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The Scottish  
Government

# Evaluation of the Angus Gold Project

(A Partnership Approach to Digital  
Education and Social Inclusion)

Public Services and Government



**EVALUATION OF THE ANGUS GOLD PROJECT  
(A PARTNERSHIP APPROACH TO DIGITAL  
EDUCATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION)**

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Scottish Government Social Research  
2008

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

1. Angus Gold is a digital inclusion initiative allied to a broader programme of health education and improvements to engagement with services for the 50+ population. Following the end of a three-year pilot phase funded by the Scottish Government, a team from the RBS Centre for the Older Person's Agenda at Queen Margaret University was commissioned to undertake an evaluation of the project.

2. The aim of this project was to evaluate the Angus Gold project with a focus on identifying and reporting lessons learned for dissemination to local authorities and other organisations engaged in this type of activity.

## Aims and objectives of the evaluation

3. In order to meet these aims the research pursued two strands as shown in Table 1, below.

**Table 1 Evaluation aims and objectives**

<b>Strand one: Impact evaluation</b>	<b>Strand two: Process evaluation</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Analyse the extent to which the project met its objectives</li><li>Assess the impact on participants of taking part in training and forums</li><li>Explore whether there have been any unintended positive or negative outcomes as a result of the initiatives developed</li><li>Examine the extent to which the approach taken represents value for money</li></ul>	<p>Appraise the approach taken to each element of the project including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>the engagement methods used to involve older people;</li><li>the process of developing a website that is relevant to and accessible for older users;</li><li>partnership working and engagement of the private sector;</li><li>levels and type of support required by the different age groups;</li><li>the training and delivery models used to build the confidence of participants;</li><li>the effectiveness of delivering ICT in the different venues used by the project; and</li><li>development of the entitlement card</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Locate the findings in the context of existing research on accepted good practice and lessons from other UK projects</li><li>Present lessons learned in a research report and series of topic-based summaries</li></ul>	

## Methods

4. The evaluation team also worked alongside four members of COPA's HUB<sup>1</sup> during fieldwork (\* = assistance and input from HUB researchers)

- Exploratory visits to other digital inclusion projects and to the different type of venues where training had been provided by Angus Gold\*
- Exploratory discussions with key stakeholders and the Project Co-ordinator

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.qmu.ac.uk/copa/hub/>

- Review of the existing literature (for the last five years); review of existing website projects; and a review of project documentation
- With project participants: a postal questionnaire to all participants; three discussion groups\*; six interviews and three case studies
- Volunteers: two discussion groups\*
- With strategic partners and other stakeholders: one discussion group\*; seven interviews
- With the Angus Gold project team: five interviews
- A website evaluation included an interview with the web developer; website evaluation with seven members of the Angus Gold website end user group; review of project documentation; and assessment of the website against accessibility criteria\*

### **Introduction to Angus Gold**

5. The Angus 50+ project, later re-named Angus Gold by participants, began in March 2004 and became fully operational by January 2005. The project's remit was to promote digital inclusion for the 50+ population of Angus within a broader programme of health education and improvements to engagement with services. Angus Gold was designed around a strategic partnership agreement with council agencies working in collaboration with representatives from the voluntary and private sectors. Originally intended to run for two years, an extension for a further year was subsequently agreed to accommodate certain delays. The project employed a Community Learning and Development (CLD) approach (see 2.6 and 2.32 for a definition of CLD) and this provided a methodology and guided decision-making.

### ***Aims and objectives of Angus Gold:***

6. The aims and objectives of Angus Gold were to:
- Increase the use of modern technology in the target age group, as a means of accessing information, contributing to the development of this information and increasing community involvement
  - Develop a website that meets the specific needs of older adults
  - Develop involvement in a 50+ smartcard which may utilise discounts and incentives and be linked to existing citizen card development – i.e. leisure, library and travel cards
  - Provide a publication that will be available online to provide a guide to local services targeted at the 50+ age group
  - Inform the 50+ population on health and well-being issues and opportunities in Angus – including service provision, health improvement and community safety

### **Findings**

#### ***The strategic partnership***

7. The original multi-disciplinary partnership that collaborated on Angus Gold involved:
- Angus Council agencies (including Social Work and Health, Leisure Services and the IT Department)
  - Angus College
  - Age Concern Scotland

- Microsoft
- British Telecom
- Tayside Police
- NHS Tayside

8. The early stages of the project were characterised by the need to overcome different ‘drivers’ (i.e. financial targets or policy-related aims) of the various partners. The more successful relationships were those where a learning and development approach was embraced by partners. Good partnerships were characterised by partners that were prepared to adapt their working practices to meet the needs of Angus Gold participants; work at a pace that supported input from participants; and harness resources that could be used by the project.

9. The partnership generated various forms of input and contribution to the project including resources such as computer software and broadband facilities from the private sector; expertise and advice from different sectors; financial and staffing input from health and council agencies; signposting and support linked to policy developments; and capacity building through joint working with different groups and services.

10. Strategic partners recognised with hindsight that there had been insufficient forward planning and provision of resources for the project. This was reportedly due to:

- Uncertainty over demand and outcomes associated with a pilot project
- Lack of responsiveness to the level of demand as the project progressed
- Not planning effectively beyond the pilot phase of the project

11. A range of benefits were experienced by strategic partners including improvements to provision, better accountability to older service users and a greater understanding of the value of interdisciplinary working.

### ***Engagement***

12. The project targeted groups and individuals who were unlikely to access training and other activities elsewhere and took an exploratory and experimental approach to tackling the different barriers to participation.

13. Consultation with participants was on-going and began with a residential conference held shortly after the project began which:

- Opened discussions on the internet and website design and recruited a website end user group
- Collected ideas on the branding of the project using creative activities around colour and design
- Established the foundations of a network of forums by consulting delegates on local issues of concern and their ideas for how these might be addressed

14. The project reviewed the individual progress of trainees and adapted teaching and content to their perspectives; reviewed the progress of each strand by supporting participants to gather feedback from stakeholders and the wider community; and evaluated the overall project on an annual basis, measuring progress against agreed milestones.

15. A higher than expected level of demand for computer training was generated by early engagement activities. In response the team slowed down the in-take of trainees in order to develop other strands.

16. A strong project 'brand' was developed through discussion and consultation with participants. The branding supported loyalty from participants and encouraged ownership of the project as a whole.

17. The status of the project as separate from mainstream services gave it a beacon quality whereby it was visible to potential collaborators and interested parties beyond the boundaries of Angus.

18. Many participants reported involvement in more than one strand of the project, highlighting the diverse roles they had been able to take on. The mobility of the different project strands enhanced inclusivity as events and opportunities were offered to participants on their home territory. Participants with mobility difficulties and other limiting conditions were enabled to access training and attend forum meetings as a result.

19. The project created a network of participants with whom local planners and services providers could consult and provided novel ways in which to disseminate information and other messages. This network has also begun to raise issues of local concern and feedback on services and facilities.

### ***Progress on the aims and objectives***

20. The project achieved most of the aims and objectives despite certain delays:

- The aim of increasing the use of modern technology within the target age group was achieved and the targets set for trainee numbers were exceeded.
- The aim of constructing a website that meets the specific needs of older people was achieved but subject to significant delays due to pacing development according to the needs of participants. The delays also had implications in terms of costs and the timing of funding.
- While an Angus Gold card is now in circulation that is linked to the National Entitlement Card (NEC) the original objective of creating a 'smartcard' was not achieved during the period of funding from the Scottish Government.
- The objective of providing a publication and service guide for the 50+ population of Angus has been achieved in the context of learning lessons around format and content. Following an iterative process of testing different formats a third version of the publication contained initial information on the discount card and directed readers to the website as a source of further information.
- The health and wellbeing objective was achieved through the introduction of diverse sources of information and by enhancing the skills of participants to access this information.

21. The project engaged in a series of activities and tasks that were additional to the original aims and objectives and these included:

- A drama group that linked with theatre projects and other groups around Scotland and was used to develop scenarios for short films on community safety made in

collaboration with the Trading Standards Office and Care and Repair and a short film on mental health issues in collaboration with the local NHS

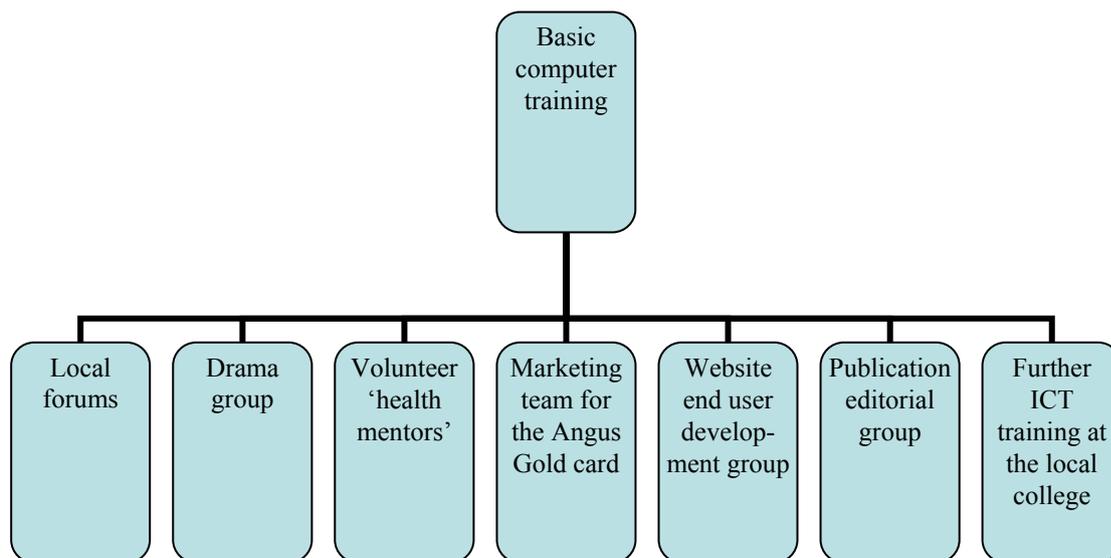
- Recruitment of volunteers for the IT training and health promotion strands of the project helping to build capacity, broaden the reach of the project and engage the wider community in the project
- Development of a network of forums that took place in various settings agreed with participants including meetings in sheltered housing facilities during day time to facilitate consultation with and participation of frail and disabled participants.

### ***IT Training***

22. An inclusive approach to training was developed through regular reviewing of progress and adaptation of materials and content to trainees needs alongside the introduction of various forms of assistive technology and other adaptations.

23. IT training was used as a springboard into an array of other project activities (see Figure 1 below) and through this Angus Gold managed to sustain engagement with participants.

**Figure 1 The Angus Gold pathway for participants**



24. Resources were targeted through an informal assessment process that gave priority to absolute beginners in a manner that avoided potentially stigmatising formal selection criteria.

25. Developing mobile training further supported the targeting of resources, helped address anxieties about learning a new skill and led to trainees learning within groups of people familiar to them.

26. The project uncovered literacy problems for some trainees and was required to find ways of supporting learners through teaching methods that avoided emphasis upon reading and writing. Teaching materials were adapted to substitute text with illustrations, a relationship was developed with the local literacy team, more one-on-one support from volunteers was provided for learners with literacy difficulties, literacy software packages were purchased, and teaching was tailored with individualised activity plans and reviews.

27. At the time of the evaluation 389 participants had undergone basic training with nearly a quarter of these going on to further training at the local community college and over a quarter purchasing their own computers. Of the participants with access to a computer 70% reported using it for emailing, 64% for accessing the internet and 45% for getting information.

28. The evaluation also found evidence that the project had successfully targeted individuals who might face barriers to accessing training elsewhere with 44% trainees reporting they lived alone; 40% with a chronic illness or disabling condition and a third reporting they were rarely or not always able to get out and about. Approximately a third of respondents had visual impairment and a quarter reported hearing difficulties.

29. Strategic partners indicated that Angus Gold had achieved the dual outcome of gathering information together of particular relevance to the 50+ population while increasing participants' skills in accessing it.

30. The training had a less than 10% drop-out rate with participants highlighting the most important features as:

- The age-targeted format and composition of classes
- Everyone beginning at a similar level
- The relaxed and social tone of the classes
- The opportunity to establish or widen a social network

### ***Website development***

31. The project's website was developed through consultation with individuals with diverse support requirements and little or no prior experience of using the internet. A firm of web developers was contracted to work with a website end user group. The development process took longer than expected as a result of following a pace set by participants.

32. The evaluation found that nearly a third of participants had visited the website recently and most found it easy or very easy to locate information. Participants also reported that the lay-out and information on the website compared favourably to the complicated nature of much online content.

33. Strategic partners recognised that the website represented a sector leading example of what an accessible and usable website should be for older people but raised concerns over the need to keep the content updated.

### ***Angus Gold Card***

34. The National Entitlement Card (NEC) was rebranded to carry the Angus Gold logo and from June 2007 has been distributed to anyone entitled to a travel concession. It is also available to 50-59 year old residents if they apply to the Council. A team of participants have been involved in negotiating discounts and deals with the local business community.

35. Delays to distributing the card undermined links to the publication and website in the earlier stages of the project. According to the project team, these delays mean the potential of the card is only beginning to be realised.

36. The card now carries over 20 different discounts and deals and has been distributed to over 30,000 people in Angus. Cardholders who were not project participants were provided with little information on how the card could be used when they were originally sent out. Of the project participants, 38% of cardholders have made use of the card to obtain discounts or other deals.

37. After the initial start-up costs the running costs of the card are limited and the majority of the associated workload is being undertaken by project participants. Work on the card has continued beyond the period of Government funding.

### ***Publications***

38. The project produced three types of publication: a magazine, a service directory specifically for the Arbroath area and a third format combining both directory and magazine. A writer/researcher was contracted to work with an editorial team of participants to compile content and gather input from the wider community and service providers.

39. Evaluation questionnaire data shows that 78% of respondents had seen an Angus Gold-related publication and over a third of respondents indicated making use of a specific article or piece of information from the publication.

40. For many strategic partners the publication's greatest strength lay in its relationship with the other project strands and the distribution network that was harnessed by the project including the local meal delivery service for frail and housebound older people.

41. The publication has also supported further project objectives including:

- informing the 50+ population of health and well-being issues,
- promoting access to information for older people (including housebound and frail older people) and
- involving older people in the production of content.

42. While the third and final version of the publication carried links to the card and website none of the publications carried any advertising or other forms of commercial input with implications for the sustainability of this strand of the project, discussed later.

### ***Health and well-being***

43. Health and well-being issues were integrated throughout the project and information was disseminated in a range of formats and media. The process began by establishing how health-related issues were perceived by the local 50+ population through a survey carried out by participants. Fourteen IT trainees also went on to receive training as health mentors and to engage frail and housebound older people residing in sheltered housing facilities around health based activities.

44. Health, wellbeing and community safety information has been dispersed throughout the project, which has maintained a focus upon groups and individuals who particularly stand to benefit from it. This includes participants who were socially isolated, frail, disabled and those with enduring health problems.

45. Partners reported that the project has helped support and promote local and national health and social care policy and noted the improvements to the well-being of participants as a result of taking part in the project. This included benefits to well-being associated with areas such as computer training that were not directly health-related. The benefits of disseminating health information in a broader context of activities and initiatives were also recognised.

46. Participants reported improvements to well-being and quality of life as well as increased skills in accessing information on health conditions. Opportunities to learn about health-related issues were also increased through various branches of the project including talks at forums, a health-themed publication and health and wellbeing information on the website.

### ***Impact on participants***

47. Very few criticisms of the project were voiced by participants and a number of strategic partners indicated that the impact upon participants' lives and wellbeing had been the single most significant achievement of the project. Both partners and participants highlighted that the combined impact of the project as a whole and the interconnected nature of its various strands was key to its success.

48. Acquisition of computing skills had a positive influence upon both frequency and quality of social contact with existing social networks as well as making activities of daily life easier. Project participation extended social networks and increased levels of direct social contact for participants. The sociability associated with the project has been a trigger for initial engagement and a motive for maintaining engagement for participants.

### ***Value for money***

49. Among the issues to consider in deciding whether Angus Gold represents value for money are:

- It has targeted groups and individuals who are high-level users of public services and provided skills to access services and information about them online
- Participants have been enabled to take control of aspects of their lives that due to frailty, ill-health or disability were becoming more difficult to manage such as shopping, money management and maintaining social ties
- The experimental approach of the project means that lessons have been learned that will benefit future initiatives especially in respect to digital inclusion and the engagement of groups often considered 'hard to reach'
- Value has been added through benefits to partners in terms of reviewing working practices, identifying gaps in provision and reaching a broader range of service users.

50. The high rate of trainee retention, alongside the measurable progress made by participants, support the interpretation that the project has offered value for money especially in terms of the training programme and wider efforts made to tackle digital exclusion. The varied forms of input from different partners have also helped to make the project more cost effective, alongside the benefits attached to the recruitment of volunteers.

## ***Sustainability***

51. Partners identified two approaches to the sustainability of the project. The first option is to develop the Angus Gold template on a national level comparable to the YoungScot initiative. A second option was to pursue a local model of sustainability through mainstreaming of the different project strands. Progress on this is detailed below in Table 2.

**Table 2 Mainstreaming of project strands following the end of Government funding**

<b>Project Strand</b>	<b>Current status</b>
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Giving up premises and moving to accommodation provided by partners</li><li>• Slowing of trainee through-put</li><li>• IT trainers salaries and costs to be met by Community Learning and Development (CLD)</li></ul>
Website	Not yet allocated to a health or Council agency (since the evaluation took place arrangements have been made to host the website more locally and link it to other council initiatives)
Card	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Participant marketing team continue to secure deals and discounts</li><li>• Card to continue as part of project managed by Project team</li><li>• As the confidence of the marketing team grows participant ownership of this strand is increasing</li></ul>
Publications	Not yet allocated to a health or Council agency
Health and Wellbeing	NHS have agreed to further funding for a 0.5 fte health and wellbeing worker until March 2009
Forums	Support for forums has been mainstreamed with local workers employed by the CLD and with plans to further develop a Forum Federation bringing together representatives from Angus-wide forums
Project team	The responsibilities of the Project Co-ordinator have been merged with a broader set of responsibilities in relation to information and engagement within an existing Senior Community Learning and Development post. It is likely this will support greater levels of intergenerational working.

52. The greatest obstacles to the project's sustainability have been the slow response of strategic partners to the unexpected level of demand and an overall lack of forward planning. The exploratory and experimental dimension to the project has taken precedence over the concern to identify opportunities for income generation. Comparisons with similar projects suggest potential exists for a more commercially viable approach but also to support sustainability by handing over increasing levels of responsibility to participants.

## ***Replicability***

53. As a pilot initiative Angus Gold has proved the efficacy of the approach taken and therefore its value as a template. Partners and participants alike highlighted the crucial role of the Project Co-ordinator as a champion of the project and driving force behind its success. Considerations for replicating this type of initiative, based upon lessons learned by Angus Gold include:

- Forward planning from the outset, including provision for expansion
- Early development of a strong brand identity
- Responsiveness to levels of demand during the life of the project
- Overcoming sector differences for joint working between partners
- All partners observing the National Standards for Community Engagement

- Balancing through-put of trainees with the need to develop other branches of the project
- Identifying new revenue streams and exploiting the commercial knowledge of private sector partners
- Capacity building through collaboration and joint working

54. The delay to certain project strands highlight that future initiatives, pursuing a similar community learning and development (CLD) approach, require flexibility in timing of finance. It was a feature of the CLD framework that the project progressed at a pace relevant to the participants and a commitment to this ethos is required at all levels of a project including the financial management.

55. Future projects may also wish to consider charging to assist with income generation towards sustainability however two points need to be acknowledged. The first is the ability of frail older adults and particularly those in care homes to pay, and secondly income generated is likely to be small and not fully offset costs. Where courses are designed to encourage a return to work they may be eligible for Individual Learning Account (ILA) funding. The Angus Gold team noted that it was ‘a luxury’ to be able to provide computer training free of charge.

### ***Conclusion***

56. As a summary of what has been achieved so far it might be argued that Angus Gold has had a big impact on a limited number of participants and with a limited geographical reach. However, as an exploratory pilot with an emphasis upon experimentation, the aim has been to learn lessons, especially in respect to inclusive practice, rather than meet numeric targets.

57. A particularly attractive aspect of Angus Gold is that it provides participants with a position from which to speak and a dynamic with providers, planners and policy-makers that is different to the usual framework for consultation and engagement of service users. By bringing people together under the banner of Angus Gold the stereotype of older people as passive service users has been challenged with very real consequences for the lives of those involved, not least in the discovery noted by one participant that ‘unity is strength’.

58. The project’s greatest challenge now is the task of translating an effective and lauded experiment in community engagement into a lasting and more broadly encompassing approach to digital and social inclusion.

## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

### Introduction

1.1 The Angus 50+ project, later re-named Angus Gold by participants, began in March 2004 and became fully operational by January 2005. The project's remit was to promote digital inclusion for the 50+ population of Angus within a broader programme of health education and improvements to engagement with services. Angus Gold was designed around a strategic partnership agreement with council agencies working in collaboration with representatives from the voluntary and private sectors. Originally intended to run for two years, an extension for a further year was subsequently agreed to accommodate certain delays.

1.2 Inspired by the success of the Dialogue Youth and YoungScot initiatives in Angus, the then Chief Executive led a series of scoping exercises including meetings with older people's groups and forums; exploratory talks with the private and voluntary sector; and invited input from practitioners and professionals working with older people. As project advisory group was convened and charged with the development of a funding proposal. This group set out the proposed main areas of activity, outputs and outcomes for the project and a formal submission was made to the Scottish Government for funding.

1.3 In November 2007, the Public Service Reform Directorate's Transformational Technologies Division commissioned Queen Margaret University's RBS Centre for the Older Person's Agenda (COPA) to undertake an evaluation of the Angus Gold project. The intention was that the evaluation would have a strong focus upon identifying and reporting lessons learned for dissemination to local authorities and other organisations engaged in digital inclusion activities. As the main output from the evaluation this document is intended to serve as a resource for future initiatives and reports the findings of the evaluation. The key lessons learned from the project have also been summarised in six briefings available on the Scottish Government website.

### Context

1.4 In 2001, within a context of UK-wide and international efforts to tackle digital exclusion, the Scottish Executive<sup>2</sup> launched its Digital Inclusion Strategy "Connecting Scotland's People". The aim of the strategy was to promote access to information and communications technology (ICT) along with the skills to use it. Experimental pilots such as the Public Internet Access Points initiative, the Internet Made Easy CD and Digital Communities Initiative (Scottish Executive, 2006) were developed to assist in achieving this aim. By 2006, while progress had been made, evidence shows that certain groups, such as older people, disabled people and those living in deprived areas, remain largely digitally unengaged. The Scottish Household Survey identified that, in 2006, 47% of the Scottish population do not have internet access in the home. This percentage increases to 75% in the 60-74 age group and of the 75 and over age group, 93% do not have access to the internet (Corbett, MacLeod, and Hope, 2007).

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<sup>2</sup> Now called the Scottish Government

## *From senior citizens to e-citizens*

1.5 Increasingly, the enjoyment of full citizenship requires a degree of digital literacy and competence. While recent years have witnessed a massive migration of public services online and increased expenditure on the maintenance of local and national government websites, not every section of society has found it easy to keep pace with this shift. Factors such as age, gender, income, literacy and level of educational attainment are all known to influence patterns of digital engagement. Living alone is another factor, not least due to the absence of other household members who might support and advise on how to use new technologies. Disabled people (especially women) are three times less likely to be digitally engaged and long-term health conditions have also been shown to have a negative influence upon the uptake and use of ICT.

## *Older people and digital exclusion*

1.6 Among the barriers identified to older people's digital inclusion are physical changes associated with ageing including visual, perceptual, motor and cognitive abilities. However, the ICT industry has also been slow to engage with older people. In addition to designing and marketing to a youthful audience, few outlets train staff to be aware of the particular needs and preferences of older customers. Websites and online content dedicated to older people remain limited and a majority fail to meet basic accessibility criteria.

1.7 Older people are far less likely than other age groups to access the internet through other new forms of technology such as digital television or mobile phones. Access to computers is therefore vital for promoting digital engagement. However, a pilot study carried out for the Scottish Government<sup>3</sup> found that while provision of (largely unsupervised) public internet access points served to increase digital access for some groups that had previously made little or no use of the internet, these public resources had little positive effect upon older people's internet access.

## **Aims and Objectives**

1.8 The aim of this project was to evaluate the Angus Gold project with a focus on identifying and reporting lessons learned for dissemination to local authorities and other organisations engaged in this type of activity.

1.9 In order to meet these aims the research pursued the following objectives:

### *Strand One – Impact Evaluation*

- Analyse the extent to which the Angus Gold project met its objectives.
- Assess the impact on participants of taking part in Angus Gold training and Angus Gold forums in terms of knowledge, skills gained, engagement in their community, well-being and perceived quality of life for example.
- Explore whether there have been any unintended positive or negative outcomes as a result of the initiatives developed (e.g. wider community benefits such as engagement with other age groups, the Council, local companies and other civic participation).

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/17002/0024844.pdf>

- Examine the extent to which the approach taken represents value for money.

### *Strand Two – Process Evaluation*

- Conduct an appraisal of the approach taken to each element of the project, identifying: what worked, what didn't and why, lessons learned, having particular regard to replicability, sustainability and cost effectiveness. This included analysis of the:
  - I) engagement methods used to involve older people in the project (from initial approach to involving participants in designing and developing services, health and well-being publications and online content)
  - II) process of developing a website that is relevant to and accessible for older users
  - III) approach to partnership working and engagement of the private sector (e.g. in entitlement card and web content)
  - IV) levels and type of support required by the different age groups (including consideration of costs and the role of volunteer workers)
  - V) approach to training and delivery models used to build the confidence of participants and equip them with the skills to use a PC and the internet
  - VI) effectiveness of delivering ICT in the different venues used by the project (including consideration of access, suitability for participants, time and costs)
  - VII) development of the entitlement card.
- Locate the findings in the context of existing research on accepted good practice and lessons from other UK projects involved in engaging older people in the use of ICT
- Present lessons learned in a research report and series of topic-based summaries (up to a maximum of seven, one for each of the seven elements listed above) for dissemination to local authorities and others interested in engaging in this kind of activity.

## **Methods**

1.10 The evaluation involved a selection of qualitative methods with efforts made to funnel research activities from initially loosely structured discussion groups through to close scrutiny of individual case studies. There were four main groups from which we sought contributions:

- ICT trainees and other older people who had participated in one or more elements of the project
- Strategic partners: representatives from the main partnership who were involved from the outset of the project
- Stakeholders: representatives of groups and individuals who had become involved with the project and/or collaborated with it since its inception
- Angus Gold team members

## ***Fieldwork***

1.11 The fieldwork consisted of informal discussions and fact-finding visits as well as more formalised data-gathering. The contextualising activities included:

- Visits to two similar digital inclusion projects: the Edinburgh ACEIT project and the Surrey 50+ Network
- Visits to an Angus day centre where ICT training had been provided, a sheltered housing complex, Angus College and the Angus Gold drop-in centre.
- Discussions with a representative of the National Entitlement Card Programme based at Dundee Council
- Discussions with the Ex-Chief of Angus Council (responsible for the original idea for the project and who succeeded in securing funding from the Scottish Government)
- An introduction to the Angus Gold project and an overview of it was also provided by the Project Co-ordinator at the outset of the fieldwork

1.12 The data-gathering for the project lasted for approximately two and a half months and during this period the team undertook the following activities:

- A selective review of the existing literature (from the last five years) on ageing and digital inclusion
- A review of the project-related documentation compiled by the Angus Gold team
- A postal questionnaire<sup>4</sup> distributed to 470 project participants. We received 169 responses<sup>5</sup> (a return rate of 36%). This questionnaire included questions aimed at better understanding people's computer use and was cross-referenced with the project's own evaluation data gathered from trainees.
- Discussion groups were held with a total of 15 ICT trainees who had received training in different types of venue this included one group in a care home, one based at Angus College (whose participants had originally attended the drop-in centre) and one group at a sheltered housing facility.
- Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with 6 ICT trainees and an additional 3 more detailed case study interviews were completed. Efforts were made to involve people of varying ages and a mix of those who had recently completed their training and some who had received training at the earlier stages of the project.
- Three stakeholder discussion groups were undertaken: one with Project Advisors and representatives from different agencies involved in the Project, including Social Services, Community Planning and Trading Standards; one with 6 volunteers from the health promotion strand of the project and one with 6 volunteers from the ICT training strand. An interview with a representative of Forfarshire Society for the Blind and an interview with the Area Manager, Neighbourhood Services, Sports Facilities Arbroath and Carnoustie were also carried out.
- Five semi-structured interviews were undertaken with strategic partners of Angus Gold including; the Director of Angus College; the Director of Neighbourhood Services; a representative of Community Learning and Development (and line-manager to the Project Co-ordinator); and a representative of British Telecom. A joint interview with 2 tutors from Angus College was also undertaken.
- Interviews were conducted with five Angus Gold team members

1.13 *Appendix 1* presents the profiles of the evaluation participants.

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<sup>4</sup> The questionnaire was adapted from a previously tested tool developed by Melanie Lewin for research on older people's computer use (Lewin 2001).

<sup>5</sup> Respondents were given the option of contacting COPA and answering the questions over the telephone.

## ***Website evaluation***

1.14 The COPA team also enlisted the input of the website developer for their own website (Dr Sue Murray) to undertake the website evaluation strand of the study. This piece of work consisted of:

- A review of similar website projects alongside an initial investigation of the Angus Gold website
- Evaluation of the Angus Gold website against accessibility criteria with the input of two HUB researchers (see below)
- Interview with the web developer employed by Angus Gold
- Interviews and evaluation of the Angus Gold website with 7 members of the web development group
- A review of the project documentation held by the Angus Gold team relating to the website development

## ***HUB researchers***

1.15 As an additional strand to the evaluation, four older people who are members of COPA's HUB<sup>6</sup> were recruited to the team. Each of these 'HUB researchers' had existing knowledge of services to older people and an understanding of information and communication technology. Two had previous experience of involvement in other digital inclusion projects for older people and one had extensive experience of advocacy work with older people residing in care homes. The HUB researchers attended several meetings where they assisted with the structure and content of the fieldwork tools. As well as attending the meetings, three assisted with facilitating the discussion group interviews while two had input into the website evaluation strand. Furthermore, three of the HUB researchers also attended and participated in the interim evaluation report meeting with the advisory group and representatives of the Scottish Government.

## ***Limitations and constraints***

1.16 The tender asked that the evaluation should consider what influences the project may have had upon the well-being and quality of life of those who participated. Access was provided to data gathered by the Angus Gold team during the life of the project, and questions were put to participants during interview or discussion but no validated tools were used, given that this was an endpoint study.

1.17 The evaluation necessarily focused upon the aims and objectives that were the basis on which funding was received. While we were able to ask questions regarding the diverse portfolio of activities that Angus Gold has engaged in, we are not in a position to offer a critical account of the full scope of the project.

1.18 With respect to the age range of those who have participated in the evaluation we have managed only limited input from people in the 50-60 years group. This consideration has implications for our findings but reflects the targeting of particular groups by the Angus Gold project itself, something we discuss further under the section on engagement (see 2.34).

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<sup>6</sup> The HUB is a Scottish-wide network of older people and practitioners who have expressed an interest in participating in COPA's research and educational activities: <http://www.qmu.ac.uk/copa/hub/>

## **Report Structure**

1.19 The remainder of this report is structured as follows

- Chapter 2: Introduction to Angus Gold; strategic partnerships; engagement with and impact upon participants
- Chapter 3: Performance against the project's specific aims and objectives
- Chapter 4: Discussion: value for money, sustainability and replicability
- Chapter 5: Conclusions
  
- Appendix 1: Profile of evaluation participants
- Appendix 2: Strategic partnership case study
- Appendix 3: Participant case studies
- Appendix 4: References

## **CHAPTER TWO THE PROJECT, ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACT**

2.1 In this chapter we introduce the Angus Gold project, outline the strategic partnership upon which it was built and the approach taken to engaging participants. In the final section we consider the impact the project has had upon participants.

### **Introduction to Angus**

2.2 Angus lies to the east-side of Scotland, just inland from Aberdeen and north of Dundee. Covering both rural and urban areas there are no major cities within Angus and over a quarter of the population resides in rural areas. The total population is just under 110,000 and the largest town, Arbroath is home to approximately 25,000. Arbroath is also the area with the highest indices of deprivation, the inner parts of which rank amongst the worst 1% of disadvantaged households in Scotland.

2.3 The profile of the ageing population differs slightly to that of the rest of Scotland. Angus has a higher than average 60+ and 75+ population and higher than average numbers of carers who are of pensionable age. There is also a higher number of single (pensioner) households than the average for Scotland and an expectation of 40% growth in the 60+ population in Angus by 2018. As with the rest of the country, it is predicted that there will also be a steep rise in the numbers of people of 85+ years.

### ***Local policy***

2.4 Angus Council's Community Plan (for the period 2007-2012) highlights a commitment to engaging with communities and supporting the active citizenship of older residents. Angus Community Planning Partnership's Active Citizenship Strategy states that 'older people are a growing proportion of the community [...] and it is important that ways are found of securing their involvement in the community'. The Community Plan includes a proposed set of actions that involve meeting older people in places where they congregate on an everyday basis such as supermarkets and village halls, in order to "identify the needs and views of individuals and communities and to work out how best to address them."

### **The Angus Gold Project**

2.5 Aims and objectives:

- Increase the use of modern technology in the target age group, as a means of accessing information, contributing to the development of this information and increasing community involvement
- Develop a website that meets the specific needs of older adults
- Develop involvement in a 50+ smartcard which may utilise discounts and incentives and be linked to existing citizen card development – i.e. leisure, library and travel cards.
- Provide a publication that will be available online to provide a guide to local services targeted at the 50+ age group
- Inform the 50+ population on health and well-being issues and opportunities in Angus – including service provision, health improvement and community safety

### ***Community learning and development***

2.6 The project is managed by the Council's Community Learning and Development (CLD) Service and the CLD approach provided a framework and methodology for the overall project. A concise definition of CLD offered by the Scottish Government<sup>7</sup> is:

*"Community learning and development (CLD) is learning and social development work with individuals and groups in their communities using a range of formal and informal methods. A common defining feature is that programmes and activities are developed in dialogue with communities and participants... (CLD's) main aim is to help individuals and communities tackle real issues in their lives through community action and community-based learning"*<sup>8</sup>.

### ***Structure and staffing***

2.7 In this section we list the different strands of Angus Gold and the staffing associated with them.

- A project advisory group has supported the development of the project from the outset.
- The drop-in centre offers training and houses the main office. In addition to the Project-coordinator and community learning and development worker, an administrator and office volunteers are based here.
- Basic computer training – involve 2 IT tutors and volunteers recruited from the local college, volunteer centre and the wider community.
- Health and well-being promotion - in addition to a paid health and well-being worker a team of volunteer 'health mentors' (n = 14) has been recruited to support this work.
- There are currently five Angus Gold forums with a membership of around 80 people.
- Publications - three different types of publication have been produced; a magazine, a service directory and a third version that combined directory and magazine format.
- Angus Gold card – provides discounts to local retailers and services.
- Angus Gold website – designed as a 'gateway' to the internet.

### ***Strategic partners and stakeholders***

2.8 The original multi-disciplinary partnership that collaborated on Angus Gold involved

- Angus Council (including Social Work and Health, Leisure Services and IT Departments)
- Angus College
- Age Concern Edinburgh IT (ACEIT): a digital inclusion initiative for older people
- Microsoft
- British Telecom
- Tayside Police
- NHS Tayside.

2.9 Further partnerships and short-term collaborations have been nurtured during the life of the project. This has included: establishing relationships with local business and retailers; collaborations with voluntary and charitable sector groups; and working with projects and

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Life-Long-Learning/LearningConnections> .

<sup>8</sup> Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities, Scottish Executive Guidance for Community Learning and Development, 2004.

agencies from outside the boundaries of Angus. Other groups involved during the life of the project include the Trading Standards Office, Forfarshire Society for the Blind, local mental health support groups, a brain injury unit and the charity; Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland.

### ***Guiding principles***

2.10 The project has adhered to certain key principles that have guided decision-making and management:

- Participative: From the outset, Angus Gold has sought to involve participants in the development and direction of the project rather than position them as recipients of a pre-prepared service.
- Dialogic: There has been an on-going dialogue with participants to ensure that content both reflects and is relevant to their experiences and perspectives. It has also fostered a dialogue between participants and the wider community including service providers.
- Peripatetic: In order to ensure participation of groups and individuals who would otherwise be unlikely to access such activities and resources the project has taken itself out to the ‘home territory’ of participants.
- Inclusive: In order to meet the participants’ diverse needs, efforts have been made to identify and overcome the barriers to access and participation that lead to the exclusion of certain groups and individuals.
- Experimental: As a pilot initiative emphasis has been given throughout to learning about and exploring issues rather than seeking to achieve numeric or financial targets
- Reflexive: The project has incorporated a rolling process of evaluation and feedback in order to remain relevant to participants and learn from its experimental activities.
- Strong identity: The project benefited from establishing early on a strong brand with which participants have identified and developed a sense of ownership.

### **Partnership working and engagement of the private sector**

2.11 The Angus Gold project was built upon a strategic partnership between council agencies, the voluntary sector and the private sector. Led by the Chief Executive the Council also held a series of scoping activities that included: discussions with older people’s forums; inviting input from practitioners working with older people; exploratory discussions with the voluntary and private sector; and convening of an advisory group. In this section we offer an overview of this partnership network and consider examples of how different partnerships have been negotiated.

#### ***Preparations and setting up***

2.12 The task of bringing together the partnership was facilitated by receipt of funding and the original intention was that the pilot project would produce a systematic approach to partnership working in respect to the 50+ population in Angus. While establishing the partnership proved straightforward, relations between the partners and the project required further negotiation. Different partners had contrasting ‘drivers’, some with financial or numeric targets to meet while others were more policy-oriented. As one partner observed joint working initially felt unfamiliar and required a period of becoming familiar with one another:

*“Its not just about the work that (the Project Coordinator) does it’s the whole partnership, because I think that is something that could be ruled out in terms*

*of the initial stages, it was actually about understanding the rules of each partner within there. Once that understanding was there, there is no competition in it at all, it's not about 'what can I get out of this for my organisation', it's 'how collectively can we ensure that the participants get what their needs are?'" (Strategic partner interviewee)*

2.13 Input and commitment from different partners has included:

- participation in an advisory committee for the project;
- input of resources (such as computing software supplied by private sector partners);
- funding and staffing (from health and council agencies, especially once Government funding ceased)
- advice and expertise (for example from a local university computing department)

### ***Engagement with the private sector: Corporate partnership***

2.14 There have been two levels of engagement and/or partnership with the private sector during the life of the project. The first has been with large corporations, mainly Microsoft and British Telecom (BT). A relationship with Angus Gold has been on-going throughout the life of the project.

**Table 3 Benefits to partnership (private sector)**

<b>Input to the project from the private sector</b>	<b>Benefits to partnership for large corporations</b>
Representatives on the project advisory group	Exploring the potential of a new ICT market
Provision of computer software and broadband facilities and other resources	Supporting a corporate social responsibility agenda
Advice and support on using technology to provide mobile training	Good publicity and PR for the company at a local level

2.15 With regard to sustainability, it seems the emphasis of the relationship between Angus Gold and the private sector has been upon securing the input of free or discounted resources. We found less evidence to suggest the project had exploited the commercial knowledge and insights that these large corporations might have been able to offer, in trying to identify sources of revenue.

### ***Replicability***

2.16 Given that input to the project had limited apparent commercial benefit to these large corporations, one question to arise is whether similar relationships could be nurtured by councils or other groups seeking to replicate the Angus Gold template elsewhere. Interviews with private sector partners made clear that future initiatives would have to either appeal to a corporate social responsibility agenda, or offer the prospect of stimulating a new or emerging market. One interviewee indicated that a commercially worthwhile enterprise would probably require a single contractor supporting a regional if not national programme.

### ***Small business partnerships***

2.17 The other type of partnership with the private sector has been at a local level with businesses and retailers, mainly through participation in the discount programme offered via the entitlement card and supported by the website. One of the more successful partnerships with a law firm is detailed later in this report (see 3.70). Using the Angus Gold card as a tool

for engaging local businesses the project developed a marketing strategy for securing discounts and other deals.

**Steps to engaging with local businesses:**

- A marketing team comprising project participants was convened with support from Angus Gold staff to promote links with the local business community
- The team began by identifying local businesses that might have an interest in the 50+ age group
- A pack was produced containing details of Angus Gold and its various outputs, including information on the website and a copy of the latest magazine
- Businesses were contacted either by telephone, letter or a direct ‘door-knocking’ approach, in some cases participants knew the owners of local businesses and drew upon their network of contacts
- The team would refer to publicity on the project in local papers as a way of introducing Angus Gold
- Businesses and services were targeted that fitted with the project’s themes, such as alternative health therapists and fitness or computing outlets
- In return for offering discounts to Angus Gold cardholders the businesses were offered the opportunity to target a particular group of consumers; advertise their services; and the chance to collaborate further with the project.
- Outcomes included facilitating project participants in having direct contact with local businesses and in some cases actually helping to shape the services on offer.

***Types of activity: Time-limited collaborations***

2.18 An example of a time-limited and issue-specific partnership was that with the Trading Standards Office, aimed at producing a short video raising awareness of doorstep crime. Project participants were involved in developing the ideas and scenarios for the film while attending a drama group. They then acted in the film which is now going to be used by the voluntary sector with plans to market it. As one participant remarked “it was quite a learning thing in itself. To be a film star even for five minutes is something you wouldn’t expect to be” (Participant interviewee).

2.19 A Trading Standards representative reported on the impact of the film, noting that in the past people had been embarrassed to admit they had been victims of doorstep crime, and not willing to come forward. “Well I’m getting more phone calls now saying, ‘I think I’ve become a victim is there somebody there to come out and visit me?’ and it’s very good”.

2.20 Collaboration with Trading Standards was not one of the originally envisaged project activities and illustrates the opportunistic fashion in which the project achieved its objectives. The benefits to this type of partnership activity include:

- engaging participants in new activities
- output content is developed by participants
- dissemination of (in this case community safety) information, and awareness-raising (with films, the potential reach of the dissemination is particularly broad)
- revenue-raising potential (finding funding for time limited projects is often easier than larger long-term initiatives)
- measurable outcomes.

### ***On-going relationships***

2.21 While relations between the project and certain strategic partners remained limited other collaborations developed over time and had fruitful outcomes for both parties. For instance, the relationship of Angus Gold to the local community college provided a source of volunteers; offered follow-on ICT training to project participants and led to the college adapting courses and provision for older students (as detailed in *Appendix 2*).

2.22 A relationship with Neighbourhood Services, which run (council-owned) sheltered housing facilities, also evolved over time and in addition to the provision of IT training for residents, included health promotion activities and hosting local forums in the communal rooms of different facilities to support attendance by residents.

**Table 4 Benefits to partnership (public sector)**

<b>Input to the project from the public sector</b>	<b>Benefits to partnership for public sector agencies</b>
Representatives on the project advisory group	Providing a novel way to disseminate information and a resource for consultation
Provision of staffing and funding	Highlighting gaps in service provision and making agencies more accountable to the community
Capacity building by linking to other initiatives and sourcing funding	Introducing a new culture of collaborative working and overcoming service boundaries

2.23 Angus Gold also collaborated with voluntary sector groups such as the Forfarshire Society for the Blind. The team identified an overlap between the profile of participants targeted by project and the membership of the Society. The Society was able to provide access to a network of older people with visual impairment and as part of the learning and development process Angus Gold worked with members to learn how to adapt ICT training to the needs of people with sight problems.

**Table 5 Benefits to partnership (voluntary sector)**

<b>Input to the project from the voluntary sector</b>	<b>Benefits to partnership for charities and voluntary sector organisations</b>
Representatives on the project advisory group offering expertise and advice on tackling barriers to participation	Building capacity of organisation by offering computer training and support to membership
Providing access to a network of sometimes 'hard to reach' participants	Co-ordinated working leading to a more strategic impact on target group
Building capacity of project by pooling resources	Enhancing sustainability by pooling resources

### ***Impact on partners***

2.24 The internal evaluation and review undertaken by Angus Gold reports a high level of support for the project among partners who praised the open and transparent decision-making process, the creative and effective use of resources and the way the project had made use of partners' strengths. It was also agreed that the appropriate partners had been involved in the project.

2.25 The original aims and objectives for Angus Gold fixed squarely upon the participants in terms of the focus for activity and expected impact. The implication being that digital inclusion is best tackled at the level of groups and individuals known to be digitally excluded. For this reason a significant and unintended outcome has been the impact of the project upon service providers and strategic partners in particular. This impact has included:

- challenging fixed attitudes by developing a better understanding of older service users;
- exposing gaps in service provision;
- sign-posting services to new ways of cross-boundary working and a different culture of service provision.

2.26 Many of the strategic partners conceded that the demand for training and the participants' sustained interest in remaining involved in the project caught them unawares. This was linked to an assumption that older people would show limited interest in computer training or other project-related activities: "no one grasped the community and capacity-building side of it" (Strategic partner discussion group participant). Other partners talked of how the project had challenged the stereotype of older people as passive recipients of services.

2.27 By engaging in the project some partners had been made aware of their failure to consider or cater for some sections of the older population. One example was the Council's Leisure Services, whose provision had not previously involved going out into the community. The strenuous level of fitness training and classes available was also recognised as unsuitable for frail older people. The project served as a catalyst for seated exercise classes taking place in sheltered housing complexes across Angus..

2.28 Another impact upon partners has been to reveal the value of a partnership approach to working with the community. As one representative observed:

*"There is no separate health component but I think we viewed it as that at the outset. We thought, right, OK we're going to do this part of the project, you'll do that bit with the IT [but not thinking of it as] integrated and intertwined in the way it has been [...] Right from the start we should have been seeing it as a whole, in a more holistic way" (Strategic partner discussion group participant).*

### ***Forward planning***

2.29 According to a number of strategic partner representatives we spoke to, uncertainty over how the project would unfold had implications for forward planning, budgeting and the on-going commitment of resources to the project. One interviewee described 'wandering into the project without a clear idea of the outcomes' (Strategic partner interviewee). Another strategic partner representative outlined the lack of planning associated with the early days of the partnership:

*"I suppose we were just taking advantage of a funding opportunity that somebody else was leading on and obviously we wanted to be part of it. We maybe should have been thinking 'OK, well if this does achieve what we think it might, what are we actually going to do about this beyond the two year pilot?" (Discussion group participant)*

2.30 Comments from the partners suggested that the partnership as a whole was slow to recognise the need for forward planning and insufficient consideration had been given to the longer-term sustainability of the project. As one private sector collaborator observed "very few [projects] seem to understand that they need to create new revenue streams to keep the project rolling forward".

### 2.31 Outcomes of the partnership include:

- Laying the foundations for an on-going dialogue between project participants and local agencies and providers
- A better understanding of the needs and aspirations of the target group by providers
- Greater accountability of providers and other agencies to groups and individuals with often high support needs
- Opportunities for participants to influence planning and provision at local and national levels
- Novel ways to disseminate information and promote awareness of issues such as health promotion
- A more readily accessible network for consultation and gathering feedback on local services and facilities

#### **Strategic partnership summary:**

- The project benefited from the pooling of resources and influence that the partners contributed and this included input and financing from agencies outside of Angus.
- There had been insufficient forward planning and provision of resources due to:
  - Uncertainty over demand and outcomes associated with a pilot project
  - Lack of responsiveness to the level of demand as the project progressed
  - Not planning effectively beyond the pilot phase of the project
- A range of benefits were also experienced by strategic partners including improvements to provision, better accountability to older service users and a greater understanding of the value of interdisciplinary working.
- See Briefing no.2 for an overview of strategic partnerships
- See Appendix 2 for an example of strategic partnership working

## **The Engagement Process**

### ***Framework***

2.32 The Angus Gold project developed an engagement process with the intention of drawing in groups and individuals who were not already well networked or active in the wider community. The process drew upon a community learning and development (CLD) model with participants influencing the project's remit from the outset. This model of engagement set Angus Gold apart from mainstream services and a more 'top down' service delivery format. Key features of this approach, as outlined by the project team, included:

- Engaging with people in their own communities and on their own terms and often on their home territory
- Building each strand of the project around the needs and aspirations of participants
- Consulting participants, and other partners, on all aspects of project development and involving them directly in decision making where possible

- Developing the project at a pace that was appropriate to participants and in ways that enhanced their capacity to contribute and participate
- Maximising opportunities for participants, community members and partners to participate in project development.

2.33 The rationale behind the engagement project was that socially excluded and isolated individuals would take precedence and inform development. For this reason, the engagement process largely avoided existing older people’s networks and groups and sought instead to connect with less well networked individuals. In this way, the finite resources available to the project were targeted from the outset in a far more specific fashion than simply provision to the 50+ population. As a pilot initiative the emphasis was upon learning how to engage these groups rather than seeking to achieve a critical mass of participants.

### ***Early engagement***

2.34 The early stages of the pilot witnessed a series of relatively unorthodox experiments in community engagement and efforts to target particular groups and sections of the community.

**Table 6 Engagement activities**

<b>Venue/setting</b>	<b>Approach/strategy</b>
Bingo halls	After agreeing access with owners the Project Co-ordinator gave presentations to customers queuing for bingo, distributed project publicity and held a recruitment drive inside the hall
Supermarkets	Setting up a stall outside supermarkets and using publicity about on-line credit card fraud and Silver Surfers to engage passers-by
Town centre and shopping centres	Inviting people to bring their mobile phones to learn how to make better use of them and using this as an opportunity to discuss ICT and recruit to the project
Sheltered housing facilities	Angus Gold team attending tea and toast mornings to introduce the project and recruit residents
Support groups and other voluntary sector organisations for people with sensory impairment, physical and mental health conditions	Holding introductory meetings with service users often with support workers in attendance to discuss the potential relevance of ICT to everyday routines and activities

### ***Formal consultation***

2.35 Following these early efforts at persuasion and recruitment a residential conference attended by 60 invited participants was held that served as the beginnings of a network building process that has been a feature of the project since. The project had begun to work closely with sheltered housing facilities in an effort to recruit frail and disabled participants. As a result, the majority of attendees at this event were over 70 years, and none had used the internet. Some attendees had received one or two blocks of computer training from Angus Gold.

2.36 Areas covered by the conference included an introduction to the issue of digital inclusion and the specific task of building a website accessible to older people with little or no prior computing experience. The conference also worked on development of the Angus Gold brand and under the guise of asking ‘what annoys us – and how can we change things?’ began building an infrastructure for local forums.

### ***Evaluation and review***

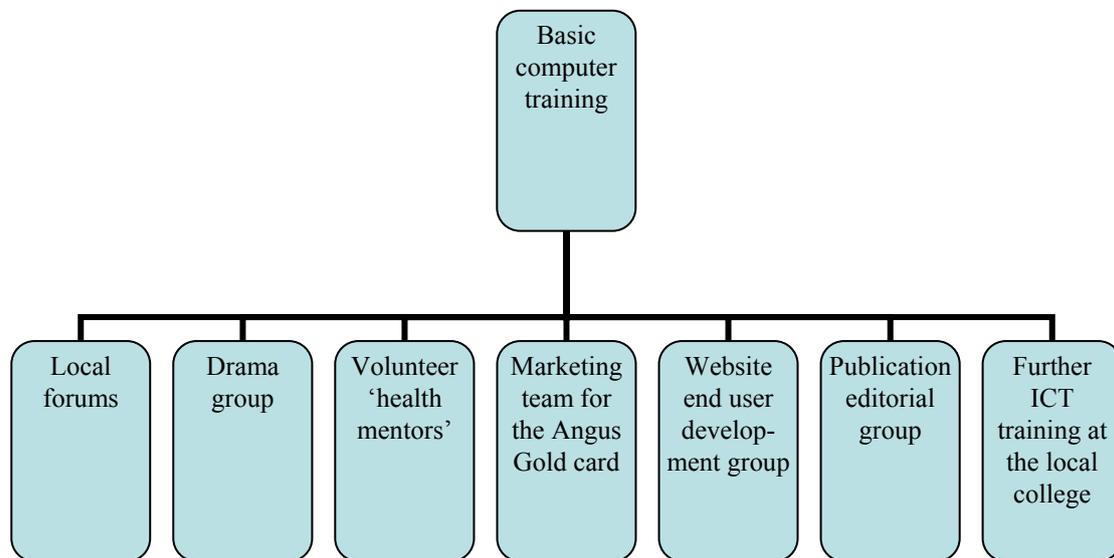
2.37 Throughout the Angus Gold project the team reviewed the individual progress of IT trainees, evaluated each strand of the project and undertook annual reviews of the project as a whole. This review process included input from strategic partners, project staff, volunteers and participants. The evaluation process for each strand was led by participants and facilitated their engagement with the wider community as they gathered feedback and input from service providers, local businesses and other 50+ residents.

### ***Pacing***

2.38 The project’s development model was organised around the provision of computer skills training as a tool for engaging participants and as a springboard into a broader range of activities. Initially a large in-flux of trainees was accommodated. An unexpectedly high number of participants wished to remain engaged with the project after this initial training. A bottle-neck effect was created with increasing numbers being taken on by the project but without the infrastructure available to maintain their participation, highlighting the importance of pacing. The intake of trainees was consequently slowed to allow further development in other areas.

2.39 Computer training served as the entry point for participants. To date, 389 participants out of a total of 500 have passed through the computer training as the first stage in getting involved with Angus Gold. Computer trainees were supported to progress to various strands of the project once training was completed.

**Figure 2 The Angus Gold pathway for participants**



### ***Branding***

2.40 An early concern to develop the project’s brand identity proved a prescient move. A distinctive brand encouraged loyalty and something with which participants could identify. The appeal of the branding also lay in its function as a standpoint from which participants could speak. In communication with local services and other amenities a different dynamic was involved compared to that of service provider/service user.

2.41 The status of Angus Gold, as a visible and accessible enterprise set apart from mainstream services has facilitated the engagement process. The project brand has provided a recognisable point of contact and this has led to a fairly opportunistic pattern of collaborations, entry into which has been guided by the objectives of community engagement, health promotion and education. One such example is an intergenerational dance project currently under discussion which will bring participants together with younger dancers to discuss and perform dances from different eras. The ‘beacon’ quality of Angus Gold has facilitated a series of similar collaborations.

### ***Confidence building***

2.42 Much of the engagement process has involved confidence-boosting components whilst exploiting network-building opportunities. An over-arching strategy is discernible of moving participants often from a position of low self-confidence toward more confident self-advocacy. A good example of this is the drama group which has led to contact and activities with groups from other parts of Scotland and which a number of participants referred to as an opportunity to exercise self-expression:

*“We come in and meet here for our drama and our drama teacher will say ‘we’re going to do this’ and we fall about laughing, you know, and then we do it, and then we’re involved in it, and we talk about it and exchange views, we’re encouraged to discuss” (Participant interviewee)*

2.43 The drama group evolved as an adjunct to the forums and represents another innovation that was not originally envisaged when the project was devised, but has helped incorporate an arts-based dimension to the project and promote a different form of community engagement.

### ***Volunteer recruitment***

2.44 A volunteering strand to Angus Gold was not specified in the aims and objectives but helped in achieving these, particularly in respect to the IT and Health and Wellbeing strands. The project recruited volunteers to function as health mentors (n=14), these volunteers were mainly recruited from participants who had completed IT training. IT volunteers were also recruited (n=42), mainly on a time-limited basis either from the local community college or the local Voluntary Services Centre. Two IT volunteers were recruited from a local mental health support group.

**Table 7 Benefits and considerations for recruiting volunteers**

<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Considerations</b>
Off-sets costs	Time to recruit volunteers is required
Builds the capacity of the project and enhances sustainability	The on-going support of a designated staff member is required
Provides new skills and knowledge for volunteers	Some volunteers may require higher levels of support and supervision than others
Enhances education and employment prospects of volunteers	All volunteers require training and briefing on the project
Provides volunteers with knowledge of the needs of older learners	Out of pocket expenses need to be included in the budget
Increases levels of support to participants	Volunteer numbers need to be replenished on a regular basis

## **Forums**

2.45 While not a specific objective of Angus Gold, the development of local forums has been a feature of the project from the outset, contributing to the wider aim of increasing community involvement. At an early residential conference delegates were encouraged to raise issues of concern and make suggestions for how to tackle these. The forums have been used as opportunities to elicit input from participants and review the project as well as serving as a point of contact with local services and agencies for consultation over planning and provision. Examples of the type of issues covered include:

- Consultation on changes to sheltered housing provision
- Supporting Age Concern's campaign work
- Contributing to a wider consultation on nursing services
- Contributing to proposals for a new credit union
- Compiling a transport petition

2.46 So far, Angus Gold has established five forums with more planned with over 80 people involved on an on-going basis. The forums reflect the peripatetic quality of the project as a whole in that meetings are held in sheltered housing facilities to support participation of those with limited mobility, and are scheduled during the day to further encourage attendance. Interviews with strategic partners revealed that council agencies are poised ready to tap into this infrastructure as an engagement opportunity.

*"I see potential for engaging with the Forums to actually get the feedback we're looking for about services to inform a two way dialogue, to give out information but also to get that back" (Strategic partner discussion group participant)*

2.47 At the time of the evaluation the forums had already begun to be mainstreamed with local staff taking over the facilitation and support of the forums but with the Angus Gold team convening meetings with these staff on a regular basis. A Forums Federation is also under development whereby representatives of each forum will meet at an Angus-wide level.

2.48 As discussed in the section on impact later in this chapter, the progress made by participants led to growth in self-confidence and increased skills of self-advocacy. The outcome for many was therefore a shift from developing confidence within the project to feeling better prepared and able to engage in activities in the wider community. This included voicing concerns regarding the planning and provision of services at a local and national level. For instance, the project's own documentation notes that "74 individuals contributed to the Government consultation on the 'Strategy for a Scotland with an Ageing Population'. A collective response generated at a conference of participants was also submitted".

2.49 In terms of community involvement a number of strategic partners highlighted that the project had served to raise awareness of a broader mechanism for consultation and engagement that was previously unknown to participants. For instance, one strategic partner discussion group participant recalled a meeting with MSPs to whom participants had put questions: "I think it gave them a sense of 'we do have a real role, we do have a voice and we're not alone. We can make the bridges and have that sort of strength'".

2.50 During the life of Angus Gold the National Standards for Community Engagement were introduced and the project worked according to this guidance during years two and three. Discussions with the Project Co-ordinator highlighted that opportunities for more seamless partnership working would likely be enhanced as more partners began to adopt the Standards and work according to the recommendations contained therein.

## 2.51 Outcomes of the engagement process

- Learning about participants and developing the project based upon this knowledge created a person-centred model that reflected local conditions
- Progress through the project helped to build participants' confidence and support self-expression and advocacy skills
- Confidence-building within the project led to participants being better prepared to speak out on local and national issues

## **Conclusions**

2.52 The view of many of the strategic partners we spoke to was that having achieved success with a small number, the next challenge will be to facilitate this process with far greater numbers. Discussion with the team and partners has also highlighted that the engagement process still has further challenges, not least of which include supporting the integration of care home residents into the wider activities of the project and engaging with more isolated individuals in rural settings.

### **Engagement process summary**

- The engagement process was characterised by dialogue with participants maintained through a system of review and evaluation
- Achieving a balance between trainee throughput and project development has been an on-going challenge
- The status of Angus Gold, set apart from mainstream service provision offered something positive for participants to identify with
- The mobility of the different project strands enhanced inclusivity as events and opportunities were offered to participants on their home territory
- The engagement process supported participants on a trajectory that began with confidence-building through positive learning experiences and led to engagement with the wider community and contributions to planning and development of services locally and nationally
- The model developed has yet to prove it can expand to accommodate a larger number of participants without compromising the level of support on offer
- See Briefing no.1 for an overview of the engagement process.

## **Impact on participants**

2.53 For strategic partners and other stakeholders approached for the evaluation the most striking aspect of Angus Gold has been the impact upon the lives of those who participated in it. In discussion with participants, criticism of the project was rare and tended to be mild (see below), most were able to offer a precise outline of the skills they had acquired and of the different ways their lives had been influenced. *Appendix 3* contains three case studies of Angus Gold participants.

2.54 Very few people we spoke to registered criticism of the project. One discussion group participant spoke of the slow pace of learning in training sessions but this appeared more a case of self frustration at his capacity to grasp new tasks than a problem with the teaching.

Another mentioned a couple who had begun the training and left before the end after their daughter had suggested she could teach them at a quicker pace. One participant with visual impairment spoke of an initial frustration that training materials and equipment were not suited to her needs although this problem was addressed during the period of training. Finally, one person spoke of their disappointment in being turned down for training due to already having some experience of computers.

### **Skills**

2.55 The range and level of skills acquired from training and other areas of the project varied across the participant group according to a number of factors including the period of time since they had first received training; whether they had on-going access to a computer; and whether they had pursued further training from other sources. Responses to the evaluation questionnaire made clear that many trainees were incorporating computers into their everyday lives. Of those with access to a computer 59% indicated that they use a computer less than an hour a day and 41% for 2 hours or more per day. Half of the 169 respondents had a computer at home that was connected to the internet.

**Table 8 Patterns of computer use by participants**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Word processing	38%
Playing games	35%
Accessing the internet	64%
Emailing	70%
Exchanging information	36%
Learning and studying	33%
Food shopping	7%
Chat rooms	(less than)1%

2.56 Participants were employing acquired skills in ways that enabled them to manage activities of daily living and pursue interests, those described by interviewees included:

- booking holidays and making substantial savings in so doing;
- using online auction sites;
- buying goods online;
- using search engines and accessing various forms of information;
- on-line banking and other money management activities.

### **Maintaining social ties**

2.57 Skills acquired through the project also supported the maintenance of social ties. Participants highlighted the way in which internet access had both supported and enhanced relationships, especially with globally dispersed families. For some, project participation had led to a greater frequency of contact with family and friends and a better quality of communication.

*“The first time I saw my son and grandchildren, I was like ‘ooh dear I can see you’, I was so excited and they were ‘yes we can see you mother’ and I was like ‘oh you look lovely’. I choked up” (Trainee discussion group participant)*

*“I was able to look at my grand-daughters house in Sydney; I was able to see the pool!” (Trainee discussion group participant)*

2.58 One unexpected outcome from the training lay in the discovery of common ground with younger family members as a result of computer training. One couple had been able to enter new territory in conversations: “when we’re speaking to our grandchildren we’re more informed about what they’re talking about because they are computer literate [...] so you feel a bit more *with* the younger generation” (IT interviewees). The same couple spoke of the pleasure they derived from following their niece’s web-log while she spent a gap-year travelling.

2.59 A further unexpected benefit from the training was that participants had been able to search for and re-establish links with lost contacts. This was especially the case for friends who had moved overseas. Training had enabled project participants to maintain both strong and weak social ties and extend their social networks.

*“What it means to say is that through the computer you can talk to them and if you’ve a webcam you can see them! And that’s the ... I haven’t seen them for 40 years physically, so now I can on the webcam. You get a fright like, you know, a fright right enough!” (Participant interviewee)*

### **Social contact and networks**

2.60 From the participants’ perspective, the most commonly cited benefit from taking part in Angus Gold was social contact and the network of which they had become a part.

*“We have this comradeship, rather like when you started school or the services or wherever you were going, you’ve got a wee body of people now that you’re meeting outwith these things and they’re all kent faces.”*

2.61 Socialising was mainly described as linked to learning opportunities or health-related activity. For instance, much of the feedback on training highlighted the sociability associated with taking part. Social activity was also linked to community engagement through participation in forums, drama groups, volunteering and other group activities. For many of the participants we spoke to, the opportunity to socialise was both a trigger to join different activities and a factor maintaining their engagement.

2.62 Participation in the project extended the roles available to participants in a context where many had felt frustrated at the lack of opportunities available to them post-retirement.

*“These activities are almost a conveyance to something more [...] I mean it’s important to get people involved. It’s important to show people they can still be of value in society and that they’re not just put on the shelf [...] just stay there on the shelf and any skills or talents they may have had are just put away” (Participant interviewee)*

### **Community involvement**

2.63 Discussions with participants of their involvement with the wider community as a result of participating in Angus Gold also served to elicit indications of the broader impact of the project upon issues such as well-being and quality of life.

*“I was a nervous wreck before but I’m ... You see this fear is not a fear of people. Nobody here has got guns or knives that can threaten us. It’s fear of yourself, its fear that you can’t, once you start – can I finish? Do I have enough sense to say what I’m going to say, will it make sense to other people, is it intelligent enough? But once you get over that barrier and speak your mind, you just get on with it” (Discussion group participant)*

2.64 A pattern emerged from the experiences reported by a number of participants that confidence building within the project led to greater confidence to engage more broadly within the community

*“From being in the drama class, hearing your own voice, everyone’s all sitting listening to you and it might sound a bit strange but you generally, you are only talking conversation but when you’re doing this in front of everybody it makes you more confident and sharpens your mind” (Participant interviewee)*

2.65 Discussions with participants who had joined the project at its inception revealed that many were engaged in multiple strands and activities. In some cases we heard of participants who were forum members, health volunteers and involved with the drama group as well as attending college. The overall picture of the project’s impact was that a small proportion of Angus’ older population had become highly active and engaged. During interview the Project Co-ordinator made clear that as a pilot initiative the intention had been to show what might be achieved locally and learn how best to do it. However, one strategic partner sounded a note of caution in respect to ‘setting up expectations that were unsustainable’ in a context where the project’s future was uncertain.

#### **Impact on participants - summary**

- Participation in Angus Gold has provided skills that make activities of daily life easier
- Computing skills have had a positive influence upon both frequency and quality of social contact with existing social networks
- Project participation has extended social networks and increased levels of direct social contact for participants
- The sociability associated with the project has been a trigger for initial engagement and a motive for maintaining engagement
- According to partners and participants, the overall impact of the project has positively influenced well-being and quality of life of those taking part
- See Appendix 3 for participant case studies

## **CHAPTER THREE PERFORMANCE AGAINST AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

3.1 In this section we consider the five main strands and the associated aims and objectives that have guided the Angus Gold project and use the data we have gathered alongside the projects own documentation and evaluation process to assess how well each has been achieved.

3.2 The Angus Gold project set out with an over-arching aim regarding digital inclusion and four more specific objectives:

Aim:

- Increase the use of modern technology in the target age group, as a means of accessing information, contributing to the development of this information and increasing community involvement

Objectives:

- Develop a website that meets the specific needs of older adults
- Develop involvement in a 50+ smartcard which may utilise discounts and incentives and be linked to existing citizen card development – i.e. leisure, library and travel cards.
- Provide a publication that will be available online to provide a guide to local services targeted at the 50+ age group
- Inform the 50+ population on health and well-being issues and opportunities in Angus – including service provision, health improvement and community safety

3.3 The project eschewed a more traditional service delivery approach in favour of a community learning and development framework within which to achieve its ends. This framework proved to have a crucial influence over what was done, how, and at what pace.

### **The IT Training Programme**

*Aim “Increase the use of modern technology in the targeted age group, as a means of accessing information, contributing to the development of this information and increasing community involvement”*

3.4 The provision of IT training to the 50+ population of Angus lay at the heart of the Angus Gold mission. Computer skills training was offered as a means of securing initial participation in the project. From this, trainees could progress to participate in a choice of further project strands and approximately a quarter of the trainees to date have gone on to continue computer training at a higher level at the local college. As with each strand of the project, the training was built around a process of gathering input from participants and using this to ensure that content was relevant to people’s lives and reflected their perspectives.

3.5 The early stages of the training were focused on adapting pace and materials to trainees’ needs and finding solutions to accessibility issues for individuals who found a conventional computer set-up difficult to use. The project experimented with providing

training at public internet access points but the trainers found it hard to adapt these public facilities to meet the needs of people with different forms of impairment or frailty. As a result of these early experiences a decision was taken to develop mobile provision and bring the training to participants.

3.6 The project team set itself an original target of providing basic computer skills training to 250 people during the period of funding. Although some training in the use of mobile telephones was also a feature of the project, the focus throughout has been upon computer skills. IT training served as the lynchpin to the project and the team and partners made clear that an offer of free training was vital to engagement of participants, a message that has obvious implications for replicating the Angus Gold template.

### ***Expenditure***

3.7 The provision of training was one of the more costly strands to the project. Outlay on IT equipment, assistive technology and transportation for mobile training (not including trainers' salaries and property costs) represented approximately a quarter of the project's overall budget (see Table 12 for further details). As the 'point of entry' for participants, much of this cost was weighted toward the early stages of the project. The main areas of expenditure included:

- securing and equipping a 'shop-front' style drop-in and training centre;
- salaries for two (initially) half-time IT trainers;
- computer hardware for the drop-in centre and for the mobile training provision
- outlay on various items of assistive technology to meet the specific needs of the targeted trainees, and transport to convey equipment to/from the different venues used for training.

3.8 Costs were off-set through partnership with two large corporate collaborators, which provided software and internet access in sheltered housing facilities. The recruitment of a team of IT volunteers to support the trainers also helped to limit training costs, as did later input from council agencies in the form of computer hardware for (selected) sheltered housing complexes.

### ***Approach***

3.9 The training was modelled on a community learning and development (CLD) approach (see 2.6 and 2.32). As a pilot, the full implications of this development model only became clear as the project progressed with tensions emerging between achieving a numeric target for trainee through-put and the need to maintain the engagement of those who had passed through training. The Project Coordinator described her response to this dilemma:

*"Any project has to watch that it allows time for the development model [...] That's why I said after 7 months, I need to sit down and think about the model we had developed and to kind of slow people, slow the process down a wee bit in terms of the training, because we were moving too fast to keep the development going"*

### ***Targeting***

3.10 It was clear early on that a decision needed to be made between an open-house self-referral system or targeting of project resources through specifying criteria for participation.

In consultation with the advisory group a decision was taken to funnel training resources toward those who would be least likely to access such provision by any other means. This decision led to the introduction of an informal triage system in which self-referring participants were prioritised according to their level of past experience with computers. The self-referrers with most experience waited longest to receive training.

3.11 The appeal of this needs-led gate-keeping system is that finite resources were rationed in a way that did not require the introduction of formalised and potentially stigmatising access criteria (such as being in receipt of Income Support for instance). The targeting also shifted the project's remit away from simply being age-related and onto more specific barriers to digital inclusion. The main downside was that some who had shown an interest in the project were required to wait prolonged periods before being accepted onto the training.

3.12 The decision to target individuals with little or no prior experience meant that training was always at a most basic and introductory level. Neither the Angus Gold team nor strategic partners expected the level of demand for further training from participants, following completion of the initial training course. In response, the project developed a relationship with the local community college and created a pathway for trainees to continue computer training and develop skills in other areas of information and communication technology. This transition from Angus Gold to the local college is outlined in *Appendix 2: 'Strategic Partnership Case Study'*.

### ***Overcoming barriers to ICT training***

3.13 Interviews and discussions for the evaluation highlighted that many participants:

- did not believe ICT would be relevant to their lives
- were concerned about costs
- had not received formal education of any kind for many decades
- were not confident of their capacity to learn or even to see themselves as potential learners
- believed they would have problems of access due to frailty or physical impairment
- saw educational establishments such as the local college as territory belonging to (and claimed by) younger people.

3.14 The project team identified various organisations already working with the groups and individuals they wished to target, and initial meetings were arranged with workers and service users. The team would attend with a pre-prepared conversation structure and ask the service users about their backgrounds and interests and then move on to the topic of computers.

*“So the conversation explored their personal feelings but we had already sussed (their objections), so every time they would say ‘och I would break it, I’m hopeless, I’ve never been good at learning anything’ we would say ‘well you know our computers, we’ve been given permission to break them’ and we made a lot of humour around it.” (Project co-ordinator)*

3.15 The purpose of these introductory encounters was to overcome often self-imposed barriers by placing the prospect of computer use in the context of people's lives and looking at specific occasions when a computer could support interests or activities or make certain tasks easier. In one example, a woman with visual impairment who had begun to experience

panic attacks and anxiety in crowded situations was encouraged to learn computing in order to be able to do her shopping online.

### ***Volunteers***

3.16 Volunteers were recruited from the local community college's HND courses to assist with training. Volunteers from the community were also recruited and provided assistance to IT trainers, often being deployed strategically to meet the needs of training groups whose learning was accelerating at differing speeds. Volunteers were sometimes appointed to trainees on a one to one basis to further assist them following completion of the training programme. This included support to housebound trainees. The process is sustained by annual presentations and recruitment drives to each new in-take of students. Outcomes for the volunteers themselves were often positive with two receiving 'Student of the Year Awards' and three being taken on as paid tutors by the college.

### ***Training structure***

3.17 The Project Coordinator reported that the 'bottom line' for the training was to move people from a position of resistance and negativity to a willingness and ability to learn about and use computers. The training was offered in three blocks:

- six hourly sessions, followed by a review of progress;
- eight hourly sessions, with a second review meeting;
- six hourly sessions followed by a review to decide whether further one-to-one support from a volunteer was required.

3.18 After each block a review meeting was held with the trainees that incorporated reflection on learning and discussion of topics relating to the wider development of the project. These meetings enabled the team to tailor the training and its contents specifically to the needs of trainees, and this included the development of learning activities around the needs and interests of individual participants. As one participant explained:

*"That's one of the good things, we were participating and giving our views and our views were taken on board and then there might be another meeting and 'see now, is this what you've said? Is this right? Is this what you want? And so that you felt you were involved in some form of your own learning process. And you had a bit of control'" (Participant interviewee)*

3.19 Efforts were also made to develop handouts and other support materials that took account of the particular needs of trainees some of whom had sensory impairment or other forms of physical limitation.

### ***Content***

3.20 Prior to Angus Gold there had been little age-specific computer training available in Angus<sup>9</sup> and existing classes had proved unsatisfactory to many older learners. By contrast, the training programme had a less than 10% drop-out rate, most of which reportedly related to problems with ill-health rather than the unsuitability of classes<sup>10</sup>. The training adopted a very different format to existing provision. The key features identified by the trainer included:

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<sup>9</sup> One exception is the Airlie Silver Surfer Club a local initiative run by older people

<sup>10</sup> This compares to a reported drop-out rate of 48% for one project targeting older people (Cody et al 1999)

- Taking a step by step approach with lots of repetition to assist memory
- Classroom style with teacher leading
- Provision of multiple sources and styles of instruction
- Teacher maintaining a ‘hands-off’ approach to students’ computers
- Avoiding the need for typing wherever possible

### ***Mobile training***

3.21 Providing an opportunity to learn to use a computer on ‘home territory’ proved a successful innovation. Not only was the formidable prospect of a formal learning environment removed, a more relaxed and social dimension was introduced as a result. According to both staff and participants, an important element of the mobile training was that fellow trainees were often familiar to one another, for instance when training took place in sheltered housing facilities or care homes, creating a more supportive learning context. As one care home resident observed:

*“It seemed like double-dutch, but you could ask and not be frightened to ask and we had a laugh and it was very friendly, not like being at school!”*

3.22 Discussions such as these highlighted that for many trainees their last experience of formal education had been at school, and signalled the challenge faced by the project when engaging people who did not perceive themselves as able learners. The same resident spoke of how it felt to begin learning again: “it was nerve wracking, thinking you’d do something silly [...] but it makes you think you’re not as dopey as you think you are”. In this respect, the project managed to challenge sometimes entrenched beliefs on the part of trainees that they no longer possessed the capacity to learn something new.

### ***Challenges***

3.23 A range of challenges were encountered during the provision of mobile training, some of which mirrored the type of difficulties reported by other peripatetic workers such as home care workers. This included:

- unpredictable travelling times between venues,
- set-up and packing-up time eating into the tutorial period, and
- workers feeling disengaged from the rest of the project team with limited opportunities for joint working or participation in team activities.

3.24 More specific problems related to the need to carry heavy equipment around (causing aching shoulders), and various technical difficulties including problems with connecting to the internet remotely (the GPRS technology was reportedly not easily adaptable to the trainers’ needs).

3.25 A contentious policy in the eyes of certain advisory group members was the decision to bring as full a range of adaptations and assistive tools as possible whenever beginning a training session with a new group. This was questioned on the grounds that it inappropriately ‘pathologised’ the older trainees. The Project Co-ordinator explained the rationale: “when we brought it as standard, people didn’t think they were being made to feel different, [we would say] ‘this is just what we have, what would you like, which one would you like to use?’”.

## *Venues*

3.26 As an exception, mobile training was provided on a one-to-one basis in people's own homes and whenever this occurred a risk assessment was carried out beforehand. The other venues for training provision included:

- libraries,
- village halls
- care homes
- day care centres
- communal lounges of sheltered housing facilities
- drop-in centre.

3.27 Each venue posed specific challenges, as did the various support needs of individual trainees. Care homes were found to have few suitable spaces within which to provide training. The use of dining rooms and other communal spaces impinged upon the wider resident body and often led to residents walking in and out while training was in progress. The number of wheel-chair users in the homes led to delays as the trainers awaited staff assistance to move people in or out of the rooms.

3.28 In one nursing home the memory problems experienced by trainees presented a challenge to the established learning process of the programme. The team switched their efforts to staff and through training care workers provided the basis for computer use as a joint activity for staff and residents.

3.29 A residential care home visited by the evaluation had three trainee residents, one of whom had received training before arriving at the home, describing his computer as a 'lifeline' that enabled him to stay in touch with a dispersed family. When he was assessed as requiring residential care he had specifically requested a room with space for his computer. The other two residents we spoke to did not have a computer of their own and having progressed through the training successfully were unable to maintain their skills due to the absence of a machine "we were just getting a taster of it, just getting to the good bit and it stopped" (IT trainee interviewee).

3.30 By contrast, Neighbourhood Services (and certain private sheltered housing facilities) committed themselves to providing a communal computer so that even when residents did not have their own hardware they were still able to access the internet and build up their computing skills.

## *Lessons learned*

3.31 An unexpected dimension to the training programme was the level of literacy problems encountered and that trainers were required to negotiate. "I presumed they would certainly be able to read the hand-outs but no, it became clear very quickly that lots of people have real literacy issues" (IT Trainer). A number of strategies were employed to tackle such problems including:

- minimising typing and supporting learners in completing tasks in ways that did not make their difficulties obvious;
- adaptation of materials, often substituting text with illustrations and using demonstrations instead of handouts;
- developing a relationship with the local Literacy Team;
- awareness-raising training on issues of literacy to IT trainers and as a strand of the volunteer induction;

- using volunteers to offer one-to-one support for people with literacy difficulties, and
- purchasing literacy software packages such as Texthelp and AbilityNet Training.

3.32 An unexpected benefit to arise from the training was that it had introduced technology and made it familiar to older people at a point when innovations in telecare and e-health were fast-developing. One strategic partner pointed out that creating familiarity with technology would facilitate future efforts to support people's health and care digitally and through other technological innovations. The prospect of 'virtual sheltered housing' was something barely considered when Angus Gold commenced but is now a very real consideration for a local authority where a quarter of the population is rurally located.

### ***Outcomes***

3.33 The profile of trainees to date reveals something of the effects of the decision to target the training for particular groups. According to the project's documentation over half of all trainees are sheltered housing residents and nearly half are aged over 70 years. The project has worked with members from various groups supporting disabled people and those with long-term and enduring mental and physical health conditions (detailed earlier see 2.9). Of the respondents to the evaluation questionnaire:

- 44% indicated that they lived alone;
- approximately a third reported eyesight problems and,
- a quarter reported hearing problems;
- nearly 40% indicated they had some form of chronic illness or disabling condition;
- a third reported either being 'rarely' or 'not always' able to get out and about;
- over three quarters of respondents were women.

3.34 At the time the evaluation was undertaken 389 participants had undergone basic computer skills training. Project documentation shows that the training programme has recorded a high retention rate with less than 10% dropping out before completion. Over 90 trainees have progressed from basic training to receive further training at the local community college and over 100 trainees report purchasing their own computer.

3.35 Evaluation questionnaires circulated to project participants found that 119 (70%) out of 169 respondents had accessed and spent time on a computer. Of the 119 with computer experience, when asked what they used the computer for:

- 64% indicated that it was for accessing the internet,
- 70% for emailing
- 45% indicated using the internet specifically for getting information and/or exchanging information (accessing local information = 44%).

### ***Views of strategic partners***

3.36 The strategic partners highlighted the significance of offering alternative means to accessing information than were available in Angus before the advent of the project. Angus Gold was recognised for having achieved the dual outcome of gathering information together of particular relevance to the 50+ population while increasing participants' skills in accessing it. Partners also noted that improvements to participants' wellbeing were linked to the computer training.

### ***Views of participants***

3.37 Many trainees we spoke to referred to the daunting and seemingly insurmountable prospect of grasping how to use a computer followed by the sense of achievement felt as learning progressed. The most attractive features of the training in the eyes of participants were:

- that it was age-targeted
- everyone began at a similar level
- the relaxed and social tone of classes
- the opportunity to establish or widen a social network

3.38 For many trainees, the fear of being out-paced by younger learners was a significant concern:

*“You weren’t in a classroom with younger people that were forging ahead and you were sitting there like an idiot. We were in a situation where we all wanted to learn, even the tutor wanted to learn and I think that’s great”*  
(Trainee interviewee)

### ***Sustainability***

- On-going recruitment of volunteers supported the sustainability of the training and the need for high levels of one-to-one support
- Securing commitments from hosts such as sheltered housing facilities to supply computer hardware and contributions of software from telecommunications corporations both helped to off-set costs
- Without the offer of free IT training the project would lose a key engagement tool, so this strand of the project may continue to run at a loss.

#### **Training summary**

- The project achieved the aim of increasing the use of modern technology within the target age group and exceeded the numeric targets set for training figures.
- The triage system and mobile training enabled the targeting of resources for those who would be unlikely to access training provision elsewhere
- Across all settings the training has been ‘resource hungry’ in comparison to existing provision of digital education, however the low drop-out rate and positive testimonies of learners serve as indicators of success of the approach
- Training was less (cost-)effective where trainees were unable to access a computer outside of training sessions
- The approach to computer training developed has succeeded in introducing digital education to learners with varied and often high levels of support needs; literacy difficulties; and facing a range of other barriers to learning.
- The decision to use the training as a starting point for further engagement adds value to the training strand of the project.
- See Briefing numbers 3 and 4 for an overview of the training programme

## **The Website**

*Objective: “Develop a website that meets the specific needs of older adults”*

### ***Aims***

3.39 The aim was to create a website that was both useable and useful for the target audience. It was a priority that the website should be supporting for the users (i.e. meet the diverse needs of those new to the internet), but that it should also enable the users to go on to explore other websites.

### ***Engagement***

3.40 The first stages of the development of the website, entitlement card and publication began at a residential conference attended by 60 of the project’s earliest participants. The participants were mainly 70+ with little or no prior experience of computers, none had prior experience of the internet and many faced barriers to accessing other forms of training or support due to disability, ill-health or frailty.

3.41 The conference was used to begin a dialogue with participants and to recruit people to different strands of the project, including a ‘website end user group’. It provided an opportunity for participants to meet with strategic partner representatives and form an action plan for the development of the website at an early stage of the project. Focus group sessions were used to gather opinions and ideas regarding content for the proposed website.

3.42 Membership of the website end user group evolved and changed over the development period, supporting fresh input and ideas. Individuals were recruited by the Angus Gold team from the various project forums and also from those participating in the IT training. Regular group meetings helped sustain involvement, promote a sense of ownership of the website and foster sociability. Three members of the website end user group continue to contribute content (menu of the month, book of the month, and gardening tips).

3.43 Involvement with the website appeared to entail a high level of participation and members were responsible for:

- generating ideas for the website content
- deciding on a name for the website
- participating in the testing stages, and
- generating ideas for marketing, promotion and launching of the website.

### ***Process***

3.44 An early decision was taken to construct a website that would be usable for people new to the internet and would serve as a starting point for getting online. A web development consultancy was contracted to continue this work with the participants. The development process was intended to provide insights for both the web developers and Angus Council into the characteristics of websites and online content that best suit the needs of older people who are not confident users of digital technology.

3.45 A user-centred approach was taken in developing the website, with members of the target user group being involved at various stages of the process. Although a needs analysis

had already been carried out to a large extent by the Angus Gold team, the design team carried out further investigations regarding what the users were looking for. The approach employed by the design team for gathering this information involved:

- carrying out focus group sessions with different members of the target group (i.e. individuals with different types of impairment or limiting condition)
- meetings with the project team leader
- meetings with the advisory team
- card-sorting technique to ascertain the type of content the users preferred and to assist in organising the structure and classification of the content.

3.46 Several prototypes were introduced as part of the website development process. The first was a black and white version, a technique used to demonstrate key areas of the website without distracting users with a high-tech appearance. The designer reported that this particular prototype was developed to specifically test the navigation features, the layout structure and the organisation of a sample of the content. The website went through much iteration, and at each stage testing was carried out:

*“the site development itself had quite a number of iterations based around testing, getting test results, recommendations, making changes to the site, back testing and repeating that until we were happy that the issues had been addressed” (Web developer)*

3.47 The website testing process was task-based, with participants being asked to find specific content using a think aloud protocol. The design team provided recommendations regarding those who should participate in testing, and recruitment was organised by the Angus project leader. Where possible, individuals with diverse needs were invited to participate in evaluations; for example, people with no experience of using the internet, people with visual impairment and people with poor motor skills. All these issues made testing more challenging, but were necessary in order to assess usability and accessibility of the website fully. As a member of the design team explained:

*“It’s about learnability. We didn’t want to create different ways of navigating content, we wanted to support them in learning how to use this [website], so that they can use this as a platform and also go on to other sites” (Web developer)*

3.48 Participants were involved in various activities aimed at promoting and publicising the website in order to attract feedback from a wider audience. The team were also responsible for gathering and collating content for the website and this involved further contact with local service providers and other agencies.

### ***Lessons learned***

3.49 Lessons learned from carrying out evaluations with older users include:

- pace investigations according to the needs of participants
- this particular user group can become dispirited, so plenty of encouragement is needed
- the testing process needs to be quite controlled to avoid users becoming ‘lost in hyperspace’

3.50 A website design team member explained the need for this control:

*“It has to be quite controlled as well, because anywhere on this site that you have an external link to another website...they can very quickly get lost and can end up on all sorts of different sites on the internet.” (Web developer)*

### **Usability**

3.51 Several usability issues were noted through the testing process:

- there was poor understanding of the concept of scrolling - users were either not aware of the concept, or found scrolling difficult to do: A ‘keep scrolling’ image was used to alert users to further content while the most important information was placed in the main page area reducing the need to scroll
- difficulty understanding the concept of a ‘home page’, so different terminology was required: For example, to assist users in returning to the home page a link with the phrase ‘back to start’ was placed at the top of the navigation menu on every page
- difficulty differentiating between the browser and the website, which could have the potential to create confusion
- difficulties with navigation: Navigation features on the left-hand side of the page were repeated in the body of the page and as a trail of ‘breadcrumbs’ at the top of each page to provide maximum support
- readability of content - much of the content from outside sources had to be re-written so that it was readable in a Web-based format and suitable for the intended audience: Use of jargon was avoided where possible, chunking of content aided readability and an inverted pyramid style of restructuring content enabled important information to be positioned at the top of the page, a design team member explained what this entailed:

*“we used an inverted pyramid style for content writing so that the conclusion where appropriate, or the summary was always shown at the top of the page...so you had the title in quite a large font and then you had a conclusion in a different style at the top of the page...and also any calls to action relating to that content like a telephone number or contact details were also positioned at the top and at the bottom of the page.” (Web developer)*

### **Website content**

3.52 Having gone ‘live’, the website serves various functions and the content includes<sup>11</sup>:

- Showcasing the project’s activities
- Sign-posting users to local services and facilities
- Linking to other strands of the project (for example carrying details of the discounts available on the Angus Gold card)
- Offering a web-based version of the publication content
- Informing users of health issues
- Offering information on local education provision
- Linking people together via the forum and discussion sections.

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<sup>11</sup> [www.angusgold.com](http://www.angusgold.com)

3.53 None of the materials that were developed for the computer training are contained on the website despite the potential for greater numbers to benefit from access to these resources. It does however contain some training and support material on using websites derived from the original training material.

### ***Impact on participants***

3.54 Positive and enjoyable aspects of being involved with the development of the website from the website end user group perspective included the challenge of the development task, the skills and knowledge gained and the sociability of taking part.

**Table 9 Benefits and outcomes for website end user group**

<b>Involvement in the task</b>	<b>Social aspect</b>	<b>Skills acquired or enhanced</b>
Challenge of learning something new	Opportunities to socialise and make new friends	Emailing
Involvement with arranging the layout of content	Participating in a 'new way of life' (online environments)	Online banking
Helping others by making an accessible website for older users	Better understanding of what grandchildren were talking about	Accessing travel information, road maps and atlases
Sense of achievement in the finished product	Gaining confidence (especially to explore other websites)	Transactions at online auctions
Contributing ideas and keeping an active mind		Price comparisons and shopping
Contributing content		Finding recipes, weather forecasts etc.

3.55 Use of the website was reported to be less frequent now by those who had been involved in the website end user group. Mainly this was because much of the information contained on the website was discussed verbally at the group meetings. However, it was reported that if specific local information was required, then the website was the place to visit.

### ***Challenges***

3.56 On-going areas of concern relate to the promotion and maintenance of the website, both important factors for successful continuation. The development group found it difficult to create awareness of the website amongst the target user group and experimented with different promotional activities. For instance, a competition was advertised in local supermarkets encouraging younger people to introduce their older relatives to the website and efforts were made to publicise the website through links to other project strands such as the publications.

3.57 The website development progressed at a pace that reflected the need to work in collaboration with people who had little or no prior exposure to the internet. The process took longer than planned and this had implications for costs. The website went 'live' three months before the end of the three year period of funding. The intention that the website would be linked to and enjoy a synergistic relationship with the entitlement card and publication was compromised as a result of these delays and led to the need to re-organise the project strands accordingly.

### ***Outcomes***

3.58 The website is now live and provides:

- different levels of support for users with varying needs
- an extensive resource for local information
- a forum facility for discussion
- a starting place/platform for moving on to use other websites
- links to the different strands of the project via the online content
- publicity regarding the project's activities, and
- content that has largely been generated by participants themselves.

3.59 Of the 119 participants with computer access who responded to the evaluation questionnaire, 28% reported having visited the Angus Gold website recently. Most found it either 'quite' or 'very easy' to locate information on the website, and 19 out of a total of 44 who answered the question, considered the website only to be worth an occasional visit.

3.60 Participants that we spoke to highlighted the ease with which they accessed information and the contrast between the 'basic' form of the Angus Gold website compared to "*the mainstream web pages that have got plans and more parts to them that maybe are accessible to people who are more familiar with computers but not our age group.*" (Discussion group participant)

3.61 Strategic partners were also supportive of the website development strand but reported that the time and resource commitment was higher than had originally been expected.

*"It took us a lot longer to get that website than we had anticipated because I think we had very much underestimated that working with this particular group, that had to look at new accessibility issues, massive accessibility issues. And [web developers] were super at listening and testing and put in place an awful lot of testing groups [...] but now it's a sector-leading example of what a web page should look like for this particular client group."* (Strategic Partner interviewee)

3.62 Other partners that we spoke to indicated they were keen to look at ways of linking the website to their own and using it as a vehicle for reaching the wider community and as an alternative model for communicating with older service users.

*"And again its early, but indications are that, yes, people are using [the website] as another avenue for accessing information, and for me that's crucial when it comes to ensuring that everybody has access in some way to actually finding out what they can, what services they can get and how they can benefit by actually accessing them."* (Strategic partner discussion group participant)

### **Sustainability**

3.63 One strategic partner discussion group participant highlighted the importance of maintenance and keeping the content current:

*"You either take it forward or you just remove it. You can't allow it to stagnate because the information then becomes obsolete, it's no longer a useful source, it's actually misinformation. So [...] it would be good to actually move that forward and not have it sitting as it is now"*

3.64 As the above quote attests, there is an on-going requirement for up-dating and maintenance to the website. To date, none of the strategic partners have taken responsibility for the website following the end of Government funding and a decision is yet to be taken by Angus Council over whether it will be maintained in the longer term.

#### **Website summary**

- The project achieved the aim of constructing a website that meets the specific needs of older people
- The development of the website involved a prolonged and costly process of working in collaboration with participants with little or no prior computer experience. See 4.12 for further details on costs.
- The objective was achieved in the context of an experimental learning process that provided insights for local agencies into the necessary attributes for a website to be accessible and usable for older users with diverse needs
- An overall lack of forward planning means that questions remain over the sustainability of this strand of the project
- See Briefing number 5 for an overview of the website development

#### **The Angus Gold card**

*Objective: “Develop involvement in a 50+ Smartcard which may utilise discounts and incentives and be linked to existing citizen card developments – i.e. leisure, library, and travel cards”*

#### **Aims**

3.65 The Angus Gold card was originally intended to be a ‘smartcard’, improving access to and engagement with services and local incentive schemes. Containing a microchip, it can be coded with information relating to the holder. It has a range of potential uses, not all of which were known or predicted at the project’s inception. The intention was that the card would be developed in conjunction with the Angus Gold website and publication.

3.66 The card was designed to follow the template of the YoungScot card aimed at supporting younger people’s access to and engagement in local and national services and facilities.

#### **YoungScot**

The YoungScot card has been used:

- to help build networks of younger people at a local level,
- to promote contact between younger people and the local business community by securing discounts and benefits from them
- as a (voluntary) proof of age,
- providing access to educational facilities and
- for ‘cashless catering’ in school meals services.

### ***National Entitlement Card***

3.67 The National Entitlement Card (NEC) is part of “Customer First”, a Scottish Government sponsored programme developed in partnership with Scottish local authorities and managed, with the support of the Scottish Government, COSLA and SOLACE, under the direction of the Improvement Service. The delivery of a national, voluntary, NEC enhances the provision of services to key client groups – the priorities being young people aged 12 - 25 as well as older and disabled people. This has now been expanded, with the public sector offering services on the card to all citizens. Around 1.3 million citizens have been issued with a NEC and there is a large and growing portfolio of applications. In addition to concessionary travel for younger, older and disabled cardholders, the card is enabled for general public sector applications such as libraries, schools (catering, library, room access, registration, vending, etc) taxi card, leisure pass, staff cards as well applications for third parties such as Universities (matriculation, library, area access).

### ***Engagement***

3.68 The Angus Gold card has also been used as an engagement tool in a number of ways that are modelled on YoungScot. A working party of participants has been recruited to market the card and negotiate discounts with local retailers, facilities and places of interest. Through the card a dialogue has been fostered between the team of participants charged with marketing it and a range of local services and businesses. The discounts and other offers have also served to attract 50+ Angus residents to the project.

### ***Angus Gold Card overview***

- The Angus Gold team arranged for the National Entitlement Card (NEC) to be re-branded with the Angus Gold logo on the other side of the card
- The re-branded card is now automatically sent to anyone who is eligible for the travel concession (although the cards were sent out without any accompanying information on Angus Gold)
- Anyone aged 50-59 years who is not eligible for the travel concession can apply for the Angus Gold card and enjoy the other discounts and benefits open to Angus Gold members
- The marketing team of participants has negotiated a series of discounts and deals with the local business community and other services that are available to anyone with the card
- Local teams of project participants have also been deployed to raise awareness of the card at local shopping centres and other venues
- Details of the discounts and other deals available through the card are advertised on the Angus Gold website, further raising the profile of businesses participating in the scheme.

### ***Engaging local businesses***

3.69 As outlined at 2.17, a team of participants established contact with the local business community to secure discounts and deals for the Angus Gold card. The links between the card, the website and the publication were highlighted to help secure participation in the discount scheme.

3.70 As an example of the potential of the card to be used in association with other strands of the project, a discount arrangement with a local law firm has been agreed that has led to

further collaboration. Angus Gold members have advised on the content and presentation of a law services pack aimed at older people. In return, the firm have sent representatives to speak at local forums, and have offered to submit a 'Frequently Asked Questions' section to the website on legal matters of relevance to older people.

3.71 The relationship with the law firm offers an insight into the potential of the card both to support partnership-building with the private sector and to exploit these partnerships beyond a simple discount arrangement. Clearly, as Angus Gold membership grows, partnerships will become increasingly attractive to retailers and service-providers thereby supporting the sustainability of this strand to the project.

3.72 The card now carries:

- Discounts for shops and retailers likely to appeal to 50+ consumers
- Discounts that support the themes of the project such as discounts for alternative therapists, leisure centres and computing equipment and software
- Access to the library of the local university
- Reduced price entry to local places of interest for walking and other outdoor activities.

3.73 Without card readers yet installed in many libraries or leisure service facilities, little use has been made of the microchip facility to tailor the card to the individual holder and the cards are used largely on a 'show and go' basis to obtain discounts as one participant explained:

*"If you go into the shops they have a little notice, either in the window or on the counter, or shop doorway that says Angus Gold, and you can show your card there and you get a discount". (Discussion group participant)*

3.74 The Angus Gold card has seen a slow rate of progress to date. Delays were due, at least in part, to the introduction of policy offering a national travel concession card to older and disabled people. A decision was taken to combine the Angus Gold card with the travel concession and from June 2007 all concession cards issued to older and disabled residents of Angus carried the Angus Gold logo on the flip-side of the card.

### ***Smartcard***

3.75 The smartcard facility was not fully developed during the period of funding. The prospect of much further development therefore exists. Innovations developed in other areas include:

- As e-money to replace small payments for things such as parking fees and library charges
- As a one-off application to use local services (doing away with the need for form-filling each time a new service or facility is accessed)
- Linked to Independent Learning Accounts to support the education pathway from community-based learning to local colleges or universities
- Offering access to services at a regional level in order to encourage take-up of facilities beyond council boundaries

3.76 The Angus Gold card team has also suggested using the card to gather points from volunteering that might be linked to rewards or discounts and to encourage supermarkets to give points to a reward scheme for older people in the way ‘computers for schools’ schemes are currently designed.

### ***Encouraging take-up by 50-60 year olds***

3.77 For anyone under-60 years and not registered disabled, the Angus Gold team were faced with the challenge of promoting the card purely on the basis of the discounts it had negotiated with the local business community and other facilities. The team highlighted that success in securing certain popular discounts helped to encourage take-up by the 50-60 years group. For instance, an offer from a large electrical goods supplier of free delivery of new white goods and removal of old appliances helped to boost applications for the card.

### ***Challenges***

3.78 The main obstacles faced by the team in trying to achieve the objective of developing a 50+ Smartcard have included:

- Delays in distributing the card due to the decision to combine it with the NEC
- Subsequent disruption of plans to tie the card in with other strands of the project such as the publication and the website
- Delays to the installation of card readers in different services and facilities meaning the ‘smartcard’ function was not developed
- Difficulties in attracting the 50-60 year groups who were not entitled to a travel concession
- The pace of development has also been tied to the confidence-building of the marketing team who required greater levels of support at the outset but are now operating more autonomously.

### ***Outcomes***

3.79 Activities relating to the Angus Gold card to date have been closely linked to the progress made by Angus Council with uptake of the National Entitlement Card. Figures supplied by the National Entitlement Card Programme Office show that at June of last year 23,347 cards had been issued to older and disabled Angus residents, representing 84.81% of the eligible take-up. When matched to council’s with a comparable geography or population size, this is one of the lowest take-up rates recorded for that period. Since this time and during the period when the cards have had Angus Gold branding the figures have risen by 1.27% more than the average for the comparison councils. This rise may however reflect a ‘catch-up’ from the initially low uptake in the area.

3.80 Since June of last year Angus Council have issued 814 cards to people aged 50-59 years and who are not entitled to a travel concession. This represents approximately 5% of eligible people aged 50 to 59 years. The challenge of distributing the card to those without entitlement to a travel concession, has led to a low take-up for this age-group. The Project Coordinator explained: “I found it quite a difficult thing because it was being called a National Entitlement Card with very little entitlement on it if you were 50-60”. The project’s focus upon the older and more frail sections of the community may have contributed to the slower rate of take-up for this younger group.

3.81 Of the strategic partner representatives we spoke to for the evaluation, most understood the card to be a means of securing discounts from local businesses. Only one interviewee discussed the potential for the card to be put to use on a larger scale, such as securing fuel discounts from energy suppliers. By contrast, the project team argued that the potential for the card was only beginning to be realised. As the Project Co-ordinator observed:

*“I think commercially, we are standing ready for people to see the value of that card and we’re hampered only by the fact that we’re working with a very little budget to put out any leafleting or marketing resources to people [...] but people are developing that themselves at the moment”*

3.82 As Table 10 below indicates, of those who responded to the evaluation questionnaire over a third do not have an Angus Gold card, most of whom will have received their NEC before the Council began re-branding the cards in June 2007. However, (as an update to the figure of 23,347 at June 2007) over 30,000 cards have now been distributed and this figure is increasing. The evaluation questionnaire showed that of the 98 people who had obtained a card, 37 (38%) had made use of it beyond its function as a travelcard, to obtain discounts and other deals.

**Table 10 Angus Gold cardholders**

Do you have an Angus Gold card	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
No	64	37.9	39.5
Yes	98	58.0	60.5
Missing	7	4.1	
Total	169	100	

3.83 The decision to combine the card with the National Entitlement scheme secured council-wide distribution to older and disabled people. Some concession cardholders were prompted to contact the project to find out more about Angus Gold as a result. However, the lack of accompanying information on the project when the cards were originally distributed means that many remain unaware of its purpose or potential. The evidence suggests the Angus Gold initiative has had limited impact upon the take-up of the National Entitlement Card. Residents who have not heard of the project and are without computer access have no easy means of accessing information about the card.

### ***Sustainability***

- Having combined the card with the NEC the project has secured council-wide distribution so that a network of potential users now exists
- Marketing of the card and raising awareness of its uses to the 50+ population has largely been undertaken by project participants so staffing costs and time are limited and diminishing as the team grow in confidence
- As the number of discounts grows so the level of uptake is likely to increase
- The card also has the potential to secure the input of local services and businesses to other areas of the project (for example contributions to the publication and website)

### **Card summary**

- While a card is now in circulation that is linked to the NEC the original objective of creating a ‘smartcard’ was not achieved during the period of funding from the Scottish Government
- The delays also undermined the linking of the card to other strands of the project
- Cardholders who were not project participants were provided with little information on how the card could be used
- The substantial starting-up delays mean the potential of the card is only beginning to be realised and there are many further uses yet to be explored
- After the initial start-up costs the running costs of the card are limited and the majority of the associated workload is being undertaken by project participants
- See Briefing no. 6 for an overview of the Angus Gold card.

### **The Publications**

*Objective: “Provide a publication that will be available online to provide a guide to local services targeted at the 50+ age group.”*

#### ***Aims***

3.84 At the design stage of the project, the original intention was to produce a publication that tied in with the project website and was available in hard copy and online. It was left to the project to decide the content and format of the publication.

3.85 Production of the publication under the original terms was hampered by the slower than anticipated development of the website. With constraints upon co-development with the website, a decision was taken to produce two different types of publication and pilot each and learn lessons about the most effective and popular format.

- The first was an (annual) Angus-wide magazine with a print-run of 20,000 and which had a health and well-being theme.
- The second type of publication was a (one-off) service directory aimed specifically at residents of Arbroath.

3.86 The service directory pulled together information on public and voluntary services and facilities in the Arbroath area and despite carrying the Angus Gold branding contained limited content relating to project activities. The magazine by contrast, contained articles by Angus Gold members, and various features based upon their suggestions and project themes.

3.87 A writer/researcher was contracted to work in collaboration with a group of project participants who functioned as an editorial team to produce content for the publication. One of the greatest challenges reported by the team was the need to ensure that content remained relevant for a prolonged period. The group gathered content from various sources including the project’s forums and were involved in direct communication with local services and providers.

3.88 Distribution of the publications took place through a wide range of public locations and public and voluntary agencies that included Council Access Offices, libraries and health

service settings. Additionally, the magazine was carried by supermarkets and local shops as well as using the local Community Meals Service; a collaboration that ensured the magazine would reach frail and housebound older people. While links to the website were delayed the publications were used as a vehicle for health and wellbeing promotion, containing articles and/or details on local services, health improvement and community safety.

### ***Evaluation and review***

3.89 In light of the responses and feedback to the two types of publication a decision was taken to publish a second edition of the magazine. Two groups of participants are currently seeking feedback on the magazines through visits to local shopping centres.

### ***Outcomes***

3.90 In respect to the project's wider aim of involving the 50+ population in contributing to the production of information, the magazine appears to have achieved this with greater success than the directory, given the nature of its content. By comparison, the service directory involved a degree of 'deadweight' in terms of achieving something that existing services should be/are already doing.

3.91 To date, there have been few apparent in-roads made with the private sector, with no commercial advertisements carried in either publication, despite an original plan that they would connect to the website and entitlement card. Given the success of the Angus Gold card marketing team it is surprising that similar activities were not pursued for the publication in order to prove its sustainability.

3.92 While there were no requests for copies of the print-run of the first magazine from partner agencies, with the subsequent publication specific requests were received for over 9,000 copies which in itself serves as an indicator of success. All the publications were made available electronically through partners' existing websites despite delays to the project's own website.

3.93 Evaluation questionnaire data shows that 79% of respondents had seen Angus Gold related publications (18% indicated they had not seen a publication and 3% did not answer the question). When asked whether they had made use of any specific information or advice from the publications approximately a third of respondents listed one or more topic or aspect of the content.

3.94 Of particular interest to many of the strategic partners was that, in Angus, Angus Gold offered a novel means to distribute information and raise awareness of local services and facilities. With the publication carrying the Angus Gold brand instead of that of the Council or one of its agencies it was viewed as enjoying a different status to the outputs from mainstream services that some partners considered beneficial to disseminating information.

### ***Sustainability***

3.95 Key considerations for the sustainability of the publications include:

- Production costs have not been off-set with advertising despite the intention that the publication would link to the website and Angus Gold card

- There is a requirement for updating and gathering of information for each edition (the workload for which has been assumed by project participants)
- There is a potential overlap with information provided from other sources (especially in the case of the Service Guide)

3.96 Like the website, there seemed to be an uncertain future for the publication and questions over its sustainability (see 4.36 for further details on mainstreaming of the project):

*“We’ve not been able to do anything publications-wise since this time last year because of the budget position, so that’s a strand we haven’t been able to sustain beyond the Executive funding period, which I think is a loss because we had begun to develop useful publications and some interesting distribution networks” (Strategic partner interviewee)*

3.97 To date, responsibility for the magazine has not been assumed by any of the strategic partners following the end of Government funding.

#### **Publications summary**

- The objective of providing a publication and service guide for the 50+ population of Angus has been achieved in the context of learning lessons around format and content (although the service guide only covered the Arbroath area)
- Much of the content of the publications is now online, as originally intended, although the delays to the development of the website meant this happened later than planned
- Planned links to the Angus Gold card have been less well developed
- The publications supported further project objectives including: informing the 50+ population of health and well-being issues, promoting access to information for older people (including housebound and frail older people) and involving older people in the production of content
- For many strategic partners the greatest strength of the publication lies in its

#### **Health and wellbeing**

*Aim: “Inform the 50+ population on health and well-being issues and opportunities in Angus – including service provision, health improvement and community safety”*

## *Aims*

3.98 A health and wellbeing strand was an intended feature of Angus Gold from the outset and the local NHS board was an active member of the strategic partnership throughout. In respect to community safety, the project shifted away from early input by the local police force and towards input from a representative of the Trading Standards Office, who worked with Angus Gold to raise awareness of doorstep crime.

## *Engagement*

3.99 The community and learning development approach that underpinned Angus Gold was used to guide the health and wellbeing strand. This involved participants gathering information from their peers in order to find out how the 50+ population of Angus perceived health issues, which of these were of particular concern to them and how their health needs could best be met. The mobile quality of the project was exploited with volunteers engaging people in shopping centres and other environments not explicitly linked to the provision of services. The findings from this dialogue were then used to guide content for the website, publications and other project activities. Project participants also visited health promotion initiatives outside of Angus to gain insights into innovations in other areas and use these to develop work at a local level.

3.100 Messages concerning health, wellbeing and community safety permeated the project's different branches illustrating the benefits of the synergy between the strands. For instance:

- through developing computer skills participants were enabled to access online health information and become better informed about particular issues and conditions
- health and well-being articles were uploaded to the project website, which also contains a comprehensive guide to local services and what they offer
- the first edition of the Angus Gold magazine followed a health theme containing articles on healthy eating and smoking cessation as well as a guide to local services
- the Angus Gold card offers discounts on leisure activities such as swimming and on alternative therapies such as reflexology and homeopathy
- talks on health-related issues such as dementia and osteoporosis were also given to Angus Gold forums.

3.101 By combining the different project strands, the team were able to: enhance opportunities for accessing health and wellbeing information; improve participants' skills in seeking out information; and tailor information to their perspectives. As one strategic partner explained, the various sources of information have benefited participants' health management:

*"People have been able to get information about particular health issues and about their conditions, which has enabled them to have improved self help and care" (Strategic partner discussion group)*

3.102 The project also employs a Health and Wellbeing worker who adopted a community learning and development approach in keeping with the ethos of the wider project. This worker has overseen the output of information, the support and training of volunteer 'health mentors' and various sub-projects aimed at promoting specific issues, such as nutrition awareness and smoking cessation. As a feature of the partnership working with sheltered housing facilities, the Health and Wellbeing worker maintains health information noticeboards in communal areas of these facilities.

## **Volunteers**

3.103 The worker has trained a team of fourteen voluntary ‘health mentors’, many of whom originally joined the project to receive computer training. The role of health mentors includes:

- leading walks in different parts of Angus,
- supporting national awareness campaigns
- supporting seated exercise classes for care home residents (which are led by an appropriately trained practitioner)
- during winter months, visiting sheltered housing complexes and holding coffee mornings where health-related issues such as diet and nutrition are discussed

3.104 Health information points have been sited in two health centres where volunteers support people to locate and access health-related information on the internet.

3.105 The health volunteer strand represents a potentially sustainable model of engagement. Participants are offered training to function as health champions or advocates and work to disseminate information to a wider local network. This strand of the project has promoted contact with isolated older people, but also involved participants in receiving health education training. There was a strong social dimension to the volunteering activity as illustrated in the friendship that one volunteer had developed with a 97 year old sheltered housing resident:

*“So instead of going for a walk I meet him on a Saturday or Wednesday and sit for about an hour with him. But it doesn’t matter if we talk about the same thing I’ve heard before, what matters to me is that he is happy with the visit. And we always have a good laugh and a glass of wine” (Participant interviewee)*

3.106 Health and wellbeing information has been fed into the project at different points and in various formats and media. As noted above the appeal of this approach has been that information and awareness-raising were embedded in the broader activities in which participants were engaged and both reflected and responded to their perspectives. This was seen by strategic partners not only as a novel means to deliver information but also as removing it from health-based settings and instead, bringing it to participants and providing them with greater control over how and when information was accessed.

*“I think it’s a way in which people find it easier, perhaps, to actually access the information because they don’t see it as being ‘Social Work Services’, therefore its something they might look at rather than going through the Council” (Strategic partner discussion group participant)*

## **Participant involvement**

3.107 Discussion with strategic partners also highlighted the perceived benefits of the participative quality of the project’s activities. For instance, some participants acted in short films designed to raise awareness of issues such as doorstep crime and elder abuse. These film-making collaborations drew upon the skills and confidence-building developed in drama groups.

3.108 Other service providers recognised the value of collaborating with Angus Gold in order to involve older people more directly in their work. In one instance, the co-ordinator of a suicide prevention initiative worked with Angus Gold participants to develop a pack for older people. While these collaborations were in line with the project's objective to inform the 50+ population of health and safety information, they were additional to the originally envisaged activities. As such, the films and other time-limited initiatives highlight the opportunistic approach taken by the team.

### ***Lessons learned***

- Improvements to the health and wellbeing of participants reportedly stemmed not only from the explicitly health-related aspects of the project but from participation as a whole
- ICT training helped to improve skills to seek out health management information and support
- Integrating health information across the wider project enhanced opportunities to access information and made this information more readily available

### ***Outcomes***

3.109 Partners interviewed for the evaluation were aware of how the health and wellbeing activities linked in with local and national (health and social care) policies including:

- supporting people in managing long-term health conditions through provision of information and signposting to services
- raising awareness of community and voluntary services that exist to support patients and carers
- linking to the recommendations of the Health Improvement Strategy
- broader work on mental health and wellbeing supported by the project.

3.110 Partners also reported observed improvements to the wellbeing of those who took part in the project, illustrating the value of co-ordinated working for different organisations supporting a shared target group. One partner noted that sheltered housing residents who participated in the project had reclaimed aspects of their lives that they had begun to relinquish such as shopping and money management and that this had led to observable improvements to wellbeing.

3.111 It was also clear from interviews that the overall impact of the project upon health and wellbeing had been positive and it was here that strategic partners emphasised the significance of the integrated approach taken by Angus Gold. As one strategic partner discussion group participant explained:

*“Obviously there were expected outcomes in terms of health improvement from the actual work that was labelled as health and wellbeing, but I think, in addition to that, there have been a lot of less expected, if not unexpected outcomes from other parts of the projects. These have emerged and at times really surprised us especially related to the digital inclusion and community engagement parts of the project”*

3.112 This impression was reinforced during discussion with project participants. One woman talked of the project as a positive alternative to anti-depressants, and two others spoke of making fewer visits to the doctor as a result of becoming involved in Angus Gold. Some highlighted the impact of the project upon broader issues of well-being and the quality of

their lives. One interviewee described Angus Gold as a ‘new lease of life’ while others compared their current round of social activity to the more isolated and home-bound patterns of everyday living prior to taking part.

### ***Sustainability***

3.113 The project has received input and support from health-based strategic partners from the outset and this support continues in the form of funding for a 0.5 Health and Wellbeing worker (until March 2009) now that pilot funding has ceased. The recruitment of IT trainees as health volunteers has also served to build capacity for the health and wellbeing strand and ensures a renewable resource for health promotion.

#### **Health and wellbeing summary**

- The health and wellbeing objective was achieved using diverse sources of information and by enhancing the skills of participants to access this information
- Through opportunistic collaborations and keeping abreast of national policy and campaigns the project has engaged in activities (such as the drama group) and generated outputs (such as the community safety films) that were additional to what was originally envisaged. Often this has been tied to securing funding for time-limited activities.
- Health, wellbeing and community safety information has been dispersed throughout the project, which has maintained a focus upon groups and individuals who particularly stand to benefit from it. This includes participants who were socially isolated, frail, disabled and those with enduring health problems.
- Benefits have been demonstrated of disseminating health information in a broader context of activities and initiatives and in this way taking a more holistic approach to meeting the needs of participants.
- The project has provided new channels of communication with this group for members of the strategic partnership.

## CHAPTER FOUR      DISCUSSION

4.1 In this section we draw upon the findings of the evaluation to consider three broader questions associated with the project: value for money; sustainability and replicability.

### **Value for money**

#### *The question of value for money*

4.2 One of the greatest challenges in offering an account of the ways a project like this represents value for money is that returns on the investment are difficult to measure and/or quantify. For instance, this project has targeted a section of the population that makes a high level of use of public and health services. For each individual who is enabled to access those services and information about them online, a substantial saving is incurred when compared to a face to face encounter with a practitioner or other public sector worker.

4.3 Many of the people targeted by the project have been enabled to take control of areas of their lives that due to ill-health or disability were becoming increasingly challenging – this includes everyday tasks such as money management, online grocery shopping and accessing health related information to enhance self management of conditions. All such activities have ‘value for money’ implications. In some cases, access to the internet has served as ‘that little bit of help’ that so many people require but find increasingly difficult to access from public services. Savings made by others when booking holidays, buying insurance, searching for deals and comparing prices online are all an added consideration in the question of value for money.

4.4 Another significant dimension to the question of value for money is the role of a pilot programme in the experimental and explorative testing of what works and what does not. The lessons learned in many areas of Angus Gold will benefit the participants themselves, the strategic partners and any groups or bodies with an interest in replicating the project. In this respect, Angus Gold has tried and tested a successful approach to digital inclusion for socially excluded groups and individuals within a context of developing an effective process of sustained engagement.

4.5 Value has also been added through the benefit to strategic partners and other service providers. In some cases, the project has enabled agencies to review their working practices, identify gaps in provision and adapt themselves in ways that are both more inclusive and efficient in reaching a broad range of service users. In the case of the local college, collaboration with Angus Gold has had an impact on the knowledge and skills of both students and teachers and enabled the college to open itself up to a whole new group of learners and meet their needs (see *Appendix 2* for further details)

4.6 In light of the difficulties attached to a broader effort to outline the full range of returns on Scottish Government funding the following questions were identified as linked to a more concrete and tangible definition of ‘value for money.’

- Was expenditure undertaken in a cost effective manner?
- Did the project achieve ‘value for money’ in turning inputs in to outputs?

4.7 It must be noted that this section has not been completed as a cost-analysis audit due to lack of detailed ‘actual costs’ and time constraints. For future initiatives annual reporting of actual costs against each element would assist in tracking expenditure.

### **Overall project**

4.8 For the duration of the project, all procurement and recruitment procedures followed were those of Angus Council. The main costs for the project were salaries and IT equipment along with website design and development.

4.9 Delays referred to previously resulted in a number of elements being scheduled for year two and the project being extended to three years. Furthermore, following research through the residential conference and discussion with partners the cost of the website was considerably more than the original estimate due to the decision to work in collaboration with participants who had little or no prior experience of the internet. A very detailed and specialised brief was required in order to achieve this aspect of the project and additional costs were agreed.

4.10 Regular reporting to the Scottish Government was undertaken by the Principal Officer and Angus Council. Much of this reporting was concerned with under-spend. Where this was identified, agreement was reached by both parties and alternative solutions found. Where additional spend was anticipated this was also highlighted.

4.11 Although projected expenditure and changes were monitored as noted above, detailed analysis of actual expenditure was not reported to the Scottish Government as a matter of routine procedure. It is therefore not possible to produce a breakdown of return on investment, i.e. how much it cost per participant undertaking computer training or how that varied according to where training was delivered. An overview of expenditure and some indication of how the budget was allocated across the different strands is offered below.

**Table 11 Project Core Costs**

	<b>04-05</b>	<b>05-06</b>	<b>06-07</b>
Management and admin	21,605	32,389	29,642
<u>Employee Costs</u> including: tutors and community education workers; other – Health Worker/Writer	10,368	70,300	51,127
<u>Property Costs</u> including: annual rental; refurbishment; annual running costs	15,760	13,561	16,563
<u>Angus Gold Card*</u>	0.00	0.00	0.00
<u>IT Equipment and Support</u> including: equipment; vans, purchase; vans, running costs and GPRS	0.00	110,450	3,214
<u>Publications</u>	0.00	0.00	9,917
<u>Website</u> Generation of contents, site design and construction	0.00	0.00	48,946
Miscellaneous e.g. travel; consultation; recruitment; staff training etc.	8,518	800	7,436
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>95,789</b>	<b>227,500</b>	<b>166,845</b>
Scottish Government Funding	103,407	223,115	133,479

\* Funding for this element was transferred due to delays incurred in the development stage. Total cost for this element was £35,000

4.12 For projects of a similar size and type, timing needs to be built in for delays which may be caused by consultation and research. It was a feature of the learning and development framework that the project progressed at a pace relevant to the participants and a commitment to this ethos is required at all levels of a project including the financial management.

4.13 Recruitment of volunteers represented a cost effective route of achieving support and expanding the project's activities. It also enabled a multi-layered approach as those who were initially recruited as IT trainees were then trained to assist as walk leaders and health advocates, while advancing their skills at the same time. Voluntary support to IT trainees helped to offset the costs of working with small class sizes and provision of one-to-one support during training sessions. Similar projects in the future should note that volunteers require training, ongoing support and out-of-pocket expenses and these costs should be included in financial projections. Should volunteers not be utilised then market rate costs for trainers/course leaders to provide support need to be included.

### ***Shop and equipment***

4.14 Discussions had been held with Angus College regarding a venue for courses and a local library was also used as a location. However, neither was found to be suitable for a number of reasons: not enough rooms; learners with poor experiences of learning unlikely to attend; no specialist equipment available for frail older adults. As a result the decision was made to rent premises in Arbroath (annual rental £5,200). The cost for refurbishment was £10,000 and equipment costs £4,500. This worked well for the immediate vicinity, however, was less accessible for those who were in care homes, sheltered housing or in the more rural parts of Angus. Hence the majority of training delivered by the project was offered on an outreach basis with limits placed on training in the Arbroath centre to ensure equity of access. In respect to sustainability it is clear that if the project had made use of existing facilities overheads could have been reduced.

4.15 Specialist IT equipment was required alongside other pieces of assistive technology. To enable local training delivery with this specialised equipment two vans were purchased, by internal procurement through Angus Council (cost for both £13,148). Running costs were around £3,000 per year.

### ***Angus Gold Card - National Entitlement Card***

4.16 The area where there are most questions concerning cost effectiveness is the Angus Gold Card. The target group for Angus Gold is weighted toward the upper end of the 50+ population, although people considered 'fragile or vulnerable' learners in the 50-60 years group were also targeted. The extent to which Angus Gold sought to engage the broader 50-60 year old population was limited. It seems this targeting was not made clear to the National Entitlement Card (NEC) Programme who collaborated with Angus Gold in the hope that it would provide insights into how to extend take up of the NEC by groups not in receipt of the travel concession.

4.17 In all, a sum of nearly £35,000 was outlaid to cover the costs of re-branding 15,000 entitlement cards specifically for 50-60 year olds who were not in receipt of the concession card. To date, approximately 814 of these cards have been distributed, suggesting that the collaboration has not been a good investment for the NEC Programme.

4.18 Recent financial figures show that cards are being recharged to the council at £3 per card. Recharging occurs as the Scottish Government has provided local authorities (LA) with

funding for the Entitlement Card. There is therefore a recharge made to each LA for every card provided by the National Entitlement Card Programme.

### **National Entitlement Card**

The National Entitlement Card (NEC) Programme is an initiative to establish a unified approach to the access and delivery of services for Scottish citizens using one card (a smartcard) to replace many.

The main aim of the website (details below) is to promote joint working across all Scottish Local Authorities in the development of the National Entitlement Card (NEC) Programme.

National Entitlement Cards are just one element in a wider Scottish Government sponsored programme called Customer First which aims to encourage all local councils to share resources and create efficiencies to ensure that Scottish citizens have easier to access services and facilities at the first point of contact with their local council.

The smartcard is known colloquially among older people as 'the bus pass' but is actually much more than that and further information can be gained from the website below.

### ***Education Courses***

4.19 Traditionally education courses are developed to cover a number of learners at one time at specific levels. Educating a number of learners within one class is the most cost efficient method providing greatest reach. Utilising existing facilities and equipment available in the community also reduces cost. By contrast, this project targeted learners with specific and diverse needs. During the life of Angus Gold, Neighbourhood Services supported selected sheltered housing complexes to purchase their own equipment to allow residents access where none had previously been available apart from when trainers were in attendance.

### ***Existing initiatives***

4.20 When seeking comparative initiatives, ACEIT (Age Concern IT) and 'Moose in the Hoose' are two Edinburgh projects that are delivered hand in hand and have similarities to Angus Gold. The former delivering IT courses for older adults for a charge. The latter has volunteers trained by the former to work specifically with older people in care homes. It is impossible to compare these projects in terms of budget on a like for like basis given their differences, however both projects will be of interest to readers of this report and information may be accessed on the following websites.

- AceIT: <http://www.aceit.org.uk/>
- 'Moose in the Hoose': <http://www.aceit.org.uk/moose.htm>

4.21 Future projects may wish to consider charging to assist with income generation towards sustainability however two points need to be acknowledged. The first is the ability of frail older adults and particularly those in care homes to pay, and secondly income generated would likely not fully offset costs. Where courses are designed to encourage a return to work they may be eligible for Individual Learning Account (ILA) funding which is available to the

whole population. Angus Gold noted that it was a luxury to be able to provide the training free of charge.

### ***Website development***

4.22 The cost of research and development of the website was just under £49K. Lessons learned from this work would arguably off-set costs attached to future website development projects.

### ***Health and Well-Being***

4.23 Costs for Community Care and Primary Medical Services (GP's) in Scotland for 2007 alone were £988 million and £700 million respectively<sup>12</sup>. With the change of emphasis on prevention and care in the community, a considerable saving may be achieved by preventing older people from entering the health system in the first place.

4.24 This aspect should be taken into consideration by Community Health Partners (CHP) and the benefits have clearly been seen in Angus with the local CHP choosing to fund aspects of the programme. It is also used as a route through which to disseminate information. Although no formal measures have been employed by the project or partners to measure health improvements it was clear from discussions and interviews that Angus Gold was considered to be having a beneficial impact on the health and well-being of participants.

### ***Partnerships***

4.25 The project capitalised on partnerships making the most of opportunities whenever possible e.g. B.T. gave expert advice on developing mobile internet access facilities on project laptops. They also contributed broadband connections and costs for one year into ten locations of the project's choice. Partners also reported generating considerable knowledge and insights into the target group from participating in the project.

**Table 12 Private sector contributions – Potential Cost**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Cost £</b>
Internet Advice – consultant for 3 days	1,200
Broadband Connections x 6 for three years and 4 for one year (£40.50 per month includes support from BT)	10,692
Microsoft Software x 6 venues x £250	1,500
<b>Total Saving</b>	<b>13,392</b>

Note – Businesses and LA's may obtain savings through purchase agreements. Additionally, now hardware is sold with software included.

### ***Conclusions***

4.26 Financial reporting of actual costs against each element and analysis of expenditure could have been more thorough.

4.27 Despite overarching questions concerning sustainability and future uncertainty running through the project, Angus Gold has achieved diverse outputs and outcomes in a short space of time. That such ground breaking objectives were met, including individually tailored training in care homes and sheltered housing; and a website designed and purpose built by

<sup>12</sup> Costs Book 2007 - Executive Summary, iSD, Scotland: <http://www.isdscotland.org/isd/3672.html>

older people for older people, supports the impression that there have been high levels of return for the original investment.

## **Sustainability**

4.28 Throughout this report we have indicated where questions of sustainability have applied to specific strands of the project. In this section we draw upon input from stakeholders to consider the broader question of the project's overall sustainability. As a background to this, the project team made clear that they engaged strategic partners in on-going discussions concerning sustainability throughout the life of the project. This included regular reports submitted to the Angus Community Planning Partnership detailing progress and financial needs.

### ***Partnership working***

4.29 To date, the project appears to have worked most closely with strategic partners located in the public sector. Questions remain therefore around the level of commitment and input that might be expected from the likes of private sector care homes and supported living facilities.

4.30 It seems the greatest obstacle to the sustainability of Angus Gold has been the lack of forward planning built into the partnership from the outset. Reasons given for this included that it was an experimental initiative with unpredictable outcomes. Although as one strategic partner representative pointed out:

*“At the beginning it was fairly loosely based on the success of the Young Scot project [...] obviously we had no idea it would take off with the older population in the way that it did but I think we had a reasonable notion that the model had the potential to be successful.” (Strategic partner discussion group participant)*

4.31 As another strategic partner indicated, the failure to anticipate the success of the project possibly reflected a degree of ageism and stereotyped thinking in respect to older people and digital technology. This meant that insufficient capacity or budget provision was put into the project at key stages to allow its growth. The over-riding lesson learned in respect to sustainability is therefore to be clear about outcomes from the beginning and responsive to demand throughout.

4.32 The project has proved successful and creative in identifying funding opportunities for smaller time-limited initiatives, often by using the strategic partnership as a means of staying informed of policy developments and associated opportunities. However, in terms of longer-term and larger scale funding, the opportunity to harness the commercial knowledge and insights of private sector partners appears to have been less well exploited.

4.33 In some instances the project has used the offer of free computer training as a means of leverage to secure input and commitments from partners, for instance with sheltered housing. However, other occasions when the provision of training might have been used to encourage commitments from collaborators such as care homes have been overlooked. For future initiatives a lesson here is to make use of the ICT training resource as a bargaining tool when dealing with potential hosts and collaborators.

4.34 For this evaluation the perspectives of a range of stakeholders in Angus Gold have been incorporated. A clear message from all directions was that the project needs to continue, there

were however differences of opinion on how this should happen. One perspective was that the project should be supported to grow into a regional and then national initiative and thereby fulfil the original intention of following the model developed by Young Scot. Alternatively, having convened and developed a local strategic partnership, the project might continue with a greater degree of input and material support from members of this partnership. A third option of securing external funding from a charitable source had been tried but without success at the time of writing this report.

### ***National framework for sustainability***

4.35 The ‘national’ route is one for which Young Scot provides a template for development and sustainability in the eyes of some partners. For certain strands of the project such as the website, entitlement card and forums the benefits of a national infrastructure are clear. Indeed, the challenges of developing these strands were argued in part to be due to the lack of a national network:

*“Young Scot locally had been able to link into Young Scot nationally - Young Scot’s national website, national card situation, Young Scot’s national information streams. There was no Old Scot!” (Project Co-ordinator)*

### ***Local model of sustainability***

4.36 The ‘local’ route for sustainability was argued by partners to have synergy with current policy developments. The Local Government in Scotland Act (2003) requires council’s to engage with communities and it was suggested that the community planning mechanism could be used to ensure that Angus Gold is worked into Local Outcome Agreements. Given existing policy requirements on the public sector to engage with communities it might be argued that Angus Gold represents an innovative approach to something local authorities should already be doing. However, in practice, the challenge of building a multidisciplinary partnership is a slow process. As one Council representative pointed out, the funding for the initial pilot served as a catalyst to begin a process that would otherwise have taken much longer.

4.37 Key features of health policy were also outlined by partners as potentially fulfilled or promoted through the Angus Gold strategy, not least around mental health and wellbeing in later life. For a sustainable local model to succeed there is a need for partners to continue to overcome the different ‘drivers’ that govern their operation, the differing ethos and cultures of the various sectors and to work across service boundaries.

**Table 13 Mainstreaming of project strands following the end of Government funding**

<b>Project Strand</b>	<b>Current status</b>
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving up premises and moving to accommodation provided by partners</li> <li>• Slowing of trainee through-put</li> <li>• IT trainers salaries and costs to be met by Community Learning and Development (CLD)</li> </ul>
Website	Not yet allocated to a health or Council agency
Card	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participant marketing team continue to secure deals and discounts</li> <li>• Card to continue as part of project managed by Project team</li> <li>• As the confidence of the marketing team grows participant ownership of this strand is increasing</li> </ul>
Publications	Not yet allocated to a health or Council agency
Health and Wellbeing	NHS have agreed to further funding for a full-time worker
Forums	Support for forums has been mainstreamed with local workers employed by the CLD and with plans to further develop a Forum Federation bringing together representatives from Angus-wide forums
Project team	CLD have agreed to fund a full-time worker and the Project Co-ordinator. This latter post now includes responsibility for YoungScot development to support greater levels of intergenerational working

### ***Income generation***

4.38 The experience of the ACEIT Edinburgh digital inclusion project is promising in respect to the potential to take a more commercial approach to provision. The Co-ordinator

reports that many private sector providers have registered an interest in computer training and would be prepared to pay for this. The greatest challenge outlined by the ACEIT Coordinator was the need to identify the true cost of training (which takes into account overheads and other indirect costs) in order to take on a more commercial approach to training provision.

4.39 An alternative path to sustainability was suggested by one of the private sector collaborators and based upon the early stages of work by the project in collaboration with the public and voluntary and charitable sectors. Given that Angus Gold has targeted sections of the community that are also the focus of other not-for-profit groups and organisations the potential exists to build capacity and sustainability through regional and even national coordinated working in order to have a more strategic impact upon the target groups. This would include ensuring that different initiatives both learn from each other and do not replicate one another.

### ***Participation and project 'ownership'***

4.40 The aim of a more sustainable approach does not rest simply upon questions of resourcing and support. The trajectory the project has followed also involves growing ownership of the initiative by participants and promotion of an ever greater degree of autonomy. A sustainable future for Angus Gold might therefore also include the handing over of increasing levels of responsibility and decision-making to participants. This is the current ambition for the Surrey 50+ Network<sup>13</sup> where it is hoped to create an autonomous network of participants with an on-going relationship to local services and agencies. Such a prospect is timely given the requirement now across the public sector to consult with and engage communities. In some parts of the UK private consultancies have developed specifically to undertake this work on behalf of health and local authority agencies. As more agencies begin to recognise the need for community engagement, the existence of an autonomous Angus Gold network could present an attractive alternative to the prospect of consultation evolving into a private profit-making exercise.

### ***Future development***

4.41 Angus Gold's internal review and evaluation makes a case for sustainability based upon the on-going demand from a waiting list of trainees and interest shown by private sector sheltered housing and care providing organisations. A 'significant minority' of trainees are reported to be keen to progress into other areas of the project and those involved in the forums, website and card are reported to believe these strands have the potential to be further developed.

4.42 A further issue with implications for sustainability is what appears to have been an inherent tension throughout the life of the project of careful targeting of resources set against the need to capacity-build and disseminate information through raising the profile of the project more widely across Angus. Evaluation questionnaire returns suggest that a good proportion (approximately a third) of existing participants herald from Arbroath and the surrounding area. The interpretation this supports is that the project has had a big impact upon a limited number and lacks a broad reach. The need to build numbers to make the project sustainable may compound this tension.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.surreycommunity.info/surrey50plusnetwork/>

4.43 However, a clear message from the partners concerning the future of Angus Gold was the desire for it to grow ‘laterally’. This would entail developing a larger network of participants, and for its learning and development model to be rolled out to other areas of community education and provision. In this respect, the challenge will be to discover whether the model can be widened to take account of significant numbers without losing the qualities that have distinguished it from the institutions that currently administer local resources. This includes its capacity to be dynamic, opportunistic and responsive to the expressed needs of participants.

### **Replicability**

4.44 Clearly, efforts to replicate Angus Gold will lead to differing outcomes according to the input and ownership of the participants themselves. As Angus Gold has proved, it is difficult at the outset to predict pace or direction with consequences for costs because the project is aligned to the needs of the participants and governed by their concerns and pace of progress. As one strategic partner observed:

*“The two year funding period was a very tight period to try and achieve all the things that were to be achieved within the project and do that in a developmental way, bringing people along and engaging and involving people.” (Strategic partner interviewee)*

4.45 The project has demonstrated that pre-set targets are sometimes at odds with the CLD framework and the importance, when such tensions emerge, of remaining clear about the underlying ethos and methodology. As the above quote indicates the sheer breadth of the different strands to the project – all of which were built around a central engagement process – presented a massive challenge for rolling out in the time originally designated.

### **Process**

4.46 While many of the delays to the project were unforeseen and in some cases originated beyond the boundaries of the project itself, the overall outcome has been a staggered or staged rolling out of the different elements. In terms of replication, the question is whether such a staggered model of development was a hindrance or a benefit to the capacity of the project to concentrate on certain elements at a time and develop each one. Given the broad range of aims and objectives the project set out with, and the level of staffing and resources, it is difficult to imagine how all the strands might have been rolled out concurrently.

4.47 In addition to the tensions around the pace of progress have been the questions raised over the numbers of participants to have benefited from the project. As one strategic partner observed:

*“So the central thing there is, keep people at the heart, keep the people you’re working with and for right in the middle of what you’re doing and always be engaging with them, talking and listening to them [...] But, on the other hand don’t allow yourself to be disproportionately influenced by a small number of people, make sure there is a range of interests feeding in.” (Strategic partner)*

4.48 Any attempt to replicate the project will need to meet the challenge of balancing numeric targets with the need to support those who take part as the project develops and sustain their engagement.

### ***Key elements***

4.49 The question of whether it would be possible to replicate some or all of what Angus Gold has achieved elsewhere was put to the project's various stakeholders. Different groups highlighted what they considered key elements of the project that would be required if the template was repeated elsewhere. For participants, the main features included the sociability attached to all the strands and activities. The commitment and qualities of the project team were also highlighted as important factors.

4.50 For the project team and strategic partners, the message has been that both the structure and challenges would be very similar wherever this style of project was undertaken. One piece of advice was the need to recruit representatives of strategic partner agencies who are at the heart of their organisations and are willing and prepared to collaborate across disciplines. Four key areas were repeatedly highlighted as crucial to any effort to replicate the project.

- Strong management
- Community engagement using a development model
- Support of a strategic partnership
- Targeting of resources at a clearly defined section of the community

### ***Management***

4.51 Most of these factors are discussed above, however the issue of project management and leadership is one that we turn to here given that it has emerged as a prominent issue throughout the evaluation. From the point of view of both participants and strategic partners the leadership of Angus Gold has resonated throughout interviews and discussions as a key factor to its success. While replicating personalities is not an option it is useful to be clear of the mix of skills required to undertake a project comparable to Angus Gold. During the evaluation we asked the Project Coordinator to outline her role and the skills required for the job.

#### **Project Co-ordinator: Job description**

##### Background:

- Community Learning and Development
- Community education

##### Experience/knowledge:

- Community development (uses of digital technology to do this)
- Services to older people; social care; and education
- Partnership working
- Understanding of how to build capacity with participants
- "Knowing about computers is the least of it"
- Appreciating the psychology and barriers to learning that people face
- Understanding the fear and trepidation that people have about learning
- Understanding and knowledge of networks especially of the public sector

##### Role:

- Team manager
- Practitioner role with leadership on linking to other agencies and strategies
- Promoting empowerment and learning
- Community engagement

## ***Conclusions***

4.52 The appeal of a learning and development model is that it involves generating knowledge and insights into a local community and will therefore always have a specific character grounded in local conditions whenever pursued. There is an evolving framework for community engagement across national and local government and other public sector agencies so the model developed by Angus Gold has a timeliness that is difficult to ignore.

### **Chapter Summary**

- The project has met with a series of delays with consequent implications for the costs involved. Despite this, the scope of what has been achieved; the success in achieving and even exceeding certain aims and objectives; and the positive appraisal from strategic partners and participants, support the interpretation that Angus Gold represents value for money.
- The area in which the project has been least active and where the strategic partnership has been less effective has been forward planning to ensure sustainability beyond the initial period of funding. Questions persist as to how best to take the project forward and ensure a longer-term future.
- Key considerations in replicating the project include strong management, community engagement, strategic partnership and targeting of resources. As a pilot initiative Angus Gold has proved the efficacy of the approach taken and therefore its value as a template.

## CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSIONS

5.1 In this report we have offered a flavour of Angus Gold both in terms of what has been achieved and the approach taken. Time constraints have led us to concentrate upon the different type of activities the project has engaged in rather than seeking to appraise each and every activity. For this reason many of the project's achievements remain unacknowledged by this report. Requests for further details on the project can be directed to the Angus Gold team via their website: [www.angusgold.com](http://www.angusgold.com).

**Table 14 Project overview**

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
Angus Gold used a community learning and development approach to engage participants, support contributions and promote ownership of the project	The project engaged with groups often perceived as 'hard to reach' by service providers and has laid the foundations for an ongoing process of involvement
The project unfolded according to a pace set by the needs of participants	This priority meant that certain targets and objectives were not met according to the originally agreed timescale
The project prioritised experimentation and learning especially in respect to overcoming barriers to inclusion for older people with diverse support needs	The learning and development approach coupled with the targeting of people with high support needs meant that only a small proportion of Angus' 50+ population participated in the project
The project established itself as separate from and largely independent to mainstream services and council agencies	The stand-alone status of Angus Gold increased it's visibility to potential collaborators and other organisations targeting older people
The project has a strong brand and identity generated by development work with participants	The branding of Angus Gold has provided something that participants can identify with and a standpoint from which to speak, for example when communicating with local service providers
A multidisciplinary network of groups and agencies supported and contributed to the project by pooling resources and influence	Levels of support and input from the different partners have been uneven, the more successful relationships have involved partners who have embraced the development model
Poor forward planning was reportedly due to the uncertainty associated with a pilot initiative and lack clarity over outcomes	The sustainability of Angus Gold remains in question, although certain strands have now been mainstreamed by the Council

5.2 Overall, criticism of Angus Gold has been limited, no doubt reflecting the success in how well it has engaged with and supported participants and stakeholders. There is a risk that undertaking an evaluation at the end of a period of funding when the future for the project was uncertain may have influenced the input of different groups and individuals. This may have been offset by undertaking some form of evaluation earlier in the funding period, which would be something to consider for other projects of this type.

### *Partnerships*

5.3 The project was intended to promote partnership working and address the divisions between services by meeting the needs of older people in a more holistic fashion. As certain partners had come to realise, the project both acknowledged and responded to the interconnected nature of physical, social and emotional needs of participants.

5.4 Most progress was made with partners that embraced the community learning and development model pursued by the project; were prepared to adapt their working practices and style of provision accordingly; and, were able to harness resources to contribute to this. Levels of co-operation and participation varied considerably where the wider partnership was concerned raising the question of whether the development of a formal protocol of some kind might have helped to guide working relations.

### ***The development approach***

5.5 The project adopted a needs-based rather than service-based focus that drew upon a process of learning about and from sections of the local community. This was supported by an on-going process of engagement and consultation that provided an alternative form of expertise on local conditions, services and facilities based on the perspectives of older residents and service users.

5.6 It remains to be seen whether mainstreaming the different project strands will lead to a reassertion of professional control over the project and reinstate service providers as the 'experts' on local needs and conditions.

5.7 Difficulties in working to a pre-set timescale were experienced, resulting in an uneven pace of progression for the different project strands. These issues of pacing illustrate the tensions between an existing professional and service-led culture on the one hand, and the developmental model pursued by Angus Gold on the other. Project documentation reveals that much time and effort was expended by the project team in seeking to establish more flexible funding arrangements that accommodated the participative approach on which the project was based. This represents a lesson learned for funders supporting a project of this nature.

### ***Brand and identity***

5.8 A particularly attractive aspect of Angus Gold is that it provides participants with a position from which to speak and a dynamic with providers, planners and policy-makers that is different to the usual framework for consultation and engagement of service users. As more than one strategic partner pointed out, older people are all too often positioned as the passive recipients of a service and do not always consider themselves to have influence over or ownership of the services they receive. By bringing people together under the banner of Angus Gold this stereotype has been challenged with very real consequences for the lives of those involved, not least in the discovery noted by one participant that 'unity is strength'.

5.9 Through ownership of the project, participants also maintained control over the knowledge and information about them that was collected and communicated to a wider network of agencies and service providers.

### ***Engagement***

5.10 The project shows that a willingness to engage with the community on the part of public services and agencies takes more than just facilitating direct contact, rather it involves questions of how to communicate under conditions that are fair, balanced and supportive.

5.11 An evolving infrastructure of community involvement and consultation was harnessed by the project to support the input of groups and individuals who were previously not well engaged and at times overlooked by service providers and other agencies. This has highlighted the importance of ‘community’ involvement mechanisms developing in an inclusive fashion.

5.12 A tailored and person-centred approach based upon individualised forms of knowledge-gathering has distinguished this project from a more traditional service delivery format with a ‘one size fits all’ outcome. Rather than operating according to assumptions about certain types of service user and their related needs, Angus Gold has demonstrated that an individualised approach to digital education supports learning and maintains the commitment of even the most sceptical learner.

### ***Impact***

5.13 For participants in Angus Gold, engagement has involved a process of confidence-building and the acquisition of skills that provide a foundation for more confident self-advocacy and expression. This has been achieved in a context of provision of information and education in order for people to better understand and articulate their needs and those of their community.

5.14 The project also drew in volunteers who gained direct experience and insights into working with the target groups and who developed transferable skills that will outlast their involvement with Angus Gold. Both volunteers and participants have increased the capacity of the project to impact upon the wider community. Many project outputs, including awareness-raising films; the website; the publications and the card have the potential to benefit a much broader swathe of the community.

5.15 Overall, the project has built upon and developed the social capital of local communities in Angus in ways that have given precedence to those on the peripheries of the community. Having helped individuals to develop skills and knowledge that are useful to the wider community the project is likely to have a lasting legacy now that it has laid the foundations for an on-going process of involvement.

### ***Future prospects***

5.16 A more co-ordinated and planned approach to the project’s future development alongside greater attention to income generation would likely have improved the potential for sustainability. The project has done well to attract funds and/or resources from diverse sources for time-limited initiatives but has generally been less successful in identifying more lasting sources of income. In this respect it may have exploited the commercial knowledge and expertise of private partners further and developed the commercial potential of certain strands of the project earlier.

5.17 Despite questions concerning longer-term planning and preparations Angus Gold has provided a framework to improve local conditions not only by promoting closer working between different services and agencies but also by helping local residents to play a more active role in shaping policy and provision.

5.18 The project's greatest challenge now is the task of translating an effective and lauded experiment in community engagement into a lasting and more broadly encompassing approach to digital and social inclusion.

## APPENDIX 1

## PROFILE OF EVALUATION PARTICIPANTS

### Profile of participants

Participant profile	Website group	Discussion group	Interviewees	Case studies	Total
<b>Gender</b>					
Men	2	5	2	1	10
Women	5	10	4	2	21
				<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Age</b>					
70+	6		1	1	8
60-69	1		4	1	6
50-59	-		1	1	2
Not recorded	-	15			15
				<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>

### Evaluation questionnaire: profile of respondents

	Frequency	%
<b>Demographic Characteristics</b>		
Gender		
Male	34	20.1
Female	133	78.7
Missing	2	1.2
Age Group		
50-60	13	7.7
60-70	53	31.4
70-80	62	36.7
80-90	34	20.1
90+	4	2.4
Live Alone		
Yes	81	47.9
No	87	51.5
Missing	1	0.6
<b>Angus Gold and ICT related Characteristics</b>		
Ever Use a computer		
Yes	119	70.4
No	34	20.1
Missing	16	9.5
Have a computer at home that is contacted to the internet		
Yes	85	50.3
No	50	29.6
Missing	34	20.1
Visited Angus Gold Website recently (of 119)		
Yes	33	27.7
No	85	71.4
Missing	1	.8
Have Angus Gold Card		
Yes	98	58.0
No	64	37.9
Missing	7	4.1
Seen one of the Angus Gold publications		
Yes	133	78.7
No	31	18.3
Missing	5	3.0

***Strategic partnership case study: Creating a digital education pathway in Angus***

In this case study we offer an outline of the relationship developed between Angus Gold and the local community college as an example of how strategic partnerships worked during the life of the project. Angus Gold worked collaboratively with the college in a number of ways including: the recruitment of volunteers; creating a transition phase as the next step for IT training for participants; and by influencing the college's approach to teaching and supporting older students.

***Volunteer recruitment*****What happened:**

- The college director was a member of the Angus Gold advisory group;
- the Angus Gold team were invited into the college with the idea of recruiting IT volunteers from the student body;
- volunteering was treated as a form of mini-placement contributing to student's coursework;
- students were also persuaded to join because volunteering would enhance future employment prospects;
- volunteer input was made sustainable through recruitment drives each new academic year
- volunteers supplemented the work of the trainers and were used to increase the level of one-to-one input that each participant received

**Outcomes:**

- the introduction of younger volunteers built an intergenerational strand into the training
- students gained a better understanding of the needs of the learners targeted by the project
- three volunteers went on to be employed as IT trainers at the college
- two volunteers were awarded 'student of the year' by the college

An unpredicted outcome of the training offered by Angus Gold was the number of participants interested in further learning. Already clear about the unsuitability of existing digital education programmes the project worked closely with the college to create a transition phase for Angus Gold participants. As one IT trainee pointed out, an important feature of this transition from community-based learning to entering college was moving forward as a group:

*"It was intimidating to go to college on your own because young people just say 'well you just do this and you just do that' and of course, when you're older you don't take it in. I would probably have struggled away at home not doing very much until Angus Gold came along with their wee classes. And I think it was quite important having that wee class with (the IT trainer) because by that time you knew that other people were in the same boat as yourself and so you were doing it in a unit almost, so unity is strength, so that you felt more confident going forward to the college" (Participant interviewee)*

The college liaised with the project on how to create an unthreatening environment for the incoming students recognising that the setting itself could represent a deterrent for many: “they were walking through groups of younger people into academic institutions as they perceived them” (College Director). The result was that the college developed a transition zone within the college to encourage Angus Gold participants to continue their ICT studies.

**Features of the transition zone:**

- classes were held on a Friday when the college was most quiet;
- the classroom could be accessed from the back of the college and was next to the car park
- there was a kitchen next to the classroom and a small social area with sofas
- participants could make themselves coffee and tea and spend time socialising in a small group

**Changes to the teaching and courses:**

- classes were for older people only
- classes were reduced in running time
- smaller groups than usual
- slower pace of teaching
- teaching materials were adapted to the interests of students
- students were invited to contribute ideas to the teaching programme
- use of volunteers to supplement teaching
- provision of assistive technology and adaptations to meet the needs of disabled and frail students such as bigger keyboards; different types of mouse; different types of chair; larger screens; larger fonts and different colours
- review and evaluation of classes in order to tailor content to students needs and perspectives

Once Angus Gold students were through the door, the college realised that its established teaching practices and materials were also not well suited to this new group of learners. As with a number of Angus Gold partners, the college continued the CLD approach by adapting classes and teaching materials to the interests and backgrounds of students and eliciting their input into the programme. Although 26% of the college’s intake was of 50yrs+ students, the small number (less than 100) of Angus Gold participants were described as their more ‘vulnerable learners’. This led to a steep learning curve for the college as it adapted to the diverse needs of learners.

The initial intake was of three groups of eight students per group for six weeks. Basic skills (five weeks) were taught first followed by internet use (five weeks), after which students were evaluated and all wished to continue further to a certificated course (SQA Access Level 2). A measure of the college’s success is that after three years, almost all the 92 Angus Gold referred students are still in attendance.

*Outcomes of the strategic partnership*

<b>For the college</b>	<b>For Angus Gold</b>
Highlighted a gap in provision and a section of the community whose educational needs were not being well met	Building capacity of the project and further supporting the learning of participants
Building of knowledge and skills for working inclusively with different groups of older learners	Creation of a digital education 'pathway' for older people in Angus
A better understanding of how the college was perceived by the wider community and the need to address a youth-oriented image	Opportunities for participants to further build confidence and to access education (often for the first time in many decades)
Need to negotiate tensions between financial and numeric targets and the commitment to provide for this section of the community	The transition phase led to many participants entering mainstream courses at the college
Impact on the professional development and knowledge base of the teaching staff	Supplementing teaching capacity through recruitment of volunteers from the college
Placement and work experience for student volunteers	Supporting the sustainability of the project through collaboration

From the point of view of participants this pathway has helped to move many from unconfident, sceptical novices to skilled, active learners who are increasingly integrated into the college environment. This pathway was outlined by one participant:

*"I go to a day group for mental health and Angus Gold had come in and asked anybody if they would like to take part in a computing group. I was absolutely terrified cause I'd never touched a computer before in my life, so it was really scary. So I took up learning just step by step which I found really good and from there I came to the college. I've got two certificates now and I've got my Equal Skills certificate and I am now going on to creative crafts and photography" (Discussion group participant)*

According to the Project Coordinator the future of this partnership may lie in the creative use of ILA's to support Angus Gold as an off-campus satellite to the college in order to make the relationship a sustainable one.

During fieldwork we spoke with a number of Angus Gold participants and asked them about their lives before and after involvement with the project, in order to gain a more personalised insight into what the project has meant to those involved. Here, we offer a brief outline of three people's involvement with the project.

***Case Study 1: Mrs Anderson<sup>14</sup>***

Mrs Anderson is in her mid-sixties and works in a service sector job nearby to where she lives. She has held down the same job for over 15 years and now plans to retire. When not at work she used to spend a lot of time at home, watching the television.

We began by asking about life before Angus Gold and what had motivated Mrs Anderson to get involved: "I lost my husband seven years ago, he was a good man and everything and I was just lost. I've got a family but they didn't want to bother with me after I lost him, I don't know why and it's still the same and so I've got used to it. But I like meeting people and talking to them."

After watching members of her family using a computer Mrs Anderson decided she would like to learn and signed up to Angus Gold after being told about it by a friend. Having watched her grandchildren tapping away on a keyboard, she felt nervous about learning. Starting Angus Gold about a year ago, the first step was basic skills training which she attended at the local Angus Gold drop-in centre. "I did two courses over there and it was good because there was only four of us and maybe one or two tutors and you got a lot of attention, I really enjoyed it."

The next block of lessons was provided by an Angus Gold tutor in the library: "We had six weeks with her and she was showing us how to buy and sell off the (online auction) and I bought a CD. Then they asked me if I wanted to go to college." In the meantime, Mrs Anderson bought herself a laptop. After a while she began exploring the internet, using search engines to check out hotels and prices "I was interested in Poland but didn't know where to start [...] you get more information online and you can see everything".

We asked Mrs Anderson how often she uses her computer and what she's looking forward to learning next: "Well, nearly every night when I'm looking for something. But if there's nothing on the telly, I just go up and say right I'll look for this, just things that I'm wanting to look for. But once I get email, start doing the email I think I'll enjoy that because I can contact a lot of friends instead of phoning."

Through the computing classes Mrs Anderson heard about other opportunities including local forums which included talks and visits to other groups and venues around the region and described how her involvement helped build up confidence: "I would never think of sitting and talking to someone about, even genetics and I would never think, if somebody said to me 'do you want to go to Strathclyde University' – no thank you! But I've been there with Angus Gold."

Involvement in the project broadened the range of people Mrs Anderson had contact with but also led her to meet and support other people who were recently bereaved. It is the level of activity, social contact and the wellbeing that has come with that which she registers as most significant: "Just getting out and saying I've got a meeting today. They say 'where are you going?' and I say 'I'm going to a meeting with Angus Gold' [...] It's given me more confidence in myself [...] it's opened a new world for me."

<sup>14</sup> All names used are pseudonyms.

### ***Case Study 2: Mrs Bailey***

Mrs Bailey is in her 70's and lives alone in a small town in Angus. Generally her health is good but her eyesight has deteriorated recently. She described being very active, particularly around the home, enjoying painting, gardening and in the winter months listening to audio books supplied by the Royal National Institute for the Blind.

Before getting involved with Angus Gold, Mrs Bailey said she knew nothing of new technology and had begun to regret this and felt 'outside' of what was happening around her "people were talking in a language I didn't understand." She had tried going to the local library but there was no-one available to help her get started. From what she had heard it seemed the internet could provide a way of learning and instant access to information. Her main motivation to take up training was so she could write her life story and pass it on to younger members of her family.

Despite worries over her visual impairment she received training from Angus Gold and progressed to the college - with both experiences she found the approach of the trainers helped her to learn and overcome initial feelings of not being able to cope. Mrs Bailey also received support and computing advice from her son. Through the training she went on to join a local forum and a drama class: "I would never have imagined I would have done anything like it!" With the drama group and forums she has travelled around the region and has now decided now to join a local U3A group (University of the Third Age). She had found she often missed published material advertising groups and events due to her failing eyesight but had been alerted to things through Angus Gold participation.

Mrs Bailey found the drama classes had helped her overcome nervousness about standing up and performing and above all felt her life had altered through the social network she had become part of: "You pass by people in the street, but this has allowed us to meet." The three most important things to have come from involvement in Angus Gold are: being alert to what is available; things no longer feeling 'closed off'; and widening social horizons.

### ***Case Study 2: Mr Carlisle***

Mr Carlisle had been a factory worker who took early retirement due to ill-health. He had been involved in a range of different jobs and was a world traveller. Like many of the people who made a self-referral to Angus Gold, he had heard about the project through word of mouth.

The prospect of learning computers felt like a 'minefield', he explains why that was: "this was an obstacle for me which I had placed in front of myself and I couldn't see my way through it. So it tends to paralyse your thinking because there's so many bits and pieces which you have to put in place. But once you go to the course it doesn't seem that way. Gradually you're led through it and you're hardly aware you're out on the other side and you're OK". Mr Carlisle's account reflects the experiences of many participants who had not had received any formal education since their youth and were unconfident as learners. He was particularly taken by the way he was consulted and asked for input to the training, which had made it more relevant to the trainees.

Mr Carlisle had been amongst the earliest intake of trainees and had progressed to the college to extend his skills and learning. He described using computing packages and software to support a range of activities, including hobbies such as model-making and downloading images from art galleries. His computer skills had also supported communication with friends and family in different parts of the world. He had used 'Google earth' to view places where he had lived and where friends were still located, and learned to use a webcam when talking with these globally dispersed friends. He had also booked a holiday, saving money and managing to tailor it more specifically to his needs.

Like many of the early participants, Mr Carlisle was engaged in a range of Angus Gold activities including the making of a film to raise awareness around elder abuse and on-going participation in a local forum and drama class. Combined, he thought these activities had built his confidence and had made him more prepared to try new things. As a health volunteer he has begun visiting older people in

sheltered housing facilities and now makes regular visits to one resident in particular. Each event he has participated in was described as an opportunity to learn, gather information and socialise:

“I always come away with lots of leaflets and books and so forth, We had one, when the event was over I just went through all the different stalls and talked to all the different people. It’s not just a case of what you’re there for – what are the rest of the people there for? So you go and speak to them and you are meeting new people, getting new ideas”

Being part of Angus Gold was described by Mr Carlisle as leading to increased skills; being active; and feeling both physically and psychologically improved (and going to the doctor less). It has also built confidence and extended the range of activities and social events that punctuate his everyday life. In trying to outline the importance of the project he emphasised the way all these different benefits had created an overall impact: “You see this is the confidence thing. It’s what you gain from it. It’s the composite things that are all happening”.

## APPENDIX 4

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