skills so she took an ITQ computer qualification with Exeter College. While doing the course, E helped other learners who were on the Level 1 course, which helped to increase her confidence in using a computer. She became a learning champion and has now been accepted on a training-for-work course at the local hospital.

Learner P became involved in the CLIF project as a volunteer, having been a lorry driver. He has been learning to use an iPad and is now volunteering in care homes and has enrolled on a PTTLS (Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector) course.

The ICICLE project (see Case study 2) involved 46 volunteer undergraduate students from the BA (Hons) Special Education programme at the University of East London Special Needs Education course. The participation of volunteer students was beneficial for their own development, for the learners whom they supported, and for the support workers who welcomed the extra help. The volunteers gave one-to-one support to the learners on a weekly basis to fulfil the requirements for their compulsory placement module on their degree. The project gave the volunteers the opportunity to become involved in a meaningful community-based project, which facilitated the development of their professional skills and was linked to accredited learning.

- All volunteers reported increased communication skills.
- Ninety-six per cent reported that they understood how multimedia could be used to increase community involvement.
- Eighty-eight per cent reported an increase in their understanding of the use of multimedia to develop ideas and set goals.

For some projects, volunteers have taken ownership of programmes, offering sustainability where funding is not available. For example, volunteers from the Spark Sunderland Digital Production and Participation Project will continue the programme supported by the 'Project in a box' for guidance, tips and planning.

4.5 Partnerships

Successful projects established strong partnerships which greatly enhanced their effectiveness, impact and sustainability and provided learners with multiple progression routes.

The MK People in Action – Transforming Communities project formed a strong partnership between Milton Keynes College, Adult Continuing Education, the local council, Surestart children's centres, Probation Trust, Crime Reduction Initiative and Babcock International Group. Each partner had a clear role and responsibilities, ranging from referral to specialist advice. Partner expertise was complementary, resulting in a cohesive and comprehensive learner experience.



What does CLIF tell us?

Money Matters in Kensington formed a partnership which worked cohesively to support isolated parents, particularly those from black and minority ethnic communities in Kensington. The project benefited greatly from the range of expertise offered from partners. For example:

- the Pagoda (Chinese community centre) supplied a Chinese-speaking representative to co-tutor courses for Chinese parents.
- HEAT (Heat Energy Advice Team) gave benefits and advice on welfare issues, drawing on the team's expertise with sufferers of domestic violence.
- Credit Union delivered training on financial capability.
- Citizens Advice Bureau gave financial training to project staff through a discrete session on 'Welfare reform – helping parents to cope on a reduced income'.
- Asylum Link offered a range of support services to asylum seekers and refugees. This organisation acted as a referral in and on from the project and was part of the community research initiative.

Digital projects with strong partnerships were more likely to develop strong sustainability plans.

The work of Recovery Rises (see Case study 1) will continue to be supported by project partners, including Breaking Free Online who have committed to providing equipment and free learner access to their therapeutic online key working programme. Liverpool John Moores University will continue to provide volunteers, as will the project's partner recovery agencies.

Partners in the Shropshire Heirloom project are collaborating to sustain aspects of their project. Newcastle libraries and adult learning services who partnered with Flo-culture for the Memory Box project will continue to use an app to help older learners to engage meaningfully with digital technology.

4.6 What works well?

CLIF projects highlighted a number of features of effective practice in relation to digital inclusion in community learning contexts. They showed how incorporating these features into community learning programmes can help to maximise the impact for individuals and communities. For example:

- Coherent partnerships substantially benefit digital inclusion programmes. Partnerships can use their networks to engage niche groups, can offer pathways for learners' progression, can co-ordinate internet access and can provide digital learning opportunities in a range of relevant contexts.
- Social media can extend networks of support by connecting learning providers from different neighbourhoods, raising awareness about available resources, avoiding duplication and building stronger networks for volunteering.
- Support from volunteer digital champions and peer mentors has a substantial impact on the engagement, motivation and confidence of learners, as well as on their digital skills development. However, to be effective, volunteers need co-ordination, training, recognition and development opportunities.
- Outreach services can be delivered by trained intermediaries in different fields who are trusted sources of information or role models for the people they mentor.
- The best digital inclusion programmes foster learners' confidence, self-esteem and independent learning skills, as well as training them in the specific use of technologies. This approach enables learners to cope with future changes in technology and to be confident of their ability to use it.
- Successful programmes include initial learner assessment and adaptation of the programme to the needs of diverse groups and individuals. Providers need to be careful not to patronise members of niche groups by making assumptions about their relationship to digital technology. The profiles of digitally excluded groups are complex and must be carefully analysed to be useful in finding solutions.



What does CLIF tell us?

- There are significant numbers of digitally excluded adults for whom intensive support is essential. Many third sector organisations are well placed to deliver such support. It is important that communities should find the means to define their own needs and devise their own solutions.



5 Case studies

Case study 1

Recovery Rises

Summary of the project

This Liverpool-based project was led by Genie in the Gutter, a non-profit organisation offering opportunities and training to active substance misusers as a bridge to recovery. The project used a 12-week digital media course and an evidence-based online recovery learning programme provided by partner organisation, Breaking Free Online.

Many learners had experienced homelessness, mental health problems and criminality. Tutors and mentors were ex-substance misusers themselves, so were seen as strong role models by the learners.

Impact

The project demonstrated a powerful impact on the 180 learners, who all reduced their substance misuse, with some going into full recovery. They accessed online recovering communities, became less socially isolated and were able to participate in further activities and meetings which supported them in their recovery.

Learners acquired digital media skills including journalism, writing and digital photography which, combined with increased confidence and self-esteem, improved their employability. Six learners progressed to employment or self-employment, and nine went into further education. Twenty-three progressed to peer mentoring or volunteer training. All learners showed significant improvements in terms of their physical and mental health.



Success factors

- Critical to the success of the project was its use of a relevant hook to engage and motivate participants. All 180 participants used their digital skills to access and use Breaking Free Online to reduce their substance misuse.
- Another key factor was the ongoing involvement of participants in the production of an online magazine, which had the multiple benefits of increasing participants' digital skills, increasing their ongoing engagement in and commitment to the programme and increasing the organisation's revenue opportunities.
- A third factor in the project's success was the structure which was developed to support learners to become peer mentors and volunteers on follow-on courses, offering relevant support to new learners while developing the confidence and employability skills of the volunteers.

Case study 2

ICICLE

Summary of the project

The ICICLE (Inclusive Co-development and Implementation of a Community Learning Environment) project, managed by the Rix Centre, London, worked in partnership with the University of East London and MultiMe and Xtensis software companies to reduce digital exclusion for people with learning disabilities. It did so through the use of a co-developed multimedia learning platform, using images, video and sound clips to engage people who were otherwise excluded through difficulties with reading and writing.

In total, there were 116 participants: 44 adults with learning disabilities, 25 support and teaching staff and 46 volunteer undergraduate students. Learners used the platform for goal setting and planning, building effective support circles to help them achieve their personal goals. This resulted in improvements to their social and digital inclusion and their employability.

Impact

Before the project, 77 per cent of learners had never used social networks compared with just 13 per cent post project. Learners' weekly use of computers increased from 30 per cent to 57 per cent with a three per cent increase in their use of the internet to find information. Participants improved their existing friendships and formed new ones through the internet. Asked if she was able to make new friends through the project one learner replied that '... at least 50 per cent of the students are on my MultiMe'.

The project evidenced impressive progression in ICT skills. At the beginning of the project, 40 per cent of the participants felt confident about turning a camera on and off. By the end of the project this figure



increased to 77 per cent. At the end of the project, 53 per cent of learners felt confident about saving a picture on a computer, up by 26 per cent compared with the start of the project.

All of the volunteer students reported that their digital communication skills had increased through volunteering on this project, with 88 per cent reporting a significant increase in their understanding of how multimedia can be used to develop ideas and set goals.

Seventy-nine per cent of support workers learned new ways to empower others, 31 per cent improved their communication skills, 26 per cent learnt how to use the internet better and 68 per cent are now able to teach others to use multimedia.

Success factors

- Nominated adults with a learning disability acted as 'champions' and mentored their peers, as well as presenting the project and their achievements to visitors and new staff.
- Support workers and volunteers assisted the learners both face-to-face and online by providing resources related to the individuals' goals.
- Tutors, support staff and volunteer students assisted participant learners with disabilities to work towards personal goals, which were broken down into easy and achievable tasks. The learners could assign each task to any of their online supporters for help, and experiences and progress were recorded in various digital media formats and added to the individuals' online profiles.
- The volunteers accompanied the learners in outings in their communities to gather material and information, which formed the basis for building a website showcasing local opportunities and services available for people with learning disabilities.
- Support workers developed individualised community learning pathways with the learners, planned courses of action and created collections of online resources which they shared with learners.

Case study 3

Brilliant Stories

Summary of the project

The Brilliant Stories project was led by Haringey Adult Learning Service, working in partnership with local primary schools, children's centres and Raising Voices, a network of educators, researchers and evaluators. It inspired parents and carers to engage in their children's learning through the use of an Open University digital storytelling app called Our Story.

Brilliant Stories included a tutor training programme which trained and assisted community educators and tutors in using digital technology to support family learning. In addition, a parent/carer learning champion's programme engaged parents/carers and their children in family learning using digital technology.

The majority of learners on this programme were women who had recently come to the UK with children who were at risk of social exclusion. Their participation has enabled them to develop social networks with each other, take on volunteer roles in their local primary school or children's centre, and progress on to further learning and employment opportunities.

Impact

Thirty-six parents/carers and 36 children from disadvantaged backgrounds in Haringey who previously had no or limited experience of technology are now more confident and able to use it.

They have developed their own digital content, using the 'Our Story' app to create stories, import photos, annotate with text and add sound. Parents/carers have learnt about the challenges of technology and are more confident in solving problems for themselves. They are also more confident about using their digital skills both in everyday life and to



improve their life chances; for example, undertaking online job searches.

There has been a marked improvement in family relationships, with all learners reporting a greater depth and quality to parent–child interaction. In addition, there has been a marked increase in learners' writing abilities. Their aspirations for themselves and their children have increased and they have improved their English language skills, reporting that they feel more comfortable conversing/writing stories in English and have transferred the skills they have gained to other scenarios such as job applications.

Success factors

- Some learners have become 'community ambassadors', acting as role models and peer mentors.
- Five learners have also become 'community educators', delivering training to others or supporting their adult learning tutors.

Case study 4

Back to the Future

Summary of the project

The project addressed the issue of digital inclusion in North Tyneside for older people who had little or no ICT skills, but who had a lifetime of other skills to share. It engaged young volunteer digital champions with older people, in training, events and activities relating to digital skills and knowledge sharing. In total, 154 participants took part in the project, with younger people using their digital knowledge to support the development of older participants' digital skills, and older participants sharing their knowledge and skills. They created a suite of videos that were buried in a time capsule to digitally preserve the potentially soon-to-be-lost skills (e.g. crafting and embroidery) of older people.

Impact

At the outset of the project, 73 per cent of older participants assessed their level of confidence and competence in the use of technology as 'no' or 'low'. At the project's conclusion, 80 per cent assessed their level of confidence as 'moderate' or 'high', demonstrating an exceptionally high level of progression.

Volunteers gained confidence, co-taught classes, supported drop-in sessions, offered public and peer support through social networking sites, delivered training sessions and managed volunteer meetings. Ninety-eight per cent of volunteers and staff rated the training as largely or definitely helpful and several of the 22 digital champions have progressed into work or further learning.

Use of mobile wi-fi meant that learners could use their own devices, which allowed older learners to continue their learning at home, building their confidence and developing their digital skills: 'We've



had people bringing in iPads, laptops and tablets and getting to grips with the increasingly diverse technologies' (Eric, digital champion).

In addition, learners created digital content, including a film on how to upgrade RAM in a PC for use in a PC repair course. The film will be used for future learners.

Success factors

- The intergenerational aspect of the project:

I believe that perceptions of younger people about the older generation and vice versa have changed. Older people have a lifetime of experiences and stories to tell that may have surprised the younger ones. (Older learner)

I've learned how to cook Yorkshire puddings and vegetables in modern and traditional ways and I will now be able to use these skills at home.' (Helen, aged 17)

- Volunteer involvement. Volunteers supported other learners, wrote much of the training materials and helped to plan events and activities.
- Use of tablets, smart phones and three mobile wi-fi devices and a year's broadband contract. Supplementing the use of learners' own devices allowed the project to run workshops in all areas, including places that had no other access to technology, such as sheltered accommodation.

Many aspects of the project will continue, with skills swap workshops and family history events, while digital champion volunteers are in the process of forming a self-organised learning group. There are plans to develop a community interest company to deliver community learning in new technologies in North Tyneside.

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