

Outstanding Teaching, Learning and Assessment (OTLA) Action Research Project

Peer to Peer Fusion Skills Project

Haringey Adult Learning Service – June 2022

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For further information regarding the Shaping Success Action Research programme and this project go to https://ccpathways.co.uk/practitioner-research/otla-8/.

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Peer to Peer Fusion Skills Project

Haringey Adult Learning Service

SUMMARY

This project investigated how a range of foundational skills can be supported and embedded in the development of essential digital skills through an informal learning approach.

The aim of the project was to develop peer-to-peer support relationships via collaboration, with low-level learners receiving digital support from higher-level learners. By triangulating the arrangement with tutors, we aimed to use peer-to-peer support to improve learners' confidence and ability in class and to help them participate in our ever-increasing digital society.

RATIONALE

Haringey Adult Learning Service (HALS) identified a support need for ESOL and literacy learners who have low-level digital skills. This project explored how peer-to-peer support could benefit both high-level (mentors) and low-level learners (mentees) through a peer-to-peer fusion model, with learners developing foundational and digital skills.

HALS embed the **5 Cs model of fusion skills** into the curriculum, and these skills underpinned the project. For more information about the 5 Cs, please visit our 5Cs model Padlet.

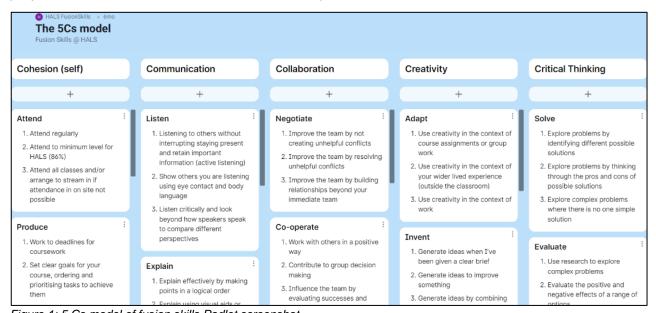


Figure 1: 5 Cs model of fusion skills Padlet screenshot

These fusion skills form part of 56 foundational skills identified by McKinsey & Company, the Distinct Elements of Talent (DELTAs), that will help citizens thrive in the future of work (June 2021). McKinsey & Company (2021).

There were two strands to the project:

1. Mentors to improve their fusion skills

2. Mentees to improve confidence with Essential Digital Skills.

The intention of this project is to act as the foundation for the creation of a peer-to-peer support culture across HALS, with a dual focus on both mentors and mentees.

Other Contextual Information

Our action research was part of the Education and Training Foundation's OTLA 8 Programme. The peer mentors were Level 1 and 2 learners (Digital TLC volunteers) who had good digital skills and the mentees were lower-level English learners.

We began with 12 volunteer peer mentors who we matched with one learner (mentee) each. The context is adult learning and the mentoring sessions that were carried out in the learning lounge area were curated and monitored by staff.

APPROACH

Stage 1:

Facilitate Digital TLC Workshop to design the marketing and promotional activities in order to set up the Open Learning Lounge. The Tender Love and Care (TLC) group consists of learners and volunteers who want to make a difference and promote a more inclusive and a better place to thrive at HALS. The group has different subgroups, and the Digital TLC subgroup that took part in this project is made up from Level 1 and Level 2 Information and Communication Technology (ICT) learners with improved digital skills.

Stage 2:

Train up a group of HALS learner volunteers to support lower-level learners in developing digital skills and crucial transferable skills based on using our own 5 C's Model. Tutors refer nominated learners from their classes to the group. Learners are paired up with Digital TLC volunteers for support.

Stage 3:

Hold tutorials with the participating learners to track the development of their foundational and Essential Digital Skills (EDS) and encourage this learning to be disseminated in the classroom.

Co-design tasks to enable the TLC to run drop-in sessions collaboratively, share skills and knowledge amongst themselves and provide support to lower-level learners with their EDS and foundational skills.

Stage 4:

Run presentation of outcomes across the service in dissemination events including class visits, team huddles and lunchtime talks by both learner groups and practitioners.

Stage 5:

Encourage the creation of video diaries by the participants.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Mentors

Mentors involved in the project were motivated to take part to improve employability skills such as communication, problem-solving, and creative thinking.

"By participating in this project of peer supporters, I hope to improve my ability to encourage other peers to work together in a positive way. I would like to be able to generate ideas on how to better improve the skills of learners I support by knowledge sharing. I hope to be able to communicate more effectively to gain skills to support others with digital skills."

(HB, mentor).

"I am taking many courses to improve myself, also to have better job opportunities. The reason why I wanted to join TLC peer-to-peer fusion was, first of all, to test my teaching skills and have an opportunity to improve my communication, observation and creativity skills, which will be required during this process. I am sure that the outcome from this will be a win-win situation, as I believe that you learn while you teach."

(GD, mentor).

The impact of providing support to peers was beneficial to mentors, as the experience of adapting to meet the support needs of their mentees provided skill-development opportunities outside of those initially identified (such as listening in addition to communication). The experience of being able to support others through sharing knowledge and skills supported mentors to develop skills with building relationships and teamworking.

"I am very happy from this experience because it helped me to develop my listening, also my communicative skills. The person, E, that I had to help, he trust (sic) me his email account and together we achieve to recover his password. The experience was very nice and helpful for developing new skills."

(OL, mentor).

"I am delighted to be part of this great project. My skills improved in teamworking, collaboration, communication skills throughout while communicating with my mentors, colleagues and mentees."

(JB, mentor).

Mentees

Mentees gained essential digital skills that will allow them to access resources and participate in their courses on digital platforms. Some mentees benefited from learning targeting individualised skills to deal with a particular problem, like recovering and changing a password for an email account.

Skills acquired during the project included:

- logging on and off MS Teams
- · downloading and uploading files
- · opening and viewing files
- cut and paste
- inserting a digital signature
- recovering and changing the password for an email account.

Mentees benefited from receiving support to learn digital skills, and also had the opportunity to develop communication skills, which is of additional benefit to ESOL and literacy learners. Feedback from mentees included:

"Today I learned how to open the Team, and I'm happy, so it go (sic) "The IT skills I have learnt well" (A, mentee). which include Cut, Copy and Paste. Also how to log into **Microsoft Teams have** helped me to be more productive in my course and help other students in my ologo" (D. montos) "I learn (sic) how to log in Team, how to locate file, how to log out. I improve my communication skills" (mentee). "I learn (sic) how to log in Teams, access files, how to log out. Important (I improved) my communication

skills" (M, mentee).

Checklists were also created to help track each mentee's progress.

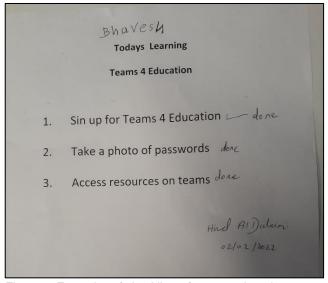
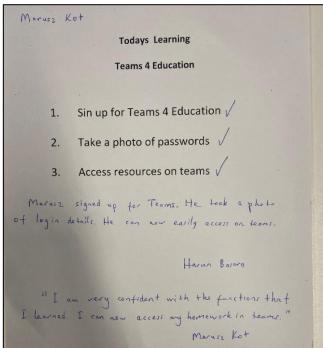


Figure 2: Examples of checklists of mentees learning



At a peer-to-peer celebration event, one of the mentees had the opportunity to hear their mentor speak about the project and their own experiences. The mentee and mentor discussed their experiences together at the event, with the mentor sharing that she had been a total beginner when she started, which the mentee commented was a huge inspiration to her. They talked together about how they had both benefited from the experience and learned from each other, and how their digital skills and wider skills improved throughout the project.

Tutors

Feedback from tutors on the support learners brought back to the classroom is noted below.

"E needed support with changing the password on his email account as the account had been set up by someone else and he was unhappy that they had access to it. The peer-to-peer support provided an opportunity for him to work with a mentor to identify the steps to change his password. The impact this had in the classroom was E was able to feel confident accessing his emails to receive links to activities he was required to complete as part of the course. It had a positive impact on his confidence and feeling safe in the knowledge his information was secure"

(Caitríona, ICT Beginners Tutor).

"RC was able to enrol via 'web enrol' for the first time independently after getting peer-topeer support. Previously he had to complete a paper enrolment form. The impact to RC was that he was able to have more agency over his learning and also to give him greater confidence when he is choosing further learning, as he knows he will be able to enrol online independently"

(Tutor).

Some valuable feedback was also provided by Pre/Entry English tutor, S:

"These learners are extremely low level and despite my 15 years of teaching experience I often find it really difficult to get them to understand concepts. Concepts and tasks have to repeated again and again".

Our initial approach was to teach the mentees the skills that they wanted to learn. Tutor S requested that specific aspects of learning could be individualised by the tutor to meet the learning needs of a specific group. This approach was adapted. S indicated to the mentors the specific skills the learners from her low-level English group needed to improve on. Mentees received support on those specific tasks. A checklist of mentees learning illustrated in Figure 2 was produced for each learner and returned to the tutor. This method was then adopted across all of the support sessions.

Tutor S feedback following the session:

"In terms of what was really useful: discrete activities supporting learners to get logged on to Teams, access classroom and upload files".

Stakeholders

The over 50s group participated in a peer support session. Quotes from the group representative included:

"Several of these people have really next to no digital skills."

"Glad there was such a good turnout."

"I am really looking forward to seeing this programme and relationship progress!"

Mentee Support Log

The Mentee Support Log, completed by mentors, also documented the skills required, shared and the impact for the mentee.

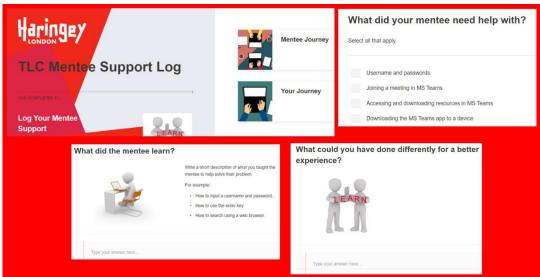


Figure 3: Sample of mentee support log

The screenshot below shares some of the data captured during the project via the Mentee Support Log. The first column includes skills required by the mentee, the second column skills shared by mentors with the mentee and the third column records the impact on the mentee.

6	Username and passwords; Joining a meeting in MS Teams; Accessing and downloading resources in MS Teams	How to log into team How to access the right class How to check files/ select the right one. How to open a file with a PowerPoint presentation How play the presentation with audio from the beginning How to close the file and log out safely.	He should be able to open his teams account using the password he created and access the class material, close the file and log out from his account.
7	Username and passwords; Joining a meeting in MS Teams; Accessing and downloading resources in MS Teams; Using the Toolbar in an MS Teams meeting	How to input a username and password. How to navigate to files in MS Teams Open file in Teams - in this case a PowerPoint	She will be able to log into a computer at HALS using their username and password and also her own pad at home. Navigate through Teams to classwork & comunicate with the class tutor.
8	Username and passwords; Joining a meeting in MS Teams; Accessing and downloading resources in MS Teams	How to input a username and password. How to use the enter key. How to search using a web browser.	They will be able to log into a computer using their username and password. Find their class and able to access class work.
9	Joining a meeting in MS Teams; Completing an internet search	S want to enroll in the new course of ItLevel 1 skills for employment in January. Also, I gave her an idea of how to log in to MS teams how to download files from there and how to attach files from MS Teams.	She will be able to go to the web enroll page to search for any new courses, and she can now use MS teams with more confidence than before.
10	Accessing and downloading resources in MS Teams	How to fill the consent form and how to sign it using the different features from word. How to use the caps lock How to delete a sentence using backspace How to attach a document to an email	They will be able to do their homework easily which is related to audio in PowerPoint.

Figure 4. Data captured during the project via the Mentee Support Log.

Videos and pictures illustrating our project in action

You can access a variety of videos from our mentors and mentees on our <u>Peer to Peer Fusion Skills</u> <u>Padlet</u> board, as well as in Appendix 2, learner case studies. Below are some images of our mentors and mentees in action.





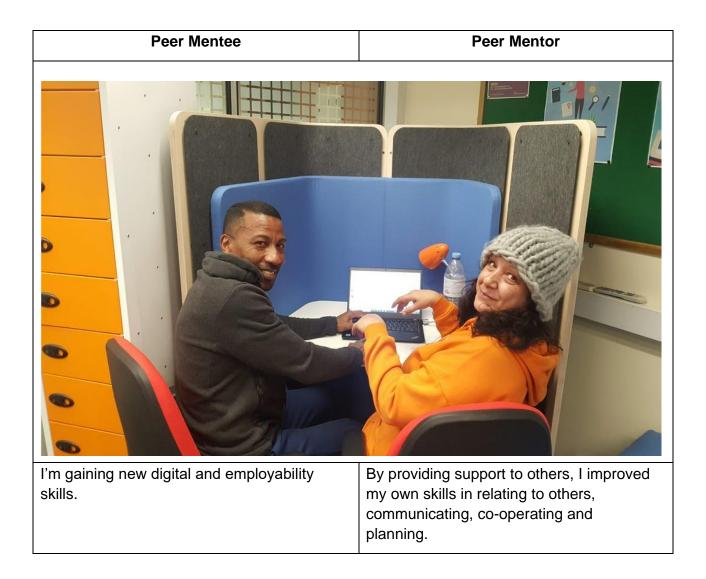




Figure 5: Peer to Peer mentoring sessions

Peer Mentoring Showcases Mentor and Mentees Experiences

Further examples of the impact of our peer-peer fusion skills project on mentors and mentees are evidenced on our <u>Padlet board</u>, under the column mentee and mentor experience. An example is shared below:



Further Quotes from our Peer Mentors:

The quotes below further illustrate the impact of our action research project in relation to teaching, learning and assessment:

"I supported my Peer Mentee to improve his learning by how to get onto Microsoft Teams and navigate around the screen, to get to his class. Then he could access the work his teacher put on his Channel" (J, Peer mentor).

"The meeting with Peers was successful. Improved IT skills for Mentee" (P, Peer mentor).

"My mentoring relationship with my mentee was very positive, he was very eager to learn and always contacts me for help" (F, Peer mentor).

"The relationship with my mentee is providing me with key skills that I will need in Team Management" (H, Peer mentor).

"My mentoring relationship with Mentee was very supported and we worked well in a team. The Mentee appreciated the help he learned" (B, Peer mentor).



Figure 6:Peer to peer mentoring display

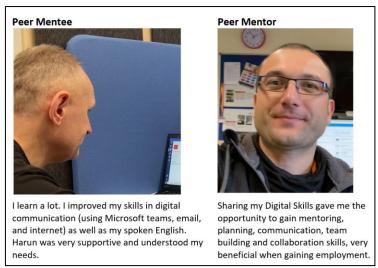


Figure 7: Mentee and mentor feedback on the project.

Organisational Development

As an organisation, we are looking to continue to use this approach, nurturing a culture of peer-topeer support, and supporting documenting the impact of this culture with video diaries capturing progress and joy in the project. Our plans going forward include:

- establishing a regular culture of peer-to-peer support within the classroom;
- continued use of the Open Learning Lounge as a space for developing the foundational and digital skills of HALS learners, and as a centre for resources which will continue to grow as the peer-to-peer support continues;
- continuous staff support to adopt the peer-to-peer support model.

Promotion events took place across the service where learners, staff and stakeholders were getting familiar with the project.



Figure 8: Peer to Peer Fusion Skills Project promotion events

The peer-to-peer support practice became popular with our learners, staff and stakeholders. Our lovely Digital TLC volunteers recently provided peer-to-peer support for the Over 50s community group. This group were very delighted about the digital support they received and wished to further participate in this project. Below are some photos of our eager peer mentors' and mentees' experiences with our stakeholders.



Figure 9: Peer to Peer and individual mentoring session for stakeholders

The peer-to-peer support model enabled our staff, learners and stakeholders to have access to an informal learner-centred method that improved digital access to all of the participants as well as TLA by enabling learners to bring the learning back into the classroom. This method also fostered improved employability skills across the spectrum. Peer mentors/mentees became better at collaboration, communication, planning and digital skills.

Professional Development

Professional Standard	How our project outcomes demonstrate this standard
6. Build positive and collaborative relationships with colleagues and learners.	Our project provided time and space for us to come together as a teaching team to challenge our assumptions and build positive and collaborative relationships with colleagues and learners. There were discussions with colleagues about should we provide learners topics on what digital skills they need to improve on or give them the freedom to choose what they want to learn. These depended on learners' individual needs and what worked for one learner did not work for the other. In conclusion, the peer-to-peer support was a great aid in the classroom as more learners gained digital skills and were able to better participate and support peers as well as a continuous interaction within staff themes from different departments.
11. Manage and promote positive learner behaviour.	During the programme we managed and promoted positive learner behaviour. A culture of mutual support and learning. Mentors interacted and supported each other sharing skills, knowledge and behaviour. Mentees brought back the knowledge they gained to their classrooms and further shared with their peers. The project enthused learners to develop a positive supportive behaviour across HALS.
17. Enable learners to share responsibility for their own learning and assessment, setting goals that stretch and challenge.	This learner-centred peer-to-peer approach enabled learners to share responsibility for their own learning and assessment, setting goals that stretch and challenge by supporting each other individually and in their classroom. They were continuously learning new digital skills and experiencing fusion skills throughout.

LEARNING FROM THIS PROJECT

Mentor feedback shows how much the mentors enjoyed taking part in the project and how it increased their employability skills. As part of the project, they received training in how to provide support, which provided them with a variety of tools to support their peers. They also increased their own digital skills by creating and uploading videos to document their experience, and creative thinking by reflecting on the impact of the training they provided.

Mentees improved their digital skills, being able to access digital resources that will support their

learning, and they, in turn, can support other learners in the classrooms. Having access to targeted, one-to-one support, provided an opportunity to upskill in areas that directly addressed their areas of need in relation to digital literacy, with an added benefit of improving communication skills.

Tutors benefited by extra support, which meant they could concentrate on their lessons and spend less time providing support for essential digital skills in the classroom.

During the project, feedback from a tutor identified that the peer-to-peer support for her learners would be even better if it was more structured for her learners. She identified key skills that would specifically benefit their learning experience that should be provided during the peer-to-peer support. We adapted the mentoring model with the tutor providing support topics that were shared with the mentors.

Mentors mentioned that they would have benefited from role play in their training. We implemented this as role play is a very useful activity for building confidence and communication skills.

Following the programme some peer mentors are considering progressing to teaching assistant roles.

"The peer-to-peer support enabled me to gain experience in sharing the digital skills that I learnt with lower-level learners and improve my skills in planning and working collaboratively with others. It gave me confidence and now I am thinking of progressing towards a teaching assistant role"

(G, Peer mentor).

The project team's research findings in relation to other similar research projects shows similar positive impact.

For example, previous research demonstrated that peers learning from other peers is the path to follow (De Boer et al, 2013; Koster et al, 2010). These positive results align with our findings where all students can feel accepted, make new friends and enhance their employability skills.

"The participants' growth and progress as the session increased was noticeable. It was transparent that the mentees looked up the mentors and that they were forming strong bonds" (Owusu, 2020).

We hope our project research outcomes will assist others who would like to implement a peer program at their institution.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: The Project Team

The project team enjoyed working hard in supporting teaching learning and assessment with continuous reflection and improved practice. Peer mentors were trained in mentoring and supported throughout the peer mentoring sessions. Events were planned to showcase our achievement where learners, staff and stakeholders shared stories regarding the project.

Project Role	Name	Job Role	Contact
Project Lead	Ecaterina Bright	Senior Tutor	Ecaterina.Bright@haringey.gov.uk
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Project Team	Joy Thomas	Associate Tutor	Joy.Thomas@haringey.gov.uk
Project Team	Caitríona Fitzsimons	Associate Tutor	Caitriona.Fitzsimons@haringey.gov.uk
Mentor	Catherine Gray	Mentor	c.gray@eastcoast.ac.uk
Research Group Lead	Sue Lownsbrough	RGL	sue.lownsbrough@outlook.com

Appendix 2: Learner Case Studies

Two case studies are present containing learners' videos and quotes regarding their experiences.

Case Study 1

RM was a student on the IT User Level 2 class now is an active member of the TLC group.

M was a student in the Building Confidence in Literacy Class.

Mentor, RM, supported mentee, M, initially with the <u>digital skills</u> to <u>access a PowerPoint</u> file resource with audio aimed at support independent learning by being able to listen to and read English at the same time for homework. RM then provided the further skills of <u>logging into MS</u> <u>Teams</u>, accessing files and how to log out. Further to the digital skills learned through peer-to-peer mentoring, M noted an added benefit of:

"Improved, my communication skills."

RM then reflected on her experiences as mentor.

Case Study 2

Mentor JB is a student in the IT Use Level 2 class and an active member of the TLC group.

Mentee R is a student in the Building Confidence in Literacy Class.

Mentor, JB, supported mentee, R, with a variety of digital skills, including PowerPoint, Word and logging into MS Teams. Before receiving peer-to-peer support, R said:

"I think it's very interested (sic) because, normally, I don't know how to use the computers properly, so I need to learn how to paste, in order to copy, in order to write email and send, things like that, so it's a good start for me."

The support provided enabled R to gain confidence with computers for accessing resources he can use to support his learning.

After learning how to successfully log into MS Teams using a laptop, R noted:

"It was just the laptop that was the problem, but now I overcome it".

After learning cut and paste and R noted:

"I can now help my students in my class with what I learnt".

Please see <u>JB R Video 1</u>, <u>JB R Video 2</u>, <u>JB R Video 3</u>, <u>JB R Video 4</u> for further comments and feedback:

- R (mentor), commented on improved confidence.
- J (mentor), commented on improved in teamworking, collaboration, communication.

Appendix 3: Support Log

Support logs were created for our peer mentors to record their experiences with their mentees and reflect regularly to bring improvements.

Mentee Support Log

An E-learning tool was designed for mentors to log the support being provided to mentees on an on-going basis. This tool collected the data on skills being shared and the impact of how they can be used by the mentee.



Figure 10: Support log comprising of mentee and mentor experiences

Tutor Evaluation of Mentee Progress

An E-learning tool was designed for tutors to feedback on how the peer to peer support has impacted on the participating learner.



Figure 11: Tutor feedback of project impact on learner behaviour in the classroom

Appendix 4: Video Diaries

Video diaries were recorded for peer mentoring sessions to reflect regarding experiences/ progression on the mentor/mentee skills development.

Both mentors and mentees recorded video diaries that were uploaded to the Digital TLC team on MS Teams to keep a record of the support that was provided by mentors and feedback from the mentees on what they had learned.



Figure 12: Mentoring sessions and creating video diaries.

Appendix 5: Mentor Training Resources

Resources were developed to support a 'train the trainer' style workshop for mentors in preparation for providing support. The training session included pair and group activities involving scenarios for how support could be provided, and role play exercises.

A video training course was also delivered to mentors so that they could create video diaries capturing their journey and their mentees journey. Tutors completed an initial assessment feedback for learners referred as mentees to evaluate their digital skills needs as well as safeguarding training.

An opportunity for mentors was also included to identify their own core skills that they could utilise in providing peer-to-peer support.

Finally, Peer mentors received safeguarding training.



Figure 13: Peer to Peer mentoring training resources

Shared below are quotes from a peer mentor and a mentee regarding impact of the training:

"From Participating in the Safeguarding training with my Mentor I reinforced the importance of Safeguarding and end-user cyber security

(F, Peer Mentor).

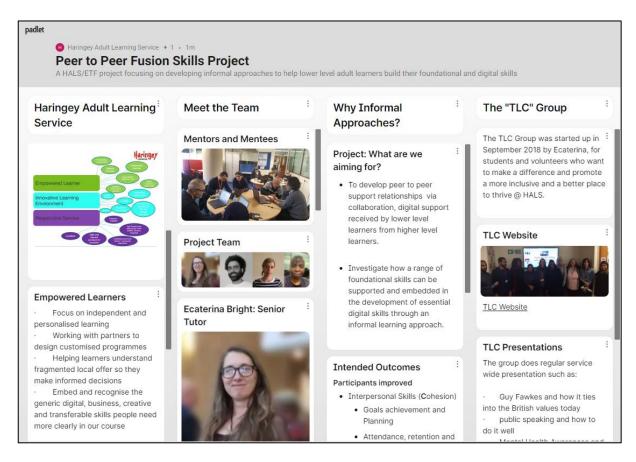
"Thank you F, now I am able to confidently log in to my email with a secure password"

(C, Peer Mentee).

Appendix 6: Project Padlet

A Padlet platform was created to curate and showcase the project, including methodology, case studies, resources and identifying next steps.

You can access the Padlet here: Peer to Peer Fusion Skills Project (padlet.com)



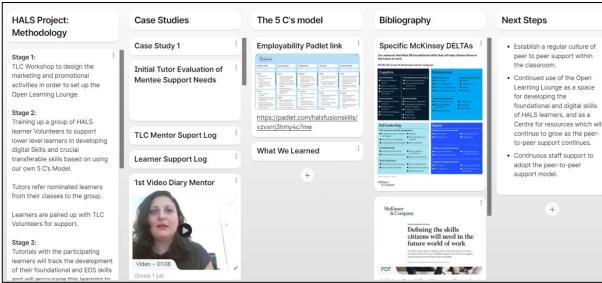


Figure 14: Peer to Peer Fusion Skills Project Padlet screenshots.

Appendix 7: Project Short Film
Project Short Film created by peer mentor to showcase the impact in a snapshot.







Figure 15: Mentoring sessions short film screenshots.

Appendix 8: Participants and Stakeholders

8 tutors, 15 peer mentors, 20 learners' mentees, HALS (Functional Skills and ESOL) and the over 50's community group benefited so far from the programme. The tutors participated by signposting learners and giving feedback on their performance following the peer mentoring support. The peer mentors improved their employability skills and deepened their digital skills by supporting the lower-level learners who in turn improved digital skills and fusion skills.

The over-50 group learnt digital skills used for everyday life and work. Tutors benefited by increased number of digitally skilled learners in their classroom which enabled them to have more time to focus on the subject.

No of learners?	30	No of staff?	8
No of organisations?	2	No of employers/ stakeholders?	1

Appendix 9: Research/ Evaluation Approach

Data was collected via the log-books and video diaries on an ongoing basis throughout the project. Participants analysed and reflected upon the data to facilitate improvement.

Participant/observer (e.g. practitioner reflective accounts, logs)	X	Interview/survey (e.g. polls, questionnaires, learner interviews)	Х
Observation of practice (in person, video, observation notes)	Х	Document analysis (e.g. learner work, session plans, annotated resources, policies)	х
Custom test/assessment (of knowledge, skill, attitude, participation) for your 'intervention'	х	High-stakes learner assessment (e.g. A Level results, End Point Assessment, BTECs	х
Before/after assessment (e.g. measures of progress or change in attainment, participation)	х	Comparative trial (e.g. comparing participants' outcomes against a 'control' group	х
Other (specify):	Action Research, including a final film recorded during the project.		

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