

SOCIAL JUSTICE PULSE REVIEW 2025

COST OF LIVING, HEALTH INEQUALITIES AND RACE EQUITY

Connecting Futures: Co-producing Digital Skills Sessions with Hope Beyond Borders

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Project Summary

This evidence-based project supported a group of Spanish-speaking people from migrant backgrounds to access digital devices, improve digital literacy, and decrease barriers to digital inclusion. This supports them with important tasks such as searching for jobs, applying for benefits, and accessing healthcare.



The Challenge

Many of the people who the charity Hope Beyond Borders work with face language or cultural barriers, along with limited access to digital devices, and little or no experience with technology. When combined with a transition to a new country with different and often complicated systems, these challenges often stop them from accessing services, finding work, or continuing their education. Through this project, we aimed to reduce these barriers and help individuals and families become more confident, independent, and connected.

We delivered a 12-week digital skills drop-in, first understanding current difficulties with internet/computer usage, and then asking the group to choose the topics they wanted to focus learning on. They chose translation apps, using email, cybersecurity, AI, and more.

Research undertaken by part of the project team before the start of the course (the article now in preparation will be available from the authors) showed the importance of:

1. Relationships, trust, and intra-organisational collaboration in the provision of effective digital inclusion services
2. Teaching digital skills through co-production. Identifying tasks that are important to participants is more effective than designing a one-size-fits-all course, and this project's design was co-produced with participants and with a digital inclusion specialist to avoid common pitfalls of digital inclusion work.

Findings

- The project strengthened the relationship between Hope Beyond Borders and the University, by fostering relationships, strengthening evidence about effective digital inclusion projects, and providing access to all course participants to language learning tools available through the University's Language Resource Centre.
- Current difficulties with internet/computer usage were identified as: accessing medical/dental services, using translation apps, using GPS, emailing, using word processors, safety and security, and general computer skills.
- Because the participants had identified the themes, there were real-life examples to work through for each of the topics.
- The friendly atmosphere, food provided, flexible pacing, trusted location, and delivery in Spanish allowed for exploration of each of the themes, and for the participants to support each other in learning.
- The in-person group delivery led to peer-to-peer support both within and outside of the course.
- Opportunities for immediate practical support included Digital Voice delivering a session on using the NHS App.
- Feedback from the course was very positive, and participants' confidence grew in many areas of using the internet and technology safely. One participant identified that not speaking English is a major barrier for them, but that learning translation tools has made them feel safer.



Left to right: Sergi shows the group a poster for the course. Sergi demonstrates the power of AI to create realistic but fake photos. Match the icon with the name of the translation app. One participant uses AI to create an image of the national bird of Venezuela, doing the national dance, the Joropo, and reminds Chat GPT to add the correct shoes.

Recommendations

- When purchasing digital kit for a project, ensure that it is modern, accessible, and that it fits in with devices participants already are using.
- Secure additional funding to continue the course for changing needs and technological updates.
- Continue to teach tools and strategies for migrants to use technology to adapt to, understand, and utilise the services and opportunities in a new country.
- Replicate the course trialled here in other settings, using the same principles of trusted location, trusted people, co-production, and delivery in first language.

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