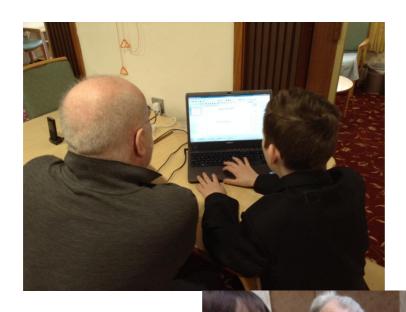# Tech and Tea programme

Lessons Learnt Evaluation

Introduction

The gulbenkian report on older people, technology and community identified that: *The benefits of technology is not simply access to technology but more specifically how technology can foster improved social interaction, engaging older people in their communities and promoting high quality face-to-face contact. Access to the internet and digital technologies through relevant supported services can indeed enhance all these aspects of life for older people – so long as technology is seen as the means to an end, not the end in itself.*

Social isolation and the feelings of loneliness are common problems for older people living in the United Kingdom today. Recent research documents a worrying trend that many who work with older people have observed for themselves:

- *Fear of being alone is a major source of anxiety as people grow old.*
- *Some older people go for days without seeing another person; many die alone.*
- *16% of older people in deprived inner city areas suffer severe loneliness.*
- *Certain ethnic groups are particularly vulnerable.*
- *Isolation and loneliness can damage both mental and physical health in older people.*

Technology can be a means to enable older people to renew and develop social contacts and engage actively in their communities. It can provide opportunities to:

- *participate in meaningful work and other activities (whether paid or on a volunteer basis);*
- *interact in new ways with family and friends;*
- *learn, develop skills and gather experience;*
- *share learning, skills and experience with others.*

Addressing barriers to technology

A large proportion of older people do not use communications technology. Some of the important barriers to older people adopting digital technologies include:

- ***Lack of home access to the internet:*** *Only half of people aged 60-69 have access to the internet at home, but this falls to 17% among the over-70s. Adults over the age of 60 are also less likely than younger adults to get internet access in the next year. The dominant reason for not having or seeking access is that older people don't feel they need it.*
- ***Low awareness of what technology can offer:*** *10% of people aged 60-69 have access to the internet but don't use it. They feel that digital technology has no relevance for them and that they would gain nothing by using it*
- ***Inadequate marketing:*** *Technology marketing is generally aimed at the young, promoting gimmicky aspects of products that don't interest older people. Or, marketing is aimed at the frail elderly, a group with which most older people don't identify.*

- ***Inappropriate design:*** *Digital equipment is designed to attract young buyers who have grown up using technology. Small buttons, fiddly controls and unnecessarily complicated interfaces can all be barriers to older, or less adept, users. The appearance of 'special' equipment is also a deterrent for some older people who don't want ugly objects cluttering up their homes.*
  *• **Anxieties:** Older people tend to have certain fears regarding technology. One of them is cost: they assume, for example, that computers cost more than they actually do. Another is breaking equipment or doing something wrong. A third is security: although most older people don't know enough about technology to be familiar with common security problems, many know enough to be concerned.*

http://www.gulbenkian.org.uk/pdffiles/Older-people-technology-and-community.pdf

Background

Tech and tea in Salford was run as a test of change through the community asset project working group to engage older people in understanding the benefits of technology in helping them to:
- engage in neighbourhood activity
- reduce social isolation and loneliness
- improve health and well being outcomes.

An initial test of change involved an open event with Age Uk Salford which encouraged older people to bring their own kit have a cup of tea and get some informal support. The Tech and Tea' event (in partnership with Salford City Council and EE) was held on 2 October 2013. During the Tech and Tea event there were demonstrations on using computers/tablets (using the internet), mobile phones and telecare items. A 12-week IT course for older people was established and a programme of IT sessions commence in January 2014 at Critchley House (Age UK wi fi-free café) venue. Age UK also continue to promote the use of informal/drop in access of using the facilities at Critchley House. Unfortunately by 2014 the college had to withdraw their support as they no longer had funding to support this type of delivery. The drop-in sessions however continue with volunteers supporting people to develop their own skills.

In December 2014 Inspiring Communities Together (ICT) was approached by Salix Homes to develop and deliver a programme of tech and tea sessions across sheltered housing schemes managed by them. There was also an opportunity to deliver one programme working with a secondary school as an intergenerational project. Salix Homes funded this project through their neighbourhood budgets and provided a worker to develop and deliver the sessions and equipment to take to the sessions.

Tech and Tea - Sessions Outline

Week 1	**Hopes and Fears**	- Discussion on technology and benefits - Help with individual technology equipment - Getting to know each other
Week 2	**The Basics of a computer**	- How to turn our tech on and off safely. - basics of opening and closing programmes - how to create/delete folders and copying and pasting
Week 3	**Google Searching**	how to surf the internet by learning how to do a Google search. Each person learns how to conduct a google search on their chosen piece of tech and begins to surf the internet.
Week 4	**Surfing the Internet and communicating**	- Explore useful websites - Explore Skype and Facetime as a way of keeping in contact with people
Week 5	**E-Mails and Social Media**	- Set everyone up with an email address and learn how to send - Facebook and Twitter and consider whether we want to set up an account on these

Getting started

The approach used was very informal with talking to group members to understand their fears and help them overcome them. Both lap tops and tablet technology were used as some people felt more confident using tablets but could not develop the skills needed to use a laptop.

- Between January 2015 and May 2015: 18 sessions of tech and tea were delivered across 3 sheltered housing schemes: Muirhead Court (8 sessions), Spring Bank (5 sessions), Alexandra Court (5 sessions). More sessions were delivered at Muirhead Court as this supported the intergenerational element of the project.
- A total of 23 older people took part in the project (Male - 11, Female - 11, BME - 1)

Participants were a very nervous about using tech at the start (the constant worry from everyone was that they were scared of breaking it). One older person had had a bad experience where the internet had stopped working and she was worried that she had broken the internet. For everyone! Some people were very reluctant to participate, questioning what the point of all this technology? People felt that because they were old and "past it" that there was no point learning.

Some participants had never owned a computer others had just been recently given one as a gift. Everyone had low confidence to use technology. Some felt that

computers were a waste of time while others were keen to learn new skills. The highest skill level was from those who had used computers when they were working, but it was so long ago (and they only used computers for one task) that they had forgotten the basics.

The skills learnt

Learning new things: A big skill that everyone learned how to do was to surf the internet, whether it be through a tablet or the laptop. By the final sessions, everyone was comfortable with going online and doing Google searches. ***One group has decided to carry on the sessions with two of the more confident participants taking the lead***. By the end of the sessions some participants had decided to buy their own tablets because they had enjoyed using them so much, every one felt much more confident with using their own tech (if they had one) and even the most reluctant to participate had gotten involved and learned how to surf online.

Keeping in touch: Communication with family and friends was important for some of the participants Some of the older people had an e-mail address set up for them by members of their family, but they didn't know how to work it! By the end, they could email their family (and even me to check that Tech and Tea was going to be on!). others were ***able to use either FaceTime or Skype (as well as e-mail) and had communicated with family or friends that did not live in Salford.***

Improving health and well being: The ability to stream videos and music enabled people to set up a Spotify Account and stream music while others discovered YouTube and were browsing for old videos of Salford. The ladies in Spring Bank loved to do Line Dancing but the teacher had finished her contract, so one of the ***ladies was using Youtube to learn how to do the dances and then teaching the rest of the women how to do it.*** Through making it fun one person opened up and spoke about her arthritis, she wanted to find out more about it online. She had never done it before because she didn't know how to Google Search but also because she didn't know how to spell arthritis. Once she ***learned that you could speak into the microphone and it would search what you said,*** she lit up and spent the whole session ***reading about arthritis and understanding how to manage her own long term condition.***

Reducing social isolation and loneliness: Some participants had never met each other despite living in the same sheltered housing scheme so ***new friends within the scheme have been made.*** From having no or little interest whatsoever; EVERYONE was asking the Salix Worker when the internet was going to be set up in the shared room!

Quotes from older people:

"I know how to take a selfie!" "It's been brilliant!"

http://communityreporter.net/videos/tech-and-tea-2015

Muirhead court intergenerational project

For Muirhead Court, the structure was a little different as we connected with Albion Academy and worked with 10 young people from Years 7 and 9. Time was spent working with the young people and older people separately to understand what their perceptions and fears were of being involved in an intergenerational project. The young people also received some digital champion training so they had skills to enable them to teach older people how to use computers.

People were nervous (young and old). But through some introduction exercises and working on an intimate 1-1 basis, the pairs were able to gel and connect which made the learning so much more enjoyable. The older people went from feeling unsure about the young people coming to their space to actively looking forward to seeing them coming. By the end, they older people were keen to continue this connection that had been made.

By the end, not only had the *older people connected and bonded with the younger people, but they had learned how to surf the internet, how to stream videos and how to play games*! 4 of the older people also learned how to create presentations that they presented in front of the whole group on the final week. By the final week, *4 people had bought their own tablet to use with the young people*. The young people had given them confidence to not only use tech, but to buy their own!

Doing Tech and Tea this way was a fantastic experience for both young and old. It ended up creating a very relaxed, informal learning environment where they young people enjoyed being Teacher, and the older people enjoyed spending time with the young people. They were even able to share their own knowledge and experiences. 1 pair had learned how to use Spotify so the older person was introducing the pupil to his type of music and vice versa.

Terrance had suffered from three strokes and had forgotten all he know about computers but wanted to find a way of keeping his poetry which he enjoys writing. With help from a young person he is now able to write his poetry on line and has learnt to skype so he can keep in touch with his family in Australia.

Maggie suffers from serve back pain and spends a lot of time in bed because of the pain. By taking part in the sessions she has found other ways of managing her pain by being engaged in activity and she now enjoys searching the internet and playing games rather than going to bed.

The connection established between the Sheltered Housing scheme and the local high school is a relationship that is still going as there have been meet-ups between the two since the course has finished.

Things we learnt and can improve on:

- Older people often lack confidence but with some support they are able to find their own ways of learning new skills and sharing their own experiences to support others

- Create opportunities for groups to meet each other and share their skills and knowledge. This will enable individuals to meet and socialise and provide opportunities for new projects to develop. The sheltered housing schemes project all took place in a shared community room which will have free wifi access ad a computer provided by Salix Homes. At least 2 new projects have been developed (Dance and IT sessions run by the older people using their new skills)

- Because there was only one person delivering the sessions it meant for some people there was a bit of waiting around before they got to 1-1 time. By providing the tea people were able to have a natter and a cup of tea and get to know each other but it would be great to have 2 or even 3 facilitators on hand so people do not feel like they are waiting a long time to be seen.

- Building in a question and answer sheet for people to fill in so we know what people want to learn so can group together to support each other.

- Towards the end of the sessions the Salford Together development worker went to the tech and tea sessions to talk to older people about well being plans and eating well in latter life. This element could be further developed to enable technology to be built in once the well being plans are on line accessible.

- Working with the housing provider made it easier to access older people as they already had a relationship with someone – work will need to be done to identify those older people who live in their own homes and are already isolated or lonely.