Digital NNS

2025

BRUM CONNECTED CAMP

12 JUNE 2025

NORTHFIELD Community Partnership

Birmingham City Council

Contents

Introduction

Following on from the success of <u>NNS (Neighbourhood Network Scheme) Camp</u> in 2024, we decided to bring back the unconference event this year but with a refreshed format based on the feedback we received at the last event.

Last year, 21 participants attended the event. While the unconference had a digital focus, we left the theme largely open-ended to encourage participation, as well as to help attendees get used to the unconference format as it was the first unconference for many of them. The majority of the participants last year were from the core NNS network, with a few from BVSC, the Prevention & Communities team in the Adult Social Care Directorate at Birmingham City Council, and the VCFSE sector.

From the feedback that we received from participants and our own takeaways from running our first unconference, we concluded the following learnings to apply to this year's event:

Expand the type of participants to include social workers, social prescribers and Community Network Support Officers (CNSO).

Send invitations out to all groups at the same time, instead of giving priority to NNS teams.

Give the event a broader title to reflect the wider diversity of participants.

Communications and Marketing

As the unconference was an invite-only event, our communications approach focused on targeted outreach and network-based promotion rather than public advertising (such as on social media). Our goal was to ensure strong registration and engagement from both returning and new participants, while building anticipation for the refreshed format of this year's event.

Channels and Outreach

Our primary communications channels were direct email invitations and mentions in relevant meetings such as NNS Meetups and Community Digital Skills Network meetings.

We received valuable support from BVSC, Birmingham City Council (BCC), and NNS colleagues, who helped extend our reach to networks beyond our own — including social prescribers, social workers and Community Network Support Officers (CNSOs). Their support was key in ensuring diverse representation across sectors.

Engagement Activities

To build momentum and involve the community early on, we conducted the following engagement initiatives:

- Sent out a pre-event survey to past attendees to gather input on what they would like to see at this year's event. This helped guide our planning and was an effort to make attendees feel part of the process. We received 10 responses for this survey. Please see Appendix A for a summary of the responses.

- Based on feedback that the event should include participants other than the NNS network, we launched a public poll to rename the event. This gave our network a sense of ownership and signalled the event's new, broader focus.

We provided five name options and sent the poll to NNS colleagues. A total of 17 colleagues responded to the poll and **Brum Connected Camp** garnered the most votes. The name options and number of votes for each option are as follows:
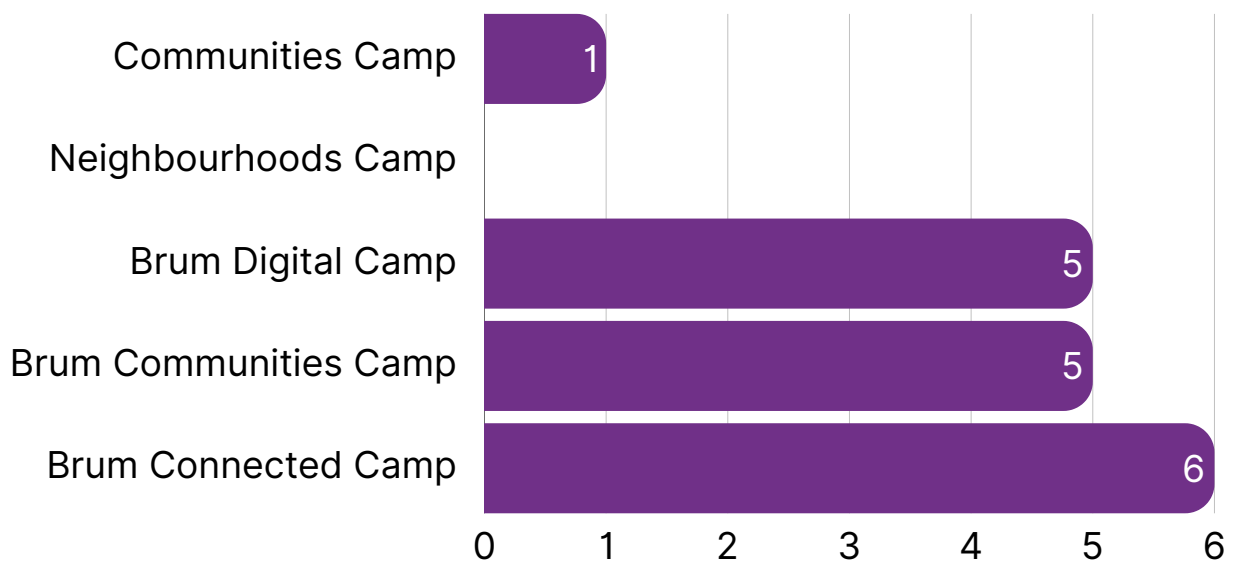
Key Messaging

Throughout our communications, we emphasised themes of collaboration, co-creation, networking, inclusion and bridging the digital divide. These values reflected the spirit of the unconference and the feedback we received from last year's attendees.

We also made a conscious effort to signal that the event was evolving to welcome participants from beyond the traditional NNS network.

Adapting to Change

One key challenge arose when we ran into logistical issues, and the original event date was no longer available. We responded quickly by emailing all invitees to announce the new date, providing a revised save-the-date and minimising disruption. This timely and transparent communication helped to maintain engagement and trust.

Metrics and Outcomes

Our primary goal was to ensure strong registration and participation. Thanks to targeted outreach and partner support, we successfully engaged a wide range of attendees, including many from outside the core NNS network.

Reflections

👍 What worked well

The combination of direct outreach and partner amplification proved highly effective. The pre-event survey and name-change poll helped generate a sense of community ownership and anticipation.

❗ Areas to improve

While communications were largely successful, we could consider developing clearer timelines and backup plans for venue logistics to mitigate future scheduling challenges.

Registration and Attendance

34 people registered for the event, and 27 people attended on the day, compared to 21 attendees at last year's event.

As the venue required a list of attendees to be submitted before the event for security purposes, we encouraged interested participants to register for the event so that they would be allowed entry. There were a couple of people who did not register and had turned up on the day; however we had informed the venue in advance that this might happen, and they were happy to accommodate a few last-minute participants.

The attendees were a mix of colleagues from the NNSs, public sector, BVSC, Community Digital Skills Network (CDSN), VCFSE groups, digital products and services providers, social prescribers, and CNSOs. As Erdington NNS had a volunteer recruitment event running on the same day, they were unable to attend.

While there was considerable effort to encourage social workers to attend, we did not receive any sign ups from them. This could be due to the nature of their work where it may be difficult for them to set aside a few hours to attend an event.

Please see Appendix B for the Participant Attendance Summary.

Event Format

The event was held using an unconference format where attendees get to decide on the topics for the day. 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.

Based on the feedback from last year's event and the pre-event survey, we extended the breakout sessions from 20 minutes to 30 minutes. This allowed more discussion time for each topic. We gave the event an earlier start time to accommodate the longer breakout sessions. Each session consisted of three to four discussion topics that were assigned to a discussion area at the venue. Attendees were encouraged to participate in any of the topics that piqued their interest.

Agenda

9 - 9.20am	Arrivals and registration
9.20 - 9.30am	Welcome and introductions
9.30 - 10am	Brainstorm topics and co-create timetable
10 - 10.30am	Breakout session #1
1030 - 11.05am	Breakout session #2
11.10 - 11.40am	Breakout session #3
11.45am - 12.30pm	Lunch break
12.35 - 1.05pm	Breakout session #4
1.10 - 1.40pm	Breakout session #5
1.45 - 2pm	Wrap up and thank yous

Proposed Topics

The theme for Brum Connected Camp 2025 was **Digital Evolution**. Hence, there were more digital-focused topics proposed this year compared to last year.

Participants showed strong interest in a wide range of topics reflecting both current challenges and emerging opportunities in the sector and in their line of work.

A key area of focus was the use of **artificial intelligence** (AI), with several sessions exploring practical applications of AI to save time, demonstrate impact, and manage tasks, as well as broader questions about the ethical implications and risks of over-reliance on these technologies.

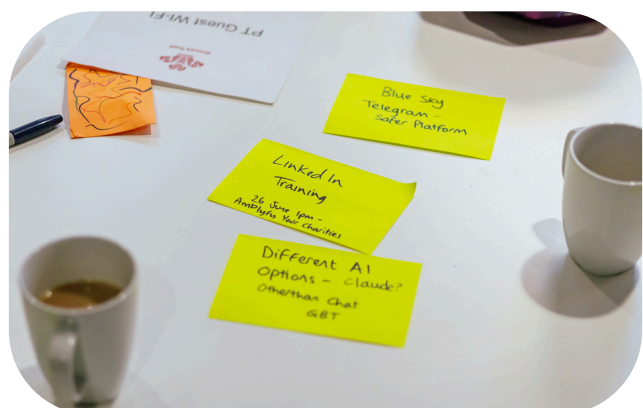**Digital inclusion** was another central theme, with discussions on:

▸▸ Improving access to devices, internet, and training

▸▸ Impact of digital services on communities

▸▸ How digital tools can both support and hinder community connectedness

Participants were also keen to explore **skills development**, including training on platforms like LinkedIn and Instagram, and strategies for improving participation in sector-wide training opportunities.
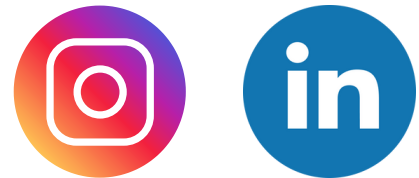
The importance of **equity and inclusion** surfaced across multiple sessions, particularly around improving work conditions in the charity sector, supporting diverse communities, and creating culturally sensitive resources.

Finally, there was interest in **marketing and communications**, including exploring alternative communications platforms such as Bluesky and Telegram.

List of Proposed Topics

We have put together a list of topics that participants proposed, grouped into sub-categories.

AI and its impact

» Different generative AI options other than ChatGPT

» Understanding the growth of AI and how to use it

» How to use AI to help save time and manage tasks efficiently

» How to use AI to demonstrate the impact we make

» What might be the impact on groups of citizens that might be over-reliant on aspects of AI?

» AI: how can we use it well; how can people become aware of its limits; will we become dependent

Digital Inclusion and Access

➤➤ Digital support services available to help people access devices, IT, internet, and training

➤➤ Tech is either a barrier or a support — how do we bring those together?

➤➤ How is the move to digital impacting communities and can digital improve social connectedness? How to use AI to demonstrate the impact we make

Skills Development and Capacity Building

➤➤ LinkedIn training

➤➤ How to improve training participation within the non-profit sector

➤➤ Marketing and communications: Best ways to use limited time, money, and resources, and using Instagram for communications

➤➤ Improving work conditions in the charity sector

Equity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement

» Meaningful citizen engagement in diverse communities

» Culturally sensitive materials/information for income maximisation for citizens

Digital Platforms and Tools

» Digital hygiene — how to get to Inbox zero and clean up our digital spaces

» Money management budgeting

» Free/Open Source software

Feedback

Out of the 27 participants, 11 completed the feedback form. Most respondents gave the event a high rating, with 11 rating it 5 out of 5, and three rating it 4 out of 5. Participants enjoyed the unconference-style format of the event, with the majority rating it as "Excellent".

What Participants Liked Most About the Event

Key highlights for the respondents include networking and peer exchange; diverse topics and open conversation; and safe and inclusive space for all voices.

"I like that there's no pressure with the conversations and everyone's voice is heard."

"Feeling free to talk and have an input – meeting new people and learning new things."

"Meeting people – freelancers, NNS staff and all."

What Participants Learnt

Common themes include:

- AI and digital tools: exposure to different generative AI platforms and ideas for using digital tools more efficiently.

- Digital challenges: gained a better understanding of digital barriers and opportunities both at work and for the communities they support.

- Inclusion and confidence: inspiration to try new tech and awareness of inclusive practices.

"More confidence to implement new technology at work and home. Great conversations around inclusion too."

"I learnt about balancing digital engagement and in-person connections. Digital hygiene [was interesting]"

"The [digital] challenges the sector faces."

Likelihood to attend again and recommend the event

Majority of the respondents said they were "extremely likely" to attend the event again. There was also a strong endorsement for the event, with all respondents likely to recommend the event to others.

"Thank you, it was amazing! Looking forward to the next one, will spread the word."

"Keep up the brilliant work."

"Enjoyed the session. Learnt so much. Thank you."

Suggestions for Improvement

We appreciate all suggestions for improvements and will be considering whether we can incorporate them into the next event. Some notable suggestions include having a session where participants could "have a go at using apps and creating something", and that "the sessions that worked best had a 'facilitator of the conversation.'"

Feedback from Emails and Social Media

In addition to the feedback form, we also received feedback through emails and on social media. Below are extracts of some of the feedback.

"I found the event…very interesting especially listening to people's experiences working with citizens especially the positives and negatives we can struggle with when trying to access services using technology."

– Sophie McDonald, CNSO, Ladywood Constituency

"Huge well done to Pauline and Gena for organising a great day of digital discussions and learning. I arrived not knowing what to expect and left realising I'd likely learned the most I've ever learned in one day."

– Sharon Staples, CNSO, Ladywood Constituency

"It was a brilliant day... I learnt so much, the time flew by."

– Cathy Miles, Social Media and Marketing Officer, Sutton Coldfield NNS

"So good to hear how each of us approaches digital inclusion, whether individuals or local organisations. Discussing many questions such as how we better serve and support the older generation around digital confidence to exploring how AI could guide in education."

– Ashley Walker, freelancer for Perry Barr NNS and CDSN member

"Plenty of topics to get your teeth into, small groups so no-one left and no time to get bored of a topic."

– Benita Wishart, Evaluation and Learning Lead, BVSC

Please refer to Appendix C for the full feedback report and Appendix D for screenshots of feedback from social media.

Review and Learnings

What Worked Well

» **Wider Reach & Diversity**: Expanding the participant base beyond the core NNS network (e.g. social prescribers, CNSOs, BVSC, digital providers) led to broader conversations and fresh perspectives.

» **Support from partners**: Direct outreach and support from key partners like BVSC, BCC and NNSs enabled effective engagement and strong attendance (27 vs 21 last year, with 9 of 10 NNSs signed up/were represented).

» **Participant engagement**: Engagement initiatives like the pre-event survey and poll (to rename the event) helped to foster a sense of inclusion and co-creation.

» **Refined format**: Extended breakout sessions (30 minutes vs 20) allowed for deeper discussions. Five sessions offered more flexibility and focus.

What Could Be Improved

» **Social worker engagement:** Despite efforts, no social workers registered or attended, possibly due to scheduling constraints or job demands. We could follow up with social workers through NNS colleagues to find out what may have prevented them from attending Brum Connected Camp.

» **Logistics:** A last-minute event date change was well-managed but highlighted the need for stronger backup planning.

» **Facilitation in sessions:** Feedback suggested that sessions with a clear facilitator worked best, helping keep conversations focused and productive. We could include in our briefing at the start of the event that participants who suggest a topic should help to start the conversation.

» **Hands-on element:** One attendee suggested adding practical, interactive components — such as trying out apps or tools during the event.

Overall Learnings

» **Continue with the unconference format:** Participants valued the open, non-hierarchical structure and space for collaborative learning.

» **Digital focus well-received:** The "Digital Evolution" theme resonated with participants. AI, digital inclusion and access, and digital technologies were timely and well-received topics.

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 The King's Trust for hosting us, Change Kitchen CIC for the delicious food, and Angela Grabowska for the fantastic photos.

Thank you also to our attendees for their participation and valuable feedback.

Appendices

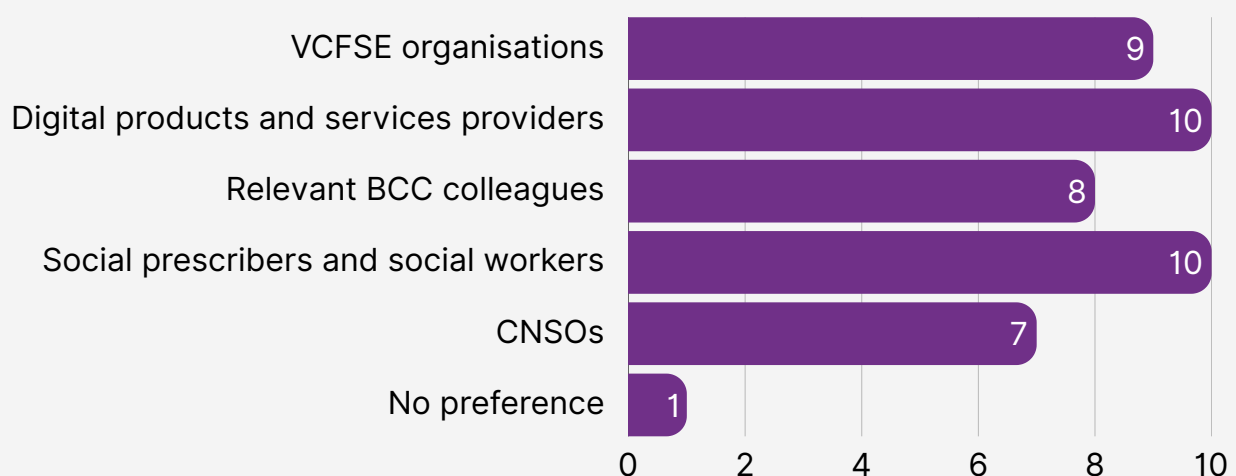## Appendix A: Pre-event Survey Summary

1. Which NNS/organisation are you from?

Edgbaston NNS (1); Erdington NNS (2); Ladywood NNS (1);
Northfield NNS (1); Perry Barr NNS (1); Sutton Coldfield NNS (1)
Yardley NNS (3)
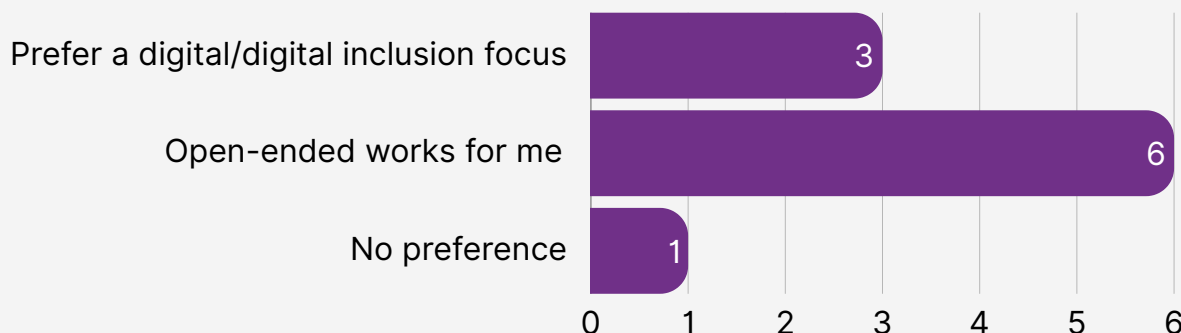
2. How likely are you to attend the event?

Very likely: 7 responses
Likely: 3 responses
Neutral/Not likely: 0

3. Who would you like to see/interact with at the event? You may select more than 1.

Category	Count
VCFSE organisations	9
Digital products and services providers	10
Relevant BCC colleagues	8
Social prescribers and social workers	10
CNSOs	7
No preference	1

Appendix A: Pre-event Survey Summary

4. Would you prefer a digital focus or open-ended?

Response	Count
Prefer a digital/digital inclusion focus	3
Open-ended works for me	6
No preference	1

4a. If you have a focus in mind that is not listed above, please tell us what it is.

"Digital hubs, AI."

"You could also incorporate digital inclusion too. There is definitely an element of need around digital inclusion, I feel, especially for Yardley."

"Co-production"

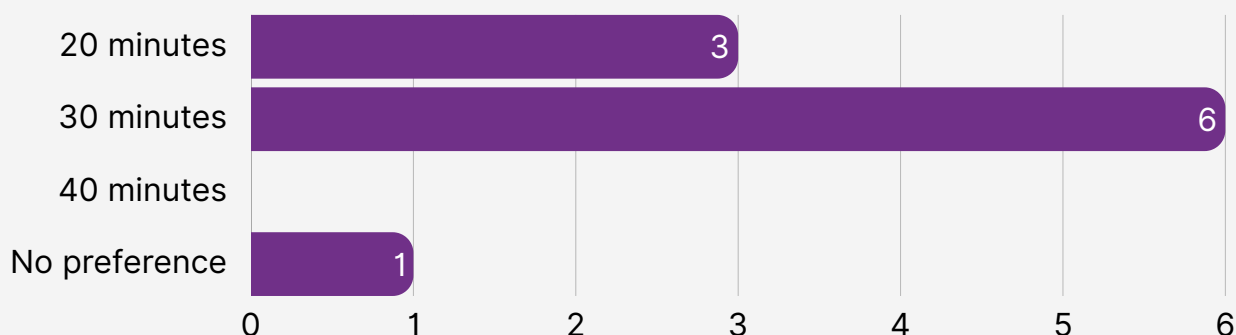## 5. Please rank the following aspects based on how important they are to you at the next unconference.

1. Learning something new
2. Networking
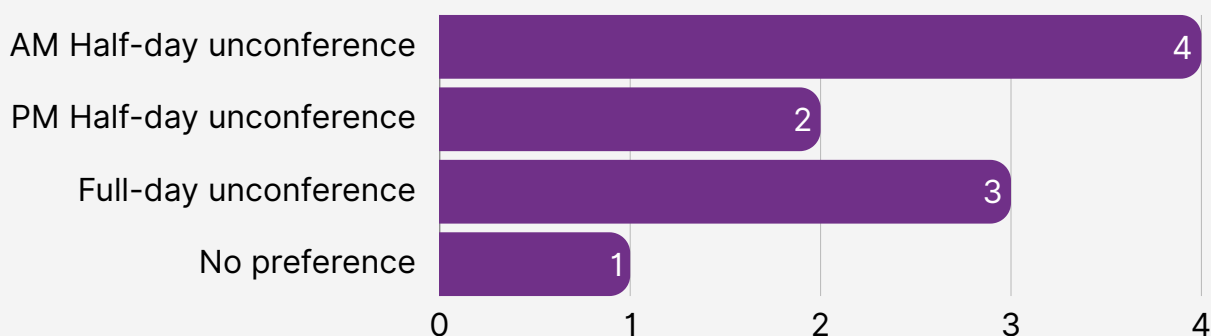3. Insightful discussions
4. Location
5. Food

Appendix A: Pre-event Survey Summary

6. How long would you like the sessions to be at the next unconference?

Option	Count
20 minutes	3
30 minutes	6
40 minutes	0
No preference	1

7. How long would you like the next unconference to be?

Option	Count
AM Half-day unconference	4
PM Half-day unconference	2
Full-day unconference	3
No preference	1

8. Any other comments or questions.

"I love the way the unconference is set out because I feel that it allows for topics to come about organically. It is the perfect setting to bring to the table any topics that require coverage, and if there is a consensus, then it tends to come up which is what I like about the unconference style approach the most. One other point, I have selected full day unconference but just as easy with AM or PM half day. Thank you Pauline and Gena for a truly enjoyable and invaluable session last year and looking forward to it very much this year!"

Appendix B: Participant Attendance Summary

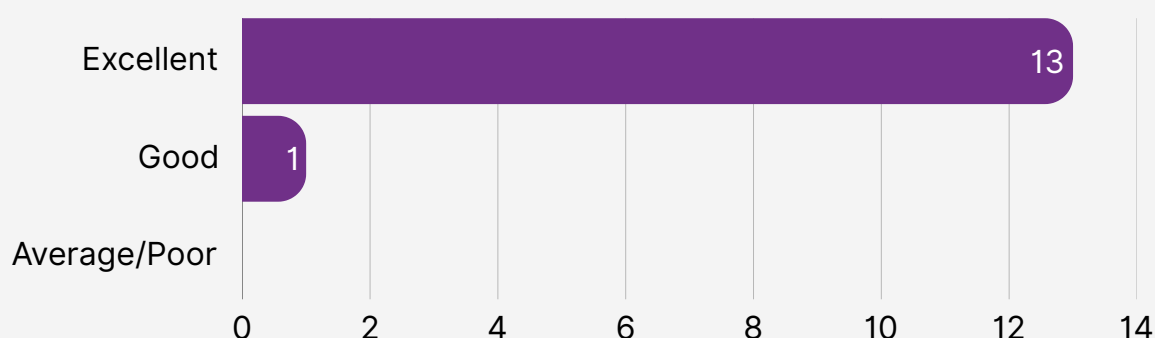| Group	Registered	Attended	Last-minute attendance
Birmingham City Council (Adult Social Care Commissioning Team, etc)	2	2	2
BVSC	2	2	N/A
Community Digital Skills Network	4	3	1
CNSO	4	2	N/A
Digital products and services providers	3	3	N/A
Social prescribers	2	1	N/A
Other	3	1	0
NNS			
Edgbaston NNS	2	2	N/A
Hall Green NNS	1	0	N/A
Hodge Hill NNS	1	0	N/A
Ladywood NNS	1	1	N/A
Northfield NNS	1	0	N/A
Perry Barr NNS	2	1	1
Selly Oak NNS	2	2	N/A
Sutton Coldfield NNS	1	1	N/A
Yardley NNS	3	2	N/A
Total	**34**	**23**	**4**

Appendix C: Participant Feedback

1. On a scale of 1 to 5, how satisfied were you with Brum Connected Camp?

Rating	Count
5 stars	11
4 stars	3
3/2/1 stars	

(Bar chart, x-axis 0 to 12)
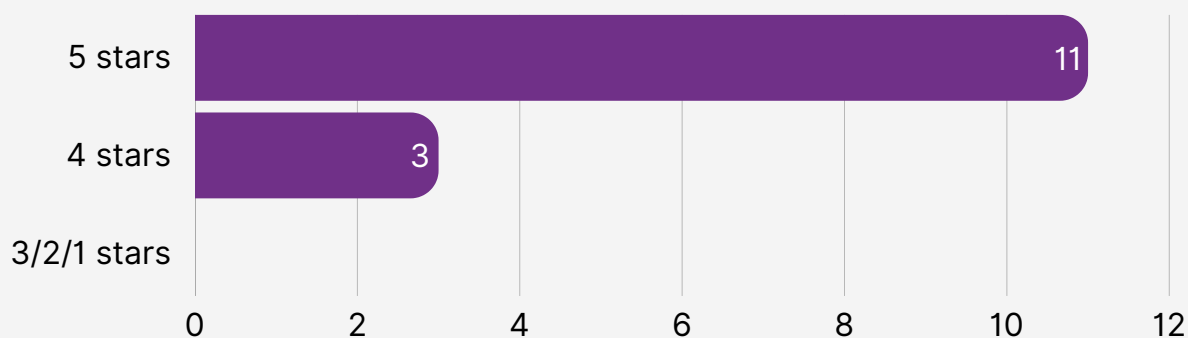
2. How would you rate the format of the event?

Rating	Count
Excellent	13
Good	1
Average/Poor	

(Bar chart, x-axis 0 to 14)

3. What did you learn that would be useful to you?

The majority learnt about different AI platforms and tips on how to use them effectively. Discussions on digital inclusion was also useful, such as how to use tech to remove barriers and increase digital engagement. Other useful topics include cultural sensitivity, networks and insights from the ground, digital hygiene (email inbox and time management), social media, useful apps and understanding digital challenges.

Appendix C: Participant Feedback

4. What did you like most about the event?

- Diversity of participants
- Participant-led event
- Peer sharing and support
- Networking and interesting conversations
- Hearing about different perspectives and approaches to challenges
- Inclusive environment
- Good venue and pacing of the event

5. What can we improve for our next event?

- Sessions that worked best had a 'facilitator of the conversation'
- Lack of overall objectives or outcomes...[but] don't know if there's any way around that within the [unconference] spirit.
- Vegan catering is good for vegans but meat eaters or vegetarians might prefer other options.
- Maybe have a session where people could have a go at using apps and creating something.
- Slightly later start time.
- More people outside of NNS.

Appendix C: Participant Feedback

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

Rating	Count
10	10
9	2
8	1
7	1
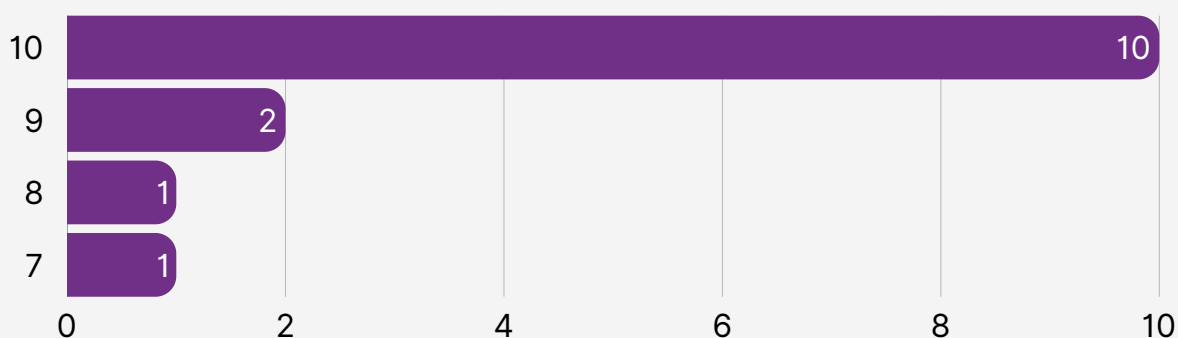
7. Would you like to share anything else?

"Pauline and Gena did a fantastic job of advertising the event. It was well planned and organised. The venue was perfect. I loved that Pauline came and joined in with different sessions that were taking place. It was great to see how this event has grown since the previous year and I'm really looking forward to hearing all the feedback. Thank you so much!!"

"Enjoyed the session. Learnt so much. Thank you."

"Thank you, it was amazing! Looking forward to the next one, will spread the word."

"Thank you to the organisers!"

"Thanks for organising, I loved it!"

"Keep up the brilliant work."

"Thank you for organising such a great event."

Appendix D: Feedback on Social Media

Rickie Josen · 2nd

Learning & Development Operations. Chair of charity board. Pe...

3d · 🌐

+ Follow ···

It was good to be at an unconference again yesterday. Thanks to the expert organisation and facilitation of Pauline Roche and Gena N. for #BrumConnectedCamp

#DigitalLeadership

Ashley Walker · 2nd

Inclusion through green spaces, technology and the built enviro...

3d · 🌐

+ Follow ···

Thank you Pauline Roche and Gena N. for hosting such an insightful and connecting space at #brumconnectedcamp - an unconference where attendees could steer the agendas and talking points around achieving better digital inclusion in and around Birmingham.

So good to hear how each of us approaches digital inclusion, whether individuals or local organisations. Discussing many questions such as how we better serve and support the older generation around digital confidence to exploring how AI could guide in education.

Benita Wishart · 2nd

Research and Evaluation Lead at BVSC. The Centre for Volunt...

4d · 🌐

🔗 Connect ···

A huge cheer for Pauline Roche and Gena N. from Digital NNS for planning and running today's Brum Connected Camp. It was a day full of discussion, connections and sparking ideas.

This morning I was apprehensive - not sure what I might want to talk about, or if indeed I did want to listen and talk, rather than trying to tackle that growing to do pile of admin, comms and reports. But I loved every minute of it and that's unusual for a conference.

So it's not exactly a conference - it's an unconference and this means there really is no agenda. Not to start with. Thirty minutes from kicking off we had collaborated and created the agenda here. And then we were off! Plenty of topics to get your teeth into, small groups so no-one left out and no time to get bored of a topic. And yes, you might guess, I went to the Linked In session in the first slot and resolved to shout more about the fabulous work others are doing across the city. And thanks to The King's Trust for introducing me to their wonderful space and sparking more ideas and to Change Kitchen for lunch.

Good to see, amongst many others - Lisa Eleftheriou Gordon Strachan Lois Maguire-Cox Lisa Robinson Juanita Bradshaw Cathy Miles Malwina Chrobakiewicz David Abosch MBA

Rebecca Isaac · 1st

4d ···
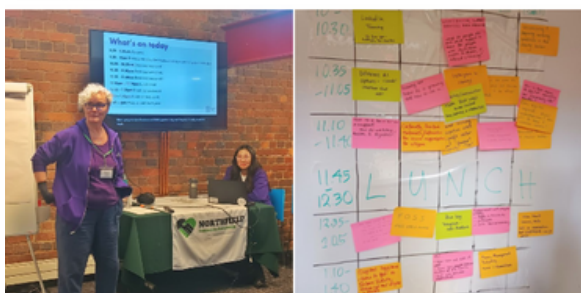
Strategic Volunteering Leadership | Delivering With Communities | Skilled Pro...

It was a great day with so much learning. Thank you Pauline Roche and Gena N.

Like · 💬 4 | Reply

Sharon Staples · 2nd

2d ···

Community Network Support Officer CNSO

Huge well done to Pauline and Gena for organising a great day of digital discussions and learning, I arrived not knowing what to expect and left realising I'd likely learned the most I've ever learned in one day 👏

Like · 💬 3 | Reply · 1 reply

Lisa Eleftheriou · 1st

1d ···

Senior Commissioning Officer at Birmingham City Council

Sharon Staples Pauline Roche ❤️

Like · 👍 2 | Reply

Malwina Chrobakiewicz · 2nd

4d ···

Ladywood NNS Project Manager

It was a fantastic event. I enjoyed every minute!

Like · 💬 3 | Reply

Cathy Miles · 2nd

4d ···

Social Media and Marketing Officer at Age Concern Birmingham

It was a brilliant day wasn't it? I learnt so much, the time flew by. Thank you Pauline and Gena for the best 'Unconference', it was fab.

Like · 💬 4 | Reply

Lois Maguire-Cox · 2nd

3d ···

Birmingham City Council Community Support & Development || Selly Oak Ne...

Aren't they just awesome!

Like · 👍 3 | Reply