

Wired Up Communities - Project Managers' Interview August /September 2003

A first round of research interviews took place in September 2001 and over the course of January 2002 Halcyon Consultants conducted a second round of interviews with project managers. During August 2003 Halcyon Consultants conducted a third and final round of interviews with the six phase two pilot WuC projects.

The research questionnaire for this third round was framed to obtain responses to 22 questions over the eight key measures being tested by DfES, but again expanded to include other issues of relevance.

- Impact of the WUC pilot on the community
- Integration of the WUC pilot with other initiatives & synergy links
- The technology used in offering access to ICT
- Nature of the public/private sector partnerships
- Services provided by a WUC pilot project
- Training and awareness offered to users
- Content development
- Schools link and the relationship with the E-Learning Foundation
- Decision making/management
- Funding and charging policy
- Sustainability
- Good practice recommendations

Impact on communities

Selection criteria

Selection criteria have not changed, although Eastserve has extended its area. Those who are less affluent, and families were selected rather than those with a PC or email address already (Suffolk), which had 3 times as many enquiries as computers. Those with bad debts were not given a loan, and those without a phone line were put on to Broadband when it became available (Eastserve). Com2Net (see below for more information on this project) has started with a list of target wards.

Take-up

Newham has a problem with take up from older people who are more likely to live in a low-rise and not have an active champion in the block. Of 410 wired flats, 270 have taken up the offer (60%). 100 more flats could be wired.

In Suffolk, two thirds of households applied for a PC, and one third got one. The area should have been expanded to include Wickham Market.

Eastserve has extended to Miles Platting/Ancoats with regeneration funds, and has shipped 3500 PCs (over 90% new ones). STBs and Network computers are not used. Credit Union handled 70% of payments.

Some Asian families were unable to participate as used a shared telephone line in a row of terraced houses bought communally (Blackburn).

Levels of Take-Up August 2003

WUC Project	Estimated	Actual
Alston	1200	670 ⁺
Blackburn	2400	2520
Brampton	1200*	298
East Manchester	4500	3500
Suffolk	1550	1550
Liverpool	2000	1870
Newham	750	270

+ Alston has 330 broadband connections, but only 250 users due to cost and performance

* The figures are for new PCs and do not include recipients of set top boxes distributed by Pit2Net. Com2Net now has a potential target of 10 000 homes across Rotherham.

How to reach into the community and engage residents.

There is no one answer to this. Much depends upon the time taken to prepare the community and to nest the WuC within other activities and partnerships – Eastserve and Blackburn are the best examples of this. An overall and sustained planning and consultation process (Eastserve, Newham, Blackburn) assist with this. Champions (Suffolk, Newham) demonstrated that take-up was higher where they were active. Use of existing functions, community groups, council contacts, and on street and word of mouth are all deemed important. Direct mail and telemarketing (Blackburn, Suffolk) were deemed effective. Use of video (Newham) to raise awareness and gain interest is highly rated. Those projects with a ‘high-street’ presence saw this as sustaining interest (Eastserve, Suffolk) – although Blackburn deliberately did not have this.

The nature of the broadband technology was in itself an attractor (Eastserve, Alston). Employing a team of people from the target area gives them an added incentive to sell the service to their friends, family and neighbours. Marketing funding from Countryside Agency has been used to promote the website and support local events and community organisations (Alston).

Problems faced were the understanding of the nature of the offer (Blackburn, Com2Net), and the very problematic social conditions in Brampton, where even the office location in the Miners Welfare of itself was a barrier to many people. Schools were not seen as a successful way of reaching potential recipients (Eastserve).

A planned and sustained PR exercise seems to work best, with attention paid to all media, including the project's own web site. Once the projects were established and had a track record, enquiries were likely to continue (Blackburn, Eastserve). Regular press releases and news stories in the local media works well to keep awareness levels high (Alston).

ICT champions achievements and capacity building

It may be necessary to distinguish between 'volunteers' and 'champions'. 'Volunteers' is preferred - champions may be thought of as meaning 'winners' (Alston, Eastserve). They may have a role in administration, project management, documentation, web-authoring and (broadband) marketing – that is working within the organisational structure. In such cases (Eastserve, Com2et) it is a requirement that they are adequately supported, and that projects cannot rely on voluntary activity to achieve results. Using champions is great in theory but they require support and management if they are delivering front line services for the community such as technical support.

As champions, volunteers successfully carried a number of roles in support of marketing the project and helping the recipients with the technology (Suffolk, Eastserve, Alston). A deliberate training and support programme for champions has meant that they may be in a position to carry forward the project and its spin-offs (Suffolk,), and this is being planned for Eastserve Phase 3 and Com2Net in principle. Installers may become local points of contact for the project, and some residents may become digital media champions on the local network (Newham). Contributions to web sites (Alston, Blackburn, Eastserve, Suffolk) and in particular to discussion boards (Eastserve, Blackburn), whilst continuing to be sometimes problematic, have been significant.

“Volunteers helped residents to have confidence to go through the project, by face-to-face interventions using their own experiences.”

“In Alston, many people provide informal technical support which does not register on the project's radar. We know it takes place, but we don't know the full extent of it.”

Evidence of other capacity building is the opening up of online discussions, developing of training skills and employment opportunities, improved skill at negotiation, decision-making and communication, and technical support on the web and an individual basis. However, problems have occurred when champions were split into technical and non-technical roles, causing a falling out amongst themselves and with decision makers on the residents' panel (Eastserve).

Integration with other activities

Integration can be summarised on two levels: into pre-existing developments, and into new ones now being developed.

Pre-existing examples

- Estate planning (Newham Masterplanning system)
- Network East Manchester and NDC (the NEM Board says it is successful in meeting regeneration objectives), (Co2Net)
- EAZ's (Eastserve provided network and some kit)
- Credit Union (Eastserve)
- County network and development strategies (Alston)
- BEACH community development activity (BeOnline has given credibility to this)
- Learning agenda (All)

New potentiality examples

- Web based services: crime reduction and safety (Eastserve, Suffolk, Alston), housing and young people's programmes (Eastserve)
- New municipal networks (Eastserve, Newham)
- Digital (media) developments (Newham, Manchester)
- Rural Broadband push (Suffolk, Alston)
- Plastic card development (Blackburn, Suffolk)
- Learning-work continuum development (Alston, Eastserve)
- Schools use of ICTs for 'mediathèque' developments (Blackburn).
- Distribution of content via cabled council premises across the Borough (Newham)
- E-government (All).

Technology

Setting up and running contracts for the supply of terminals, networks and software continues to set challenges for all of the projects.

Terminals

Some people just can't or won't use a PC (Blackburn), and the specifications tended to be inadequate (ME was replaced by XP in Eastserve), changeable and somewhat unreliable (Blackburn, Eastserve). Questions over supply, maintenance, supply and maintenance contract compliance (through a third party tender process) and the sheer effort of keeping on top of this were prominent (Pit2Net, Blackburn, Eastserve). Projects felt that the terminals were likely to be overpriced given market conditions. New PCs are the preferred option (excepting Newham and Com2Net). Newham's groundbreaking approach demonstrates that the STBs are easy to use, avoid viruses and can be easily managed via central server control. Usage remains lower than hoped however, although this may change when broadcast TV is stopped. Neither PLATO nor learndirect are viewable currently on a TV.

Networks

All of the broadband networks have had problems and require quality assured and secure processes. There is a lack of experience in the delivery of wireless networks, particularly the 802.11b option (Suffolk), and the learning curve has been long (Alston, Newham). Managing suppliers in an emerging market has been critical (Eastserve, Alston, Suffolk), particularly when there are a number of contracted partners. Technical and access to homes problems associated with the installations have been many. Examples are that Newham has only wired 60% of intended homes; multiple interventions over servers are required (Newham, Alston); ensuring network integrity and security has not always provided a reliable service (Alston, Eastserve); and network topology, if predicated on secure local government management practices can restrict the use and flexibility of the network (Eastserve); line of sight requirements cause problems (Alston, Suffolk), although a test using a mobile internet device throughout the Suffolk radio coverage area was very successful.

On the positive side, server and application software management is straightforward, and the networks offer the chance of remote diagnostics and for the end-users an attractive and fast service.

Software

Clearly Newham has a lot to offer, including its PC on a TV option, which has been deemed a success by Microsoft. Content management software has been an issue for all of the projects, and the costs associated with its supply and use have been high (Blackburn). The SMS software linked with the Cybermoor portal has proved an effective way of providing information to users quickly.

Impact

Faulty terminals and network outages have damaged the project's credibility with end users (Blackburn, Alston) but overall the impact of the technology has been high, with wide and fast improvements in skills reported (Suffolk, Blackburn, Com2Net). Eastserve reported high usage of music file downloads and sharing, and there is anecdotal evidence of the benefits to young people (Com2Net) and community groups and businesses (Suffolk).

Public sector partnerships

The most important public sector partner for the projects is the local authority. Primary roles are **ownership** (Newham network, Blackburn, Com2Net project), **coordination of strategy and planning** (Suffolk, Eastserve), **procurement and contracting** (Eastserve, Blackburn), **financial management** (Blackburn, Eastserve), and **provision of skills and knowledge** (Eastserve). Within this, various sections of local government have had some involvement – such the police, housing and education. Blackburn Council continues to have a special role in relation to the BEACH partnership in fostering its emergence as a trading entity (whilst continuing to seek justification for its expenditure). Other agencies currently involved are the Colleges (Newham), regional development agencies (Alston, Suffolk), and voluntary sector agencies (Newham).

Although nested within the regeneration arm of the council in New East Manchester, the Eastserve project in principle can become an independent entity, but relies currently on funding drawn down through the Council. Suffolk

council is not viewed as having been supportive to the project. The development of Com2Net depends entirely on a contract with Rotherham Council for the supply of re-cycled PCs.

The primary issue with public sector partnerships remains for those projects that were set up with little local context, so that real partnership working has been set back by the need to concentrate on project roll-out. This has meant slow or little recognition of the work of the project – for example by seeing the benefit of access to a large number of people through the web sites. However public agencies can and do contribute cash to the projects.

Private sector partnerships

All of the projects have an essential relationship with their suppliers, and although failures are reported, generally the point has been reached where most difficulties have been overcome. Eastserve and Suffolk, Newham and Alston have noted the support and commitment of private sector partners. No specific relationship with private sector organisations has been evidenced except that Newham keeps in touch with its local Chamber.

Relationship with local business

Suffolk has good and strong relationships with three local firms for support, web site maintenance and PC supplies, and broadband installations, and there is involvement in wider activities to promote the project. Generally however links with local firms have been at a low level. Eastserve however is looking to provide network services to local businesses and take on a business directory/portal service.

Alston is looking to develop closer links with local business around e-commerce.

WUC Services

Determining the needs of the community and the services required

The Tenants Management Organisation (Newham) works with residents and leads the project on the ground. Installing the technology and then monitoring use is one way of determining needs – for example using job search facilities (Newham) – however it is recognised that there has been inadequate marketing research. Working with champions to run events and a telemarketing campaign were core to Suffolk's work. Surveys of recipients are being used (Blackburn, Eastserve, Suffolk, Alston) to provide feedback. Blackburn had high returns for postal surveys, but poor returns from the web based version. Com2Net will be working within the overall Rotherham regeneration and learning and skills strategies, and considers that employing community workers will be essential for this. Special attention to training needs (Suffolk) and to those with limiting conditions (Alston) were very important.

Facilities, services, and support for residents.

The services etc specifically mentioned by interviewees are listed below and may not be a complete set.

a) Facilities

- Public access project office (Newham, Suffolk, Eastserve, Alston, Brampton (at the moment))
- Training venues (Eastserve [UK online centres], Suffolk, Blackburn [original laptop suite that did not reflect real PC usage, now learning centre])
- Video edit suites (Newham, Alston)
- Small scale events (Newham, Suffolk, Alston)
- Estate cinema for local videos (Newham, Alston)
- Community Access points (Suffolk [20], Blackburn, Alston [7])
- Drop off point for faulty kit (Suffolk, Alston)
- Flexible network membership (Eastserve, Alston)
- Drop-in office services (Eastserve, Com2net, Alston)

b) Services

- Splashplastic (Blackburn [275 users])
- Credit Union (Eastserve)
- Web site (all bar Newham)
- Home visits to reset computer (Alston), at £10 plus £10 ph thereafter [Blackburn]
- Multimedia hire and edit facility (Alston)
- E-government (Eastserve, though 'it is hard work')
- WuC CD (Eastserve)
- Video production, young people schemes, Home 2 Home videos [50], secure online shopping environment, TV over IP, FreeView, PLATO, open source internet and email, games (Newham)
- Consumable sales (Suffolk)
- Community ISP (Suffolk, Alston)
- VOIP (Alston)
- Website usability testing services & consultancy [Alston]
- Web portal development, wireless network development

Possible services: web conference room (Eastserve); telephone support (Eastserve); hardware upgrades, consumables (Eastserve, Com2Net), 3-D planning tools; college funded video production as coursework (Newham)

c) Support

- Help desk (Newham, Suffolk, Eastserve, Com2Net [in house after perceived failure of ILM to support staff], Blackburn, Alston)
- Personal contact (Newham, Suffolk [mentoring champions])
- Equal opportunities (Alston)
- Office based staff rather than being deflected from work by public office as the scheme was community based in any case (Blackburn)
- Web based information (Suffolk, Eastserve, Blackburn, Alston)
- Supplier maintenance (Blackburn)
- Online and video help (Newham)
- Training targeted at used services via system monitoring (Newham)
- Beginner and advanced user groups (Newham)
- Remote support & virus removal for broadband customers (Alston)

Training and Awareness

Organisation

People need short focussed training events over time that can lead in due course to greater take-up of learndirect and other training opportunities (Suffolk, Newham). It is essential to coordinate the initial training with the delivery and connection of the equipment, and to provide multiple venues to do this (Suffolk). Tailoring courses to recipient need – identified in a preliminary training needs analysis or during awareness sessions – is most effective (Suffolk, Newham). Take-up of free courses is not as consistent as for those for which a fee is charged – people fail to turn up for booked sessions (Suffolk, Blackburn). It is therefore essential to plan both for initial training, and then prepare a programme of follow-up courses in both formal and informal environments using both the resources of training providers and champions and volunteers (Suffolk, Eastserve). Training providers must be contracted through a service level agreement that conforms to project objectives not e.g. college or learning centre ones (Blackburn, Com2Net, Suffolk).

The question of the timing of training remains one where the projects took different approaches – insisting that training took place before allowing access to the computer (Blackburn), to offering training once the recipients had started using it (Suffolk). One project considers that people will train themselves without help (Alston). If training is an output measure then do the training first before equipment is delivered (Com2Net), although this can cause problems if there is a time delay before installation (Blackburn). Funding for training can be drawn down through LSC and learndirect routes (as well as ESF/ERDF), and the WuCs do provide an impetus to the take-up of learning opportunities. The importance of having learndirect/UK online centres as well other less formal venues was emphasised by most projects.

Basic Skills

Most projects did not deal formally with the issues surrounding learning basic skills, an area that has developed nationally over the lifetime of the WuC programme. Alston has obtained PLATO learning software to carry out basic skills training and has contracted with the local training centre to get people interested. It has been difficult to recruit people for the courses despite working with the schools and other Cumbria wide projects. Basic skills training is a people intensive activity to recruit and support learners, however, there has been little revenue support from local partners in Alston. Some progress is being made on this in Blackburn, but those who lack basic skills require a more personal intervention at higher cost, and a recent report highlights the shortage of basic skills teachers (OfSTED 2003¹). Basic skills remain an issue that the WuCs have not fully grasped.

¹ Literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages: a survey of current practice in post-16 and adult provision. OFSTED 2003
<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.summary&id=3410>

Promotion and marketing the project and its services

A Project Pack (Suffolk), videos, leaflets, CDROMs (All), events, and newsletters (paper and online) have all been used.

Projects have been developing a marketing plan that tries to identify its target audience (groups and individuals), and develop an identity for the project – more than ‘it’s the people who give away free computers’ (Eastserve) or for the web site (Blackburn’s is being re-launched to a wider community as a ‘neighbourhood site’ capable of giving a voice to residents.) Telemarketing (Suffolk) of its training courses has led to an increased take-up of basic courses by its direct personal approach. Suffolk has also produced a marketing plan for its ISP. The close involvement of champions, training and the support offered to the web site has led a growing number of web pages to be hosted on the Suffolk Online site. Com2Net reports that the current marketing is top-down and requires a strategic framework, and has little evidence of its success. Newham relies upon the outcomes of the Masterplanning process for the area, whilst Eastserve continues to review its plans for its Phase 3 operation.

Alston has used a variety of marketing activities – banners, newsletters, leaflets, car stickers, pen holders etc. This has continued over the last 6 months using Countryside Agency funding.

Content

Achieving the objectives of the project community web site

Some projects are looking to expand the geographic coverage of their web sites, and all face the issues of delivering content to the site through engaging and training community users, whilst continuing to have or recruit enough staff resources to do this and maintain quality. Questions remain over material for those with ESOL in Blackburn.

E-government services and the delivery of other agencies’ content remain largely problematic, indeed projects feel that they have been ignored or that a joined up strategy has failed to materialise (Suffolk, Eastserve). In Blackburn’s case, the success of the site in attracting users has to be proved by November 2003 in order to convince the Council to make use of it for its ‘accessible services’ programme and expand it to other areas.

Developing multimedia content is the next phase for Alston and this involves training people in the use of video cameras.

Newham

Newham does not have a portal as such. Instead it delivers a range of services. According to monitoring statistics, the most popular services are, in order, Digital TV, internet/email, games and possibly PC on the TV.

Planned are:

- Personal web space
- Teletext
- A virtual service centre with the Borough

- Newham TV
- Commercial video on demand if customer base big enough.

Schools Links

Com2Net

Wath Comprehensive uses the project office as an out of hours club and resource centre, and there is scope for expansion into an eLF.

Newham

There is an eLF, but the project deals direct with schools. STBs are installed in all classrooms, and if laptops are brought home there are plans to connect them to the cabling for access to the school server. Co-location means that the WuC is part of the wider council strategy.

Suffolk

The high school helped co-ordinate applications to the project, and shared knowledge with it. The IT suite at Wilby school is used for adult evening classes. The current issue is the establishment of access to the school servers, and the possibility of using broadband links to schools as routes in for further Wi-Fi projects.

Eastserve

The project is working with the EAZ in the use of MS Class servers (schools are on the WuC network). Equipment was donated to schools to supplement the eLF-funded kit, but there is no ongoing relationship with the eLF. The project takes the view that the eLF should be responsible for training parents and pupils, and that it should support technical developments. The co-location has been poorly exploited.

Alston

There is no local eLF, but the project has been working with schools on video production, content development for the website. Network security issues remain (true elsewhere). It is thought that children have had real benefits for having access to technology at home.

Blackburn

The local eLF installed equipment in 11 schools. There is no access to schools servers from home as yet – and there are online resources available elsewhere on the internet. Co-location allowed investment in extra kit for schools and opened up channels to some sympathetic staff. Schools do not divulge information to the project on the use made of its PCs, and the view is that the schools do not think outside of their immediate interests.

Projects were asked if local people understand what is on offer from the two schemes – WuC and eLF, and there is little evidence of an issue here – people largely unaware it is thought.

Decision making / management

The views noted here were given freely by interviewees, and in some cases reflect personal opinions that have not been tested by complementary interviews with the accountable bodies in the DfES contracts.

Relationship with accountable body

Council financial systems were deemed inadequate (Newham, Manchester) and obstructive (Blackburn, preventing BEACH from doing some projects it would like to because staff are contracted to specific projects). Poor support from the accountable body was reported (Newham, Suffolk) in terms of supervision and commitment, although the Council supports infrastructure through its 2 day per week contract to the project (Newham). The Pit2Net project was characterised as badly set-up, with unclear objectives and planning and poor relationship between the Council and the community. Newham has kept away from the Council, and ensured that the intellectual property resides with Newham.net. In Suffolk the project manager would liked to have been more responsible for staff recruitment and project set-up from the outset, and had reservations about the accountable body taking on a new area of work. Eastserve is being underwritten by the Council – and could be stood down now on its original and achieved targets.

Staff and training

Dismissal procedures were criticised (Eastserve). Improved training from the accountable body was called for (Eastserve, Suffolk, Com2Net). Alston has suffered from reliance on a single manager, but with a new assistant he can now concentrate more on project vision and objectives.

Other issues

Infrastructure installation was an ‘uncontrolled environment’ (Newham) particularly on lead times, and it was an ‘all or nothing’ project. Com2Net is subject to the learning curve imposed on Phoenix Enterprises as a growing business, with a whole series of organisational and set-up procedures to work through and a new Board to account to. Newham is learning how to turn a project into a service. Alston has concerns over partner buy-in. Blackburn is particularly concerned that the council wants to take over the web site, and is currently developing community web sites across the borough with education and community groups using an outside contactor. It says that the project may be able to roll out web sites to other areas in 2004 – or not. Project staff discern interference from the Board and a conflict between it and the Forum’s vision. Staff consider that they are not trusted to develop beyond the contracted plan.

Staff resources

Blackburn is running with more staff than needed as the peak effort has passed; Newham had a peak of staff before the launch; Alston is better off and Eastserve – though well-staffed - has taken technical support in-house, occupied new premises to put them all under one roof, but still lacks volunteer, business support and web content staff. External consultancy continues (Com2Net – set-up; Eastserve – business planning; Blackburn – e-government [to BEACH]). Com2Net has major staff issues – skills and resources – to resolve,

and current staff have to work beyond normal parameters in the tasks undertaken. It needs funding, and technical support, admin and finance and community contact staff. Newham is concerned that the knowledge – some pre-existing and some innovative and learnt on the job – is vulnerable if the two staff 'leave'. The skills needed for its kind of project are expensive. Eastserve considers it has the staff capacity to run Phase 3, with a new technical web site manager and replacement project officer. It is possible that volunteers will be trained in technical support. Suffolk has suffered from its shortfall in staff, requiring more reliance on volunteers and delaying the wireless project.

Funding & Charging Policy

Revenue and capital received up to March 2003

Newham

£1M DfES, £300 000 Media Trust, £100 000 SRB

Since March 2003, only £50 000 SRB, plus cash subsidies from Newham.net and Media Trust. The project has re-charged the council for 2 days at commercial rates in order to pay the Technical Manager.

Suffolk

£1.3M DfES capital, £30 000 Suffolk CC, £45 000 District Councils, £227 000 EEDA revenue

Eastserve

£2.014M DfES capital, ERDF £477 500, NDC/SRB £477 500 revenue.

Com2Net

Project has £80 000 to last until January or March 2004, plus assets worth up to c£100 000.

Alston

£1.2M capital, £212 000 revenue.

Blackburn

No information. £70 000 contingency returned to DfES. Expenditure monitored closely by council, and funds can only be accessed via council approval – project is failing to meet cash flow targets set by ERDF.

Outstanding issues about costs and charges to end-users

Users want free or low-cost access to services (Blackburn). The ISP is making a small profit in Suffolk. Newham plans a paid for PC/Internet service aiming at those who do not have a phone line or use dial-up at the moment. Video on demand does not have enough potential subscribers. Com2Net is picking up. The Pit2Net customers, and dealing with the contract for 6 or 12 months free loan that have expired, and setting up and chasing Direct debit or Credit Union payment schemes.

There are issues about people exploiting the cheap tariff for broadband services in Alston using the one person on the house on benefit to get cheap broadband.

Sustainability

Business models for sustaining or expanding the services, resources in place, and what remains to be done

Newham

- Allow PCs to be added to network
- Home2Home: £300+k from various budgets – from October if approved
- ODPM Innovation fund - £1M project

- Deploying scheme across borough (2500 homes) as part of re-wiring council premises (and elsewhere). This requires further investment from private sector, currently underwritten by Newham.net

Suffolk

- Solitair 2 (wireless network)
- ISP serving 4000 customers
- Community enterprise...?

Eastserve

- Phase 3 for 2004 if approved: £1M NWDA, but wants £2M plus £1M ERDF to tie in with learning agenda, concentrating on this rather than IT support.
- Contracting partner for delivery of other self-contained projects
- Reviewing organisational capacity: Board sees evolution rather than structural change. Has cushion of current revenue for 2 years.

Com2Net

- Recycling 1000 PCs per annum using ERDF funding to sustain it over years 12 years. Aiming for a £60 000 trading surplus
- Project has £80 000 to last until January or March 2004, plus 275 new pc's and software valued at £80 000 to £100 000
- Decisions required on sales v hire of computers, consumables and after sales support, technical support and credit arrangements.

Alston

- Broadband service at varying charge levels
- IT or community ICT consultancy on e-government, portals, broadband
- CyberMoor Ltd registered as a co-operative
- Public access PC revenue

Blackburn

- Community plans + council initiatives + BEACH 'expertise = IEG 2005
- There is £15 000 for staff to extend web site for the 'accessible services' programme
- There is no clear way forward, and staff are constrained to current work only. Neighbourhood web sites seem a way forward, so the project is re-marketing and positioning its web site. Concerns over nature of council's project – top down or bottom up?

Funding: bids made

Com2Net

Community Fund bid to be submitted, plus ODPM funding bid too. Can project meet long-term social inclusion agenda that underlies it?

Newham

LDA £3400 000/ERDF £400 000/LSC £60 000 – all failed
SRB (current) from October. If fails, all TV services and staff would finish.

Suffolk

ODPM (community consultation) £250 000

LSC – rejected because of investment already in the area

Learning resource centres – rejected.

£52 000 funding from EEDA and DfES for second wireless project under discussion (now agreed).

Alston

Learning & Skills Council, Local Initiative Fund £10,000 Until March 04

Funding: other bids achieved**Suffolk**

EEDA wireless £50 000 with DfES match funding

Blackburn

£220 000 ERDF/SRB fund until March 2004, plus web site enhancement fund from council

Eastserve

£226 000 NDC/SRB + ERDF revenue from April 2003 (= £1.3M total revenue).

Alston

NWDA Broadband Fund £95,000 until March 04

Countryside Agency £38 500 until March 04

Rural Development Programme £16 500 Until October 04

LSC £12 000 Until March 04

Issues

Blackburn has talked to a range of funders and discussed a number of avenues. A key issue is that surveys show that people are not making use of their PCs, and there is a need to shift the emphasis to using the PC as a tool. Broadband development is a possibility.

Newham could develop an ISP over the Newham.net extranet. Do external consultancy, replicate to other areas as a package aimed at local authorities and marketed under the 'digital divide' banner. What is Newham.net's core business and what is the business model?

Feedback

Good practice for running a WUC project

- Clear aims
- Manage expectations in community
- Avoid over ambition on technology
- Realistic funding
- Plan for sustainability
- Although experimental, projects do have the potential for learning and development
- Projects need to capture trading resources
- Proper management practices, including contracting and just-in-time management, risk analysis, prioritising and completing tasks
- Partner buy-in essential – at all levels of the organisation
- Allow time
- Strong community development and social inclusions skills need to be embedded in the team
- Look for dual-sourcing and sharing of supply contracts
- Champions essential and need proper management and structured programme
- People: experience and specialist skills are need for a complex programme
- Create a permanent core team and outsource technical support, installations and learning
- Develop engagement strategy for other service providers
- Collect and manage high quality data
- Sweeten funders and get intelligence on funding
- Don't invent it all – share experience and use the WuC Toolkit
- Strong management skills required – separate from technical management
- Prepare good documentation

Recommendations to those funding similar Wired Up Communities that would ensure that their programme objectives are met

- Focus on highly managed outputs not IT
- Manage spend and outcomes carefully
- Insist on value for money even if this overrides local decisions
- Watch out for time servers and crooks
- Allow time - for testing and implementation
- Don't over invest in technology rather than people
- Research needs to capture what is taking place at the time, attitudes
- Community should pay something back into project in order to own it – determine charging policy
- Informal training and basic skills are important
- Don't stigmatise disadvantaged people
- Recognise that those outside a target area may resent it
- Its a community development project, so fund and plan for and ring-fence funding for this
- Ring fence content development funding
- Broadband infrastructure should come first

- If its about skills and training don't insist on a portal
- Celebrate success
- Help coordinate funding streams
- Organise shared solutions and knowledge.