



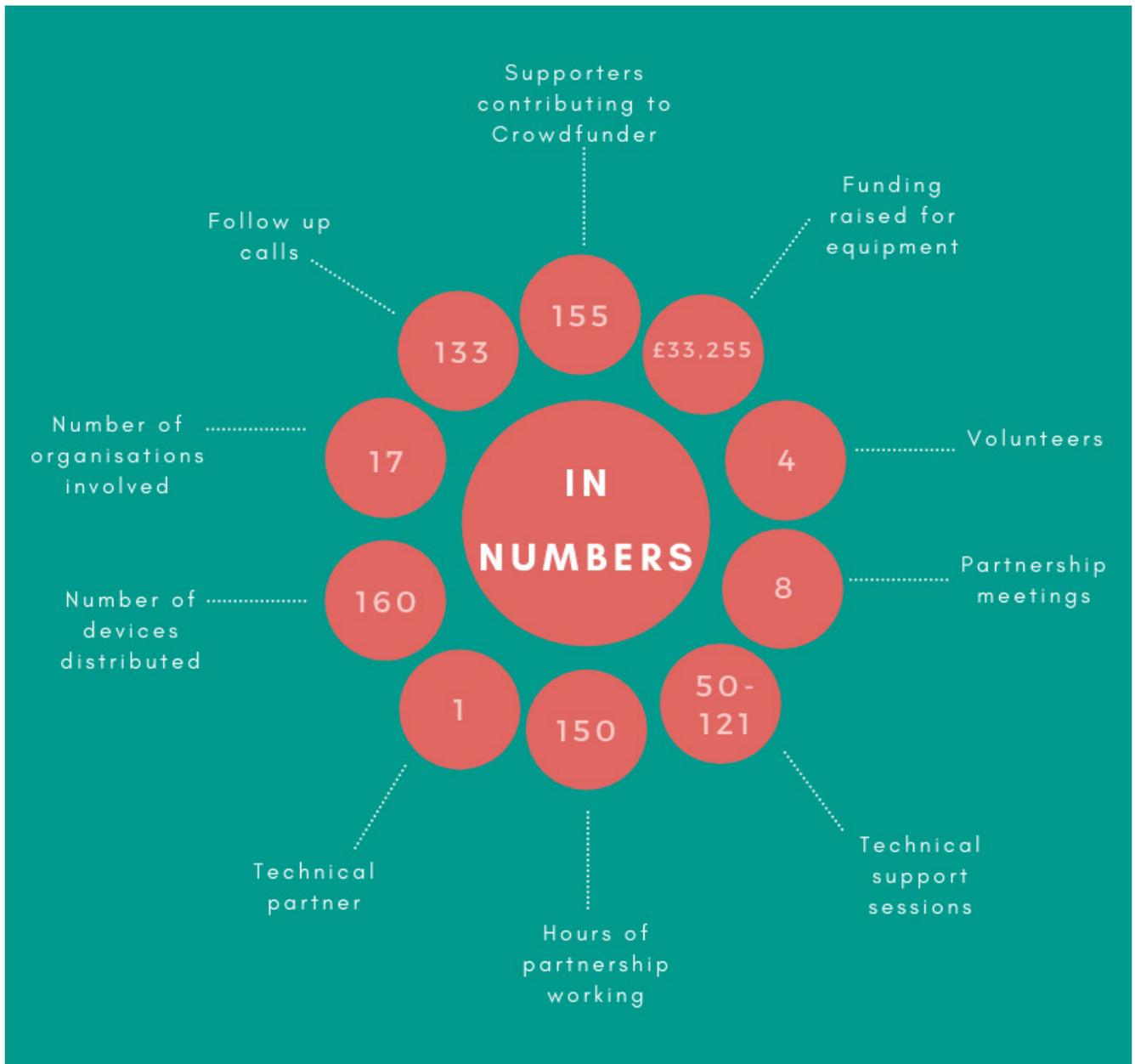
Connecting Tulse Hill Summary Report



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Summary of Achievements



The Connecting Tulse Hill Partnership

The Connecting Tulse Hill (CTH) Partnership came together to provide a collective response to addressing digital exclusion in Tulse Hill during the Covid-19 pandemic. The partnership was initially formed of the following organisations: Tulse Hill Labour Ward Councillors, Jubilee Primary School, Tree Shepherd and High Trees Community Development Trust.

The partnership objectives were to ensure that:

- Individuals could access and apply for welfare support they may be entitled to.
- Individuals could take part in online courses that are being delivered by High Trees.
- Children and young people could engage in their remote school- support.
- Individuals and families could stay connected to each other via video-calls.

To make these objectives achievable the partnership quickly organised all of the resources to manage the project and put all of the pieces into place to get the equipment out to those in need as an emergency response.

The initiative was also supported by further Tulse Hill based organisations including St. Matthews Project, YellowQube and Holy Trinity Primary School, and three Tenants and Residents Associations: St Matthews, Tulse Hill Estate and St. Martins Estate. These partners became active referrers into the project.

A Collaborative Approach to Fundraising

The partnership set up a Crowdfunder at the beginning of the initiative setting ourselves a target of £10,000. In the end we greatly exceeded this raising £15,175, through individual donors, match funding from Lambeth Council and contributions from a local housing association. This was the first Crowdfunder we had run, and its success was a huge bonus to our collective work. The Crowdfunder attracted 155 different supporters who made contributions. All the partners promoted this fund which worked very effectively. St Matthews TRA and High Trees were also able to raise a further £3,000 and £12,000 respectively for equipment to provide additional resource for the project.

High Trees oversaw the delivery of the project, providing staff time in kind, to ensure that all fundraising was able to be directed solely to purchasing equipment.

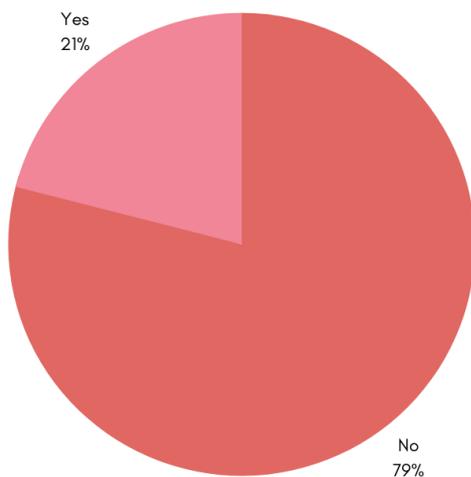
Device Distribution

With the funds raised, the partnership was able to secure 130 laptops/tablets and 60 Mi-Fi devices, a total of 190 devices.

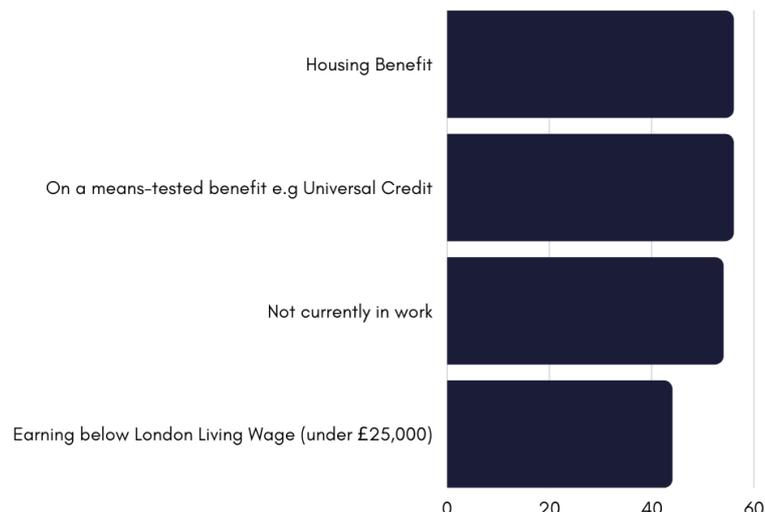
Over 160 of these devices have now been delivered to beneficiaries in need. The devices have reached some of the most vulnerable people locally and have made a huge difference to people's lives. The remaining devices have been allocated and will be collected by beneficiaries and referral organisations by the end of September 20.

79% of all devices went to beneficiaries with a school aged child at home, many of these families with more than one child. e.g. **M.** an unemployed single mother from Dominican Republic with 4 young children and no access to the internet or a digital device. Through the project **M.** has been able to join High Trees ESOL online classes and make sure her young children were able to stay connected. Families with school aged children have been heavily affected by the lockdown with 71% of recipients needing devices to help children with schoolwork. e.g. **A.** aged 11, was unable to complete his school homework or connect with remote youth services because his family of 7 only had one digital device.

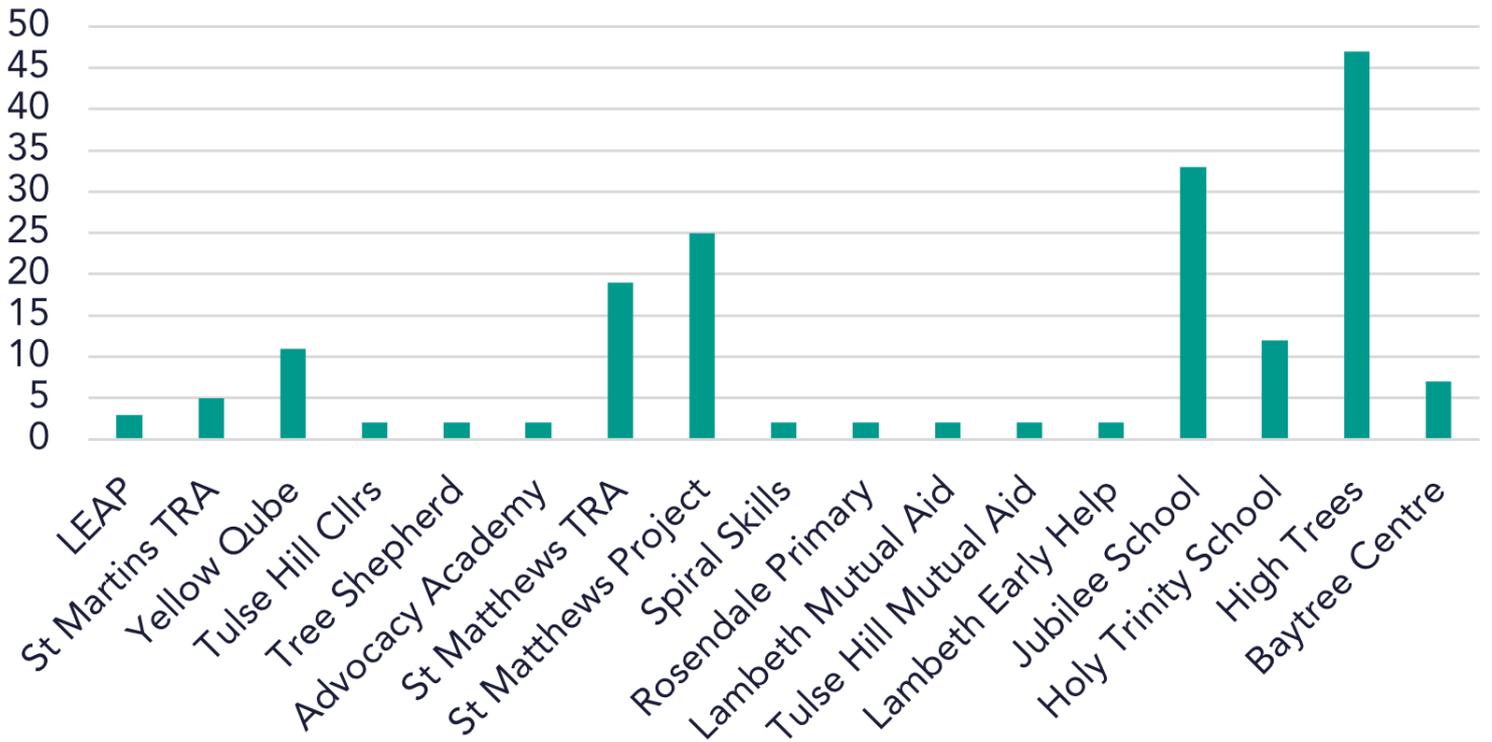
Number of beneficiaries with school aged children at home



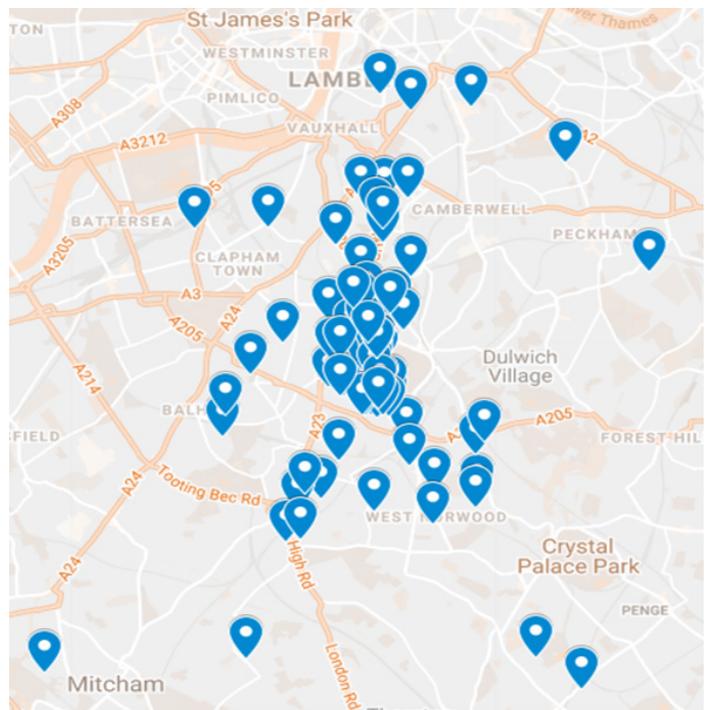
All users supported through the project were experiencing financial struggles with 44% of recipients earning below the London Living Wage, 54% not currently being in work, 56% being on a means tested benefit and 56% being on housing benefits.



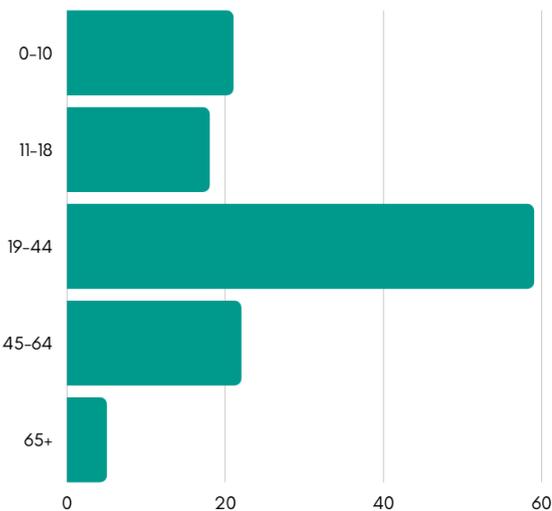
Device distribution by organisation



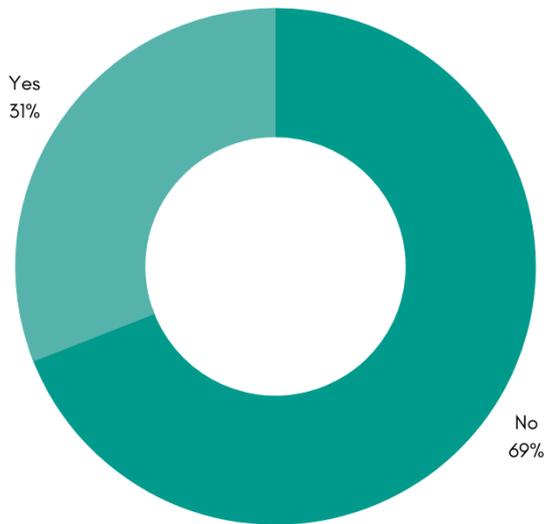
Map of 108 beneficiaries receiving equipment through CTH project, results clustered.



Device recipients by age



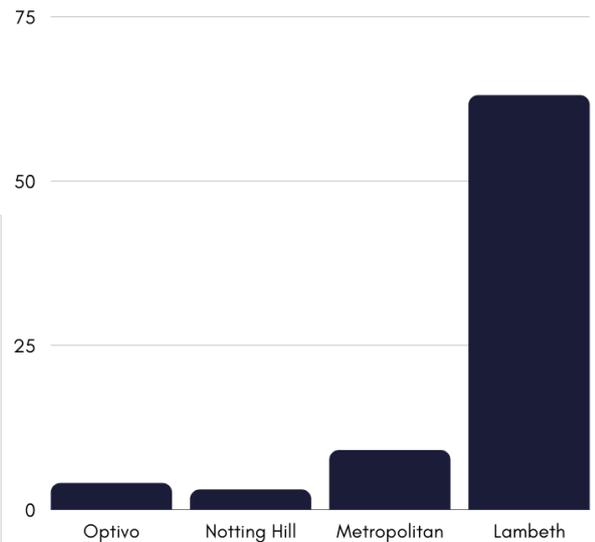
Device recipients with a disability



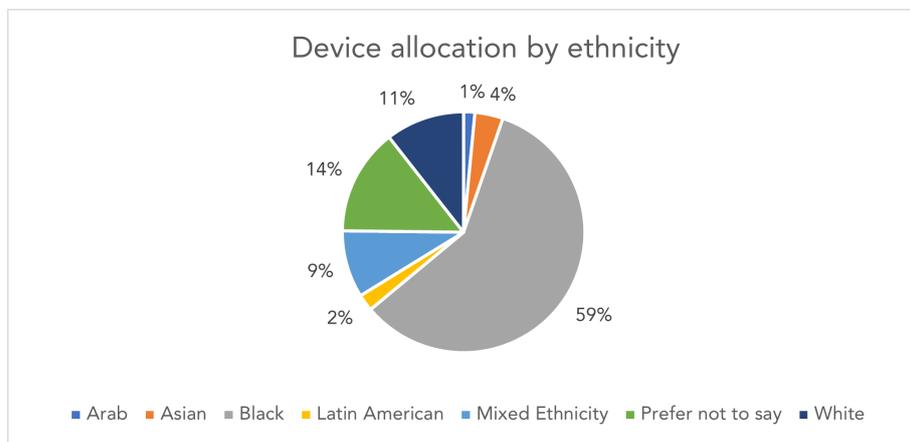
Our data also shows that 31% of those accessing this service had a health condition or a disability, was often in multigenerational households or alone and isolated. e.g. P., a lone parent and carer, living with her elderly mother who is disabled and shielding.

Data also show that 63% of people were renting from the council or social landlord, 68% of those from Lambeth (43% overall) with 59% of beneficiaries needing help through the project identifying as Black (British, African, Caribbean or "other").

Social Housing Landlord



Device allocation by ethnicity



More than 37% of those accessing the service to date, had no functioning Wi-Fi at home. We have found that many recipients from the project have needed the devices for adult education with 27% reporting that they needed equipment to continue their studies. A further 34% expressed a need for devices to be able to look for work or complete on-line applications, some were also struggling with the inability to regularly check emails and look for work opportunities. e.g. G., a security worker on a zero-hour contract who solely relies on being able to connect to secure work.

Impact

Referral organisations were asked for feedback on the impact of the project for their beneficiaries. We had 38 responses to this questionnaire (29% of individuals allocated). In response to the question, "to what extent does the beneficiary agree that the device has made a positive impact on their life?" **94.8% either strongly agreed or agreed the equipment had made a significant positive impact.**

Partners reported that:

"It's been a total lifeline; she has needed a new washing machine during lockdown and having access to the internet made getting a replacement a much easier task. It's given her access to all of the things she needs on the internet and made it easier to live life through lockdown."

"It's linked her to all the things she used to access in the community and locally prior to Covid-19 - can listen to music when she likes, can interact and keep in touch with family on a regular basis which has made a huge difference to her everyday life. Has made lockdown and shielding so much easier."

"Helped the 3 girls not to fight over one laptop, and concentrate on their schoolwork"

"Access the home-schooling for the children and keep in contact with each of the schools. This has made the family feel more confident and able to cope with lock down."

"It helped parents ensure their children did not suffer academically as a result of their social or financial context."

"It enabled partners staff to more effectively support their beneficiaries"

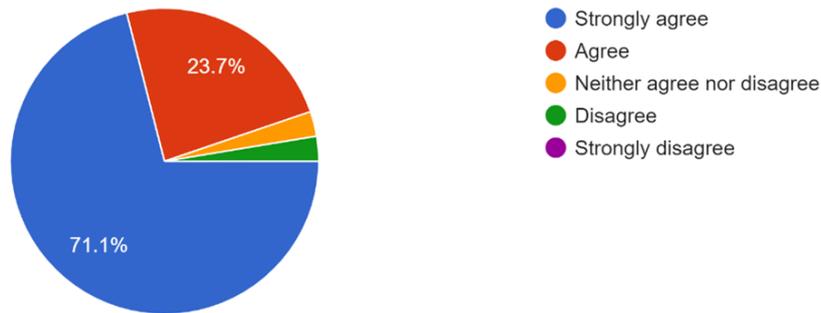
"I have been able to better support them in my role, trying to get the involved in courses or continue their job seeking which would have been much more challenging without them having a device"

"A 'huge' impact is being made as so many individuals have felt isolated during these arduous times of the Covid- 19 pandemic... some have not been able to physically visit friends and family and have relied on their equipment to support them in connecting with others especially as they may not be local to any of them. Also, enabling people to shop online for groceries for themselves and others that they may be supporting."

One respondent neither agreed nor disagreed and one disagreed that the equipment had made a positive impact. In one case the equipment had developed a technical fault, with the device eventually being returned. This was replaced with an alternative device with the beneficiary now able to make use of their new equipment. In the other case, the beneficiary had contracted COVID-19 and was not able to make use of the laptop while unwell, this beneficiary has gone on to make a full recovery and is now making use of their device. The following data was collected to better understand the individual impact the project has had for device recipients:

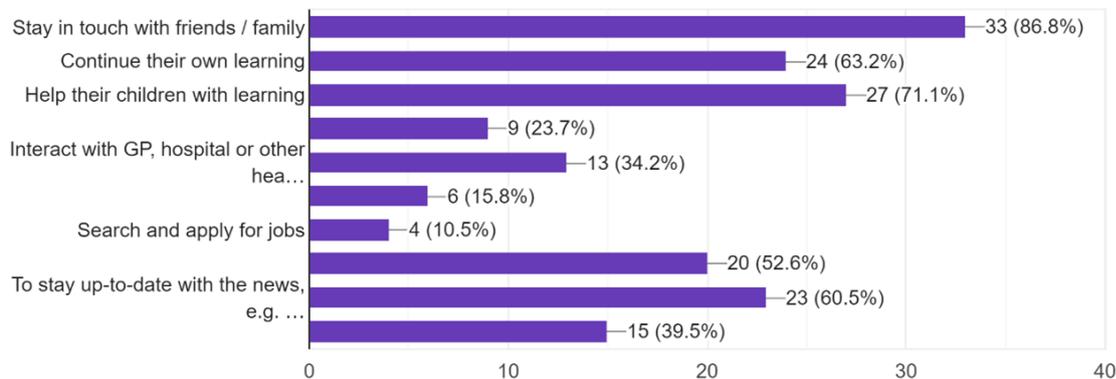
To what extent does the beneficiary agree that the device has had a positive impact on their life?

38 responses



Has the beneficiary been able to do any of the following, as a result of receiving the device? Please tick all that apply.

38 responses



Feedback from Partners

At the end of the device allocation process, partners were asked for feedback on how they found being a part of the partnership, what they felt could be improved, and their thoughts for the future.

Overall what worked well across the CTH partnership?

Partners responded that "the swift and effective response to our community's need for internet and device access" and the "breadth of organisations involved" were key strengths of the project. Partners mentioned that the project created a sense of community support, the referral system was straightforward, responses were rapid, and the project felt well managed. The weekly partnership "reports were timely and very informative which helped to "build trust" with organisations." The aftercare was also highlighted for praise. "I feel the communication regarding aftercare of the laptops is great. If our families have any issues with their equipment, there is always someone on hand to support with that."

What could be improved for future working?

Partners mentioned that input and allocation process could be refined in the future. This is an issue that reduced as more staff understood the process and guidance was produced and shared. Due to the quick turnaround of the emergency response, there were also some challenges for local groups with regards to identifying beneficiaries. "TRAs were not sure how they could refer people in without causing upset amongst neighbours. If we had more time, we could have thought about that more."

What need/s were you able to address of your beneficiaries as a result of the CTH project?

Partners universally agreed that the project had a significant positive impact enabling beneficiaries to connect with online learning opportunities. (See beneficiaries' feedback in the Impact section).

What other digital needs could still be addressed in the future by the CTH partnership?

Multiple partners raised the issue of connectivity as something that still needed to be addressed.

Is there anything else you would like to share on your experience as a partner of the CTH project?

"This is vital work that needs to be fully supported in our communities so that all community members can access basic services and opportunities, especially when community facilities such as libraries are not open or open for fewer hours."

"It has been a 'brilliant experience' being able to support and interact with all the different families and individuals in Tulse and Brixton Hill that accessed the programme. Many have shared their stories with me and I'm very glad that St Matthews TRA is a part of this journey I'm looking forward to its continuation and building stronger partnerships across the Tulse Hill Ward."

Legacy and Next Steps

Connectivity:

The key issue of connectivity was something we were able to make limited long-term progress on during the CTHP initial response. Many of the partners have known of the issues of digital exclusion in the area for years, but the pandemic shone a spotlight on the fact that a high number of people in our locality do not have internet access.

For those not able to afford a monthly direct debit for data, there is no good solution.

Most people in this situation simply can't afford to pay for it and are under constant pressure. Those that can scrape the money together either pay over the odds for pay as you go data or get a poor basic broadband package.

Through conversations with Lambeth Housing and Comm-Tech as well as our partners, we have discovered an opportunity to provide a long-term community Wi-Fi solution. We will be looking at developing a proposal to bring community Wi-Fi to Tulse Hill estate and exploring whether this is a possible route forward.

Digital Library:

A legacy of the project is that we now have a library of laptops that are out on long term loan to local people, if/when these are returned to the CTH partnership we will re allocate these to beneficiaries on our waiting list. The beneficiary referral system will remain in place so that the partnership can continue to keep track of the numbers of people in need of equipment, based on need we will seek to secure access to more equipment for people we collectively support if required. We will review the situation with the partnership as it develops and shape the support to meet the needs that emerge.

Community Internet Hubs:

As COVID-19 restrictions start to lift and local people start to be able to access more community spaces in Tulse Hill we anticipate that the demand for use of IT equipment within community spaces will return to pre pandemic levels.

There are already a few spaces within Tulse Hill offering the community access to the internet through community internet hubs, but we feel that the need is greater than the current offer available.

The CTH partnership is committed to working with partners that want to expand the current offer and set up community internet hubs in their venues by providing equipment. Partners that wish to run one of these hubs will need to have the space and ability to commit to the ongoing maintenance required to run them. High Trees and Glows have already committed to opening new hubs and we will seek to expand the number of partners doing the same over the coming months.

The CTH partnership will also seek to work with partners that are hosting new and existing Community Internet hubs to create joint publicity so that the Tulse Hill community know when the various internet hubs are open.

Digital skills:

We will also continue to support beneficiaries with ongoing ICT courses and 1-1 support. We know that many of the people that have accessed support through the project will need this ongoing resource. We will also seek to bring in additional partners to help us build capacity in this area.

Formalising the partnership:

We will now reflect and review our progress as a partnership and explore next steps. Working collaboratively on the CTH project brought us closer together as a collective, increased our communication and levels of collaboration. There is a lot of potential to build on and formalise the partnership as is something we will look to explore beyond the life of this initial project.

Sharing of learning:

A key commitment of the partnership is to share the learning from the work we do together. We have already packaged, and shared learning generated through this project to enable organisations in other geographical locations to learn from and build on the work we have done, and we will continue to do this.



Case Studies

B. is a mother of one who regularly attended our ESOL classes at a local children's centre. When courses were suspended due to COVID-19, she found herself unable to connect with others or study English, and due to lack of access to any devices or internet connection at home, she was disconnected and digitally excluded. Thanks to our support, B. has received a device and a dongle with internet connection and has been able to join weekly ESOL classes with her teacher Elly, meet new ESOL learners and even join sessions with her little baby Elizabeth. B. has also received a range of English books for babies and toddlers from High Trees, to be able to learn new words and read together with her child. About the support she received, she says: "High Trees have helped me to do English online, by providing me with a tablet for me not to have to worry about missing classes, or not studying or learning. With the tablet that High Trees gave me I can study English at home, and I can attend the ESOL classes online every week. It is making my life easier."

M. is a 64 year old, vulnerable person who was living alone and belonged to the categories of people needing to shield. M. struggled with isolation and loneliness as she is usually very active and sociable. Being digitally excluded also added extra pressure to her situation, and luckily through the wellbeing checks, we were also able to provide her with a laptop. About the impact that this had in her current situation, M. mentioned that it has completely changed her life, as she is now able to use video calling to reconnect with family in Holland and find out about useful, local information. It has just given her an overall boost in wellbeing to know that she can chat to someone for half an hour each week about what has been going on in the news and locally and that if she needs something urgently, someone from High Trees would do their best to help. "It's made a real difference, especially whilst I had to stay at home".

"Thank you for all you are doing for me. I would have been lost without you and unable to understand the guidelines and access food vouchers. You have helped my children too as we can now study on the new laptop and not have to worry about missing homework. I can also study my course and attend classes with O. so I can still complete my qualification". (R.A. - ICT learner)

