



Digital Inclusion in Surrey

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A STRATEGIC APPROACH

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Digital” permeates everything. How we communicate, work, learn, travel and entertain ourselves today is a world away from 20 years ago. Digital skills are classed by the [government as ‘essential’](#) to live in our society today. Yet, **18% (21,560) adults in Surrey do not have all of these skills** and **5.7% (50,000) adults in Surrey are offline**. Many more people **lack the recommended digital skills for work (19%)**. Improving digital inclusion has a wide range of benefits. For the Council, supporting this work will drive more successful digital transformation, modernisation and channel shift. Improving digital maturity, culture and working practices will future proof the Council to deliver outstanding public services in a more efficient way. The social benefits for residents are also hugely significant; improved health and wellbeing, social inclusion, better employment opportunities and saving money. Recent research calculates **the ROI for every £1 in digital inclusion to yield £9.48¹ in economic benefits**. These positive outcomes support Surrey County Council’s 2030 ambition to, ‘make Surrey a uniquely special place for people to live, work and learn, and where no one is left behind’.

From our research with stakeholders and experience in this field we have co-produced a digital inclusion action plan to recognise existing work being delivered in Surrey, and included actions for the future, to form a roadmap to improve digital inclusion and make it sustainable. The problem of digital exclusion is not going away, it is only changing. For example, changes in technology such as 2factor authentication, assistive technology, remote working, a cashless society, the switch-off of analogue phone lines and the metaverse will bring new challenges to inclusion. There is a misconception that this issue will be solved when older people reach their natural end. Digital skills gaps still exist and our young people are not all ‘digital natives’.² **Digital skills are an enabler** and this action plan will deliver benefits to support a wide range of SCC priorities and other strategies. This recommended approach aims to embed digital inclusion and make this work part of business as usual.

Many of the barriers to improving digital inclusion in Surrey can be overcome with a **collaborative networked approach**. Surrey Heartlands currently have funding for this purpose and have established a digital inclusion steering group, which currently has around 80 organisations involved. We recommend that SCC collaborates with Surrey Heartlands to grow and develop a digital inclusion network, and to adopt and monitor the action plan. A networked approach has been adopted successfully in other areas such as; [Digital Dorset](#), [100% Digital Leeds](#), [Digital Brighton & Hove](#), [Greater](#)

¹ [Economic Impact of Digital Inclusion 2022](#)

² [Digital Poverty Alliance Evidence Review 2022](#)

[Manchester](#). Other barriers to inclusion highlighted by stakeholders including raising awareness of support to residents, a joined-up understanding of digital inclusion support provision (mapping of activity), access to devices, funding and training of digital champions – all of which can all be better addressed in a digital inclusion network. Having a network will enable sharing of best practice and amplifying key messages to reach more residents in need.

The residents most at risk of digital exclusion are more likely to include some of the most vulnerable groups³. Including people who are; older, disabled, people with low formal education or living on low-income. These groups will also feel the impact of the rising cost of living - potentially cancelling broadband contracts⁴, being unable to buy devices and data thus further exacerbating digital poverty. There is a need for sustainable access to low cost of gifted devices in the County. Refurbishing schemes also contribute to environmental goals such as reducing landfill waste. Raising awareness of low-cost broadband offers ('social tariffs') should also be prioritised.

Surrey County Council has some good examples of digital inclusion work and crucially, the Council recognises that not everyone will be able to transact online and alternative options to engage with the Council are open. The libraries offer digital skills support and funding for **two Digital Welfare Officers**, has improved capacity for digital skills support available to residents. A **digital skills strategy and training offer for staff** has supported over 10,000 participants, all of which will increase the digital maturity of SCC and enable more efficient ways of working. New roles within digital service design have also broadened user research and increased accessibility of digital products. Essential digital skills courses are available as part of the Adult Learning offer. However, for SCC to fully recognise the social and economic benefits of this work more importance of this work there is a need for support and recognition for it at Senior Leadership level and **clear ownership** within the Council structures. **Dedicated resource to drive collaboration internally** between different directorates at SCC, and **externally with other organisations** working to reduce digital exclusion is required.

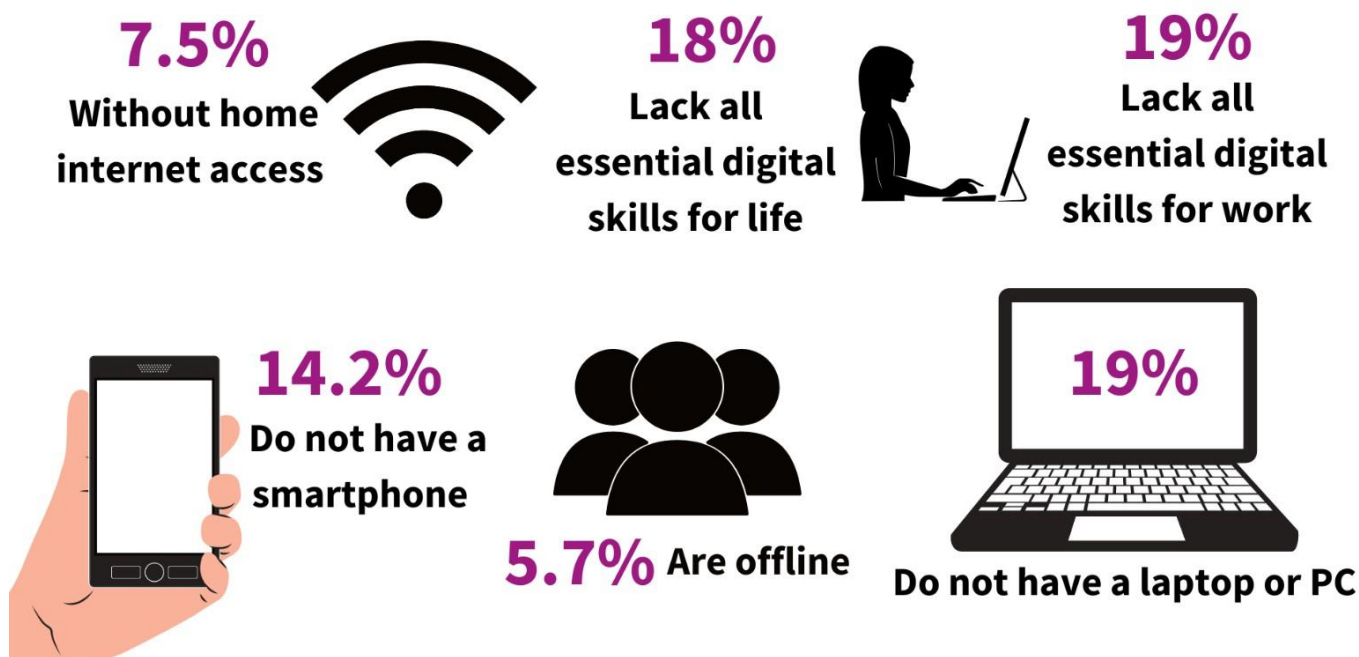
The fantastic contributions from stakeholders during this consultation has demonstrated the tremendous passion for this work. We hope that SCC will commit to the recommendations to reap the

³ Older people are more likely to not be online, 85% of UK population who are estimated to have never used the internet are aged 65 or over (2.8 million); and among people living with disabilities 14.9% have never used the internet (2.3 million people), compared to 3.4% of those who are not disabled [ONS 2020](#).

⁴ [One million people cancel broadband](#)

benefits that digital inclusion can deliver; not only from modernising service delivery, but also from the life changing impact that digital inclusion can have for residents.

Digital Exclusion Stats - Adults in Surrey



ABOUT THIS REPORT

Citizens Online were commissioned to research and review Surrey County Council and its partners' approach to Digital Inclusion. Our findings in this report provide:

- A better understanding of digital exclusion and inclusion issues
- A picture of current digital inclusion provision in the County
- An action plan based on recommendations to improve Digital Inclusion

Our research has included engagement with 86 stakeholders from 38 organisations. We have conducted interviews (n=37), an online survey (n=60), a workshop (n=26), desktop research and a strategic document review.

The scope of the report includes residents who are “Digitally Excluded” through recognised barriers: digital skills, motivation, confidence and trust, and access to and affordability of data and devices. Whilst there is a need to support anyone who is digitally excluded to access the benefits of the internet, it is also important to recognise that there will be residents who will never be able to use a digital service or will need assistance to do so. The accompanying action plan details interventions which will enable digital participation and boost a range of other social and economic outcomes.

We hope our recommendations are agreed and adopted to embed digital inclusion access into business as usual, not only for Surrey County Council, but also other organisations transforming digitally across the County. This will help to deliver outstanding, inclusive digital services and enable everyone to benefit from the digital world we now live in.

Surrey County Council's Vision

By 2030 we want Surrey to be a uniquely special place where everyone has a great start to life, people live healthy and fulfilling lives, are enabled to achieve their full potential and contribute to their community, and no one is left behind.

ACTIONS

To achieve the vision of Surrey County Council, digital inclusion actions will focus on three areas:

CREATING THE ENVIRONMENT WHERE DIGITAL INCLUSION HAPPENS

We need to raise awareness of digital inclusion work at a County wide level, including at a senior level within the Council. This will ensure this work is treated as a priority as the key enabler it is for residents to live better, healthier lives and the County to prosper. Asking residents about their digital skills and access as standard for all public and community services will help us to gather data and target support. This will also help to embed digital inclusion into organisations and reminds staff that digital skills are everyone's responsibility. Having this evidence base will also enable better funding opportunities and leverage more support from social value in contracts.

BUILDING DIGITAL SKILLS, MOTIVATION, CONFIDENCE AND TRUST

These are key barriers that prevent people from being digitally included and organisations in the County must work together to solve them. There is a need to train more trusted digital champions who can help residents to overcome these barriers. From our consultation the key concern was raising awareness of what support is available. There are many people who need help but don't know where to go.

CONNECTIVITY AND ACCESS TO DEVICES

Access to devices was the second key concern from responses in our consultation. As the cost of living crisis deepens, and more services move online, we know that people will continue to need support

with access to suitable devices. Encouraging more recycling of devices will also contribute to the green agenda. With uptake at only 3%⁵ for people who are eligible for social tariffs, more must be done to promote these offers.

Creating the environment where digital inclusion happens

1. Make digital part of the conversation. Embed digital inclusion within all Council work streams, public and community services
2. Raise awareness of the barriers to digital inclusion
3. Continue to learn from and implement digital inclusion best practice
4. Seek opportunities to support and fund digital inclusion work from organisations, charitable trusts and leverage social value from relevant contracts

Supporting residents to access the benefits of the internet

Building digital skills, motivation, confidence & trust

5. Establish a Digital Inclusion Network to:
 - Train and support more digital champions
 - Promote best practice
 - Facilitate a joined up approach
 - Signpost to provision and resources, including specialist support for key at risk groups⁶
6. Raise awareness of digital inclusion support for residents and promote the benefits of technology
7. Create a common approach to assess digital exclusion eg. Level of skills, confidence and access to devices for residents

Connectivity and access to devices

8. Establish a sustainable solution for residents to access free or low cost devices
9. Ensure availability of free-to-use devices in public settings through libraries, community hubs and other facilities.
10. Promote social tariffs, free and low cost data packages and availability of free wifi to residents

⁵ [Ofcom 2020](#)

⁶ Disabled, Learning disabilities, dementia, older people, care leavers, care givers, English as an Additional Language, Low income, neurodiverse

PRINCIPLES

It is recommended that SCC and other organisations as part of the Surrey Heartlands Digital Inclusion network, learn from best practice in digital inclusion around the UK and adopt the following design principles:

AN EVIDENCE BASED APPROACH

We will ensure that everything we do to tackle the digital divide will be based on the best available evidence. We have mapped digital exclusion risk in the County and gathered views from cross sector stakeholders' views and experiences of digital. We will improve understanding with more work with residents.

PARTNERSHIP AND JOINT WORKING

Digital inclusion is too big an issue for one single organisation to tackle. We will encourage and facilitate better partnership working via the Surrey Heartlands ICB digital inclusion network. We will also learn from other networks such as [Digital Poverty Alliance](#).

PROVIDING SUPPORT TO RESIDENTS WHEN AND WHERE THEY NEED IT

We know that people's needs vary, and our approach will ensure different types of support continue to be available to residents in varied settings. Working with a wide range of organisations and different types of digital champions to make this happen.

SECURING INVESTMENT TO BUILD SUSTAINABILITY

Digital inclusion is a cross cutting priority and by raising the profile of this work at a strategic level we seek to secure funding from a range of sources. We will seek out further funding and investment from contracts, corporate donors and charitable trusts and foundations.



KEY RESEARCH

Within Surrey County Council (SCC), there are examples of good digital inclusion practice but it varies between services. The action plan contains recommendations to standardise best practice throughout the Council to support the Council’s vision *“to help everyone in Surrey benefit from all the opportunities on offer in our county, and to ensure that no one is left behind. Now, and in the future.”* Embedding digital inclusion in to the design and delivery of services is a significant part of ensuring Surrey residents can benefit from the opportunities on offer and that those who are vulnerable are not excluded further. SCC, along with other organisations in the County, need to ‘Create the environment for digital inclusion to happen’. These actions are aimed to make this work sustainable and part of ‘business as usual’. Some actions are already in progress, others are longer term aims.

The recommendations in this report support the four priority objectives in SCC Organisational strategy:

- Growing a sustainable economy so everyone can benefit – ensuring local residents have digital skills will contribute to sustainable economy and allow organisation to scale as they work in a more efficient way,
- Tackling health inequality – with increasing use of digital health tools, digital skills and access are an important part of accessing health care,
- Enabling a greener future – device recycling and refurbishing is a part of the solution to greener future,
- Empowering & thriving communities – supporting digital inclusion will empower residents and communities.

Digital inclusion does not sit within one sector but crosses many agendas. The recommendations in this report link to the following strategies and services. These should include considering the barriers digital exclusion can create for residents:

- Equality Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2022 to 2023
- Customer promise
- Health and Care:
 - Adult social care vision
 - Living Well in Later Life - Older People’s Commissioning Strategy 2021-2030
 - Surrey Carers Strategy 2021-2024

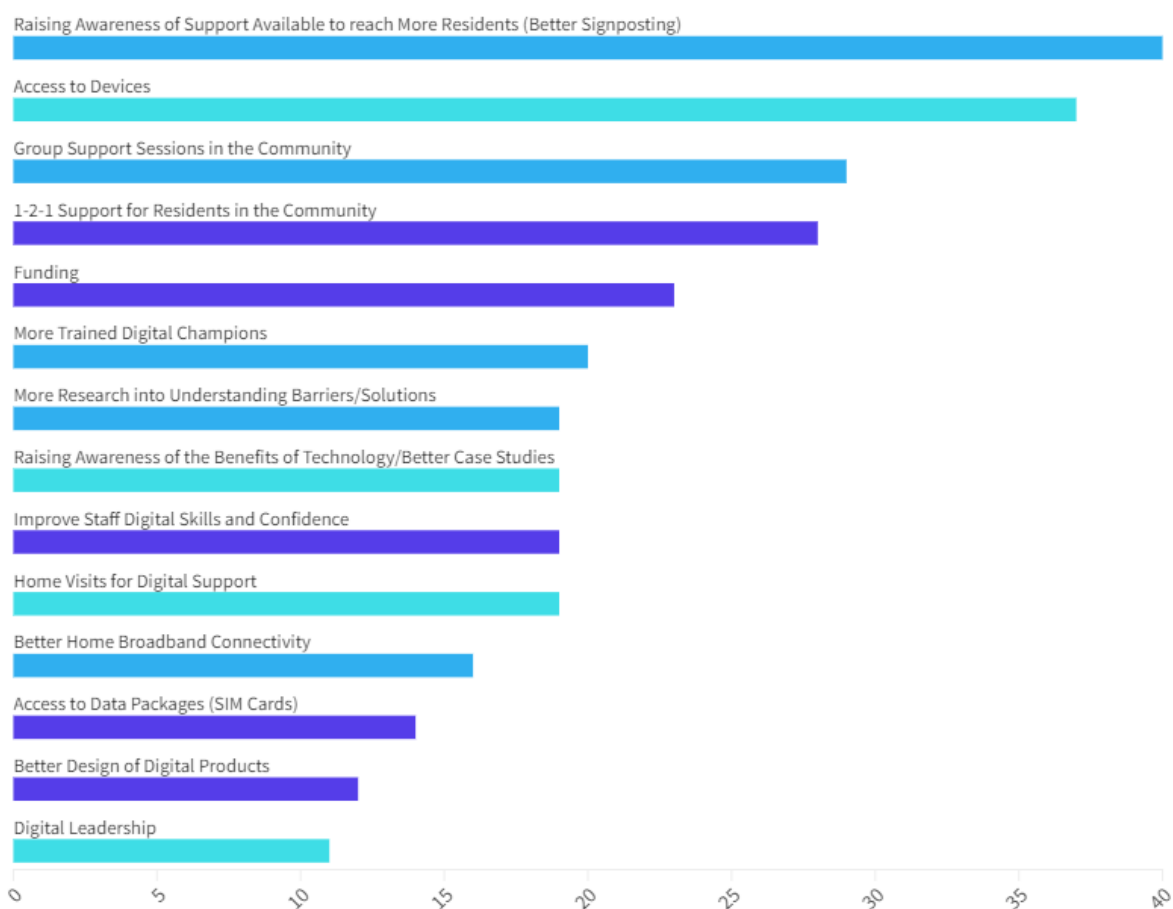
- Joint Health and Social Care Dementia Strategy for Surrey 2022 to 2027
- Surrey’s Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Public Health Team Service Plan 2023-24
- Digital Strategy 2025
- Surrey Skills Plan 2022
- Children and Young People; Education
- Adult education

Other key organisations and strategies across the County include:

- Surrey Heartlands Digital inclusion strategy
- District and Borough Councils: Corporate or Core Strategy; Communications and Customer Service Strategies; IT and Digital Strategies.
- Housing associations and voluntary sector organisations.

Figure 1: Priorities to tackle digital exclusion in Surrey (survey responses, n=60).

Priorities to tackle digital exclusion in Surrey (survey responses)



The barriers to digital inclusion in Surrey were examined with stakeholders in the survey, interviews, and the workshop. See figure 1 for responses to this question in the survey.

SUPPORTING RESIDENTS WITH DIGITAL SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE

Providing support to residents with digital skills and confidence should come in many forms to meet their needs. In the survey these were:

- Group support sessions in the community (48%)
- 1-to-1 support for residents (46%)
- Having more Digital Champions (33%)
- Home visits for digital support (19%)

The role of informal support has been highlighted often in sector research.⁷ This is something many of us are familiar with - think back to the last time you were struggling to do something online – you may have searched online for a solution, but on the whole most people ask someone near to them. This type of support can have limitations, friends and family can lack patience and do the task for someone, rather than supporting learners to learn to perform the task themselves.

A coordinated digital champion (DC) programme across the County would **enhance current activity** and offer a **more sustainable way of delivering digital skills support**. Having a dedicated trainer and using resources from organisations such as Digital Unite, Digital Eagles and Learn my Way would help to increase provision. There is interest in this work, 22 respondents in the survey stated an interest to receive free training up upskill their staff/volunteers. Half of those interested in this were SCC staff. When overcoming digital exclusion, SCC staff also thought that training Digital Champions was a priority (38%), compared to the total respondents (33.3%). When speaking to departments, there was no coordinated approach or training for staff to support residents digitally. We strongly advocate for Embedded Digital Champions. These are staff members (usually in a customer or staff facing role who are trained to digitally support colleagues and residents with digital services. There are some already in place in Adult Social Care, Community,

⁷ Centre for Ageing Better & Citizens Online 2021: [Digital Skills to Connect](#). This research was conducted with people aged 50-70 years old on lower incomes during the pandemic

Investment and Engagement, Highways, IT and Development. There is potential to develop this further, embedded Digital Champions can include:

- Customer Contact staff supporting a range of online services
- Revenues and Benefits advisors assisting people with online benefits claims
- Employment support workers helping someone to job search online
- Social prescribers helping residents improve health outcomes through digital health apps
- Carers supporting others with long term health conditions
- Library staff supporting residents use in-house devices

Research indicates that digital inclusion projects that use an embedded digital champion approach were able to maintain participant engagement for longer.⁸

Our research also highlighted a need for digital support **home visits**. 20% of survey respondents put this in the top 5 of priorities for overcoming digital exclusion. It is positive there is a cross-county awareness that those who are fully or partially housebound are further disadvantaged from accessing digital support. Utilising pre-existing support that visits people's home, such as homecare, the library home delivery service or meal services offer avenues to train staff as digital champions and provide in the home digital support.

An interviewee raised that there was not enough information on residents digital skills and access, to be able to support them. The SCC Digital Skills Team told us they collect feedback forms after their sessions with staff. **Monitoring and data collection** of learners (residents and staff) should be integrated across the county. We recommend SCC conduct **a resident insight survey** on digital access and skills, and work in partnership with external stakeholders to share the findings. This survey could additionally develop understanding and lead to work streams on characteristics that increase the likelihood of being digitally excluded, such as: English as an Additional Language, jobseekers, dementia/memory issues, and learning disabilities.

⁸ SCVO (2017) [Digital Participation Challenge Fund Review](#)

ACCESS TO DEVICES AND DATA

Access to devices was the second most often chosen barrier to digital inclusion, with **62% of respondents** to the survey stating this is a key priority.

STAFF DIGITAL SKILLS

There are examples of great digital inclusion and digital skills activity taking place across the SCC and other organisations. SCC has developed a Staff Digital Skills strategy and have a Digital Skills Team who support staff, offering a range of support depending on what individual staff members needed. In addition, staff Tech Advocates support colleague with Microsoft 365 training. This is a great example of good practice.

Across all organisations we spoke to, there is a strong willingness for skilled staff to support residents. SCC's organisational strategy demonstrates the importance of staff skills, with a priority that ***“people's needs are met by skilled staff who offer a consistent and good quality service”***. However, there is more to be done to ensure that staff have the *digital* skills to support residents. **Upskilling staff** was a slightly higher priority for Surrey CC staff (43%) compared to all survey respondents (32%). Lack of confidence amongst staff in different organisations of how they could help residents ranged from a lack of personal digital skills, lack of Digital Champion training, and lack of knowledge of where they could signpost residents. Improving staff digital skills through awareness and training, working in partnership between SCC, District and Borough Councils, health, voluntary sector and private organisations is key to overcoming digital exclusion.

One of the barriers to digital inclusion highlighted in the interviews was that not all **operational staff** at SCC and District and Borough Councils have the digital skills needed, often don't have digital devices provided by their work place, and in some cases are not provided staff email addresses. To ensure all staff are digitally included, these barriers must be assessed and addressed. We were told that a new project within SCC was aimed to reach more community-based members of staff – this is a strong step to increasing staff digital skills but needs to be incorporated county wide to ensure that all staff employed by local authorities have the access to devices, connectivity, and digital support.

AWARENESS OF DIGITAL SKILLS SUPPORT AVAILABLE FOR RESIDENTS

Only 32% of stakeholders surveyed said that they **ask residents about digital skills and access**. 43% asked these questions ‘sometimes’. As digital skills are classed as essential for all UK adults in today’s society it’s important to embed this as part of the conversation. And when service providers identify that residents need further support with digital skills, they need to be aware of where to signpost them for further support. 62% of those surveyed signpost residents to digital support – but **67% said that more needs to be done to raise awareness of support available to residents**.

In interviews, many participants also discussed this, noting that to improve digital inclusion, a mapping of digital inclusion activity in the county (n=5), and more joined up understanding of cross-county projects (n=8)= would be helpful. Similarly, not having a road map/cohesive plan across the county, and lack of awareness of support offers were cited as barriers. Other national research also supports this finding, The Centre for Aging Better reported that 87% of 50-70yr olds on household incomes of under 25K, did not know where to go to get help with digital skills.⁹



⁹ [Centre For Aging Better Digital Skills to Connect July 2021](#)

INTERNAL WORK WITHIN ORGANISATIONS AND NETWORKING

There isn't a consistent approach about how to support digitally excluded residents. A lack of a: cohesive road map, digital inclusion strategy, and approach to digital transformation, was cited as a barrier to digital inclusion by stakeholders. An approach to digital skills training that is consistent across departments, that could be shared with external organisations, would enable all resident facing staff to support residents more effectively, and boost their own skillset. In addition to boosting staff members' digital knowledge, how to share this knowledge with others is key in supporting residents.

A lack of joined up understanding and partnership working, both within SCC and amongst partner organisations were identified in our research as creating a significant barrier to digital inclusion. Many staff across SCC and District and Borough Councils felt that there is **not strong enough support from senior leadership**, and they therefore did not have confidence that digital inclusion will be incorporated into business plans to be embedded into everyday practice. Having confidence and trust within departments, organisations, and across organisations is key to successfully embedding digital inclusion work. One SCC staff member felt that there was a lack of staff comms and engagement around digital inclusion. Embedding digital inclusion as an organisational priority could encourage staff motivation to embed it into their daily practice. It is key that this prioritisation comes from all areas of the organisation – especially leadership.

Staff and volunteers should feel confident sharing support resources, signposting learners/residents, raising awareness about being safe online, and promoting the benefits of the digital world. There was a reoccurring theme in our research that staff across SCC, District and Borough Councils and other organisations did not know what digital support was out there, and strongly felt a joined-up county approach would help overcome this. Need for **'joined up understanding of projects'** was the most cited priority in interviews. Similarly in the survey the most often cited priority, with just over half (52%) of respondents choosing it, was **'Raising awareness of support to reach more residents'**. To be able to successfully triage residents between organisations and support services, **partnership working** with resource and knowledge sharing at the centre is essential. Mapping of activity across the county was also strongly cited as a need by those we interviewed.

Overall, digital inclusion work needs to be executed collaboratively, to enable staff the tools and confidence to support learners within a supportive environment. Better understanding of the barriers to digital inclusion, and SCC, District and Borough Councils, and voluntary and sector working in partnership to pool knowledge and share good practice will support this. Concerns about **funding** for this work as a barrier was also in the top 5 priorities for 38% of survey respondents, and 37% of interviewees. Closer collaboration between organisations can also support fundraising for this work.



PROGRESS SO FAR

CREATING THE ENVIRONMENT WHERE DIGITAL INCLUSION HAPPENS

Work that is already taking place in Surrey includes:

- Surrey Heartlands have established a Digital Inclusion network
- SCC's staff skills strategy and training provided by Digital Skills Team
- Design of SCC digital products both being accessible and also tested with users who have low digital skills

In addition to this, as highlighted in our key findings, it is essential that staff have an understanding of digital exclusion, and awareness of the digital inclusion support available to residents. We encourage **staff to discuss with residents in any interaction about their digital access and confidence**. This can be as simple as asking:

1. Do you have a device you can connect to the internet with?
2. Are you confident to download an app or navigate a new website on your own?

This would help to raise awareness as if the answer to either of the questions is no, staff should either help residents there and then, or signpost them to support. Asking these questions helps to embed this work, making staff aware that essential digital skills are an integral part of providing a service.

When residents need further support, a **signposting website** developed by Surrey Heartlands (due to be launched in 2023) will be a useful resource, with information about support for residents' digital skills and access. Linking up this website with other information services such as Surrey Information Point and Family Information Service will reduce duplication and ensure everyone has access to current information.

BUILDING DIGITAL SKILLS, MOTIVATION, CONFIDENCE AND TRUST

Across Surrey County there are:

- At least 37 organisations offering some type of digital skills support to residents, and

- At least 17 organisations who have staff in Digital Champion roles¹⁰. These include SCC Digital Welfare Support Officers who provide support to residents who are more likely to be digitally excluded, and Digital Angels from Surrey Coalition.
- There are also many volunteer Digital Champions in the county, including 46 volunteer Digital Buddies in SCC Libraries.

When supporting residents with digital skills, resident-facing SCC departments and other organisations had mixed approaches. Demonstrating the benefits of being online to residents is good practice and should be shared widely across all residents and staff. Using a person-centred approach to potential and current learners is key to increasing digital inclusion. Our research has shown that this motivation can range from contacting friends and family online, to accessing health care to learning a hobby. All staff and volunteers across the county should be aware that digital inclusion is not a 'one size fits all', and often different people have different motivations to going online.

CONNECTIVITY AND ACCESS TO DEVICES

Surrey Library Service have computers within libraries that can be booked by residents to use. Surrey Libraries are also members of the [National Data Bank](#) and will join the [National Devices Bank](#) when it is up and running, and are developing a tablet loan scheme. The County would benefit from further raising awareness to residents, schools and organisations supporting people in need where to access low cost or free devices. Again, a network and action plan provide ideal opportunities to support this.

To increase access and recycle devices to prevent landfill waste, there are opportunities that can be explored. While there are local organisations running device schemes in localities¹¹, there is need for more device refurbishment schemes operating across the County. This should include encouraging donations of old devices from residents, potentially via libraries (as in [North Yorkshire](#)) and businesses. More awareness is needed for other organisations to donate old tech. The [Digital Inclusion Toolkit](#) also has information on options for devices.

¹⁰ See details in Appendix 2.

¹¹ See details in Appendix 2.

It is estimated that only 3% of those eligible have taken advantage of lower cost broadband via [‘social tariffs’](#), more should be done to promote these particularly in the current context of Cost of Living and rising inflation. Some of the local organisations already provide free SIM cards to service users¹², and more should be encouraged to do this to reduce data poverty.



DIGITAL INCLUSION ACTION PLAN

We have co-produced an action plan that includes recognition of digital inclusion work already taking place in Surrey, and suggested actions for future ambition to improve impact. The action plan aims to address barriers to digital inclusion and build a sustainable approach, plug gaps in current provision, and target support to the people who are most at risk. We have categorised actions to impact on three pillars discussed earlier in the report.

¹² These can be achieved through [Vodafone’s Charities Connected](#), which provides free SIM cards to charities to distribute to their service users.

APPENDIX 1: DIGITAL EXCLUSION RISK IN SURREY

Digital exclusion in Surrey	Population	Percentage
Non-users of internet ¹³	50,000	5.70%
Without full Essential Digital Skills for Life ¹⁴	216,560	18%
Without Essential Digital Skills for Work ¹⁵	228,592	19%
Without internet access at home ¹⁶	74,000	7.5%
Don't have laptop/PC at home ¹⁷	187,500	19%
No smartphone ¹⁸	139,800	14.2%
% of premises without access to superfast broadband ¹⁹	-	1.5%
% of premises without access to USO download speeds ²⁰	-	0.31%

DIGITAL EXCLUSION RISK MAP

- Areas with high digital exclusion risk include **several areas in Spelthorne**, and **Reigate and Banstead**, and one each in Guildford, Elmbridge and Woking.

Digital exclusion is not caused by any single risk factor. There is also no single measure or dataset that tells us what the scale of digital exclusion is across an area. Because of this, we use a variety of data sources that tell us about the levels of certain risk factors among a population in an area.

¹³ [ONS Internet users; UK 2020](#).

¹⁴ [Lloyds Consumer Digital Index 2022](#)

¹⁵ [Lloyds Consumer Digital Index 2022](#)

¹⁶ [Lloyds Consumer Digital Index](#), 2019.

¹⁷ [Lloyds Consumer Digital Index](#), 2019.

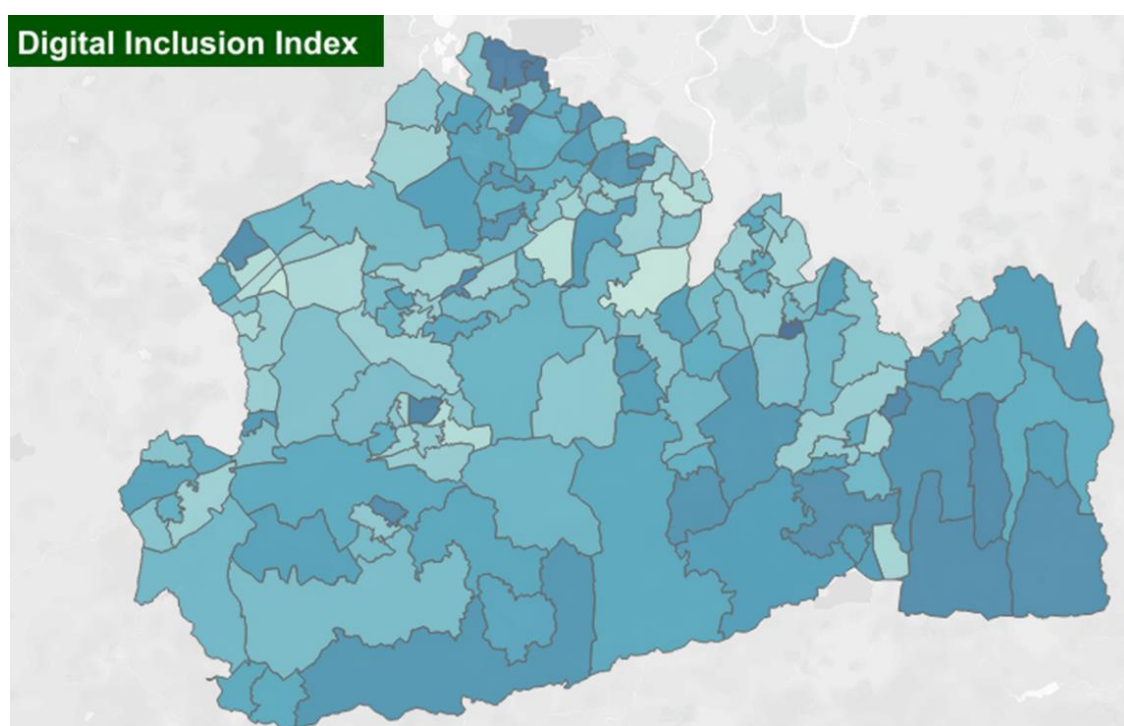
¹⁸ [Lloyds Consumer Digital Index](#), 2019.

¹⁹ [thinkBroadband](#), accessed 24/05/2023. This is higher than England average (2.1%) and similar level as South East (1.6%)

²⁰ [thinkBroadband](#), accessed 24/05/2023. From 20 March 2020, if someone cannot get a download speed of 10 Mbit/s and an upload speed of 1Mbit/s, they can request an upgraded connection from BT, under the "Universal Service Obligation for Broadband", government legislation giving the right to request a 'decent' broadband connection. This is lower than England average (0.7%) and South East (0.45%)

The digital exclusion risk mapping has been completed using [Surrey Digital Exclusion Map](#)-tool, created by Surrey County Council Population Insight Team. The mapping tool brings together social and technology datasets. Areas with high risk of digital exclusion are shown below on map (Figure 2), and listed with their risk factors in Figure 3. In both the data is shown on the level of a Middle Layer Super Output Area, (MSOA)²¹.

Figure 2: Digital Exclusion Risk in Surrey County.²²



²¹ An MSOA is a commonly used unit of measurement in a geographical area. MSOAs have an average population of about 7,500 people, or 4,000 households. Wards typically have several MSOAs; MSOA are known by codes, they don't have names. When we are referring to specific MSOAs, we will use the name of the ward it belongs in. Further information can be found here: <https://ocsi.uk/2019/03/18/Isoas-leps-and-lookups-a-beginners-guide-to-statistical-geographies>

²² The mapping is done using [Surrey Digital Exclusion Map](#)-tool. The darker the MSOA area, the higher the digital exclusion risk.

Figure 3: Areas with high digital exclusion risk in Surrey and risk factors for each area (social indicators).²³

MSOA	Local authority	Pensioners in poverty (Pension credit)	Disability benefit (DLA)	Prevalence of Learning Disability	Households in Poverty	Universal credit	People w no qualifications	Social rented housing
Tattenham South	Reigate and Banstead	X			X	X	X	X
Stanwell South	Spelthorne	X	X		X	X	X	X
Staines South West	Spelthorne	X	X		X		X	X
Stanwell North & Stanwell Moor	Spelthorne				X	X	X	X
Bellfields, Slyfield & Weyfield	Guildford	X	X		X		X	X
Merstham	Reigate and Banstead		X	X				X
West Molesey South	Elmbridge	X				X		
Sheerwater	Woking	X			X	X	X	X
Godstone	Reigate and Banstead			X				
Sunbury Common	Spelthorne					X	X	

DEMOGRAPHICS

Older people are more likely to be digitally excluded – to be offline, to lack digital skills, and are less likely to have access to digital devices. **85% of UK population who are estimated to have never used the internet are aged 65 or over (2.8 million)**²⁴. Age alone is not a simple predictor of digital exclusion - the **majority of people aged 65 and over**

²³ The mapping is done using [Surrey Digital Exclusion Map](#)-tool. For the social indicators, the mapping tool also includes data about population over the age of 65, and pensioners living alone. These were not factors in any of the MSOA areas with highest digital exclusion risk.

²⁴ [Internet use in the UK; annual estimates by age, sex, disability and geographical location](#) (ONS, 2020), accessed 12/09/2022

(71.1%) are internet users. Income/deprivation, education and other factors will also be important. **18.88% of Surrey population is aged 65 or older.** This is similar as England as a whole (18.41%).

Disabled people are among the demographic groups research has consistently identified as being more likely to be digitally excluded. ONS data on internet users shows ***the proportion of disabled adults who have never used the internet remains considerably higher than not disabled*** (14.9% compared to 3.4% in 2020)²⁵. And **18.4% of disabled people are not regular internet users** (2.5 million people) - considerably higher than for adults who are not disabled (5%).²⁶ In Surrey, **21.3% of residents reported a disability or a long-term health condition** in 2021 Census.²⁷ This was highest in Runnymede and Tandridge. **Assistive technology** and other technological developments do also help some of those with impairments to use online services.

DEPRIVATION

Low income and low educational level are associated with higher likelihood to not having essential digital skills or internet access. The groups **more likely not to have internet access at home** continue to be those aged 75+²⁸ (26%), those in DE households (14%) and those who are most financially vulnerable (10%).²⁹ A large majority (83%) of those without home internet access were also not accessing it anywhere else.³⁰ **25% of people earning under £11,499/year have skills in each of the five Essential Digital Skills groups,** compared to 61% of people earning over £25,000.³¹ **In Surrey, 42.9% of households were classified as deprived** in some way – this is lower than across England (51.6%) and South East (48%).³²

²⁵ [Internet users - Office for National Statistics](#), 2020

²⁶ According to the ONS Internet Users data for 2020, 14.9% of disabled people have never used the internet (2.3 million people), compared to 3.4% of those who are not disabled (1.3 million people). A further 3.5% of people with disabilities last used the internet over three months ago, and may thus also be considered effectively offline. This makes a total of 18.4% of disabled people who are never, or not regularly, online (2.5 million people). [Internet users - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

²⁷ [Census 2021: Disability \(Surrey-i\)](#)

²⁸ [ONS, Internet Access 2020](#)

²⁹ [Ofcom, Adults' Media Use and Attitudes report 2022](#)

³⁰ Ofcom, Adults' Media Use and Attitudes report 2022

³¹ Lloyds [Consumer Digital Index, 2019](#). Likewise, The [2018 Lloyds CDI](#) found that just 64% of those earning under £17,499 a year had all five Basic Digital Skills, compared to 84% of those earning up between £17,500 and £39,999, and 94% of those earning over £40,000

³² [Census 2021: Household deprivation \(Surrey-i\)](#)

ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

People of different ethnicities, migration status, and with English as an Additional Language (EAL) can be confident internet users – there is nothing about any of these characteristics that should be considered a barrier to digital inclusion. However, digital inclusion programmes should consider targeting engagement to take account of different backgrounds, experiences, and challenges when trying to reach digitally excluded people within these demographic groups (those who are excluded because of other factors discussed elsewhere in this report around age, disability or low income, for example). There are **80,792 residents whose main language was not English (6.9%** of the population above age 3) in Surrey. This is highest in Woking and Spelthorne.³³ Of these only 12.3% reported they could not speak English well or at all.

DIGITAL SKILLS

Digital skills are of an ever-increasing importance in our society. A lack of digital skills also holds our workforce back from increased productivity, embracing technological change and future ways of working. The Essential Digital Skills Framework ([Department of Education, 2018](#)) is divided into Foundation skills, Essential Digital Skills for Life, and Essential Digital Skills for Work (see Figure 4).



Figure 4: Essential digital skills framework ([Department of Education, 2018](#))

An estimated 216,560 of Surrey residents (18% of adult residents) lack the full Essential Digital Skills for Life, which are needed to safely benefit from, participate in and contribute to the digital world. Many of these adults will be ‘Narrow’ internet users who only participate in a limited number of internet

³³ [Census 2021: Main Language | Surrey-i \(surreyi.gov.uk\)](#)

activities. (Ofcom, 2018). An estimated 228,592 Surrey residents (19% of adult residents) don't have the full Essential Digital Skills for Work.³⁴

CONNECTIVITY

Connectivity across Surrey is good, and better than the average connectivity across England and South East. The latest data from thinkbroadband³⁵ reports that 98.82% of residential and business premises in Surrey have access to **Superfast Broadband** ('SFBB' – speeds of up to 24Mbps). While this is the overwhelming majority of premises, it still leaves a small proportion of population without access to these speeds. **Ultrafast speeds** of up to 100Mbps are available to a significant proportion properties (80.54%). This is slightly higher than that across East Midlands and England (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Coverage data for Surrey, South East and England (thinkbroadband)

	Surrey	South East	England
Below 2 Mbps down	0.08%	0.11%	0.22%
Below USO (<10 Mbps, <1 Mbps up)	0.30%	0.44%	0.69%
Superfast (UK definition, >24 Mbps)	98.82%	98.60%	98.11%
Ultrafast (>100 Mbps)	80.54%	80.06%	78.54%

Similarly, access to connections in relation to **minimum download speeds** in Surrey is better than the national and regional average. Ofcom identify that 10Mbps is the minimum speed currently needed to meet an average household's digital needs, which is

³⁴ We have used Census 2021 data with Lloyds Digital Skills 2021 data to estimate the figures for Digital Skills.

³⁵ [thinkbroadband](https://www.thinkbroadband.com/), Accessed 19/05/2023. "Coverage percentages include both residential and business premises and is based around postcode level data. The speed available are determined by a model that reconstructs the Openreach exchange/cabinet based network, and takes into account the distance limitations of ADSL2+ and VDSL2/G.fast (FTTC) services. ...By running our model we are able to provide a verification for the Ofcom data and are not reliant on quarterly data releases but can update data on a daily or weekly basis as needed. The largest factor for any differences with the Ofcom analysis is down to the timing of publication."

included in the “Universal Service Obligation” rate (USO).³⁶ However, it is important to remember that good connectivity does not imply uptake. People may not have home broadband packages, even if they are available to them, for many reasons: for example cost, or whether they think it’s worth having.

³⁶ From 20 March 2020, if someone cannot get a download speed of 10 Mbit/s and an upload speed of 1Mbit/s, they can request an upgraded connection from BT, under the “Universal Service Obligation for Broadband”, government legislation giving the right to request a ‘decent’ broadband connection.

APPENDIX 2: DIGITAL SUPPORT PROVISION IN SURREY

Organisation	Resident Group(s) supported	Area Covered	Access to wifi	Devices / details	Digital Champions	Type of Support
Active Surrey	Older people (55+), Disabled People, Younger people (under 25), Families, Other Organisations, People with healthcare needs, People with English as an Additional Language, Care Leavers	County Wide				
Age Concern Epsom & Ewell	Older people (55+)	Epsom and Ewell			Yes	Home Visits
Age UK Surrey	Older people (55+)	County Wide		Tablets	Yes	Face to face appointments, Drop in sessions, Tablet loan scheme
Ash Parish Council	Everyone	Guildford			Yes	
Bramley Parish	Older people (55+), Disabled People, Families, People with healthcare needs	Waverley			Yes	
Caterham Valley Parish Council	Older people (55+), Younger people (under 25), Families	Tandridge		Tablets, phones, smart speakers, data	Yes	Group support, 1:1 support
Chiddingfold Parish Council	Older people (55+), Younger people (under 25), Families, Other Organisations	Waverley			Yes	

Organisation	Resident Group(s) supported	Area Covered	Access to wifi	Devices / details	Digital Champions	Type of Support
Citizens Advice Surrey Heath	Older people (55+), Disabled People, Younger people (under 25), Jobseekers / unemployed, Families, People with healthcare needs, People with English as an Additional Language	Surrey Heath		Data	Yes	Embedded digital champions
Citizens Advice Tandridge	Older people (55+), Disabled People, Younger people (under 25), Jobseekers/unemployed, Families, People with healthcare needs, People with English as an Additional Language, Care Leavers, Prison Leavers	Tandridge			Yes	
CREST Cancer Support	Older people (55+), Disabled People, Younger people (under 25), Families, People with healthcare needs; Cancer patients and carers	Elmbridge, Spelthorne, Runnymede			Yes	
Elmbridge Council	Everyone	Elmbridge	Yes	Yes	Yes	Embedded digital champions
Farnham Town Council	Older people (55+), Younger people (under 25), Jobseekers / unemployed, Families, Other Organisations, People with English as an Additional Language	Waverley			Yes	
Hale Community Centre	Older people (55+), Younger people (under 25), Families	Waverley	Yes		Yes	Embedded digital champions
Horley Town Council	Older people (55+)	Reigate and Banstead			Yes	

Organisation	Resident Group(s) supported	Area Covered	Access to wifi	Devices / details	Digital Champions	Type of Support
Mascot	Older people (55+), Jobseekers / unemployed, Families, People with English as an Additional Language	Woking	Yes	Laptops	Yes	
Methodist Homes Association (MHA)	Older people (55+), People with healthcare needs	Reigate and Banstead, Tandridge			Yes	
Oxted Parish Council	Other Organisations and Residents of Oxted Parish	Tandridge				
Reigate and Banstead Borough Council	Everyone	Reigate and Banstead			Yes	Embedded digital champions, iPad group
Ripley Parish Council	Everyone	Guildford			Yes	
Salfords and Sidlow Parish Council	Older people (55+), Disabled People, Younger people (under 25), Families, Other Organisations, People with English as an Additional Language	Reigate and Banstead			Yes	
South Tandridge Parish Council - Oxted Health Centre	Older people (55+), Disabled People, Younger people (under 25), Jobseekers/ unemployed, Families, People with healthcare needs, People with English as an Additional Language, Care Leavers	Tandridge			Yes	
Stanwell Events	Everyone	Spelthorne				
Superhighways	18+, Low income	Kingston		Data		

Organisation	Resident Group(s) supported	Area Covered	Access to wifi	Devices / details	Digital Champions	Type of Support
Surrey CC - Adult Social Care	Older people (55+), Disabled People, Younger people (under 25), Jobseekers / unemployed, Other Organisations, People with healthcare needs, Care Leavers	County Wide			Yes	Embedded digital champions
Surrey CC - Community Investment and Engagement	Older people (55+), Disabled People, Younger people (under 25), Families	County Wide			Yes	
Surrey CC - Customer Services	Everyone	County Wide			Yes	Embedded digital champions
Surrey CC - Highways	Older people (55+), Disabled People, Younger people (under 25)	County Wide			Yes	
Surrey CC - IT & D	Surrey CC Staff	County Wide				Internal Courses
Surrey CC - Libraries			Yes	Computers, printers, data	Yes	
Surrey Choices	Younger people (under 25), Disabled People				Yes	
Surrey Coalition of Disabled People	Older people (55+), Disabled People, Jobseekers / unemployed, People with English as an Additional Language, People with healthcare needs	County Wide		Data, devices	Yes	Embedded digital champions
Surrey Community Action	Other Organisations	County Wide			Yes	

Organisation	Resident Group(s) supported	Area Covered	Access to wifi	Devices / details	Digital Champions	Type of Support
Tandridge Council	Older people (55+), Disabled People, Families, People with healthcare needs, People with English as an Additional Language	Tandridge				Embedded digital champions
Volunteer Woking	Other Organisations	Woking			Yes	
Waverley Borough Council	Everyone	Waverley			Yes	Embedded digital champions
Woking Council	Older people (55+), Disabled People, Jobseekers / unemployed, Families, People with English as an Additional Language, Younger people (under 25), Care Leavers, Prison Leavers, People with healthcare needs	Woking	Yes		Yes	Embedded digital champions