LEARNING FUTURES PROGRAMME

FINAL REPORT

NETSPass – North East Tutor and Student Passport

Gateshead Council learningSkills

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Table of Contents

Project title

NETSPass – North East Tutor and Student Passport.

Name of lead organisation

Gateshead Councils learningSkills.

The seven North East Local Authorities working as a combined authority *to inspire learning through technology.*

Project summary

The NETSPass project aimed to address the following two challenges:

Challenge One: increase learning technology skills and confidence of the North East Combined Authority teacher workforce.

Challenge Two: establish a co-production model that would enable the seven local authority partners to attain the focus, scale and momentum needed to address challenge one – smaller providers struggle to resource this area.

Research shows the FE & Skills sector workforce must increase its understanding and use of learning technology – to become digitally creative, stay in touch with learner's increasing digital preferences and lifestyles (BECTA 2009).

NETSpass, a partnership of seven North East authorities, aimed to tackle the challenges by establishing a mechanism for developing and recognising digital literacy through continuous professional development (CPD), online resources and online badges that would recognise and reward the progress of tutors.

Over 100 tutors, supported by digital champions, went through a pilot digital teaching CPD programme to gain skills and confidence, develop and curate quality, effective, digital learning resources and design increased blended learning experiences for learners (FELTAG, 2014).

In addition the project aimed to define quality standards for an online learning CPD resource that would be shared and implemented across the partnership.

Who should read this report and why

This Final Project Report and the attached Asset Reports will be of interest to:

- Local Authorities providing FE, Skills and Adult Community Learning seeking to work as a Combined Authority around learning technology skills;
- It will also be of interest to an individual Local Authority seeking to increase the digital skills and confidence of their teaching staff;
- Colleges and other providers of learning and skills to adults will find the assets of interest if they too need to increase the skills and confidence of their teaching staff.

CPD resources developed

The following CPD resources have been developed:

- ASSET ONE: Communications Resources and how these were used in the project;
- ASSET TWO: Digital Literacy Skills and Confidence Survey Resources and how these were used in the project;
- ASSET THREE: Digital Curator CPD Pilot Programme Resources for tutors to increase their learning technology skills and how these were used in the project;
- ASSET FOUR: Learner and Tutor Online Induction Pilot Resources and how these were used in the project.

Refer to the final section of this report for more detail.

Project lead contact details

Project Lead: Kevin Pearson, Principal learningSkills Manager, Gateshead Council.

Tel: 0191 433 8646/ 8652/07702591933. Email: kevinpearson@gateshead.gov.uk

The Gateshead Council learningSkills service provides further education and skills and adult community learning across the borough of Gateshead. It also provides learning in some of the neighbouring authorities. It coordinates three combined authority programmes. NETSPass is one of those combined authority programmes. NETSPass consists of the seven North East Local Authority further education and skills service providers. There are some 49,000 learners across the combined authority area with approximately 480 teaching staff.

Members of partnership

- Durham County Council Adult Learning and Skills Service.
- Gateshead Council LearningSkills.
- Newcastle Council City Learning.
- North Tyneside Council Adult Learning Alliance.
- Northumberland County Council Adult Learning Service.
- South Tyneside Adult Learning.
- Sunderland Council Family Adult and Community Learning Service.

What the project set out to do and why

The overall challenge was to increase and improve the use of learning technologies in the area, within which two distinct challenges were identified. Firstly the challenge was how to increase and improve digital skills and confidence in the combined tutor pool of the seven local authorities. The second challenge related to scale and cost. Separately a local authority based FE and Skills provider, like a small college, will struggle to regularly invest in learning technology skills and resources. The combined authority wanted to establish and test a model of collaboration and co-production that could build on strengths and create capacity for the development of shared solutions and resources. Through combined focus, the aim was to ensure learning technology and pedagogy were seen and valued by all staff as a priority, and to ensure sustainability and growth in these aspects of service.

The project talked with 118 staff and conducted a desktop evaluation of the digital capacity across the seven local authorities prior to applying to the national programme. Managers were struck by the range as well as inconsistencies in distribution of digital skills. Some tutors were already above expectations whilst others appeared barely ILT literate. The utilisation of and access to new technology was also varied within each of the authorities. All had areas of innovation and skill (for example the utilisation of the Iris OTL system in Newcastle Council and Online Badges by Gateshead) as well as common issues around connectivity and variable technology availability in local venues.

Research consistently shows that the whole sector workforce needs to be brought up to speed to fully understand the potential of learning technology. It needs to become digitally creative in its approach, and in turn to stay in touch with the increasingly digital abilities, preferences and lifestyles of the majority of our learners (BECTA, 2009).

The seven local authorities found that as well as there being a lot of work to close the digital divide amongst learners in the region, 27% of NE Residents don't have online skills (24% nationally, OED), there is also a significant digital divide amongst staff in terms of

digital skills and confidence. The seven local authorities have seen this in the range of quality and variable distribution of embedded digital learning approaches, both across the region and in curriculum teams within the authorities. BECTA (2009) highlighted a number of staff and tutors in the sector as having "not grown up with the technology".

The process

1 The first step was to establish an effective management team and a co-production team, a production calendar, resources and processes. An Operations Advisory Group (OAG) of the seven lead officers in the local authority FE and Skills services was established to provide coordination, monitor progress and give support and leadership. The OAG met monthly to receive progress reports, consider achievements and look at challenges. It also signed-off CPD assets and resources when they were ready.

A Digital Champions (DC) team answerable to the OAG consisted of 15 staff - a Coordinator plus two Digital Champions per authority. This team was responsible for creating and testing the project assets. They were also responsible for ensuring effective communication across the partnership and across their local authority. The DC team deliver edthe main CPD asset the Digital Curator Programme to the pilot cohorts of tutors. **(see Asset Three in the resources section)**.

2 The second step was to establish effective communications. As a wide scale project, creating a communications infrastructure and resources was one of the early priority tasks. Most importantly the communications approach was part of an agreement to follow an Open Practice model.

This open practice model was defined as NETSPass partners sharing skills, knowledge and resources openly and actively. Working as co-producers of new innovative open education resources that would increase local digital learning skills and make them available to the wider sector through Learning Futures. Communication buy-in of all partners was key to this approach **(see Asset One in the resources section).**

Illustration One: The NETSPass used an instructional design model (ADDIE) for both the project learning process and the asset development process to address the challenges identified by the project.
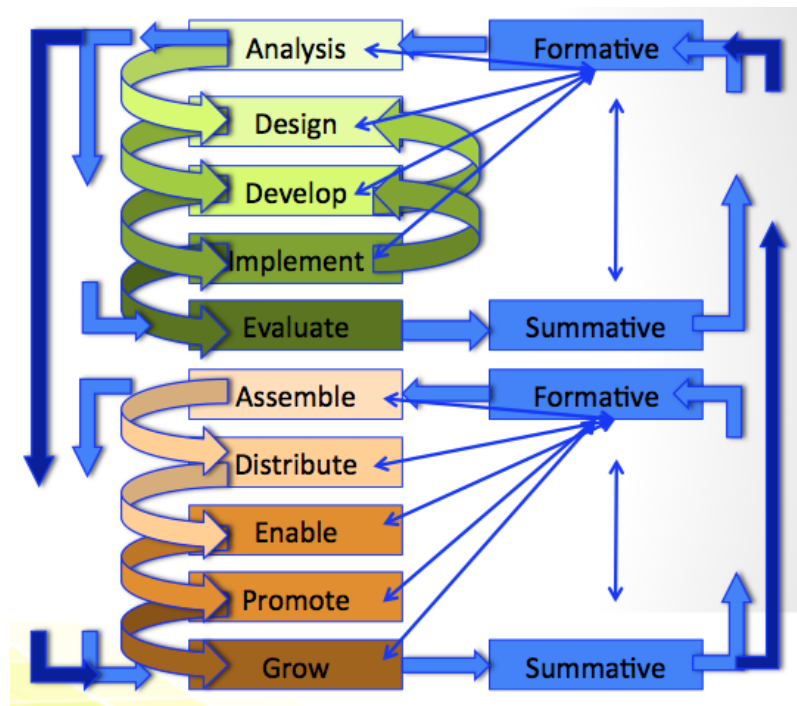
3 An Asset Development Workshop Programme ran from January to September 2015. The Digital Champions met each month for full and half day practical sessions, researching, writing, and reviewing production of each of the four main assets. Tasks were set between the workshops to keep up a strong pace.

The workshops were timed to coincide with OAG management group meetings and were in the same venue throughout the year to contain the impact on each LA, maximise attendance and save costs – the budget was extremely tight. The production calendar was shared, stored and updated via the NETSPass Moodle VLE forum as an "at a glance" text document (shown at end of this document). Once an asset was in production the next one was started. The overlapping development cycles meant the DC team could fit everything into the time available, review and fine-tune the assets as connected learning loops. **(See illustration one above**).

4 Asset testing was carried out from May 2015 to September 2015. The time pressures of having such an ambitious project to an extent caught up with the DC team in August 2015. As a consequence there was one final asset, out of the four main assets, that was not quite ready by the end of project deadline but which was completed in October 2015 **(See Asset Four).**

The most important asset in terms of the challenge we had identified and that is central to the national programme is the Digital Curator Programme (**See Asset Three**). The pilot programme was completed then rolled out in six LAs between May and July 2015 with the seventh LA rolling it out in September. **(See Asset Two for the evaluation process and resources)**.

Illustration Two: A Moodle online project space was created as a central store, an asset location and a place to communicate, share ideas and pose questions.

5 The final phase was to assess the achievements of the project in terms of the challenges identified. In addition we:

- reviewed a model for a combined authority to coproduce resources and the creating of CPD resources to address weaknesses in terms of learning technology skills confidence and application;
- evaluated the distance travelled by all involved and listen to the feedback from the 100+ tutors who took part (**see Asset Four**);
- shared the NETSPass story across the combined authority region and the sector nationally via Learning Futures and the Education and Training Foundation;
- agreed a legacy pathway from 30 September 2015. The OAG will meet to find a way to work together beyond October 2015 (see sections 8 and 9 below).

The results

Challenges overcome

Challenge One: increase learning technology skills and confidence of the North East Combined Authority FE and Skills teacher workforce (NETSPass).

The main CPD development resource is the Digital Curator programme **(details in Asset Three).** The tutors were surveyed before during and after their 20-hour, nine-unit CPD programme using the Digital Literacy Skills Survey tool (see Asset Two).

Prior to the creation of the Digital Curator programme there was no learning technology CPD programme for tutors that addressed the key needs of digital skills, confidence and learning delivery in one concise course. The way many current tutors in the sector learn how to use learning technology in the classroom is similar to how their learners acquire these skills and confidence, where it does occur, is informally or non-formally (BECTA 2009).

Did the process make a difference to the 100+ tutors who took part in the pilot? Yes it did. Were they already digitally skilled and confident anyway? Some yes but by not all. The combined tutor pool with its age profile reflects the evidence in BECTA (2009) who highlighted a number of staff and tutors in the sector have "not grown up with the technology."

Over 100 tutors and digital champions (23% of the tutor workforce) took part in the pilot CPD programme **(Asset Three)** from all seven partner' authorities. Of those tutors who took part as learners 31 completed and returned the DLSS form **(Asset Two)** in February 2015 (start point of journey) and September 2015 (end point of journey). Most, i.e 84%, of tutors said their confidence had improved as a consequence of being able to spend 20 hours focused on learning technology and blended learning, facilitated by a digital champion. This includes those tutors who initially self-assessed as high in many areas.

Illustration Three: tutor confidence after completing the project CPD programme.

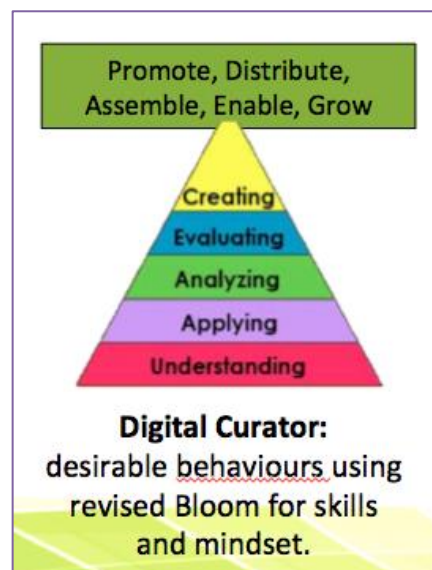**CPD Programme: Tutor Confidence Change**

No change 16%

Improved 84%
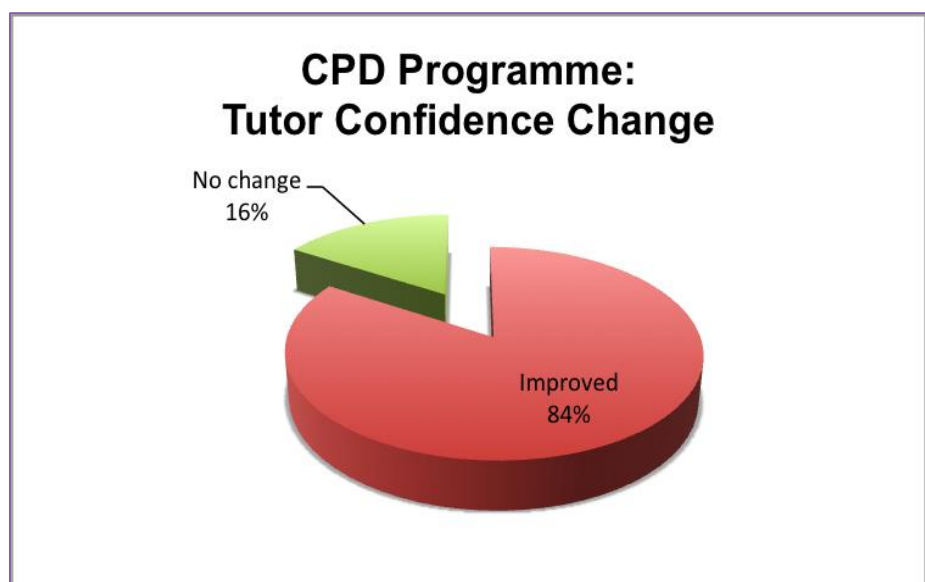
Below is a list of reflections from tutors about the CPD programme.

- *"I will be able to use a variety of media to provide a variety of learning experiences."*

- *"I feel more confident regarding all aspects…although I may need more practice."*
- *"Very informative…about how to move the use of digital resources forward."*
- *"More understanding of different media for use in class."*
- *"Better understanding of Digital Footprint (and e-safeguarding)."*
- *"Totally taken aback at how much information about yourself is on the internet."*
- *"Became more confident using social media, especially apps like Pinterest."*
- *"Social media is very interesting for use with students for independent learning and research skills."*
- *"Important to engage learners on numerous levels using online communication - forums, messaging (use of social media)."*
- *"Very informative, (to learn about) the direction the digital world is going and impacting on (my) teaching and learning."*

Illustration Four: The Digital Curator programme model utilised Bloom's taxonomy. It describes five desired digital curator behaviours in the top level.

Promote, Distribute, Assemble, Enable, Grow

Creating
Evaluating
Analyzing
Applying
Understanding

Digital Curator: desirable behaviours using revised Bloom for skills and mindset.

Digital Champions delivering the pilot CPD all witnessed a growth in understanding and confidence: *"The tutors who attended the digital curators course are a lot more confident in creating, curating digital content."*

Most tutors on the programme commented on how useful the course was to them in learning how to use their local authority VLE. Six of the authorities used Moodle for the project. Moodle versions varied from 1.9 to 2.9 but the flexible approach taken on instructional design **(see Asset Three, "quality control")** avoided any difficulties this could have caused.

The survey revealed an interesting, false positive in terms of tutors overall self assessment. Although this relates to a small number, tutors initially scored themselves higher in skills and confidence whilst by the end of the CPD programme downgraded some

of their assumptions. This suggests the CPD programme gave them a more realistic measure of their own ability and confidence. A more objective appraisal was made possible through experiencing the digital CPD programme – they realised they had more to learn perhaps.

Challenge Two: establish a co-production model that would enable the seven local authority partners to attain focus, scale and momentum needed to address challenge one.

It was felt that pressure of time, continuing year-on year major cuts in budgets due to the unprecedented austerity measures, and consequent staff turnover all created a significant pressure on the project. Despite this, managers unanimously felt the project had taken everyone forward in their thinking around learning technology and have a commitment to increase digital skills and blended learning in their provision.

Having established shared needs and goals, described above in "What the project set out to achieve and why," the managers of the seven services involved in NETSPass found the project helped them a lot *"to gain experience and resources"* in learning technology and blended learning.

It is clear to the project partners that the co-production approach that was managed and structured together with the policy of open practice, were significant factors in achieving a positive appraisal. A real achievement and even more so in such challenging economic times. Managers commented:

- *"Sharing between the LAs worked well especially having a structure of regular meetings to keep focussed."*
- *"Having monthly newsletters right through helped us to share the news."*
- *"The structured/focused approach to developing digital learning into a better educational offer worked well for our service."*
- *"Attending the regular focus groups was hugely beneficial to progress my personal thinking around the whole digital agenda. I wouldn't have been able to do so alone."*
- *"What we can take forward for our service is the need to pick up speed on digital inclusion and blended learning."*
- *"Regular meetings to put digital content together are of great benefit to help with the pressures of time."*
- *"Digital Curator course is a great asset…to roll out throughout the organisation."*
- *"Tutors who attended the Digital Curator course are a lot more confident in creating and curating digital content."*

- *"Being able to create open educational resources, to collaborate as a team across the authorities has been a great benefit."*
- *"For our service the Digital Curator programme has increased staff skills and will increase the flexibility of our delivery."*

Impact identified

Impact on the learners who took part in the pilot CPD programme:

See "challenge one" above for more information and comments.

Learners in the context of the project were the 100+ tutors who took part directly in the CPD programmes run in each authority. For those on the CPD course, feedback shows 84% of tutors felt they had improved their confidence in learning technology and blended learning. They felt more able to implement digital learning in their courses as a consequence of the course (illustration three).

The impact of having a cohort (23% of the tutor workforce) of teachers trained as Digital Curators on the 49,000 learners who enrol on the courses across the authority will be witnessed by each of the seven LAs in NETSPass in the 2015-2016 academic year.

Future impact:

In spite of the enormous challenges facing the sector, as described in the opening paragraph of "challenge two" above, all seven partners, have committed to training all teaching staff as Digital Curators over the next 12 months. This will mean up to 480 Digital Curators will exist in the combined authority area where none previously existed.

Most partners will be making this a mandatory CPD requirement. Some will deliver this as a series of "bite-size" workshops to fit their existing CPD approach whilst others will create packages that suit their need regarding pressures on tutor and staff time. Others are including VLE training and Google Apps for Education training as part of an enhanced programme. All though will deliver the nine Digital Curator programme core units and follow the quality control document guidance.

Impact on Managers:

Impact on managers in the partner authorities has been described in "challenge two" above. Additionally the project has helped managers to take immediate action to change the quality of the learning experience with targets for a higher ratio of blended learning in courses offered plus a new approach to digital teaching and learning quality control.

Here are some of the examples from partners of the NETSPass impact:

- *"NETSPass has made us upgrade the skills we seek from our contractors and in terms of how much blended learning and learning technology we expect to see in delivery – have set into contract specifications a 10% minimum use of blended learning in classes delivered by contractors."*

- *"We have prioritised development and implementation of a blended learning strategy. Work is underway and all staff will do the project CPD training programme from October 2015. I do not see any alternative for us, or our partners, if we are to survive as a smaller provider. We need to ensure our delivery keeps pace with learner expectations and experience in the use of technology to offer informal, non-formal and formal blended learning choices."*
- *"The management team have agreed specific learning technology and blended learning Performance Indicators for the coming year and our quality inspectors will receive training in this aspect of teaching and learning."*
- *"We will be adding to our existing assessments of the use of learning technology in delivery."*

Key learning points

The key factors in the NETSPass project's success, which any other group of local authority or other educational establishments in the FE and Skills sector would need to be aware of if they wish to replicate this practice, are:

- The creation of a model way of working as a combined authority in an area we each struggle to resource and prioritise as individual providers;

- The ability to create time by sharing knowledge and creative minds, to identify common problems and co-produce solutions and the willingness and enthusiasm to work together. Sharing the workload;

- Establishing a tight structure and schedule with a clear communication plan and channels;

- A hands-on project coordinator from within the partnership supported by a digital champion from each partner;

- A shared online space for the project to communicate ideas, pose questions, store and share resources;

- Access to development funding – in this case the grant from The Education and Training Foundation plus a contribution from each partner;

- Access to sector expertise and leaders – in this case the Learning Futures national team and the significant amount of events and resources they made available to the project;

- Time.

With hindsight, the project would have set out to create one key asset. There was not enough time to complete and test all the assets in the project time available. The Tutor Online Induction course was completed in October 2015 and the Learner Online Induction programme will be tested by all partners from October 2015.

It would have been highly beneficial if there had been funding for two years for such an important national programme. This would have enabled resources to be developed in year one, tested in year two, impacts made more visible and captured, and a bigger local dissemination programme.

NETSPass will meet again in mid-late October to plan a way forward to secure a meaningful legacy from the last 12 month's work. Managers and the Digital Champions hope to meet and continue working as a combined team. This will start with completing and delivering the Tutor Online Induction course for new tutors; evaluating the continued roll out of the Digital Curator CPD programme, and sharing learning technology experience and expertise. Without external funding to resource a coordinator and workshops it will be a challenge to develop new resources and assets.

Resources

1. ASSET ONE: Communications Resources and how these were used in the project:
    i. partnership newsletter toolkit;
    ii. co-production model and open practice description;
    iii. CPD model diagram using Bloom and ADDIE;
    iv. Online project space description.

2. ASSET TWO: Digital Literacy Skills and Confidence Survey Resources and how these were used in the project:
    i. Questionnaire Survey Form.

3. ASSET THREE: Digital Curator CPD Programme Resources for tutors to increase their learning technology skills and how these were used in the project:
    i. Digital Curator Role and Person Specification;
    ii. Digital Curator Programme – Description, Quality Assurance Document, Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria, Scheme of Work example, Lesson Plan examples, ILP example, access to example Moodle 2.9 course area;
    iii. Digital Curator Open Badge Resources – badge description, rationale and criteria, free design tool link, free distribution tool link, badge used in the project.

4. ASSET FOUR: Learner and Tutor Online Induction Pilot Resources and how these were used in the project:
    i. A four-unit Learner Online Induction – Description, Quality Assurance Document, Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria, Access to the four videos created for each unit, Online Quiz.

ii. A four-unit Tutor Online Induction – Description, Quality Assurance Document, Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria, Access to the four videos created for each unit, Online Quiz.

Asset Development Workshop Programme "at a glance" Calendar:

What	When			Who
Project Management Meetings:				
No.1	January 28th	Wednesday	3-5pm	OAG
No.2	February 25th	Wednesday	3-5pm	OAG
No.3	March 25th	Wednesday	3-5pm	OAG
No.4	May 20th	Wednesday	3-4pm	OAG
No.5	July 01st	Wednesday	3-5pm	OAG
No.6	September 09th	Wednesday	3-5pm	OAG
~~Digital Curator Programme Workshops:~~	~~February 11th~~	~~Wednesday~~	~~10-4pm~~	~~DC's~~
	~~February 19th~~	~~Wednesday~~	~~10-4pm~~	~~DC's~~
Staff Online Induction Programme content workshop:	March 20th / Mid October	Wednesday / TBC	10-4pm / 10-4pm	DC's / DC's
Learner Online Induction Programme content workshops:	July 8th / August 20th	Wednesday / Thursday	10-3pm / 10-3pm	DC's / DC's
Online Learning Content Standards workshops:				
No.1	February 25th	Wednesday	1-3pm	DC's
No.2	March 25th	Wednesday	1-3pm	DC's
No.3	May 20th	Wednesday	1-2.30pm	DC's
No.4	July 1st Open Badges cancelled	Wednesday	1-3pm	DC's
No.5	September 9th Staff Online Induction Programme	Wednesday	1-3pm	DC's
NETSPass Newsletter "The Digital Passport"				
Issue No.1	Publish: January 30th	Editor/publisher: Gateshead		
Issue No.2	Publish: February 27th	Editor/publisher: Durham		
Issue No.3	Publish: March 30th	Editor/publisher: Newcastle		
Issue No.4	Publish: April 30th	Editor/publisher: North Tyneside		
Issue No.5	Publish: May 31st	Editor/publisher: Northumberland		
Issue No.6	Publish: June 30th	Editor/publisher: South Tyneside		
Issue No.7	Publish: July 31st	Editor/publisher: Sunderland		
Issue No.8	Publish: August 30th	Editor/publisher: Gateshead		
Issue No.9	Publish: September 30th	Editor/publisher: Gateshead		
End of Project Event – Defer to October	**When/where**: September/Sunderland			
Project ends: 30th September				