

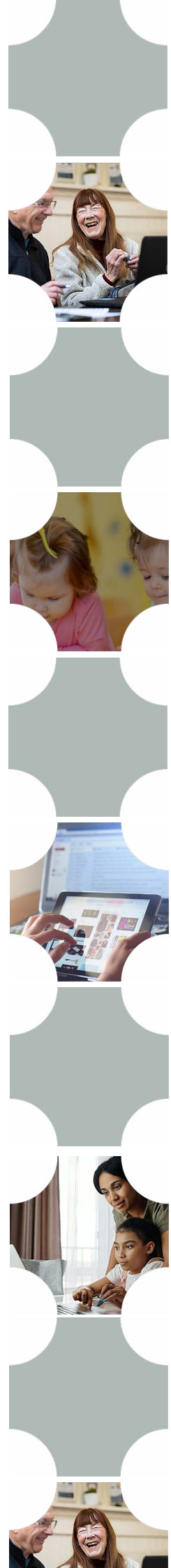
**GREATER
MANCHESTER**
DOING DIGITAL DIFFERENTLY



Social Impact Report:
Fixing the digital divide
2022

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Foreword

“ We live in a world where digital is a part of all our lives, whether we actively seek to go online or not.

As we continue to digitally transform many of our public services to improve efficiencies and cost savings, especially in a time where the cost of living is widening divides. In today’s world, being online means you can easily access and manage your healthcare, take greater care of your finances - digital inclusion impacts your liveability.

If Greater Manchester is truly going to be a world leading digital city region, we have to make a big commitment to fix the digital divide, the consequences of not doing so are severe – with our people at risk of further social isolation, lack of equal opportunities and not being able to access vital support. In a cost-of-living crisis, digital exclusion means you’re paying more for utilities, your ability to cope with increased financial pressures is diminished.

As many as 1.2m residents in Greater Manchester could be excluded in some way to access the benefits digital brings, which is why in October 2020 we launched our Digital Inclusion Agenda for Change with a bold ambition to make Greater Manchester a 100%

digitally enabled city region; and we setup a sector and industry wide collaboration to try to get everyone to help – the Digital Inclusion Taskforce.

In 2021, I announced an ambition for Greater Manchester to become one of the first city-regions in the world to equip all under-25s, over-75s and disabled people with the skills, connectivity, and technology to get online and established a Digital Inclusion Action Network (DIAN) to lead targeted action.

We are ensuring that everyone in Greater Manchester, whatever their age, location or situation, can benefit from the opportunity digital brings. But each and every one of us has a part to play to ensure everyone stays connected, especially those who are vulnerable or face layers of disadvantage.

Now is the time where Greater Manchester can lead the way in achieving an ambition for the UK.

Andy Burnham
Mayor of Greater Manchester



The scale of the challenge

The pandemic and then the cost-of-living crisis have highlighted the extent of the UK's digital divide for millions of people. This divide has amplified the impact of social isolation and loneliness, particularly for groups such as older people, disabled people and those with health conditions. A new layer of vulnerability has appeared – people and families that are unable to stay connected, access vital services and education, let alone participate in the digital world.

Digital marginalisation means a lack of basic skills and motivation, tools and access to get online. It is a spectrum of inequality and faces the poorest, most vulnerable families and communities impacting:

- Access to healthcare and health management
- Access to vital public services and advice
- Access to work, ability to continue learning and do homework
- Financial management and access to support

Digital inclusion is increasingly being considered a human right essential to daily life in the UK as food, water and social security.

700,000

people are only using the internet in a narrow or limited way

450,000

are classified as 'non-users'

1.2M

residents excluded in some way from the opportunity digital brings

23%

of residents not using digital services because of lack of money

52%

of those offline are between 60 and 70 44% of those offline are under 60

40%

of benefit claimants have very low digital engagement

52%

of those offline can spend £300+ a year on utilities because they don't have capacity to compare prices online

References in graphic.

1. ONS Internet Users, 2020: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/itandinternetindustry/bulletins/internetusers/2020>
2. ibid
3. UK Consumer Digital Index 2021, Lloyd's Bank: https://www.lloydsbank.com/assets/media/pdfs/banking_with_us/whats-happening/210513-lloyds-consumer-digital-index-2021-report.pdf

Research meets policy

Digital inclusion is at the heart of economic recovery post pandemic and building community resilience and wellbeing at a time where the cost of living is placing exasperated pressures on UK councils and households. Building capabilities in our communities strengthens our community resilience, improving wellbeing and decreasing pressure on our frontline services such as health and social care, saving £6 million over three years.

Inequality has been shown to be one of the most damaging things to society. The Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission Report 'Good Lives for All' report highlighted an ambition 'public services in the city-region are accessible and community-based agencies work together to respond to and support local needs and individual people. When problems arise in this city-region everyone works together to tackle them, with specific "missions" focused on complex challenges.

Even before the pandemic, Greater Manchester was fractured by inequalities in health, wellbeing, employment and pay, skills, school readiness, child poverty and more, cutting across localities, ethnic groups, age and gender, with Greater Manchester too often falling below national averages.

Covid-19 related inequalities were not surprising. Greater Manchester has made a transition from its industrial past to a modern knowledge economy but that success has not reached everyone and the transition has left a legacy of inequalities⁴.

The findings of Greater Manchester's Big Disability Survey 2022 stated that a third of people surveyed could not afford their bills and 66% stated that the biggest negative influence on their wellbeing and mental health was poverty. The stark findings showed that disabled people are using food banks at three times the rate of non-disabled people and nearly half of respondents cannot afford anything other than the essentials.



Greater Manchester's drive to fix the digital divide

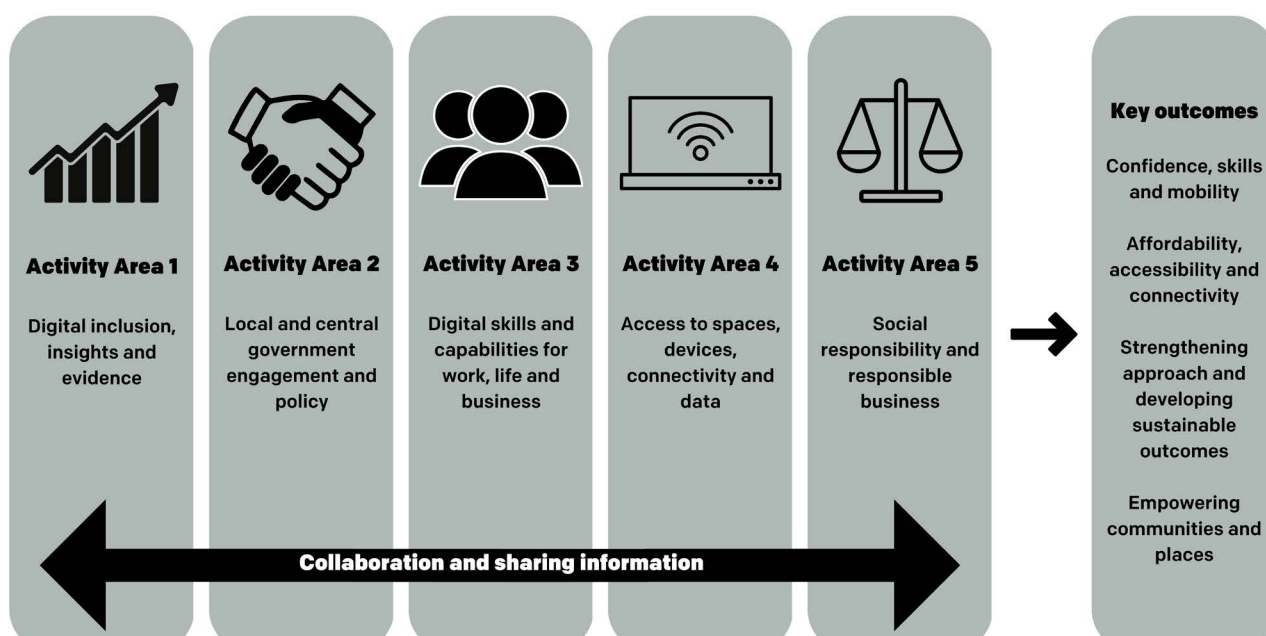
We're joining up across our region to tackle data poverty, skills and inclusion. This includes convening a Digital Inclusion Locality Leads group representing all 10 local authorities across the region to share local needs, resource, learning and gaps.

Greater Manchester Digital Inclusion Taskforce. Leveraging cross-sector working and a driving force with over 250 members which includes the UK's leading telecommunications, global and national organisations with a footprint in Greater Manchester and spans education, Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) and health and social care.

Tackling inequalities for priority groups. Greater Manchester continues to drive a coordinated cross-sector response to address digital exclusion catalysed by relationships with public, private and the VCSE sectors. The DIAN brings together key stakeholders to develop targeted approaches to drive digital inclusion for priority groups which include young people under 25s, adults over 75s and disabled people.

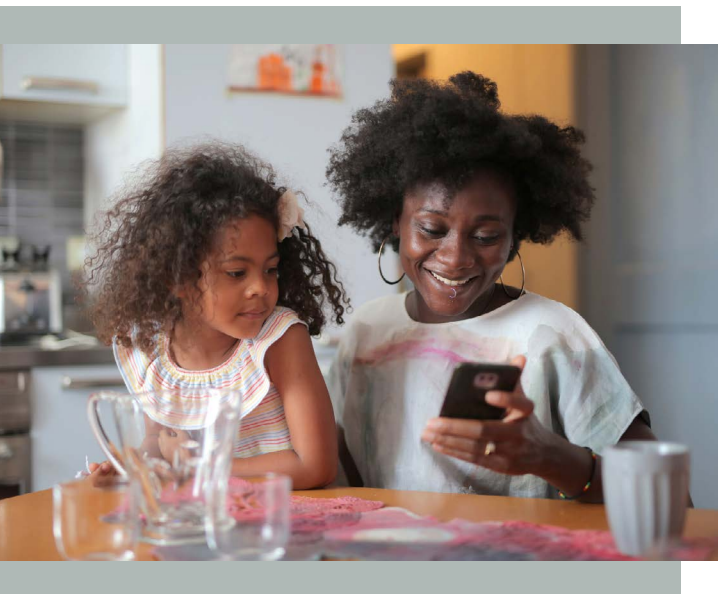


Greater Manchester Digital Inclusion Taskforce Framework Ambition: Lead the way to a 100% digitally enabled city region



Joining up nationally. We have set up a National Digital Inclusion Forum with combined authorities and local authorities across the UK as a coalition to join up, share best practice and learning and work together on challenges to drive inclusion nationally.

Get Online Greater Manchester. Helping residents, and professionals supporting residents, to access local, regional and national support to get online. The campaign and webpage brings together the help available for residents to get online, from across all ten Greater Manchester local authorities, plus wider regional and national support, including digital skills support, accessing assistive technology to getting more confident with using online services.



Greater Manchester Databank. Worked with Good Things Foundation to launch a regional campaign, with a drive for all community groups and libraries to get access to free data for residents that are not eligible or able to access existing data packages as well as access to basic digital literacy support for community groups.

Get Online Greater Manchester: for care leavers. In a drive to address inequalities and levelling up across the region, Greater Manchester's leaders, private and public sector and young person's charities have worked together with the Greater Manchester care leaver's network to design a comprehensive package of support including access to free data connectivity for 12 months,

devices and free digital skills training to support care leavers to build their skills and confidence online and benefit from opportunities to thrive.

Bespoke support for disabled people. Greater Manchester is working with ten boroughs to provide a Digital Enablement Service which includes targeted support provision to support disabled people to live well and independently working with Henshaw's and local organisations.

Digital inclusion pilot for social housing residents. Five Greater Manchester based social housing providers and local authorities are each working with an internet service provider to develop a better understanding of digital participation amongst 1,000 of their residents and nearby community hubs. The pilot will involve extensive engagement with local communities to understand how different cohorts are accessing digital services, the barriers (including financial constraints) which prevent some households making the most of the benefits that digital can bring.

Working with our partners - Virgin Media O2 Business

How important is digital inclusion to Virgin Media O2?

In today's connected world, if you can't get online, you're shut out. Shut out of many essential services. Shut out of online learning and work opportunities. And shut out of conversations with family, friends and loved ones. At Virgin Media O2, we're committed to tackling digital exclusion and data poverty. It's at the heart of our new sustainability strategy, the Better Connections Plan, which has goals to connect one million digitally excluded people through free and affordable connectivity and services, and to improve the digital skills and confidence of two million people by the end of 2025.

We have a rich history in this space, and now we're building on it – through a series of measures to provide those who need it most with access to free connectivity, devices, and digital skills training. For example, we're the founding member of the National Databank. Last month, we also began a three-year £2 million strategic partnership with digital inclusion charity Good Things Foundation. This will help one million people – including those on low incomes most affected by the cost-of-living crisis; minoritised ethnic groups; and low-skilled workers and older people – to access free connectivity, devices, and digital skills training.

On the device side, our Community Calling initiative, in partnership with environmental charity, Hubbub, is giving unwanted smart phones a new lease of life by re-homing them with people in need, along with free mobile data, texts and calls from the National Databank. And our Tech Lending Community Fund, also in partnership with Hubbub, has provided a share of £400,000 to five UK charities to run a pioneering device lending scheme to provide tablets and data to people who need them."

Why has Virgin Media O2 joined the digital inclusion pilot for social housing?

This project is the latest development in our long standing work with GMCA to provide much-needed connectivity and help close the digital divide in the city-region. We're so proud to be a part of this pilot, which will be the largest digital inclusion social housing intervention known in the UK – potentially globally.

No one organisation has the answer to digital exclusion, and the strength of this pilot will be in collaboration. From connectivity itself to digital skills, this project is all about bringing together industry leaders with social housing providers and their residents to get to the heart of the problem. We'll be working alongside Wythenshawe Community Housing Group to understand the issues impacting their residents, so we can develop real solutions that will help close the digital divide, for good.

From delivering infrastructure to creating local jobs, supporting digital skills, care leavers and providing free broadband and devices, we've been working closely with the GMCA team for a number of years. Central to this has been connecting more than 1,500 public sites to full fibre in Greater Manchester as part of the UK's largest Local Full Fibre Networks Programme (LFFN).

Nicola Green - Corporate Affairs Director, Virgin Media O2

A snapshot – successful initiatives across Greater Manchester’s boroughs

Rochdale Borough Council

has developed an innovative MESH network, providing free WiFi to its most excluded social housing residents. To date the initiative provides 2,000 homes with WiFi. The greatest cost was purchasing broadband which Rochdale did through a local internet provider at a cost of £18k for 3 years. They worked with local housing

providers to install the kit and paid an expert to scope the area and configure the kit. This means it costs 27p per home per month to fund and potential savings for residents up to £600,000 per year. This network has been shared through the Locality Leads and is in process of being replicated in Bury and Tameside.

Salford City Council

has developed a powerful integrated approach called Better Off Salford that recognises and addresses the common causes and complications of poverty and digital poverty. Part of this is “Digital Everyone,” a council led cross-sector collaboration working to create a 100% digitally inclusive borough. Salford developed a Digital Exclusion Risk Index, which has since been adapted and launched by GMCA for free national coverage, with which the council identifies crossover between factors such

as deprivation, age, disability, average broadband download speeds and whether the household is using e-bills or traditional ones to assess the forms of support needed. This can lead to identifying tenants in perpetual debt, council tax arrears or facing any multitude of socio-economic issues that intersect with digital. This is followed up by the Better Off Salford team offering support that is branded in a friendly manner leading to 4000+ residents being supported in 2022.



Driving social impact through public sector procurement

Virgin Media O2 Business (VMO2B) were appointed to deliver up to 2700KM of new fibre optic broadband infrastructure across the region, connecting more than 1,500 public sites throughout Greater Manchester, known as the Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) programme. The deal also included a number of bold investments in social value initiatives that supported Greater Manchester's Digital Blueprint, including VMO2B supporting the Greater Manchester Technology Fund (GM Tech Fund).

The GM Tech Fund was first set up in 2020, and has supported over 3,537 people to date, with the technology and connectivity needed to continue their learning at home whilst schools and colleges were closed. Through LFFN, VMBO2 made a £15,000 donation to the fund.



“GMCA's Social Value Framework identified several strategic priorities key to rebuilding the region's economy and society following Covid-19. Creating skills and providing the best employment possible were two of the most essential components for levelling up and ensuring equal opportunities for all.

The impact of this programme has been transformative - a direct impact through the work that has been undertaken on the ground in helping to change lives and strongly influenced our strategic thinking about social value, demonstrating what is possible when the public and private sectors work better together” John Steward, Digital Infrastructure Policy Lead, GMCA

Local Full Fibre Network programme - social value activity to date

38

apprentices hired - mix of civil engineers, field technicians, telesales apprentice and fibre engineers

£50k

to the Greater Manchester Technology Fund, supporting young people

21

community sites set-up with free connectivity, for five years

1,000

hours volunteered by Virgin Media staff across Greater Manchester to date

78%

of the LFFN workforce based in Greater Manchester

£100k

to Greater Manchester Mayor's Charity, to support the A Bed Every Night programme

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Since June 2021 VMO2B has supported the digital inclusion programme through a secondment of a Project Manager into the role of Digital Inclusion Programme Management role at GMCA. The new way of working has significantly boosted the range of activity, ideas and collaboration to help tackle the digital divide.

Understanding the scale of the challenge: developing an agreed definition

One of the challenges faced across the UK in understanding the depth of the issue locally is that there wasn't a consistent, shared definition of 'digital exclusion' nationally. The Digital Exclusion Risk Index Tool (DERI) is an interactive tool that has been developed to consider social, infrastructure and economic factors that could contribute towards digital exclusion and deprivation.

The idea of DERI is that it indicates local geographical areas at risk of digital exclusion and allows local authorities to prioritise these areas to target approaches effectively and consider further investigation. The DERI has been developed as an open data tool, available for England, Scotland and Wales, to empower local authorities across the UK to better target support and interventions in local areas of most need.

The latest release of DERI v1.6 released in November 2022 includes data updates from the 2021 Census release, Ofcom Autumn 2022 Connected Nations update and a refresh of some of the dashboard interface.

Delivery across Greater Manchester

The digital inclusion agenda has had pioneering successes in implementing regional large-scale initiatives which address the issue of digital exclusion at a level which will have significant impact across the City-Region. Long-term programmes to enhance local offers of support, connectivity, skills and advice have been developed and delivered in partnership with the localities, industry partners and VCSE sector organisations.

Addressing digital poverty across Greater Manchester

The **Greater Manchester Databank (GM Databank)**, part of Good Things Foundation's National Databank. Greater Manchester have partnered with Good Things Foundation to deliver the National Databank locally.

The GM Databank is described as a 'food bank for data connectivity' and is a collaboration with mobile data providers to offer free data SIMS for 6 months to community organisations who sign up to become a databank, to support residents in need.

115 organisations operating as databanks

20k SIM cards provided to databanks

Organisations include women's refuges, carer support organisations, libraries and food banks across Greater Manchester.

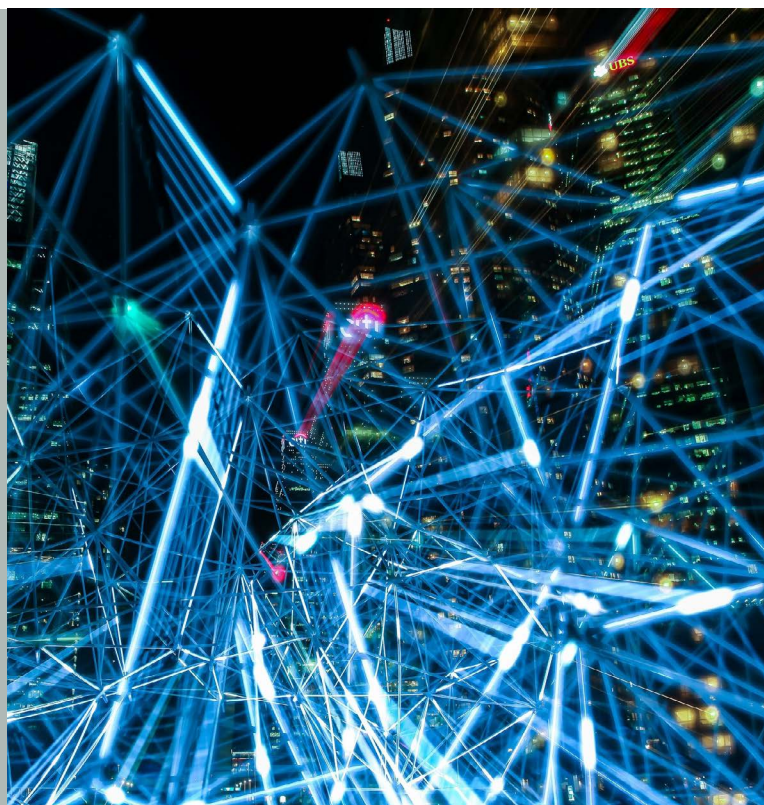
Statistics as of January 2023

Digital inclusion pilot for social housing residents

With 20% of Greater Manchester residents living in social housing, this pilot explores how connectivity may be made accessible to people living in low incomes and is the largest digital inclusion social housing intervention pilot programme in Europe, potentially globally.

It brings together five internet service providers (ISP's) with five social housing providers. The aim is not only to offer discounted, high-speed internet but to improve participation and confidence of residents through skills workshops in their community.

The pilot was formally launched at Connected Britain in September 2022 by Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham alongside ISP's with a call that more leadership and collaboration was needed across sectors to ensure everyone is connected, especially in a cost of living crisis.



“We estimate up to 60% of social housing residents in Greater Manchester face levels of digital exclusion. I firmly believe that digital connectivity should be recognised as a basic human right – and treated as a utility like water, gas, and electricity.”

By bringing together five of the UK's biggest internet service providers with five social housing providers from across the region, we'll be able to understand better the challenges behind that belief, as we attempt to tackle digital exclusion within social housing settings.” Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester

By carrying out user research with representatives from the three priority groups (adults over 75s, young people under 25s and disabled people), the research team at the University of Liverpool have gained insights into the barriers to digital inclusion and gathered evidence to develop activities to tackle barriers and improve participation with each community in the study. The discovery phase of the pilot has been pivotal to challenging assumptions around the value of social tariffs as well as define what conditions are needed for ISP's, social housing providers and local authorities to improve connections and encourage participation and skills. Currently, the offers from the ISP's are being finalised in consultation with their respective social housing providers and local authorities.

Although there are a few challenges in relation to physical connections and data sharing agreements, the project will soon be supporting 5,000 residents with the aim to roll this out wide scale and reach 200,000 residents by the end of 2023.

Supporting disabled people

The Greater Manchester Disabled People's Panel was created as an initiative between disabled people's organisations and the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham. The purpose of the group is to ensure that disabled people are better represented in the future planning and running of the city region.

The group also have the aims to:

- Promote the independence and integration of disabled people in society
- Identify and challenge the discrimination faced by disabled people in society today
- Encourage and support the self-organisation of disabled people
- Ensure disabled people have equal rights in society and access to opportunities



Henshaw's

Henshaw's is a charity offering free specialist support, advice and training for all residents in Greater Manchester living with sight loss and a range of other disabilities. Within the organisation, they offer a range of services from digital assessments and training to social groups and counselling services. Their goal is to make sure residents receive timely services and resources that will help them remain independent. Henshaw's support currently is offered from various community-based locations across Greater Manchester, and this has been recently expanded to include nine out of ten boroughs with the view to extend this further.

Young people

Greater Manchester Technology Fund (GM Tech Fund)

The GM Tech Fund was first set up in 2020, and has supported over 3,537 people to date, with the technology and connectivity needed to continue their learning at home whilst schools and colleges were closed.



In 2022, the fund was reinstated to support the needs of young people in Special Educational Need schools (SEND) and Pupil Referral Units (PRU) after the pandemic had exasperated existing inequalities that schools faced. By talking to young people and educators targeted support could directly address specific needs and barriers to delivering education and digital skills, which also included the digital and IT skills of teachers. This phase of the fund received over 200 refurbished and new devices from organisations including Ability Net, AJ Bell, Transport for Greater Manchester and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service.

The challenge in supporting PRU and SEND schools demonstrated that more support was needed, beyond devices and connectivity and that it wasn't simply about giving laptops to students. The digital skills gap amongst teachers and staff meant that laptops that were received through the Department for Education were left unopened in cupboards as teachers were not confident enough to download appropriate software. Hence bespoke digital skills sessions have been developed with Microsoft and Phoenix to support the basic IT skills of teachers within these schools. This training will be accessible to all Greater Manchester schools to tackle the digital skills gaps for teachers.

23% Disabled people and those with long term conditions are 23% less likely to have the essential digital skills for life.

2.5x Those with an impairment are 2.5 times more likely to lack foundation level skills.

32% of people with an impairment do not have even the most basic digital skills.

578 578 children in PRU and SEND schools would benefit from skills coaches.

“The fund has allowed students to work independently with headphones in to avoid distractions also which is great. The fund is a fantastic opportunity for SEND and PRU schools as it allows us to use technology that we've not used before. Our IT teams advised that the tech we received is of excellent quality, so thank you. I encourage more companies to donate to ensure schools get the tech they need” Suzie Connor, Deputy Head Teacher at White Bridge College

References in graphic:

1. (Lloyd's Consumer Digital Index 2020). 2. (Lloyd's Consumer Digital Index 2022) 3. (Good Things Foundation, 2022)

4. (PRU and SEND School Survey 2022)

Working with our partners - Microsoft

“We are working in partnership with GMCA and the local ecosystem to deliver a skills program that works for the local community.

As well as bringing Microsoft’s national skills programmes to the region we are supporting local digital inclusion initiatives such as the GM Tech Fund, which targets students within SEND schools and Pupil Referral Units, and events for local care leavers. We are also driving school engagement across the region with an aim to up-skill and inspire the next generation, we are working with teachers and students deliberately targeting areas that are considered deprived or under-represented.

Our aim is to reach as many people as possible demonstrate the opportunities that exist within the regions thriving tech sector, create belief and show people pathways to success that work for them” Marie Hamilton. Microsoft

Care leavers

Get Online Greater Manchester: for care leavers

To further Greater Manchester’s Young Person’s Guarantee and target bespoke support for young people who face increased layers of disadvantage, Get Online Greater Manchester: for care leavers was piloted and expanded with the aim to support care leavers aged 18-25 across the region. The principle was to develop a support offering that went beyond device and connectivity support to tackle key challenges for young people who are care-experienced and their professional support systems.

Under the guidance of care leavers and care leaver networks across Greater Manchester, each local authority has developed bespoke packages for care leavers which include:

- Free data SIM connectivity via the GM Databank
- Access to an appropriate digital device where required
- Access to local digital skills training to help boost care leavers motivation and confidence around using digital services
- Support and guidance from local organisations around life skills, such as the Salford Foundation who deliver a managing money online skills programme
- Access to skills and career opportunities such as Digital Bootcamps at HOST, Salford

242 care leavers across Greater Manchester have accessed this offer



To promote the offer further, the Care Leaver's campaign culminated in the 'Bee Connected' event held in October 2022. This event allowed industry bodies from Microsoft, Google, Cisco and Barclays to promote opportunities available to care leavers across GM. As a result of this project 32 Care Leavers to date have enrolled onto Digital Skills Bootcamps provided by In4Group called Skills City, to train young people into in demand careers in the digital sector.

Internet Matters Media Literacy Pilot

Towards the end of 2022, GMCA, together with the local authorities, supported Internet Matters by participating in a focus group that discussed developing a media literacy pilot for vulnerable young care leavers. Internet Matters will be developing a project aimed at supporting care leavers to be safe online. Their aim is to equip them with the skills and knowledge they need to manage online risks and operate safely and confidently online.

Older people

Doing digital in later life: a practical guide. GMCA and Good Things Foundation joined forces to produce a practical guide to support more people to get online and benefit from doing digital in later life.

The guide is aimed at those supporting over 75's in Greater Manchester to participate digitally (including frontline staff, community groups, family and friends).

The guide was presented to the UK Network of Age Friendly Communities to raise the profile of the free online resource and is being used nationally.



Other support for older people includes initiative's like Tech and Tea in Salford, supporting older residents to build their digital skills and confidence whilst offering support and guidance to help participants improve their own well-being in a relaxed community setting.

When 72 year old Bernard Whipbay, who lives alone in Salford spent much of the pandemic behind closed doors. Bernard grew isolated and depressed without the means or knowledge to shop online or even FaceTime his grandchildren. Bernard joined Salford's Tech and Tea course as a reason to get out of bed and is now a regular volunteer helping others in his community to use technology with confidence.



“I didn't want to live anymore, it's as simple as that. I woke up in the morning and thought, what can I do today? I can't do anything for myself. It just killed me. I didn't have the tech know how to do anything, I just sat here getting worse every day.” Bernard Whipbay.

Empowering people

Our ten local authorities have developed a standard of community-based initiatives and activities to support residents become confident internet users and multiple initiatives to tackle data poverty in a sustainable way. These include:

Community device lending schemes

Many Greater Manchester local authorities offer a range of device schemes and community lending libraries to support residents access the internet at home.

£10k

worth of devices to Manchester residents, through Manchester City Council, including 400 Chromebooks

320

devices available to Oldham residents, through Oldham Council's tablet loan scheme

220

devices available to Stockport residents, through Stockport Council's DigiKnow scheme

100

devices available to Bolton residents, through Bolton Council's Lending Library service. 50 Chromebooks and 50 tablets with the support of Google and Netpremacy

Internet connectivity and access

With the cost-of-living crisis forcing residents to choose between food, fuel and keeping their broadband, financial strains mean some residents can no longer afford monthly broadband fees.

In Rochdale, the innovative Mesh Network pilot scheme has been developed to offer free WiFi for residents in underprivileged communities with 2000 homes benefiting from free internet at the cost of 27p per home per month to the council. Potential savings for residents are up to £600,000 per year.

All ten Greater Manchester local authorities have GM Databanks and are supporting thousands of vulnerable people to get connected by providing free SIMS, which include mobile data, talk minutes and texts.

Confident internet users

With digital skills a basic literacy for life, work and business, local authorities play a part in supporting essential digital skills programmes for the community to help them with day-to-day tasks online such as shopping or online banking. Local initiatives include:

- In Stockport, the DigiKnow campaign runs free group classes within a range of community settings providing free digital skills and face-to-face support
- Bolton Council working in partnership with Bolton College have facilitated 270 one-to-one digital sessions helping 85 people at informal digital "drop ins" held in libraries

- For the past five years, Wigan Council have delivered “Appy Days” sessions every Tuesday morning for older people to allow residents to ask for digital support in a social setting.
- The Breaking Digital Barriers Programme in Oldham has seen over 140 people supported with learning key digital skills
- In Salford, Tech and Tea sessions have supported participants to build their digital skills whilst offering support and guidance to help participants improve their own well-being. These sessions have been particularly useful for older residents
- Rochdale Borough Council is working alongside Google Digital Garage to offer free tutorials on everything from developing a website to online marketing. The council have also started Learn My Way sessions that support individuals when applying for jobs online
- Salford Council are working with Princes Trust and IN4.0 to deliver a free skills course where residents can explore a new skills in coding
- The SEND code project in Tameside is a 6-week programme for people who are digitally and socially excluded. Each person has a plan personalised for individual needs which covers digital skills such as photography, video making and coding
- Tameside Council have worked alongside Diversity Matters to support 16 women successfully complete a 7-week employability computer course. 25 learners have also participated in 6 weeks community hub learning sessions.

For those confident digital residents, a range of sessions have been designed by local authorities in partnership with external stakeholders to enhance their digital skills.

Local authorities have a key role in identifying specific groups who would benefit from tailored digital support and have created digital programmes to assist residents with specific needs.

Digital champions within communities

As demand for learning digital skills has grown, local authorities have trained volunteers to become Digital community champions to support with delivering 1-1 or group digital skills sessions.

Local authorities, including Bolton, Manchester and Stockport, are training a new cohort of Digital Champion volunteers.

Wigan Council’s successful TechMate sessions are volunteer-led and take place in a range of community settings. Since the launch of the new TechMate system, TechMate volunteers have reported that they have delivered 149 hours of one-to-one support and 122 hours of TechMate Tea parties to residents across the borough.



“From the start, it was more like being helped by a friend rather than trying to explain what I wanted to learn with a stranger. It made me feel so relaxed when we were talking about the things I needed to know about my iPad.” Sue, TechMate participant



“Sue’s really grown in confidence using her iPad. She now uses it to watch documentaries on YouTube, email friends and look up all sorts of information. We regularly keep in touch with updates - not only about the digital skills she has learned but also about her life and hobbies.” Liz, Wigan-Tech Mates

As part of the Warm Hub Initiative throughout all local authorities, Lloyd’s Bank are offering support through their Corporate Social Responsibility and corporate volunteering opportunities.

Working with our partners - Ingeus

Why is addressing digital inclusion important to Ingeus?

Our Greater Manchester programmes have a focus on supporting unemployed people in the region to gain sustainable employment. Access to digital is not only a key factor in being able to job search effectively, but also a critical skill in the workplace.

We provide an online platform to all of the people accessing our programmes (c 20,000 people) that allows them to upskill, job search and develop their learning for the workplace. We want as many people as possible to benefit from the resources that are available. Digital skills are a barrier to work for 28% of all our participants, and a barrier for 45% of those people aged over 50. Helping more people to get the skills and equipment to get online is also part of our social value commitments.

Why did you become part of the Greater Manchester Digital Inclusion Taskforce?

Being part of the network is important to us as our aims are aligned. The locality leads have great access to community resources and broader knowledge that help us to connect individuals to the local support that's available. We also want to find ways that we can give back to local communities through our social value commitments, the taskforce is a great way to make that happen.

What have been some of your successes in the last 12 months?

We've asked all our Greater Manchester staff to donate old/unused smart phones, laptops and tablets, which we provided to PC Refurb in Tameside. We also have worked with them over the last few years to purchase reconditioned laptops for our jobseekers in the borough.



We've signposted more than 1400 people to digital skills courses and made a further 335 direct referrals this year so people can get the support they need. We promote local courses, drop ins, library services, and loan schemes. We've trained 10 digital champions across Greater Manchester boroughs to support participants and run "computers and coffee" sessions for beginners on our in-house PCs and have donated 46 licences to our corporate staff eLearning platform to local VCSE organisations to support the development of staff and volunteers.

Two of our team helped to secure a tablet through Wigan Council's Lending Library for a participant who can now use this to job search from home, as well as utilise our

"iWorks" platform. He's grateful for the support and said "The Job Search Programme also provides an easy way to track progress. There's definitely an element of collecting merit badges as you complete different modules that gave me a sense of achievement beyond how many applications I'd completed that day.

We are working with the taskforce to develop money management sessions that will be delivered to care leavers across Greater Manchester, as one of the ways we can use our staff skill to give back. Jayne Garner, Head of Integration Greater Manchester at Ingeus