



MiCommunity Toolkit

A guide to setting up and running
an inter-generational digital inclusion project



Welcome to MiCommunity Toolkit! Age UK London's guide for voluntary or community organisations working with older people

This toolkit is designed to provide you with all the information and resources you need to set up and run an effective intergenerational digital inclusion project. It aims to be helpful to both organisations who are setting out on this path for the first time and those who would like to improve or build on current digital inclusion activities. It can also be used by schools and colleges that would like to offer this project as part of their enrichment activities.

MiCommunity Toolkit offers you step by step instructions, helpful hints and tips in the form of Masterclass sheets, as well as examples and success stories to inspire you. It covers the time from first considering the idea, through set up to completion of a successful project, using experience and knowledge gathered from partners and beneficiaries.

The aim of this toolkit is to provide thorough practical help and guidance to help make your project a success and provide a positive impact not just for those directly involved, but also the wider community.

MiCommunity Background

The MiCommunity project is an intergenerational, digital inclusion project run by Age UK London from June 2011 until May 2012 funded through the GLA's Team London programme and the Reuben Foundation.

This project creates a platform for intergenerational learning opportunities engaging younger and older people through digital inclusion/computers/technology/internet sessions.

MiCommunity emphasises an increase in community cohesion and the breaking down of barriers between these two age groups, and through them different ethnic and cultural groups.

MiCommunity is not an IT course. The aim of MiCommunity is to use intergenerational volunteering to build a stronger sense of community and connectedness between young volunteers and older people, bridging differences in age, ethnicity and culture, and challenging negative stereotypes. This takes place by facilitating young people (aged 16-19) to share their IT skills, with older people (aged 60+), many of whom have little or no IT knowledge or skills. This might include e.g. how to use the internet, set up an email account, use a mobile phone or download digital photographs. It is intended that the project will establish important links and understanding between the two age groups, whilst also enabling older people to use digital technology more confidently, and promoting volunteering among young people (subsequently improving their employability).

Delivering the MiCommunity project over a one year period should engage at least three local schools or colleges with involvement of fifty volunteers and seventy-five older learners as beneficiaries in total. The coordination of this project will need at least 17.5 hours a week of human resource and a budget of c£22,000 (see Resources section for further details).

By the end of March 2012, the MiCommunity project worked across eighteen London boroughs and in 42 schools/academies/colleges. The project engaged with 1019 older people over the age of 60 and with 711 young volunteers aged between 16-19 years, as well as 180 beneficiary volunteers and 60 corporate volunteers

Why an intergenerational digital inclusion project?

“Intergenerational practice aims to bring people together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities which promote greater understanding and respect between generations and contributes to building more cohesive communities. Intergenerational practice is inclusive, building on the positive resources that the young and old have to offer each other and those around them”. (Definition of Intergenerational Practice: Beth Johnson Foundation, 2001)

MiCommunity is a digital inclusion project which uses intergenerational volunteering to build a stronger sense of community and connectedness between young volunteers and older people. This takes place by project matching the IT skills of young people aged between 16-19 years, with the desire and motivation of older people (aged 60+) to increase their knowledge and access to digital technology.

Delivering a MiCommunity project will bring outcomes over and above those of increased use of digital technology for the older people, including:

1. Changing negative perceptions of the young and old generations
2. Increasing life opportunities for both younger and older people
3. Promoting volunteering
4. Connecting communities

Undertaking an intergenerational digital inclusion project can complement your other work, increase your reach, impact your local community and improve your reputation locally.

MiCommunity Film



[Click here to watch the video](#)

MiCommunity Steps to Success...



STEP 1: consider these questions

- Is there a need locally? Are there other organisations running projects like this? Do your current users request this type of activity? Do you run IT sessions already?
- Do you have current links with local schools and colleges that are in a position to partner you on delivering this? Do they fully understand the MiCommunity project and that it is more than an IT course?
- Do you have funding in place? (see **Resources** for an example budget) Are you in touch with your local Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) for potential support with funding opportunities or guidance?
- Will you recruit staff or do you have a part-time staff member (17.5 hours a week) with the range of skills required to fully deliver the project (flexibility, organisational skills, oral & written communication, good at relationship building)?
- When do you want to start delivery? MiCommunity found that September to March was the optimum project delivery time, to avoid summer exams. Make sure you have three months before you want to start delivering the project in order to get staff in place and schools and older people recruited?
- How long will your course be, for how many hours each session? Can you sustain that?
- At what location will you deliver the course? (see **Masterclass** on working in schools)
- Do you have or can you develop the teaching resources, or can you use other learning packs to deliver? MiCommunity used a mixture of readily available IT resources, such as BBC First Click, as well as developing its own.
- How will you know if your project has made a difference? Do you have monitoring and evaluation tools that you can use? What benchmarking data will you collect?

STEP 2: set up

- Agree location and set up a meeting with the school to go through a



checklist for set up. (see **Resources** section)

- Ensure a partnership agreement is signed by the school or college. This can take time. (see **Resources** section)
- Confirm a key contact with school (teacher/IT tutor) and agree timetabling for the IT sessions.
- Produce an application pack for the older learners and the volunteers. (see **Resources** section)
- Develop a volunteer satisfaction survey.
- Design an induction session that includes intergenerational awareness. MiCommunity found a standard induction for each course is very effective.
- Agree on which resources to use for the course.
- Set up 'dummy' social networking sites and email accounts.
- Ensure you have safeguarding policies and procedures for the young volunteers and older learners. MiCommunity used the school's safeguarding procedures where appropriate and Age UK safeguarding policies if these were needed. (see **Resources** section)
- Set up a steering group consisting of stakeholders in the project.



STEP 3: get going

- recruit older learners through networks, local media including newspapers, local events, other organisations and suitable locations, such as cafes, libraries, bingo halls, GP surgeries and local sheltered housing.
- Make presentations in assemblies at schools and colleges. Recruit young volunteers through teachers and notices at the school or college.
- Be flexible about when you run the sessions – consider after school or lunchtime as well.
- Ask each participant (older learners and young volunteers) to complete all paperwork.
- Ensure you have an 'Enhanced CRB' checked member of staff or volunteer supervising each session. This can be an IT tutor, teacher, sessional worker or Project Coordinator.
- Match the volunteers and older learners one to one if possible (see **Masterclass** on running an IT session for helpful hints).

- Produce a press release (see **Resources** section) and circulate to local media and place in school newsletter/magazine.
- Use the '**TimeLine**' in this toolkit to plan your activities month by month.

STEP 4: keep going



- Review the one to one partnerships informally to check they are progressing well.
- Use a variety of evaluation tools (see **Resources** section) to measure the impact of the project.
- Ensure the steering group are meeting bi-monthly to keep communication open about the project's progress locally.
- Deal with problems as they arise. A joint approach between the school and organisation is the most effective way if they arose.
- Consider setting up one-off 'digital clinics' to pick up sessions that have been missed, or specific requests from older learners.
- Consider opportunities for keeping the participants engaged with your organisation. MiCommunity encouraged older learners to become volunteers themselves using their new found skills, aka beneficiary volunteers.



STEP 5: reward and recognise

- Thank all participants regularly.
- Provide references (see **Resources** section) for the young volunteers and help them use the experience for their University applications.
- Hold a small thank you event and present certificates (see **Resources** section) at the end of the course.

MiCommunity Delivery TimeLine

THREE MONTH PREPARATION TIME



- **Research** other projects working in digital inclusion in your area
- **Agree** funding and outcomes for the project (see budget in **Resources**)
- **Confirm** length of time for project delivery
- **Identify** local schools and colleges you would like to work with
- **Set up** the coordinator role and recruit as necessary
- **Set up** safeguarding policies and procedures, to be able to share with schools/colleges

- **Make contact** with local schools and colleges and go through set up checklist
- **Write** article about the project in your in-house newsletter/email bulletin
- **Run** advertisements in local community for older learners
- **Identify** resources to be used
- **Set up** steering group to help guide and input into the project
- **Design** and print application packs

- **Get** partnership agreements signed with local schools and colleges
- **Collect** or write necessary resources
- **Produce** evaluation and volunteer satisfaction paperwork
- **Make** presentations at school assemblies to recruit young volunteers
- **Hold** steering group meeting
- **Set up** 'dummy' social networking and email accounts

PROJECT START



- **Run** induction sessions for older learners
- **Run** induction and training sessions for young volunteers
- 'Match' volunteers one to one with older learners
- **Complete** paperwork for all participants
- **Deliver** sessions (consider impact of school holidays/exams on timing of sessions)
- **Submit** story to local press/radio
- **Take** photographs of sessions (with permission slips)

- **Hold** steering group meeting
- **Run** further recruitment session for volunteers and older learners
- **Encourage** volunteers to write an article for school newsletter
- **Identify** a 'peer facilitator' if possible to encourage other young volunteers
- **Carry out** on-going evaluation
- **Record** any quotes from sessions

- **Advertise** the next half-term course/s
- **Consider** increasing number of schools involved
- **Run** further induction sessions for volunteers and older learners
- **Carry out** on-going evaluation
- **Take** photographs of sessions and record quotes

MiCommunity Delivery TimeLine (cont'd)



- **Run** further recruitment session for volunteers and older learners in new schools
- **Carry** out on-going evaluation
- **Take** photographs of sessions and record quotes



- **Hold** steering group meeting
- **Set up** some digital clinics and drop-in sessions
- **Carry** out on-going evaluation
- **Take** photographs of sessions and record quotes



- **Consider** setting up fortnightly digital inclusion clinics for on-going engagement
- **Run** a 'bring a friend' session
- **Carry** out on-going evaluation
- **Take** photographs of sessions and record quotes
- **Ask** volunteers to complete volunteer satisfaction survey

PROJECT END



- **Hold** steering group meeting
- **Encourage** volunteers to write an article for school newsletter
- **Set up** some digital clinics and drop-in session to pick up any missing sessions
- **Take** photographs of sessions and record quotes

FINAL REPORTING PERIOD



- **Talk** to the schools about how to jointly continue the course
- **Ensure** all paperwork is completed
- **Carry** out final evaluation
- **Approach** potential funders for ongoing support
- Evaluate results from the volunteer satisfaction surveys



- **Run** a thank you event for all young volunteers and older learners
- **Provide** certificates for all participants
- **Offer** references for all young volunteers who were part of the project
- **Submit** article (case study) and photos to local media/press

MiCommunity Masterclass in...

.....working in schools

MiCommunity project worked in partnership with local schools and sixth form colleges in seven London boroughs. The project worked locally with three to nine schools in each borough which were a mix of faith, single sex and comprehensive schools and colleges.



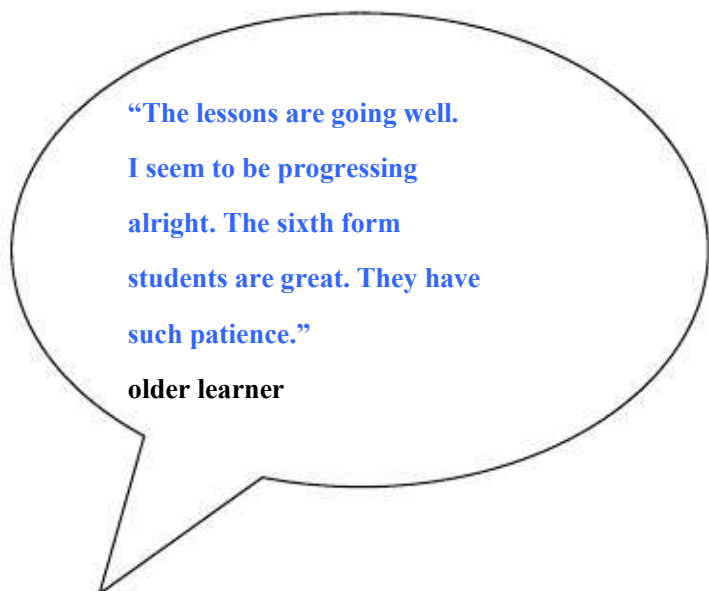
Top Tips

1. Work with those schools and sixth form colleges you already have a relationship with first as it can take up to three months to get everything in place with a new school/college. MiCommunity found most success working with students in Years 12 and 13.
2. Identify a teacher/IT tutor who is enthusiastic about the project and will act as the main contact for you. This will help you with locating appropriate time in the school timetable and help you problem solve any issues that may arise, such as lack of attendance, drop out, technical issues and room allocation changes. Escalate issues to the Head of Year as needed.
3. Use the IT space in the school where possible. Be aware of physical access needs of the older learners. Make sure that there is access to and from the school for the older learners at the time you are planning on running the sessions in terms of public transport and personal safety. MiCommunity project found that schools welcome the connection with the community through use of their facilities and the older learners gain an insight into modern school life and young peoples' experience.
4. Advertise the opportunity as widely as possible in the school, through teachers, posters and school magazine. Make short presentations about the project at assemblies, highlighting the benefits of the volunteering experience to the individuals, in particular for their University applications and CVs. The MiCommunity project found that an enthusiastic

student can act as a ‘peer facilitator’ for the project, encouraging continuity from other students.

5. Agree which websites and packages you will need access to in advance of starting the course/sessions and ensure the school are able to allow access to them during this time. This is particularly important with social networking sites (i.e. Facebook) and IT packages such as Adobe Acrobat, which can be blocked or time-limited in schools.
6. Be sure to have safeguarding policies and procedures in place before the project starts. MiCommunity used the school’s safeguarding procedures where appropriate and Age UK safeguarding policies if these were needed. (see **Resources** section). Each session must be supervised by someone with an Enhanced CRB check.
7. Produce a press release at the beginning and during the project. It is good publicity for the school as well as the project.
8. Use positive statements and experiences of schools already in the project when negotiating and encouraging other schools to get involved.
9. Reward and recognise the contribution of the students during and at the end of their volunteering with certificates, small celebrations and references.
10. Explore additional opportunities to build relationships and

work together.
MiCommunity
found this
contributed
significantly to the
feeling of
community
connectedness.



MiCommunity Masterclass in...

.....working with older learners

MiCommunity has delivered the project in partnership with local Age UKs across seven London boroughs. The project has worked with a range of older people: those already engaged in other activities within each individual organisation and those who have attended in response to adverts for MiCommunity.



MiCommunity worked with men and women over the age of 60 years and 34% have been over 76 years of age.

Top Tips

1. Involve as wide a range of older people as possible through diverse recruitment methods. MiCommunity engaged older people by advertising in libraries, cafes and hairdressers in the local community, encouraging current service users to ‘bring a friend’ and making presentations about MiCommunity at local sheltered housing.
2. Brief the older learners fully in the first week in order to manage expectations and ensure they know who they can approach if they have any questions or concerns about the set up or what they are learning.
3. In addition to the registration form, ask each learner to complete a small questionnaire to gauge their knowledge and level of skills, but primarily what they’d like to learn. MiCommunity is unique in that individual learners determine what they’d like to learn or practice. MiCommunity found that a questionnaire that lists types of knowledge they may have (i.e. sending emails, uploading and sharing photos, using Skype, setting up and using a Facebook account, etc) can help the pairings in the early stages.

4. Be sure to have a vulnerable adults' policy in place before the project starts. Each session must be supervised by someone with an Enhanced CRB check.
5. Be aware that there may be issues of ill health or other personal commitments that prevent the older learners attending on occasional weeks. Be flexible by providing additional sessions at the end of the agreed number of weeks, or provide drop in sessions.
6. Encourage the young volunteers to check understanding with their individual learner as they progress through each session and to be aware of any hearing difficulties the older learners may have.
7. Provide regular comfort breaks during each session.
8. Re-iterate to the older learners about the careful use of their log-in and password information and that they are to keep their passwords 'secret' and not to use their credit card details in view of others.
9. Recognise and never under-estimate the contribution the older learners are able to bring to MiCommunity through their life experiences and social skills. MiCommunity found that the young volunteers were surprised by the level of knowledge and similar interests that the older learners were able to share.
10. Explore opportunities for the older learners to share their new found skills through volunteering with new learners, or linking in with the school on other activities. MiCommunity in one borough

developed some additional links with the schools through the idea of an allotment project.

“The sessions are going really well, you can see the progress of my learner, she has shown a real improvement with using a computer and the internet. It is also a lot of fun; we have a laugh as well as teaching and learning.” young volunteer



Encourage the young volunteer to sit on the opposite side of the older learner from ‘the mouse’. This encourages the learner to practice what they have learnt themselves.

MiCommunity Masterclass in...

...running a MiCommunity session

The MiCommunity project is not an IT course, but an approach to digital inclusion, which is learner-led and develops skills for both the learner and volunteer, breaks down barriers between generations, challenges negative stereotypes and connects communities.

MiCommunity delivered 5841 hours of volunteering by young people in 42+ schools, academies, offices, and community centres and across London

Top Tips

1. Plan a location that works for the young volunteers and the older learners both in terms of physical access and links to public transport.
2. Decide the optimum number of learners you can manage at one time and ensure your room has sufficient IT facilities and space for that many pairings. Run a thorough induction session before you start that details expectations, how to deal with questions and problems. MiCommunity found that a full induction reduced the likelihood of issues arising later on.
3. Consider how long your sessions will run for. MiCommunity found one hour sessions were sufficient and ten weeks was the optimum length of time. Bear in mind that this does depend on how the school terms fall, as it may be more difficult to ensure the same level of commitment from the young volunteers across a school half-term break.
4. Matching/Pairing can be carried out by the facilitator/supervisor, or by the participants themselves. MiCommunity found no evidence that one way was more successful than the other. Consider matching people by interests if they are known.
5. Produce and display some “do’s and don’ts” (see **Resources** section) for the session which should cover behaviour, expectations, use of passwords and credit card details, etc.

6. Ensure you have resources available for those learners who are real beginners, or for the young volunteers who are initially lacking in confidence. MiCommunity found that a number of the young volunteers are often able to identify on-line resources that can help with specific needs. BBC First Click resources are very good for beginners and take a step by step approach. If it is not possible to have sufficient resources for everyone, consider displaying the resources on 'White Boards' in the IT rooms.
7. Set up generic Facebook and email accounts so that older learners can practice using their new skills without the young volunteers needing to give over their own personal details. Put a disclaimer on the account such as 'this does not represent the views of Age UK, etc'.
8. Link your sessions into other events or activities that are happening locally, such as MyFriendsOnline or Volunteers Week.
9. Set up some one-off drop in times to complement your other sessions. These can be linked to specific areas of learning, such as using your digital camera, or learning to operate your new mobile phone. MiCommunity called these one off sessions 'Digital Clinics' or 'Afternoon Tea with a Techy Twist' and the older learners brought their specific piece of digital equipment, or questions. This also acted as an opportunity to 'mop-up' any missed sessions during the previous ten weeks, or provide a drop in opportunity for someone who hadn't attended previously.
10. There can be occasional absenteeism. Always follow up after the session and if it is during school time, follow up with the young volunteer at the time. If you have people absent, consider setting up a temporary pairing for that one session or see if the young volunteer would like to produce a short presentation to share at the next session. If necessary, you could put one volunteer with two older learners who are at a similar level.



MiCommunity Masterclass in...

...evaluating learning and measuring success

MiCommunity impacts community cohesion through the mechanism of delivering digital inclusion sessions for older people and volunteering opportunities for young people.

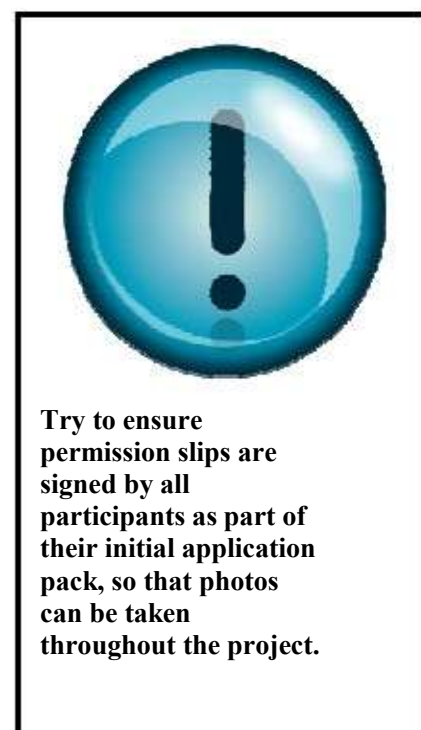
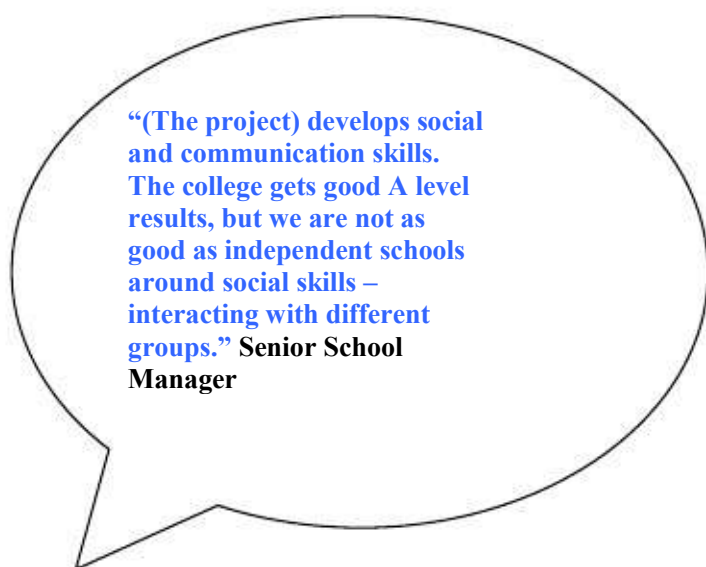
The project is evaluated throughout its life, in terms of both qualitative and quantitative data and this helps to measure its success.



Top Tips

1. Be very clear at the beginning what outcomes you are looking for and what you are wanting to measure to make sure you ask the right initial questions.
2. Set up standard reporting templates that record progress against objectives, identify risks and how they will be mitigated as well as reporting on financial spend.
3. Utilise a variety of methods of evaluating impact, such as running small focus groups, semi-formal interviews as well as observation.
4. Use a monthly diary (see **Resources** section) for the Coordinator to reflect on their activities, what they have learnt and what they may do differently. It provides opportunity to think about the project in a self-reflective way.
5. Collect demographic monitoring data for older learners and young volunteers to be able to evaluate the community reach of the project.
6. Take photographs of the sessions (with permission slips) and record quotes and observations, to use as evidence for reporting and future funding opportunities.

7. Consider setting up action learning sets or joint networking opportunities if delivering the project across a number of boroughs or areas. This shared learning will enable you to make improvements and changes to the project which will improve the delivery and impact of the project.
8. Implement a volunteering satisfaction survey that can be completed on-line, using a mechanism such as Surveymonkey. Set it up at the beginning so that you can record those young volunteers that exit early, or only complete an early drop in session.
9. Why not ask the older learners to complete a 'what I know, what I'd like to know/learn' sheet (see **Resources** section) at their first session and then return to it when they've finished to evaluate what they have learnt.
10. Make sure you are measuring the outcomes that were agreed with your funder.



Resources/Templates

The resources listed below are examples or templates that you might find useful in delivering a MiCommunity inter-generational digital inclusion project. Each resource will open in a separate window and can be downloaded, by clicking on the links below, and altered to fit with your organisation's exact requirements.

1. [MiCommunity case studies](#)
2. [Example One Year MiCommunity Budget](#)
3. [School checklist](#)
4. [Partnership Agreement](#)
5. [Application Form_learners](#)
6. [Equalities and Monitoring Form_learners](#)
7. [What I'd like to learn sheet](#)
8. [Application Form_volunteers](#)
9. [Equalities and Monitoring Form_volunteers](#)
10. [Safeguarding Adults and Children Protocol](#)
11. [Press Release template](#)
12. [Dos and Donts_learners](#)
13. [On-line banking demonstration factsheet](#)
14. [Dos and Donts_volunteers](#)
15. [Example certificate](#)
16. [Volunteer Reference letter](#)
17. [Monthly Project Diary](#)
18. [Outcome Indicators Form](#)
19. [Masterclass in Corporate Volunteering](#)

Further Information

About Age UK London

Age UK London is the regional voice of independent Age UKs and Age Concerns in London and works hard to support and enhance local work and champion the voices of older people at a London-wide level. Age UK London works to improve the quality of life and enhance the status and influence of older people in the capital. This is achieved through London-wide programmes and through the campaigning and communications work with a range of older people's organisations across London to enhance services, including the 33 borough-based older people's forums.

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