

# From High-touch to High-tech: How has the Pandemic reshaped community education services for refugee learners in the UK?

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Vulnerable groups such as refugees and those on lower incomes often rely on charity and voluntary services to meet their basic needs (e.g., education, money matters, social support, etc.). Moving such services online due to the Pandemic has threatened the wellbeing of these groups. The greatest challenge has been to maintain the “human touch” (i.e., the human interactions and social connections crucial for an individual’s wellbeing) in online community education services. This research captures the experience of learners from an online community education service for refugees to provide insight for service providers to minimise the gap between the educational and social needs of refugee learners, and online service delivery operation to ensure the social support conveyed in face-to-face settings are embedded and reflected in the COVID-inspired digital services. Following a survey of 107 students, 25 interviews and two focus groups were conducted with employees, tutors, volunteers, and learners. Further, a solution development stage was carried out with stakeholders participation. Finally, the devised solution was evaluated through a usability study phase with five follow-up interviews. Our findings reveal the main missing elements of human touch in community digital education provision and uncover a series of pull factors that can help to facilitate participation and augment human touch in an online educational setting to generate relational value for learners and achieve desired wellbeing outcomes. In conclusion, our research demonstrates that refugee learners not only attach equal value to the quality of human interactions and quality of teaching but also, they assume human touch as a prerequisite for their educational attainments in a community education service.