

Digital Streets – Executive Summary

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The Digital Streets project explored the potential of a community tool to improve the street accessibility of Elgin. The tool aims to support collaboration between the Moray Council and various community groups, particularly those with disabilities. The initial focus area was around Elgin High Street, with the potential to extend the tool to cover other areas. This concept was jointly proposed by the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) and the Moray Council. It was accepted by the Digital Health & Care Institute (DHI) as Experience Labs, which took place between January and April 2016.

The design-led approach taken in pre-Lab activities and in two Experience Labs provided the opportunity to explore the potential of a digital or physical community tool, and aimed to deliver a set of requirements that were firmly user driven.

An initial pre-Lab Community Street Audit was led by Living Streets, a UK charity that aims to “create a walking nation, free from congested roads and pollution, reducing the risk of preventable illness and social isolation and making walking the natural choice”. Engaging a group of mixed participants comprising of people with disabilities, Experience Lab team members, representatives of community groups and partners from NHS Grampian and the Moray Council, the aim of the Street Audit was to identify issues that encourage or discourage everyday accessibility of the Elgin High Street area for members of our communities.

In Experience Lab 1, experience maps were produced to capture both the specific positive and negative experiences of the group, including their general perception of the High Street area. The group also considered what Elgin might look like in 50 years’ time, and the steps required to reach that vision.

The second Experience Lab aimed to consider and articulate the requirements for a community tool, based on the insights gathered in the previous lab. An innovation generator technique was used to encourage creative thinking and brainstorming to create new or repurpose existing inventions, from which user driven requirements were distilled.

The outputs from the Labs including audio, photos, videos and field notes, were analysed for emerging themes and the findings provided valuable insights on user experiences of the street accessibility, aspirations for the future of Elgin and knowledge of current technology. The resulting requirements highlight the importance of personalisation; opportunities for working with community groups, businesses, transport and the public; increasing general awareness of accessibility challenges; and an easy to use application.