

The Warm Welcome Programme: Bridging the Gap

Bracknell Forest Submission to the
Social Care Digital Innovation Programme

Funded by NHS Digital



Social Isolation and Loneliness

Research on social isolation and loneliness shows them to be consistently linked with ill health, including everything from heart disease to depression and cognitive decline¹.

Social isolation and loneliness are also associated with excess health and care costs, including a greater risk of delayed discharge from hospital, hospital readmission and permanent admission into residential care¹.

Given this evidence, it's no surprise that improving social contact is a national priority. The UK now even has a 'Minister for Loneliness', Tracey Crouch, leading a government-wide group with responsibility for policy and innovation in tackling social isolation.

The good news is that we can do something about it.

A research review showed that programmes aimed at alleviating social isolation and loneliness are cost effective, especially if they have two key characteristics: a) They are group based and b) they are designed and run largely by the participants themselves².



A socially connected community is key to what we are trying to achieve in Bracknell Forest. Whether it be our aim of improving population health and well-being, or our need to reduce dependency on health and social care services, social isolation will always undermine our efforts. Therefore we've made it a top priority.

"The power of community to create health is far greater than any physician clinic or hospital." Mark Hyman MD

1. <http://www.mentalhealthchallenge.org.uk/social-factors-population-health-management/>

2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3170621/>

The Bracknell Forest Warm Welcome Programme

Our Warm **Welcome** Programme is an 'asset based' initiative aimed at reducing social isolation and loneliness within our local community.

By asset-based, we mean the programme is fuelled by the enthusiasm and energy of local people. It centres around a network of over 400 community groups and projects run by local people for local people. These offer everything from advice and support, through to opportunities for physical activity, craft, learning or just having fun.

Our support to these community groups includes seed funding, advice, training and help with securing venues. We also offer expert support on promotion, including running social media campaigns, making brief videos or the creation of posters and leaflets.

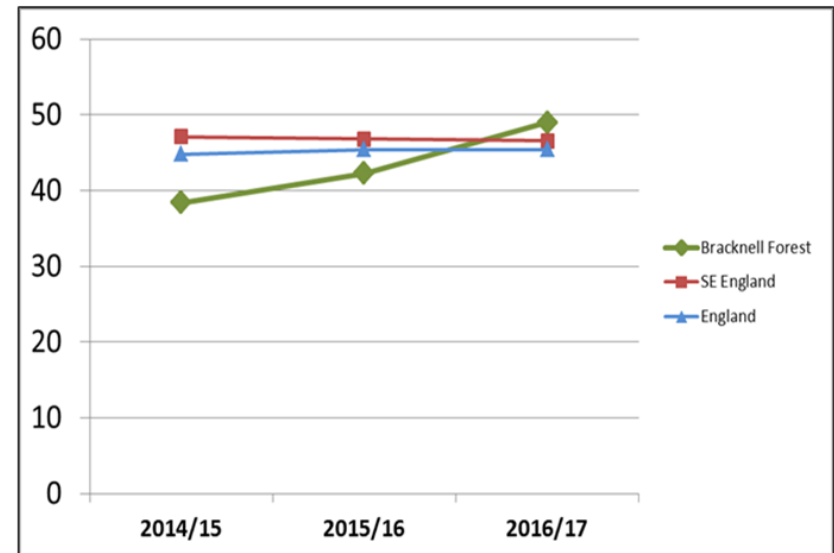
Local people wishing to join one of the community groups can either just go along, be 'referred' via our Social Prescribing' programme, or sign up at one of our regular 'Community Expo' events.

More info on the Warm Welcome Programme is at...



<http://health.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/warm-welcome/>

The Warm Welcome Programme seems to be having a positive impact. Since the programme launched in 2015 we've seen a significant rise in the number of people saying that they have as much social contact as they would like (ASCOF, 2017). Surveys also show an increase in the number of physically active people in Bracknell Forest (Sport England, 2017).

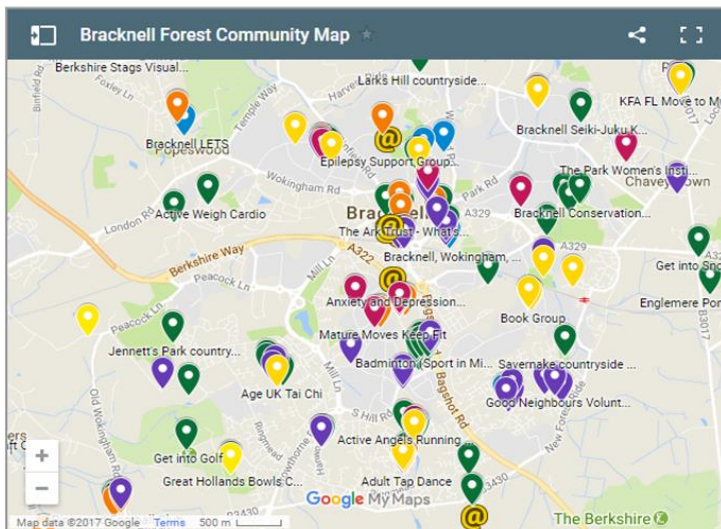


Source: NHS digital, ASCOF

The Warm Welcome Programme won a national Self Care Award in and was highly commended by the UK Positive Practice in Mental Health initiative.

Our Challenge: Bridging the Gap to the Warm Welcome Programme

Key to the whole Warm Welcome Programme is our online interactive ‘Community Map’. This is regularly updated with new groups and, at the last count, now allows users to explore over 400 community initiatives in the local area.



The Community Map has proven very popular. It receives several thousand hits every month, a total that is increasing all the time. However we are also very aware that it's not for everyone...

In particular, while the online map is easy to use for most people in our area, it's not that great for our residents that either don't have internet access, or who may otherwise struggle to access websites.

Feedback from both residents and professional colleagues suggested that two groups in particular may be missing out on the information contained in our Warm Welcome Community Map. These are..

- Older People (over 65) with health conditions
- People with Learning Disabilities

Ironically, these groups are also among those most likely to experience social isolation and loneliness. Therefore it's certainly a gap we must address.

We can (and do) produce printed guides to community projects. However, these obviously can't reflect the ever changing details of what groups are out there, what they offer, when and where.

Therefore, we needed to find a solution that provided dynamic and interactive information on community groups and projects, but that didn't require users to have home internet access.

Discovery Phase



Discovery Phase - Overview

We were fortunate to be selected to participate in the 2018 Social Care Digital Innovation Project run by the LGA and NHS Digital. This included funding that allowed us to embark on a user engagement exercise aimed at answering the following question...

How can we best enable local people to explore the ever changing information we hold on community groups and projects in a way that is simple, accessible and doesn't require home internet access?

While, the Warm Welcome Programme is coordinated by the Public Health Team at Bracknell Forest Council, it's actually a collaboration of a range of local partners. These include our Council colleagues in Social Care, NHS East Berkshire and Involve Voluntary Services.

We formed a project team incorporating all of these partners. It is chaired by the Director of Public Health, Dr. Lisa McNally.

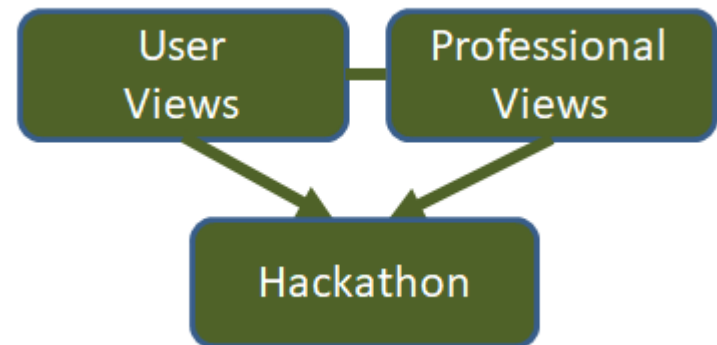
The team commissioned Qa Research, a social and market research company. Qa are have extensive experience of working in Bracknell Forest and in conducting work on health and social care.

The first phase of the research was aimed at exploring general attitudes to both the need for help in connecting with community groups and potential role of technology

The second phase focused in on designing a solution – and took the form of a 'hackathon'. Participants were invited to get into the detail and help us actually design a solution.

Both of these phases focused on older people and adults with learning disabilities (LD).

A third, supplementary phase of the work captured professionals' views. This included those working with older adults and/or people as well as those from the interactive technology sector.



Discovery Phase – User Attitudes & Themes

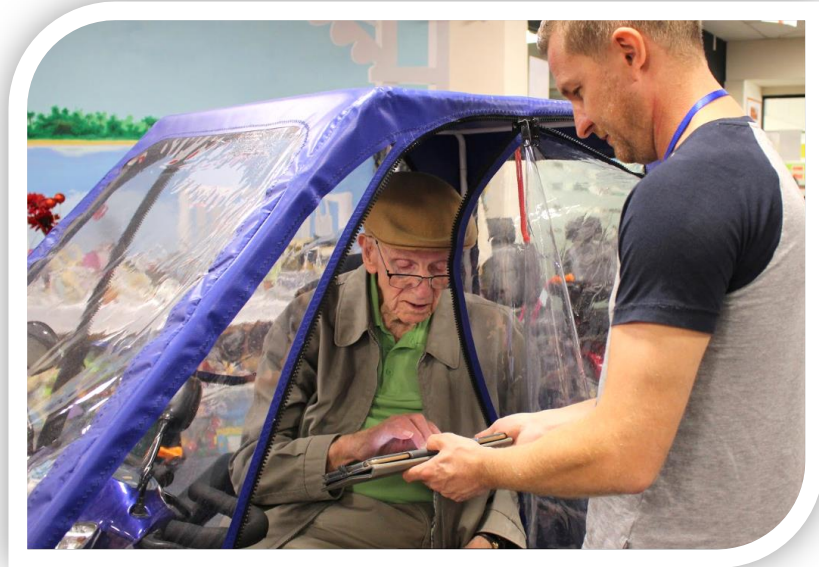
In total we engaged with 30 individuals via a combination of group discussions and one to one depth interviews. Participants included older people (aged 65+), carers of older people, carers of adults with LD, adults with LD (with support from carers).

Among the older participants, most said that they did not use computers at home. While some said that they had used tablets at some point, generally speaking internet at home was not something they had or would consider having.

“I wouldn’t bother...I left work when I was 55 and it was getting complicated then...I’ve lost track of what you do on a computer....”

The majority of our older participants told us that they had used the touch screen sign in at the GP surgery. Some also mentioned using this type of system in libraries too.

When probed about the GP reception touch screen participants generally reported they had no problem with this and found it relatively straight forward.



In relation to people with LD, in many cases they actually had better digital skills than the parent/carer and would take on the role of enabler/facilitator.

For people with LD their relationship with technology could vary widely depending on their level of need.

As some carers pointed out, some people with LD can prefer interacting with technology over face to face contact with others.

Discovery Phase – User Attitudes & Proposal Validation

There were mixed levels of awareness of the Bracknell Warm Welcome Website.

Some carers of people with LD were more familiar with it and thought that it was/had been used by 'community network advisers' and perhaps used to be called 'community marketplace'.

There was general agreement that more would need to be done to make people aware of the resource, most likely by getting out into the community and explaining it to people.

When shown the map screen with the multiple pins, many of the older people looked confused and said if they saw that they would shut the screen down or walk away. For some it reinforced why they chose not to engage with technology and screens.

When seeing what the screen revealed and clicking on one of the map pins the majority of participants were impressed by the information provided.

The information was easy to digest and the fact that there was a phone number and contact details were welcomed.

Following on from the positive responses regarding GP interactive screens, we took a proposal to participants of using interactive, digital kiosks in public places. They were shown an example image of an interactive kiosk being trialled in Coventry so they could get an idea of what one of these facilities may look like in a public space.

Participants said that seeing this out and about would make them curious, have a look, and try to touch and swipe.

"I would have a go...a lot of people they don't have tech, but if it is easy and like a big picture and you can touch it, someone might do that if they are in town."

Participants suggested that that the sight of the kiosk would make people decide to have a closer look and have a go at using it. It would also have the advantage of not relying on home internet or knowledge of the how to navigate websites.

In general , while participants stated that the kiosks would have to be very easy to use for everyone, the proposal proved popular.

Discovery Phase – The Professionals

There was widespread agreement among professionals that keeping the people they support informed about community groups and projects was a key priority. There was also agreement that enabling people to explore that information using a digital, interactive kiosk, would be very beneficial...

I think it would put people back in control of their lives. To find out their own information will give them independence.



Watch a video of interviews with professionals
<https://youtu.be/KjnoyC61uGk>

The proposal of an interactive, digital kiosk chimed with professionals as they confirmed that many older people struggled with standard access to the web.

Most of the people we support get their information from word of mouth, or they ring and ask us. Very few get their information from the internet.

In contrast, those supporting people with LD reported that their clients often use digital tech...

A lot do have smartphones and do access the internet on a regular basis.

Interviews with commercial technology professionals revealed a wide range of interactive options were available for public space use. These include voice features, printing and biosensors. The software, which can be controlled from a team base allows updates and usage monitoring. Detailed information on costs for different tech options were obtained.

The tech companies all expressed a keen interest in an ongoing partnership if the project progressed to implementation.

Discovery Phase – The Hackathon

More generally associated with the design of smartphone apps, a hackathon is a live design session which includes people with expert knowledge or experience on the topic area.

To our knowledge, a hackathon format has never been used to design public space technology, or carried out with users of social care services.

Our Hackathon sessions, conducted by Qa Research with older residents and people with LD, co-created a design for an interactive display using touchscreen, devices. Their purpose was to further validate our proposals and create a detailed specification for the implementation phase.

The first learning point was that, if looking to transfer the content from the Community Map – an actual map would not work. Rather, a simpler design based on the 6 colour keys would work better - each with its own image icon to give them a clear identity.

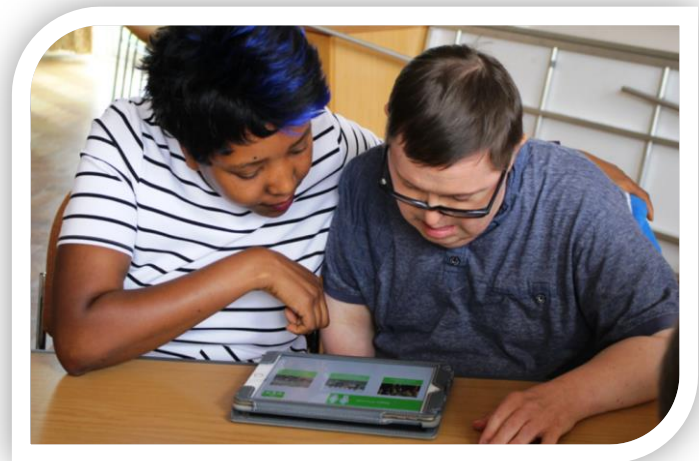
“Turn the words into images....face of a child ideas for kids...mortar board for learning...pen pencil get creative...,get connected telephone....how about meeting others”

The first, ‘home screen’ design was considered crucial by our participants. Many thought that something about “The Warm Welcome Programme” would be uninformative.

Rather they suggested that the home screen could simply say in large font: *‘Hello, tap me’* or *‘tap me’*

The second screen could then include the short introduction *‘This kiosk can help you ...’*

The introduction paragraph would also benefit by adding *‘around Bracknell Forest’* somewhere within the text to make it clear that it was focused on activities within the local area only.



Discovery Phase – The Hackathon (cont.)

Our participants decided that the design should help those less familiar or confident with using touch screen devices by providing ongoing assistance or instruction (eg: that they need to touch the screen in certain places).

The Hackathon participants decided that the system should ask the user to select a location which would then filter activities that were in that location only. This would enable people to make choices more efficiently as they would only select things that were in places they could get to.

They co-designed to follow the theme selection page that shows a map of Bracknell broken up into a number of core localities i.e. Priestwood, Great Hollands etc . The following screen will then only filter activities that are in that area

Just in case some people are Ok to travel further, our participants also suggested that we provide the option to *'see activities in all areas'* available.

Some felt that the screen should only show a maximum of five activities, anymore and this could be confusing and off-putting for those



with learning difficulties or sensory impairments.

Some therefore suggested additional activities could be on another page but there would need to be an instruction to say *'see more, swipe left'*

When thinking about the physical format of kiosks whereby the screens are portrait rather than landscape in design.

Our participants also decided that it may make more sense for the activities to be stacked vertically rather than side by side horizontally.

Discovery Phase – The Hackathon (cont.)

The participants thought that most important aspect of the tool was the information box. They felt it could be adapted to become more usable for a wider range of individuals.

It was suggested that we swap info text box to left hand side – *“You always look left first.”* Also, they designed the subtitle to be in a format showing they key details people needed (eg: *what, when, where, and how much?*).

We also should ensure that we make the info font larger. It may be useful to offer the user a way to increase the font size if they need it.



The location of the kiosks was a key consideration for our participants.

Popular suggestions included ‘South Hill Park’. This was a place that was seen to have very high footfall of older people and those with disabilities and LD .

Other suggestions included:

The Peel Centre, Bus station/bus stops, Libraries, Sports and community centres, Colleges, Doctor’s surgeries, Supermarkets and Princess Square/Lexicon

There was a feeling that the best locations would include places with a captive audience e.g. places for sitting and waiting.

“I would have a look if I was bored waiting for a bus.”

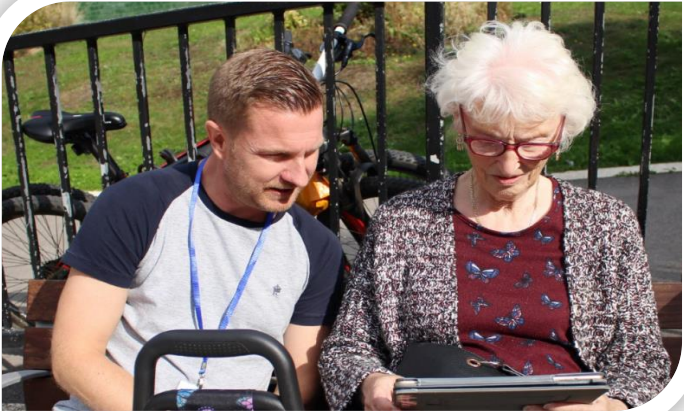
There was also support for a mobile kiosk to take to community events so that people could see it in action and develop confidence.

Discovery Phase – Reflections

The Discovery Page left us with a detailed specification for not only interactive digital kiosks, but also where they should be placed and how they should be promoted or presented.

The participants, particularly those in the hackathon, approached the exercise with an amazing enthusiasm and willingness to put time and effort into the project. They validated our initial proposals and then took them to the next level.

If the project goes forward to implementation, the hackathon participants, plus some key professionals, will be invited to form a steering group to help roll out and evaluate the initiative.



The hackathon was a novel method of user engagement which proved extremely useful. Only this type of extended format would have created the level of detailed co-design that we needed. This will now allow us to take very detail specifications to potential suppliers of the technology.

One key reflection on our discovery phase was the that it proved incredibly challenging to consider all levels of need. While on the one hand we wanted to accommodate those less able to understand or navigate information, we also didn't want to produce something so simplistic that it ceased to be of real value. We think, however, that we have reached a good compromise in our specification thanks to our hackathon participants suggestions of step by step guidance as an option on the system.

Another reflection is that we would not have been able to complete the discovery phase without significant professional input. This included the professional research team, as well as colleagues in social care services. This will be an important consideration when planning future user engagement work.