

## Silver iPad Creativity

A project to offer creative iPad learning sessions to people aged 50 and over, supported by Awards for All



Report prepared by Katherine Anderson, July 2015

## Introduction

Silver iPad Creativity was a new and unique one-year project, offering creative iPad learning sessions to people aged 50 and over. The project was designed to help people to develop their digital skills, provide a space for social interaction and contributing towards the maintenance of a healthy and active community.

The project was informed by ARC's regular process of consultation with participants in its Silver programme of activity. Feedback from these consultations suggested that there was an appetite amongst older people to learn more about digital technologies in a 'safe space', alongside their peers. Though some were engaging with new technologies already, many said that they lacked confidence in their use and felt that it was not always an easy process to learn from their younger family members. Others said that they had no experience of using tablets or smartphones and that they would like to find out more about them, in a supportive learning environment.

The aims of the project were:

- To offer people aged 50 and over the opportunity to develop more confidence in using digital technologies
- To show how the active use of digital technologies can help people to forge new connections with other people and services
- Through the use of creative potential of iPads, to introduce other digital programs and applications including email, internet searches, Skype, online shopping etc
- To provide creative sessions which were stimulating, challenging and fun

The project was funded by Big Lottery Fund, through their Awards for All scheme.



## What we did

The project was split into three main elements: two sets of 12 creative iPad sessions delivered between September to December 2014 and April to July 2015 respectively, with a range of development activity taking place in the wider community between January and March 2015.

At the end of each of the 12 week sets of classes, ARC hosted a celebratory event, the shape and content of which was developed in consultation with the participants.

## Shaping the sessions

ARC engaged freelance worker Claire Ford to deliver the weekly iPad sessions and development activity. Having significant experience of working on a wide range of projects introducing older people to digital technology, including leading on iPad engAGE, a project focused around working with individuals living with dementia, Claire was ideally placed to respond to the needs and interests of the participants.



Each of the 12 week blocks of activity began with general introduction to using an iPad and a discussion between Claire and the group, to gather more information about the individuals' levels of knowledge and what they hoped to gain from taking part in the sessions. The timetable for the remaining 11 weeks was then built around introducing both the basics of the iPad (including its settings and 'social' applications including emailing, internet searches and downloading etc) and its creative possibilities, in response to the needs and interest of the different participants.

## Celebrating achievement

As the course progressed, ideas for the celebratory event were also introduced and discussed, with each event being shaped in response to the preferences of the different groups.

The participants in the autumn 2014 course suggested that they would like to celebrate by sharing what they had learned with other people aged 50 and over, introducing them to some of their favourite iPad apps. In early December, we ran *Appetisers*, a series of free iPad 'speed dating' sessions. Participants on the course led mini-tasters in apps such as Paper 53, Stop Motion Studio and PS Touch, and attenders could also learn some iPad tips and tricks and make their own stylus, to use during the tasters.



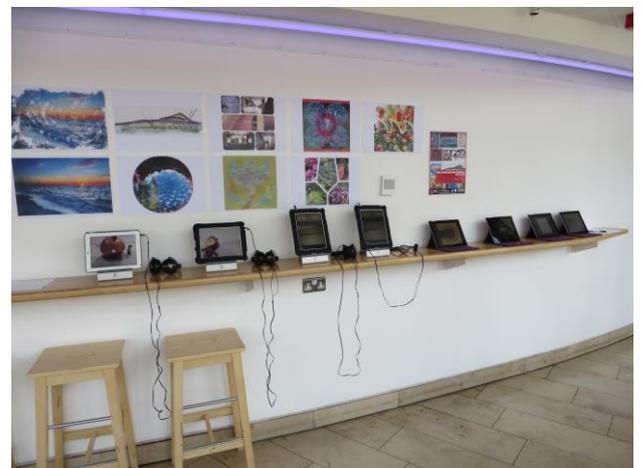
Feedback from those who came along was extremely positive:

**“ most useful, especially photo editing & drawing”**

**“very helpful, even for this retired computer teacher”**

and the participants who led the sessions were pleased that they had felt confident enough to share their new skills with others. This was carried through into the development activity in early 2015, as the autumn group also volunteered to help support Claire in the delivery of taster sessions for the wider community.

In contrast, to mark their achievements, ARC and Claire worked with the summer 2015 group to stage a celebratory exhibition in No 60, on ARC’s ground floor. A selection of photographs, collages, poetry and visual art images were displayed, along with music, animations and films created by the group. Visitors were also able try out some of the iPad apps used by the group for themselves.





### Development activity

Between January and March, we undertook an active engagement campaign, to introduce the programme to the wider community. Direct contact was made with the library network, interest groups and organisations representing older people, including local branches of the U3A and Stockton Over-50s Assembly. As there was significant interest in practical tasters, we expanded on the original plan to deliver 5 mini-sessions, instead offering 9 in total, to over 90 participants in Stockton, Billingham, Norton and Middlesbrough. We also presented the programme to local groups, and promoted the programme through a bespoke marketing and publicity campaign.

Each taster was supported by participants from the autumn group, who were able to use the skills they had learned to help those new to iPads to engage with the sessions. Details were collected from people who were interested to find out more about the programme, and publicity was distributed at all sessions.

A number of those who attended the tasters later signed up for the course. All of those who had left their details after sessions were also invited to the final July celebration event.



## **Capturing Evidence and Feedback**

**“awesome – bringing high technology to us!”**

**Silver iPad Creativity participant**

**“very good, enjoyed it. It’s amazing what these things can do”**

***Appetisers attender***

Regular monitoring and evaluation of the sessions were built into the programme of delivery. At the end of each week’s session, the course leader reflected on the session, making notes about the participants’ interaction with particular apps and general skills development, and capturing any informal comments from the group. The group was also regularly asked to complete quick Post-It note feedback, giving their responses to particular apps, and any challenges they were facing. This information was used to help the course leader plan future sessions.

Participants were also given an email address by the course leader, for them to make contact between sessions, should they have any questions about apps they were using, or issues which they would like to have resolved between classes.

At the end of the autumn and summer sessions, ARC staff held a ‘conversation with cake’ session with participants, to gather their feedback about the classes and ideas for future courses or events. Participants who were unable to attend were asked to complete a short questionnaire, reflecting on similar questions to those asked during the conversational evaluation sessions.

Informal feedback from attenders at the celebration events was gathered via comments left on a large iPad ‘screen’ and photographic documentation was captured at sessions and special events.

## **Successes**

Feedback from the participants who took part in the autumn and summer 12 week courses was universally positive. Of the 27 people who attended across the two courses, many had previous experience of using desktops and laptops, but were new to tablet technology, or had been given iPads but had used them only infrequently, prior to attending the sessions.

In conversational evaluation, many participants said that, though they had joined the class to learn ‘the basics’, they had become fascinated with the creative possibilities of the iPad and had really enjoyed learning more about the artistic apps they had used.

**“the class was fantastic!”**

**“a most enjoyable course and very informative. It’s a must for new people to iPads. I enjoyed everything”**

**Silver iPad Creativity participants**

All members of the groups felt that their confidence had increased as a result of having attended the classes. They had been surprised by what they could achieve and what the iPad offered, with sessions introducing them to aspects of the iPad which were way

beyond what they felt they may have learned. Many members of the group said that they had enjoyed introducing their family to the apps they had learned and the artwork, movies and animations they had created – they felt that their increased knowledge had allowed them to discuss and use the technology more confidently around their children and grandchildren. Though some participants already owned iPads, others decided to buy their own as a result of what they were learning on the course. All of the participants continued to use ARC's iPads during sessions, to make use of the downloaded apps, though many people also purchased and downloaded these onto their own tablets, between sessions.

**“Very interesting. Must buy these drawing apps, they’re just what I’ve been looking for”**

#### **Silver iPad Creativity participant**

The increased confidence of the participants in the autumn sessions in particular was demonstrated by their choosing to run taster sessions for other older people, in their *Appetisers* celebration event. All members of the group also volunteered to take part in the development activity run between January and March, at which they acted as additional support workers. Feedback from attenders at these taster sessions suggested that being assisted by their peers was a positive aspect of the sessions for them.

Participant feedback for the course leaders was extremely positive. People felt that the session leader was an ‘ideal’ choice, with particular praise being given to the clarity of the teaching style, the readiness of the leader to provide online support between sessions, the usefulness of informative ‘how to’ handouts and the variety of apps introduced during the 12 weeks. Participants in the summer sessions also valued having additional support workers at sessions, who were able to provide 1:1 assistance during classes.

**“don’t be scared – we learnt loads of new useful skills, had lots of fun without the aid of a safety net (apart from Claire and the lovely ARC staff)”**

#### **Silver iPad Creativity participants**

Relationships between the participants were also supportive and positive. Members of the group valued being able to learn with people of a similar age, and a great rapport was built between them and with the tutors.

**“I don’t think I’ve laughed so much in a session before”**

#### **Silver iPad Creativity participant**

There was significant interest from all those who took part in attending future sessions, to learn more about particular apps, or develop their skills further.

**“absolutely brilliant – can we have a follow up?”**

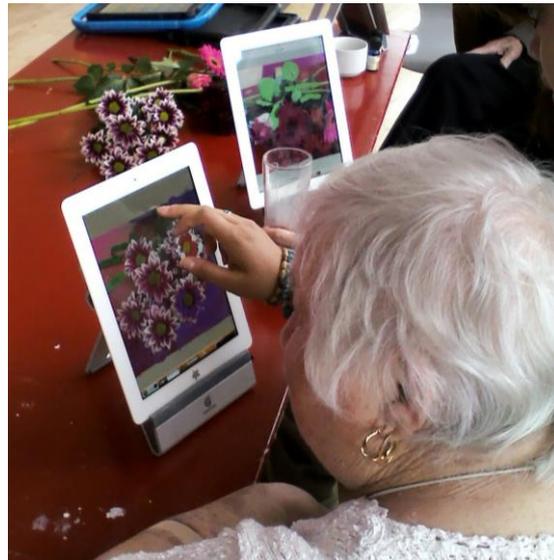
**“enjoyed a great course – I hope there will be another!”**

#### **Silver iPad Creativity participants**

The development activity in the wider community during January to March 2015 also generated significant interest. ARC made contact with a variety of networks offering activities for people aged 50 and over, including libraries, the University of the Third Age and Stockton's Over-50s Assembly.

From the initial contact with these groups, it became clear that there was a greater appetite for hands-on, practical tasters than talks and information sessions. Though some presentations were given, this resulted in 9 taster sessions being run in Stockton and the surrounding areas, which were attended by over 90 people. Sessions in the local community were offered free to people aged 50 and over, and each was fully subscribed.

The positive levels of engagement with both the development activity and the longer courses also informed our decision to organise some separate iPad sessions for participants in ARC's Staying Out project, a partnership project which offers older people a holistic pathway of support and reablement on release from hospital. Claire Ford led two sessions with the group, introducing them to the use of the iPad and to photography, visual and pottery apps. Response to the sessions was extremely encouraging. Though members of the group had not used iPads before, they picked up the techniques very quickly and produced some lovely art pieces. Since the sessions, some members of the group have continued to request to use the iPads and one has been exploring how it can be used as a tool to keep in contact with family who live some distance away.



## Challenges

Though class sizes were kept small enough to allow tutors to engage with individuals and their particular needs and interests, devising a series of sessions which took into account the different levels of skills and experience at the starting point, and the different directions in which participants were interested in taking their learning, was a challenge.

To help to answer these different needs and desires, the course leader gathered information from participants at the start of each of the 12 week blocks of activity, and shaped a timetable for future sessions based on the feedback given in this first session. The resulting timetable was then shared with the group, allowing them to see

how the sessions would progress, but also allowing them to make a decision about whether they would like to attend particular sessions. In the event, most participants attended all sessions, unless holidays or other commitments meant that they were unable to do so, but this shape did allow people to dip in and out should they be interested only in particular uses of the iPad.

**“Amazing! I had no idea you could do such wonderful artwork; and excellent tuition”**

#### **Silver iPad Creativity participant**

Though the course was designed to introduce people to the creative possibilities of iPads, there was inevitably interest amongst participants in the use of the tablet as a communication tool and, throughout the sessions, questions were posed about emails, internet searches, downloading etc., which were not necessarily specifically related to the apps being introduced that week. The course leader dealt with these by having a ‘consultation’ time at the end of each session, to deal with particular problems and issues which individuals may be having with their own iPad, and by providing an online and telephone ‘troubleshooting’ line for people, to allow them to contact her outside of the official class time. This also allowed participants to ask further questions about the creative apps too, many of which they downloaded and used between sessions.

Within any group, there will be a variety of preferred learning styles, as well as differences in confidence, skills and experience. This meant that, across a group, some people found particular apps easier to pick up than others, with this changing from individual to individual and week to week. In practice, this meant finding ways to provide individual support for any participant who wanted more concentrated help on a particular app. Two solutions were found to this – the first was to have at least one support worker in attendance at sessions, to assist the course leader, and to work with individuals on a 1:1 basis. The second was for the tutor to begin each session with the group working together, to introduce a particular app, after which the group would undertake a set of directed practical exercises, allowing the course leader to move around the class, offering more individual advice and help, as required.

**“Very positive this week - I am finding it easier to learn”**

**“Interesting, explained very well. Good, steady pace”**

#### **Silver iPad Creativity participants**

In line with the rest of ARC’s Silver programme of activity for people aged 50 and over, the Silver iPad Creativity sessions allowed for participants to join the class at any time. Whilst this meant that people who were more experienced were able to attend the class without having signed up for all 12 sessions, some participants who did join later in the run of sessions felt that they had missed out on useful information earlier on and that it would have been useful for this particular activity to explain more clearly at what stage they were joining the classes.

### **What we learnt**

Working on the project has given us the opportunity to learn a great deal about running similar activities in the future. Amongst the lessons learned were the following:

- There is a great appetite amongst the wider community to learn more about iPad technology, but much of this is related to the 'basics' of email, internet searching and social media. It may be useful to develop a pattern for classes which introduce these basics, then move onto the more creative applications, for those who wish to learn more. Promoting a clear structure of enrolment options, allowing people join all classes, or to 'opt in' at particular points if they are already familiar with the basics of operating an iPad, may be beneficial
- Though sessions were run for groups, for these kinds of activities in particular it is important to be able to respond to different individuals' needs and requirements. This means keeping class sizes small enough to be able to give individual feedback, or having additional support workers available who can work with individual learners at their own pace
- Celebrating the learners' achievements is valued by members of a group and encourages them to see how their skills and confidence have developed over time. Designing celebrations in consultation with learners can help to reduce anxieties about sharing work with the wider public
- Language is important and the use of jargon can be to be a barrier to speaking to particular audiences, or to learning. Specific computer language, familiar to those who are working regularly with technology, or those who have been brought up using it, may feel abstruse to people for whom it is not so familiar. Practitioners and venues should be vigilant about making assumptions about the language they can or should use, both when marketing activities and in sessions. Providing a glossary of terms for learners can help people to become familiar with terminology
- Conversely, course organisers should resist making assumptions about participants' familiarity with technology. Many older people do engage with and use technology regularly, but welcome the opportunity to improve their skills and confidence in a supportive environment
- Learning in sessions can be usefully backed up with the provision of explanatory handout material, which people can use to refresh their learning between sessions. Providing direct email contact with a course leader can also help to support learners to problem solve between sessions
- Though feedback from participants suggested that it is important for older people to be able to pay for sessions on a weekly basis, some felt that it was important to have attended the classes from the beginning. These comments reflected the fact that the shape of this class differs from the continuous delivery across the rest of ARC's Silver programme. Participants suggested that publishing the timetable of classes online could help people to see at what point they are joining a course. For future activities, it would be worth investigating a structure which allowed for different 'joining points', depending on an individual's pre-existing level of experience



**LOTTERY FUNDED**