Commentary Series

The Youth Technology Centre: The Click

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THE CENTRE FOR INSTITUTIONAL STUDIES

The Centre for Institutional Studies (CIS) is a research unit within the University of East London (UEL). Established in 1970, the centre undertakes studies of public policy and public institutions. Its distinctive approach is to identify the problems to which new policy is seen as a solution, and assess the capacity of the institutions to put new policies into practice. The Centre's name, and its approach is derived from the work of Sir Karl Popper and others, and in developing this approach the centre is unique in this country.

Since 1970 the centre has completed a range of studies in the fields of education, voluntary organisations, local government, local government finance, and other public services. Current work is focused on higher education, the voluntary sector and urban regeneration in the East of London.

THE URBAN REGENERATION TEAM

The Centre's urban regeneration evaluation team has been involved in the evaluation of a number of regeneration initiatives in East London. These have included Stratford City Challenge programme and SRBs located in East London. Other evaluations include a regional evaluation of the Youth Inclusion Programme for an assessment of the Home Office, funded Domestic Violence projects which are part of the Crime Reduction Programme, and a number of projects concerned with reducing the criminal behaviour of young offenders.

The urban regeneration team is multidisciplinary, and consists of researchers from a variety of academic backgrounds, including social sciences, criminology, environmental science, and economics. In this way they are well suited to evaluate Urban Regeneration programmes which typically cover a wide range of projects, objectives, and focuses.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Centre for Institutional Studies at the University of East London was commissioned by the South Leytonstone SRB in August 2001 to undertake an independent evaluation of the Youth Technology Centre. The evaluation was focused on the extent to which the project had contributed to SRB Strategic Objective 1 to enhance the employment prospects, education and skills of local people and promote equality of opportunity.

The fieldwork took place between October 2001 and February 2002 and a number of different methods were used to collate the data. It was agreed with the Project Manager that the evaluation should concentrate on those services that directly benefit from the SRB funding. The users of four different services were thus evaluated; the Internet cafe (30), the City and Guilds (8), the Learndirect (26) and the Cybersquads (10).

A total of 78 people participated in the research including 74 users of the above facilities, the Project Manager (1), the Training and Development Co-ordinator (1), and two tutors.

Project history

The Youth Technology Centre, also known as the Click, is run by the registered charity O-Regen (Orient-Regeneration). It was opened in February 2000 and the Click first aimed to provide the area with more activities for the young population. However, the target groups of its services have been expanded to include the local population in general.

The project has been successful in obtaining further funding from both the public and the private sector and in 2000/2001 the SRB funding only represented £50,000 of the total funding for year two (total funding for year six £282,740).

Research findings

These are the findings from the data collated.

The project in general

The project has been successful in targeting groups that have been identified as in danger of social exclusion. Around half of the service users interviewed (32 of the 69 that answered the question) are unemployed (46 per cent) and 55 (of the 70 that answered the question) come from ethnic minorities (78 per cent).

The findings also show that the majority of the users that benefit from the services (36 out of the 65 that answered the question) live in E11 (55 per cent).

Twenty eight per cent (20 out of the 71 that answered the question) of the users owned their own house and 30 per cent (21 out of the 71 that answered the question) rent privately. However, half of the sample that either owned their own home or rented privately were unemployed and thus eligible for social benefits.

The findings suggest the 'Black' population (39 of the 70 that answered the question) is overrepresented among its service users (56 per cent). It also shows that the Asian population is underrepresented in comparison to the borough statistics.

The majority of the users of the project are between 26 and 40 years of age with the exemption of the Cybersquads. Given that the area has a young population the findings suggest they are underrepresented, which is particularly true for the under 16.

Crime statistics show that crime has gone up in the area. The project's attempt to tackle crime and improve community safety through providing young people with leisure and training activities has yet to reach its full potential. The project has concentrated on training rather than entertainment and social events, which potentially could draw the attention of other interest groups.

Internet cafe

Findings suggest that the café has attracted about double the number of users than the membership monitoring procedures would suggest.

Many have found out about the centre by passing it on the street. Another big group was attracted to the Click by leaflets.

Fifty per cent of the users had never used an Internet cafe before starting to visit the Click. This suggests that the Click has reached a group of users new to public ICT facilities.

Only a small number of its users knew about other facilities/ services provided by the centre. The majority would be interested in receiving further information.

A majority, 16 of the 30 users (53 per cent), found the centre was suitable because it provides the services they need. However, 43 per cent (13 out of 30) found the fee to go on line was too high and six of those said that lower prices should be offered to faithful customers. Twenty seven per cent (8 out of 30) found it would be more suitable if more advice and support to individual customers was provided. Twenty per cent (6 out of 30) commented that the big windows sometimes prevented them from seeing the screen. Seventeen per cent (5 out of 30) said the staff could be friendlier and more service-minded.

Cybersquads

Their experience with the Cybersquads was empowering for the young people as they felt they were listened to and not spoken to as children.

Six (60 per cent) of the young people spoken to said they had missed one or more sessions. The main reason given was having to do homework. Two students said they had gone on summer holiday and had forgotten about the project.

Two respondents said the classes finished too late, one said he did not feel safe leaving the Click late in the evening and one commented that sometimes he got lazy during the class because he was very tired.

Learn Direct

The interviews showed that the respondents had high expectations of the course, some to learn basic IT and some to increase the knowledge they already had. Eight of the 26 respondents said that the course had not met their expectations (31 per cent). The findings showed however that the expectations that they had of the course were too high.

Thirty one per cent of the people spoken to (8 of the 26) had not finished the course and were no longer signed on. The reasons given for leaving the course were varied, four said their personal commitments had changed. Two referred to computers crashing as the reason why they left and two said the course was too repetitive and slow for their liking.

The research showed two types of clients. Those who had no or only little previous knowledge of IT were generally satisfied with the course and the assistance provided. The group that was already more confident commented upon the non-interactive nature of the course.

City and Guilds Course

The research showed the people attending the City and Guilds course differed from the rest of the interviewees in that all who answered the question were either living in an housing association (4) or a council flat (3).

The research showed that the students found the course had met their expectations, and one commented that she had since found a job.

The research showed that the course provides the students with skills that are easily transferable to their every day life; seven of the eight respondents (88 per cent) had been able to use their newly acquired skills.

Of the respondents that missed some of the classes all four had difficulties in finding childcare. This was a common reason for not attending all classes.

Recommendations

The following recommendations could be taken into account in the future development of the project:

Internet cafe

- The Click could consider extending their market and target people living in the east of Cann Hall and close to Leyton and Leytonstone station by door to door leafleting.

- The Click could increase the visibility of information on the services provided by the Click to the users of the Cybercafe.

- The Click could improve on staff friendliness, and provide more assistance to users on the ground floor. The latter would enable the less fluent users of IT to access the services.

Learn Direct Course

- The project could tackle problems such as failing computers and systems by making sure suitable technical support is available.

- The project could more clearly outline the Learn Direct course and address its potential as well as limitations in the interview in order to make sure the client has realistic expectations from the course.

- Considering the different skill levels of participants, the tutors might encourage students to share their knowledge and learn from each other.

Youth Technology Project (Cybersquads)

- The team could reschedule the course so that it finishes at an earlier hour or takes place at weekends. Students would not feel so tired and could get more out of the course. Doing so could also open the course to a wider variety of young people that are not allowed to stay out late or are afraid of walking in the streets in the late evening.

- The project could target groups identified as socially excluded or in danger of social exclusion; including those excluded from school, at risk of offending, or young offenders.

City and Guilds Course

- The project could consider providing childcare facilities for the students to maximise their ability to participate in the courses. This service could also be made available for students attending other services/ facilities or courses.

Overall

- The project could provide more activities and possibly courses for young people in the area. It could also consider expanding its services to include children.

- The project could consider increasing their co-operation with community groups. Specific ethnic groups could be targeted that are underrepresented by the users of the services, such as Asians.

- The project could consider international collaboration with ICT projects. A refugee community could benefit from such an initiative that could work in partnership with projects in their home countries.

- The project could try to reach disaffected young people, such as those excluded from school, at risk of offending or young offenders.

- There is an identified need for IT training by those working in the voluntary sector. New courses could be developed to help to build the capacity of local voluntary organisations further.

- The project could consider more widely informing the small local business and community organisations about the course they offer in business skills and basic ICT.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The Urban Regeneration Evaluation team at the Centre for Institutional Studies (CIS), University of East London (UEL) was commissioned in August 2001 by the South Leytonstone Single Regeneration (SRB) to undertake an independent assessment of the Youth Technology Centre in South Leytonstone in the London borough of Waltham Forest.

The Youth Technology Centre or the 'Click', as it has come to be known, opened its doors to the public in February 2000. The SRB provided the capital funding and has - among other funding bodies - contributed to its revenue income since.

The centre is an ambitious regeneration initiative. It is located in the centre of South Leytonstone in its own high-profile building. It has a Internet cafe, provides employment advice, free ICT training for small businesses, free Learndirect courses, Literacy and Numeracy Improver courses for the unemployed as well as train young people in web-design and music production.

The project follows the SRB Strategic objective 1 to enhance employment prospects, education and skills of local people and promote equality of opportunity. The Youth Technology Centre aims to reduce 'social exclusion and to provide access to new skills'.

Our research aimed to assess the impact the centre has had on its users. The findings discussed in this report draw on the literature, on the role of IT in urban regeneration, monitoring data, interviews with project managers, tutors, 74 users, and observations on site.

This report first outlines the context and the history of the project. It goes on to discuss the research methods used and to present the findings of the research.

This section outlines the projects history and context in the neighbourhood and wider governmental policy.

South Leytonstone: population

The Click is situated on Leytonstone High Road on the border between Cathall and Cann Hall wards in East London. It is in the centre of the area targeted by the South Leytonstone Single Regeneration Budget. This area ranges from Maryland point in the London Borough of Newham to the Leytonstone High Road to the railway bridge at Leytonstone station in the London Borough of Waltham Forest.

The table below shows the variations between Cann Hall and Cathall wards. All 8,414 wards are ranked with the least deprived ranked as 8414. As shown below the two wards both fall into the most deprived ten per cent in the country (see BOX 1). It also shows that incomes and education are low, unemployment and child poverty are high. The domain in which the wards suffer least deprivation is health (Cann Hall is amongst the 19 per cent most deprived and Cathall amongst the 25 per cent most deprived, see BOX 4). According to the table both wards suffer particularly high deprivation in regards to housing (both are among the two per cent of wards that are the most deprived in the country).

Table 1
Indices of Deprivation (IMD) 2000

	RANK OF IMD RANK (BOX 1)	RANK OF INCOME DOMAIN (BOX 2)	RANK OF EMPLOYMENT DOMAIN (BOX 3)	RANK OF HEALTH DOMAIN (BOX 4)
Cann Hall	791	614	1111	1566
Cathall	778	621	1213	2085

	RANK OF EDUCATION DOMAIN (BOX 5)	RANK OF HOUSING DOMAIN SCORE (BOX 6)	RANK OF CHILD POVERTY (BOX 7)
Cann Hall	1244	167	800
Cathall	743	154	752

The index of multiple deprivation 2000(IMD) of the Department of Transport and the Environment and Regions (DETR) 8,414 wards in total with the least deprived ward ranked at 8414

A high percentage of the population comes from ethnic minority groups.

Table 2
Ethnic groups in population (1991)

	White	Black Caribbean	Black African	Black Other	Indian	Pakistani	Bangladeshi	Chinese & other
Cann Hall	65.3%	11.8%	4.7%	2.6%	4.5%	4.4%	2.5%	4.1%
Cathall	57.4%	12.5%	6.8%	3.3%	5.1%	7.6%	1.5%	5.7%

Source: Census 1991

Minority groups are significantly higher than the average for Waltham Forest for 1991. The projection for the borough for 2001 suggests a decrease of the white population and a rising proportion of the minority groups. In particular, the projections by the Greater London Authority for 2001 anticipate a rise in the Asian population and a slight decrease in the Black population.

The population in the area is fairly young. Cathall and Cann Hall have a higher proportion of children and young people up to age 24 than the Borough average, and the proportion of adults aged 40 to 64 and pensioners are less than the Borough average. The age profile of the ethnic minority population is younger than the 'White' group, with 40 per cent of the ethnic minority population aged under 20 years compared to 23 per cent of the 'White' population.

It is projected that in year 2011 the proportion of elderly in the ethnic minority groups will grow from four per cent to six per cent, and that the elderly in the 'White' population will remain at 17 per cent of the group (Greater London Authority Central projection, 1999 round).

South Leytonstone: crime

Crime has been traditionally high in the area and data provided by the Metropolitan Police show a strong rise in crime allegations in the Cathall/ Cann Hall area from August 2000 and the beginning of 2002[1].

From August 2000 to August 2001, there has been an increase of recorded allegations of 39 per cent. The number of recorded allegations in February 2002 was seven per cent higher than the equivalent figure in 2001.

The number of crime allegations has also been rising more strongly than in the surrounding areas. Together with Leyton (JL 18), Cathall and Cann Hall (JL 20) has shown the largest increase in the area.

Moreover, the gap between Cann Hall and Cathall and the surrounding areas has widened over the past years: from December 2000 to 2001 crime allegations have risen by 28 per cent in South Leytonstone as compared to 16 per cent for Leyton as a whole. Between 1996 and 1997, reported crime in South Leytonstone rose by 21 per cent compared to 17 per cent in Leyton as a whole.

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[1] Because of the changes in beat boundaries in July 2000, data prior to that date can not be compared to more recent figures.

Research in the area has also shown a high fear of crime amongst residents in the Cann Hall and Cathall wards (Centre for Institutional Studies, forthcoming).

The role of ICT in urban regeneration

In the past decade policy makers have increasingly felt that Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) can have an important role in helping achieve the objectives of urban regeneration programmes in deprived neighbourhoods.

The Government's National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, first launched in April 2000, sets out one of its major principles as 'reviving local economies', and a key idea to be used in fulfilling this objective is 'improving IT in deprived neighbourhoods' (2001).

Lack of access to ICTs can in itself constitute an important factor of social exclusion. The Fabian Society (2001 has warned about the dangers of a 'digital divide' with an increasing division between the information rich and information poor).

There is little data on ICT-usage in deprived neighbourhoods and no such data exists on South Leytonstone. The limited information available suggests that access to ICT is low in these areas. Researchers at De Montfort Business School undertook a household survey of residents in an area of Braunstone in Leicester designated for New Deal for Communities and Single Regeneration Budget funding. The survey found that ownership of computers was not widespread. Only ten per cent of households had a computer and only seven per cent had access to the Internet (Foley 1999).

Looking at the characteristics of those in the lowest social classes, D and E, can provide some insight into the problems faced by those living in deprived neighbourhoods. Some indicators include:

- Those in class DE are less likely to have ever used a PC or the Internet than for the population as a whole. 38 per cent and 14 per cent compared with 58 per cent and 29 per cent;
- Only a quarter of DEs say they have access to a PC at home compared with 44 per cent of all adults
- Only two per cent of DEs say they have Internet access in the home compared with one in three ABs and 14 per cent of all adults
- Only nine per cent of DEs used the Internet in the last twelve months compared with 43 per cent of ABs (Policy Action Team, 2000).

In addition to bridging the digital divide, many argue that using ICTs can have a role in tackling social exclusion more generally. The Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (2001) states that ICT can not only improve access to information but also

- assist personal development
- improve the image of an area
- reach the disabled, ethnic minorities and young people truancy
- support local business development and
- foster community development.

In their response to the Social Exclusion Unit's report 'Bringing Britain Together' (1998), Communities Online argue for example that ICT can be used to attract people into learning who have negative experiences with conventional institutions of education.

Early on in the debate about the use of ICT in urban regeneration, the focus was on the individual, who benefited from using an ICT centre by increasing his skills and his chances on the labour market.

More recently, this approach has come to be criticised as the 'NVQ factory approach' as it is counting individual achievements rather than developments of communities where people are allowed to learn according to more flexible means that can take different needs into account (Shearman 2000). The potential of a creative use of ICT for the development of communities as a whole has been put on the agenda. The Social Exclusion Unit has asked the Policy Action Team 15 to assess ICT's role in strengthening communities. In its paper 'Beyond Access', the Fabian Society for example stresses the importance of getting excluded people to develop their own content in the battle for social inclusion (Fabian Society 2001).

The Youth Technology Centre, the Click

The Youth Technology Centre in South Leytonstone was conceived as response to concerns about the lack of provision for youth in the area. 'During discussions with local residents about the development of the new Langthorne Park, many local people expressed serious concerns about the lack of facilities for young people in the area and their lack of achievement' (Click 2001). One of the aims of the Click was to help to tackle the rising youth crime and inner city problems that South Leytonstone was experiencing.

The site of the Centre is close to the newly created Langthorne Park, situated between two dense areas of social housing, each with an average 40 per cent of teenager population. The Centre is newly built and was completed and opened in February 2000.

Van Heyningen and Haward Architects designed the building which is eye-catching and stands out from the neighbouring buildings. From the main road the building appears to have an oval structure and its ground floor has windows all around. The building has two floors which not only host the activities of the project itself but also offers office space for other complementary services.

The project: aims

From the start the brief for the project went beyond an exclusive focus on the young people in the area. Its target groups also included

- the local community including unemployed people and socially excluded members
- Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

The strategic aims of the project are:

- To enhance the employment prospects, education, and skills of local people particularly the young and those at risk of social exclusion through the provision of enhanced employment advice/ guidance service, training and access to the Internet.
- To encourage sustainable economic growth and wealth creation by improving the competitiveness of the local economy through provision of demonstration, site and training for local SMEs in internet and multi-media skills including e-commerce.
- To tackle crime and improve community safety by providing access for local young people to positive leisure and educational activity based around ICT.
- To enhance the quality of life for local people by providing a cybercafe and other entertainment opportunities.

Facilities and services provided

The ground floor of the training centre is dominated by the Internet Cafe designed to provide an attractive environment for informal learning. There are computer stations and seating areas by large glass-windows. Snacks and food have been made available from the coffee-counter but at the time of the research the management was searching for a new contractor. Other services on the ground floor include leisure/ youth activities such as home work clubs and ICT based projects), colour photocopying, printing and scanning.

The first floor offers employment advice by the EAST (Employment Advice, Support and Training).

The second floor offers ICT and multimedia training. Below are the current training opportunities offered by the Click.

- Free Learndirect courses in basic IT and office skills.
- ICT courses for small businesses and community organisations.
- Literacy and numeracy improver courses for unemployed.
- The Cybersquads, a youth project teaching web design and music production.

Project structure and funding

The Click is managed by O-Regen, a charity operating in the local borough of Waltham Forest. Partners include the London Borough of Waltham Forest Youth Service and Planning and Economic Development Department, Waltham Forest College, South Leytonstone SRB partnership and Futures Careers.

Local people are involved in the management and work of the Click. The Click Steering Group meets every eight weeks and is a formal sub-committee of the main O'Regen Trustee Board. Half the members of the sub-committee are local residents. The Chair, Vice-Chair and the Vice-Secretary are tenants or residents who live within the neighbourhood.

The project team consists of a centre manager, one computer support officer, one administrative officer, two tutors, one training and development co-ordinator, one receptionist, and five part time computer support workers.

Funding for the project has come from a number of sources. The SRB South Leytonstone provided £969,270 of Capital Funding for the construction of the building and the acquisition of the initial equipment. Revenue funds provided by the SRB amount to £265,000, distributed over five years. In 2001, this revenue from the SRB constituted 14 per cent of the Click's income. Other sources of revenue income for that year included the Waltham Forest Housing Action Trust, the National Lottery Charity Board, European Funding, and other charitable trusts. Income earned from Internet trade and room hire have contributed to 24 per cent of the budget in 2000/ 2001.

Monitoring data: members of the Click

Free membership has been created in order to be able to monitor user patterns. The monitoring data only provides information on some of the users. At the time of the research the total number of members was 515. The majority of the members are from the local neighbourhood, which is consistent with the aims of the project.

TABLE 3
Monitoring data: Usage by area

Area	No of users	Area	No of users
Leytonstone	263	Stratford	75
Forest Gate	40	Leyton	39
Walthamstow	23		

Information taken from the monitoring data of the project.

According to the Click monitoring data of its members the majority are between 20 to 29 years of age (49 per cent). The next biggest age group is between 19 and 30 (36 per cent). Most of their members are male (57 per cent) and a large number of those (45 per cent) are full individual members (in full time work or self-employed) the second largest group among the male members are students (30 per cent).

Thirty-seven per cent of the female members are full Individual members, 32 per cent are students and the biggest difference between the genders are the 'individual memberships' where the person is employed part time or not working at all. This group represents 16 per cent of the total number of members but 19 per cent of the total number of female members compared to 14 per cent of the male membership.

According to the membership monitoring form these are the ethnicities that are represented.

TABLE 4
Membership: Ethnicity (n=515)

Ethnicity		Ethnicity	
Other	177	Black Caribbean	39
White	101	Pakistani	21
African	82	Indian	11
Black British	78	Chinese	6

The Click self monitoring does not provide any specification of what 'other' ethnicity incorporates.

The centre does not have any monitoring data on the users of the Click cafe that are not members and is currently investigating ways of achieving this.

Flexible learning centre

In 1997 the Flexible Learning Centre (FLC) was opened. It is located at the Harrow Green Library and provides computer based learning packages to increase and enhance the skills of residents living in Cann Hall and Cathall wards to improve their opportunities to finding employment. Currently the centre provides courses such as European Computer Driving licence and HTML Visual Basics. All the courses provided by the FLC lead to qualifications and are aimed at people over 16 years of age. None of the courses are tutor led and the staff are only there to provide ad hoc support.

In order not to duplicate the services the Click and the FLC are working in partnership. The centres cross-refer clients who would otherwise not be recruited or to provide them with further progression routes. They also exchange publicity and marketing materials.

The research took place between October 2001 and February 2002. It aimed to assess the impact the project has had on its users. In addition to that, its objectives are:

- to identify areas of best practice in the project,
- to identify areas where services could be expanded,
- to provide community feedback to project management,
- to establish the most effective means of attracting new users to the project.

The report makes suggestions for a forward strategy.

Research methods

At an initial meeting with the project manager, the origins of the project, its aims and the best way to approach the evaluation were discussed. The focus of the research was on the projects that were directly funded by the SRB: The Internet cafe, the Learndirect courses, The City and Guilds course and the Cybersquads project. We interviewed tutors and users of these projects.

Overall 74 users of the Centre's facilities were interviewed. Those who participated in the research come to 78 in total and include

Users of the Internet Cafe (n=30)
Participants of the Learndirect course (n=26)
Participants of the City and Guilds course (n=8)
Participants of the Cybersquads (n=10)
Project manager (1)
Training and development co-ordinator (1)
Course tutor (2)

The interviews with the Internet Cafe users were conducted face to face at different times and on different days to ensure an accurate picture of the users of the Internet Cafe was obtained. We worked together with the receptionists to ensure the users were approached after they had logged off and were not interrupted during the time when they were logged on.

We interviewed a random sample of ten out of the 19 participants of the Cybersquads programme over the phone. To protect the integrity of the participants all children and their guardian/parents had been sent a letter explaining about the research, asking them to contact us or the Click if they did not want to take part in the survey. Only two participants declined to take part.

A letter was also sent out to the students that had been attending the Learndirect course. These interviews were carried out over the telephone.

The users of the City and Guilds course were handed a self-completion questionnaire at the last session of their course. We got feedback from eight of the

ten people registered on the course. The last two students did not turn up at the last session. Further effort to contact them proved fruitless.

Scope and limitations of the research

Contacting people that attended a course some time ago can prove difficult as in the case of the people that had signed up for the Learndirect course. One third of the telephone numbers on the list were either no longer working or were wrong as the person no longer lived there. This meant that we were only able to contact 18 out of the targeted 25 that had signed up for the Introduction to Computing course and eight of the ten targeted on the Office Skills course.

Carrying out the random sampling of the users of the Internet Cafe proved difficult as monitoring data exists only for users that have signed up as members. The researchers that were working at the Click cafe therefore had to make assessments of the users of the Internet Cafe at each of their visits making sure they spoke to a representative sample in terms of the ethnicity of the users at any one time.

The scope of our research was limited by its short-termed nature and the economic constraints imposed by its tight budget. The evaluation focused on the provided services that directly benefited from the SRB funds and on the achievements of the project aims directly linked to those services.

This section presents and discusses the findings of the research. It is divided into subsections that follow the different parts of the project evaluated.

The Internet Cafe

The findings discussed in this subsection relate to the 30 interviews with the users of the Internet cafe.

Background of the users

The users of the Internet Cafe that were interviewed came from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Users were born in ten different countries. Twenty-one of the 28 (75 per cent) of respondents came from ethnic minorities. The following ethnic belonging represented the 28 users that completed the questionnaire.

Table 3
Internet Cafe users: Ethnic groups (n=28)

	Numbers
White British	7
Caribbean/ West Indian	6
African	5
European	4
Asian/ Other	3
Asian/ Chinese	2
Asian/ Indian	1

Comparing the information we have on our respondents to the data for Cann Hall and Cathall wards, it seems that the 'Black' population is highly over-represented amongst users of the Internet Cafe. To a lesser extent, this holds true for the Asian population.

Half of the respondents were women. Half of the sample of people interviewed were working. Of the 15 people that were unemployed 11 were looking for work.

The majority of the users we interviewed were under 30. As the table below illustrates, 21 (70 per cent) were under the age of 31.

Table 4
Internet Cafe: Age group of users (n=30)

	Numbers
Under 16	3
16-20	4
21-25	6
26-30	8
30-35	2
36-40	4
41-50	2
51-60	1

The accommodation of the 30 users were as follows:

TABLE 5
Internet Cafe: Accommodation (n=30)

Privately rented	13
With parents, not paying rent	6
Own house	5
Housing association (Waltham Forest HAT)	3
Council flat	2
Own flat	1

Of those that privately rent, live rent free, or own their accommodation 13 were unemployed and eligible for social benefits. Twelve were working.

Seventeen of the 30 users live in E11, six in E7 and three in E15 . Four people did not answer the question.

Social considerations

The users were asked how they spent their spare time. The activities that featured most prominently among their answers are 'at home with friends' (10) and 'listening to music' (10). Other activities include reading books (9), looking for work (4), going out with friends, looking after children, going to church, studying, visiting internet cafes with two each, and watching TV, going to the cinema, or doing nothing with one each.

Twelve (40 per cent) out of the 30 attended local community facilities, seven of whom used local sports and leisure centres, two mentioned job centres, one the epicentre and one was involved with the local mosque.

Only five out of 30 (17 per cent) were members of a local community group or association. Those who were involved named the church, the International Lions

Club, the lakeside project, or Leyton Orient Community Sports Programme as their groups.

The Click

We asked the users of the Internet cafe how they had initially heard about the Click. The majority of users said they found out about it as they passed by. One interviewee said, he had 'literally watched it being built'. The second largest group, eight out of 30 (27 per cent) said, they had heard about the Click through friends.

Table 6
Internet Cafe: How did you hear about the Click? (n=30)

	Numbers
Walked by and inquired	16
Friends	8
Employer	1
Other personal contact	1
Leaflet	1
Job centre	1
Yellow pages	1
Internet	1

Most of the users interviewed (14) had started using the Click in 2001. Ten had first used the Click in the present year, 2002. Six had used the Click since it started.

Our data suggests that the Click has attracted people who had never been to an Internet cafe before. Fifteen (50 per cent) of the 30 we interviewed stated they had not used other Internet cafes before visiting the Click.

Usage patterns

Half of the respondents (15) did visit other Internet cafes at the same time as using the Click. The majority of cafes that interviewees used before (9) and at the same time as they used the Click (11) were located in the local area.

TABLE 7
Internet Cafe: How often do you visit the Internet Cafe? (n=30)

Twice per week	6	Once per day	3
Once per week	5	Twice per month	3
Three times per week	5	Four times per week	2
Once per month	4	Three times per month	2

Sixteen (53 per cent) of respondents were members of the Click, which suggests that the Click has far more users than those that are being monitored through their membership.

The largest single group of users (14) spent between one and two hours on the net when they are at the Internet Cafe. Ten surf between 30 minutes and one hour.

When asked how they spend the time in front of their computer once they have logged on, surfing the net (21 of 30) and reading and writing emails (17 of 30) featured most prominently amongst the answers. Eight said they used Word for Windows at the Click and three said they used training programmes. Two bought things over the web and two engaged in research. Only one said she visited chat rooms/sites.

When asked, whether they meet friends at the Click or had made any new contacts at the Click, the great majority of users said that they had not.

Table 8
Internet Cafe: Socialising at the Click (n=30)

	Yes	No
Do you meet friends at the Cafe?	8	22
Have you made any new friends/ contacts at the Click?	7	23

When asked whether they used any other service that the Click offers, only eight said that they did. As illustrated in the table below respondents' awareness of the Click's wider-ranging services was low.

Table 9
Internet Cafe: Awareness of further services amongst users (n=30)

	Heard about	Used
Learndirect, Introduction to Computing	16	7
Internet Membership services	10	2
Learndirect, Office Skills	12	5
Basic Skills Training	9	0
Advice for small businesses	6	0
Job-search Help	5	1
City and Guilds Course	5	1
Cybersquad programme	4	0
Summer University Youth Programme	4	1

Sixteen of interviewees said, they would be interested in more information about services offered by the centre, 13 said they would not be interested and one was not sure.

Feedback on the services

When asked what the respondents liked most about the Click their answers were as follows.

TABLE 10
Internet Cafe: What do you like the most about the Click? (n=30)

It provides the services that I need	16	It gives me a chance to meet people	4
It enables me to communicate with friends/ make contacts	7	It is close	3
It gives me something to do	6	It is convenient	2
It gives me the skills that I am to use in my professional life	5		

One stressed, it felt comfortable and spacious. One lauded the 'nice atmosphere', another mentioned the *privacy, and quiet atmosphere and the possibility for quick printing*. One added, it was *cool*.

At the end of the interview each respondent was asked if they would like to comment on something else regarding the Click in general and the services provided by the centre. Eight users expanded on the positive impact the Click has had in their lives. Below a selection of the responses:

> *It allows me to keep in touch with the world. I do not have access to the net at home.*

> *I found employment through using the Click.*

> *I like coming here knowing that I can work on my CV and not get viruses. It offers really good services.*

We asked the users how they think the services could be improved. The table below presents the percentages of people who agreed with each proposition.

Table 11
Internet Cafe: How could the services be improved? (n=30)

	Yes
Provide more advice and support to individual customers	8
Fees to be less expensive	7
Offer lower prices to faithful customers	6
Provide sunscreen for the computers	6
Improve service and staff friendliness	5
Training to be open to a wider public	2

Two people said they would value the installation of air conditioning. 'It gets so hot in hot weather, that you can't breathe'. Two people said they wanted more information about events and services on offer at the Click.

Cybersquad project

The findings outlined below are related to the interviews with ten pupils that attended the programme in 2001. At the initial interview with the project tutor of the Cybersquads it became clear that the project that had run three times had targeted different groups on each occasion. The tutor explained that the project was still establishing itself and trying to find out the best way to target the young people. The young people interviewed had all been part of the third running course and the particular group came from a local secondary school.

Background of users

The ten young people interviewed identified themselves as belonging to the following ethnic groups.

Table 12
Cybersquads: Ethnic groups of users (n=10)

	Numbers
Black British	2
Black African	2
Pakistani	2
Black Caribbean	1
British Asian	1
Mixed race	1
White British	1

Out of the ten we interviewed, seven were born in the UK. The three participants that had been born outside Britain came from Angola, Ghana, and Pakistan.

In this particular group the 'Black', population was again highly over-represented compared with neighbourhood statistics. In addition to the 24 students that had signed up for the project only three were female.

Half of our sample was 15 years olds (five) two were 14 and two were 12 years old, only one was 16. Four lived in E11, one each lived in E10, E17, E5, E7. Two did not answer the question.

When asked, what type of accommodation they lived in, the majority responded that their parents owned a house. This suggests that the participants of the Cybersquads represent a group of people that are more affluent than the majority of those living in Waltham Forest.

Table 13
Cybersquads: Accommodation (n=10)

	Numbers
Parents own house	6
Parents rent privately	3
Council Flat	1

Web-design and music production

The Click offered two different workshops for the young people: One on Web-design and one on Music and Events promotion. Students could choose between the workshops or take part in sessions of both. In our sample, five had participated in the Web-design, three had taken part in the music and events promotion unit and two had taken part in both programmes.

One boy reported he had tried the music course but had found it less interesting. He also said that there were not enough keyboards for all the participants. Another person, who did only the music course, said he thought he might have learned even more on the web-design programme.

Motivation

When asked how they heard about the course the largest group (3) said, they had seen a poster or a leaflet, two heard about the project through friends, two were told about it at their school, and two heard about it at the Click.

Asked, why they had decided to take part in the project, the young people gave different reasons. The majority (6) gave reasons relating to their desire to learn new things. Below is a selection of their answers:

> *I went to learn more about computers. I have a computer at home and don't know how to use it.*

> *I wanted to learn about computers and I wanted to try a new experience.*

> *I am interested in computers.*

Two referred to the lack of provision for young people in the area.

> *I thought I could benefit from it. I had nothing better to do anyway.*

> *There is not much to do.*

One said:

> *I used to go to the Click for the Cyberclub and I am there on Friday anyway so I thought I might as well go. People said it was good.*

Three said they went because their friends went.

The Web Design group formed an editorial board, which decided what was to be put on the website. Six of the seven youths who did the Web Design course said that they were on the editorial board.

All those who attended the editorial board meetings felt that they could get their ideas across to the board. The one boy who was not part of the Board felt that he could not get his ideas across.

Eight out of ten felt that they could express their ideas during the workshop. Below are some examples of comments the young people made.

> *I contributed and I told everyone what my ideas were.*

> *I enjoyed it because there was a lot of discussion and people listened to your ideas. I am usually quite shy but it was really okay.*

> *You could express your ideas and no one was judging you. Not just on the site but also on other subjects. I thought that was really, really good.*

Two however did complain that the others would not listen. One of them said

> *They were not listening. They were too loud and distracting other people, while others were trying to work. The tutor was friendly but sometimes they were disobeying him.*

> *They don't listen. Some people were talking all the time.*

Missed sessions

Six out of the ten interviewed had missed one or more of the sessions. When asked for the reasons, each of them gave a combination of reasons. Four said they were too busy with homework from school. Two said they went on summer holidays and forgot about the project when they got back. One of them said:

> *When I did remember, there was such a gap that I couldn't be bothered to go.*

Two also said they felt intimidated by the group. One said, he missed one class, because they were about to move house. One said, he stopped going because he didn't enjoy the class and couldn't be bothered.

One boy said he stopped going because he didn't like the kids who were hanging around outside the Click. He felt they were rude.

The same boy also mentioned that he did not feel safe walking home when the course finished at night.

New skills

Below are some skills they felt they had acquired as a result of the Cybersquads course.

TABLE 14
Cybersquads: New skills learned (n=10)

Learned how to design a web-page	6	How to put music and text on a web-site	1
Learned how to use the equipment in a music studio	5	Basic stuff about the computer	1
How to use a computer	2		

Two said they had developed their team working skills. Three said, they didn't learn much, two of those said that was because they did not attend enough lessons.

Only three said they had practised what they had learned since they finished the course. Those three explained in detail how they had used their skills:

> *I built my own web-site. I am just waiting for it to be released by the provider.*

> *I used it for my English homework.*

> *I used it for my GCSE. I did a piece of coursework in music and it went pretty well.*

Of the seven who said they did not practice their skills, one said, he did not learn anything. One reported he could not think of what to design a web-page for.

The other five responded that they did not have access to the necessary equipment.

The youths were asked whether they had been able to show any of their friends who were not on the course what they learned. Four said yes. One of them explained

> *Every week, I told my friends and a couple went. There was half an hour free internet before and after the course as well.*

> *I asked a couple of my friends to come but they didn't. Now they regret it.*

> *On the open-day my friends came over and I showed them.*

Of those (6) that had not showed their friends two said their friends were all on the course. One said he did not want to show them and one said he was too busy.

When asked, whether the workshop has given them ideas for the future, half of the youth said yes, the other half said no.

Feedback from the participants

When asked how much they enjoyed the workshop the answers were as seen below:

Table 15
Cybersquads: Overall, how much would you say you enjoyed the workshop?(n=10)

	Numbers
A lot	4
A fair amount	3
A bit	2
Not at all	1

We asked the students what they liked most about the workshops. Below is a selection of the answers students gave:

TABLE 16
Cybersquads: What did you most like about the workshop? (n=10)

Being able to give ideas to the design of a Web-page	4
Feeling listened to and not talked at	2
To have responsibility that the school never would give us	1
The place, and the technology available	1
To show each other things	1
To get together	1

We also tried to find out what the young people did not like. We read a series of statements to them and asked whether they agreed or not. The numbers of interviewees who agreed with the various statements are shown in the table below.

Table 17
Cybersquads: What did you not like about the workshop?

	Agreed	Disagreed
It was fun but I didn't really learn that much	4	6
What we did was not really relevant to what I want to do	3	6
I felt intimidated by the group	3	7
I would have liked to work in a smaller group	2	8
I found many technical terms difficult to understand	1	9
I knew everything on the course already	0	10

Of the three young respondents that commented that there were other things they disliked with the course two commented on the finishing time.

> *It finished a bit late for those who had to travel. It would have been better, had it started earlier and finished earlier.*

Sometimes I grew a bit lazy. It was until 9 o'clock and I sometimes got tired.

The third said he had stopped going because people did not want to work.

People didn't want to work that is why I stopped going that's why I didn't like it. I think their parents forced them to go there, I didn't need that because I get that at school all the time.

Some expanded on the question regarding the size of the group.

With the groups, it is that if there are more people, there are more ideas. If it is smaller, you get to say more.

Another explained

The advantage in a big group is that you get to know a lot of people. In the future you have to work with lots of people.

Three of the young people commented positively on the tutors' encouragement and help in dealing with the technical terms.

Learndirect

The discussion of the findings below are related to the 26 interviews that were carried out with people that had signed up for the course.

Background of the users

The majority of the participants of the Learndirect course we interviewed came from one of the ethnic minorities (19). Eighteen of those defined themselves as 'Black' which shows an overrepresentation to the data on 'Black' ethnic groups in the area.

Table 18
Learndirect: Ethnic groups of users (n=26)

	Numbers
White British	7
Black Caribbean	5
Black African	5
Black British	4
Black Other	4
Pakistani	1

Sixteen of the 26 were born in the UK, seven in an African country, two in the Caribbean, and one in Pakistan. The majority of those we interviewed were female (17). The majority was between 31 to 40 years old.

Table 19
Learndirect: Age groups of users (n=25)

	Numbers
16 – 20	3
21 –30	3
31-40	12
41-50	4
51-60	2
Over 60	1

The single most frequent area in which the respondents lived was E11 (11). Other areas include E15 (4), E4 (4), E10 (3) and E9 (2). Two respondents did not answer the question.

The table below illustrates the distribution of several categories of accommodation among respondents.

Table 20
Learndirect: Accommodation (n=24)

	Numbers
Own house	9
Housing association	6
Privately rented	5
Council Flat	2
With parents, not paying rent	2

Fifteen of those interviewed are currently working. Eight of the 11 that were not working were looking for a job. Three respondents did not answer the question.

Of those that own their house, live rent free or privately rent accommodation eight (50 per cent) were unemployed and eligible for social benefits.

Half of those living in a housing association lived in Waltham Forest Housing Action Trust (3).

We asked for the highest educational qualification obtained. Four stated that they had left school without any formal qualification. Eleven had done GCSE's or equivalent and/ or NVQ's. Five had completed their A-levels, and another five had obtained undergraduate and/ or postgraduate degrees. One did not answer the question.

The course

Eighteen of those we interviewed participated in the Introduction to Computing Course, six in the Office Skills Course and two in both.

Of the 26 people we spoke to, four had completed the course, 14 were still enrolled, and eight had stopped going at some point. Five females and three males had left the course without completing it.

When asked, why they stopped going, four of the eight said that their personal circumstances had changed and they now had other commitments. Two referred to the computers crashing and problems with logging in as being reasons why they left the course. Three referred to the course as being too slow and repetitive for their liking which resulted in them not completing the course.

The respondents were asked how they heard about the Learndirect course.

Table 21
Learndirect: How did you hear about the course?

	Numbers
Through Leaflets	11
At the Click	4
Careers advisor	4
Someone told me about it	3
Saw it in the local newspaper	3
Other National Learndirect Advertisement	2

The numbers do not necessarily add up to 26 as some respondents gave more than one answer to the question.

Expectations

The following table illustrates the reasons given by the respondents for signing up on the course.

TABLE 22
Learndirect: Why did you decide to go on the course?

To learn basic IT	13	It was standard requirement of my employer	1
To get broader knowledge of IT	12	More flexible way of learning	1
To be able to access better job opportunities	9	A tutor was available	1
To learn specific tasks on a particular programme	2		

The numbers do not necessarily add up to 26 as some respondents gave more than one answer to the question.

Thirteen respondents stated the course had met their expectation. However, eight respondents stated the course had failed to do so. Two of those eight were still enrolled on the course. The respondents gave different reasons for their answers. Two had expected the course to be tutor led. Two said they had expected less technical problems with the computers and were disappointed. Two argued that their hopes to improve their skills had not been fulfilled. One of the latter had expected to get more knowledge in particular about Excel. The other said that it had not been advanced enough to show her any new information.

Course usefulness

Respondents were asked, which parts of the course they found most useful. Their answers are illustrated below.

Table 23
Learndirect: Which parts of the course did you find most useful? (n=26)

Creating and maintaining databases	9
Basic application software, such as spreadsheet	7
Working with windows '95	4
Basics of Word 2000	4
Formatting documents	4
Organising and retrieving data	4
Processing information	3
Saving and sending a document	3
Printing documents	3
Email, Internet	3
Organising Pages	2

The numbers do not necessarily add up to 26 as some respondents gave more than one answer to the question.

Eleven respondents had used their new skills outside the course.

TABLE 24
Learndirect: Where have you been able to use your new skills? (n=11)

At work	8	At university	1
At my home computer	6	At internet cafes	1

Experiences of using their new skills has been very different for men and women: six (67 per cent) of the men had practised their new skills whereas only five (35 per cent) of the women had been able to do the same.

Those who had not practised their skills would all have liked to do so. When asked what stopped them from doing so, four said because of a lack of time, three referred to childcare, two mentioned their health. One of the participants argued that she could not use her skill:

> *because I have long hours at my present job and I don't use a computer there. I don't have a computer at home and I don't have time to go to the library.*

Seven said they had applied for a job that would require using IT-skills since they started the course (six women and one man). Three of the seven had succeeded in getting the job. They were all female.

When asked how much they think they had learned from the course 16 said they had learned 'a lot' or 'a fair amount' on the course. Again, men and women differed significantly in their answers. This is clear from the table below.

Table 25
Learndirect: How much would you say, you learned on the course? (n=23)

	Overall	Men	Women
A lot	7 (30%)	5 (63%)	2 (13%)
A fair amount	9 (39%)	1 (13%)	8 (53%)
A bit	4 (17%)	0 (0%)	4 (27%)
Nothing at all	3 (13%)	2 (25%)	1 (7%)
Total	23	8	15

Benefits from the course

Trying to find out in what ways participants felt they had benefited from the course, we read a series of statements to them and asked whether they agreed or disagreed. Twenty-six respondents commented upon the benefits of the course. The table below illustrates the answers the respondents gave.

Table 26
Learndirect: In what ways have you benefited from the course? (n=23)

	Agree
Attending the course gave me a chance to learn new skills	19
I feel more confident to communicate using IT	17
It gave me something to do	17
I learned more skills that I feel I need	16
I was able to meet people	16
Attending the course helped me to overcome my fears of IT	12
Attending the course got me into employment	3
Attending the course led me to get promoted	2

Number does not necessarily add up to 100% since respondents could give more than one answer.

The two that agreed on the statement that they had been promoted as a result from the course were both female.

Further skills desired

The participants were asked, whether there was anything they would have liked to learn that was not on the course. Eight of the respondents said everything that they wanted had been included, five were not sure what more they would benefit form learning. Five said they would have liked to learn more about specific programmes. Two said they would have liked the course to be more specific about how the things they learned could be used in real life. One said the course could provide more general information on computers and one said more assistance was needed from the tutors.

Suitability improvement

When asked about what participants did not like about the course the answers were as follows:

Table 27
Learndirect: How could the course have been better suited to your needs?
(n=23)

	Yes
Hours for practising should have been more flexible	10
I would have preferred to stretch the course over a longer period of time	9
I would have preferred working in a smaller group	9
Too many technical terms were used on the course	3

One of the respondents explained that the course did not allow for flexible working hours where he had to work shifts and often was unable to attend. Running a course at weekends would make the courses available to more local people.

The Click offers no limit to the timespan of the course and the large number of respondents that wanted to stretch the course over a longer period of time can be explained by personal reasons rather than restrictions set by the course outline.

Twenty-one respondents said they would recommend the course to a friend and five said they already had. Eight respondents expanded on their answer further and below are some of the comments that the respondents made.

> *The course is very good for someone that has a family and a part time job. It gives you the ability to juggle many responsibilities, and to feel more confident.*

> *I would recommend it to someone who can follow instructions and do not expect interaction.*

The respondents were asked if there was anything else they would like to comment upon. Eighteen people answered and their comments can be summarised in these few statements.

> *The course is a good thing. However, I could have learned more if the tutor had more time to help individual students. It can be quite tedious leaning this way.*

> *I think it is much better to learn this way, teaching yourself - it makes me push myself, and there is somebody there to help if I need it. I was surprised I did not have to pay!*

> *The staff are very helpful. I can still do the course back home which is a plus for me since I have two kids.*

> *I would have liked more interaction between the students where we all can learn from each other.*

The above statements represent the two different groups of people: those that have a bit of knowledge already and feel confident to get on with it on their own, and those with less skills and confidence who need more support and guidance.

The City and Guilds course

The findings outlined below represent the information from the self-completion questionnaires distributed to the students at the City and Guilds course. The questionnaire aimed to understand the level to which the students had found the course useful for their purposes.

Background of users

Four of those interviewed were women and two were men. Two did not answer the question. The majority (4) was in the age group between 31 and 40. One respondent was between 17 and 20 years old, one between 21 and 30.

The table below presents the information on the participants' ethnic group. Two did not answer the question.

Table 28
City and Guilds: Ethnic group of users (n=6)

Black African	3
Black British	2
White European	1

The majority (4) of respondents were born in Ghana, two named England as their country of origin and one the Philippines. Two did not answer the question.

The majority (4) came from the local area (E11). E15, E17, E4 was represented by one interviewee each. One did not answer the question.

Four said, they lived in housing association accommodation; three said they lived in a council flat. Of those four living in a housing association, three named the Waltham Forest HAT as their housing association. One did not answer the question.

When asked, whether they were working at the moment, all of those answering the question (6) said no. Seven said they were looking for work.

We asked the participants of the course what type of education they had previously had. Two said they had done both GCSEs and NVQs. One each named GCSEs and NVQs, and one woman said, she had not gained any formal qualifications.

Course attendance

When asked how they had heard about the course, seven said they had received a leaflet, one said 'through previous adult education'. One respondent ticked in addition that he had walked past the Click and inquired.

We wanted to find out why respondents had decided to attend the course. Five out of the eight said, they had signed up to learn basic IT. Four said, they had wanted to get a broader knowledge of IT. Three wanted to learn a specific task on a particular programme. Two stated they wanted to improve their chances on the job-market.

Four stated they had missed some of the classes. When asked for the reason, all of them said it was because they had to look after their children. Three said, additionally, that they had missed classes because they had felt unwell.

Expectations and skills gained

We asked what participants expected from the course. Below are some of the answers.

> *I expected to learn a new skill.*

> *I expected to be able to work in an IT field.*

> *I expected to learn new ideas, which will enable me to find a job after finishing the course.*

All of those answering the question, (6) stated that the course had met their expectations.

When asked, which parts of the course participants had found most useful, the answers were as follows:

Table 29
City and Guilds: Which parts of the course have you found most useful? (n=8)

	Number
Setting up databases	8
Searching databases	7
Creating spreadsheets	7
Writing and editing Word documents	6
Graphical representation of data	5
Saving documents	5
Printing documents	5
Powerpoint	5
Internet	5
Email	5

Use of skills

Seven out of the eight interviewed stated they had been able to use their skills outside the course. Most of those (4) had practised their skills at their home computer, three had used their skills at work and one at university.

The woman who had not used her skills outside the course stated she would like to do so and was looking for a job now.

Three of the eight stated they had applied for a job requiring IT-Skills since they started the course, one of whom had been successful.

When asked how much they thought they had learned on the course, the majority (5) said 'a lot', the other three ticked 'a fair amount'.

We asked, in what ways respondents felt they had benefited from the course. Below are their answers.

Table 30
City and Guilds: In what ways have you benefited from doing the course? (n=8)

	Yes	No
I feel more confident using computers	7	1
Attending the course gave me a chance to learn new skills	6	2
I was able to meet people	6	2
It gave me something to do	5	3
I learned more skills that I feel I need	4	4
Attending the course helped me to overcome my fears of IT	4	4
Attending the course got me into employment	1	7
Attending the course led me getting promoted	1	7

What the course did not provide

When asked, what they would like to learn that was not on the course, one mentioned Power Point, another desk-top publishing. The participants of the course were asked their opinion on a series of possible improvements. Below are their answers.

Table 31
City and Guilds: How could the course have been better suited to your needs? (n=7)

	Agreed	Disagreed
I would have preferred stretching the course over a longer period of time.	3	4
Hours for practising should have been more flexible.	1	6
I would have liked to have more feedback and help from the tutor.	1	6
Too many technical terms were used on the course	1	6

Two of the eight stated that the course was too long.

All those who answered the question (7) stated that they would recommend the course to a friend.

At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were asked whether there was anything else, they would like to tell us about the City and Guilds Course or the Click and its services in general. Four of them replied. Two of the statements are reproduced below:

> *The course is good and very helpful. With a bit of help from both students and teacher everything was fine.*

> *They were friendly and helpful throughout the work.*

This section closes the findings from the research. The following section presents a discussion of the main findings, the conclusions and recommendations for future practice.

Areas of best practice

Data shows that the SRB funding only covered 18 per cent of the total revenue for the project in year six (2001/02) £50,000 out of a grand total of funding £282,74. The practice of having multiple funds should enable the project to be less reliant on one source and more sustainable for the future. However, it is important to find funds that come with similar requirements.

Tackling social exclusion

The findings show that the majority of the people that use the services of the project are local residents reflecting one of the project's aims to assist local people in accessing new skills and knowledge.

Our data suggests that the project has succeeded in reaching groups that through research have been identified as in danger of social exclusion. Many of the service users at the Centre are unemployed (46 per cent or 32 of the 69 that answered) and a large proportion of users come from the ethnic minorities (78 per cent or 55 of the 70 that answered).

The research shows that the services attract some ethnic groups more than others. The largest user group is the 'Black' population (56 per cent or 39 of 70 that answered) and only 14 per cent of the users are from the rising Asian population (10 out of the 70 that answered). The findings show that overall the 'Black' users are highly over-represented in comparison to the population of the area and the Asian population is underrepresented.

With the exception of the City and Guilds course, homeowners and people renting privately were over-represented compared to the data we can expect from an area such as South Leytonstone. Twenty eight per cent own their own house, (or 20 of the 71 that answered), and 30 per cent rent privately (or 21 of the 70 that answered). However about 50 per cent of those that are privately renting, living in rent free environments, or owning their own house were unemployed which means that they are potentially eligible for social benefits that can contribute to pay their rent and other living expenses.

With regards to the young people that attended the Cybersquads six (60 per cent) said they lived in owned house and three (30 per cent) rented privately. Only one lived in a council flat. This suggests that the project might not reach those that are in most risk of social exclusion.

Research in the area has shown that crime has gone up and there is also a fear of becoming a victim of crime (Helena Svensson de la Cruz and Monica Krause 2002). The projects aim to tackle crime and improve community safety by providing access for young people to leisure activities and education based around ICT has yet to reach its full potential. Activities for young people in the evenings could be

extended and be targeted to young people in danger of social exclusion and of becoming either involved in or victims of crime.

The users of the services are generally 26 to 40 years of age, with the exception of the *Cybersquads.* It is only the Internet Cafe that can be said to attract the age group 26 to 30 year olds, whereas most of the City and Guilds and Learndirect have students over 31. Given that the population in the area is young the data suggests that the young population of the borough is highly underrepresented. This is particularly true in the case of those under 16.

Service provision and quality

The high number of users of the Cybercafe who said they had never used an internet-cafe before (15 out of 30) shows that the internet cafe has been able to attract people to a service they previously never used and possibly provide a service that the clients needed.

Concerns were raised among the users (43 per cent or 13 out of 30 that answered) regarding the services provided at the floor level of the Cybercafe. The respondents commented that the cafe could offer more assistance to its users. Five of those also commented that the staff were not very friendly.

The Learndirect courses have had a 31 per cent dropout rate (8 out of 26). The research shows the respondents' expectations differed from what they found on the course. Many were not prepared for the teach-yourself nature of the course. Respondents also found the course to be less flexible than they had expected. Previous research by the University of East London has shown that flexibility is highly rated among ICT learners (Sampson, 2001).

For the great majority of participants the Cybersquads was an empowering experience. The majority of the young people interviewed were focused on learning IT, that they were aware was important for their future and only one said he had joined the course because there was nothing else to do in the borough. This suggests that the project has reached a relatively highly motivated group of young people. The project has realised the dangers with a self-selecting sample and is working together with schools trying to target young people that are perhaps not so self-motivated and in need of more encouragement.

Marketing

The majority of the respondents had either heard about the Click and its services though leaflets or by passing by. The findings suggest the eye-catching design and the prominent location of the centre have made a significant contribution to the local marketing strategy of the project.

The findings also suggest there is a lot of potential to expand the information about the services to those who do not pass the Click on one of their daily routes. The project could target people living in the East of Cann Hall or those close to Leyton or Leytonstone station or in neighbouring areas.   Targeting the residents on the 'other side of the High Street' could further help to break down geographical and social boundaries that exist.

Most users of the services are not aware of the range of training opportunities the project offers. Our data suggests that the services provided by the project are not known to most of its drop-in customers. Only eight of the 26 questioned, said they used any other service the Click offers. Awareness of other services was generally low. However, 16 out of the 30 we interviewed stated that they would be interested in more information.

During the fieldwork for another project in the area it has become clear that there was a high demand among voluntary organisations for further IT and ICT training (Helena Svensson de la Cruz and Monika Krause 2002). The organisations mentioned need for training in word-processing, data-base applications and the internet. Only two mentioned that they were aware of the training provided by the Click, which demonstrates a low level of awareness and scope for improving the marketing of training courses.

Scope for expansion

The project would benefit from focusing on attracting community groups to the facilities and courses as well as on the individual client. In doing so the project would minimise the risk of duplicating service of other Internet cafes in the area such as the Flexible Learning Centre and the increasing number of Internet cafes. There is a potential to learn from experiences other communities have made in using ICT to fight social exclusion. Positive examples elsewhere include

- the Artimedia project in Batley, which has focused on using ICT as a means of cultural expression for cultural groups in the area. One of their projects involved Afro-Caribbean women telling the story of how they or their parents immigrated online. A digital gallery for local artists and photographers has also been set up. In co-operation with local schools and the Asian community a digital archive for people in Batley has been established (Shearman, Communities Online).

- Pennywell Electronic Village Hall, which managed to engage the Indian community by setting up a teleconference with Delhi University. Families were able to converse with relatives in India and show-off their new children (DTLR, online document).

Expanding the services to wider groups of people could include young people given that the South Leytonstone area has been criticised for not providing enough activities for children and young people (Roberts, 1998; Helena de la Cruz and Monika Krause 2002). Much of the activities at the Click focus on training and little on entertainment opportunities. Providing the latter might encourage and target different groups of young people to attend the services.

The research has shown that the Click has also brought positive benefits to the community and changes to individual lives in and around the borough. The majority of the people spoken to felt that the training provided them with new skills which they were either already using or aiming to use in the future. However, it has yet to reach its full potential in expanding its services and opening them up to more vulnerable and younger residents in the neighbourhood.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations could be taken into account in the future development of the project:

Internet Cafe

- The Click could consider extending their market and target people living in the east of Cann Hall and close to Leyton and Leytonstone station by door to door leafleting.

- The Click could increase the visibility of information on the services provided by the Click to the users of the Cybercafe.

- The Click could improve on staff friendliness, and provide more assistance to users on the ground floor. Providing the latter would enable the less fluent users of IT to access the services.

Learndirect course

- The project could tackle problems regarding failing computers and systems. The project could make sure technical support is adequate to the services they provide.

- The project could more clearly outline the Learndirect course and address its potential as well as limitations in the interview with the client in order to make sure future students have realistic expectations. More emphasis needs to be given to the individual nature of the course and the impersonal assistance provided over the computer rather than by the tutor. The limitations of the course in regards to more in depth and detailed information regarding specific programmes needs to be compared with the students expectations.

- Considering the different skill levels of participants, the tutors might encourage students to share their knowledge and learn from each other.

Youth Technology project

- The team could make sure the course finishes at an earlier hour. Students would not feel so tired and could get more out of the course. Doing so could also open the course to a wider variety of young people who are not allowed to stay out late or afraid of walking in the streets in the late evening.

- The project could target groups identified as socially excluded or in danger of social exclusion; including those excluded from school, at risk of offending or young offenders.

City and Guilds course

- The project could consider providing childcare during course hours to maximise the attendance of parents with children. This service could be offered to students of other courses as well.

Overall

- The project could consider increasing their co-operation with all local community groups, and offering them courses to meet their needs.

- There is an identified need in the community for IT training in the voluntary sector. The project could more widely market the course in business skills and make sure the course is suited to their needs.

- The project could provide more courses and activities for young people in the area. It could also consider expanding their services to IT play groups for children.

- The project could expand its effort to try to reach disaffected young people, such as those excluded from school, in risk of offending or young offenders.

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