Making Sense of Media - Initiate:

what works in delivering community programmes

Making
sense
of media

Initiate

Contents

Introduction

Online media literacy is first and foremost about people – what they do online and how they do it. It's about inclusion, participation, connection. It's about people doing the things they want and need to, online, in a safer way. Online media literacy skills, like offline literacy and numeracy, are unevenly spread across the population - with many cohorts confident and flourishing online, and far too many either not connected or not confident, and not flourishing. And many of those cohorts are at present underserved by the media literacy sector in the UK, with an absence of resources and opportunities to learn in an environment that suits them.

As we identified in our Approach to Media Literacy document published in December 2021, Ofcom intends to support the media literacy sector by commissioning initiatives to serve specific cohorts in communities recognised as having particular media literacy needs. In order to do that well we wanted to understand what works in community skills programmes. We conducted interviews and focus groups with staff (and in most cases, service users) of ten organisations across the UK. We found excellent examples of best practice by these organisations in delivering education initiatives to communities.

This research took place between January and March 2022 with the aim of identifying what makes an effective learning or skills-based intervention in a local context. Although the research is part of the Making Sense of Media programme, the goal was to identify best practice skills-based community interventions on any topic – not just media literacy initiatives – and to extract insights from a range of perspectives on what works well, and on what the organisations and service users have learnt along the way.

We have distilled our learning into a suite of seven best practice principles and corresponding recommendations on how to approach the delivery of educational programmes at a local level. These are summarised at Figure 1. As Ofcom moves towards commissioning community-based interventions, our intention is to adhere to these principles. These principles may, at times, challenge our usual ways of working, as we have things to learn from the people we listened to.

Every intervention we commission will be carefully considered against these principles, and will, over time, be evaluated to ensure that the outcomes are achieving the desired goals. Ofcom's interim update on its approach to media literacy evaluations can be found here, with further guidance scheduled for publication this autumn. Our intention is to commission three waves of intervention before the end of March 2023, one in the summer, one in the autumn and one early in 2023. We will publish more detailed information on this process shortly.

We are deeply grateful to the leaders, service managers and service users across the country who took the time to share their insights, suggestions and concerns with us. We learnt so much from you and our work is richer for your insights. Thank you.

Overview

This report sets out the findings of a rapid research project to uncover examples of best practice in skills interventions at a local level. We have resolved our findings into seven principles and associated recommendations. The key learning from this project is that local communities require local solutions and must therefore be involved in creating and delivering these solutions. In essence, the community needs to teach itself, and the provider's role is to create the right conditions for that.

1. People are not ready to learn, just because you are ready to teach

Recognise that many factors affect our capacity to learn. Each learner may require individualised support. This must be founded on a trusted relationship with creative and tenacious staff who have sufficient time and resources to create accessible learning interventions, support each learner and remove barriers to learning.

Identify the core message and communicate it clearly in a way that is tailored to the community, e.g. considering language, channels and accessibility. Plan sufficient time for marketing and recruitment, particularly when targeting underserved communities.

2. Behaviour change is a process, not a transaction

Deliver education programmes that are based on a model of how to change behaviour.

Consider mechanisms to sustain learning within and across the community; for example, a community champion approach, or supporting continued contact and refresher training for both staff and learners.

3. What you think a community needs, and what they actually need, can be very different things

Ask communities what they need. They can contribute their lived experience and challenge our assumptions, biases and privilege.

Target education programmes to communities where there is unmet need.

4. Communities won't listen to people they don't know or trust

Deliver education programmes via partner organisations which have a trusted relationship with an underserved community and can demonstrate competence in delivering against the principles in this document.

5. Empowered communities are learning communities

Enable flexibility in provision so that communities can translate desired programme outcomes into local solutions, using local assets.

Be open to exploring a variety of delivery models while ensuring sound governance arrangements.

Harness or create inclusive, accessible environments (online and offline) where people can learn from each other.

6. Support community-led innovation through flexible delivery

Agree an appetite for risk which enables a proportionate approach to evidence/evaluation without stifling flexibility and innovation.

Facilitate learning and evaluate what works. For example, use pathfinders to develop and test theories of change.

7. The funding model can make or break a programme of learning

The funding model needs to recognise that sometimes, removing potential barriers to learning has a cost.

Create programme targets which focus on outcomes that are meaningful at a local level, i.e. the differences for individuals and communities over the medium to long term.

Methodology

An initial desktop exercise was undertaken to identify projects of interest for the research.   Team members also reached out directly to members of the Making Sense of Media network, to their own personal networks and to the Chairs of staff networks.   The criteria used to identify projects included:

- Projects engaging with vulnerable adults in underserved communities, e.g. areas of deprivation or communities of interest, with respect to equalities-protected characteristics.
- Projects based in rural and urban locations across the UK.
- Projects that could engage immediately in the rapid research programme which took place from January to March 2022.

Ten projects met these criteria and were willing and able to get involved in the research within the set timeframe.   These were:

Project	Description
Challenging Violence Against Women	This project, by Glasgow charity Community InfoSource, comprises a team of men working in partnership with men from asylum seeker and refugee communities to tackle issues of gender inequality.
Digital skills for older people	Good Things Foundation supports a network of local organisations to deliver digital skills training. One of these is Cross Gates & District Good Neighbours' Scheme CIO, which provides digital upskilling for people aged 60+ in Leeds.
Everyday Computer Skills course	The course, from Lead Scotland, was funded by SCVO and delivered in partnership with the Open University. The course helps disabled people to learn digital skills and was developed with a core group of disabled people.
Household Budget Support	This project, in West Sussex, aims to help clients of Horsham Matters' crisis support and foodbank service to tackle the root causes of their financial hardship.
Hungry Little Minds	National Literacy Trust delivers early-years parenting literacy activities in some of the poorest communities in England, working through the Hungry Little Minds campaign which is funded by the Department for Education.
Insight App	Innovate Trust is a Welsh charity which provides support and guidance to people with learning disabilities, mental health challenges or physical impairments. Its Insight App acts as an online community hub.
Make Sure It Adds Up	This campaign was delivered by a Bradford District partnership of local organisations and ambassadors including Bradford African Community, and was led by Bradford for Everyone. Its aims were to get more people to practise and promote 'critical thinking' when receiving and sharing uncertain information either online, in person, or via instant messaging.

Rainbow Grow	This is an LGBTQI+-led community gardening group in Hackney, East London, where members learn to grow edible plants in an urban environment.
Skills for Tomorrow	The project from Birmingham Enterprise Community provided post-Covid skills development support for young adults aged 18-30.
Sunflower Challenge	The project aimed to help Together TV viewers across the UK boost mental health, learn a new skill and connect with their communities through growing a sunflower.

The research activities comprised interviews with staff, and interviews or focus groups with service users. The aim was to gather a strategic perspective from a senior manager, an operational perspective from a staff member working closer to service delivery, and an insight from the perspective of end-users. Some organisations/projects were quite small, so required only one staff interview. One project (Rainbow Grow) comprised a single interview with the volunteer who manages the group and is a member of the community. Another project (Insight App) again comprised a single interview with a staff member as we were unable to secure further engagement within the time available. Within the allotted timeframe we were able to engage organisations in England, Wales and Scotland but were unable to secure availability from the organisations we contacted in Northern Ireland.

Jess McBeath was contracted by Ofcom as the lead interviewer, accompanied by an MSOM team member. The online interviews took place using Microsoft Teams. All interviews were recorded and automatically transcribed. The recordings and transcriptions were retained until this report was finalised, and all the interviewees consented to be interviewed. The ten participating organisations are named in this report, but individual respondents are anonymised. No payment was offered for interview, but service users were offered a £30 Lovetoshop gift card as a thank-you for their participation.

One final point to note regarding the use of virtual interviews is about the choice of video conferencing software. This research project was constrained to the use of software that is predominantly used for office purposes, which created a variety of barriers when engaging with learners in online interviews or focus groups. The software is accessible by browser only on a computer – however, if a learner is using a mobile device, they are required to download the app, which can be time-consuming and uses additional data. There is also a need for a learner to familiarise themselves with the meeting controls.   Given these difficulties, rather than inviting learners to join a meeting from home, some of our focus group meetings were facilitated by the project i.e., learners were invited to meet at the project's office, where they would sit together at a computer with the project worker who would manage the call. This was a really helpful way to ensure that learners could engage with us, but it also introduced an element of bias as learners were discussing the project in the presence of staff. Where organisations use online tools to engage with learners, a better starting point is to ask what tools communities have access to, and then work to remove the barriers to ensure these tools can be used.

The remainder of this document describes each of the seven principles in turn, by detailing what we heard from the organisations we spoke to. We extend our thanks to these organisations and service users for offering their time and input to help us learn.

Principles

Through researching these ten projects, we have identified seven best-practice principles to guide skills transfer activities. For each principle, we explain what this looks like in practice, using examples from the projects. We distil each principle into a small number of recommendations, described as "which means doing this, and not doing this".

Principle 1: People are not ready to learn just because you are ready to teach

Summary	Which means doing this	And not this
There are barriers to engaging with underserved communities. You need a 'go-getter' approach to identify where people are and how to reach them. You need an initial 'hook' to arouse interest in a project, and you must be prepared to remove barriers.	Recognising that many factors affect our capacity to learn, and each learner may require individual support. This must be founded on trusted relationships with creative and tenacious staff who have sufficient time and resources to create accessible learning interventions, support each learner and remove barriers to learning.	Providing staff with insufficient skills, time or other resources they need to create accessible learning interventions or provide individual support to learners.
	Identifying the core message and communicating it clearly in a way that is tailored to the community e.g. considering language, channels and accessibility. Planning sufficient time for marketing and recruitment, particularly when targeting underserved communities.	Accepting that there are barriers that are too difficult/expensive to deal with, which prevent some people from accessing education programmes.
		Allocating insufficient time for marketing, or using generic messaging that will not attract (or may actively deter) an underserved community.

An initial hook

We heard from many learning projects about their use of creative marketing to attract new learners. People spoke of the importance of an initial 'hook' to gain awareness of the project and arouse interest in it. In the **Sunflower Challenge** project, Together TV offered free sunflower seeds. It hoped for 10,000 learners and attracted that number within the first 24 hours. As a member of staff commented: *"You need a strong hook. Everyone wants free sunflower seeds!"* The **Hungry Little Minds** campaign reinforced this, giving out free books. **Rainbow Grow**, the LGBTQI+ gardening group, said that its hook – offering non-traditional, multi-generational, sustainable food growing in inner-city London – was a unique proposition; no other group does this.

Language is also important as part of the initial engagement with potential learners. Together TV said that its marketing materials talked about 'boosting wellbeing' rather than 'addressing mental health'. This is more audience-friendly than talking directly about the campaign's aims (to improve mental health, reduce isolation and increase community action through the mechanisms of gardening TV programmes and sunflower growing).   Horsham Matters similarly said they used non-judgmental language when explaining to foodbank users about its budgeting support service.

Comprehensive marketing

The projects identified the most appropriate marketing channels to reach potential learners. For example, **Rainbow Grow** put up leaflets in the local area, and also in LGBTQI+ spaces.   Together TV was targeting a UK-wide audience, so it created a comprehensive, cross-channel (online and offline) multi-week campaign. When we talked to learners from various projects, we learnt that multiple touchpoints had influenced their decision to get involved – for example, seeing an advert as well as being approached by a project worker in the community. Learners from **the Skills for Tomorrow** project in Birmingham referenced hearing staff talk at other events about the project, as well as seeing adverts for it online. For the **Hungry Little Minds** campaign, locally based National Literacy Trust staff and partners undertook significant outreach activities in order to meet parents of young children, as well as professionals who could help raise awareness of the importance of chatting, playing, and reading in children's early years. The staff demonstrated tenacity and a 'go-getter' attitude: they were prepared to tap into any organisation or network that might be helpful. They visited playgroups and nurseries, as well as regularly setting up stalls in locations in the target area where parents might be passing. When lockdown happened, they moved their services online, setting up a weekly online book reading session and building up a social media following.

We heard of similar professional outreach by Lead Scotland, which developed the **Everyday Computer Skills** course. This organisation has regional bases in rural and urban areas and operates a network of stakeholders, with senior staff sitting on relevant networks across the region.

One project which uses an innovative approach to attract and engage with learners is the Challenging Violence Against Women project, run by the Glasgow charity Community InfoSource.

Challenging Violence Against Women[1] (Community InfoSource)

Community InfoSource (CIS) is a registered charity in Glasgow that works with communities and individuals to help them realise their potential and become integrated more quickly. Its focus is on asylum-seeker and refugee communities - including people who are survivors of abuse, persecution, torture, and trafficking. The charity has a vision of a diverse and inclusive Scotland where everyone is supported to contribute and participate.

The Challenging Violence Against Women Project comprises a team of men working in partnership with men to tackle issues of gender inequality. They do this by

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[1] https://www.infosource.org.uk/challenging-vaw1.html

promoting gender equality and human rights, raising awareness of honour-based violence, gender-based violence and female genital mutilation, and reducing the incidence of all types of violence against women. It is the only project of its kind in Scotland.

> "They helped the asylum seekers with stuff like accommodation … My journey started like that"
>
> *Challenging Violence Against Women learner*

The project team has learned through trial and error how best to engage men in learning how to challenge violence against women. This can be an uncomfortable, even taboo topic, so the team had to consider carefully how to market it to potential learners. The project's approach to engaging with the local community is to offer initial contact via another service, such as one-to-one support for individuals, helping with housing applications or signposting to food banks. Only when the team members feel that they have developed a trusting relationship with an individual do they broach the Challenging Violence Against Women project. Introducing the project is done carefully, using language and imagery which is subtle and culturally sensitive. For example, the project leaflet has been redesigned several times, as the team learned that using shocking imagery and language was counterproductive to engagement and learning. CIS also engages with influencers in the community, and recruits community ambassadors who can help raise awareness of its work.

We heard from various projects that it takes longer than expected to teach people, and this is partly to do with addressing an individual's barriers to learning. Lead Scotland helped us understand some of the barriers that may be experienced by disabled people, and how organisations can approach this:

Everyday Computer Skills course (Lead Scotland)[2]

Lead Scotland[3] is a national charity supporting disabled people and carers by providing personalised learning, befriending, advice and information services.   The charity received funding from SCVO to create the 'Everyday Computer Skills: A Beginner's Guide' course, in partnership with the Open University (OU). The aim of the project was to bring together and support disabled people to learn essential digital skills; it has co-produced an online course, which will be hosted on the OU platform. The course was designed and written by and for disabled people, distinguishing it from other basic digital skills courses.

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[2] https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/course/view.php?id=5538
[3] https://www.lead.org.uk/supporting-people-connecting-communities-highland-and-moray/.

> "Every disabled person will spend vast amounts of time per week on administration related to their disability"
>
> *Everyday Computer Skills course core group volunteer*

Staff explained that the unit cost per learner is high, due to the need to address individual needs and remove barriers. We spoke to a disabled person who had volunteered on the core group that developed the course. They explained the array of barriers that may prevent a disabled person from being able to learn. A key point was around timing and flexibility; learners may have medical appointments, or an impairment which affects the time of day that they can be active or limits the amount of time they can be active. There may be limited funding to provide the appropriate support that a person needs to access learning. There can also be conflicts in the adjustments needed by people with differing impairments; for example, someone with a visual impairment might benefit from a bright light in their workspace, while this might be uncomfortable for someone else. Video-recorded training content may have insufficient audio quality or captions. The Everyday Computer Skills course has 12 to 15 different formats including Easy Read, text only, access to extra support for Braille, etc. Lead Scotland is very clear that wherever a barrier exists, it will remove it. A key point here is the importance of creating learning solutions that are fully accessible to all, i.e. removing potential barriers at the point of design. It is important to recognise the significant variability of impairments and barriers (including hidden disabilities) that may affect learners, and to use this knowledge to design all learning interventions to a high standard of accessibility.

> "Where there are barriers, we remove them"
>
> *Lead Scotland staff member*

Staff describe the charity as 'a learning organisation'. In practice this means continually asking what can be learnt and what needs to change, so that disabled people and carers have an equal opportunity to learn, participate and achieve their potential. The organisation considers what added value they can give to staff and members. The core group involved in creating the course was able to gain skills in trialing it and to work with OU staff on the practicalities of getting the course onto the platform. Everyone benefits from continual learning, and Lead Scotland has embedded this ethos so that it applies to every project it undertakes.

> "The notion was not to just develop the course. Internally we could just have said 'we have expert folk here, let's get it up there'. We're a learning organisation. Everything is about learning."
>
> *Lead Scotland staff member*

Principle 2: Behaviour change is a process, not a transaction

Summary	Which means doing this	And not this
Facilitating sustained learning is not about transferring a set of facts from the trainer's head to the learner's head. It's about using behavioural science to plan and implement a process of change. Trusted relationships and online support are important for sustaining the change.	Delivering education programmes that are based on a model of how to change behaviour. Considering mechanisms to sustain learning within and across the community, through a community champion approach, or by supporting continued contact and refresher training between staff and learners.	Delivering educational content without a clear view on how it will effect a change in behaviour. Delivering a one-off training event that is not rooted in a relationship between learner/trainer or a community learning approach.

Behavioural science

We heard several examples of organisations using behavioural science and other tools to plan and trigger behaviour change. The Sunflower Challenge project, by Together TV, is an example of how the logical planning and diligent execution of a behavioural change intervention can exceed expected outcomes.

Sunflower Challenge[4] (Together TV)

Together TV is a social change broadcaster and was the first supporter-owned national TV channel. It runs a TV channel and a digital platform which help people find inspiration to do good in their lives and their community: the vision is a world where people and their communities thrive together. Through the Sunflower Challenge, Together TV invited viewers to get into gardening through growing a sunflower. The challenge involved a 12-week journey inviting people to boost their wellbeing, learn a new skill, connect with their community, win prizes, and use their sunflowers as gifts.

> "It's like a little community. I felt like I was taking part in something and it made me feel like I was joined in"
>
> *Sunflower Challenge participant*

This project is a good example of using behavioural science techniques to deliver positive outcomes for vulnerable communities. Together TV's viewers are most typically 40-60-year-old women, but the broadcaster prefers to identify its primary audience as people who are experiencing social

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[4] https://www.togethertv.com/together-good-sunflower-challenge-2021

isolation, irrespective of age and gender. For example, this group includes people who may not have a strong support network or are going through significant changes in their lives: empty nesters, people transitioning into retirement, people who are living with a long-term illness or those who have lost a spouse.

Together TV aims to tackle social isolation by using the power of linear TV channel distribution and the right selection of TV shows and documentaries, and its previous approach was to add an inspiring message at the end of a TV programme.

> *"*We were saying 'If you're inspired by this gardening show, why not go and join your local gardening group?' But we realised it wasn't that effective. So, within this process, we thought, why don't we create a behavioural science campaign, that walks people in baby steps from this content into the action we want, from individual sphere to social connection sphere?"
>
> *TogetherTV staff member*

The project team mapped out the three-month engagement journey using various levers; firstly, inspiring learners and making them feel good about the project (growing a sunflower), then continuously reinforcing the positive messaging, and finally nudging learners to connect with others. The project team repurposed marketing software to support its behaviour change programme via a multi-channel online and offline campaign.   For example, there was a gardening programme on Together TV in which the presenter talked about the project, and there were adverts for the project on partner channels such as Channel 4 and ITV as well as billboards and other online/offline messaging.   The messaging was designed to embed habits into everyday routines and nudge people's behaviour towards connecting with others.

Signing up to the challenge was straightforward – viewers could go to the website or send a text. The project aimed for 10,000 participants and attracted more than 52,000. Each learner received their seeds along with a calendar of activities, backed up by weekly emails, SMS/WhatsApp messages, and access to the Facebook group and information on the website.   Learners were encouraged to share photos of their progress – more than 4,000 'Sunflower Selfies' were submitted.

> "It's a nice brochure and calendar to tick off week by week. And various advice"
>
> "The email was a 'would you like to…?' It was a gentle, friendly approach"
>
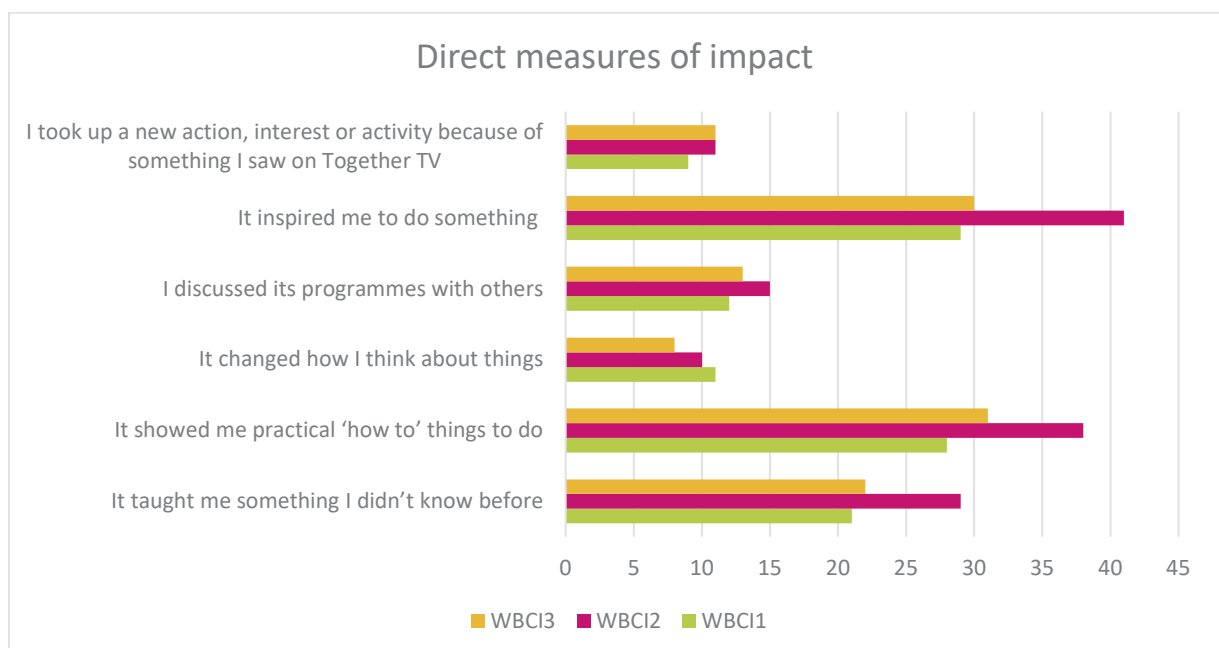> *Sunflower Challenge participants*

The language of the marketing materials was carefully chosen to supportively nudge behaviour change, without being prescriptive.

This project neatly demonstrates a link between individual and community learning. One of the Challenge tasks was to share seeds with other people, and learners told us about taking seeds to their neighbours, a local youth group and the local school. The project team was also contacted by groups and organisations who wanted to support participation, such as a residential home for older people which wanted to help its residents get involved. Over 130 groups across the UK took part in the challenge.

The project was highly successful in achieving its aims of improving mental wellbeing and tackling social isolation. The project surveyed learners in three waves at key points through the change programme, to track changes in mood, outlook, feelings, and behaviour, with over 13,000 respondents completing three surveys. The graph below shows that there was a consistent increase in positive emotions throughout the experience.

Change in mood/outlook
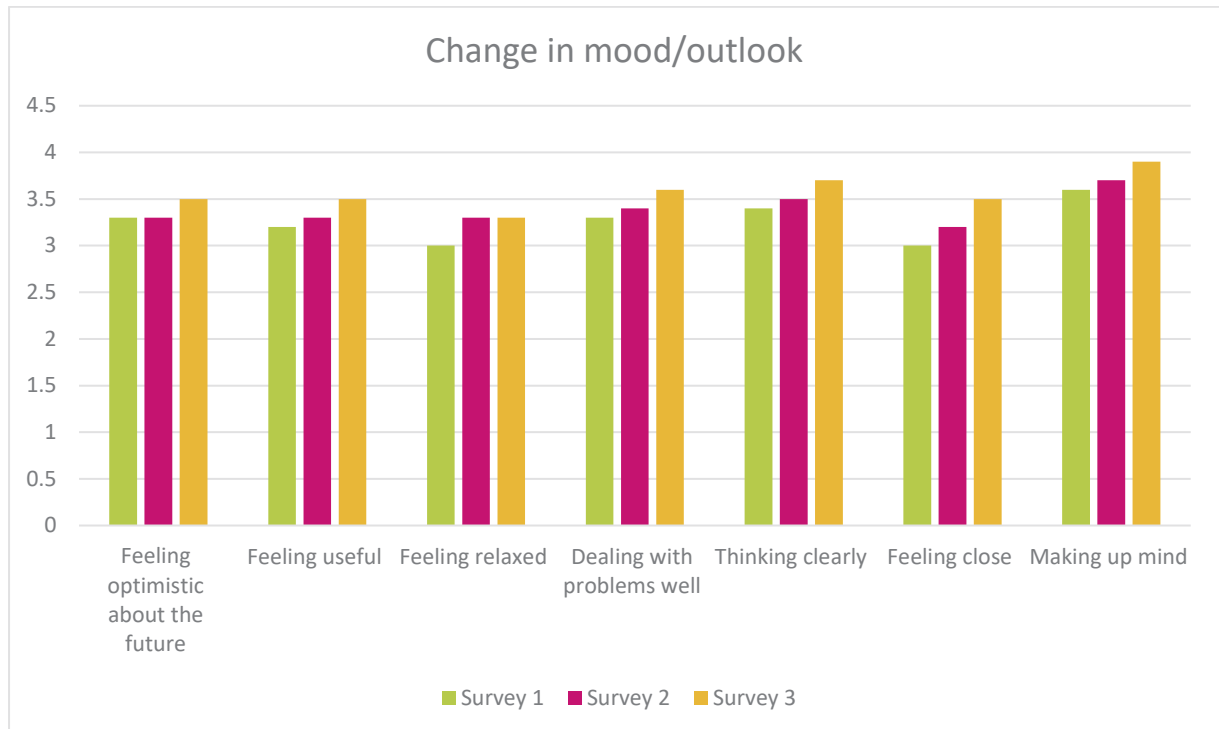
Figure 1: Data provided by Together TV setting out the results of three surveys concerning the changes in mood and outlook of participants in the Sunflower Challenge.

Direct measures of impact

Figure 3: Data provided by Together TV setting out the results of its survey concerning the direct measures of positive impact on participants in the Sunflower Challenge.

Good Things Foundation works with local partner organisations to deliver digital skills training. As the commissioner, the Foundation stressed how important it was to understand the theory of change approach in every local centre that it supported.

A test for the **CIS Challenging Violence Against Women** project was how to deliver workshops which influenced a change in attitude on an emotive issue. The approach was to focus on facts rather than opinions. The workshops covered several topics including the law in the UK relating to gender-based violence and child protection; dispelling myths about the religious underpinning of violent practices; and explaining the health implications for women and girls. For many participants, learning this information brought a change in attitude, while for a few participants, more in-depth or one-to-one discussion was appropriate. Staff were trained to ensure they had the skills needed to deliver this kind of workshop, and CIS tweaked the training content as it learned what type of approaches worked best. For example, it removed some content relating to health implications, after recognising that shock tactics do not support learning in these circumstances. It also explained that there is a difference in understanding of violence against women in different communities, so the workshops varied in content, approach and language to cater to East African, Middle Eastern and West African cohorts. The project demonstrated effectiveness in changing attitudes; for example, in the project's before and after survey, participants reported a marked reduction (33%) in support for the practice of female genital mutilation.

Relationship between learner and trainer

We received a very clear message from the learners we spoke to, across all the projects we looked at, that their relationship with the teacher was the most important factor in their learning. Young adults who participated in the **Skills for Tomorrow** project spoke enthusiastically about the staff who continued to support them long after the course was over.   Similarly, Lead Scotland said it had followed up with its learners three, six and 12 months after engagement, including those who had needed support to complete the **Everyday Computer Skills** course.

Several community-based organisations we talked to had recruited local volunteers – people who 'learn by doing'. Volunteers were drawn from the community and joined the organisation to support its work, spread the word and train and guide other learners. One organisation using this approach is Community InfoSource, which recruited volunteer community champions who supported its **Challenging Violence Against Women** project. This approach of mobilising the community can be a powerful tool in facilitating learning at a community-wide, not just individual, level. It was also reiterated to us that, given the nature of the topic, Community InfoSource staff and volunteers must be fully committed to the message to effect a change in attitude and behaviour in others.

Principle 3: What you think a community needs and what it *actually needs* can be very different things

Summary	Which means doing this	And not this
Communities can challenge your assumptions. They can tell you what they already know. They can explain about invisible barriers. They can help you understand what they need.	Asking communities what they need. They can contribute their lived experience and challenge our assumptions, biases, and privilege. Targeting education programmes at communities where there is unmet need.	Assuming we know what underserved communities need and want, without asking them. Targeting education programmes at communities which already have provision or for which there is no clear identified need.

Assumptions versus needs

In the **Hungry Little Minds** project, National Literacy Trust staff, working in Peterborough, gave a simple example of how assumptions can be challenged. They were considering different ways to ensure that their service was accessible to all communities. They had Lithuanian and Romanian volunteers who could translate some of their stories, and a contact who could create sign-language videos. They enquired about translation into Urdu or Punjabi, but staff working in the local community explained that translation wasn't needed, as young parents are generally second- or third-generation immigrants and so speak fluent English.

Lead Scotland espoused the desire to find out what people's needs are in order to design a service to meet those needs. Its '**Everyday Computer Skills'** course was co-designed with disabled people. A staff member remarked "*Genuine co-development of a product is important. I can't underscore that enough. You need to ask disabled people.   If you haven't asked them, you end up with a dud project*."

Cross Gates & District Good Neighbours' Scheme delivers **digital skills training** for people aged 60+ in Leeds. It has honed its approach by improving its understanding of what skills people actually needed to learn. Its original training model comprised a six-week progressive programme of learning. But as the learners already had pockets of knowledge, they didn't need to attend all classes on all topics; the fixed programme was too prescriptive. Instead, the Scheme introduced a 'pick and mix' approach to the topics. They found that learners would have more of a sense of agency, and feel more motivated to attend classes, if they could choose which topics they wanted to learn. Cross Gates also discovered a local need for training materials. There is a wealth of digital skills training materials online, but Cross Gates couldn't find resources which exactly matched its learners' needs. It also realised that its learners had got to know the trainer and were familiar with (and preferred) their approach and style of delivery. So Cross Gates began creating its own bespoke videos, which are hosted online for service users to access at home.

We heard many times from projects about how they tailored their services in response to demand. Bradford African Community applied to deliver the **Make Sure It Adds Up** critical thinking training

element of the project because it recognised that its community members were receiving misinformation from abroad. The realisation that this was a problem in the community was reinforced when we spoke to learners.

> "During the pandemic there was a lot of false information on social media, WhatsApp etc, Facebook etc. People were receiving a lot of messages, voice notes, videos about the virus that was going on and the negative things about Covid19 … people were anxious and bringing a lot of anxiety"
>
> *Make Sure It Adds Up learner*

Staff with the **Challenging Violence Against Women** project understood that social change is a process that affects the entire community. Men often have a controlling influence in the continuation of the practice of female genital mutilation, so it is critical that they are supported in the process of changing their own attitudes, and then in turn influencing others in their community. It is important that every member of society has a say in this process if a lasting solution is to be found.

Barriers to learning

Together TV identified that a large proportion of its viewers were vulnerable and/or lonely. It realised that to overcome this loneliness, it would have to help people overcome barriers such as a lack of self-confidence. The **Sunflower Challenge** was designed to do this. Similarly, our conversation with **Rainbow Grow** identified the barriers to learning that may be faced by people who identify as being part of the LGBTQI+ community.

Rainbow Grow[5]

Rainbow Grow is a LGBTQI+-led community gardening initiative in Hackney, East London. It provides a friendly space for members of the LGBTQI+ community to learn to grow food in an urban environment. This is a friendly, inter-generational mixed group who grow edible plants, provide gardening support within the group and to others, host social events, arrange gardening-related outings, and sometimes cook and eat together. They are interested in sharing their skills with other groups and individuals; this includes leading foraging walks, cooking healthy meals with what they grow, and making jam and preserves.

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[5] https://rainbowgrowhackney.wordpress.com/

> "It's probably easier to walk into a gardening group than into a club. One of the young people said he'd never met a gay man over the age of 25"
>
> - Rainbow Grow founder

Members come from across London (although travel time can be a barrier), and the project's specific nature makes it an inclusive and welcoming space. It was pointed out to us that many projects and initiatives aimed at the LGBTQI+ community focus on what might be described as 'issues' such as mental health or homelessness. And for many, social events like drag nights or discos can be very intimidating. A gardening group fills a gap in the provision.

Figure 4: Banner for the Rainbow Grow project

There may be limited opportunities for people who feel isolated, and who identify as LGBTQI+, to meet others. For example, older people may not want to go to a club, and younger people may not have anyone in their family or local community who identifies as part of this community. Rainbow Grow helps to bring community members together. It is inter-generational and works with other LGBTQI+ support groups, for example with younger people.

Principle 4: Communities won't listen to people they don't know or trust

Summary	Which means doing this	And not this
Communities are more open to learning from organisations with which they already have a trusting relationship.	Delivering education programmes via partner organisations which have a trusted relationship with an underserved community and can demonstrate competence in delivering against the principles in this document.	Choosing a partner to deliver education programmes which does not have a relationship with an underserved community and cannot demonstrate competence in the key principles of this document.

Shared identity

In doing this research, it very quicky became apparent that the choice of provider of a learning intervention is of particular importance.   People who do not know or trust the provider will not be receptive to learning from them.   For example, we heard from young adults who had completed the Skills for Tomorrow course about how a shared sense of identity had encouraged them to get involved.

> "If he can do it, I can do it"
>
> "It definitely helps that they were closer to my age"
>
> *Skills for Tomorrow learners*

Skills for Tomorrow (Birmingham Enterprise Community)[6]
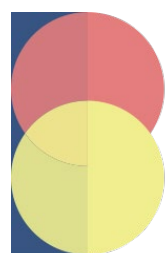
Birmingham Enterprise Community (BEC) is a social enterprise aiming to empower emerging entrepreneurs to help them build innovative businesses that will work towards solving the world's problems.   In June 2020, BEC launched the Skills for Tomorrow project' to provide post-Covid skills development support for young adults.   The project was targeted at those aged 18-30, as current research showed that 23% of this group had been furloughed, with a further 9% losing their jobs.   Young people leaving education were entering a job market with the highest levels of youth unemployment in a generation. Funded by Innovate UK, the Skills for Tomorrow Project aimed to upskill young adults by taking them through a virtual month-long development programme designed to help build key entrepreneurial skills.

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[6] https://www.birminghamenterprisecommunity.co.uk/uncategorized/birmingham-enterprise-community-launches-skills-for-tomorrow-project-to-provide-post-covid-skill-development-support-for-young-people/

The project included expert-led workshops, group mentoring and access to a range of digital learning materials. It was designed with two outcomes in mind. Participants would gain a basic understanding of entrepreneurship which they could use to explore starting their own businesses. And having been upskilled, they would also have increased their employability and would be better able to look for opportunities to use these new skills in the workplace.

Learners explained how the trainer on the course challenged their misconceptions about the type of person who is an entrepreneur. The trainer was about the same age as the learners, with the same kind of background. This shared identity had a positive impact on learners: "*It was like, maybe this is a thing I can do!*" (Skills for Tomorrow learner).

The project aimed to cater for young adults whose career opportunities had been affected by the pandemic, irrespective of background. So potential learners included recent and current students, people who were working in fairly junior roles, budding entrepreneurs and people who had been made redundant. The project team knew that young people are interested in starting their own businesses, and that entrepreneurial skills can help with employability, so the course was designed to support both young entrepreneurs and those who would benefit from gaining entrepreneurial skills. In practice this meant tweaking the marketing language for the project to avoid using terminology that might deter a potential learner from identifying with the course (such as the word 'entrepreneur'). We can see that the language in the marketing materials focuses on skills for the future.

Figure 5: Marketing materials for Skills For Tomorrow project

> "I didn't really think of myself as an entrepreneur, more as a freelancer."
>
> *Skills for Tomorrow learner*

The course itself had to be practical enough to enable people to go out and start their own business, but also evidence-based, so that they could showcase their skills to a potential employer. With other

programmes, BEC uses a group mentoring approach, but the potential for participants to learn from each other was less viable in this project because the learners may have to apply their skills in a very diverse range of situations.

Trusted relationship

Staff at Horsham Matters **Budget Support Service** explained that there must be a route to creating a relationship with the community, and that this might be via a partner agency that already knows the clients well. In practice, the Community Household Budget Advisors proactively engage with the community. They visit each foodbank regularly and talk to foodbank users while they are choosing their food items, to broach conversations about budgeting.

> "I attend the hub at least once a week, and once a month I'll go to every other location as well. That's just so that people become familiar with my face"
>
> "Some clients you can't ask questions – they'll cage up. Sometimes it will take two or three months"
>
> *Budget Support Service staff, Horsham Matters*

We also heard about how important trust in the provider has been in Bradford, where learners got involved in '**Make Sure It Adds Up'**, an example of community-led learning.

Make Sure It Adds Up (Bradford for Everyone and Bradford African Community[7])

The Bradford for Everyone programme is led by the Stronger Communities team at Bradford Council and is overseen by an independent partnership board. The programme's **Make Sure It Adds Up** campaign[8] aims to get more people in the Bradford area to practise and promote critical thinking when receiving and sharing uncertain information, either online, in person, or via instant messaging. Its overarching aim is to reduce hate crime and improve the lives of people in local communities, as part of Bradford District's Anti Rumour and Critical Thinking strategy.

Bradford for Everyone partnered with a behavioural change specialist to develop the campaign and the training[9]. The overall approach was to promote critical thinking in a way that supported positive diversity, with the focus on reducing the spreading of rumours, rather than by (for example) 'myth busting' or shaming people for believing misinformation. The process involved identifying rumours

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[7] https://bradfordafrican.co.uk/

[8] https://bradfordforeveryone.co.uk/make-sure-it-adds-up/

[9] See Principle 2: Behaviour change is a process, not a transaction, for other examples of projects using behavioural science

e.g., in relation to marginalised groups; developing campaigns to raise awareness of critical thinking; and identifying key people who could help spread the message. Importantly, we heard that for a learning intervention to be successful, it must be delivered by people who are part of the community or have a trusted relationship with it.   To that end, Bradford for Everyone identified local ambassadors: organisations that could get involved in creating the resource and in delivering it.
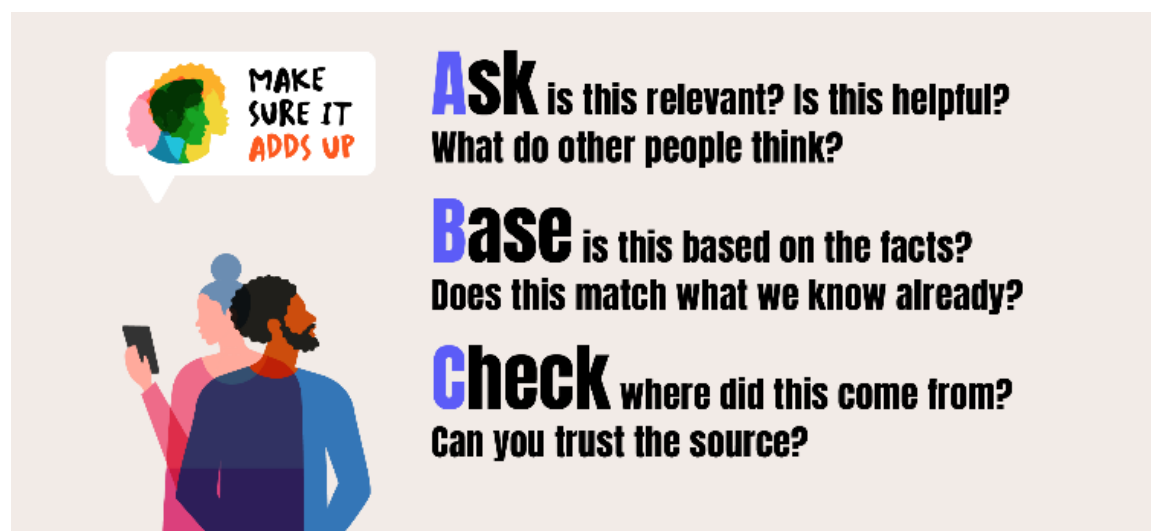

Figure 6: Campaign and training materials for the Make Sure It Adds Up project

One ambassador organisation receiving funding and support was Bradford African Community (BAC). BAC aims to develop the capacity and skills of members of the African, refugee and other disadvantaged communities in Bradford and Yorkshire, in such a way that they are better able to identify and help meet their needs and participate more fully in society. The BAC team was able to empathise authentically when engaging learners, including having challenging conversations, because it was part of that community and could say "These issues affect all of us". It was a community-led approach.

Evaluation of the course found that most learners felt they had a further understanding of diversity and fewer negative personal beliefs as a result. Most learners believed that the course would directly reduce hate crime and bullying. We asked learners if they had spread the knowledge to their friends and family, so that the community as a whole could learn:

> "Yes, that's why the group is bigger now and includes other people."
>
> "I got my husband and brother to join in so they could listen in and get the info first-hand from a professional"
>
> *Make Sure It Adds Up learners*

Principle 5: Empowered communities are learning communities

Summary	Which means doing this	And not this
Empower communities to localise the learning by exploiting local assets, structures, people, and processes. Create or use existing inclusive, trusted environments, online and offline. This could also mean embedding the learning into other programmes of work and considering novel ways to sustain learning. This should be set within a local leadership structure and with sound governance arrangements.	Enabling flexibility in provision, so that communities can translate desired programme outcomes into local solutions, using local assets. Being open to exploring a variety of delivery models while ensuring sound governance arrangements. Harnessing or creating inclusive, accessible environments (online and offline) where people can learn from each other.	Treating communities as passive recipients of information rather than active participants in their own learning. Creating a rigid education programme which cannot be tailored to different community needs and is inaccessible to the community. Allowing communities to create their own solutions without sufficient governance to align with the overall programme outcomes. Making no effort to create environments (online or offline) that are inclusive.

Community assets

We heard of many examples where community assets were identified and exploited to deliver a learning intervention. Good Things Foundation is an organisation which demonstrates openness to supporting any delivery mechanism that will achieve the desired outcomes.

Digital Skills for Older People, Good Things Foundation[10] and Cross Gates & District Good Neighbours' Scheme[11] CIO

Good Things Foundation (Good Things) is a charity registered in England and Wales with a vision of a world in which everyone benefits from digital. Good Things partners with communities via its Online Centres Network, a group of hyper-local partner organisations embedded in communities. Good Things funds digital skills transfer via different types of services that are appropriate for each community. These include many different types of organisation, from small charities and community learning centres to larger training centres, libraries, adult education etc., and teaching ranges from outreach, one-to-ones, and drop-ins to more formal courses. They all deliver digital inclusion support, in an environment that is accessible to local people. Staff told us to "*avoid that school thing*", i.e., there are barriers to engagement if the learning feels like formal

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[10] https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/the-digital-divide/digital-inclusion-in-communities/

[11] https://crossgatesgns.org.uk/news_events/youre-never-too-old-to-learn/

education. This can be apparent in the choice of location, but also in the language used, e.g., talking about 'taking a test'.

> "They must do some kind of digital inclusion work… One online centre is a fish and chip shop which has developed a digital support café in it. Others are pop-up centres especially in more rural areas where people are more spread out. They even use Wetherspoon pubs as a place to support digital skills."
>
> *Good Things Foundation staff member*

Cross Gates & District Good Neighbours' Scheme CIO is a charitable incorporated organisation which works with and for older people in the Cross Gates area of Leeds. It supports people by helping to reduce their loneliness and isolation, promoting independence, healthy lifestyles and trying new things.   It delivers digital skills training for people aged 60+, supported by the Good Things Foundation and by local programmes such as 100% Digital Leeds.   The staff explained that 'older people' represents a wide age range. Although they deliver services to people aged 60+, most of the learners are in their 70s and 80s. They may have retired before internet technologies took off at work, or they may use some technology but are out of touch with the latest developments, or they find that they are being forced to use technology because services have moved online: "*I've got a new guy who has an old desktop, and he was saying 'I don't have a smartphone'. He said everything's on* apps now. Lidl's supermarket, he can't get a discount now because it's on the app." (Cross Gates staff member).

We also heard about the importance of having a supportive network to help with learning. Younger family members can be so concerned about risks such as fraud that they dissuade their older relations from using technology. *"They're told not to touch anything, not to click anything. They think they're going to get charged all the time".* Staff told us they hear of family members who prefer to undertake digital activities on behalf of an older person, rather than teach them how to do it. This was echoed by the learners we spoke to:

> "They [Cross Gates staff] don't treat us like morons or idiots."
>
> "If you need anything, they [Cross Gates staff] have time"
>
> "I've got a smartphone, and I don't like my husband or daughter telling me what to do"
>
> *Cross Gates learners*

This idea of a 'supportive network' also translates to the role of trainers and fellow learners in helping with learning. Staff and learners talked about the need to have a good ratio of teachers to learners, to have relatively small class sizes and to put people of mixed ability together in a class so they can teach each other. Learners also explained about the importance of the digital skills training being available in their local area, and about learning new things that were useful to them, so they kept coming back for more:

> "We're on a good bus route or a 20-minute walk. And thanks to [the trainer]
> I sometimes book a flexibus. You book it, and it's lovely, the drivers are
> friendly… You book it on an app."
>
> *Cross Gates learner*

Place-based delivery

A place-based approach involves taking coordinated action at a local level, investing in long-term commitment to working in an area, based on the principles of collective impact. This is about working in partnership with local organisations, communities and individuals on initiatives which meet the unique needs of a local area. The National Literacy Trust operates a series of community hubs across the UK, taking a place-based approach.

Hungry Little Minds[12], National Literacy Trust[13]

The National Literacy Trust (NLT) is a charity registered in England, Wales and Scotland, dedicated to giving disadvantaged children the literacy skills they need to succeed. This includes establishing literacy projects in the poorest communities across England. NLT delivers early-years parenting literacy activities in partnership with the Department for Education's Hungry Little Minds: Local Communities Programme.

> *"This idea of working in partnership locally, understanding the barriers and challenges
> for the environment and also really understanding the strengths that exist. You need to
> be on the ground, working directly in communities to be able to do this."*
>
> *National Literacy Trust staff member*

The programme uses a place-based approach to support the UK Government's priority to halve the number of children who leave the Early Years Foundation Stage without achieving the expected level of development in 'communication and language' and 'literacy'. The programme uses a behavioural model[14] which says that three factors must be present for a behaviour change intervention to be successful: opportunity, capability and motivation. For example, the model seeks to change parents' behaviour in supporting their child's language and literacy, through:

- Providing more *opportunities* for parents to do more chat, play and read behaviours.
- Increasing the *capabilities* of parents by improving their confidence to undertake these learning behaviours with their child.
- Increasing parents' *motivation* to improve their children's literacy skills.

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[12] https://hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk/
[13] https://literacytrust.org.uk/communities/
[14] For more information about behavioural science approaches, see Principle 2: Behaviour change is a process, not a transaction

Parents told us about the importance of staff and volunteers being friendly, non-judgmental, and approachable. Recognising the power of this relationship in reinforcing learning, the Trust tweaked its approach, to focus on having a greater impact on a smaller number of people. Previously, it had set up a stall with free books/packs which parents could pick up and take away in passing, and although this reached a large number of parents, it wasn't clear that this approach was influencing behaviour change. So, the Trust switched to giving out the books on request. This meant that it could have a conversation with a parent and their child about the book and introduce some of the concepts of literacy. In this model, it reached fewer parents but had a deeper impact on those it engaged with. Parents told us that after following the programme, they understood the importance of young children's literacy skills, and had changed their behaviour, integrating literacy into their engagement with their young children.

> "Previously I was doing a bit every now and again but not as purposefully... now I know it's important so build it into the routine"
>
> "It's definitely important to read whatever age so they get used to it. Since I met [National Literacy Trust] I know this"
>
> *Hungry Little Minds learners (parents)*

Evaluation of the programme found that best practice comprised the following (summarised):

1. Common agenda: a strategic plan, using a theory of change, based on consultation and research with the local community.
2. Shared measurement: an agreed evaluation framework with data collected and shared to influence decision-making locally.
3. Partnership approach: mutually reinforcing activities by public, corporate and third sectors, with robust governance and clear accountability between partners and frontline staff with the relevant skills, knowledge and confidence.
4. Communications: continuous communication with stakeholders. All partners communicate the same vision and with consistent messaging.
5. Backbone support organisation: strong and visible local leadership at a senior level.
6. Medium-term commitment: sustainability of the project over a medium-term period.
7. Community involvement: community steering group and evidence of significant influence from community consultation.

Embedding into other initiatives

Learning interventions don't have to be specially arranged training events. In addition to running a workshop on critical thinking as part of **Make Sure It Adds Up**, Bradford African Community integrated critical thinking into other topics in its programme of learning. For example, it tackled 'gender misinformation' in its workshops on violence against women. This is a useful example of embedding a topic that then becomes a significant lever in sustaining the learning.

Inclusive environments, online and offline

We talked to project staff about the different techniques they use to make sure the learning environment feels inclusive.

There are a number of ways in which inclusivity can be achieved. One aspect to consider is the way the intervention is delivered – online or face to face. Lead Scotland staff involved in the **Everyday Computer Skills** course explained how they supplemented online learning with face-to-face contact when required. Some individuals can complete the online learning by themselves, and others benefit from one-to-one support. The **Skills for Tomorrow** project was initially delivered online including live lessons, but staff noted that it was more difficult to identify (and therefore deal with) a learner who was feeling disengaged. It is also more difficult to address issues such as self-confidence with a learner if you can only communicate with them online. The **Household Budget Support** service from Horsham Matters was initiated at about the same time that the first lockdown was imposed.   Staff met one-to-one with individuals over Zoom, but quickly found that the video conferencing format was too intrusive for a conversation in which a vulnerable person was revealing detailed content about their personal finances. This was compounded by connectivity issues for those living in rural areas. They therefore switched from video to phone calls.

On the other hand, the National Literacy Trust switched to online delivery of its **Hungry Little Minds** project during lockdown and found it worked well. They delivered weekly online book readings and gained a significant following.

The **Make Sure It Adds Up** project used WhatsApp to build a thriving community. WhatsApp was chosen because it is a widely used app that most of the community would already be familiar with; it is often used to maintain contact with family abroad. The app facilitates two-way communications – for example, people share something they've seen online, and others comment about whether they feel it is trustworthy or not.   The project team and others regularly share voice notes on the app, as this is an easy way to provide content translated into different languages and ensure the information is accessible to people who cannot read. Learners told us about how much they appreciated the WhatsApp group:

> "As soon as they have any info that is helpful to the community, they always pop it in there. Every day you will see someone posting something in there"
>
> "The more people shared, the more people wanted to share their experiences"
>
> "It's really helpful because we have different languages, and other people wanted to listen in Arabic or Sudanese. But we always have interpreters"
>
> *Make Sure It Adds Up learners*

Another organisation which created an inclusive online community is the Innovate Trust, with its Insight app.

Insight App (Innovate Trust)
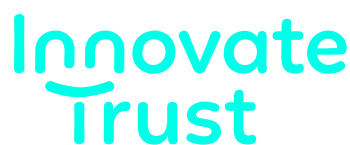
Innovate Trust is a Welsh charity that provides support and guidance to people with learning disabilities, as well as people with mental health challenges and physical impairments. It runs student volunteer projects supporting elderly, young, disadvantaged and vulnerable members of the local community.

The Trust developed a bespoke social app for supported people, called Insight App. This was originally developed as a mechanism for enabling supported people to share information (a 'digital diary') about their activities, and their health and wellbeing, with their friends, family and support network. When the pandemic hit, supported people couldn't access day services or other support, and the Innovate Trust realised that it could expand the functionality of the app to help with these problems. The app was changed from purely information-sharing to a place where people could access activities and be socially connected: an online community hub. The app allows individuals to communicate with family, friends and peers, and join in online groups and activities. They can attend live events or watch pre-recorded videos such as a cookery class, arts and crafts, learning Welsh, Tai Chi, music therapy and live book readings. The app has a news feed and daily challenges like designing a poster or making a fun-flavour ice cream. There are over 250 groups on the app, ranging from advocacy services to gardening.

> "We don't want to limit anyone to be able to access this"
>
> *Innovate Trust staff member*

One way in which the app engages with its members is an ideas page where community members can make their own suggestions. People suggest improvements to the functionality of the app as well as activities they would like to do or new services they'd like to see on the app. As a staff member explained "*We didn't want to build something that people have to figure out. We said, this is the bare bones and let's develop it as a community.*" There is a peer-led team that helps develop the app and does regular surveys of users to gather feedback.

Innovate Trust provides demonstrations of the app, and helps to digitally upskill employees and partner staff, who in turn support service users and their families. They found that professionals themselves are not always confident in using technology, so it was important to have a clear, shared vision about why the app is so important, so that they would *want* to learn the skills they needed. It was also critical to ensure that the professionals had their own support network to help them learn and gain confidence.

The project team discovered there can be an assumption that service users don't have the internet, or don't have a device/connectivity. But most users have access to technology (particularly as devices were supplied during the pandemic), so actually the barriers to access are mainly to do with digital skills. And the focus of digital skills support tends to be on activities such as 'how to search on Google' or 'how to watch out for spam email' when people may need more foundational learning

e.g. how to download an app and how to register an account on it: "*People don't realise you can Google <u>anything</u>*" (this is further evidence of Principle 3: What you think a community needs, and what they actually need, can be very different things).

Vulnerable users can be at increased risk online[15], so mainstream social media apps may not be seen as safe spaces for communities such as Innovate Trust members.   Creating a bespoke platform for this vulnerable group is an innovative development, and the <u>comments from service users, volunteers and staff</u> underline the positive impact it has made. Managing a social media space brings its own challenges in ensuring the safety and security of users. The Trust assesses the risk and has a team to manage the community. Access to the app is by invitation only; it is not open to the public to join at will.   The Trust has built in features to the app to help identify inappropriate posts and check shared images, and it receives external support to test the app, while acknowledging that it can never be 100% safe.

Collaboration is an important aspect of this project. Innovate Trust originally created the app for use only by its own members, but the approach was about improving quality of life rather than competing with other service providers: "*All these providers were providing a service which wasn't accessible at that point [during the pandemic], because they couldn't take them to a dance class*". So, the Trust invited the local authorities, across the three geographical areas that it covers in Wales, to get involved. The app has now been adopted not only in Wales but across the whole of the UK.

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[15] https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/tags/vulnerable-children/

Principle 6: Support community-led innovation through flexible delivery

Summary	Which means doing this	And not this
Finding out what works best involves trying new approaches and being prepared to learn from mistakes.	Agree an appetite for risk which enables a proportionate approach to evidence/evaluation without stifling flexibility and innovation. Facilitating learning and evaluating what works. For example, using pathfinders to develop and test theories of change.	Relying on a cautious risk appetite. Always denying funding to projects that can't demonstrate substantial existing evidence or measurable outcomes. Sticking with a delivery model whether it's effective or not.

Pathfinding

Using a pathfinder approach can help to build evidence of what works. We heard about the important work of Horsham Matters in supporting foodbank users to better manage their household budgets.

Horsham Budget Support (Horsham Matters)[16]

Horsham Matters is a Christian charity that aims to relieve hardship through the provision of essential services (food, fuel and shelter) to make a positive, long-lasting impact on people's lives. The charity provides crisis support and a foodbank service, but also aims to help its clients tackle the root causes of their financial hardship. Their household budget support service helps people to maximise their income, review their expenditure and work towards a sustainable budget, and also points them towards other useful services.

Horsham Matters is trying a new approach to foodbank services; it is a 'pathfinder' for the Trussell Trust, which has backed it with a three-year funding agreement, to give the charity sufficient time to embed itself and to evaluate the new way of working. The new approach is a move away from the provision of pre-packed food boxes to a supermarket-style foodbank service with accompanying budget support. Staff explained that around 40% of foodbank clients are single adults, many of whom have mental health challenges that can impede their capacity to budget. Providing pre-

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[16] https://www.horsham-matters.org.uk/copy-of-horsham-foodbank

packed food boxes responds to the primary need to avoid hunger but does not meet other needs, addressing which may ultimately help someone move out of food poverty. In the pathfinder service, people can choose their own food items. This approach reduces waste and also gives back a sense of agency to people using the foodbank. And the accompanying budget support service helps people regain a sense of control over their finances. There was a risk in trying this new approach; the first time the charity opened the new venue, no-one turned up.   But it has now closed the old-style foodbank because nobody was using it.

The Budget Support Service is available to people who are referred from partner agencies and is offered to people attending the foodbank or receiving other services from Horsham Matters. The Community Household Budget Advisor approaches people and explains the service. If someone wants support, a phone meeting is set up to discuss their situation in detail. The Advisor explained to us that there has been some learning along the way about how to keep people engaged with the service; for example, people are no longer asked to send in their bank statement but can instead talk through it over the phone.

Both staff and a service user talked to us about the importance of building a trusted relationship.

> "When you're having a conversation with a client, just having the listening skills and the people skills for people to open up to you. And you say you're going to do something and you follow through and you get it done."
>
> *Horsham Matters staff*
>
> "Even though you think you know, right, it's good to also have someone to talk to. [The staff member] was like, not a counsellor, but someone to have a bit of a sound off to… So now if I ever phone up the foodbank, I ask for [them]"
>
> *Household Budget Support* service user

The service user explained that normally they would be wary of giving out any banking information, for fear of fraud. They also commented that when they met the advisor, they were keen to impress them with their own reality: that they really had tried everything but were still having genuine difficulties managing their household budget. It was important to them that they felt trusted.

Staff explained that they improved the budget support service so that it became more streamlined from the service user's perspective. For example, if someone contacts the service and needs additional support from Citizens' Advice, they are put straight through to them. Staff said the service must be "*accessible, discreet and promoted broadly*".

> "Make sure that a place of learning is a place of mistake-making. Because that's where the learning comes"
>
> *Rainbow Grow staff member*

Principle 7: The funding model can make or break a programme of learning

Summary	Which means doing this	And not this
Avoid the allure of funding only urgent activities or short-term measurable outputs. Medium- to long-term preventive work can be difficult to measure but delivers sustained outcomes. Inclusion means being prepared to fund the removal of barriers to learning. It's easier to measure processes and outputs, but that approach risks failing to deliver outcomes. Evaluation must be proportionate to project size.	Creating an outcomes-focused funding model (medium- to long-term funding) which is informed by community engagement, recognises the cost of removing barriers to learning, and is aligned with the principles in this document. Creating programme targets and an evaluation mechanism which focus on outcomes that are meaningful at a local level i.e., the difference for individuals and communities over the medium to long term.	Creating a short-term funding model which has not been informed by community engagement and does not align with an outcomes-focused change process or the principles in this document. Creating programme targets that do not factor in barriers to learning at an individual or community level. Prioritising efficiency over outcomes (e.g., focus on getting as many attendees trained in as short a time as possible). Putting in place burdensome, rigid evaluation requirements irrespective of local applicability or the amount of funding received by a project.

Outcomes and evaluation

Cross Gates (digital skills training for people aged 60+) found that for some national funding programmes, the evidence, outcomes, and evaluation criteria do not align with clients' needs at a local level. This could be because the funding programme creators have not engaged with local delivery partners or communities to get the outcomes right:

"People are coming up with the money … They'll come up with a contract between themselves which sounds really good, but they talk to us about it".

"The expectations of some of our contracts e.g., our contract was maybe four sessions and one of the outcomes is to use the [specific] app. It takes so many sessions to get to that stage"

"Some of the [outcomes] are not what that person wants to learn. They want to learn email, shopping, Facebook etc"

"We had to evidence what I'd done with these people, and it wasn't inclusive. We had to ask people financial questions e.g. benefits, low income, and those didn't match my members"

Cross Gates staff member

They contrasted this approach with local funding (for example, local authority and partners). In this case, funding is provided based on trust and a working history, so the delivery organisation is empowered to apply the funding in ways that will best serve its community.

Funding cycle

Changing behaviour is a slow process. Horsham Matters staff explained the importance of receiving three-year funding from the Trussell Trust for their pathfinder work, and that in return they are building an evidence base of what works. Short-term funding cycles cannot deliver longer-term change. We heard this message from several of the projects we talked to, such as the National Literacy Trust staff talking about **Hungry Little Minds** and early-years literacy work. They explained that short-term measurable activities which respond to immediate need are attractive to funders. This is because there is an urgency to respond to problems, and the response activities are clear and measurable. Longer-term, preventive or outcome-focused projects (which will do important work in reducing future need) are neither time-critical nor easily measurable. Such projects may introduce governance and evaluation challenges as they extend over several funding cycles. Positive outcomes may not be achieved for years. These projects are therefore less attractive to funders:

> It feels fluffy. It never feels urgent enough. Early years were an afterthought. It needs minimum 3-5-year funding"
>
> *National Literacy Trust staff member*

The research team evaluating that programme produced a logic model which was used to inform the development of an evaluation framework[Error! Bookmark not defined.]. Presenting a framework helps to show that there is a process in place to achieve outcomes that cannot be delivered immediately.

Deep learning

Cross Gates staff confirmed that funding programmes can fall short of what is needed when working with vulnerable communities. They reiterated that the estimates of time/efficiency often don't match learner needs; for example, funding an average of four lessons per learner, when a single learner might need 20 lessons. This has parallels with the approach taken by Hungry Little Minds, whereby National Literacy Trust staff focused on deeper one-to-one engagement with a smaller number of parents, rather than a light-touch delivery with a larger cohort of parents. Individual impact is important; the right balance must be struck between efficiency and the outcomes of a project.

> "Funding completely influences what we deliver"
>
> *Cross Gates staff member*

Lead Scotland staff also commented that the unit cost per learner can be high. This is echoed by a Good Things Foundation evaluation of whether funding matches need:

> *Current levels of FDI* [Future Digital Inclusion] *funding may be too low to support those with the highest levels of need. Helping learners who are offline to develop digital skills is*

resource intensive and becomes more so if learners have especially low skills and confidence. Greater need for one-to-one support and overall support time correlates with factors including age, lower educational attainment, unemployment, and not speaking good English.[17]

It is also recognised that the structure of funding can be restrictive. For example, local delivery partners are relied upon to provide the 'soft skills' to support learners, but there is no funding for this. Partners may need to bring in volunteers to deliver additional support. Good Things Foundation has begun pooling resources to provide flexibility to its delivery partners in how they can make use of their funds.

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[17] Future Digital Inclusion: delivering basic digital skills for those in need, Good Things Foundation, June 2019. https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/insights/digital-skills-for-those-in-need/