The Hub Game

David Wilcox, Drew Mackie and Matt Scott
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The Hub Game

David Wilcox, Drew Mackie and Matt Scott

Our Way Ahead and Connecting Londoners ran a workshop with about 50 people on November 16 2017 at London Metropolitan University to play through how to develop networked support systems for civil society.

During an hour and a half session we heard about current plans for support systems focussed on a Hub; adopted roles from concerned citizen to network leader and council officer; reviewed challenges and ideas from a consultant’s report; developed further ideas, and then chose methods and actions to carry them out.

We negotiated how we could support each other with funding, endorsement, and sharing. And we decided who could deliver on the ideas.

We then captured our reports of the project ideas on video - and discussed what we had learned from the session.

The next steps will be to develop a community of practice to support each other in taking these and other ideas forward - with a focus on how to use mapping, digital tech, storytelling and meet-ups for network building.

Full report available online here

http://networkedcity.london/hubgame/overview
Background

Over the next few months decisions will be made affecting the support systems for Londoners in local communities and across the capital.

The London Council for Voluntary Services (LVSC), umbrella organisation for 120,000 community groups, networks and charities groups and organisations, has closed after 107 years, and we are in the final stages of a review of alternatives supported by London funders and called The Way Ahead (TWA). The Greater London Authority is also undertaking a review.

The main solution is a London resource Hub, incorporated as a charitable company based on Greater London Volunteering, and now funded with £350,000 for its first year.

As reported here, some London networks and grass roots organisations believe the approach so far is too top-down, and have set up Our Way Ahead as a network of networks.

We want to build accessible digital community platforms, research and map grassroots community activity, to facilitate collaboration, strengthen local platforms and spaces for action and build the voice of those at the grassroots level. The OWA Planning Group work collectively in solidarity with local campaigns to build a grassroots movement for social justice in London and the immediate hinterland of communities affected by the state of affairs London.

More background here
The basis for the workshop

In order to design the workshop, we analysed the report produced by Steve Wyler for LVSC about the Hub:

- Full report that detailed how the Hub might operate.
- Extracts used to design the game

The Wyler report is featured on the TWA site as “outlining what a future ‘London Hub’ would look like and entails”. There are also links there to a Change Plan, and commitments of directors of Councils for Voluntary Service.

An advisory group is discussing how these ideas, or others, might shape the development of the Hub and associated systems. David Wilcox and Christine Goodall are members of the advisory group, on behalf of Our Way Ahead, and one aim for the workshop was to provide input to the group.

We felt that rather than an abstract discussion of support systems, we would take the main ideas and recommendations in the report and make them the basis for a simulation. Here’s the main documents and materials.

- Background briefing online - background download
- List of roles online - role cards download
- Challenges and ideas - challenges and ideas download
- Methods and action - methods and actions download

We had terrific support from community work students at London Met, who also took part in the workshop.
1. The Hub Game

**Game report**

The instructions for participants said:

“*The aim of this workshop is to explore how we can connect, co-operate and collaborate to make London a better place to live and work for everyone.*

“The focus is on making use of the resources that we have by building networks and relationships - as well as finding new resources where possible.

“We hope that our ideas will inform development of the new London Hub for London, responsible for developing civil society support systems, and will in any case help us form some new relationships ourselves.”

The event started with presentations from Matt Scott and David Wilcox summarising the issues and setting the context. The gaming session started by clearing the chairs to the side of the room so that participants could move freely.

**Badges and Tags** Badges denoting various roles were laid out on a side table and participants were asked to choose a role. Some players were able to play their real roles.

On one side of the room several ‘challenges’ were posted on the wall. On the other side of the room sample ‘ideas’ - possible initiatives to address the challenges - were posted on the wall. Each consisted of a description and methods that might be used to take the idea forward. The methods were represented by cards stuck to the ideas sheets. Players could select an idea to promote or create new. Alternatively, players could wait to see what ideas emerged and then provide support for preferred initiatives.
The play of the game consisted of discussing the initiatives and exchanging support tickets. Each player’s badge held a different set of ‘support’ tickets denoting:

- Fund
- Endorse
- Share
- Adopt/Deliver

Each method card needed 2 support tickets and the overall idea sheet needed an ‘Adopt/Deliver’ ticket if the idea was to considered successful. Successful ideas were posted on the wall beside the challenges.

Negotiation 1.5 was conducted freely between roles and a total of 13 ideas completed the process. At the end of the session, players presented their idea (3 min Max.) and this was videoed.

For more information contact David Wilcox david@socialreporter.com
Figure 1.5: Negotiate
Hub game presentations

Overview of the Hub game here >

These were the pre-prepared ideas that we offered to participants. Others were developed during play of the game.

- **New peer support systems** including knowledge and skills exchange visits between groups and organisations and regular meet ups
- **A ‘Lifeboat’ scheme**, where expert assistance with small grants can help organisations in difficulty turn themselves around. Lifeboat scheme figure: 2.1
- **A ‘co-production offer’** – whereby groups of local residents, service-users etc would be identified and supported to engage in co-production exercises with statutory bodies and others wishing to apply co-production methodologies.
- **A social prescribing London platform** through which health and care professionals help people find advice and support in their local communities, and more widely.
- **A consultancy pool** of the most skilled and respected civil society leaders in London, markets its offer across sectors, and generates income for civil society activities.
- **A corporate volunteering brokerage scheme** helps central London companies support volunteering by employees who live right across London.
- **Meeting rooms and conferencing facilities** marketed to voluntary organisations and others with a central booking system.

Ideas with video presentations

Every idea has its own page … follow the “More on …” link below each one. Addition ideas at the bottom of this page.

Lifeboat support scheme

Lifeboat support scheme video
2. Hub game presentations

Figure 2.1: Lifeboat
Social enterprise ecosystem

Social enterprise ecosystem video

Figure 2.2: Social Eco Systems
2. Hub game presentations

Shared events listing

Shared events listing video

Figure 2.3: Shared Events
Supporting refugees

Supporting refugees video

Figure 2.4: Supporting Refugees
A Community Space

A community space video

Figure 2.5: Community Space
2. Hub game presentations

Voices of London

Voices of London video

Figure 2.6: Voices
Cross sector events

Cross sector events video

Figure 2.7: Cross Sector
Peer group support systems

Peer group support systems video

Figure 2.8: Peer Group
LETS link for organisations

LETS link for organisations video

Figure 2.9: Lets Link
Social prescribing London platform

Social prescribing London platform video

Figure 2.10: Social Prescribing
Additional ideas

A co-production offer

A ‘co-production offer’ – whereby groups of local residents, service users etc. would be identified and supported to engage in co-production exercises with statutory bodies and others wishing to apply co-production methodologies.

A pilot project of this group but the leader will use her track record in helping make this project possible. People involved will be volunteers who have been successful entrepreneurs to help develop beneficiaries invest in self-employment (catering, beauty and health care and nursing, customer services, personal development skills, training and advice guidance, IT and social media, business planning, marketing, finance, collaboration.

Discovering concerned residents to tackle anti-social behaviour

Discovering other concerned residents and discover ways to discourage bad behaviour by linking groups with activities that may aid better behaviour, support local groups, Police and Local Authorities to enable projects to develop.

Digital storytelling network

Sharing: grassroots group network including a women’s support network; hub for London. Big Lottery fund(ed) to provide support with local campaigns, funding to create, build and create projects: aims to campaign successfully, to empower communities and enterprise. To shape voluntary sector policy and local community funders

Stop and search youth project monitoring police

Educating people and the Police on the project: get them involved in helping out community work, keeping them busy doing group activities, getting them to help out in the hospitals, are homes, local community.

Community Cafe

To create a space for the local community to open a local cafe to create jobs, space for social networks for the elderly. Prevent flats from being built
Map of game components

We created an interactive map based on the results of the Our Way Ahead workshop hub game on November 16 2017. We set some challenges drawn from two sources: the original Way Ahead report, and the report containing detailed recommendations about the Hub.

We offered some initial ideas to meet the challenges - drawn from the reports - and invited players to add more. People then chose methods to support ideas. Details of those below in the links.

The map, developed using Kumu.io software, shows how the challenges, ideas and methods relate. You can click on the nodes to see more detail, and also videos of presentations if idea champions offered that. There is a further analysis of the map here

- Game overview
- Challenges and initial ideas - as listed before game play
- Methods and actions - as listed before game play
- Ideas as developed in the game

You can view an interactive version of the map on this web page

There is an analysis of the map below
3. Map of game components

Clusters from Kumu map

These are screenshots and analysis of the interactive map, above.

First, here’s the way that the Kumu.io software, used to draw the original map, shows clusters. See the legend for cluster descriptions.

Figure 3.1: Cluster
3. Map of game components

Table analysis clusters

This table shows how ideas and methods cluster around key nodes, coloured pink in the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Develop Cooperative Structure</th>
<th>Community Expertise</th>
<th>Key Connectors</th>
<th>Portal</th>
<th>Social Enterprise Ecosystem</th>
<th>Supporting Refugees</th>
<th>Amplify Voice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Prescribing London Platform</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>A ‘Lifeboat’ scheme</td>
<td>Identify Local Assets and Needs</td>
<td>Cross Sector Events</td>
<td>A Community Space</td>
<td>Central Voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future London</td>
<td>Gather Real-time Intelligence</td>
<td>Mapping</td>
<td>The Way Ahead Recommendation</td>
<td>Mentors</td>
<td>Mutual Support</td>
<td>Discovering Concerned Residents to tackle Anti-social Behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unleashing civil society resources</td>
<td>Training and support</td>
<td>LETS link for organisations</td>
<td>Practice Cooperation &amp; Collaboration</td>
<td>Innovate</td>
<td>Stop &amp; Search Youth Project Monitoring</td>
<td>Devolve Funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chalton Community Expertise</td>
<td>Gather and Share Success</td>
<td>Peer group support systems</td>
<td>Connect Platforms</td>
<td>Help social entrepreneurs grow their business</td>
<td>Think Globally</td>
<td>Digital Storytelling Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliver through Networks/Platforms</td>
<td>Coaching</td>
<td>Improving system of support</td>
<td>A Shared Events Lasting Website for London’s VCS</td>
<td>Local Authorities use equity dividends to fund new social enterprises</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build Networks Online</td>
<td>LVSC Hub report</td>
<td>A ‘co-production offer’</td>
<td>Showcasing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting positive change</td>
<td>Voices of London: championing community expertise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cluster Table

The columns in this table show the nodes that are contained in each map cluster. The highlighted cells indicate the lead node in each cluster according to network analysis.

Figure 3.2: Ideas and Methods
Next steps after the workshop game

These proposals are in draft, for discussion with members of Our Way Ahead and Connecting Londoners

Summary

The workshop took the key elements from official reports on developing new infrastructure for civil society - the challenges, ideas and methods to develop solutions - and turned these into props for a role-playing game. We analysed the further ideas developed by participants, and created an interactive map. This showed where to focus further development.

As next steps we propose forming a community of practice for change agents who want to help build a set of interlinked networks that will create a cooperative platform for London. We’ll report these ideas to the official Hub advisory group, and use them as a basis for fund-raising.

Recap on the game

The workshop game brought together three sets of ideas;

- The original Way Ahead report that recommended firstly, that development of new infrastructure for London civil society should be designed to meet the needs of local communities, with development driven by communities; and secondly that the essence of future systems should be cooperation and collaboration - co-production.
- The report by Steve Wyler, commissioned by a partner in The Way Ahead, London Voluntary Service Council, which included a set of recommendations for the way that a new London Hub should be established. Here’s the key points.
- Proposals by Our Way Ahead for a bottom-up approach and systems to complement the potentially top-down Hub.

The background to those ideas and reports is here. We also drew on the idea of social ecosystems.
The aim of the workshop, and the game that we played, was to “unpack” these complex ideas using a set of props that would help participants create their own set of proposals for, as we called it, Citizen-led hubs.

As Our Way Ahead say in their statement of purpose:

We want to build accessible digital community platforms, research and map grassroots community activity, to facilitate collaboration, strengthen local platforms and spaces for action and build the voice of those at the grassroots level.

We want to achieve “bottom-across”, not rely on linking existing networks or a central hub. We need all three.

We provided game participants with a set of props for their discussions, drawn directly from the above reports. The props were:

- Challenges and initial ideas
- Methods and actions to develop those ideas

Participants then developed ideas drawn from the reports, or developed their own.

- Ideas as developed in the game
Analysis of game results

Drew Mackie produced a map of the way that reports, challenges, ideas and methods are linked - and an analysis of where clusters emerge.

- Interactive map of challenges, ideas and methods

The idea of a platform rather than a Hub

Steve Wyler’s report talks about building networks, using platforms, and says of the Hub:

It should act as a convenor and enabler, rather than direct deliverer, in effect delivering change through networks and platforms, rather than through traditional organisational and membership delivery methods.

The implication is that the Hub should build the networks, and create the platforms. Our Way Ahead believes that, in the spirit of the main Way Ahead recommendations, the networks and platforms should be developed bottom-up.

We also like the idea of a cooperative structure in the longer term:

A co-operative structure has been suggested, with a strong identity and purpose, in which a variety of main stakeholder agencies (and perhaps even Londoners) have a stake, e.g. by owning a share as investors.

The current Hub proposals say that membership of the Hub company will be open to all Londoners.

So why not build a collaborative, open, bottom-up platform to support networks, perhaps owned by Londoners? That isn’t entirely far-fetched. The idea of platform coops is gaining momentum. Most of those are aimed at creating alternatives for workers and consumers to the big commercial platforms.

We are thinking about something with the same values, but a different approach. We don’t want to build new software systems - we couldn’t get the resources or sustain the systems. What we think could be more feasible is platform and network building that:

- Maps and builds connections between existing networks - something that featured in the Our Way Ahead event in July
- Explores how to make connections at different levels - personal, neighbourhood and London-wide, as we explained to the deputy mayor
- Focusses on connecting the connectors - the key people who are points of contact in communities, change agents using a mix of methods for social action, community and network builders.
- Technically develops ways to join up existing online systems, and helps the connectors and change agents use mapping, digital technology, storytelling and innovative ways of organising.
Developing a Community of Practice

So, instead of building a technology platform, build a platform for change agents - an idea sparked by this blog post by Dion Hinchcliffe.

In summary: Bring together a group of people interested in how to build networks and support network-based action. Develop both a learning network and practical activities that can attract clients and funding. Use the network tools to learn how to build networks in practice.

![Figure 4.2: Community of Practice](image)

More here on how that would work
Moving from the game to the Community of Practice

We hope that people who came to the workshop on November 16 - and previous events run by Connecting Londoners and Our Way Ahead - might be founder members of the Community of Practice.

Then together our first steps might be:

- Review and expand the ideas developed in the game, and consider what resources are needed for them.
- Continue mapping the existing networks in London, to see what assets we have
- Develop funding proposals to support the Community of Practice
- Help people developing ideas and projects pitch for funds

We will also report our ideas to the Hub advisory group.

In the longer term the aim would be to join up the networks revealed by mapping, build new networks, and support them. Together with the work undertaken by the Hub these would form the sort of Platform for London envisaged in Steve Wyler’s report.

- Ideas for a Community Platform from Nicolas Fonty

If you are interested in this approach email David Wilcox david@socialreporter.com. I’ll shortly set up other ways to join in.