

# One Digital observational and practice based learning

Year 1 (June 2017-18)

## Section 1: Working with beneficiaries/learners

This section of learning is about the people we are working with.



**Lack of access to devices can be a barrier and limit learning. Projects that offer access to tablets or laptops are more effective**

Providing support to people who do not have their own digital devices can have an impact on and limit learning. Learners having their own kit is more effective for ongoing engagement and learning at home. Projects often look to secure funding for loan schemes to support people's access, but no evaluative evidence has been seen of the impact of the schemes. A number of partners are now providing equipment through funded loan schemes, so a review can be carried out in 2018/19.

[Blog: Try out a Tablet with Age UK South Lakeland](#)

**People learning on a mobile phone only, limits ability to develop key skills. Signposting to places with computers (and a person to support) improves opportunities to learn.**

Learning from projects working with some of the most vulnerable people has meant that often they have access only to a mobile phone, with limited data and connectivity. [Citizens Advice Scotland](#) published useful insights into this area during 2018 which One Digital has chosen to highlight.

[CAS/One Digital 2018 Smartphone Only](#)

This is a significant barrier for developing skills and confidence to fulfil more complex tasks such as filling in online benefit forms. The work of some One Digital delivery partners in providing alternative access points, such as Brighton & Hove local council, then become critical in providing not only access/equipment, but also skills support. This gives people the confidence and motivation to engage with tasks which they experience as complex, such as scanning documents to attach to an online form.

The numbers of people seeking to access online services in a supported venue highlights the need to train as many Digital Champions as possible amongst frontline staff/volunteers and to recognise the time that is required to provide good quality digital skills support. Some partners such as [Clarion Futures](#) through their core digital work provide [regional hubs](#) with facilities and access to digital skills support often being provided alongside job clubs, energy advice and money guidance.

Staff providing support to some of the most vulnerable groups report that libraries can still be seen as places that they would not visit and for this reason they may need to be supported on their first visit to the library. Access to libraries in rural locations can though be limited by poor transport links.

**Broadband access and cost are a barrier. Publicising available social tariffs can increase access and skills.**

Cost of broadband and low access rates are impacting particularly on learners in rural areas and on groups with high levels of social exclusion who cannot afford the costs (and so access only through mobile phones). Take up of the BT Basic Broadband offer remains very low across the UK and is available to those only on certain income based benefits. Cost being cited as a reason not to go online may be influenced by people's willingness to admit skills gaps or lack of motivation ('not for me', or 'not relevant to me').

[Ofcom Access & Inclusion Report 2016.](#)

[Ofcom Connected Nations Report 2017](#)

Access is a complex issue and has a specific impact on those living in areas with no broadband access, or with weak access, areas of higher charges (often rural areas), limited choice areas (generally again in rural areas) which all have affordability and quality of service implications.

Projects are finding that having low connection speeds, or limited data, reduces opportunities to maintain learning, as well as to access vital services.

If people have no access at home then the need for free community WiFi increases. Although proving the digital inclusion benefits of providing free access in community hubs does not appear to have been fully evaluated. It is likely to be of more benefit to those who are digitally included already (supporting their growing digital participation).

Two new projects in Gwynedd area started in summer 2018 with funding from Gwynedd Council (drawn down from Rural Communities Development Fund). One strand under 'Access for All' has led to a two-part project with 10+ free internet Kiosks being installed in rural communities (with Social Telecoms as the supplier). The second is Free Public WIFI in 10+ areas around the county (Menter Môn is the supplier). Both should complete during year 2 and some learning should come out of these in terms of impact. Citizens Online will support both projects through the [Digital Gwynedd](#) project.

Some local areas do have good levels of free access points but the availability of information on their location remains patchy and lacks consistency. Some venues, especially community halls, are only open for limited periods which reduces their availability to the local community. General cuts in funding of local authorities and the voluntary sector is leading to reductions in numbers of community venues and Council offices (such as local housing offices) which often were the only point of free access and computers in areas of high deprivation.



## Delivering accessible digital skills support is at the heart of the work of One Digital – projects are keen to ensure no-one is excluded

Work to ensure an accessible approach to digital inclusion and digital skills support has been at the heart of much One Digital activity. Links with [RNIB](#) and [AbilityNet](#) and other organisations working to support people with disabilities has been on-going. Practical learning is taking place between Age UK and RNIB for instance to support the capability of Age UK champions to provide support to people with sight loss.

Digital Champions using the [Digital Champions Network](#) provided by [Digital Unite](#) use resources and learning on how to support people with disabilities frequently. Being able to adjust your device to make it accessible for you is a key Foundation Skill for people to learn.

Messages about accessible digital transformation have been promoted by [Citizens Online](#) and One Digital. Citizens Online have shared significant learning in this area through their website.

There is a commitment to continue working with key disability charities to build knowledge of how to support people with different needs online, as well as to promote messages around the accessibility of online customer services, websites and other digital resources.



## Digital inclusion projects are successful if they develop their impact and evaluation plans early and adapt and learn regularly

Measuring the impact of learning on end learners needs to consider a range of factors including confidence, motivation and skills. Projects need to consider how to measure impact both during delivery (to capture outputs) and as part of evaluation activity where longer term/wider impacts can be considered. The One Digital [toolkit](#) has a section that outlines in general how projects can measure impact. Resources are available from the One Digital measuring the impact of digital inclusion [event](#) held in November 2018.

One Digital partner [Citizens Online](#) has shared learning about its snapshot approach to measuring end learner activity. This involves collecting more detailed data on numbers being supported and skills developed over a specific period.