Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

PropTech Engagement Fund Round 2

Final Report

June 2023

Local Planning Authority	London Borough of Haringey
Project Lead	Sarah Carruthers (Community Engagement Officer)
Senior Stakeholder	Peter Exton (Head of Area Regeneration)
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Theme	Theme 3: Estate Regeneration

Contents

1. Context

The Northumberland Park Estate experiences some of the highest levels of poverty for the borough and nationally:
- **Housing -** Tottenham constituency experiences the second highest levels of overcrowding nationally
- **People -** North Tottenham has a higher rate of people in 'poor health' (11% to 7% above the borough average)
- **Place -** The rate of violent crime is considerably higher within the Tottenham area, on average being 50% higher than Haringey consistently over time
- **Economy -** The unemployment rate in Northumberland Park is almost twice than Haringey and the London rate at 16.3%

Engagement activity during the Covid-19 lockdown, including the Local Plan first steps consultation, has highlighted significantly lower levels of digital participation from the Northumberland Park estate when compared to the rest of the borough.

Estate Regeneration
As part of a wider cross council approach to improving the lives of residents in Northumberland Park, the council has appointed architects to work with the community to identify options for new and improved homes and spaces. The work will inform the new Local Plan and establish a shared vision for the future of the estate.

Northumberland Park is a diverse community, which shares many backgrounds, ages, languages and cultures. Our ambition is to work with residents to ensure that future change continues to celebrate the Northumberland Park community, building upon stories of the area's history, identity and communities to shape a strong and lasting sense of place.

2. Project Aims & Objectives

Our aim was to work with residents and the wider community to break down barriers to digital participation in one of the most deprived areas in the country, whilst enabling residents to actively engage in shaping the future of the Northumberland Park estate.

The project aimed to build digital capacity and increase participation through four key core workstreams:

Phase 1: **Community led research** into barriers to digital access to inform the project development
Phase 2: **Overcoming barriers to digital engagement** through access to digital tools, training, and devices
Phase 3: **Reaching diversity** through targeted use of digital tools including translation services, and social media

Phase 4: **Establishing a 'hub**' where residents and the wider community can access digital devices and support to enable them to be actively involved in shaping the future of all aspects of their neighbourhood – from community facilities to housing management, to delivery of new homes.

Key learnings
The project aims to work with the community to address the barriers to digital participation. It will test how capacity building paired with digital methods of engagement and access to devices can support co-production of new and improved homes and places, whilst expand the reach of our engagement in a diverse community. Learning outcomes include:

- To understand the barriers to digital participation in communities experiencing high levels of deprivation
- To understand how barriers to digital participation can be overcome
- To explore how online engagement tools can expand reach of engagement across different ethnic, faith and age groups
- To explore how digital tools combined with access to IT equipment and capacity building around digital literacy can support co-production in an estate regeneration context.

3. Community led research into barriers to digital access to inform the project development

3.1 Our objectives were to:

- Understand the existing landscape for digital support in Northumberland Park
- Involve residents and the wider community in community research to identify the barriers to digital engagement and shape the project
- Ensure voices from harder to engage groups were heard to understand barriers to digital engagement

3.2 Methods used:

- Flyers/posters promoting the opportunity to get involved as a community researcher distributed to c.1325 council homes in Northumberland Park, community groups and spaces, businesses, and via partners and stakeholders
- Flyers/posters included information in English, Turkish, Polish and Somali; four of the main languages we know are spoken in the area
- Offer of a £50 voucher to participate as a community researcher
- A survey that could be used by community researchers in a paper format or digitally

- Meetings with other parts of the council, partners and stakeholders to map any existing digital support programmes and gather key learnings to shape the project
- Research sessions with harder to engage groups in the area including an over 55's group, youth services, and a food bank

Key Learnings/Outcomes (Phase 1)

- There was a very low response to the community researcher opportunity. We engaged 3 active community researchers who completed 34 surveys with local Northumberland Park residents – 16 paper and 18 digitally
- Participants ranged in ages from 22-75+, with majority 30-49. Majority were female.15% were disabled. 4 were unemployed, with 8 currently claiming benefits. Range of ethnicities, religions, and qualifications
- Respondents over 50 reported less frequent internet access and greater difficulty getting online. Respondents from White Other and Asian groups reported greater difficulty getting online
- Respondents were most likely to want to use the internet to access public services, news and information, and entertainment. Work/education and communication were also popular. Not much interest shown for greater involvement in local decisions
- Biggest listed barrier to digital access was lack of knowledge of public devices. Both respondents who struggled with access noted confidence as a barrier to them
- Digital support requested included guidance and lessons on how to access and use the internet, more free Wi-Fi access in the area, and more face-face support available for those who struggle to get online
- Through our mapping of existing digital support, we learnt that there were currently no programmes offering support in the immediate area of Northumberland Park. There had been digital champion programmes to support online engagement in housing during the Covid pandemic that were no longer running. Support was being offered through the local foodbank however, funding for this was changing and this was only accessed by those attending the service one day a week, and of those, many didn't own or have access to a device.
- The nearest place to access a public computer is the library which is not in the immediate local area and considered too far away for many
- Our engagement with harder to reach groups echoed the outcomes from the surveys. The over 55's group said that difficulty using equipment (fear of pressing incorrect button, lack of understanding of functionality, incompatible devices), lack of confidence/ knowledge, difficulty accessing a computer (library / hubs are too far!) were all barriers to digital engagement
- Suggestions for support included improving access to computers locally, 1-1 training/support, available devices to keep practicing, and options to bring your own devices
- The workshop with young people identified that whilst using the internet was not an issue, poor Wi-Fi in council buildings where they accessed youth services and old computers were the main problems they experienced.

4. Overcoming barriers to digital engagement through access to digital tools, training, and devices

4.1 Our objectives were to:
- Pilot a digital training and support programme in a community space in the heart of Northumberland Park to address some of the barriers to digital engagement highlighted during the community research phase
- Provide access to devices in Northumberland Park to address some of the digital barriers faced by the community

4.2 Methods used:

- Approached the adult education service in Haringey Council (Haringey Learns) to pilot a series of digital support sessions for residents and the wider community in Northumberland Park. Haringey Learns is based in Wood Green which is 3 miles away from Northumberland Park. Along with their existing experience and expertise in adult education and their network of digital volunteers, we shared the feedback from the community research phase of the project to ensure that the pilot sessions were shaped by this
- Delivered an initial 10-week pilot of digital support sessions held at the Neighbourhood Resource Centre (NRC); a community building in the heart of Northumberland Park. The sessions were from 11-4pm and were on a 'drop-in' basis where residents could receive one to one support either on a laptop provided, or on a personal device (such as a smartphone)
- Purchased devices and equipment (laptops and smartphones, larger monitors and keyboards to support those who may struggle with working from a smaller screen) for the digital support sessions, and for harder to engage groups accessing services in Northumberland Park including young people (Project 2020) and the food bank (Community Cook Up)
- Created flyers/posters (see appendix - flyer) promoting the digital support sessions in four languages; English, Polish. Turkish and Somali
- Distributed flyers to c.1325 council homes in Northumberland Park, community groups and spaces, businesses, and via partners and stakeholders
- Provided the digital volunteers a £5 voucher each week to get lunch from the local Tesco Metro, and Oyster cards to cover travel costs
- Provided the digital volunteers vouchers of their choice (Love2shop/One4All) at London Living Wage each week in recognition of their time and skills as peer mentors

4.3 Key Learnings/Outcomes (Phase 2)

- The first 10-week pilot sessions were well attended and evidenced a clear need for digital support in Northumberland Park
- The Haringey Learns adult education tutor and the digital volunteers (peer mentors) asked each learner who attended a session 'What makes IT difficult for you' and the most common response was **'I need support to get started'** followed by **'I do not have Wi-Fi at home'** and **'I do not have a computer or smartphone'**
- Most learners were aged of 55 – 85. This confirmed the need to engage with harder to engage groups (e.g. the over 55's group) to shape programmes and support to ensure it meets the needs of the community
- Further to the initial 10-week pilot, we moved forward with a second 10-week programme. The support team recorded **101 one-to-one** learner sessions during this period. This was made up of learners who attended regularly, and new learners
- Some learners travelled from other parts of Haringey as they had seen the leaflet in community spaces (library, through other council support services) and travelled to Northumberland Park. This evidenced the need across the borough for this type of informal digital support
- Here are some examples of the support that was requested by learners when they attended a drop-in session recorded by the support team:
    - **Information how to start**
    - **Setting up accounts and using email**
    - **Accessing online services**
    - **Get to know my device**
    - **Google and safe internet use**
    - **Apply to start up ecommerce online payments and orders**
    - **Apply for council housing**
    - **Apply for a driving license**
    - **How to block and delete messages on my phone**
    - **Download NHS app**
    - **Apply for a course**
    - **Help with pension online**
    - **How to play chess online (for now!)**

- Other council and support services in the area contacted the team to ask if they could refer residents to the sessions for support. Examples include through the Connected Communities service where online forms needed to be completed (benefits, housing etc.), and

from a school where parents needed to complete an online secondary school place application. This was an important learning as it evidenced that digital support sessions could increase capacity for other services who provide support to residents and their families

- To ensure ongoing support for the Northumberland Park community, Haringey Learns are now delivering one of their free computer courses for beginners at the NRC. This supports one of the aims of the Haringey Learns adult education service to provide courses in other parts of the borough as they currently only operate from the library in Wood Green (3 miles from Northumberland Park)
- The digital project funding enabled a third 10-week round of drop in, one-to-one support sessions to run alongside the computer course for beginners
- Learners and other services have already asked the Haringey Learns team for other courses, such as ESOL to be delivered at the NRC. The funding has ensured that the classroom set up (devices/equipment) to run future adult education courses in Northumberland Park is viable
- All the feedback from learners recorded by the digital support team was positive. One local resident said:
  'Having IT peer support drop-in in my local community is a fantastic opportunity to get help with starting the digital learning as I do not have a computer or Wi-Fi connection at home. The team is very helpful and supportive. I received advice on enrolling on a computer course at Haringey Learns. My digital world has started!'

5. Reaching diversity through targeted use of digital tools including translation services, and social media

5.1 Our objectives were to:
- Use an online engagement platform to increase engagement with the Homes and Spaces plan; the programme to engage the Northumberland Park community in co-production in an estate regeneration context
- Use an online platform to test translation services to increase engagement with the Homes and Spaces plan; the programme to engage the Northumberland Park community in co-production in an estate regeneration context
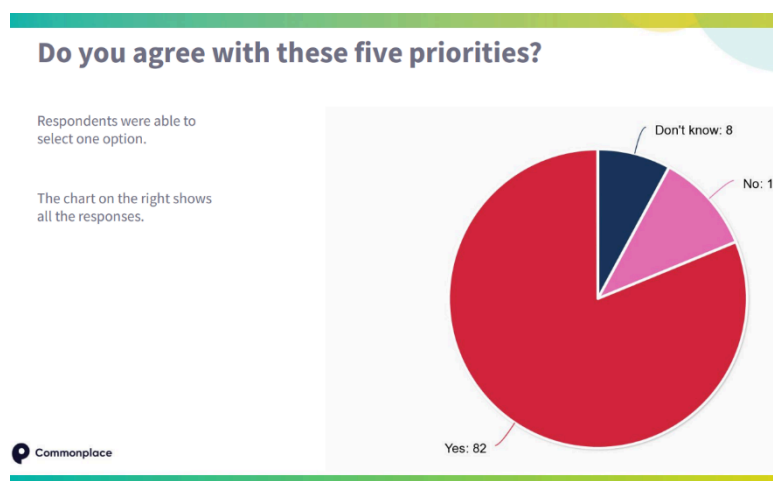
5.2 Methods Used:

- A document with information on the development of the Homes and Spaces Plan was created, along with a questionnaire and freepost envelope. This was distributed to c.1325 council homes in Northumberland Park, community groups and spaces, businesses, and via partners and stakeholders
- **Homes & Spaces plan document and questionnaire attached**
- We used **COMMONPLACE** as our digital platform for the Homes and Spaces plan information and questionnaire to test five priorities:
    - New homes to meet the needs of the community
    - Increased safety for residents and their homes
    - Improved open space to enjoy, play and socialise
    - Safe movement and routes
    - Well used spaces and buildings that serve the community

- The three questions that were asked were:
    - Do you agree with the five priorities?
    - Would you change anything about the priorities?
    - Do you have any questions about the priorities?

- Link to Commonplace platform: [Community Forum - Northumberland Park Neighbourhood Improvements - Commonplace](#)
- The five priorities and the engagement approach were developed with the Community Voices Design Group (CVDG); a group of council tenants and leaseholders living within the red line boundary area of Northumberland Park. The CVDG work together with the architects and council regeneration team
- Haringey Council have an existing license with Commonplace. However, due to the barriers of digital engagement in Northumberland Park and team resource/budget constraints, we had not used a digital platform on the project before
- Through the Commonplace platform, we used the translation service to test the most commonly spoken languages in the area that we know of (Turkish, Somali and Polish) and included two more emerging languages (Spanish and Romanian) that we understand to be an increasing population in the area
- Our engagement offered a range of traditional methods including by post, email and text/phone and drop-in sessions. We also held an event to launch the engagement period as part of a wider community festive event with other council teams, partners, and stakeholders at the NRC in December 2022 where we offered food and activities
- A QR code for the Commonplace platform was used in all engagement material including posters in the five different languages we were testing

- The Commonplace platform was launched in December and ran for 6-weeks. We were mindful of it being the festive period and that there needed to be enough time for the community to participate

5.3 Key Learnings/Outcomes (Phase 3)

- **Full report from Commonplace attached**
- It's important to note that all the manually received responses (paper copies) received via a freepost envelope or dropped off at the Neighbourhood Resource Centre were uploaded on to the Commonplace platform. The Commonplace platform was able to highlight the different methods of engagement (paper or online) for data analysis.
- In total, **c.100 households** engaged and gave feedback either via the questionnaire (paper) or online (Commonplace)
- Of these c.100 responses, half came via the Commonplace platform increasing our usual reach by c.50%.
- For context, depending on the theme and focus, Haringey Council can get high number of responses on Commonplace (e.g. over 1000 responses to LTN sites). In Northumberland Park, due to its hyperlocal nature and demographics, 100 responses is considered reasonable. We were able to get a clear idea of views towards the 5 priorities we were testing at this stage of the programme (see graph below).

Do you agree with these five priorities?

Respondents were able to select one option.

The chart on the right shows all the responses.
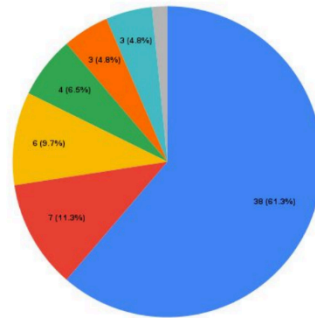
Don't know: 8
No: 11
Yes: 82

Commonplace

- The **headline figures** show over 1000 visitors to the Commonplace platform during the 6-week engagement period
- The **peak times** for traffic to the Commonplace platform were:
    - During the launch of the engagement (week beginning 19th December 2022) at the festive event, and via information distributed to c.1325 council homes in Northumberland Park, community groups and spaces, businesses, partners and stakeholders
    - During the festive period
    - During the meta campaign in February
- **Connection to the area.** The data gathered showed that over 60% of respondents lived in Northumberland Park. When broken down to where the responses came from, mostly all the paper surveys came from respondents living in Northumberland Park.
- There was a broader reach to the wider community online with just over half the respondents living in Northumberland Park, and the other half made up of those who 'regularly visit', 'have children at nursery/school', commute via', 'are part of a community group' or 'work in' the area (see graphs below)
- Whilst using Commonplace gave us a broader reach to the wider community, there were respondents who lived outside of the area who gave more general feedback about issues across the borough, rather than the hyper-local area of Northumberland Park

Connection to area

Respondents were able to select multiple options from a pre-defined list, as well as adding their own options.

The chart on the left shows all the responses of those that chose to answer.

- I live in Northumberland Park
- I regularly visit Northumberland Park
- I have children at nursery/school in Northumberland Park
- I commute via Northumberland Park
- I am part of a community group in Northumberland Park
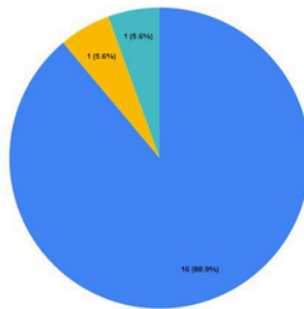- I work in Northumberland Park
- Other

Connection to area

Online responses

Surveyed responses

- I live in Northumberland Park
- I regularly visit Northumberland Pa
- I have children at nursery/school in Park
- I commute via Northumberland Pa
- I am part of a community group in Park
- I work in Northumberland Park
- Other
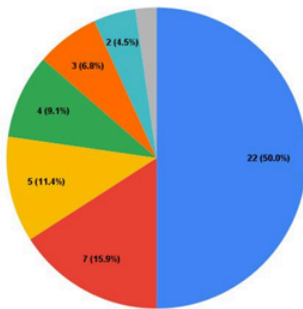
These charts show how the responses are split based on whether the responses were collected through the Commonplace site, or via a paper survey

- **Age.** The data we received by those who gave this information reflected our learnings about barriers to online engagement amongst the older population in Northumberland Park.
- There was a higher number of online respondents between the ages of 30-59. This number reduces between the ages of 60-75+ where the paper surveys were more commonly used to provide feedback (see graph below).

Age

The chart on the right shows all the respondents ages and shows the split based on whether the responses were collected through the Commonplace site, or via a paper survey.
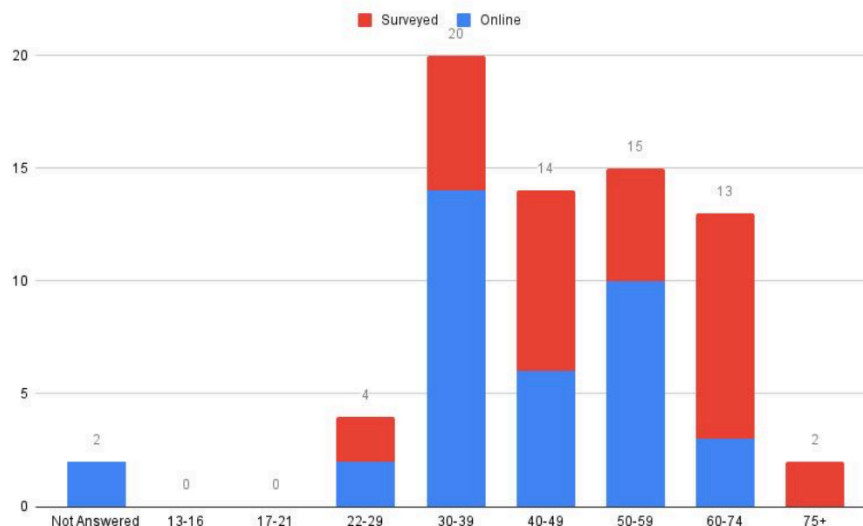
Commonplace

- **Testing languages.** The data showed that of the 5 languages that were available on the Commonplace platform, information was mainly viewed in English, with only two views per month in Spanish and Somali.

6. Establishing a 'hub' where residents and the wider community can access digital devices and support to enable them to be actively involved in shaping the future of all aspects of their neighbourhood – from community facilities to housing management, to delivery of new homes

6.1 Our objectives were to:
- Establish a 'hub' at the Neighbourhood Resource Centre (NRC) in the heart of Northumberland Park where residents and the wider community can access digital devices and support.

6.2 Methods used:

- Digital devices/storage procured to provide a classroom set up for ongoing adult education ICT sessions at the NRC. The classroom set up is also available for other council teams to be able to deliver support in the community that requires access to a device (e.g. financial management sessions, job support etc.)
- Library style furniture/devices procured to enable ongoing access for the community to drop outside of the classroom setting
- Solution for lack of public Wi-Fi in NRC temporarily addressed with use of portable Wi-Fi. Longer term solutions being addressed as part of wider connectivity project in the area.

6.3 Key Learnings/Outcomes (Phase 3)

- The classroom set up at the NRC as part of this pilot will enable the adult education service to deliver more programmes in Northumberland Park. There are also other council services/teams who can use the classroom set up for training and support.
- Creating a library style area where residents and the wider community have access to a device will partly go towards addressing the needs highlighted during phase 1 about public access in the hyper-local area.

7. Community Engagement Summary

7.1 We used the following outreach methods:

- Booklets/flyers posted to c.1325 council homes in Northumberland Park, community groups and spaces, businesses, and via partners and stakeholders

- Posters across the Northumberland Park estate

- Drop-in sessions held by the council at a community space in Northumberland Park (Neighbourhood Resource Centre)

- Drop-in sessions with a dedicated Turkish speaking interpreter

- Festive community event (Dec 22)

- One to one sessions with harder to engage groups (younger people, over 55's group, foodbank)

- Use of Commonplace digital platform

- Social media campaign signposting to the Commonplace digital platform

7.2 The main challenges we faced were:

- We had changes in our team/resource from the time we started the project, to when we finished. We have been running as a team of two instead of four for the best part of a year so resource to carry out such a multifaceted project was at times a challenge

- Our programme schedule moved for many different reasons beyond our control. Therefore, our engagement with the community and testing the digital platform came much later than we'd anticipated

- Northumberland Park is in an area where a large regeneration programme was explored a few years ago and then it was stopped. There is a hangover from this resulting in consultation fatigue (e.g. why are you asking us this again?). Many residents have a lack of trust in the council that anything will change

- There are other major issues residents of Northumberland Park face including poverty (heat or eat), overcrowding, maintenance of homes, crime and ASB. This can make it hard for many people to engage in conversations about changes that might happen in 5-10 years when they're struggling with to day-to-day life right now

- We had a clear steer from the Community Voices Design Group that a lengthy demographics form included in the questionnaire was a huge barrier to engagement. We therefore gathered less data from the paper questionnaires returned to us than we did online

7.3 Surprises

- We expected more interest in participation as a community researcher, especially with an incentive offered (£50 voucher). If we did this project again, we would look to procure a delivery partner for this phase as there were social value and community building opportunities (such as an intergenerational project)

8. Pilot Outcomes

8.1 What changes (if any) have come about as a result of this project and opportunities to deliver further/ongoing digital engagement?

This project has enabled us to explore digital barriers and how to overcome them. We now have:

- A digital platform that we know extends our reach to the community (it increased our responses by 50%) and has become part of our ongoing comms and engagement strategy for the regeneration team in Northumberland Park
- A permanent classroom set up in the heart of the community that is being used to support digital literacy
- The adult education service delivering digital literacy in Northumberland Park (a pilot for their service). There is now the potential for other sessions to be run locally (ESOL has been requested)
- Other services requesting use of the classroom set up to offer the community support (financial support, job support etc.)
- Computers in the public area of the Neighbourhood Resource Centre for the community to come and access (this is still being explored as there are wider issues with connectivity, but this is due to be up and running soon)

Ultimately, digital literacy and access to devices will be life changing for many residents in different ways. From basic access to services (e.g. council, doctors), to contact with family (e.g. email/video calling), to engaging in coproduction in an estate regeneration context, these are all options that are being made possible through this project.

We are still at the early stages of engagement, and it will be interesting to monitor digital responses over time. There is not always a direct correlation as different consultations can engage people in different ways. Our baseline data for this project was taken from the online engagement with the Local Plan. In Northumberland Park, there were under 5 responses. This is not a surprise given the challenges of the area. We also know that engagement with the Local Plan is not a unique challenge to Haringey. For many in more deprived areas, there is no relevance or incentive to engage with a document like the Local Plan if you have urgent priorities such as feeding your family or finding a job.

8.2 Cost effectiveness - are there ways that conducting digital engagement allowed you to save time or resource compared to traditional methods of engagement?

In the Northumberland Park community, the use of a digital platform will be 'in addition to' rather than 'instead of' using traditional engagement methods.

The pilot provided us the resources to to explore the effectiveness of a digital platform which would not have been a priority/possibility previously. It didn't save time as we still delivered our usual traditional engagement activity which is more time and resource heavy.

Online engagement helped us reach more people and diversify who engaged, especially within the wider community.

9. Development/Implementation

9.1 How you developed/ implemented/ mobilised the product with your suppliers

We decided to use Commonplace as we had an existing license with them. Our project focussed more heavily on exploring and overcoming barriers to digital engagement in an estate regeneration context.

Procurement of digital devices in general was a challenge. It took over 6 months to get the laptops for the classroom set up and youth service for example. We were able to work with finance and the PM team to be able to extend the team's payment card amount to purchase items for the project due to the time sensitivities.

9.2 Lessons learned: Challenges you had to overcome e.g. people/skill shortages/ knowledge gaps

Our biggest challenge was team resource. At one point in the project, we had a 6-month secondment to our team and that individual brought fantastic technical knowledge and experience, and data analysis and reporting expertise. Due to changes in the wider programme, the secondment came to an end and we lost that resource and skill set resulting in more challenges for the remaining team.

The comms team are great, and the funding enabled us to get them involved in the digital platform and social media campaigns. This is not something we had the skill set/capacity to always deliver at team level. Moving forward, this comms resource comes at a cost so it's important we can look at developing the skill set within the team to be able to manage ongoing digital engagement.

9.3 Lessons learned: Ongoing engagement requirements/ambitions for this project

We want to continue to use the platform to build on digital engagement. We will also be able to use the data more intelligently, sharing knowledge and connections across our communities.

10. Budget

Haringey council was awarded **£99,000.** This was spent on the following items:

Item of spend	Cost (£)
Classroom set up with devices (laptops), monitors & storage	£20,000
Digital support sessions and volunteer digital mentor programme	£15,000
Digital devices for harder to engage groups	£5,000
Digital platform with translations & social media campaign	£5,000
Comms and engagement material	£20,000
Library style set up with computer booths	£30,000
Engagement events	£4,000