

Bright ideas conference: using technology to support and involve

Friday November 3 2006 West Ham United Football Club

Foreword



I welcome the opportunities the conference has provided to seriously consider what changes need to happen for Newham residents to maximise the benefits of technology. The time has passed when we could think of technology as just another set of add-on tools - it changes the way we live and work, and that means jobs, administrative systems and programmes have to change as well. Technology can help with social inclusion - but we must recognise and commit to the need for change.

Technology enables people to do things for themselves. My role as civic leader is to promote and encourage people to use technology to improve their lives and to ensure that the technology is fit for the purpose and excellent.

We have come a long way in Newham and are using innovative technology in many areas, including running Council services, providing care and support in the home, helping pupils to succeed and encouraging business to trade electronically. But we can still go a lot further. I will ensure we continue to be at the forefront of technological innovation.

Sir Robin Wales

Mayor of Newham

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Event site

www.promarta.co.uk/brightidea/

Further information

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London Borough of Newham

<http://www.newham.gov.uk>

Social Regeneration Unit

<http://sru.newham.gov.uk>

Overview of the conference

Programme

10:00 Welcome by Sir Robin Wales, Mayor of Newham

10:10 Keynote speaker, Chris Yapp, Head of Public Sector Innovation, Microsoft

11:15 Workshops and demonstrations

London Portal and NIMS

- Nick Tjaardstra, London Connects
- Lavinia Irving, LB Newham

Community TV

- John Defoe, LB Newham
- Richard Overton

Community Information and Consultation Websites

- Paresh Chudasama, Microsoft
- Susan Vende, Newham.com
- Lavinia Irving, LB Newham
- Philippa Snare, Microsoft

ICT and Care - Newham Advanced Telecare (NeAT)

● Charles Lowe, Newham Network Change-Up ICT

- Miles Maier, Change Up ICT

14:10 Launch of Where IT's @ Evaluation Report with Paul Ticher

14:30 Workshops and demonstrations

ICT Support for community groups and small businesses

- Carol Harrison, Caboodle
- Peter Duschinsky, Imaginist

E-democracy Adults and Young People

- Rita Davies, LB Newham
- Gavin Sealey, NYPO
- Dan Jellinek, Headstar.com

Linking with Young People

- Gavin Sealey, NYPO
- Susan Vende, LB Newham

The Bright Ideas conference in November 2006 offered a chance to explore how technology is being used by statutory and voluntary organisations to support and involve people living in Newham – and more than 120 people responded to the invitation.

The London Borough of Newham brought together speakers and exhibitors showing a range of projects from the latest Microsoft online community systems to forums and videos developed by local young people.

There was news and discussion of advanced telecare to help older people remain in their homes, community TV over the Internet, e-democracy, and help for small businesses, community and voluntary organisations. There were demonstrations of London-wide and Newham -specific systems providing information and communication systems.

The day started with a vision and challenge from the Mayor, Sir Robin Wales. He made clear that simply adding technology to existing systems and hoping for improvement wouldn't work. The way organisations operated, and services were delivered, had to change as well. Individuals also had to take responsibility for the opportunities technology offered.

Feedback from those attending showed general enthusiasm for both the sessions, and the networking opportunities. Some showed personal commitment to taking things forward by saying that they were interested in joining a Newham ICT in the Community development group.

- The key challenge over the next ten years is digital inclusion. Newham Council is developing a strategy to maximise digital television to reduce digital exclusion.
- The council and other public bodies have to help people move from being just consumers of information to being creators of content. The workshops provided information on how this can be achieved. For example: Community TV can give people a voice by offering them the opportunity to develop and broadcast their own content. Windows Live services can add scope for increased participation through a range of different communication channels.
- Online systems being developed in Newham can provide people with information specific to their needs and forums for discussion with others with similar interests. Newham.com is the latest exciting system to be developed.
- Advanced telecare means vulnerable and frail people may be able to stay in their own homes longer, and alert services when they have problems. This is a major development in Newham.
- A message for funders is that new technology offers great opportunities to community and voluntary organisations.
- Small businesses can benefit from technology support services in Newham, and learn how to use e-commerce to trade with the public sector and others. This is an area that needs developing to enable more businesses to benefit.
- Local issues forums can give people a say in local affairs, and also encourage a focus on the citizen in transforming government. They only work well when a range of people participate and respect each others' views.
- Young people are creating their own websites, winning technology awards, and developing their own project.
- Introducing technology to advice agencies has helped produce substantial improvements in services, improving efficiency and quality of advice.

Conference welcome



After a welcome from Rita Davies, Manager of the Council's Social Regeneration Unit, Newham's Mayor Sir Robin Wales set the tone of the event. He made clear the time had passed when we could think of technology as just another set of add-on tools - it changes the way we live and work, and that means jobs, administrative systems and programmes have to change as well. Technology could help with social inclusion - but only if we recognised the need for change, and didn't simply replicate systems of the past. Sir Robin used libraries to illustrate this point. Book-borrowing has decreased, so libraries are now a place to access information rather than books - their purpose is changing.

In addition Sir Robin said that people must be encouraged to do things for themselves, rather than be told what to do and this is where Information and Communication Technology (ICT) comes in. We need to use ICT to change working conditions and the way we do things. He used the work of Newham Advanced Telecare (NeAT) as an example of how electronic assistive technology means that people have to be dealt with in a different way. NeAT allows the identification of people who need assistance and helps them to live at home for longer. It gives them more dignity and more opportunities.

Website <http://mayor.newham.gov.uk/>

Keynote address

The key challenge over the next ten years is digital exclusion. ... it is the poorest who are least served and least empowered by new developments in ICT

Chris Yapp, Head of Public Sector Innovation at Microsoft

Chris Yapp started by saying that the basic components of computers have not changed much since the early days - but the ways that they are used have changed significantly. The convergence of computers with other devices, and their pervasiveness and connectedness means networking rather than personal computing is increasingly important. However, we are not yet using the potential sufficiently. To do so involves looking at how we can realise the potential of our diverse communities, and connect the different people and institutions within them to create a community learning network.

The key challenge over the next ten years is digital exclusion. Although we have a high take-up of ICT and ICT skills, our productivity from ICT is lower than in the US and elsewhere. We have a high availability of e-services, but take-up of services lags, and it is the poorest who are least served and least empowered by new developments in ICT.

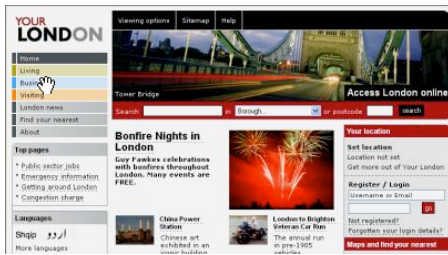
There are increased demands for creativity, innovation, design and inter-personal skills in a global market that is becoming increasingly competitive. We have to be higher- skilled because machines can substitute for people on low-skill tasks, and do things more cheaply. Developing higher level of skills mean life-long learning, and a re-invention of schools and colleges to link them to other parts of the community - libraries, leisure centres, home, workplaces.



Newham has made great contributions in, for example, its early work on broadband and Internet television - but development of a community learning network is not simply about the council providing infrastructure or information. It is about the council creating content with the community to serve the community, allowing people to move from being consumers of information to creators of it. The key is to understand community formation and how technologies can become embedded in the community. We must not look at what they cannot do, but look at what they can do.

Your London and VOLCOM

Nick Tjaardstra, London Connects



Nick presented the Your London website, which enables people to access information across the whole capital. It covers London Living, Business and Visiting, with news updates and a "find your nearest" facility.

The site includes a directory of community and voluntary organisations across London, and the community website tool shows organisations how to set up their own website. Schools are also on line.

Website <http://www.yourlondon.gov.uk>

Neighbourhood Information

Lavinia Irving, NIMS Manager, LB Newham



Lavinia explained that the Newham Neighbourhood Information Management System (NIMS) is an on-line central data repository that enables local strategic partners to share their data. Funded by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, the NIMS Project is an important tool to understand, monitor, renew and develop policy and service planning thus improving the quality of life for local people. The system was launched in September 2004 and has just been updated to include a directory of internally generated research papers and key statistics at ward level. These additions are just the first of many new capabilities designed to aid partners, councillors, residents and council staff, wishing to access local information easily.

Website <http://www.newham.info/research/home.htm>

Community TV

John Defoe, LB Newham, and Richard Overton

The Community TV project was set up on Carpenters Estate in 2002, initially with funding from the Department for Education and Skills, then later from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. The aim was to address community engagement and empowerment using new technology, when many people did not have access to online services. Digital exclusion is important at a time when 85 per cent of jobs need ICT skills, and so much shopping can be done cheaper online. We are facing a shopping divide.

The system was TV-based because people are familiar with TV - it is the most pervasive means of communication that exists in almost every home. People may not have PCs, or be as comfortable with them as they are with TV. The project gave people set-top boxes for Internet access, video on demand, satellite TV and webcams, and is currently delivered via computer cabling or integrated reception system aerial socket.

The focus has been on using the system as a community engagement tool. It was possible to set up a local TV channel on the estate, train people how to use it and enable them to make TV programmes about their community. People learned new skills by making their



own videos, and it helped to bridge the digital divide. The system was used for information and engagement during the re-planning of the estate.

The issue now is how to move forward beyond the initial pilot.

Regen TV - as it is now called - is expensive. There is a lot of equipment owned by the Council serving about 300 people on the estate. The problem is that there are no commercial services to provide income. It is possible to deliver benefit, but there is no opportunity to deliver paid-for services to residents.

Elsewhere other similar projects are being developed - particularly the Digital Bridge in Shoreditch. BT and Sky are working on projects, and these could provide opportunities to re-introduce the lessons learned with Regen TV, and show where the real personal and community benefits are.

The team are also looking at opportunities in Canning Town, where a project was part of an unsuccessful bid for funding under the Digital Challenge. The situation is still open and they are looking at possibilities.

Website <http://regentv.net>

Community Information and Consultation Websites

Paresh Chudasama, Principal Strategy Consultant, Microsoft, introduced workshops on the theme of how to use technology to develop communities.

Susan Vende, newham.com

Susan provided an overview of the Community Information and Consultation Strategy developed with the Local Strategic Partnership. The LSP includes other public bodies as well as community and voluntary sector organisations.

The vision for the strategy includes raising awareness of LSP activities, and particularly developing a diverse online community with many regular users, who will have personalised services matching their needs.

The key audiences extend beyond residents and local businesses to include visitors and outside business relevant to regeneration objectives. Services are also aimed at special interest groups, local forums, and hard to reach groupings.

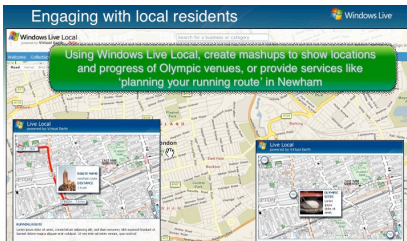
Susan gave an example of what can be offered to an individual, targeting personal interests, by using on-line messaging, a weekly e-mail, regular e-zines and discussion forums.

She also described an integrated campaign, giving the example of fostering and adoption to target Black and Minority Ethnic groups, currently under-represented. The current standard methods, advertisements and web methods, are good but in future the plan is to use discussion, on-line consultation before launching projects and SMS text messages to give feedback on peoples' contributions to the consultation.

Susan gave an example of what can be offered to an individual, targeting personal interests, by using on-line messaging, a weekly e-mail, regular e-zines and discussion forums.

Philippa Snare, Head of Windows Live Services, OSG UK

Philippa demonstrated a range of Live Services enabling a local authority to develop new relationships with citizens - and for citizens to communicate with each other. This could include working with smaller community groups, reaching broader audiences, and also two-way participation.



Using Windows Live Local it is possible to create mapping projects - perhaps showing the progress with various Olympic venues

Those who sign up for Newham's gold card could be offered Live mail and instant messaging, and also Live spaces, which offers individuals the opportunity to set up their own sites with the information they want to display, like a diary, or a blog. Windows Live Spaces could also be used to link schools from across the country with schools in Newham on the journey to 2012.

Using Windows Live Local it is possible to create mapping projects - perhaps showing the progress with various Olympic venues, or provide services like "planning your running route" in Newham.

Alerts via email, instant messaging or mobile phone can be delivered "spam-free" offering citizens news and updates for the borough.

There's also scope for two-way participation. With Windows Expo citizens can easily trade, swap or sell with people in their local community. They can also post questions and get answers from fellow citizens with Windows Live QnA. Office Live provides a package of services to help small businesses get online.

Web site <http://get.live.com>

Newham Advanced Telecare (NeAT)

Charles Lowe, Newham Network

Charles described how Newham Advanced Telecare (NeAT) assists vulnerable and frail people to live independently and in control, and helps people manage risk.

It is an alliance of the council with Police, Newham Homes, NHS Trusts, Fire Service and voluntary bodies, in a borough where there are 13,200 all-pensioner households and where 17.3% of the population have limiting, long-term illnesses.

A range of sensors in vulnerable peoples' homes sends alerts automatically to a control centre if problems are detected. The sensors monitor and detect changes as they occur and alert the person before a situation gets out of control. Basic sensors can, for example, send an alert if smoke is detected, abnormal heat is detected in the kitchen, or the sink or bath has overflowed.

More advanced systems can send an alert if something unusual happens, such as the gas having been left on, or the water supply not having been used for a prolonged period. There will be more than 4000 installations by end of March 2008.

Charles listed four main reasons for people opting for institutional care in Newham: carer exhaustion, regular enuresis, falls, and distraction burglary - and to address these it will be necessary to extend and personalise the nature of the kit, and consider the context in which it will be used. This might involve, for example: bed and chair sensors, a falls detector, enuresis sensor, and bogus caller protector by which the control centre could monitor conversations at the front door.



There are financial benefits in the reduced need for residential, nursing and hospital care, and other services. However, the greatest benefit is the improvement in people's quality of life. Advanced Telecare will only work successfully if the kit, installation, control and response systems are integrated with care pathways, and the project engages all practitioners and partners. It is necessary to establish protocols on, for example, what to say if someone has dementia. All of this means changing the processes, not just installing technology. It can challenge 'as is'.

Issues include securing appropriate referrals, dementia, lost kit, influencing third party providers (a warden may be involved in extra work), ensuring an appropriate response (not just calling the ambulance service), and payer/beneficiary. The council may pay, but it's the National Health Service that benefits from this.

Website <http://www.newham.gov.uk/Services/NewhamNetwork/AboutUs/NeAT.htm>

Change-up ICT

Miles Maier, London Region ICT Champion

Miles is working in the community and voluntary sector as London Region ICT champion, with the task of helping these not for profit organisations deal with the multiple challenges of lack of funding and access to equipment, low levels of technical knowledge and of support. His work is funded by the Change Up programme that is investing across the board in community and voluntary sector infrastructure. He works with local councils for voluntary service, and there is also a bid in to the Big Lottery for nine staff to act as circuit riders - mobile technology support workers.

The immediate task for Miles is to convince funders of the benefits that investment in ICT could bring to the sector, and he will be running an event in Spring 2007 to showcase examples of what organisations are already doing, and the potential. Miles is keen to work with other networks in London, and is open to any contacts with promising projects. As well as showcasing good examples, he wants to promote knowledge sharing across London.



- Show-casing the best ICT projects

While much work has to be done in helping groups and organisations with the basics, Miles is keen to show the potential of Web 2.0 applications like blogs and wikis, and also to help groups explore the possibilities of web-based services. Since costs are a big concern there could be benefits in putting together an office set-up using free online services provided by Google, Yahoo and others.

Miles is showing the way by running his own blog <http://www.lasa.org.uk/ictchampion/>

ICT Support for community groups and small business

Carol Harrison, Caboodle Solutions

Carol presented the work of Caboodle, which is a public-private sector initiative set up jointly by the London Borough of Newham and the leading ICT services provider Steria Ltd. It was originally set up using the New Deal training scheme for 18-25 year-olds, offering a two-year ICT training scheme.

Caboodle is a local company formed specifically to work in, and give back to the local community. It aims to provide corporate-level ICT solutions at prices that small business and the voluntary sector can afford.

At the same time its training schemes have resulted in 33 local unemployed people achieving exam passes and going on to find secure employment. Staff are also pledged to support CC4G, a Department for Education and Skills funded programme aimed at transforming the attitudes of a generation of girls to get them interested in ICT.

In 2007 Caboodle aims to relaunch its Pathways scheme, and to offer placements to 12 unemployed people a year. It also hopes to increase work experience placements, become more involved with community initiatives, and function as an environmentally progressive organisation.

Website <http://www.caboodlesolutions.co.uk>

Caboodle is a local company formed specifically to work in, and give back to the local community.

Securing a business legacy

Peter Duschinsky, The Imagist Company

Peter presented the Securing a Business Legacy programme, sponsored by Newham's Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. This aims to help local enterprises increase their capacity to win contracts for work arising from the 2012 Olympics opportunity. The programme now includes the KickStart e-enabling project started in Newham in 2004.

Peter said the world is moving in the direction of e-commerce, buying and selling electronically, and the London Borough of Newham is moving to an e-procurement system, hiring and paying for services on-line rather than through paper-based methods. He said the kit is easy, but it needs the mindset to make it work. The Securing a Business Legacy programme offers one-to-one counselling, e-commerce support, and also supply chain support and training. It is available to all Newham-based small companies and voluntary enterprises, with a particular focus on minority businesses, women-owned businesses, those owned by disabled people, and social enterprises and community or voluntary organisations.

Peter explained that Newham aimed to increase the number of small companies and voluntary enterprises using modern e-trading methods, to increase the numbers trading with Newham public agencies, and promote awareness of the benefits of e-trading. The e-commerce offer covered development of a website offer, online catalogue and support. This then enabled the company or organisation to run a range of services including e-invoicing, online catalogue and integration with merchant accounts.

Website <http://www.imagist.co.uk>



E-democracy Adults and Young People

Dan Jellinek, Headstar.com, Gavin Sealey, NYPO, Rita Davies, LB Newham



Dan Jellinek, Gavin Sealey, Rita Davies provided an overview of the complex landscape of e-democracy, in which many different tools and approaches are being used to improve all parts of the democratic system. For example, e-participation includes online debates and consultation as well as longer-term online communities. E-lobbying extends campaigning online, and e-voting pilots substitute the screen for the ballot box. Increasingly local and central government services are becoming e-services.

Dan offered a range of examples from Tell Parliament through which people can engage directly with Select Committees, to discussion boards run by local councils (though only 11 per cent of them), and initiatives by the BBC Action Network and MySociety.

Politicians are using a range of methods online to inform and organise, including a video social networking site Webcameron set up by the Tory leader. However e-voting pilots have shown little increase in turnout.

At the local level, Brighton and Hove and Newham have Local Issues Forums where forum managers (Dan in Brighton, Gavin in Newham) enable local people to raise their own issues and so control the agenda for debate.

A focus on the citizen is also important in the programme to transform government: that's where there is a cross-over between e-democracy and e-government.

Newham Local Issues Forum <http://forums.e-democracy.org/newham>

Linking with Young People

Susan Vende, LB Newham and Gavin Sealey, NYPO

Newham Young People Online (NYPO) is a project and website where the content belongs to the young people involved, whose ages range from 11 to 19.

The purpose of the website is to create an environment that is stimulating and challenging to young people, to inspire them to become part of their community, and to involve them as creators rather than just consumers. The site uses a variety of strategies to reach a wide range of young people. There are some closed forums to provide privacy

The young people have created a range of content including graphics, animations, and movies as well as continuing conversations on a bulletin board. There are more than 40 individual young people's websites.

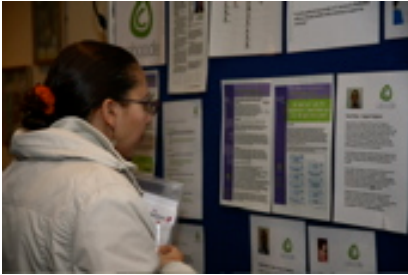
One area of the site provides Learning Paths through which young people can create Learning Portfolios by tackling a number of challenges related to online content development and communication. Some content is kept online, some offline, providing evidence of their creativity. The portfolios may be used as evidence for a Youth Achievement Award, a Youth Challenge Award or a Duke of Edinburgh Award

The site and project develops learning materials, systems of support for young people, and ICT access. It also develops the ability of youth staff to engage with young people, and the ability of young people to take future ownership of the development and promotion of the NYPO community.

Website <http://www.nypo.org/>

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Where IT's @ Evaluation Report



Paul Ticher

Paul Ticher presented an evaluation of the Where It's @ project, which aims to improve the performance of small voluntary sector advice agencies through the use of ICT. They were offered four elements of support:

- Software (case recording, benefits calculations and on-line information services)
- Training in the use of software packages, and also in how to manage their computer systems.
- Technical support, sufficient to enable them to take part in the project
- Broadband provision, as few organisations had broadband when the project started..

The project started in 2001. There were a lot of changes with agencies. Twenty agencies signed up at the start of the project, but 9 left (for various reasons, such as loss of funding) and were replaced by 9 others.

Overall ten agencies said the project made a great difference and others benefited, but to a lesser extent. The ones who did not benefit gave different reasons, such as the project coming at the wrong time for the agency, or having different priorities, proving that computers alone are not enough. The key to success was management commitment.

The case recording software was "a triumph" for six out of the 10 agencies using it. Benefits calculations filled a specific role well. Use of electronic information depended on personal preferences. In addition:

- Technical support was well received
- Most agencies are using ICT more confidently than before the project
- Most training was rated good or excellent
- Agencies felt supported by the project administration
- Broadband provision was problematic, but most difficulties are now resolved

Lessons for future projects include: it is not particular technology that is important but the kind of package delivered and how it is done; accept that ICT is not going to be a success for everyone; offer a programme to help people when they need it.

Website <http://sru.newham.gov.uk>

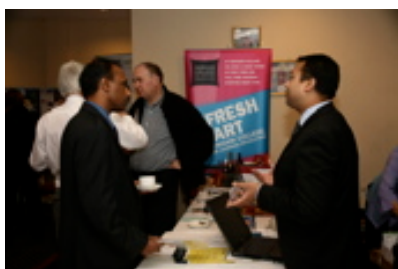
Opinions of participants

An online survey of those attending the conference showed support for community technology, and interest in continuing development of its role. Figures quoted e.g. (7+12) are for agree strongly (first figure) + agree (second figure).

Twenty two people responded to the online survey, and nearly all of those agreed that communication about community issues on the web was essential (7+12), and also that websites should be linked to make them more accessible to the community (10+10).

There was support for technology services enabling elderly and disabled people to remain in their own homes (8+9), and for more work with young people to develop web based communication facilities (8+8). Eighteen people (9+9) liked the idea of a Newham community website with information, and the opportunity to communicate with others.

More support for the community and voluntary sector (9+9) and the business sector (6+9) to develop their ICT systems was endorsed. At the end of the survey nine out of eighteen people responding said they were interested in joining a Newham ICT in the Community development group.



Evaluation

Total attendance for the conference- including 27 exhibitors - was 122. Of these 22 provided feedback through a form completed on the day, or online. Feedback scores ranged from 4.3 to 5.1 out of 6, indicating a broad satisfaction with the day. In addition to marking elements of the day attendees were asked to comment on the best thing about the day, anything they disliked about the day, and to make suggestions to improve future events. Since feedback numbers were low, the organisers are cautious about drawing substantial conclusions. However, points included:

Best things about the day

- Hearing about new and exciting ideas, and seeing from people involved how these could be implemented
- The welcome speech from the Mayor, Sir Robin Wales, setting out the vision for Newham, and challenging businesses, community and voluntary organisations to get involved
- The workshops and the enthusiasm of the presenters
- Opportunities to network - meeting other people interested in using ICT to support and empower local residents.

Anything you disliked

- Sound system
- Timing and organisation of some sessions
- Signing around the conference
- Suggestions for improvement in any future events
- More specific aims and objectives
- More awareness among speakers of the needs of those with disabilities
- More engaging, interactive exhibitions
- More service users invited

The organisers acknowledged that although the venue was popular, the sound system and signage presented problems.