West Partnership

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The use of digital technology for parental engagement: lessons learnt from Covid-19

GLASGOW
CITY REGION
Education

1 SUMMARY

This paper discusses how digital technologies were used for effective parental engagement across all levels of education within the West Partnership during the Covid-19 global pandemic. We first map out what we know about parental engagement and how Covid-19 posed challenges. We then present five case studies which demonstrate innovative use of digital technologies to engage parents/carers during the crisis. Case studies come from an early years centre, a primary school, a secondary school, one local authority and a community development trust. From our five case studies, each of which includes its own nuances, we draw out three key themes that we identify as underpinning the successes.[1] Finally, we comment on how educational institutions may wish to harness digital technologies to improve parental engagement within their own areas. A note on our methodology is presented in an accompanying appendix.

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[1] At various points in this report we refer to commercial products used by participating organisations. The West Partnership does not endorse any of these products and note that other similar products are available.

2 INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 global pandemic, which hit the UK in early 2020, produced various challenges at all levels of education. In March, Scottish schools closed for most children and young people, with learning shifted from the classroom to their homes. The quality of learning at home has been linked to educational development amongst the early years in literacy (Skwarchuk et al., 2014) and numeracy (Anders et al., 2012). Learning at home places an increased importance on parental engagement, an activity that has been linked with improved attainment in non-pandemic times (EEF, 2020). The increased time spent at home, and the increased opportunity for parent-child interactions around learning, mean that parental engagement may well have took on a more important role during Covid-19. This paper explores one aspect of this area, that is, how West Partnership educational organisations engaged, and continue to engage, with parents digitally during the ongoing Covid-19 crisis. But first, we turn to summarise existing understanding around the role of parental engagement in learning.

3 PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

Parental engagement can be defined as 'the involvement of parents in supporting their children's academic learning' (EEF, 2020). Engagement is a broad term that relates to a variety of different parental actions that may impact upon a child's learning. For example, Goodall et al. (2011, p14) include learning at home, communicating with schools, participating in in-school activities, being involved in decision making, and collaborating with school communities as various forms of parental engagement. What is clear, is that parental engagement has a positive impact upon educational achievement and outcomes (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Harris, Andrew-Power and Goodall, 2007). Indeed, Education Scotland (2020), in their report on family learning, draw upon a meta-analysis of research to suggest that family engagement has a bigger impact on children's attainment than 'other social, economic and family background factors'.

Essentially, parental engagement is likely to improve the attainment and achievement of a child and schools that facilitate and encourage parental engagement are likely to see an improvement in educational outcomes (Goodall et al., 2011). Getting parental engagement right across all educational sectors is also a key process in narrowing the attainment gap (Grayson, 2013). Goodall and Vorhaus (2011) and Grayson (2013) divide their reviews of parental engagement into three sections: i) school-home links, ii) support and training for parents, iii) family and community-based interventions. Given the context of our current situation we are most interested in the first of these sections; the school-home link.

An effective relationship between school and home is key for both individual educational achievement and narrowing cohort level attainment gaps (Goodall et al., 2011; Grayson, 2013). Goodall et al. identified the following traits of schools that create a positive school-home link:

1) The school has designed an approach to parental engagement
2) School improvement strategies include parental needs assessments to identify areas where parental engagement practices can be improved
3) Parental engagement is viewed broadly and is responsive to the needs to parents
4) Improving children's learning is the clear aim of a school's approach to parental engagement
5) Staff are given training in parental engagement
6) Parents receive clear, specific, targeted information from schools

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At the time, the authors also suggested that 'levels of parental engagement could be improved if schools made more use of the potential of technology to support at-home learning' (Goodall et al., 2011, p21). The evidence to support this statement comes from an earlier study from the British Education Communications and Technology Agency (Becta, 2010), who suggested that information and communications technology (ICT) can improve parental engagement in four ways: i) parents can access information conveniently, ii) parents can be more involved with their child's learning, iii) it can support more flexible working for staff, and iv) parents can be informed of their child's learning by harnessing technology. Despite the benefits of digitally driven parental engagement, in a 2010 survey, only 25% of parents had received any information about their child's learning online (Becta, 2010). The same study found that 84% of parents said they had received little or no resources to support their children's home learning.

Digitally enhanced parental engagement is key given the context of Covid-19 and the need for Scottish schools to adopt remote learning approaches that centre pupils' learning in the home. This paper therefore adds to existing research by exploring some of the methods that schools, and other educational institutions, have adopted to encourage parental engagement during Covid-19. Such approaches were key for keeping parents informed about the situation of their children's learning in a global pandemic, but also in ensuring that children's at home learning was as effective as possible.

4 CASE STUDIES

4.1 CASE STUDY 1 – GIBSHILL CHILDREN'S CENTRE, GREENOCK, INVERCLYDE COUNCIL

Case study 1 involved the Gibshill Children's Centre in Greenock, Inverclyde. Inverclyde is one of the nine challenge authorities identified by the Scottish Government as having particularly high levels of deprivation (Scot Gov, 2020). Gibshill is an early years centre that provides for approximately 70 children between the ages of 2 and 5.

In responding to the practicalities of social distancing, Gibshill took a multi-pronged approach to engaging with parents and their children. A range of digital platforms were used to keep parents abreast of the emerging situation, offer suggestions for learning, engage in health and wellbeing checks and to share the achievements of family learning. Acknowledging the unequal access to technology and internet access, Gibshill also ensured that printed learning packs were available for those with accessibility difficulties. The centre used multiple platforms to engage in such practices. Gibshill had used phone calls, emails, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and online learning journals to continue engaging with their families. This pragmatic approach was adopted to meet the needs of families who engaged with a broad range of communication channels.

Online learning journals were used to share children's achievements whilst encouraging two-way interactions between the centre and its families. Twitter was also used for two-way commenting and was used as a platform where family learning challenges could be disseminated. YouTube was used to host a weekly story that was read out by one of the centre's staff members. Children reported enjoying the visual and audio presence of someone they would usually see in person. Underpinning each of these digital interventions was the centre's approach during Covid-19, which its Depute Head of Centre described as a:

> 'commitment to building positive, loving relationships based on trust, respect, and empathy [which] has enabled us to support our children, families and staff through these challenging times as a community and as a team.'

While many digital interventions were well received, there was also evidence that some families remained less engaged than others. This was attributed to some parents being less equipped to engage online, others having little disposable time to engage with the centre, and other issues which may impact upon the ability of parents to engage with their children's learning. Nevertheless, there was also a belief that digital technology had been beneficial through providing access to information, sustaining relationships between centre and families, and facilitating interaction to support family engagement. At the same time, the printed materials were there to support those with accessibility or connectivity issues. It was believed that this multi-platform approach provided the flexibility required to achieve such progress.

4.2 CASE STUDY 2 – ST MONICA'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL, POLLOK, GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL

Our second case study is based on St Monica's RC Primary School in Pollok, Glasgow. St Monica's had 378 pupils on its roll based on the latest Scottish Governments summary statistics. Just over a fifth of its pupils (21.9%) come from ethnic minority backgrounds and just under half of its pupils (48.4%) reside in areas with high levels of deprivation. The Covid-19 pandemic meant that St Monica's had to refashion some of its existing technological tools and harness the power of new resources. Their approach, like many of our case studies, was multi-faceted.

At the centre of St Monica's strategy was the use of Glow, our nationwide digital learning platform, with all pupils given an account. The Glow accounts allowed members of staff to disseminate information and suggest learning activities in one place that was consistently used. Glow's email function was used to communicate with children and their families. Staff also asked their children to reply, acknowledge receipt of information, and interact with learning activities. Emails also linked to a variety of other technologies, such as Dropbox, which linked pupils and their families to an edited video featuring St Monica's staff. Other school-home communication was completed across Twitter, Facebook, and the school's personal app. At one point the Facebook page was used to host a video by P3 students for staff. It is also used by the parent council to share information that is also used on the school app.

It became apparent that many of these communication channels existed prior to social distancing measures but were 'turned on' and used more regularly given the context. St Monica's also used two external learning providers to aid their approach. These were the Sumdog active learning platform and the resources provided by Education City. Acknowledging that some of their children and families did not have the requisite accessibility or connectivity, St Monica's created learning packs that were disseminated where required.

A variety of benefits of St Monica's approach were identified. Firstly, as parents could see what activities their children had been set, there was a perception that they had become, to an extent, more involved in their children's learning. Secondly, although phone calls to families did continue, digital technologies provided a tool to communicate information to parents and pupils quickly and efficiently. Thirdly, the dissemination of learning activities via digital technologies was also more efficient than printing which would have been logistically and environmentally more challenging. Fourthly, and finally, the use of multiple platforms meant that some families that might be present on one platform but not on another did not miss out on important information.

Despite St Monica's approach, some limitations were identified. As in case study 1, staff at St Monica's suggested that pupils and their families differed in terms of the extent of their engagement. Some pupils were consistently replying to their teachers and engaging via their Glow accounts and profiles on Sumdog and Education City. Others were intermittent with their engagement or had a level of engagement that decreased over time. A very small minority of students had not engaged appropriately at any point. As in case study 1, printed materials were circulated to ensure those who were not engaging digitally had offline learning opportunities at home.

4.3 CASE STUDY 3 – RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL TRANSITION TEAM

Our third case study is the transitions team based at Renfrewshire Council. In 2019, there were 1851 four-year olds registered in early learning centres within Renfrewshire (Scot Gov, 2020c). These children will enter Renfrewshire's 49 primary schools. In the latest summary statistics, there were 1924 children at P7 who would be making the transition to Renfrewshire's 11 secondary schools in the year after the summary statistics were collected. Acknowledging the importance of effective transitions, the team at Renfrewshire Council has completed work to improve parental engagement and the transitions process.

The Renfrewshire transitions team joined with the Parents in Partnership team to develop a Parents in Transition program. This combines transitions work with the Parents in Partnership (PIP) programmes that aim to support 'both parents and children with the transition from primary school to high school, increase the capacity of parents to support their child's learning at home [and] encourage parental involvement in high school life' (O'Neill, 2015). This approach is designed to build on excellent parental engagement work and positive relationships which the transition team have with children and parents already in primary. These relationships and approaches to engagement are then passed smoothly on (transitioned) to secondary through the collaborative work of the transition team and PIP coordinators and through the fact that transition teachers follow children and parents into secondary. The social distancing requirements of Covid-19 meant that much of this work had to adapt rapidly.

The team at Renfrewshire Council used digital flipbooks[2] to communicate transitions information with their children and parents. The team audited parents to map out how accessible the flipbooks would be and to understand what the main anxieties around transitions were. The flipbooks allowed files containing transitions information and activities to be presented in a more visual and accessible format. The analysis of parents' and pupils' needs led to the production of flipbooks based on learning at home (including literacy and numeracy), health and wellbeing, understanding the key elements of entering the next phase of education and understanding the impact of Covid-19. The flipbooks were sent out to nurseries and primary schools, with accompanying guidance on how to adapt the flipbooks to local contexts.

One benefit of the flipbooks was that they could be used across multiple devices, or on a smartphone alone. The guidance document sent to participating nurseries and primary schools had advice on how to adapt font sizes so that those with access to a phone only could still read the flipbook. Given the unequal access to more expensive devices (laptops, tablets etc) this was a way of ensuring access to families from deprived areas. The dissemination of the flipbooks also allowed for the continued interaction between teachers and families, with many nurseries and primary schools asking families to respond to the activities presented within the flipbooks. There were various examples of families taking photos showing them complete playful transitions activities. Another benefit of the flipbooks is that engagement can be tracked as their authors can see the number of people who have accessed the flipbooks. There has also been positive feedback from parents who were pleased that their concerns and anxieties were addressed by the content of the flipbooks. The research driven approach by the team at Renfrewshire council was particularly appropriate in identifying these anxieties.

4.4 CASE STUDY 4 – ST PAUL'S RC HIGH SCHOOL, POLLOK, GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL

Our fourth case study involves St Paul's RC High School in Pollok, Glasgow. St Paul's had 917 pupils on its last pupil roll, with 36.4% of them registered for free school meals and 86% coming from the 40% most deprived post codes (Scot Gov, 2020b). Over the previous few years, St Paul's and its partners have made a concerted effort in improving the transitions of pupils and families in their catchment

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[2] See appendix A for links to these flipbooks.

areas. These innovations were largely in-person and incorporated playful activities such as a treasure hunt to build a sense of community for the children and families that were about to enter their school. Unfortunately, the social distancing implications of Covid-19 meant that such activities could not take place in 2020.

To overcome these issues, the team at St Paul's moved to an online approach to transitions. As in our other case studies, St Paul's realised that some of their families had accessibility or connectivity issues, and created offline resources, in this case a transition booklet for all children. Their digital offering consisted of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and an app designed for the school. The app was hosted by Piota, an android app that allows organisations to disseminate information to their members. The app was promoted on the schools Twitter page with helpful videos created to help those who had any technological difficulties.

For transitions, Twitter and Instagram were the digital technologies primarily used. Accounts were created that were separate from the school's main accounts and focused on interactions with the families of those who were coming to St Paul's at some point in the future. The Twitter account was used for a variety of purposes, including the dissemination of information, signposting to support services and the promotion of health and wellbeing. Instagram was used in a similar way, but also posted pictures of the work of primary pupils who had completed competitions encouraged by the school. For example, the school's social subjects team posted pictures of entrants' submissions to their 'design an Easter egg' competition, with submissions relating to contemporary political and social issues.

One of the main benefits of the St Paul's approach was that their transitions work could continue albeit in a different form. The changes that the St Paul's team had made in previous years had various in-person approaches that could be transferred onto digital platforms, retaining the important task of effective transition from primary to secondary for pupils and families. The innovative use of less formal technologies, such as Instagram, also meant that a playful approach to transition could occur. As in other case studies, it was identified that not all pupils and families had access to the digital platforms used. Nevertheless, the foresight to include a non-digital transitions booklet communicating the same information and learning activities meant that families were not left behind.

4.5   CASE STUDY 5 – GOVANHILL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TRUST

Our fifth case study looks at the Govanhill Community Development Trust (GCDT), an organisation that operates in Govanhill, Glasgow. The trust is an example of a Community Learning and Development (CLD) organisation. GCDT was set up in 1991 and aims to 'develop physical, social, economic and environmental regeneration initiatives' (GCDT, 2020) in the diverse area of Govanhill. Govanhill is believed to be Scotland's most diverse neighbourhood. Two surveys (Govvanhill Info, 2020a, 2020b) identified key demographic data:

• Residents of Govanhill come from 52 different nationalities

• 88 different languages are spoken by the residents

• 82% of the population speak at least two languages

• 40% of the residents come from ethnic minority backgrounds

Areas of Govanhill are also noted as being within the 10% most deprived areas in Scotland (SIMD, 2020). It also has the largest Roma population in the UK.

One remit of the GCDT is to provide literacy and English language development opportunities. The trust employs ESOL and Integration workers who provide English and Literacy tutoring to those who are

speakers of other languages. In providing such a service the trust aims its provision to individual adults but also to families where multiple generations may not be English speakers. The learning of English is important for a variety of reasons, including integration into the wider community and for personal development opportunities in education and employment.

The outbreak of Covid-19 provided challenges to the GCDT's provision of learning opportunities. In-person tutoring and family learning practices needed to be completed online; a challenge given the accessibility issues present in some of Govanhill's most deprived areas. To adapt to the challenge of Covid-19, the GCDT created a Facebook page; 'Lockdown Family Challenge'. The public group was created to provide a space where learning activities and information could be shared at a time when social distancing prevented in-person dissemination. At the heart of the learning activities is a playful pedagogy that aims to encourage families into informal learning environments. The group had 150 members, as of mid-July, and has outreach into the further community who do not have access to Facebook.

Learning activities that have been posted on the Facebook page have been created to match Curriculum for Excellence themes and capacities. Aside from the creation of effective contributors, confident individuals and successful learners, the Facebook page has encouraged responsible citizenship through the recycling and sharing of resources amongst the community. The activities encouraged by the page have also been legitimised by key external partners including Glasgow Life's Family Learning Officer as part of Glasgow's Improvement Challenge, schools within the community, 3rd sector organisations, community businesses, and individuals. Engagement with the activities has been positive, with many families interacting with the page's organiser through the visual display of their learning activities.

The page's organiser notes that some families interacted directly with her, rather than publicly posting their efforts. On the other hand, there were examples of families asking for help and having other families offer support across the page. Another significant limitation was that many families had only one device, meaning presence online was sporadic. Issues of understanding how particular technologies worked was also identified. To address these issues, the lockdown page organiser planned on continuing to build engagement using the page to host the Govanhill Children's Festival (GCF). With lockdown restrictions eased and children returning to school, the organisation realised that the lockdown page must also evolve to meet the needs of this changing landscape. Due to on-going Covid-19 restrictions, this year's GCF will, like many, take place online. The festival will capitalise on the avenues of digital communication forged by the Lockdown Challenge project, occupying the lockdown group page to communicate with existing members whilst attracting new engagement generated by the festival in the process. The online festival will address all major aspects of Curriculum for Excellence and families can participate in talent shows, gaming workshops and a Kids' Book festival alongside other events. It is hoped this will further enhance digital confidence and competency within the community.

5   LESSONS LEARNT

From the five case studies detailed above, we have identified three distinct themes that provide us with lessons in how we might harness digital technologies in the future. These themes relate to the necessity for digital technologies to build on existing relationships, the appropriate use of digital technologies in relation to accessibility and responsiveness, and finally, the playful use of digital technologies to engage effectively with pupils and parents.

5.1   1. BUILDING ON EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS

In each of our five case studies, the effective use of digital technology was a new addition to already existing positive relations between the school and home. Whether the service was an early years centre, a community development trust, or a primary or secondary school, the organisation had created a positive environment for its work prior to Covid-19. In each of these cases we identified trust as a key element in the relationships between organisation and family. By trust we mean that families perceive the wellbeing and development of their children as at the centre of the organisations approach. The ethos of these organisations was child centred; the needs of pupils and parents explicitly prioritised; a commitment to inclusion; and, a direct addressing of inequity as key values. The development of trust that underpinned the effective use of digital technologies was not something that could be developed online itself. For engagement to occur, pupils and parents needed to trust the organisations they were engaging with. Indeed, in the Gibshill case study, we heard stories of children who enjoyed seeing one of their teachers reading a story via a YouTube video. For those institutions that used apps (St Monica's and St Paul's), it is likely that the pre-Covid-19 use of such apps to communicate with parents meant that a legitimate channel of communication had been developed prior to the enforced need for social distancing.

As such, the lesson we believe to be learnt from this theme is that engaging with parents across digital technologies is unlikely to be successful and effective if existing positive relationships are not already developed. This is not to say that digital technologies cannot help further develop such relationships, but we believe that existing relationships of trust, based on a positive school ethos, provides legitimacy to the technologies and will be more likely to lead parents towards engagement with the organisation. Organisations should consider how they build positive relationships in cases where these do not already exist.

5.2   2. USING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY EFFECTIVELY

Across our five case studies we identified a variety of platforms used and for a variety of purposes. Indeed, two of our case studies had used digital technologies specifically for the purposes of transition, two for the direct provision of learning and another to engage a particularly diverse population with a high level of English as additional language. We also identified a range of approaches to the use of digital platforms, ranging from what might be called a multi-pronged approach to more specific targeted use of individual platforms. We identified three key elements that make up the approach use of technology. These are accessibility, flexibility, and responsiveness.

5.2.1   Accessibility and appropriateness

One of the key elements that make up the appropriate use of digital technologies was accessibility. Firstly, the schools involved in our case studies all provided non-digitised materials that were given to pupils and families that did not have sufficient access to digital platforms or devices. We found good examples of where accessibility as scoped out prior to their digital interventions. Secondly, many of our case studies used platforms that were themselves accessible. For example, two of our case studies used school specific apps that meant that information could be sent to parents, rather than relying upon parents seeking out information that the schools had posted elsewhere. We noted that many of these technologies were 'one click' away from parents. It was notable that none of our case studies mentioned their websites, perhaps reflecting the acknowledgement that not all parents are likely to seek out information from such platforms.

5.2.2   Flexibility

Another key element of appropriate use of digital technology regards flexibility. By flexibility we mean that the digital strategy itself is adaptable and based on information gathered by staff. In many cases flexibility manifests in a digital approach that adapts to new technologies or presents the same

information across platforms. In many of our case studies we found that organisations were using various platforms, with each capturing a segment of their desired audience. We also came across examples of staff who had tried using different technologies/platforms, had found them not to be effective, and had returned to their main approaches. Flexibility was often a response to the analytics that had been generated through previous communications. One benefit of digital technologies is that they often come with simple analytics that give some information on engagement. Several of our case studies aimed to use these analytics to inform how effective their use of technology had been.

5.2.3 Responsiveness

We also found that the responsiveness of communication across digital platforms was a particularly important element in each of our case studies. By responsiveness we mean the extent to which organisations were interacting through their provision of engaging parents. We found that positive engagement with families resulted in two-way interactions as opposed to the organisation simply bombarding families with information. At times this manifested in schools responding to requests from parents. We found evidence of organisations tailoring their use of digital technologies after getting feedback from parents. We also noted that in many of our case studies the role of school was widened to respond to pupils' and parents' wider needs. At times, these new communication channels were used to ensure family wellbeing and as a tool to respond to issues surrounding fuel and food poverty.

Overall, we believe that the lesson learnt here is that the use of digital technology should be appropriate for its audience. Organisations should consider the population characteristics with whom they are aiming to engage and should identify potential barriers to accessibility (deprivation being the most likely barrier). It also appears that flexible approaches that involve the testing of new platforms and ideas are likely to capture some families who were previously hard to reach. A strong approach involves staff reflecting upon what worked and what did not with appropriate actions taken following such reflection. Finally, we believe that effective use of digital technology to engage parents must be responsive. It must react to families and provide an interactive environment.

5.3 3. DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND PLAY

A key theme that was present across all five of our case studies was the use of play in effectively engaging parents. The playfulness of approaches was present irrespective of the purpose of using digital technology. For example, our early learning centre used online learning journals to encourage children to engage in playful learning activities within their families. Both of our case studies involving transitions (Case Studies 3 and 4) used playful activities, presented across, albeit different, platforms to engage with children, young people and their families. We also found elements of play incorporated into our primary school with the use of Sumdog and Education City being key components of their approach, and our community development trust, who used Facebook to encourage playful learning activities. From the approaches detailed in our case studies, we believe that digital technologies may be a useful tool to present learning opportunities underpinned by a playful pedagogy. It may also be that informal approaches that draw upon play further build trust and legitimacy in the school-home link.

6 CONCLUSION

This report has explored five case studies of educational organisations using digital technologies as a response to the 2020 Covid-19 crisis. We have identified three important points. Firstly, digital technologies are not, in themselves, the key to effective communication with parents. We employ digital technologies as useful tools that, when used appropriately, can build on existing relationships between services and their users. As such, existing relationships based on trust, care and community underpin

the effective use of digital technologies. Secondly, our case studies demonstrated that an appropriate needs analysis must be completed before engaging with digital technologies. For some organisations this means that digital provision spans across multiple platforms, each of which captures a segment of their desired audience. For others, highly specific modes of communication are more appropriate and effective. It appears that this may be particularly important in situations where deprivation limits the likelihood of widespread access/connection. Thirdly, our case studies demonstrated a variety of ways that playful communication could stimulate engagement with their families. Whether this involves transitions activities or numeracy and literacy learning, the use of digital technology to create playful activities appeared to be something that was attractive to pupils and their parents.

7 REFERENCES

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8 APPENDIX A - FLIPBOOKS

A sample of Flipbook can be found here:

https://www.flipsnack.com/MrsHaining/curriculum-flipbook.html

https://www.flipsnack.com/MrsHaining/maths-flipbook.html

https://www.flipsnack.com/MrsHaining/literacy-flipbook.html

9 APPENDIX B - METHODOLOGY

The case studies we present here are based on a small-scale research project completed by the West Partnership (WP) Collaborative Learning Networks, Families and Communities Lead Officer, Helen Brown and the WP Data and Information Officer, James Bowness. Case study participants, detailed below, were recruited via existing relationships and professional channels, meaning that our work used convenience sampling and should not be taken to represent the West Partnership region overall. We accept entirely that other cases of good practice exist within the West Partnership and are not used here.

All participants were given an information sheet explaining the purpose of the research and detailing what was to be expected from engaging with the West Partnership in this project. All participants agreed to be interviewed and were happy to be either audio or video recorded. Four of the five interviews took place over Microsoft Teams, with the interviews being video recorded. The fourth interview took place in person and was audio recorded. Interviews lasted between 30 and 55 minutes, with an average of 45 minutes. Interviews had three main aims:

1) What had the participating institution done to engage parents during Covid-19?
2) What were the benefits and limitations of participant approaches?

3) What were the underlying principles that led participant approaches to be effective?

We used semi-structured interviews to achieve such aims. Both WP colleagues contributed to the interview schedule and participated in each interview. During interviews, both WP colleagues used probes to explore areas of interest that were not included within our interview schedules. This gave participants a chance to further explain their use of digital technology and clarify areas that the researchers were unsure of.

Analysis was led by the Data and Information Officer, with the WP Lead Officer acting as a peer reviewer. Analysis consisted of a thematic analysis of collected data with the aim of understanding the underlying principles that explain the effectiveness of the case studies.