

## Tech Support Thursdays case study

### Background

After delivering tech support morning sessions and Zoom meetings for a group of people in a social isolation project for Mycenae House (Techy Tea times – [link 1](#), [link 2](#), [link 3](#)), it was realised that the service was possible in a potentially larger offering. Lewisham Homes offered community support funding for the transition from the first lock down to happen?

This did not transpire, but Community Waves offered to fund the project for 10 weeks.

### Focus and Context

The original proposal was to offer technical support for people needing support with technology, help with getting online; GP patient access and assistance with CV writing. Lewisham Homes feedback indicated that the focus was somewhat spread, and as such Tech Support Thursday (TST) was to focus on assisting people getting online and helping with patient access, accessing Zoom meetings (for wellness activities) and assist with general digital issues.

**Project period:** 29<sup>th</sup> October 2020 - 14<sup>th</sup> January 2021

### Referral Process

1. Community Organisation flags up a person requiring digital support
2. Organisation refers via Soulchip online form (password protected)
3. The referred person receives a call on Tuesday/Wednesday informing of their support slot between 10-12am on Thursday
4. Call actions are logged, especially if intervention includes remote control. Follow up options include invitation to regular afternoon Zoom meeting and a call the following week

### Zoom meetings as a space to discuss and practice

Since the first lock down in 2020, Zoom had been taken up as an application with easy to access via an email link - making it suitable for many people with low digital skills readily. It has become a delivery mechanism for 'at home' activities for well being - art, singing, exercise, etc. Nonetheless, it does have a learning curve and practice makes for a better experience for the recipient and activity host.

## Reach out and marketing

Flyers were created and sent out to Lewisham organisations:

- Community connections (Michael Stuart)
- Council liaison (Sara Laing)
- Voluntary Services Lewisham (Bettina Ganser)
- Lewisham CCG
- Healthwatch – had a conversation with Marzena Zoladz about potential referrals
- Invited to talk at Digital Inclusion online event organised by Lewisham Local - <https://www.soulchip.co.uk/re-thinking-volunteering-talk-on-23-10-20/>
- Discussion with NHS Innovation research project about online access.

## Challenges

- Outreach issues - people know, but nobody refers.
  - Possibly juggling lots of information, matters of capacity.
- Getting in touch - arranging call times
- No help desk software, spread sheets are not up to the task.
- People not at home, not prepared when called, also not communicated by referring organisation.
- Trust path problems - when a referral is made, how much does the referrer get involved? Maybe the organisation gives a call back with a time and date.
- No feedback - from referrals or organisations
- Printables not printed? No way to find out]
- Using a spreadsheet to manage the calls was very clunky and awkward – future projects would use cloud based options such as Zohodesk.

## Outcomes

I met Jon F whilst he was volunteering for Techy Times at Mycenae House in Blackheath standard; he was proven to be consistent, informed and patient; a real asset to making the sessions work. Jon had skills unused and I offered him some paid work to assist with the calls and Zoom sessions. With appropriate supervisory nudges and some materials to help with conversational/support starting points he adapted. Unfortunately the lack of project recipients didn't result in development of technical support skills, nonetheless we forged ahead.

Being **on-line** is what we want,  
Being **connected** is what we need.

## **Instructional material - printables**

We started creating printable flyers, 'printables' as a bridge to useful step by step reference for people with low digital skills. At first we used [Libre Office Draw](#) to share drafts, but this was problematic and seemed to shift images. We then started using [Canva](#) to collaborate and create more consistent designs. The topics covered connecting to Wi-Fi via Windows/IOS/Android.

## **Phone support**

Number of people supported over project period: **11**

Repeat calls (follow up calls to make sure situation is resolved) : maximum of **3**, average of **2**

Dead calls (left voicemail or didn't answer): **4**

Number of times remote control used:1 (attempted to fix webcam issues for a participant)

## **Examples of situations**

- Talking about GP online access
- Helping to install Zoom on devices
- Making sure wifi connections were made

## **Zoom meetings**

- Number of meetings: **11**
- Average number of attendees: **3**
- Follow up actions:**11**

## **Discussion and activities**

Sending links to relevant video tutorials via email, calling to check up on how one person got on connecting to their Wi-Fi, sending another a pdf manual for his printer

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## Lessons to take forward

- Create support pathways - referring organisations need to have acknowledged actions for them, also provide feedback.
- Trust building exercises - surgery sessions to phone an IT agony uncle.
- Need for proper support/CRM software to track and follow up people's issues. Possible colour coding to enable quick reference which can be shared with the help desk operator and the person requiring support.
- Future projects of this kind need to be long term (6 months+) to create sense of an ongoing service/ community brand.