Digital inclusion

Corporate Resources OSC
4th March 2024

Digital Inclusion

Digital Inclusion = various wording and definitions, e.g. digital citizenship, digital divide, digital access…

What we know so far:
- Digital exclusion is a huge and complex problem, and not static
- Context is key – the people best placed to support people are the ones closest to them
- What works is meaningful collaboration and co-production
- We can't do digital, if we don't do inclusion

The Council's Digital Declaration

1. **Putting users first -** Our services will be tailored to fit our users' needs, prioritising users above professionals and the organisation.

2. **Creating technology that connects -** Our IT systems will join up effectively, using simpler and more reliable software with open standards to give our data a common structure.

3. **Building trust in data practices -** We will only ever share information safely and securely, building trust among our partners and users, and better supporting the most vulnerable members of our communities.

4. **Leading digital transformation -** We will demonstrate digital leadership, creating the conditions for organisational transformation, and ensuring all those we work with embrace this Digital Declaration.

5. **Fostering open and collaborative working -** We will champion an open working culture that helps every colleague to succeed with working digitally, through sharing our plans and experience, working collaboratively with other organisations, and reusing good practice.

Our Digital Services Offer - Including, Involving, Improving

- Assisting and supporting

- Increasing digital skills residents and employees

- Involving residents – digital panel www.gateshead.gov.uk/digitalpanel

- Making improvements – adapting and changing ways of working and the system

- Better use of data – real time
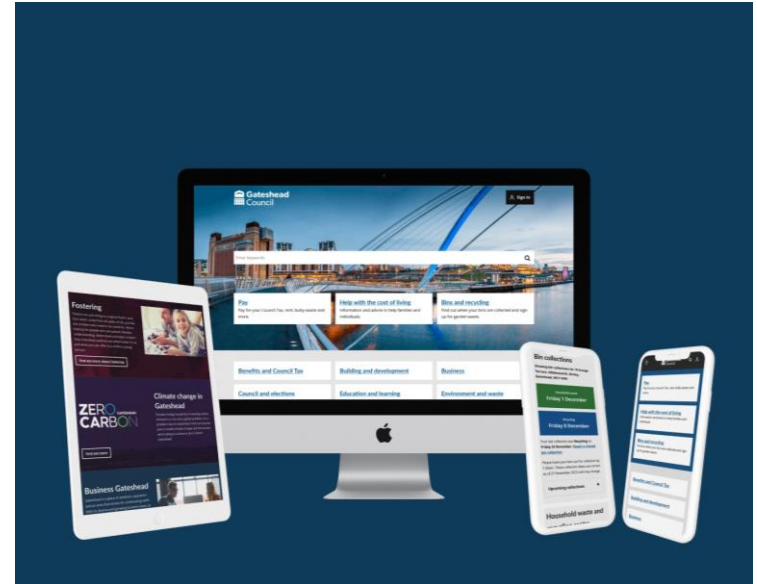
Digital Inclusion – Our Workforce

- Two dedicated IT Trainers

- Since April 2020 we have delivered 1,816 training sessions to employees and councillors

- Training Programme is available and can be booked online via the corporate Learning Hub
  - In addition, we also offer be-spoke training sessions, one to one sessions, face to face, virtual training and online courses on learning hub.
  - Creation of training documentation, videos how to / FAQ's available online for all employees to access via our IT online portal assytNet.

- Focus Groups – both employees and councillors

- How to / did you know IT snippets/ guidance issued weekly in the Council News

Gateshead Digital Inclusion Project

- Alessandra Mondin - Gateshead Digital Inclusion in Health and Social Care Project Manager at Connected Voice (Health Equity Team), since April 2023

- Gateshead Digital Inclusion Steering Group

- Cross-sector partnership between NHS, Gateshead Council, VCSE organisations, research, industry

- Priority setting

Gateshead Digital Inclusion Steering Group: Initial Priorities

- Mapping
- Information sharing
- Gateshead Digital Inclusion Network
- Connecting and collaborating with different organisations across sectors – e.g. with Primary Care
- Funding – circulate opportunities, coordinate collaborations
- Influencing – on matters such as good practice, research, design, accessibility
- Workforce development
- New solutions for tech assisted care and wellbeing
- Coordinating projects in the community

New: UKSPF Digital Inclusion Project

To work with 20 micro, small, and medium VCSE organisations (annual income <£300,000) based and working in Gateshead

- With a footprint in areas of highest need relating to digital poverty and/or most digitally excluded demographics

- Outcome: improve access to the organisation and the perception of their facilities/amenities

- Grant up to £3,450 each + project support throughout, free training and opportunities, join Gateshead Digital Inclusion Network - until March 2025

Funded by UK Government

POWERED BY LEVELLING UP

Gateshead Council

Connected Voice Health Equity

We amplify voices.
We champion equality.
We inspire change.
We support action.
We connect people.

One Strawberry Lane
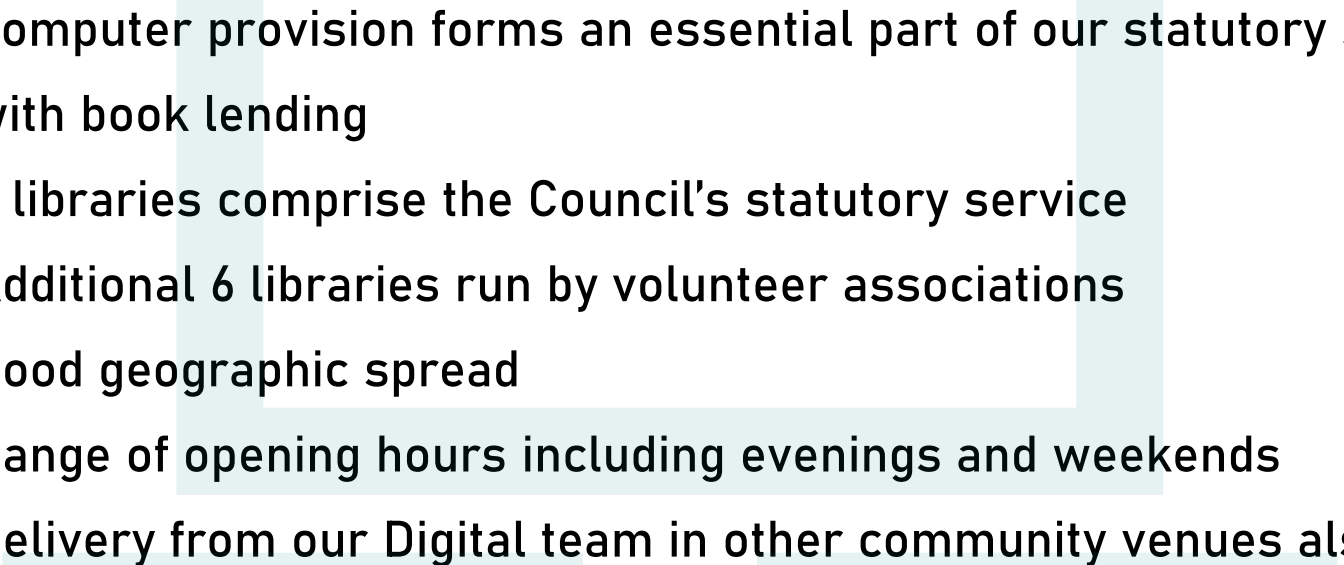Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 4BX
Alessandra.Mondin@
ConnectedVoice.org.uk
www.connectedvoice.org.uk

# Gateshead Libraries Digital Inclusion Offer

Rachel Ridley

- ✓ Computer provision forms an essential part of our statutory service, with book lending
- ✓ 8 libraries comprise the Council's statutory service
- ✓ Additional 6 libraries run by volunteer associations
- ✓ Good geographic spread
- ✓ Range of opening hours including evenings and weekends
- ✓ Delivery from our Digital team in other community venues also

Data, Devices & Connectivity

Access to an internet enabled device (such as smartphone, tablet or laptop) is essential in participating digitally. However, many cannot afford an internet-enabled device or have sufficient broadband or mobile data.

➢ We provide free access to up-to-date computers (including up-to-date security) and have 147 public PCs across our libraries
➢ Free Wi-Fi is offered in all our libraries – easy to use, no sign up necessary
➢ Access to printers for a small charge
➢ Charging points & workspaces for own devices
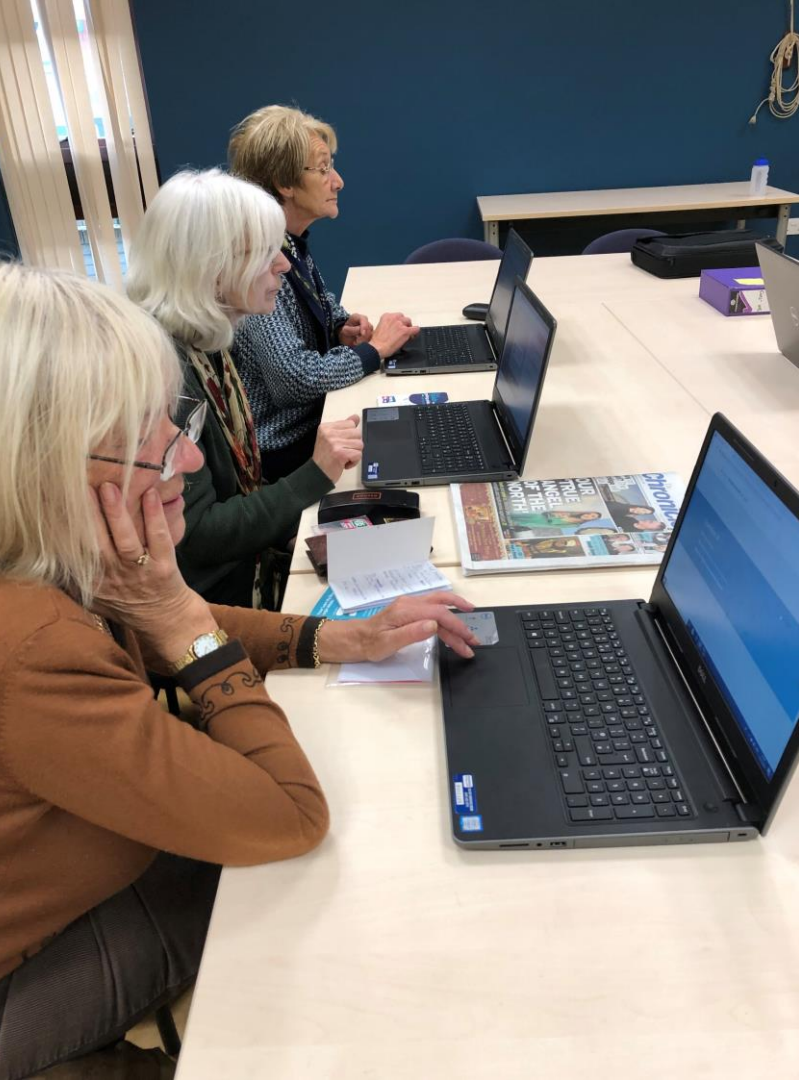
Support

Access to support to use equipment, websites and apps to develop confidence and skills is also much needed.

➢ Trained Library staff support residents to get online every day – the breadth of enquiries continues to evolve
➢ Our Digital Team provide more formal support, including group skills sessions such as jobseeker support & basic computer skills
➢ Drop-in sessions offered in a variety of settings to address specific issues or encourage communities to find out more
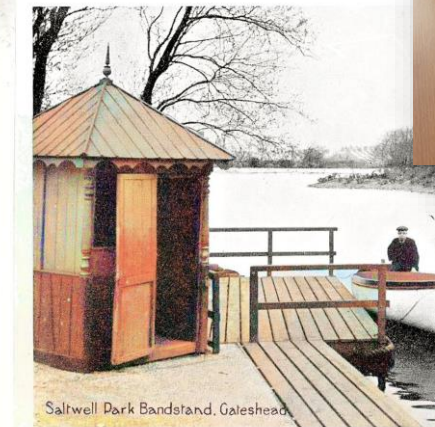
Motivation

A lack of interest or being unable to see any benefit are well-documented contributing factors to non-use of the internet. We offer an innovative and flexible approach to engaging with Gateshead residents who are reluctant to use or do not have access to digital devices.

Themed 'learn by stealth' sessions are used to entice reluctant learners to engage with digital skills. These include sessions about:

➢ using photo editing

➢ using Vinted

➢ tracing your family tree

➢ creative design skills to use our MakerPlace equipment

➢ wellbeing apps, and much more

Our users

➢ Library users are typically older learners, unemployed people and those on low income

➢ Younger learners do also need support, e.g., to complete forms more easily after a reliance on smartphone access only

➢ Referrals from Jobcentre Plus, Housing services, Work Coaches and other partners

➢ Access to the internet for homeless and travellers – no need to provide proof of permanent address

➢ Increased demand for Wi-Fi and printing from diverse mix of residents

Some of our current partners include:

- ➤ DWP
- ➤ Working Gateshead
- ➤ 2way Tenancy
- ➤ Refugee Services
- ➤ Edberts House
- ➤ Winlaton Community Centre
- ➤ Teams Life Centre
- ➤ Looked After Children & Young People Service
- ➤ Bespoke Gateshead, Castleview Group
- ➤ Community Link Workers
- ➤ RNIB

Case Study: Teams Life Centre

The Digital Team worked with volunteers at the Teams Life Centre to improve their digital skills and, in becoming Digital Champions, support others who would make use of their new IT suite. After a number of weeks, the volunteers then toured the Central Library and found out more about the resources available to them there.

The sessions have made a very big difference to me, I've learned skills about using a computer. I want to be able to learn how to use a computer for myself so I don't have to rely on other people to be able to do things online
Digital Skills course participant

Just wanted to let you know of the amazing support I have had from jacky at gateshead library. She pointed me in the direction of national careers service and learn my way as well as trying to get me some help with a laptop. Suffering with anxiety and was really struggling this help has been amazing there a credit both jacky and national careers service.
Digital skills course participant

I've proved to myself I can do something I thought I couldn't on the computer
Digital Skills course participant

It will help me to be able to help my children use the computer and be safe online
Digital skills course participant

Case Study: data and hardware gifting

➢ As part of the Good Things Foundation's National DataBank scheme the Digital Team have worked with a number of partners to distribute free SIM cards to people in need. The SIMs last 6 months with a free monthly allocation of 20gb data plus unlimited calls and texts.

➢ The criteria are simply that the individual must be over 18 and in need to data to do everything in their life that they need to be able to do. The team offer support for switching SIMS, retaining original numbers, downloading necessary apps and take the opportunity to tell clients about other sessions that can be offered.

➢ Gateshead Libraries has also been part of National Device scheme to gift laptops and tablets.

I am currently working with a patient who often does not have any credit on her phone to be able to ring people back. She is currently trying to avoid drinking alcohol and has other mental health issues that she is trying to sort out. She is very much ready to engage with agencies however often she cannot ring them back due to not having suffice or any credit on her phone.
Community Link Worker

I'd like to refer someone for your free SIM card service. They receive UC, and are struggling to make their monthly contract payments due to the escalating cost of living. As a result they are no longer able to make or receive calls and are struggling to manage and organize necessary healthcare appointments and debt support.
Community Link Worker

Digital Switchover

- What it is
  - The Public Switched Telephone Network to be retired
  - Landline calls will be delivered over digital technology called Voice over Internet Protocol which uses a broadband connection
  - Timeline
- What it could mean for our communities
- What we've done
  - Within the Council
  - Council news and information
  - Community event in summer at the Central Library

Next steps

- Members seminar

- Digital Switchover community event at the Central Library

- Revised Digital Declaration

- Published digital principles and standards

- Further updates to Members