1. Guiding Principles
2. The capability approach
3. Project timeline (revised) and data phasing
4. The situated community
5. Pre-intervention report (community space, tablet intervention, stakeholder data, community participant data, thematic analysis in progress)

Guiding principles:

- Grouping multi-stakeholder investments (in broader sense)
- Looking for a ‘reasonably thick description’ of DIFFERENT learner lives in contexts, through their eyes, with (partly) ethnographic principles.
- Looking for (digital) enabling of capability to speak to more reductive policy discourse.
- Capability mix includes community, home, personal lifeworld, technology and pedagogic rationale - very complex.
- Our capability methodology will be transferable, whereas the community context is deeply situated and specific.
- Reflexive re power - researchers, teachers, technology providers, stakeholders - (partly) ethnographic principles enable ‘mindfulness’

Context restrictions: contract still not signed, budget and timescale mean this is a pilot, exploratory study.

Key research questions

1. How do the school management, teachers, parents, community stakeholder groups and service users define capability?

2. In what ways can digital learning technology develop capability with broader societal benefits outside of the school?

3. What are the required conditions for digital learning technology to foster capability and lead to empowerment, engagement and inclusion in community contexts?

4. What is the current level of digital literacy within the Isle of Portland community, and how does this impact upon public use of community services?

5. Can the provision of digital technology and digital literacy training lead to greater educational engagement from learners and their parents / caregivers?
## Revised Project Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date to complete</th>
<th>Research activities</th>
<th>Deliverables</th>
<th>QA review measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>End of Jan 15</td>
<td>Pre-intervention</td>
<td>Planning meetings and agreed outcomes with all stakeholders and fieldwork groups.</td>
<td>Contracts signed Researcher time allocated Steering group constituency confirmed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of Feb 15</td>
<td>Pre-intervention</td>
<td>Lit / policy review (1)</td>
<td>Ethics clearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of April 15</td>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>Lit / policy review (2) Capability profiling Website – interim dissemination</td>
<td>Steering group evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of May 15</td>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>Capability profiling Participant observation data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of June 15</td>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>Participation observation data</td>
<td>Ethics review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of July 15</td>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>Website – interim dissemination</td>
<td>Steering group evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of Sept 15</td>
<td>Post-intervention</td>
<td>Narrative data</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>End of Oct 15</td>
<td>Post-intervention</td>
<td>Capability data Website – interim dissemination</td>
<td>Steering group evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of Nov 15</td>
<td>Post-intervention</td>
<td>Capability data Workshops / Seminars Website complete</td>
<td>Stakeholder feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-project phase</td>
<td>Writing up / reporting</td>
<td>Journal articles x 2 Conference proceedings x 2</td>
<td>Peer review</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outputs - Web dissemination / project report to funder and stakeholders / 3 x industry / community of practice outputs: Guardian, Times Education Supplement, SEN Magazine, Technology and Society / JORSEN / 2 x conference proceedings from: Media Education Summit / BERA / Learning Technologies / Future of SEN.
The Capability Approach

Amartya Sen (1984)

… the alternative combinations of things a person is able to do or be – the various ‘functionings’ he or she can achieve… the approach is based on a view of living as a combination of various ‘doings and beings’.

Technology, people, families, homes, communities - resources into key functionings into capability.

Importance of being “alive” to the variations between individuals regarding their values & to witness the valuing of things which do not have direct or indirect utility.

Tablets are not a ‘capability’ in themselves, and therefore attempt to capture the changes in ‘functionings’ (benefits hopefully) that they facilitate.

Important to not merely enumerate the ‘new’ possibilities that tablets create, but assess how valuable those possibilities are to the recipients/participants. It is possible that they generate a range of onerous ‘possibilities’, such as problems with navigating an interface, connection issues and charging.

wellbeing - achievement - freedom - agency (inter-related).

There is a positive political motive underlying this – a desire to construct human lives in terms of possibilities rather than deficits.
The Situated Community

Stakeholders:

IPACA: Founded in 2012 with sponsorship from the Aldridge Foundation / Dorset County council. The school was formed from Brackenbury Infant School, Grove Infant School, Southwell County Primary School, Underhill Community Junior School and Royal Manor Arts College. Currently split over 3 campuses.

15.4% of children had a Child Protection Plan (2010)

Portland and Weymouth in the lowest 20% nationally on each of the following indicators:

○ Child Wellbeing Index
○ Material Wellbeing Index
○ Education Wellbeing Index
○ Health and Disability Wellbeing Index

Ofsted Report 2014 - overall rating of Good. Further rating of Good in Achievement of Pupils, Quality of Teaching, Behaviour and Safety of Pupils and Leadership and Management

Not yet outstanding because The academy’s leaders have not been entirely successful in gaining the full support of parents and the wider community

{See Academy Education Brief, Unicef community project criteria, Developing the Island Community ed brief criteria}.

Aster Housing Association has targeted Weymouth and Portland as an area of social deprivation. It is estimated that out of 1200 students at the school, 400 live in Aster Housing Properties

Demographics

The island has a population of 12800. With this figure 95.1% are white british and 61% christian.

Unemployment or at least those seeking unemployment benefits sits
at 1.7% (the average for Dorset is 2.2%). This may be a statistical misnomer however, as those employed are often on 0 hour contracts, and their work is very dependent on tourism. Those that do work may fall under the standard living wage (taken as below 60% of national average yearly income) and may be classified as working poor.

Culture

‘Bunnies’, stone quarries, the ‘rich seam of nothingness’ - see Katrina Palmer.
Tophill and Underhill. Historically rooted social status: quarriers, landowners, fishermen.
Outsiders, incomers, mainlanders, kimberlin.
No thoroughfare, limited amenities, third spaces & cultural spaces on the island.

Slats and Slubb

Given the situated nature of this research project it is necessary to outline the cultural context, that is, to provide an account of the factors that make Portland distinctive. These factors, we suggest, are not merely peripheral, but constitute a constellation of assumptions, values and attitudes that may have a direct or indirect impact on the way in which the participants in the project interact with the researchers and the research activities.

The distinctiveness of the Isle of Portland is signalled in a contemporary art project – a site-specific audio walk by the artist Katrina Palmer. The project summary on the Artangel site says: “Katrina Palmer has undertaken her own excavations into this elemental island, marked by unsettling absences, deviant goings-on and a writer who has gone missing”,[1] which conjures up a sense of ‘otherness’, inflected by the historical remoteness and inaccessibility of the island together with the ‘extractive economy’ which, as Palmer’s work explores, has caused the island to be ‘hollowed out’.

This outline document will, of course, not deal with every aspect of the Island’s distinctiveness, but will focus very briefly on one particular dimension – a historically rooted sense of suspicion regarding non-Islanders. The term ‘Kimberlin’ is used to refer to non-Portlanders and can be found (albeit with a slight difference in spelling) in the ‘Terms of Surrender of Portland’ following the Island’s surrender to the Parliamentarians in 1646: “vii. That Islanders and Strangers (called locally Kimberlins) shall have and enjoy their lands and estates as formerly they have done…”

Stuart Morris in his history of Portland (1985) presents more evidence of this attitude – even between the wars, he says “incredibly there were still individuals living who had ‘never been to England’” (127). He also adduces “the time honoured Portland custom of
“courtship” which continued well into the 19th century, according to which marriage would only take place after pregnancy confirmed the rightness of the match. Significantly “any Kimberlins who took advantage of the ‘free love’ but who did not honour their duty to marry were stoned out of the Island!” (42). And perhaps driven by a need to conserve resources, the Poor Houses in the 18th century “drew the line at helping Kimberlins” (44).

A collection of articles and letters from the Portland Free Press includes this joke, from 1982, which seems to confirm a continuing awareness of such suspicion of ‘incomers’:

“Many years ago a young man from Wyke came courting on Portland. He returned looking rather the worse for wear ‘Did you get drunk’ said his friend. ‘No, I got stoned.’ Was the reply” (2003:7).

We do not propose to assess in detail any kind of possible causal relationship between Portland’s geographical distinctiveness and aspects of its character, but it is probably reasonable to suggest that its historical isolation and size may have contributed to this in some way. It was, as Bettey (1970) says, not until 1839 when the Ferry Bridge was opened that “Portland was joined to the mainland, and this momentous event prepared the way for all the other changes which were to occur in Portland during the next few years, and which were to break down its ancient isolation” (113).

There is, of course, a danger that this attempt to understand a specific context has the undesirable effect of ‘othering’ the participants in an anthropological way. As our methodology makes clear, we are anxious to avoid this, hence our mobilisation of the capabilities model and a form of participatory (partly ethnographic) research. It has been valuable, though, to have had some sense of this distinctive context when approaching participants in the early stages of the work, and it is likely that the outcomes of the research will include a nuanced picture of the complex relationships between institutions, communities and technologies.

**Pre-intervention report**

**Samsung Community Space**

Now in use by families during Dorset County Council (DCC) Parental Pit-Stops. The parents appreciate having their own space as traditionally they would meet in a typical classroom. This is an early indication that the space is working. We are to meet with Dan Parker from Skills and Learning (S&L) and Paul Seaman from Aster Housing Association (AHA) to draw up an early programme of activities for the space including adult education (basic English and maths etc), drop-ins for AHA’s customers as well as an European Computer Drivers License. We are also talking with Ansbury and the local job centre to provide specific support for NEET’s on the island, and those who are in long term unemployment. As well as these prescribed activities, we will be opening the space for people to come and use as they wish or for community groups to book out. Phil has students working with me as Digital Leaders - one girl in year 8 is providing web development for a local community project, and a sixth form student will provide free tech support drop-in sessions. Along with this, Wendy Maggs at DCC S&L runs a Digital Champion programme and has provided us with our first (of hopefully many) Digital Champion who will operate out of the Space. They are volunteers in the local area work out of community spaces and provide digital support for people. In the long term it is hoped that there will be continual soft assessment of peoples’ needs so the space can provide specific support opportunities.

**Tablet Intervention**

We have interviewed most of the key stakeholders: teachers, Housing Association, governance, local council and community groups. Our sample of 10 families will be in place by 8th May. Capability is primarily framed in terms of individual aspiration, engagement with community services, current motivation towards learning, and adult engagement with the child’s education. Digital access is not typically perceived to be a barrier to any of these capabilities. It is often repeated that many of the families we are targeting already have digital access, and the introduction of a tablet into the home, in itself, will have little impact. Instead, it has been suggested that the creation of a digital space that provides support and training, and the provision of Digital Pit-Stop sessions for families take part in our study will have a greater impact.

**Participant survey analysis - see collated survey.**

Notion of digital access in conjunction with digital literacy - T4S’ perspective will be helpful here. Potential ‘mirror’ of teachers with access to digital technology but lacking pedagogic rationale and not community members with access but ‘learning capability gap’.

**Thematic Analysis: Stakeholder Interviews**
We are currently using thematic coding on the transcribed interviews for discourse analysis. Emerging findings indicate the following categories:

**Lacking Confidence to Engage**

Community members that are targeted by this research project are frequently described as lacking confidence to engage in community services. Among those working in the community it has given rise to an approach of prioritising them ‘coming through the door’ first to engage in any activity (baking, coffee mornings, Wii playing evenings), ‘soft-assessment’ approach to understanding individual needs. They will then be signposted and encouraged to engage in other services. This lack of confidence to engage with community services is paralleled by suggestions that people do not engage with technology due to a lack of confidence in using it.

Emerging discourse - raising confidence of parents / adults, via the students, is assumed to be a priority, and possible through such an intervention.

**Aspiration Deficit**

Alongside the limited confidence to engage with community services there is frequent mention of a lack of aspiration on the island. This aspiration is framed around gainful employment or otherwise improving their economic position. “IPACA will focus on changing the mindset”.

Emerging discourse - the capability ‘lack’ can be objectively witnessed, as a neutral phenomena, in socio-economic and historical contexts, and a school is potentially an agent of change in this regard, despite the broader context understood.

**Access to Community Services**

There is limited access to community services on the island – especially those services that provide IT support or access. Reportedly, community members have to travel to Weymouth to access community services.

**Access to Technology**

A lack of access to technology is mentioned as a potential barrier to capability by some. However, technology in this instances is framed in terms of stable, fast internet access. Moreover, this access is qualified by IPACA and community outreach staff in terms of access to support using it.

**Ineffective use of Technology**

Counter to some assertions that access to technology is a limiting factor, some community and staff members have identified an over indulgence of digital media as a barrier towards learning, aspiration, or general wellbeing. One stakeholder shared a story – described as ‘typical’ – of a 7 year old girl who was unable to sleep without
'Youtube' playing in the background. It seemed like a genuine concern to her and was shared by another colleague. When hearing about the project for the first time here initial reaction was to raise concerns regarding the introduction of more technology into the home. It has apparently become a source of tension for some families.

It has emerged that there are generally positive sentiments towards the use of technology, which is unsurprising given IPACA’s digital focus. However, there is also distinction between the superficial use of technology and the ‘effective’ use of technology. It almost becomes a dichotomy between positive and negative use of technology. Positive use of technology is related to engagement with community services, engagement with their children’s or their own learning, or their general development.

Emerging discourses - distinction between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ technology, discourse of surveillance and monitoring / evidence generation, at odds with more pedagogic rationale - the latter is abstract and undeveloped at this point.

“We could track how much they use it, when they get home, sitting on the sofa, if they are using it for Maths we could use that as evidence for supporting SEN.”

“For me it’s about that personal engagement into further learning. In some ways technology is really accessible, IPACA are best placed to start to build confidence, you would hope parents won’t see such a barrier if this is offered to them as well, so the hope is parents will build up that confidence, not just with IPACA but with other people, to take on a learning option for adults, as there has never been that offering or a location on Portland.”

**Understanding of use of Technology / Pedagogic Rationale**

This is perhaps echoed by the experiences of educators working in an increasingly ‘tech’ orientated education system. It is suggested that many community members have access to technology but don’t necessarily know how to use it. One stakeholder said that they needed more support in the use of technology, not in the technical use of it – but understanding its potential and the ways in which it can be used.

“It’s a battle for autonomy. Teachers response to having things imposed on them is to shut the door…. it’s very complex, the local context is key, you need autonomy for the learners and the teachers, otherwise you won’t have authenticity, Samsung would be really pleased to see how you do it properly.”

“Asking what have you learned is very different to - how have you been educated?”
‘They’ Discourse

Many members of the community who perhaps would have benefitted from this project have already been written off. There are community members who have substantial needs and have already received a lot of support and it has “been wasted on them”. This is apparently more “common than [we] think”. However, there are several things to consider about this. The notion of ‘learned helplessness’ emerges, where families who have had generations supported by social services become reliant on them. In this situation they lose agency and become reliant on outside intervention. Assumptions, such as “some don’t realise how inadequate they are”, implying firstly that there is a measure of adequacy, and that this is prescribed by the authority figure providing help.

“It’s the challenge - how do you change an ethos on an island?”

“A lot of them allegedly take drugs, the parents, and seem to be de-motivated, happy to stay on benefits.”

It has been mentioned by several staff members that they have concerns about the community having physical access to the space. Moreover, it has been frequently suggested that community members should not be trusted with the tablets – implying they will likely be stolen. Moreover, assumptions regarding the community - “they just aren’t proper people” – may be in fact be contributing to their lack of confidence or aspiration.

Emerging discourse - the majority of interactions people in our target group are said (by others) to have with services are framed around this assumption of ‘inadequacy’ or need for improvement – often through aid-based interventions. Capability is a more fluid, negotiated alternative, we hypothesise.