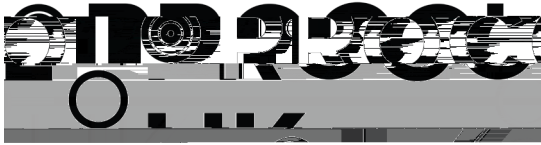


# 'Connecting Communities':



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# ‘Connecting Communities’: Evaluation of a Pilot Project aimed at promoting digital inclusion in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets

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## Research Evaluation of a Universal Basic Service, Working Paper Series

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A I G P

The Institute for Global Prosperity at UCL (IGP) is redesigning prosperity for the 21st century, changing the way we conceive and run our economies, and reworking our relationship with the planet. IGP’s vision is to build a prosperous, sustainable, global future, underpinned by the principles of fairness and justice, and allied to a realistic, long-term vision of humanity’s place in the world.

The IGP undertakes pioneering research that seeks to dramatically improve the quality of life for this and future generations. Its strength lies in the way it allies intellectual creativity to effective collaboration and policy development. Of particular importance to the IGP’s approach is the way in which it integrates non-academic expertise into its knowledge generation by engaging with governments, policy makers, business, civil society, the arts and local communities.

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A PROCOL

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IGP currently has three PROCOLs in London, Lebanon and Africa. PROCOL Lebanon works on delivering inclusive and prosperous futures for communities impacted by mass displacement. PROCOL Africa focuses on natural and social prosperity. PROCOL UK investigates past, present and future determinants of prosperity in the UK.

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# Executive Summary

## BACKGROUND

This report is a final evaluation of the 'Connecting Communities' Project launched in June 2020. The

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The 'Connecting Communities' pilot project has provided valuable insight into what the IGP's Universal Basic Service for Information might look like, and how it could contribute to broader livelihood security, in Tower Hamlets and beyond. The project also illustrates how a multi-stakeholder collaboration can help to reach a broader group of residents, particularly those who are most deprived.

The consensus from all stakeholders, including schools and households, was that the scheme should be rolled out more widely with some revisions to:

- **Eligibility:** L

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- **Scale:** A

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- **Delivery:** R

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- **Evaluation:** D

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The 'Connecting Communities' project indicates that Universal Basic Services is an effective tool for reducing digital inequalities and securing livelihoods. We therefore make several broader policy recommendations:

- **Expansion**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The ‘Connecting Communities’ project was developed through a partnership between Poplar HARCA, the LETTA Trust, Tower Hamlets Council, and East End Community Foundation. In phase 1 the intervention was rolled out to 70 households in two primary schools in Poplar and in phase 2 it was rolled out to 130 households in a further nine primary schools across Tower Hamlets. The scheme is part of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Digital Inclusion Strategy. The project offers a package that includes free internet for one year, a Google Chromebook and training.

The evaluation of phase 1 was conducted by a small team of researchers at the Institute for Global Prosperity (IGP) at UCL (University College London) in collaboration with two citizen social scientists (CSS) living and working in Poplar. The aim was to collect ‘stories of change’ through personal accounts exploring the expectations and short-term impacts of the project. Findings from phase 1 of the research demonstrated that the project was having a rapid and beneficial impact on the behaviours and capabilities of participating households across four key areas (Moreno et al., 2021): home schooling and learning opportunities, work and employability opportunities, physical and mental health wellbeing and behaviours, and time and cost-savings.

In May 2022, the Institute of Global Prosperity (IGP) at UCL was commissioned to undertake a final evaluation of phase two of the project. The research was conducted by Dr Penny Bernstock, Israel Amoah-Norman, and two Citizen Social Scientists based in Tower Hamlets, Pratimas Singh and Sultana Rouf. The findings from phase two of the evaluation reinforce the findings from phase one, with improvements in enabling access to information and employment opportunities, promoting greater digital inclusion, beneficial impacts on education and learning as well as, benefits for well-being and social capital.

In section 2, we highlight the importance of digital inclusion through the lens of livelihood security, Universal Basic Services (UBS) and digital citizenship which relates to how digital UBS like this can empower citizens. Section 3 outlines the research methodology underpinning the evaluation. Section 4 explores digital inclusion/exclusion in the UK and

Tower Hamlets. Section 5 provides an overview of research findings and section 6 concludes the report evaluation suggesting lessons for future roll-out and broader policy recommendations for consideration.

## 2. LIVELIHOOD SECURITY AND UNIVERSAL BASIC SERVICES

### Livelihood Security

Livelihood security is defined as a set of intersecting and interconnecting factors that enable people to lead fulfilling and flourishing lives. It was consistently identified as one of the most important drivers and foundations underpinning prosperity. This is based on extensive research in east London as part of the IGP's Citizen Prosperity Index for London (Woodcraft and Anderson, 2019) as well as, recent research carried out in north London (Euston).

The following five areas depicted in Figure 1 below constitute the infrastructure of a 'secure livelihood' of which digital inclusion is a key component that is inherently linked with other aspects of inclusion such as financial, economic and social.

### Universal Basic Services and Digital UBS

The importance of services such as access to digital communications, transport, child and social care all collectively determine an individual's ability to lead a

good quality of life. From access to digital services, housing, and aordable childcare, to education and health outcomes, these cannot be effectively addressed by our existing welfare systems. The pandemic revealed and exacerbated inequalities, demonstrating how insecurity is not experienced in isolation but is the result of intricately and inextricably linked domains of insecurity. The incumbent cost of living crisis has highlighted the need for new forms of universal social protections and welfare (Moore, Snower and Bruni, 2022).

To secure people's livelihoods, the IGP proposes a programme of 'Universal Basic Services' (UBS). UBS works to enhance people's capacities, capabilities and bring opportunities for greater economic and social participation through a new basket of public goods and shared infrastructure of public services thereby, building a solid foundation from which people can thrive. UBS also facilitates place-based change and provides people with the resilience necessary to "navigate the next wave of social and economic transformations within the



Figure 1. Infrastructure for Livelihood Security (IGP, 2022b)



economy including data and Artificial Intelligence (AI), automation and climate change” (Moore et al., 2022, p.4; Moore, Snower and Bruni, 2022).

UBS would include shelter, food, education, transport, information (digital), health and care, legal services free at the point of need (Moore et al., 2022a). A UBS for ‘information’ forms the backbone of a digital UBS pilot and should include digital access, devices as well as, literacy and skills (Percy et al., 2022). The ‘Connecting Communities’ project seeks to implement this approach through the three-pronged provision of a broadband connection, a Google Chromebook and training.

### Digital Citizenship

The rationale behind the three-pronged approach is not just aimed at improving outcomes for individuals but about empowering citizens and increasing social participation. The provision of support, training and education equips citizens with the necessary skills and knowledge to become ‘digital citizens’ in their communities (Percy et al., 2022; Moore et al., 2022b).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The research was undertaken between May and July 2022. It included:

#### 1. Semi-Structured Interviews with key stakeholders

Interviews were undertaken with five key stakeholders - three of these interviews were with members of the project steering group and two with staff leading on implementation. These interviews were aimed at finding out more about the key aims/intentions of the project, perspectives on implementation and roll out.

#### 2. An online survey aimed at participating schools

The survey was designed in consultation with the 'Connecting Communities' steering group



exclusion found that 7% of UK adults are affected by device poverty, i.e., they have limited access to the internet because they do not own a PC, laptop, tablet, or smartphone. This increases to 9% for those with a limiting illness, 13% for those not working and 20% for those on incomes below £11,500 (Ofcom, 2022).

Another key challenge in promoting digital inclusion is that a considerable proportion of the population lacks the skills needed to utilise the internet. The 2022 Digital Consumer Index report by Lloyds Bank (2022) acknowledges that approximately 10% of the population (circa 5.3 million) still lack basic foundational digital skills and essential digital skills for use in everyday life. The CEBR (2015) identified five key benefits linked to having basic digital skills i.e., accessing employment, increased earnings, savings on retail transactions, time-saving and communications. Further benefits are outlined by Lloyds Bank (2022) in the form of greater confidence and financial well-being, improving access to key services and building financial resilience. The ONS (2019) Study estimated that 9 million people (16% of the population) are unable to use the Internet and their device by themselves, this includes being unable to undertake basic and foundational digital activities such as turning on a device, connecting to Wi-Fi, or opening an App. A review of the demographic characteristics of those lacking basic skills has some crossover with non-users (ONS, 2019).

A correlation has been identified between those lacking digital skills and income i.e., people on an annual household income of £50,000 or more are 40% more likely to be able to carry out basic digital tasks compared to those earning less than £17,499 (Lloyds Bank, 2020). A skills gap has also been identified between older men and women, with older women less likely to have digital skills than older men (ONS, 2019). The ONS have also identified an ethnicity gap, noting that people from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds are less likely to have all five Essential Digital Skills for Work than those from a White background, whilst acknowledging that this gap is closing. For example, in 2011, the ethnicity gap was most pronounced between those from a White background and those from a Bangladeshi background, however, by 2018 this gap had disappeared illustrating the dynamic nature of this issue (ONS, 2019).

However, whilst there is evidence that the ethnicity gap is closing it is important to note that there is

a strong correlation between income and digital exclusion and between ethnicity and poverty. For example, a recent report on Poverty in the UK confirmed that poverty levels for certain ethnic groups have been consistently above average, with 53% of Bangladeshi households, 48% of Pakistani Households and 40% of Black African/Black Caribbean groups living in poverty compared to 24% for those from a white background. Moreover, people from Black and Minority Ethnic groups are also more likely to have higher rates of in-work poverty and child poverty and are more likely to live in larger families and lone parent households, family types that are more prone to poverty (JRF, 2022).

Burgess and Holmes (2022) highlight the complex interaction between housing and digital inclusion. They argue that digital inclusion intersects in important ways with other aspects of people's

more pronounced between pupils attending private and state schools, where pupils in private schools were twice as likely to participate in online learning compared to their state school counterparts.

These two studies identified a parental support gap between the educational qualifications of parents and their ability to support their children's learning. For example, three quarters of parents with a postgraduate degree, and just over 60% of those with an undergraduate degree felt confident directing their child's learning, compared to less than half of parents with A level or GCSE level qualifications (Montacute and Cullinate, 2021). Similarly, parental support with remote learning increased from 42% in the most- deprived schools to 62% in the least deprived schools (Nelson and Sharp, 2020).

As we have exited the pandemic the problem of digital exclusion continues. Ofcom's (2022a) survey found that more than a third (36%) of primary school-age children did not always have access to an adequate device for online learning at home, compared to (17%) of secondary-age children. Furthermore, one in ten primary-age children (11%) rarely or never had access compared to (3%) Of children in secondary schools. They also identified several differences in access and use between children living in the most financially vulnerable (MFV) households and those living in the least financially vulnerable households (LFV). Children in the most financially vulnerable households were less likely to use a tablet to go online (61% vs 75% LFV) or a laptop or netbook (34% vs 61% LFV) and were more likely to use a device other than a computer to go online (56% vs 29% LFV). For example, whilst less than one in ten children in (MFV households) only used a mobile phone to go online (8%), this declined to (2%) for those living in LFV households (Ofcom, 2022b).

The ongoing cost of living crisis is further exacerbating the problem of digital exclusion. As inflation soars, and the price of energy, food, transport and housing go up, basic services are shifting further out of reach. Recent analysis suggests that 6 million UK households are now struggling to pay their mobile, landline and broadband bills (Which, 2022). This poses a serious threat to digital inclusion, and to broader social and economic participation.

A number of organisations and institutions are advocating the importance of digital inclusion as a basic right/need. UNICEF UK and the Carnegie UK Trust (2021) have highlighted the link between children's rights and digital inclusion arguing that the

pandemic has shone a spotlight on the problems faced by digitally excluded children and young people and its role in potentially impacting on the equitable life chances of every child under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child where every child has the right to a quality education (Articles 28 and 29), to access information (Article 17) and to leisure, culture and play (Article 31). Their strategy for addressing digital inclusion aligns closely with the 'Connecting Communities' project where they advocate a four- pronged approach aimed at addressing inclusion that includes access to a device, a stable connection, skills, and a safe environment (UNICEF UK/Carnegie UK Trust, 2021).

The Good Things Foundation is currently working on a Minimum digital living standard underpinned by a citizen science approach that suggests that in addition to access and skills there is a need to focus on online safety (Good Things Foundation, 2022). Similarly, the Institute of Global Prosperity has highlighted the relationship between digital inclusion and prosperity/secure livelihoods (Woodcraft et al., 2021; Moore et al., 2022a). Secure livelihoods are identified as an infrastructure of interrelated assets that people can rely on to prosper including secure income and good quality work; food and energy security; aordable, secure, and good quality housing; access to key public services – childcare and transport, healthcare, education, enabling inclusion in the social and economic life of the city by supporting and creating the capacities and capabilities that allow people to participate fully in society (Woodcraft et al., 2021; IGP, 2019).



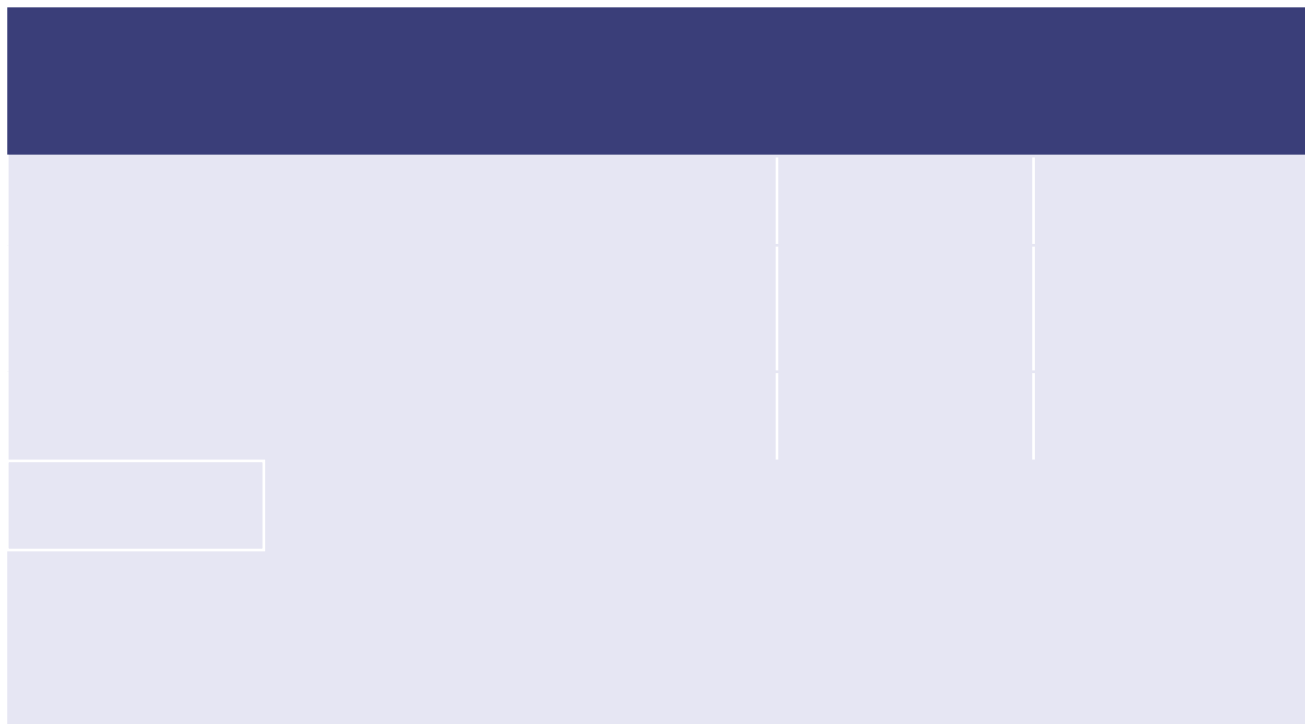
Table 1. Digital Inclusion from Prosperity in east London 2021-2031 Longitudinal Study (IGP, 2022a)

Lower Super Output Area (LSOA)	Number of Households surveyed	Access to computer at home (%)	Access to internet at home (%)	Access to the internet anywhere <sup>1</sup> (%)
Coventry Cross (Tower Hamlets 008D)	259	86%	73%	95%
Fish Island & Sweetwater (Tower Hamlets 001C)	264	94%	92%	98%
Teviot East (Tower Hamlets 018D)	254	78%	82%	95%
Teviot North (Tower Hamlets 018B)	374	88%	88%	93%
Teviot West (Tower Hamlets 018C)	241	75%	76%	90%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1392</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>94%</b>

and 'Asian' ethnic groups (due to similar sample size), we see that those from a 'White' background are more digitally excluded than the 'Asian' ethnic group.

<sup>1</sup> 'Anywhere' includes at home via a laptop/computer; A tablet, smart phone/mobile phone; Family member/friend; Work; Public places such as a community centre, library, or internet café; Elsewhere

Table 2. Ethnicity breakdown of above digital inclusion data (IGP, 2022a)





XQLTXH EHFDXVH \RX JHW WR WWR WWS  
 WKH GHYLFH VR \RX GR QRW KBYH WR  
 ZRUU\ DERXW VSLOOLQJ YRPHWKLOJ  
 RQ LW <RX JHW D \HDUV EURDGEDQG  
 DQG WUDLQLQJ 7KH WUDLOJ HOHPHQW  
 LV RQH RI WKH NH\ VXFFHVVHV  
 6WDNHNKROGHU ,QWHUYLHZ

Trainings delivered by each Primary School through a 'train the trainer' model. The rationale for this model of delivery assumed that training should be offered in a context that households were familiar with, as this would be more acceptable and result in higher take up.

A handbook was developed to support roll out of training in all participating schools. The handbook comprises:

The scheme was under development in the period leading up to the pandemic and was expedited in response to the urgent need to support online learning. One key challenge has been how to prioritise distribution of the laptops and policy has evolved over time:

2ULJLQDOO\ LW ZDV IR  
 RQ IUHH VFKRRO PHDOV  
 JRLQJ WKURXJK WKH SU  
 ZH UHDOLVHG WKDW WK  
 EHVW SODFHG WR LGHQ  
 QRW RQO\ RQ IUHH VFK  
 RWKHUV WKDW PLJKW M  
 Wkuhvkrog RI HOLJLEL  
 QRW KDYH EURDGEDQG  
 ZH KDYH OHIW LW XS W  
 WR HQVXUH WKH GHYLF  
 WKH ULJKW SHRSOH EH  
 UHODWLRQVKLSV ZLWK  
 6WDNHNKROGHU ,QWHUY

**Stable Internet connection**

Each household was provided with a free and stable internet connection for one year. This was provided by 'Community Fibre.' One barrier that emerged early on was that Community Fibre was not able to provide coverage for all households. To overcome this barrier, relationships were developed with other broadband providers.

**Training**

One of the unique elements of the intervention is the provision of a comprehensive training programme organised into three blocks delivered across seven weeks aimed at all participating households. The training programme was developed by the training manager at the LETTA trust and the IT lead in Poplar HARCA who have extensive experience in delivering digital inclusion skills training to their residents. The



The training was delivered as a weekly online one-hour session during the pandemic, and then moved to a one and half hour weekly face to face session as we exited the pandemic.

We now move on to consider the findings of this evaluation. The findings are organised into two sections. In the first section we explore the perspective of schools' on the scheme and in the second, household/user perspectives.

## 5. RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 5.1 Key findings - Perspectives from Schools/Headteachers/Family Liaison Officers and Stakeholders (Project Steering Group and Implementation Staff)

As a result of the research, the following findings were identified:

1. The majority of schools (80%) reported that digital inclusion was a priority for their school. This was particularly true for schools in the most deprived areas of the borough.

2. The most common barriers to digital inclusion were identified as a lack of staff resources and a lack of time. Schools also reported that a lack of digital skills among staff was a significant barrier.

3. The most common enablers to digital inclusion were identified as having a dedicated digital inclusion lead and having a clear digital inclusion strategy. Schools also reported that having a good relationship with the local authority was an enabler.

4. The most common challenges to digital inclusion were identified as a lack of digital skills among staff and a lack of digital resources. Schools also reported that a lack of time was a challenge.

5. The most common recommendations for improving digital inclusion were identified as providing digital skills training for staff and providing digital resources. Schools also recommended that the local authority should provide a dedicated digital inclusion lead.

participating schools that there were some barriers to take up. These barriers were structural/practical and attitudinal.

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ZKHQ GLJLWDO FRQQHFWLYLW\ ZDV  
VR QHHGHG 5HVSRQGHQW 6FKRRO  
6XUYH\

:H LGHQWL4HG SDUHQWV ZKR



ODQJXDJH (QJOLVK LQGLYLZGHLHOVHWLQJ WKH VDPH  
)LQDQFLDO OLWHUDF\ 5HRISROGMQXFWLRQ WKDW I  
6FKRRO 6XUYH\  
KDG WKH GHYLFH KDG  
,QWHUYLHZ

One school observed that their ICT suite was well designed to accommodate training for parents. Schools were asked to identify any barriers to extending the training offer; two specifically mentioned time and another the physical space to offer training.

Benefits were also identified in terms of academic performance:

:H WKRXJKW ZKHQ FKLOO  
UHWXUQHG WR VFKRRO Z  
WR VHH ODUJH JDSV DFU  
7KDW LV QRW WKH FDVH  
JDSV ZKHUH RQOLQH OHD  
QRW OHQG WKHPVHOYHV  
DURXQG ZULWLQJ LV QRW  
LV ZRXOG KDYH EHHQ LI  
ZHUH IDFH WR IDFH EHF  
QHHGHG WR EH KHDYLO\  
EXW UHGLQJ DQG PDWK

What are the advantages/disadvantages of distributing this package through schools?

Schools were asked to identify the advantages and disadvantages of distributing the package through schools. Two key advantages were identified including the ability of schools to identify those who were in need or would benefit most from the intervention and schools being trusted by families. One disadvantage identified was the time pressure associated with delivery.

### 5.3 Assessing the impact on pupils, families, and schools of participating in the 'Connecting Communities' Scheme

In the next section, we focus in more detail on the perspectives of schools on the benefits for pupils, families, and participating schools.

#### Benefits for pupils

Schools were asked to identify the benefits on children of participating in the scheme during the pandemic. The overriding benefit identified related to access to learning both during the pandemic and in the post pandemic period. Two respondents who completed the School Survey specifically mentioned the free internet service and one respondent indicated that digital inclusion enabled pupils to gain online support on a range of issues such as mental health.

, FDQ WKLQN RI WKH VFKRROV WKDW  
ZHUHQ W DEOH WR DFFHVV WKLV SURMHFW  
LPPHGLDWHO\ 7KH\ ZHUH VHQLQJ  
KRPH D SDFN RI SDSHU DQG WKHUH  
LV QR ZD\ FKLOGUHQ ZKR ZHUH  
ZRUNLQJ ZLWK D VWDFN RI SDSHU

DFFHVV VHUYLFHV H J \*3 ORFDO  
 FRXQFLO HWF 5HVSRRQGHQW 6FKRRO  
 6XUYH\

\$ KLJKHU OHYHO RI FRQ4GHQFH  
 IURP ERWK SDUHQWV SXSLOV ZKHQ  
 DFFHVVVLQJ OHDUQLQJ PDWHULDOV  
 RQOLQH 5HVSRRQGHQW 6FKRRO  
 6XUYH\

3DUHQWV IHOW PFK PRUH DEOH WR  
 DFFHV ORFDO DPHQLWLHV DQG JLYH  
 WKHLU FKLOGUHQ DFFHV WR VFRRRO  
 OHDUQLQJ 5HVSRRQGHQW 6FKRRO  
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)LQDQFLDO VXSSRUW IRU IDPLOLHV  
 WKDW PD\ KDYH EHHQ DIIHFWHG  
 E\ FRYLG 7KH\ ZHUH DEOH WR  
 DFFHVV IUHH LQWHUQHW ,&7 WUDLQLQJ  
 SDUHQWV ZHUH DEOH WR OHDUQ DERXW  
 KRZ WR XVH WKH GHYLFHV WKDW WKH\  
 UHFHLYHG 5HVSRRQGHQW 6FKRRO  
 6XUYH\

5HODWLRQVKLSV EHWZHHQ VFRRROV  
 DQG SDUHQWV DUH VWURQJHU WRGD\  
 WKDQ WKH\ KDYH HYHU EHHQ D ORW  
 RI WKDW LV GRZQ WR &RQQHFWLQJ  
 &RPPXQLWLHV DQG WKH EURDGHU  
 UHVSRRQH RI WKH SDQGHPLF <RX DUH  
 ORRNLQJ IRU D VLOYHU OLQLQJ LQ WZR  
 \HDUV RI DZIXOQHVV LW KDV EURXJKW  
 IDPLOLHV DQG VFRRROV FORVHU  
 WRJHWKHU DQG ZH KDYH HVWDEOLVKHG  
 D UHDOO\ JRRG VHQVH RI FRPPXQLW\  
 6WDNHKROGHU ,QWHUYLHZ

Benefits for Schools

Respondents were asked to identify the impact on schools of participating in the scheme. A range of benefits were identifid[









7KHUH LV D WRWDO RI VL[ SHRSOH OLYH  
LQ P\ KRXVH 0\ 4UVW FKLOG LV  
\HDUV ROG VHFRQG RQH LV \HDUV  
ROG WKLUG RQH LV \HDUV ROG  
IRXUWK RQH LV \HDUV ROG DQG WKH  
\RXQJHU RQH LV \HDUV ROG 2QH  
ODSWRS LV QRW HQRXJK \$QG LW WHQGV  
WR EH XVHG E\ P\ ROGHU FKLOGUHQ  
3DUWLFLSDQW 6HPL VWUXFWXUHG  
LQWHUYLHZ

We were interested in understanding user

Chromebook/internet.

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WR NHHS 4W 0\ EURWKHU XVHV WKH  
&KPEQP 0€ 0 0WÀTðXP Q 0  
&KPHP• P0€°€Pi€`<€±0#Hp 0PRPP) ðU 0 p 0WR 0\Hð0€°€I  
&KPBPHERRNWKüHð0€°€05pO CB0 ËĐp S0 0  
&KPHUh-r0 p&KPUh% CP@RU @R`E @a- #0H@ Q&À0 ]WR 5 F @



the scheme on Children's learning. Semi-structured Interviews offered a more qualitative insight into the perspectives of households on the impact of the package on children's learning:

ZLWK P\ GDXJKWHU V SUH  
IRU KHU DFWXDO H[DPV  
6HPLVWUXFWXUHG LQWHU

, DP KRQHVWO\ JUDWHIXO %RIU DKKH RI WKH &KURPH  
KHOS DQG WKH VXSSRUW WKHDW WKH\ P\ 0@ p0 P€€ A  
JDYH XV E\ JLYLQJ XV WKH DFWXDO  
&KURPHERRN EHFDXVH LI WKH NLGV  
GLG QRW KDYH WKDW &KURPHERRN  
FKLOGUHQ FRXOG QRW KDYH GRQH KRPH  
OHDUQLQJ ,W PDGH LW PFK HDVLHU  
DQG FDOPHU IRU HYHU\RQH WR GR  
ZKDW WKH\ KDG WR GR 3DUWLFLSDQW  
6HPL VWUXFWXUHG LQWHUYLHZ

%HIRUH , KDG WKH &KURPHERRN RU  
DQ\ ODSWRS LQ KRXXVH P\ \HDU VRQ  
ZRXOG KDYH WR XVH P\ SKRQH WR GR  
ZRUN RQOLQH 3DUWLFLSDQW 6HPL  
VWUXFWXUHG LQWHUYLHZ@@p0H

,W LV YHU\ LPSRUWDQW &KURPHERRN  
DQG ODSWRS RU FRPSXWHU EHFDXVH  
ZH UHO\ RQ WHFKQRORJ\ LW HQDEOHG  
KLP WR MRLQ KLV FODVV KH FRXOG WDON  
WR WKH WHDFKHU ,I P\ VRQ FRXOG  
QRW SDUWLFLSDWH LW FRXOG KDYH  
LPSDFWHG RQ KLV OLIH ,Q WKH IXWXUH  
KH ZRXOG KDYH VXIIHUG 6R LW  
ZDV YHU\ KHOSIXO DQG JUHDW IRU  
RXU FRPPXQLW\ 2XU FKLOGUHQ  
3DUWLFLSDQW 6HPL VWUXFWXUHG  
LQWHUYLHZ

0\ \RXQJHVW JRW LW \RX NQRZ DV D  
\HDU VL[ FKLOG 6KH ZDV VR KDSS\  
6KH OLNHG UHDGLQJ VR VKH VWDUWHG  
ORRNQJ IRU ERRNV VKH DOUHDG\ KDG  
VR PDQ\ ERRNV EXW VKH UHDG DOO  
RI WKHP DQG DW WKH VDPH WLPH P\  
RWKHU GDXJKWHU KDV EHHQ VWUXJJOLQJ  
ZLWK KHU 3& DQG ZDV SUHSDULQJ  
IRU KHU \*&6( V LW ZDV WRR PFK  
SUHVXUH DQG VR WKDW KHOSHG D ORW

the scheme:

EHFDXVH WKH SDQGHPLF  
 VWUXJJJOLQJ SHRSOH GLG  
 ,W KDV FKDQJHG P\ OLIH IRU P\ WR GR , ZDV OLNH  
 FKLOGUHQ 7KH\ GR QRW QHHG WR DVN DP SDUDQRLG  
 IRU P\ SKRQH :H QHHG WKLV SURMHFW  
 IRU FKLOGUHQ 3DUWLFLSDQW 6HPL VWUXFWXUHG DQG , ZDV UH  
 VWUXFWXUHG LQWHUYLHZ WKDW VFKRROV ZHUH FOR  
 DP JRLQJ WR FRSH DQG  
 , ZDV SURXG WR UHFHLYH WKH OLNH VXSSRUWHG W  
 SDFNDJH EXW , GLG QRW KHOSH PH ZLWK P\ PHQW  
 ZKDW WKH EHQH4W ZRXOG FRPH NQRZLQJ WKDW ,  
 UHDOLVHG LW ZDV YHU\ LPSRUWDQW WKRVH SURMH  
 LW ZDV ELJ KHOS IRU P\ IDPLO\ 6R WKDW VXSSRU  
 WKH VLWXDWLRQ WHDFKHV WKH WKDW LW LQJ DQG QR  
 LV YHU\ LPSRUWDQW LQWHUYLHZ DQG LW LV WI  
 &KURPHERRN 7KH &KURPHERRN GR WKHLU KRPH  
 LV JRRG TXDOLW\ DQG WKH LQWHUYLHZ WR ORRN  
 LV YHU\ KLJK VSHHG DV ZKHQ ZKDW 7KH\ DUH DOZ  
 DUHD <RXU SURMHFW LV YHU\ JRRG WKH\ DUH JHWWL  
 3DUWLFLSDQW 6HPL VWUXFWXUHG FRPSXWHUV DQ  
 LQWHUYLHZ DQG &KURPHERRN 6R WKD  
 EHFDXVH QRZDGD\V HYHU  
 ,W KDV LPSDFWHG SRVLWLYHLYHQ 3DUWLFLSDQ  
 HYHU\ VLQJOH DUHD FDOOLQJ D\*3  
 VWUXFWXUHG LQWHUYLHZ

doing things online, connecting  
 WR P\ IDPLO\ DEURDG DV ZHOO DUH YHU\ KDSS\ DIWHU  
 FRQQHFWLQJ ZLWK FRXVLQV WKLV ZH HVSHFLDOO\ P\ FKL  
 UHFRJQLVH WKH HQRUPRXY KDV D ELJ VFUHHQ VR W  
 EHWZHHQ WKH LQWHUQHW DFHVV WKDW  
 KDYH ULJKW QRZ VR ZH DUH KDSS\  
 VDWL4HG DQG ZLWK WKH GHYLFH NLGV HQMR\ LW  
 :KHQ P\ GDXJKWHU ZDV UHYLQJ 3DUWLFLSDQW 6HPL VWU  
 IRU KHU \*&6( VKH DOZD\V YLQJ LQWHUYLHZ  
 WKDQNV \*RG , JRW WKLW LW KHOSHG  
 PH VR PFK 3DUWLFLSDQW 6HPL YHU\ KDSS\ ,W Z  
 VWUXFWXUHG LQWHUYLHZ KHOSIXO IRU XV O\ HOGH  
 YHU\ KDSS\ +LV ROG FRPS  
 , DP KRQHVWO\ KXQGUHG SHUFHOW  
 JUDWHIXO IRU WKH VHUYLFRW ZRUN SURSHUO\ WKD  
 UHFHLYLQJ WKH LQWHUQHW DQG WKH  
 &KURPHERRN DW WKH WLPH RQH 3DUWLFLSDQW 6HPL  
 UHDOO\ QHHGHG LW \$QG LW KDYH PDGH  
 D YHU\ ELJ LPSDFW 7KH PDLQ  
 WKLQJ LV WKDW ZH MRLQHG DW D WLPH  
 ZKHQ WKH WKLQJV ZHUH UHDOO\ EDG

## 6. CONCLUSION

The 'Connecting Communities' pilot project utilises a three-pronged approach to addressing digital inclusion. The project has provided a valuable insight into what the IGP's Universal Basic Service for 'information' might look like, and how it could contribute to broader livelihood security, in Tower Hamlets and beyond.

The 'Connecting Communities' project also represents a multi-stakeholder approach in public service delivery, design, and implementation, with partners from local authority, housing association, third sector and other public and private sector institutions. Our findings demonstrate how multi-stakeholder collaboration can help to reach a broader group of residents, particularly those who are most deprived (in this case, digitally excluded).

The research methodology utilised employed a wide variety of techniques to evaluate this scheme. This included interviews with key stakeholders; a school survey (completed by 8 of 11 schools); semi-structured interviews with users and an online survey. Given that this research was aimed in part





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