

Working together across the North!



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ACTION SERVICES (ERVAS) LTD**  
*"The Charity for Charities and Communities"*

[ervas.org.uk](http://ervas.org.uk)



**VONNE**  
voluntary organisations' network north east

[vonne.org.uk](http://vonne.org.uk)



**HUMBER & WOLDS  
RURAL ACTION**

[hwrcc.org.uk](http://hwrcc.org.uk)

# Digital Inclusion:- Are we all included?



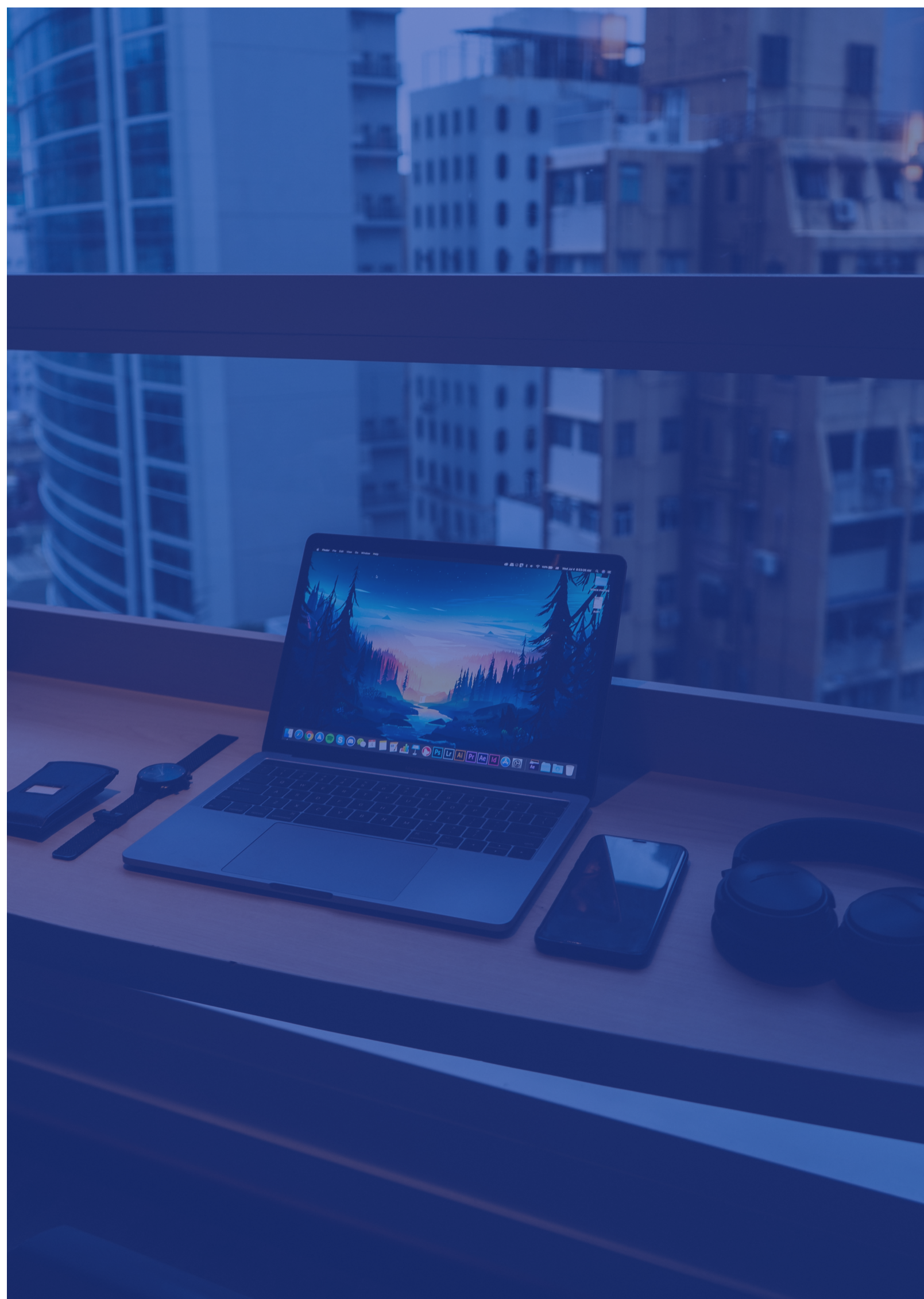
**VCS Emergencies  
Partnership**



**navca**  
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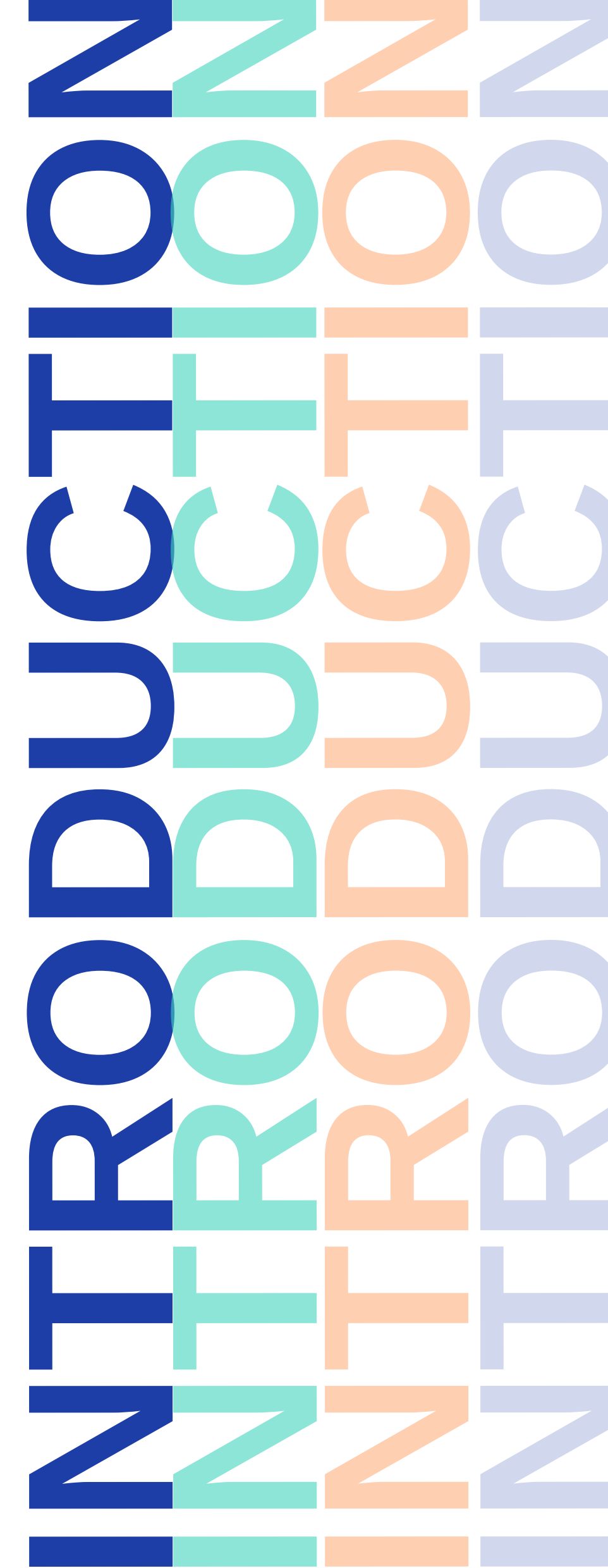
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**Background**

The Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership (VCSE EP) is made up of a range of organisations within the sector with the aim of improving coordination at national and local levels before, during and after emergencies. They have been directly involved in the planning and delivery of a UK-wide response to the Covid-19 pandemic and have worked to pool evidence of unmet need in communities, working with a network of voluntary and community sector local and regional infrastructure partners.

The VCSE EP identified five subject areas which have featured as areas of unmet need or areas of challenge for the voluntary and community sector throughout the pandemic. They are also the key areas of focus for government in the post-Covid recovery phase:

- Food
- Volunteers in testing and vaccination
- Community inclusion, equality and diversity
- Mental health
- Digital inclusion

East Riding Voluntary Action Services (ERVAS), Voluntary Organisations Network North East (VONNE) and Humber and Wolds Rural Action (HWRA) were appointed by the VCSEP as Digital Inclusion Subject Liaison Leads and worked together throughout April, May and June 2021 across the North to build a picture of activity in the region.

**Our approach**

The three organisations working in collaboration already cover a great deal of the Northern region.

Our approach was to focus on the geographical areas that each organisation covers in depth, and proactively collect information from the other areas. We took this approach on the basis that a more detailed understanding where we already have contacts would provide more valuable data than a surface level understanding across the whole geographical footprint of the North.

As infrastructure support organisations who had worked in the field of digital inclusion in the voluntary and community sector within our own geographical areas throughout the pandemic, each partner came with knowledge of the issues relating to exclusion, and some experience of delivering support to sector organisations. Using our combined understanding we devised a framework through which we could articulate issues relating to exclusion.

We collectively understand an individual's ability to access digital to be centred around four key areas:

- Access to equipment (kit)
- Access to infrastructure (connectivity)
- Access through ability and skills (confidence)
- Access through a sense of safety and security (care)



# Data Collection Methods



## Survey

A survey was co-designed between the three partners which aimed to collect data around the identified areas of Kit, Confidence, Connectivity and Care.

The survey was purposefully ‘light touch’ to mitigate against perceived ‘survey fatigue’ in the sector and to encourage responses. There was a further question which asked respondents whether they would be interested in joining a digital network for the North and if they were willing to be contacted for further information.

A full list of survey questions can be found in Appendix A.

Respondent numbers and coverage are set out below:

- North East – 27 responses
- North West – 13 responses
- Yorkshire & Humber – 32 responses
- 3 national charities

This is an encouraging response rate and in particular the fact that respondents were fairly evenly distributed across the three areas enhances the validity of the report.

Where partners did not have existing representation, efforts were made to promote the survey through the VCSE Emergencies Partnership and MAC cells networks as well as proactively identifying organisations and networks and sending it to them with a request for promotion. In one case a North West based infrastructure organisation politely declined to distribute to their networks due to the aforementioned survey fatigue.

## Interviews/case study collection

Where respondents indicated either through the survey or direct email contact that they were willing, interviews were conducted by zoom to capture insights and activities.

Desk based research captured a number of case studies and ‘snap shots’ of activities which are outlined in the report.

## Survey findings

Although the survey was structured using the four areas: Kit, Confidence, Connectivity and Care, the findings are clear that the interrelationship between all 4 areas have an impact on a person’s ability to access and utilise ‘digital’, that everyone’s needs are different and that there is no one solution. However what it has also highlighted is that there is a great deal of activity, support and good practice already taking place across the north within the voluntary and community sector and that people and organisations are very happy to share their approaches and resources to co-design and co-produce digital (and non-digital) solutions.

## Access to equipment - Kit:

### Challenges

- Lack of access to equipment due to cost of purchase, the closure of communal facilities (libraries, community buildings, village halls etc.) which provide free access or knowledge of the equipment’s capability (smart phones used for calling and texting only).
- Knowing what equipment to purchase to meet individual need and the language used to describe the functions of a piece of equipment were both barriers to people wanting to invest in their own equipment

### Solutions

- Purchase of smart phones, tablets and MiFi devices, often loaded with data, by organisations (voluntary and public sector) and either given or loaned short term to individuals and local organisations examples included specific schemes for care homes and the creation of a ‘Loan Library’
- Collection, refurbishment and redistribution of used equipment from and to individuals and organisations
- Creation of a simple tablet that only has the apps available that the individual needs and requiring only a few simple clicks to start people off until they become more confident e.g. Grandpad
- A bespoke tablet pre-set to access a few essential things, for example family members emails, the bank or GP surgery



# Survey Findings Continued



## Access to infrastructure - Connectivity:

### Challenges

- Cost of connectivity including initial purchase cost/installation, ongoing costs and potential for hidden costs or exceeding data limits
- Understanding what is needed to get connected and the range (or lack of) providers is confusing and complex whether it is selecting appropriate broadband (and the speed of connectivity), 4 or 5G telephone, satellite or dongle etc.
- Postcode areas which already have significant levels of deprivation (unemployment, poor housing stock, lack of support services, low income etc.) are impacted again by lack of access to digital through personal devices and communal hubs
- Rural areas, already subject to rural poverty, are hit again by lack of access to broadband, 4/5G or alternative providers leaving them with dial-up speeds, no access at all or excessive infrastructure costs

### Solutions

- Voluntary and other organisations have provided financial solutions: grants to fund data packages, pre-loaded data sims
- Supported individuals and groups to search for and access the best/cheapest deals for their needs
- Developed community access for example Village Halls/Pubs as Digital Hubs providing digital access points/hot spots for individuals, communities, businesses etc.
- Call for street side access to services for example adapting old telephone boxes, providing access points within supermarkets, post offices, neighbourhood centres and places where people attend for other, essential, reasons
- Broadband issues to be addressed at a national level, it needs to be seen as a utility with access for all

## Access through ability and skills – Confidence

### Challenges

- A person's lack of digital know-how cannot be underestimated, some people were unaware how to turn on a smart phone or understand what all the functions were
- Real concern about 'doing something wrong' and there being no one available to help them
- Because of the starting point of people's learning, building the knowledge and confidence was very time consuming and needed multiple face to face appointments to develop the basic skills to use technology
- Lack of capacity to support specific learning (time and knowledge/skill)
- Delivering digital skills training to people during lockdown when face to face was not an option
- Proposals to deliver 'structured IT learning', it is not what the majority of people need to carry out essential tasks and enjoyable activities

### Solutions

- Reverting to telephone support and hard copy handouts/handbooks posted to people to support their learning
- Working with family members, friends, neighbours, volunteers who had more experience, knowledge and skills than the person they were helping, creating opportunities for people to help each other (no special skills or technical know-how required) including Digital Buddy schemes
- Start at the point the person feels most comfortable and use their interests to build their engagement with using digital technology
- Select only the apps the person wishes/needs to use.
- Once people have some skills and gained confidence, introducing people to AbilityNet or Digital Unite for resources to increase their abilities
- Published guidance to help people attending online NHS appointments
- Development of small group support using Zoom and Microsoft Teams which was an opportunity for tea/coffee and a chat keeping people connected



# Survey Findings Continued



## Access through a sense of safety and security - Care

### Challenges

- Concerns over safety and fraud online is one of the barriers preventing people from accessing digital technology
- People not knowing how to keep themselves safe whilst online

### Solutions

- Coaching over Zoom or Microsoft Teams, providing training in E Safety, updating people on scams, embedding the importance of secure passwords, raising awareness of online bullying, grooming harassments etc.
- Promoting FraudWatch.org.uk to the people we are supporting
- For the organisation, upgrading security through IT support services, reviewing all risk management and processes and policies around GDPR and data management.

## Impact on individuals

Although digital technology has acted as an enabler during the pandemic, it has also emphasised the 'Digital Divide', here are some examples highlighted within the survey:

- People with dementia have struggled to get online and therefore it is the informal carers who have stepped up to help and this is now 'another thing' that is placing pressure on them
- Increased isolation and loneliness across all age groups as the main 'social' communication moved online
- Missing out on essential information relating to personal care (appointments, test results, finances/benefits, general communication etc.)
- Not having the same access to information and resources. Telephoning the GP practice for an appointment potentially places you at a disadvantage as online bookings are given priority
- Unable to home school, talk with people or see people
- Increased frustration, anxiety and stress as people do not want to learn how to use IT kit but feel they will be left out otherwise

## Impact on VCSE organisations

In the main voluntary and community sector organisations adapted very quickly to a new way of working adopting Zoom, Microsoft office/Teams etc. in the same way as their larger public and private sector counterparts. It has pushed organisations into reviewing their IT systems, opportunities for remote working and communicating. It has taken investment from unrestricted reserves to upgrade equipment and IT infrastructure and provide training for staff but for many organisations has future-proofed them.

A key gap identified was the shortage of sufficiently accessible, trusted 'technical expertise' for volunteer led organisations to feel confident in supporting their communities in the digital agenda.

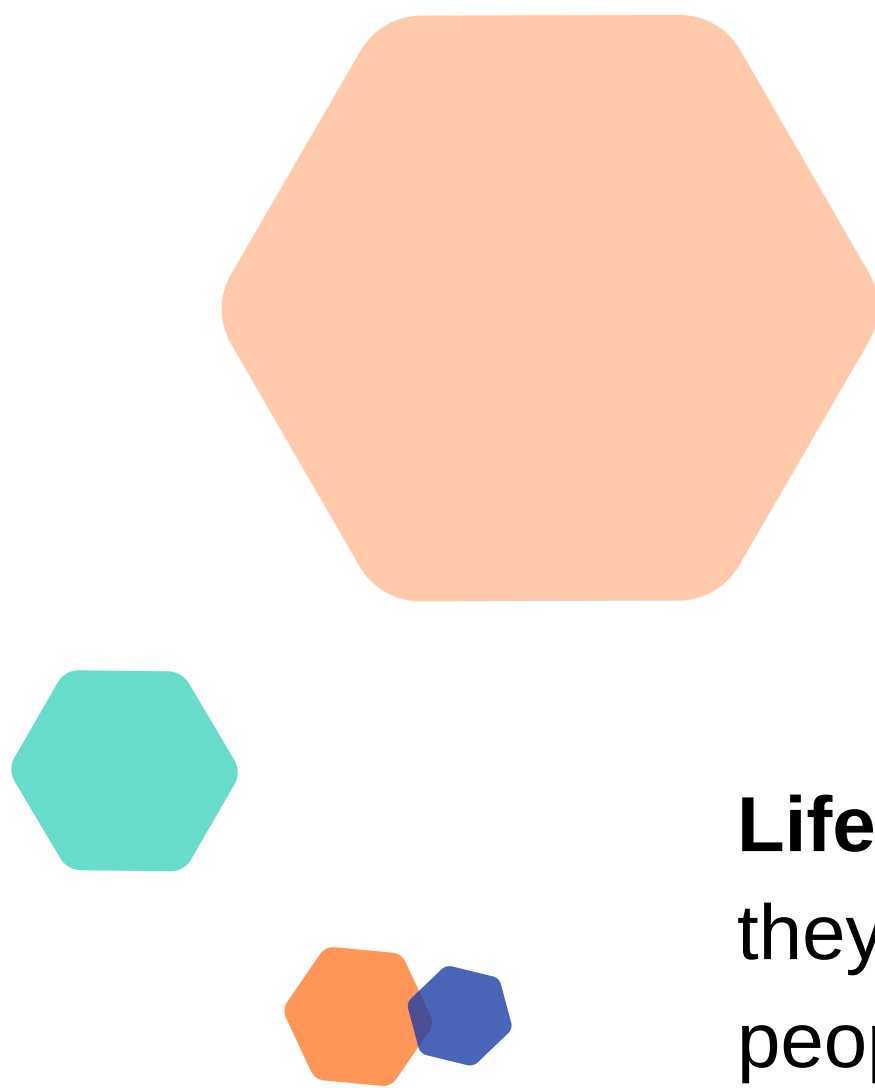
## Off line services – the non-digital approach

Real concerns were raised over 'digital' becoming the default position with everything moving 'on-line' and no easily accessible route available for those whose preference and/or need is for other ways of communicating.

Use of the telephone has increased as an alternative to face to face meetings but also to assist people to get online. Where information has only been available online (including resources to access digital), organisations have returned to printing and posting directly to people to ensure equity of access.

It is imperative that there is 'another way' as part of the system, the VCS can assist people to get online but there always needs to be an offline route which has equality of access and priority.





**Gateshead Digital Voice CIC – Kit, Confidence, Connectivity and Care**  
Gateshead Digital Voice CIC has a variety of different services which are tailored to a digital need and group. As such the organisation has managed to provide assistance to people in all four key areas associated with digital exclusion: Kit, Confidence, Connectivity and Care. They have achieved this through their varied services highlighted below.

**Lifebooks** is 10-week programme which provides tablets to care home residents so they can make a digital scrapbook to tell their life story. It is particularly tailored to people with Alzheimer's and Dementia. The programme improves the wellbeing of residents, allows them to acquire digital skills and reduces isolation all whilst capturing cherished memories. It was, however, difficult to run this service during the pandemic due to lack of face-to-face contact with human facilitators.

**iSkills** is aimed at people with learning disabilities and younger people and gives them an opportunity to explore the basics of digital media production. The course is tailored to the interests and skillset of the participants and can be a one-day workshop or a longer term project. Participants are provided with an iPad because it is a versatile item of kit which is accessible and familiar. The programme enables participants to learn digital skills, get creative and explore the outdoors and also includes a career progression group to help participants consider how they can use their skills in employment.

**Geohistories** is a heritage project working with a diverse group of people excluded by barriers and language and enables them to tell stories about their neighbourhood. A small team of adults are taught how to use iPads and they interview local people and take photographs to create a short film.

**inTouch** is a service which is mostly for older people and refugees to help them access services. It is an introductory course which teaches people the basics of using technology. They are given an iPad with doorstep instructions so they can learn how to set up zoom meetings and use apps to order medicine online. It's a great way to help people learn new skills, gain confidence in using digital technology, understand staying safe online and allowing them to get connected and feel less isolated.

**DigitalMe** works with underrepresented and vulnerable people to create an avatar they can use as a conduit to tell their stories and share their experiences. It helps people to address crucial issues by giving them the confidence to share their stories whilst also remaining safe by not revealing their identity.

Digital Voice recognises that some people can afford devices and understand how to use them, but data costs can be an issue. Participants in their programmes were given dongles with pre-loaded data alongside the iPads but this was just a temporary measure as equipment has to be given back once the programme is finished. They are getting trainers up to date on the cheapest deals and locations to continue digital interaction such as libraries and digital cafes.

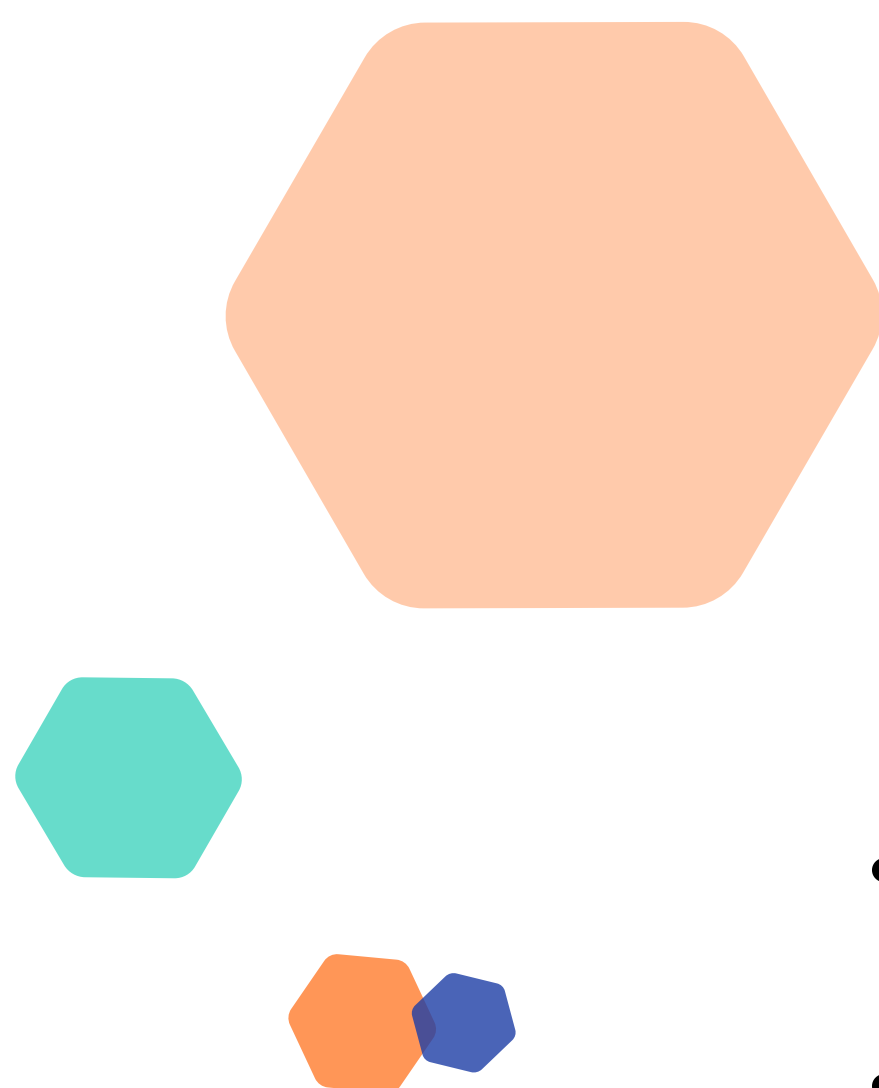
Digital Voice has had a lot of success in using their programmes to bring people together and become more confident. People have woken up to digital inclusion because of the pandemic and it is essential that going forward, to bridge the digital inclusion gap, there is recognition of digital inclusion diversity. Digital Voice tackles this issue by getting people engaged and making learning digital skills fun and accessible.

#### Sources:

- <https://www.digitalvoice.org.uk/>



# Case Studies



## **Salford CVS – *Kit, Confidence, Connectivity and Care***

Salford CVS are doing a variety of different work to help tackle digital exclusion. The first is providing a Digital Resources Online Library page on their website which signposts to:

- Digital inclusion projects to help improve digital skills, confidence and allow participants to access a device through Corinth Training CIC.
- Support from other organisations such as Catalyst's Digital Candle.
- Information on data usage and where to get the best data deals.
- Resources for staying safe online.

They also run their own digital skills training, Tech and Tea – a weekly online session for older people (65+) where qualified adult learning tutors help participants to use their own devices or laptops and tablets they have provided. They can also provide participants with a mobile Wi-Fi server if they don't have access to the internet.

Salford CVS are also partners in Digital Everyone – a council led cross-sector collaboration to make Salford a digitally inclusive city. The site features courses, training and support including calls for device donation, a young people's tech committee, funding and employment opportunities, resources for English speakers of other languages and a variety of other support.

Two key features of the website are a map of Salford which directs to locations for free public Wi-Fi and a key figures section which tracks key digital statistics of Salford including:

- 6684 people they have helped to get online.
- 56 buildings with free public Wi-Fi.
- 200 public access computers.
- 2293 older people who have been supported with digital skills by Inspiring Communities.
- And 1400 people from African, Asian and Middle Eastern diasporas supported by NMCP.

With a vast portfolio of different resources and workshops, Salford CVS also address the four key areas highlighted in this research. Furthermore, some of their work is targeted at those who are the most vulnerable in society and likely to be digitally excluded such as young people, English speakers of other languages and older people.

## **Sources:**

- <https://www.salfordcvs.co.uk/new-digital-inclusion-project-salford>
- <https://www.salfordcvs.co.uk/digital-resources-online-library>
- <https://digitalinclusion.salford.gov.uk/>
- <https://digitalinclusion.salford.gov.uk/our-network/our-partners/salford-cvs/>



# Case Studies

## **Brightlife Cheshire – Confidence**

Brightlife Cheshire ran a Digital Buddy programme to provide one-to-one support to participants in their homes. It was soon realised that participants thought they would benefit more from working in a group to acquire digital skills so weekly sessions took place in libraries. The sessions focused on developing skills to build knowledge and confidence and the sessions were co-designed by participants to ensure they were tailored to their needs in terms of skills learned and pace of delivery. Participants were also given the option to participate in projects and presentations using their new skills to consolidate their learning, encourage interaction and also build confidence.

Most of the participants were over 70 and had little to no experience of using technology before participating in the programme. However, some participants had been given devices such as smartphones and tablets by family members so they could stay in touch but had no idea how to use them.

An 8-week programme was also run in residential care settings, with taster sessions for residents to encourage them to attend the weekly sessions. Unfortunately, few of the residents could attend the community-based groups due to lack of transport and mobility issues and due to limited numbers of volunteers, the service couldn't continue in a care setting.



### **The programme identified some key learnings, such as:**

- Digital skills sessions must be delivered at the correct pace for participants.
- An intergenerational aspect can help to engage participants.
- Community-based sessions and learning digital skills help combat loneliness and isolation.
- Providing opportunities to practice skills consolidates learning and increases confidence.

The legacy of this programme is that it has helped vulnerable people to develop skills, reduced loneliness and a regular weekly session has been sustained which attracts around 20 participants.

**Sources:** - <http://www.brightlifecheshire.org.uk/keycommissions/digital-buddies/>



# Case Studies



## **Alzheimer's Society – North West – Good practice**

Older people have concerns about everything being moved online when they have no understanding of it. They are also worried that they will miss important information because it is only distributed digitally, leaving them excluded because they weren't able to find out about it. The pandemic exacerbated the digital divide so those who didn't have an understanding of how to use technology or didn't have access to any kit were even more excluded and unable to receive face to face help.

It is important to recognise that although you can provide people with training, devices and data, some people don't want to have to become digital and as such there should always be the option for a straightforward way to do things offline. The Alzheimer's Society demonstrated good practice by printing things off and posting them to beneficiaries as well as sometimes using phones to do things instead of just over zoom. Though we want to encourage digital inclusion we have to accept that it isn't for everyone, and we need to do our best to keep those people as included as possible without digital.

### **Sources:**

- Survey

## **East Riding Voluntary Action Services (ERVAS) Ltd - Care**

ERVAS are working to deliver the 'care' element of digital inclusion focusing on cyber security in East Yorkshire (to include Hull). ERVAS have checked that resources cover digital safety and fraud because it is integral that this is woven into all aspects of digital. It does seem to be an area where people don't engage as much, which may be because they don't want to acknowledge the elements of online danger and it can be quite overwhelming for people with few digital skills to consider. However, it is important to address this because the best means of protection is prevention and having the knowledge of what to do if you get hacked or are scammed online.



ERVAS run sessions which look at a variety of different aspects of cyber security such as:

- What cyber security is.
- Backing up data.
- Protection from malware.
- Keeping smartphones safe.
- Using passwords.
- Avoiding phishing attacks.
- And reporting incidents.

Considering there are a lot of workshops out there that are focused on building digital skills, there seems to be a lack of sessions that are centred on cyber security despite it being such a prominent issue for anyone who uses online services.

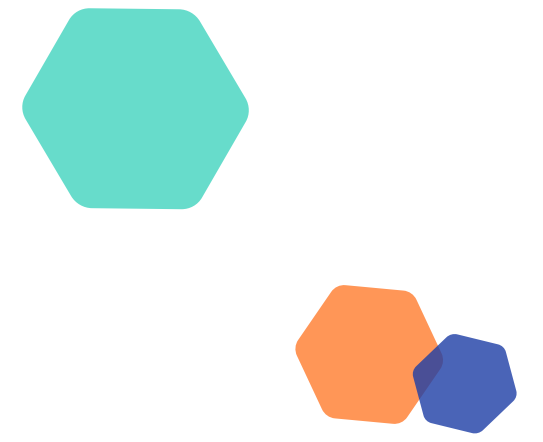
### **Sources:**

- Survey

- <https://www.ervas.org.uk/training/event/cyber-security-for-charities/>



# Case Studies



## **100% Digital Leeds**

100% Digital Leeds is a cross-sector collaboration with Leeds City Council, Good Things Foundation and organisations across the city who can support people to go digital. With 90,000 adults in Leeds still lacking the basic digital skills they need to participate in society, 100% Digital Leeds' aim is to bridge this gap so that people can access the services and benefits that they need.

The collaboration is vast – encouraging organisations to subscribe to become part of the network, focusing on the digital journey of both individuals – by providing online and face to face training and information about staying safe online - and organisations – through grants, digital champions and a tablet lending scheme. It therefore encapsulates Kit, Confidence, Connectivity and Care throughout its work.

### **Some of the key elements of 100% Digital's work include:**

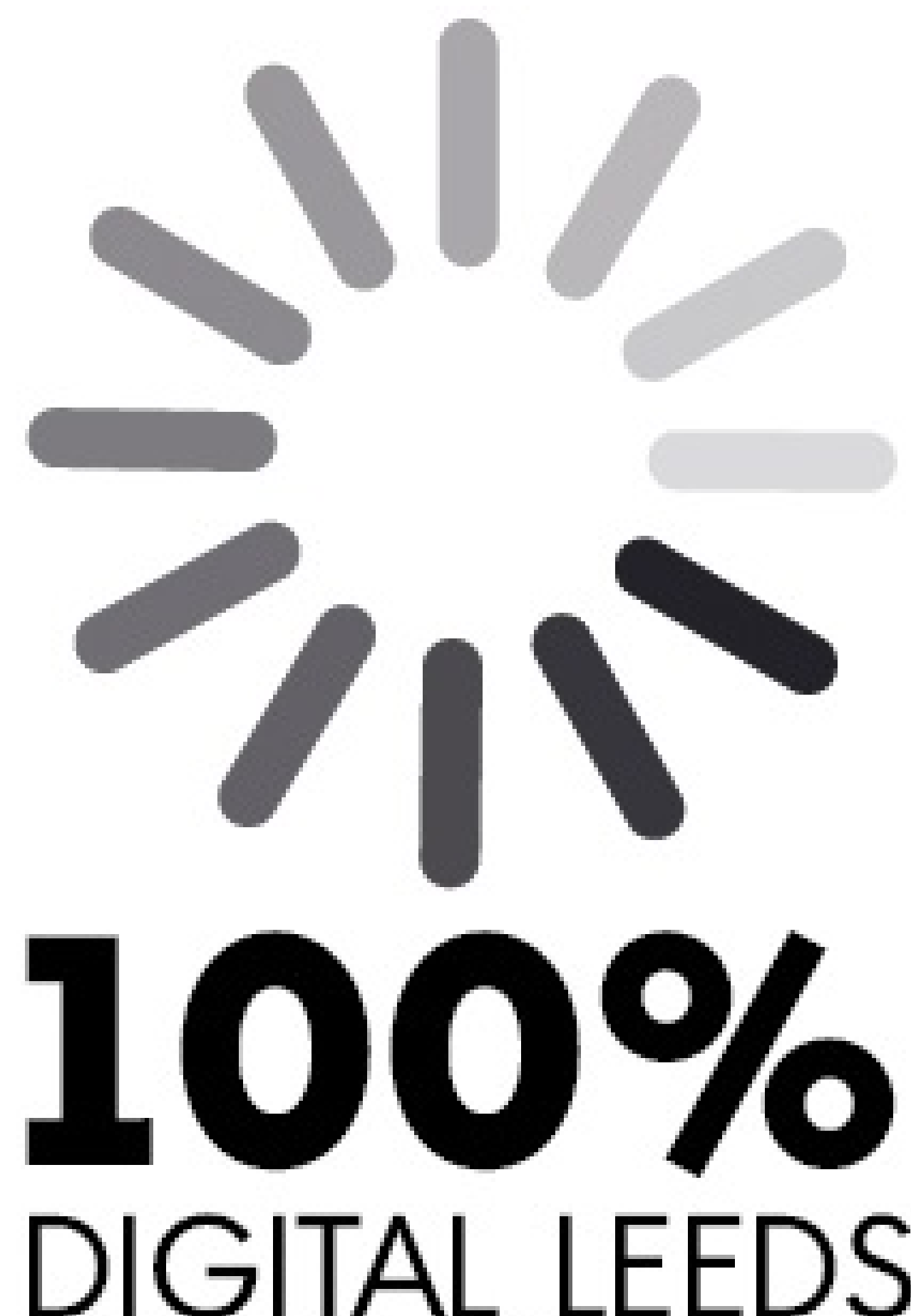
- Training members of organisations to become digital champions so they can understand barriers to digital inclusion and help to signpost people to accessible tools and resources which will help them develop their skills and confidence.
- Bringing together partners to form digital inclusion networks who then work together to reduce digital exclusion for a specific community – including an autism and learning disability digital inclusion network.
- Running a trial Dementia Pathfinder project to explore the ways digital can support people living with dementia, their families and carers by giving them equipment and digital skills training.
- Building digital toolkits as a resource for organisations.
- Working with traveller communities.

Overall, 100% Digital Leeds aspires to connect people to their communities so they can access a wider circle of support, help people to improve their lives by independently using digital and working with professionals and people with lived experience to tackle digital exclusion in Leeds.

### **Sources:**

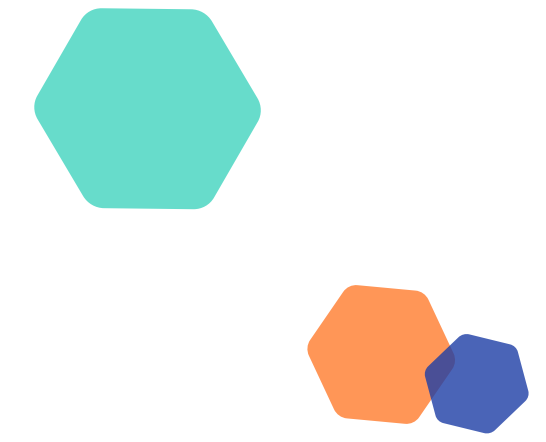
<https://www.onlinecentresnetwork.org/leeds>

<https://leedsdigitalinclusion.wordpress.com/>





# Case Studies



## Humber and Wolds Rural Action (HWRA)

Humber and Wolds Rural Action (HWRA) have created a project, 'Village Halls as Digital Hubs' which brings together the four main strands of this report – Kit, Confidence, Connectivity and Care.

The project works with halls in East Riding that have established a connection, bought or had kit donated and have developed local digital skills training through peer support. People who have been trained then agree to mentor halls that find themselves in a similar position, sharing the learning and enabling independence. HWRA are creating case studies, guidance and toolkits to provide further information to village halls who have ambitions to become hubs.

Using village halls as digital hubs gives local people a location where they can go to get connected (something which can be difficult in rural areas), offers access to devices, training on how to use devices and participate in fun and educational programmes and projects whilst also offering a safe environment to understand how to use digital safely.

The project is particularly prevalent as it not only helps people to gain confidence using digital but provides support so people can access essential elements of daily life including access to online job services and healthcare services such as prescriptions or appointments. The Hubs also provide a social setting where people can learn which contributes to their wellbeing and helps combat loneliness.

Source:

Survey

[https://www.hwrcc.org.uk/downloads/Digital\\_Venue\\_Toolkit\\_Art\\_Digital01.pdf](https://www.hwrcc.org.uk/downloads/Digital_Venue_Toolkit_Art_Digital01.pdf)



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# Existing Research

### National picture

The Good Things Foundation is a social change organisation that produces a [Digital Nation report](#) every year. Their report for 2020 uses data from Ofcom to highlight that in the North East:

- 18% of users are classified as ‘extensive’ internet users.
- 53% are classified as ‘limited’ or ‘non-users’.



In the North West:

- 31% of users are classified as ‘extensive’ internet users.
- 41% are classified as ‘limited’ or ‘non-users’.

Digital Nation 2020 emphasises the prevalence of ‘limited internet users’; people who are online but using the internet for very few things. This serves to highlight the layers to digital exclusion, for example, young people with no or few qualifications who use the internet but only for social media or entertainment. Or users who only have a smartphone which affects critical engagement. Many people have digital skills for life but lack the digital skills needed for work.

The [Lloyds UK Consumer Digital Index 2021](#) used the behavioural data of 1 million people and interviewed over 16,000 consumers, to create the UK’s largest measure of digital capability and financial behaviours.

The Index highlights people receiving benefits are more likely to have low rates of digital engagement than the general population, and shows the percentage of people in each region who are offline:

	Proportion of benefit claimants who have very low digital engagement (%)	People offline (%)
North East	37	8
North West	34	4
Yorkshire and Humber	34	4

The top three reasons for people stating that they were not online are:

- I’m worried about privacy and security
- I’m worried about having my identity taken
- I think the internet is too complicated to use

### The report states:

“2.6 million people remain completely offline. A further 20.5 million adults have Low or Very Low digital engagement. As the data shows digital poverty is exacerbated by existing vulnerabilities, never more so than in the last year.”



# Regional Research

In January 2021 Newcastle University's Open Lab and VONNE published a report [‘Tackling digital poverty in the North East: lessons learned from the region’s VCSE sector’](#).

The report was the result of co-produced workshops with VCSE organisations and researchers exploring digital poverty and digital inclusion and found the following key findings:

- Digital inclusion is a large and complex subject area containing many distinct goals, all of which need to be pursued in order to tackle digital poverty. This makes it difficult for a single organisation to address all areas of digital inclusion and indicates the need for a holistic, collaborative approach.
- There is a desire across VCSE organisations to collaborate in digital inclusion work, particularly with respect to sharing data and practical know-how, as well as undertaking advocacy work and making collective calls for change.
- The scale and nature of digital poverty is often underestimated by key decision makers including funders and policymakers. Digital inclusion is more complex than an educational process undertaken by an individual and from which they ‘graduate’. The current funding landscape does not recognise these complexities, with too much focus on short-term projects carried out by individual organisations.
- The pace of digital innovation and technical incompatibilities between systems are a continual source of challenges for those experiencing digital poverty.
- Digital-first services present inherent safeguarding risks for individuals in digital poverty who often need to share personal information with VCSE sector practitioners in order to access support with essential services, such as financial or healthcare services. This presents organisations with sizeable challenges when balancing delivering support and safeguarding service users, staff and volunteers.
- The VCSE sector is filling gaps in digital access policy in areas such as safeguarding and inclusive design of technology. The more recent digitisation of services in the VCSE sector has substantially increased workload for VCSE practitioners. This work is not necessarily equally distributed across organisations’ workforces and can put disproportionate pressure on staff and volunteers from marginalised groups.



Open Lab, Not-Equal & VONNE

Tackling Digital Poverty

NOT-EQUAL



UK Research  
and Innovation

openlab



VONNE  
voluntary organisations' network north east



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# Regional Research (cont.)

The report also made the following recommendations:

## Complexity

Policymakers and funders should recognize the complexity of doing digital inclusion work 'on the ground', and that addressing digital poverty in a sustainable and effective manner requires a long-term view of funding and commissioning.

## Collaboration

Funders and commissioners should wherever possible foster a collaborative ecosystem of digital inclusion practitioners. Work should be undertaken to cultivate an environment in which many organisations can collaborate closely to address different aspects of digital poverty in a particular locality.

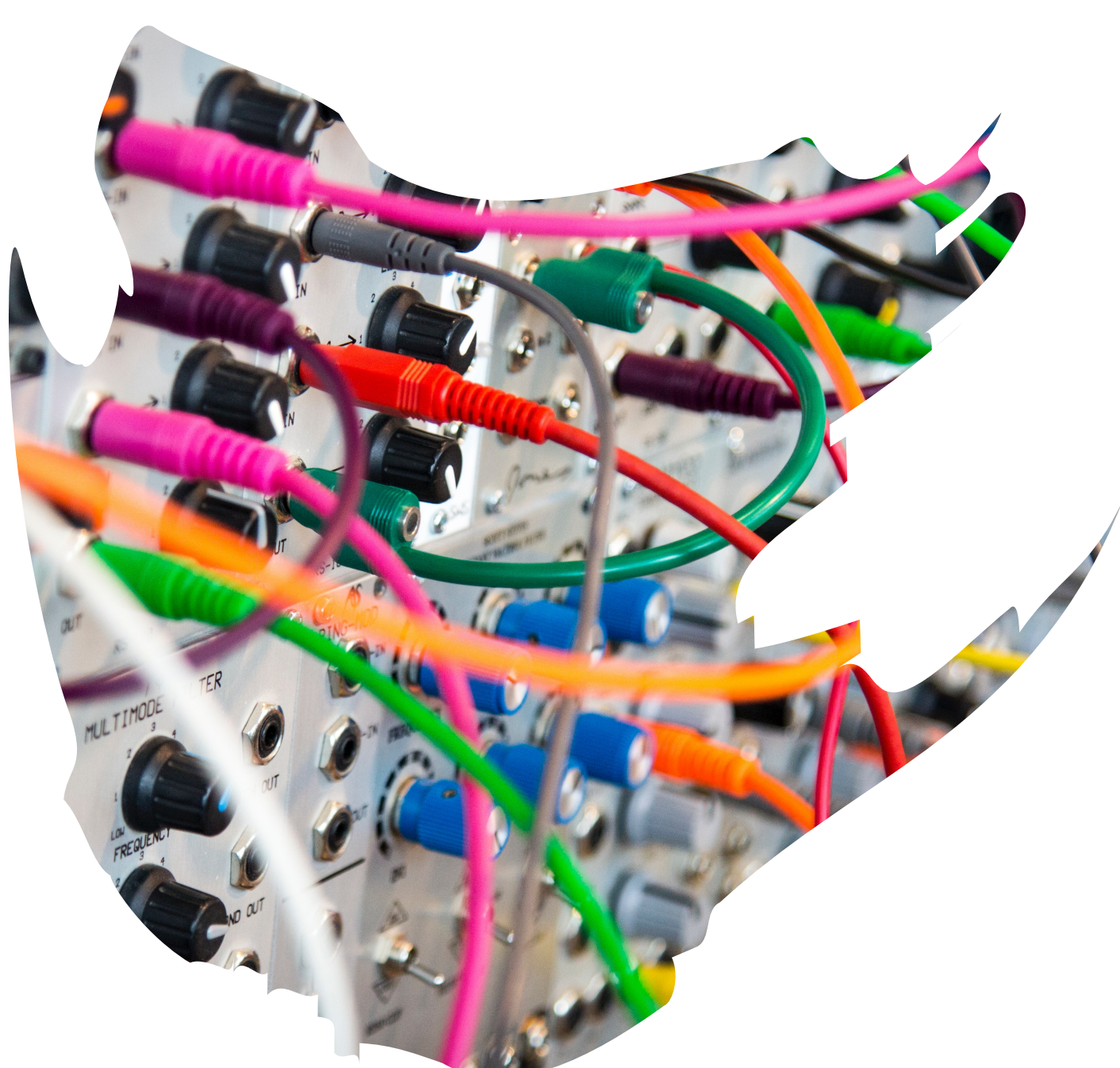
## Training

VCSE sector practitioners and technologists should be supported to engage with one another to develop guidance around the development of technology which is as accessible as possible to those experiencing digital poverty.

Training provision that would be of benefit to the North-East's VCSE sector includes:

- Training to support collaboration with other organisations on complex inclusion projects.
- Training in producing accessible online materials.
- Guidance on engaging individuals belonging to particular marginalised communities, drawn from organisations with relevant expertise and experience.

Further research is being undertaken in the North East by policy think tank IPPR North and this is due for completion in summer 2021.





# Regional Research (cont.)

In March 2021, mHabitat worked with three Integrated Care Systems (Humber Coast and Vale ICS, West Yorkshire and Harrogate ICS, South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw ICS) to develop a Digital Inclusion Blueprint which can be accessed [here](#).

Extract from the report ‘Digital Inclusion Blueprint for Integrated Care Systems, Reducing the Digital Divide’:

*There are an estimated 9 million people in the UK who don’t have access to the internet on a daily basis. That is 9 million people who*

- *Can’t access video consultations*
- *Wait longer for appointments*
- *Also map consistently with the biggest indicators of health inequalities*

*This report brings together the co-designed ‘Digital Inclusion’ activities of three Integrated Care Systems throughout the Covid crisis to provide a blueprint for digital inclusion across all ICSs. It is designed as a starting point. Showing the art of the possible to give food for thought for other ICSs to co-design their own programmes. mHabitat recommends this guide as a beginning to a co-design process, whereby interested ICS can use the things in here to help their own tailored developments in their areas.*

The report demonstrates the effectiveness of partnership working and has a particular emphasis on working closely with local voluntary and community sector organisations who are already pro-active in delivering, and assisting to deliver, solutions that support greater digital access to health and care.

## Digital Inclusion Blueprint For Integrated Care Systems (ICS)

Reducing the Digital Divide  
March 2021



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# Conclusion

The voluntary and community sector has flexed and adapted its delivery methods in order to support the needs of community groups and individuals. Recognising that, as more information and activity moved 'on-line', they were ideally placed to identify and provide digital solutions whether this was connectivity, equipment or training.

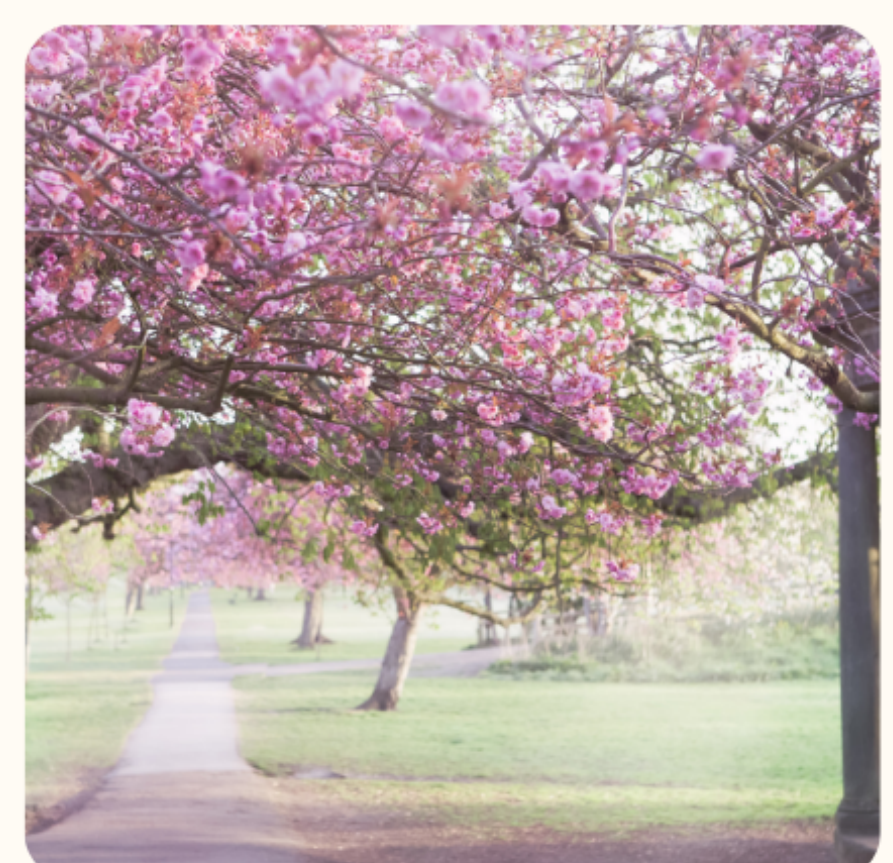
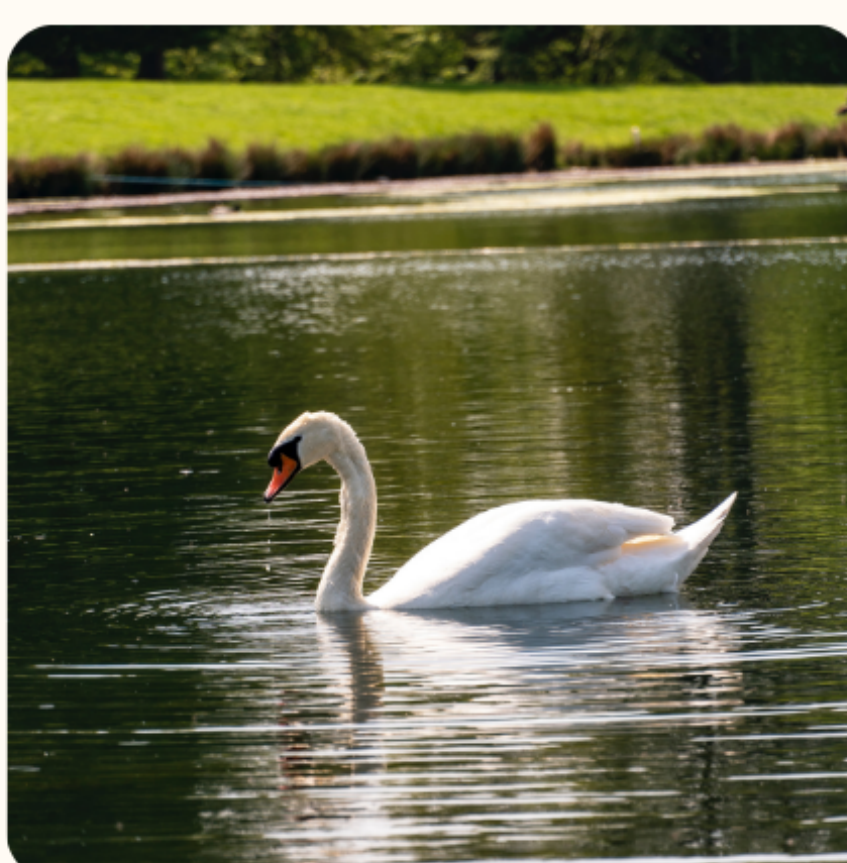
Groups were often enabled to do this through public sector grants or provision of equipment but the delivery appears to be 'patchy' and is often a temporary fix (loaded sim cards and MiFi, loaned equipment etc.) in response to the pandemic rather than a long term sustainable and strategic solution.

In order for public and private sector organisations to continue the move to on-line services, information and communication there needs to be systematic investment in infrastructure (connectivity), access to equipment (phones, tablets, libraries, digital hubs), skilling up and building the confidence of users and developing and promoting safe use which protects the individual.

The voluntary and community sector is already providing this service, has existing relationships with communities including those that others struggle to reach and understands how best to approach and assist people. As a sector we must promote our role in enabling individuals and communities to gain digital access and skills, gain recognition for the impact our digital solutions have had, and in the future can have, in assisting people to access health, wellbeing and social support reducing pressure on people and the health and care system.

Working with system partners we must design and develop a strategic approach which facilitates and enables local delivery of a community led and bespoke solution as a 'one size fits all' approach will not work.

As we move towards a digital world with the potential for people to be further excluded from support, services and social contact it is important to recognise that the voluntary and community sector is an invaluable partner in developing existing, and creating new, solutions to the challenges faced by both individuals and those developing digitalised services.





# Recommendations

These are the recommendations for the ecosystem of support. From national through to hyper-local we all have a responsibility to influence, promote and implement the four pillars of digital inclusion (Kit, Confidence, Connectivity and Care).

## ***Build on existing good practice***

- Voluntary and community sector to promote their current digital activity, solutions and successes, showcasing what has been achieved and highlighting what is possible
- Value the expertise of the voluntary and community sector, our links into communities and individuals and our major contribution to supporting and sustaining people, responding to need at a local and personal level, by working in equal partnership with and resourcing the sector to expand existing work in the field of digital inclusion.

## **Develop local digital system partnerships**

- Involve the voluntary and community sector at the earliest possible stage in designing and delivering services and access routes including non-digital
- Share resources, expertise, understanding of population needs, current solutions and successes

## ***Invest in connectivity and equipment***

- Create equity in the system which enables everyone (wherever you live or work) to have access to broadband the same as any other utility
- Develop a strategic, long term, sustainable approach to providing affordable, simple, accessible, local and personal IT solutions

## ***Ensure equality of access and prioritisation***

- Whichever route a person takes to access advice, information, support or a service, whether digital or non-digital, there should be no difference to when, where and how they receive the response, service, intervention or treatment. This includes access to health, care, finance, employment, education etc.
- Voluntary and community sector should engage as a delivery partner to assist in raising awareness of the needs of those people who are digitally excluded and to work together to create and implement solutions to increase digital inclusion

## ***Keeping people safe***

- Create a local resource which provides simple, easily accessible advice and information on how to be safe whilst using the internet
- Work together as partners to inform and educate to prevent internet fraud and cyber security breaches To encourage people and organisations to report such incidents and provide support to the victims





# Appendix A

## Digital Inclusion and Cyber Awareness Survey

We want to hear the voices of people who are digitally excluded.

We know the VCS sector has expertise on the levels and complexities of digital exclusion and ideas and real-world examples about what works to tackle it.

East Riding Voluntary Action Services (ERVAS), Voluntary Organisations Network North East (VONNE) and Humber and Wolds Rural Action (HWRA) are working together across the North to build a picture of activity in the region.

Findings will be used to highlight to local, regional and national partners what is happening on the ground, what works, and what more needs to be done.

We appreciate you taking the time to complete this survey.

In addition to this, we will be contacting some organisations and networks directly to capture your digital concerns, responses and activities and discuss the survey in more detail, if you would like a conversation please contact Georgia Goncalves via email: Georgia.Goncalves@vonne.org.uk.

The closing date for the survey is Monday 31st May.

If you would like to receive a copy of the report and an update on the work we are doing please make sure that you provide your email at the end of the survey so that we can stay in touch and connect you to any future opportunities. Our work is funded through the VCSE Emergencies Partnership.

\* Required

Kit

1. Has your organisation been distributing IT kit to local people (laptops, tablets, phones etc)  
Yes No

2. If yes, tell us more about what you have distributed and who to.

## Confidence

3. We want to better understand the issues of digital exclusion. Think about what the people you have been working with have said to you in recent months and select all the answers that are relevant:

*Check all that apply.*

- Nobody has mentioned issues with moving services online
- Issues with not having any IT kit
- Issues with not having the right IT kit for their household
- Issues with not having connectivity - no broadband, credit for data etc. People have IT kit but don't know how to use it
- Lack of confidence to use the IT kit they have
- People have been unable to access health/public sector services because of digital exclusion
- Other:

4. Based on your experience, what do you think are the top three concerns for people who are digitally excluded?

## Connectivity

5. Thinking about your beneficiaries, have they got any barriers to connectivity? I.e. expensive data (cost), lack of signal (availability) etc Select all that apply

*Check all that apply.*

- Cost of equipment
- Cost of connectivity
- Lack of digital infrastructure
- Understanding what is needed to connect (hard wire, wi-fi, satellite, telephone, dongle etc.)
- Other:



# Appendix A (cont.)

6. Tell us more about what you have been doing to address issues with connectivity amongst the people you support:

**Care**

7. Has your organisation been doing anything to train/support people to use the IT kit they have safely (showing people how to do something online)

Yes No

8. If yes, please tell us how you have done this:

**What next?**

9. Tell us about any plans you might have to address digital exclusion and cyber safety over the next 6 months.

10. Do you think there are any gaps that should be addressed in the future?

Yes No

11. What do you think the key gaps are and share any ideas you might have for resolving them.

**And lastly...**

12. Which local authority area does your organisation cover? \*

Select all that apply

North East (to include: Darlington, Durham, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Northumberland, North Tyneside, Redcar and Cleveland, South Tyneside, Stockton and Sunderland.)

North West (to include: Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Bolton, Bury, Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Cumbria, Halton, Knowsley, Lancashire, Liverpool, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Sefton, St Helens, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, Warrington, Wigan and Wirral.)

Yorkshire & Humber (to include: Barnsley, Bradford, Calderdale, Doncaster, East Riding of Yorkshire, Hull, Kirklees, Leeds, North East Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire, North Yorkshire, Rotherham, Sheffield, Wakefield and York.)

Other:

13. Which beneficiaries does your organisation support?

Select all that apply

*Check all that apply.*

Children/young people

The general public/humankind Elderly/older people

People with disabilities

Other charities or voluntary bodies Other defined groups

People of a particular ethnic or racial origin Other:

14. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

15. Organisation

16. Would you like to join a digital network for organisations?

Yes No





VCS Emergencies  
Partnership



**navca**  
local focus national voice

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## Working together across the North!



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**VONNE**  
voluntary organisations' network north east

[vonne.org.uk](http://vonne.org.uk)



**HUMBER & WOLDS  
RURAL ACTION**

**HWRA**

[hwrcc.org.uk](http://hwrcc.org.uk)

East Riding Voluntary Action Services (ERVAS), Voluntary Organisations Network North East (VONNE) and Humber and Wolds Rural Action (HWRA) were appointed by the VCSEP as Digital Inclusion Subject Liaison Leads and worked together throughout April, May and June 2021 across the North to build a picture of activity in the region.

