

Enacting the internet and social media on the public sector's frontline

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Presentation outline

- **Literature, research questions and approach**
- **The Net Assets Case Study and what went wrong**
- **Focus shifted to youth workers**
- **Findings**
- **Reflections**

Drivers for utilising I&SM...

- **Top down pressures from policy makers and funders**
 - Drives innovation and innovative ways of working
 - Improve efficiency
 - Save money, worsened by recession and austerity measures
 - Increase participation, new localism and ‘big society’

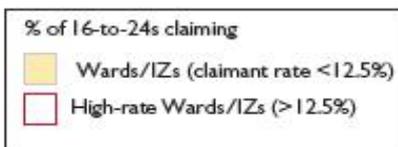
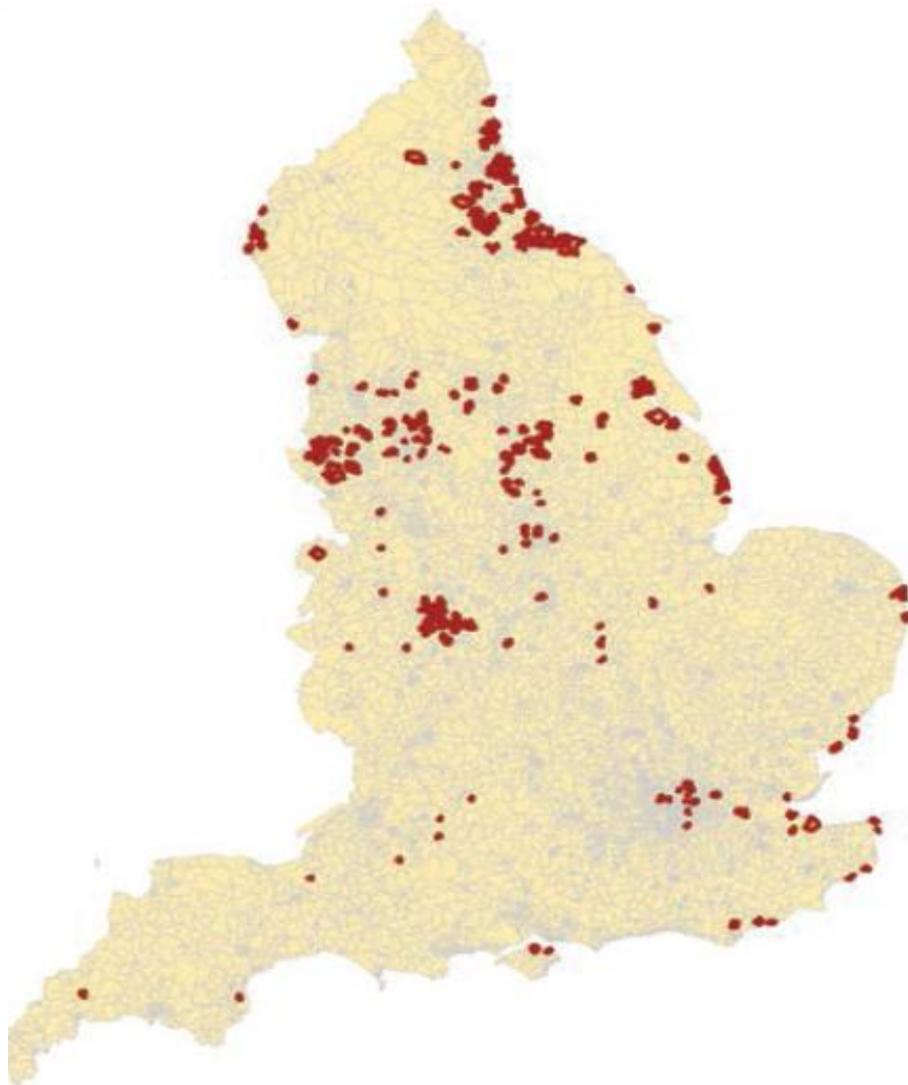
“Participation can contribute to more responsive and accountable forms of governance, which in turn will be pro-social justice” The Localism Bill

- **Bottom up pressures - there is an assumption that the ‘digital natives’ prefer communicating through digital technologies, social media**

Literature and framing the research

- **E government and Digital Era Governance (Dunleavy et al 2006)**
- **E-enabled transformational government**
- **Digital by Default**
- **Government Digital Service (GDS) launched**
- **Digital Local**
- **Street level Bureaucrats (Lipsky 1980; 2010)**
- **Digital native (Marc Prensky)**
- **Enactment (Fountain 2001)**

The spatial distribution of claimant rate amongst under 24s in England:
wards with over 12.5% claiming JSA are highlighted



Control and safety issues

- “[My organisation] and most of the ones we work with view any ideas associated with social media as presenting an unacceptable risk”***
- “Its impossible to control – things got released before the launch date, we couldn’t keep track of what they were doing”***
- “The first response we got was from a school representative outraged – facebook is banned and we don't have the time”***
- “I hit a roadblock as I couldn't demonstrate how it was going to be measured, how effective it would be for the Local Authority”***
- “A real suspicion exists about social media which makes it not worth using”***
- “They [young people] can run rings around us, we set up a fb page and the young people set up another fb page with the specific purpose of undermining the original page”***

Attention shifted to the youth workers themselves

- **Most of them used social media**
- **Facebook pages used to disseminate information to young people**
- **Facebook pages connected youth workers to present and former colleagues**
- **Used social media to show off young peoples' project**
- **Most had websites but a review indicated limited content and very basic interactivity**
- **More and more public and third sector employees regularly interact with and through social media in the workplace.**

Research questions & methodology

- **How is I&SM being utilised in the context of youth work?**
- **How are workers operating and managing in these new mediated spaces?**
- **The potential impact of I&SM at the practitioner-client interface?**
- **Participant observer approach at focus groups supplemented by follow up in depth interviews**

Youth workers reported some of the barriers they faced:

1. **ICT Access** *“The digital divide is actually very real”*
“Uploading is slow” *“Young people in rural settings are behind their urban counterparts in terms of the technologies they are using – there’s really only facebook that they can use”*
2. **Resources (money, time, training)**
3. **Control and safety**
4. **Blurring boundaries of work**
5. **Asymmetries of knowledge, attitudes and understandings** *“The organisations [I work with] do not understand or recognise the benefits”*

Reflections

The pace of technological change and how researchers keep up

Not being able to do, “more for less”

Critical importance of face to face working

Technical incompatibility especially legacy websites

Institutional and organisational norms values and beliefs

Attention to concepts such as individual agency, practice perspectives

A better understanding of how SLBs can be given effective support