

Norfolk Digital Inclusion Strategy Refresh

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CERI SUMNER AND GEOFF CONNELL

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Introduction and Context

Over the last 18 months the pace of change and embedding of digital services has surged forward. At the same time, the impact of digital exclusion has been keenly felt by those who are disproportionately affected: in many cases widening inequalities that already existed.

Whilst nationally 1.2 million more people gained basic internet abilities during the pandemic¹ for others it has meant they have become more isolated, less able to access key services and struggling with elements of every day life such as shopping and banking. It's estimated in the UK there are more than 7 million (11%) Adults without basic internet skills

In Norfolk we are proud of how we have supported residents to become more digitally included, providing both access and skills. This strategy takes the key learnings from the last 18 months and shapes a strategic plan that develops and embeds digital inclusion further.

This strategy aims to support the outcomes of Together for Norfolk by enabling our residents to have digital skills for work, to engage with their communities and local resources, and to thrive in today's increasingly digital world.

1 – [digital-nation-2020\(1\).pdf](#)

Recent Digital Inclusion Highlights

Supporting Connectivity

- 6000 laptops provided to digitally excluded children through the “Every Child Online” campaign
- 1000 Families supported with devices and / or connectivity via Norfolk Assistance Scheme
- 300 Devices provided to the VCSE sector to support residents to get online

Libraries

- Staying healthy: NHS Connect: NHS funded, device gifting with library wrap-around support for patients referred with longer term conditions (2 projects : cancer and mild mental health problems)
- Norwich Good Economy Commission funding : families on low-income, improving their money management & online skills
- Libraries Online Shopping phone support for online during Covid and help to use online library services
- NHS Accelerated Digital Transformation funding for Digital Health Hub, linked to Good Things Foundation: Better Health Outcomes

Adult Learning

- Supported 7,000 learners online in 2020/21 with formal qualifications and courses to support mental health and wellbeing

Adult Social Care

- TEC Lending Library – Adult Social Care, the Innovation Team and Libraries are piloting a new approach to loan care support devices to residents to build knowledge, confidence and skills in using digital technology.
- ALCOVE project – Adult Social Care and the Innovation Team are supporting day service users with Video Care phones. These are simple devices for people with no or low digital skills that allow them to access video calls.

Vision

Vision

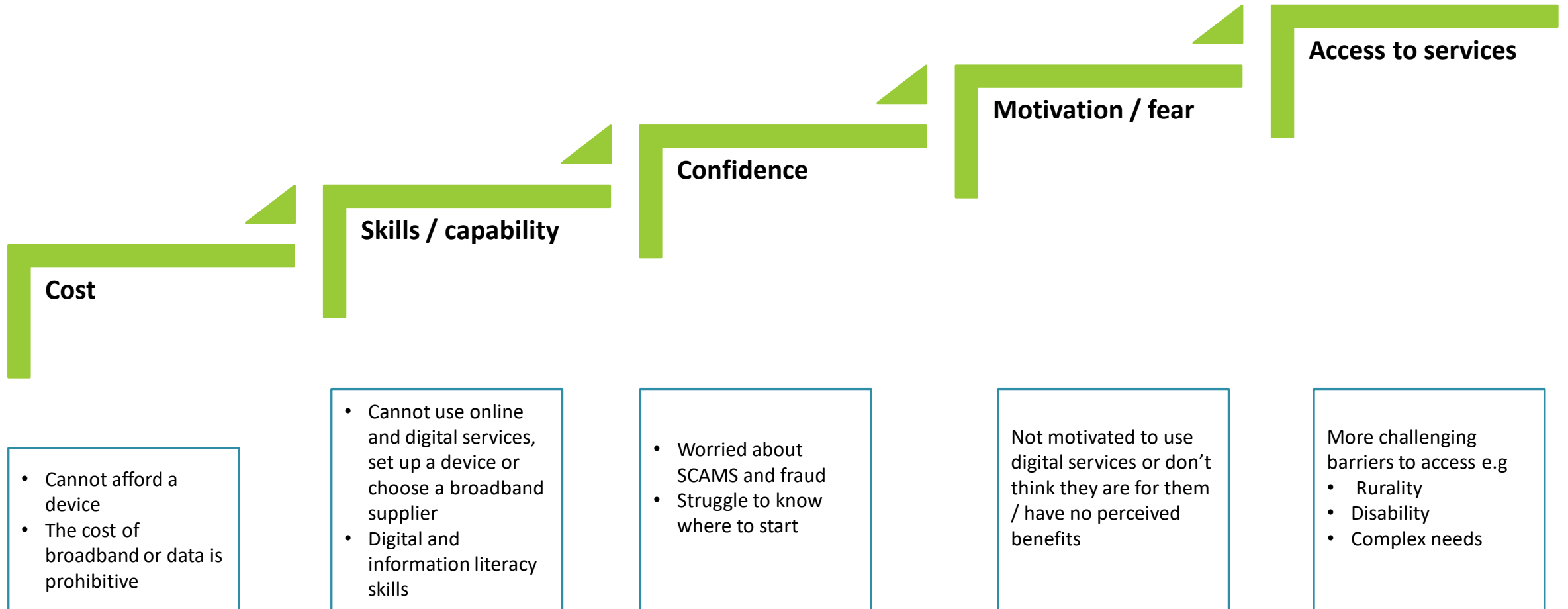
“Every Norfolk resident is provided with the appropriate digital access opportunities to meet their needs and enable them to be digitally included in all aspects of their lives”

We'll achieve the vision by:

- *Working in partnership to target activity and make best use of resources*
- *Enabling universal access to connectivity in the county*
- *Supporting access to devices and equipment*
- *Increasing digital skills and confidence in key cohorts*
- *Developing the skills of our staff to understand how to support residents to access and use technology to improve their lives*

Barriers to access

People may experience one or more of these barriers to access



Strategic Themes



Working in partnership to target activity and make best use of resources



Enabling universal access to connectivity in the county



Supporting access to devices and equipment



Increasing digital skills and confidence in key cohorts



Developing the skills of our staff to understand how to support residents to access and use technology to improve their lives



Working in partnership to target activity and make best use of resources

Outcome:

Strong partnerships are in place including data sharing to target proactive interventions, including with the VCSE and Private sectors. We have built on existing work with the NHS to identify a full view of specific groups of people in geographical areas who are most likely to benefit from digital inclusion and target the most appropriate support to them.

Norfolk as a system is ready to harness any national funding for digital inclusion so that we can make the most efficient and effective use of any funding available.

Our well communicated support pathways mean that VCSE, system partners and businesses can easily find the help and opportunities to ensure people with multiple inequalities can become digitally included and access services and support that improve their lives.

Strategic plan: What we will do

Strategic Theme	Intervention	Measure /deliverable
Working in partnership to target activity and make best use of resources	Continue to work in partnership across the system to identify target groups and map county wide assets to jointly offer support. We will use this to develop a single picture of digital exclusion for the county alongside additional Experian Public Sector Mosaic analysis to provide an evidence base for future work	We have the ability to identify who is digitally excluded specifically – By April 2022
	Maximise funding opportunities and inward investment to Norfolk - raising awareness of grants and schemes that aid digital inclusion and ensure that Norfolk residents benefit from National funding. Nurture a collaborative approach to bidding for this funding in the County.	Increase inward investment to support digital inclusion by 25% by April 2023
	Create clear, communicated pathways of support that enable wider professionals and the voluntary sector to connect residents with digital inclusion support as part of their trusted relationship (for example Midwives and health visitors and social care teams)	80% of residents report that it is simple to find the help they need by April 2023
	A targeted communications and engagement plan that raises awareness and motivates residents to become digitally included, understand what is available to them and how they can access it. We will also communicate with people the ways that they can stay safe online and build confidence amongst those at risk of exclusion that there is help and support available at every step of the way	Communications and engagement plan complete by April 2022
	Further enhance connectivity in Norfolk by building our strategic relationships with providers ensuring that as many residents as possible are able to access, fast, reliable and affordable broadband	96% of Norfolk residents currently have access to “superfast” or better broadband and over 70% of households take it up. We aspire to 100% availability and 100% take-up and will monitor and report on progress.



Enabling universal access to connectivity in the county

Outcome:

Key groups of people can access affordable broadband, whether this is support in understanding broadband packages, or help with access to free/ low cost options including free MiFi dongles and subsidised broadband packages if appropriate.

Continued roll out of the Better Broadband for Norfolk programme and Project Gigabit enables nearly all Norfolk residents to access fast, reliable Broadband and enables small businesses to operate effectively and support people to work from home.

Connectivity with devices to digitally excluded children means children and young people can keep up with their peers educationally, and have the digital skills needed for an ever changing workplace.

People have the connectivity needed to find employment or career progression. Being online means people can access savings and benefits such as energy switching, online shopping and education, as well as find information and advice that supports wider life chances and wellbeing.

Strategic plan: What we will do

Strategic Theme	Intervention	Measure /deliverable
Enabling universal access to connectivity in the county	<p>Will provide subsidised and free connectivity through the Norfolk Assistance Scheme to provide broadband &/or mobile connectivity to selected cohorts, facilitating access to employment and social inclusion opportunities.</p> <p>Furthermore we will offer MiFi dongles to residents through our Library Networks and schools to enable people to test and try connectivity and build their confidence to invest in the longer term, or to use the connectivity for specific tasks such as finding a job or studying for exams.</p>	<p>80% of people supported with free or subsidised connectivity report that it enabled them to find a job or improve their life chances</p> <p>1000 Norfolk residents supported with free or subsidised connectivity by April 2024</p>
	<p>Thorough Libraries and Adult Learning we will help residents to understand the options available to them in terms of broadband and connectivity and what might work best for them, this will be underpinned by the option of borrowing a MiFi dongle to “try before you buy”</p> <p>Digital programmes of learning will include information about purchasing and understanding Broadband packages</p>	<p>90% of those supported tell us that they feel inspired to use technology more in their everyday lives</p> <p>Programmes of learning will have this embedded by Academic year 2022</p>
	<p>Where we provide free devices to Children and Young people most at risk of digital exclusion we will also provide the connectivity children need so they benefit fully from their new device</p>	<p>All Children and young people who need it are provided with connectivity support</p>



Supporting access to devices and equipment

Outcome:

Free and refreshed devices directed at target groups enable people to access hardware they could not otherwise afford, supporting them to learn, progress their careers and become socially included.

Health inequalities are addressed by removing the barriers to accessing digital services with devices and face to face support, enabling people to access vital health and support services, and reducing or delaying further service needs as a result.

Assistive technology loan libraries provide opportunities to trial assistive technology, guided by staff who understand the benefits of this technology and how to use it. This enables people to maintain or increase their independence, employment opportunities and improve wellbeing.

People will be able to borrow devices from Libraries to try before they buy, building confidence and a desire to learn more. Wrap around support helps them learn how to get the most from their device.

Strategic plan: What we will do

Strategic Theme	Intervention	Measure /deliverable
Supporting access to devices and equipment	<p>IMT will refurbish and distribute devices across the County, both NCC refreshed equipment and devices from other large public & private sector Norfolk organisations. These devices will be targeted at Schools, digitally excluded and low income adults and VCSE organisations. Wrap around troubleshooting support will be provided by our Libraries and a team of digital support volunteers.</p>	<p>80% of those supported say that receiving a device has made a significant positive impact</p> <p>1,000 devices provided to residents annually</p>
	<p>We will implement a loan device suite that can be borrowed from Libraries and Schools, where people can borrow a device, try it, build their confidence and get early help so that they can “try before they buy” and take the risk out of accessing digital devices / services.</p>	<p>80% of those who receive this support offer say that they have become more confident in using digital services as a result</p>
	<p>Libraries will provide Assistive Tech loans, enabling residents, carers and care providers to test equipment that may help them / those they care for and get help and advice. This support will help people to stay independent and connected in their homes, improve wellbeing and access services that support their wider health and care needs</p>	<p>80% of those provided with a Tec Lending Library device said it made a difference to their lives in terms of reducing their support needs or helping them to stay independent</p>
	<p>Support small businesses and new start ups to be sustainable in the digital world by providing simple to access support from the Business and Intellectual Property Centres, run by Libraries and wrap around training courses from Adult Learning including social media for business and e-commerce Further embed support for small businesses with the Go Digital project roll out of free business support programme for micro, small and medium sized businesses in Norfolk.</p>	<p>600 business supported through Go Digital</p>
	<p>Develop the use of creative digital technologies by increasing the reach and regularity of events like “Digifest”. Inspiring young people to enter into a career in digital creative industries</p>	<p>Target under development</p>



Increasing digital skills and confidence in key cohorts

Outcome:

People know how to get online and stay safe online, avoid Scams and Cyber abuse and are more confident using digital services as a result.

It's easy to access support in using digital devices and services including signposting and referral to courses and face to face support from Libraries and volunteers.

Through the training, flexible learning opportunities and embedding digital skills, people have the skills, equipment and connectivity needed to find employment or career progression, to benefit from the opportunities of online services such as switching utilities and online deals and reduce social isolation by being able to connect with others online.

Strategic plan: What we will do

Strategic Theme	Intervention	Measure /deliverable
Increasing digital skills and confidence in key cohorts	Enhanced and supported digital skills learning opportunities provided by Adult Learning, targeted at Libraries, Schools, NAS and the VCSE sector. This will include implementation of a simple referral pathway for staff and the VCSE sector to get people the help they need	1000 Adult Learners supported with digital skills courses in 2 years
	Adult Learning and Libraries will continue to embed entry level and beyond digital learning programmes , giving people a range of opportunities to build their digital skills into their personal development journey	80% of those who received support say that it was relevant to their needs
	We will recruit volunteers to work with residents 121 to understand barriers to access and help residents get online, answer their questions, connect them to support and be a trusted source of help	Recruit and train at least 100 volunteers by October 2023 (at least 2 per Library)
	Ensure Norfolk residents including children are able to stay safe online and understand how to avoid SCAMS and avoid cyber abuse and exploitation	90% of those who receive a device take part in some form of wider skills development to stay safe online
	Continue and build on our libraries offer to engage residents in digital services, for example coding clubs, get online groups and friendship brokerage using online communication tools to support residents' tentative steps into digital inclusion.	80% of those who attend an event say it has inspired them to learn more
	Those who receive a loan device and connectivity will automatically receive information and advice on how to stay safe online	
	Provide support to the voluntary sector to deliver their services online, provide loan or refreshed devices to help them support their clients and enable them to benefit from NCC economies of scale in terms of licence procurement and advice	80% of relevant VCSE organisations feel they are supported by NCC to deliver their services online
	Ensure that our digital web content is accessible regardless of people's ability, disability or literacy skills or whether English is their first language. Managers and staff understand their responsibilities to provide accessible digital and web offers to ensure that residents with disabilities are not excluded from accessing information	Target under development



Developing the skills of our staff to understand how to support residents to access and use technology to improve their lives

Outcome:

NCC staff as digital advocates and champions understand how technology can be used to support people in their every day lives, overcome barriers to access and become digitally included

Because we ensure that accessibility is considered as standard when developing new applications or digital services the people that need them the most can access them.

Opportunities to trial assistive technology, guided by staff who understand the benefits of the technology and how to use it, enables people to maintain or increase independence, employment opportunities and improve wellbeing.

Our staff as digital citizens can make best use of digital services in their day to day roles

Strategic plan: What we will do

Strategic Theme	Intervention	Measure /deliverable
<p>Developing the skills of our staff to understand how to support residents to access and use technology to improve their lives</p>	<p>Engage and communicate with staff so that they understand the support offer clearly and can in turn communicate this to residents, including enabling staff to understand their responsibilities accessible digital services and web content to customers</p>	<p>Engagement plan in place by October 2022</p>
	<p>Showcasing, technology test drives and training opportunities that influence and inform staff on the types of technology available to support residents they are working with and supporting to access wider support available</p>	<p>15 events for staff by March 2023</p>
	<p>Ensure staff understand how to access the support offers available, (and go to Libraries staff for help where needed) for residents they work with so they can support them to access help. For example where residents have learning disabilities or we are working with families experiencing a range of inequalities and barriers to access.</p>	<p>1000 staff trained to become digital advocates in 3 years 80% of staff trained feel confident that they can really help people to become digitally included</p>
	<p>Work closely with NALC to provide support to town and parish council staff who can in turn support residents</p>	<p>80% of parish clerks are confident in how to refer people for help</p>
	<p>Make it simple for staff to find local digital support offers for residents, by ensuring the Norfolk Community Directory has a range of guided searches and up to date information to make this as quick and simple as possible</p>	<p>80% of staff surveyed feel they are able to use the Norfolk Community Directory effectively to find information for resident</p>
	<p>Ensure that our digital technologies – such as our computer hardware, software, apps, business systems such as Oracle and Liquid Logic and business equipment such as smart phones - are accessible for disabled staff and service users</p>	<p>Digital systems development and project staff will complete relevant training. Project documentation, including checklists will ensure that accessibility needs are considered on all relevant systems development and procurement activities.</p>