

# Manchester's Digital Inclusion Action Plan

Refresh (Feb 2024)



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using the same card or device



# What is Digital Inclusion?

Digital Exclusion occurs where someone doesn't have one or more of the following:

- Access to the Internet
- Skills/Confidence to use the Internet
- Motivation to use the Internet – “it's not for me”

According to [the UN](#), digital inclusion refers to the "equitable, meaningful, and safe access to use, lead, and design of digital technologies, services, and associated opportunities for everyone, everywhere. Digital inclusion is enabled by human rights-based, intersectional, and whole-of-society policies and multi-stakeholder approaches and actions, that take into account the various barriers individuals face when accessing and experiencing digital technologies."

There are different ways of describing and measuring digital inclusion. Recently, the [Minimum Digital Living Standards Project](#) has set out to identify the minimum digital needs of families in the UK. The current working definition is "A minimum digital standard of living includes, but is more than, having accessible internet, adequate equipment, and the skills, knowledge and support people need. It is about being able to communicate, connect and engage with opportunities safely and with confidence."

Importantly, as the [UK Digital Poverty Evidence Review](#) highlights, digital exclusion and poverty can affect anyone, and most of us will experience some form of digital exclusion in our lifetimes. People fall in and out of being digitally included. There is no switch we can flip to ensure that someone changes status permanently from "excluded" to "included."

“

Digital poverty is both the result of and a cause of financial hardship. A person might not need to live in financial poverty to experience digital poverty.

**UK Digital Poverty  
Evidence Review 2022**

”

# Digital Exclusion Research

## UK

- 1.7 million households do not have a broadband connection (2021).
- 2.4 million adults do not have even basic digital skills for life.
- Lack of digital skills costs the economy £63 billion a year.
- 20% of non-users say the internet is too expensive.
- 20% of non-users say the internet is too complicated.

## Manchester

- 1 in 3 (37%) residents report that their household experiences some form of digital exclusion.
- 63% of those aged 75+ and 52% of disabled people are likely to experience at least one aspect of digital exclusion.
- Residents are most likely to be excluded due to a lack of skills or support to allow them to access digital online services.
- Only around 40% of residents are able to use digital GP services.
- 12% of residents don't have decent broadband connections.

## Social Exclusion

- Almost 20% of residents don't have any formal education qualifications. (Those who left education at or under 18 years are almost 8x more likely to be limited or non-users.)
- Around 17% of residents have a disability. (32% of people with an impairment do not have even the most basic digital skills.)
- 20% of residents have a main language other than English. (Lack of English language literacy can be a barrier to learning digital skills.)
- 42% of children are growing up in poverty and 21% Mcr households have < £30/month discretionary income (not incl. broadband costs). (Limited users are 4x more likely to come from low-income households.)

Sources:

[https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5803/ldselect/ldcomm/219/21904.htm#\\_idTextAnchor004](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5803/ldselect/ldcomm/219/21904.htm#_idTextAnchor004)

<https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/insights/building-a-digital-nation/>

[https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/understanding\\_motivations\\_of\\_non-users\\_of\\_the\\_internet.pdf](https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/understanding_motivations_of_non-users_of_the_internet.pdf)

<https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/research/resident-surveys/>

# Digital Exclusion Research



"Digital exclusion affects millions of UK citizens. Every day, people are unable to access the internet because they do not have the connection, device or skills to get online. This digital divide is undermining efforts to improve UK productivity, economic growth and socio-economic inclusion. Cost of living challenges are exacerbating the problem for the most financially vulnerable."

**The House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee inquiry into "Digital Exclusion and the Cost of Living" (June 2023)**





# Mission Statement

We **advise** organisations across Manchester on how to embed digital inclusion into their existing offer.

We **support** residents and organisations serving residents to access digital skills training, devices, connectivity, and data.

We **connect** people working on digital inclusion across the city by convening meetings for networking and knowledge exchange.

We **amplify** the best practice across the city and country on digital inclusion to raise awareness.

And perhaps most importantly, we **listen** to the voices of lived experience. We strive to co-create solutions to digital exclusion with the people who have first-hand knowledge.

We don't chase the numbers because we know that being included is not a tick-box exercise. People will fall in and out of being digitally included at different points in their lives, and inclusion is often a qualitative experience.

***We're interested in culture change!*** Everyone needs to take responsibility for empowering people to be digitally included.



# Digital Inclusion Team

- **Libraries Citywide Services Manager (Reform)** - advising on strategic approaches to DI, amplifying and coordinating DI work within MCC and externally, reporting on the DI work across the city
- **Digital Inclusion Coordinator** – advising on strategic approaches to DI, coordinating DI work within MCC and externally, leading on community engagement, leading on device and data distribution projects, contributing to reports
- **Digital Inclusion Officer** – community engagement, supporting community orgs to embed DI into existing services, leading on Digital Champions volunteer project
- **Digital Inclusion Business Support** – data collection, responding to customer queries (via text line and inbox), comms support, distributing devices and data, admin for National Databank project

# Digital Inclusion in Manchester



**6745+**

people provided with data and/or a device



**500+**

residents that we've engaged with at our in-person events

**4200+**

free SIMs donated so far.  
17 libraries are registered as Databanks.



**200+**

care leavers supported with digital access, data and skills support

**280+**

Digital Inclusion Working Group members

**50+**

partner organisations currently being supported to embed DI

**1560+**

people supported via our inbox and text line



**140+**

UK Online Centres in Manchester

**1910+**

subscribers to our comms, including a monthly newsletter & Twitter.



# Strategic Landscape

Almost every aspect of everyday life is impacted by **digital** today: work, school, health, community, social and more.

**Digital** is fundamental to residents' lives, so **inclusion** is necessary for everyone to benefit.

This is why **digital inclusion** must be integral to all our key strategic plans citywide.

**Digital inclusion** is a priority embedded in several key Manchester City Council strategies.

# The Manchester Digital Strategy, 2021-2026

This strategy sets out the city's ambition to be a world-leading digital city by 2026, and digital inclusion is fundamental to this ambition.

Digital inclusion, equality, and diversity are at the heart of the strategy, and it is a priority to **"deepen our understanding of digital inclusion by continuing to deliver the Digital Inclusion Action Plan, developing the Digital Exclusion Index and actively engaging with residents and VCSE organisations."**

# Making Manchester Fairer: Anti-Poverty Strategy 2023-2027

Digital inclusion is also about ensuring that the digital technologies we adopt and use treat everyone fairly. The Anti-Poverty Strategy commits to implementing the Algorithmic Transparency Standard so we can make sure that algorithmic decision-making (like AI) does not unfairly penalise people on low incomes, and encourage our partners to do the same.

Algorithms are sets of rules applied to data in order to find patterns, solve problems, or make predictions. Local authorities and other organisations collect, store, and analyse large amounts of data, and they increasingly use algorithms to support decision making. The use of algorithms gives opportunities to make services more efficient, tailor services to individual users, and reveal new insights about social problems based on robust evidence. However, algorithmic decision-making also brings risks, such as violations of privacy, discrimination, and bias against certain people or groups.

The UK Algorithmic Transparency Standard is a national framework to enable the public sector to share information on the use of algorithmic tools with the public and other stakeholders, such as regulators and researchers. Publishing this information out in the open means that these systems and tools can be subjected to public debate and scrutiny.



**CERTIFICATE**  
of Digital Skills

*Awely gwaned to*  
David Hogue

...the following subjects or Learn My Way

Introduction to Microsoft Word	Completed on 12/15/2022
Introduction to Microsoft Excel	Completed on 12/15/2022
Introduction to Microsoft PowerPoint	Completed on 12/15/2022
Introduction to Microsoft Outlook	Completed on 12/15/2022
Introduction to Microsoft Teams	Completed on 12/15/2022
Introduction to Microsoft OneDrive	Completed on 12/15/2022
Introduction to Microsoft SharePoint	Completed on 12/15/2022
Introduction to Microsoft Yammer	Completed on 12/15/2022

DAF

# Making Manchester Fairer: Tackling Health Inequalities in Manchester 2022–2027

Health inequalities are the avoidable gaps between the healthiest and least healthy people and communities in our city. So many Mancunians fared worse during the pandemic because of existing inequalities.

The pandemic also exposed the added barriers to good health that some communities face as a result of prejudice and discrimination. Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, as well as Disabled People, were disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

The Making Manchester Fairer Action Plan seeks to address the persistent health inequalities in Manchester and digital inclusion is explicitly highlighted as a key driver of this:

"Digital inclusion is about making the benefits and opportunities of the internet and digital technology available to everyone. Addressing the digital divide is one of the many great social – and health equity – challenges."

The Digital Inclusion team is actively engaged with the plan's various kickstarter projects and is advising on where digital inclusion initiatives can support the projects' aims.



# Investing in Success: Manchester's Economic Strategy

This strategy sets out a vision for the next 25 years

One of the five priorities is: “Develop world-class infrastructure, places and talent.”

As part of that it references “Delivering Manchester’s Digital Strategy” and “Digital connectivity is now as essential to businesses and residents as traditional utilities such as water and power.”

The delivery of the Digital Inclusion Action Plan will support residents’ digital skills, the economic strategy and the ambition for inclusive growth.

# Age Friendly Strategy

The 4 main themes of the Age Friendly Strategy are:

- Being Heard and Age Equality
- Age Friendly Neighborhoods where we can Age in Place
- Age Friendly Services that support us to Age Well
- Work, Skills and Money

Given that digital exclusion disproportionately affects older people, we are working closely with the Age Friendly team to embed digital inclusion into the strategy's delivery plan, under each of the four themes. Our particular focus is supporting age friendly organisations to promote digital inclusion as part of existing services.

# Digital Inclusion in Manchester: A consultancy approach

During the COVID19 pandemic, the Digital Inclusion team were responsible for preparing and sending out numerous devices to residents and providing them with mentor volunteers to guide and train in the use of these devices.

Since the end of the pandemic, the Digital Inclusion team has adopted a different consultancy based approach that will bring inclusivity to more citizens of Manchester.

This approach involves contacting community organisations and offering to help them embed digital initiatives in their offer by using a bespoke 'Digital Inclusion Toolkit'.

To date, we have contacted over 30 community organisations and helped them improve their digital offer to their service users.

Here are some of the organisations we are working with:-

**Mustard Tree**

**Believe in children**

New Longsight Housing Co-op

**boaztrust**  
serving destitute asylum seekers

**CAHN**  
Caribbean & African Health Network

**Barnardo's**

**MASH**  
manchester action on street health  
est. 1991

**GEORGE HOUSE TRUST**  
HIV POSITIVE LIVING

**Cornerstone**  
Caritas Diocese of Salford

**Sharp Futures**

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...the real voice of Manchester

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**Golden Centre of Opportunities**  
We are a City & Guilds Approved Centre and a Matrix Accredited Centre

**back on track >**



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Est 1846  
manchester deaf centre

**North Manchester Community Partnership**

**Booth Centre**

**BARNABUS**  
Bringing hope to the homeless and vulnerable



**COFFEE 4 Craig**

**healthy me healthy communities**  
www.hmhc.co.uk

**MANCHESTER SETTLEMENT**  
CREATING STRONGER COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

# Building Stronger Communities Together Strategy

The pandemic shone a spotlight on the issues of loneliness and social isolation in our society. One of the few positive impacts from this time was the rise of people using digital to communicate; and the benefits of these online communities mean that people from diverse backgrounds, who otherwise might not have come together, can find a common space.

But not everyone has access.

As more and more of our life takes place online, from chatting with friends and neighbours on social media, consuming culture, checking local events, to reading regional & national news, for those offline the social isolation is exacerbated. We recognise that digital exclusion is social exclusion.

However, the increase in digital communication can increase the risk of polarisation, as hate speech and fake news lead to online conflicts which spill over into the real world. Therefore, it is vital that digital inclusion work also promotes online safety and media literacy.

The Digital Inclusion team will support the Building Stronger Communities Together Strategy team to ensure that the delivery plan considers digital excluded members of our communities and co-designs strategies to support them.



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NORTHERN

# Purpose of this Action Plan

- This document is a plan for meeting the strategic priorities of the city, particularly those articulated in the Digital Strategy.
- Our actions are organised into workstreams >> workstreams have specific objectives >> and objectives are delivered by our vast array of partners across the city.
- We are always looking for partners who are willing to commit to delivering on this action plan with our advice and support, so please get in touch!



# Digital Inclusion Action Plan

1 Advising & Building Capacity	2 Expanding Access	3 Digital Capability	4 Sustainability & Affordability	5 Listening & Research
<p>1.1 Embed DI in existing services</p> <p>1.2 Encourage knowledge exchange, develop digital champions across all sectors</p> <p>1.3 Increase number of digital champions providing support in libraries and providing telephone support</p> <p>1.4 Build local DI networks</p> <p>1.5 Support frontline workers to provide ad hoc skills support</p>	<p>2.1 Donate devices + data to residents &amp; comm orgs (lending &amp; device refurb schemes)</p> <p>2.2 Make grants and funding available to Manchester organisations (incl non-MCC funding)</p> <p>2.3 Develop infrastructure e.g. public wifi hotspots, mesh (free/affordable connectivity), embed connectivity in social value</p> <p>2.4 Increase device and connectivity donations through social value contracts</p>	<p>3.1 Improve visibility of digital skills support in communities, including in libraries</p> <p>3.2 Help ensure all Manchester residents and MCC staff have digital skills for life and work</p> <p>3.3 Promote online safety and wellbeing for children and schools</p> <p>3.4 Promote digital skills for employability</p> <p>3.5 Data and algorithmic literacy in public and MCC staff and public sector staff more widely</p>	<p>4.1 Promote and support circular economy initiatives (e.g. refurb device schemes)</p> <p>4.2 Encourage software development that is backward compatible (overcome planned obsolescence)</p> <p>4.3 Keep costs down by recycling</p>	<p>5.1 Involve people with lived experience in co-designing digital inclusion projects and interventions</p> <p>5.2 Support research into digital exclusion and strategies for increasing inclusion and diversity</p> <p>5.3 Use the Digital Exclusion Risk Index to target work and encouraging use across all sectors</p>



# Advising & Building Capacity



## Objectives:

- 1.1 Embed DI in existing services
- 1.2 Encourage knowledge exchange, develop digital champions across all sectors
- 1.3 Increase number of digital champions providing support in libraries and providing telephone support
- 1.4 Build local DI networks
- 1.5 Support frontline workers to provide ad hoc skills support

# Advising & Building Capacity: We will...

Intervention	Why?	Lead	Target Date/ Report Back	Measure/deliverables	Updates
Digital Champions scheme	To boost capacity at digital skills sessions, to develop skills of volunteers	MCC DI team	Feb 2024	Numbers of DCs trained and matched to volunteering opportunities	Refresh Feb 2024
DI toolkit	Support frontline staff to recognise digital exclusion, know where to signpost, know how to embed DI into existing services	MCC DI and W&S teams	April 2024	A toolkit ppt for community orgs	40+ organisations contacted
Consultancy offer to community organisations	To support community orgs to embed DI in existing services, so residents can access support in trusted spaces	MCC DI team	ongoing	Number of Let's Get Digital partners, case studies on partner organisations	1 case study live on 'Lets Get Digital' website, several more in preparation.
Social housing model of good practice and reporting pro-forma	To support SH providers to offer DI support to tenants, to agree on annual reporting	WCHG	April 2024	Annual reporting pro-forma; SH DI blueprint	Meeting to be planned ASAP early 2024
PSTN switch off advisory role	To minimise risks to vulnerable residents in the forthcoming PSTN switch off	MCC DI team	April 2024	Awareness raising materials for staff and residents	GMCA working group set up



# Expanding Access

## Objectives:

- 2.1 Donate devices + data to residents & comm orgs (lending & device refurb schemes)
- 2.2 Make grants and funding available to Manchester organisations (incl non-MCC funding)
- 2.3 Develop infrastructure e.g. public wifi, mesh (free/affordable connectivity), embed connectivity in social value
- 2.4 Increase device and connectivity donations through social value contracts

# Expanding Access: We will...

Intervention	Why?	Lead	Target Date/ Report Back	Measure/deliverables	Updates
Databank promotion	To ensure more services include this in their existing support offers	MCC DI team	Ongoing	Number of databanks across city increased	20 new databanks set up as part of DI toolkit initiative in 2023 Over 4000 Sims donated in 2023
MESH pilot in MCC social housing	To explore alternative, cheaper connectivity for social housing tenants	Digital Strategy Team	Feb 2024	Pilot site for MESH network agreed and networked	
Device lending library pilots	To trial more sustainable approach to device poverty	MCC DI team	Evaluate projects in March 2024	Number of clients supported with device loan and impact of this on their lives	
Be Well device scheme	To support Be Well clients' health and wellbeing via online tools	Big Life Group	Feb 2024	25 Geobooks donated to 25 clients who are partnered with a coach for digital skills support	5 devices donated so far
Komp device project	To reduce social isolation in older people to video chat with family	Age Friendly NCDO (MCC)	Completed Aug 23	Number of older people who receive a device and can use it to stay in contact with family	Delivery made to Didsbury and Chorlton Good Neighbours
Funding opportunities	To boost capacity in VCSE to offer DI support	MCC DI team	Ongoing	Amount of funding brought into the city	
Social Value	To increase the number of refurbished low cost hardware being reused by Manchester residents	MCC DI team	April 2024	Amount of devices donated to residents	

# Digital Capability



## Objectives:

- 3.1 Improve visibility of digital skills support in communities, including in libraries
- 3.2 Help ensure all Manchester residents and MCC staff have digital skills for life and work
- 3.3 Promote online safety and wellbeing for children and schools
- 3.4 Promote digital skills for employability
- 3.5 Data and algorithmic literacy in public and MCC staff and public sector staff more widely

# Digital Capability: We will...

Intervention	Why?	Lead	Target Date/ Report Back	Measure/deliverables	Updates
Digital health hubs in multiple areas of the city	To empower people to manage health via online tools, to ease capacity at GPs in order to keep analogue routes open for those who need them	MCC DI team and NHS	Feb 2024	Number of Digital Health Hubs across the city	Wythenshawe pilot successful. Cheetham, Harpurhey rolled out Feb 2024. Gorton, Longsight and Levenshulme planned for Summer 24
Support the development and implementation of a digital skills framework	To align business and resident digital skills needs.	W&S team	Ongoing		Digital skills framework launched in January 24
Learn My Way in libraries project	To improve digital skills of library customers, to develop confidence of library staff in using LMW platform	MCC DI team	Complete June 23	Training materials and workshops delivered to library staff	Pilot at Central Library is complete
Workforce Digital Skills Development	Staff to be digital advocates and have the skills they need for work now and in future	MCC Workforce Development	Feb 2024	A Workforce Digital Skills plan	

# Sustainability & Affordability



## Objectives:

- 4.1 Promote and support circular economy initiatives (e.g. refurb device schemes)
- 4.2 Encourage software development that is backward compatible (overcome planned obsolescence)
- 4.3 Keep costs down by recycling

# Sustainability & Affordability: We will...

Intervention	Why?	Lead	Target Date/ Report Back	Measure/deliverables	Updates
Community Computers refurb device scheme	To increase numbers of devices available to residents, to support MCC's Zero Carbon pledge	Community Computers	On-going	Monthly donation and sales data for Manchester	
Old MCC devices refurbished and donated to Manchester residents	To increase numbers of devices available to residents, to support MCC's Zero Carbon pledge	MCC IT	Mar 2024  2025	More refurbished devices received by Manchester residents  Existing contractor (Tier1) makes some devices available to Manchester residents  Influence new and MCC IT contracts to include that residents receive our old devices	Contact made with Tier1 refurb partner on MCC contract.
Comms work on e-waste recycling	Drive up donations to refurb scheme; meeting MCC's Zero Carbon pledge	MCC's Zero Carbon Comms team	April 2024	Comms campaign produced by MCC	



# Listening & Research



## Objectives:

- 5.1 3-part research project on "Reframing digital exclusion"
- 5.2 Digital Exclusion Risk Index
- 5.3 Annual Digital Inclusion Report

# Listening & Research: We will...

Intervention	Why?	Lead	Target Date/ Report Back	Measure/deliverables	Updates
3-part research project on "Reframing digital exclusion"	Hear from people with lived experience in order to better understand and co-design initiatives	Open Data Manchester (ODM)	Report delivered January 2024	Report on Digital volunteers, report on focus groups, user research materials for community orgs	
Digital Exclusion Risk Index	Use data to target work in the areas of the city most at risk of digital exclusion,	MCC PRI team	Ongoing	Number of uses of the DERI	
Annual Digital Inclusion report, from 2024	To report on metrics which indicate residents are more digitally included	MCC PRI team	Ongoing	Annual report produced from 2024	



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The Let's Get Digital Manchester programme is run by a  
dedicated digital inclusion team in the Library Service at Manchester  
City Council.

