

The Digital Edge

Using digital technology to support young people



A PROVOCATION PAPER written for Nominet Trust by Tim Davies, David Wilcox and Alex Farrow

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Foreword

Digital technology offers new ways of addressing the challenges faced by young people by enabling new forms of collaboration; facilitating new communities of support and challenge, and affording new ways of accessing information and resources. But to take advantage of this potential, we need to redesign the ways in which we articulate and approach the social challenges we're looking to address.

This publication has been developed with this approach in mind. The messages have been developed by bringing together people with a variety of skills and experience in an effort to understand the challenges facing young people in greater detail and to shape key messages around how we best support them. Our thanks go to the authors and for the wealth of online and offline contributions of many other participants, whose blog posts, tweets and shared insights can be found at www.socialreporters.net/?cat=34. This publication has been collaboratively developed, and we hope to work with you to respond to the challenges and messages it sets out.

Dan Sutch

Head of Development Research
Nominet Trust – June 2012

About the authors

Written by **Tim Davies, David Wilcox and Alex Farrow** for Nominet Trust

Tim Davies, Co-director, Practical Participation

Tim has been working at the intersection of youth policy and technology since 1999 when he got involved in the newly formed Havant Borough Youth Council, and ended up managing Havant Borough's youth website. On graduating in 2006, Tim discovered the possibility of putting together his own livelihood through part-time work as the marketing manager for a Fairtrade shop, developing digital tools for grantmaking, and working as a participation consultant with The National Youth Agency, where he also co-authored a research report on Youth Work and Social Networking. He started blogging at www.timdavies.org.uk and has lost count of the number of interesting projects and opportunities that has given rise to.

Tim has an MSc in Social Science of the Internet from the Oxford Internet Institute, and is currently studying at the Web Science Doctoral Training Centre at the University of Southampton for a PhD looking at the impacts of open government data policies. Tim can be contacted by email at tim@practicalparticipation.co.uk or on Twitter at [@timdavies](https://twitter.com/timdavies).

David Wilcox, Socialreporter

David is developing the practice of social reporting, based on past experience as a journalist and consultant on regeneration partnerships, community engagement, and social media. He has written books on participation and partnerships and co-authored *Social By Social: Social technology for social impact*. You can find out more about David and can contact him via http://socialreporter.com/?page_id=41. You can also find

him on Twitter at [@davidwilcox](https://twitter.com/davidwilcox). In practice social reporting involves explorations that use a mix of collaborative online activity and workshops to clarify issues, develop ideas for action, and help build networks. You can find out more about those here: www.socialreporters.net/?page_id=552.

Alex Farrow, Associate Consultant, Practical Participation

Alex has over seven years experience working on youth participation and skills for young people. He spent five years working for the National Youth Agency working on, evaluating and developing plans for the participation of children and young people in decision making using Hear by Right and Act by Right. Alex co-authored Act by Right – Let's Change the Climate to support community action against climate change.

Alex's work has focused on leadership and management training with youth sector managers as well as through writing leadership training for young people. For the Woodcraft Folk, he produced *Leading for the Future* and for Croydon Borough Council ran an extensive consultation into the London riots in 2011. Alex was the lead consultant on behalf of Practical Participation with the DfID CSO Youth Working Group working on the Youth Participation in Development guide and he is currently evaluating the dance4life UK programme for Restless Development. Alex can be contacted at alex@practicalparticipation.co.uk or on Twitter at [@alexjamesfarrow](https://twitter.com/alexjamesfarrow).

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Digital technology offers a phenomenal opportunity to stimulate new forms of collaboration, to mobilise new communities of interest, and to unleash the imagination of millions of users in addressing specific local and global challenges.

At Nominet Trust we are committed to making these opportunities a reality – for as many people as possible.

Nominet Trust is a UK-based social investor that advocates the imaginative use of digital technology to improve lives and communities.

That's why we bring together, invest in and support projects committed to using digital technology to make society better.

Through our on-going research programme we identify specific areas of need and channel funding towards initiatives designed to make a significant difference to people's lives.

Since our inception in September 2008, Nominet Trust has invested in hundreds of projects, providing business support as well as financial investment, seeking to make a positive difference to the lives of disadvantages and vulnerable people.

To find out more about our work or how you can apply for funding, please visit: **www.nominettrust.org.uk**