Foreword

Digital technology offers new ways of addressing the challenges faced by young people by enabling new forms of collaboration; facilitating new communities of support and challenge, and affording new ways of accessing information and resources. But to take advantage of this potential, we need to redesign the ways in which we articulate and approach the social challenges we’re looking to address.

This publication has been developed with this approach in mind. The messages have been developed by bringing together people with a variety of skills and experience in an effort to understand the challenges facing young people in greater detail and to shape key messages around how we best support them. Our thanks go to the authors and for the wealth of online and offline contributions of many other participants, whose blog posts, tweets and shared insights can be found at www.socialreporters.net/?cat=34. This publication has been collaboratively developed, and we hope to work with you to respond to the challenges and messages it sets out.

Dan Sutch
Head of Development Research
Nominet Trust – June 2012
About the authors

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Tim has been working at the intersection of youth policy and technology since 1999 when he got involved in the newly formed Havant Borough Youth Council, and ended up managing Havant Borough’s youth website. On graduating in 2006, Tim discovered the possibility of putting together his own livelihood through part-time work as the marketing manager for a Fairtrade shop, developing digital tools for grantmaking, and working as a participation consultant with The National Youth Agency, where he also co-authored a research report on Youth Work and Social Networking. He started blogging at www.timdavies.org.uk and has lost count of the number of interesting projects and opportunities that has given rise to.

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David is developing the practice of social reporting, based on past experience as a journalist and consultant on regeneration partnerships, community engagement, and social media. He has written books on participation and partnerships and co-authored Social By Social: Social technology for social impact. You can find out more about David and can contact him via http://socialreporter.com/?page_id=41. You can also find him on Twitter at @davidwilcox. In practice social reporting involves explorations that use a mix of collaborative online activity and workshops to clarify issues, develop ideas for action, and help build networks. You can find out more about those here: www.socialreporters.net/?page_id=552.

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Alex’s work has focused on leadership and management training with youth sector managers as well as through writing leadership training for young people. For the Woodcraft Folk, he produced Leading for the Future and for Croydon Borough Council ran an extensive consultation into the London riots in 2011. Alex was the lead consultant on behalf of Practical Participation with the DfID CSO Youth Working Group working on the Youth Participation in Development guide and he is currently evaluating the dance4life UK programme for Restless Development. Alex can be contacted at alex@practicalparticipation.co.uk or on Twitter at @alexjamesfarrow.
Introduction

High unemployment. Social exclusion. Low political engagement. Fragmented communities. It’s not difficult to construct a long list of youth policy challenges. The challenges are not new, and many are shared by all generations, but against a background of economic turmoil, environmental degradation, and increasingly complex local and global communities, these challenges impact profoundly on the future life chances of younger generations, and demand our renewed attention.

Digital innovation has a key role to play in finding new solutions to these challenges. Yet, the role digital technology can play is not always clear, and there are countless examples of technologies bolted on to projects without thinking how it can really make a difference. In this paper we offer ten key messages for adding a digital edge to innovations to support young people. In our journey towards these messages we have sought to dig deeper into understanding the root causes of the persistent social challenges young people face, and to understand how technologies are changing the landscape in which we work. We’ve focussed on how digital approaches meet existing practice, and on the importance of starting from the issues young people face, as well as the professional values that different innovators bring to addressing those issues, rather than starting from tools and digital technologies.

The ten messages we present in this paper have been developed through a process of online and offline dialogue, asking a broad range of social innovators – young and older – to share their thoughts around the central question of how digital technology can support young people’s social and economic engagement in their communities. Along the way we generated more than 30 key messages overall, and for each of the ten here we’ve collected a wide range of online resources to support them and to inspire you to think about where your work can make more impact with a digital edge.
Three ways to find the innovation space

DIGGING DEEPER INTO ROOT CAUSES

Far too often economic and social challenges are dealt with at a surface level. For example, concerns about youth unemployment might lead to a focus on the fact that young people are not finding jobs to apply for, or are not getting the jobs that they do find and apply for. This can drive responses based around providing better job information, or writing better CVs. These are of course not bad things (and there’s still space for innovation to increase their impact), but they don’t get to the roots of the problem, and they don’t lead us to new spaces for innovation.

Digging deeper involves listening to the diverse lived experiences of those affected by a social or economic challenge, and incessantly asking ‘why?’. What is it that underlies the barriers that are keeping young people from accessing sustainable livelihoods, or from getting involved in local community decision making and action? What are all the different factors that might be involved?

Digging deeper involves listening to the diverse lived experiences of those affected by a social or economic challenge, and incessantly asking ‘why?’. What is it that underlies the barriers that are keeping young people from accessing sustainable livelihoods, or from getting involved in local community decision making and action? What are all the different factors that might be involved? This process quickly steps beyond the surface, to explore how the external, contextual, deeper issues (of culture, networks, incentives, education, politics and power, local environments, conventional ideas of work and volunteering, and personal relationships) might all play a role in the marginalisation and exclusion of young people – both directly and indirectly.

Each of these factors are potential targets for digital innovation. Of course, not all these factors are relevant to all young people. For example, only some young people face internal barriers to employment or community engagement related to confidence or mental wellbeing. However, for those who face these barriers, they can be significant. Digging deeper emphasises the diversity of young people’s experience, and that there is unlikely to be one single innovation or digital tool that resolves a social challenge. Instead, a range of overlapping actions and innovations are needed to provide the support the different groups will need to overcome key challenges. Each innovation is just one piece of the puzzle: both for each young person, and for our communities and society as a whole.

Deeper questioning of key social challenges might also lead us to reframe the narratives around a social challenge. For example, ‘low levels of youth volunteering’ might explore how some of the barriers to youth action in their communities could be linked to the narrow definition of ‘volunteering’. Reframing the challenge as one of engaging in ‘socially useful activity’ makes it clear that young people often are engaged, just not always in
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ways that fit the categories that have been handed down through past policy and practice. In doing this, we shift from a deficit framework which focussed on the limitations of young people's action, to an asset-oriented framework, seeking to identify the strengths that young people bring to their communities, and to increase their impact.

EXPLORING THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE AND THE NATURE OF ENGAGEMENT

A lot of the professions and services that have a role to play in supporting young people's economic and social engagement have been around for a long time – founded well before the advent of the Internet. The importance of informal education, youth work, housing services and community development, amongst others, continue to have vital professional skills and values to contribute (as we explore in the next section). Yet, over the last 25 years, the Internet and digital technologies have become woven into the fabric of our everyday lives and have catalysed seismic social and economic shifts: changing the landscape that young people are growing up in, and the environment for services that support them.

Digital technologies are changing:

− the setting
With social networks and cheap global communication, a young person's ‘community' is not just made up by the locality where they live, but might also be extended online to include communities of interest, dispersed networks of friends, or diaspora communities.

− expectations
When media, information and entertainment are available ‘on demand' 24 hours a day, what about access to support, advice, guidance and opportunities to engage locally?

Over the last 25 years, the Internet and digital technologies have become woven into the fabric of our everyday lives and have catalysed seismic social and economic shifts: changing the landscape that young people are growing up in, and the environment for services that support them.

− the dynamics of relationships
Mobile phones and social media support constant connectivity and contact between peers, based on sharing and conversing around multimedia content, whilst professionals supporting young people are often only accessible for very discrete and occasional periods of time, still working primarily through text or face-to-face conversations.
Many services providing support to young people have struggled to engage with these digital shifts in the past, held back by underinvestment or by fears about the risks of online spaces. Yet, there is a growing recognition that this needs to change, and innovation is needed to bridge the gap between current practice, and the needs and potential of a digitally connected world.

**RENEGOTIATING PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE**

Digital technology can enable, amplify and extend different forms of support for young people. Adding a digital edge to a service might allow it to take advantage of economies of scale to reach many more young people than a non-digital service; it might open up opportunities for more interactive and personalised support; or it might empower young people to take greater direct control of situations that affect them. Those impacts won’t come from the technology alone, they will also come from the way a service is designed, and the values built into it.

We’ve witnessed too many projects that leapt straight for the latest ‘cool tool’ and then tried later to work out what purpose it served. Instead, as a number of the messages in this paper show, identifying agile ways to learn about, experiment with, apply and embed technology is much more likely to lead to sustainable digital innovations that can get to the roots of the key social and economic challenges faced by young people and by our communities.
As a direct example of how digital technologies can reframe the way in which a challenge can be approached, this paper has been authored through an online document using a number of social media channels that enabled a wide range of experts to be directly involved in building and shaping a list of key messages. This open approach proved extremely valuable, and within a few weeks over 30 key messages on digital innovation were gathered, backed up by links to online resources and examples that explained many of them. Through more traditional consultation approaches, these messages have been refined to the ten presented here. In order to address social challenges there is a need for a mixture of new approaches facilitated by digital technologies, and traditional techniques of co-design and development.

These messages are not definitive instructions on how to do digital innovations. Rather, they are here to spark ideas and reflection. Not all good digital innovations must, for example, use games to engage, or that they have to blend online and offline, but it is worth taking the time to consider the potential impacts of doing so.

Next to each message you will find a link and a QR code. This will take you to a page of extra resources related to this message that were shared with us, or that we found, during our exploration.

**QR codes**

QR 3D barcodes are like a printed hyperlink. If you are reading this on paper, but you have a smartphone with a camera to hand, you should be able to download a QR code reader, which you can then point at the codes to go straight to the additional content.
Recognise the diversity of youth

Youth is a time of transition. Young people are often encountering experiences and challenges for the first time, and the choices they make have an impact on their future life trajectories. That is part of the reason why so many policies and services focus specifically on young people. But just because the 7.4 million 16-24 year-olds in the UK might have this in common it does not mean they are all alike in other ways.

Diverse youth cultures, diverse interests, different needs, and a wide range of lived experiences all impact on the routes young people might take to become more economically and socially engaged. As one workshop participant put it, “16-18 year-olds in Poplar are potentially very different to 18-21 year-olds in Peckham”, and even amongst those 18-21 year-olds in Peckham there will be a whole range of different interests, issues and opportunities for engagement. It can be tempting to think that digital innovations could use the Internet to reach out to all young people in the UK, but designing for the ‘average’ young person is not going to meet the real needs of many real young people at all. In any case, one of the strengths of the Internet is not as a broadcast medium, but as a way to reach out to specific smaller communities with shared interests, or facing shared challenges.

Recognising the diversity of youth might lead to projects that focus on serving one of the ‘the long tail’: offering niche groups of young people a bespoke service, or identifying and targeting their efforts to a particular population of young people. Recognition of diversity might also drive projects that are built around personalisation, letting people customise their experience of a service. Alternatively, an innovation might be focussed behind the scenes in ways that let other people contextualise it for particular groups of young people, or by working peer-to-peer in order to let young people add context to an innovation, and to share it with their social networks.

Consider the livelihoods of the future

Being economically engaged doesn’t have to mean a ‘9 to 5’ job. Many people are making a positive choice to turn away from full-time employment with a company. Instead, they are putting together their own careers and livelihoods from a mixture of freelance work, self-employment, part-time contracts and time spent on independent unfunded projects that they care about: often volunteering in their communities. For many of them, the Internet has been key to these new ways of working: from providing a marketplace to promote their services,
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to giving access to cheap and on-demand tools for online banking and managing business accounting. Social networks provide access to business advice or leads for new work. Blogs share valuable informal learning. Skype makes it possible to collaborate with teams across the country, and mobile technologies make it possible to run a small business on the go, without having expensive office overheads. These tools don’t just provide opportunities for people in the digital or knowledge economies: craftspeople, engineers, gardeners and professionals across a wide range of trades are using digital technologies to build their livelihoods in new ways.

With only around 200,000 vacancies for over 2.4 million people unemployed in early 2012, the loss of the option to pursue full-time work is not something to be celebrated. But in a changing economy we need to think about how we are preparing young people to secure a decent living, and to be able to make positive choices about how they use their time, talents and resources. For some young people, being economically engaged and being socially engaged might be one and the same thing: finding socially valuable and sustainable work in their communities. For others, knowing how much you need to work to live a good life, and being able to identify the other important things in life, such as being part of community, is an important part of planning a work-life balance. Plus, if all those people in work who are fed up with their current jobs and want to downsize to fewer days a week, or who are looking for the courage to go independent, made that step, there would be more space in the job market for those starting out who do want to take an employment track.

Whatever happens in the economy, equipping young people for the livelihoods of the future is not just going to be about helping people find and fill in job applications, or telling people how to build a better CV. It might involve letting young people explore the alternatives and helping them gain the confidence to explore new ways of working. It might involve offering support for young people to manage the practicalities of juggling two jobs whilst getting a new business off the ground, or providing insight into using the Internet to find customers. It might need new tools to help young people keep track of finances and taxes, and to work out what they really need to earn to live the sort of life they want. We can’t be sure exactly what the world of work will look like in the future, but we can have a vision that builds towards more young people having access to sustainable, fulfilling livelihoods, and we can look for ways to use digital tools to support that.

Being economically engaged doesn’t have to mean a ‘9 to 5’ job. Many people are making a positive choice to turn away from full-time employment with a company. Instead, they are putting together their own careers and livelihoods from a mixture of freelance work, self-employment, part-time contracts and time spent on independent unfunded projects that they care about.
The concept of ‘livelihoods’ may be more familiar from International Development contexts, where ‘youth livelihoods’ has been an area of significant focus. Livelihoods interventions focus on the means to earn a living and start from a focus on individuals and their communities, looking at all the resources available to them: from education and training and access to finance, to health care provision and other key public services. As we’re using it, the concept of livelihoods can also incorporate a focus on the other ways someone chooses to use the resources they have available to them – including spending some of their time and energy contributing to their local area, or choosing to make their living through activities that have a positive impact on the environment, their community, and on key social issues they care about.

**SUPPORT CREATORS, NOT CONSUMERS**

http://goo.gl/vv8Do

Digital tools can allow young people to create and share content with the world. Yet few 16-24 year-olds take full advantage of the possibilities to create and share digital media online beyond sharing photos in a closed social network. We are still primarily a nation of digital consumers – taking in online media, rather than being digital creators and shaping our own media environments. That’s a big missed opportunity.

Being a content creator can be about the impact of the media you create – whether blog posts, video clips or other forms of online and collaborative media – but it is also about the process of creating and the learning that comes from that. The 1980s classic youth work text by Mark Smith, Creators Not Consumers, describes youth group members planning a trip to go ice skating. The text highlights the informal learning gains from focussing on the process of creating the trip, rather than solely on the end ‘product’. As Mark outlines the ice skating trip did not necessarily have an “outcome that recommends itself to youth work administrators keen to justify their work by the usual standards” when “in the end [it] has 29 participants, a financial loss (£16) and left four members stranded in London when they did not turn up on time for the returning coach (the decision of the [young] organisers)”. However, the process of ‘creating’ a trip (rather than just having it created for them) led to key learning for the young people, who when next planning a trip made changes based on their past experience. If the group were planning a trip today, they might use web-based collaboration tools to do it – learning in the process about how team-work can take place online. But the real timeless insight from Creators Not Consumers is that for informal learning the process of creation matters as much as the product at the end.

David Gauntlett, Professor of Media and Communications at the School of Media, Arts and Design at the University of Westminster, argues that fostering creativity, including digital participatory cultures, is a powerful way to transform lives and societies. When developing innovations with a digital edge, consider if they are only about new content for young people...
to consume, or whether they truly tap into the potential of creation as a process of learning, empowerment and participation.

**BE NETWORK LITERATE AND CREATE NEW CONNECTIONS**

http://goo.gl/JwGBH

Networks are increasingly becoming a key organising principle within society, and as such, understanding how people within networks interact and participate is vital to creating effective support for young people. Sociologist Manuel Castells has described the ‘Network Society’, where social institutions and human interactions move from being organised by hierarchy and bureaucratic structures to be organised around networks. In Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives, Nicholas Christakis and James Fowler examine many different ways in which the networks we are part of influence our behaviour, and how the action and interests of friends-of-a-friend in a network (even if we don’t know them directly) can have an influence on us. And Internet visionary Howard Rheingold has argued that ‘network literacy’ – understanding how the “structure and dynamics of networks influences political freedom, economic wealth creation, and participation in the creation of culture”¹ – is one of the most important contemporary literacies to have.

However, interventions to support young people are rarely designed with networks in mind. Becoming economically and socially engaged can be described as being about taking on new roles within organisations or within a community: but we can also think about it as making new connections and becoming part of new networks. Network mapping and social network analysis can help to visualise the networks people are part of, and the gaps in those networks where new connections could be made. Young people’s digital social networks on sites like Facebook increasingly impact upon the content they see online. Whether or not a young person has a network of friends and contacts that provide access to positive content, role models and information on how to build a livelihood or engage in a local community will have an influence on their ability to locate and take advantage of opportunities to engage.

Community builders working with Forever Manchester are using social network mapping to depict the connections that they are making, and to help people identify more connections by showing them the emerging map. Gary Stanyard writes: “It helps us and our communities actually see how we are knitting people together in a web of community, it has also become a record of how a community builder sees the positive connections in the community. By creating this record, it in a small way gives a sense of legitimacy and importance to discovering the positive talents and skills.”

Innovations might help young people to develop their own network literacy, or they might work through networks to make new connections, and make sure positive content and opportunities are flowing through the online and offline networks young people are part of.

**BLEND ONLINE AND OFFLINE**

For many young people, day-to-day life is lived through a blend of online and offline interaction. Conversations started face-to-face with friends move to SMS on the way home, onto social network site chat later on and perhaps at some point to a Skype call. Snapshots of a social event taken on a smartphone might be uploaded to the web, shared, liked, discussed and then shown around on a screen at the next face-to-face meeting, extending engagement as content and conversation seamlessly shifts between online and offline.

Yet the majority of services and support for young people are resolutely delivered either offline or online, with strong dividing lines between the two.

Blending offline and online support can happen in many ways. It might be driven by a facilitator taking a ‘blended facilitation’ approach to amplify face-to-face work with young people by sharing it online. Or it might involve using the web to connect people to meet to share ideas and experience offline. Many areas of the country now have hyperlocal online websites – such as the London ward based Harringay Online (www.harringayonline.com), and Birmingham’s Digbeth is Good (http://digbeth.org) – that are helping make new connections in local communities (though many right now have little youth involvement). With a large enough network, even national sites can help people make face-to-face connections with people with shared interests or issues.

Blended approaches can also be about getting professionals already working offline with young people to increase their use of digital tools. As government moves towards a ‘digital by default’ model for accessing public services, the 10% of 17-19 year-olds who are lapsed Internet users, and other young people who have access, but face difficulty using digital services (whether because of literacy and language barriers, moments of transition, or other challenges) may need support from the adults they are already in touch with in order to make the most of the growing opportunities online.

**ADDRESS INNOVATION GAPS IN THE BACK-OFFICE**

Focussing only on tools for young people and developing the end-user interfaces can ignore another opportunity: that digital technology can provide incredible support ‘behind the scenes’ for adults working with young people.

A useful intervention could be developing ways for young people to find volunteering opportunities. However, the lack of good quality (and open) data on volunteering opportunities;
tools for keeping data up to date, and the tools to track and respond in effective ways to enquiries from volunteers are equally important in providing opportunities for young people to engage.

There are many other innovation gaps like this, where professionals working with young people, or staff managing information and services ‘behind the scenes’ are working with out-of-date technologies, or lack the skills and training to use the technology they do have to its potential. Often there is a lack of awareness of existing tools and services that might be able to support practice, or many small barriers preventing use of new tools. Sometime disruptive digital innovation might be about unlocking the latent capacity of the services already there to support young people, putting better tools into the hands of practitioners, and giving them the skills to use what they have already got.

USE GAMES TO ENGAGE

http://goo.gl/USD0r

Games have long been part of youth engagement: just look at youth movements like the Guides and Scouts, which not only use games in their weekly meetings, but which have used ‘badges’ to recognise achievement since they were founded. However, the idea of digital ‘gamification’ has only recently come to prominence in discussions of education and support for young people. In a Twitter contribution to this report, Matt Lent described how ‘gaming mechanics’ can tap into a range of motivations to get young people engaged in education, learning or social action: from “status, achievement, reward and competition to self-expression and altruism”.

In Finland, Verke, the National Centre for Online Youth Work, has been exploring how getting young people involved in creating digital games can be a powerful informal education tool. As Jukka Orava at the centre explained:

“Instead of spending money on public information campaigns, we have been looking at using funds to support many young people to co-create their own online and mobile games inspired by a public information message. Even if just a few of those games end up completed, when shared within young people’s peer networks, they can end up engaging with a lot of young people.”

Not everyone is convinced by gamification: critics argue that it can replace an intrinsic motivation with extrinsic rewards, dumbing down engagement. Proponents respond that, whilst there are examples of shallow gamification out there, when gamification is done right it re-enforces intrinsic motivations: if doing the right thing is also fun, that doesn’t make it less of the right thing to do.
Co-design with young people

http://goo.gl/2vVGb

The design process is essential for effective digital innovation. In co-design, service users and designers come together to create a service that takes into account the different views, needs and wants of those who could benefit from it. Co-design goes beyond simple surveys or focus groups to get input from potential service users, and works directly with them as partners in the design process – sharing together in the problem solving process.

There are many approaches to co-design. For example, weekend innovation workshops bring together technology developers, designers, policy makers and young people to explore key challenges and to come up with prototype solutions over a weekend. Another approach might make use of ‘paper prototyping’ to get potential users of an innovation to test out and offer feedback on ideas before a lot of time has gone into technical development. Equally, working with young people to create imagined ‘persona profiles’ that represent possible users of an innovation and developing scenarios to describe in storyboard form how an innovation might be used could be considered.

Effective co-design creates ways for young people to be involved right through the innovation process, and digital collaboration tools can be used to keep a group engaged even when face-to-face meetings are difficult to organise. However, it’s important to think about who is involved in a co-design process – remembering the diversity of young people, and making sure the voices of those affected or to benefit from an innovation are included in the process.

Joe Roberson is the co-ordinator of a recent Innovation Labs project (www.innovationlabs.org.uk) which aims to create digital tools that support young people’s mental health. He describes how co-design approaches: “... get service users and professionals to think about how someone other than themselves will experience a service or application, both before and after it’s been developed. Using these tools results in a better understanding of what is important for service users when they interact with the product or service. This in turn leads to more well-rounded ideas.”

Use digital tools to enable peer-to-peer learning

http://goo.gl/xkdLB

In the Internet age, education doesn’t have to be top-down or only available in formal settings. Digital tools can support peer-to-peer learning, where young people and adults are both teachers and learners – sharing their experiences and knowledge with each other. It can be easier to learn from someone with similar experiences to you and who is able to communicate information in more accessible ways. Digital peer-to-peer learning might take place online, through social networks and social media; or digital tools might be used to bring
together groups for face-to-face peer-to-peer learning opportunities.

The Internet has the potential to revolutionise learning. Webcast lectures or inspirational clips from TED Talks (www.ted.com/talks) demonstrate the power of the web in supporting self-directed learning and providing access to high quality education resources. Peer-to-peer learning complements these one-to-many forms of online education with opportunities for many-to-many learning, where ‘everyone has something to teach, and everyone has something to learn’ (a motto adopted by SchoolOfEverything.com). Confidence is important for effective peer-to-peer learning: both the confidence of ‘teachers’ and the confidence of learners. Similarly it is important to explore who are young people’s peers. Traditional age groupings found in classrooms can make way for digital peer groups organised around skills, needs, interests or challenges.

**USE TECHNOLOGY TO PERSONALISE SERVICES**

http://goo.gl/NTftu

The modern web is personalised. From what you see on Facebook or the DVD and book recommendations you might get on Amazon, to your search results on Google, computers are crunching vast quantities of data about you to give you a personal experience of the web – customising content based on all sorts of information and inferences about you. For young people, many of their home spaces on the web are personalised, and that can create an expectation of personal services from other online platforms.
A continued exploration

Personalisation might happen at the level of a single service by designing a range of different routes through the service, or it might be about bringing together content from across the web to give an individual or group their own view of relevant support and resources for them. It is worth noting however that not all projects will have the luxury of the vast quantities of data that make Amazon and Google’s statistically driven forms of personalisation possible. Where Facebook can collect lots of personal information from its users over time, services based on demanding lots of details from their users are likely to frustrate them. One set of technologies currently in development to address these challenges are ‘personal data stores’ that put individuals in control of their own personal data, and make it easy for them to selectively share it with online services so that those services can be more personalised. Personalisation might also draw upon contextual data and open data from the wider web – for example, drawing in local content based on where a website user is coming from.

We know from recognising the diversity of young people that there is not going to be a one-size-fits-all approach to offering support, so personalisation is ultimately about making the most of the engagement you have to provide the information and support that will make the most impact.

Etherpad is a simple and light-weight tool for real-time collaboration on a document. You set up a pad, share the link with anyone you want, and then you can all type into the document at the same time – seeing who is writing by the colour of the text. You can find a list of free Etherpad servers (no need to sign-up or sign-in to anything) at http://etherpad.org/public-sites.
Further reading

What are you already doing, or planning to do to support young people to create sustainable livelihoods, or to get engaged in community decision making? What role does digital technology play in your plans? The messages above have been presented to spark some ideas for new ways that you could use digital technologies. If you’ve got five minutes, then why not grab the back of an envelope (or, even better, go to Google Docs or Etherpad) to create a document you could share online with a college or young person, and write some thoughts on what a selection of the messages above might mean for your work.

The rules of paper and print mean we’ve had to freeze in this document a snapshot of our exploration of how digital technology can support work with young people, weaving together input from over 30 participants who shared their input with us. But the messages here are just one stage on an unfolding journey exploring how to add a digital edge to youth work, community development and social innovation practice. We hope that your own innovations and explorations will be part of that journey too...
You can find all the blog posts and links to resources collecting during the process of putting this paper together at www.socialreporters.net/?cat=34 where each message is backed up with links to websites, videos and further resources. Below are a few extra resources worth taking a look at, or that we’ve referenced in the paper above.

**Plugged In, Untapped: Using Digital Technologies to Help Young People Learn to Lead** by Sarah Hewes, Lauren Kahn and Mary Abdo of the Young Foundation offers an analysis of the possibilities digital technologies offer for youth leadership, and includes top tips for building online initiatives that empower young people.

The **Social by Social** book and website offer 38 key propositions on using social media for changing the way we engage communities, run companies, deliver public services, participate in government and campaign for change. Find it at www.socialbysocial.com

**Manuel Castells’** voluminous writing on ‘The Network Society’ offers an in depth look at the social changes brought about by globalisation and networked technologies. For a shorter read, **The Internet Galaxy** outlines some of the key ideas from the lengthier ‘Network Society’ trilogy. The more recent **Communication Power** highlights how networks can both create and challenge social exclusion across the world.

**Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives** by Nicholas Christakis and James Fowler takes a look at how network analysis and network theory can be used to understand influence on human behaviour. In the book they look across a wide range of impacts networks have on wealth, health and politics (amongst other things). On the book website at http://connectedthebook.com you will find video and audio clips where they explore the key ideas.

Howard Rheingold’s **Net Smart** (2012) outlines some of the skills and literacies we need to get on in the modern world, from attention literacy to participation, collaboration and critical information consumption skills.

For more **hyperlocal websites** check out the Openly Local Directory: **http://openlylocal.com/hyperlocal_sites**
About the series

Nominet Trust provocation papers are undertaken by leading thinkers, writers and researchers to provide an alternative view on the existing challenges of digital technology. By reflecting on current research, policy and practice, the authors explore alternative approaches to a topic, in order to stimulate debate and to provide new perspectives on particular challenges.

By providing insight and new ideas, it is hoped these publications will add to the imaginative applications of the internet to drive social action.

As always, we value your comments and suggestions for how to act on the ideas presented within these publications, and how we can build the series so that it is more useful to us all as we work towards a safer, more accessible internet, used for social good.

We look forward to your comments and suggestions at: developmentresearch@nominettrust.org.uk
Digital technology offers a phenomenal opportunity to stimulate new forms of collaboration, to mobilise new communities of interest, and to unleash the imagination of millions of users in addressing specific local and global challenges.

At Nominet Trust we are committed to making these opportunities a reality – for as many people as possible.

Nominet Trust is a UK-based social investor that advocates the imaginative use of digital technology to improve lives and communities.

That’s why we bring together, invest in and support projects committed to using digital technology to make society better.

Through our on-going research programme we identify specific areas of need and channel funding towards initiatives designed to make a significant difference to people’s lives.

Since our inception in September 2008, Nominet Trust has invested in hundreds of projects, providing business support as well as financial investment, seeking to make a positive difference to the lives of disadvantages and vulnerable people.

To find out more about our work or how you can apply for funding, please visit: www.nominettrust.org.uk