

# Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Plan 2023 - 2026: Supporting residents in a digital world

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## Introduction

The purpose of this document is to set out our Digital Inclusion Plan for the next three years. The Plan is owned by the Cheshire East Health and Wellbeing Board and Health and Care Partnership Board.

Our definition of 'Digital Inclusion' focusses upon equipping residents with the digital skills, access, motivation and trust to allow them to participate fully in today's online society, enabling them to improve their quality of life, employability, health and wellbeing.

Digital exclusion and social exclusion are interrelated; empowering our residents to get online will help to tackle wider social issues, support economic growth and close equality gaps. As we look to focus on helping people maintain their independence, connect with their communities, build their resilience and enjoy better health and wellbeing, it is important that we encourage and support online access, working with partners to overcome anything that inhibits this.

## Background

Since March 2020, significantly more services have gone online and the gap between those who are digitally included and excluded has widened.

**“The pandemic didn't create the digital divide - but it did expose and exacerbate it. Fixing the digital divide is an urgent priority.”<sup>1</sup>**

The topic of digital inclusion is complex and requires a strong partnership approach to ensure we have **positive, real and sustained impact** across Cheshire East.

The Health and Wellbeing Board (which includes NHS organisations, Cheshire East Council, and Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise organisations that support our Cheshire East residents) is focused upon reducing inequalities in the borough. This Plan addresses digital inequality and the need to maximise the opportunities for people to be able to access the digital world if they choose to do so.

[Digital Inclusion defined: Digital inclusion is about making sure that people have the opportunity and confidence to use the internet to do things that benefit them day-to-day<sup>1</sup> This might include online shopping, paying bills, connecting with friends and family, applying for jobs, seeking out information and advice or streaming music or films. It might be done on a smartphone or smart TV, a tablet, laptop or desktop personal computer.

The purpose of this Plan is to:

- highlight the issues that not being able to access the digital world can cause for our residents, local organisations and our Cheshire East communities

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-digital-inclusion-strategy/government-digital-inclusion-strategy>

- offer a consistent and collaborative approach to the local authority and partner organisation's digital inclusion interventions.

**£9.48**

Return for every £1 invested in  
digital inclusion activities<sup>2</sup>

This Plan is for 2023 - 2026. The associated delivery interventions will remain flexible to the changing needs of our residents, the external environment and opportunities to achieve increased digital inclusion.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Economic-impact-of-digital-inclusion-July-2022.pdf>

## Informed by our Communities

To ensure the Plan represented our communities in Cheshire East, we went out and spoke directly with our residents. We also talked with organisations in our Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector.

Our residents and local organisations experience, hear and see the issues related to digital inclusion, and provide valuable support to many of our residents across the borough.



The Plan has also been informed by research and publications including the UK Digital Poverty Evidence Review 2022 published by the Digital Poverty Alliance<sup>3</sup>. They have set out five principles for ending digital poverty that we shall support and align our implementation activity to:

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<sup>3</sup> UK Digital Poverty Evidence Review 2022, Dr Kira Allman [https://digitalpovertyalliance.org/research\\_directory/uk-digital-poverty-evidence-review-2022/](https://digitalpovertyalliance.org/research_directory/uk-digital-poverty-evidence-review-2022/)

## Principles for ending digital poverty

Based on the evidence, the Digital Poverty Alliance has developed five key principles for ending digital poverty once and for all. These will guide the creation of a National Delivery Plan, with specific recommendations for government, public, private and third sectors.



Digital is a basic right. Digital is now an essential utility – and access to it should be treated as such.



Accessing key public services online, like social security and healthcare, must be simple, safe, and meet all people's needs.



Digital should fit into people's lives, not be an additional burden – particularly for the most disadvantaged.



Digital skills should be fundamental to education and training throughout life. Support must be provided to trusted intermediaries who have a key role in providing access to digital.



There must be cross-sector efforts to provide free and open evidence on digital exclusion.

## The Vision

- We want to ensure that all Cheshire East residents can access the digital skills, technology and **services they choose to, in the right way for them**
- We want to support residents now, and in the future as the world of digital continues to evolve
- We want to have a consistent and joined up approach to tackling digital exclusion across Cheshire East.

## Digital Inclusion in Cheshire East

### Our Residents

Through our engagement work, it became clear that there are three cohorts of resident in relation to digital inclusion:



**Digitally Averse**



**Digitally Inexperienced or Excluded**



**Digitally Enabled**

### Our Digitally Averse Residents

Residents in this cohort told us that they do not wish to use digital methods and are keen not to be pressured into using digital methods for a variety of reasons, including:

- They were **not expecting to use digital tools in their lifetime** and rely on friends and family to use such methods
- They are **happy with their lives as they currently are** and tend not to take up opportunities to use digital tools
- The internet is **seen as discouraging human connection** and there is a perception that the internet is seen as for trivial communication
- There is a strong **preference for face-to-face and other traditional methods** of communication, alongside a view that this cannot be replicated digitally

“My children help me when I need anything online”

“My husband doesn't want to build skills online, he's just not interested or motivated and I can do it for him”

“I value [in-person or telephone] contact with other people “

Ultimately, this group told us that they want their wishes to be respected and to still have access to the services they need through non-digital methods.

## Our Digitally Inexperienced and Excluded Residents

Residents in this cohort told us that they want to use digital methods but there are several barriers in the way to them achieving this. This covers a broad range of issues which include:

- They are **fearful of making mistakes** such as breaking their computer and losing their data
- They are inexperienced and/or have **low confidence** in their abilities to use the internet
- They are **thrown by unexpected events** such as cookies requests, popups and updates
- **Learning was perceived as overwhelming** and, when they had sought training for beginners, it had assumed a level of existing competence
- They do not know how it is possible to **remember all their passwords** with many sites having different password requirements, and how to make sure they're suitable to protect their data
- It's **tough to decide what tools to use** and there are minimal instructions, again with many digital items assuming an existing level of competence
- They are **unsure how to keep their data safe** and were very concerned about scams
- There are questions around **affordability** of equipment and broadband connections given the rising cost of living
- Their ill-health or disability hampers or reduces their digital inclusion and more needs to be done by service providers to mitigate against this
- They have **poor connectivity** and this limits their online use

“I’m frightened about doing the wrong thing, pressing the wrong button, it crashing and losing my information and money...”

“Courses don’t work as they’re in a group with different devices and lots of jargon and terminology that I don’t understand”

“If I was confident my data was protected and I know I’m not vulnerable to hacking, I’d love to use the internet more”

Often, there is the assumption that older adults are the only digitally inexperienced or excluded group but, it’s not only older adults that fit in this category. We’ve highlighted a few factors that can affect digital inclusion below.

Carers including young carers	Domestic Abuse	Rurality
Sexual exploitation	Socio-economic status	Homelessness
Cultural contexts	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller digital access	Disability and mental health

## Our Digitally Enabled Residents

Our digitally included residents mostly felt confident and able to use the internet. They often used it for shopping online, searching for information and keeping in touch with others, alongside accessing the services they need. Others however would like to know how to do more online and become more confident in their use. They told us that:

- They recognise that there is a lot more that they could do online, but they need help to do this and build their confidence
- They are **open to experiencing more from the internet** and are not deterred by new or different sites
- They find it **easy to transfer knowledge and skills** across sites, albeit finding services can still be a challenge
- They see it as an **important and valuable tool** to help their life
- Some are concerned about transactions, but they feel **aware of how to manage any risks**
- For some, **connectivity is the main issue** they face, particularly in our rural communities

“I’m happy with my level of use of the internet and feel pretty confident with it”

“I’m quite comfortable finding services online, although it can be hard to find as there’s lots of information out there and it’s not always clear where to search”

“The only thing that stops me is connectivity. Sometimes I need to go round to my neighbour’s house to use their Wi-Fi when ours drops”



## The scale of digital exclusion across Cheshire East

Our current population in Cheshire East is nearly 400,000 residents. In line with UK estimations for the levels of digital exclusion<sup>4</sup>, we have up to 79,600 residents in Cheshire East who are unable to connect to the internet or lack the essential digital skills, meaning they are likely to struggle when interacting with online services and are at risk of being left behind and left out from society.

However, it is important to not ignore pressures from the current economic climate with recent estimates pointing to another concerning figure; it has been estimated by Citizens Advice that more than 1 in 6 people are struggling to afford their broadband<sup>5</sup>. This works out to around 51,000 adults across Cheshire East who are at risk of digital exclusion on the grounds of cost alone.

**“I can’t afford broadband, so when my mobile data runs out I can’t see my grandkids. Do you know how heartbreaking that is?”<sup>3</sup>**

## Why is it important?

The benefits of boosting digital inclusion will be seen at three key levels:



## The Benefits for our Residents

For individuals, the benefits are very clear.

### Cost of Living

Digital access can mean reduced costs of living. Households offline are missing out on savings of £560 per year from shopping and paying bills and council tax online or being able to keep in touch with family and friends.

**I am also able to do my banking online too. I can’t use the branches anymore, so I do everything online and my bank gives me 5% interest - so it’s actually quite good for me.”<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>4</sup> [221101-lloyds-ipsos-mori-essential-digital-skills-technical-note.pdf \(lloydsbank.com\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/about-us1/media/press-releases/more-than-one-in-six-struggling-to-afford-broadband/>

For individuals, the cost benefits do not stop there. According to a 2014 BT report<sup>6</sup>, getting online was worth £1,064 a year due to increased confidence, less social isolation, financial savings and opportunities in employment and leisure.

## Employment

The internet also provides improved job prospects. Many jobs are advertised online and require submission of an electronic Curriculum Vitae as a minimum requirement of the recruitment process. According to the 2014 BT report, for workers, getting online was worth £3,568 a year due to opportunities for remote working and increased earning opportunities.<sup>7</sup>

## Education

Digital inclusion can increase opportunities to access free and paid online learning programmes, alongside informal learning through websites such as YouTube.

**“In the UK, it’s very popular to use the internet to learn things. YouTube has really helped me, my wife and my family to improve our English.”<sup>8</sup>**

Many children also have opportunities to learn outside of school, yet those without an internet connection will struggle to access this in comparison to their peers.

## Wellbeing

81% of people aged 55 and over say being online makes them feel part of modern society and less lonely<sup>9</sup>. Online access can increase opportunity for social engagement whether online through social media or finding in-person activities. Our Live Well site is our online directory that helps residents find the community groups and services they need.

**“As each day goes by, I’m feeling more cut-off” –  
Cheshire East Resident**

**“Digital can help you keep your independence and keep  
you living independently” – Cheshire East Resident**

## Health

Digital inclusion means improved access to health and wellbeing information, services and support for independent living such as tele-health. It also means better access to medical communication. As one resident we spoke to said:

**“While I was on holiday, I received a message through  
the NHS app about an appointment. It’s great because I  
wouldn’t have received if it had just been sent via letter  
to my home address” – Cheshire East resident**

## Access to Consultations

Many Council and NHS consultations, alongside surveys from other organisations across the public, private and VCFSE sector, are typically most easily accessed online. Being digitally

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<sup>6</sup> Government Digital Service (2012) “Digital Efficiency Report”: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-efficiency-report/digital-efficiency-report>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.bt.com/bt-plc/assets/documents/about-bt/bt-uk-and-worldwide/bt-in-the-uk-and-ireland/research-and-reports/digital-inclusion-the-social-return-on-investment.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.digitalcommunities.gov.wales/case-studies/fariss-story/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-digital-inclusion-strategy/government-digital-inclusion-strategy>

included means greater opportunities for residents to have their say, have their voice heard and have an impact on their wider community.

## The Benefits for Cheshire East organisations

### VCFSE Sector

Speaking to VCFSE organisations, it became clear that time and resource is spent trying to help those access the services they need during service provision that is intended for other purposes.

**“I spent forty minutes with a service user helping them fill in an online housing form. That time should’ve been helping them with the reasons they came to our service. So much time is spent doing things digitally for people who are digitally excluded” – VCFSE employee**

Helping those who want to be digitally included in principle means that there is less demand on the system to provide such support and organisations, such as the above, can dedicate more of their time to providing the services they offer.

Additionally, we heard from our VCFSE sector that digital exclusion poses a barrier for many volunteers.

**“We’ve had people want to volunteer who don’t have online access to complete the forms needed. We’ll always help them but it means more cost and time to post out the forms and get them to send them back to a local care home who can then scan and send across to me” – VCFSE employee**

The gap between demand for volunteers and the number of volunteers was also raised during our engagement. Given many volunteering opportunities are best advertised online, it is anticipated that, the more we enhance digital inclusion, the more residents who are willing to volunteer can be matched up with potential opportunities.

### Cheshire East Council Services

For Cheshire East Council, alongside the above benefits that are seen for the VCFSE sector, improving levels of digital inclusion will help achieve our strategic aims such as the:

- **Customer Experience Strategy** - our Digital Inclusion Plan will support the Council’s goals of adopting a digital first approach and helping our customers to access our services online
- **Digital Strategy** - our Digital Inclusion Plan will support our customers to choose the digital option first, but also help to ensure we don’t exclude those who prefer face to face, written or phone interactions.
- **Live Well for Longer Plan** – our Digital Inclusion Plan will support the council to achieve its aims of helping residents live longer, healthier, happier lives.

Fundamentally, this will mean improving savings from greater use of digital methods whilst improving service quality. As stated by the Cabinet Office and Government Digital Service's Digital Efficiency Report, "the bulk of the savings is driven by the fact that digital transactions are estimated to be 20 times cheaper than by phone, 30 times cheaper than by post and as much as 50 times cheaper than by face-to-face meetings".<sup>10</sup>

These savings mean that this money can be utilized across other areas of need to continue towards the corporate aim of being:

**'an open and enabling organisation  
which empowers and cares about people, and  
facilitates a thriving and sustainable place'**

## NHS Organisations

The commitment that every patient has the right to be offered digital-first primary care is a core part of the NHS Long Term Plan and the rate of implementation for this was fast-tracked through the COVID-19 pandemic with online consultations doubling in March 2020<sup>11</sup>. The NHS is set to continue its digital journey with many benefits seen for both patients and the healthcare system.

According to The Good Things Foundation<sup>12</sup>, residents who have basic digital skills can take advantage of the NHS Choices website, E-prescriptions and online bookings systems which will lead to a reduction in the number of avoidable GP visits, as well as lower costs from providing offline booking services. They estimated the cost savings to the NHS to total £141 million by 2028.

For us in Cheshire East, this digital usage means that more patients can be supported with more efficient service provision for our communities. Therefore, the more we can support our residents who want to get online, the more they are able to use the online healthcare systems and services, and the healthier our Cheshire East community will become.

## The Whole Community Benefits

### Reducing Inequalities

Improving digital inclusion has the power to tackle health inequalities<sup>13</sup>. Often the benefits of reducing health inequalities are proposed at the individual level through longer life expectancy and improved quality of life<sup>14</sup>. Whilst these benefits are important on a number of 'fair and just' levels, there is also a "growing body of research that suggests reducing the social and economic inequalities that lie behind the uneven distribution of disease will bring a wide range of [societal] benefits"<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Government Digital Service (2012) "Digital Efficiency Report": <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-efficiency-report/digital-efficiency-report>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/insights/digital-participation-lessons-learned/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/insights/economic-impact-digital-inclusion/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://digital.nhs.uk/news/2020/national-project-shows-digital-inclusion-is-key-to-tackling-health-inequalities>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/fair-society-healthy-lives-full-report.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> <https://jech.bmj.com/content/54/12/923>

This has been supported by the Marmot review<sup>15</sup> which estimated there to be substantial economic losses as a result of health inequalities in the realm of £50-60 billion per year in the UK through productivity losses, lost taxes and higher welfare payments.

Therefore, actions that can proactively tackle health inequalities across Cheshire East such as improving levels of digital inclusion, seek to reduce these losses for the area, creating a fairer society.

### **Businesses in Cheshire East**

The challenge to attract and recruit employees remains an issue for businesses across the UK, including Cheshire East. Many roles today are digitally advertised through online job boards and many application processes tend to be online through digital submission of a CV. Online recruitment methods prevent those who are digitally excluded from applying and may reduce the potential number of applicants. By improving digital inclusion, there would be an increase in uptake of digital recruitment methods.

In addition to this, the UKCES 2015 skills survey<sup>16</sup> found that 14% of companies have staff that are not fully proficient and, where the workforce is digitally included, they are more able to access information to support their health and wellbeing. This might support lower sickness absence levels, improving organisational productivity and resilience. Therefore, there is a strong case to improve digital inclusion for the benefit of businesses in Cheshire East.

### **Carbon Neutrality**

There is an environmental case for supporting those who wish to be digitally included. For example, providing digital support for residents using our NHS can reduce the number of unnecessary journeys to appointments, reducing not only petrol cost for patients but also the environmental impact of these journeys. Additionally, using digital methods of communication instead of postal methods can also contribute to reducing carbon footprints by being more environmentally friendly<sup>17</sup>.

### **Working Together to Achieve Change**

The digital world is fast moving and the gap between the included and excluded is widening at pace. As one of our Cheshire East residents said, “as each day goes by, I'm feeling more cut-off”.

The level of change that is needed is community-wide and will only be achieved by us all pulling together and working closely, in partnership.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukces-employer-skills-survey-2015-uk-report>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/energy-white-paper-powering-our-net-zero-future/energy-white-paper-powering-our-net-zero-future-accessible-html-version>

## Our Priorities

Several recommendations have been made by resident, NHS, Council and VCFSE voices during the engagement phase of this Plan. These include a buddy scheme for those learning to use the internet and improving broadband infrastructure across the area. Many of these suggestions are already taking place, yet not always in a consistent and joined-up way that ensures maximum impact for our residents. The Plan will help ensure a more consistent and unified approach across organisations.

Based on these recommendations, we have established five priorities to initially focus upon.

### **Establish a Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Partnership network**

We will establish a Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Partnership Network. We have already seen benefits from the Digital Inclusion task group comprised of members across our NHS organisations, Cheshire East Council and VCFSE organisations. We will expand this to strengthen our partnership approach across Cheshire East.

In expanding this group to create a broader network, we will ensure more work is joined-up across the area, leading to more focused and impactful outcomes for our residents.

### **Open up the opportunity for resident involvement as part of the Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Partnership network**

Equally as important are the voices of our residents. This Plan has highlighted that many of our residents have lived experience of digital exclusion and are key to ensuring the success of inclusion activity. Our residents help us understand where the gaps are in support provision around digital inclusion and help us co-produce initiatives to actively tackle digital exclusion. As such, we will ensure that the Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Partnership includes resident voices, particularly those who are digitally inexperienced or excluded.

### **Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Partnership will set the strategic direction for digital inclusion activity**

Through the engagement that informed this Plan, it is clear there are specific priorities born from the lived experience of residents. Given the substantial negative impact digital exclusion has for residents as outlined in this Plan, we will ensure this directly informs the strategic direction for activity driven by the Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Partnership.

We will ensure that our Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Partnership group consider:

- How we can effectively communicate with residents who do not wish to use digital tools
- How can we ensure that policies and processes are not 'digital-by-default'

- How we can ensure areas across Cheshire East have better connectivity and are aware of initiatives that are being undertaken to achieve this
- How we can ensure residents have access to the digital tools they need and are able to affordably access the internet
- How we can ensure our online services are easy to find digitally
- How we can create a 'One Cheshire East' offering to develop our residents' digital skills
- How we can help our residents build their confidence in using digital tools
- How we can ensure our residents feel safe online

### **Conduct asset-mapping to understand what assets we have, how to maximise their impact and where the gaps are**

There are many assets, offerings and positive activity taking place across Cheshire East, some that are well known, some that are known to a few and some that are flying under the radar. We will conduct an asset-mapping exercise to understand where digital inclusion activity is taking place, how to maximise their impact and identify gaps.

This will allow us to:

- Understand what we already do to tackle this issue
- Enhance the impact of these activities by joining-up work
- Identify which areas in Cheshire East may be disadvantaged where very little activity is going on
- Ensure a fair spread of activity across the area, in line with our vision that no resident is digitally left behind.

[Asset definition – asset can be a service such as digital community group or skills courses or a physical resource such as a digitally enabled community centre]

### **Establish a well-managed programme of activity to support digital inclusion.**

The priorities within the Digital Inclusion Plan will be achieved through a managed programme of activity in line with the following principles:

- Activity is behavioural and evidence informed meaning that it is backed by research and engages residents effectively through positive behaviour change principles
- Momentum is maintained through active management of the programme plan
- Every area of the partnership is kept informed of progress of activity and outcomes
- Members of the partnership take ownership over agreed strategic actions, ensuring they come to fruition and do not fizzle out over time
- Working groups are established to achieve time-bound goals and support working at pace

Dedicated project management support will be required to drive the programme and coordinate the partnership.

### **Final Note**

The approach and priorities set out above will create the foundations for us to truly gain traction and confront the issue of digital exclusion. Only with this joined up approach can we remove the barriers to digital inclusion that our residents told us they experience.



## Implementation Plan

Several ideas were forthcoming from residents, NHS colleagues, Cheshire East Council staff and representatives from VCFSE organisations as part of the engagement phase of this plan. There will be more ideas that we haven't yet heard and, as such, this plan will remain flexible.

Area	Idea	Action	Responsibility	Outcome
<p><b>Digital Buddies Scheme</b></p>	<p>The idea of a digital buddies scheme was raised to help support confidence building in relation to digital skills.</p> <p>1-2-1 support was noted as very helpful with better opportunity to troubleshoot issues as and when they arise.</p>	<p>We will re-establish and strengthen our Digital Buddies volunteer capacity in our Cheshire East Libraries, targeting volunteer recruitment from local high schools and colleges.</p> <p>We will leverage our network in the Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Partnership Group to further strengthen our Digital Buddy offer across other organisations, for example East Cheshire Trust and explore training opportunities that are face to face, remote and online.</p> <p>Drop-in sessions held across the community were also raised as a suggestion as an informal way to provide support which could also be considered by Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Partnership. We</p>	<p>Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Partnership which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NHS organisations</li> <li>• Cheshire East Council</li> <li>• Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) organisations</li> <li>• Residents</li> </ul> <p>Cheshire East Libraries will also be heavily involved due to the nature of this action</p>	<p>Residents will be equipped with the skills and information to be able to access digital technology themselves.</p>

		will explore and develop pathways for drop-in sessions in the community.		
<b>Complete Beginner Skills Training</b>	<p>Residents wanted skills support for complete beginners, starting from the very beginning of switching on a device.</p> <p>Residents and our VCFSE sector raised that smaller groups would be the preferred format to create a better learning environment. Ideally sessions would be bitesize to allow information to be digested and for learners to not be overwhelmed.</p> <p>Accessibility of such sessions was also raised; it may be difficult for some residents to travel to training due to mobility, rurality and cost. The training provision should be delivered in a format appropriate for the customer. For example,</p>	<p>We will develop a One Cheshire East digital skills offer to ensure our residents can access skills support, no matter where they live. Through our partnership approach, we will identify, join up and build upon digital skills activity taking place across the borough so that all residents have access to the skills support they need.</p> <p>We will focus on developing a network of peer-support to deliver digital skills and ensure our offer does not assume a basic level of understanding.</p> <p>We will explore training opportunities that are face to face, remote and online.</p> <p>We will seek to utilise the Shared Prosperity Fund allocation to 'People and Skills' to support digital inclusion.</p>	Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Partnership as a whole will be involved	Residents feel they have the basic skills to use digital tools and the internet with confidence.

	community-based courses and night schools were suggested.			
<b>Learn from Each Other</b>	<p>One resident raised the idea of learning from those who are digitally enabled such as teenage children who may be looking for volunteering opportunities. Equally, another resident raised about neighbours supporting neighbours.</p> <p>We will share information about digital resources across partner organisations</p>	<p>We will target local high schools, colleges to drive up volunteer recruitment. We will explore a neighbours supporting neighbours scheme.</p> <p>Information about key digital resources for example Patient Knows Best, the CATCH App and the Living Well website will be proactively shared to enable colleagues to raise with residents where helpful and appropriate.</p>	<p>Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Partnership</p> <p>Residents will also be heavily involved to support their community</p>	<p>Residents feel supported by their community to become digitally included.</p>
<b>Access in Community Centres</b>	<p>Having access to digital tools in community spaces was raised as a way of promoting the</p>	<p>We will bring together assets to map the digital inclusion activity taking place across the borough.</p>	<p>Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Partnership</p>	<p>Residents have access to the digital tools they need, alongside support to be able to use them.</p>

	benefits of using the internet and allowing people to try it in a relaxed yet supportive environment.	We will build on the Hublet rental scheme in Libraries and explore more opportunities to increase access to digital devices, such as device recycling schemes and lending libraries. We will work with partners to map out digital connectivity spaces and identify 'hot spot' zones.	Cheshire East Council Community Services and Cheshire East Libraries will be heavily involved through Connected Community centres and community libraries	
<b>Improve Connectivity</b>	<p>Connectivity in certain areas such as those that are particularly rural was raised.</p> <p>Connectivity ranged from poor to intermittent at best by some residents and a suggestion as made to improve this across the area.</p>	<p>This is an ongoing project, led by four local authorities across Cheshire – Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington borough councils – to “deliver faster broadband to areas where it had not been commercially viable to invest previously, in particular our outlying and rural communities”.<sup>18</sup></p> <p>Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Partnership will support communication of this project.</p>	<p>Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Partnership</p> <p>Cheshire East Council will be heavily involved due to their link to the Connecting Cheshire scheme</p>	Residents and organisations are kept up-to-date with the Connecting Cheshire scheme.
<b>Free Wi-Fi Access</b>	Providing free Wi-Fi access to those in social housing was raised by a VCFSE sector representative. The idea	We will explore how this has worked in other areas and whether housing-based organisations could provide digital support in this capacity.	<p>Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Partnership</p> <p>Social Housing Providers</p>	Residents who are facing a barrier of Wi-Fi affordability have fair opportunities to access the internet.

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council\\_and\\_democracy/your\\_council/about\\_cheshire\\_east/connecting\\_cheshire.aspx](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/your_council/about_cheshire_east/connecting_cheshire.aspx)

	<p>was raised around whether masts could provide Wi-Fi to residents who cannot afford it. It was noted that the speed of this broadband may not be fast given the likely number of users but that it would be a good start for those who currently cannot afford it.</p>	<p>We will also explore further opportunities for free Wi-Fi access and communicating this effectively across the borough.</p>		
<p><b>Social Value</b></p>	<p>A VCFSE representative raised whether digital inclusion could be a social value topic for organisations who are commissioned by organisations such as Cheshire East.</p>	<p>We will include digital inclusion as a social value priority at Cheshire East Council.</p> <p>We will engage with businesses across Cheshire East who wish to engage in Corporate Social Responsibility around digital inclusion.</p> <p>The partnership will act as a link, understanding resident needs in relation to digital inclusion as ensuring these gaps are highlighted to organisations as opportunities to make a real difference.</p>	<p>Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Partnership.</p> <p>Cheshire East Council's Social Value Unit will also be heavily involved due to the nature of this action.</p>	<p>Digital inclusion projects are sourced from commissioned services and these projects add value to our communities.</p>