



# Community Planning Aberdeen

<b>Progress Report</b>	Project End Report 3.2: By December 2022 increase by 10% the number of people in Aberdeen who have digital access and feel comfortable using digital tools.
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<b>Date of Report</b>	28/02/23
<b>Governance Group</b>	CPA Board – 19 April 2023

<b>Purpose of the Report</b>
This report presents the results of the LOIP Improvement Project Aim 3.2 which sought to increase by 10% the number of people in Aberdeen who have digital access and feel comfortable using digital tools and seeks approval to end project.

<b>Summary of Key Information</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>BACKGROUND</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 This Project is included in Stretch Outcome 3 of the LOIP with Stretch Outcome “500 Aberdeen City residents upskilled/ reskilled to enable them to move into, within and between economic opportunities as they arise by 2026”.</li> <li>1.2 There is also a link to another Aberdeen Prospers improvement project: “Increase the number of people within Aberdeen City gaining qualifications in ICT and Digital skills at SCQF Levels 7 and above by 10% by 2023” Which focuses on more advanced digital skills.</li> <li>1.3 We recognise that ‘comfortable’ will have different meanings for different groups of users. From discussions with groups working with a wide range of individuals in the city we have agreed that ‘comfortable’ for the purpose of this improvement aim will be measured against a set of essential digital skills.</li> <li>1.4 Some of the benefits of increasing citizens digital literacy are that citizens acquire skills for employment opportunities which could reduce levels of unemployment in the city.</li> <li>1.5 Volunteering is a positive way for individuals to develop their own skills as well as support others, particularly with groups of older people and younger people it is positive for cross age group interaction.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

- 1.6 Groups operating in communities encourage social interaction, where there may be individuals at risk of social isolation, for example the Silver Surfers sessions are in a café style and encourages social interaction.
- 1.7 Some individuals may require further support in other areas of their life and engagement with these groups could lead to signposting which will have a positive effect on their life. CFINE offers a foodbank to those in need but whilst they are accessing that service they can get support applying / maintaining their benefit claims.
- 1.8 Individuals may have the desire to engage with services digitally but do not have the skillset, by upskilling citizens demand on other services in the city could be reduced.
- 1.9 During the pandemic the importance of being connected became even more important as many of the most vulnerable in the city had to shield from family and friends. Many of us had the equipment, connectivity, and digital confidence to stay connected to friends and family, and able to continue working, essential shopping and accessing health information and other transactional services.

## **2. IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AIM**

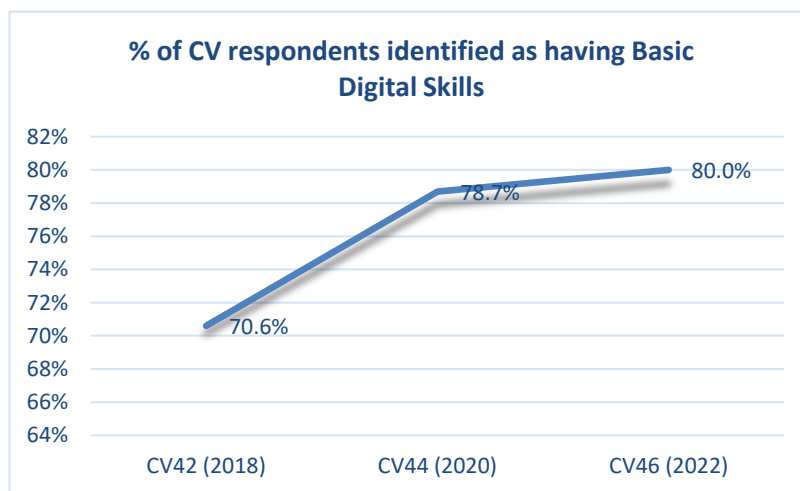
- 2.1 The aim of this project is by December 2022, increase by 10% the number of people in Aberdeen who have digital access; and feel comfortable using digital tools.

## **3. WHAT CHANGES DID WE MAKE?**

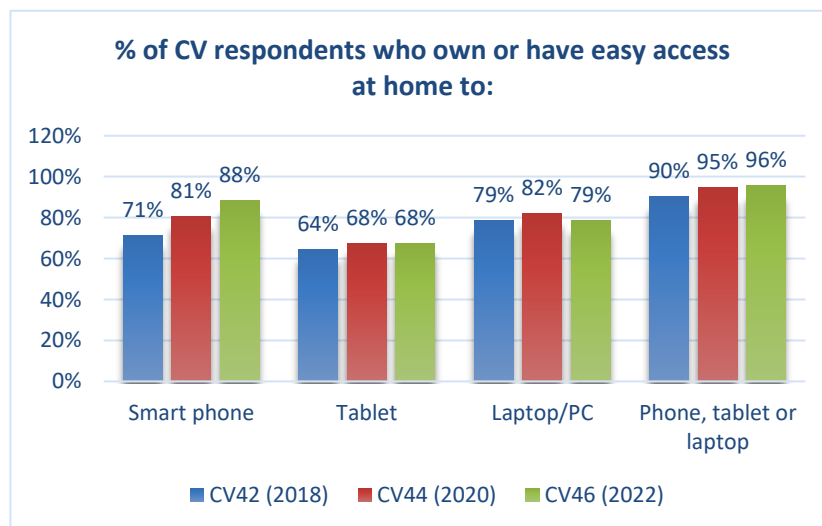
- 3.1 Our multi agency project team tested a number of improvements to increase both digital access and the number of people comfortable using digital tools, namely:
  1. Promote existing access and new access to digital devices, such as library computers, council digital resources, and universities.
  2. Test how the Connecting Scotland programme increases the number of people in Aberdeen who have a digital device and improved digital skills during periods of high need and during and in recovery of the Covid-19 pandemic. This initiative sought to bridge the gap with those citizens that could not access these benefits because they don't have the confidence, kit and connectivity at home.
  3. Work with communities to increase support available through digital champions linked to Connecting Scotland programme and similar schemes.
  4. Test a staff training programme with a team of individuals in the city to upskill them so that they feel confident supporting customers/clients with digital processes.

#### 4. HAVE OUR CHANGES RESULTED IN IMPROVEMENT?

4.1 Yes, the project has achieved its aim. Prior to the pandemic a City Voice questionnaire was undertaken to identify the % of Aberdeen Citizens that identify as having Basic Digital Skills and asking whether they owned or had easy access to (1) a smart phone, (2) a tablet or (3) a laptop or PC. There has been a 9.4% increase in the % of respondents identified as having basic digital skills, with 80% of respondents in 2022, compared to 70.6% in 2018.



4.2 In relation to digital access, we have also seen improvement. Since the questions were first asked in 2018, the proportion of respondents who own or have easy access to a smart phone has increased from 71% to 88% and the proportion of who have access to at least one of the devices has increased from 90% to 96%.

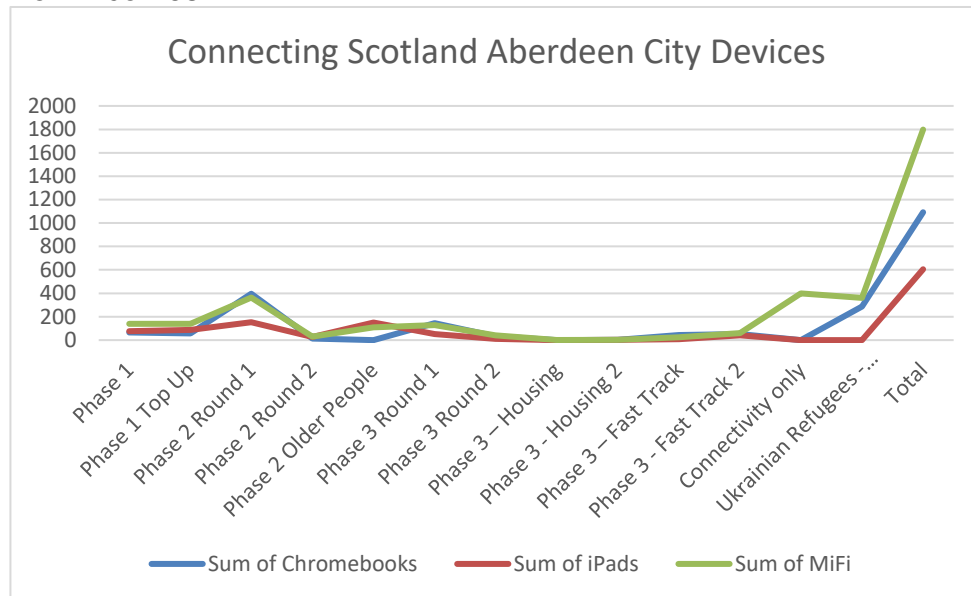


Test how the Connecting Scotland programme increases the number of people in Aberdeen who have a digital device and improved digital skills during periods of high need and during and in recovery of the Covid-19 pandemic.

4.3 Whilst digital access is showing a 6% increase from City Voice respondents, through our test with Connecting Scotland programme across the city a total of 43 projects that were awarded devices as part of Phase 1-3 of Connecting Scotland which were distributed by public and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations. As

evidenced from the data below this has had a positive impact on our aim of improving digital access with a total of 1439 digital devices were issued between March 2020 and March 2021. In addition, 1798 people/households received MiFi - this has ensured 1798 households now have digital access.

- Phase 1 provided 385 devices to individuals who were shielding.
- Phase 2 provided 541 devices across families, looked after children and young people, with an additional winter support programme targeting elderly residents with 174 devices.
- Phase 3 provided 320 devices to individuals who were unemployed and on low incomes.

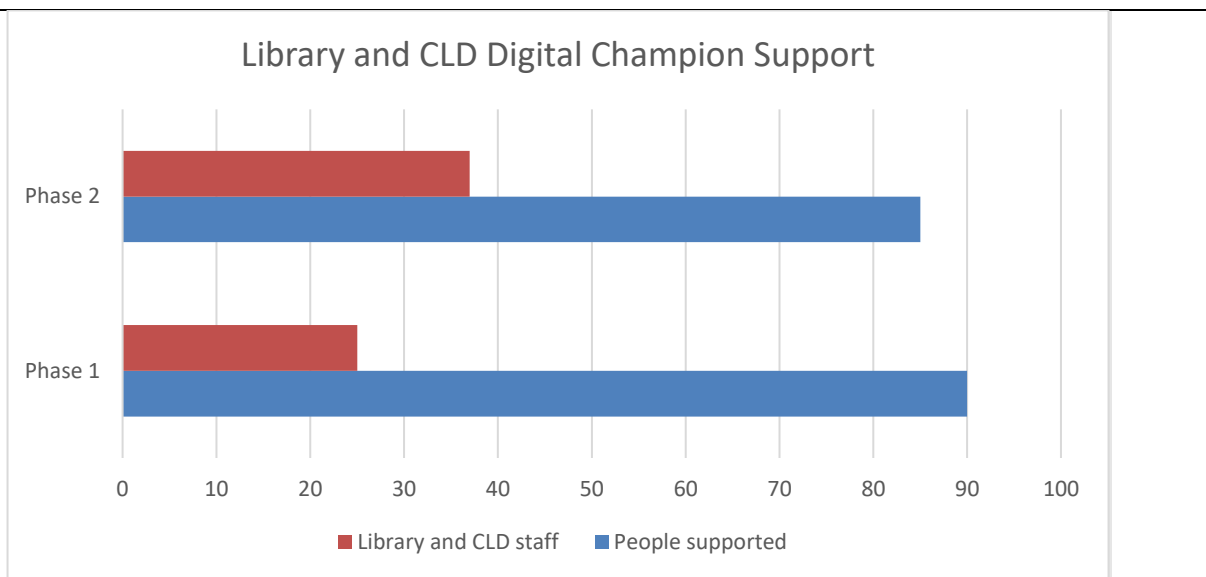


4.4 We do not hold the data for all of the groups that were involved in Connecting Scotland project so are unable to provide data on how citizens felt before and after receiving their device and digital support.

Work with communities to increase support available through digital champions linked to Connecting Scotland programme and similar schemes.

4.5 Digital Champion roles were taken on by staff across public and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations as part of the Connecting Scotland roll out to support individuals to develop and improve basic digital skills. While not all sessions with Digital Champions were captured, these instances were recorded across Community Learning and Development and Library staff:

- Phase 1 - 90 people supported over 6 months with 1-2 sessions per week, delivered by 25 CLD/Lib staff
- Phase 2 - 86 families supported over 6 months 1 session per week, delivered by 37 CLD/Lib staff



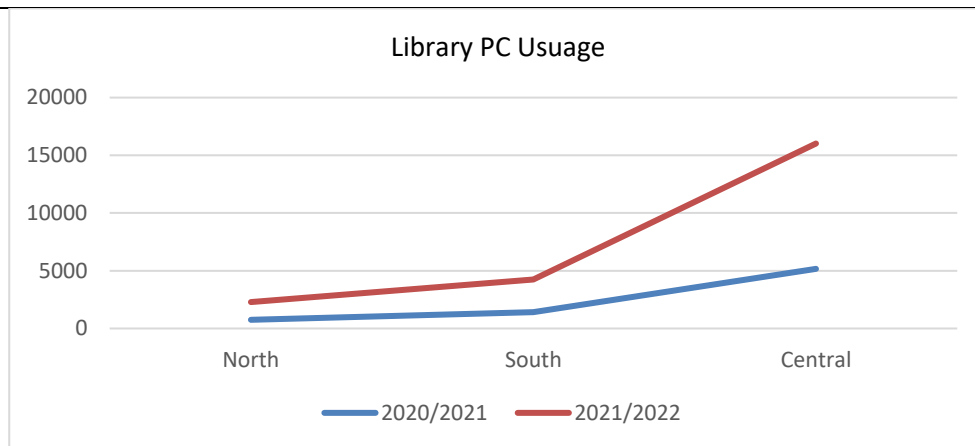
- 4.6 Digital Champions operated during lockdown and within the restrictions at the time, many sessions took place outside in park and a cemetery. Really where people felt most comfortable. One Digital Champions supported learners with additional support needs to set up voice activation setting on their Chrome book, enabling them to use their device to pursue is interests online and to communicate with others who shared those interests. This helped to alleviate feelings of isolation during covid restrictions when he was unable to access mainstream services.
- 4.7 The support of Digital Champions enabled many individuals to use video calls to keep in touch with friends and family during lockdown. Parishioners of St Fitticks Church, with digital champion support were able to attend online services on Sunday's throughout lockdown.
- 4.8 North East Sensory Services (NESS) took part in Connecting Scotland initiative, which has enabled all their CIS Digital project staff and volunteers to complete 'Digital Champion' training free of charge. A number of staff are also accessing free Digital Inclusion SCQF qualifications via Connecting Scotland and Kelvin College. NESS completed the set-up stage of this project from December 2020 as planned:
- identifying and prioritising participants
  - developing a training schedule
  - recruiting and training additional volunteers, and
  - procuring digital equipment (e.g. tablet and 'Mi-Fi' (mobile Wi-Fi) devices) where required.
  - Purchasing different stands and accessories to ease and support participants' use of the devices based on individual needs, including bean bag rests; these accessories are vital to service users with restricted vision and mobility, to enable them to get the best use of their tablet.
- 4.9 Participants have experienced reduced social isolation as a result of NESS training and support, particularly in the use of video messaging to communicate with geographically distanced family and friends. One lady was "delighted" to

see her granddaughter and listen to her play the piano after almost two years of only having telephone contact, while a new participant was “over the moon” when we were able to help her “find” the family photographs sent by her daughter; she is now able to take the photographs from her email system and download them into the photo folder on her iPad. Others are enjoying the ease of taking photographs using their devices.

- 4.10 A test with Bon Accord Care, ACC Libraires, RGU Occupational Health students and tenants took place across two Sheltered Housing complexes. 11 tenants who had been provided with Connecting Scotland devices were supported with basic digital skills to access Life Curve, (an app that promotes independence as you age) along with learning other digital functions.

Promote existing access and new access to digital devices, such as library computers, council digital resources, and universities.

- 4.11 The project recognised that there were already a number of organisations providing access to digital devices, such as library computers, council digital resources, and universities and also providing digital skills classes. In light of this, and with the new Digital Champions, the project did not want to duplicate activity and instead focused on raising awareness of existing support/access and developing tests where provision was not readily accessible e.g. sheltered housing. As a result of the awareness raising, we have seen the following outcomes:
- Between Dec 2019 and Dec 22, Adult Learning, ACC supported 106 learners who took part in group ‘Beginners Computing’ and ‘ICT SQA level 3’ and ‘Continued Learning’ sessions pre Covid, with activity stopping due to lockdown when Adult Learning staff were re deployed to other areas of work. With the role out of Connecting Scotland staff were brought back as Digital Champions to work 1-1 with recipients of devices (these numbers are in addition to the Connecting Scotland stats show above). Post covid the Adult Learning teams digital sessions were reinstated and were initially 1-1 in nature, with group sessions returning in November 2021. There were 85 learners from the central locality and 18 from the North locality.
  - Adult Learning in Willowdale Community payback have successfully supported 11 individuals to complete their Core Skill Level 2 in Information and Communication Technology and 8 individuals to complete their Core Skill Level 3 in Information and Communication Technology.
  - The library service offers bookable PCs, printing and free WIFI access the central and community libraries access to PCs in libraries has seen an increase of 6266 users on pc in libraries post covid-19 showing the increase in digital literacy post lockdown. In North the increase was 1537 users; in South it was 2845 users and Central 1884. This showed that targeted promotion within localities was successful.



- Most PC usage is carried out independently however Library staff as capacity allows, can be available to support digital skills, these are recorded as technical support less than 15 mins and more than 15 mins.
- Technical support can include regular customers asking for help to build up their digital skills as well as on the spot requests for support with form filling where customers are not so confident. Customers are often signposted to library services from Marischal College with some interactions being transactional more than developing skills. Staff in the media centre reported the support they give to regular customers as an ad-hoc rolling computer class.

	More than 15 mins	Less than 15 mins
01/01/20 – 31/12/20	67	2336
01/01/21 – 31/12/21	29	706
01/01/22 - 31/12/22	548	5172
Top 3 sites for technical support	1. Central 2. Tillydrone 3. Dyce	1. Central 2. Airyhall 3. Bridge of Don

## 5. HOW WILL WE SUSTAIN THESE IMPROVEMENTS?

- 5.1 The City Digital Group that has grown in membership since the start of this improvement project and will continue to meet on a regular basis and to promote existing access and new access to digital devices, such as library computers, council digital resources, and universities providing access to digital. The following are now embedded and will continue in terms of support digital skills.
- 5.2 Life Curve project: Aberdeen City Libraries and Bon Accord Care continue supporting individuals in sheltered housing to keep healthy and become more comfortable using digital tools to stay connected. New partnerships are in development to being in the North East Culture Collective to develop sustainable volunteer models in this setting.
- 5.3 Silver City Surfers continue to offer face to face tuition for over 55's in the City helping them to become more comfortable using digital tools.



5.4 North-East Sensory Services continue to support their clients with face to face support visits, MIFI devices ensuring individuals have digital access and accessories to support participants use their devices.

## **6. HOW WILL WE MONITOR THESE IMPROVEMENTS?**

6.1 The City Digital Group continue to meet on a quarterly basis to discuss initiatives ongoing in the city, share best practice and identify projects where collaborative working can take place.

6.2 Should it be agreed that the project is ended, the data recorded will also continue to be monitored and reported to the Aberdeen Prospers Group, as well as added to the Outcomes Framework/Improvement Programme Dashboard to ensure that performance continues.

## **7. OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCALE UP AND SPREAD**

7.1 As above, the Life Curve project which to date has supported individuals in sheltered housing to keep healthy and become more comfortable using digital tools to stay connected, could be expanded to other groups where they are at risk of social isolation. New partnerships are in development to being in the North East Culture Collective to develop sustainable volunteer models in this setting.

7.2 With the cost of living crisis, we may start to see a drop in digital access since households cannot afford Wi-Fi/internet access or digital devices which could see a drop in progress made over the last few years. We are spreading our promotion to raise awareness that our Warm Spaces have free internet access and access to devices.

7.3 Adult Learning run weekly digital skills workshop with 11 learners who benefited from the Connecting Scotland initiative, classes are running in Seaton and Cummings Park Flat and scope to be scaled up further.

### **Recommendations for Action**

It is recommended that the CPA Board:

- i) Agree that testing is concluded and that this Improvement Project is brought to an end on the basis that the aim has been achieved and that the changes are embedded where possible and continues across the city's partners to enhance both digital literacy and the higher-level digital skills required for increased connection and, quality of life and by many employers; and
- ii) Note that the data set for the overall aim will continue to be reported via the improvement programme dashboard to ensure progress is monitored.

### **Opportunities and Risks**

With the cost of living crisis, we may start to see a drop in digital access since households cannot afford Wi-Fi/internet access or digital devices which could see a drop in progress made over the last few years. We continue to promote Warm Spaces



on the Aberdeen City website where spaces have free internet access and access to devices.

### **Consultation**

Aberdeen Prospers  
Project Team  
CPA Management Group

### **Background Papers**

LOIP 2016-26  
[3.2 Project charter](#)

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