

Evaluation of the Technology and Tea Project

Executive Summary and Project Report
MSc Public Health Dissertation Project

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Executive Summary

Background

According to the United Nations (2015) globally the number of older people is increasing. On a national level the United Kingdom (UK) is following this trend, with the Office for National Statistic (ONS) predicting that by 2039 1 in 12 will be aged 80 or over. Looking locally in Salford, according to the Salford locality Action Plan (2016) there are currently 33,200 residents aged 65 and over, and this is expected to increase by 45,000 before 2030. It should be noted that although the number of over 65s is expected to increase the population in Salford on the whole will be younger compared to the England average (Salford locality Action Plan, 2016).

One of the challenges in relation the aging population is that many older people now live alone and with long-term health conditions, which has created additional funding pressures on health and social care services (United Nations, 2015; Bloom, 2011). In line with this is evidence that using technology can help reduce social isolation and improve health and well-being (Hill et al., 2015). Nonetheless, due to the digital skills gap caused by older people often retiring before these technologies became mainstream, older residents are the least likely to use the internet (ONS, 2017). To help combat this 'low level 5 week digital skills programme Tech and Tea was set up in Salford in November 2015 and is designed to give members of the local community the opportunity to learn how to use technology in a supportive, friendly environment. So far it has been found that benefits of the programme include bringing people together, helping to reduce social isolation and supporting residents to age well (Salford Together, 2016).

Objectives

The main project objectives were to:

1. Evaluate if the Tech and Tea programme has increased participants access and use of technology to manage their health and social care needs.
2. Explore whether the service users feel more confident and less anxious using technology after attending the Tech and Tea programme.
3. Examine if the Tech and Tea programme has improved social interactions for the participants.

Methods

This research was undertaken using a qualitative approach. Purposeful recruitment was used by selecting participants who had attended the Tech and Tea programme within the last 12 months. Data was collected using three focus groups and three interviews, all of which were audio recorded. A guided discussion took place facilitated through the use of open ended questions (see appendix 3). In total n=18 participants (n=6 males, n=11 females) attended the focus groups and n=3 participants (n=1 male, n=2 females) were interviewed by phone. The age range for participants was from 57-85.

Data was analysed using thematic analysis to draw out the key themes and sub-themes.

Results

The researcher identified four key themes including: Social Inclusion, Accessibility, Well-Being and the Dark Side.

Theme 1 - Social inclusion (feeling connected)

Attending the course had opened up a whole new perspective for the participants, they felt more connected to the outside world, through making contact with family and friends, meeting new people on the course, making new friendships, which were continued outside of the group. Some participants had progressed to other volunteering opportunities. Overall using computers was seen as a necessity in an increasingly digital society.

In addition to the positive aspects of the programme, participants also raised ongoing unease with aspects of technology. There were several concerns about the inaccuracies of the health information available on the internet and also the sheer volume of health information available.

Theme 2 - Accessibility

This theme related to overcoming access difficulties and accessing training locally in venues. The participants were already regular users of these community venues, and had been recruited to the course by staff working in local facilities. It is important that consideration is given to the challenges older people face, including access to training. Many older people with disabilities will rely on family members and carers for support with access; as such it is important that family members and carers also have the required skills to enable this support (Chadwick, Wesson & Fulwood, 2013). Tech and Tea was reported to meet their needs in the way it was advertised and delivered in local venues to an older target audience.

Theme 3- Wellbeing

Keeping in touch with family and friends, listening to music, hobbies and nostalgia are all things that connected the participants to people, improved their mood and stimulated their brain. The research evidence supports previous research into the positive health impacts on wellbeing by connecting with people. Previous effects reported include improved immunity and a reduction in cardiovascular problems (Age UK, 2012; Windle, Francis & Coombe, 2011) including a reduction in depressive illness (Valtorta et al., 2012).

Theme 4 - The Dark Side

There were concerns raised about security on-line and staying safe, these fears were due to a lack of knowledge impacting on how they used the internet. For example some participants were reluctant to use internet banking, shopping, booking holidays, and there were real concerns about identity theft.

Key recommendations

- To continue to run the Tech and Tea course including follow-on courses e.g. internet safety.
- To continue drop in sessions supported by the volunteers in order to

increase users confidence in using the technology, further developing their skills and building on and maintaining the friendships developed through the Tech and Tea programme.

- Ensure participants are given information about safe websites to search for information about long term health conditions.
- To establish and maintain links with local and other councils to share initiatives and ideas from this forward thinking and well received programme and develop links to more isolated groups of older people who may have undertaken the training.
- To continue to improve and increase ways of advertising and marketing the course.

Acknowledgements

There are a few people who I would like to thank who have supported me through my learning journey. My late husband Gary without his support on the early stages of this journey I would not be where I am today. My daughter Amy, my son in law Ben and grandson Henry for their patience and encouragement, particularly when I have not been available as much as I would of liked to be. To my daughter Danielle for her support, and for listening when I needed a listening ear. I would like to thank my Mum for her understanding and encouragement, despite having many challenges of her own.

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1.0 Background

The United Nations (2015) reported that by 2050 the population of people aged 60 years or older will have increased by 56% to an estimated 2.1 billion. Globally there will be a rise in the number of elderly who are 80 or over, and have greater health needs than those in their 60s and 70s (Bloom, 2011). This rise presents opportunities for a growing older generation who are less likely to use technology, but can benefit from its use. For example the switching of public services to electronic and online delivery has been a key government policy since 2009. There is also evidence suggesting that adults should be entitled to access provisions, including support to learn basic skills since 2009 (Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (DBIS), 2009). Furthermore the present government has made a commitment to increasing digital inclusion by working with charities and encouraging a movement of digital champions to get active in their communities (Department for Digital, Culture Media & Sport (DCMS), 2017).

In today's modern society, technology is embedded into our culture and plays a fundamental role in our everyday lives. From smartphones to social media to online banking our reliance on technology has become ever more apparent (DCMS, 2017). In recognition of this the Tech and Tea project aims to improve access to information and IT skills for older people over 65 in Salford, with the aim of supporting local communities by bringing people together, reducing social isolation and improve health and well-being outcomes. The programme also encourages local residents who have completed the course to become volunteer wellbeing champions (i.e. volunteers who enable local residents to support each other).

The aim of this research was to explore whether the Tech and Tea project had increased access to older people using technology to manage their health and social care needs, reduced anxiety about using technology, improved confidence when using technology and increased social inclusion.

1.2 Summary of the main points from the literature

Globally there will be a rise in the number of elderly who are 80 or over, and have greater health needs than those in their 60s and 70s (Bloom, 2011, Office of National Statistics (ONS), 2017). Although older people are living longer many are living with complex health conditions, which has financial consequences for providing Health and

Social Care services (Bloom, 2011; World Health Organisation (WHO), 2015). In the United Kingdom (UK) there are 11.6 million people aged 65 and over according to Age UK, with this number expected to grow by over 40% in the next 17 years to over 17 million (Age UK, 2017). The ONS predict that by mid-2039 1:12 of the population will be aged 80 or over (ONS, 2011). Looking more locally at the Salford Locality Action Plan (2016) it states that there are 33,200 residents aged 65 and over, with this population being expected to increase to over 45,000 by 2030. This proportion of population will increase at a slower rate than both England and Greater Manchester and according to the ONS (2011) overall Salford will have a population in 2021 that is younger than the English average.

The consequences of these increasing numbers of elderly residents has meant additional pressures on funding social and healthcare systems, pension schemes as well as maintaining economic growth (United Nations, 2015, Bloom, 2011). Mason (2016) notes that National Health Service (NHS) spending is nearly double that for households that are retired. Researchers have looked at how the elderly can use technology to improve their own health and wellbeing to enable them to be cared for at home for longer. Eisma et al., (2004) found older people would use technology to save time and energy, such as microwaves, dishwashers and use computers and tablets to shop on line. Further to this Tsai et al., (2015) found that older people would use the internet to access support networks and forums for providing health information.

One of the challenges identified by older people are feelings of loneliness and isolation (Hill et al., 2015). Deteriorating physical impairments can prevent older people going out which can add to the feeling of isolation and anxiety (Tsai et al., 2015). Technology can enable the elderly to develop and renew social contacts and become more actively engaged in their communities (Bolton, 2010). However, age is a significant factor in relation to non-use of the internet according, with 1:10 adults having never used the internet, just over one half of these 2.6 million were 75 and over (ONS, 2017). The number of internet user's decrease with age, making age a significant factor to non-use of the internet and pensioners are over represented amongst socially excluded and lower income groups (ONS, 2017).

Qualitative studies exploring older people's experiences with technology found that

older people who engaged with technology reported that it reduced isolation, because it helped them to maintain contact with family and friends (Tsai et al., 2015; Hill et al., 2015; Mitzen et al., 2010). Participants who are lonely and isolated may be more likely to put themselves forward to take part in research that has a social focus to collecting data i.e. using focus groups and semi structured questionnaires because it allows participants to talk at their own pace either with another person or within a group (Tashakkorie & Tedlie 2010). Further to this taking part in focus groups has been found to be an enjoyable social experience (Patton 2002).

An increasing older population means there are a greater number of frail older adults who are living with health conditions. There are health impacts for older people who are lonely and isolated, which include effects on their immunity and cardiovascular system (Age UK, 2012; Valtorta & Hanratty, 2012; Windle, Francis, Coombe, 2011), and a link between depression and loneliness (Age UK, 2012; Cotton et al., 2012; Windle et al., 2011). Using technology has the potential to reduce isolation therefore improving health and wellbeing. In addition, older adults are more likely to use the NHS and these health costs are increasing (Lattanzio et al., 2014). Using technology can support health care by using home monitoring (e.g. blood pressure monitors, blood glucose monitors, and monitoring of oxygen levels), enabling early intervention and allowing older people to remain at home instead of attending medical appointments therefore saving money (Czaja et al., 2006).

However it has also been found that a lack of the necessary knowledge and skills to use technology is a barrier for many older people. The skills gap may be because older adults: have been retired a number of years; may not have used technology; the cost of the equipment, along with the fees required to access the internet which can be prohibitive (Tsai et al, 2015; Czaja et al, 2006). It is argued that there is a lack of recognition within the technological industry about the numbers of older people, and that they should design technology that is more user friendly. Further to this consumer demand for more accessible devices would most likely make them more cost effective. User friendly equipment could be designed to aid memory loss, and make using computers easier for older residents with hearing, visual, or sensory impairments (Eisma et al., 2004; Hill et al., 2015). Anxiety about using equipment is another barrier, with these anxieties potentially due to previous experiences of learning, or lacking in

self-confidence (self-efficacy) as discussed (Eisma et al., 2004; Hill et al., 2015). There is recognition that these anxieties can be overcome by learning in small groups, providing training that recognises anxiety in a supportive environment, and using community wellbeing.

Online security has been mentioned as a concern and a barrier to some people, in part because there has been a rise in computer threats related to computer viruses, fraud and the stealing of sensitive information (Hill et al., 2015; Holtum, 2016; Mitzner et al., 2010; Tsai et al., 2015). In order to mitigate these threats, using passwords and computer virus protection software can help, with training courses for the elderly needing to include online security as a component (Hildebrandt, 2013).

The Local Authority of Salford has demonstrated a commitment to the long term support for older residents by adopting the WHO Age Friendly Cities model. This model provides a framework to enable cities to adapt their services and structures to make them more accessible and inclusive to the needs of older people (WHO 2007). Furthermore the Salford Locality Plan (2017) has transformation priorities to deliver a digital inclusive city, reducing the number of digitally excluded residents and providing access to services on-line where possible.

2.0 Study Objectives

The main project objectives were to:

1. Evaluate if the Tech and Tea programme has increased participants access and use of technology to manage their health and social care needs.
2. Explore whether the service users feel more confident and less anxious using technology after attending the Tech and Tea programme.
3. Examine if the Tech and Tea programme has improved social interactions for the participants.

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Design

This study used an inductive approach to enquiry by collecting qualitative data using focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Braun and Clarke (2013) note that focus groups are an appropriate method of enquiry when seeking to find out about understanding and perceptions, with semi-structured interviews being appropriate if participants have a personal stake in the topic.

3.3 Sample

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling from attendees of the Tech and Tea courses, either currently or during the preceding 12 months. The sample was identified and contacted by Inspiring Communities Together who run Tech and Tea. This approach is supported by a number of researchers (Eisma et al., 2004; Hill et al., 2015; Mitzner et al., 2010).

To avoid researcher bias the initial invitation letter was sent out by Inspiring Communities Together and anyone who wished to take part could do so (Appendix 1). Those who wanted to take part then contacted the researcher by telephone or email and were sent a participant information letter detailing the research, the dates and times of the focus groups and a consent form (Appendix 2). Contact details of the researcher were included in the letter in case they had any further questions, wanted to withdraw from the study or preferred a 1:1 interview.

3.4 Procedure

The researcher was seeking to recruit a potential cohort of around 16-24 participants which would be a similar number used by other researchers (Mitzner et al., 2010).

The researcher had arranged for three focus groups to take place, in three different areas within Salford at different times to help with accessibility. All the venues had been used to deliver the Tech and Tea courses so were familiar for the participants. These venues included a community café based in Swinton, an Age U.K meeting room based in Eccles and a Library based at Salford sports village. The researcher who was also the moderator of the group arrived at the venue at least thirty minutes before the participants to check the room and the equipment (e.g. digital tape recorder was working and refreshments were available). The researcher greeted the participants

as they arrived and refreshments were offered in order to make them feel at ease. The focus group was expected to last one hour, although a two hour timeslot was given as this allowed time for any latecomers and time at the end of the focus group for socialisation.

Once all the participants had arrived the researcher talked through the participant information sheet to ensure that all participants were happy to proceed and written consent was obtained. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the research process at any time, as specified on the information sheet, although any information already used would remain in the study. Before the focus groups began participants were asked to turn off mobile phones and to respect other members within the group, ensuring everyone had an opportunity to speak. To start participants were asked to introduce themselves by their first name and the date they attended the course. After the introductions the digital recorder was turned on.

A guided discussion took place using a pre-determined open ended questions as described by Krueger and Casey (2009) starting with an opening question designed to make the participants feel at ease. The next questions were transition questions leading into the topic, followed by the key questions addressing the research area, the final ending question gave the participants the opportunity to bring up any issues they felt were relevant (Appendix 3).

Example of an opening question; *let's begin by having each person tell me your first name and how long ago you participated in the Tech and Tea programme?*

Continuing with a transition question to get the participants thinking about the programme E.g. *think back to when you first accessed the Tech and Tea programme what were your first impressions?*

Moving on to key questions these are looking at the impacts of the course on the individual E.g. *In what way is your life different because of your participation in the tech and tea programme?*

The ending question gives the participants the opportunity to discuss issues not already mentioned *Is there anything else you would like to mention that you feel it is important to talk about?*

The 1:1 interviews were negotiated individually, and for those undertaken by telephone they were sent a participant information and consent form prior to the interview. The interviewer reiterated the information, which was on the participant information sheet and verbal consent was obtained prior to interview which was recorded. The format which followed was then in line with the focus groups.

3.5 Ethics

To ensure that all aspects were considered for this study an ethics application form was submitted to the University Ethics Committee. Ethical Approval was obtained on the 26th June 2017 ethics number HST 1617-293 (Appendix 5).

3.6 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was undertaken in stages as described by Braun & Clarke (2013) and Lacy & Luff (2001).

Phase 1

This involved becoming familiar with the data reading and re reading it in an active way. It then involved listening to the recorded data and completing transcription as it was spoken including utterances and laughter.

Phase 2

This includes generating codes from the data, this is an initial list of what is in the data, and the relevance of the data to the research question guided the analysis.

Phase 3

This involved searching for themes from the codes generated, and combining these themes to begin to develop thematic maps.

Phase 4

This involved ensuring the data within the themes came together in a meaningful way and that the themes could be clearly identified.

Phase 5

Reviewing the themes, and checking that these themes work, checking that there was a convincing story developing.

Phase 6

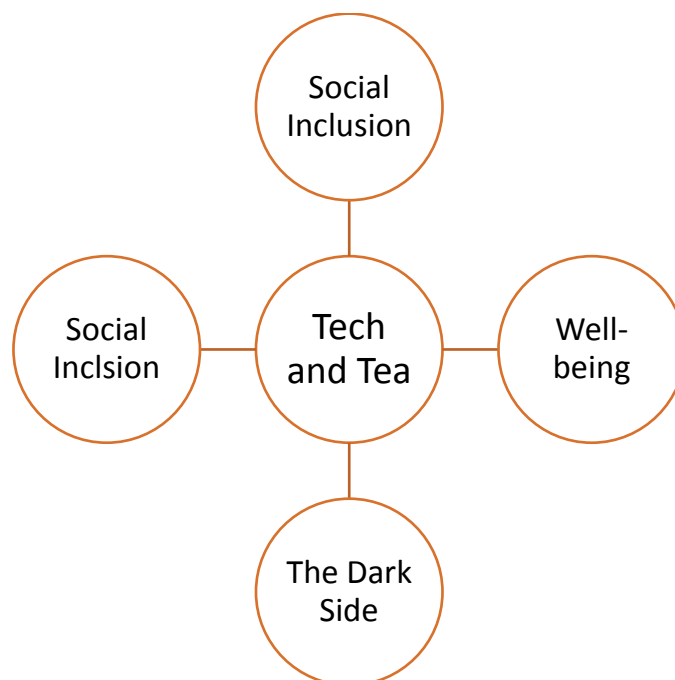
Report writing, drawing on a set of fully worked out themes and pulling together the analytical analysis.

4.0 Summary of main Findings

N=18 participants (n=6 males, n=11 females) attended the focus groups and n=3 participants (n=1 male, n=2 females) were interviewed on the telephone. The age range for participants was from 57-85 years. All participants were of Caucasian ethnicity and were all English speakers. In order to protect confidentiality pseudonyms have been used in place of real names any similarities are purely coincidental.

After transcribing and coding the data, the researcher found 43 codes and with further analyses and theme mapping four main themes were derived: Social Inclusion, Accessibility, Well-Being and the Dark side.

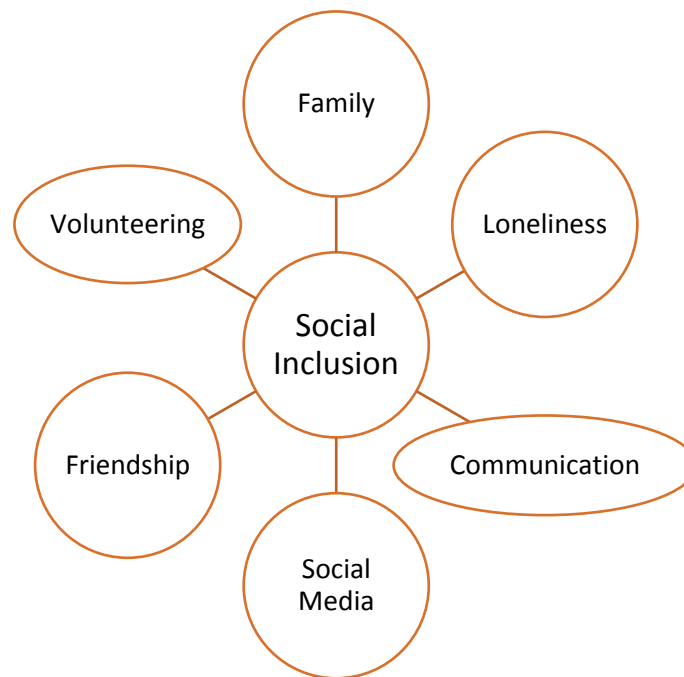
Figure 1 Overview of key themes



Each theme had a number of sub-themes as outlined in the diagrams below, these sub-themes all linked into the main theme.

4.1 Theme 1 - Social Inclusion

Figure 2 Social Inclusion sub theme map



One of the central themes in this study was that the Tech and Tea programme gave participants the opportunity to engage with each other and feel connected to the community in which they lived. There were a number of sub-themes which contributed to this theme as outlined below.

Sub-theme 1 - Communication: This sub-theme was about how participants interacted with others. Discussion took place around how using computers helped with communication, by sending and receiving emails, reading newspapers, engaging with social media (such as Skype, Facebook and what's App to have face to face conversations), booking doctors' appointments, and holidays.

The participants reported that they now had a set of new skills that they could use to communicate with others. In addition connecting with people made them feel good, and they did not feel so alone. As such it was found that this new way of communicating was helping to reduce loneliness and increased social inclusion.

"I feel more involved and aware with what's going on in the wider community which is very important to me" (Mary)

"If you can't get out as much as you want, you [now] know Skype and what

have [so] you can still be in contact with people [and] have a laugh and a joke with somebody so you don't feel isolated" (Helen)

Sub-theme 2 - Family: another sub-theme related to the importance of family, staying in touch, seeing and talking to them on a regular basis. Through having greater access to the internet and social media this had opened up an avenue to remain connected to their family.

"If you belong or go on Facebook at least if you have the messenger thing you could at least do a video call, you could do a video call on WhatsApp as well which for me is great because my daughter is in Australia she has just had her third child and I never see her, to be able to visually see her it's fantastic". (Ann)

Sub-theme 3 - Friendships: This sub-theme related to staying in contact with friends or making new friends and extending their social network. It was reported that one of the key benefits of the Tech and Tea course was social interaction which was encouraged alongside learning and made learning social and encouraged friendships to develop from a shared learning experience. Participants talked about becoming more confident and cohesive as a community by attending the tech and tea course. Age UK (2010) identified that learning new skills increased community participation and also increase's confidence (Czaja et al., 2006; Hill et al., 2015). Linked to this one male participant (John) contacted the research team following the focus group to say he had enjoyed it so much and asked how he could be more involved. As a result of this he was encouraged to become a volunteer. Tsai et al., (2015), and Hill et al., (2015) identified connecting with family and friends as a key factor in reducing social isolation.

"Well that's it, it got people together, you know the people who live where you live but you see you now talk to them" (Pat)

"My group we all became very friendly and we decided to take it further and there's a whole gardening project and other things for a group of people who met through Tech and Tea all jelled together" (John)

"I think our lads would have got on better if they were in a group away from the home and came out" (Joan)

"We are not very mobile are we" (John)

“Yeah where they would have a benefit because they would have met different people instead of being with the same level of their own they see every day” (Joan)

“Yes because I am a Rugby League supporter and one or two of us are emailing each other you know about the games and what have you so it’s smashing”

Sub-theme 4 - Loneliness: This sub-theme was about being alone and how that made the participants feel. They talked about feelings of low mood, however, their wellbeing had improved by using their new skills to access social media which could reduce the feeling of loneliness and Isolation. Participants reported that by being in contact with others -- especially if they were unwell and could not get out – using social media could allow them to have a laugh and a joke to raise their mood and improve their wellbeing.

“if you’re on your own you are lonely your very depressed you get on the phone and nobody answers, you get online I can get onto my brothers sisters and everything straight away that’s how I know” (John)

“if you are poorly and can’t get out you know skype and what have you, I can still be in touch with family and friends you can still have a laugh and a joke with somebody, so you don’t feel as isolated” (Joan)

“it helped me a lot, when you live on your own and your lonely, it’s made a big difference to me” (Mary)

Sub-theme 5 - Volunteering: The final sub theme which was about giving time to help others within the community for no financial reward. Participants talked about having a purpose, improving wellbeing and getting help. Volunteering has made a difference to the lives of the individuals as volunteers with improved confidence, and increased self-esteem. In addition it has helped to reduce the isolation and given them a purpose. It was felt that the Tech and Tea course delivery had been enriched because of the input by the volunteers.

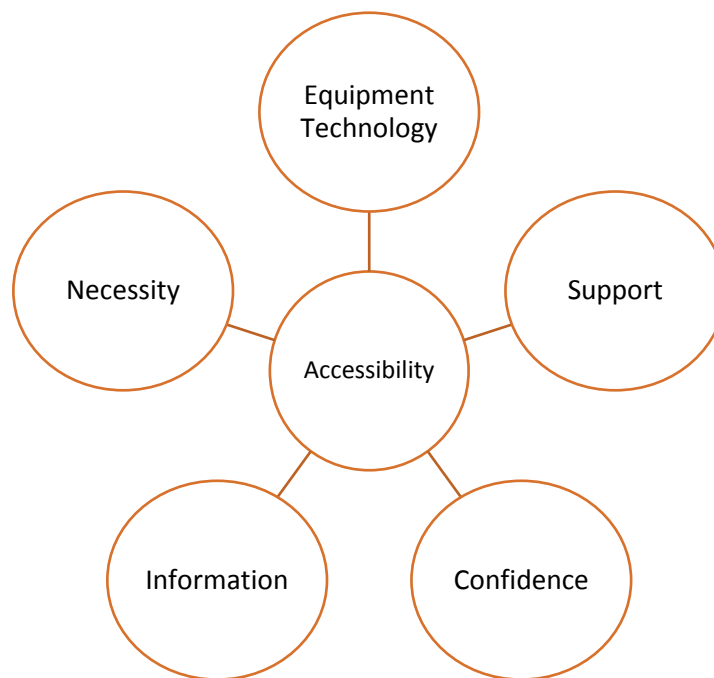
“well my life is different now because I am volunteering I am not sat at home and I’m getting out doing different projects and doing Tech and Tea volunteering and its getting my wellbeing improved” (John)

“a couple of times a woman came along and she helps out a lot which is best you know” (Joan)

4.2 Theme 2 - Accessibility

This theme related to overcoming access difficulties, and accessing training locally in venues. The participants were already regular users of these community venues, and had been recruited to the course by staff working in local facilities.

Figure 3 Accessibility sub-theme map



It is important that consideration is given to the challenges older people face, including access to training. Many older people with disabilities will rely on family members and carers for support with access, as such it is important that family members and carers also have the required skills to enable this support (Chadwick, Wesson & Fulwood, 2013). Tech and Tea was reported to meet their needs by the way it was advertised and delivered in local venues to an older target audience.

“I was in the Library at Kersal one rainy day and err the Librarian said to me there’s a Tech and Tea Course starting next week would you like to join so I said yeah ok, so I came and did the course, passed OK and got me lap-top, then I was asked if I would like to volunteer to help out on other courses that have been run from Tech and Tea and that’s why I am here now”.

“I heard about it from one of the Age UK ladies who works at the office, she

was here on a Friday, I come on a Friday to do knitting and crocheting I thought I could do with having a go.” (Joan)

Sub-theme 1 - Equipment /Technology: This sub-theme was linked to the access to subsidised equipment which is also part of the Tech and Tea programme. The offer to purchase a laptop or a tablet at a reduced cost removed a barrier to participants using and developing digital skills after the course had finished. The comments from Pat and John indicated that providing the equipment meant that Pat and “others” she referred to would not have normally been able to afford to buy a computer. However, John suggested completing the training on the laptops or tablets and then being able to buy them at the end of the course would mean they would be familiar with the equipment thus removing some of the anxieties around using the equipment. Anxiety about using equipment has been identified as a barrier in several studies (Czaja et al., 2006; Hill et al., 2015; Mason, 2012; Tsai et al., 2015). The participants reported an increase in confidence and knowledge to be able to search for information following the course.

“The thing is if you have got a question about anything you can just google it and get information” (Pat)

“I think it’s fabulous that they’ve bought these computers and given us the chance of buying them cheap because a lot of us could not have afforded it” (Joan)

“yes like we’ve just said have the lap tops straight away so that the knowledge you learn is still fresh in your mind you know” (John)

However those who also had a certain level of knowledge reported that this was also potentially an issue in terms of them wanting to know more complex things to others who were just beginning:

“I felt like a bit of an assistant really I never really got to learn some of the things I wanted to learn erm I think I said when the course finished would there be an advanced one coming up because I would love to go to something a bit you know the next step.”

“that’s exactly how I felt I don’t think I got to learn what I wanted to learn and with [name] on the second one, we spent so many lessons talking about security of using a computer etc again we didn’t get as far as we wanted. I

got as far as doing emails and sending an attachment and that was it.”

Sub-theme 2 - Support: Access to technology training and support from the volunteers was valued, however there were some challenges around different ability levels within the group with some people needing more support. The support they were getting was making the course more accessible so they were more likely to continue using the technology after the course had finished. However Jill and Mary’s experience was not as positive, and Janes perspective around having a volunteer present was that it could make a difference because her experience was positive. Doris, Molly and Jane valued a more structured course. Previous studies have reported that learning in small groups, providing training that recognises these anxieties in a supportive environment is what is needed (Mitzner et al., 2010; Tsai et al., 2015). The Tech and Tea programme uses volunteer wellbeing champions, who can be people that have already undertaken the Tech and Tea programme or people who have expressed an interest in technology. Training is provided so volunteers understand the model and how to use the equipment and give one to one support which increases confidence. This can be important as previous studies have found that a lack of confidence or previous negative experiences influences how older people cope with new learning experiences (Czaja et al., 2006, Hill et al., 2015).

“He had us all sitting around a table like this and he just kept going round, where people were having difficulty was going round, I did not particularly like that because we were all doing something different” (Mary)

“I was going to agree with you we were all sitting together and we had never switched one on. There were four of us he came and did a little bit with us but people advanced wanted to book holidays so he was going so we did not have the full two hours” (Jill)

“I have to say he did go a little bit off kilter it was really difficult for him as well he could have done with an assistant to sort out the people who weren’t so good” (Mary)

“I found it very good when I did it because the lady who’s in charge she already arranged with some people who were listed as volunteer wellbeing champions under Age UK, they came along at least two of them” (Jane)

“What she did sensibly was do one section of the programme with everybody

at the same time” (Molly)

“I think that’s the way to do it” (Doris)

*“We’re different generation’s totally different generation and different outlook and computers are strange beings so to have the council arrange for specific courses for people elderly people is a think erm a most wonderful thing ... I mean there were many many positive points but one or two negative ones.”
(David)*

Sub-theme 3 - Confidence: This was discussed in the form of knowledge they had gained from attending the course, and learning how to access lots of information on the internet. Participants talked about how by attending the course they had increased their level of confidence in using the technology. However, they also felt that confidence was impacted by their level of understanding, so it may differ for people within the group.

“I know that’s a difficult thing to do because you want to concentrate on the one that you have got. In a group everybody might have a different model so it’s difficult in 5 weeks to get everybody confident in using the model that they have got.”

Sub-theme 4 - Information: This theme related to how they could gain information. For example by being able to use google it had opened up a world of information, which was just at their fingertips. They were using the new skills from the course to open up their world and search for information they needed. They now had access to information online and the possibilities for finding information was endless

“I learnt about health matters far more than I knew previously erm there is information about various meetings and for example the meetings held by erm the Pennine Acute Trust every so often and they send me an email about the meetings if I have the time and inclination I can go along to them er whereas it would be more difficult for them to communicate with people like me if there weren’t the email” (David)

“I think you have got to have common sense as well like you were saying erm don’t believe everything that you read on it”

“The thing is if you have got a question about anything erm you can just

google it and get the information, my nephew is a big fan of old film stars and he said to me there is an app that you can put on and it's got everything you need to know about Hollywood stars, film stars, everything it's absolutely brilliant and it gives you a lot of information about those and if there is any information you want to know as well... well I don't know broadband what's the cheapest broadband?"

Sub-theme 5 - Necessity: This sub theme related to feeling they had to learn to use the computer in order to access services, to keep up with what is happening. Participants reported that they were worried about becoming further incapacitated and not being able to get out. As such there were some fears about being left behind and not being able to fully participate in a digital world.

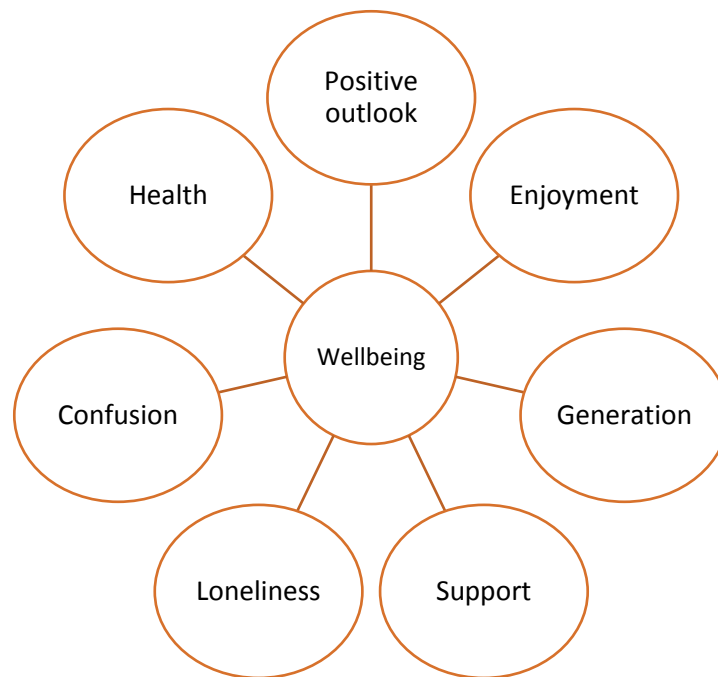
"I feel I am just trying to stay with it you know, keep up with what's happening"
(Alice)

"I think there will come a time when you can't get out for some reason you will be to ill or immobile to get out" (Mary)

4.3 Theme 3 - Wellbeing

Throughout this study there was a lot of discussion around different aspects relating to their well-being, how it made them feel and how they looked after themselves, including how to stay well.

Figure 4 Wellbeing Sub-theme map



Sub-theme 1 - Health: the theme related to the participant talking about using tech to support staying well, and how to manage health conditions. Some participants reported that they were using new skills to search for information related to health conditions and felt empowered with the new knowledge they had gained. And with this it reduced their anxieties and enabled them to ask more questions or go and see their General Practitioner (GP) earlier. Participants used the technology to order repeat prescriptions and make GP appointments. However not all felt positively, with others reporting there being too much health information which they found overwhelming.

By attending the Tech and Tea course they were using the new skills to search for health information, others were using the internet for improving their mood like listening to music or hobbies this made them feel good. Keeping in touch with family and friends, listening to music, hobbies and nostalgia online are all things that have been found to connect to people, improve their mood, stimulate their brain, and improve mental and emotional health (Age UK, 2013; Lelkes, 2013; Age UK, 2010).

Some participants reported anxieties about searching for health information and needed more support. With some highlighting concerns about some of the inaccuracies of the health data available on the internet and also the sheer volume of health data available. David and Michael were aware of how getting the right

information could be beneficial, However, Helen, Harry and Mary felt they could become confused with too much information.

In the narrative there was a recognition of the value of computers in keeping in touch and preventing depression and anxiety. There was also a recognition that accessing health services is going to be online more and more, so it was something they needed to do in order to participate in society.

“I had a tingling sensation in that finger and that thumb and I studied it, it mentioned Carpel Tunnel Syndrome ,Yeah so went to see me Doctor and told em what I thought when he looked at the hospital for me to go and see them he said the patient has diagnosed himself” (Michael)

“It’s knowledge, again its knowledge it’s not just going into theatre and err waking up 4or 5 hours later and um, I knew what they were going to do” (David, who had surgery recently)

“there’s one thing you don’t look up medical things that is a no no do not look at medical things because you will drive yourself crazy” (Helen)

“you can talk yourself into anything can’t you” (Harry)

“you could google something and think yep I’ve got that and I’ve got that as well and you could drive yourself crazy and it’s just not worth it if you want to know medical things go and see your GP.” (Mary)

“I use it for repeat prescriptions” (Harry)

“there will come a time when you can’t get out for some reason you will be too ill or to immobile to get out” (John)

“and it will be too late to try it” (Jack)

“and maybe our only means of communication you know” (John)

“well I would try to get a one to one with somebody” (David)

“if you are on your own your lonely very depressed you get on the phone and nobody answers the phone so you go online I can get onto my brothers my sisters and everything straight away that’s how I know” (John)

Sub-theme 2 & 3 - Enjoyment/positive outlook: In these two sub themes

participants talked about how they feel about the course using words such as wonderful, it's the way forward. Participants found the course enjoyable and it gave them a positive outlook on life and a purpose for going out.

"well whatever the positives or whatever negatives we have talked about regarding this course it is definitely wonderful" (Pat)

"Oh I agree" (Doris)

"it's the way forward really" (Molly)

"I still think you need that purpose to go out, particularly men they do not want to just go and be sitting around having a coffee, they want to be doing something purposeful. I think this you know gives them a reason for going out and about. That's isolation for you." (Jane)

"thank you very much I enjoyed it very much very beneficial thank you very much for it" (Helen)

Sub-theme 4 - Generation: in this sub theme participants were talking about connecting across the generations with children and grandchildren through using social networking sites, which made them feel good. Maintaining of connections with family is an important part of maintaining emotional and mental health.

"Erm I think from up here erm what we found is that a lot of residents here have got families who live mainly abroad or in other parts of the country and erm they can now Skype them which they couldn't do that before because they didn't really know what that was erm so it enabled them to keep in contact with their families and their friends through Skype, Facebook erm they've learnt to do that as well" (Anne)

4.4 Theme 4 - The Dark Side

The dark side theme emerged from conversations around some of the more unsavory aspects of the internet and their concerns for their safety on line. Participants had real concerns about internet safety. With this also being reported as a concern in a number of previous studies (Hill et al., 2015; Holttum, 2016; Mitzner et al., 2010; Tsai et al., 2015). Recently there has been a rise in computer threats, with these coming from computer viruses, fraud and the stealing of sensitive information. In order to mitigate these threats using passwords, computer virus protection software can help training

courses for the elderly would need to include on line security (Hildebrandt, 2013).

Figure 5 The Dark Side sub-theme map



Sub-theme 1 - Security: Participants talked about their personal information falling into the wrong hands and knowing about the maintenance of it and the safeguards of it all. They felt that more information on the security aspects of the internet is needed in order to stay safe on line.

“I mean I have always been safe I use PayPal, I know for some people it can happen by pressing links in your inbox that look like they have been sent by PayPal but they have not they have come from other places it’s just being careful log in at their own site stuff like that.”

Sub-theme 2 - Scams: This theme linked to the risk of scams, for example false emails looking like they have come from a bank. There were concerns about being taken in and giving away personal information in an email that looks legitimate which highlights more information is needed to stay safe on line.

“that’s just what I was going to say then in a nutshell you have to know about the maintenance of it ,the safeguards of it , all the good stuff that you can do you can be open to scams and things like that .”

Sub-theme 3 - Viruses: This theme related to anxieties around infecting their computer. For example the fear of clicking on a link that will cause a problem with their

computer and their anxieties about security issues.

“we did do a little group down in Salford it was a one off erm and it was all about internet safety you know just a one off course and if we do that again it is always something you can come along to as well. Gives you a bit more information about staying safe on the internet so yes”.

“I watched a programme about er I think it was on horizon it was about that latest NHS virus about how it started it was on for an hour and er and I really did not understand what they were talking about”.

“ you know worms and things like that I mean these people that actually hack into you they must be very clever themselves though they are specialists”

Sub-theme 4 - Gambling: Participants voiced fears around losing money and becoming addicted to free games. For example through playing bingo or other games on line where you have to sign up and give credit card details. From the discussions about some of the issues they were also about safety online, viruses, money, the fear of being scammed and personal information falling into the wrong hands. It was clear that a dark side to using the internet was emerging and this could become a barrier to access if these anxieties were not resolved, as the discussion below exemplifies.

“P2F well stop playing candy crush (laughter)

P5f I’m not now I am playing bingo

P2f that’s worse

P5f free bingo

P2f what do you win? Just the joy of getting a line?

P1f I suppose is it addictive

P5f it is a bit

P3M I’m with you I don’t spend any money on there but I get plenty of entertainment (Laughter)”

Sub-theme 5 - Money: The final sub-theme was around issues that arose about online banking and making mistakes with money. Some reported that they were too frightened to use online banking. It was felt that further training was needed in order

to feel safe using online banking or making purchases online.

“You hear all these scare stories which is defeating the object of encouraging older people to use a computer or a lap top isn't it, it could be frightening people away from it all together” (Arthur)

“In a nutshell you have to know about the maintenance of it, the safeguards of it, all the good stuff that you can do you can be open to scams and things like that” (John)

“See I do not do online banking, I will not do that I have only got a bit of money” (Janet)

“I am wary not to click anything not give any details it's very very intrusive information if it goes can be used all over the place “ (Helen)

“it can yes” (Mary)

Discussion on the topic of internet banking and shopping:

“Obs I've been doing on line banking for quite a while now it's ok

P2f I don't trust it

P1f it's being able to trust yourself and I am the same as you I could not trust myself not to do that silly thing pressing the wrong button sending a thousand instead of 100 and saying where it has gone”

“Pf5 I was looking at chairs the other day and I managed to buy one but I didn't want it and I could not get rid of it (laughter)I could do with some help to get rid of these things that I am buying that I don't want (laughter)

P3 yes yes they can be a dangerous thing you can spend a lot of money

P5 do not know how it happened.”

5.0 Recommendations

1. To continue to run the Tech and Tea courses to include follow-on courses e.g. internet safety, and drop in Tech and Tea sessions supported by the volunteers.

Linking to the themes from the research related to social inclusion, it was clear that the Tech and Tea course identified two distinct aspects. 1) It was successful in engaging older people to learn together and improve their technological skills. 2) By providing the tea participants were able to make new friends at the same time, reducing their level of isolation and improving their confidence.

In terms of accessibility local drop in sessions with volunteer support would continue to make these sessions more accessible and offer access to 1:1 support that could be ongoing. This will help to increase confidence using the technology and further develop participant's digital skills. With these factors being found to help overcome some of the barriers to access to technology for older people (Czaja et al., 2004; Mason, 2012). Further training and one to one support could help reduce some of their expressed anxieties around internet safety, which has also been identified as being a barrier to access (Tsai et al., 2010; Hill et al., 2015; Holthum, 2016). It is anticipated that these additional sessions will at the same time build on and maintain the friendships developed through the Tech and Tea programme which the participants felt was really important. Similarly, it is anticipated that this in turn will contribute to improving their health and wellbeing by reducing loneliness (AGE UK, 2012; Windle et al., 2011; Voltorta & Hanratty, 2012).

2. Develop an awareness about safe websites to search for information about long term conditions and staying healthy.

For example NHS choices website is the UK's biggest health website, and is a comprehensive health information service with thousands of articles, videos and tools (NHS, 2017). Access to the information on this website would help reduce some of the anxieties the participants had about seeking online information from a safe site that is accurate, monitored and updated at regular intervals.

Safe websites could be promoted at the drop in sessions, using these sites to aid in the development of basic health and well-being plans with support available from the health and wellbeing champions. They could support with developing plans for and searching for relevant information for example; healthy eating, exercise, finding out

information about managing long-term conditions, dealing with bereavement, retirement and coping with loneliness.

3. To establish and maintain links with local councils and surrounding councils to share initiatives and ideas about the service

The participants on the course were thrilled to have had the opportunity to attend the Tech and Tea course in Salford and gained so much from the experience. They had mentioned that family members living in other areas were unable to access what they felt was a life changing course. Sharing initiatives and ideas with other councils will have the potential to improve access to technology for many older residents. Going forward the service users could be involved in this sharing of information detailing how it has changed their lives.

4. Consideration needs to be given to developing ways to support all participants

Within the sample there were participants who lived in the community and those who lived in supported living accommodation. As such particularly residents in supported living accommodation (including nursing homes, retirement homes etc) expressed desire in some cases for access to the wider social network of Tech and Tea. The tea and social aspect has been a very successful part of the course, for residents undertaking courses in house it was identified that having the opportunity to broaden their social networks and meet regularly with others who may live away from their care setting and this would be welcomed.

5. Advertising and Marketing

To continue to work with the council to advertise and market the course to ensure that all residents can have the opportunity to attend. This might include ensuring that all health professionals including general practitioners, and social services staff are aware of the benefits of the Tech and Tea course. Very often it is these professionals who are able to engage seldom heard residents who are already socially isolated and would benefit from attending the course enabling continuing support in maintaining their Health and Well-Being.

6.0 Conclusion

The main aims of the research was to evaluate the Tech and Tea programme within Salford. This programme has increased participants access and use of technology to better manage their health and social care needs, and feel confident/less anxious using the technology. The evidence from the study would suggest that by attending the course and using technology the participants improved their abilities in relation to the use of technology and that the course helped with socialisation. This has been achieved by becoming more involved with their local communities, making new friends, and reporting feeling less isolated and more included in society. Participants have increased their use of the internet to search for relevant health information, however it was felt that participants will need ongoing help and support to feel confident to continue to keep up in a fast paced increasingly changing technological world. In addition support on accessing appropriate health sites and internet safety needs to be updated on a regular basis. The opportunity to buy a laptop or a tablet at a discounted price has been a major factor in reducing a barrier to access to technology for many older residents.

The participants reported feeling more confident and less anxious using the technology after attending the course. The Tech and Tea programme has improved social interactions with many of the participants who are now using social media to stay in contact with family and friends. In addition some are continuing to meet with others outside from their group socially, whilst others have gone on to become volunteers supporting others on the Tech and Tea course. The social aspects of the course are equally important to the technological aspects and this aspect needs to continue through the drop in sessions with support from the volunteers.

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8.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 - participant recruitment letter

University of Salford
School of Health Sciences
Allerton Building
Frederick Road Campus
Salford
M6 6PU

June 2017

Dear

I am writing to let you know about an opportunity to participate in a research study to evaluate your experiences of attending the Tech and Tea programme.

The researcher Val Rimmer is a Masters of Public Health student with the University of Salford, you have been invited because you have attended the Tech and Tea programme and service user views about the programme are very important. The research is being supported by Inspiring Communities Together who deliver the programme which aims to improve people's lives by bringing people together, providing learning opportunities and supporting residents to age well.

Participation in this research study includes attending a focus group discussion with between five and ten other service users, or a face to face, telephone or Skype interview. The interview will be recorded using a voice or audio tape recorder if using Skype the time needed will be approximately one hour. The research will take place in a local community venue, or at home if you prefer a telephone or skype interview.

There is no obligation for you to take part in the study if you do not wish to do so and you may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. Any information you share will be kept confidential, the data collected will be stored safely and you will not be personally identified in any reports. The information will be kept for the recommended three years and will then be disposed of securely.

If you have any questions or you would like to take part in the research, please contact the researcher on the telephone number or email address as shown.

Val Rimmer MPH student on 0161-295 -5094 or email v.rimmer@edu.salford.ac.uk

Dr Anna Cooper on 0161 295 5094 email a.m.cooper@salford.ac.uk.

Yours Sincerely

Val Rimmer

MPH student

Appendix 2 - PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Title of study: The study to evaluate the experiences of service users who accessed the tech and tea programme.

Name of Researcher: Val Rimmer

Focus group Date Time Venue

Invitation paragraph

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study that is part of a Master's Degree in Public Health at Salford University, please take time to read the following information carefully and decide if you agree to take part or not . If you have any questions please contact me at the address below to discuss further.

What is the purpose of the study?

It is known that older residents who do not have access to or know how to use technology may be socially isolated the aim of the tech and tea study is to find out if attending the sessions has improved your health and wellbeing.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been selected to take part because you have accessed the Tech and Tea programme

Do I have to take part?

It is your choice whether or not to take part, if you do decide to take part you will have been given an information sheet and will be asked to sign a consent form, you are of course entitled to withdraw from the study within two months without giving a reason by agreeing to take part you will be asked to attend a 1-hour focus group with 6-8 others or a face to face, telephone or skype interview to discuss your experience of the tech and tea programme. All interviews will be voice or audio recorded as appropriate and then transcribed to allow them to be analysed for themes.

Expenses and payments?

No expenses or payments will be made for taking part in this evaluation, refreshments will be provided at the venue.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no disadvantages to taking part, but it will require you to give up an hour of your time to attend a focus group discussion or take part in a face to face telephone or Skype interview

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The benefits are that you will be helping to evaluate the programme from a service user perspective and will add to the information already known from a Salford perspective all information will help

towards planning further courses in the future.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

All the information obtained will be kept confidential anything you say will be anonymised Data collected will be stored safely you will be anonymised during and after the study, focus groups cannot be fully confidential because discussions are shared with the other participants in the group. Communication tools such as Skype attempt to ensure data security through encryption technologies while beneficial there are still possibilities of risk associated with such a medium (e.g. hackers acquiring data).The information will be retained for the recommended 3 years then will be disposed of securely.

What will happen if I don't carry on with the study?

You are free to withdraw from the study within two months of being interviewed or taking part in a focus group, withdrawing from the study will not affect your rights .However if you have participated in a focus group or interview the information you have contributed may remain as study data.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the study will be made available in the form of a report to Inspiring Communities Together a copy of the results will be made available to the participants. The results may also be published in academic journals however all data will be anonymised.

Who is organising or sponsoring the research?

The research is being organised by Val Rimmer, Public Health MSc student at the University of Salford, The research is supported by Inspiring Communities Together.

Further information and contact details:

If you have any concerns about any aspect of the study please contact Dr Anna Cooper on 0161 295 5094 email a.m.cooper@salford.ac.uk contact v.rimmer@edu.salford.ac.uk

Or alternatively if you have concerns about the research process contact; Jo Creswell Associate Director of Research on 0161 295 3000 ext. 3000 email j.e.cresswell@salford.ac.uk

Appendix3 - CONSENT FORM

Title of study: Evaluation of the Tech and Tea Programme

Name of Researcher:Val Rimmer

Please complete and sign this form after you have read and understood the study information sheet. Read the statements below and yes or no, as applicable in the box on the right hand side.

- 1. I confirm that I have read and understand the study information sheet Version 4 dated July 2017, for the above study. I have had opportunity to consider the information and ask questions which have been answered satisfactorily. Yes/No

- 2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw within two months, without giving any reason, and without my rights being affected. Yes/No

- 3. If I do decide to withdraw I understand that the information I have given, up to the point of withdrawal, may be used in the research. The timeframe for withdrawal is two months. Yes/No

- 4. I agree to participate by participating in a focus group or face to face, telephone Or skype interview Yes/No

- 5. I understand that my personal details will be kept confidential and not revealed to people outside the research team. I am aware there are still possibilities of data risks associated with skype (e.g. hackers acquiring data) even when using data security encryption technologies. Yes/No

- 6. I understand that my anonymised data will be used in (researcher's thesis/ research report) other academic publications and conferences presentations. Yes/No

- 7. I agree to take part in the study: Yes/No

Name of participant	Date	Signature
Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature

Appendix 4 - Research Interview schedule for the Tech and Tea service (Based on Kruger and Casey 2000)

Welcome

Welcome to the session and for taking the time to join us, my name is xxxxxx. I am a Master's in public Health Student with the University of Salford, I am undertaking this focus group to obtain service user views of the Tech and Tea program. You have been invited because you have attended the Tech and Tea Program so you are familiar with the service, and you live in Salford.

There are no wrong answers to the questions I am about to ask, I am expecting you to have different points of view, please feel free to share your point of view even if it is different from what others have said, all comments are helpful whether they are positive or negative, sometimes it is the negative comments which are the most helpful. I am here to listen ask questions and make sure everybody has a chance to share. The session today will be tape recorded this is because we do not want to miss any of your comments, it is often difficult to write everything down. You are assured that you will not be identified in any reports you also have the right to withdraw from the procedure at any time if you so choose. Although we may use first names today no names will be included in any reports

Opening question 1

Let's begin by having each person tell me your first name and how long ago you participated in the tech and Tea programme.

Introductory Question

2. How did you find out about the tech and tea programme?

Transition Question

3. Think back to when you first accessed the Tech and Tea Programme what were your first impressions?

Key Questions

4. In what way is your life different because of your participation in the tech and tea programme?

5. Did you notice any differences in how you interact with others whilst attending Tech and Tea and following the programme?

6. How useful did you find the social aspects of the programme?

7. What are the main things you are using the equipment for?

8. What difference if any has using the equipment had on your general health and wellbeing including management of long-term health conditions?

9 .Is there anything you feel could be done to improve the Tech and Tea programme?

Ending Question

10. Is there anything else you would like to mention that you feel it is important to talk about?

The interviewer will use probing questions which would encourage the participants to elaborate further
i.e. Would you explain further? Is there anything else? Would you say more?

Appendix 5 – Copy of Ethical Approval Letter



School Ethical Approval Panel for Taught Programmes

Research Centres Support Team
Research and Enterprise
G0.3 Joule House
University of Salford
M5 4WT

T +44(0)161 295 3362

www.salford.ac.uk

26 June 2017

Valerie Rimmer

Dear Valerie

RE: ETHICS APPLICATION HST1617-293 - Evaluation of a Technology and Tea project for the Elderly

Based on the information you have provided, I am pleased to inform you that application HST1617-293 has been approved.

If there are any changes to the project and/ or its methodology, please inform the Panel as soon as possible by contacting Health-TaughtEthics@salford.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John McMahon'.

Dr John McMahon

Chair of the Joint School Approval Ethical Panel for Taught Programmes