



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
JOINT RESEARCH CENTRE

Institute for Prospective Technological Studies
Information Society Unit

Mapping eInclusion intermediaries in Sunderland, UK

D4. Final Report: Characterisation of eInclusion Intermediaries in Sunderland

CONTRACT NUMBER: 152955-2012-A08-UK

14/11/2012

This document has been prepared by John Clayton as part of Task 2 of the MIREIA project - Measuring the impact of eInclusion Actors (AA INFSO/H3/2011/2 - SMART 2011/007 conducted by the Information Society Unit of the of the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS) of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre in collaboration with DG CONNECT. For more information about the MIREIA Project visit: <http://is.jrc.ec.europa.eu/pages/EAP/eInclusion/MIREIA.html>

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0. Executive Summary

Methodology

A database was constructed to account for all organisations working within the city boundaries currently providing some form of ICT access and/or support to residents. This information was based on publically available information as well as through key gatekeepers and local experts from City Council, the University and Local Strategic Partnership. Information was also gathered through internet searches, previous research conducted in this area and via local directories. 248 intermediaries operating in the city were identified. This provided the population for the second stage of the research, an online survey, which aimed to get a representative sample of this population and explore in more detail the character of the organisations and their provision. More detailed information about (a) the character and structure of organisations (b) ICT provision and support offered and (c) recorded and perceived benefits, was collected through the use of a quantitative/qualitative questionnaire distributed via email to all organisations on the database. 39 intermediaries (including intermediaries with multiple venues) responded. This represents a response rate of 16%. Survey results were electronically captured and coded according to the responses provided where necessary.

Findings

Residents within the city of Sunderland face a number of socio-economic challenges including below national average measurements for employment, income, education, health and multiple deprivation.

A great deal of attention has been paid to the digital inclusion agenda in Sunderland over the last two decades to deal with these challenges, including a strong strategic commitment and a number of practical programmes supporting access to ICT for residents.

The City Council and its partners in the voluntary and community sector have played an important role in the provision of ICT facilities in the city. However, there are signs that this is beginning to be undermined due to threats to funding and reduced local government spending.

Much of the ICT provision is based in the public and third sectors. Private provision is mostly found in education and training industries and there is very limited privately owned public access to ICT facilities.

In terms of ICT support and the hosting of ICT activities for other organisations, the interdependency of intermediaries is clear. This is a strength in terms of partnership working, but there may be knock on effects from the closure of intermediaries in the future.

Formal educational institutions make up the largest proportion of ICT intermediaries in the city, although there is emerging evidence that procurement processes for managed services in schools mean that there are restrictions in extending provision to the wider local community.

Community and youth centres are a key form of ICT provision and support in the city, many of which have been or are supported by the Council's Community ICT team. This is a crucial group of intermediaries because access is inclusive – offering a range of open access as well as formal basic ICT training courses.

Smaller organisation in the third sector, for example those supporting the needs of refugees and black and minority ethnic communities in the city are under resourced and face challenges around the ability to offer technical support in the use of such technology.

Many of those surveyed see the use of ICT as important to the work they do. However, there are very few intermediaries solely concerned with technological needs and requirements.

Most commonly cited activities in the survey included general access to computers and the internet as well as a range of educational courses. The target groups most commonly targeted by these activities include 'General' local populations and 'Young People'.

The key benefits of ICT access identified in the survey included those related to employment and education related outcomes, as well as an equality of access which would not otherwise exist. However, there are other benefits which may not be adequately captured by focussing solely on employment based typologies.

Very few intermediaries collect reliable and rigorous data sets in relation to the number of users accessing ICT services and the benefits this has for their quality of life. Even for those intermediaries indicating that such data was collected, this wasn't done in any systematic form.

Policy Recommendations

There is a requirement to establish which initiatives provide the most effective and valuable interventions and, in the current economic context, to be smarter about which forms of 'digital inclusion' to support. At the same time it should be recognised that many intermediaries do not just offer ICT access/support and that the variety of services offered to disadvantaged communities by intermediaries should be valued.

There is a need to support the work of those intermediaries who provide services to the local community, which include, but are not limited to ICT activities. It is suggested that this broad approach to community development and social inclusion is supported.

The community and voluntary sector is the main intermediary in the city outside of mainstream education. If this work is considered of value – the future of organisations (particularly smaller organisations) facing threats of closure needs to be urgently addressed.

The development of a useable measurement framework which accounts for the work of diverse intermediaries has potential to demonstrate some of the successes as well as limits of technology in addressing areas of social exclusion.

There is a danger that the typology employed in these case studies is too general and not responsive enough to local contexts. There needs to be a better awareness of the diversity of terminologies used across Europe and awareness of the range of non-employment based benefits which might be accrued from ICT access.

It is suggested that intermediaries need data which focuses on the impact in terms of employment and education, but also 'softer' and less prescribed measurements of success. There is also a temptation to separate out technological and non-technological benefits – but it is suggested that these are both integrated into any future measurement framework.

From the findings of this study it is suggested that the following should be included in any future organisational typology work: (a) Health and Social Care (b) Third sector support (c) Business support (d) Social Housing providers.

Because some organizations and venues within the city offer a range of services and a range of access to ICT it raises questions about what is counted as the intermediary. This needs to be clarified in future work. There needs to be greater recognition of the fact that intermediaries can be both hosts of ICT access/supporters as well as providers/funders of those services.

1. Introduction

1.1 IPTS research on ICT for Inclusion and the MIREIA Project

The 'Socio-economic Analysis of ICT for Learning and Inclusion Action' (ICTLI) of the Information Society Unit at the JRC-IPTS is conducting research in the area of ICT for socioeconomic inclusion with the main goal of providing evidence based analysis to support EU policy design, implementation and evaluation, focusing on the interplay between ICT, social inclusion and empowerment of groups at risks of exclusion.

As part of its research strategy and among its key activities the ICTLI Action is conducting research with the specific objective of **Measuring the impacts of ICT for socio-economic inclusion**, including the structuring of the policy landscape and the characterization of the various actors active on it, as well as the development of a conceptual and methodological framework and implementation strategy to gather data and assess impacts of specific ICT-enabled services in support of groups at risk of exclusion and to promote social inclusion, integration and employability. A particular interest in this regard concerns the role of e-Inclusion Intermediaries (due to their multiplier effects) in promoting socio-economic inclusion at various levels (e.g. regional, local, community, thematic, etc.).

Therefore, as part of the Administrative Arrangement (AA) for 2012-2013 with DG CONNECT a study on Measuring the impact of e-Inclusion Actors on Digital Literacy, Skills and Inclusion goals of the Digital Agenda for Europe (hereinafter referred to as MIREIA) has been agreed. The MIREIA research aims to address two key gaps:

- a) the policy need to **understand and characterize the diverse set of actors** (from public, private and third sectors) involved in implementing the e-Inclusion policies;
- b) the lack of both available **methodologies and practice in measuring the impact of ICT** for socio-economic inclusion.

This case study is framed within the *Task 2: Case-study exhaustive mapping of selected areas* of the MIREIA research project.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The general aim of the study is to provide a detailed picture of the e-Inclusion local landscape in the city of Sunderland, England, through gathering and analysing relevant data and documentation for mapping and characterising e-Inclusion intermediaries and activities, and drafting a case study on exhaustive locality mapping of e-Inclusion intermediaries and interventions in the selected area.

In parallel to this study, two additional areas have been analysed. These are the urban district of El Raval in Barcelona, Spain and a rural region of Latvia. Therefore, in total, three locality mappings will be undertaken providing an exhaustive view and characterisation of the e-

Inclusion actors. This mapping aim to:

- a) Test the typology identified through the locality mapping
- b) Estimate the size and distribution of intermediary actors
- c) Identify impact assessment methods in use by grassroots organisations

In order to achieve these objectives several tasks have been completed as part of this project. These include:

1. Characterization of the role, structure and activities of e-Inclusion Intermediaries in the area, definition and mapping of a typology of actors, their quantification, and description of the methodological difficulties encountered in doing this research.
2. An analysis of how contextual factors affect the existence, structure, typology and quantity of eInclusion intermediary organizations.
3. A analysis of the role of the intermediaries addressing the challenges identified in the area, the possible relationships between the contextual factors and the characterization of eInclusion intermediaries in the area, and a discussion of policy and research implications for the following activities of the research.

1.3 Structure of the Report

Following this introduction section, in which the methodological approach adopted and challenges encountered are outlined, the remainder of the report will address the above objectives through an analysis of the local socio-economic and digital policy context, (Section 2). This will be followed by a detailed mapping of e-inclusion intermediaries in Sunderland (Section 3) and lastly the policy implications and recommendations for MIREIA will be considered (Section 4).

1.4 Methodological approach

Initial population database

The starting point for accessing ICT intermediaries providing access to or support in the use of ICT in Sunderland, was to draw upon the definition outlined in the contract specifications. This allowed for an initial focus on organisations working within the public sector including local and national government agencies, those working in the voluntary and community sector, or third sector, and those operating as private businesses but providing services for socially inclusive outcomes.

With this initial scope in mind, a database was constructed which aimed to account for and list all organisations working within the city boundaries who, on the best and most recent information available, currently provide some form of ICT access or support to residents. Considering the numbers involved, it was decided that this information would be based on publically available information as a means of tentative organisational classification, quantification, but also as a means of recording contact details.

Sunderland City Council has historically played an active role in the promotion of digital inclusion and has supported many public and third sector organisations to deliver ICT opportunities over the last decade (see section 3). The dedicated department for this agenda was therefore the initial key gatekeeper for establishing a basic knowledge of active E-

inclusion intermediaries. This proved to be an effective starting point and allowed for the construction of a list of all agencies known to and supported by the City Council Community ICT Team. However, there are also a number of intermediaries who operate outside of the council's activities and to access this information other sources were used. This included consultation with City Council representatives, other experts within the University, previous research conducted in this area, Local Strategic Partnership contacts, internet searches, or where such information did not exist, through local directories established by third sector umbrella organisations and private listings via local business directories. Other national providers of ICT access such as Microsoft training centres and UK Online Centres were also contacted to gather details of local provision.

Using this approach and on the basis of the most currently available information it was possible to identify 248 intermediaries operating in the city. These were broken down in a basic organisational classification, and where known, information regarding provision was outlined. This provided the population for the second stage of the research – an online survey which aimed to get a representative sample of this population and explore in more detail the character of the organisations and their provision.

On-line survey

From the starting point of the extended database, more detailed information concerning the following areas was collected through the use of a short questionnaire with a range of both more closed and open questions in order to capture the diversity of organisations and allow for more detailed forms of classification/typologies.

- (a) The character and structure of organisations
- (b) ICT provision and supported offered and
- (c) Recorded and perceived benefits for service users/customers etc.

This questionnaire was distributed as a hyperlink via email and covering letter to all organisations listed on the database using publically available e-mail addresses. The e-mail was sent three times over the course of two weeks and was followed up through phone calls where no responses were forthcoming as a means of advertising the research and encouraging participation.

A short survey was devised to enable a level of efficiency in data collection. Rather than delivering paper versions of the questionnaire, it was decided that a more convenient option from the perspective of the participating intermediaries would be to deliver this as an online questionnaire via e-mail. 39 intermediaries responded to the questionnaire. This included some intermediaries such as the City Council's Library network with numerous venues delivering ICT access. Given the time constraints in place for research design, implementation, data collection and analysis (less than 1 month), it is suggested that this represents a good response rate (16%) from which to infer some key trends in citywide provision. The total of 248 organisations included multiple venues, rather than individual types of intermediary and it is likely that the available information for some of these is dated and likely that some may now even be closed (see section 1.5). Therefore, it is suggested the response rate above could potentially be adjusted upwards. Most organisations listed in the initial database were represented, although it is recognised that educational establishments, making up a large proportion of the database entries were relatively under-represented (see section 1.5).

Survey results were electronically captured, coded where necessary according to the responses provided and developed into the various typologies outlined in section 3. This was also carried out both to reflect the specific situation found in Sunderland, but also in relation to the other case studies in this broader project and a general typology. This coding allows for comparison between the responses from the different intermediaries (and across the three studies) and allowed for a quantification of responses as presented in the survey analysis.

1.5 Methodological challenges

Visibility of intermediaries

Given the time constraints of the project in terms of research design, data collection and data analysis, it may be that some agencies offering provision have been over-looked. One issue this may raise is concerning the visibility of ICT intermediaries and their awareness raising strategies. Those intermediaries not included in the initial database are not easily located or known amongst those active on this local agenda. The intermediaries included are those visible to the public – but a public with access to information available on the internet. For many of those with limited internet access in the city, it may be much harder to know what opportunities exist. In terms of the local e-inclusion agenda, this presents a somewhat contradictory situation.

Changing e-inclusion landscapes

One of the key difficulties in constructing the initial database was accessing up to date information, including contact details. The accuracy of this information, particularly when publically available through the internet, has been affected by turnover of staff and the changing shape and names of organisations. This was tackled by trying to avoid the use of generic e-mail addresses, and where possible sourcing personalised e-mail addresses for the most appropriate person within an organisation, through contact with gatekeepers and through direct phone calls to organisations.

There was also a key issue in relation the disappearance of some agencies altogether. The e-inclusion landscape is not static and as many organisations are reliant upon continuing funding to support their work, the picture is fluid. The current economic climate means that many organisations in the north east of England, particularly smaller organisations in the third sector, are folding due to lack of funds in the context of massive public spending cuts and changing funding regimes (Donovan, et al, 2012).

It is also the case that some organisations supported by the City Council to deliver ICT, now no longer do so due to the withdrawal of funding or support or specific activities. Knowledge of this was gained through some of the responses to the invitation to complete the survey, where respondents indicated the study would no longer be of relevance to their activities. This provides an important lesson in the careful and ongoing monitoring of organisations acting as E-inclusion intermediaries. Just because an agency has historically delivered, supported or hosted E-inclusion activities, it does not mean that they will continue to do so if the money and incentives are not there to do so. Information garnered through organisations such as the City Council may also portray a unwittingly misleading picture of the number of organisations involved in these activities, if programmes and funding periods are limited and current records fail to reflect this.

Direct access to some organisations

Some organisations proved very difficult to contact directly. This was particularly the case for central government agencies with local branches such as Job Centre Plus, where no local direct access for research purposes is permitted. For this agency, all contact has to go through the central department responsible – in this case the Department of Work and Pensions - which makes the chances of responses extremely challenging. In such situations it may be possible to infer the characteristics of such agencies without recourse to standard research methods.

Survey response rates

One of the key issues affecting the response rate was the timing of the research, and it is felt that lessons can be learned in this regard. The data collection took place during the month of August and in the UK, as elsewhere in Europe, this is the peak holiday season with many organisations either operating a skeleton staff or effectively shutting down. This meant that when the invitation to participate was received, many of the responses were ‘out of office’ and when the mail was re-directed to other members of staff they were often unable to help due to a lack of knowledge. This was also the case when the organisations were phoned directly. This was particularly true for educational establishments, especially primary and secondary schools, who could not provide any information due to annual leave. The organisations responding to the survey therefore reflect this.

To get around these difficulties it was essential that the initial database was as thorough and extensive as possible. Clearly a larger sample increases the chances of an acceptable number of responses. Therefore a great deal of time was put into establishing those organisations who might meet the criteria set out in the project specifications. It was also important to be effective in communicating to potential participants - describing the project well enough yet not over-bombarding them with information. Therefore the format of the covering e-mail that accompanied the survey invitation was carefully thought through. This included ensuring that respondents would be kept informed of any publically available research outputs in order to give them a stake and interest in the research. Any returned e-mail addresses were followed up in terms of spelling errors and where this wasn't the case, alternative addresses were sourced through direct phone calls. This proved to be time consuming but effective in increasing the response rate and would be suggested as an effective means of engaging participants in future research. Although no participants completed the survey over the phone as they could not spare the time, a significant proportion did so in their own time.

Another method that improved response rates was to talk with those responsible for umbrella organisations and partnerships working in this area and using their positions within local networks to encourage and support participation. One example of this is the Digital Youth Work overseen by the Sunderland Youth and Voluntary Forum group. The request for survey participation was sent to all organisations with a stake in this work and yielded additional responses. It also meant that in any re-send of the survey e-mail the message could be addressed directly to named individuals.

Relevance of the survey

In some cases the respondents had began the survey but then ceased to complete it as they felt it was not of direct relevance to them and the work they did. This is one of major pitfalls in designing a questionnaire for such a broad audience. In hindsight it is easier to see why some questions were interpreted in this way. In future research it is recommended that attention is particularly paid to designing questions that are flexible and relevant to different types of intermediary with different foci.

Definitions of intermediaries

Because some organizations and venues within the city offer a range of services and a range of access to ICT (especially city libraries, community centres and customer service centres), it raises questions about what counts as an intermediary. It is also the case that one responding intermediary may be part of a larger network of intermediaries (e.g. city libraries). This raises the issue of what counts as one distinct intermediary – is it the overall organization or the individual venue? This needs to be clarified in future work. There also needs to be greater recognition of the fact that intermediaries can be both hosts of ICT access as well as providers of services.

Additional areas to be explored

On reflection, there were additional areas which could have been addressed through this survey. For example, it would have been useful to know more explicitly which the organisations charged for their services and which provided free access as this seems to be increasingly the case and is also a means of distinguishing between types of providers. This was provided voluntarily by some organisations, and such information is often publically available, however it would have been good to have a systematic approach to the collection of this data in the future.

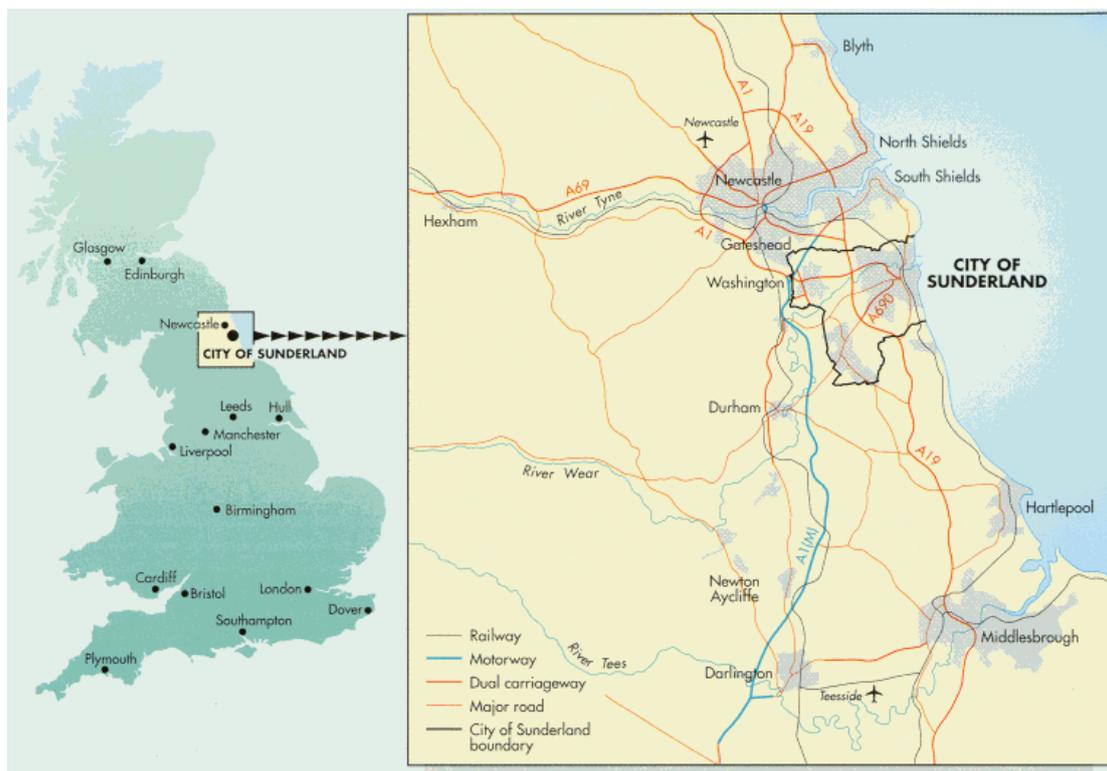
2. Context of the Locality

2.1 Socio-Economic Landscape

Demographics

The city of Sunderland is located at the mouth River Wear in the north east of England (See Figure 1). The city is estimated to be home to a population of approximately 283,500 (ONS, 2006), making it the largest city in the region. The city is composed of both more densely populated urban areas and more rural areas. According to the 2001 census 98.1% of the population are classified as 'white', with 1% 'Asian' and 0.4% 'mixed-race'. 60% of homes in Sunderland are owner occupied, with an average household size of 2.4 people. 3% of the homes have no permanent residents. 16% of the population are under 15 and 23% are over the age of 65 (ONS, 2010).

Figure 1: Map of the City of Sunderland, UK



Source: Sunderland City Council (2009)

A Brief History

The late 20th century/early 21st century has been a period of significant change for Sunderland. This was a city that once boasted the biggest ship building yards in the world and extensive coal mining, glass and rope making industries (Ville, 1990). However, virtually all traces of these have now disappeared. These industries supported significant levels of employment, but by 1986 coal was no longer exported through Sunderland, by 1993 the last local mine had closed and by 1988 shipbuilding had come to an end. At about the same time (1986) the Nissan car manufacturing plant was opened, and today has become the largest of

its kind in the UK and one of the most productive in Europe. While this was an economic boost for the city, it failed to address the fall-out of de-industrialisation and did not prevent widespread unemployment. By 1991 the number of unemployed in Sunderland had reached 24,342 (ONS, 1991), with male unemployment over 20 % (Vision of Britain Through Time, 2009).

Poverty and deprivation

Despite a falling proportion of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs)¹ identified as amongst the most deprived nationally, deprivation and poverty in Sunderland remains evident. In 2010, 18% of the city's total housing fell within England's 10% most deprived LSOAs (DCLG, 2010). One of the persistent weaknesses for the city is deprivation associated with a lack of employment. Out of 326 local authority areas in England, Sunderland ranks 11th (1st is the most deprived) on the absolute number of employment deprived residents. This has improved from a position of 7th in 2004 and 2007 – but is still a major problem.

Child poverty, a reliable indicator of family poverty, also remains a real problem. Sunderland has 26% of its children and young people within families earning less than 60% of the national average income, compared to a national average of 20.9% (End Child Poverty, 2011). In the wards of Southwick and Hendon these rates run at over 40%.

Employment

The majority of employment opportunities are in the service sector. 77% of employees in Sunderland and 83.5% across Great Britain are employed in this sector (ONS, 2008). 10.9% of Sunderland's employees in this sector are found in the retail sector (DFDS/TWRI, 2011). However, in contrast to the national picture, Sunderland has a higher proportion of employees working in the public sector. This is particularly seen in terms of health - employing 12.9% of the working population, education (8.7%) and public administration more generally (8.5%). Despite the damage done to industry in recent decades, there is also still a significant presence for manufacturing, which in 2011 employed 14.3% of the local workforce (Tyne and Wear Research and Information, 2011).

Up until 2009, employment rates in the city had generally been improving and catching up with the national average. However, from 2009 onwards employment rates in the city have declined dramatically and by 2011 this rate had dropped below 62% of the working age population. The gap between the local and national rates is now significant and growing.

There is also a growing problem with youth unemployment, which has increased sharply during the current economic recession. The city was recently identified as having one of the highest proportions of young people between the ages of 18-25 as out of work in the UK and has been identified by ACEVO (2012) as being one of the 152 youth unemployment 'hotspots' in the UK. The youth unemployment rate in Sunderland is presently at 9.9% compared to a national average of 3.9% (ONS, 2012). There is also an issue with the proportion of young people who are not actively involved in employment, education or training (NEETs). Lee and Wright (2011) indicate that Sunderland falls into their 'High' categorisation of NEETS in England (between 18-20 per cent of 16-24 year olds NEET).

Education

¹ LSOAs are the smallest geographical unit of analysis for statistical data in the UK. There are 188 LSOAs in the city of Sunderland.

Whilst Sunderland has started from a much lower baseline than elsewhere, it is also the case that a range of education indicators have improved in recent years (up to 2009). This applies to indicators across the age groups including those at Key Stage 2, GCSE, and at age 19 but also for the population as a whole. However, this does not necessarily mean that the gap in performance between Sunderland and the national average has been decreasing, and therefore may represent an overall national trend. For example, the increasing proportion of the local population who are qualified at Level 4² reflects national trends and a geographical inequality remains.

Health

30.7% of Sunderland's population are still ranked among the 10% most health deprived nationally (DCLG, 2010). Part of this picture is the fact that Sunderland has higher rates of mortality from cancer and coronary related diseases than the national average. While Sunderland has reduced mortality from all cancers from a rate in 2000 well above the national average, between 2007 and 2008 this gap once again opened up.

Digital Inclusion

Over recent years rates of access to technology in Sunderland have increased. Of particular significance is the growth in the proportion of residents with access to PCs, the Internet and e-mail. According to IPSOS-MORI (2010) between 2004-2010 those with the internet at home has increased from 36% to 62%. What is also noticeable is that private ownership has increased while those accessing public resources has been declining. For example, those accessing technology between 2007-2010 through libraries and City Council centres has fallen from 12% to 8% according to this same survey.

Our own previous research (Clayton et al., 2009) indicates that use of and ownership of various forms of technology in socially excluded neighbourhoods of the city is much lower than suggested by IPSOS-MORI (for the whole city) with 36% of residents surveyed owning a desktop computer, 33% owning a laptop and 37% having broadband internet connections at home. As with the IPSOS-MORI survey, our own survey demonstrated a limited knowledge of and use of public facilities providing access to ICT opportunities. Given the financial and strategic investment by authorities in the city over the last two decades (see Section 2.2), this is a somewhat unexpected finding (Clayton et al, 2009).

2.2 Digital Inclusion Policy, Strategy and Projects

Sunderland has been recognised on many occasions since the mid-1990s as a model in terms of how technology and community engagement may be harnessed to meet social and economic ends. This has had discernible impact upon the way the city and its institutions operate and has inspired those responsible for digital inclusion activities to push for continuing development.

1996 marked the publication of the first dedicated ICT strategy in the city, following the establishment of the city's local strategic partnership (LSP). Unlike many LSPs across England, the Sunderland LSP has a history which can be traced back before New Labour's modernisation agenda incorporated this model as a means of collaboratively tackling local issues (Sullivan, 2003). The grouping brought together the public, private, business, community and voluntary sectors (CVS) to deal with some of the issues facing the city, in

² Level 4 is equivalent to the first year of undergraduate study at University.

particular the need to stimulate a flagging local economy. From this point on, a number of key programmes were developed by the City Council working along with the community and voluntary sector in particular which aimed to improve access to and support for the use of ICT for socially inclusive goals. Some of the key programmes included:

- Telematics Strategies (1996-1999 and 1999-2003)
- E-Government Strategy and Action Plan (2000-2005)
- E-Neighbourhoods Programme (2001-2009)
- Connecting the Coalfields (2000-2008)
- Sunderland Telecare Service (2007-)
- Sunderland Software City (2007-)
- Sunderland Digital Challenge (2007-2009)

Two of the above programmes, E-Neighbourhoods and Digital Challenge deserve further attention here. While many of the initiatives already established in the city prior to 2000 (particularly the establishment of Electronic Village Halls and Learning Centres) were already addressing the issues of social exclusion, it was recognised that additional resources were required to meet the needs of community groups whose technological and social needs were not adequately funded or supported. It was out of this recognition and Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF) that the E-Neighbourhoods Programme emerged. This was administered by the City Council ICT Unit on behalf of the LSP and working in partnership with the well established Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS). This programme enabled a suite of initiatives which shifted the emphasis towards improving the quality of life of those identified as 'socially excluded'. It aimed to do so by providing access to technologies, skills and training, promoting participation in the democratic process, encouraging cross-community dialogue and improving channels of consultation. This programme established the building blocks for much of what has followed in terms of community engagement, technical support and partnership working. As a direct result over 40 EVHs were established across the city by 2009 in community venues, over 70 Community e-Champions were equipped and trained, and over 60 voluntary organisations in the city were supported, 10 community interest websites were created and 20 community interest authors were trained and supported (ESD solutions4inclusion, 2009)

Overlapping and following on from this, Sunderland Digital Challenge was an authority wide programme which gave impetus and support to a range of digital inclusion activities within and beyond the boundaries of the programme itself, building on the recognised progress and investment already made in digital infrastructure. The goal was to create a digitally enabled city, one where access to technology is available to all, where local services are delivered more efficiently and effectively through digital technology, and where digital solutions are considered in dealing with all economic and social challenges. The selection of Sunderland as the winner of the national Digital Challenge competition was largely due to the community-led and needs driven nature of the bid put forward.

Digital Challenge included a suite of individual yet inter-related projects which looked to address key domains of social exclusion: health, education, independent living, and developing community capacity. The rationale behind a range of projects was that 'one size does not fit all' and that the diverse needs of community groups could not be adequately addressed through large scale all encompassing initiatives. Some of the key initiatives included:

- E-Champions - A new direction: Provision of Internet-ready computers for community based practitioners/volunteers supported by appropriate training and guidance.
- Telesafe: Use of tracking device on mobile networks to enable carers, parents and guardians to track the location of vulnerable and at risk individuals in case of an emergency.
- Smart Sunderland: A 'sign up' text alert system. The project provides a platform for organisations to deliver and receive SMS text messages from end-users.
- Flash/Hexagon: Flash is a form of virtual meeting technology held between two or more people over the internet. Hexagon enables an informal, on-line social network environment and facilitates individuals, communities and the voluntary and community sector to communicate with each other.
- Health Information Points: Kiosks which allow users to check their health status including weight, BMI, blood pressure, body fat content and take them through an optional health questionnaire.
- Health-E: Aimed at addressing childhood health by engaging young people with health related issues on the internet and through the use of healthy games/consoles.
- ICT@home: Provided PCs, connectivity and technical support to families without access to technology within their own home.
- E-Mentoring: To provide disadvantaged and disengaged young people with the engagement to raise aspirations and awareness of future opportunities. This was done by matching up young people with appropriate and relevant education and business sector mentors and enabling contact via e-mail.
- Community Tech: Technical support provided to support a number of digital inclusion initiatives for individuals and the CVS by the dedicated technical team base out of the ICT department at Sunderland City Council.
- Equipment Loan: Short-term loan of digital technology equipment to community and voluntary organisations, as well as the provision of technical support in the use of this technology.
- Telehealth: A system of monitoring long term health conditions remotely thus avoiding unwanted trips to hospitals and potentially keeping down the number of re-admissions to hospital.
- Digital Communities: A range of digital inclusion projects providing access to the internet and other digital technology through community based facilities, based in the Southwick (now closed), Easington Lane and Washington areas of the city.

Many of the successful projects which ran under the E-Neighbourhoods and Digital Challenge programmes are still being delivered by a scaled down Community ICT team within Sunderland City Council. Community of Interest websites, ICT support to the CVS, EVHs and E-Champions are all examples of the continuing commitment to the digital inclusion agenda and an approach which continues to focus on the needs of the local community – helping to provide access and support for residents in locations which are convenient to them.

This team currently supports 58 Community Venues to deliver access to ICT. There are now around 200 Community e-Champions in the city who use technology supported by SCC to help others in their peer group, neighbourhoods, communities or organisations. Over 50 Community of Interest Websites are now supported where intermediaries in the CVS engage

with their peers and interest groups to offer a range of information, advice, guidance and support and to date the Community IT team have supported 154 CVS organisations in the city.

2.3 Implications of the context in the composition of the typology e-Inclusion Intermediaries

Given some of the socio-economic challenges Sunderland's residents face, a great deal of work has gone into the use of technology for social and economic ends over the last two decades. This has included a corporate commitment to use technology as a way of reviving a flagging economy through the encouragement of hi-tech industries, but it has also been demonstrated through innovative forms of community engagement in order to provide more equitable access to technological resources and support systems with health, community development, educational and employment goals in mind. This local agenda has also played out at the same time as a national policy agenda which has encouraged access to technology through a range of mechanisms including mainstream formal education.

Alongside the programmes and initiatives mentioned above there are also a plethora of smaller scale projects which have been running in the city throughout this period. These are often those led by small community and voluntary sector organisations such as community associations and registered charities who are often operating on very limited resources. However, it is clear that in Sunderland a great deal of work has been done to link into such activities which are already working with the community in this way. Many of the larger programmes such as E-Neighbourhoods and Digital Challenge have utilised the capacity and expertise already developed and have brought these projects under the banner of more formal digital inclusion activity. The serious and sustained community engagement and ongoing community consultation originally developed through the early stages of the e-Neighbourhoods programme, remains a vital and sometimes unique aspect of the approach towards digital inclusion which harnesses the good work already done by the CVS. It is no surprise therefore that much of the work, particularly in relation to open internet access and informal education, is done within the third sector through trusted neighbourhood based community venues.

Despite considerable strategic and financial investment in supporting the provision of public ICT opportunities, the end of the Digital Challenge programme has meant a number of things. Firstly it has brought about the scaling down of the Community ICT department in terms of staffing, financial resources and the ability to service and support organisations to the same extent. While technical support has continued and the work of the EVHs in particular continues to be supported by the City Council, there is only so much that can now be achieved. This has, in some cases, resulted in the breakdown of relationships with previously active intermediaries and the tailing off of some ICT related activities. This however is not to play down the continued role of, in particular libraries and active community centres who continue to use Community ICT as a form of support. One of the other key problems is that technology goes out of date very quickly and while the last decade was marked by a civic investment in technology, this is not entirely sustainable where replacement technology is not supplied or financed.

There is also another key factor in determining the ability of intermediaries to be active and sustainable and that is both the general economic climate (the recession) but also the massive

cuts in government spending since the Comprehensive Spending Review of 2010. As other research has explored (Clayton et al 2010), the knock on effects of changes to funding regimes and reductions in the deal for local governments, is that third sector organisations are competing against national organisations for smaller budgets and local authority grants are disappearing, especially for non statutory obligations. We know that the north east of England has been one of the most adversely effected regions in the UK from this economic downturn and political culture of austerity (Hetherington, 2011) and Sunderland has clearly been on the frontline in terms of funding cuts and the more general adverse economic situation.

This has meant that a number of organisations, even historically active and successful organisations have disappeared due to their inability to source adequate funds. In relation to the ICT landscape this has included several key players. For example, the Wearmouth Development Trust in Swan Street in the Southwick area of the city was at the forefront of an innovative idea to create a ‘digital community’ in Sunderland – an intermediary which hosted a variety of ICT related opportunities including wireless hot spot, ICT suite, training courses, equipment loan into the community and the development of E-Champions. As such it was one of the key example of good practice identified within the Digital Challenge programme. The venue no longer exists. The same can be said of ETEC – a social enterprise established to help small and medium businesses in the area as well as individuals with their ICT needs – providing free access to ICT support. This too has folded. Other examples include Bridge (a women’s education centre) which 5 branches across the city, which offered women in marginalised communities the opportunity to attend introductory educational courses and EBC which ran the e-mentoring scheme for young people mentioned above. However, several factors including the need to charge for services, the disappearance of key grants and the increasing competitiveness with other, often larger and more powerful organisations in the region and nationally has meant this service too no longer exists.

The current challenge is to continue providing access to technology beyond private ownership in a period of financial austerity and massive local authority funding cuts. While a great deal of work has been done around this agenda in terms of strategy and implementation – the relative success of these activities has not been so clearly established. Recent evaluations (Clayton et al, 2009) have indicated that the impact of such schemes on levels of social inclusion for residents in socially excluded areas of the city may be limited. There is then a requirement to establish which initiatives provide the most effective and valuable interventions and, in such an economic context, to be smarter about which forms of ‘digital inclusion’ to pursue at the local level. Before this can be established it is necessary to form a more detailed picture of those organisations and agencies currently involved in delivering ICT opportunities and this is the main purpose of this piece of research.

3. Mapping of eInclusion intermediaries

3.1 The landscape of eInclusion intermediaries in Sunderland

– **Typology for Organizational Type 1.1. Aggregated**

Database

Although these are ascribed categories rather than that based on the perspective the intermediaries themselves, 33.9% of those organisations listed in the database can be described as belonging to the **third sector** (community and voluntary). The **public sector** is the most represented sector in the database, making up 49.6% of intermediaries. This can largely be accounted for the large number of schools and other formal education institutions in the city. For example, there are 77 primary schools in Sunderland. The **private sector** represents 16.5% of intermediaries in the extended database.

Figure 2: Organisational types from extended database

	Third Sector	Public Sector	Private Sector
Sunderland	33.9%	49.6%	16.5%

Survey

66.6% of responding organisations to the survey identified themselves as from the **third sector**, including Social Enterprises and Community Interest Companies (4). These are companies often with charitable status, but also registered as Ltd companies which are primarily focused on socially inclusive goals rather than profit. 3 organisations within the Third Sector category also identified themselves as charities and 1 as a voluntary organisation. 15.4% of organisations identified themselves as either Ltd Companies or belonging to the **private sector**. 17.9% organisations were identified as belonging to the **government/public sector** including 2 schools, 1 University, a Trade Union, Software City and a Community Association. The sample is therefore broadly representative of intermediaries operating across sectors.

Figure 3: Organisational types from survey responses

	Third Sector	Public Sector	Private Sector
Sunderland	66.6%	17.9%	15.4%

– **Typology Organizational Type 1.2 Disaggregated (Survey responses)**

Government/Public Sector

Out of the 17.9% of responding intermediaries to the survey which identified as belonging to the public sector, one of the key respondents was the Councils’ network of libraries. While this represents only 1 intermediary in the survey, the respondent spoke on behalf of the entire network of 20 libraries, including 6 libraries based within multi-use Customer Service Centres. 3 responding intermediaries represented Formal Educational institutions including 2 secondary schools and the only University in the city. Additional ‘other’ projects which indentified as belonging to this sector included publically funded business support (1) a Trade Union (1) and a Community Association (1). No intermediaries participated in the survey that were recognized as National, Regional and State Agencies, Municipal or Government-run Telecenters. It is suggested that the library network in Sunderland may be close to a definition of a Government-run Telecenter, although the key difference is that ICT is only one small aspect of provision through these venues rather than the primary role. It is also the case that some of the intermediaries surveyed do offer access to government funded adult education classes (2). However, again these cannot be described by this function as it is only one aspect of service provision and these organisations did not identify as belonging to the

public/government sector. This also raises the issue of definition by sector which can be problematic.

Third Sector

Out of the 66.6% of responding intermediaries to the survey which identified as belonging to the Third Sector, Neighbourhood based community centres (8) and Youth Centres (6) were recognized the key type of organisations. Out of all intermediaries surveyed Community Centres made up 22% of respondents and Youth Centres 17%. No NGO-run Telecenters were identified in the survey. This is not a term which is used in the UK context and very few organisations solely operated as a means of accessing ICT. ICT opportunities were rather offered as part of a broader community led, neighbourhood-based organisations as mentioned above. Migrant and Minority Support Organizations made up 3 of the respondents in this sector including support groups for asylum seekers and refugees as well as more general support for the BME community. Voluntary sector support organisations made up 2 of the responding intermediaries and 'other' respondents included: Older people care (2), Third Sector Business Support i.e. not-for-profit infrastructure organisations supporting commercial organisations (2), Education and Training (2), Carer Support (1) and Disability support (1) organisations.

Private Sector

There is a very limited private provision of public to ICT opportunities in Sunderland. This is summed up by the finding that no cybercafés responded to the survey and that only one such intermediary was found to exist in the city. The key type of intermediary in this sector are those organisations providing privately funded education and training courses, which made up 3 of the responding intermediaries to the survey. 'Other' intermediaries included Social Housing Providers (1), Telecoms Providers (1) and privately funded Business Support organisations (1).

- Categories of intermediaries

Public Libraries

City Libraries offer ICT access and support in the form of ICT suites known as 'Electronic Village Halls', delivered in partnership with the City Council Community ICT team. Some smaller libraries do not offer large PC suites, but do still provide smaller scale ICT access and support. Customer Service Centres are Council owned mixed use, partnership operated locations where a range of public services are brought together in a single community venue. The Family Adult and Community Learning department within the city council use training rooms at the service centres to put on a range of non-compulsory accredited and non-accredited educational courses.

Formal Educational Institutions

Includes compulsory and post-compulsory formal educational institutions which receive some form of direct government funding for delivering structured and accredited educational and vocational programmes, mostly in classroom based settings. ICT provision is seen to be embedded into the curriculum at all levels, with the FE College and University offering more specialist qualifications in ICT based competencies.

Community and Youth Centres

Includes 30 'Community Electronic Village Halls' – a variety of PC based ICT suites across Neighbourhood based community venues. These are established and technically supported by

the city council within these venues. There are also 4 centres identified who provide independent access to ICT opportunities. Community and youth centres come in a range of forms including religious based, youth focussed, and Residents' Associations which are often focussed on the needs of the very young and older people in the community. This classification also includes Community and Voluntary Sector support groups who provide advice information and resources to third sector organisations. Therefore provision can range across educational, employment, health and social care, childcare and leisure domains, although the focus does tend to be on meeting the of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, especially children, parents, young people, older people and the disabled.

Migrant and Minority Support Organisations

These groups within the community and voluntary or third sector exist to support the specific needs and welfare of black and minority ethnic groups living in the city, as well as those requiring particular support, advice and information due to their refugee or asylum seeker status and the challenges that result. Provision of ICT is used as means of assisting service users in a range of areas including educational needs, welfare rights, advice and information, employment and employability and social interaction.

Training Organisations

Includes those organisations offering educational opportunities additional to formal opportunities and beyond traditional classroom settings. They may be services used by formal educational institutions as ancillary to mainstream education. Use of ICT may be essential to their work – such as the case of the Music Technology Education organisation listed below, or may supplementary to the core services offered. Also includes those agencies delivering employment related guidance, support and advice as well as those organisations offering vocational training courses across sectors. Provision may range from access to information and advice, employment searching, training courses that make use of ICT or specific ICT focussed courses.

Other: Older people care

Organisations across the private, public and third sector supporting the health, well-being and quality of life of vulnerable groups. This includes older people supported to live independently, but also other groups such as those with disabilities and long term health conditions and those with substance abuse problems. Provision may take the form of assistive technology or the provision of computer access within facilities.

Other: Business and Business Support

Includes those commercial businesses offering IT support to other businesses in the city. Also includes those profit making companies delivering sales, support and maintenance services and internet cafes. In other contexts Internet Cafes may have deserved its own initial category, however only one such intermediary was identified in Sunderland during the course of the research.

Other: Third Sector Business Support

Includes non profit-making ICT based companies and business infrastructure providers in the city including community interest companies and social enterprises whose primary purpose is to encourage the development of either other social enterprises or private enterprises in Sunderland.

Other: Carer Support

Those organisations which provides support to carers who look after the needs (without payment) of those who cannot look after themselves due to frailty, disability or illness. The organisations included here offer confidential information, advice and support service to carers.

Other: Community and Voluntary Sector Support

Those umbrella organisations which offer help and support to the community and voluntary sector in the city through training, advice and by creating partnerships and connections across CVS organisations around common issues and concerns. These include organisations focussed on both CVS work more generally, but also more specifically youth work.

Other: Disability Support

Those organisations which offer support, advice and services those with physical and/or mental disabilities. Organisations included here are specifically concerned with social inclusion issues, especially around disability rights, education and employment opportunities.

Other: Trade Union (Unison)

Trade Unions representing the needs, rights and interests of members working in the public services, for private contractors providing public services and in the essential utilities. These include frontline staff and managers working full or part time in local authorities, the NHS, the police service, colleges and schools, the electricity, gas and water industries, transport and the voluntary sector.

Other: Social Housing Provider

Gentoo is the Registered Social Housing Landlord operating in Sunderland, and manages a stock of over 30,000 properties in the city alongside shared residents facilities and support for older people. In partnership with the City Council and in some cases with other community centres, Gentoo have established their own version of the ‘Electronic Village Hall’ by offering 24-hour PC access in shared spaces proximate to housing provision where residents request such access. Technical support is provided by the City Council’s Community ICT Team.

For a discussion of the implications of these additional categories listed as ‘other’ see section 4.

3.2 Target groups of eInclusion intermediaries

As can be seen from Figure 4 the key target groups identified across the intermediaries surveyed were the ‘General’ public including all residents in the city as well as ‘children’ and ‘young adults’. Other significant target groups include those identified as low income and unemployed – more deprived and marginalised residents. However, it is also important to recognise the extensive range of target groups represented through the survey responses.

Figure 4: Breakdown of target groups named by intermediaries from survey

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decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

As can be seen in Figure 5 and Figure 6, of those organisations who responded to the survey from the third sector (including Community Interest Companies) their focus was mainly on serving the needs of the ‘General’ broader local community – therefore while only one target group was identified – this was extremely broad - meeting the needs of multiple **service user groups**. This was the case for ‘Public Libraries’ (100%), ‘Community Centres’ (22%), ‘Formal Educational Institutions’ (17%) and ‘Training Organisations’ (16%). In addition to recognition of serving the general public, the range of target groups served by community and youth centres also illustrates the nature of open access to ICT through these intermediaries. Community Centres focus upon 8 different types of target groups and Youth Centres focus on 5 different target groups. In the case of the majority of community centres there is no overt restrictions on use of facilities, although it should be recognised that these community centres are usually most active in more deprived areas of the city. This reflects some of the socio-economic difficulties outlined in section 2 of this report.

Aside from intermediaries which allow for ‘General’ access, some serve the needs of specific social groups. These are groups with specific needs and requirements on the basis of their marginal positions within society. This includes including Migrants and Ethnic Minorities, Young People (inc NEETs) and those individuals with disabilities. Many intermediaries solely serve the needs of these specific groups. For example this includes, Carer support (carers: 100%), Business support (businesses: 100%) and Social Housing (social housing residents: 100%) organisations.

Additional user groups of note include deprived communities which include the categories ‘unemployed people’ and ‘low-income people’ - mentioned by 7 organisations (18% of respondents) – 4 of which are neighbourhood based community centres, 1 of which is a youth project located within a neighbourhood based community and centre, 1 of which is a Social Enterprise support group and the last of which is an Education and Training provider. 3 organisations (2 community centres and one Education and Training provider) also specifically meet the needs of those Young people ‘Not in Employment Education or Training’ (NEETs) for which there are currently specific funding streams available. This focus on those outside of education and employment, on low incomes, or living in more deprived parts of the city again clearly link to a local and national agenda looking to address some of these key socio-economic challenges highlighted in section 2.

For those intermediaries more focussed on serving local businesses – partners and customers were the focus of services provided. For example, Sunderland Software City, a Community Interest Company, helps software industries in the city in their business development, resourcing and planning. For formal educational institutions such as schools and the University, the focus of activities is for the benefit of students, who in the case of post compulsory education, have paid fees and are therefore entitled to services including ICT access and support. One of the schools surveyed indicated that resources were only available to staff and students, while the other makes available basic ICT courses to the wider community. Some facilities were only made available to those who qualified for access on the basis of residence. This is specifically seen in relation the Social Housing Provider who offered access to ICT suites within the housing complexes – only to those who living in that accommodation. There is then a *distinction to make between more open and more targeted access* on the basis of group membership, cost, residence and need among other factors.

Figure 5: Category of Intermediary and Target Groups from survey

Category of Intermediary	Target Groups

Public Libraries	General
Migrant and Minority Support Organisations	Migrants, Ethnic Minorities
Training Organisations	General, Young Adults (inc NEETs), low-income people, other: musicians

Other: Older people care

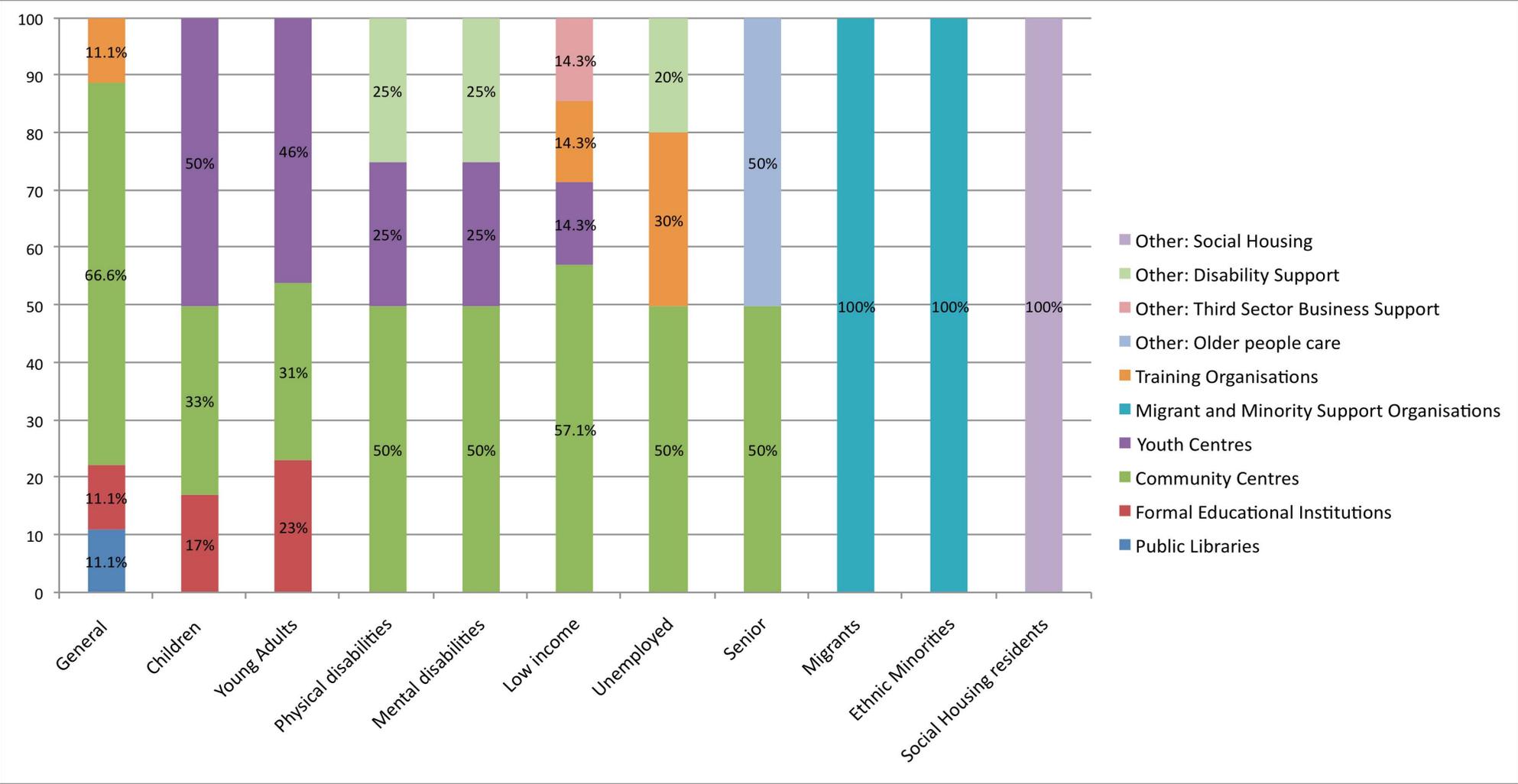
Senior Citizens/Elderly

Other: Business Support

Other: Local Business, unemployed people

Other: Third Sector Business Support	Other: Local Business, unemployed people, low-income people
Other: Trade Union	Other: City Council Workers
Other: Social Housing	People living in Social Housing

Figure 6: Distribution of target groups across categories of intermediaries



3.3 Organizational Structure

As can be seen in Figure 7 (which is based upon a general typology agreed across case study sites), of those responding intermediaries who divulged their budgets, the majority of respondents worked within small organisations with relatively limited **budgets** of up to about £300,000 (72% not including those not responding or unsure). 18 intermediaries' budgets fall between 0-£300,000 and only 7 between £300,001 and £80 million. This is accounted for by the fact that many are operating on a not for profit basis. This is clearly very different for those organisations whose aim is to make a profit – but these types of organisations are under-represented in this survey due to the focus on social inclusion. Budgets ranged very widely from 23K-25K for religious based organisations through to £4M for one school and £80M for the University. Clearly this has an impact on the ability of these differentially resourced organisations to offer ICT provision.

This is also illustrated in terms of the **number of paid staff** employed by organisations and the ability of these staff to provide relevant forms of ICT support. The majority of intermediaries have been between 1-10 paid staff (55%). However, the University for example has over 2000 paid staff, including IT support staff within each Faculty and for the institution as a whole, in comparison to Hetton New Dawn (older people support), employing one part time member of staff. There is for many community based third sector organisations a clear reliance on **volunteers** and inevitably a reliance on partner organisations to provide the expertise needed in relation to ICT provision. Where volunteers are used it is unlikely that an intermediary will use more than 30 volunteers within their organisation. Not all organisations, even those in the third sector used volunteers to provide their service. However, where organisations did use volunteers the numbers, when compared against the scale of the neighbourhood-based projects were considerable. One organisation, Age UK – a national charity - has over 300 volunteers on its books in Sunderland.

In terms of **sources of funding** the overwhelming impression is that all non-profit making intermediaries gained their funding from a wide range of sources including national and local government grants and contracts, charitable donations and money generating services as side projects to the main service offered. Again this provides a picture of a complex third sector based upon funds from public, private and other charitable sources. Essentially those organisations secure funding from wherever they can to secure their future operation, with the majority of organisations sourcing funding from Charitable Foundations/Trusts, Self generated income, Local Authorities, Grants and Contracts. Some organisations in the third sector such as youth projects like Youth Asian Voices are wholly reliant on single sources of funding and in this case grant funding from the local authority. This is significant because it makes groups such as this reliant and vulnerable to financial decision-making and changes at local government level currently taking place in the aftermath of the comprehensive spending review of 2010. One organisation (a CVS support group) currently receives no funding and is running on its reserves – again pointing towards the difficult financial situation within the not-for-profit sector.

Nearly all respondents indicate that their **ICT provision is not funded from specific named external sources**. This reflects the fact that funders are not providing ring-fenced money for

these kinds of activities and that funds are drawn from central budgets or based upon donations. The only exceptions to this are Media Savvy who obtained start up costs from UnLtd (a charity supporting social entrepreneurs), the City Council and the University of Sunderland. In addition, Unity Multicultural Organisation note they have received funding from the City Council Community IT department to help with their provision. In terms of **non-financial support** the City Council Community ICT team features much more heavily and suggests that the council has more recently began to focus on the support side than direct funding/provision. 38% indicated that they received support from the Community ICT team – especially third sector organisations. This was also the only explicitly stated form of non-financial support received. **Donations of technology** from other organisations were important for 28% of the respondents – some of these were from charitable organisations, some from other community projects who have now closed down and again from the City Council Community ICT Team and software from Microsoft as part of sponsored training programme (SMILE). All of the nine organizations to receive donations are in the third sector.

Figure 7: Organisational structures of intermediaries

Category Intermediary	Staff	Funding	Budget

Public Libraries	1074 across 20 sites	Local Government	Not known
Migrant and Minority Support Organisations	0 – 1 (rely on volunteers)	Charitable trusts/Private donations/self generated/various	£25,000 - £90,000
Training Organisations	0 - 38	Commercial /Local Gov/National Gov/Contracts/Charitable trusts	Not known

Other: Older people care	1 - 100	Charitable trusts/Self generated/grants/Local Gov/Contracts	Not known - £25,000
Other: Community and Voluntary Sector Support	3 - 5	No funding/Grants/Big Lottery/Self generated	£250,000

Other: Disability Support	10	National Government	£280,000
Other: Social Housing	1800	Private Banks	Not known

3.4 Main activities and outcomes

There is a distinction to be made between those organisations who provide more *flexible open-ended access* to computers and the internet and those who make provision for specific *structured and focussed educational and training purposes*. There are cases where both of these are apparent within the same organisation. This is the case at the University of Sunderland, but also at organisations such as Age UK:

“Structured ICT courses – e.g. ICT Awareness, Family Tree Online, Photo Restoration, Internet and email, Computers for Beginners etc, plus a drop-in sessions two days per week to enable flexibility of learning”

As can be seen from Figure 8, the overwhelming majority (58%) of organisations provide some form of open internet/non-prescribed access alongside a range of more and less formal educational courses. This seems to be the primary mode of provision. Therefore while this is a key finding from the survey, it also indicates that this commonality stretches across different types of intermediary and may not be the most useful manner of distinction.

Figure 8: ICT services/activities offered by intermediaries

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decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Some intermediaries were engaged in improving either employability through the development of skills or access to job opportunities by using the internet as a means for job searching, this includes Disability Support, Migrant and Minority Support Organisations and Youth Centres. There were a number of **benefits or outcomes** identified by respondents in the use of ICT– and again these responses directly relates to the specific focus of activity of the organization and its mission. Unsurprisingly perhaps, given the context outlined in section 2, educational and employment related benefits are cited most often in the survey, as well as the importance of public provision in offering equal access to opportunities.

As can be seen from Figure 9, all categories of intermediary offer ‘Networking Capabilities’ because they provide access to ICT – this is a necessary part of being classified as an ICT intermediary and can be almost taken for granted. What might be more important is the reason why such access is seen to be important and for many of the organisations surveyed it was the provision of an equality of access, that is, providing opportunities for those who did not have any alternative access to ICT. Nearly all categories of intermediary also pointed to activities which allowed users to become more skilled in the use of ICT. For some this was a basic level of ICT training through introductory courses or self-led use of the technologies available (including ‘Public Libraries’ and ‘Community Centres’), while for others, especially ‘Training Providers’ and ‘Formal Educational Institutions’, the purpose was to offer more advanced access and skilling. There were additional activities and outcomes which are not adequately captured by the categories used in Figure 9. They include the opportunity to access public information, to socialise, the use of technology to access and engage hard to reach groups and less employment orientated educational opportunities.

Figure 9: Main outcomes and activities of ICT intermediaries

Category of Intermediary	Outcomes	ICT activities

Public Libraries	Networking capabilities, Skilling	ICT access, Basic ICT Training
Migrant and Minority Support Organisations	Skilling, Networking capabilities	Basic ICT Training, ICT access, e-Intermediation, Training and use of ICT for communication
Training Orgs	Job Placement capabilities, Skilling, Networking capabilities	ICT-supported job-seeking, job application, CV development, Advanced ICT skills development, ICT supported community building Training and use of ICT for communication, collaboration, and participation
Other: Older people	Networking capabilities, Public services, Skilling, Empowerment	ICT access, e-Intermediation, Training and use of ICT for communication, Basic ICT training, engagement life long learning

<p>Other: Business Support</p>	<p>Skilling, Networking capabilities, Job Placement capabilities</p>	<p>Advanced ICT skills development, ICT access, ICT supported community building</p>
<p>Other: Community and Voluntary Sector Support</p>	<p>Job Placement capabilities, Networking capabilities</p>	<p>ICT supported community building, e-Intermediation</p>

Other: Disability Support	Networking capabilities, Job Placement capabilities	ICT access, ICT-supported job-seeking, job application, CV development
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3.5 Complementary/Alternative classification of eInclusion intermediaries

The following categorisation develops key points drawn from the survey analysis. These include: the distinction between more open and more targeted access, the importance of ICT to the mission of intermediaries, roles as deliverers or hosts and the interdependency of intermediaries. The following concise typology is suggested. This inevitably simplifies the diversity of intermediaries explored above, but seeks to capture the major distinctions of organisational and provision type.

Education and training providers

This includes provision that is available to those individuals who have signed up to, been invited to, been compelled to attend or funded to be on, specific training and education courses involving the development of ICT skills to enhance education, enable employment or improve employability. This can be contrasted to more open and flexible access. These include work-based learning and vocational courses carried out by educational and training companies in the city operating mainly through the private and third sectors, but also provision of introductory ICT courses through the Family, Adult and Community Learning department of the City Council. It also includes ICT provision offered by formal education institutions such as schools, colleges and the University. In relation to social inclusion, all intermediaries have a commitment to and focus on improving educational standards, although this is more explicitly expressed by some than others. Some of these intermediaries operate out of their own premises, but also work in partnership with a variety of community venues across the city such as neighbourhood-based community centres where rooms are hired out. However such delivery is not permanent and often occurs in an ad hoc manner in the basis of demand, suitability of facilities and funding. In some cases the focus of delivery is specifically on ICT competencies, where for other organisations, provision includes ICT as part of educational courses with a alternative foci.

Neighbourhood based open access & ICT courses (Community)

This is access to ICT open and available to all – although there may be some restrictions for the neighbourhood based community centres on the basis of residence. One of the key rationales of such provision is to provide an equality of access to those opportunities restricted due to a lack of private ICT ownership or a lack of expertise – especially in more deprived parts of the city. Providing access within a community based, familiar environment is also an important feature of this provision. The key aspect of this type is that there is some access free at the point of usage with no strict direction in terms of usage. This provision is mostly based within the community and voluntary or third sector – although often delivered in partnership with the city council as part of key e-inclusion programmes as well as other partners including UK Online Centres and Learn-Direct. The key form of provision is PCs, access to the internet, Microsoft Office and printing facilities. There will be restrictions in terms of website security and there will be, at specific time, groups booked in to use some of

the facilities. The majority of this open access in the city is available through 'Community Electronic Village Halls'. These are computer suites supported by both the host organisation at an immediate level, but also backed up by technical support from the city council Community ICT Team. However, there are facilities available within city-wide community centres which are not supported by the council in this way. In some cases computer suites are independently funded and supported, but operate in a similar fashion to the EVHs. In addition to open access, it is also recognised that these facilities also include other forms of access such as hosting training courses and basic ICT courses delivered by some of the organisations mentioned in the previous category or by the Families Adult and Community Learning department of the city council, or in partnership with the local further education college.

Neighbourhood based open access & ICT courses (Council)

Again this is access to ICT that, in the main, is available to all, free at the point of use. However, in contrast to the previous type this is based within venues which are owned, ran and supported by the City Council rather than independent community and voluntary groups. Again such provision is driven by a desire to improve the opportunities and life chances of residents in the city who may not be able to access ICT through private means as well as provide convenient and local access. This provision also facilitates a certain flexibility in terms of the use to which technology is put. The key form of provision is PCs access to the internet, Microsoft Office and printing facilities. There will be restrictions in terms of website security and there at times be specific social groups booked in to use the facilities. The majority of this open access in the city is available through Electronic Village Halls in Council venues. These are made available through the network of 20, variously sized, city libraries - 6 of which are based within Customer Service Centres. These are mixed use, partnership based venues bringing together a range of public services – a 'one stop-shop' often including childcare, recruitment, housing, benefit advice, pension advice, welfare advice, health access and library provision. City library provision is also found in some mixed-use partnership based community centres. 243 PCs are available across the city through the library network. In addition to open access, these facilities also include other training courses delivered by the Family Adult and Community Learning department within the city council, or in partnership with the local further education college. City libraries also work in partnership with Arts Council England, Reading Agency, WRVS, UK Online, WEA, New Writing North, BBC Learning and Sunderland Heritage Forum to delivering learning opportunities through the use of ICT. City libraries also run a mobile library (LIAZE), which provides mobile access to 8 laptops and offers users ICT support across city neighbourhoods for those communities where access to standard city libraries is more restricted.

Socially targeted access

Access is open to all of those who qualify as belonging to a specific social or interest groups and who have specific needs which can, in part, be addressed through use of ICT. However, ICT is not the primary focus of these organisations and the available facilities often reflect this. There is a commonality in that most of these groups are deemed to be marginalised, vulnerable or at risk in some way and therefore have services directed to these needs through the private, public and third sectors. These groups include older people, younger people, those with disabilities, those from minority ethnic groups and/or refugees and asylum seekers. Arguably an exception to this designation of vulnerable groups may be social housing

residents who have open access to ICT suites within social housing shared facility sites where access is only available to Gentoo residents living in the locality – although provision is specific and socially targeted. Use of technology in these scenarios is flexible, but is mostly related to the retrieval of advice, information, support, education, training and leisure related. Most provision is on an ad hoc and open access basis with guidance provided workers within the organisations when available. However, in some cases, especially with the larger and better resources organisations (such as Age UK) more structured introductory ICT courses are on offer for older people. For many of the smaller, locally based projects, particularly youth organisations, resources appear to be more limited and access less structured, but guided by the youth workers where possible to meet the specific needs – which in the case of young people - relates to education, training, employment and recreation.

Business/Community and Voluntary support & facilitation

This includes organisations operating in the private sector for a profit, but also Community Interest Companies, Social Enterprises and community and voluntary groups who are more focused on issues of inclusion and empowerment. What these organisations have in common though is a focus to support the activities of other organisations in the city in their use of ICT. These intermediaries provide advice, information and in some cases ICT facilities, hardware and software to allow the development of the work of other organisations. For example, Rainton.net as current owners of the E-volve Business Centre plays host to a number of other companies in the city – providing them with the latest in telecommunication technologies to facilitate call centres and efficient back office facilities. In other cases this support looks to directly encourage the growth of ICT related business, such as the work of Sunderland Software City, which looks to encourage the growth of the software industry within Sunderland in particular. However, in other cases support is seen as one tool to be used to achieve other socially inclusive aims – such as the work of Community and Voluntary Sector umbrella organisation Sunderland Voluntary Sector Youth Forum (SVSYF) who have recently been involved in the Digital Youth Work working group – engaging young people in creative activities through the use of social media. Other internal diversity includes the resources available to those organisations operating on some commercial level with budgets in the £100K+ range with support groups working in the community and voluntary sector such as SVSYF who are currently running on reserves.

3.6 Impact Assessment Methods

In terms of **data collection** on access to and impact of the use of ICT it is clear that many organisations (56%) do not collect this information – although most are aware of the approximate number of users engaging with their general services. Of those who do collect such data, (22% collecting access and impact data and 19% just collecting access data) only two intermediaries surveyed passed on this information. Therefore while in theory data may be collected it is not necessarily made easily available for monitoring and research purposes or collated in any useful or meaningful sense. This makes an assessment of the impact of this work in relation to social inclusion outcomes difficult to assess. *There is a gap to be addressed here if we are to understand the scale of the work of these intermediaries.*

At present Sunderland City Libraries conduct occasional surveys to be completed by service users concerning their use of the ICT facilities. For example, in 2011/12 – there were 167,094 hours of ICT access and 20, 712 hours of ICT based learning within the library facilities across the city. In a 2008 survey conducted by City Libraries 59% of library ICT users had no

home access to ICT, 24% used the facilities in relation to Education, 51% for email use, 23% in relation to Job Searching, 44% to finding information and 11% in relation to their own work. However, what this does not tell us is how this had led to specific and tangible outcomes for the individuals concerned.

Sunderland Software City have also offered baseline data regarding the scale and extent of the current software industry landscape in the city. In conjunction to their own business plans and strategies, this will allow the organization to assess the impact their work and how it may contribute to the growth of this sector.

For many intermediaries it would seem that measuring impact in the short term is a very challenging task. While measurement of the number of users and the activities they engage in can easily be recorded, the impact this has on their quality of life of opportunities available to them is something much less immediate. Many of the benefits of technology may not be felt straight away and may accrue and snowball over time, making it difficult to attribute any changes in circumstances to a particular time period or activity. It may also be the case that some intermediaries have a much more fleeting engagement with service users (for example Public Libraries) where the ability to monitor changes in circumstance over time is much more limited. Certain types of intermediary therefore have a much better opportunity of capturing this than others – those organisation which develop much closer relationships with their service users over a longer period of time. There may also be an unwillingness amongst either the intermediary or the service user to engage in such close surveillance which makes any attempt to judge the impact of ICT activities challenging or perhaps undesirable.

4. Policy Implications and Recommendations for MIREIA

The relative success of digital inclusion activities in Sunderland has not been clearly established. Recent evaluations (Clayton et al, 2009) have indicated that the impact of such schemes on levels of social inclusion for residents in the city may be limited. There is then a requirement to establish which initiatives provide the most effective and valuable interventions and, in the current economic context, to be smarter about which forms of ‘digital inclusion’ to pursue at the local level. Any such analysis needs to bear in mind that what counts as effective, may not be solely in relation to employment-based outcomes.

If the work of earlier initiatives in Sunderland is to be built on – especially in terms of the relationship between the public and third sector, it is vital that resources do not entirely dry up for these activities and that relationships are sustained. The community and voluntary sector in its many guises is clearly the main intermediary (although not necessarily the main funder) in the city outside of mainstream education. If this work is considered of value – the future of organizations facing threats of closure needs to be urgently addressed.

The survey used for this research achieved a good level of responses given the constraints in place, and allowed for the collection of useful comparable data. However, it is accepted that further data could have been collected. In particular it is recommended that any future research looks to collect data concerning the costs involved in the use of technology and or

support. It seems to be a growing tendency to charge for services and this is something which should be monitored.

There is clearly a lack of monitoring taking place within organizations in terms of the impact of ICT access. The development of a useable measurement framework which accounts for the work of diverse intermediaries therefore has potential to demonstrate some of the successes as well as limits of technology in addressing areas of social exclusion. The work of MEIRAI is therefore to be endorsed as addressing a pressing need.

There is a danger that the typology developed is too general and not responsive to the local contexts. For example the term Telecenters is not recognised so clearly in the UK context as it is elsewhere in Europe. It is also clear from the breakdown of intermediaries in the above analysis that there are a number of intermediary types in the context of Sunderland which do not neatly fit into the suggested joint typology for all three case studies. This has resulted in a number of intermediaries designated as 'other'. The additional categories suggested are an important part of the e-inclusion landscape in this place and therefore should be included in a more general typology in the broader MIREIA project.

The key categories which need further attention in any future MIREIA work and should be accounted for in a general typology include those organizations dealing with (a) Health and Social Care (e.g. disability support, older people care, carer support), (b) Third sector support (including both umbrella organizations as well as those organizations supporting social enterprises) (c) Business support (if this is considered of relevance) and (d) Social Housing providers who offer some kind of ICT access for its residents.

There may also be some limitations in terms of suggested outcomes and ICT activities as the suggested general typology doesn't consider the non-technological aspects of ICT access (e.g. opportunities for offline socialization) and benefits/opportunities which might be gained that are not necessarily related to employment, formal education or engagement with public services.

In terms of the collection of data by intermediaries which might better capture the impact of their work, it is suggested that this both needs to focus on the impact on areas for service users such as employment and education, but also on other measurements which capture the 'softer' elements of engagement with not just technology but the intermediaries themselves. There is a temptation to separate out technological and non-technological benefits – but it is suggested that these are both integrated into any future measurement framework. It is also recognised that there will be difficulties in capturing this kind of data in the short term – where impacts emerge over time - and for those intermediaries who have weaker relationships with their service users.

It is suggested that one of the best ways to understand the character of ICT intermediaries is through an approach which takes into account the organizational structure, the focus of activities, the level of open or structured access and the target groups of the intermediary. The alternative classification suggested in the analysis above works on this basis and identifies key distinctions between different forms of provision, whilst allowing for the recognition of internal diversity. However, it is acknowledged that this may not work in all locations and may not be applicable for a more general and simplified typology.

There is a need to support the work of those intermediaries who provide services to the local community, which include, but are not limited to ICT activities. It should be recognised that very few intermediaries are solely concerned with ICT based work – but that this forms one aspect of a broader toolkit of resources designed to support the needs of specific social groups or general local residents living in deprived parts of the city. It is suggested that this broad approach to community development and social inclusion is supported.

Because some organizations and venues within the city offer a range of services and a range of access to ICT under one roof (especially city libraries, community centres and customer service centres), it raises questions about what is counted as the intermediary. This needs to be clarified in future work. There needs to be greater recognition of the fact that intermediaries can be both hosts of ICT access as well as providers of those services due to complex partnerships between public, third and private sectors.

The distinction between public, third and private sectors also needs further consideration in any future work. The inter-relationships between these sectors has been highlighted in this study and where venues are funded from a range of sources, are used by a range of external organizations and work in partnership both locally and nationally it may be unhelpful or misleading to categorize this work according to these conventional distinctions.

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