



Digital Inclusion Project

Impact Report

Year 4 April 2022 - March 2023

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Who we are

Age UK Hammersmith and Fulham is an independent local charity supporting older people across the borough. Our aim is to promote older people's wellbeing and help make their lives fulfilling and enjoyable by offering a wide range of practical services and activities.

What we do

We are committed to addressing poverty, improving wellbeing, mental and physical health, combatting disadvantages, defeating ageism, recognising diversity, addressing social exclusion and promoting more effective public services for older people.

Digital Inclusion Project

The Internet dominates the modern age and as a result older people can be left at a disadvantage. The generous 5-year funding and support by The National Lottery Community Fund since April 2019 has enabled us to provide digital skills training to reduce such disadvantages and, as a consequence, address loneliness, isolation, poverty and deprivation. It has also helped give access to significant services across the Borough and enable older people to stay connected with organisations, friends and family.

The project connects skilled Digital Champion volunteers with clients to demonstrate the usefulness of technology in their everyday life. Digital skill sessions are provided on a one-to-one basis either in person, online or via telephone. Given that older people often lack confidence in learning digital skills, we adopted a method allowing them to learn at their own pace on any device (laptop, tablet, smartphone etc.)

To continue to reach as many clients as possible, we choose to combine the process of learning with social events and activities, such as techy tea parties and social quizzes.

Year 4 - Impact in Numbers

Our Digital Service was used

4185
times



Digital Skill
Learners

842

Digital Befriender
and Champion
Volunteers

22



No. of Hosted
outreach events,
workshops, IT
classes, and
supported online
activities

468



Outreach events/
workshops, IT Class
and online activity
attendances

2703



Learn My Way
Online Training
Portal Enrolments

49

Local Business and
Community
Partnerships

12



Housebound
residents trained

76



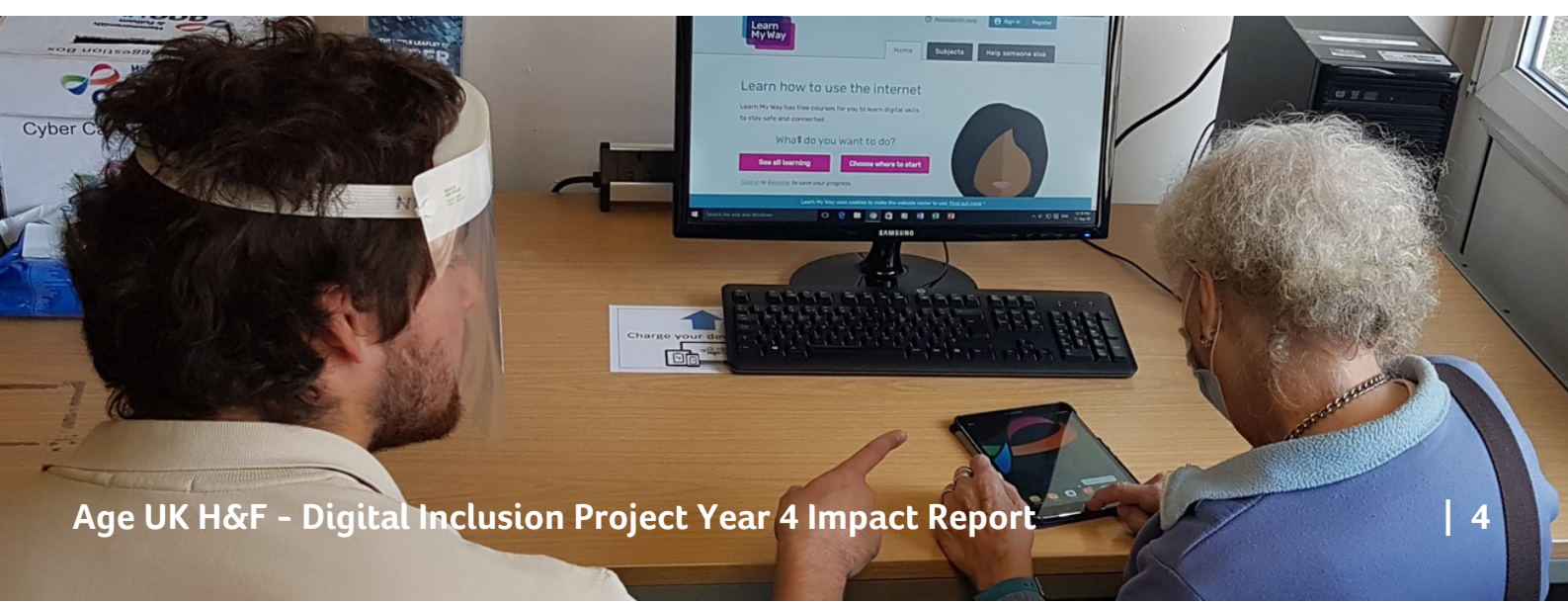
How we help

We support older residents living in the Hammersmith and Fulham area achieve their digital goals by working with them to overcome challenges. Clients may wish to receive support with their own devices, including mobile phones, tablets and laptops. For clients who do not have their own devices, we offer support by way of our Tablet Loan Scheme. The Tablet Loan Scheme allows clients to make an informed decision about the practicality of purchasing a device, prior to investing in one. We have 20 tablets which can be loaned to our clients, for a maximum period of up to 6 months. Of these 20 tablets, we received 10 tablets from Age UK National and the others were provided by Open Age .In addition to the tablets, we provide our clients with data to enable them to use the tablet when they are away from our centre. Sim cards with 20GB data for a period of 6 months were donated by Charities Connected. Our partnerships have successfully enabled us to provide necessary resources to our clients.

We continue to provide access and support with Learn My Way. This is available for clients visiting our centre, and to those we support during our outreach sessions. We offer drop-in sessions at various locations, including Hammersmith library and Shepherd's Bush Library, in addition to other outreach venues. This initiative enables us to support clients who are unable to visit us at our centre. We are currently focused on creating partnerships in digitally deprived areas within the borough, in the attempt to close the digital gap.

We raise awareness about health and well-being, by working closely with other organisations, such as the NHS, in addition to providing information about the benefits of being online. In the current way of life, more services are moving towards being available online only. This was designed to help streamline processes and benefit those who were at risk during covid lockdowns. The downside to this, however, was that a large proportion of older residents of the borough, did not have the necessary skills or technology to gain access to these resources. Our awareness raising initiative provides useful information to support individuals overcome personal challenges.

We are also currently working on creating a secure method of delivering our services to clients who are housebound. With the help of our dedicated team of staff and volunteers, this service will soon be available.



Overcoming challenges

Cost-of-living Crisis

We continue to act with caution against Covid-19. Our services are becoming increasingly popular through our outreach work. The demand is high; however, we can only reach a limited number of clients due to the limited number of staff and Digital Champions we have in our team. We continue to recruit volunteers; however, this is becoming increasingly difficult since the beginning of the cost-of-living crisis. People are now searching for more paid opportunities, rather than volunteering opportunities. We have, however, maintained 12 regular digital champions who have supported our clients throughout the year. In addition to our digital champions, our organisation has recruited 6 digital befrienders, however, we have not included this figure in our report because we did collect feedback with regards to digital support which they provided.

Over the winter period, people were more concerned with receiving support for their energy bills, rather than explore the opportunities of support available to upskill with digital technology. Nevertheless, it became even more apparent as to how much support is needed to overcome digital exclusion.

Low Healthcare Engagement

Low GP engagement continues to be an issue. We have set up a regular drop-in session at a local medical centre to overcome this issue. More engagement from GP's, however, would undoubtedly have a positive impact. We have streamlined our referral process to make it easier for GP's and other healthcare professionals to make referrals to our services. Limited form filling services in the borough continues to be problematic. Our Digital Champions, although dedicated, do not possess the requisite expertise or qualifications to support clients to successfully complete, for example, a claim for pension credit.

“

*I find my tutor has great patience and even though sometimes I forget my work process, he always puts me back on track, thank you
Age UK Hammersmith & Fulham -
Mr D'Lime*

”



“

I have been coming here for a while and the cyber cafe has been an excellent facility. When stuck, there is always a digital champion to guide you through - Teresa

”



Annual comparisons

By Year 4 of the project, we have successfully completed 10 out of 13 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). We have exceeded our targets for the following:

- Interventions
- One-to-one digital learners
- Housebound learners
- Outreach attendees
- Hosted outreach events
- Outreach workshops
- Local business partnerships
- Community & faith partnerships
- Collaborative meetings
- Learn My Way enrolments



We continue to work towards achieving the remaining 3 KPIs. Volunteer recruitment continues to be a challenge, however, our volunteer retention rate is currently very high. We have a minimum of one volunteer to support older residents of the borough from Monday through Saturday. Therefore, although we have not yet met the required target, our quality volunteers provide sufficient time and quality support to make our achievements possible.

Our Podcast (We Love Music) is currently in its infancy stage. Our partnership with Liberty Global has proved to be extremely resourceful as they are currently editing the initial recordings of the Podcast, in addition to supporting with client interviews. We look forward to future episodes and showcasing our achievements with this great partnership.



By introducing home visits, we have bridged the gap for housebound clients, which has made a greater impact on older residents in Hammersmith and Fulham. We continue to find new and innovative ways to tackle digital poverty, with the support of partner organisations, who generously provide much needed devices and internet connection.

Our contributions have proved to be beneficial to older members of the borough, particularly during times of social isolation and now, the cost of living crisis. Clients find comfort in knowing that Age UK Hammersmith & Fulham provide free digital skills services, which is useful to achieve their personal digital goals. We are extremely proud of the contributions we have made so far, and we continue to work harder to ensure that our clients receive the best possible service.

Meet Diane

Diane is 87 years old and lives alone in a small flat in London. She relied on television to keep up with the news and interact with those around her. But after a few years of living this way, she started to feel lonely and depressed and it was beginning to affect her health.



That's when she joined the Digital Skills programme, which offers classes that help older adults learn how to navigate the online world and everything that comes with it. She was most interested in learning how to keep in touch with family and had no idea how much she would improve after taking just a few classes!

Diane was shocked to learn that the internet is also a place where you can research the news and other current events. Since beginning the computer classes, she says her life has tremendously improved.

"I'm a slow learner, but it's getting easier as time passes. I'm happy that I can text my family to see how they are doing; it puts my mind at ease."

She can now keep up with what's happening around her and use her mobile phone to stay in touch with her family members across town—and even across oceans! Her mental health has also improved significantly since taking the digital skills classes; she has become more confident and engaged with the world around her, which helps keep her mind active as well as her body healthy!

"I want to continue learning; it can be very overwhelming to learn so much at once. When I was younger, the phone was meant for one thing. Who knew such a little thing could make this much difference?!"

Diane goes on to say: "Every chance I get, I tell other people my age to be open to learning about the net. I understand why they're apprehensive; I was too. But now I get to ask my grandchildren how their day went every day, and it only takes five minutes. I encourage everyone to try."

so...what's next?

We have seen continuous growth in our services over the last year. Amidst all the challenges which presented themselves, Age UK Hammersmith & Fulham's Digital Inclusion programme is becoming increasingly more popular than ever.

Podcast

We have recently finished recording the first episode of our podcast, We Love Music. The episode is currently undergoing its editing stage, and we are extremely excited to share the completed version with the stakeholders. We aim to deliver 1 episode each month, making this an enjoyable experience for our clients, volunteers and all other stakeholders, alike.

Digital Champions Coffee Mornings

We recognise that the current cost-of-living crisis has had an impact on everyone, including our Digital Champions. We have recently introduced a Coffee Morning, which will be held on the first Thursday of every month. The purpose of these coffee mornings is to provide our Digital Champions with additional support by offering them a safe space to discuss any concerns or challenges they may face, and to discuss ideas to inspire them. Digital Champions can also bring friends who are interested in volunteering to our coffee mornings, to highlight their work and the positive impact it has for our clients.

Outreach Expansion

We are in the process of investigating potential partnerships to expand our outreach work. We are focusing on areas which are at higher risk of being digitally deprived. By offering a home visit service, we can engage with housebound clients in need of digital support.

Can you help?

To meet service demand, we require additional funding to support low income learners with suitable devices / data connectivity, provide home support and pay for extending staff additional working hours.

DONATE



... and if you have some free time to spare, why not volunteer with us!



Contact Us

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