

Get Online

Greater Manchester:

A guide to digital support offers for disabled people



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Introduction

In October 2020 the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham announced ambitions 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.

In today's society, having the ability and support to get online is essential, to ensure equal access to the opportunities that digital can bring. Digital inclusion means enabling people to actively participate in society, access information and public services – it means having the ability to fully participate in life.

In Greater Manchester we are working collaboratively to address the barriers to digital inclusion such as connectivity, accessibility, affordability, skills, motivation and confidence.

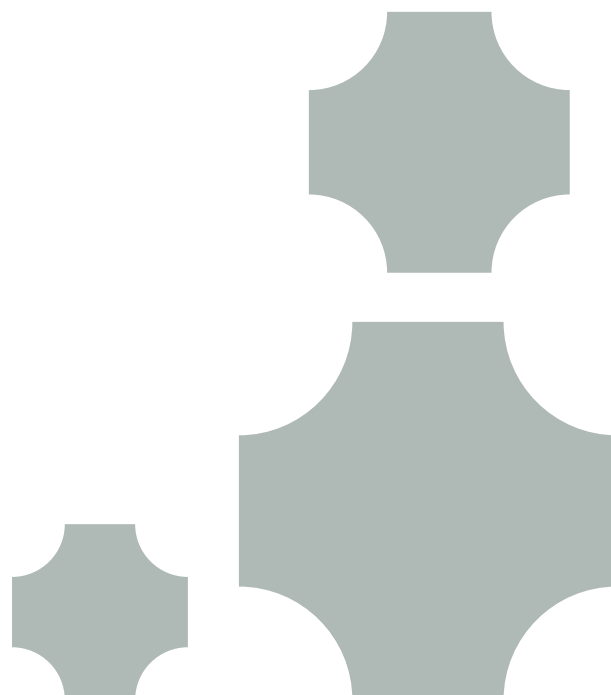
Advancements in technology and the digital transformation of public services have presented many ways to ensure people can access services at a touch of a button. However, this does not mean services are accessible to all- or that everyone will feel the benefit.

Ben Andrews, Managing Director, Beyond Empower said: **“Without disabled people or supporting organisations knowing what support or provision is out there, it is unlikely that the potential of digital will be felt by those who may need it most. This resource is a welcomed means to understand the digital landscape in Greater Manchester to enable disabled people to make the most of the digital opportunities available to them”.**

We want to ensure that everyone in Greater Manchester, whatever their age, location or situation, can benefit from the opportunities digital brings. The following organisations have a range of support, most of which is free or at a reduced cost, to help residents across Greater Manchester benefit from the opportunities digital brings.

“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 support.”

Andy Burnham
Mayor of Greater Manchester



Support with Assistive Technology

Ability Net

Ability Net is a UK-based charity that believes digital technology should be available to everyone. The charity provides free guidance to disabled people, employers and family and friends on how technology can be adapted to support independence. They have a network of volunteers who visit people in their homes to assist with adapting technology.

“I’m 82 years old, I live alone and need my PC to stay connected to the world. I’ve spent months struggling to resolve problems with my PC. Since being directed to your organisation my life has been changed.”

Jonathan, an Ability Net client.

Ability Net have also created the following guides to support individuals in making simple adjustments to their computer, tablet or smartphone to make it easier to use. ‘How to’ guides are available from the Ability Net website.

[Ability Net website](http://mcmw.abilitynet.org.uk)
(mcmw.abilitynet.org.uk)

Their site is full of free factsheets, blogs, webinars and videos that show the many ways that technology can help people remain independent.

[Website: Ability Net](http://abilitynet.org.uk)
(abilitynet.org.uk)

[Email: Ability Net](mailto:enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk)
(enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk)

Telephone: 0800 048 7642
(during UK office hours)





Ace Centre

The Ace Centre works with people of all ages who need Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) and Assistive Technology to communicate. The team is made up of a range of specialists, which include speech & language therapists, teachers, occupational therapists and engineers. Together, they assess individuals to find appropriate software, hardware and paper-based resources that help to maintain, improve or increase an individuals' capabilities to communicate with those around them. Their aim is to train clients to use the resources, which will support them in becoming more independent.

In addition, the Ace Centre offers a range of training and information services and advocates nationally for improved provision and investment in AAC and Assistive Technology.

"I met with these amazing people today. At an emotional stage in our story, they gave us hope for the future for our lovely son who is unlikely to speak. Can't wait to get started with 'modelling' (now I finally know what it is!) and allow him to learn his own special way of talking."

Katie Lees, a parent of a child attending the Ace Centre.

[Website: Ace Centre](http://www.acecentre.org.uk)
(acecentre.org.uk)

Telephone: 0800 080 3115
(Lines are open 9am-5pm
Monday to Friday).



Everyone Can

Everyone Can is a charity offering free practical digital solutions to improve the independence of young disabled people. Whether a young person needs support with shopping, communicating or controlling appliances, the team create a bespoke plan to address the needs of the individual after being assessed in their centre located in Sale.

Everyone Can also have a gaming centre to create an inclusive gaming experience for disabled people with the most up-to-date equipment adapted to create a fun environment for all. The team have weekly drop-in sessions at their centre in Sale and are keen for groups who support disabled children and young people to contact them if they would like to organise a visit.

[Website: Everyone Can](http://everyonecan.org.uk)
(everyonecan.org.uk)

Telephone: 0808 800 0009
(Lines are open 9am-5pm
Monday to Friday).

**/EVERYONE
CAN ■**





Henshaws

Henshaws is a charity that supports blind and visually impaired people to live more independent lives. To date, their centres have offered a range of services to provide more than 7,000 visually impaired people with an improved quality of life.

Their friendly and experienced staff and volunteers are passionate and committed to delivering valuable services that change lives. Through a personal one-to-one chat, their Digital Enablement Team will assess a person's needs and make suggestions on the best solution based on the user's level of sight and technical ability. Following the assessment, they can help look for suitable grants and offer further training sessions at a local Greater Manchester venue.

"I've had great support from the tech team for several years. They have shown me how to use technology to live more independently. Now I don't need people coming round to read my mail, because I can do it for myself. It's made my life a lot less stressful."

Pauline, a Henshaw's client.

Henshaws also offer their Knowledge Village which is an online resource including eBooks, videos and blogs to provide free information on living with sight loss.

[Website: Henshaws](https://www.henshaws.org.uk)
(henshaws.org.uk)

[Email: Henshaws](mailto:info@henshaws.org.uk)
(info@henshaws.org.uk)

Telephone: 0300 222 5555
(Lines are open 9am-5pm
Monday to Friday).



Tech Club at Walthew House

Walthew House provide guidance on finding appropriate technology to support people with sight and hearing loss.

They provide:

- A non-profit resource centre with devices to try
- A practical hands-on approach
- Demonstrations from product providers
- Support from volunteers in setting up devices
- Expert volunteers to help at home

Walthew House have a monthly drop-in session in Stockport for people to share knowledge, support and ideas with others on assistive technology. Walthew House also provide a tech one-to-one service in which a volunteer can come to your home to assist you with your devices if you are



unable to visit the centre. There are a range of activity groups that happen each day. Information on these activities and support can be found on the Walthew House website.

[Website: Walthew House](http://walthewhouse.org.uk)
(walthewhouse.org.uk)

Telephone: 0161 480 2612
(during UK office hours) or
[email the admin.](mailto:admin@walthewhouse.org.uk)

(admin@walthewhouse.org.uk)





Enhancing your digital skills

Digital Independent Specialist College

Based in Manchester's Northern Quarter, the Digital Independent Specialist College (DISC) offers an internship programme for young people who have a flair for digital and creative technology. The college aims to develop the digital and creative capabilities of its students, along with improving their confidence and core employability skills. At the end of the internship, they support young people into apprenticeships, employment or other positive destinations in the digital economy.

The college was established by Digital Advantage and SENDCode who between them have now worked with over 500 young people with SEND.

The full-time supported internship is open to young people aged 16 to 25 who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and there is also a part-time option available for residents covered by Manchester City Council. They also offer Alternative Provision and pre-internship training where students can attend for one or two days a week, depending on their needs.

Caprice, a DISC intern, said:

"You all have really impacted my life in the best way possible, every day you work so hard for me and the others, you give us the best and you all are the most kind-hearted and supportive people I have ever met. At the start I was worried I'd struggle to make friends, but I am surrounded by friends every day."

Website:
[Digital Independent Specialist College](https://disc.ac.uk)
(disc.ac.uk)

To express interest in this opportunity
Email: [DISC](mailto:Seamus.m@disc.ac.uk)
(Seamus.m@disc.ac.uk)



DIGITAL INDEPENDENT SPECIALIST COLLEGE
MANCHESTER

Free digital skills courses

Learn My Way (online courses) for beginners

The Good Things Foundation charity have developed free online courses that cover subjects from using your device, online safety and accessing online services. These short courses, which avoid complex language, allow people to learn at their own pace and can be repeated as many times as is needed to learn the basic digital skills for life, such as shopping online. All courses are free for anyone to use.

More info available on the website:
[Good Things Foundation](https://goodthingsfoundation.org)
(goodthingsfoundation.org)

You can also access the Learn My Way programme at any library in Greater Manchester.

Good Things Foundation have also created a series of short guides to build the confidence of people who support other adults to get online.

Organisations supporting low-income families, people with disabilities, vulnerable or disadvantaged groups, older adults, jobseekers, immigrants, refugees or marginalised communities are encouraged to sign up and access Learn My Way.

[Website: Good Things Foundation](https://goodthingsfoundation.org/learn/learn-my-way)
(goodthingsfoundation.org/learn/
learn-my-way)





Greater Manchester Skills Bootcamps

Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) was successful in securing funds from the Department for Education to deliver Skills Bootcamps across the region.

Skills Bootcamps give residents aged 19 + the opportunity to build advanced skills across a range of industries, including digital, with free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks.

For those participants not in employment, upon completion of the training, they will be fast tracked to a guaranteed interview with a local employer.

The courses are available to anybody over the age of 19 living in the city-region. However, Skills Bootcamps place a high focus on people living with a disability, those returning from a career break, people from minoritised communities, over 50s, veterans, ex-offenders, women and low-paid or those not in work.

More information about the courses currently available can be found on the [Skills Bootcamps webpages](https://greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/work-and-skills/skills-bootcamps) (greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/work-and-skills/skills-bootcamps)

Support is also available through various other education, work and skills opportunities including Greater Manchester's Working Well programme and devolved Adult Education Budget. Browse offers on the Work and Skills area of the GMCA website.

[Website: GMCA Work and Skills](https://greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/work-and-skills) (greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/work-and-skills)

Get Online Greater Manchester

Get Online Greater Manchester is a programme of working helpings residents, and those supporting residents, to access local, regional and national support to get online. It brings together courses, support and activities from national and local organisations from across all of Greater Manchester's 10 local authority areas, so all residents can access activities and support needed to get online. This could include digital skills support to accessing assistive technology to getting more confident with using online services.

Digital skills support can also be found through the Get Online Greater Manchester: Digital Skills Map - an interactive map bringing digital support offerings together, into one place, for people to view and find out more. The map can support professionals, family and friends, in signposting someone they know who may be struggling to get online, or would benefit from improved digital skills. Residents themselves can also access the tool to find digital support on offer. Support identified on the map includes Greater Manchester Databanks, centres offering access to computers and the internet and various digital skills sessions.

[Email: Get Online Greater Manchester](mailto:gmcadigital@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk)
(gmcadigital@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk)

[Website: Get Online Greater Manchester](https://greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/digital/get-online-greater-manchester)
(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/digital/get-online-greater-manchester)





Digital skills support helplines

All local authorities across Greater Manchester have digital skills sessions for beginners to support them in accessing the many benefits the internet has to offer. The list of numbers below will help you find out about what support is available in your local area.

Phone lines are available during UK office hours, however some of these hours may vary. Some local authorities also help residents access loaned devices (this is subject to eligibility and availability).

Bolton	01204 332853
Bury	0161 253 5872
Manchester	07860 064128 (Text only service)
Oldham	0161 770 8000
Rochdale	01706 926653
Salford	0800 952 1000
Stockport	07724 217888
Tameside	0161 342 2031
Trafford	0161 912 3189
Wigan	01942 244991

Please note that Lloyds Bank also have a helpline to support people digitally, anyone can use this helpline, you do not have to be a Lloyds Bank customer.

Telephone: 0345 222 03333



Connectivity - broadband and mobile

Social tariffs

A large number of internet service providers offer discounted social tariff products, with some offering deals from £12 per month. Social tariffs can provide a lower-cost internet service for those who might be struggling to afford an internet connection or phone services. Social tariffs could help those eligible with a saving of more than approximately £180 per year, which is around 50% compared to the average cost of broadband. New social tariffs continue to be developed by various internet and mobile providers. For more details on the prices, internet speeds and contract lengths of the current social tariffs, please contact internet service providers suppliers directly.

To view social tariffs available, visit:

[Ofcom](https://www.ofcom.gov.uk)

([ofcom.org.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/advice-for-consumers/costs-and-billing/social-tariffs](https://www.ofcom.gov.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/advice-for-consumers/costs-and-billing/social-tariffs))

Please be aware that eligibility requirements differ for each contract which means you may not be entitled to an offer at one company, but you might at another. It should also be noted that most suppliers will ask for proof when checking your entitlement to any offer and whilst most of these suppliers do not charge an installation fee some do have set-up charges.

If you are an organisation or service provider, and you want to support people with the cost of broadband or mobile data, please click here to view Good Things Foundation's guide on supporting people with data connectivity.

[Website: Good Things Foundation](https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org)

([goodthingsfoundation.org/data-poverty-lab/supporting-people-with-data-connectivity-broadband-and-mobile-data](https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/data-poverty-lab/supporting-people-with-data-connectivity-broadband-and-mobile-data))

The Greater Manchester Databank

The Greater Manchester Databank supports residents with free data SIM cards, through community organisations. Some households or residents are unable to access or afford an internet package. Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) is working with the Good Things Foundation to deliver their National Databank locally with the Greater Manchester Databank.

Greater Manchester's Databank is a "foodbank for connectivity" enabling local organisations to provide free SIM cards and mobile data (as well as talk minutes and texts) to residents in need.

Further information is available on the Greater Manchester Databank and how to access these free SIM cards via the GMCA website.

[Website: The Greater Manchester Databank](https://greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/digital/get-online-greater-manchester/greater-manchester-wide-support/the-greater-manchester-databank)
(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/digital/get-online-greater-manchester/greater-manchester-wide-support/the-greater-manchester-databank)

Organisations that want to help people in their community access free mobile data via the Greater Manchester Databank need to be a member of the Good Things Foundation National Digital Inclusion Network. It's free to join and easy to apply through the Good Things Foundation website.

[Website: Good Things Foundation](https://goodthingsfoundation.org/databank)
(goodthingsfoundation.org/databank)

[Email: Good Things Foundation](mailto:hello@goodthingsfoundation.org)
(hello@goodthingsfoundation.org)





Staying safe online

Being able to get online and have the basic skills to confidently navigate the online world has transformed lives, from staying connected with friends and family, staying up to date with local news or accessing GP and other health services, but it's important that is done safely. To understand how you, or someone you know, can stay safe and confident online visit [Get Online Greater Manchester](#) which brings together resources to stay safe online.

[Website: Get Online Greater Manchester](#)
(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/digital/get-online-greater-manchester/support-with-online-safety)

Advice for parents of children and young people

There is an increasing for parents, guardians and education settings to play a key role in keeping young people safe online.

The following organisations have support and helpful tips for parents to keep their children safe online when using a range of devices, such as phones, laptops, tablets or gaming consoles. They include guides on how to set up parental controls on devices and advice on helping children to manage their mental health online.

[NSPCC](#)

(nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety)

[UK Safer Internet](#)

(saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource)

[Internet Matters](#)

(internetmatters.org)

Internet Matters have also created a page that focuses on supporting children and young people stay safe online while gaming.

[Gaming Advice Hub from Internet Matters](#)

(internetmatters.org/resources/online-gaming-advice)

Developing individuals' confidence online

The following organisations have created many helpful guides for adults to use the internet safely. This includes information on how to avoid online scams and how to set up passwords securely.

[Age UK](#)

(ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/work-learning/technology-internet/internet-security)

[Get Safe Online](#)

(getsafeonline.org/personal/article-category/protecting-yourself)

[Which?](#)

(which.co.uk/consumer-rights/advice/how-to-spot-a-scam-1f1z5h8mnJ9)

Other available resources

Spectrum Gaming

Spectrum Gaming work with young autistic people up to the age of 18 and focus on building friendships and a community through their gaming sessions.



The team, who organise regular meet ups for young people in Greater Manchester, aim to increase self-acceptance amongst children and young people who are diagnosed as autistic and encourage them to accept their differences and live their happiest lives.

A parent of a young person attending Spectrum said:

“Spectrum gaming for my child was the first sociable space they’d been in where they felt safe, without fear of being laughed at or bullied. They’re inclusive and make everyone feel welcome.”

More info available at
Website: Spectrum Gaming
(spectrumgaming.net)

Email: Spectrum Gaming
(info@spectrumgaming.net)





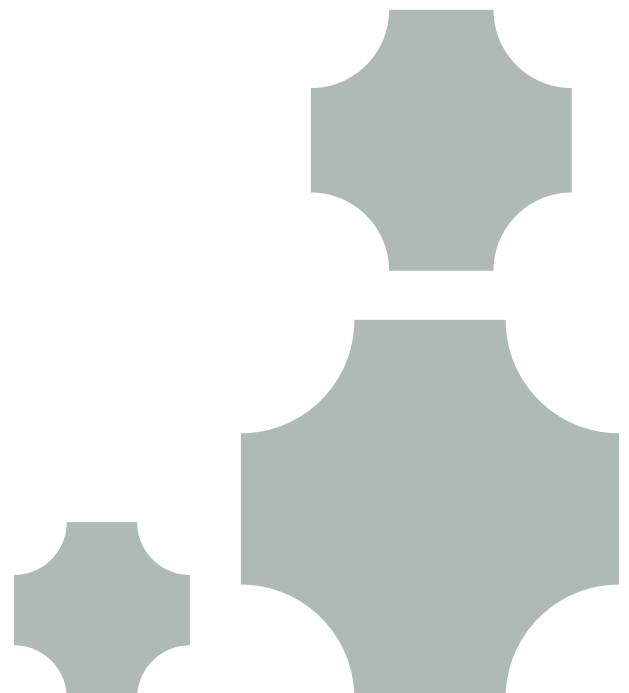
Education and Training Foundation – making learning accessible

The Education and Training Foundation have four national Centres for Excellence in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), including in Oldham. The Centres for Excellence provides expert support for leaders, managers and practitioners who wish to put learners with SEND at the centre of their organisation as part of a Department for Education (DfE) funded national programme.

Their Making Learning Accessible webpage brings together resources that will help you to use digital technology with SEND learners.

[Website: Education and Training Foundation](https://www.et-foundation.co.uk/professional-development/special-educational-needs-disabilities/teaching-and-learning/digital-technologies-and-send)

([et-foundation.co.uk/professional-development/special-educational-needs-disabilities/teaching-and-learning/digital-technologies-and-send](https://www.et-foundation.co.uk/professional-development/special-educational-needs-disabilities/teaching-and-learning/digital-technologies-and-send))





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