Contents

Workshop A:
Digital Inclusion, Reach, Engagement and Retention pre and post Covid

On the 26th November, in the Zoom room we had funders/commissioners, policymakers, delivery partners and members of our Older People's Committee and we wanted to hear from all sides to gather a range of viewpoints. We asked attendees to consider the whole Connect Hackney programme, when answering the following:

To ensure digital platforms and services are designed and best enabled to be digitally accessible, what do funders and commissioners need to consider and put in place?

Digital property and accessibility
- Consideration needs to be given to lack of/provision for digital property in funding; this can include Wi-Fi, data allowance or dongles.
- There needs to be greater thought to the complexity of people's different needs within that – and how this can be covered in a funding application. For example, how to accommodate differences in accessibility, data allowances, and different devices (some people do not own smart phones and so do not have access to Zoom, WhatsApp). Funders need to be willing to offer flexibility in delivery modes to meet individual accessibility needs – with costs per head encouraged.
- There needs to be easier communication and better awareness of new accessible and successful alternatives that work for this age group (>50), such as SPARKO (social networking platform accessible via TV).

- Funders and providers need to be adaptable and understand how new alternative technologies such as SPARKO work and what is required to support their roll out.
- It's important to cultivate an open dialogue between funders and providers about new workable solutions so funding can be responsive, supportive and flexible to needs, so as to optimise impact, adopting for example a 'test and learn' approach as is the case for Connect Hackney funded activities

Language and literacy

- Literacy issues uncovered during the pandemic have not been satisfactorily addressed. We need to give thought to how we support people struggling with literacy issues and feeling shame around that.
- Translation needs and challenges to reaching ethnically diverse groups who may speak English as a second language or not at all need to be included in the funding/commissioning strategy, to ensure an inclusive and accessible model for all.

Awareness of time intensity of service delivery

- Older people often need a lot of one to one support and repetition and patience, and so projects can be significantly more time intensive than working with other groups, particularly when staff are working remotely; this needs to be factored into funding programme budget allocations.

Listening to older people and providers

- Older peoples' voices could have greater placement in wider funding and commissioning tables, so their needs and challenges around digital inclusion are more fully understood and catered for from conception of the funding criteria to project selection.
- A committee of digital inclusion providers could also help ensure funded bids are responsive and realistically supportive of the needs on the ground.

Some older people don't want to engage digitally

- We need to be aware that people who do not want to go online might become even more isolated. Careful consideration around how to cater for these people needs to be on the funders' radar and integrated into their funding/commissioning strategies.

What could be done differently to ensure that local policies are designed to best enable older people to access online services and connect to online communities and make friends?

Consulting with providers and service users

- Policymakers should involve providers more in decision making. Language is often an issue and not always taken into consideration.
- Also involve service users in problem solving and developing appropriate solutions.

Collaboration and sharing of resources

- Forthcoming policy strategy includes a lot around digital inclusion, and a commitment to it especially for older people; but, the challenge is how to put policy and strategy into action. There is money but there are challenges in training people if you can't sit with them to train them how to use the technology.
- We need improved communication that captures and shares learning across projects and organisations - pulling ideas together, as well as a directory of support available, so that people are aware of what's out there. There are a lot of groups offering support (and this needs to be shared, promoted and supported, for example a through and up to date sign-posting portal/resource).

Accessibility

- More thought needs to be given to accessibility –ensuring information is not just in the right language, but is easily shareable, in the right format and size, so it is easy read, people know what's available and how they can access it.
- Language is often an issue and not always taken into consideration. Guidance, advice and information sharing should be offered in multiple languages; and providers/service users that are native speakers with relevant experience should be consulted to ensure translated materials are technically correct, and will be understood correctly by their intended audience.

Infrastructure

- Infrastructure needs development on a borough-wide approach. Libraries are often the only point for many to get free online access and this is not enough, and many libraries have closed. Libraries need to be better funded, and there needs to be more resources, and policy needs to be enabling access/infrastructure borough wide.
- There needs to be an acceptance that technology needs to be funded properly- could be cross-sectional - bringing on board the private sector in order to get technology in people's hands is key – via for example private sector gifting / corporate responsibility.
- It's then important to make sure providers know about what's on offer so that they can better support their participants to feel more connected.
- Social housing providers need to be worked into strategy, and need to move towards providing access to WiFi.

After what you've heard today is there anything you would want to change about the delivery of your project/service that could make it easier for older people access online services?

- Making an assessment of digital skills/access at the start when people join or are being referred.
- Factoring in more time when building bids so that we can tailor to participant's needs where required.
- Ensuring invites to ZOOM meetings are simplified to encourage people to join online

Systems Change and Partnership Working

Coproduction and Partnership Working - a definition:

Co-production refers to the process of citizens and professionals working together in an equal and reciprocal relationship to achieve common goals. Enhancing the skills and knowledge of both parties, adding value through the generation of long-term assets (individual, organisational and community), new insights, and social relations.
(Salisbury, 2020)

On the 26th November, in the Zoom room we had funders/commissioners, policymakers, delivery partners and members of our Older People's Committee and we wanted to hear from all sides to gather a range of viewpoints. We asked attendees to consider the whole Connect Hackney project, when answering the following:

What has the impact been for older people?

Forming new connections
- Enabled new relationships to be formed, amidst a hugely diverse population – with projects providing a hook based on the activity, or simply the opportunity to meet new people

Increased digital skills
- Provided an opportunity for some older people to learn new digital skills as projects transitioned online in response to government restrictions due to C-19. This has opened a new world to people who previously were limited in their ability to attend face-to-face activities – need to continue a multi-model approach of face-to-face and online

Coproduction approach has led to increased confidence
- An opportunity to build confidence from coproducing projects, working together [with providers and other older people] e.g. Connect Hackney Media Group
- Having older people in the lead should be something that projects and services are measured against, with targets set – both in terms of volunteering, but also within staff resources

- Important to understand what coproduction means for older people – how do they define it, and how can the perceived benefits be sold to older people so that the benefits can be more widely experienced?

How can Connect Hackney better influence services design, and how they are delivered for older people?

- Building connections is what makes the difference
- Conversations informed by the learning, rather than the learning itself is what influences service improvements; allowing new relationships between providers to be established
- Online conversations throughout the pandemic have been necessary – but face-to-face opportunities are essential e.g. networking

Effective communication
- Films are a really effective and powerful tool to convey learning, and amplify older people's voice
- Older Peoples Committee cited as critical mechanism for directing the programme, with wider potential e.g. delivering Ageing Well strategy

Online delivery significant development for those unable to leave home
- CH projects which have been delivered online have demonstrated a significant development for tackling loneliness and isolation – if services are to be equally accessible, then extra resources need to be provided that enable providers to deliver multi-model delivery models.

Need to think long-term
- CH projects such as the Community Connectors, which offers 12 sessions, owes the success it has with project participants to the amount of sessions participants are afforded – particularly for OP experiencing extreme isolation
- CH commissioning approach of long-term commissioning allow projects to develop and adapt to their target beneficiaries – but also provide assurance to the community that it's a reliable service – critical for OP who have experienced long-term isolation

Adopting a person-centred approach

- Ensuring that services work to meet people where they are in their journey, offering the flexibility to adjust as the needs of the service user adapts e.g. Community Connectors, provides home visits and also introduced group activities which allowed the provider to tailor the individual service, providing 1:1 support longer for those that needed it, transitioning those who made progress quicker into group activities, maximising staff resources
- Working at a hyper-local level, ensuring that services were accessible to where people are, allowing both physical and psychological barriers associated with needing/wanting to remain local to be overcome

How can the system work more efficiently and effectively for the benefit of older people?

Expand our thinking about partnership working

- More opportunities to bring participants together – volunteers have a 'positive curiosity' about other groups, and the system should look to facilitate

Hyper-local and asset based approach

- First step for receiving support needs to be close to home; but only works if organisations know what's on offer, and where
- Identify community champions – trusted local people who are able to signpost to community activities / provide a linking role between providers

Communication and outreach

- Word-of-mouth is key to delivering a hyper-local approach – building outreach into service design, be prepared to knock-on doors and speak to people
- Hosting 'Well-being' days, inviting providers and the community to come together e.g. Winter Warmer

Increase joined-up services

- A need to ensure services are joining up with more adopting a person-centred approach, taking account of the holistic needs of an individual, taking responsibility for building links with referral partners

- More (face-to-face) opportunities for provider to make connections and find out what services are available, and how they cross refer
- Think beyond services, ensuring that community spaces are available to those who just want to be able to be in the community e.g. read the paper in the library, community garden etc