OUTSTANDING TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT
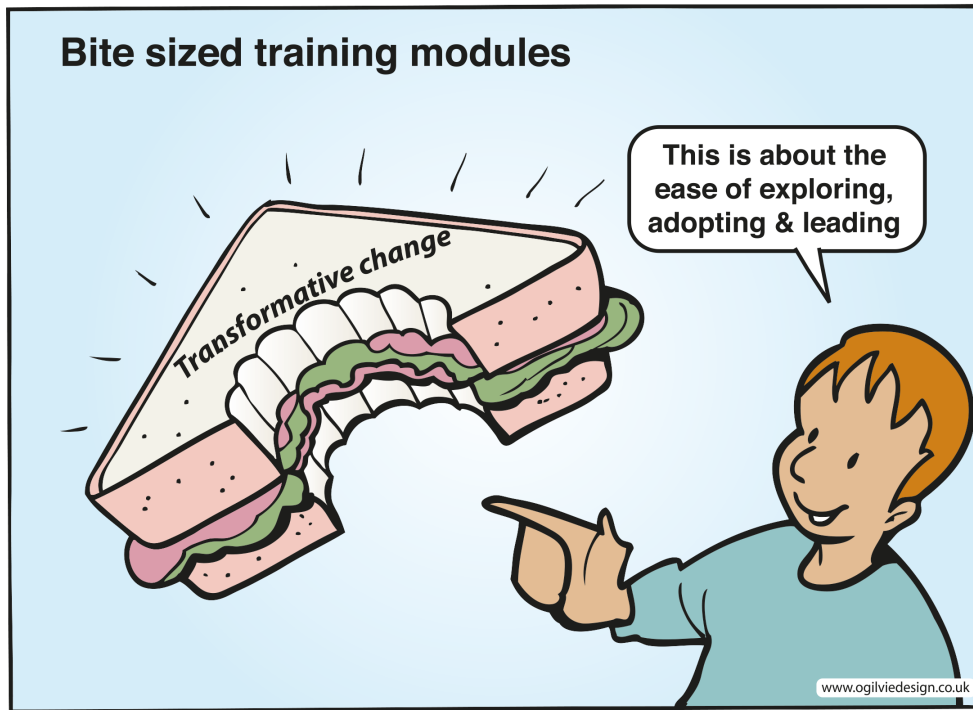
A SUMMARY OF PROJECTS IN THE OTLA DIGITAL (NORTH EAST AND CUMBRIA) PROGRAMME

Success North at Newcastle College, ccConsultancy, Skills Digital, The Education and Training Consortium (HUDCETT)

Contents

1. Foreword

Vikki Liogier, Head of Learning Technologies, The Education and Training Foundation

A key part of our EdTech strategy is to foster robust and close partnerships with FE and Training organisations to ensure that digital technology can enhance learning. I hope you will agree with me that these projects provide great examples of this in practice.

We are already starting to implement positive changes through our Digital Teaching Professional Framework (DTPF). The framework is aimed at supporting teachers and trainers in developing their digital skills, enhancing learning, teaching and assessment, and promoting a common understanding of digital skills development.

Micro-learning modules which teachers and trainers can complete at their own pace have been produced and mapped to the DTPF. Those who complete the micro-learning modules will receive digital badges providing recognition of their improved digital skills – and these can be displayed on their CVs and LinkedIn profiles. These modules are now available on our Enhance Digital Teaching Platform.

More information and the latest updates on the launch of the Enhance Digital Teaching Platform and the Education and Training Foundation's EdTech strategy can be found here https://www.et-foundation.co.uk/supporting/support-practitioners/edtech-support/.

In January 2018 the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) commissioned a series of Outstanding Teaching Learning and Assessment (OTLA) collaborative projects focussed on digital. The aim of these projects is to use action research to evidence the most effective ways to spread and embed effective practice in the use of technology to achieve measurable improvements in teaching, learning and assessment.

We have been really pleased with the success of the projects and particularly the collaboration that has taken place within and between providers. This booklet focuses on the 5 projects run by OTLA (North East and Cumbria).

2. Introduction

Claire Collins, OTLA (North East and Cumbria) Lead, ccConsultancy

David Prinn, OTLA (North East and Cumbria) Project Manager
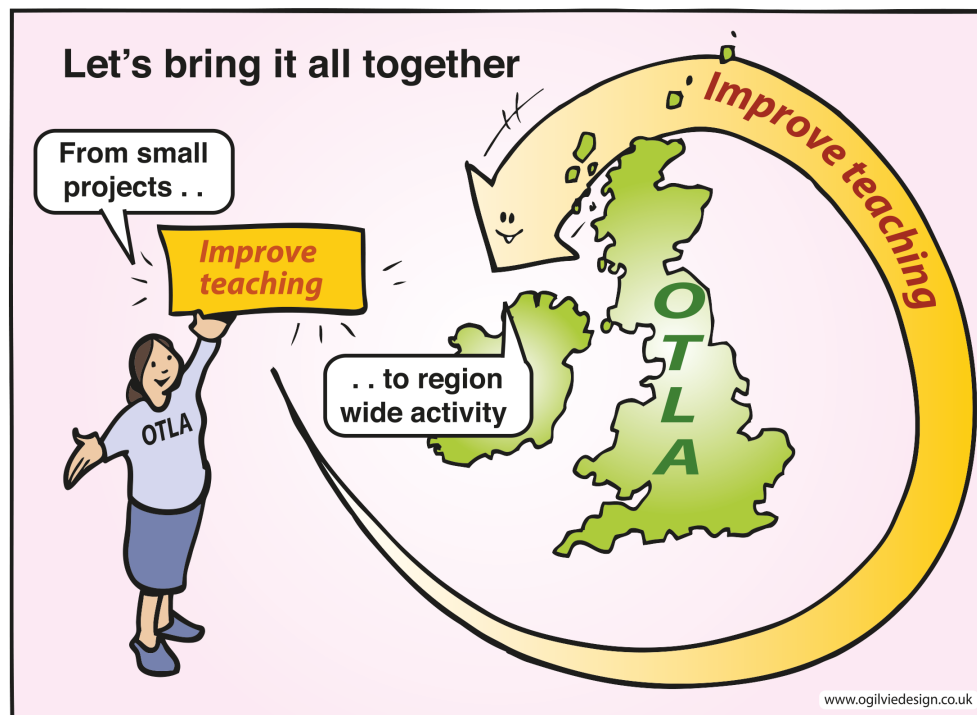
The 'Outstanding Teaching, Learning and Assessment' (OTLA) programme was led in the North East and Cumbria by Success North at Newcastle College, in partnership with ccConsultancy, The Education and Training Consortium / HUDCETT and Skills Digital.

The purpose of this booklet is to provide a summary and evaluation of the work undertaken by the programme and its associated projects which were funded by the Education and Training Foundation. Five projects developed the use of digital technologies in the Learning and Skills sector and focused upon driving professional development for staff through encouraging practitioners' exploration and integration of digital technologies into teaching, learning and assessment.

The OTLA Digital programme in the North East and Cumbria was very successful in reaching smaller providers from the diversity of the post-16 sector who are sometimes harder to reach. Three of the five projects were led by FE Colleges, with the other two led by Local Authorities. Partner organisations included independent training providers, offender learning teams and 3rd sector organisations, who work with clients from the most disadvantaged groups in society.

To further support the project teams' understanding of practitioner-led action research, a series of project-related professional development events were held. At a launch event we brought providers together to prepare them for their projects by focusing on common problems then identifying potential solutions to that problem, rather than being driven by the features of a digital solution.

We held a CPD session on how to conduct collaborative action research, and a half-day event with Professor Jean McNiff, who is a leading international expert on practitioner-led research, to explore this topic further once the project teams had begun their work.

Webinars were delivered by the OTLA programme team on using multimedia and producing digital project newsletters. Each project was supported by a dedicated project mentor and the OTLA team led monthly discussion and update meetings for all mentors.

The project teams presented the outcomes of their projects and evidence of impact at interim and final dissemination events, which stimulated sharing and adoption of cross-project (region-wide) effective practices. They also

shared their work nationally, via newsletters and social media and this booklet will be shared widely to continue their projects' dissemination.

At the final dissemination event our 'conference artist' Graham Ogilvie[1] produced a number of illustrations to capture the main messages of the event and to represent the projects. We have used digitised versions of his work throughout this booklet.

In Section 3 of this booklet Dr. Andy Convery summarises the achievements of the OTLA Digital (North East and Cumbria) programme. He explains what we learned about supporting collaborative projects and what difference the projects made to learners, practitioners and organisations who took part.

In Section 4 we present a summary of each of the OTLA Digital (North East and Cumbria) projects. The project summaries are supported by case studies. Full reports, case studies and associated resources will be made available on the Education and Training Foundation's Improving Teaching exhibition site on the Excellence Gateway https://improving-teaching.excellencegateway.org.uk/.

In Section 5 Professor Jean McNiff presents an edited transcript of her closing presentation at the final dissemination event in which she argued that the work done on these projects was of the highest standard. We hope that you enjoy reading about the contribution that these projects have made to the knowledge of the field.

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[1] www.ogilviedesign.co.uk

3. Enhancing Teaching and Learning Through Digital Creativity

Dr. Andy Convery, OTLA (North East and Cumbria) Professional Development Lead
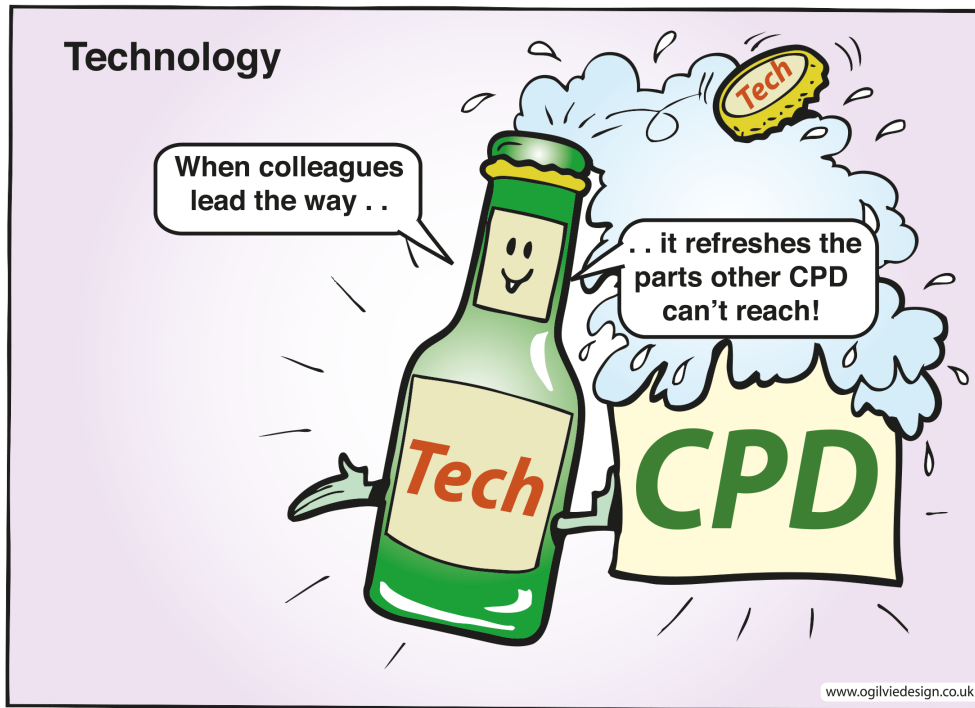
When we began this project there was great enthusiasm, but also some trepidation – how would busy practitioners find time and opportunity to upskill themselves and get to grips with the latest digital approaches? As we look at what has been achieved, practitioners' report a pride in the progress they have collectively made, as you'll see throughout this booklet. The following themes run through all the projects:

- Learners are more actively involved in sessions.
- Staff are more confident in choosing and using digital applications.
- Technology is being used to inspire learners who are "hard to reach" (and teach).

- Confident teachers are modelling new digital practices for their colleagues.
- This digital opportunity is helping staff rethink their teaching approaches.
- Staff are becoming effective educational researchers and reflective professionals.

Learners are more actively involved

When practitioners experimented with technology in their teaching, it almost always prompted learners to be more active in sessions. Often, teachers used digital devices to encourage learners to contribute in quiz sessions. Staff created blogs and chat rooms so that learners could offer both resource materials and comments, and learners began contributing online both during lessons and whilst working on their own.

In one project, virtual communication also created a safe space for learners who had been quiet in class to message teachers with questions about problem areas. In the case studies that follow, you'll see teachers beginning to use a variety of quiz format applications to involve learners using smartphones and tablets. Staff then use their teaching experience to adapt these formats and make them more effective – for example, having knowledge-checks which open up discussion during lessons as well as at the start and finish; encouraging learners to set themselves digital quizzes; and organising groupwork around quizzes.

Teachers have used these digital "hooks" to capture learners' attention at first, and then have built on these to promote more learner engagement with, and deeper thinking about the subject matter (e.g. using digital voting to get learners' investment in focusing on maths "misconceptions" in a group discussion). Throughout this project, practitioners have been consistently fashioning digital opportunities to get learners in the right frame of mind for further learning.

Staff are more confident in choosing and using digital applications

Across all the projects, staff who were initially nervous about bringing technology into sessions have been rewarded for their professional risk-taking. The examples in this booklet show staff experimenting with technology – often beginning by following the example of their colleagues, and then rapidly adapting the approaches to meet the needs of their particular learners.

Colleagues showed their newfound confidence by testing applications and then sharing their findings about the value and the shortcomings of different digital approaches in different contexts. Practitioners swapped experiences in regular partner project meetings; in on-line Padlets and blogs; in micro-teaching exercises as part of the Digital Educator project; and in whole programme dissemination events.

These practitioner-led exchanges proved valuable for their fellow staff, by showing how and why different technologies could best be used with certain learner groups. This not only improved both staff confidence to use technology but also gave them workable ideas about how to rethink their classroom strategies. In many ways, teachers' improved confidence to use technology is recorded in their working evaluations of how different approaches and applications are best adapted to local settings. Practitioners' experiments provide a reliable guide to some of the untested assumptions of the applications marketing hype.

Reaching the most disadvantaged learners

Several case studies specifically targeted "hard to reach" groups:
- In North Tyneside YMCA, staff attempted to connect more effectively with homeless young people, and helped them become more employable.
- The Novus case-study outlines the first steps in trying to keep mothers, grandmothers and other carers in prison connected with their children by helping them become a part of their children's education.
- AutismAble produced a digital video about work placements to help young adults with autism tackle work experience.

- Sunderland Home Care used a "Google Classroom" to help unemployed trainees achieve qualifications that would help their applications for specific jobs.

In each of these cases, effective links were made with groups who are on the margins of education and training. Through digital approaches, learners were given confidence that they could make valuable contributions to their communities through education and employment routes.

Local authorities, training providers and specialist provision helped learners who are educationally, socially, economically or digitally disadvantaged. In addition, mainstream colleges often found that technology could help those who could be more challenging to engage. For example, staff made good use of QR codes to overcome literacy barriers and give higher needs learners access to internet sites. Entry level and Level 1 teachers used smartphone photos, videos and Adobe Spark to help learners to record progress; to annotate images showing the stages of their achievements; and to reflect upon their learning journeys.

Digital technology repeatedly enabled progress by removing communication barriers, encouraging withdrawn learners to become more involved and to raise their expectations.

Confident teachers are modelling digital practices for colleagues

The digital opportunity proved to be a great leveller, as old and young, new and experienced teachers and trainers met together to consider, "What works for me?" Teachers acknowledged that they needed direction to find useful applications and approaches, and there was a great deal of goodwill and sharing.

Practitioners gave to, and took from, each other, and projects quickly learned the practical value of drawing on local digital expertise to address specific problems that arose. (This contrasted with attending generic application-led training days in which practitioners felt challenged to bend their teaching to the potential of the digital "solutions" on offer, thus leaving them feeling both overwhelmed by the range of "affordances" on offer, and less in control of

how all this myriad of optional extras could practically be applied in classrooms and workshops.)

Projects often encouraged vocational practitioners to become "digital champions" and "digital educators", and subject specialists infected colleagues with their grounded enthusiasm. When the local digital "expert" was from their own teaching or training setting, their advice and example had greater credibility. Some of those encouraging others had no formal leadership role, but they were inspired and professionally rejuvenated by discovering simpler and more rewarding ways of motivating and engaging their learners.

Important though it was, this sharing of practitioner knowledge was not restricted to practitioners' immediate local practice. Through links with other project partners, colleges, prison educators, charities, independent training providers, local authority provision and specialist providers all began to better appreciate more diverse learner groups and to reflect upon a wider range of strategies. This meant that college participants on this programme, for example, gained a deeper understanding of the needs of ex-offenders, and prison educators became more familiar with the digital strategies that mainstream provision adopted.

Staff are becoming effective educational researchers

All the projects encouraged teachers and trainers to experiment and report back to their colleagues. This practitioner-led enquiry is the fundamental and most effective form of educational research, as this "systematic enquiry made public" actually impacts on what happens in classrooms and workshops. Some reported on their experiments digitally; the Gateshead Council Padlet (see section 4.5.a.) is a wonderful example of rich conversations between staff, together with examples of applications and plans that have been tried and tested in practice.

Other projects made good use of practitioner research reporting "templates" – accessible two-side formats for the research process that began with the key question, "What is the problem that you are trying to solve within your teaching, learning and assessment using digital technologies?" Practitioners spoke enthusiastically about reading each other's reports – and learning

from them. They appreciated the credibility of the local settings, which gave them both ideas and confidence to risk testing a new digital approach.

The real strength of the practitioner reports was in their practical application, accessible language, and their overwhelming sense of purpose. The template enabled other practitioners to gain insight into colleagues' practice, so that examples of challenging high-level learning are evident for colleagues to consider in their own classroom.

These reports often acknowledged the potential of applications, but their reports also flagged up cautions about the limited value of some applications in the classroom and workshop (e.g. "You can't see how well individual learners have done without going into submenus which isn't really practical in a lesson"). Other reports highlighted the negatives of learner anonymity – whilst it created a safe space for learner responses, it meant that teachers couldn't always draw upon their knowledge of individuals to respond quickly and appropriately to digitally-generated findings.

The research process – inviting advantages and disadvantages – encouraged participants to report on unsuccessful experiments, and to offer informed professional judgements about why digital applications weren't fulfilling expectations in a given learning context. Several discussed how approaches were only partially appropriate with particular subject areas or level of group; the template – and the project leader's supportive process – enabled these important discriminations to be made public. The reports often raised unanticipated outcomes – those surprising outcomes that are the hallmark of original research.

This digital opportunity is helping staff rethink established teaching approaches

Although the focus is on digital approaches, the key to this project has been on the way that the digital stimulus has changed classrooms and stimulated practitioners to think about how their learners learn most effectively. For example, sessions might have previously begun with a recap by the teacher who would ask questions to individuals. However, by introducing a quiz application, all the learners would attempt all of the teacher's questions, thus actively engaging all learners from the start of the session.

This has created a new relationship with the group, who were all active participants from the beginning, so this change in dynamic for the teacher has changed expectations about the degree of participation that learners could make.

For example, when Level 1 learners reviewed a series of photos of their painting at different stages, they seemed confident about explaining the stages in their work and how they might change the way that they approached this process in future. Before using photos, they might have simply relied upon the teacher to tell them what they had achieved and what they still needed to do better.

This experience has changed the expectations of the teacher for the potential of level 1 learners to self-assess (though he is still thwarted in his attempts to persuade learners to record their reflections in writing). He will persevere with this approach as he sees an improvement in the learners' approach to their painting, and will extend the digital imagery exercise to a Level 2 class and see if has similar positive outcomes (and maybe less resistance to keeping a written record).

In subsequent sessions where digital imagery is not being used, the teacher now has a greater appreciation of Level 1 learners' capacity to reflect and articulate, and he may well feel more relaxed about raising his expectations about the standard of questions that these learners could answer. In situations where there are no digital photos available, how will the teacher create other reflective opportunities to prompt learner feedback?

Next steps...

This project has released an outpouring of creativity, and equipped teachers with the resources and the confidence to progress as digital experts. We have celebrated the progress that all the practitioners have made – but where might the project teams – and practitioners – go next? What else could they achieve?

Maintain your digital networks

It's important to maintain the many really productive links that you've made through this project, so build on these now the project has finished to keep up your level of purpose and direction. Joanne Mills at Gateshead College has established a digital Professional Exchange Network – get onboard with this and maintain your high levels of professional refreshment. (Contact Joanne at joanne.mills@gateshead.ac.uk)

Get learners even more involved

Most projects have created more active classrooms, with learners both interested and invested in lessons. Build on these comfortable relationships to challenge learners to use technology to create their own digital products, to become more reflective, to assess (and improve) their performance, and to work collaboratively and independently. Don't just be satisfied with achieving better relationships with a digital stimulus – use the ground that you've gained to shift the learners out of their comfort zones

Keep sharing practitioners' digital wisdom

A real strength of these projects has been the practitioners' reports on what does and doesn't work in classrooms and workshops. These have real credibility and help change teachers' and trainers' practices. Where you highlight limitations in technology – keep sharing these. Sometimes, we don't tell colleagues if a technology doesn't live up to its advertised potential in case it's our fault – we worry that we're not good enough teachers to get it to work.

However, the reality is that most applications are based on a technologist's (rather than a teacher's) idea of what should happen in classrooms, so make your classroom a testbed for the technology, keep sharing your teachers' expertise (together with the tweaks you had to make to get it to work). Remember – educational technology is too important to be left to the technologists!

4. The OTLA Digital (North East and Cumbria) projects

In this section we present a summary of each of the OTLA Digital (North East and Cumbria) projects with some case studies from the participating organisations. Full reports, case studies and associated resources will be made available on the Education and Training Foundation's Improving Teaching exhibition site on the Excellence Gateway.

4.1. Study Supporters

Newcastle College and Novus
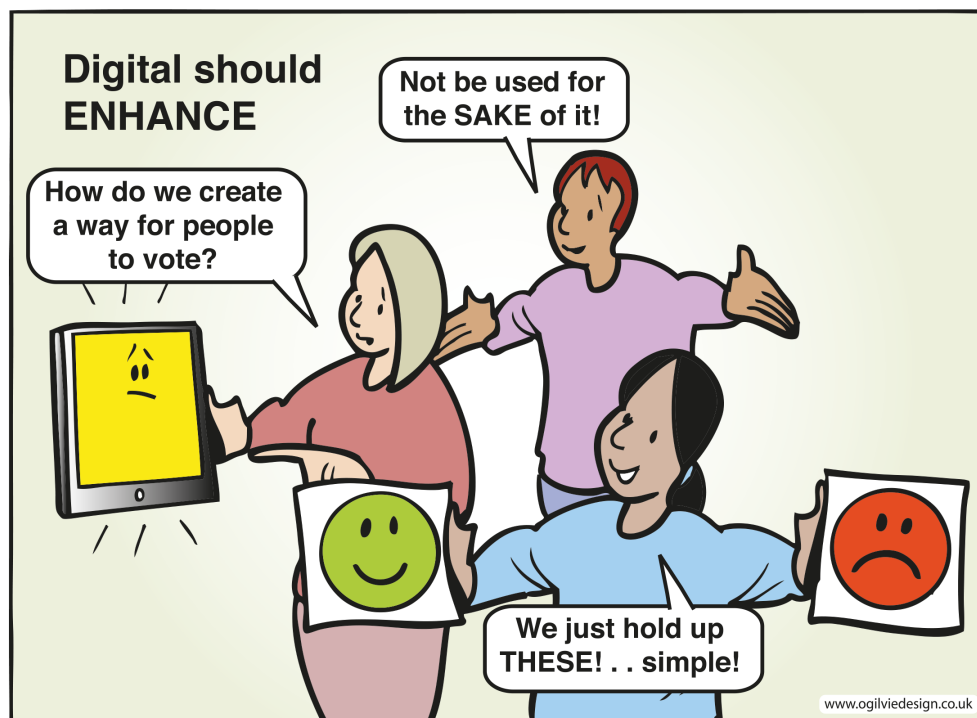
Summary

The project was designed to explore the impact of 'digital home study support' on the confidence and performance of learners on our English and maths programmes and the mothers of children in the secure estate.

Strategies to improve engagement and enhance the quality of the learning experience on these programmes were largely successful although tutors continued to report that learners were reluctant to take responsibility for their learning and continue with their studies at home. In the secure estate, the parents we worked with were experiencing increasing difficulty in trying to keep up to date with what their children were doing in school, which in turn made visits and maintaining positive family relationships much harder.

Our initial research indicated that it is widely recognised that parental involvement/ engagement can impact significantly on learner motivation, aspirations and achievement. Consequently, we decided to explore ways of engaging parents and carers in an effort to take learning beyond the classroom and further develop students' attitude, skills and confidence in their English and maths learning and improve family relationships in the secure state.

Rationale for the project

We wanted to research the impact of a parental/family engagement approach and how this could be supported through a digital platform to assess its impact on outcomes for:

- 16-19-year-old students studying maths and English as part of programmes of study
- and adult maths and English learners who may benefit from collaborating with their children outside the secure estate.

To support inclusion, we termed the approach we adopted as 'study supporter engagement' as we were mindful of the varied backgrounds of our students. For adult learners returning to learning, who may have had very negative previous challenges, we wanted to explore how engagement of adults as study supporters for their own children could support their engagement, progress and achievement.

The aims of the project were:

1. Improve learner engagement, retention and performance on English and maths programmes.
2. Identify successful 'parental' engagement strategies to encourage support and collaboration.
3. Set up a digital platform designed to encourage 'parents /carers etc' to engage with the project.

4. Develop a short training session and resources to provide 'parents/carers' with the skills and confidence needed to sign post or act as 'Study Supporters' for their charges.
5. Monitor the frequency and quality of engagement through the digital platform, encourage feedback from all parties and share findings from this research with the sector.

The approaches we took were designed to involve the participants fully in the choices and strategies used – to encourage participation and 'buy-in'. Wherever possible the project participants were instrumental in the decisions made and this was hoped to improve engagement.

Project Approach

The main focus of the project targeted programmes designed to support 16-18-year-olds working towards either their GCSE or Functional Skills English and maths qualifications within a college. Four groups were involved in the research and they were comprised of students attending GCSE English classes as part of their Programme of Study. Two groups participated near the end of their course in the 17/18 academic year, whilst the second two groups were starting their course at the beginning of the 18/19 academic year.

The first participating groups were made up of students from hospitality, music and performing arts, general engineering and IT courses, and the second groups were from construction and hair and beauty therapy. They were all working towards level two and three vocational qualifications and re-sitting their GCSE English qualifications. Students were heavily involved in deciding which digital platform was best to use, and 'Instagram' was used by teachers and students to extend GCSE English learning, support revision and communicate with students.

In the secure estate, the female prisoners were finding it increasingly difficult to relate to their children on 'family' days. These women often didn't recognise what their children were learning, new exams etc., or lacked confidence in their own English and maths skills, thus finding it difficult to relate to their children's day to day experiences.

Novus explored ways in which they could help these mothers engage more fully with their children's English and maths development, encouraging them to do the best that they can while building their own confidence and skills in these areas. Production of a digital story book for parents to use with their children developed skills and confidence.

Professional learning: Evidence of changes in teaching, learning and assessment practices.

At Newcastle College, the first two groups engaged well with the Instagram platform. As the GCSE exams grew nearer, students were keen to extend learning outside the classroom and teachers uploaded resources, study guides, videos and revision tips to the Instagram site. Students found the process of accessing the content via the familiar and chosen platform easy and interactive. Students who were very quiet in class engaged far better with the online / digital content, and teachers found that uploading content was very quick and easy, once they had overcome their initial concerns regarding personal unfamiliarity.

Although the college uses Moodle as their VLE, we found that students engaged far better with Instagram, as it was more familiar and accessible to them. We also started to explore how to involve parents in the Instagram site, by having a parallel site which they could access to support their child, but the students fed back that they would not be keen on this as they were 'adults' now and would not like to think their parents could see what they were doing at college.

The second two groups did not engage as well as the first participants. At the beginning of the new academic year, there was not the same sense of urgency experienced with the previous groups. We also found that the type of student; their course, gender, interests and levels of motivation impacted greatly on participation levels.

Engagement with the resources and information on the Instagram site was extremely low for students at the start of the 18/19 academic year, and the students were not as interested in the site. We tried to focus more on engaging their parents via the college parents' evenings, but due to insufficient staff being available, this did not take place.

Evidence of improved collaboration and changes in organisational practices

- Collaboration with teaching colleagues – when students are working with more than one teacher, Instagram provides a clear overview of what has been covered and how this was done for new teachers / courses.
- Use of a wider range of digital platforms in education. Staff involved in the project reported a positive attitude towards doing so.
- This digital action research project created frequent opportunities for colleagues to begin focusing upon aspects of their established teaching relationships with learners, and to collaboratively explore opportunities to improve learner participation both inside and outside of sessions.

Evidence of improvement in learners' achievements, retention and progression.

Newcastle College:

- Direct comparison of group achievement, retention and progression cannot take place as the teaching staff were not working with sufficient numbers to have control groups to compare. However, when exploring the results for the more prolific users of the Instagram site, there was a noticeable increase in higher exam grades than would normally be observed. Two students started the course with a grade '3' from school, then achieved a grade '7' after being involved in the project.
- As our students are GCSE re-sitters, and have often already had numerous failed attempts at gaining a good grade, we believe that this innovative approach did have an impact on their skills, knowledge development and improved self-confidence (evidenced by comments made on the Instagram site by students and anecdotal evidence from teachers). However, we are aware that Instagram is not the only factor that had a positive impact on learning and higher exam grades, and more research would be required to fully explore impact.

Novus / HMP/YOI Low Newton (Secure Estate):

- Anecdotal evidence from staff and participants is positive, but due to the time taken to agree policies and procedures, it is too early to assess any improvement in achievement, retention and progression.

Learning from this project

Newcastle College Instagram Project

- Use the digital platform the students are most comfortable accessing and using, and ensure they have input on the choice of platform (Instagram) to ensure their fullest participation.
- The Instagram facility enabled learners who did not speak up in class to ask questions and communicate more effectively in the classroom. They began to ask questions which enabled them to improve their coursework.
- Students don't always want their parents involved in supporting their college studies!
- Scheduling is vital – the sense of urgency and engagement levels for students are influenced greatly by the timing of the activity.
- Females seemed to be more positive about using Instagram than males, and there were also difficulties in extending the use of Instagram across some departments. Perhaps each department needs to evolve its own preferred approach with staff and learners in discrete projects.

NOVUS / HMP/YOI Low Newton (Secure Estate) project

- It would be good practice to create a family learning strategy within HMP/YOI Low Newton and promote family learning activities.
- Being excluded from their child's education can negatively impact on family relationships for all.
- We need to learn more from existing (non-digital) family learning projects and what makes them successful.
- Digital communication has huge potential in the secure estate if security issues can be addressed.

For further information about this project

You can read more about this project on the Excellence Gateway at
https://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2933
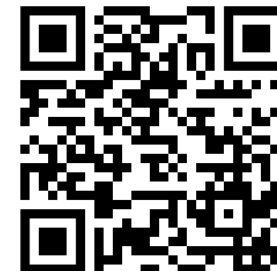
a. Case study (FE College focus)

Newcastle College

Technology can enable dialogue for ALL students

Teacher: You can have a dialogue with me . . . . without anyone else KNOWING

Ninja messages!

Can I ask if . .

Stealth communication

www.ogilviedesign.co.uk

What was the purpose of the project?

This project was designed to explore the impact of 'digital home study support' on the performance of learners on English and maths programmes.

Attendance and attainment for learners in maths and English lags behind performance on vocational elements of programmes of study, and this has impact on achievement; nationally, and significantly for the North East.
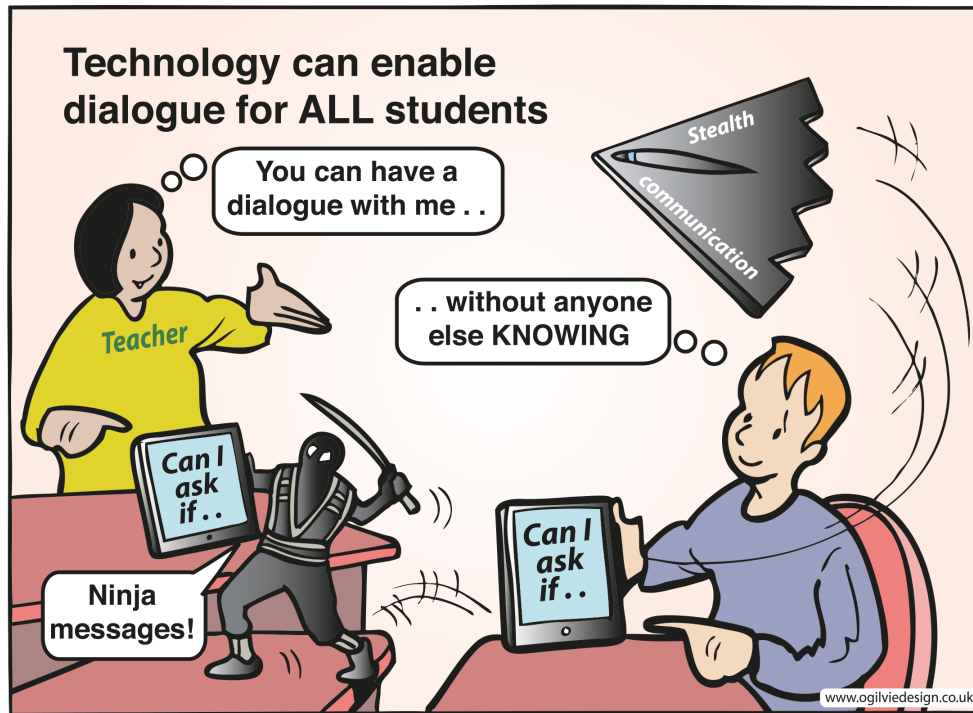
Teachers of maths and English do their utmost to be creative in engaging their learners in development of these skills; however, outside of the classroom environment, students tend to be reluctant to continue with their studies.

In order to promote learner engagement in developing the skills and knowledge to be successful in their studies and life, we planned to explore how parents and carers of our students could be involved in supporting them outside the classroom.

The project aimed to:

1. improve learner engagement, retention and performance on English and maths programmes by working more closely with their 'parents /carers'.
2. identify successful 'parental' engagement strategies employed within our own organisations and findings from current sector research in order to launch the 'study support' programme.
3. set up a digital platform designed to encourage 'parents /carers' to support their charges as they prepare for their English and maths exams.
4. develop a training programme, which provides these 'parents/carers' with the skills and resources needed to act as 'Study Supporters'.
5. monitor the frequency and quality of engagement through the digital platform, encourage feedback from all parties and share findings from this research with the sector.

What did the project do?

The project planned to identify an appropriate digital platform initially focussed on teacher ideas and preferences. However, we found that digital platforms created with education in mind were not particularly user-friendly; resources like Blackboard and Edmodo already seemed out of date and unappealing to our students, and they were having to be prompted to check these platforms regularly which defeated the object of students taking ownership themselves. With this in mind, we began to focus on what students were most comfortable with.

As teachers, we are all too aware of the intrusive and distracting presence of mobile phones in classrooms across the country. We couldn't help but notice that the majority of times we asked students to "put phones away", they had been mindlessly scrolling through an Instagram feed. We began to feel like we were fighting a losing battle against the phones, but then began to wonder whether we could infiltrate this digital distraction and use it to enhance the learning and engagement of our students. Could we advertise lessons and concepts "by stealth" by popping up on the same newsfeeds they spent hours a day scrolling through?

We set up a number of Instagram accounts for use with students and their parents; to upload images and resources used during our GCSE English sessions and to show students and parents what we had been doing in classes. The students accessed the resources far more regularly than we had expected them to, but the parents' involvement was extremely limited.

In an attempt to engage parents in support and sessions to develop their personal skills and confidence, offering a pilot programme of maths and English skill 'top up' sessions for staff at the College – to help them to support their students and children at home. Recruitment to this programme wasn't successful as staff felt they were 'too busy' to come rather than not 'wanting' to come, and this is an area we hope to explore further in future development work.

We worked with maths teachers to see if their students would engage with the project, but again, due to the time constraints of the teachers, a maths strand did not get off the ground. The lessons learned from the English strand will be shared with the maths team to promote the benefits of the approach as the new academic year progresses.

Project work included:
- the use of Instagram to post pictures of activities carried out in class, useful resources, videos including 'how to' guides and teacher feedback regarding assessment activities and GCSE exam preparation techniques
- Students accessing the Instagram site during and after classes
- making accessible resources and activities which helped students to catch up on missed lessons, review content completed in class, attempt extension activities to confirm their understanding of what teachers had covered in class, create opportunities to ask follow up questions out of class for quieter students, prompted homework, revision sessions and/or explore lesson content at their leisure.

What helped the project succeed?

A key strength of this activity was the teachers themselves – they were extremely keen to review their current practice and experiment with different approaches and resources and develop their own digital skills, for the benefit of their students. The collaborative nature of the activity and the internal support from a team of English teaching specialists regarding ideas and strategies which students might find useful was also vital.

The project took place at the end of the academic year 17-18, and again at the start of the next year 18-19. When the students were preparing for exams at the end of the year, there was a higher level of enthusiasm and engagement with the Instagram platform than there was at the start of the new academic year. We also found that the curriculum area the students were from had an impact on engagement and activity levels; hairdressing and art students were more involved and positive (at the end of the year – when exams were taking place) than were construction and IT students (at the beginning of the academic year).

Example postings from the Instagram site:
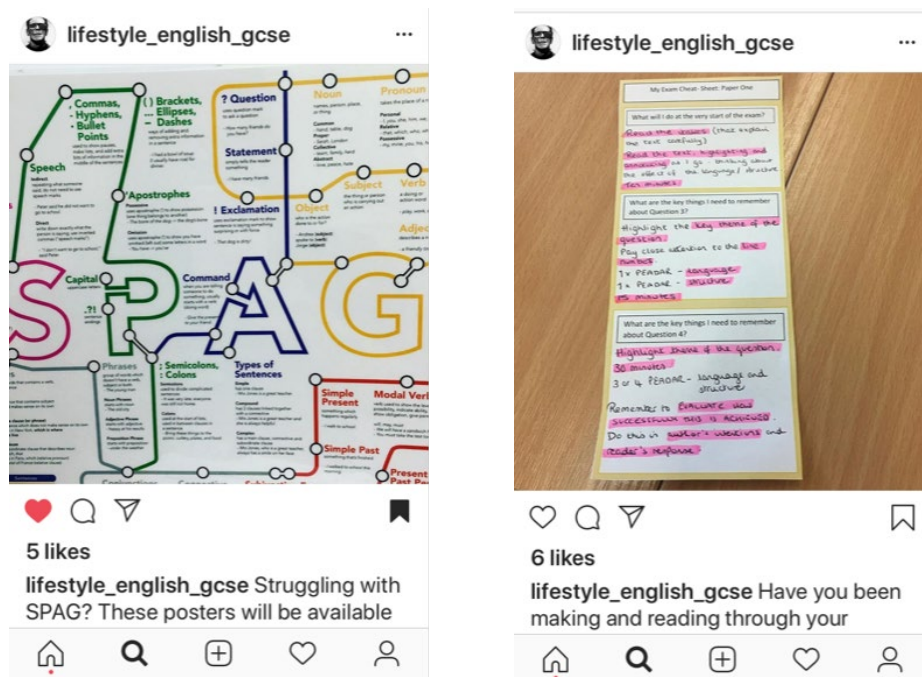
What challenges did the project face?

- Students having access to the resource required to participate – outside of the college environment
- The very low number of vocational teaching staff engaging with the up-skilling offer – nobody attended the offered sessions
- Gender appeared to impact on engagement levels – female students engaged far better than male students did – Instagram seemed to be more orientated to females
- Maths project not as successful as the English – staff involvement levels were lower due to time constraints
- Videos on Instagram can only be one minute long; you cannot have long extended video clips
- You cannot ensure that your students only look at your site if you ask them to use it in the classroom, so the distractions of other users still exist.

- If you do not like filming yourself, (we didn't!) you can get around this by filming your hands annotating a text and just record your voice but if you are not comfortable with this, your site may not have much variety and you will be limited to picture posts.
- You cannot attach documents like Word or PowerPoint.

What difference did the project make?

We were very pleased with the engagement with Instagram from GCSE exam preparation in English – it allowed students who did not engage as well in class activities a different platform to access support and ask questions. The key concepts from teaching sessions were made available via Instagram on phones – which the students found easier than via Moodle (the College Virtual Learning Environment). With a single 'click', the resource and support was there, with no logging in or multi-step process to manoeuvre.

We found the benefits of using Instagram in this project were that:

- there is no need to prompt students to check the site; any new posts will pop up automatically on their news feed
- it was incredibly quick and easy for students to comment on posts; they simply clicked on the post and typed their comment
- the quieter, more reluctant students often prefer to send a message online (either a DM (direct message) or publicly underneath a post) if they have not understood something rather than speak out in class
- teachers can make and post a ONE MINUTE video in ONE MINUTE. When planning a lesson which includes explaining a key concept, the teacher can quickly film themselves explaining this, and post it to the site for students to refer to whenever they need
- it encouraged further engagement and activity of students - some enjoyed contributing to the site, making videos or having their work displayed in the posts
- it is very easy to set up and maintain a site
- the teacher decides who sees their posts and they have to 'OK' each user
- if a teacher has an "Oops, I forgot to tell them about…" moment, they can quickly post this to the group as soon as they remember.
- The materials are a permanent record.

Staff numbers:

- *directly involved: 8*
- *indirectly involved: 20*

Student numbers:

- *directly involved: 90*
- *indirectly involved: 20*

Quotes from participating students:

"It helps me revise what I need to do and it's useful"

"It's easier to revise from and easier to get to."

Quotes from participating teachers

"Dead easy to set up"

"Found it worthwhile to use a different digital medium to communicate with my learners"

"They ended up being my teacher, which also improved their engagement with the site"

The use of a different digital platform for students was successful but we did not effectively engage the study 'supporters' as we had intended to. We were disappointed that the parental involvement aspect of the project has not been very productive so far. The inclusion of English and maths teaching staff at parents' evenings was insufficient to engage them, and students were not keen to involve their parents/carers in what they were studying at College.

Moving forward, we would like to investigate further how to engage the appropriate people *outside the classroom* in supporting and developing the skills, knowledge and confidence of our students.

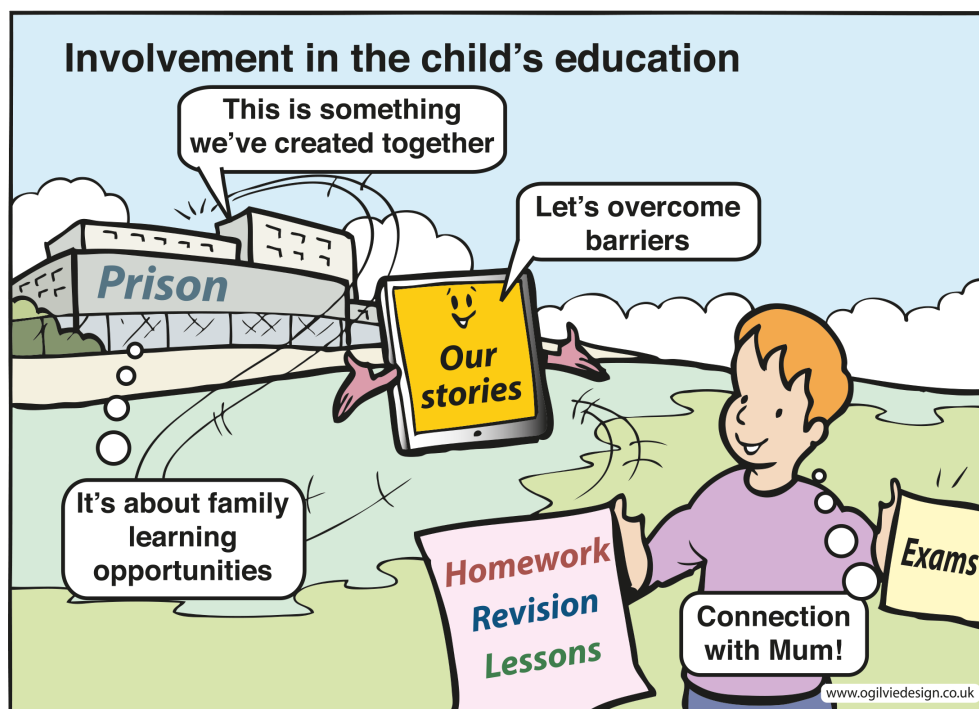## Where can I find more information?

Link to Padlet site:

https://padlet.com/rachel_southern1/8egxl8kuyn21

Our Instagram Page: lifestyle_english_gcse

b. Case study (Secure Estate focus)

NOVUS (HMP/YOI Low Newton)

What was the purpose of the project?

As English teachers working with women in the secure estate, we noted that some of the mothers we worked with were experiencing increasing difficulty in trying to keep up to date with what their children were doing in school, which in turn made visits and maintaining positive family relationships much harder.

We were keen to explore how we might be able to improve the situation and conscious of the research highlighting the importance of parental

engagement on a child's learning. Research emphasises the importance of positive family relationships in reducing reoffending and rehabilitation[2].

With this in mind we decided to explore opportunities to:

- promote parental engagement in their child's learning
- strengthen or maintain family bonds/relationships
- improve English skills (parent and child)
- develop confidence in the parents to support their child(ren) with educational activities.

Novus, who are responsible for education at Low Newton, held a focus group with some of the residents to gauge interest in the project. They identified a strategy and the software to help mothers in prison engage with their children's learning more. The idea was to work with mums and kids to create a joint story which would be turned into an e-book to be accessed through a website/ downloaded to a smart phone by the child at home. They created a prototype book which would then be turned into an e-book.

What did the project do?

- We held a focus group with some of the residents to gauge interest in the project and discuss possible ways to move it forward.
- We finally decided upon an approach which would encourage mothers to work with their children to create their own personal story which would then be produced digitally. The idea being that they both would benefit from improving their narrative skills, but also the children would be able to listen to the story when they got home as their mothers would not be there.
- Having identified the strategy 'Fairytale Families,' we then sourced the most suitable software.

---

[2] Lord Farmer (2017) *The Importance of Strengthening Prisoners' Family Ties to Prevent Reoffending and Reduce Intergenerational Crime.* London: Ministry of Justice.

- Our short-term aim was to see mothers working with education staff on current family visits to write a fictional story with their child(ren). The story would then be digitalised and sent to the child so that it can be downloaded at home and the parent will be given a paper copy.
- Our long-term plan is for the women to participate in a 6-week programme
- We met with Novus Senior Management Team and the Governor to gain permission for the project.
- We met with security to discuss risks/ safety requirements and restrictions and then identified an appropriate visit to run short-term project.
- We visited HMP Durham to evaluate their family programme.
- The English class created a prototype book which was then digitalised.
- We created promotional materials to advertise and promote the project and encourage engagement.
- We ran a 'parent/carer' event for September to introduce and promote the project and discuss how to get the most for themselves and their charges from it.
- We identified a strategy and the software to help mothers in prison engage with their children's learning more
- We held a successful focus group with some of the residents to gauge interest in and inform the work of the project.

Example pages from the book:

What helped the project succeed?

Attempting any digital projects in Offender Learning is extremely difficult and we believe that we wouldn't have been able to get this off the ground without the buy-in and support from the senior management team.

Promotional materials helped promote the project and develop the parents' positive attitude towards how their involvement would be beneficial to their own and their child's skills and confidence.

What challenges did the project face?

Having to liaise closely with a range of senior management teams within the prison and the college was quite time-consuming but had to be done to secure the go ahead on the project. Contract complications prevented Novus from accessing the current visits to run the short-term project. Release for staff to attend project meetings and dissemination events was also difficult.

What difference did the project make?

Novus now have agreement from the prison to run both the long-term and short-term projects, which means that there are now opportunities for residents to get and be more involved in their child's learning.

Evening visits have now been allocated to encourage more families to bring children to see their parents, so that it is not impacting on school attendance.

Novus have been allocated one session per week to continue the project and develop the participants' skills, knowledge and confidence further.

Summary of Findings

There is currently no family learning strategy within HMP/YOI Low Newton, which limits access to family learning opportunities. As a result, family learning is not widely promoted across the prison, resulting in missed opportunities for parents to promote the importance of learning to their child(ren).

Schools are reluctant to release children in order to attend family visits, as they are not understood as having educational value. This impacts upon the

relationship between the parent and child and the parent feels that they are missing out on important aspects of the child's life.

Other establishments are running family learning projects successfully; through which residents are building crucial and beneficial relationships with their children and their education. Parents have expressed that as a result of the projects, they have engaged with their child's learning in a way that is positive but unfamiliar to them.
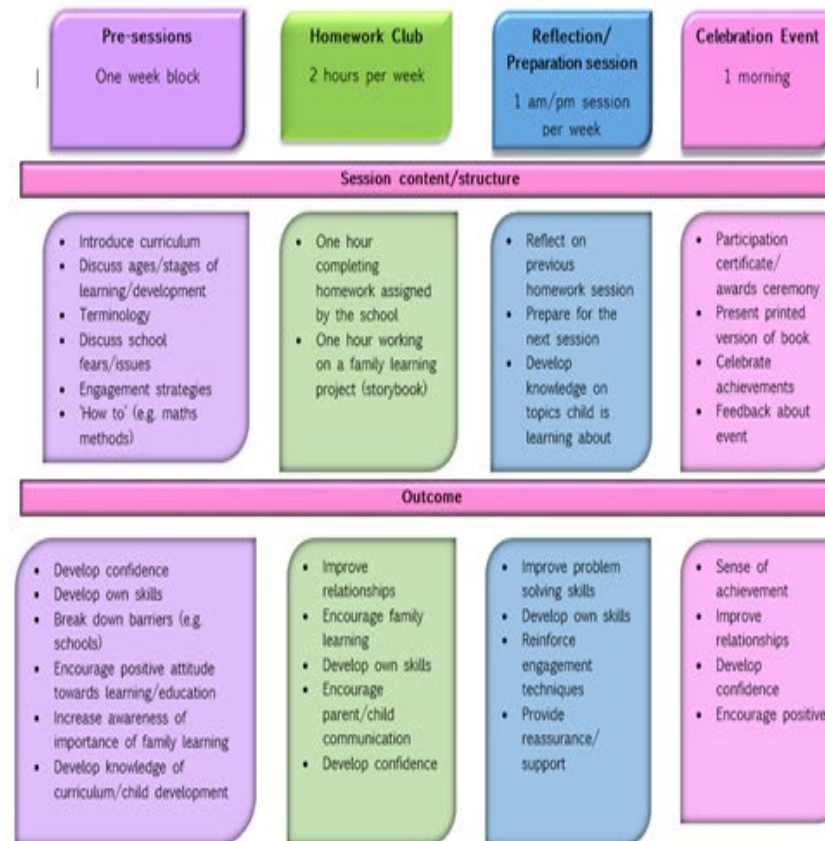
Long term plans:

Links have been formed between Novus and prison partners (NEPACS & Offender Management) and the prison have expressed a keen interest in developing family learning collaboratively.
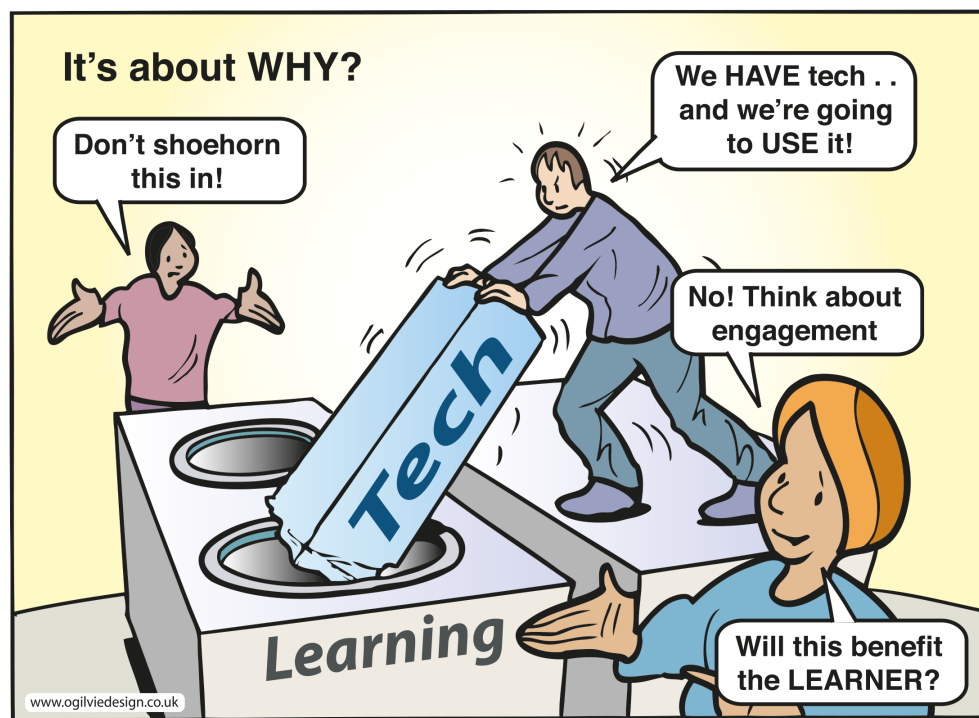
Where can I find more information?

Although there is nothing currently available externally, the project team would be happy to explain aspects further and answer specific questions.

Week	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1		Pre-sessions					
2					Homework Club		
3			Reflection/ prep session		Homework Club		
4			Reflection/ prep session		Homework Club		
5			Reflection/ prep session		Homework Club		
6			Reflection/ prep session			Celebration Event	

Pre-sessions	Homework Club	Reflection/ Preparation session	Celebration Event
One week block	2 hours per week	1 am/pm session per week	1 morning

Session content/structure

• Introduce curriculum • Discuss ages/stages of learning/development • Terminology • Discuss school fears/issues • Engagement strategies • 'How to' (e.g. maths methods)	• One hour completing homework assigned by the school • One hour working on a family learning project (storybook)	• Reflect on previous homework session • Prepare for the next session • Develop knowledge on topics child is learning about	• Participation certificate/ awards ceremony • Present printed version of book • Celebrate achievements • Feedback about event

Outcome

• Develop confidence • Develop own skills • Break down barriers (e.g. schools) • Encourage positive attitude towards learning/education • Increase awareness of importance of family learning • Develop knowledge of curriculum/child development	• Improve relationships • Encourage family learning • Develop own skills • Encourage parent/child communication • Develop confidence	• Improve problem solving skills • Develop own skills • Reinforce engagement techniques • Provide reassurance/ support	• Sense of achievement • Improve relationships • Develop confidence • Encourage positive

4.2. Digital Educators Programme

Gateshead College, North Tyneside Council and North Tyneside YMCA

It's about WHY?

Don't shoehorn this in!

We HAVE tech . . and we're going to USE it!

No! Think about engagement

Tech

Learning

Will this benefit the LEARNER?

www.ogilviedesign.co.uk

Summary

Through a series of collaborative training days, and continuous activity in own work places, this OTLA Digital project supported practitioners from Gateshead College, North Tyneside Council and North Tyneside YMCA to investigate the use of technology to engage and enhance the learner experience and to promote the use of technology to their immediate colleagues, through the achievement of the Digital Educators Award.

Rationale for the project

The vision of the project was for 100 staff in Gateshead/North Tyneside to use ICT/Digital approaches in more productive and innovative ways which generate outstanding learning. More significantly, these staff:

a.   Came from subject areas where the effective use of digital technology was sometimes less established e.g. Employability, Maths and English, Catering and Hospitality, Health and Social Care, Early Years, Foundation Learning, ESOL, Retail, Warehousing.

b.   Work with groups of learners where the need for innovative and stimulating delivery was recognised to be high, but where historically there was evidence that this was not always occurring e.g. NEET, high needs learners, looked after young people.

The project hoped to solve multiple connected problems i.e. staff from these subject/delivery areas who felt they lacked confidence: self-assessment reports which indicated that the stimulating use of ICT as an area for development; and OFSTED feedback indicating opportunities were being missed to engage and inspire learners using digital approaches.

It particularly recognises that some subject areas have 'moved ahead' in terms of outstanding teaching learning and assessment and the use of ICT - especially the technical, engineering and media based subjects –but that there needed to be a fresh focus on subjects and learning environments often considered to be 'practical' or sometimes considered to attract learners working at the lower levels.

The partnership brought together a college with 'outstanding' status and recognised strength in the delivery of ICT/digital media with community and local authority providers who are successfully accessing hard to reach learners and learners with complex needs.

We set out to develop 15 Digital Educators to lead and inspire teams of staff using a very specific model: the concept of 'champions' is common enough, but this model was distinctive, as the champions were not to be ICT specialists who already taught IT as part of their normal job role. They came from the subject areas and learning environments identified earlier e.g.

NEET, Employability, Foundation, Health and Social Care. These champions were not to arrive, deliver specialist training then leave. Instead they would be embedded in delivery teams and training environments as a constantly available resource. Their specialism would be applying digital approaches to that specific subject area, or learner group.

The uniqueness of this programme was that is the Digital Educators Award was not achieved by developing personal digital skills – it could only be achieved by transferring these skills to others. By completing the training, the champions had to share their learning and demonstrate that they were developing others.

On average each digital educator champion was expected to actively support seven other staff in their use of technology towards outstanding teaching and learning. The staff they supported were colleagues within their subject teams and delivery centres.

Project Approach

Gateshead College trained 8 of its own staff, plus 5 from the local authority and 2 from YMCA, as Digital Educators through four full day training sessions whereby participants were able to reflect on their own practice, develop a bespoke toolkit of technologies appropriate for their own needs and then introduce them to their own teams and organisations. The value of the formal qualification was that it provided a motivation and further credibility for these "digital champions.

Professional learning: Evidence of changes in teaching, learning and assessment practices.

As the programme was wide ranging in its scope, with large numbers of staff and aiming to target some specific learner groups (hard to reach adults, looked after children, NEET etc.) as well as some specific curriculum areas (e.g. Foundation, Employability, Health and Social Care), the project developed most of the Professional Standards to some degree. It also followed the three stages of the Digital Teaching Professional Framework (ETF in collaboration with Jisc) whereby participants own practice would be explored, adopting a new way of teaching/learning before leading the way with colleagues.

A three-step process was followed where practitioners investigated their current practice in line with theorists before identifying an element in which they wanted to improve by introducing a technology to enhance learning. It was important at this point to monitor that technology was not being shoe-horned in just because there was a new application or piece of kit.

The process then continued with the practical have-a-go sessions where sharing of knowledge took place. This encouraged each participant to bring their own contribution of a tool which they were comfortable or confident in using and sharing this with their peers.

Supportive observations and learning walks enabled practitioners to discuss whether the introduction of technology was appropriate, if any impact on learner engagement or progress was being made (see case study for feedback form). Each practitioner was then encouraged to reflect, identifying any areas for further development or if the tool was not successful, recognising why.

The impact of the professional learning is evident as 25 practitioners have provided evidence of developments in their digital pedagogy towards the award and 8 have completed. The 25 include the initial 15 who were enrolled, and an additional 10 practitioners from the other four projects in this programme who recognised the benefits of the Award

Evidence of improved collaboration and changes in organisational practices

The fundamental purpose was to make learning sessions more technologically stimulating, relevant, accessible and interactive, in the drive to achieve outstanding TLA.

An active learning methodology was used by the facilitators during the training days to provide opportunities for participants to practice using new technologies in a non-judgemental environment. Staff were then set activities to continue in their own teaching environments before sharing their experiences to discuss any issues, barriers and recommendations for further development.

Dissemination events added value to the sharing of approaches between participants, allowing conversations to take place about the technologies, different learning groups and impact. Additional micro CPD events were then used to support the practice aspect of the process. Introducing new uses of technology and 'have a go' sessions. These sessions helped create a personalised 'tool kit' which was accessible and appropriate to each participant.

Key measures would include feedback from internal observations and learning walks, and formal reports from external partners or agencies, specifically OFSTED. We looked for an improved observation grade profile as well as qualitative feedback indicating improvements in teaching, learning and assessment.

We produced an audit of the technologies used by delivery staff at the beginning of the programme and then a further audit at the end of the project. The purpose to compare this to see how widespread new approaches and products have become and consideration given as to where they were now being used.

A digital feedback tool was used to collect anonymous feedback from project participants to allow honest responses. When asked 'How has the digital project impacted on you and your practice?' the following comments were received:

> *"I absolutely loved the training days. They gave me time away from work to really think about how I wanted to introduce technology and why I was doing it."*
>
> By taking part in the sessions I have been able to explore a few new apps I didn't know about – peer teaching has been invaluable. I have also used this in my practice with my trainees and I feel this has been great CPD
>
> Widening my awareness of digital practices. Great for professional development which then transfers to the classroom.
>
> I am learning about new approaches from people I trust – if it works for one of my peers, I feel more confident that it will work for me!
>
> It's allowed me to understand what does work with a variety of different learning groups to provide a positive impact for them and their learning journey but also streamlined work for teachers too.

> **The success of the collaborative approach is evident in that the project Leader is establishing a Professional Exchange so that those involved in this initiative can continue their collaboration after the project has finished.**

Evidence of improvement in learners' achievements, retention and progression.

The number of learners impacted on is more difficult to define than the number of teachers, because each teacher could employ their new skills in the use of technology in many different classes and situations. It is estimated that this project has had a reach of 80+ practitioners and 1850+ learners.

In terms of specific measures, end of course surveys will be used to see if there are any improvements in the learner feedback responses linked to the introduction of technology. One question, for example, for an end of course survey would be 'do teachers use technology in an interesting and engaging way?' gaining qualitative feedback and opportunity to gather further information from individual learners.

Key learning from this project

- Consideration of participants' needs

  All participants started with a range of different prior knowledge in respect of digital skills, teaching experience and their level of self-confidence. Beginning with a self-assessment is important to enable appropriate support to be put in place. This initial assessment needs to take into consideration the role of the practitioner, the student group, the learning environment and resources available as well as their personal skills, confidence and experience.

- Alignment of content and activities to professional development

  The content and activities needed to be adapted throughout the project to differentiate for the participants. There was no one-size-fits-all approach. Even when it came to the Virtual Learning Environment being used in between the training days, not one VLE was appropriate for all to access or engage with due to the various organisational restrictions.

- Collaboration and peer learning

  Traditional CPD of disseminating information does not work when introducing new technologies. Active learning environments which are non-judgemental, where time is given for everyone to have a go and ask questions, make mistakes and learn by doing really help build confidence. Support communication between the training day sessions is invaluable. This additional support is required to ensure the practitioner continues to feel they have a point of contact if they have any questions or concerns. Richer developmental learning can be achieved through supportive observations or lesson study where peers can share and provide feedback to each other in a safe environment.
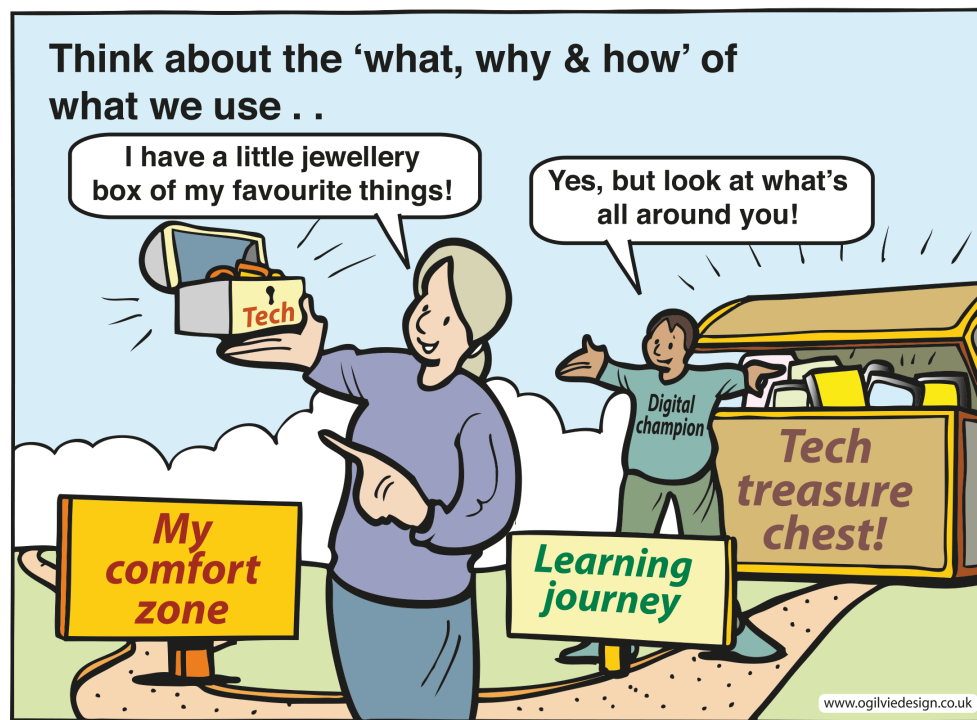
For further information about this project

You can read more about this project on the Excellence Gateway at https://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2934

a. Case study (Digital educators)

Gateshead College

Think about the 'what, why & how' of what we use . .

I have a little jewellery box of my favourite things!

Yes, but look at what's all around you!

Tech

Digital champion

My comfort zone

Learning journey

Tech treasure chest!

www.ogilviedesign.co.uk

What was the purpose of the project?

The main purpose of the project was to increase the use of technology within classrooms to enhance teaching, learning and assessment activity. There was a specific focus on those vocational areas of the College where the effective use of digital technology was sometimes less established. Often, learners in these areas required innovative and stimulating delivery (including Foundation Learning, NEET and high needs learners).

The project aimed to develop "digital champions" from existing vocational specialists for whom ICT was not normally part of their normal job role. These newly-trained champions were to remain embedded in delivery teams and training environments as a resident resource. Their specialism would be applying digital approaches to that specific subject area, or learner group.

To help equip the new digital champions, the College offered a "Digital Educator's Award". This award required evidence of practitioners developing their personal digital skills, but it could only be achieved by them transferring these skills to other colleagues in their subject areas. To gain the Digital Educator award, the champions had to demonstrate that they were developing other staff members.

What did the project do?

- Five colleagues from North Tyneside YMCA and North Tyneside Council Adult Learning Service were enrolled on the programme alongside eight College staff to share the learning benefits across the sector. This partnership brought together a college with 'outstanding' status and recognised strength in the delivery of ICT/digital media with community and local authority providers who are successfully accessing hard to reach learners and learners with complex needs.
- The Award required staff to attend for four training days at approximately two-monthly intervals. On these training days, staff reflected on current practice and identified elements of their digital potential which they would like to improve. The training involved practical sessions where sharing of knowledge and skills took place. Each participant contributed a tool which they were confident in using in their teaching context.
- The Award emphasised the importance of the pedagogical value of any digital development in practice. Participating staff were asked to demonstrate how new technological approaches would:
  - contribute to improved learner engagement with subject content;
  - develop learners' social skills;
  - contribute to learners' capacity to self-assess and make progress;
  - improve learners' employability

- It was important to ensure that technology was not being "shoe-horned in" just because there was a new application or kit available.
- The structure of the Award meant that staff following the qualification constructed a personalised 'tool kit' which was accessible and appropriate to each participant.
- An audit at the beginning and end of the Award enabled evidence to be provided showing that learners became more engaged (evidence was produced from quality observation reports and learner voice).
- An additional 12 staff from the other four OTLA Digital projects representing 8 providers also enrolled upon the programme.

What helped the project succeed?

- The Digital Educator qualification provided a motivation and further credibility for these "digital champions". (This incentive was important as unanticipated additional teaching responsibilities created significant pressures on ensuring participants' attendance). A well-designed VLE provided necessary back-up as well as exemplary VLE materials for participants.
- Traditional CPD approaches (disseminating general information) does not work when persuading staff to embrace new technologies. The collaborative training days, which were non-judgemental and where participants could explore new digital approaches and risk "having a go", were crucial in building confidence.
- The mixed group of participants had a range of different prior knowledge in respect of digital skills, teaching experience and digital confidence.
  This eventually proved very productive as staff learned from each other through the project. The micro-teaching experience was also developmental and valued by participants.
- The content and activities needed to be adapted throughout the project to help differentiate for the participants. The participants also valued the on-site visits and supportive observations by assessors for the qualification.

What challenges did the project face?

- Some participants occasionally prioritised collection of minimal portfolio evidence over the intrinsic learning opportunities that the qualification had created. (Those teaching on the Award quickly become adept at supportively refocusing participants to help them benefit fully from the qualification.)
- Some of the less confident participants from outside providers did not seem to take advantage of the VLE and online support that was available and this took up staff time in tutorials and training days. External candidates needed additional support to master a new VLE.
- Some participants expressed having difficulty finding time and opportunity to fully practice with new technologies and build self-confidence before trying with learners.
- Following an audit of the technologies used by delivery staff at the beginning and the end of the project, one or two participants appeared reluctant to fundamentally change their practice beyond that required to gain the qualification (even though the success of these digital practices for stimulating learner progress had been confirmed by observers and Award assessors).

What difference did the project make?

Practitioners began to look at their practice and consider different ways of doing things using a range of technologies, including:
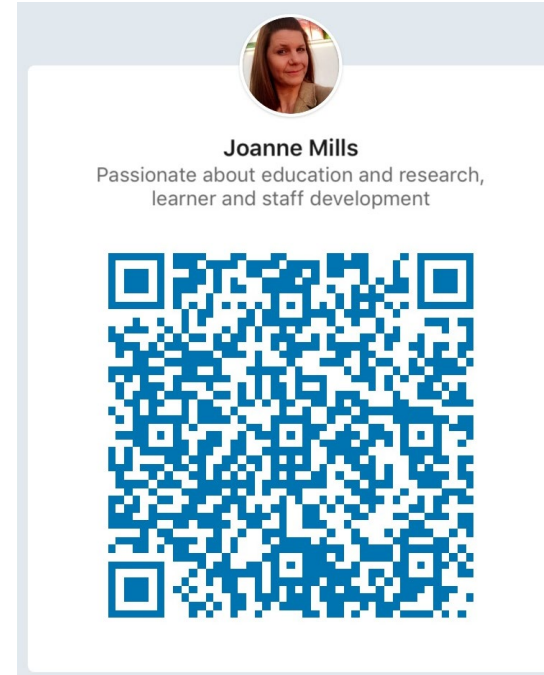- A QR wall being used to make practical demonstrations available on video whenever the learners need to revisit;
- Green screen technology being used to create video content in non-accessible locations.
- "Google Cardboard" was used for SEN learners to visit art galleries and global locations to help them 'see' and research.
- Colleagues from different projects shared and adopted digital practices observed at Digital Educator microteaching (e.g. a Northumberland Council teacher began using applications that were demonstrated on a Digital Educator training day).

- 25 staff from nine different providers joined this award, and 8 have already successfully completed.
- A Digital Professional Exchange Network has been established after the project finished, and participants from across the projects joined its first meeting in January 2019.
- Learners became more engaged (evidence within quality observation reports and learner voice).

Where can I find more information?
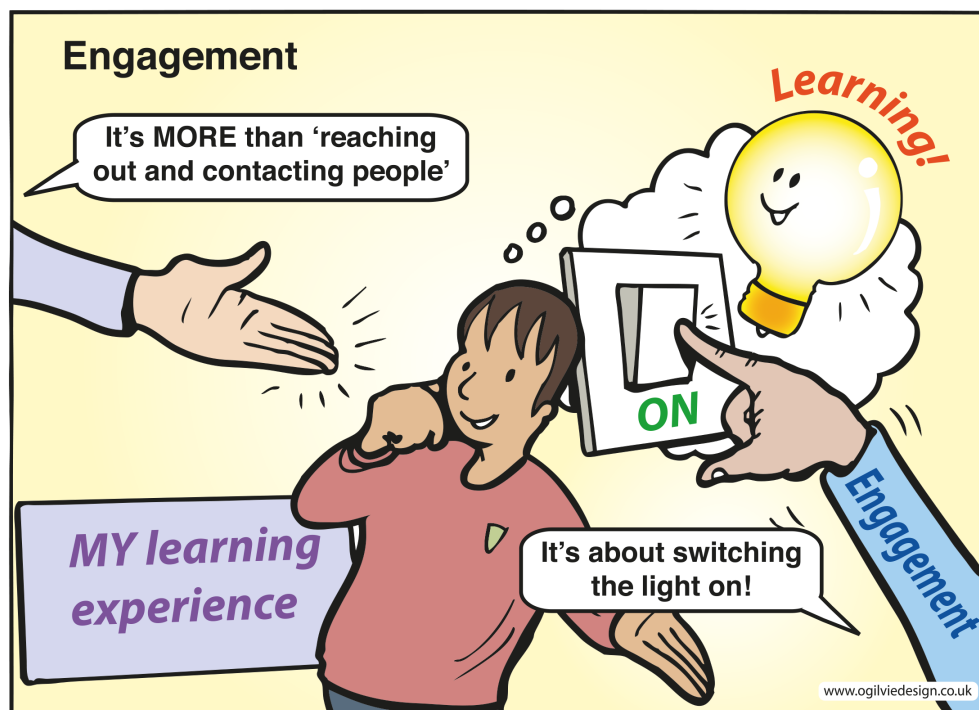
Ascentis Level 4 Award in Digital Learning for Educators
https://www.ascentis.co.uk/ascentis-extended-qualifications

or please get in touch directly -

Joanne Mills
Passionate about education and research, learner and staff development

b. Case study (Using a VLE to support apprenticeships in a local authority)

North Tyneside Council Adult Learning Service

What was the purpose of the project?

These initiatives were part of the wider Digital Educator Award project managed by Gateshead College, in which project participants developed both their digital awareness and practised sharing their knowledge across the community of educators in their organisation.

Both projects attempted to exploit the potential of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) in an organisation which had a variety of learners and practitioners teaching across a number of sites to learners with differing attendance patterns and variable start and completion dates.

Rationale for the project

The IT manager used the opportunity to respond to their latest Ofsted report which recommended that all learners have immediate access to full information relating to tackling extremism and the PREVENT agenda – to "reinforce the dangers of radicalisation and extremism so that learners and apprentices develop a sound understanding of these risks and how they relate to their daily lives." The manager decided that preparing introductory activities through the e-portfolio system on the VLE would help address that recommendation.

The Apprenticeship Trainer encouraged the use of the virtual leaning environment as part of our blended delivery model on apprenticeship provision. This was especially important due to the nature of delivery on a "rolling programme" with continual starts, and it needed an effective tracking tool for teaching and planning which could reach a variety of staff.

What did the project do?

In the IT Manager's initiative:

- The IT Manager consulted teachers and managers and decided to embed a PREVENT resource into the induction process as a VLE course which pilot learners using the e-portfolio and VLE would have to complete before the e-portfolio system allowed them to access the system. This remained available on the resources area of the e-portfolio as a PowerPoint so that learners could revisit it at any point in their programme.
- The manager worked with tutors to support them in its design, which included teaching them how to embed videos and website links into the PowerPoint and how to embed all of this into a VLE course which could then be accessed through distance learning.
- To involve tutors further, the manager also consulted about what would make a difference regarding teaching, learning and assessment through

digital approaches. To do this he had input into our annual tutor briefings and also in small groups.

- Tutors completed feedback sheets with prompt questions. Key feedback from tutor briefings indicated how help with Prevent was required.

The Apprenticeship Trainer's initiative:

- She based her work on a virtual session with 3 apprentices and then, via a digital session, disseminated this to further education teaching staff within Employment and Skills.

What helped the project succeed?

The IT manager found that frequent consultations with the tutors was necessary.

When there were compatibility issues, the Apprenticeship Trainer used external links from the VLE to other digital resources including YouTube and Google slides.

She also found that the VLE did not allow for interactive discussion, so she used a link to Mentimeter to make the session more interactive.

The challenges the project faced:

In the IT Manager's initiative, some students clicked through the VLE prevent course at induction and didn't actually read the information for click on the video and website article links. They just wanted to get straight into their course.

In the Apprenticeship Trainer's initiative, there were technical issues with linking resources on the internal system and the Virtual Learning Environment.

What difference the project made:

The IT manager found that:

- Tutors were more confident to teach the Prevent and WRAP agenda through having this is in place at the initial stage.
- Learners referred to the induction process in lessons on Prevent and radicalisation.
- Some tutors decided to set this as a task within the e-portfolio system for learners to complete.

The Apprenticeship Trainer found that:

- Feedback from tutors echoed her own evaluation, which was that the session contained everything the learner needs in one place, for them to visit, as and when required. (This proved particularly useful on the apprenticeship provision as it is delivered as a rolling programme, with continual starts, and provided a useful tracking tool for teaching and planning.)

Both project participants worked with a number of colleagues to improve awareness of the potential of the VLE across the organisation.

Where can I find more information?

Feedback on the Apprenticeship Trainer's initiative has been gathered at https://www.mentimeter.com/s/a8801e103ce9dc052035076c08e715df/74f4a431301f

c. Case study (Digital approaches to communicate with homeless people)

North Tyneside YMCA
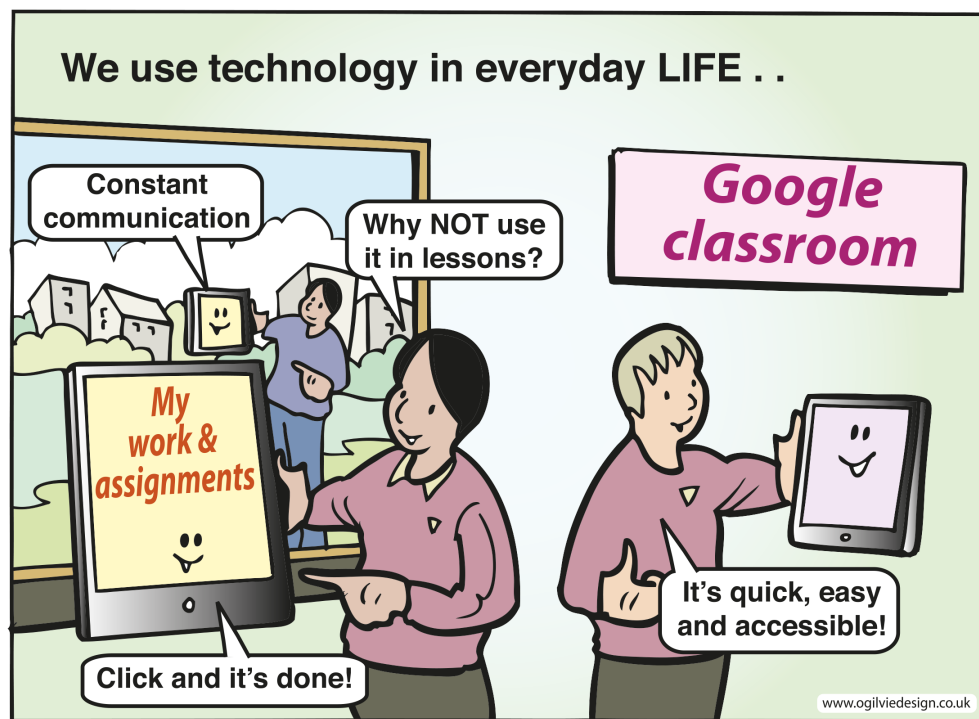
What was the purpose of the project?

Two staff from North Tyneside YMCA explored ways to use digital approaches to help the life chances of homeless young people.

One practitioner attempted to help young people to create a professional email address that would impress employers and increase their chances of getting a job.

In the other initiative, the YMCA manager attempted to use "Mentimeter" a questioning application, to help staff get information from clients who may be unable to attend meetings.

Both practitioners were also enrolled on the Gateshead College Digital Educators Award.

Rationale for the project

YMCA clients often have disrupted lifestyles and feedback from support workers is that they find it hard to gather data in consultation sessions as young people often don't turn up. The manager wanted to address this problem by creating a consultation method that could be delivered to young people in the room, but also shared to every beneficiary digitally, as a method to improve response rates.

They have often become dissociated from the practices of the formal world of employment, so clients needed to appreciate the importance of having a professional email address, that would remove any barriers to digital communication with employers. The 6 learners involved with the project were all residents in the Supported Accommodation unit in North Shields.

What did the project do?

For the clients' employability session:

- The practitioner produced a list of inappropriate and over-familiar email addresses for the group who were asked if they thought the names were suitable for a prospective employee to send to an employer when inquiring about a job. The list got everyone talking about the silly names and the suitability of their own email address.
- Clients looked at their own email addresses and if they were "Business Appropriate". Two young people had inappropriate emails which we had to change.
- Gmail was decided to be the best email provided. I supported the two learners to set up new emails.
- The learners were required to send an email to the teacher to demonstrate understanding and to show their ability to use the technology.

For the staff professional learning session:

The session was delivered to three senior members of the Housing Team, including the Head of Housing, the Project Leader) and the Re-settlement worker. The manager:

- Organised the meeting via email and calendar invitation using Gmail and Google suite for emails and calendar appointments
- Demonstrated the use of QR codes to access online information and encouraged colleagues to use their phones to access the Menti presentation and later, a demonstration of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs).
- Delivered an interactive presentation using an interactive TV to present the workshop and colleagues took part using their phones. (iPads were on hand in case their phones were inaccessible.)
- Provided an introduction to Google Classroom as a 'digital space' to publicise any forthcoming activities
- Used QR codes again to link colleagues to our Google Classroom test site, where we have created a number of test activities.

What helped the project succeed?

For the clients' employability session:

- The use of a list of unsuitable email addresses provided a light-hearted stimulus which engaged the learners and prompted them to reflect upon the virtual impression that they would make.

For the staff professional learning session:

- Backing and involvement of the Head of housing. This demonstrated to colleagues the importance of the learning activity and encouraged them to attend and think about how to use the resources within their day to day activities.
- Free access to meeting space and digital resources. In this case, interactive TV and mobile phones were used to take part.
- Board Commitment to Digital Engagement. YMCA North Tyneside has adopted various approaches aimed at connecting young people digitally. This commitment makes it much easier to engage support workers in training exercises.

The challenges the project faced:

For the clients' employability session:

- There were challenges with slow program loading on the old computers.
- There was some lack of engagement from learners, and it proved difficult to achieve follow-up engagement with the learners.

For the staff professional learning session:

- Busy workloads and shift patterns made it difficult to find a slot in everyone's diaries to accommodate this training session. Due to shift patterns I reduced it from 6 participants to 3.
- Lack of access to digital technology: It was felt that young people might struggle to access the digital materials as a result of phones being exchanged, stolen, pawned etc. However, we can make iPads available for young people to take part and the majority do have smartphones.

What difference the project made:

For the clients' employability session:

- Two of the learners had unsuitable addresses. Now all have a greater chance of being considered for interview for jobs.
- One of the Young people said "I didn't understand what all the fuss was about until Pamela explained it. I now have a proper email. "

For the staff professional learning session:

- Since delivering the presentation, it has been shared by the participants with all housing support workers and they are planning to use Mentimeter at the next all resident meeting to plan activities for 2019.
- All of the participants said that they'd enjoyed taking part and that they'd learnt more about using digital technology to reach young people. One of the participants said:
  "I was really surprised by the QR codes, because I remember them being really popular, but then went out of fashion; but actually, they seem to be really useful, seeing as young people use their phones for everything these days. I'm definitely going to use QR codes to get people to access online information."

4.3. Empower staff to promote and use digital technologies to meet the diverse needs of learners

Bishop Auckland College, Darlington College, Darlington Borough Council and South West Durham Training

Summary

Four providers worked together to address inconsistencies of staff using digital technologies to support and enhance teaching, learning and assessment. A variety of approaches attempted to improve staff knowledge, skills and confidence to plan and use suitable digital technologies to improve learners' experiences, skill development and positive outcomes.

Rationale for the project

The main objectives of our project were to:

1.   Implement a range of digital approaches to inspire, motivate and engage learners.
2.   Develop digital assessment methods to provide constructive feedback that will improve achievement
3.   Promote the use of digital approaches to prepare learners better for their next steps

It was evident from initial meetings that there was a wide range of digital skills across the four organisations and within the various curriculum areas. We needed to ensure that staff knew that they would have teething problems and mistakes would happen along the way within their own projects.

To support staff in their development, instead of advanced practitioners and managers carrying out learning walks, we encouraged staff to carry out peer observations and have conversations about what they had seen. We also agreed not to use quality documents as these have been used in more formal inspection settings in the past.

Practitioners were encouraged to take photographs of aspects of teaching that they had liked during the peer observations and these photographs instigated the discussions during the informal meetings.

Staff were allocated time to write up their research and project reflections. We believed giving practitioners time to undertake research that is underpinned by proven methodologies was vital to ongoing development.

Project Approach

Initially, we disseminated a questionnaire to gauge staff skills and confidence when using digital technologies within their practice. This gave a clear starting point, to enable us to establish current variations in staff skill levels, and tailor CPD activities to match their individual needs. (We decided to offer the questionnaire digitally and in a paper-based version to try not to exclude staff with low confidence in their digital capabilities from the start of the project.) We also asked staff to complete the OTLA baseline questionnaire to ascertain current achievement of the Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers. These responses enabled us to further analyse common trends to help design a structured plan for CPD.

Each organisation identified 'Digital Leads' from various vocational subject areas, to act as initial experts. It was intended that the 'Digital Leads' would remain as a role to ensure continued dissemination of knowledge and skills as a legacy of the project. Digital Leads promoted and facilitated mini action research projects within teams, supported by a research mentor from the College teaching and learning team. This gave staff the autonomy to research and trial digital technologies available that were better suited to their subject and learners. They reviewed and summarised outcomes that were shared across their own and partner organisations

Each practitioner that has taken part in the project was encouraged to write up their own, individual piece of research. Some practitioners were again uncomfortable with writing academically or using academic references in their research write-up. This was either because it had been a long period of time since they had done this or that they had never written up research previously.

From the outset of the project we agreed that it was imperative to ensure that staff were made to feel comfortable. Without doubt, this assisted in getting the quantity and quality of research evaluations. We think as a project group that staff would not have bought into the project if they had not been given allocated time to carry out the given project tasks due to general workload in the Further Education sector.

Professional learning: Evidence of changes in teaching, learning and assessment practices.

This project was intended to increase staff confidence in their use of digital technologies to improve learners' experience. The pre- and post- project questionnaires provided evidence of a marked rise in staff confidence when using digital technology within their teaching, from 42% to 88% expressing confidence in their use of digital approaches.

Importantly, there has been an increase of 32% in the proportion of staff who would now be confident to use digital technology as a method of assessment (from 35% to 67%). This is an area that the project partners have agreed to continue collaboration in a 'project legacy' group.

As corroboration for these statistics, across the project 31 staff produced short individual reports that detail the process of adopting and refining their experiments with new digital approaches. These reports into their digital experiments in practical classroom settings provide systematic insights into the practitioners' aims and achievements. The reports document their classroom and workshop decision-making, changes to teachers' original plans, learners' feedback which highlight their experience of the digital innovations. Reports conclude with presenting evidence of the advantages and disadvantages of the particular approaches, and making recommendations for their peers.

A large sample (15 of these 31 reports) are appended to the Case Study for this project on the Excellence Gateway. In these reports, 29 of the 31 reports (94%) highlight how staff had managed to fashion ways to incorporate digital approaches successfully, whilst two reports concluded that particular applications were inappropriate for the particular classroom or workshop setting.

The active participation and demonstrations at project dissemination events indicate that the project had met its fundamental aim of improving staff knowledge, skills and confidence to plan and use suitable digital technologies.

From the practitioners' reports, there were many examples of teachers using a wide variety of digital applications to engage learners with subject content. Practitioners encouraged learner feedback and more active participation in sessions. This addressed the project objective of implementing a range of digital approaches to inspire, motivate and engage learners. Reports show that less articulate learners were using video to communicate more freely, freed from their limited writing skills. These videos provided opportunities for more sustained discussion between teachers and learners.

There is also evidence that staff developed digital assessment methods to provide constructive feedback that would improve achievement. Staff frequently used digital applications in starter and plenary activities, to check on existing knowledge and to recap. This encouraged greater interaction between teachers and learners, and the improved interactions may be reflected in the improved attendance and retention in these lessons.

The practitioner research as individuals and as part of small groups encouraged more focused and detailed discussion between staff from various departments from all four partner organisations. This had never happened before and gave staff a different viewpoint and exposed staff to different experiences.

The project also gave staff numerous opportunities to experience professional learning. At the start of the project we were able to organise for an external Apple expert to deliver a training session for practitioners on how using Apple products can help staff and learners within learning sessions. The feedback from this session was very positive as three out of the four organisations use Apple products and a large percentage of staff have Apple phones and tablets.

Evidence of improved collaboration and changes in organisational practices

Staff development sessions in the participating organisations had previously been held as small departmental activities, but through the project they became opened up to enable staff to reflectively evaluate what other departments and other organisations are trialling within their teaching, learning and assessment. The general feeling is that this has improved working relationships between staff from other departments and other organisations. The less formal peer observations are another huge positive by-product that has come from this digital project. Feedback from staff has been that they enjoy the opportunity to observe staff in a more informal setting and their own teaching and learning has improved because of the process.

As a project group we held two larger dissemination events for all staff in all four organisations. These events proved very popular with all staff that attended. Encouraging the staff to collaborate and share ideas in a very relaxed environment has probably been the one of the major positives of our project. Feedback from the attending practitioners both via a twitter wall and on paper-based feedback slips confirmed how positive an experience the dissemination events had been for staff.

Evidence of improvement in learners' achievements, retention and progression.

Bishop Auckland College – In Foundation Learning, learner attendance has improved from 64% to 83% during the period of the digital project. In learners' feedback during the QDP student survey, they stated that they enjoyed producing the videos with Flip-grid rather than having to complete worksheets.

HND learners within Sport developed skills in using Adobe Spark rather than using PowerPoint presentations to showcase their work for assignment tasks.

76% of Functional Skills learners stated that they were more likely to answer maths questions within learning sessions if the teacher was using Plickers.

87% of Foundation learners felt they would be more likely to voluntarily engage in discussions through the Flipgrid app rather than in tutor-led, verbal discussions.

83% of Level 2 Sports students felt they would engage with their learning more frequently when using Google Classroom.

Darlington College – Apprentice learners have enjoyed using Google Classroom as this gives them access to their tutor throughout the week and not only on their one day per week in college.

SWDT – The introduction of Showme tutorials developed by staff to explain design procedures has proved very popular. Learners can review these videos in their own time and again in taught sessions.

Learning from this project

- Encouraging staff to take a period of time to experiment with various methods of digital technology before having to decide on the method that they will trial with their learners would have been additionally helpful.
- Offering a training session to staff of how to write up their research projects as some staff struggled with the process. I think we assumed that all staff would be comfortable with writing up their findings.
- It was the intention that staff would be encouraged to work in similar subject groups collaboratively across the partners. However, because of timetabling difficulties, the providers tended to work on their projects and share findings about their digital progress towards the end of the project.

- As a project group we held two larger dissemination events for all staff in all four organisations. If we were to run another project, we would have more of these events spread evenly across the timescale of the project.
- The allocation of dedicated time to allow practitioners to experiment in a relaxed environment was also a big positive of the project. Practitioner feedback stated on numerous occasions that teachers had tended not to experiment with digital technologies because of the fear of negative feedback or the technology not working in taught sessions.
- Encouraging staff to collaborate and share ideas in a relaxed environment has probably been the one of the major positives of our project.

For further information about this project

You can read more about this project on the Excellence Gateway at https://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2935

a. Case Study (Introducing tablets to help Entry Level Literacy learners)

Darlington Borough Council Learning & Skills

consider how technology adds to a session, by "Substituting, Augmenting, Modifying and Redefining" existing teaching activities.

What did the project do?

Louise researched the viability of tablets and their features. She concluded that the tablet's more familiar and intuitive interface would be accessible to most of her learners, and still give them access to more advanced features such as Word and Padlet.

From her internet research Louise also found anecdotal evidence that was positive about the use of Padlet in the classroom which suggested that it was easy to use and encouraged collaboration. Importantly, she identified that on the SAMR scale it allowed for significant task redesign and the creation of new tasks.

In the first session, Entry Level learners were comfortable using tablets and easily accessed the internet for carrying out research tasks. They used Quizizz and could see their progress and could also review their performance. She found that Quizizz can be adapted which was important for differentiating for each level, as was the facility to keep results private to avoid embarrassment.

In the second session with Entry Level learners, pairs were given guidance in opening up an internet search engine and they were advised to plan the areas they wanted to research. Word was also open on the iPad for information to be cut and pasted into. This whole initial experience was new as most learners had not used Word on an iPad before. The pairs communicated together and helped each other. They all approached the task with interest and enthusiasm – one learner was nervous about the task but was reassured by her partner and soon enjoyed the activity. Staff were on hand to give

What was the purpose of the project?

Louise McTaggart works as a literacy teacher in a local authority learning and skills provision. She was keen to use the OTLA digital project to explore the use of tablets to help improve learners' motivation and literacy skills.

She planned to use the SAMR[3] model to see how she could use tablets and appropriate applications to design tasks that stretched and challenged Entry Level learners and encouraged collaboration. SAMR invites practitioners to

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[3] Puentedura, R.R. (2006) Transformation, Technology, and Education available at
http://hippasus.com/resources/tte/

advice, but were mainly in an observational role unless it was apparent that progress was limited.

In the third session, Level 1 and 2 learners were provided with a link and password to a blank Functional Skills English Padlet site. They all accessed it and added some details about themselves and their learning journey, progression and goals. The learners then researched the topic of plastic pollution and added items to the Padlet such as videos, articles and pictures. They immediately accessed the shared resources, playing videos from the Padlet and discussing what each had uploaded. Several learners continued the Padlet activity at home.

Louise gathered evidence of the learners' digital experience through the work that learners produced, the Padlets created and filming of student activities. All of these provided materials to help discussions with the learners about their experiences and to plan the next steps.

What helped the project succeed?

- A class set of tablets.
- Research conducted before the project enabled tablet use to be targeted at resolving educational challenges (rather than simple short-term gains from the novelty value of new technology).
- Support from the Darlington BC Learning & Skills team leader and the wider project.
- Additional classroom support being available to assist with some Entry Level learners' initial nervousness when encountering new applications on the tablets and when focusing search engines.
- Learner feedback on their experiences helped plan useful next steps in using the tablets and applications.

What challenges did the project face?

- Support was initially needed to reassure students about use of the tablets and to gain familiarity with the applications, as some learners were reluctant to use devices at first.

- Technology wasn't always available and the internet was sometimes inaccessible.
- It was very time-consuming to plan and to ensure all the learning outcomes were met.
- Filmed evidence was useful for capturing progress and prompting discussion, but not all learners were comfortable with being filmed.

What difference did the project make?

- Using the iPads and associated programmes impacted positively on the learners and they all expressed enthusiasm about using digital technologies regularly.
- Results and feedback from quizzes provided positive reinforcement for Entry Level learners that underlined their progress (e.g. plural spellings that show progress over the course of one or more lessons)
- The research which Level 1 and 2 gathered through the use of the iPad was successfully used in writing articles.
- There are wider employability benefits from an improvement in learners' social confidence and sense of achievement. Learners' confidence grew from the full experience of using the tablets to access and complete relatively complex applications such as Word.
- This project experience seems to have given them the confidence to work more cooperatively, both together in pairs and also in contributing to the whole group.
- The learners felt they had experienced something new and innovative that added to their personal progression – some learners were keen to make their own Padlets at home for work or hobbies.
- The Padlet site is now accessible and shared across more than one class.

Where can I find more information?

For further details of Louise's project or the wider Darlington BC Learning & Skills initiative, contact Simon Moore - Simon.Moore@darlington.gov.uk

A short video introduction to SAMR is available at
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9b5yvgKQdqE

b. Case study (Using Quizizz as an exam preparation tool)

Darlington College
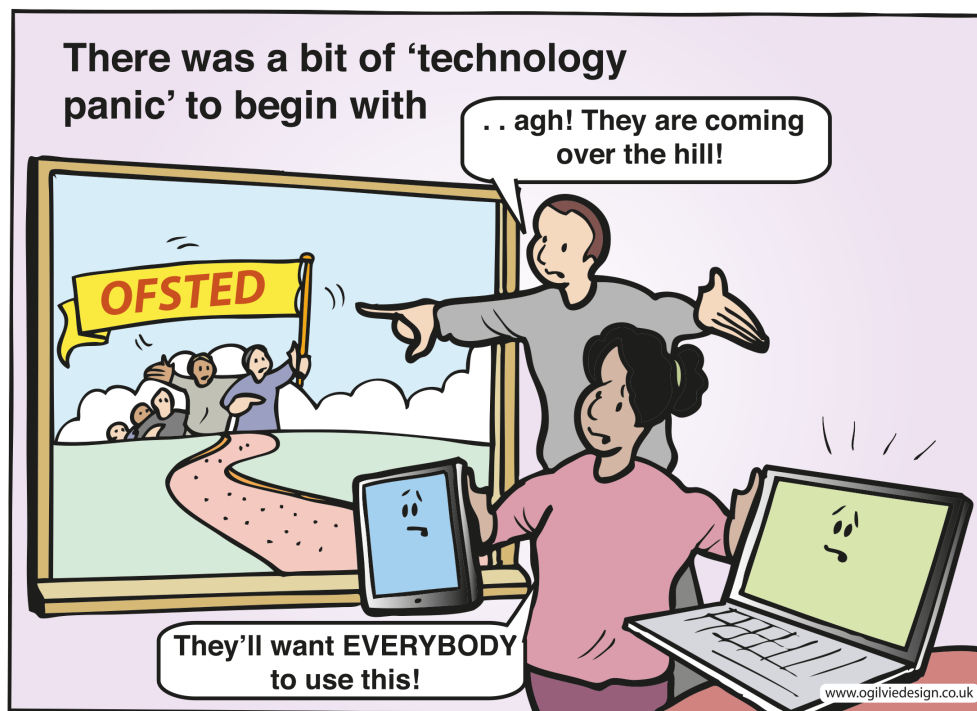
What was the purpose of the project?

The purpose was to ensure that level 3 computing students were prepared for the OCR Unit 3 Cyber Security exam. It was desirable to move away from work books and taught sessions and to provide a means of consolidation and revision that the students found engaging and enjoyable, while having a sustained challenge

What did the project do?

Quizizz.com allows the building of question banks. These questions can be input by the lecturer or copied from other question banks. A total of 132 questions were accumulated that covered the range of the exam topics. The class sat the questions and an overall accuracy was given for the answers.

Any questions that were answered well by the class as a whole were then removed and the new bank attempted after targeted revision of low accuracy areas. In the next round the number of questions dropped from 132 to 70, followed by 32. On the last session prior to the exam an overall accuracy of 93% was reached, this is an improvement over the first attempt when accuracy was only 72%.

What helped the project succeed?

The project was a success in terms of engagement due to the competitive nature of the format. Learners encouraged others to do well as they would rather have fewer questions to answer than more! In a survey following the exam the vast majority of students (>70%) felt that they were well prepared for the exam.
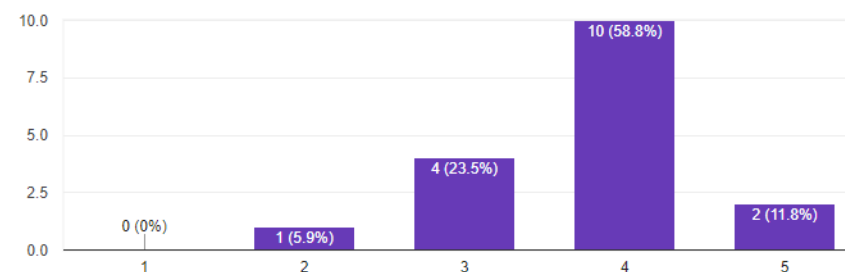
What challenges did the project face?

Quizizz offers the ability to score more points by answering questions quicker. This meant that students often rushed their answers rather than considering them. Once the timed element was removed and the students asked to focus on accuracy overall results improved.
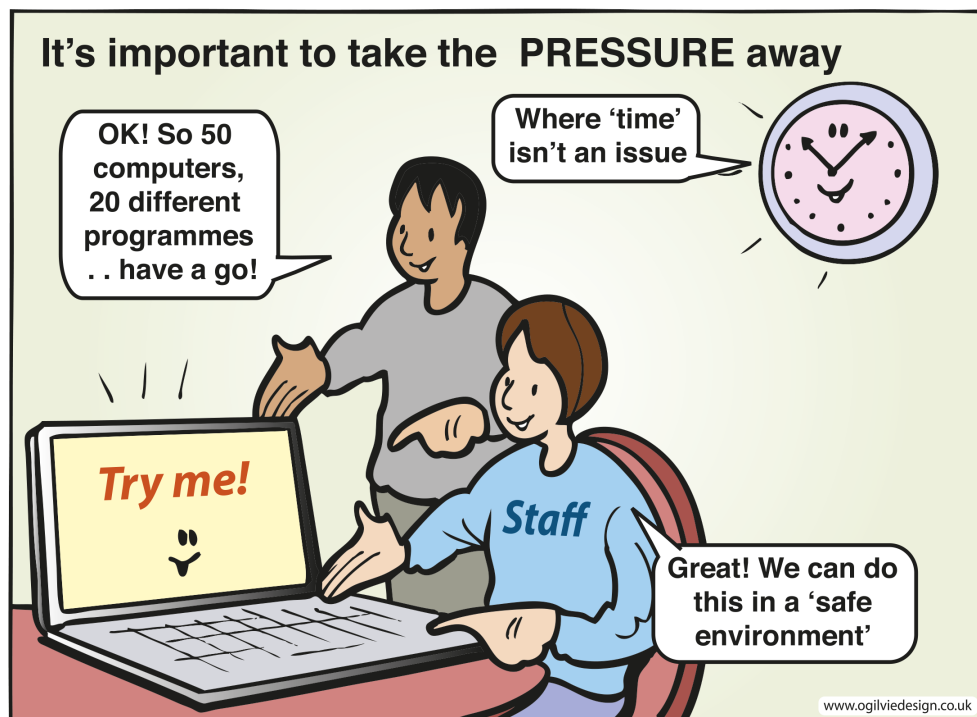
What difference did the project make?

It is difficult to measure overall success as results of the exam will not be released until March. However, students are more confident than in previous exams that they did well and that they will achieve "good" grades.

Where can I find more information?

https://quizizz.com/

c. Case study (Designing approaches to support, record and disseminate practitioners' action research)

Bishop Auckland College and South West Durham Training

The simple reporting template structure that practitioners used (*see booklet of sample reports on the Excellence Gateway*) prompted practitioners to comment on all stages of their experiment, including:

- any prior research conducted;
- the aims and outcomes of the experiment;
- the experiment in practice;
- learners' responses to the experiment;
- advantages and disadvantages of the digital technique;
- potential improvements;
- next steps and possible extensions to the experiment;
- sources of evidence which were used to validate the claims made.

This simple staged reporting process was designed to improve the quality of the reporting of busy teachers' reflection and decision-making, and also to share their experiments at collaborative dissemination events with other practitioners.

What did the project do?

Practitioners reported from a wide range of vocational settings (including Maths, Construction, Counselling, Public Services, Hair & Beauty, Motor Vehicle, Catering, Sport, Art, Employability and Care). These digital investigations were conducted with learners from Higher Needs, Foundation Learning, and Levels 1, 2 and 3 classes. (*see booklet of sample reports on the Excellence Gateway*)

Practitioners used the template to guide and record ways that digital approaches could be introduced into their teaching. The most frequent benefits evidenced on the template were greater learner enthusiasm to engage in classroom activities, and more active contributions from learners when responding to lesson content.

What was the purpose of the project?

The wider project was intended to encourage practitioners to develop their digital confidence by experimenting with digital approaches in practical settings. This case study investigates how encouraging practitioners to follow a shared practitioner-research process helped 31 teachers to conduct, record and disseminate their research into new digital approaches.

Some reports show learners using digital applications themselves to record digital images of the stages of their learning activities, thus prompting and stimulating their reflections on their learning processes (Assessment as Learning), whilst others enable Higher Needs learners using iPads to overcome barriers caused by literacy disabilities.

Learners were challenged to set questions rather than answer them, and there is evidence of both groupwork being stimulated and independent working encouraged. Classroom voting applications helped learners engage with maths misconceptions, and learners were encouraged to question news sites to identify sources of "Fake News".

What helped the project succeed?

By presenting the practitioner research process in simple stages, practitioners were helped to focus and reflect upon their decision-making in the classroom. The limited "boxed" format of the template invited a more practitioner-friendly reporting of key points when beginning their investigations. This format provided an appropriate level of challenge and encouraged a wide range of busy practitioners to commit to a research process which they might otherwise have found daunting.

Importantly, the project leader organised two college-wide project meetings to share their research progress. These meetings enjoyed positive contributions from participants, and inspired practitioners to openly disclose activities that had not been so successful.

Where practitioners discussed their experiments with colleagues (or had feedback from those conducting walkthroughs of their teaching), there was greater sense of direction and purpose about how the activity could be further developed (e.g. using applications at different stages in the session; rolling out approaches to other groups whom the practitioner taught; or encouraging the learners to be more actively involved in using the technology).

Some of the respondents had engaged in previous OTLA 3 collaborative activities, and these experienced staff provided encouragement to new participants to fully engage in the practitioner-researcher process.

What challenges did the project face?

Whilst much use of technology created a better atmosphere in the classroom, some practitioners did not build on this positive foundation to give learners more control of the technology and engage in active higher-level learning

Some practitioners seemed satisfied with technology that terminated in lower-level "convergent" learning (e.g. knowledge tests and re-tests).

With the pressures for teachers to provide visible evidence of learner progress in sessions, starter and plenary digital quiz tests were sometimes presented as providing instant data showing "evidence" of all learners' progress. (However, other more sustained reports exposed the limitations of these claims as being inappropriate in practice as practitioners could not pause lessons to interrogate this information or respond to data banks in any meaningful way during sessions.)

In answering the question on the template, "What do learners think of the technology?", some participants relied upon their observations of learners' reactions, or used learners' results from digital tests to make judgements about the learners' responses. (Where practitioners did seek learners' responses on the experience, this often led to the teacher and learners planning more learner-centred student activities, such as learners setting their own tests in subsequent weeks).

The project leader organised two sharing meetings for all participants; on reflection, more meetings would have stimulated more development in conjunction with the templates.

What difference did the project make?

In nearly all cases, practitioners' templates reported that introducing digital innovations stimulated more enthusiastic learner response, improved the relationships between teachers and learners, and increased learner motivation.

In the best cases, the template helped prompt and record a process in which the learners (rather than the teachers) were encouraged to use digital approaches to creative effect, seeking open-ended solutions through digital

activities (for example, learners were encouraged to be creative in making digital images of work in progress as a stimulus to reflection in both Level 1 Construction and Level 3 Art)

The introduction of digital experimentation prompted all practitioners to re-evaluate their established teaching approaches and recognise improvements in how practitioners might manage their learners. This is evident repeatedly in the attached practitioner reports.

The templates invited practitioners to comment on both strengths and limitations of digital innovations in their teaching. This produced more balanced responses that illustrated how integrating digital approaches had enhanced (rather than "transformed") teaching, and indicated how benefits of an approach might be experienced differently across a class of learners. The project thus stimulated both practitioners' increased professional competence with digital skills, and also their improved professional judgements regarding when and where technology can be deployed to best effect.

The "advantages and disadvantages" section of the template invited more qualified responses about technology use. Consequently, staff were able to comment on applications such as "Google Classroom" and highlight its advantages over the College's current VLE, but also indicate Google' Classroom's relative shortcomings.

The template enabled other practitioners to gain insight into colleagues' practice, so that examples of challenging high-level learning are evident for colleagues to consider in their own classroom. (For example, Spooner's use

of "maths "misconceptions" when using "Plickers", so that a voting system is put to best effect in encouraging focused and principled discussion.

The freedom to explore practitioners' topics of their choosing enabled an excellent study of how learners can interrogate technology and be protected against "Fake News".

The research process enabled participants to report on unsuccessful experiments, and give excellent professional judgements about why digital applications were inappropriate in a given learning context. Several discussed how approaches were partially appropriate with particular subject areas or level of group; the template – and the project leader's supportive process – enabled these important discriminations to be made public.
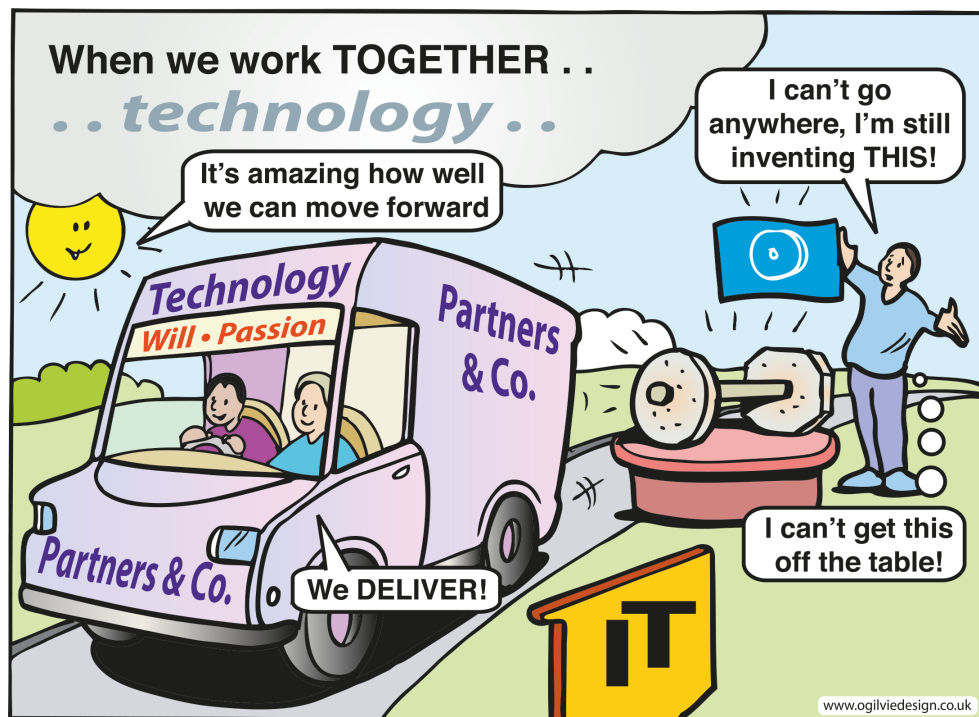
Where can I find more information?

The collection of exemplary research reports and associated outputs is available on the Excellence Gateway at https://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2935

4.4. Digital Community of Practice

South Tyneside Council, AutismAble, Community First North East (CFNE) and Sunderland Home Care Associates (SHCA)

Summary

The project focused on three local training providers who had specific concerns regarding aspects of teaching, learning and assessment that could potentially be addressed with more effective use of technology. Whilst the issues and approaches were different for each provider, partners collaborated by sharing skills and experience, ultimately creating a digital community of practice.

Rationale for the project

Each provider identified a specific issue to focus on ranging from encouraging care workers to engage in training via a blended learning

approach (SHCA) to the use of video to help overcome learners' anxiety around work placements (AutismAble). A central theme across all three providers was the idea of using technology to extend learning and experience beyond the classroom in preparation for further study or work. For CFNE the focus was on a flipped learning approach through encouraging learners to watch and respond to videos on a course site before attending a session. Tutors' and learners' digital skills would also be developed as a result of these activities.

Project Approach

Approaches ranged from research into tutors' ability to embed English and maths, through the use of questionnaires and focus groups (CFNE), to learners at AutismAble shaping the project itself, by creating their own Padlet and digital newsletters. Each partner engaged in action research by trialling a certain approach or tool and then evaluating its impact. For SHCA, an entire course was created in Google Classroom. Learners' and tutors' feedback were gathered, which has helped to improve subsequent courses. Whilst each provider adopted a slightly different approach, strategies were shared across organisations. All partners attended a training session on the use of Google Classroom, attended meetings to share best practice and support each other. SHCA were able to guide CFNE in their use of Google Classroom.

Professional learning: Evidence of changes in teaching, learning and assessment practices.

SHCA and CFNE have adapted the way they deliver courses by moving content online. The successful pilot of a course at SHCA has led to more courses being created in Google Classroom and increased learner engagement. The use of Google Classroom has also led to learners submitting work electronically, improving learners' digital skills and helping

them to prepare for submission requirements of higher education courses (CFNE, SHCA). Assessment practices are also more streamlined as a result of this. The additional tasks posted on Google sites have made it easier for tutors to set extension tasks and develop learner autonomy.

AutismAble have used video to help learners gain experience of the workplace. This process has helped to mitigate learners' anxiety around work placements whilst developing learners' and tutors' digital skills. (See links to learner-made videos and digital newsletters in the attached Case Studies). The professional discussion around digital tools has led to additional tools being trialled in sessions; SHCA have been using Plickers to improve formative assessment methods and hope to use Google Forms to help learners provide more regular course feedback.

Evidence of improved collaboration and changes in organisational practices

As outlined above, all three partners are delivering more content through the use of digital tools and platforms. Collaboration between partners has helped to identify and find solutions to very practical barriers, such as how to invite a student to Google Classroom. The case studies outline these in more detail. AutismAble's project has also led to greater collaboration and contact with employers. All partners plan to share the successes of their projects by presenting at the South Tyneside Provider Network.

Evidence of improvement in learners' achievements, retention and progression.

- SHCA have expanded use of Google Classroom and are achieving high success rates. 100% of learners enrolled onto their course have achieved within a 12-week time frame and have maintained their employment.
- Google Sites used successfully with Level 3 programmes (CFNE).
- Positive feedback on the use of Google Sites and Google Classroom has been received from tutors and learners (SHCA, CFNE).
- Electronic submission of work means tutors are able to mark and respond to learners' work more quickly.

- Learners at AutismAble have developed their digital skills through the use of videos and this has led to increased confidence, resulting in learners organising an employer event.
- Key employers have signed up to a Special Education Needs (SEND) employment workshop as a result of an employer engagement event inspired by the learners' videos.

Learning from this project

- Practitioners need time to learn about digital tools; learning is often more effective if conducted in collaboration with partner organisations.
- Learners face very practical barriers to engaging with some digital platforms, such as not having an e-mail address.
- Learners can and should shape the way a project develops, by being actively involved in creating a digital resource (AutismAble).
- A certain tool or platform may not be the only solution to a particular problem; SHCA are keen to look at a range of digital tools and AutismAble acknowledged that a combination of digital and non-digital approaches are needed to improve understanding of work placements.
- In this project, providers took from each other, and learned the practical value of drawing on local digital expertise to address specific problems that arose. By accessing local expertise, the technological solutions became applied to the educational problem at hand. This contrasted with attending generic application-led training days in which practitioners felt challenged to bend their teaching to the potential of the digital "solutions" on offer, thus leaving them feeling less in control.

For further information about this project

- You can read more about this project on the Excellence Gateway at https://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2936

a. Case study (Exploring the use of video to support autistic learners in work placements)

AutismAble is a specialist education service and wellbeing centre for people with Autism Spectrum Conditions in South Shields.
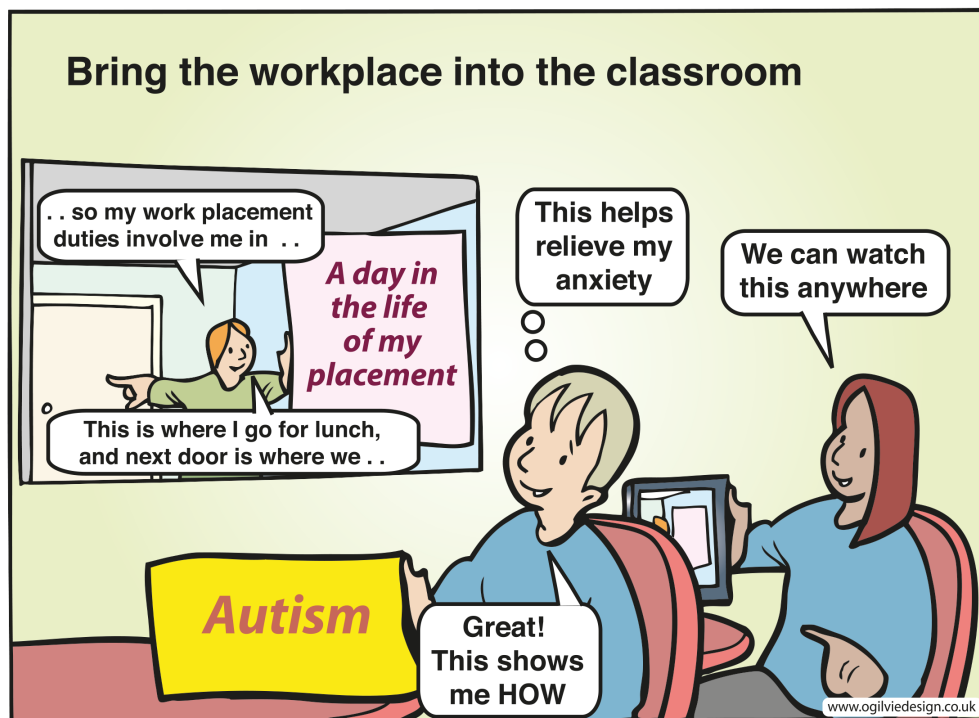
also aimed to use the videos to help with employer engagement and help employers understand some misconceptions around people with Autism.

To increase employer engagement, we created a storyboard of current work placement visits by learners:

What was the purpose of the project?

Working with two other local training providers – Community First North East and Sunderland Home Care Group, the overall aim of the digital community of practice was to improve learners' and tutors' digital skills. With this in mind, we decided to use digital video to bring a virtual experience of the work place to learners who may be anxious about visiting a new environment. We

Learners then took part in a video tour of the premises, met the staff and talked about what they did on their placement. We then got in contact with other employers and explained the project to them and asked if they would like to attend an employer engagement event to find out more.

These videos were able to bring the workplace into the classroom and put other learners at ease by seeing a visual virtual tour of each business place and listen to the employers talk about how supportive their environment is for someone with autism.

We also wanted the learners to voice what they would like to get from the project so a group of learners organised the employer engagement event. Another group of learners came together who wanted to create their own newsletter to share good news, work placement progress and local events.

What did the project do?

85% of learners at AutismAble have told us that they struggle with change and visiting new places. The project helped relieve anxiety in our learners who were anxious about attending a work placement and local employers became aware of what we were doing and began to understand the benefits of offering a work placement for someone with autism.

Learners working together on newsletters and events helped them to develop their confidence, digital skills and team working skills, as well as improving communication and wider English skills.

The employer engagement event helped to educate local employers on what a person with autism can bring to a business. It also raised awareness of the willingness of autistic people to work and the reasonable adjustments that can be made to accommodate people with autism in the workplace.

What helped the project succeed?

We adapted a member of staff's role to act as a work placement co-ordinator and she made contact with companies in the area and explained the process and the benefits of taking part for the company and the learners.

We also had help from local professional photographer and film maker, Alec Jones, who helped guide the learners to make the videos look professional.

Overall the learners made the project succeed by being so enthusiastic about wanting to change the work placement process for others and wanting to include more digital practice within their lessons and in their free time.

What challenges did the project face?

Andrew (our project lead) became poorly so I stepped in to take over the project. Some employers were reluctant to come on board due to time / financial concerns; Some learners were anxious about being in a video and it being shown to others. We overcame these challenges by explaining to employers that they would be promoted within the borough and recognised for offering opportunities to young adults with autism and we spoke with our students about the videos and explained that they would be with familiar people at all times and they would be able to have help and a break at any time. They were also given a reward of a bowling trip for their hard work.

What difference did the project make?

The project made a massive difference to our learners as we now have more learners who are willing to try a work placement and we have also managed to increase our engagement with local employers by 400%. This increase not only helps to educate employers on the best way to support an employee with autism but it also gives our learners more opportunities for work experience.

Our learners' and tutors' digital skills have improved dramatically. Those who were scared of digital skills are now using Google Classroom, Padlet, Mentimeter and video programs within their teaching and the learners are thriving on this increase of digital technology within their learning.

All staff are now taking part in digital CPD sessions and have their own self-development CPD action plan on how they can improve their digital skills.

Where can I find more information?

Videos and newsletters that the learners have made are available on Vimeo.

https://vimeo.com/autismable

Sarah Farrell-Forster

'I have been wanting to try out work experience for a long time but I am nervous about new people and new places. Taking part in the video has really helped me and I have now tried out two different work placements which I really enjoyed.'

Justin Clarke, learner

'I am enjoying using Google Classroom in my lessons. It has helped me have better access to digital skills and feel more confident using the software it provides.'

Francesca McGarry, learner

"Unison were delighted to be involved with this project. We are an inclusive organisation and were one of the first supporters of AutismAble's work placement partnership. These videos are a fantastic showcase of the opportunities available and will hopefully encourage other employers to offer work placements to the young people at AutismAble "

Janet Green, Work Placement Partner (Unison)

'I now feel like our staff can confidently embed digital skills within their lessons. Google Classroom has been a huge success with my learners as they are now completing work at home.'

Alex Poole, Digital Skills Tutor (AutismAble)

b. Case study (Promoting digital tools in the classroom to support the embedding of English and maths)

Community First North East is a community interest company. We work both within the community and with business organisations, delivering a range of training programmes, many of which are written and designed to meet diverse needs.
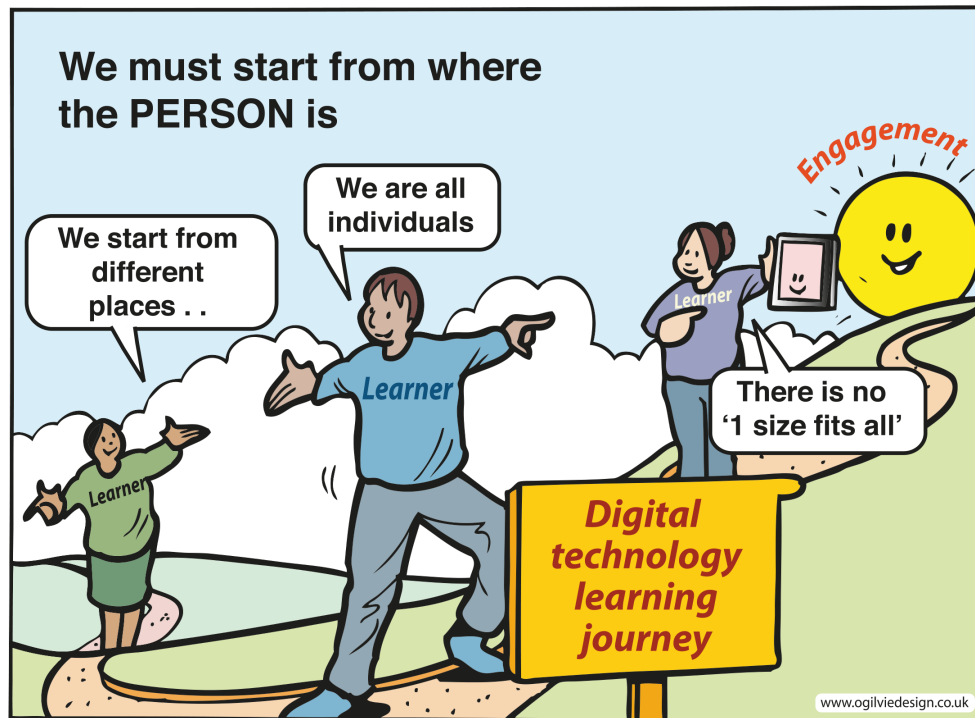
What was the purpose of the project?

The 'Digital Community of Practice' project was led by South Tyneside Council and involved Community First North East (CFNE), AutismAble and Sunderland Home Care. The aims were to develop a community that could be accessed by providers.

What did the project do?

Through meetings with the other providers we identified an issue that we struggle to use digital technology in sessions due to lack of resources. Another issue raised was that vocational tutors fed back that they were not always confident embedding functional skills.

To begin with we were looking for a method to share functional skills videos produced by tutors to support vocational learning. After some research and support from Sunderland Home Care we have been trialling using a Google Site with our Level 3 Supporting Teaching and Learning students (and now starting to introduce to Level 2.) The reason for selecting this particular group is that some may be ready to progress to higher learning and they should therefore have some experience of accessing resources and assignments through a platform.

Our starting point was to create some English and Maths related videos (some were produced internally and others were links to sites such as YouTube) and although these were popular with learners (particularly watching their Maths tutor rapping!) the web page seemed a little plain with just a functional skills area. So, after some training we saw the potential for developing an online classroom to issue assignments, display notes (such as photographs of flipcharts from the session) and encourage independent learning. To further develop this, we have added articles from sites such as BBC News, which learners have been asked to watch/read in preparation for the next session. This has included hot topics, such as Prevent, and current affairs (particularly within education) and links to sites such as BBC Bitesize

to encourage further independent learning and develop reading skills outside the classroom. Functional skills was our starting point but the hot topics have been an added bonus to support tutors.
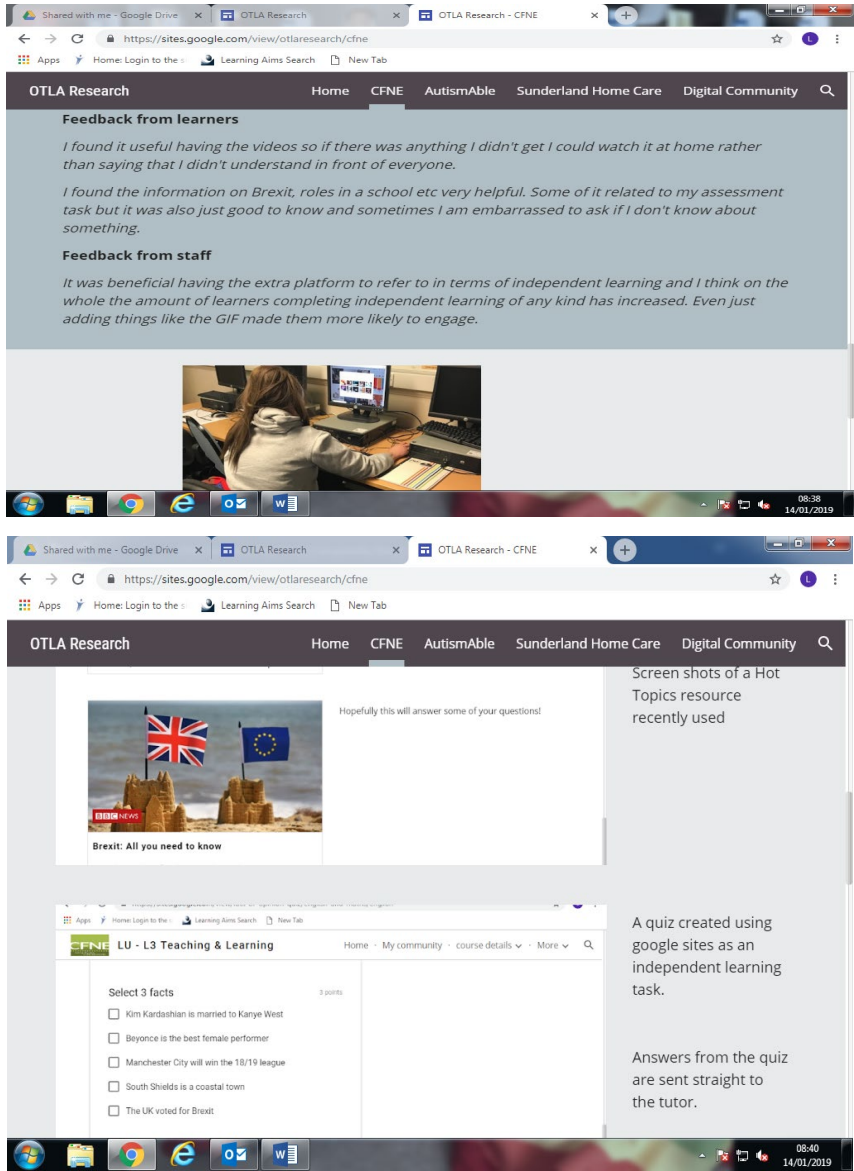
As videos are produced, the plan is to set up a central location where all tutors can access them to support embedding in all subjects.

What helped the project succeed?

- We have built stronger relationships with the other providers involved in the project and have supported each other with training. As resources are produced, they will be shared between the online community.
- The learners have also developed their digital skills (although this was time consuming to begin with) and for those planning to progress to higher education they have now experienced using platforms to submit work and access resources which was something completely unfamiliar to them. We have had to create extra access to the ICT suite around sessions for those without equipment or internet access at home.
- Vocational tutors have been pleased to be offered support with functional skills and started to use videos within their sessions.
- We have taken the opportunity to develop our teaching with stronger links to "hot topics".

What challenges did the project face?

The biggest challenge for us has been tutors having the time to produce additional resources. As a small team we all have numerous roles so finding the time to produce resources has been difficult. A suggestion has been made to set the Level 3 Supporting Teaching and Learning group a task of producing a resource as part of their learning. All staff were also required to undertake some training through Google Classroom although the packages mirrored other commonly used programmes so once accessed were fairly straightforward.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=-z4SUypJZxo (example video)

What difference did the project make?

- Tutors of vocational subjects have stated they are more likely to embed functional skills within sessions if using supporting resources prepared by functional skills tutors.
- We have taken an opportunity to include hot topics in the online resources.
- We are hoping to further develop this internally with Level 3 Supporting Teaching & Learning who as part of the criteria are asked to develop resources – this could be an opportunity to give them responsibility for creating a resource that can be shared.

- There has been an opportunity for us to look into platforms that we can use to share the resources allowing us to create an area that in the long term can become a community for training providers within South Tyneside to share.

Where can I find more information?

For further information, please email:

Lindsay Usher   lindsay@communityfirstnortheast.org.uk or
Alex Brown   alex@communityfirstnortheast.org.uk

c.   Case study (Exploring the use of Google Classroom to support distance learning for care workers)

Sunderland Home Care Associates (SHCA) is an employee-owned social enterprise offering a range of services to older people, and those with additional needs. We also offer training to current and prospective care workers.
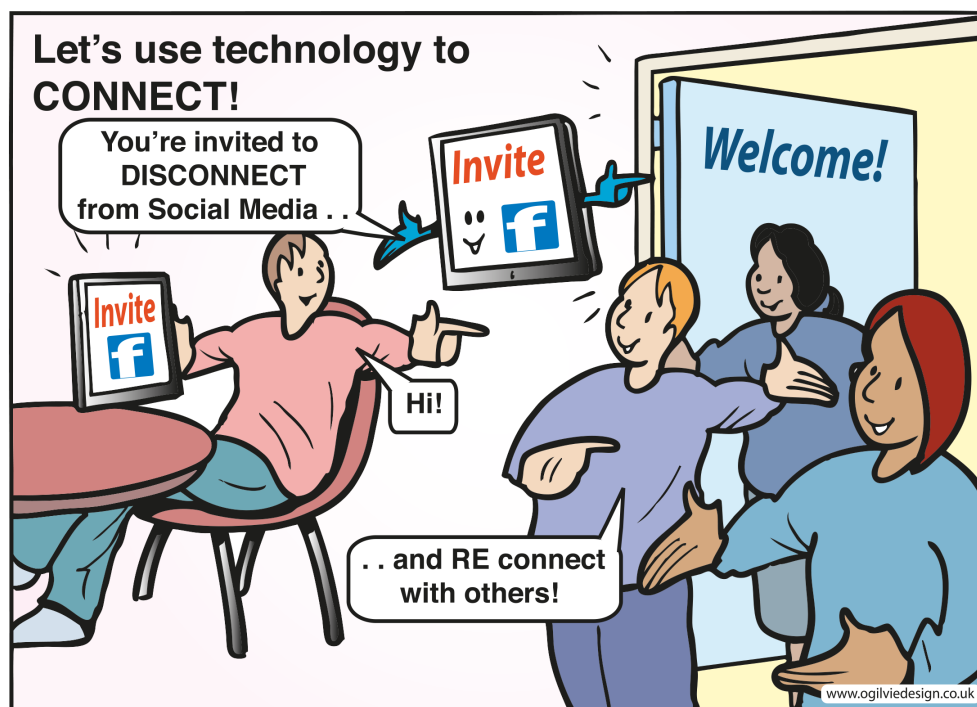
What was the purpose of the project?

SHCA looked to introduce Google Classroom as a way to reduce the administration work and costs associated with producing paper-based work products for learners. We also considered this to be a useful tool for the learners that were enrolled onto a distance learning program as they could submit their work without having to visit the office. This also would benefit those who do not drive or live near the office.

Our learners are both employed and unemployed. Our employed learners work in various health and social care roles within SHCA and are continuously training; these learners complete the distance learning. The unemployed learners complete a three- week intense classroom-based training program; those who complete are guaranteed an interview with SHCA.

What did the project do?

SHCA set up the Safe Handling of Medication course on Google Classroom and selected a few learners to pilot the course to help identify what worked well, what did not work and to gauge tutors' and learners' evaluation of the course as a whole.

Since the introduction of the pilot we have had to look at the best way to *invite* learners to the course and the best way to upload documents so that learners can input their responses but not change any information on the document. As we had no previous experience of using Google Classroom, this was challenging. The initial plan was to run with Safe Handling of Medication initially but as this has worked well, we also introduced Care Planning to the pilot. We now have all seven qualifications running on Google Classroom and the platform is being used by both classroom-based learners and distance learning learners.

SHCA produced a Google guide for both learners and trainers. This allows learners to join the correct class, access the resources and submit their work, whilst also allowing trainers to set up their classrooms and monitor the progress of their learners.

What helped the project succeed?

We have had permission to buy ten laptops which are being used for the classroom-based delivery; this allows learners to complete work and submit online if they wish to do so. Paper-based will always be available for those who prefer that method.

Time from SHCA was given to the staff working on the project, allowing us to attend various training courses on the Google Classroom platform, the Google suite and the actual set up of the classrooms and well as reformatting our resources to be compatible with the Google platform.

Support from the other organisations involved in the project. Our project lead organised a training session on Google Classroom for the project partners where we were able to exchange ideas. We were also able to support partner organisations in their use of Google Classroom, as we had already managed to familiarise ourselves with many of the basics.

What challenges did the project face?

As touched on above, since the introduction of the pilot we have had to look at the best way to "invite" learners to the course and the best way to upload documents so that learners can input their responses but not change any information on the document. As we are total beginners these things were a challenge.

As mentioned above, inviting learners to courses on Google Classroom seemed to be quite a long-winded process. Learners have to have a Gmail address, something which many of our learners do not have, or, need to be given an access code before being directed to google.com and entering the code. We have since decided that using the access code for learners to join the courses works best for us.

What difference did the project make?

The project has made the delivery to our staff much more accessible, which has resulted in continued timely submissions of course materials for assessment. Assessment and internal quality assurance have also become more streamlined as this is now done digitally from the platform. In turn this

has reduced our carbon foot print as we have dramatically reduced the amount of printing and paper use. We now find that about 20 of the 25 learners per cohort opt to use the digital platform which reduces printing by at least 80 booklets per cohort.

The learners have a platform that they can use at any time, which works well around their working lives. It also offers a live stream for constant support from both the learners in the group and the trainer. For the older members of staff this has helped with the development of their digital skills which is important as SHCA use a system called Road Runner where all staff use a handset to log in and out of their calls, check their rotas and receive messages from their line Managers.

> *D Keeling – Trainer*
>
> *"I like the Google classroom for the most part. Obviously the more I use it the better equipped I am with the features. However, some learners are not comfortable with using the site and choose to remain with the paper-based option"*
>
> *Learner Feedback*
>
> *"Using Google classroom allowed me to work from home and get my work in on time without me having to get the bus to the office, it's great because I'm not panicking about my work being late or spending extra money on bus fare"*
>
> *"I wasn't sure at first about using this type of online learning, I thought it would be hard to use, but I was surprised at how easy it was and the fact I can get feedback, make the changes and send it back without having to go to the office is fab!"*
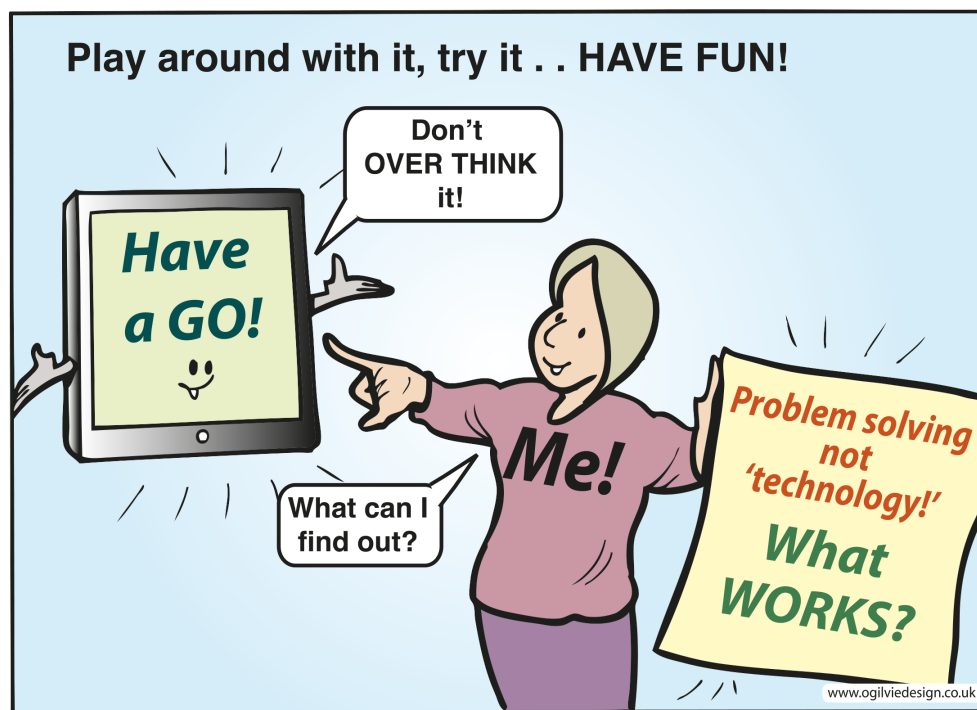>
> *"I can't lose any work, it's all there no matter where I am. There were a few problems with completing one of the workbooks at the beginning with things jumping around, but a second workbook appeared and it was sorted"*

Where can I find more information?

http://www.sunderland2020.com/

4.5. Engaging staff with using digital technology

Gateshead Council, Northumberland County Council and Durham County Council

Play around with it, try it . . HAVE FUN!

Have a GO!

Don't OVER THINK it!

What can I find out?

Me!

Problem solving not 'technology!'

What WORKS?

www.ogilviedesign.co.uk

Summary

This project promoted a collaborative approach to engagement strategies for staff to use digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment, with a focussed, problem-solving approach to enhancing current practice, ultimately impacting learner experience and engagement.

Rationale for the project

Use and embedding of digital technologies in a relevant and engaging way across teaching, learning and assessment was identified as a recurring development area across observations of TLA for Gateshead Council

learningSkills, Durham County Council Adult Learning, and Northumberland County Council Adult Learning.

Identifying from practitioner feedback that knowledge, skills, time and confidence are some of the main barriers to outstanding use of digital technologies within a classroom, partners agreed that an informal and 'have a go' approach to digital technologies from a practitioner level would be beneficial in having an impact on embedding digital technologies within TLA.

Project Approach

- Self-assessment survey was carried out across all 3 organisations to capture starting points in terms of digital skills and measure staff progress against these, completed by 94 staff across all organisations, 42 from Gateshead Council, 29 from Northumberland Council and 23 from Durham Council. The results of the survey were particularly useful in identifying key specific barriers to engaging staff with digital technologies.
- 8 key themes for workshops identified which included (but were not restricted to): Padlet, Mentimeter, Plickers, DuoLingo, Socrative, Kahoot, Nearpod, Edmodo.
- A team of 12 'digital champions' identified across all 3 organisations. Digital champions are practitioners who have been observed as successfully and competently using specific, relevant digital technologies within their teaching, learning and assessment previously.
- Digital champions delivered workshops for a practitioner-led approach to digital skills.
- Workshop reflection documents were completed by all attendees to consider how digital technologies could then be implemented into TLA and whether they felt this would be relevant to their learners.
- Mini-intervention tutor individual reflection documents were used to measure impact of digital technologies in TLA on specific groups of learners (see case study, also available on Padlet).

- Focussed walk throughs, observations of TLA and Ofsted feedback obtained to measure impact of quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Professional learning: Evidence of changes in teaching, learning and assessment practices.

Changes in staff practice have been evident through session plans and planning for learning has significantly improved as through workshop reflections, practitioners have been encouraged to consider how they will implement a digital technology into their sessions within the next month.

Individual tutor reflections have also evidenced significant changes within teaching, learning and assessment practices, with tutors completing pre-session and post-session sections answering the questions:

Pre-session:
- What is the problem that you are trying to solve within your teaching, learning and assessment using digital technologies?
- What digital technology are you going to use and why?
- How do you expect that this will impact your learners?
- How confident do you feel about using this digital technology? (Measurable scale from 0-10)

Post-session:
- What did you do?
- What impact did doing this have on your learners?
- What worked well today? Why?
- What would you do differently next time? Why?
- How confident do you feel about using this digital technology next time? (Measurable scale from 0-10)

It is notable that where technologies had a measurable impact on learning and learners through enhanced TLA, practitioners' confidence using a technology in TLA generally improved 2-3 points on the scale in every example.

In digital walk throughs/observations of TLA across all 3 organisations, tutors who were identified as requiring support with digital technologies were signposted to digital champions as part of quality improvement process.

Evidence of improved collaboration and changes in organisational practices

As a result of the Digital Technologies project, learningSkills have seen a number of changes to organisational practices:
- The identification of a set of digital technologies which has been contributed to by all partners and can be accessed on the Padlet (exhaustive list on Padlet), which have been tried and tested, is shared and updated across all organisations for collaborative research and working.
- The creation and implementation of a Continuous Professional Development plan specifically around digital skills, including with hardware.
- Implementation of 'Digital Skills Minimum Standards' for all staff to have an overall impact on the learner journey.
- Designing a more digital curriculum for learners, with the overall impact of teaching digital minimum standards.
- Tutor reflections and workshop feedback displayed on the Padlet to share with partner organisations.
- Designated team of digital champions who can be utilised for early intervention with staff and learners and can encourage/increase collaboration.
- Further offshoot project to develop staff awareness of Google Classroom to be established with Northumberland.
- Digital Marketplace event to take place in April 2019.
- Through post-OTLA support, TLA issues which come out as development points can be solved digitally to enhance teaching, learning and assessment.

Evidence of improvement in learners' achievements, retention and progression.

Learners are experiencing a broader curriculum as tutors are using technologies in a way in which they are considering the bigger picture of learner progress/achievement and had a learner-focussed approach. For example, in the pre-session section of the reflection document, one Functional English tutor wrote:

Before the Session

What is the **problem** that you are trying to solve within your teaching, learning and assessment using digital technologies?

> Encourage my class of 16-19 year olds to engage in discussion and generally build relationships within the group to allow learners to feel comfortable speaking in front of each other and participating in group work.
>
> This will enable learners to achieve my ultimate goal for each of them to undertake the speaking and listening exam in the future.

What digital technology are you going to use and why?

> Kahoot – as I feel that the fun aspect and the competitive aspect will appeal to this group of learners and take the pressure off 'just talking' in groups about a specific subject.
>
> My young learners come with many barriers to learning and issues, such as confidence in front of others, can play a big part in the failure of classroom tasks based around speaking and listening. I think Kahoot will help ease the pressure they feel by placing them in groups of 3 – 4, combined with the multiple-choice aspect of the questions.
>
> I'm using mental health as my topic rather than a specific Functional English topic, so that learners don't feel pressured into 'knowing' the answer as it's an English class.

After the Session

What did you do?

> I used Kahoot as an introduction to a session where learners had to compare a selection of texts based around mental health in small groups. Ultimately they had to produce an individual piece of writing on the topic.
>
> The quiz allowed me to open discussion on some tricky topics around mental health, but also to give the group some knowledge that they could use in their writing and research further if necessary.

What impact did doing this have on your learners?

> All learners contributed to the quiz and the competitive element really encouraged them. It promoted discussion within groups and I observed all of the learners contributing to small group discussions. It created a 'buzz' in the classroom.

What worked well today? Why?

> I think the time pressure of Kahoot worked really well. It forced the learners to start engaging with each other straightaway and they didn't have time to worry about getting involved or what they should say.

Assessment strategies have significantly improved through the project, which will have a direct impact on tutors tracking learner progression, with extensive tutor reflections to support this.

Learners have improved self-assessment and many tutors have used technology to promote autonomy with learners. During one digital walk through, learners expressed that they enjoyed setting their own targets on a Padlet as it allowed them to see where they needed to be by the end of the session and then ask relevant questions if they felt that they had not yet achieved this.

In one session at Northumberland, one tutor used Mentimeter to establish learner feelings about maths to inform planning and break down barriers:
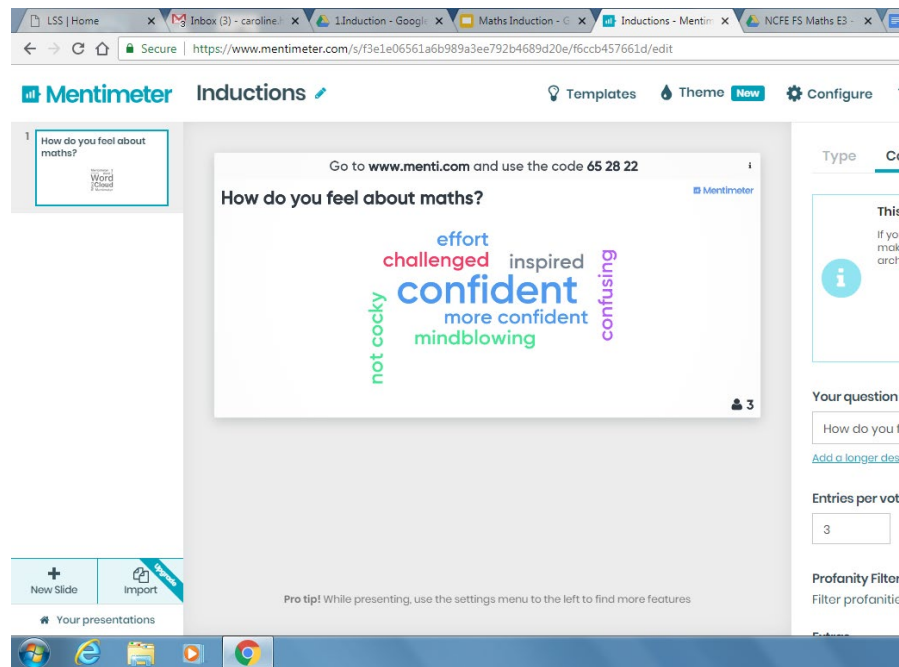
The tutor also set learners goals, noting in their tutor reflection: "I tried using this resource when Ofsted visited. I used it to not only write up learners' personal goals but also grade themselves at the end of the session. The results came up in the form of a graph which nicely embedded maths into the session. Learning was enhanced as the screen with their personal goals could be referred to throughout the lesson. Both teachers and learners can reflect on their progress to date. During the lesson, the learners were fully involved as they were the ones who had texted their comments to the screen and therefore could explain what they meant."

In one session where Nearpod was adopted to improve initial assessment and identify learner starting points more effectively, a tutor achieved a 100% success rate in the post-session exam.

Learning from this project

This project has found that, even in a short period of time, digital technologies can contribute to outstanding teaching, learning and assessment if used in the right way. We have seen the beginnings of some significant shifts in attitudes, behaviours and beliefs from tutors who have been part of this project.

- The project provides many examples of practitioners across all organisations successfully adopting digital technologies with a problem-solving approach, which is learner-centred.
- Confidence with using technology has increased, evidenced through individual tutor reflections.
- Where digital technologies might not be successful the first time, the 'have a go' reflective approach has meant that tutors are evaluating and re-trying the same technology in a different way to assess the impact over a period of time.
- Peer observations in Durham and Northumberland have proved to be successful in seeing technologies in action and have been a highly effective engagement tool which has impacted on teaching, learning and assessment strategies.
- A large factor in the success of this project was practitioner enthusiasm and the uptake of the workshops. Communication of these workshops was vital to get the 'buy-in' required and it was found that the 'sell' was much easier when these were non-technical, practitioner-led CPD opportunities.
- Staff are engaged with workshops which are delivered by practitioners.
- Workshops could have occurred earlier in the project, to assess the impact of 2 sets of workshops.
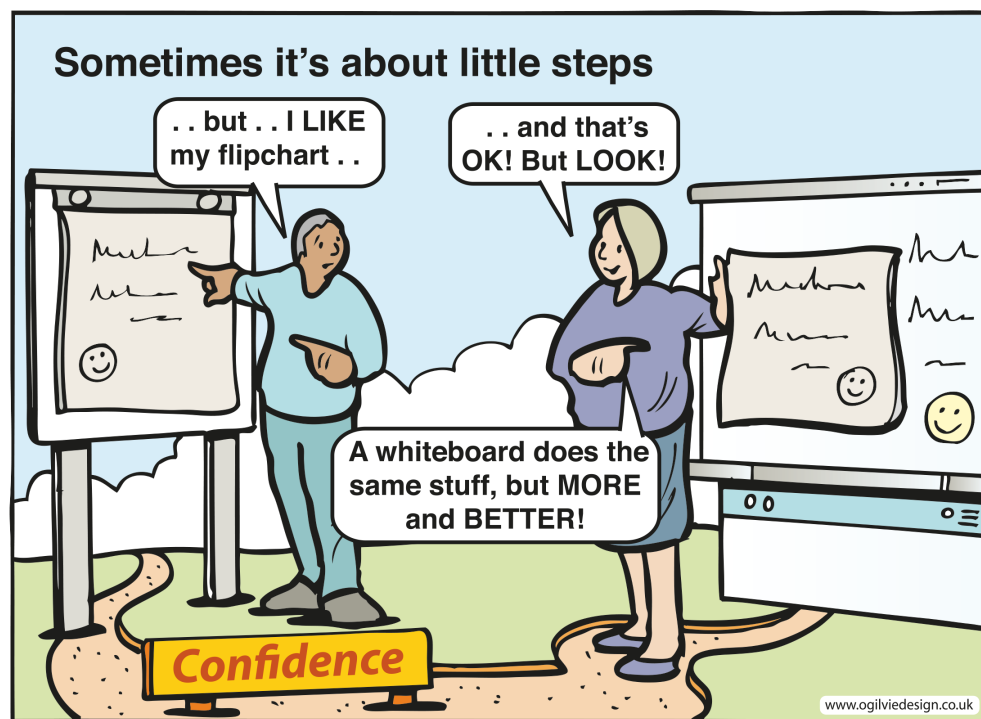
For further information about this project

- You can read more about this project on the Excellence Gateway at https://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2937

a. Case study (Engaging staff with using digital technology)

Gateshead Council learningSkills

What was the purpose of the project?

Gateshead Council, together with Northumberland County Council and Durham County Council identified from practitioners' feedback that knowledge, skills, time and confidence are some of the main barriers to outstanding use of digital technologies within a classroom.

Practitioners felt that they wanted to know what digital technologies were out there, so they had options to try. Gateshead learningSkills' work within this project slotted into the overall theme of engaging staff with digital technologies, but developed further into engaging staff and enhancing TLA by giving staff digital tools and options to 'have a go' with.

What did the project do?

- A self-assessment survey was carried out across all 3 organisations to capture starting points in terms of digital skills and measure staff progress against these, completed by 42 staff from Gateshead Council.
- 8 key topics for workshops were identified which included (but were not restricted to): Padlet, Mentimeter, Plickers, DuoLingo, Socrative, Kahoot, Nearpod, Edmodo. These apps were selected for their proven impact on assessment for learning and collaboration/extended learning.
- 89% of all teaching staff who completed the self-assessments (across all 3 organisations) identified that they would benefit from guidance and examples around what could work in sessions from fellow practitioners. This was key to the project.
- In response to this, a team of 12 'digital champions' was identified across all 3 organisations. Digital champions are practitioners who have been observed as successfully and competently using specific, relevant digital technologies within their teaching, learning and assessment. Workshops were planned to be delivered by the digital champions as 'by practitioners, for practitioners' workshops, rather than 'expert' and highly technical information about the products. This was key to the buy in of our project.
- Tutors who received requires improvement were signposted to digital champions or CPD to use a digital approach to help address a specific area for development.
- Workshop reflection documents were completed by all attendees to consider how digital technologies could be implemented into TLA.
- Mini-intervention tutor individual reflection documents were used to measure impact on learners (see Padlet).
- Focussed walk throughs, observations of TLA and Ofsted feedback have identified good practice.

What helped the project succeed?

- A problem-solving approach to digital technologies which is practitioner-led and learner-centred has engaged practitioners.
- The open sharing, through Padlet, of workshop/tutor reflections which evidence enhanced teaching, learning and assessment. This sharing of tutors' choices of digital technologies are identified as relevant and suitable for local settings.
- Digital champions driving the project forward have been highly effective in increasing engagement and providing a practitioner-led approach to enhancing teaching, learning and assessment.

Feedback from learningSkills Mentimeter workshop:
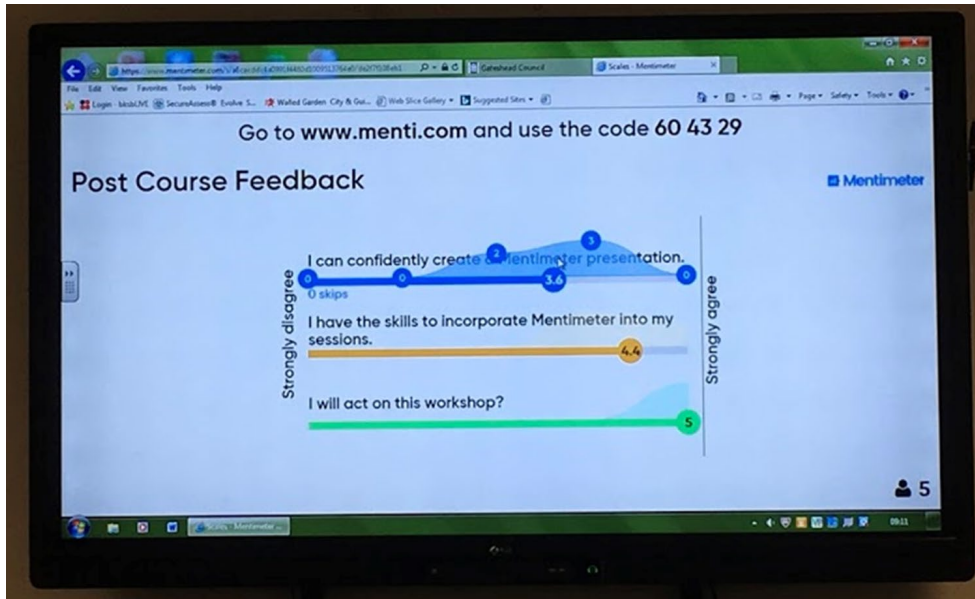
- The 'have a go', supportive approach - where tutors do not have success with technologies the first time, they then have the opportunity to reflect on this/discuss this with fellow practitioners/digital champions via the Padlet to enhance peer learning and ultimately, TLA.

- The biggest impact for Gateshead learningSkills has been using digital technologies as part of a support plan to solve problems within TLA practice with tutors who received grade 3. All tutors involved in this completed a reflection document which identified a digital technology and the learner-led rationale behind selecting this was identified in the tutor reflection forms.
- Implementation of 'Digital Skills Minimum Standards' for all staff to have an overall impact on the learner journey. The standards for teaching staff are as follows:
  1) Be using online registers and enrolments,
  2) Able to share best practice and fully utilise google classroom,
  3) Able to use a range of applications successfully with students to enhance their learner journey, including creating a learner blog,
  4) Able to market our learning offer on various forms of social media including Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, Instagram etc,
  5) Able to use a SMART board effectively (G tech),
  6) Will be competent in at least 3 online assessment tools.

What challenges did the project face?

Physical digital kit and hardware issues (such as slow Wi-Fi, problems with connecting Smart boards up) were identified by the self-assessment survey as a common issue which resulted in negative impacts for learners across the councils, so this was an opportunity to address these issues before rolling out the project. This has remained an ongoing challenge.

Workshops could have occurred earlier in the project, to assess the impact, however workshops will be ongoing over the next academic year and beyond in line with the wider Digital Skills strategy.

What difference did the project make?

- Enhanced quality of teaching, learning and assessment as evidenced through observations of TLA/digital walk throughs.

	Observation of TLA grade	Feedback	Digital Technology	Re-observation grade	Feedback
Case study 1	3	'Assessment strategies require improvement; tutor does not include all learners in direct Q & A so there is no evidence to suggest that all learners have achieved the learning objectives'	Padlet	2	'Assessment is very good – learners are inputing information into the Padlet confidently and each learner can identify 2 new things that they have learnt in the session'
Case study 2	3	'Learners complete an assessment prior to the session which is not used to inform differentiation strategies, stretch & challenge or grouping in tasks. All learners work in the same level groups throughout.'	Plickers then Nearpod (Plickers was not suitable)	2	'Excellent use of Nearpod quiz to identify learner starting points which is planned for in the session plan. The results of this IA is then used to inform Q & A and learner grouping which allows significant opportunity for stretch and challenge, which tutor makes
Case study 3	3	'Learners have too much reliance on tutor feedback to identify their next steps and this meant that some learners waiting for feedback were left doing very little while tutor gives feedback to individuals.'	Blogger	2	'Learners are becoming more autonomous, uploading their work to the blog and engaging with this very well, feeding back to one another and self-assessing. One learner commented that the blog has really helped her critically evaluate and take a 'step back' from her work'

- Designated team of digital champions who can be utilised for early intervention with staff and learners and can encourage/increase collaboration and contribute to quality of TLA improvement plans.
- The identification of a set of digital technologies which has been contributed to by all partners and can be accessed on the Padlet (exhaustive list on Padlet). Technologies have been tried and tested, shared and updated across all organisations for future collaborative research and working.

- Learners are experiencing a broader, more digital curriculum.
- Tutors are considering digital technologies in the bigger picture of learner progress/achievement (evidenced through individual tutor reflections).
- Learners have become more autonomous as a result of this project, evidenced through individual tutor reflections.
- Relationships between tutors and learners have improved, and learners are more willing to engage with teachers and participate in sessions.
- Assessment strategies have significantly improved through the project, which will have a direct impact on tutors tracking learner progression, with extensive tutor reflections to support this.
- Wider Smart board and Spark 2 Software training has been sourced through Gateshead Council learningSkills to enhance tutors' ability to use digital technologies (both hardware and software) within sessions.
- The project was included as part of the development and implementation of a service wide 'Digital Skills' strategy within Gateshead Council learningSkills, which has now included non-teaching staff. This also references the Education & Training Foundation's EdTech Strategy and Pedagogic Digital Skills Competency Framework.
- Gateshead learningSkills will be continuing with workshops for the next 3 terms in line with the digital skills strategy, as they have been so effective in engaging practitioners with using digital technologies.
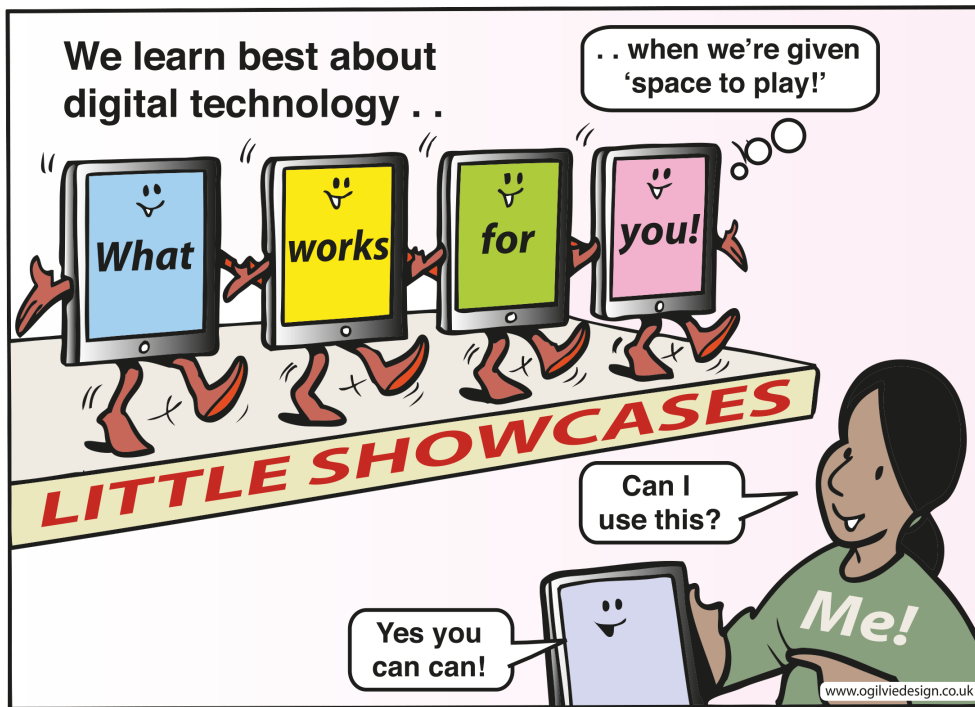
Where can I find more information?

The project Padlet contains examples of workshops, completed individual tutor reflections, observations, reports and information relating to each workshop's theme.

https://padlet.com/sarahwilletts/digitalOTLA

b. Case study (Digital champions)

Durham County Council Adult Learning & Skills Service

Conventional staff training in digital technologies was often delivered in a non-contextualised way by external organisations and practitioners did not see how technologies could be successfully applied in their curriculum areas, so we were interested to see if a different approach might work.

Many practitioners benefit from observing and learning from their peers. We recognised that those tutors who were already using digital technologies could become in-house 'Digital Champions' to:

- share their expertise with fellow practitioners
- demonstrate what is available (hardware / software)
- help others understand how to install and use the technology
- promote innovation and creativity

What did the project do?

- We identified 4 Digital Champions working across a range of curriculum areas (ICT; maths; English; Health & Social Care) and already using a range of digital technologies (Padlet; Socrative; Nearpod; Plickers) with confidence and enthusiasm.
- During Staff CPD week in September, the Digital Champions ran a series of workshops. Staff were invited to come along and see the technologies being used by their colleagues. There was an opportunity to try them out in a non-threatening environment, ask questions and discuss ideas.
- Following the workshops, staff were tasked to 'have a go' with one new technology in their own classrooms and evaluate their experience. 95% of staff felt that they and their learners had experienced positive outcomes from using technology.
- During September and October, the Quality Team focused their observations and walk through visits on the theme of 'Use of ILT' to monitor the impact of the training workshops on teaching and learning. Practitioners identified as requiring further support with using technology were signposted to the Digital Champions for additional advice and guidance.

What was the purpose of the project?

Observations of Teaching, Learning and Assessment identified that the use of digital technologies to enhance learning across Adult Learning provision was a recurring area for development. Feedback from practitioners established that they lacked confidence in their own knowledge, skills and ability to use new technologies effectively.

This meant that some learners were missing out on opportunities to access relevant, useful technologies which could develop their life skills, increase motivation and promote achievement.

- Practitioners carried out peer observations in their own curriculum areas to see technology being used in creative ways and to share good practice with each other.
- The project inspired Quality Officers to research how technology could be used to enhance the observation process which led to new video software being purchased and installed on tablets.
- Development of a new VLE is in progress to further promote digital technology in learning.
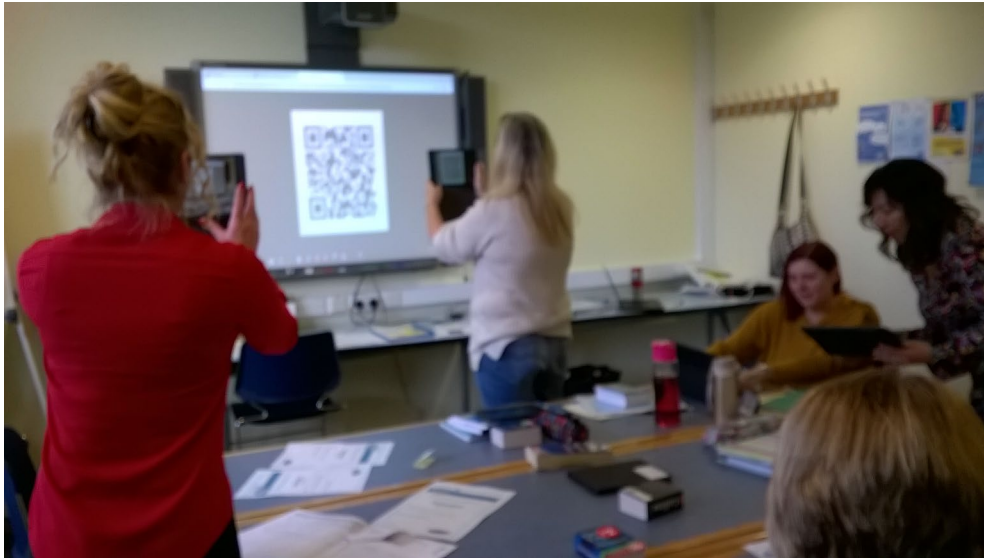
Learners in English L2 Functional Skills class using iPads & Android tablets to scan a QR code to access Padlet.

What helped the project succeed?

The OTLA Digital Project was fully supported by the ALSS senior management team in pursuit of excellence and was incorporated into the service's Business Improvement Plan. This meant that there was whole team commitment and buy-in to the project.

Digital Champions were given the time and resources to organise workshops, develop activities and support other staff.

Staff responded well to the training and advice provided by their peers.

What challenges did the project face?

Durham is a large, rural county and wi-fi access was not always reliable in community teaching venues. When multiple learners were logged on, the wi-fi signal was weakened or dropped out altogether making it impossible to continue with the planned digital activity.

Access to sufficient mobile devices was also problematic for some. When working with large groups where each learner needed access to an individual device there was often not enough tablets to go around.

What difference did the project make?

Feedback from teaching staff:

> *"Learners were more engaged – the less confident learners were able to participate and were not over ruled by the more confident learners. This also stressed the importance to learners to work with a higher level of autonomy"*
>
> *"I am going to develop the use of Plickers as a means of capturing instant feedback in class. Paula demonstrated how easy and simplistic it can be – I do not need to over think it, just do it"*
>
> *"Both Nearpod and Padlet are excellent resources that are easy to create. I will definitely use them to enhance my teaching and support blended learning"*
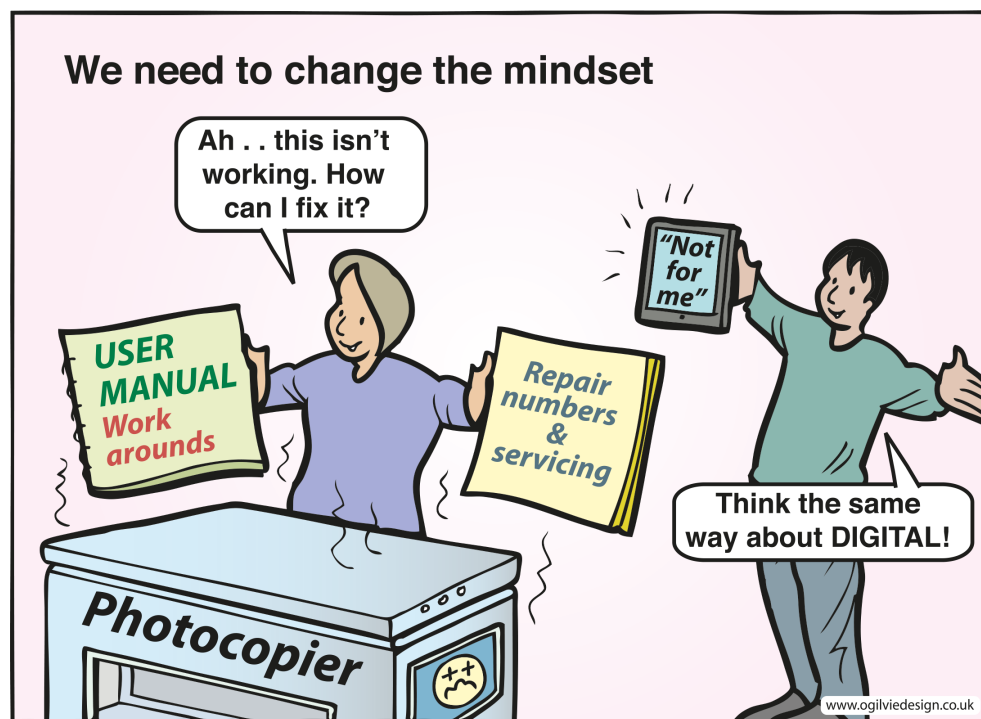
Where can I find more information?

The DCC ALSS Digital Champions are:
Dominic Wade
Sarah Ambler
Cheryl Kelstrup
Paula Foster Short

c.   Case study (Developing digital confidence across Northumberland)

Northumberland County Council Adult Learning & Skills Service

We need to change the mindset

approach to digital technologies led by practitioners would be beneficial in having an impact on embedding digital technologies within TLA.

What did the project do?

23 staff from Northumberland County Council completed self-assessment sheets which highlighted staff levels of confidence with technologies, the range of technologies and applications which staff used in their teaching, and how they thought it would benefit their sessions.

Following this self-assessment, 4 digital champions were identified and appointed from Northumberland and each of the partner councils. Their remit was to increase practitioners' knowledge and awareness of digital technology. All agreed to promote the use of technologies by demonstrations both in classes and during staff CPD sessions and staff conferences.

The initial self-assessment also agreed 8 applications that were to be promoted, including Nearpod, Mentimeter, Socrative and Padlet, which became the most used.

One digital champion established a Padlet for managing useful materials supporting staff and which included details of applications and useful websites to support their use; materials from staff training, and opportunities to communicate and share staff reflections on their digital processes. Northumberland staff also contributed effectively to the collaborative Padlet and exchanged experiences in developing conversations with staff from Gateshead and Durham.

The digital champions encouraged colleagues who were apprehensive about using technologies to try one technology at a time and to report back on progress. Staff were encouraged to report back using the feedback sheets which asked staff to reflect upon "What is the problem that you are trying to solve?"

What was the purpose of the project?

Northumberland County Council Adult Learning & Skills Service worked together with Gateshead Council learningSkills and Durham County Council Adult Learning & Skills Service to find approaches that would help staff to embed digital technologies in a relevant and engaging way in their teaching, learning and assessment. They collaboratively attempted to share best practices across the three local authorities.

A survey of practitioners identified knowledge, skills, time and confidence are some of the main barriers to outstanding use of digital technologies within classrooms, so partners agreed that an informal, collaborative 'have a go'

What helped the project succeed?

- The ethos of the overall project was to encourage staff to take risks and to 'have a go' with new technologies. This freed practitioners to discover snags as well as solutions in order to help other practitioners.
- This approach was reinforced by support from the leadership team that was manifest in digital champions being foregrounded at staff CPD sessions.
- A staff conference was organised focusing upon digital technology and Prof. Kevin Burdon was the keynote presenting his research into digital technology with FE/HE providers.
- Active collaboration with Gateshead and Durham colleagues, as evidenced by our exchanges on the central project Padlet https://padlet.com/sarahwilletts/digitalOTLA
- Digital champions also joined the Level 4 Digital Educators course that was being offered at Gateshead College. This proved really useful as we met with other digital champions from across all 5 collaborative Digital projects and explored which digital strategies were proving effective, and also, how best to promote these to other staff members.
- Staff learning from their peers who understood the practical constraints of integrating technology.

What challenges did the project face?

- Some staff were very apprehensive about using new technology which they had learned to manage without, and expressed fear of failure and embarrassment in front of students.
- Northumberland County Council serves a large rural area, and classes are held in some centres with limited technology such as laptops or tablets, compounded by poor connectivity through Wi-Fi.

- Time restraints; specifically, more time to work with those staff who were most needy, and development time to adapt and produce new resources.
- Many staff were on part-time contracts, meaning opportunities to arrange CPD for all staff was problematic.

What difference did the project make?

- Digital technology is now being used more within sessions and across NCC staff. Staff are showing enthusiasm and pride in their new skills.
- Learners are becoming more active as staff change their technologies; e.g. learners are beginning to annotate images using 'Adobe Spark', rather than passively watching PowerPoint.
- Learners are contributing more in sessions due to the stimulus for all learners to respond in Quizizz, Kahoot, etc
- More engagement of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities; e.g. learner on autistic spectrum now comments more confidently in class via Mentimeter.
- Responsive CPD sessions have now been developed in addition to large-scale mandatory training/ staff conferences.
- Accessibility of useful links for websites and resources using Padlet which is shared with staff who are now confident to use it.
- Growth of resources have been identified and shared: "a massive time-saver!"
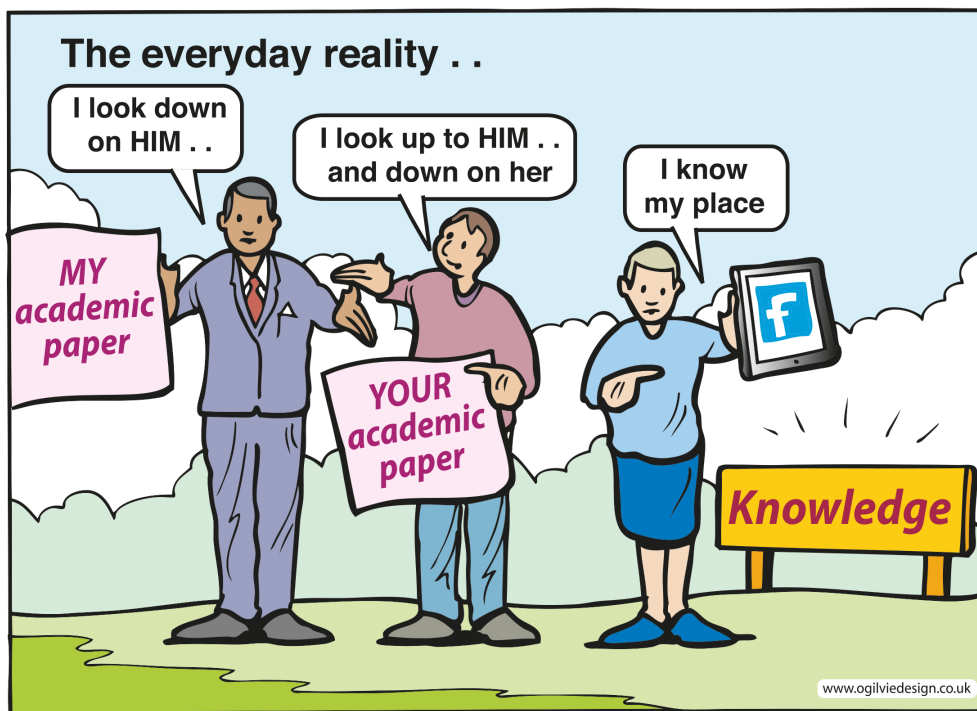
Where can I find more information?

Please see local padlet https://padlet.com/amy_norton1/c4f1tptgo3c4

and project padlet https://padlet.com/sarahwilletts/digitalOTLA

5. Establishing epistemic equality

Jean McNiff, Professor of Educational Research, York St John University

You may have seen the short sketch that colleagues Peter McDonnell, Stefan Humble and I performed at the presentation on 17th December 2018. Peter played an elitist higher education academic, Stefan was a further education lecturer and I worked in a factory workshop (we deliberately took those roles because of our height differences, and we also deliberately portrayed those roles in a stereotypical way: not all academics are elitist and not all workplace practitioners are so docile). In the sketch, the elitist academic (EA) looks down on the further education lecturer (FEL),

who in turn looks up at the EA and down on the factory worker (FW); both the further education lecturer and the factory worker look up to the elitist academic.

Here is the transcript:

EA   I'm university-based. My knowledge is academic and theoretical. I look down on him.

FEL   I look up to him because I work in a college and my knowledge is vocational. I look up to his academic knowledge. I look down on her.

FW   I work in a workshop. I don't know much. I do know my place.

EA   I write academic articles. I look down on him.

FEL   I read academic articles. I look up to him. I look down on her because she reads Facebook.

FW   I read Facebook. I know my place.

Our sketch was an adaptation of the original performed by John Cleese, Ronnie Barker and Ronnie Corbett, in 1966, and shown on The Frost Report (you can find it today on YouTube). This was a parody of the social class system. Our sketch on 17th December was a parody of the epistemological system, actively present in many (not all) different education and social settings. The aim of the sketch was to capture the idea of epistemic injustice, a concept developed by Miranda Fricker[4], which holds that some people are more knowledgeable than others because of how they are positioned. A useful example of epistemic injustice is seen in many people's attitudes towards those working in higher education, further education and everyday workplaces.

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[4] Fricker, M. (2007) *Epistemic Injustice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

My own experience as an academic is that some people in higher education tend to think that they own certain areas of knowledge; this is probably the experience of many working in further education, too. One area in particular is the language; many higher education personnel tend to think that they own the language. It is an everyday reality. And there is a long tradition that people who own the language use it to their advantage – and why wouldn't they, if it is to their advantage? The upshot is that there is a tendency often (not always) to adopt the language and mindset of 'us academics' and 'those practitioners'. This can quickly turn into a 'them and us' situation.

I speak from experience. I currently work in a university but I have also done different jobs, and often at the same time. I was a deputy headteacher in a large secondary school, took early retirement and, because I had to make a living, bought a seaside gift shop (I live on the south coast) where I sold buckets and spades and flip-flops. At the same time as running this lovely little business I also studied and completed my doctorate, and also got a part-time job in a university. The situation was that I was working both in a practical, everyday gift shop and in a university. At one point I was working part-time in further education and in higher education settings as well as in the shop.

These days, similarly, many people do different jobs or work in different sectors and settings at the same time. But questions then arise: How do you position yourself? How do you identify yourself? Do you see yourself as an academic or as a workplace person, or both – and if so, how? How do you understand your knowledge? And how do you speak about your knowledge?

At the moment part of my work involves supervising the studies of doctoral candidates who also happen to be my colleagues. In former times, they were also teachers in different teaching contexts. My background, and my values of justice and equality, lead me to see myself and those other colleagues in higher education as practitioners in a workplace called a university.

To me there is no difference of social standing between a workplace called a university and a workplace called a shop. We are all working for a living so why would we not be seen as workplace-based practitioners? Why should some see themselves as special because of a particular kind of knowledge that is part of their particular workplace tradition, and others who do not work in that tradition as less special? Perhaps different people have different reasons for their choices.

Now in doctoral studies (which is the highest academic qualification) different criteria are identified for judging quality. The two most important are:
1. Does this thesis make an original contribution to knowledge of the field?
2. Does the thesis demonstrate critical engagement?

All doctoral candidates must demonstrate the achievement of those criteria.

Here I want to suggest that all presentations today also demonstrate those two criteria in action. Throughout the day we have been listening to colleagues talking about their original contribution to knowledge of the field, whether the field has been woodwork, engineering, nursing, teaching or something else.

Every person or group of persons here can show how they are making their original contribution to their field (the first criterion). It is original because what they have done has never been done before. Scholars may have written or spoken about certain themes, often in aspirational terms, saying 'Wouldn't it be wonderful if …?', but colleagues today have actually shown this in action. They have shown how they have made their original contribution to their field from their positioning in everyday workplaces and their commitments to achieving their educational goals.

The second major criterion is that a thesis should demonstrate critical engagement. This is also what colleagues have done today. In presenting their work, all have been able to describe and explain what they are doing. They have given descriptions of what they are doing, and they have also given explanations for why they are doing it and what they hope to achieve.

They have also shown how they are testing the validity of what they are claiming by producing evidence that shows good reasons why others should believe them. They are not giving options for doubt: they are saying, 'This is what we have done, this is why we have done it and this is why you should believe us.'

So, my question is, why should not all, across sectors and different settings, claim epistemic equality – equality in the capacity to know – given that we are all able to describe, explain and account for what we know what we are doing in our different settings? Demonstrating such capacities is a matter of professionalism: as professionals, which we all profess to be, we should be able to say, 'I know what I am doing and why I am doing it, and I can produce the evidence to show these aspects.' We should judge the quality of our work in terms of demonstrating our original contributions to our fields and in showing our capacity for critical engagement: this is what we have been hearing today.

I would like to link this with another 'Big Idea', that of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, of eliminating poverty, inequality and injustice, and achieving environmental and human and non-human wellbeing. Further, from the realisation that nothing is sustainable (everything must come to an end), the job for us in the here and now is to imagine and find ways of contributing to the quality of life experience for all, in the here and now.

In my view, all participants today are doing this; we are contributing to one another's sense of well-being and flourishing and by contributing to the sense of well-being and flourishing of each and every person, we are contributing to the universe, to the well-being and flourishing of all the connections we have with every other element in the universe. This is further strengthened when we emphasise the connections between what we are doing at the level of practice, and what we are finding out, at the level of research. We explore and learn (research) about how we can improve what we are doing in relation with others (practice).

This combination of practice and research is where the knowledge is. The legitimacy of our knowledge is further demonstrated in that we can talk about what we have done (describe), why we have done it (explain), and comment on the significance of what we have done for ourselves and for other people. Thus, we demonstrate the power both of our research-based practices for self and others, and also show how we give meaning to our lives and in turn help others give meaning to their lives.

Today marks the end of our project together, and also marks the triumph and the acclaim that our work deserves. It is terrific work. Each presenter today has fully demonstrated their original contribution to knowledge of their field and demonstrated their capacity for critical engagement.

It has been such a privilege to work with you and thank you again, so much. I would suggest that we should all celebrate our own lives as practitioner-researchers and as very powerful knowers.

Thank you.

You can watch Jean's presentation at the OTLA Digital (North East and Cumbria) final dissemination event here https://youtu.be/PxjQUwxnXPo