



# Digital

## North East Lincolnshire

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A new digital programme to equip residents and organisations with the digital skills, data, and technology they need.

### **Why?**

The move to do even more online during the COVID pandemic highlighted the digital divide in North East Lincolnshire. We saw many individuals and families struggle to access online provision, which restricted the education of some of our children and limited people's access to healthcare, social interactions, and employment opportunities. This impacted on the physical, mental, and economic wellbeing of many. We want to identify the key infrastructure and support that will aid recovery and build a digitally inclusive North East Lincolnshire.

### **Working together to create change.**

Many organisations in North East Lincolnshire are already working to address the barriers preventing residents and organisations from fully embracing the opportunities offered by digital. We are determined to build on this work and tackle the digital divide through increased partnership working. Through this programme of work, we will ensure there is strong digital leadership across North East Lincolnshire, using local anchor organisations to advocate and promote the approach and to develop solutions together.

### **What do we already know?**

A project in the summer of 2020 to better understand the causes of social isolation, brought forward some early findings about the groups who are most likely to face digital exclusion and the barriers they face.

As we have increased the conversations about digital, we have brought together some early working groups which include representatives from health, the Council, voluntary and community sector organisations, business, and education. Some initial meetings and workshops have given people the opportunity to share their knowledge about the current digital picture in North East Lincolnshire.

## **We know that:**

- The proportion of residents in North East Lincolnshire accessing the internet is estimated to be the lowest in the Yorkshire and Humber region
- Many people on low incomes, including young people leaving care, struggle with the cost of devices and connectivity. Some only have a smartphone, some nothing at all, and this impacts on the ability to do every day 'online' things like applying for jobs, education, and health appointments. Nationally, the percentage of households with an internet connection increases with income and over 20% of people not in employment do not use the internet
- There are not enough public access computers or tablets to meet local need or knowledge of where the existing ones are
- Those who live alone are less likely to have an internet connection
- There are still many older people and those with low literacy, who do not have the skills needed to use IT to meet their needs
- A significant group of mostly older people still choose not to use technology, We need to ensure that they are still able to access services if this remains their choice.

## **We learned that there is:**

- Data and device access for some groups – our information shows affordability is a key barrier to digital inclusion.
- Use of online services in some local organisations.
- Support available to help people develop the skills they need. This was restricted during the pandemic as it largely relied on people going to community centres or other community organisations to access support.
- Places where Wi-Fi access is free.



# Quick Wins

Initial findings have illustrated some key areas for early focus. This includes effectively promoting and making the most of the opportunities for digital in programmes like the Community Renewal Fund: which was introduced to help improve communities, build skills, and enhance growth.

## Other quick win areas include:

- **Economy** – There is evidence to suggest that there is significant support for local businesses both from a training perspective, as well as funding. We need to ensure that this project assists in the coordination of this offer, ensuring businesses are making good use of external funding and training opportunities to improve connectivity and digital skills. We will promote the support available through the Development and Growth Board and ask local businesses to champion what is available through their networks and supply chains.
- **Society** – There is training and technological support available, and opportunities for people to build the confidence they need to get online. We need to better share these opportunities with residents so they can seek the advice, guidance and support they need at the most appropriate time and place. We will work with voluntary and community groups and community centres to grow their provision and/or direct people to the most appropriate help.
- **Health** – The move to online health provision which happened during COVID looks set to continue. We need to work with primary care, community and hospital services to promote the support available to help people access health online. We also need to understand that not all residents have made this change and support residents to get the medical help they need when they need it.



# How will the rest of the programme work?

**Discover (understand the challenge)** – Over the Summer and early Autumn we will be working to fully assess the current digital picture in North East Lincolnshire. In late September, a Digital Engagement Week, will offer opportunities for residents, local organisations and businesses to tell us about the barriers which prevent them making the most of digital, and their ideas for next steps for the programme.



**Define (find the right focus)** – As we move into the Autumn, we will bring together our learning. We will work in partnership to theme and draw insights from the information we have gathered and hope to prove some of our early assumptions. We will present the stories of our target audiences and clearly identify the causes of the key problems people face. At the end of this phase, we will identify opportunities and potential solutions. We will share our thinking with the community so that what emerges fits with what people want and need.



**Develop (test ideas and iterate)** – By Spring 2022, we aim to be developing some partnership solutions. We would like to coproduce these solutions with residents, so they best respond to local need.



**Deliver (evaluate learnings and define next steps)** – As we move into Summer and Autumn of 2022, we hope to be able to pilot some of our shared solutions in some key areas of the borough.



# Ideas

Ideas will come forward as we work together. We will keep a note of them on our 'Ideas board' as we move through the stages of the programme. Partners have already suggested the following:

- Free Wi-Fi
- Digital tech library
- Digital buddies
- Digital 'spaces' in community venues '
- Digital technology which can flag issues to health professionals.

## Know someone who needs support?

If you, or someone you know, needs support on any digital issue, IT taster sessions and basic digital skills training are available at most local libraries, adult learning organisations and some community centres. You could also visit <https://nelincs.simplyconnect.uk/> on their behalf to find local community and voluntary organisations who offer digital support.

## Want to get involved in the programme?

If you are interested in finding out more about the Digital programme, or would like to get involved, please contact Jamie Dunn, Project Manager [Jamie.dunn@nelincs.gov.uk](mailto:Jamie.dunn@nelincs.gov.uk)



## Notes

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