



**“We just clicked!”**

**Connecting Communities through Digital Inclusion:  
an Independent Programme Evaluation of the  
MiCommunity Project**

**Final evaluation report**

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## **HEADLINES**

### **The figures**

- 5841 volunteer hours, with 90 per cent of the local school volunteers were satisfied and extremely satisfied with the volunteering experience. 80 per cent said they would volunteer again for another project
- 18 London boroughs engaged through 4 interlinking elements; 39 schools, 3 Zenos IT academies, and additional sessions and short courses in Age UKs and community premises
- 1019 older people engaged in learning digital technology from mixed cultural and ethnic backgrounds
- 771 younger people from a range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds volunteered to teach older people IT

### **The outcomes**

All expected MiCommunity outcomes were achieved:

- Changed negative perceptions between younger and older people through both generations changing their perceptions of each other in positive ways, although the change was greater in young people
- Increased life opportunities in both generations with more older people getting online and using technology, and younger people able to get 'work ready'
- Promoted volunteering which led to both generations being more confident and positive about volunteering in their community
- Connected communities with participants having improved their feelings of connectedness with their community

### **The enabling factors**

Information technology (IT) was the vehicle for changing attitudes and connecting people to their community. The one-to-one tuition allowed relationships to develop and young people were willing volunteers. The older people learnt IT skills through choosing what they wanted to focus on and which represented their interests. There was visible school leadership. Older people's engagement was facilitated through Age UKs.

### **The impact**

MiCommunity project has the potential to create significant and lasting change in communities through improving community cohesion, reducing social isolation in older people, increasing the ability of older people to remain independent for longer, improving younger people's employment prospects and reducing poverty in both generations.

### **The learning**

A MiCommunity brand should be developed in order to retain the integrity of the model and take account of the delivery mechanisms and contextual factors. This is required to enable sustainability and replication of the model in line with the outcomes achieved and realisation of potential longer-term impact.

## **1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

Team London is the Mayor of London's vision for a better London, achieved through a programme of social action where the power of volunteering is harnessed, in a targeted way, to address the issues affecting Londoners, with the objective of improving the city as a place to live and work.

Team London has been adapted from the Cities of Service model, developed by the Mayor of New York, Michael Bloomberg, for New York City, and launched there in 2009. Over the last three years, the Cities of Service model has been replicated and introduced in over 100 other US cities.

Age UK London's MiCommunity project was one of nine programmes directly funded by the Reuben Foundation and the Greater London Authority (GLA) through the first phase of Team London. It was designed to utilise volunteers specifically to help build stronger communities through their actions to increase social and community cohesion.

Age UK London worked in partnership with seven London Age UKs – Age UKs Barnet, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Hillingdon, Kensington and Chelsea and Redbridge, and with three Zenos IT Academies<sup>1</sup> to deliver the project from 30 June 2011 to 31 May 2012.

### **Rationale and assumptions behind the project**

The rationale behind the project and a number of underlying assumptions based on research, experience, policies and voices in communities informed the development of the project and identified the potential drivers that could create change.

There has been growing concern that older people are being left behind from the advances in digital technology and are at risk of being excluded from mainstream society. This is due to many services only being available online and that is increasing; information on a range of issues including health and pensions are only available electronically and older people were missing out on a range of social and cultural enrichment. An assumption underlying the project was that if older people could make more use of money saving initiatives that are only available online, it would lead eventually to a reduction in pensioner poverty.

The growing evidence for this includes, for example, a report from the Nominet Trust<sup>2</sup>, which considered the current understanding and knowledge of older people and their engagement with digital technology. Among its conclusions were that many older people would benefit from greater knowledge, training

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<sup>1</sup> Croydon, Romford and West London

<sup>2</sup> Nominet Trust (2011) 'Ageing and the use of the internet – current engagement and future needs' <http://www.nominettrust.org.uk/>

and information about different uses of the internet and there was little evidence of targeted promotions and practices around ICT for older people. A project by Age UK Enfield<sup>3</sup> demonstrated the value of intergenerational work to assist older people to learn IT and this inspired some of the thinking behind the development of MiCommunity.

The project was also based on the belief that younger people would benefit from more opportunities to prepare for the world of work and that volunteering was one of the routes to do that. Opportunities to develop their communication skills with other groups in the local community, develop their confidence and self-esteem and transfer practical skills and knowledge would all help their employment prospects. They would have extra information to add to application forms for college and university and their involvement would develop their CVs and be an area that they could discuss at interviews. It was also a belief that young people had more time than working age people to volunteer and that they would feel comfortable with teaching technology to a generation outside their peer group. It was an aspiration of the project – and in line with Cities in Service ethos – that this volunteering opportunity would enthuse young people to start on a pathway of volunteering throughout their lives.

It was assumed that schools, colleges and academies would be receptive to having more volunteering opportunities for their students and that this would drive the change. This assumption was supported by the availability of enrichment sessions in schools when extra activities such as volunteering are encouraged and there are dedicated staff responsible for liaising with outside agencies.

MiCommunity's overall aim was that by using intergenerational volunteering to support the futures of both younger and older people, a stronger sense of community and connectedness would be built, bridging differences in age ethnicity and culture and challenging negative stereotyping. Older people are often invisible in young people's lives, both in families and communities; a lot of younger people feel misunderstood and alienated. The recently published, final report<sup>4</sup> on the riots in England, in August 2011, illustrates some of these disconnections. The report makes 63 recommendations and represents a big agenda for change; there is a strong emphasis on people feeling they have a stake in society and that individuals respect each other and the place they live in. MiCommunity offered an ideal opportunity to bring people together in meaningful and constructive ways.

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<sup>3</sup> Silvia Schehrer (2011) *'Time and the Ability to Listen': intergenerational work in Enfield – an evaluation*. Available from Age UK Enfield.

<sup>4</sup> *After the Riots: Final report by the Independent Riots Communities and Victims Panel*, <http://riotspanel.independent.gov.uk/> March 2012

## **About the evaluation report**

An independent evaluation was commissioned by Age UK London in September 2011. The evaluation is reporting in April 2012 in order to inform the development of the toolkit and to encourage the spread and replication of 'what works'.

The next section describes what the project involved. This is followed by the evaluation approach and activities that will test the original rationale and assumptions. Section 4 focuses on the outcomes achieved by the project; in other words, what has changed as a result of MiCommunity. Section 5 explains what has driven these changes linking this to the original hypothesis, and what has been the receptive context and environment that has supported those changes. The report concludes with key messages and learning points for the programme to consider in the future.

## 2. ABOUT MICOMMUNITY

The overall aim of MiCommunity project was to use intergenerational volunteering to build a stronger sense of community and connectedness between young volunteers and older people, bridging differences in age, ethnicity and culture and challenging negative stereotypes. This took place by facilitating young people (aged 16-19) to share their IT skills with older people (aged 60+), many of whom have little or no IT knowledge or skills. It was intended that the project would establish important links and understanding between the two age groups, whilst also enabling older people to use digital technology more confidently, and promoting volunteering among young people.

MiCommunity involved four main volunteering activities:

### *Local schools' student volunteering*

The majority of volunteering took place in schools and colleges, where young people volunteered to deliver one-to-one IT training to older people in courses of between 4 and 20 weeks.

### *Zenos IT Academy volunteering*

ATA Pearson's<sup>5</sup> three London Zenos IT Academies provided a pool of young volunteers to support IT taster sessions (digital clinics) and short courses in Age UKs and community venues across London.

### *Beneficiary (older people) volunteering*

Additional funding obtained in October 2011 enabled the project to open up volunteering opportunities for older people in the project, for example through volunteering in schools or sharing their new skills with peers.

### *Corporate volunteering*

The additional funding also enabled the project to offer volunteering opportunities to corporate volunteers, for example by providing digital clinics or hosting events. These opportunities were mainly 'one off'.

The main focus of this evaluation is the work with schools and the involvement of the Zenos academies. The majority of the activities of the corporate volunteers and older beneficiaries' volunteering is taking place in March to May and therefore, due to the timings, is only briefly included in this evaluation.

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<sup>5</sup> Due to new legislation, Zenos has separated into a training provider arm, Zenos, with the employment opportunities carried out by Pearson In Practice.

## **Expected project outcomes**

There were ten outcomes sought by the project and tested in the evaluation:

1. Reduction of negative perceptions that older and younger people have of each other
2. Increase in understanding of culture and ethnicity amongst participants
3. Change in participants' connectedness with their neighbourhood
4. Increase in levels of personal confidence (amongst participants)
5. Increased life opportunities for older people, regarding their ability to 'get online' and use digital technology
6. Greater knowledge of online community resources
7. Volunteers satisfied with their experience of participating in the programme
8. Increased life opportunities for younger people through the engagement of older volunteers and corporate volunteers in the programme
9. Greater understanding of the needs of older people as they relate to digital inclusion (corporate volunteers)
10. More positive perceptions of young people's ability to contribute to their community

### 3. EVALUATION APPROACH AND ACTIVITIES

A Theory of Change approach was used because it is able to test the project assumptions, or small 't' theories, on why the project activities may achieve certain changes. It is the methodology of choice in complex social change programmes such as MiCommunity, where there are multiple outcomes expected in a range of different contexts and attribution of the project can be challenged. By developing a draft theory of change and then testing and refining it, a final theory of change emerges which demonstrates the attribution and contribution of the project activities to the outcomes.

The draft theory of change was developed at the beginning of the evaluation process at a small workshop with a range of different stakeholders. The 'MiCommunity theory' was used to guide the development of indicators (what would be the signs that change has happened) in order to measure change (appendix one). Indicators were developed for each outcome and then used to inform the methods, such as topic guides and questions for the benchmarking tool.

Theory of Change approach pays attention to what works, for whom and most importantly why, and considers the underlying context and environment in which the changes take place. The advantage of this method is that it informs the spread and replication of 'what works'.

The evaluation measured change at programme level, looking across all the dimensions of the programme to draw conclusions. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected and used alongside secondary monitoring data collected by the projects and collated by Age UK London.

The full evaluation activities are listed in appendix two. Qualitative data was collected through observation visits, focus groups and individual interviews with participants to understand the changes that had occurred through their involvement in the project (example topic guide in appendix three). Stakeholder interviews were used to inform the context, and project co-ordinators wrote monthly reflective diaries (appendix four) ensuring that practitioner wisdom and learning informed the final analysis.

Two benchmarking tools for the older and younger participants were developed at the start of the project in order to measure changes in attitudes (appendix five). This was a recommendation from a previous evaluation of intergenerational work<sup>6</sup>. However, there was no validated tool available that measured intergenerational attitude changes and so one was designed and tested in this project (see section 6 for an assessment of its effectiveness).

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<sup>6</sup> Silvia Schehrer (2011) *'Time and the Ability to Listen': intergenerational work in Enfield – an evaluation*. Available from Age UK Enfield

The sample size was significant: for example, 16 focus groups of older and younger people and 17 stakeholder interviews were held (listed in appendix six) and 31 co-ordinator project diaries were returned. Before and after benchmarking tools were completed by 510 older persons and 414 young persons. 180 volunteer satisfaction surveys were returned.

A thematic analysis of the data was undertaken to determine whether the outcomes were reached and to identify any unintended consequences. The evaluator worked with a senior research colleague to interrogate and test the validity of the analysis against the presenting evidence. This ensured a high quality and rigorous evaluation was achieved.

## 4. FINDINGS

The MiCommunity project has reached, and in most cases, exceeded its targets. It has also reached all ten outcomes and if the programme continues and spreads there is evidence of its potential to have significant longer-term impacts on people living in local communities (discussed in section 6 and 7).

### Who was involved?<sup>7</sup>

By the end of March 2012, MiCommunity had generated **5841** volunteer hours, benefitting 1019 older people. This was carried out by 711 young volunteers (603 in schools and 108 through Zenos), 60 corporate volunteers and 180 older volunteers.

A total of **18 London boroughs** were involved in hosting IT courses and/or digital clinics. This total includes the 7 boroughs working in local schools and colleagues, as well as 11 additional boroughs<sup>8</sup> holding sessions and short courses in Age UKs premises and community venues. Volunteers engaged were from all London boroughs except for the City of London, while beneficiaries were from 25 (of 33) London boroughs.

**39** local schools and colleges and **3** Zenos Academies were engaged across the project, making a total of **42** institutions.

The spread of volunteers involved by the end of March 2012 were:

- Local schools' student volunteers – **603** (63%)
- Zenos IT Academy volunteers – **108** (11%)
- Corporate volunteers – **60** (6%)
- Beneficiary volunteers – **180** (19%)

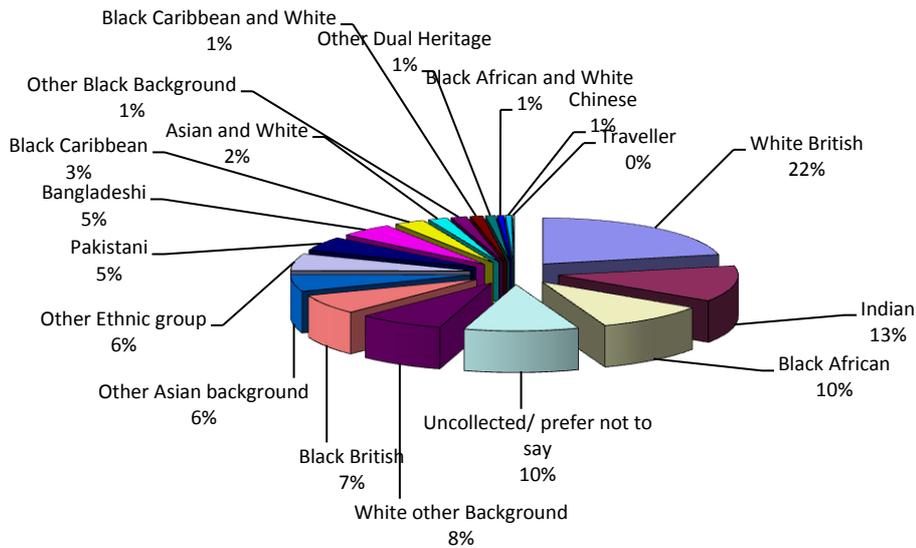
The project engaged with volunteers and beneficiaries from a multitude of ethnicities, which is illustrated in the diagrams below.

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<sup>7</sup> Data is collected from equalities monitoring forms completed between June 2011 and March 2012. (699 of 951 volunteers completed forms and 707 out of 1019 beneficiaries)

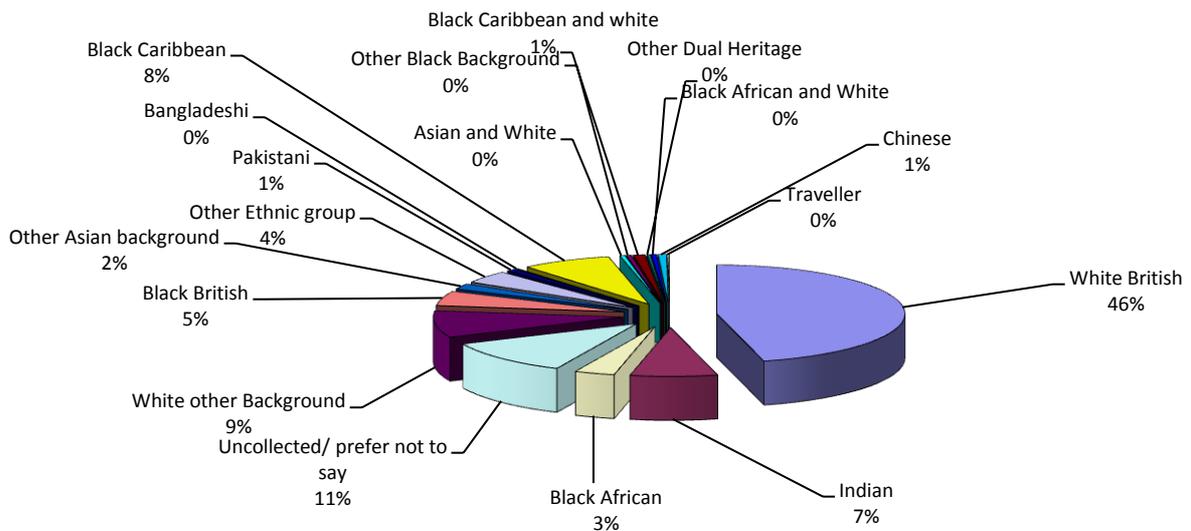
<sup>8</sup> 11 additional boroughs were: Barking and Dagenham, Bexley, Camden, Croydon, Ealing, Hammersmith & Fulham, Havering, Lambeth, Southwark, Waltham Forest, and Westminster

**fig. 1: Volunteer ethnicity**



Based on information collected from 699 of the 951 volunteers active by end of March 2012

**fig. 2: Beneficiary ethnicity**



Based on information collected from 707 of 1019 beneficiaries active by the end of March 2012

Overall, more females than males engaged in the project and in particular more than twice as many older women than men engaged in the project.

<b>Table 1: Gender of participants</b>		
	<b>Volunteers</b>	<b>Beneficiaries</b>
Female	60%	70%
Male	40%	30%
Transgendered	0%	0%

The majority of the beneficiaries that completed monitoring forms were over 66 years of age and the volunteers were mainly aged between 16 and 19 years:

<b>Table 2: Age of Beneficiaries</b>		
60-65	66-75	76 and over
20%	45%	35%

<b>Table: 3. Age of Volunteers</b>			
15-17	18-19	20-24	25 and over
70%	20%	5%	5%

#### **Four outcome themes:**

For the purposes of this report, the findings are grouped under four main outcome themes:

1. Changing negative perceptions between the younger and older generations (outcome 1)
2. Increasing life opportunities (outcomes 4, 5, 6, 8)
3. Promoting volunteering (outcomes 4, 7, 9, 10)
4. Connecting communities (outcomes 2, 3, 6)

#### **4. 1. Changing negative perceptions between the younger and older generations**

There is good evidence that by taking part in MiCommunity, younger people and older people challenged the stereotypes they had of each other and changed some of their negative perceptions. This was demonstrated in a number of ways, such as older and younger people having conversations, showing mutual respect, sharing interests, learning together and through fun and friendships.

It is clear that many of the participants were surprised that they got on so well and that their views on each generation was changing:

*"My view has definitely changed. I don't know, I am more – I only have one grandparent and I tend to think that is what older people are like, whereas meeting all these people I realise they are just like us, I actually have something in common with my partner, and I get on with her and we have a laugh and stuff, I did think that the age gap would not enable me to do that but it has" (local school volunteer).*

*"Yes, it does change attitudes, definitely. We have been talking about music today and we suddenly realised that we get focused on an image and it's not always right" (older person).*

Only one volunteer, who undertook a short 3-week course, expressed doubts that a few young people helping a few older people would change the negative perceptions of young people.

The majority of the groups, particularly those that were involved in a number of sessions, felt that by taking part in the project they understood each other better and were able to recognise the connections that existed between them.

### **Showing mutual respect**

Developing mutual respect emerged as a key factor in changing attitudes. There were frequent references to how the generations viewed each other in negative ways, partly through media images and prejudiced views. But, by bringing generations together in this way, these stereotypes were challenged. One young person explained:

*"Before you had stereotypes, 'They are like that, like this', but now, by my own experience, you can see what they (older people) are like, that they are not like this, no, no, no, I now know old people, they DO want to learn, they DO respect other people" (local school volunteer).*

Another young person commented:

*"If you respect them (older people), they will respect you. My partner and I actually get along. She don't look down on me because I show I am interested in her" (local school volunteer).*

Some of the older people recognised that they may have had the wrong impression of young people:

*"I think we have got the wrong impression of the young, they do respect elderly (people)" (older woman).*

One liaison staff member at a school had noticed how respectful the young volunteers were of older people because they *"don't gossip about older people to each other"*.

### **Having conversations**

By using IT as a catalyst for bringing younger and older people together, a number of diverse conversations arose. One young person described it as:

*"Small conversations that just happen can become quite big, and when you are teaching something, that leads to another conversation" (local school volunteer).*

Both generations expressed surprise that they communicated so well with each other. One older woman said:

*"Surprise that a young person can come across like that. I thought they may have a little bit of trouble communicating with you. I thought it may take a couple of sessions to get to know each other, but it seemed to happen straight away" (older person).*

During the evaluation process, a number of computer sessions in the local schools were observed and on each occasion there was a dynamic atmosphere between the volunteers and learners engaging with each other. I was told by both generations: *"To be honest a lot of the time we just talk and laugh"* and *"We have a giggle now and then."*

### **Shared interests**

The different age groups were surprised at how many shared interests they had between them. One young woman said:

*"There is such a big age gap I was kind of worried that they weren't kind of 'like us' but I realise now that we are all the same, they are not really different to us. If I see an older person on a bus or something, they are so different to me, but now through talking I realise – 'no actually we're not'. My partner asks: 'What should I buy in Top Shop? What would you recommend?' Wow, she actually knows about Top Shop" (local school volunteer).*

Finding out about each other's interests came about through the IT activities. Discussions were held, for example, when booking tickets for holidays or exhibitions, looking at shopping sites, exploring Google Maps, finding information about health and discussing families and friends. Another young person explained:

*"It creates an opportunity to get to know each other. For example, if you want to teach them how to buy theatre tickets: 'I would like to go to War Horse'. 'Oh, I have heard that War Horse is good' and the conversation goes from there (local school volunteer).*

Older learners had similar experiences of discovering shared interests:

*"I am with a girl who likes football and I like football and we talk a bit about Arsenal. It is lovely to think she has the same (interest), she is really keen" (older person).*

## Generational differences in attitudinal change

Whilst there was good evidence that both generations changed their perceptions of each other in positive ways, the change was greater in young people. The young people involved in the project were very open and honest about how their views of older people had changed through getting to know them better. They recognised that older people were individuals and that they could share similar views and values to themselves. This changed perception of the older generation extended to their view of the majority of older people.

Younger people changed their view in response to the statement that older people are lonely<sup>9</sup>. In the beginning, 45.4 per cent were uncertain about this (expressed as 'neither agree nor disagree'), but, by the end of the course, the uncertainty was reduced to 30.9 per cent. The majority (38.3 per cent) now disagreed that older people in general were lonely and 14.1 per cent strongly disagreed.

The older people involved in MiCommunity were more reticent and cautious about how much their changed perceptions of younger people extended beyond the local school volunteers.

As demonstrated above, it changed their view of the young people involved and they commented with surprise on their politeness, patience and commitment. Nonetheless, many of the older people held the view that these were probably exceptional young people and not representative of their generation.

*"They are in a situation where you would expect them to behave (school), I have no idea how they would be out of school" (older person).*

*"When we are on the road, we only see the outside, we do not see the inside. But when we come here, the young ones are all different, educated, manners everything" (older person).*

In fact, it was not the case that the young people were the top achievers; the school staff and co-coordinators worked together to target young people they felt would benefit most by being with an older person (5.2).

In response to the statement "*Young people do not respect their elders*", there was a small change. The majority, 50.2 per cent, disagreed with this statement at the beginning, but at the end more people strongly disagreed (up

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<sup>9</sup> These figures were taken from the benchmarking tool and represent a small proportion of the total participants, approximately 25 per cent. 266 older people completed the benchmarking tool at the beginning and 201 at the end; 231 young people completed the tool at the beginning and 149 at the end.

from 11.3 per cent to 22.8 per cent) that young people don't respect older people.

In spite of these reservations, there were still promising signs that MiCommunity could start to change those wider attitudes and promote more connected communities around age. This is illustrated by these comments from some older learners:

*"I was amazed how polite and well mannered the pupils are, yes that did take me aback" (older person).*

*"How polite and civilised they are. I meet them outside and they bid me the time of day, from seeing me here, even though people tend to put them down" (older person).*

This point is developed further below in 4.4 and in the key messages and learning section 6.

## **4. 2 Increasing life opportunities**

There is strong evidence that MiCommunity has increased the life opportunities in both the older and younger participants. The main focus for older people has been the ability to get online and use digital technology. For the younger people, MiCommunity gave them a real opportunity to improve their employability skills. Both groups also increased their levels of personal confidence. This section also links to volunteering in section 5.3.

### **Older people 'getting online'**

Overwhelmingly, older people were motivated to join the project to learn technology skills. They were acutely aware of 'being left behind' if they did not master the use of computers and the internet. One older man summed up the view of many:

*"I was quite happy in my own world paying cheques, posting cards, (but) in the future, very near future, you can't survive without paying on the internet, can't contact anyone- it's out of the question. You are forced into coming to the classes and try and learn it. I have got to do it or I will be so isolated, I wouldn't be able to pay a cheque" (older person).*

Other comments included:

*"My children are in a different country and if you don't know internet you can't communicate. They don't have time to write letters or anything, telephone is too expensive, Skype is the best thing" (older person).*

In a sample survey taken at the beginning of the course (n167), 70 per cent of the older participants could turn the computer on, 60 per cent could use a keyboard and 68 per cent a mouse. The following table shows what they wanted to learn and what they were unable to do currently. It also shows where older people's interests lay in accessing digital technology and in the classes, older people were given the opportunity to carry out all or some of their stated aims.

<b>Table 4: Older people's learning needs</b>		
	<b>'I want to learn' (%)</b>	<b>'I can already' (%)</b>
Download pictures from my camera	87.1	5.7
Attach a photo to an email	87.1	7.9
Shop online	79.6	8.7
Use social networking	77	9.2
Create word documents	76.7	17.5
Work with spread sheets	72	9.3
Use a search engine	68.5	28.2
Get onto internet	58.1	41.2
Have an email account	56.2	41.2

The table shows that older people attending the courses had a number of needs around using technology that they felt they needed to address. As a result of MiCommunity, many of the older people were amazed at their progress and how it made them feel more connected to life around them:

*"I know how to do facebook – I'm signed up" (older person).*

*"I needed to 'get more with it' and with more things on the internet... I care for my disabled wife and it is difficult to get out sometimes – and I can email" (older person).*

This older man was later observed searching for local home improvement sites.

On another occasion, one volunteer noted:

*"When we show them something that seems simple for us, they get all excited about it like. I was showing one about setting the home page to Google, and she was really excited that she could do that and she could type in Google each time" (Zenos IT Academies volunteer).*

The ability to look around many websites to get the best deals with shopping appliances, airline bookings, holidays and insurance, opens up moneysaving opportunities and in the long term the potential for reducing pensioner poverty. Some of the older people explored paying bills online, such as council tax and utilities, although it is important to mention that many older people still had a

fear of fraud if they pay online. Reassurance from online providers will need to be skilfully marketed if more older people are to have the confidence to put their financial details online.

There was some evidence that older people wanted to use their new skills to learn more about their local community. In a sample survey (n167) of older people joining MiCommunity, 82 per cent (n82) wanted to learn how to access their Borough/ community website. In particular, 78 per cent (n79) wanted to learn to access their local Age UK website.

The indications were that accessing and connecting with community facilities could increase significantly. For example, there was considerable interest in Google Maps and finding how to get to certain specialised shops; many people were learning Microsoft Publisher so they could send newsletters around their local club, others realised that it was becoming the only way to keep in touch. For example:

*"You feel you are left behind if you are unable to use a computer. You miss out on social events because now they don't phone you, or text. I am very into traditional Irish music and there are different sessions, so they would say 'why don't you get an email address and I can email you, because that's the way we're doing it now?' And I thought, I have got to get a grip of myself" (older person).*

### **Younger people getting 'job ready'**

Similarly, young people were motivated to join the project to improve their ability to get employment. For some, this was being able to add the experience to their university entrance forms or their CVs. For others it was recognition that they could improve their communications skills by interacting with a group of people (older people) that they had little contact with. A few were very specific:

*"I want to become a primary school teacher – it was about teaching, to get different views about how people learn" (local school volunteer).*

In many of the boroughs, the Age UK co-coordinators and the school liaison teachers worked together to select students who they thought would benefit the most from being involved. Often it was those who lacked confidence, were shy and who needed to improve their communication skills. In a minority of cases this included students who had English as a second language. One liaison teacher said:

*"We selected an IT student who has English as a third language, in order to help him develop language skills and he has improved already" (school liaison teacher).*

One teacher teaches level 2/3 students, who she thought were potentially more vulnerable and could really benefit from the project.

One of the strengths of MiCommunity was that it enabled older learners and younger volunteers to learn together; there was no high expectation that the younger people would know everything. One example was an older woman wanting to learn Twitter and how to tweet; the volunteer had never done that but they learnt together. The difference was that the volunteer had the confidence to find out and to share that new knowledge.

There is good evidence that the project did improve young people's ability to prepare for the job market; for example through the project, 740 young volunteers were offered a reference. Over 70 per cent of those who took part in the satisfaction survey said that they were satisfied or extremely satisfied (n59) that they were able to use the volunteering activity to progress their careers. It had significantly improved the confidence of the young people, with 82 per cent saying it had helped their confidence.

The experience of working with another generation and people from a range of backgrounds and experiences, improved communication and developed the young people's skills for later in life. Here is an example from a young person on how the project had helped him:

*"It is a good feeling knowing you have helped someone, you alone have helped someone, taught someone something that you thought was easy but they don't know about. So you have that good feeling about yourself, that self-confidence, thinking, yea, you know what, I can actually teach someone. So if anyone ever told you 'You know what? You're stupid', you can say (to yourself), doing something like this helps you, gives you that motivation that you are worth something, you are able to teach someone" (local school volunteer).*

One young woman felt it made her aware of the need to keep up with technology changes as she grew older.

For the young apprentices at the Zenos academy, MiCommunity gave them an ideal setting to test their newly learnt skills on getting to know their clients:

*"We find out the sort of things that interest them as that leads on to what we look at, that's what you do in IT support anyway" (Zenos IT Academies volunteer).*

Members of the Zenos staff team explained the value of projects like this in supporting young people who have no experience of work but are looking for employment. They explained:

*"It is useful for Zenos volunteers because they learn a lot on their course but do not realise how much they know. So when they teach the older learners they then realise. It is empowering and makes them want to learn more" (Zenos IT Academies manager).*

*"It gives young people something to talk about at interview" (Zenos IT Academies manager).*

It also helped them to maintain a focus whilst searching for jobs.

## **Reducing inequalities**

The evaluation did not look specifically at how MiCommunity may reduce inequalities in communities, although there was an emphasis in the project to engage with schools in communities with high levels of deprivation and within those schools to target students that could most benefit.

There was some evidence, presented above in the increase in life opportunities, of the potential of the project to offer considerable gains in deprived communities where segregation of age and culture were marked. One head teacher explained it like this:

*"We are here in the middle of (London Borough) in one of the most deprived wards in the country and the need couldn't be greater because, for these young people, ANYTHING we can do that raises their aspirations, builds their confidence but also brings them into contact with as wide a range of people as possible, can only benefit their future development" (head teacher).*

In another school, a senior manager welcomed the project because:

*"(The project) develops social and communication skills. The college gets good A level results, but we are not as good as independent schools around social skills – interacting with different groups" (senior school manager).*

For older people, the reduction of social isolation, beginning to feel less fearful in their communities through getting to know more local young people and being able to access online facilities, are all indicators of reducing inequalities.

The evidence suggests that while all older and younger people engaging in MiCommunity have the potential to gain, in the future the project may wish to increase the targeting of the most deprived groups and communities to explore whether the gains can be even greater for those young and older people.

### 4.3 Promoting volunteering

A key focus of MiCommunity, driven by the political and policy environment in London, was to increase volunteering in order to improve life for people in communities. By the end of March 2012, MiCommunity had generated **5841** volunteer hours.

The main driver was to recruit young people to volunteer to teach older people how to use technology and in particular, online facilities. The longer-term goal was to encourage young people to begin a lifetime of volunteering.

Due to the timing of the corporate and older people volunteering, the majority of the evidence presented, on how MiCommunity has promoted volunteering, is taken from the local school volunteers.

The majority of the local school volunteers had not volunteered before and came forward in order to improve their future prospects in the job market rather than for altruistic reasons. There were some exceptions but they were in a minority. For example:

*"(I thought) it would help me build bridges with people, find a way of helping them, in a way they will feel comfortable" (local school volunteer)*

Approximately 90 per cent of those who completed the volunteer satisfaction survey (n180) said they were extremely satisfied (n87) or satisfied (n69) with the volunteering opportunity.

Taking part in MiCommunity did lead to many of the young people changing their perception of volunteering. For the majority it had been a rewarding and worthwhile experience. Their self-esteem improved, and they gained huge satisfaction from passing on their skills to another person and in seeing the difference it made to another person's life.

*"I think it does encourage you to volunteer, yes on CV, but the good feeling I get after my person tells me 'you have really helped me today'. It is kind of more, it leaves me really happy when I leave, because I know that even though I don't know a lot, I have still offered, given her so much of my knowledge" (local school volunteer).*

*"Started off wanting to gain from it – like on my CV – but now it's kind of like, I actually enjoy it, knowing I am helping someone – not for my own gain at all, but knowing I am helping someone else, so I think that would encourage me to do it again" (local school volunteer).*

There was evidence that through volunteering with MiCommunity, many of the young people would volunteer again. In the satisfaction survey (n180), nearly

80 per cent (n140) said they would consider volunteering again for another project. One student described the experience as "awesome". This is what two of the young people said:

*"But after this, I would like to do more volunteering, seen how much I've helped someone, makes you want to do more" (local school volunteer.)*

*"For me, I think so, because this has been the first time I have volunteered to do anything and it has turned out to be a positive thing, I am quite enjoying it, and I now want to experience other things as well" (local school volunteer).*

For a few volunteers, they felt they would volunteer again if it supported their search for a job. This was a particular issue for the apprentices because they needed work placements to complete their apprenticeship, as one explained:

*"It's not paid, we need to find a job as well and it would be hard to balance volunteer work with actual jobs" (Zenos volunteer).*

### **The volunteering opportunity**

There was a clear connection between the satisfaction in volunteering and the volunteering opportunity offered by MiCommunity. Many of the young people are encouraged by the schools to find volunteering opportunities and this is facilitated through the schools promoting enrichment activities<sup>10</sup>. Similarly in the Zenos IT Academies, it is seen as useful to the students to practice their skills. But for many of the less confident young people, finding volunteering opportunities was not always easy:

*"I think there are a lot of young people who do want to volunteer but they don't know how to go about it, which is why we jumped at this opportunity, the chance to do this" (local school volunteer).*

Some young people found it difficult to find volunteering: the hours did not fit with their studies and the location was difficult to get to. MiCommunity presented the ideal vehicle for young people to engage. It was offered in school, either during the timetable or immediately afterwards, and they were in a familiar environment; safeguarding procedures were put in place by Age UKs and the schools. The local Age UKs also found the local community

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<sup>10</sup> Enrichment activities expand on students' learning in ways that differ from the methods used during the school day. They often are interactive and project-focused. They enhance a student's education by bringing new concepts to light or by using old concepts in new ways. These activities are fun for the student, but they also impart knowledge. They allow the participants to apply knowledge and skills stressed in school to real-life experiences. <http://www.learningpt.org/promisingpractices/whatis.htm>

members – the recipients – for the young people to volunteer. One school staff member explained:

*"For more vulnerable students, (MiCommunity volunteering) is less pressure on the students because they can still volunteer in their comfort zone" (local school staff member).*

### **Older people's contribution**

The opportunities for older people to volunteer with younger people are just developing in the project. From other evidence in this evaluation, the changing attitudes to younger people, the increased feelings of community connectedness and the opening up of school and college premises all indicate that there is potential for this to expand. One older woman has this view:

*"I think it's so good (MiCommunity), it's like a stepping stone for you, it gives you the confidence to think, well they've done this, so what can I do for them? I think it is something we should be encouraged to do" (older person).*

### **Corporate volunteers**

To date, a small sample of corporate volunteers (n19) have completed the volunteer satisfaction survey but it shows encouraging signs. Nearly 80 per cent said the experience had made them more likely to volunteer again and 100 per cent said they would recommend the opportunity to friends. 63 per cent (n12) had volunteered before. Two factors relevant to MiCommunity outcomes were demonstrated in this small sample: 74 per cent said it had improved their perceptions of young people's ability to contribute to their community and nearly 90 per cent said it had increased their understanding of older people in relation to digital inclusion. One volunteer put it this way:

*"People bringing in digital camcorders and iPad2s, so who said the older generation aren't interested in technology? It's brilliant" (corporate volunteer).*

### **4.4 Connecting communities**

One of the overarching aims of MiCommunity was to build a stronger sense of community and connectedness between the young and old generations. It also aimed to enable more connected communities through developing a greater understanding of different cultures and ethnicities in participants.

There are indications in the evidence from this evaluation that the connectedness is beginning to happen and that if this continued, the longer-

term impact on community cohesion could be significant. One young person put it like this:

*"I am learning more about different cultures because I have had 3 partners, so I have learnt about different people and how they think about certain stuff, and that helps me relate to them as well. I feel a bit more connected to people around me"* (local school volunteer).

In response to a benchmarking tool statement: 'This is a neighbourhood where people of different backgrounds and different ages spend time together', there was a change towards more younger people strongly agreeing (14.8 per cent) with this statement at the end of the project than at the beginning (7.9 per cent). There was a similar pattern with older people, with more strongly agreeing at the end of the sessions (change from 5.5 per cent to 9.8 per cent) than at the start of the project.

The characteristics of the participants show that the majority of the younger and older people were from a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds and experiences. The opportunity to talk together and use IT as the enabler, allowed learning to be shared between the pairs. This is illustrated below:

*"Things just lead on from another, e.g. relatives on Skype and then you learn about their relatives and their lives and that is really interesting"* (local school volunteer).

*"Where she came from, born, we researched her country so I got to know about her background as well"* (local school volunteer).

An older man had welcomed the interest from the volunteer about the local community:

*"I was being escorted out of the premises, by the young fella, he was putting out questions of what it was like at times when I was young. So there was an interest shown to me, (he) was interested to find out what it was like. I was surprised, tried to explain what had changed, house prices, smoke"* (older person).

## **Fear of crime and antisocial behaviour**

Fear of crime and concerns about young people and antisocial behaviour impacts on the way the generations connect in their communities. One older woman expressed the view of many other participants:

*"I can understand it theoretically, but when I'm in the street and I'm the only one, and there is a group of hoodies coming towards me, depending if it's dark, I feel anxious"* (older person).

The young people in MiCommunity projects were very aware of the way they are perceived in their communities:

*"Some of us are really good, but when we are on the bus and that, we tend to have very bad ways. Obviously the public are going to create a picture of us. Here it shows we are not all the same and for us, not all older people are the same, that's what this does for us" (local school volunteer).*

*"After the riots, they (older people) think we are all hooligans and there are a lot of young people out there. This (project) changes their opinion: 'Oh, you are quite nice, I haven't seen any naughty people'. When she goes out and meets her friends she will tell them and so on, and it will have a domino effect and eventually the stereotype will be changed" (local school volunteer).*

Research into the impact of intergenerational activity on fear of crime and reducing anti-social behaviour is limited in this area. However, there is some evidence of the potential of intergenerational activities to begin to overcome negative perceptions of young people's behaviour. For example<sup>11</sup>:

*"Intergenerational practice (IP) stresses the importance of creating dialogue between generations, which it is claimed can help prevent anti-social behaviour and limit fear. We examine critically the theory and practice of IP and suggest that although it has substantial flaws, it may provide a useful way forward to limiting anti-social behaviour and fear of crime, when linked with wider social regeneration programmes" (Moore and Statham 2006).*

The benchmarking attitude survey used at the beginning and end of the MiCommunity IT sessions showed very little change in older people's perceptions of safety around groups of young people. This may in part have been due to the length of time of the programme or because some of the older people involved thought they were working with the best students. However, as the research suggests, MiCommunity has the potential to reduce fear of crime and perceived anti-social behaviour in young people, because it creates a dialogue between the generations.

### **Use of community buildings**

MiCommunity has improved participant's connectedness with their community through the wider use of community buildings. For example, many older people had not entered schools for a considerable time and were unaware of how things happened in that environment. One outcome was they were able to be around groups of young people and recognise the respect that was given

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<sup>11</sup> Stephen Moore and Elaine Statham (2006) 'Can Intergenerational Practice Offer a Way of Limiting Anti-Social Behaviour and Fear of Crime? *The Howard Journal*, 45, 5, 468-484.

them; they were more visible and in touch with another generation as well as being able to make use of school resources. Similarly, some of the volunteers went to Age UK buildings and met other older people who they would not normally meet.

The schools welcomed the opportunity to have another section of the community within their premises. They found it beneficial for their students to have contact with the older generation because it allowed misconceptions to be broken down. It also gave students, who did not usually meet older people outside their own families (and some not even then, if they had come to Britain from abroad and live alone), the opportunity to have the benefits and support from an older member of the community. One senior school representative explained:

*"(The area has) a reputation and a gang culture, which is stopped at the school gate. We have 1200 students in a built up area so it is good for older people from the community to come in and meet our students. (It can lead) to older people feeling more confident around their community" (school staff member).*

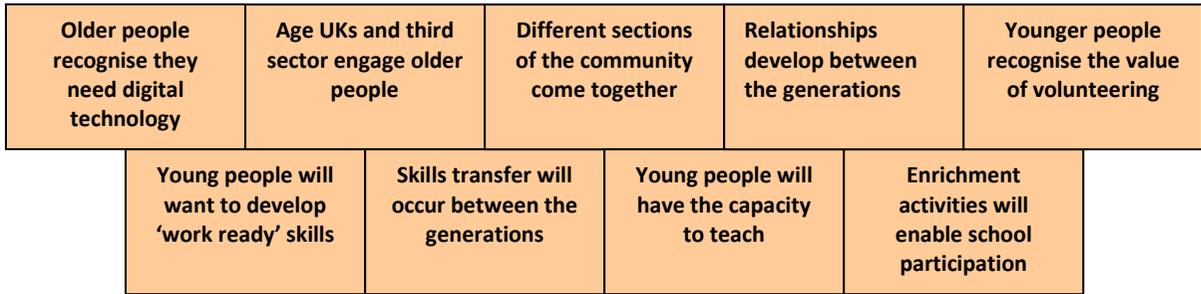
In one borough, the contact between the local Age UK and the school has led to the piloting of a lunch club in the school's catering arm. This in the context of reduced lunch club provision in the borough. Other schools who did not know a great deal about Age UK are now adopting local Age UKs as their local charity, inviting older people to school events and exploring new ways for older people to volunteer with them.

## **5. KEY DELIVERY MECHANISMS AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS**

Section 4 presented the evidence against the outcomes achieved. This section outlines why those changes happened and in what context.

### **5.1 Theory of Change**

At the beginning of the evaluation, a draft Theory of Change was developed with a range of stakeholders. This set out the underlying assumptions or hypothesis of how the outcomes would be achieved. The evaluation tested this hypothesis and produced a final Theory of Change (below). By developing a Theory of Change, the attribution and contribution of MiCommunity to the changes achieved can be articulated and assigned. The final Theory of Change is shown overleaf.



**Rationale and Assumptions**



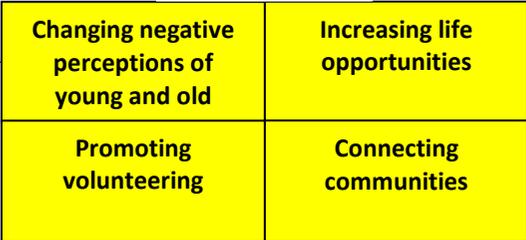
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**Theory of Change**

MiCommunity project: 1790 older and younger people engaged



**Outcomes**



Success of programme drives scaling up and out

**Delivery mechanisms**

- IT as the vehicle
- One-to-one tuition
- Learner led
- Young people as volunteers
- Visible school leadership
- Older people's engagement through the third sector
- Age UKs' co-ordination role
- Resources and human resources

**Contextual landscape driving the change**

- Enrichment activities
- Nurturing environment for young and old people
- Workplace schemes and apprenticeships
- Enabling policy and political environment
- Age UK London leadership
- History of intergenerational practice

**Longer-term impact**

- Community cohesion increases at a personal and institutional level
- Health inequalities improve
- Younger people's employment and economic opportunities improve
- Social isolation is reduced
- Older people live independently for longer
- A reduction in poverty

There were two strong motivating factors that initially brought older and younger people together. They were:

- Older people's recognition that they needed to learn about digital technology if they were not to become socially excluded from mainstream society
- Younger people's need to prepare for being ready to enter further education and employment.

A number of delivery mechanisms were then put in place; these produced the outcomes and were critical for success. They were:

### **Information Technology as the vehicle**

The use of a computer to 'broker' conversations was evident, or as one volunteer put it: "*It's the ice breaker*". Discussions happened spontaneously as a result of the activities being undertaken in the sessions. It could be argued that these discussions would not have happened so naturally if younger and older people had just met each other in a room. The content of the sessions opened up new areas of exploration and understanding as discussed in section 4 and was a key mechanism for changing attitudes towards each other.

### **One-to-one tuition**

Overwhelmingly, older people talked about the value of the one-to-one tuition. Some of them had tried IT courses but had found that they could not progress in classes in the same way they had done with the one-to-one. This was in part due to courses having mixed ability and for some, mixed age groups, which meant the older people found it difficult to get attention and learn. Others commented on how the young volunteers were so patient and did not make them feel stupid if they had forgotten something, or needed it repeated several times.

*"As a beginner, if I was in a group now with maybe 10 or 15 and one tutor, I would find that very difficult. This is just ideal for me, one-one, (we) are all at different stages" (older person).*

Some explained why they did not find it easy to learn from younger family members. For example:

*The family haven't got time, they know too much about it. These young people teach you on a 'need to know' basis." (older person).*

This one-to-one tuition also led to a strong feeling of responsibility from the older learners towards their younger partners. In the bad weather in January

2012, many older people still made it to the classes. Others, if they had felt unwell still kept up their commitment where they could:

*"If it was all in groups, or a drop in, I am likely to stop going, but when it's a set thing, you feel responsible. They are going to be there, so you need to be there (too)" (older person).*

### **Learner led**

A third key mechanism resulting in the outcomes was that the sessions were learner led. This meant that the older people choose what they wanted to learn and followed their individual interests or needs. The young volunteers were able to respond to this because of the one-to-one tuition and their ability to adapt to a variety of technology applications. One learner was typical of others:

*"Whatever you want to learn, they teach you, e.g. email. I couldn't go online or do shopping" (older person).*

A young volunteer explained how it happened:

*"You ask what they (older person) would like to learn. Most of them are very specific about what they want to learn and we just take them step-by-step through what they need to learn" (local school volunteer).*

The older learners used a variety of ways to record what they learnt at the sessions; some took their own notes, in other cases the volunteers wrote information down for them, and in others the volunteers produced printed summaries of the session.

### **Young people as willing volunteers**

The success of this project focused on young people's ability and willingness to volunteer. This allowed sessions to be offered free of charge and school facilities to be used. As word spread among the younger people, more wanted to get involved:

*"I came last week to help, and I just looked around and it looked really good. I looked around and people were laughing and joking, so I decided to come back" (local school volunteer).*

*"My first option was to do sports and I wanted to do something different, all the other options sounded 'educational'. I wanted to help other people achieve something, teach new people new things" (local school volunteer).*

## **Visible school leadership**

A key success factor was visible school leadership and senior staff commitment. There were enthusiastic IT teachers who could see the potential of the scheme, but support from the senior management team was instrumental in taking the project forward. In any replication of the project these two drivers need to be in place, in other words strategic endorsement and an enthusiastic advocate within the school staff to 'champion' the idea.

## **Older people's engagement through the third sector**

One of the success factors was the ability of local Age UKs to facilitate the involvement of a group of people in the community that schools may find hard to reach. Many of the school stakeholders welcomed and acknowledged the valuable partnership with Age UKs. One staff member said:

*"There is no real cost to the school. Age UKs act as a liaison with the older people, they are brought to us and organised, so it works for us as long as there is Age UK" (local school stakeholder).*

The schools sometimes had low resources to reach out and network in the community so the opportunity to work with a community organisation that found willing participants for their young people to volunteer with, was appreciated:

*"We were keen to find external partners to work with our vulnerable students" (school stakeholder).*

## **5.2 Contextual Landscape**

The context in which the projects were operating supports the key drivers of change. There were a number in place, which ensured the outcomes were met.

### **Enrichment activities**

Enrichment activities are a time in the school timetable when students can choose other activities that have the potential to enhance their life opportunities. School staff interviewed for this evaluation welcomed this time as a chance to develop students' contribution to the local community and to help them prepare for the world of work through developing their communication skills and confidence. It was a way of exposing young people to a form of social responsibility.

The space created allowed MiCommunity to be accommodated in an otherwise highly pressurised school timetable. It meant the students could volunteer

either in school time or after school and the opportunity was an attractive and practical option.

The changing emphasis in national educational policy means the enrichment sessions may be harder to identify, although schools are committed to offering these options to their students. One head teacher explained that although their enrichment sessions had had to be reduced in time, they still had a requirement to develop the social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) areas of a young person's life:

*"So it (enrichment activities) will never totally disappear and we see that young people having access to a wider range of activities is critically important to their development. This is one of the best projects that I have come across with teenagers and older people getting them together and I think this should be expanded" (local school stakeholder).*

## **A nurturing environment**

The schools offered a nurturing environment to the young people and older people on the project, which facilitated their engagement and allowed relationships to flourish. This supportive environment enabled young people to 'have a go' at volunteering in this way and older people responded to the young people's efforts. If the project extends to workplace schemes and other apprenticeships, this supportive and encouraging environment would need to also be in place to give the confidence required to 'give it a go' by both age groups.

## **History of intergenerational practice**

In five of the London boroughs, the Age UKs had a history of intergenerational practice in various forms. There were indications that in those boroughs, the ability to build on that experience was useful in getting the project established quickly through existing partnerships and relationships. That said, in one of the boroughs where there was no previous history, rapid progress was made through good networking and influential links. In all projects, introducing intergenerational practice guidelines into the projects would be beneficial, in particular following the recommendation<sup>12</sup> on initially working with the two age groups separately to challenge any myths and surface stereotypical views.

## **Enabling policy and political environment**

MiCommunity was initiated in an enabling policy and political environment that has been conducive to its development. The Mayor of London has promoted volunteering as a means of finding innovative and creative ways of bringing

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<sup>12</sup> Beth Johnson Foundation: *A guide to intergenerational practice, March 2011*, <http://www.centreforip.org.uk/>

different sections of communities together. It fits the current policy agenda to support communities to help themselves, to overcome perceptions and break down existing barriers of age and culture.

There was also a political drive to improve opportunities for young people through volunteering and introduce them to life long volunteering.

Older people's organisations in London were pleased that the Mayor was to fund an initiative that benefited older people in the city. This was linked to the work of the London Older Peoples Strategies Group (LOPSG), made up of external and internal stakeholders, which has campaigned for older people's initiatives over a number of years.

It also created opportunities to connect the private sector through corporate volunteering with third sector organisations in a time of reduction in public services.

### **Leadership from Age UK London**

The leadership from a regional charity for older people in London, Age UK London, has been an important contextual factor for this project. Existing relationships with regional bodies such as the GLA were already in place and could be built on. Similarly, as a regional charity in the national Age UK partnership, Age UK London had strong, well-established relationships with London Age UKs. This enabled the project to be set up quickly and the role of Age UK London's role in its success to be recognised by Age UKs and other partners.

## 6. KEY MESSAGES AND LEARNING

The evidence presented in this evaluation shows that the MiCommunity project has the potential to create significant and lasting change in our communities. It showed how the majority participating in the project changed their negative perceptions of each other and began making strong connections with a different generation; a greater understanding of each other's cultures and backgrounds was also developing, as well as a greater use of community facilities that had only previously been used by one generation or groups of people.

A key feature of intergenerational practice is that there is reciprocity between the generations, in other words they both equally contribute and gain from the intervention. In MiCommunity, the older people helped and supported young people to develop more confidence and self-esteem and prepare for the world of work. They offered their wisdom and experience to young people, many of whom had no contact with older people outside their families. In return, the young people, through their volunteering, gave older people skills in digital technology, and opened up opportunities for them to become more socially engaged with friends, family and their community. Both generations created opportunities to find out more about their community and connect with other groups of people outside their peer group.

Evidence from this evaluation makes a strong case for extending the project throughout London boroughs as well as on a national scale. As in all development projects, some useful learning has emerged that should be considered in future scaling up and expanding the project. The report makes some key recommendations as follows:

### 6.1 Project delivery mechanisms

1. **A MiCommunity brand** should be developed in order to retain the integrity of the model. The model is explained in section 5 and in the Theory of Change diagram on page 30. The delivery mechanisms of the model are required to be in place if the outcomes and longer-term impact are to be achieved. The mechanisms need to take account and be applied to the local context, such as the school environment, local community members and political incentives.

2. **The role of the project co-coordinators employed by Age UKs was pivotal** to the successful implementation of the project and would need to be recognised and replicated in any scale up of MiCommunity. Their role was essential and they worked at both a strategic and operational level, requiring a range of highly developed skills. They needed to develop relationships with schools and older people's groups, communicate on a number of levels with different groups of stakeholders and to have practical skills in delivery. Many worked with session facilitators, meaning they did not need to attend all

sessions, but they required management and leadership skills to ensure all was in place and ran smoothly.

3. **A standard induction pack**, as part of the MiCommunity toolkit, should be included. Both the younger volunteers and the older learners should have separate induction sessions, which **include intergenerational awareness**. Guidance from intergenerational practice<sup>13</sup> suggests these awareness sessions are essential for influencing attitudinal change. In MiCommunity, we have seen that older people's changing attitudes towards younger people outside of the immediate contact group, whilst still evident, were less than those of the young people towards older people. Raising the issues of negative stereotyping at the beginning of the courses helps to challenge the myths and has the potential to stimulate a greater attitudinal change towards young people.

4. **The benchmarking tool** developed in this project to track changing attitudes over the time of participants' involvement was of limited success. The issues of having the form completed honestly (for example, people worried about confidentiality in writing down their feelings), younger and older people completing them without influence from each other and collating the amount of data, proved a challenge. Further work on piloting and refining the questions, making the questionnaire shorter and finding other questions to measure change may be worth exploring and research into a validated tool would be welcomed. However, it is worth noting that whilst tools such as these make a contribution to measuring outcomes, they are likely to be of restricted value in complex social change programmes.

5. **The length of the courses** varied across the boroughs for a number of reasons, often due to the logistics of setting up. **Ten weeks** – approximately equivalent to a school term - seemed to be an optimum length; it allowed time for the relationship to establish and grow, the older person to learn IT skills and the young people to develop their confidence. Most of the sessions ran for **one hour**, which again appeared an optimum time to achieve learning for the older people and also was realistic for the younger people's volunteering commitment

6. **One-off digital clinics** were taking place in some of the boroughs alongside the delivery in schools and these were complementary to the more structured sessions. The clinics gave the opportunity for apprentices and corporate volunteers to hold 'surgeries' in local community settings for older people to drop in with queries and questions. Many of the older people attending the school courses are likely to have questions about their new learning after the courses finish. The opportunity to attend drop in sessions would help ensure they continued to be 'digital included'.

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<sup>13</sup> Beth Johnson Foundation: A guide to intergenerational practice, March 2011, <http://www.centreforip.org.uk/>

7. In two of the schools, a volunteer adopted **the role of 'peer facilitator'**. This role involved the volunteer promoting the volunteering activity among his or her peers in school, ensuring logistically that there were enough volunteers at each session to have one-to-one teaching with an older learner, and liaising internally with school staff. This enabled sessions to run smoothly and had the added advantage of developing the young person's management and leadership skills. It is a dimension that could be formally added to the MiCommunity model.

8. A key policy driver for the success of MiCommunity was the availability of **enrichment sessions in schools** – discussed in section 5 above. It will be important to the further spread of the project that there is an awareness of the changing educational policy in this area. The current government is placing less emphasis on these sessions, and whilst all the schools involved in this project were committed to enabling wider curricula activities for their students, they may need to look for other ways to deliver them.

## **6.2 Taking it further**

9. The evidence presented in this evaluation showed that all young people had the potential to gain from volunteering with MiCommunity, particularly through increasing their confidence, self worth and communication skills. However, there were signs, particularly in the more deprived areas, that the gains could be even greater for those young people who had fewer opportunities in their community and were at higher risk of unemployment and inequalities. The **potential contribution of MiCommunity to tackle health inequalities and exclusion** is an important one and should be explored further.

10. There were fewer older men coming forward to participate in MiCommunity, although the proportion was higher than would be anticipated in many Age UKs and older people's initiatives. There were also fewer male volunteers, except with the Zenos IT apprentices, where 80 per cent of the apprentices are young men. It would be worth exploring this **gender dimension** and whether older men would be more attracted to a 'formal' style of one-to-one tuition, such as may be offered by IT apprentices.

11. Many of the projects were looking at ways in which **older people could be encouraged to do more intergenerational volunteering** through MiCommunity. At the time of the evaluation, this was only just beginning, but from the evidence of intergenerational practice, it has the potential to change older people's attitudes and fears about young people, as well as offering significant gains to young people.

### 6.3 Reflective practice and sharing the learning

12. During the evaluation process, the co-coordinators in the 7 London Boroughs completed a monthly project diary (appendix 4). This enabled processes to be recorded but also gave an opportunity for **co-coordinators to reflect** on their activities: what they had learnt and what they may do differently. It gave time out in busy work schedules to think about their projects in a self-reflective way, and the simple diary could be a useful addition to the tool kit to encourage reflective practice.

13. In addition, there would be value in extending this learning process to the **formation of an action learning network or facilitated community of practice**, if the project is to spread, develop and stay true to the model. The evaluation, through working across seven boroughs, saw examples of practice, which would have benefited other MiCommunity projects. Similarly, some stakeholders recognised the value of learning across projects in order to avoid repeating mistakes or re-inventing the wheel. Developing a culture of shared learning is not easy in the third sector, particularly at a time of marked austerity, but **Age UK London** is well placed within its regional role to encourage and facilitate action learning and build on the good work already started by MiCommunity.

14. The **role of the regional organisation Age UK London** was a significant one in the success of the project. The model of obtaining financial resources, supporting projects in the different boroughs to deliver, monitoring progress and reporting to the funding body, the GLA, supported projects to be successfully implemented on the ground.

15. There is considerable evidence and learning in MiCommunity on how to deliver a successful digital inclusion project, which not only supports older people's inclusion but benefits young people's employability and promotes community cohesion. We recommend that Age UK London uses the learning from this project to influence the work of the **national Age UK's technology and internet** work area, and that such learning is shared throughout the partnership.

## APPENDIX 1: Example outcomes and indicators table

<b>Outcomes:</b> <i>What change will result from your activities? What will success look like? (These should match the outcomes from the logic model in Part A)</i>	<b>Indicators:</b> <i>What are the indications that you being successful? What are the signs that things are changing?</i>	<b>Data collection:</b> <i>Measuring the indicators. What needs to be collected and when?</i>	
		<b>Monitoring Data</b> <i>What you are collecting already</i>	<b>Evaluation data</b> <i>What else do you need to collect?</i>
<b>1. Young participants' perceptions</b> of older people (start and end of their involvement in the programme)	-Young people recognise that older people can learn new things -Younger people gain respect from older people	Number of young people participating Reasons for participating	Benchmarking tool Observations Focus group Interviews
<b>2. Older participants' perceptions</b> of young people (start and end of their involvement in the programme)	- Older people recognise that younger people have pressures on them today - Older people feel safe around groups of young people	Number of older people joining sessions	Benchmarking tool Observations Focus groups Interviews
3. Increase in <b>understanding of culture and ethnicity</b> among participants (start and end of their involvement in the programme)	- People participating in the project come from different cultural and religious backgrounds - Participants know someone who is not from the same background as them	Demographic data on age, ethnicity, geographical location	Benchmarking Observations Focus groups Interviews
4. Changes in <b>participants' perceptions of connectedness with their neighbourhood</b> (start and end of their involvement in the programme)	- People participating in the project want to volunteer on other activities in their area - Knowing more people in the area - Going to a community building, e.g. school	Demographic data	Benchmarking tool Interviews Focus groups

## APPENDIX 2: Key evaluation activities

Activity	Details	Number of participants
Theory of change workshop	October 2011 to develop a draft theory of change	6 stakeholders
Development of outcome/indicator table	Table produced – appendix 1	Appendix one
Older people benchmarking tool	Survey monkey, before and after course	510
Younger people benchmarking tool	Survey monkey, before and after course	414
Monitoring data	From GLA reporting data, demographics, experience, etc	On-going
Volunteer satisfaction forms	Survey monkey	180
Learning events	With co-coordinators at Age UK London	2
Observation visits and participatory enquiry	Schools in 7 boroughs, Zenos Academy and digital inclusion clinic,	9
Focus groups with older people	<b>8</b> groups in 7 London boroughs	<b>Total 51:</b> 36 women, 15 men Mixed heritage
Focus groups with young people	<b>7</b> groups in 7 London boroughs	<b>Total 33:</b> 27 women 7 men Mixed heritage
Interviews with young people	Individual interviews at schools	2 women 2 men
Interviews with corporate volunteers	Digital inclusion session, at an Age UK office	1 man, 1 woman
Focus group with Zenos volunteers	Held at the end of a MiCommunity session at a Zenos Academy	6 men
Stakeholder interviews	List of stakeholders in appendix six	17
Project diaries	Completed monthly by co-ordinators	31

## **APPENDIX 3: Younger people's focus group discussion guide**

### **MiCommunity Discussion Guide – Volunteers**

*Approximate time 30 minutes*

*The groups will be moderated at a medium level to allow discussion and a workshop style will be used to facilitate interactions within the group*

#### **Introduction and welcome:**

- *My name, thanks etc*
- *Check on information sheet and ask for verbal consent*
- *Recorder*
- *Confidentiality of data*
- *Everyone's view important – helps if we try to speak one at a time*
- *Timings of group*

#### **Starter discussion question**

*Individual question:*

#### **1. Name, where you live in relation to the session/ school and "Why did you get involved with MiCommunity?"**

- Volunteering with older people
- Interested in IT
- CV, UCAS, employment

#### **Guiding discussion questions**

#### **2. What happens in the sessions? Please give examples of what takes place.**

- Meet older person
- Do IT tasks
- Find information

#### **3. What works best about the project? *Buzz groups in pairs***

- Where are the men?
- In school building

#### **4. Is there anything you would like done differently? If so, what?**

#### **5. What has changed for you as a result of volunteering in this project?**

*Use post-its*

- More confident
- Know more people

**6. Has your view of older people changed as a result of this project? If so, how?**

**7. Do you feel more connected to your community?**

- People from different religions and backgrounds
- Knowing what is going on

**8. What difference is it making to how people live in this Borough? Please give examples**

**9. Do you plan to do more volunteering? If so what and with whom? If not, why?**

**Final summary question**

*Individual question*

**10. What would you like to see happen in the future?**

- Improved community relationships
- Less isolation
- More connected to what is happening in the community
- Less misunderstandings between generations

***Reminder of what happens to the information they have given***

***Thanks***

**Gillian Granville/ January 10<sup>th</sup> 2012**

## APPENDIX 4: Co-ordinator's project diary

### MiCommunity Project Diary

#### Suggestions for use:

- It is subjective so it is your experiences – there are no right or wrong answers
- Complete quickly, don't dwell for too long – about 5 minutes maximum
- Complete electronically at the end of each month

Name:.....Date:.....

What 3 things did I expect to happen this month?	
What 3 things did happen?	
What has been the <b>most significant</b> thing that happened this month?	
What have I learnt?	
How do I feel now?	

## **APPENDIX 5: Older people's benchmarking tool**

### **(Hosted on survey monkey)**

Please complete this short questionnaire at the beginning and end of your involvement in the project.

These questions have been developed to help us understand how and if the project has worked and do not necessarily represent the views of Age UK London.

Please tick one answer for each question

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire

**1. Is this the beginning or end of your course?**

**2. Date:**

**3. School or venue**

**4. Borough**

**5. Number of sessions (please ask your supervisor if you are unsure)**

**6. Young people are only interested in themselves**

(answer strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree)

**7. Young people take part in community activities**

(answer strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree)

**8. Young people do not respect their elders**

(answer strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree)

**9. Young people have an easy time now compared to when we were younger**

(answer strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree)

**10. I feel safe around groups of young people**

(answer strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree)

**11. People from different cultures and religious backgrounds don't mix together very well**

(answer strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree)

**12. I want to get to know more people in my area.**

(answer strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree)

**13. I can make a difference to the lives of other people in my area**

(answer strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree)

**14. I don't have anything in common with people who aren't of the same race, culture or religion as me**

(answer strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree)

**15. I would make a good volunteer or community supporter**

(answer strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree)

**16. I know how to find out what is going on in my neighbourhood by going online**

(answer strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree)

**17. People of different ages don't get on easily**

(answer strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree)

**18. This is a neighbourhood where people of different backgrounds and different ages spend time together**

(answer strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree)

**19. I am confident in meeting new people**

(answer strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree)

## APPENDIX 6: List of stakeholder interviews

### MiCommunity Stakeholder Interviews

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Constance Agyeman	Greater London Authority
David Andersson	Department for Work and Pensions
Beth Barnes	ATA Pearson in Practice
Ian Farrington	St Charles Sixth Form College, Kensington and Chelsea
Paul Harward	Education policy advisor
June Jarret	Haringey Sixth Form Centre
Sue Johnson	Greater London Authority
Ravi Kalsi	Seven Kings School, Redbridge
Sam Mauger	Age UK London
Daila Molokhia	Zenos IT Academies
David Mortimer	Age UK Partnership
Mark Robinson	Age UK Barnet
John Rubinstein	Woodhouse College, Barnet
Laura Snow	Paddington Academy Kensington and Chelsea
Debbie Walker	CEO of Age UK East London
Richard Warren	Mill Hill school, Barnet
Kate Wilson	Oasis Hadley School, Enfield

Copies of the full external evaluation and summary are available to download from [www.ageuk.org.uk/london](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/london)

Dr Gillian Granville carried out the independent evaluation for Age UK London. She is the director of Gillian Granville Associates, an expert evaluation company that specialises in evaluating complex social programmes [www.gilliangranville.com](http://www.gilliangranville.com)

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