



Summary Notes: Device Upcycling Workshop - LOTI / Pan-London Digital Inclusion Working group

On Tuesday, 27 July 2021, LOTI in collaboration with the Pan-London Digital Inclusion Working Group held a workshop with boroughs, as well as representatives from the GLA and upcycling organisations. Thanks in particular to Shade Nathaniel-Ayodele from Southwark for her support with organising and running the session.

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Update boroughs on the work already underway by the LOTI team
- Understand boroughs' experience with device upcycling or provision in general and
- Discuss ideas and suggestions for projects that benefit from a collaborative approach.

Below is a summary of the main points from the discussion. The workshop slides can be viewed [here](#).

Overview of current project scope

The workshop started with a summary of the desired outcome and current scope. The desired outcome is: "To increase the number of devices available to digitally excluded Londoners by reducing the barriers to upcycling of retired devices from corporates and public sector organisations."

The current scope includes:

1. Conducting [research on device upcycling](#) (complete) to include:
 - Practices in the public and private sectors
 - Journey and potential barriers to repurposing devices
 - Market and their potential to support an increase in demand for their services
2. Conducting an exemplar project (underway) - prototyping the upcycling of donated devices by testing the device journey and insights from the research.
3. Running a campaign sponsored by the GLA, to encourage private sector organisations to donate devices.

Warm Up: Relevant ideas and suggestions LOTI team should consider

Participants were invited to first share their ideas, suggestions and comments relating to this project or device provision more widely. The purpose of this warm-up exercise was to ensure that all good ideas and suggestions were captured even if they didn't relate to the questions asked in this workshop. The LOTI team will review



these and address them either as part of the current phase of this project or explore them further in future workshops.

Here's a summary of these suggestions:

- We need minimum standards/specifications so councils / referral organisations can allocate with confidence.
- Pros and cons of new versus recycled
- Pros and cons of Loan or gift
- Need to ensure that those in receipt of devices have access to ongoing support otherwise devices may not get used
- How to ensure that all devices are properly wiped and set up for their new use (and reassuring organisations donating of this since we are all micro-businesses and public sector)?
- How do we evaluate/assess the Cost and effort and reliability of recycled versus new of recycled?
- Can we have a clear definition of the different approaches and terminology - e.g. recycling, donating, refurbishing, upcycling. As currently there are many different models used by different orgs for handling end-of-life equipment.
- How do we encourage larger private businesses to donate devices to local authorities to distribute and LAs to accept them? Experience has been businesses think they can't donate to LAs only charities
- How do we create a model that moves away from ad-hoc initiatives, every so often, to something that is scalable, replicable, and can be leveraged by multiple organisations - without having to locally re-invent the solutions,
- Need to work out if some devices are unsuitable to be recycled due to age or maverick nature of particular version of devices
- Do we all share a common view on the role of LAs in device recycling upcycling? If we are redistributing our old devices are we also taking care of the support that may be needed afterwards? Is our role an advisory one to support other local organisations to upcycle securely and effectively?
- Multiple approaches essential, not either / or
- also our big suppliers like microsoft and BT to see if they have spare old devices?

Exercise 1: Device Volumes

In this exercise, participants were invited to share details of their borough's cycle for refreshing devices and what devices they could donate to test the concept as part of a LOTI project. The LOTI team is currently working with a public sector organisation to test device upcycling, in order to create detailed guidance on how boroughs can upcycle their retired devices. Undertaking a project with boroughs would provide additional insights and intelligence on how this can be done well by others. The LOTI



team will follow up with boroughs that have available devices now. If you weren't able to attend the workshop but would like to take part in a device upcycling project with LOTI, please share details [here](#). Please note that your email address and borough name will be in the public domain.

Exercise 2: Challenges with device upcycling / provision

In this exercise, participants were invited to share their experience with device upcycling or provision more generally. The LOTI team is keen to understand what boroughs have found most difficult and the contributing factors to challenges so that any guidance we create or interventions we put in place help to reduce or remove those barriers. Here's a summary of that discussion:

1. Buy-in from leadership and capacity
 - Lack of responsibility, nobody wants to own this piece of work because of the perceived work and resources required
 - Getting the right political appetite for broadening the eligible groups to receive devices, i.e not just school-aged children
 - Solutions tend to be ad-hoc; as they are seen as one-time requirements - rather than ongoing; especially for orgs doing big bang replacements. Learning is lost in terms of technical device cleansing solutions and logistical solutions and governance around use, distribution, gifting, support.
 - That the momentum of the pandemic and the drive for donations has lessened and there is a lack of appetite to continue this work after our crowdfunder
 - Determining who to target for device donation - drip-feed of individual donations or large donations from corporations?
2. Data Security
 - Fear or hesitation that devices will not be 'cleaned' properly and confidential information will be accessed by new owners. Not just for device upcycling but all devices given from a local authority if there is no IT support available for residents if something doesn't work.
 - Microsoft licenses, - worried about sec of devices and if they have been wiped properly
 - Demand for devices exceeding supply
 - Not enough devices available to meet demand of residents
3. Lack of funding / cost of refurbishment
 - Worried about cost of wiping and distributing - not sure what devices we have at the moment
 - Cost of refurbishment using a third party
 - Do not have onsite resource to upcycle in house
 - That the cost of refurbishment isn't worth recycling and councils are better off purchasing second hand laptops or cheap laptops
 - Getting the right amount of devices to benefit from economies of scale

- with refurbishers
- Getting the right amount of devices to benefit from economies of scale with refurbishers
- 4. Needs assessment - deciding who is eligible for a device and assessing suitability of devices
 - Needs assessment outside of school-aged children, digitally excluded people inherently difficult to reach to assess exact need whereas with children we could just speak to the schools
 - Devices old and may not be suitable - no one's role in the council to manage this

Exercise 2: What's gone well with device upcycling / provision

The purpose of this exercise was to help surface some of the good practices so that we can further build on these, on any future projects. Here's a summary of the main points:

1. Working with partner organisations, for example, VCS on prioritisation and distribution, connectivity suppliers and LGfL
 - Working with LGfL. Working with Ready Tech Go. Strong understanding and support from our own leadership. Collaboration with third sector organisations, NHS, open age etc have resulted in a lot of cooperation and common approaches being agreed
 - Local organisations accepting and distributing refurbished devices to residents
 - Working with relevant stakeholders to create a prioritisation list
 - Last year WCC rolled out approx 5K laptops as part of DfE schools initiative; and WCC Digital Futures programmes - I understand this generally worked well in terms of the distribution to communities through schools - although a lot of this equipment was new not recycled (so just focus on back-end)
 - Teaming up with other organisations such as Hyperoptic and Community Fibre to highlight their affordable broadband scheme and making our digital learning partner is available to offer digital skills training if they need it - a more holistic offering combining connectivity, devices and skills training
 - Help and support as others have mentioned from Community Fibre and Hyperoptic fibre suppliers esp. around cheap connectivity, and funding for digital ambassadors
2. National Standards for Device Recycling
 - The fact that there are established and national standards for removing sensitive data (and orgs doing this commercially as discussed today).
3. Campaigns to encourage device donations

- Offering alternative schemes that businesses and individuals can donate to if they do not meet the requirements
 - Making use of anecdotal evidence that appeal to people's empathy and encourage them to donate money/devices such as people passing laptops from balconies and hovering outside of libraries to tap into the WiFi during the lockdown
 - Using the pandemic and media interest to get businesses to donate devices - getting them to complete a form beforehand to ensure it's the right device and save time
4. Learning from other boroughs and sharing resources
- Using the Westminster user personas to understand which people are more likely to need support
 - Help from boroughs (e.g. Westminster) who are ahead of us in this work

Exercise 3: Potential projects in this area

We concluded the workshop by discussing potential project ideas for LOTI to take forward. Here's a summary of those ideas:

- A London-wide repository of information to enable knowledge sharing and reduce duplication of effort
- Having a pan london recycling / upcycling scheme so we're not limited to devices from businesses in each borough only working with one LA
- Grouping of neighbouring boroughs to benefit from economies of scale
- An IT support provision if there are issues with the devices, either from upcycling company or across boroughs
- A list of organisations that can help such as Ready Tech Go, Social Box, LGfL, Mer-IT Digital
- Aftercare - where people can get support when they come across problems with their device (technical support)
- Having drop-off points across London that people can drop off devices quite easily (not sure how you track which borough it came from)
- Partnering with the councils Waste Management Teams
- A list of what the requirements are and what they can do if they can't be repurposed
- A London-wide comms campaign to get internal staff and residents to donate their devices
- Speaking to businesses to get them to commit to donating their disused devices in their local authorities as part of their CSR
- London wide protocol for working with NHS in a coordinated way on digital inclusion as we share common clients who will benefit from being able to access digital / a pilot to establish how it could best work



Next steps

The LOTI team will create guidance for boroughs on how to upcycle their devices, using insights from the prototype currently underway. This is likely to be published in early autumn.

If you'd like to get involved in this or any other Digital Inclusion project, then please join the Basecamp space [here](#).

You can also add your ideas for future projects [here](#).

Please visit [the project page](#) on the LOTI website for the latest on this and other digital inclusion projects.