

# Tea & Teach May 2014

## A Digital Partnership Project



Lewisham Pensioners Forum  
&  
Barclays Bank—Digital Eagles

## **Tea and Teach' session held at Barclays Bank Lewisham on 27th May 2014 at 10am**

### **Introduction:**

The 'tea and teach' session was the first collaborative venture between Barclays bank and Lewisham Pensioners Forum (LPF), a local voluntary grass-roots organisation managed by volunteers. The one and half hour event was designed to raise the level of digital skills and confidence amongst some of Lewisham's older residents by giving them the opportunity to 'play around' with tablet computers and bring in any of their own digital equipment such as cameras, smart phones or laptops to seek guidance on using them to their best advantage within a relaxed environment.

Barclays assembled the expertise of its national 'digital eagles' co-coordinator, Kiran Channa, Barclay's community outreach manager, Zoe Dixon and two of its local 'digital eagles', Ash Patel and Aron Albert, branch employees who had elected to take on the extra digital responsibilities. Barclay's also provided the venue, a Wi-Fi enabled board-room based in its Lewisham branch, a building easy to locate and reach by public transport. It provided excellent disabled-friendly access for those suffering from mobility problems with its lift access to the second floor and adjacent toilet facilities. The team also provided refreshments for the break including tea and coffee and a range of biscuits and cakes.

LPF brought along five android tablet computers that ranged from a screen size of 7 inch to 10inch purchased thanks to a donation from the Fritz foundation. Two Apple I Pads belonging to Kiran and one of the 'learners' were also made available for experimentation. Nine LPF members owning up to minimal digital skills had been recruited following the advert for the event in the May edition of the forum's newsletter.

### **Event:**

The event was heralded as a great success by all parties concerned. Although planned for one and half hours, the group proved so eager to carry on regardless that the midway

refreshment break was dispensed with and the session forced to end after two hours.

LPF members who had never used a tablet computer before were surprised at their relative

simplicity and responsiveness and considered them less intimidating than a laptop that was perceived as more 'technical'. Their 'tea and teach' session had emboldened them to both purchase their own tablet or cajole their family into buying one on their behalf as well as graduate onto a more structured course using tablets to access the internet. The more digitally confident expressed an interest in attending future one-off sessions perhaps on a three-monthly basis that will likely feature specific topics such as how to use Skype and social media sites or bank or shop online.



All the LPF members were extremely complementary about the input of the Barclays 'digital eagles' in respect to their level of patience and approachability. Their warm and reassuring welcome helped put the adult learners immediately at ease and removed their embarrassment around displaying their lack of skills. They were considered a 'credit to Barclays'. The only (mild) criticism was the 'digital eagles' occasional use of jargon and assumption that the older learners were familiar with common terms such as 'apps'. However, they quickly resorted to plain English once they realised the problem. The 'digital eagles' were perhaps surprised by the level of enthusiasm and persistence shown by the older adult learner to master new digital skills and were gratified that their own input had been valued and appreciated. All were keen to repeat another 'tea and teach' session and perhaps expand the training experience with the same group of participants given the level of trust established in just over a morning.

### **Learning points:**

Various points were raised during a brief post-mortem discussion between the 'digital eagles' team and LPF coordinator and follow-up calls to individual participants.

- The timing of session at 10am in the morning was ideal. It enabled participants to use their Freedom Pass without restriction, to return home in daylight during the winter months and avoid the inconveniences of shared public transport with home-going schoolchildren.
- Difficulty of responding to the needs of each individual given the range of digital fluency and skills within the group.
- Need for a more 'structured' approach to prevent the more assertive from monopolising the trainer's time.
- Need to ensure refreshment break takes place so that participants are given a chance to move table and experiment with other tablets and 'buddies'.
- Optimum size of overall group to remain around 5-6 to retain the level of intimacy.
- A dedicated tablet provided for each participant. It proved difficult for those with sight and hearing impairments to share. Barclays may wish to consider investing in a few tablets to respond to older customers and demonstrate online banking apps in the branch but that could also be used for training sessions.
- Need for extra 'buddies' to provide 'one to one' support. Even with the assistance of the three 'digital eagles' team, LPF organiser and Zoe Dixon, the help proved insufficient to meet the detailed attention required by the older learners. The release of 'digital eagle' staff from their core bank duties over and above a couple of hours per month may prove an insurmountable issue for the branch.
- The event reflected well on Barclay's as an 'enabling' organisation based in the community and responsive to local needs.
- The intergenerational nature of the event was a good learning experience for all concerned possibly challenging stereotypes held by both young and old.
- The event was also a useful opportunity for younger staff to improve their 'soft skills' in preparation for attracting and interacting with the older customer.
- Need for a dedicated LPF co-ordinator to recruit participants, liaise with key local 'digital eagle' and ensure that training dates are agreed well in advance for inclusion in the bi-monthly LPF newsletter.

## The Future—What Next?

### Action points:

- Establish whether the branch Manager would be willing for LPF to use the Wi-Fi enabled board room to run an 'Introduction to the Internet using Tablet computers' course over four, fortnightly one-and-a-half hours sessions.
- Establish if the Manager is willing to release at least one member of staff to act as a 'buddy' on this course. Older and more digitally confident 'buddies' will need to be recruited from the ranks of LPF's membership to provide the vital one-to-one support required by the older learner.
- Should the offer of sessions be restricted to LPF members only or extended to other groups catering to the needs of older people such as the University of the Third Age, Positive Ageing Council, Pensioners Action Group or sheltered housing units?
- Ensure that sessions are a little more structured and theme-based i.e. specific sessions dealing with Skype or Social Media sites.
- Joint exploration around the possibility of financial training for older people
- Need to seek views of Manager regarding the availability of board room, staff release and dates in advance so that a programme of digital activity can be planned and more importantly publicised in the newsletter.



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**Jane Hopkins**-Secretary of Lewisham Pensioners Forum  
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