



2024 NNS CAMP

An unconference to bring together Neighbourhood Network Schemes, hyperlocal media groups, Connected Communities groups, and other VCFSE organisations for a day of co-creation, ideation and learning from each other

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Introduction

Background

The 10 Neighbourhood Network Schemes (NNS) in Birmingham play a major role in improving the lives of older citizens and citizens 18-49 with disabilities and long-term health conditions. Local Facebook sites and hyperlocal media groups also contribute significantly to strengthening their communities. However, these groups are not yet working closely with each other. As such, one of our key outputs is to support the NNSs to engage with hyperlocals.

As a long-time organiser and attendee of several unconferences across the UK, Digital NNS Community Lead Pauline Roche finds the unconference format useful for bringing people together for greater collaboration and ideation. Hence, Digital NNS decided to organise an unconference for NNSs and hyperlocals. Through this event, we aimed to bring them together to explore how they can harness each other's strengths to support citizens and communities and learn from each other.

In addition to hyperlocal groups, we also wanted to support the NNSs in engaging with Connected Communities groups and other voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) organisations and invited these groups to the event as well.

Engagement with hyperlocal media groups

We engaged the support of [B31 Voices](#), a well-known and highly-regarded hyperlocal group in South Birmingham, to work with us to identify and encourage existing hyperlocal groups in each of the 10 constituencies to attend the event. Following research, B31 Voices reached out to the following hyperlocals:

- [Acocks Green Neighbourhood Forum](#)
- [B14 News](#)
- [Birmingham Eastside](#)
- [Kings Heath Neighbourhoods Forum](#)
- [Stirchley.co.uk](#)

B31 Voices also reached out to individuals who are active in the hyperlocal scene, such as James Clarke, Dave Harte and Nick Booth.

Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful in getting any hyperlocal groups to attend the event although one registered to attend. B31 Voices were also unable to attend on the day, but they provided us with some useful notes on how they have worked with some NNSs. They provide local organisations across Northfield NNS and parts of Edgbaston & Selly Oak NNSs with a way to reach a wide audience locally: events calendar, jobs page, a space to promote news stories (good news preferred!), source volunteers, donations and more.

B31 Voices say that unfortunately, hyperlocals like them are becoming rarer. They pointed out however, that there are other groups, such as neighbourhood forums, in some areas who have a good online presence and may be able to support the work of NNSs.

Registration and Attendance

28 people registered for the event, and 21 people attended on the day. The attendees were a mix of colleagues from the NNSs, public sector, BVSC, Community Digital Skills Network, and other VCFSE groups.

People who attended the event

14 NNS Colleagues

Edgbaston, Erdington, Hodge Hill, Northfield, Perry Barr, Sutton Coldfield, Yardley

2 Public Sector Colleagues

5 VCFSE Colleagues



Connected Communities Groups (then BID Services, ReThink and Birmingham LGBT) were invited but were unable to attend. BID did not think the event was relevant to them due to their citizen group being more niche.

Event Details

Format

The event was held using an unconference format. For typical conferences, the organiser decides the main theme and topics and invites speakers to present the topics. An unconference is an informal and flexible event where attendees decide on the discussion topics. This allows them to suggest topics and participate in sessions that they are interested in. Attendees are also able to work collaboratively with people from diverse backgrounds on common interests.



Venue

We wanted a space that was casual, warm and inviting to help attendees feel comfortable and free to participate in the activities. Being a city-wide project, we also wanted to hold the event somewhere central. With its city-centre location and bright and welcoming space, The Warehouse, a café/event space run by environmental group Birmingham Friends of the Earth, was a good fit for the unconference.

Programme

The event was held from 10am to 2pm on 25 April 2024. We held three breakout sessions of 20-30 minutes each. Each session consisted of three discussion topics that were assigned a discussion area at the venue where attendees could gather. Attendees were encouraged to participate in any of the topics that piqued their interest.

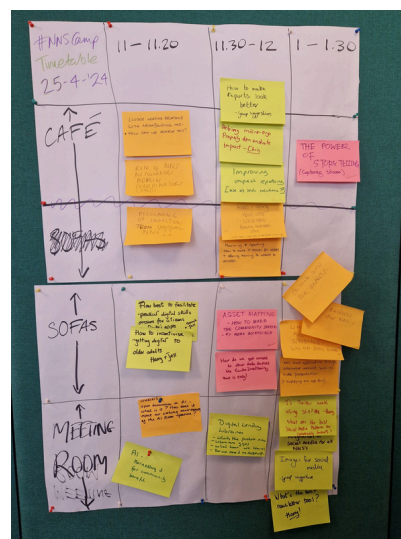


Event Timetable

10am - 10.30am	Welcome and Introductions
10.30am - 11am	Brainstorm topics for breakout sessions and co-create timetable
11.30am - 11.20am	Breakout session #1
11.30am - 12noon	Breakout session #2
12noon - 1pm	Lunch break
1pm - 1.30pm	Breakout session #3
1.30pm - 2pm	Wrap-up and thank-yous

Proposed Topics

To get attendees warmed up to the idea of proposing or suggesting topics, we gave them five minutes to discuss in pairs or groups. We were pleased that the number of topics proposed exceeded our expectations. As there were a few overlapping topics, we grouped them into nine main sessions.



Artificial intelligence

- Open discussion on AI – what is it? How does it impact our working environment? (e.g. the AI Zoom feature)
- AI – harnessing it for community benefit



Data and mapping

- Asset mapping – how to make the community directory more accessible
- How do we get access to other data sources like Route2Wellbeing that is easy!

3



Digital Lending Libraries

- What's the picture now?
- Where are the gaps?
- What have we learnt?
- Do we need to support?

4



Digital skills

- How best to facilitate “practical” digital skills sessions for citizens
- How to incentivise “getting digital” to older adults

5



Grants criteria and processes

- Criteria used for grants
- Grant processes at other NNSs
- Limited companies and NNS funding. Who has been funded?
- NNS Grant application through alternative method such as video presentation (+simplifying the app form)

6



Impact reporting

- How to make reports look better
- Helping micro-organisations properly demonstrate impact
- Improving impact reporting (UX or tech solutions?)
- Assets + capturing impact online/social media/promoting themselves online (and what is the best way of getting them to training)
- Monitoring and reporting: How to make it easier for assets + offering training to assets to access

7



NNS roles and collaboration

- Closer working relations with neighbouring NNS – how can we achieve this?
- Role of NNS Networkers, admin, coordinators, leads
- Programme or induction from central NNS?



Social media

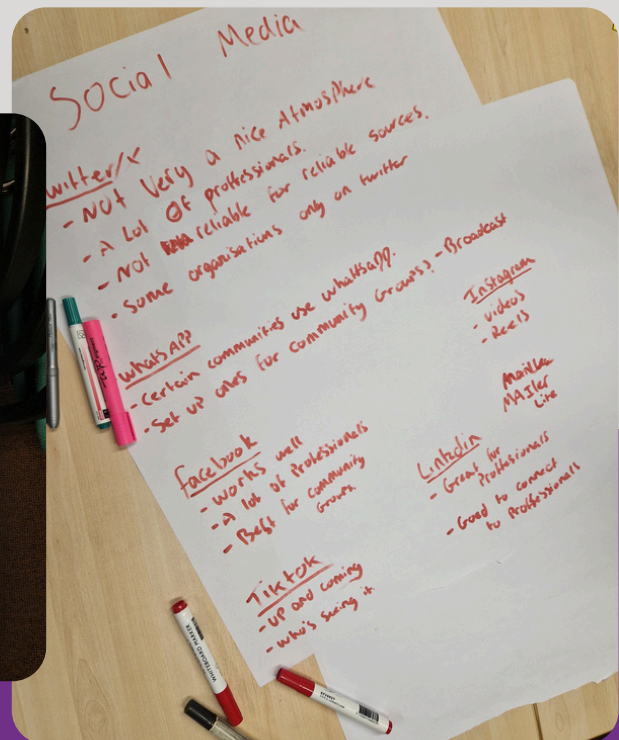
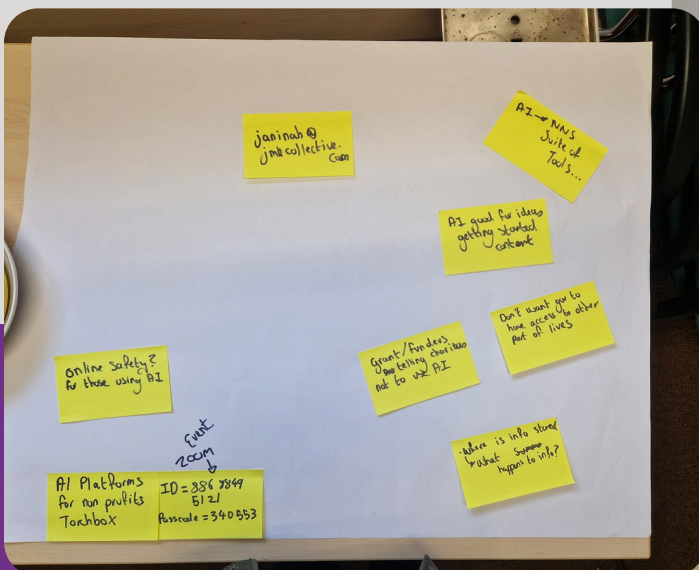
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- Is Twitter worth using still?
- What are the best social media platforms for community groups?
- Streamline & integration of social media for all NNSs
- Images for social media
- What's the best newsletter tool?

9



The power of storytelling



Feedback

Out of the 21 attendees, 9 completed the feedback form. Majority of the respondents were highly satisfied with the event. They also rated the event format as “Good” or “Excellent”, indicated that they would attend a similar event in the future, and that they would recommend it to a colleague. During the event, we also received positive verbal feedback from the attendees.

Please refer to Appendix A for the full feedback report.

Feedback summary

Q1

On a scale of 1 to 5, how satisfied were you with NNS Camp?

- All respondents were satisfied with the event.
- 7 out of 9 respondents giving a rating of 5.

Q2

How would you rate the format of the event?

- 8 out of 9 respondents rated the format as “Excellent”, while 1 respondent rated it as “Good”.

Q3

What did you learn that would be useful to you?

- Respondents enjoyed the experience of an unconference and shared that they would love to hold similar events.
- They also cited learning about AI, closer NNS collaboration, social media and promotion as useful topics.

Q4

What did you like most about the event? Please be as specific as possible.

- Respondents enjoyed meeting other NNS colleagues and external partners.
- They also appreciated the event format, where they were able to decide on the topics and move freely between sessions.



Q5 What can we improve for our next event? Please be as specific as possible.

- Respondents said they would like to have more non-NNS participants in the future and longer breakout session.
- Some respondents would also prefer a venue that is not in the city centre due to parking difficulties.

Q6 On a scale of 1 to 10, how likely are you to attend another event like this (0 = very unlikely, 10 = very likely)?

- All respondents would attend another event like NNS Camp
- 6 out of 9 respondents are very likely to attend another event.

Q7 On a scale of 1 to 10, how likely are you to recommend this event to a colleague (0 = would not recommend, 10 = highly recommend)?

- All respondents would recommend the event to a colleague, with 5 out of 9 respondents expressing that they would highly recommend it.

Open-ended feedback

“Great event, well organised, lovely food and great discussions.”

“I am looking forward to the next one and have also recommended highly to others to join! One thing, I know DNNS delivered it, and I think the rest of the NNSs just went off on their own tangent, so feel perhaps what it is specifically the theme is around for the event would help set the scene. If you were okay with the topics then this is probably irrelevant! Thank you again!”

“Great to see all other NNS’ and some external partners. Lots of interesting topics and discussions in a really nice space.”

Review and Learnings

We received generally positive feedback from the attendees, especially for the format and structure of the event. While the event had a digital focus, we did not limit the topics to the digital theme. Instead, we encouraged attendees to propose topics that they were interested in. In doing so, attendees were more engaged in the discussions and felt empowered to share their expertise with and learn from each other. By the end of the event, attendees were sharing contact details with each other for further discussions and collaboration.

Engagement with hyperlocals

While we had B31 Voices' support to invite hyperlocal groups to the event, we were not successful in doing so. B31 Voices reported that many hyperlocal groups were no longer active and were only able to find five groups that are still active.

B31 Voices suggested that the NNSs could get directly in touch with the hyperlocal group in their constituency, such as the Stirchley or Acocks Green Neighbourhood Forums who have a good online presence. We also plan to engage with the identified hyperlocal groups and NNS teams to ask what the barriers might be to communicating and collaborating with each other and see if they can be overcome.

Learnings for future events

For this first NNS Camp, we were not able to get much interest from VCFSE organisations or Connected Communities groups. This might be due to the title of the event, as the name may have given the impression that the sole audience of the event was the NNSs. We had also given priority to NNS teams and extended the invitation to other groups much later. For future unconferences, we will consider giving the event a broader title and invite various groups at an earlier stage.



Acknowledgements

Digital NNS would like to thank the Prevention & Communities team in the Adult Social Directorate at Birmingham City Council and UKGovcamp for financial support to make the event possible.



We would also like to thank B31 Voices for their support, and Birmingham Friends of the Earth for the venue and catering.



Last but not least, thank you to the wonderful attendees from the following organisations for their participation and valuable feedback:

Edgbaston NNS

Erdington NNS

Hodge Hill NNS

Northfield NNS

Perry Barr NNS

Sutton Coldfield NNS

Yardley NNS

**Prevention &
Communities team in the
Adult Social Directorate
at Birmingham City
Council**

BVSC

DigiKick

**JMK & Co
Consultancy**

Highlights Video



We have captured the highlights of the event in a short video. Please view it by clicking on this link: <https://youtu.be/dZEA6KFrUrQ>

Thank you to We Simple Media for producing the video.

Appendix

Appendix A - Feedback report

On a scale of 1 to 5, how satisfied were you with NNS Camp?	How would you rate the format of the event (participants leading the topics instead of a typical conference where the agenda has been set)	What did you learn that would be useful to you?
5	Excellent	The concept of an un conference. Loved it!
3	Good	AI
5	Excellent	Different ways about promoting oneself and NNS
5	Excellent	Lots of tips and tricks from other NNS on reporting, events and online presence
5	Excellent	Storytelling techniques. Great new format - will use!
5	Excellent	I learnt about ways the NNS could work better together and how we can improve on the work we do
4	Excellent	About how I can better support charity clients with AI integration
5	Excellent	OMG! SO MUCH! Especially about how the other NNS colleagues work. Really was an excellent day sharing, learning and just chatting.
5	Excellent	Really loved the conversation around AI and how not for profit's can utilise in day to day tasks.

What did you like most about the event? Please be as specific as possible.	What can we improve for our next event? Please be as specific as possible.
The ability to move around. Meet colleagues. Share lunch.	More non NNS participants.
Meeting other teams	Venue
Meeting other NNS and how AI can work in a good way	Nothing loved it all
Great to see all other NNS' and some external partners. Lots of interesting topics and discussions in a really nice space.	Not anything really as was a brilliant event.
Mixing informally with some fabulous people	All good
The format was fantastic. It facilitated amazing conversations	We just want more now :)
Getting to decide the topics, having the opportunity to talk to so many great people. Plus vegan lunch was great!	Run it for a bit longer (1x more session maybe) :)
The way it was laid out - with three topics and having that chance to explore; I felt it was time really well structured.	Hmm... Please can you avoid the city centre; I do not like the parking round there. Otherwise, nothing. Loved it!
Loved the unconference format and that attendees could choose the agenda.	Breakouts being 30 minutes rather than 20 minutes would be my only suggestion as we didn't have enough time to go through more than one topic.

On a scale of 1 to 10, how likely are you to attend another event like this (0 = very unlikely, 10 = very likely)?	On a scale of 1 to 10, how likely are you to recommend this event to a colleague (0 = would not recommend, 10 = highly recommend)?	Would you like to share anything else?
10	10	Well done Gena and Pauline! Loved today.
8	8	
10	10	Thank you .Excellent session
9	9	Great event, well organised, lovely food and great discussions.
10	10	Great venue too.
10	10	
10	9	Just to say that I really enjoyed the day and I look forward to attending it again next time it's on.
10	10	I am looking forward to the next one and have also recommended highly to others to join! One thing, I know DNNS delivered it, and I think the rest of the NNSs just went off on their own tangent, so feel perhaps what it is specifically the theme is around for the event would help set the scene. If you were okay with the topics then this is probably irrelevant! Thank you again!
10	10	Great event, lovely hosts and fab food! Thank you