

London Borough of Camden – Connected Communities: My World Community Map

Social Care Digital Innovation Programme (SCDIP) 2019-21 progress report

Helping residents travel in their daily lives and overcome any anxieties or accessibility issues they face by creating an easy-to-read, use and follow map with navigation aids, such as pictures of landmarks

Why are we doing this?

We want to get a better understanding of the difficulties people face when travelling in their local community so we can support them in getting where they want to go to and ultimately improve their quality of life. So far, we have focused on how we can help people to use technology as a way of planning their journey, as well as understand and aid people who do not use technology.

Background and project update

We started with a [discovery phase](#) that lasted six months. We found that travel went beyond mode of transport for individuals. People faced issues planning the journey as well as when they were travelling which made them hesitant to travel or explore new areas.

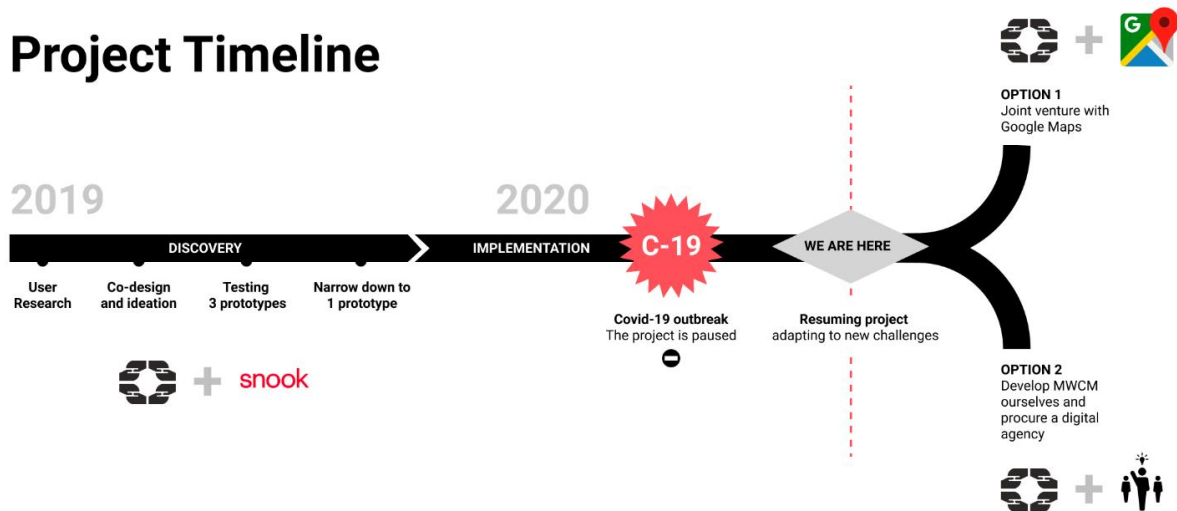
Following the discovery phase, we developed an [interactive prototype of the 'My World Community Map'](#) and used it to test out our assumptions and gain insights on how people would use the service.

The project is now in the implementation phase. Between December 2019 and March 2020 we had begun the procurement process for a digital agency, as well as recruitment for a delivery lead when the COVID-19 pandemic started and we had to pause the project.

The COVID-19 pandemic meant the Connected Communities project had to be put on hold in March. It was not feasible to continue with the project during the early crisis response, as it required individuals to travel in their community and project staff were focusing on supporting residents' immediate needs during this time. The project has paused for several months and travel in communities is still restricted due to Government regulations. There are also other restraints and psychological barriers that prevent residents, especially those in a more vulnerable situation, from leaving their homes. We had to adapt to these new circumstances and reimagine the project.

The London Borough of Camden (LBC) is now focussing on renewal planning and as a result has reassessed the status of the project. The revised plan now incorporates two different routes to progress the project.

Project Timeline



Option 1: partnership project with Google

Google Maps is the most popular online digital mapping and navigation service. It offers satellite imagery, aerial photography, street maps, 360° interactive panoramic views of streets, real-time traffic conditions, and route planning for traveling by foot, car, bicycle and air, or public transportation. Our team has been in contact with Google Maps to discuss the features of the prototype we created in the discovery phase and discuss potential collaboration in future developments. A follow-up meeting is being arranged.

The partnership project between Google and LBC would focus on the research and development aspect of accessible transport and the issues that people with learning disabilities and/or older people as well as people who are digitally excluded may face when travelling. The overall aim is to improve the accessibility of Google's current product through co-production. These discussions are at an early stage but are promising.

It is too early to set out key milestones without further conversations with Google. If a partnership between LBC and Google progresses, we would need to take into consideration Google's development plans and weigh these against SCDIP timescales.

In order to develop a joint partnership and to develop the service within Google Maps, we will need to:

- Have a kick-off meeting(s) between LBC and Google to agree the timescales and scope of the project, including flexibility
- If timescales are beyond March 2021, LBC would need to discuss project implications with the Local Government Association for agreement to proceed
- Contractually agree how the partnership would be structured
- Agree engagement process between residents involved in co-production, LBC and Google including feedback loop to all three parties
- Complete any data sharing agreements with consent from residents
- Complete engagement with residents to ensure the embedded features are co-produced
- Agree the features to be implemented and test the features with residents

Partnership with Google is our ideal project option because it is likely to provide greater development opportunities, access to a richer technology base, and potential impact which would reach further than anything we could do on our own. However, we will also advance with our second option in case the partnership does not progress and we plan to deliver elements to improve people's access to digital resources whilst discussions continue.

Option 2: Development of My World Community Map with a focus on digital inclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has meant people have been unable to travel in their local communities. After a sustained period of staying at home, people may have understandable anxieties about leaving their homes and travelling. Social distancing measures mean people may not feel comfortable being in places where two metre social distancing may be difficult such as buses and tubes.

Before COVID-19, we had a good understanding of user needs. We co-designed the map prototype with older people and people with learning disabilities who do not feel comfortable using existing technology to support them to travel in their communities. We also conducted user research around the main challenges people faced when travelling. COVID-19 will change how people travel and we will need to re-engage with people to get a better understanding of the issues they now face travelling post COVID-19. This will be a moving picture over the next few months. The target audience may also change to include people who previously may have felt comfortable travelling but now have understandable anxieties about leaving their homes and travelling.

We will need to take into consideration how people's attitudes towards going out have been impacted and any new barriers they need to consider. Volunteer and neighbourhood networks have also developed so we also need to look at whether people are relying more on community networks and whether their digital habits have changed and how.

The map can be the ideal tool to assist people to become comfortable with old known routes or try out new journeys virtually first from the comfort of their own home. It is in keeping with the overall aspiration of the map. This second option therefore focuses on repurposing the map to support with the renewal efforts following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Potential additional map features

During the pandemic several community events and groups were moved to online platforms and new groups also developed. This has brought new opportunities for community organisations to use digital resources to deliver services and support residents.

We will work with our voluntary community sector to map the activities that have been developed onto the MWCM. Ultimately, people will be able to use the map to look for online activities from voluntary and community sector organisations along their favourite routes. The desired impact will be to increase people's social networks, exposing people to a richer variety of activities and reduce people's anxieties to try new things, as physically travelling somewhere and walking through the door can be potentially quite daunting.

People may also be willing once they have tried activities virtually to attend in person when this becomes a possibility again which can have a positive impact in rebuilding communities post COVID-19. LBC is looking at renewal planning from both an economic and social perspective and the map has potential to support this by promoting activities and

services and giving people confidence to be active participants in their communities. We will work closely with the voluntary community sector to map the groups and will take into consideration during development that some groups may remain online moving forwards.

Digital training offer

During the crisis it has become more evident that we need to support people to improve their IT literacy skills and have access to technology, so they can access more services. There is work ongoing within the Council and the voluntary and community sector to identify and understand groups who may be at risk of being digitally excluded and to develop an offer to meet any needs arising from this work.

A recent Third Age Project survey found 66% of respondents who receive their online newsletter were interested in receiving training and support to enable them to use online courses. The initial phase of the reimagined project would focus on developing a remote training offer so people had better access to technology and the training in how to use it.

In the original proposal we envisaged libraries and key workers supporting residents to feel comfortable using the map as well as using the map as part of the travel training package. Unfortunately, libraries are now closed and group sessions are not possible. But Camden's Adult Community Learning is uniquely placed, and has the capacity, to deliver bespoke digital skills training, provide laptops where needed and dongles for internet access. We will also work alongside existing voluntary and community sector organisations and there is potential volunteer support with those engaged with LBC's new brokerage team.

Co-production

The idea of co-production to design, test and deliver the map has been at the core of this project. However, due to the current circumstances we acknowledge it will be challenging to engage with residents. In the original plan we had identified organisations who could help support development of the map: Ageing Better in Camden (ABC) and Synergy. These organisations are still on board to assist with the reimagined project.

We have been discussing with them what is realistic in terms of engagement with participants, acknowledging that not all residents have access to or use technology at the moment. We still aim to work with residents through as many opportunities as possible. These opportunities have been recommended by ABC and Synergy and include conference calls, one-to-one calls or postal surveys.

Milestones, outcomes, evaluation and continuous development

As the project restarts, the digital offer will be the first step, closely followed by building the map. This means we will recommence procurement of the digital agency, although we are still considering how we can use internal colleagues too.

The original quality benefits are targeted for this project: increased confidence and independence, raised profile for Camden in digital innovation, reduced digital exclusion, improved health and wellbeing, and reduced social isolation.

We will work with a pilot group of participants from ABC and Synergy with minimal digital skills to co-produce the training offer and develop the map, recording their experiences and measuring impact with feedback surveys, case studies and web analytics. The plan is for two main iterations of the service but there is also possibility for continuous development based on our research and ongoing user feedback. Extra functionality could be explored in future including voice activated commands, adding custom images and reporting hazards.