Digital Inclusion Research and Pilot Project at The Grange, Camphill Village Trust, Newnham

Working together in collaboration were
FVAF, Camphill Village Trust & The Shalom Network

Collaboration:

The people involved in the Digital Inclusion Project live in Grange Village and Oaklands Park which are two communities within Camphill Village Trust in the Forest of Dean. People who live in Camphill Village Trust are people with a learning disability, Autism and some experience different levels of mental health.

15 people first met with Janet Hawkins (Camphill Village Trust) and Alex Digby from the Forest Voluntary Action Forum in December 2022. The group shared their experiences and struggles in using digital technology. From the information gained from the discussion/consultation, the group were then asked to choose the main themes that they would like to learn and focus on. Alex asked Miriam Goldby from The Shalom Network to become involved along with Chris Plumber from a Digital inclusion charity in Cinderford.

Research Workshops – Phase 1: March – June 2023

In phase one of the project – the research phase, we ran six sessions with between 8 & 12 people, numbers fluctuated throughout these sessions.

There were 3 people involved in the delivery of this phase. 1 co-ordinating the session content & delivery (Miriam Goldby), 1 who knew all the people involved and inputted into the course content and producing Easy read materials (Janet Hawkins) and 1 person responsible in sorting out the technical issues of the equipment as they arose (Chris Plumber).

Some of the people who live in Grange Village and Oaklands Park had not used a computer or tablet/iPad before. There are others who had used digital devices before and wanted to learn how to be safe online.

Most people who attended the sessions did not grow up using technology such as computers or mobile phones. Some people were self-taught and developed basic skills such as using Zoom to connect with family. A couple of people were self-taught and could use the computer quite well. We also had a younger person from our Day Opportunities that learnt to use the computer through school and college. All these experiences were useful within the delivery and the group were paired up to enable them to work together.

People were asked to bring in their own laptops, tablets, iPads, or mobile phones in the research phase of this project.

We ran basic computer skill sessions to enable people to get to know their digital device / computer, for example using the mouse, the keyboard, switching the device on and off, importance of their password, writing and sending email, how to use Zoom.

The Metropolitan Police have produced some online safety material in video format called Little Book of Scams, this covers a few different topics, for example: not giving out passwords, scams

and not giving out personal information. We used these videos throughout the research and pilot project phases. Watching two videos each session and having a conversation about it afterwards. Answering any questions that arose.

We created Easy Read Material for each sessions learning topic, and this helped people to learn and navigate the topic being taught.

Some of the issues experienced in the research phase where things like most people did not know their passwords, each laptop or tablet worked differently, devices were not always charged up. This was a large group with various levels of ability and experience and much of the time in this phase was spent problem solving and teaching them to identify and resolve problems. We learned a significant amount from all this. Running the workshops also enabled us to identify people's abilities, needs and learning styles.

At the end of each session, the group were asked to complete feedback forms. This helped shaped each session and was incredibly useful to be able to understand what people were having difficulty with. We evaluated progress and the lessons that were learned from the research phase to enable us to review and draw learnings from. This helped us to develop, shape and tailor the Pilot Project.

Phase one enabled us to assess people's digital skills and what each person's accessibility needs where. This informed us of our list of the equipment that we needed for phase two – the Pilot Project.

Pilot Project – Phase 2: October 2023 to December 2023

Pilot Project

Planning & delivery:

The EOI was developed though our learning and feedback from the research workshops. Developing a better learning environment and budgeting to purchase the same equipment for everyone.

We purchased two large screens to work alongside the laptops, to enable people who had poor vision to work better on a larger screen alongside a keyboard for an individual with a visual impairment. As there were several people in the group who were unable to read, we purchased Read & Write software (Text help) to enable speech recognition. This meant that they could speak out what they wanted to type into Word, Emails, search engines etc. We also purchased identical 5 laptops, keyboards and mouses, and webcams. We decided on identical laptops as this meant that it levelled the devices and helped with the teaching process of using the equipment. This was a result of the learning and evaluation from the Research phase.

Unfortunately, we discovered once the sessions had started that purchasing the mouse and keyboard together meant that they would not work on their own, as there was a chip in the keyboard to connect them to the mouse. This proved difficult if the person only wanted to use one of the items. We needed to source separate keyboards that worked independently and would recommend buying corded mouses in future as this also saves on battery costs.

In the Pilot Project we had two volunteers with lived experience, one from the Shalom Network and one from Camphill Village Trust. Both came with various levels of technical expertise, which was very helpful when supporting the learners.

In this Project there where 2 halves (Phase 2 & 3). For the first 3 months there was 2 groups of 4 people who had a fortnightly session on alternate weeks. This meant that we could run a session every week. There was a beginner's group and a more advanced group. The digital learning needs of people in these groups had been identified from the research phase of the project.

Session delivery was planned for each session and session plans were sent to each participant to their emails set up for the project. This enabled individuals to learn how to access content and attachments from their emails. Having two volunteers involved with the project meant we provided 1-1 support throughout the sessions.

We continued with the basic computer skills and having two volunteers enabled us to provide 1-1 support which worked quite well. On occasions this brought out issues in group dynamics which were solved quickly. We looked at Zoom as some people used zoom to connect with family. The common theme that came through all the sessions was how to stay safe online and it was also becoming very clear that internet safety needed to be the main focal point of the session content.

Throughout the session delivery, people were consistent with attendance and eager to learn. Accessible information was used every session and created through information gained from people attending the sessions.

Easy Reads

We created easy read material for every part of the project for topics such as how to use the mouse, how to access email accounts, buttons for the speak over programme and much more. We created an easy read quiz to enable the group to think about what they had learnt so far. The feedback forms were also created in an easy read format. A few people in the group were unable to read or read well, so in creating easy read information, it enabled people to follow instructions easier.

Each person had a folder and collected easy read information from each session. At the end of the project people were given their folders to take home.

Pilot Project – Phase 3: January 2024 – April 2024

After the first 3 months we re-evaluated and realised that the beginners group required far more support than we had anticipated and were able to provide through these sessions. This meant that some benefitted more than others from the sessions. Running fortnightly sessions meant that this was a long time for people to retain what they had learnt, and we were almost going back to the beginning at most sessions. The weekly feedback sheets helped us to re-evaluate these sessions and adjust the content accordingly. Everything that had been experienced both by the group and the people supporting the group was great learning for the project going forwards.

We decided to bring the two groups together and reduced the number in the group, moving into Phase 3.

We had identified that some people in the beginner's group that were at a level of learning that required 1-1 input on an individual basis, and this was not something that could be done within this group setting. We hadn't really understood or appreciated how much input was required for some people to learn the basics of using the equipment, until we ran the first set of sessions.

In working in collaboration with the volunteers a new idea emerged to create a comic strip dialogue about different topics on internet safety. This enabled the volunteers and learners to develop new learning material in the form of Comic Strips. This refocusing enabled people to learn and use digital software and reinforce their learning on online safety.

We also decided we would go back to weekly sessions. We found that the group were constantly producing ideas that shaped the journey within each of the sessions.

Comic Strips:

The theme running through every session continued to be internet safety. One of the group volunteers from Camphill came up with the idea of creating internet safety comic strips. She was supported to create an example and took it to the group. The group liked the idea which created the focus for the duration of the third phase of the project.

In pairs people researched and designed comic strips for different topics such as using Facebook, Scams, Passwords and not giving out personal information. Easy read sheets were then created that sit alongside each comic strip topic.

One of the volunteers was involved in creating some easy-to-read information and the other worked on tidying up the audio recordings we produced during the podcasting sessions and that will be available as part of the project's legacy.

Podcasting

Alex from FVAF met with the group for a couple of sessions and did some podcasting with the group for the evaluation – to hear and record what people had gained from the project. People really enjoyed the podcasting which we are going to take forward at Camphill through Coproduction. This is also another aspect of technology that was new to the group, which brought out people's personalities, people spoke freely and had fun with it which enabled people to be themselves while talking about their experiences.

Because the podcasting sessions with Alex were so successful, people wanted to use the equipment more, so we dedicated the last three sessions of the entire project to learning how to use the equipment by recording the comic strips.

Podcasting proved to be a great way to gather people's thoughts and opinions. It enabled the learners and volunteers to express themselves verbally in new ways. This also enabled them to

learn about different ways to use technology with their voices. As a group they have recorded into audio form all the comic strips. This means that there will be an audio version that can sit alongside the booklets of Comic Strips and Easy Reads as a legacy piece of the project to share wider amongst the communities and other organisations.

The group thoroughly enjoyed using the podcasting equipment and was a great way for people to speak naturally and honestly about their experience. Their confidence grew as they got used to working with the microphones and developing audio versions of the Comic strips.

Alex from FVAF came in on the last session and used the podcasting equipment to gain feedback from the group, what people had learnt, did people feel more confident using technology, what skills had been gained, what people would like to do/learn next.

Evaluation:

We evaluated the progress and lessons learned from each session and each phase to improve the following sessions and reshape the next phase.

 phase one which helped us to shape phase two of the project. In phase two, we decided to have a beginner's group and a more advanced group. We did this because people were at various levels of experience in using the laptops. Both groups had 6 sessions which ran alternative weeks up until the new year.

Each session was evaluated with a feedback sheet and discussions as to how the following weeks content could be improved. This resulted in there being 3 sessions on podcasting rather than the 1 that was originally planned.

We have evaluated this project at and after every session, using the feedback sheets and content to help us reshape and reform the following weeks content. This has enabled us to provide a tailored teaching experience for the learners.

Learners and Volunteers Stories:

"I had an iPad and wanted to improve my skills. Internet safety was important to me, I wanted to make sure I knew how to keep myself safe. I liked working together as a team. I enjoyed learning to use Zoom, I liked the echo, and it was fun seeing everyone on the screen. I liked having conversations for the internet safety comic strips, I learnt about why looking out for padlocks was important and not giving out personal information to someone who you do not know. I enjoyed the podcasting. I liked the feeling of being on the radio and telling my story. We all had fun while learning. I found the beginning a bit rushed but as time went on things slowed down and we learnt a lot."

 Tudor - Learner

"I thought it was challenging at the beginning. We were able to give our ideas of what we wanted to do and learn about technology. I wanted to learn more about keeping safe on the internet. Through

this project I learnt more about using technology and how to keep safe online. We learned about things like writing emails and using zoom. We watched keeping safe videos by the Police that taught us about scams, using passwords, not giving out personal information. We worked as a team to create comic strips for things like Facebook and Scams. We learnt to do podcasting, which I really enjoyed."

Douglas - Learner

"Before the Digital Inclusion project, I used Zoom on my tablet to call my mum and used YouTube. The course has helped me to understand how to be safe and not to go to areas that are unsafe. We watched 'keeping safe' videos by the Police like using the Bank, passwords, and Facebook. I liked the videos because they were easy to understand. I really enjoyed the podcasting and hope we can get our own equipment to do more of it. I think using the internet is ok if you know what you are doing. I think everyone should have the opportunity to learn about the internet because then you can look after yourself and keep yourself safe.

John - Learner

"It has helped me with my social skills, one to one teaching, learning how best to manage my time. I have used my computer skills to help others in the group. The Digital Inclusion project has helped me to think about other things I can do with technology. I see it as a steppingstone to future exploration into technology"

Rhys – Volunteer

"I volunteered for the Digital Inclusion Project because I thought I would learn something about myself and how to interact and help other people. Setting up the equipment was what I enjoyed most. I'm not always confident with how to interact with people. I think I managed this quite well throughout the project. It has enabled me to learn more about myself, how I interact with others and to recognise my triggers. I enjoyed learning to use the podcasting equipment which enabled me to have a bit of fun while learning"

Jenny - Volunteer

Side effects from the project:

Everyone involved in the project has gained a significant amount of self confidence and self-esteem. They were all willing and eager to learn and the volunteers grew in their ability to support the learners.

Everyone was committed to attending the sessions, arriving early and ready to start the session on time. Those who were in the more advanced group were very willing and keen to come weekly rather than fortnightly.

The group worked well together, looking out and supporting each other. The atmosphere was positive and there was times of fun and laughter, particularly during the podcasting sessions.

Much has been gained through this project and confirms that with commitment, continuity and consistency much can be learned, explored and developed.

<u>Legacy:</u>

We had two volunteers to support the groups. This was an opportunity for both to develop their social skills, to gain experience in supporting another person 1-1 in the sessions and gaining the confidence to apply their expertise in setting up equipment, showing how to use programs that we were using and supporting individuals 1-1.

The group have created a vast amount of information and resources throughout the project. This is now being collated to create two booklets, one 'on Online Safety' and the other how to use different aspects of a computer. There will also be an online version of the resources and an audio version of each comic strip.

The internet safety comic strips and easy read documents will create the legacy for the project. Copies will be distributed to organisations' in the Forest of Dean. There will also be an audio version available digitally.

People really enjoyed the podcasting which we are going to take forward at Camphill Village Trust across eight communities through Coproduction. The Shalom Network volunteer is also going to explore how podcasting can be developed within the Network.

The online version of the resource book will enable people outside of the project both in the Forest of Dean and wider to benefit from the resources