



Digital Inclusion in Charnwood

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Citizens  Online

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Citizens Online



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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report has been produced by Citizens Online to provide analysis of digital inclusion issues within Charnwood Borough.

The report aims to:

- Improve understanding of digital exclusion and inclusion issues
- Identify opportunities to improve delivery of Essential Digital Skills framework support
- Ensure stakeholders are equipped to develop their strategies and make business cases for digital and social change

Motivating digitally excluded citizens to engage with the digital world can be difficult. To do this successfully requires compelling 'hooks' for each person, and each organisation.

Simply 'selling' or presenting a new digital service or technology does not create digital journeys. People and organisations need to understand what is beneficial for them and what an improved life or service might feel like in a digital world. Understanding people's motivations is key.



Citizens Online promotes a collaborative partnership approach to tackling digital exclusion. We collate information about current assets and resources, and promote working together in local areas, to improve the lives of residents. We have made recommendations in this report for how best to tackle digital exclusion in Charnwood Borough.

INTRODUCTION

This report has been commissioned by Charnwood Borough Council (CBC). CBC is in the process of digital transformation. Around 60-80% of services are currently available online with more planned. The Council are aware that there are still significant numbers of residents that lack Essential Digital Skills¹ and have commissioned this research to try to change that. In the context of digital transformation, this Council is making a bold statement of support for inclusivity and accessibility. They recognise the importance of digital skills, and have the ambitious aspiration that their residents will not be left behind in the digital age. Digital inclusion must be the heart of any digital transformation program and central to any transformation conversation from the start. There is no point in having brilliant online services if your customers can't use them.

The Coronavirus pandemic has had a huge impact on the way we are living our day to day lives. It has amplified just how important digital technology is to help us get through these times. For those not online, especially vulnerable people who are shielding, it is an extremely difficult and worrying time. We talk more about this in the report.



The good news is that the number of people using the internet and digital technology in the UK is gradually increasing. However, those who remain offline or lack essential digital skills, are also increasingly harder to reach and motivate. Meaning that as the digital skills gap narrows, it also deepens.

As a result of our research, we've made recommendations for CBC and other organisations in Charnwood to improve digital skills for their residents and workforce. We hope these are taken on board to embed digital skills and inclusion into business as usual. Helping to deliver fantastic digital customer service and enabling everyone to benefit from the digital world we now live in.

We hope you enjoy the report.

¹ The Essential digital skills framework defines the digital skills adults need to safely benefit from, participate in and contribute to the digital world: [Essential digital skills framework](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/428222/essential-digital-skills-framework.pdf) (gov.uk), accessed 16/12/2019.

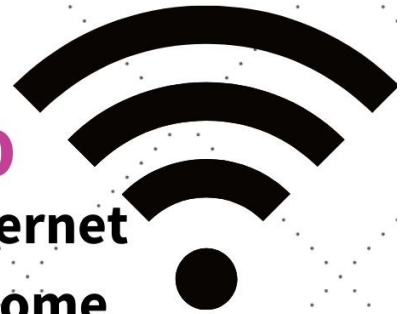
Adults in Charnwood Digital Exclusion Stats



Have no laptop

8.5%

**Have no internet
access at home**



12%
**Have no
Foundation
Digital skills**



21%

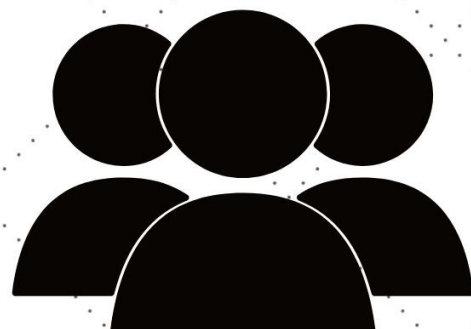
**Don't have the
Essential
Digital Skills
for life**



10%
**Only use a
smartphone
to go online**

8.8%

Are offline



HEADLINE DIGITAL INCLUSION STATS

SUMMARY STATISTICS

District population: ²	182,643
People aged 16-64 (“working age population”):	118,620 (64.9%)
People aged 65+:	33,041 (18.1%)
Approximate number of households: ³	66,516
Wards:	28
Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs):	99
Working age population in receipt of benefits ⁴ :	21,597 (18.2%)
State Pension age population in receipt of benefits ⁵ :	24,305 (73.6%)

DIGITAL EXCLUSION RELATED ESTIMATES

Non-internet users (adults):	13,000 (8.8%)
Non-internet users aged 65+:	11,000 (82.2% of non-users)
People without:	
• Essential Digital Skills ⁶ :	32,700 (21.3%)
• Foundation Digital Skills ⁷ :	26,700 (18%)
• All 7 Foundation Digital Skills:	11,800 (7.7%)
Adults with no laptop/PC at home:	30,500 (19.8%)
Adults with no internet access at home:	13,100 (8.5%)
Smartphone-only users:	15,800 (10.4%)

² Population figures from ONS 2018 Mid-Year Estimate

³ Based on 2011 census so likely to be a significant underestimate

⁴ Excludes benefits from HMRC (Child benefit, Child tax credits). Data: DWP StatXplore, Aug 19.

⁵ Includes State Pension

⁶ The Essential Digital Skills Framework is a Department of Education system, which informs the [Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital Index](#), from which the estimates above are made.

⁷ [Foundation Digital Skills](#) underpin all essential digital skills. Eg ability to turn on devices, connect to WiFi, access the internet, understand passwords and keep personal information safe.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Digital” permeates everything. How we communicate, work, learn, travel and entertain ourselves today is a world away from 20 years ago. Organisations transforming digitally must be clear in their culture that digital is everyone’s responsibility as it is an essential part of our lives both in and out of work.

The Coronavirus pandemic has also demonstrated the vital importance of digital solutions. They enable us to; have food delivered, work from home, claim benefits, order prescriptions, pay bills and videocall loved ones. Yet **over 13,000 (8.8%) adults in Charnwood Borough are not online⁸** and **over 21% of adults in don’t have all of the ‘Essential Digital Skills’** for life. With groups of people more vulnerable to the virus (older, disabled and with long term health conditions) also more likely to lack digital skills, this is a worrying problem.

As well as the people classed as offline, there are a larger group of people classed as ‘narrow’ users. These people only engage in up to 4 of 15 types of online use⁹. **We estimate there are 33,000 adults who are narrow users in Charnwood.**

We know that being online and having good digital skills has a wide range of benefits. It helps people to connect and feel less isolated, save money, access better paid work, live healthier lives and help their children.¹⁰ These aims fit well with CBC values ¹¹ so supporting residents to improve their digital skills is a win-win situation.

From our research, there is now a clear picture of evidence for where those most at risk of digital exclusion are based. We’ve ranked wards in Charnwood in order of **digital inclusion risk** and produced a Ward Risk Heatmap (page 27). The top three are: Loughborough Hastings, Thurmaston and Loughborough Lemyngton. Sileby, Birstall Wanlip and Loughborough Shelthorpe also score highly on digital inclusion risk rankings. Digital exclusion is closely linked to poverty, disability, age and social

⁸ From Office for National Statistics data. This refers to people who have never been online or last used the internet over three months ago.

⁹ The 15 types of use are: email; transactions; instant messaging; banking/ paying bills; social media; finding/ downloading information; news; health information; watching short video clips; local government sites; audio services; TV or film content; remote access e.g. accessing files through a cloud service; uploading content e.g. photos, blog posts; and playing games online.

¹⁰ People with the highest digital engagement, who earn less than £20,000 per year, [save 42% on monthly utility bills compared to those with the least digital engagement](#)

¹¹ [Charnwood Corporate Plan](#)

isolation¹². Birstall Wanlip is featured because of poor connectivity in places. It has the highest number of premises without access to Universal Service Obligation¹³. We would recommend focusing resources and marketing aimed at digitally excluded groups in these wards as a priority.

Like all local authorities across England, CBC has faced significant funding cuts. Transacting online provides one way to make savings, yet continue to deliver excellent services.¹⁴ CBC has already made progress on their digital transformation journey. Around 60-80% of services are currently available online with more planned. There is a Digital Transformation Team which monitors progress and supports across the organisation to implement change. However, more work could be done to fully implement digital and encourage more collaboration between departments. A digital strategy is being developed which will help to solidify digital aims and vision for CBC.

It's important to recognise that when talking about people lacking digital skills and confidence online, this can also include your own staff. We surveyed CBC staff, managers and a senior leader to find out more about; digital skills, digital inclusion, working practices levels, digital leadership and infrastructure. All of these aspects are key to successful digital transformation. We had a fantastic response to the surveys with 171 responses.¹⁵ There are many positives to take from the survey results. **The majority of staff, 67%, rating their skills as 'Excellent' or 'Very Good'**¹⁶. 41% of staff were willing to be a digital champion to help others with digital skills. There was a strong consensus with 88% of managers agreed on the digital vision of the organisation.¹⁷

Areas for improvement include: clarification of Council policy for helping residents with digital skills, a process to identify and triage residents who can't use the internet, overall support for residents to transact online and partnerships with other organisations to tackle digital exclusion.

¹² See, for example, "[The emergence of a "digital underclass" in Great Britain and Sweden](#): Changing reasons for digital exclusion" (2017)

¹³ [A Government minimum broadband speed](#). You can request an upgrade in your area if this is not met

¹⁴ Online services often result in improved customer satisfaction as many residents prefer the ease and convenience of 24/7 access in your own home.

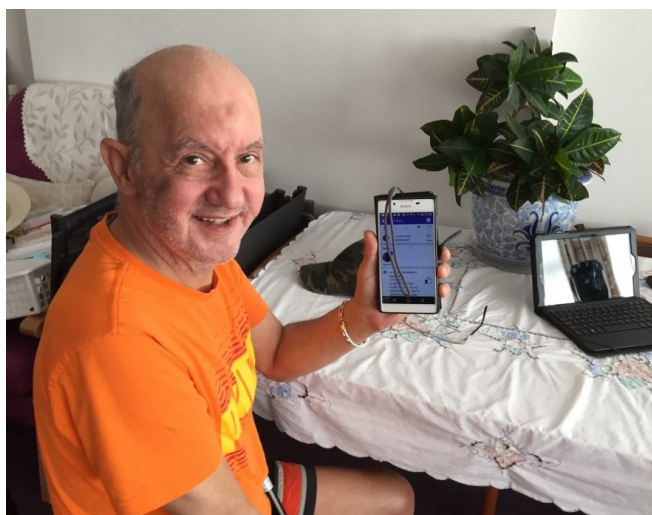
¹⁵ 136 staff, 34 managers and 1 strategic leader

¹⁶ Defined as: I'm very confident using technology. I'm flexible and can adapt to use any online app or service, find help online and understand how to solve problems with new tools or devices.

¹⁷ Option C: We are committed to offering as many of our services as possible online and see this as essential, but intend to continue offering services in parallel via other channels like the phone or face to face. Plans are in place to review our communications channels / keep channels under review in future.

The Covid19 outbreak has hindered our research with health and third sector organisations. We've only managed to engage with 20 organisations to date so we acknowledge that there may be more information to emerge from these organisations as the crisis passes. **There is willingness to be involved in a network and there are digital champions in 13 of these organisations.** This is important for CBC and all organisations to centralise this information so all staff, if not available to help residents with digital skills can signpost to somewhere that can. From our findings, although CBC works well with community organisations, there don't appear to be strong links with the health sector. There is the 'Charnwood Strategic Partnership' which includes the Primary Care Trust but the strategy is a little out of date. We would recommend working with GP Surgeries and other NHS organisations as there is a huge shift towards encouraging take up of online appointment bookings, consultations and encouraging take up of the NHS app.

There has been an amazing community response to the Covid19 crisis forming mutual aid groups with many volunteers. CBC has helped to facilitate this by launching 'Charnwood Community Action'. There are many services on offer such as help delivering food and collecting prescriptions etc. We would urge this group to **ask the vulnerable people they are supporting about their digital capability and train volunteers to be digital champions and offer remote support.**



The problem of digital exclusion is deeply entrenched, with those still offline are often the most difficult to reach. Most people will need multiple prompts, support, nudges and interventions to raise confidence and skill levels with digital technology. We advocate that the best way to do this is through a cross sector network, as this problem is too big for a single organisation to tackle alone.

A digital inclusion group and a fully networked system would:

- Increase Digital Champion (DC) provision with both volunteer and embedded DCs
- Create a clear triage and referral system
- Centralise information for help with digital skills, potentially on the CBC website
- Promote digital skills training for staff

We would recommend that a **Digital Inclusion Network is put in place for the borough**. This could be as light touch as a regular agenda item on another existing group meeting with similar aims (e.g. welfare, health and wellbeing, financial inclusion). Or it could be a more formal group. Either way a network will need dedicated resource and the more resource that can be allocated, the more successful it will be.

Using Digital Champions¹⁸ (DCs) to help people improve their digital skills is a proven method¹⁹. We advocate that the most sustainable way of digital skills support is by using ‘embedded’ DCs²⁰. These are people already working within organisations.

From our research we also know of DCs (most of which are now offering support remotely) in AbilityNet, Leonard Cheshire, Arthritis Support Leicestershire, Citizens Advice Charnwood, Loughborough JCP and Moneywise Plus. There are also staff available to help people ‘fill in digital forms’ at Advance Housing and Support, Community Advice and Law Centre (CALs), Falcon Support Services, Gorse Covert Community Association, Reaching People, Rosebery Community Centre, Syston & District Volunteer Centre, The Boys Brigade and Loughborough Children’s and Youth Service. CBC could also signpost to these services if overwhelmed with demand.

In the ‘digital age’, digital skills are essential. We recommend that **digital skills and digital champion skills are written into all job descriptions**. We recommend that digital skills and inclusion are embedded into the HR process by being included in interviews, induction, appraisals and learning and development policy. A culture of lifelong learning and allowing staff time to improve digital skills should also be promoted by management. With the rollout of Office 365 in CBC and changes in remote working practices due to Covid19 this is a good opportunity to embed new digital skills learning.

¹⁸ A Digital Champion is someone who is confident to guide and support others to do things online

¹⁹ [Recent NHS DC Study](#)

²⁰ Support for this comes from the [independent evaluation of the One Digital programme test and learn phase](#) (Sara Dunn Associates, *The One Digital collaboration: Evaluation of the ‘test and learn’ year 2016*, December 2016).

Senior Management should encourage and support the rollout of DC training using the Digital Champions Network²¹. We also recommend DCs in other organisations as part of a Digital Inclusion Network. Organisational policy regarding how to help residents with digital skills should be clarified and communicated to all staff. **Everyone must be aware of where they can signpost residents for help**, if they cannot offer that help there and then. This would apply to any other organisation as part of a Digital Inclusion Network.

Senior leaders should ensure that **digital inclusion and accessibility are embedded into policies and procurement frameworks**. CBC advocates 'social benefits' in its procurement policy which include, 'creation of employment and training opportunities'.²² We would suggest adding digital inclusion, skills and accessibility to it where appropriate.

We have enjoyed working with Charnwood Borough Council and impressed to see how much transformation work is happening and a digital champions programme beginning to take shape. We are confident that in time more organisations will get involved with a Digital Inclusion Network to impact and improve residents' digital skills.



²¹ An online training platform for training Digital Champions. Membership is included with this project.

²² [CBC Procurement Policy](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Set up a Charnwood Digital Inclusion Network

From the 20 organisations we have had contact with, 16 organisations are already offering some sort of digital inclusion support; such as free WiFi, access to equipment or digital champions. It's imperative that organisations work together to raise the digital skill levels of residents and a network is an ideal place to; encourage joint working, partnerships, sharing of resources and best practice. We must stress that **a network will require dedicated resource to run it**. Similar networks in other areas of the country have been successful in securing funding for inclusion projects.

Further information is in Section 2.1

2. Increase the number of Digital Champions (DCs) across the borough.

Including CBC staff and staff in other organisations in the digital inclusion network.



Embedded DCs are people who support others with digital skills as *part of their job*. Examples of this might include essential digital skills support given by:

- Welfare advisors while assisting something with benefits claim
- Library staff while helping someone access their e-books service
- Employment support workers as part of helping someone to look for a job

This is a more sustainable way of delivering digital skills support, as they are already employed by organisations. As their roles are often customer facing, they also have good skills to be able to engage with residents who may have more

complex needs or be higher risk of digital exclusion. Research indicates that digital inclusion projects that use an embedded digital champion approach were able to maintain participant engagement for longer.²³

In our experience it takes a ratio of **around 1 DC to 100 digitally excluded people**, to record a significant amount of digital support activity and evidence that there is some **genuine impact in an area**. Recruiting DCs at a ratio of 1:100 is likely to increase any organisation's chances of being able to evidence and evaluate the positive impact of the work.

Charnwood borough has around **13,000 residents that lack digital skills**, suggesting together, Charnwood organisations should aim to recruit around **130 DCs**. Across the District, working in a range of different contexts from senior leaders and customer facing staff to volunteers working in the community sector.

CBC is rolling out Office365 which presents another opportunity to use digital champions for internal peer to peer support to assist rollout. 41% of staff surveyed said they were willing to be a DC and 89% of managers were willing for members of their team to be DCs. 46% of staff felt more could be done to help residents with digital skills.

From our research we also know of DCs (most of which are now offering support remotely) in AbilityNet, Leonard Cheshire, Arthritis Support Leicestershire, Citizens Advice Charnwood, Loughborough JCP and Moneywise Plus. There are also staff available to help people 'fill in digital forms' at Advance Housing and Support, Community Advice and Law Centre (CALS), Falcon Support Services, Gorse Covert Community Association, Reaching People, Rosebery Community Centre, Syston & District Volunteer Centre, The Boys Brigade and Loughborough Children's and Youth Service.

Volunteer DCs are also valuable resource to help people with digital skills although volunteers do require resource to manage them.

CBC could support community organisations by providing access to the Digital Champion Network (DCN) to help train volunteer digital champions working in other community organisations. Funding to cover volunteer induction and room

²³ SCVO Digital Participation Challenge Fund Review 2017 https://storage.googleapis.com/scvo-cms/digitalparticipation/reports/Charter_Fund_Review_Report.pdf

hire for sessions and so on would also help to stimulate provision, if any funding is available.

3. **Create and embed a Charnwood ‘Triage and Signposting System’** for Essential Digital Skills²⁴. Empowering employees and volunteers in all sectors to know:

- a) How to spot people who have barriers other than motivation
- b) What questions to ask (and when)
- c) Where to refer people to get help that they need

At the moment, when CBC staff can't help a resident with digital skills they are encouraged to ask family or friends (30%), go to the Library (23%) or contact Citizens Advice (22%). The process would be more effective if it was owned by a digital inclusion network and formalised. Ideally a jointly agreed triage and signposting system could be **developed as a shared documentation resource and communications plan** within a Digital Inclusion Network. Alternatively, a course on the Digital Champions Network could cover triage and signposting.

Often organisations make official referrals to other support organisations, e.g. for health concerns or addiction. **Digital skills support could be added to these referral forms** to highlight when this support is needed and remind frontline staff about the need to consider digital inclusion.

4. **Target the wards with the highest risk of digital exclusion.** There are three in Loughborough; Hastings, Lemyngton & Shelthorpe. Also, Thurmaston, Sileby and Birstall Wanlip. Venues where digital skills provision could be provided, such as drop in sessions are listed on the maps for each ward. However, with current social distancing measures in place, **offering digital skills help remotely is the only option.** Postcodes in this high risk wards could benefit from targeted marketing to signpost to over the phone DC support from AbilityNet.

²⁴ See the Department for Education's [Essential Digital Skills Framework](#).

5. Be responsive to COVID-19 by engaging people in essential digital journeys and finding out about their digital capability.

Motivation is a key barrier for people doing more online. Over a third of those offline say the internet ‘doesn’t interest me’ and 48% of the digitally excluded state that ‘nothing’ could motivate them to go online.²⁵ The current crisis has given many people clear reasons to go online - being able to order shopping and see family and friends on video, and so on.

During the recent Covid19 pandemic, many voluntary community groups, including Charnwood Community Action²⁶ have been phoning vulnerable people to help with essential needs. They are asked if they need help with food delivery, medicine, walking pets etc but **we urge all organisations to also ask about people’s digital capability**²⁷. This is an ideal opportunity to start someone on their digital journey. Ask if they have a device to connect to the internet, an internet connection and the skills and confidence to get online. If they don’t offer help or signpost to other agencies who can help such as those mentioned in Recommendation 2.

There is also potential to launch a digital champion remote volunteer help service within mutual aid groups but such a scheme will need resource to manage.



²⁵ From the [Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index 2020](#)

²⁶ [Charnwood Community Action webpage](#)

²⁷ Our blogpost on why "[We all need to be asking people about their digital skills](#)"

6. Strategic Leadership Recommendations

- a) **Ensure Senior Leaders** in all organisations involved in the digital inclusion network **support the work of the group and promote inclusion** within transformation programmes.
- b) **Ensure that digital inclusion and accessibility²⁸ is embedded in the policies, procurement frameworks and work programmes of all network members.** Include digital skills and inclusion clauses into procurement frameworks and contracts. Especially for any IT contracts, digital products and services, or support services for higher risk digitally excluded groups.
- c) Promote **Digital Leadership and a culture of life-long learning.** Senior leaders in all organisations of the network must lead by example to promote new skills and ways of working.
- d) **Include digital skills and inclusion in HR processes.** All job specifications, recruitment advertising, interviews, on-boarding, appraisals and learning and development policy should include reference to digital skills. The key to changing culture is bringing your people with you. Highlighting the importance of digital skills to staff both new and old will convey the understanding that digital inclusion is everyone's responsibility. The role of a Digital Champion will not be seen as an additional responsibility, with time, it will be an agreed part of someone's role

7. **Centralise all information about digital skills in the District in one place, such as CBC Website.** The page could include links and information about how to access: online learning, remote support, 1-2-1 support, home help, learning sessions and courses, free WiFi and computer access. **Promote this**

²⁸ The government has a website on "[Making online public services accessible](#)", which explains: "[New regulations](#) mean public sector organisations have a legal duty to make sure websites and apps meet accessibility requirements. Public sector websites published on or after 23 September 2018 must be compliant by 23 September 2019. Any websites published after this date must be compliant before going live. Public sector websites published before 23 September 2018 must be compliant by 23 September 2020. Apps need to meet the regulations by 23 June 2021." See our introductory video "[Make Technology Work For Everyone](#)", and the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.0](#).

resources page by ensuring every **member of the digital inclusion network is linking to them** from their webpages.

- 8. Collect more user data to identify personas that are not using CDC online services to plan targeted marketing to promote online services.** Ideally this could be supplemented with focus groups and direct user testing etc. This is useful to think about as more services are made available online. For example market traders, taxi drivers or housing benefit claimants could be groups targeted to nudge into more online interactions if online take up was low.
- 9. Work with Loughborough Town Deal proposal to invest in ‘digital connectivity, smart town / city concepts and free WiFi’** by working with the Town Deal Board to embed inclusion and support for those who lack digital skills.

Support new businesses to encourage staff to be digital champions as part of their role to help and signpost residents. New businesses may also need digital skills support. With the recent pandemic online presence for businesses has become even more important. We have compiled a list of resources useful for signposting businesses, to aid economic recovery from Covid19, in an appendix.

There is an opportunity to improve digital skills in this area with targeted marketing. These conversations could be broached as part of discussions for business grant support.

1. DIGITAL EXCLUSION ACROSS CHARNWOOD

OUR APPROACH TO CHARNWOOD

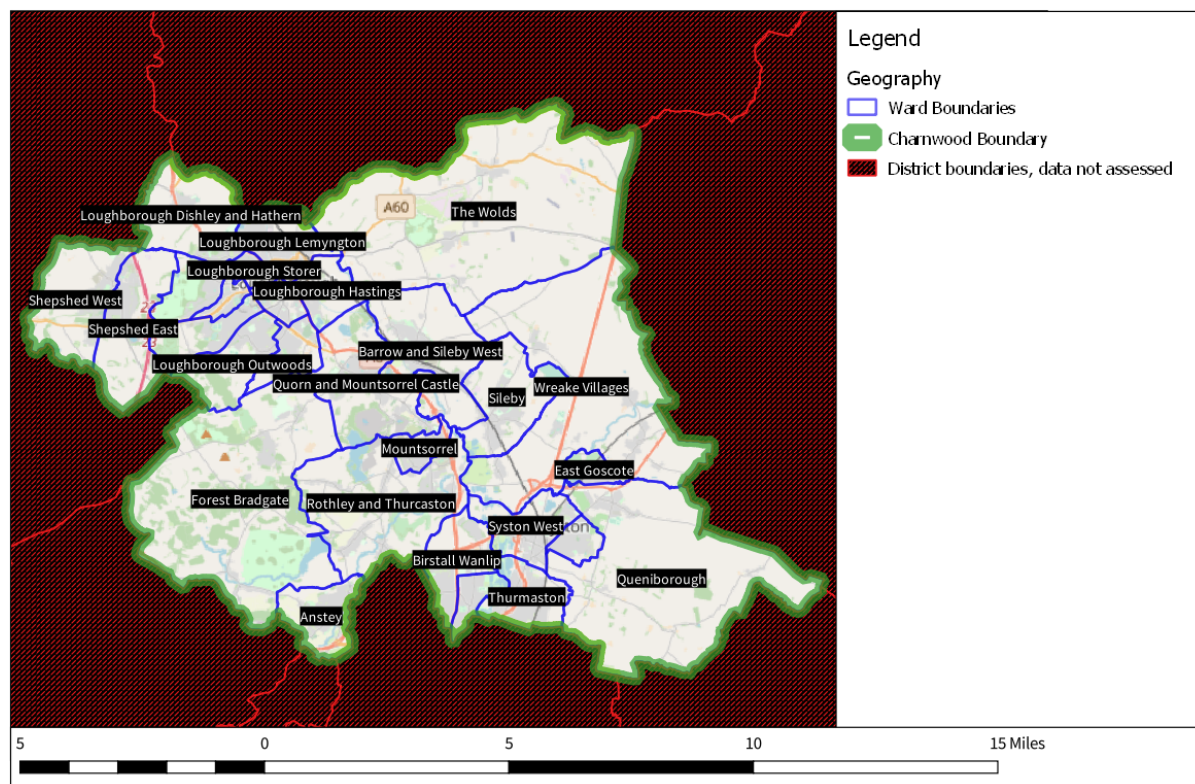
The maps we present in this report use 2017 Electoral Wards, we also refer to Lower Super Output Areas.

We usually refer to numbers of people in the maps rather than percentages. This ensures high percentages in Wards with fewer residents are not treated on a par with high percentages in more populated Wards.

Approximate proportions can be calculated by using 6,500 as a denominator population for each Ward. In the analysis, it may be helpful to imagine 650 people as approximately 10% of the population of a given Ward (though this could be as little as 6% or as much as 23% – wards vary considerably in their total number of residents, from 2,841 to 10,300). If 1,500 people in a Ward have a characteristic, this equates to roughly 25% of the population of a Ward.

Figure 1: Wards in Charnwood
Wards, Charnwood

Source: ONS Electoral Wards, 2017



There are 28 Wards²⁹ in Charnwood (see figure 1), with an average population of 6,523 people.³⁰ The population per Ward ranges from 2,841 in East Goscote in the generally less populated east of the District, to 10,300 in Thurmaston bordering Leicester.

To a large extent the population is higher in areas defined as “Urban city and town” by the 2011 Rural Urban Classification. There is a clear urban corridor in figure 3 which corresponds with the Wards with higher populations in figure 2.

As well as variation in population and rurality, there is variation in the proportion of the population of Ward that is of working age, and in the number of households and one-person households. There are 118,620 people of working age across the borough (65% of the population). The number of working age people per Ward ranges from a low of 1,692 in East Goscote to 7,068 in Loughborough Ashby (or from 58% in Loughborough Outwoods and Wreake Villages to 86% in Loughborough Ashby.)

²⁹ 2017 Electoral Wards

³⁰ 2018 MYE, ONS

Figure 2: Wards by population – Charnwood

Wards by population - Charnwood

Source: ONS, Mid Year Estimate, 2018

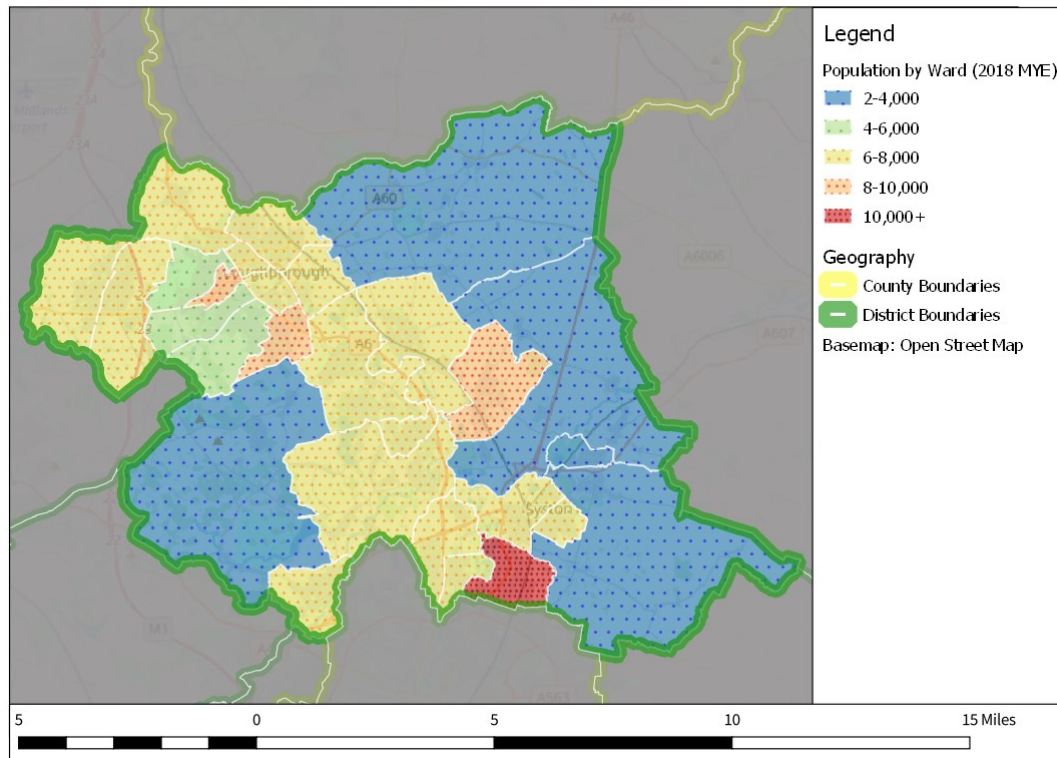
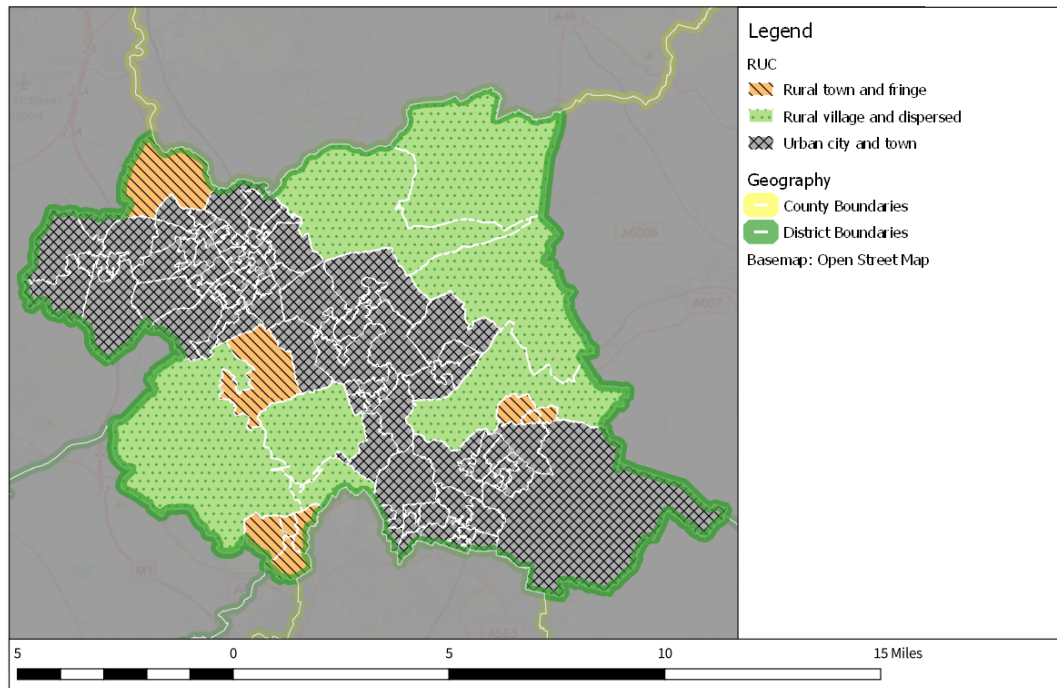


Figure 3: Rural Urban Classification of LSOAs in Charnwood

LSOAs by Rural Urban Classification - Charnwood

Source: Dept for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2011



There were 66,516 households in Charnwood at the time of the 2011 Census (we have not attempted to use more up to date estimates based on occupied addresses). There are 2,376 households in each Ward on average, ranging from 1,084 to 3,944. 18,658 of these households (28%) were recorded as one person households in the 2011 census.

Citizens Online's research expands on this data using additional sources. Our research uses publicly-available data from sources including:

- ONS OpenGeography
- Nomis population and workforce data
- Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Stat-Xplore database
- Department of Health
- Ofcom
- Websites of local authority bodies and services
- OpenStreetMap geographic database

We combine this with the results of our surveys, and with data made available by local partners such as Charnwood Borough Council and a range of community groups. This enables us to create a picture of community assets, local services and population patterns, so that existing work can be built upon, and any gaps or digital exclusion risks can be appropriately addressed.

This report focuses on a range of factors that contribute to the risk of digital exclusion, primarily:

- Age
- Benefit Claims (Housing Benefit, Universal Credit, Pension Credit - as proxies for low income)
- Disability and long-term illness (Employment and Support Allowance, Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payment, as proxies for disability and low income)
- Connectivity and device ownership or access
- Existence and availability of local support services and community assets
- Indices of multiple and specific deprivation
- Attitudes and behaviours

SURVEYS AND DESK RESEARCH

As part of our research we have surveyed Charnwood Borough Council staff, managers and senior leadership. We have included some analysis of these surveys in the report. We've also read 10 policy and strategy documents³¹ to help us understand the strategic landscape for digital inclusion across the district.

We have surveyed external organisations across Charnwood District who have an interest in Digital Inclusion. In total we've engaged with 20 organisations. We have tried to contact many more and hope in time that the Digital Inclusion Network will expand to include more partners. Together, these elements have helped to build a snapshot of the current digital inclusion landscape that we have written about in this report and informed our recommendations.

ESTIMATING DIGITAL EXCLUSION RISK

Digital exclusion is not something we can measure directly. We use a combination of other measures to identify areas where residents may be more likely to be digitally excluded. Some of these measures are: lack of good connectivity, age, low income/deprivation, and disability. Where we cannot measure these things directly, we find the most accurate proxy measures and use those.

By looking at the number of people with different demographic features, and the percentage of people with this feature; we can identify areas where digital exclusion is most likely to affect more people.

We cannot know whether the same people are found in the overlap between different categories, such as those claiming Housing Benefit and those claiming Pension Credit. But in many cases, risk factors are correlated: for example disabled people are more likely to be living in poverty³², so we should expect some overlap between different categories.

Figures 5 and 6 show the results of our data assessment and identify Wards (and LSOAs within them) with a higher risk of digital exclusion. Digital exclusion risk is highest in Loughborough Hastings. Below we also look at two other Wards in Loughborough: Lemyngton and Shelthorpe, and three others Thurmaston, Sileby and Birstall Wanlip.

³¹ Detailed in Appendix 1

³² See, for example, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's [UK Poverty 2018 report](#)

We've looked at the Loughborough Wards together. The issues here are deprivation, lower income, and disability. There are higher proportions of people are claiming Universal Credit or Housing Benefit, a disability benefit, or – if over 65 – Pension Credit. There is a similar picture, although to a lesser extent, in Thurmaston. But there is also a larger proportion of people aged over 65 in Thurmaston than in the Loughborough Wards.

In Sileby and Birstall Wanlip, connectivity is the prime issue. Sileby is identified as a high risk Ward in part because of some deprivation and higher levels of low-income/disability-related benefit claims. Birstall Wanlip ranks low for these issues, but has a significant number of older people living alone – and the worst connectivity in the district. Figure 4 shows the ranking of Wards and a summary of the data used to determine rankings

To create a Digital Exclusion risk score and rank Charnwood's Wards, we've combined data from 14 metrics. These metrics are bundled into categories, and are weighted to produce the risk score (figure 4).

The factors of age, deprivation, and disability are known to be significant for digital exclusion so these categories were heavily weighted. We have also included poor connectivity. This is a highly localised problem, but “not-spots” have been included as a small part of the equation at Ward level, to assist with any targeting of support through mobile WiFi or community assets where people without good connectivity at home can access the internet.

Figure 4: Weighting of factors in Digital Exclusion risk calculation

Factor category	Weighting
Age	2
Deprivation	1.5
Disability	1
Connectivity	0.5

WARD DIGITAL EXCLUSION RISK

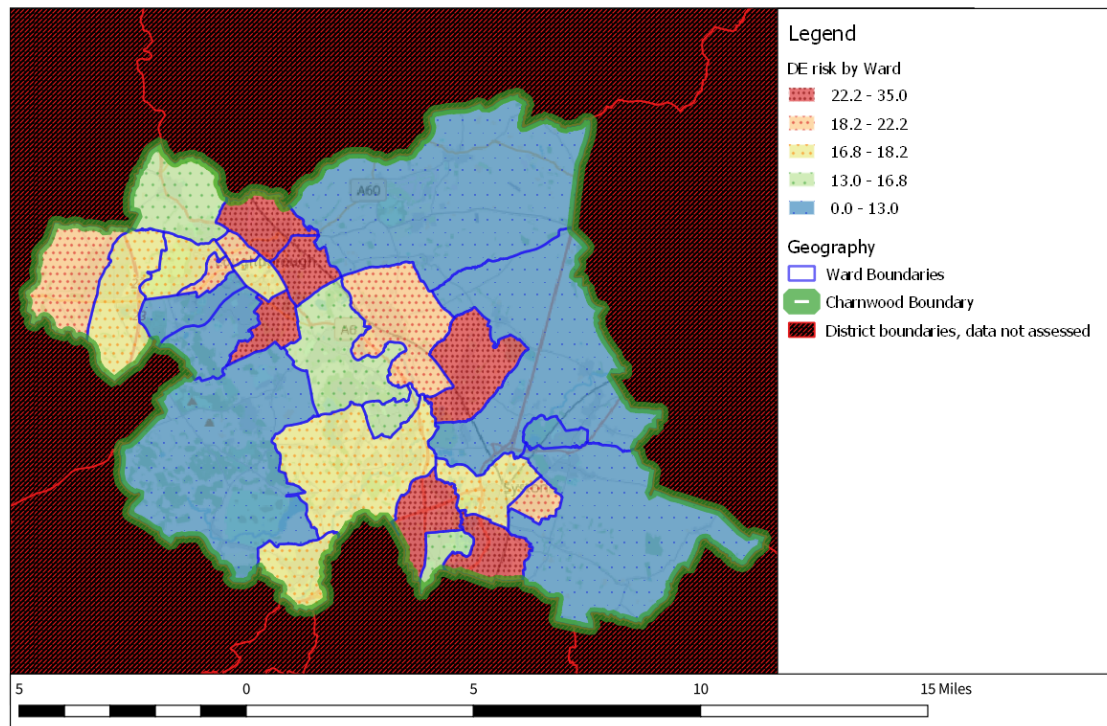
Figure 5: Charnwood Wards ranked by Digital Exclusion risk - summary of analysis

Ward Name	DE risk score	Share of % premises no USO	Share of % premises no30Mbit	Share of % aged 65	Share of Lone HH over 65 %	Share of % PC/eligible HH	Share of IMD score	Share of HB + UC	Share of disability benefits
Loughborough Hastings	35	1	0	2	3	8	10	12	8
Thurmaston	26	0	1	4	4	5	4	6	7
Loughborough Lemyngton	25	0	1	2	2	8	7	7	6
Sileby	25	15	6	3	3	4	4	5	5
Birstall Wanlip	24	30	10	3	4	2	2	2	3
Loughborough Shelthorpe	23	1	0	2	2	5	6	6	6
Loughborough Storer	21	0	1	2	3	5	7	6	5
Syston East	20	0	0	4	4	4	4	4	5
Loughborough Ashby	19	0	0	1	3	7	6	4	3
Barrow and Sileby West	19	1	10	4	4	3	2	3	4
Shepshed West	19	2	2	4	3	3	3	4	5
Anstey	18	0	1	4	4	3	4	4	4
Shepshed East	18	0	1	4	3	4	4	4	5
Syston West	18	0	0	4	4	4	3	4	4
Loughborough Garendon	17	0	0	5	4	4	3	3	3
Rothley and Thurcaston	17	2	15	4	4	2	2	2	2
Loughborough Southfields	17	0	0	2	4	3	4	5	4
Mountsorrel	16	0	1	3	3	3	3	4	4
Birstall Watermead	16	0	0	4	5	3	3	3	3
Loughborough Dishley and Hathern	15	0	0	4	3	3	3	4	4
Quorn and Mountsorrel Castle	15	0	0	4	4	3	2	3	3
Queniborough	13	5	10	5	5	2	2	1	1
Forest Bradgate	13	16	12	4	4	1	2	1	1
The Wolds	13	20	12	4	3	2	2	1	1
Wreake Villages	11	7	14	4	3	2	2	1	1
Loughborough Outwoods	10	1	0	5	5	1	1	1	2
East Goscote	9	0	0	4	3	4	2	1	1
Loughborough Nanpantan	7	0	0	3	4	1	1	1	1

Figure 6: Wards by Digital Exclusion risk quintile, Charnwood

Wards by Digital Exclusion risk quintile, Charnwood

Source: Citizens Online assessment based on data from ONS, DWP, Ofcom, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government



FOCUS ON THREE HIGHEST RISK AREAS

LOUGHBOROUGH: HASTINGS, LEMYNGTON, AND SHELTHORPE

- DE risk (weighted): 1st, 3rd and 6th
- Combined population: 9,865 (13.4%)
- Constituent LSOAs: 12
- Over-65: 2,590 (7.8% of district)
- Together account for 9,523 (25.8%) HB and UC claimants (nearly double the share of total population)
- Pension Credit claimants: 3,205 (16.1%). Pension Credit where all in household 65+ are 53% in Hastings, 54% in Lemyngton and 36% in Shelthorpe
- High numbers of people on ESA (4,289, 22.1% of the district total), DLA (3,199, 16.3%), and PIP (4,133, 20%)
- Connectivity good: just 9 premises unable to meet the USO and 30 unable to receive 30Mbit/s (2.3% of the district and 2.5%).

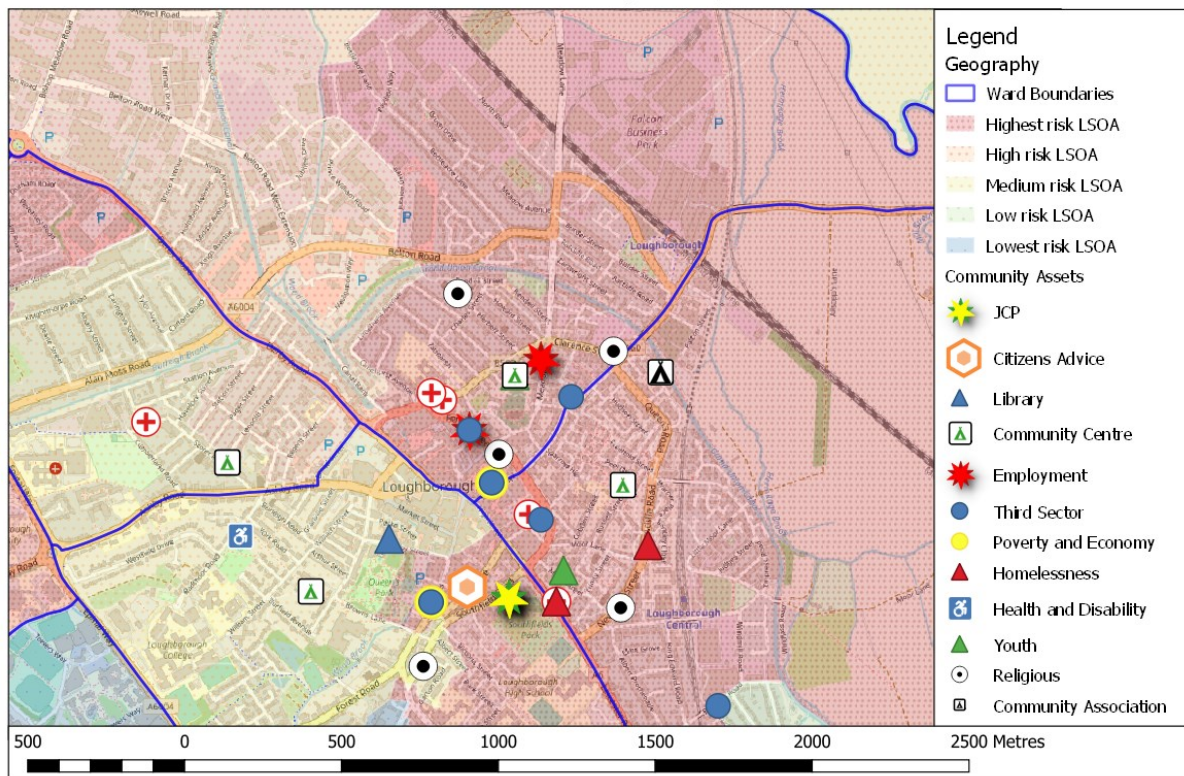
It makes sense to look at these three wards in Loughborough together along with services provided in the centre of the town (and alongside LSOAs with higher risk in neighbouring Wards).

Figure 7 shows central Loughborough. This includes the highest risk parts of Loughborough Hastings and Lemyngton Wards, and a high risk part of neighbouring Southfields Ward (which as a Ward has medium digital exclusion risk). Together Loughborough Hastings and Lemyngton account for 19.3% of Housing Benefit and Universal Credit claims, 13.4% of ESA, DLA and PIP claims, and 11.9% of Pension Credit claims. Yet, they contain just 7.7% of the district population.

Figure 7: Loughborough Central gap analysis

Gap Analysis - Loughborough Centre

Source: Citizens Online assessment based on data from ONS, DWP, Ofcom, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government



Loughborough Hastings is particularly significant in terms of multiple deprivation. It has the highest number and proportion of Housing Benefit (709) and Universal Credit claimants (450, a total of 1,159 or 12.2% of the district total). There are also a high number of Pension Credit claimants (221, 6.9% of the district total), and disability benefit claims (915 ESA, DLA and PIP claims – 7.9% of the district total). These factors

are all associated with greater likelihood of digital exclusion – whether because of lower income, age and lower income, or disability and lower income.

Figure 9 also shows there are a range of community and public sector locations we have identified close to most residents – though there are populated areas in Loughborough Lemington that are at a greater distance to these.

It's worth bearing in mind that because of the pandemic some of these sites may not be open to the public, or be operating in different ways. The following places could be useful for digital inclusion work as they are based in or near the LSOA with the highest number of households where all residents are aged 65 or over. (The area northwest of New King Street/Queen's Road, referred to as Charnwood 002A / E01025699, see figure 8).

Figure 8: Gap Analysis - high risk area of Loughborough Hastings Ward

Gap Analysis - Loughborough Hastings

Source: Citizens Online assessment based on data from ONS, DWP, Ofcom, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

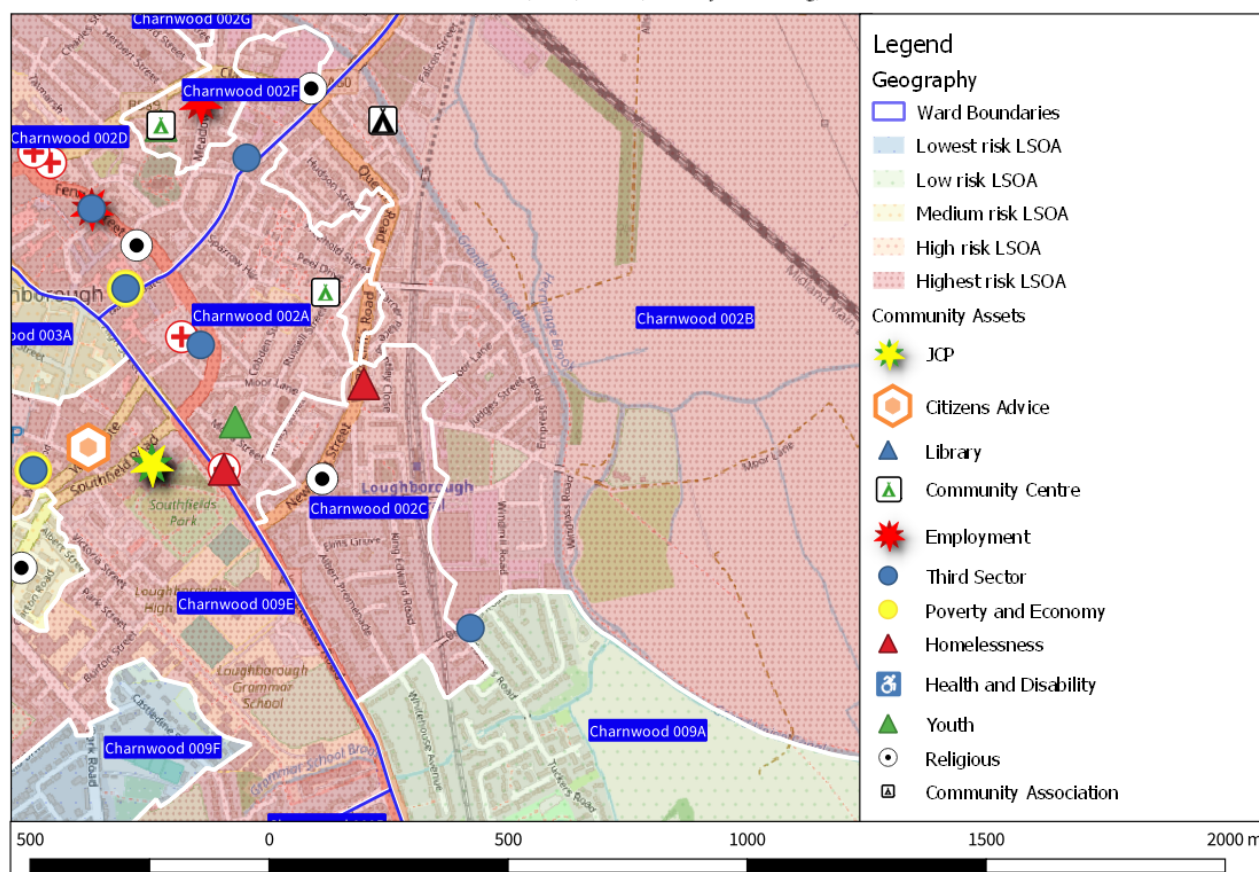
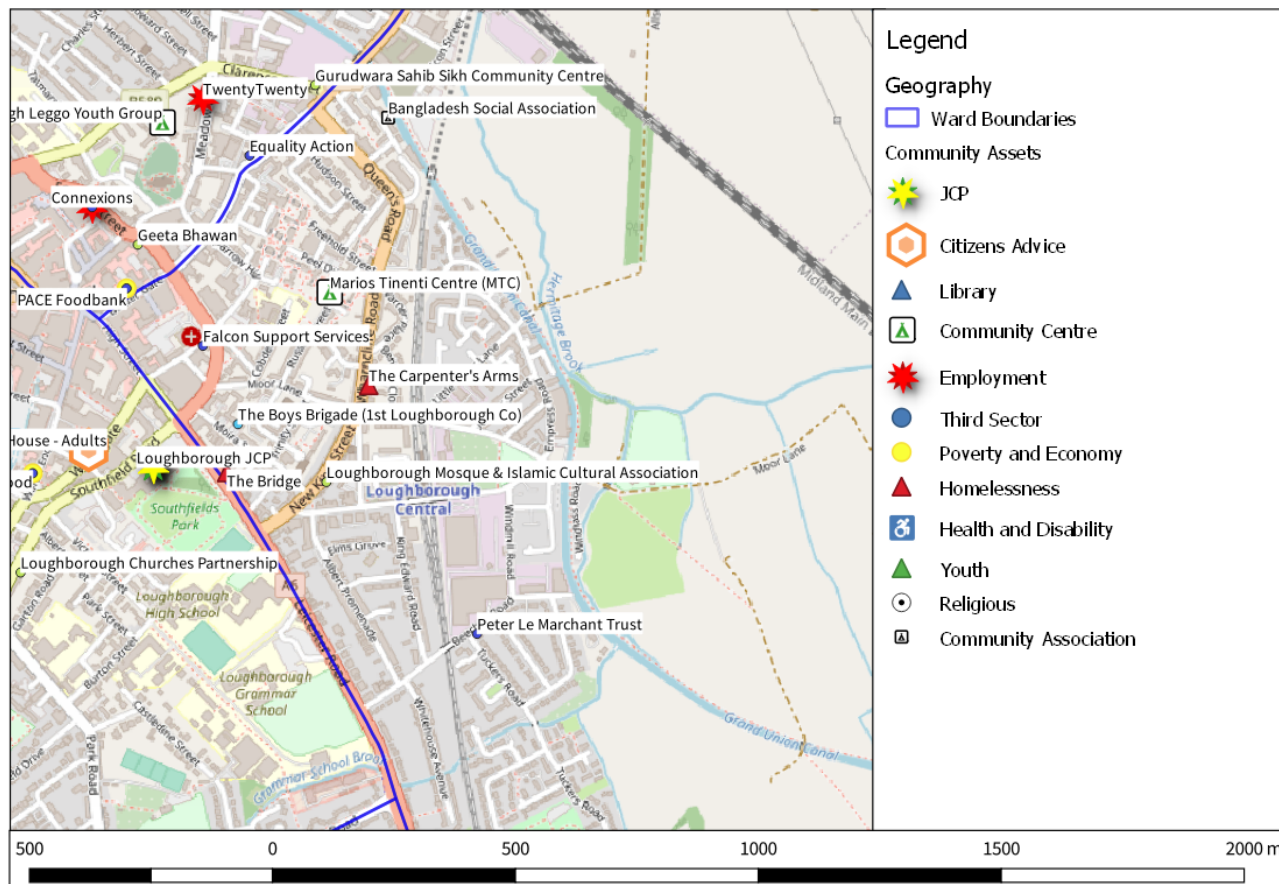


Figure 9: Gap Analysis - Loughborough Hastings

Gap Analysis - Loughborough Hastings

Source: Citizens Online assessment based on data from ONS, DWP, Ofcom, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government



[The Marios Tinenti Centre \(MTC\)](#) is a community hub, offering drop-in support and signposting. They say they have “computers available which residents can use to access the internet free of charge”. MTC has been part of Charnwood Community Action during the pandemic, but we haven’t established the extent to which access to computers is available at the moment.

EqualityAction have been active in Loughborough since 1969. They have recently secured a 6 months project with The National Lottery Community Fund – “[Beyond Lockdown Loughborough East Project](#)” ... [working] with the residents of Loughborough East (particularly in the Hastings and Lemington Wards including the Bell Foundry area) to support families and individuals to identify and access the help they need as a result of Covid-19.” This is an excellent opportunity to address the digital exclusion risks in these Wards – and the group should be a key partner in a Digital Inclusion Network.

PACE - ProActive Community Endeavours – “develop community initiatives that offer our services to the population of Charnwood”. Their location is just on the border of the Hastings and Lymington wards, and the site of the local Foodbank. Their objectives align strongly with a Digital Inclusion Network: “To relieve people who are vulnerable and excluded, by working together to assess the need, identify the issues that need to be addressed and devise a way forward to bring about positive change. To provide support mechanisms, education, training and employment opportunities to encourage and enable individuals to realise their full potential. To provide facilities and equipment for recreational purposes to improve the quality of life of local people.”

During the pandemic, [PACE has been delivering Project 19](#) – an initiative “designed to support the elderly, the vulnerable, the excluded and those who have fallen into hardship as a result of the COVID-19 virus. This includes providing food, combating isolation and loneliness providing free at the point of delivery qualified counselling via phone or video call (e.g. Facetime/WhatsApp).” It is not clear if this project involves digital skills assistance but this would be an essential organisation to include in a Digital Inclusion network.

We should emphasise that although digital exclusion is a greater risk among older people, younger people also often need support with digital skills, access to devices and the internet, and/or assistance with digital literacy. There are a number of initiatives in the area which could form part of a Digital Inclusion Network. [TwentyTwenty](#), [Connexions](#), [Loughborough Leggo Youth Group](#) (which particularly helps “young people with mild learning difficulties and special needs”), and potentially The Boys Brigade as well. [TwentyTwenty](#) operates “LifeSkills” centres for young people. Their primary programme (“Love4Life”) is based on “empowering young people to build confidence and make positive choices in their relationships, health and education” and we imagine this could certainly include digital skills training with reference particularly to these areas and digital literacy. [Connexions](#) provides support for young people who are not in education, employment or training. Providing digital skills support forms a part of the Leicester Employment Hub work (and an essential part, given much of their training is online).

The [Peter Le Marchant Trust](#) provides day outings and holidays on waterways for people of all ages with any kind of disability or serious illness. While the Trust is closed due to Covid-19 and the trips themselves do not offer enormous opportunities for digital skills training, this may be a valuable organisation in terms of communicating with local disabled people.

The Bangladesh Social Association have been part of the Covid19 response, and have been organising emergency food parcels. At time of writing they are [exploring reopening](#). We are not aware of any digital skills initiatives, but the organisation has a Facebook and a twitter account, and we expect a developed network with people in the community who may speak English as an Additional Language or benefit from bespoke support around their diaspora identity. The Gurudwara Sahib Sikh Community Centre, Geeta Bhawan and – at more of a distance – Loughborough Churches Partnership and Loughborough Polish Community Centre – also offer opportunities to engage with particular communities.

There are three housing projects locally that could be included in a digital inclusion network, Falcon Support Services, The Carpenter’s Arms, and The Bridge.

[Falcon Support Services](#) provides a 30 bed supported housing scheme with single ensuite rooms for people with a Leicestershire local connection. They provide social activities and cooking workshops, Lifewise training sessions on tenancy management, and a drop-in service that deals with “debt management, housing, benefits, mental health, Substance misuse and referrals to specialist services” as well as “access to education, training, employment, volunteering”. They have free WiFi and equipment for people to get online. Staff can also help residents to fill in forms online and they would like to be part of a digital inclusion network.

[The Carpenter’s Arms](#) is a “Christian run 12 room residential centre for men challenged by drug and alcohol addiction, which often results in a breakdown in relationships, homelessness, financial hardship, illness and offending.” The organisation provides help with employment and education but we have not established whether this includes any digital skills training. However, the Trust state they are “constantly looking for ways to improve the delivery of the programme”, and a digital inclusion network may be able to provide referral options.

[The Bridge](#) provides “specialist housing related advice, support, and assistance services and accommodation options to homeless and vulnerably housed people” across Leicestershire and Rutland. Projects include those related to employability, money management and community wellbeing. We are not aware of a digital skills strand, but again – this could form a part of work.

Pinfold and Park View Surgeries in Hastings Ward and Woodbrooke Medical Centre and Bridge Street Medical Practice in Lemyngton Ward also offer potential locations to identify digitally excluded people and refer them to support. Digital skills sessions could

– prior to the pandemic – even be offered in GP surgeries, helping patients to access online services. There remains a need to assist patients with the – now more important – online tools. Our analysis shows that Woodbrooke Medical Centre would be most worth approaching. Their patient list is not only older (also the case for Pinfold and Park View), but less likely to have taken up online services offered by the surgery (fewer than 30% of patients were registered as of the most recently available NHS Digital data). Park View surgery has a younger demographic patient list, but again fewer than 30% of patients were registered for making GP appointments, ordering repeat prescriptions, and/or looking up personal details. It should be noted that registration alone does not imply confident use of online services. Equally, where people have *not* registered for online GP services this may not be because of a lack of necessary digital skills or access to devices and the internet.

Loughborough JCP, Charnwood Citizens Advice, Home Start Charnwood, and Loughborough Library are also located nearby. Citizens Advice operate a Help to Claim Universal Credit service – based on digital skills support for the digital-by-default benefit (however, this scheme does not cover the long-term digital skills help claimants may need to fill in their UC journal or explore wider benefits of the internet).

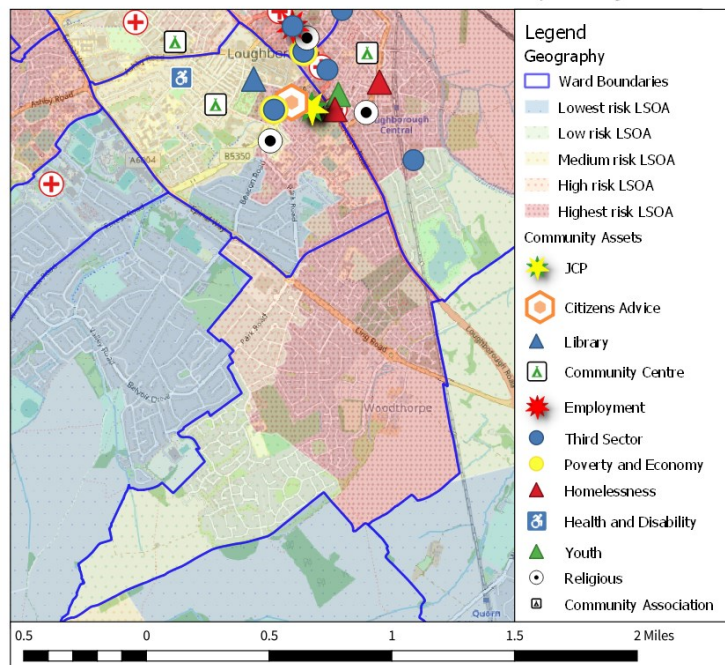
LOUGHBOROUGH SHELTHORPE

We have not been able to identify relevant public, private, or third sector organisations providing support within the boundaries of Shelthorpe Ward (see figure 10). However, the LSOAs in the East of the Ward are near to the locations mentioned in the Hastings and Lemyngton section (Charnwood 009B in the north and 009D in the south). Glebe House, located in Southfields Ward, works with people with learning disabilities and autism and as well as being a resource for people across Charnwood may be particularly important for people living in the nearby Shelthorpe Ward (as well as Hastings and Lemyngton). There are 735 claims for ESA, DLA or PIP in Shelthorpe, together accounting for 6.3% of claims in Charnwood – though the Ward only contains 4.9% of the borough's residents.

Figure 10: Gap Analysis - Loughborough Shelthorpe

Gap Analysis - Loughborough Shelthorpe

Source: Citizens Online assessment based on data from ONS, DWP, Ofcom, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government



THURMASTON AND BIRSTALL WANLIP

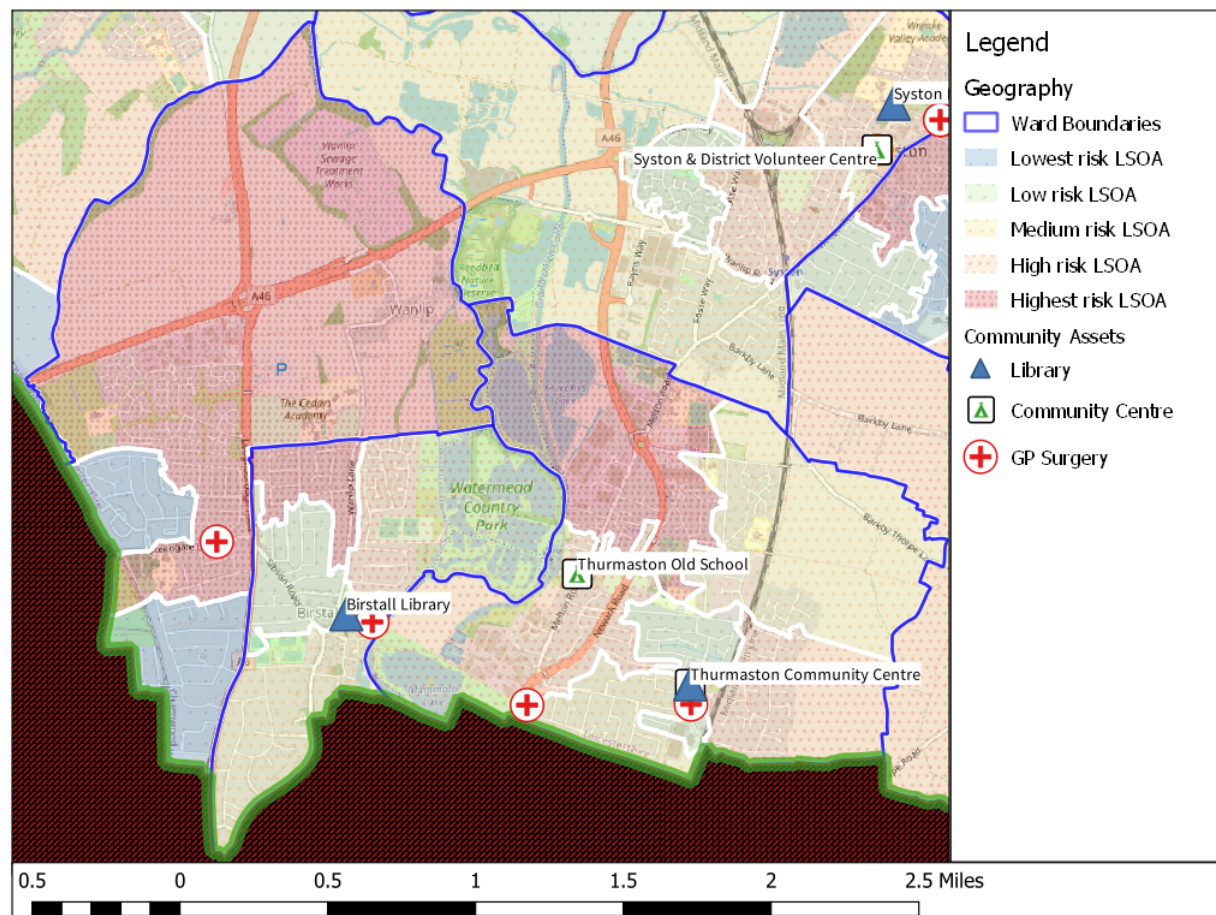
- DE risk (weighted): 2nd and 5th highest
- Combined population: 17,781 (9.7%)
- Constituent LSOAs: 9
- Over-65: 3,367 (10.2% of district)
- Together account for 10.2% of ESA, DLA and PIP claims

Across Birstall Wanlip and Thurmaston we have only identified a few community assets. Birstall Library (in the Birstall Watermead Ward) and Thurmaston Community Centre are joined by four GP surgeries: Greengate Medical Centre, Birstall Medical Centre, Thurmaston Health Centre and Silverdale Medical Centre. At greater distance are Syston Library, Syston Citizens Advice outreach sessions, and The County GP surgery in Syston (figure 11). [Thurmaston Old School Community Centre](#), featured on the map, is sadly due to close because of the impact of Covid19 on finances and extensive repairs need. We've not been able to learn much about Thurmaston Community Centre in Silverdale as there is only an out-of-date Facebook page from 2013.

Figure 11: Gap Analysis - Birstall Wanlip, and Thurmaston

Gap Analysis - Birstall Wanlip, and Thurmaston

Source: Citizens Online assessment based on data from ONS, DWP, Ofcom, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government



While these community assets can be considered together, the Wards themselves have different issues. Thurmaston has an older population. Low income is common for all adults here, but particularly for those aged over 65. Birstall Wanlip has much lower deprivation, but has the worst connectivity in Charnwood. Digitally excluded people in both wards affected by all of these issues may benefit from accessing the local library. Older adults are more likely to be engaging with GP surgeries which could serve as places to identify and – prior to the pandemic – even provide some digital skills support.

Importantly, each of the local GP surgeries mentioned has less than 30% of patients registered for online services. Greengate Medical centre has the oldest patient list, and on this basis could be the priority to engage.

Thurmaston summary

- DE risk (weighted): 2nd highest
- Population: 10,300 (5.6%)
- Constituent LSOAs: 6
- Highest number of people aged 65 and over: 2,032 (6.1% of district)
- High proportion of 65+ people living alone: 54.6% of over 65 households and 12.2% of all households.
- Highest number of Pension Credit claims: 272 (8.5% of district and 30.8% of households over 65).
- Second highest number of ESA, DLA and PIP claims: 835 (7.2% of district), and significant numbers of HB and UC claims: 530 (5.6% of district)
- No significant connectivity issues.

Birstall Wanlip summary

- DE risk (weighted): 5th highest
- Population: 7,481 (4.6%)
- Constituent LSOAs: 3
- Over-65: 1,335 (4% of district)
- Worst connectivity in the district: 158 premises cannot access 30Mbit/s (5.42% of Sileby premises) and 91 cannot access the USO (5.2%). These account for 13% and 38.3% of premises across Charnwood with connectivity issues. Although these issues affect a minority of people, it has a large impact on digital exclusion.
- There are 300 households where there a person aged 65 or over lives alone – half of households aged 65 or over, and 13% of all households.

SILEBY

- Population: 8,354 (4.6%)
- Constituent LSOAs: 10
- Over-65: 1,277 (2.9% of district)
- DE risk (weighted): 4th highest
- Relatively poor connectivity: 115 premises cannot access 30Mbit/s (3.2% of Sileby premises) and 91 cannot access the USO (2.5%). These account for 9.5% and 23% of premises across Charnwood with connectivity issues.
- There are 550 ESA, DLA or PIP claims in Sileby (4.7% of the district total).

Sileby scores relatively highly for digital exclusion risk for two reasons: poorer connectivity, and relatively higher levels of deprivation particularly around disability benefits. Similarly to Birstall Wanlip and Thurmaston, we have identified few community assets. Sileby Library is located relatively nearby, but is not as close to the LSOA with greatest digital exclusion risk (figure 12). Sileby Community Centre is a hall for hire, but also hosts Leicestershire & Rutland 4x4 response – who have run sessions

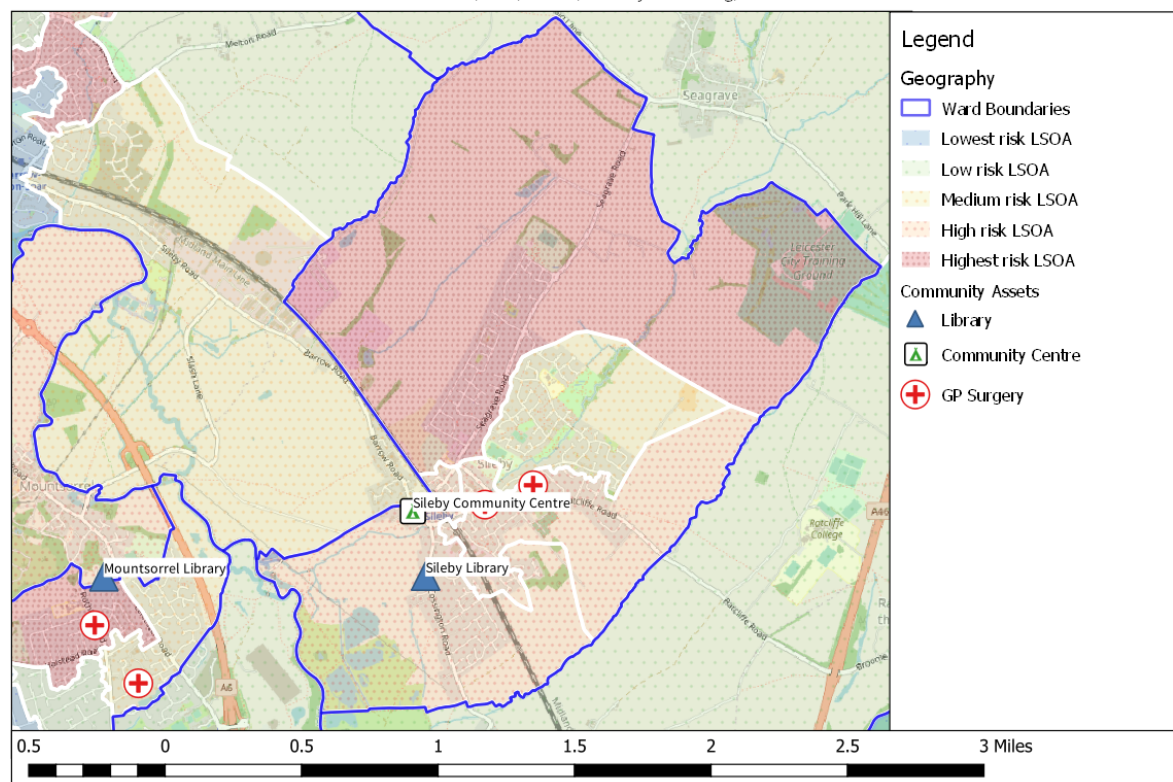
on adult safeguarding and other topics at the venue. This suggests the venue could be suitable for digital skills training. With the significant number of disabled people in the Ward, the distance to any specialist support organisation may be an issue.

People claiming disability benefits may be more likely to have health issues that involve more frequent interactions with local GPs – including mental health issues. There are two local GP surgeries, both with relatively young patient list profiles: The Banks surgery (79% of patients are not registered for online services) and Dr Mk Lakhani’s practice (69%).

Figure 12: Gap Analysis - Sileby

Gap Analysis - Sileby

Source: Citizens Online assessment based on data from ONS, DWP, Ofcom, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government



COVID19

Lockdown restrictions and precautions to prevent spread of the virus affect our gap analysis. Many people will be receiving remote support, perhaps via a telephone, where previously they would have visited a community location for face to face enquiries. Many community locations may be closed or operating in different ways. The changes limit people being able to use these services. Especially those who are older or

shielding. With a reduced number of contact points, it is even more important that remote support over the phone is on offer

“In response to Covid- 19 and the ongoing lockdown restrictions, (although gradual easing is taking place), GoLearn! (Leicestershire County Council’s Adult Learning Service) has created NEW [Online Learning](#) resources for adults across Leicestershire to access FREE of charge.” This new site includes Digital Skills courses as well as “Family Learning resources and activities for parents to support home-schooling and better understand their children’s education”, “Resources for Adults with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities to support and sustain their development and wellbeing”, and “resources and support available for any individual facing an uncertain future with regard work and employment. GoLearn offers a FREE and impartial Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) service from qualified Learning and Work Advisors available to provide one to one telephone support to help individuals take their next steps in either learning or work.”

As age is an important factor in both digital exclusion and risks associated with Covid19, it is important to mention the Age UK Leicestershire & Rutland county-wide offer: a Coronavirus Helpline (0116 299 2239 Mon-Fri 9-5pm and weekends 10-4pm). Age UK say “people can get in touch with any concerns relating to the current crisis. We also have an existing Information and Advice line 0116 299 2278 Mon-Fri 9-1pm dealing with all other issues that people over the age of 50 may be concerned about. For all vulnerable older people having to self-isolate throughout Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland we are able to offer 2 free food parcels (these can usually be delivered within 24 hours), 2 food shopping visits (food is paid for by the service user and we do not charge for the 2 trips). Prescription collection and telephone befriending. They can have access to this service by phoning 0116 299 2239.” We know that Age UK include digital inclusion triage as part of their phone assessments, and can provide devices and assistance in setting them up. Contact with Age UK Leicestershire & Rutland should help to establish the local picture and where additional support could be provided.

BOROUGH-WIDE DIGITAL EXCLUSION CONSIDERATIONS

CONNECTIVITY

At the local authority level, connectivity in Charnwood tends to be better than across England as a whole³³ (figure 13). A smaller proportion of premises have internet speeds below 2Mbps download or below the government Universal Service Obligation level (USO, below 10Mbps download, 1Mbps upload) – just 0.67% of premises. A higher proportion than across England as a whole have access to Superfast Broadband – speeds of over 24Mbps, and this is approaching 100% (98.76%). There is also a much more developed Ultrafast network, and Virgin Media Cable system, meaning that though there is less Full Fibre – there is more partial fibre than across England as a whole, again, almost all premises are covered (99.55%).

Figure 13: Connectivity comparison between England and Charnwood

Measure	England %	Charnwood %	Charnwood Vs England
Below 2 Mbps down:	0.34%	0.17%	-0.17%
Legal USO (Below 10 Mbps, 1 Mbps up):	2.07%	0.67%	-1.40%
High Speed Broadband (Below 15 Mbps):	1.79%	0.64%	-1.15%
Superfast (UK >24 Mbps):	96.98%	98.76%	1.78%
Ultrafast (>100 Mbps):	62.07%	75.59%	13.52%
Full Fibre (FTTP or FTTH):	11.05%	2.44%	-8.61%
Fibre partial/full at any speed ³⁴ :	98.60%	99.55%	0.95%
Virgin Media Cable:	54.12%	72.30%	18.18%

There is considerable variation at smaller geographic scales. There are three Wards in Charnwood where over 100 premises lack access to USO speeds, together making up three-quarters of the total 1,123 premises. Birstall Watermead – with 420 premises unable to access the USO (14.5% of premises in the Ward) – accounts for 37.4% of premises in Charnwood lacking this access. The Wolds contains 158 (11.8% of premises in the Ward and 14.1% of the total), Birstall Wanlip 140 (4.8% of premises in the Ward and 12.5% of the total), and Loughborough Shelthorpe 136 (3.6% of premises in the Ward and 12.1% of the total). Figure 16 shows the geographic distribution of premises most likely to be digitally excluded through a lack of suitable connectivity.

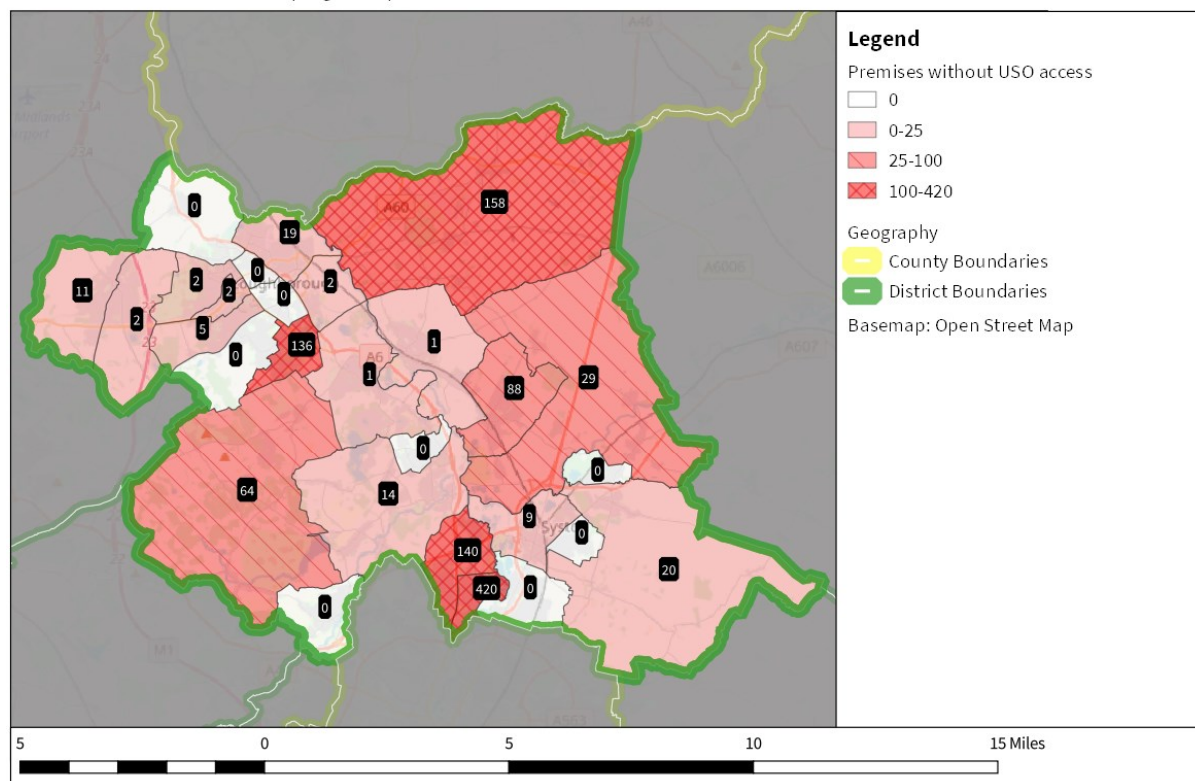
³³ thinkbroadband data as of January 2020

³⁴ Fibre To The Cabinet (FTTC)/Very-high-bit-rate Digital Subscriber Line (VDSL)/G.fast – local DSL loops achieving high speeds/Cable/Fibre To The Premises (FTTP)

Figure 14: Premises without USO access, by Ward - Charnwood

Premises without USO access, by Ward - Charnwood

Source: Ofcom Connected Nations, spring 2019 update

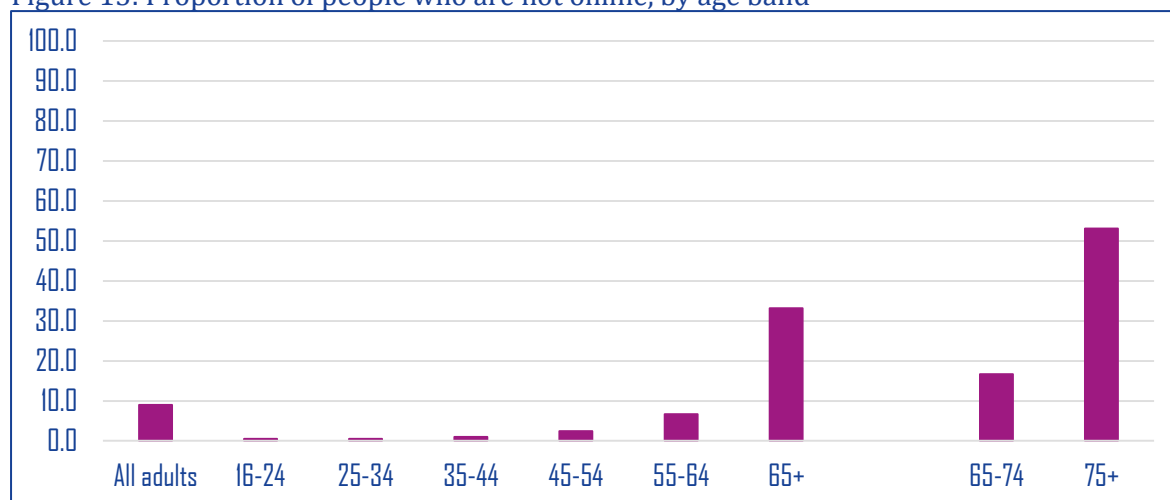


AGE

We know that older people are more likely to be digitally excluded – to be offline, to lack digital skills, and to be less likely to have access to digital devices. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), **33% of people aged 65+ have not been online *within the last 3 months*** – hence they are effectively not online (figure 17). Of these, the great majority (86%, or 29% of all people aged 65+) have *never* been online. More than half of the population aged 75+ (53.1%) are effectively not online and most (89%, 47% of all people aged 75 or over) of these have never been online³⁵.

³⁵ ONS - [Internet users, UK: 2019](#), accessed 25/09/2019

Figure 15: Proportion of people who are not online, by age band



The 2018 mid-year estimates 33,041 people living in Charnwood are aged 65 and over. At 18.1% of the population, this is in line with England (18.2%, figure 18), though it is lower than the East Midlands (19.3). A higher proportion of Charnwood are of working age than either the East Midlands or England. This is likely to be because of students at Loughborough University as the difference between Charnwood, East Midlands and England is in the 18-27 age group.

Figure 16: Proportion of population by age band, Charnwood, East Midlands, England

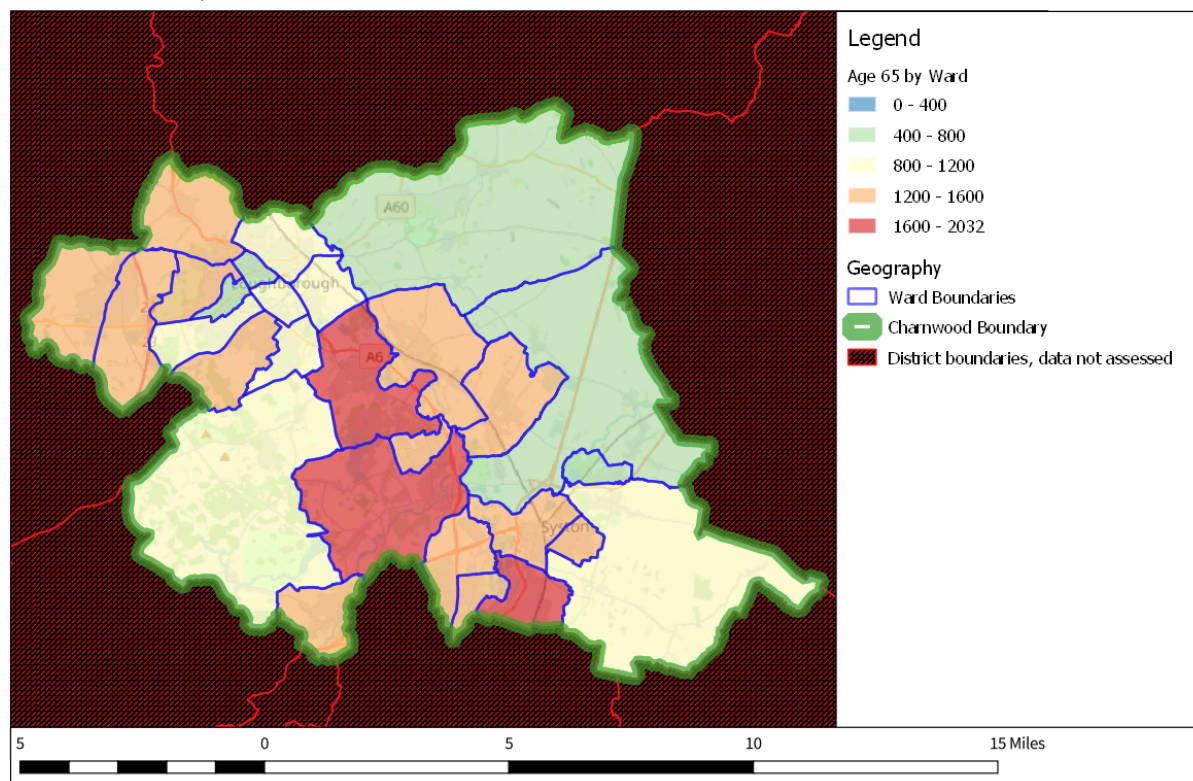
Age	Aged 0 - 15	Aged 16 - 64	Aged 65 and over
Charnwood	17.0	64.9	18.1
East Midlands	18.6	62.1	19.3
England	19.2	62.6	18.2

People aged 65 and over per Ward ranges from 462 (6%, Loughborough Ashby) to 2,032 (Thurmaston) and to 27% (Loughborough Outwoods). 14,351 households were made up of a person/people aged 65 or over (22%, ranging from 11-35% by Ward) – with over half of these (7,980 households, 56%) a person aged 65 or over living alone. In other words, 12% of all households in Charnwood are a lone person aged 65 or over. In one ward, Loughborough Hastings, as many as 72% of households aged 65 and over live alone.

Figure 17: Wards by residents aged 65 or over

Wards by residents aged 65 or over, Charnwood

Source: ONS Mid-Year Population Estimate, 2018



LOWER INCOME AND BENEFITS

Lower income is associated with lower likelihood to have all five basic digital skills. The 2019 Lloyds Consumer Digital Index (CDI) found that just 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 ³⁶.

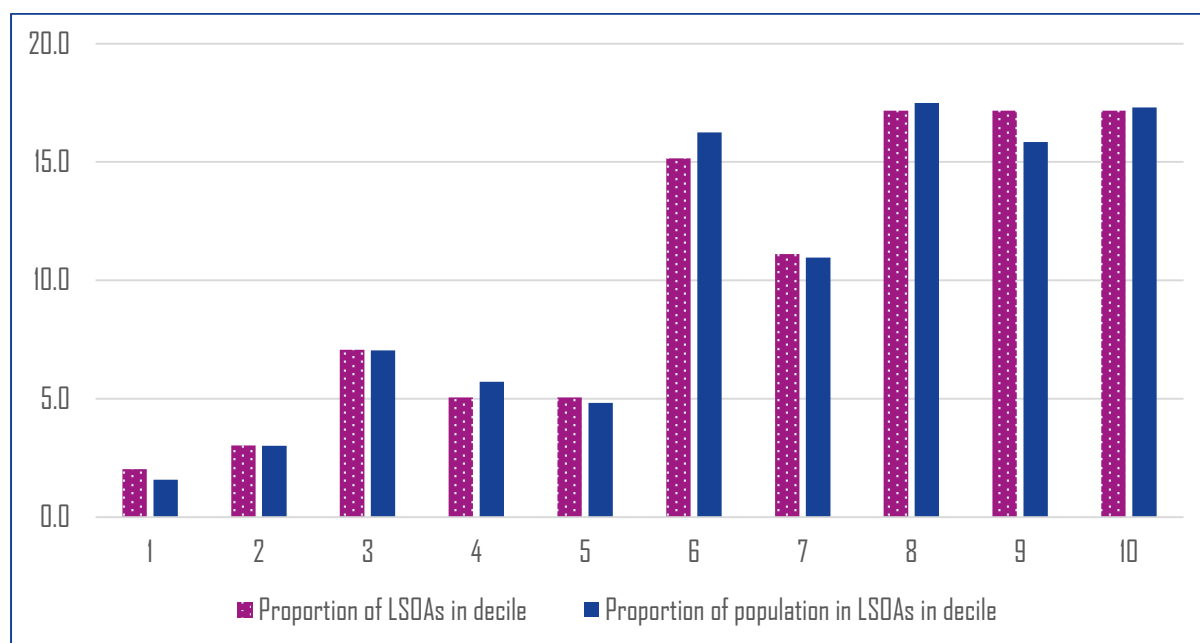
As of May 2019, there were a total of 45,902 DWP benefit claims in Charnwood (approx. 30.3% of the population). Of these, 24,305 (52.9%) were of State Pension age, while 6,716 (14.6%) were receiving Out of Work benefits. The proportion of people in receipt of benefits that are of State Pension age is considerably higher in Charnwood, than in Great Britain as a whole (52.9% compared to 45.4%). People 'Out of Work' is also lower compared to Great Britain (14.6% compared to 17.7%).

INDEX OF MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION (IMD)

³⁶ 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

Just 22 of the 99 LSOAs in Charnwood are in the 50% most deprived LSOAs on the UK IMD index (deciles 1-5). Only five are in the 20% most deprived and just two LSOAs are in the 10% most deprived LSOAs across England. The proportion of population in LSOAs by IMD decile approximately matches that proportion of LSOAs. Around a fifth (22.2%) of both LSOAs and Charnwood’s population are in the most deprived 50% in England.³⁷ 4.6% of the population are in LSOAs in the 20% most deprived (figure 17). Figures 18 and 19 show the geographic distribution of LSOAs by their IMD decile. This shows the greater deprivation in more urban parts of the district. The highest levels of deprivation is in LSOAs within the Hastings, Storer, and Lemington Wards of north/central Loughborough.

Figure 18: LSOAs and population in LSOAs by IMD decile



³⁷ It is important to state that not everyone living in an LSOA which ranks among the most deprived will be experiencing multiple deprivation.

Figure 19: LSOAs by Index of Multiple Deprivation decile - Charnwood

LSOAs by Index of Multiple Deprivation decile - Charnwood

Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government , 2019

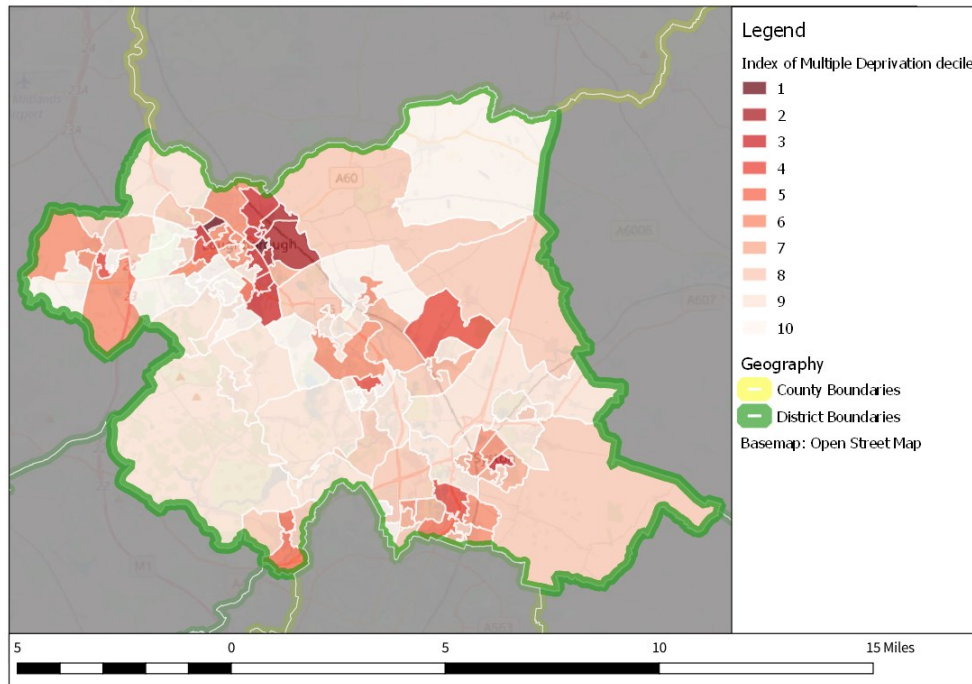
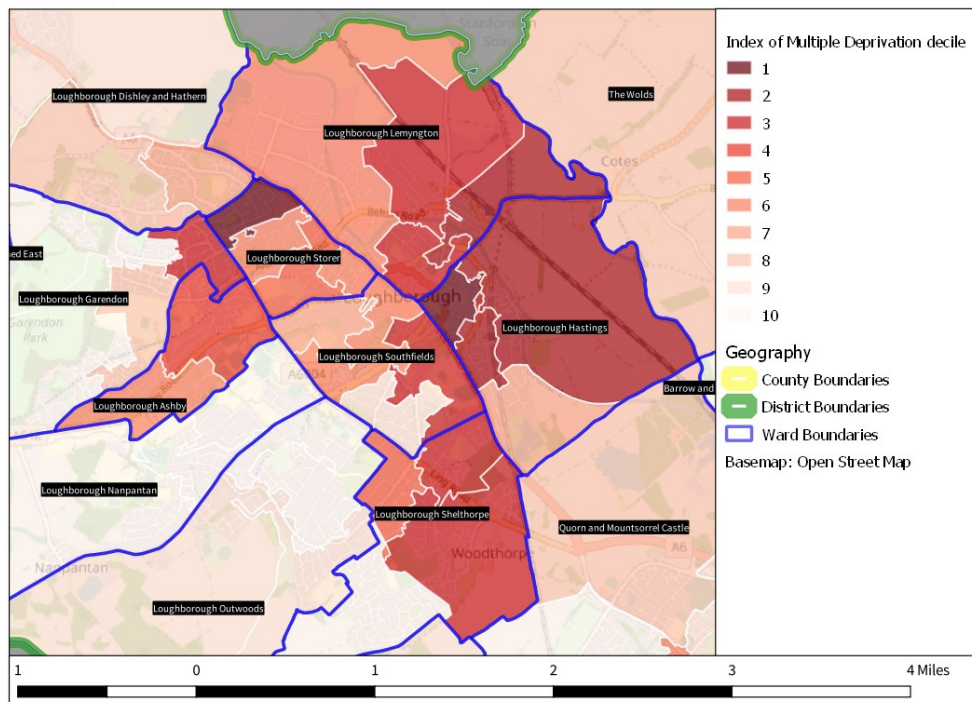


Figure 20: LSOAs by Index of Multiple Deprivation - and Ward, Loughborough

LSOAs by Index of Multiple Deprivation decile, and Ward - Loughborough

Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government , 2019



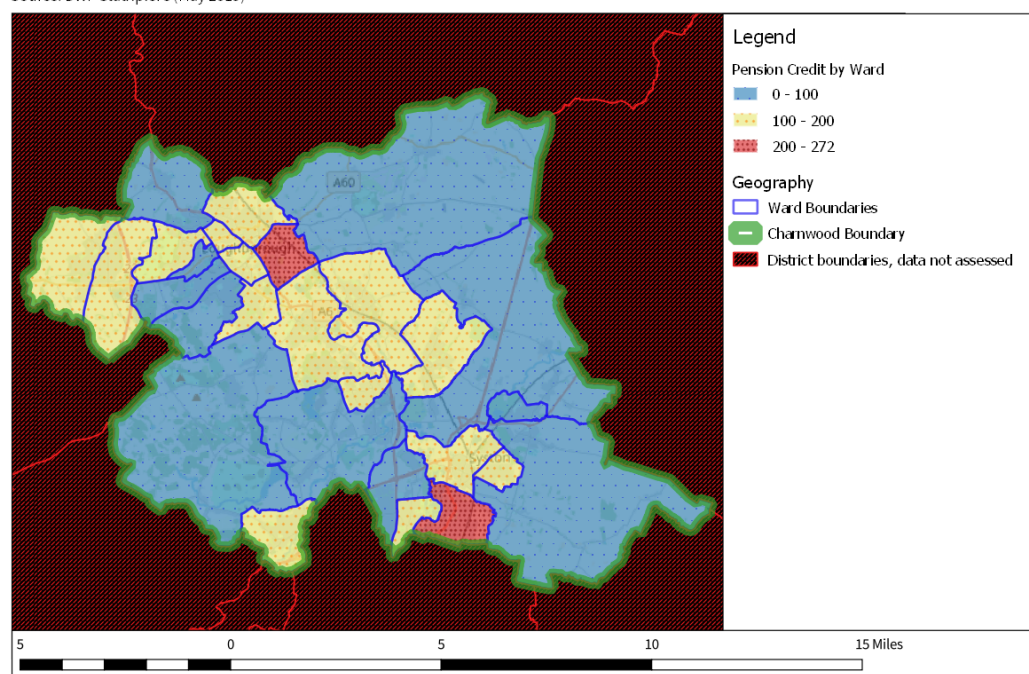
PENSION CREDIT

Pension Credit (PC) is a useful proxy for identifying people at greater risk of digital inclusion as it allows us to explore data on people who are both older and on lower incomes, an intersection of two factors associated with lower digital skills, internet use, and device ownership.³⁸ The most recent data indicates there are 3,197 PC claims in Charnwood.³⁹ This is approximately 22% of households aged over 65. The number of claims varies from just by Ward from 24 to 272 claims, or from 7% to 54% of households aged 65 or over.⁴⁰

Figure 21: Wards by Pension Credit claims

Wards by Pension Credit claims, Charnwood

Source: DWP StatXplore (May 2019)

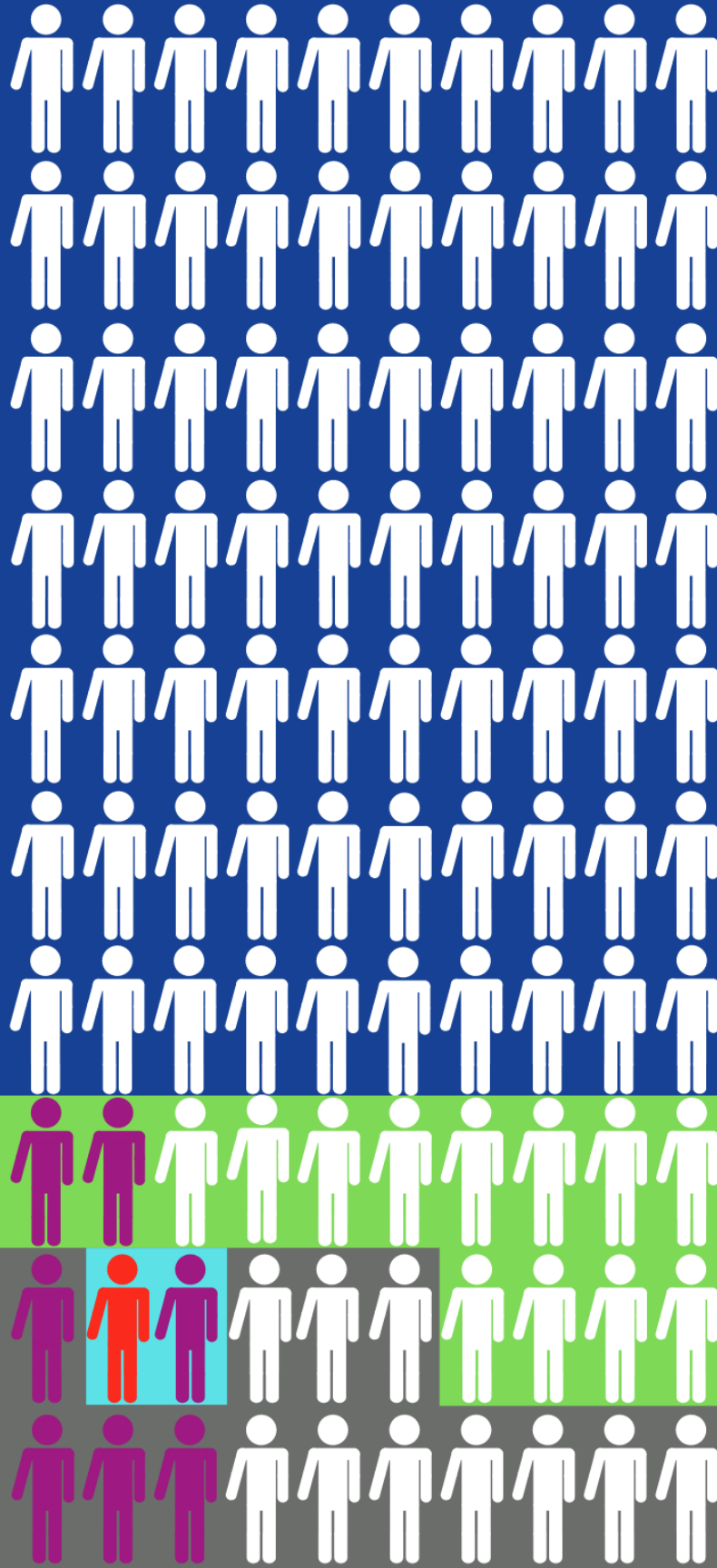


³⁸ Pension Credit (PC) is a means of financial assistance provided to people on low incomes who are also of qualifying age (65 or over, gradually being increased to 66). It is provided in two forms: Savings Credit and Guarantee Credit. Guarantee Credit is an income top-up bringing weekly incomes up to £155.60 (single) or £237.55 (couples). Savings Credit is an additional benefit of £13.07 (single) or £14.75 (couples), only available to people in receipt of the benefit before 6th April 2016, and who have savings for their retirement.

³⁹ DWP Statxplre (May 2019)

⁴⁰ At the LSOA level, the number of claims varies from just 6 to 114 by LSOA (average of 32), and 5% to 112% of households aged 65 or over. Undoubtedly, the latter impossibly high figure reflects the outdated nature of the household statistics, but still suggests a very high proportion of over 65 households in some areas are PC claimants.

Of 152,000 adults in Charnwood,
45,902 (30%) are receiving a DWP benefit



21,597 are of
working age

3,455 (16%) are
likely to be
digitally excluded

24,305 (53%) are of
State Pension age

3,200 Pension
Credit claims

>1,000 of these
most at risk of DE

8,020 (33%)
are likely to be
digitally excluded

7.6% of the population (11,500) are likely to be
digitally excluded claimants

Source: Citizens Online calculation from Lloyds Consumer Digital Index, 2019; ONS, 2019; DWP, 2019

HOUSING BENEFIT AND UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Housing Benefit (HB) is available to people in work on low incomes and unemployed people. These are both risk factors for digital exclusion, so this benefit is a useful indicator of people without digital skills. HB is being replaced by Universal Credit (UC), which is digital by default, meaning an online claim is required (in almost all cases).⁴¹

Recent survey work by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) found that **43% of UC applicants said they needed more help making a claim. The survey found around a third of claimants need ongoing support using their UC digital account (31%).**⁴² These figures may be underestimates as they only cover digital exclusion among those people claiming UC at that point of the rollout. The initial roll out cases were not expected to be the most difficult and may not overlap with the claimants or areas of the country that are most digitally excluded. The figures have also been backed up by research by Citizens Advice Scotland who found that “34% of Scots seeking CAB help with Universal Credit did so because they could not access the internet”.⁴³

As of August 2019, DWP data states there were 5,678 Housing Benefit claims in Charnwood. At the same time, there were 3,764 households receiving UC. On the basis of the above survey figures from the DWP we would estimate that **there are around 2,500 HB claims where claimants will need help making a UC claim (2,441 claims), and further around 1,200 UC claims where claimants require ongoing support (1,167).** Approximately 8.5% of households in Charnwood have an HB claim (this figure is approximate as the number of households is taken from the 2011 Census). By Ward, the average number of HB claims is 203, ranging from 26 to 700 (and between 1.2-25.4% of households). By Ward the average number of UC claims is 134, ranging from 19-450, but at the LSOA level the number of claims varies from 5 to 189. Together, the number of HB and UC claims ranges from 10 to 506 – and from 2-62% of households – by LSOA, and from 52 to 1,150 and 4-42% of households by Ward.⁴⁴ Figure 22 shows wards where there are still high(er) numbers of HB claimants, many of whom will need

⁴¹ Citizens Advice note that people “might be able to apply for Universal Credit over the phone or, in exceptional circumstances, arrange for someone to visit you at home”, but this is only an option for people with sight issues, a long-term physical disability or mental health condition which prevent online applications or computer/smartphone use, or for people who cannot read/write.

⁴² [Universal Credit full service claimant survey](#) – DWP, June 2018, accessed 26/02/2019.

⁴³ [“The shocking digital divide that punishes Universal Credit claimants”](#), Third Force News, May 2019.

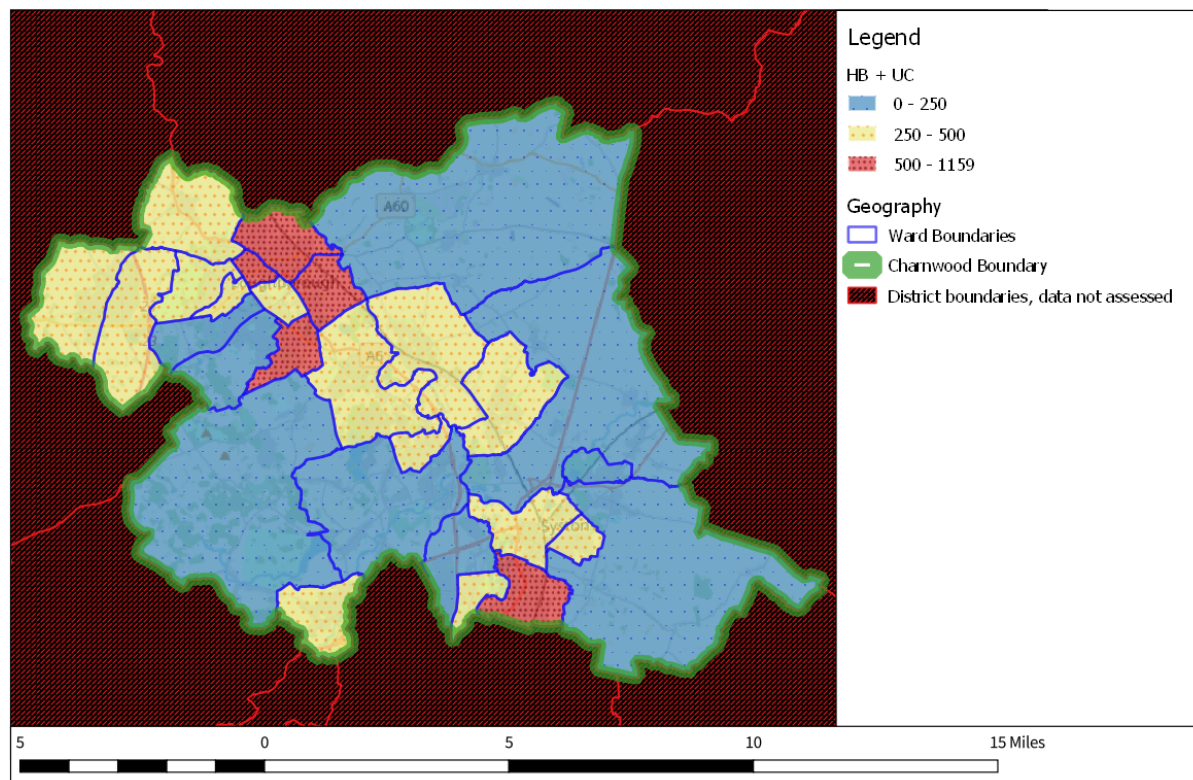
⁴⁴ On average, there were 57 claims in each LSOA, though this ranges from a low of 57 to a high of 317. Only 5,651 of the 5,678 claimants are allocated publicly to an LSOA, and 5,676 to a Ward (where the number of claims per geographic unit is below 5, data is not available – to protect privacy, which should explain the discrepancy).

support moving to UC – as well as people claiming UC who will need continuing support to maintain their claim.

Figure 22: Wards by Housing Benefit and Universal Credit claims

Wards by Housing Benefit and Universal Credit claims, Charnwood

Source: DWP StatXplore (August 2019)



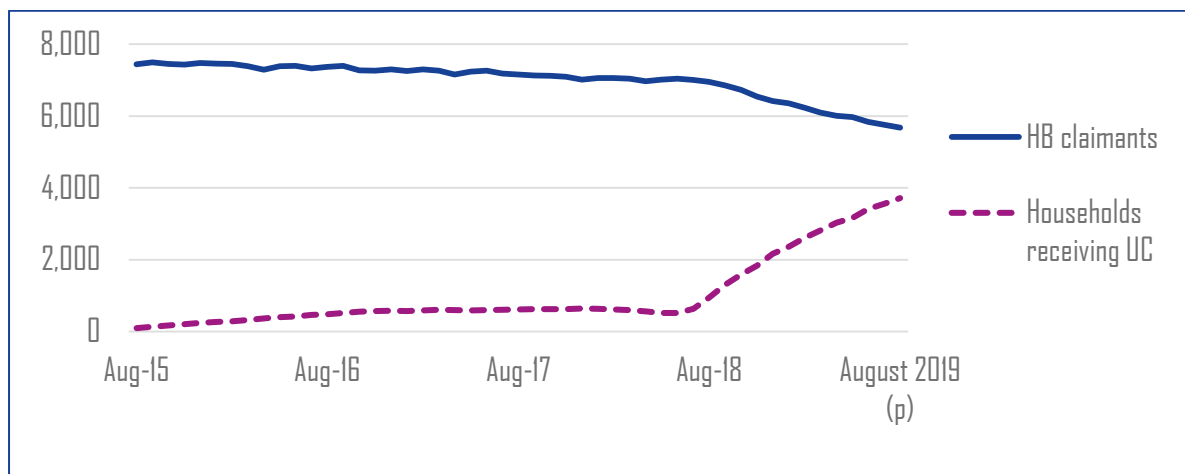
One way to measure migration to UC is to explore trends in the total number of households receiving UC against the trend for the number of HB claimants. These are mutually exclusive categories (UC replaces HB), and being a recipients of the other benefits replaced by UC would often act as a ‘passport’ to HB. Certainly, the number of HB claims is much higher than for the other benefits. The short story, shown in figures 23 and 24 is that migration was relatively low until July 2018 (at which point 8.2% of the total HB and UC was UC), but has risen steadily since August 2018 (11.9%) to effectively two-in five (39.%) claims in August 2019 (the most recently available data, which was still provisional in release from DWP StatXplore at the time of writing).

Figure 23: Households receiving Universal Credit vs Housing Benefit claims - a measure of migration to UC, 2015-2019, table by year

	Aug-15	Aug-16	Aug-17	Aug-18	Aug-19 (p)
--	--------	--------	--------	--------	------------

HB claims	7,444	7,374	7,153	6,954	5,678
Households receiving UC	95	481	619	940	3,715
Total	7,539	7,855	7,772	7,894	9,393
Percentage of total UC	1.3	6.1	8.0	11.9	39.6

Figure 24: Households receiving Universal Credit vs Housing Benefit claims - a measure of migration to UC, 2015-2019, chart by month



DISABILITY

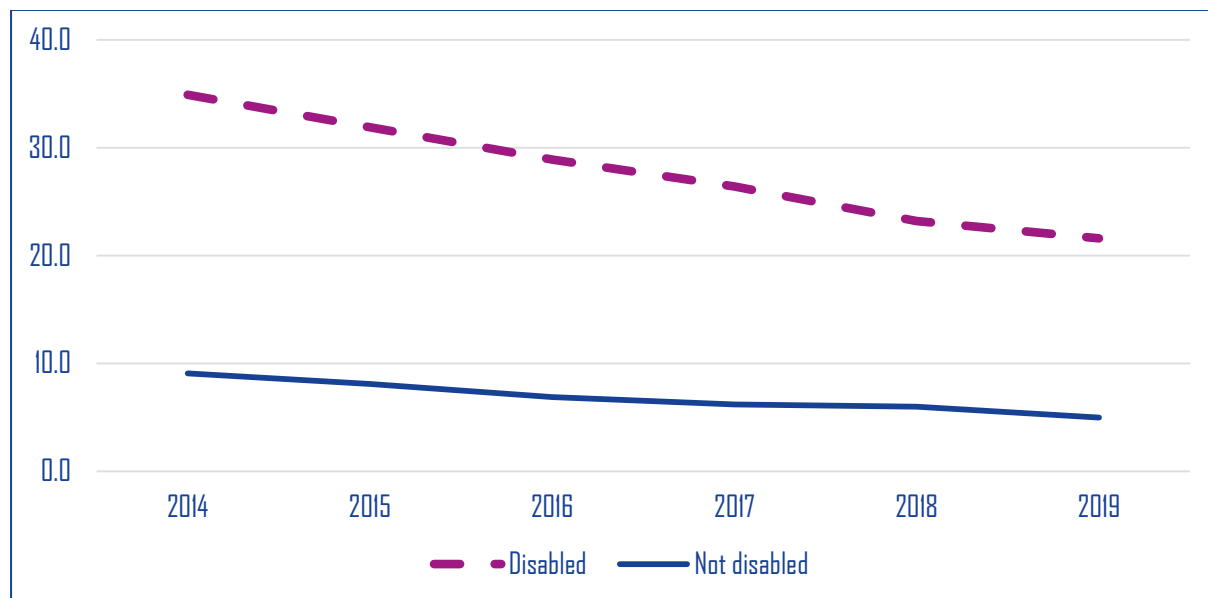
- 21.6% of disabled people are not regular internet users (2.7 million people)
- We estimate there are at least 2,500 disabled people in Charnwood who are not regular internet users

Disabled people are among the demographic groups research has consistently identified as being more likely to be digitally excluded. However, the rate at which disabled adults have become regular internet users is faster than for non-disabled adults in recent years (rising from 64.9% to 78.3%, compared to a rise from 90.8% to 94.8% among adults who are not disabled, figure 25). Nonetheless, ONS data on internet users shows *the proportion of disabled adults who are not internet users remains considerably higher than for adults who are not disabled* (21.6% compared to 5% in 2019).⁴⁵ This is despite the fact that technological developments can help those with impairments to access

⁴⁵ According to the ONS Internet Users data for 2019, 18.2% of disabled people have never used the internet (2.3 million people), compared to 4.9% of those who are not disabled (1.7 million people). A further 3.4% last used the internet over three months ago, and may thus also be considered effectively offline. This makes a total of 21.6% of disabled people who are never, or not regularly, online (2.7 million people).

services online. It is important that any digital inclusion programme ensure engagement with disabled people.

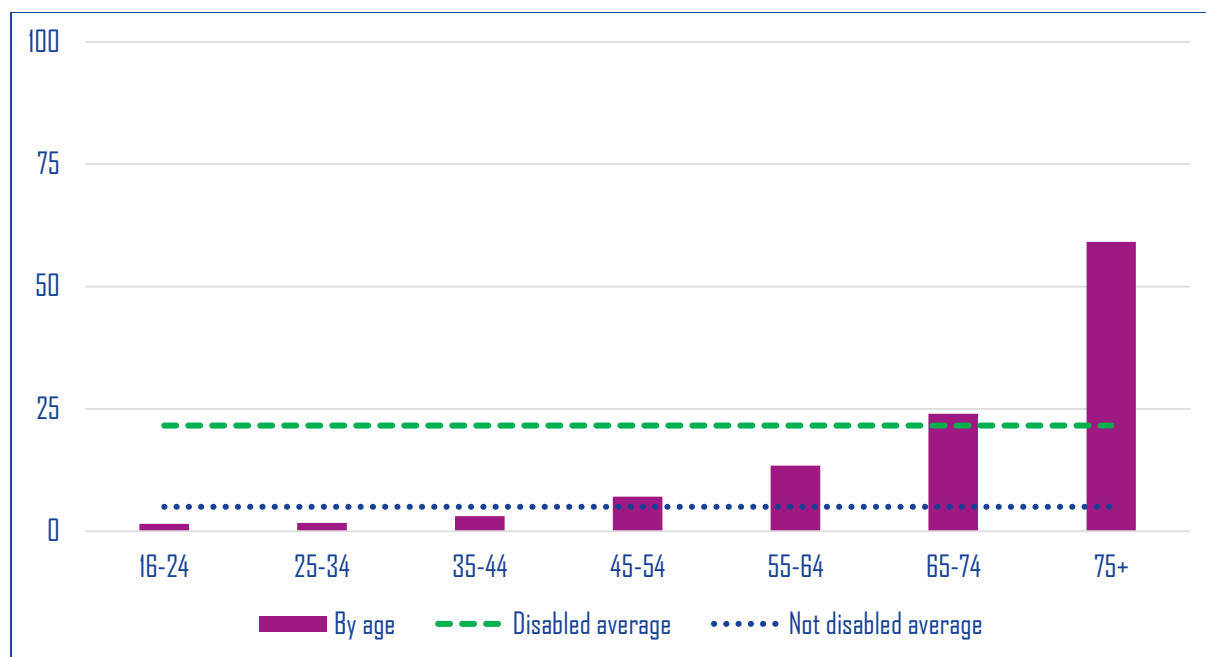
Figure 25: Proportion of adults who have never used the internet or last used it over three months ago (ONS, 2014-2019): Disabled and non-disabled adults



There is a clear intersection between age and disability: disabled people are less likely to be internet users the older they are (figure ##). Among disabled people aged 75 and over, 59% are not internet users, more than ten times the rate for adults who are not disabled on average. Indeed, “there is no difference [in levels of internet use] when looking at 16-34s (99% of non-disabled people vs. 98% of disabled people”.⁴⁶

Figure 26: Proportion of people who are not internet users: disabled people by age (ONS, 2019)

⁴⁶ Ofcom, Access and inclusion in 2018 report, available online at: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/multi-sector-research/accessibility-research/access-and-inclusion>, accessed 15/01/2020.



As shown in figure 27 (taken from Ofcom’s 2018 Access and Inclusion report), ownership of devices varies significantly for disabled people. For example, just 54% of disabled people own any computer for personal use (and 64% within their household) compared to 77% among non-disabled people (85%). Just 45% own a smartphone for personal use (53% within the household), compared to 75% among non-disabled people (81%).

While experiences are differentiated based on the nature of disabilities or impairments (people using wheelchairs may have problems gaining access to public IT equipment, whereas people with visual impairments may need specialist software and training), there is a particular risk associated with digital transformation for disabled people.

There is already a gap between the proportion of disabled internet users and non-disabled internet users with regard to accessing public services: 37% vs. 43% (Ofcom, 2018). Similar divides exist for shopping – 47% vs. 60%, and banking - 45% vs. 61%). This gap varies among people with different impairments: it is largest for visually impaired people (27% vs. 43%), while hearing impaired people are as likely as non-disabled people to use the internet to access public services (44% vs. 43%, see figure 28).

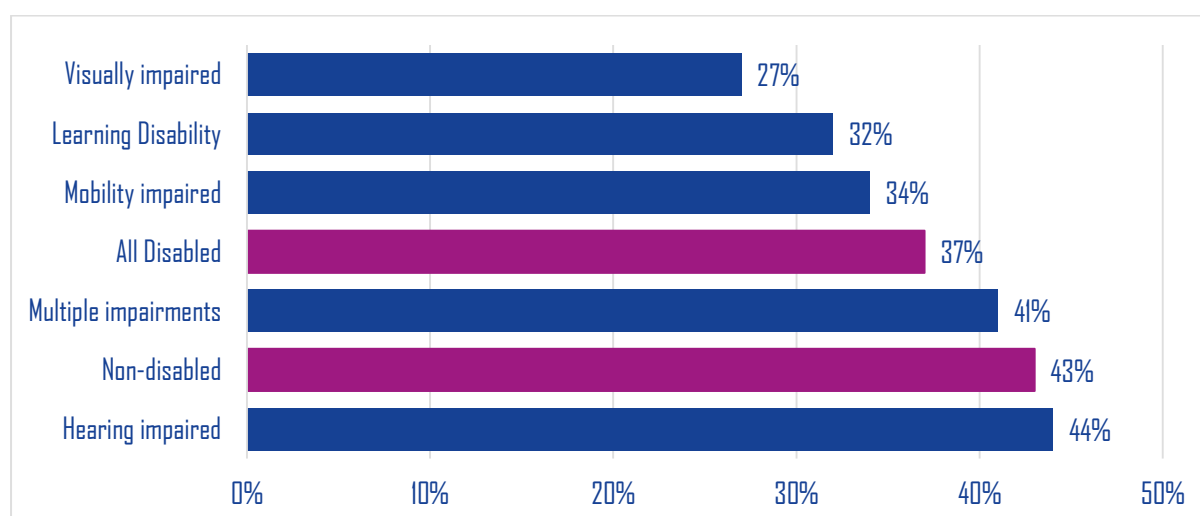
Figure 27: Ownership of devices, disabled and non-disabled people

	Household ownership		Personal use	
	Non-Disabled	Disabled	Non-Disabled	Disabled
Landline	66%	74%**	56%	66%**
ANY mobile	91%	80%*	86%	71%*
Simple mobile	22%	36%**	18%	31%**
Smartphone	81%	53%*	75%	45%*
Any computer (PC/laptop/tablet)	85%	64%*	77%	54%*
Tablet	63%	44%*	52%	34%*
Games Console	38%	23%*	24%	13%*
Smart TV	48%	30%*	43%	26%*
InternetΔ	NA	NA	92%	67%*

Source: Ofcom Disability Consumer Research. Question: Q1. Does your [household] have... QL. Which of the following do you currently ever use, if at all? Base: non-disabled: 17,510, all disabled: 3524. Note: ** indicates that a disability group is significantly higher than non-disabled consumers while * indicates that a disability group is significantly lower than non-disabled consumers (significance tested to 95%).

Δ Internet relates to personal use anywhere (i.e. both in and outside the home). The survey does not capture whether respondents have internet access at home.

Figure 28: Proportion of people using the internet to access public services (benefits, government, council), by disability type



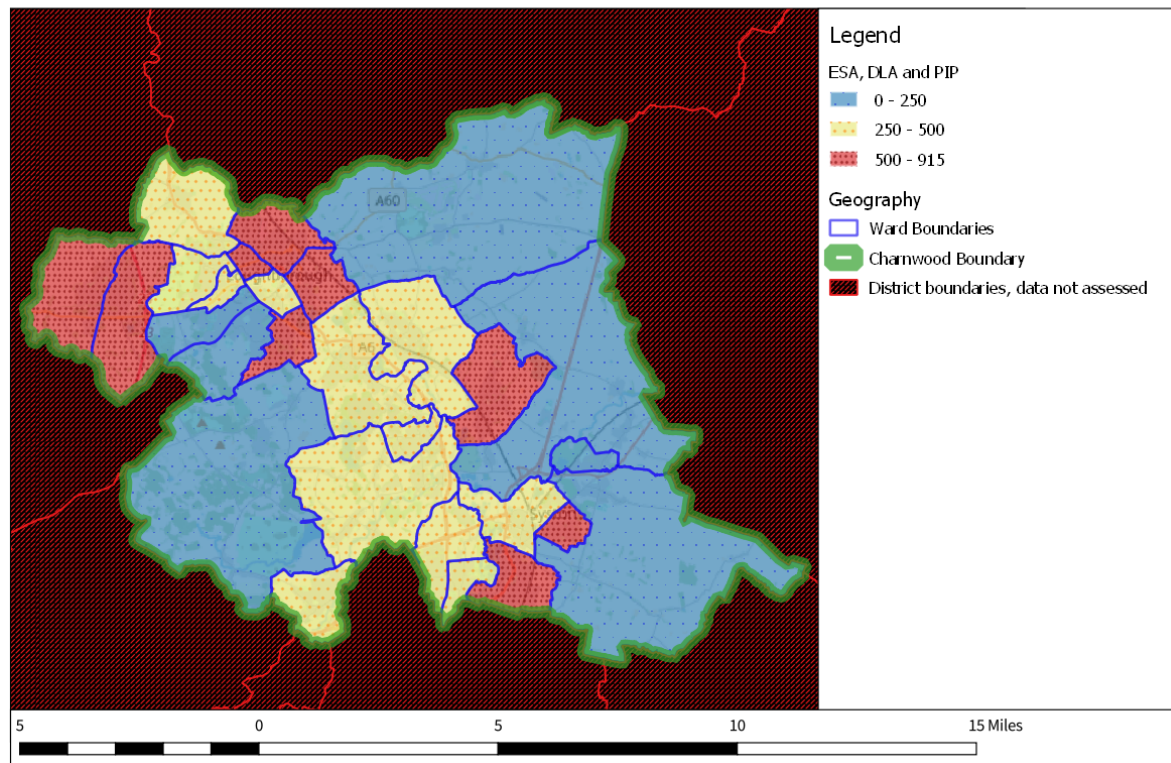
In Charnwood, there are around 11,000 people claiming Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Employment Support Allowance (ESA). PIP replaces DLA, so the total number of people claiming these benefits is mutually exclusive and can be added together. People can claim ESA as well as PIP or DLA, so in simply adding the total ESA claims we may be overestimating the total number of people receiving one of these benefits. However, as we are not including other disability benefits, we believe this gives an indication of the approximate number of people claiming benefits related to disability.

If approximately a fifth of these are not regular internet users, we would expect around 2,500 people who are disabled, claiming associated benefits, and offline, in Charnwood. The proportion is likely to be higher if anything among disabled people claiming benefits, and this estimate does not take into account people who are disabled who are not claiming benefits. In other words, we can consider **2,500 people as a minimum estimate for the number of digitally excluded disabled people in Charnwood**. Figure 29 shows the geographic distribution of higher numbers of ESA, DLA and PIP claims.

Figure 29: Wards by ESA, DLA, PIP claims

Wards by ESA, DLA, and PIP claims, Charnwood

Source: DWP StatXplore (August 2019)

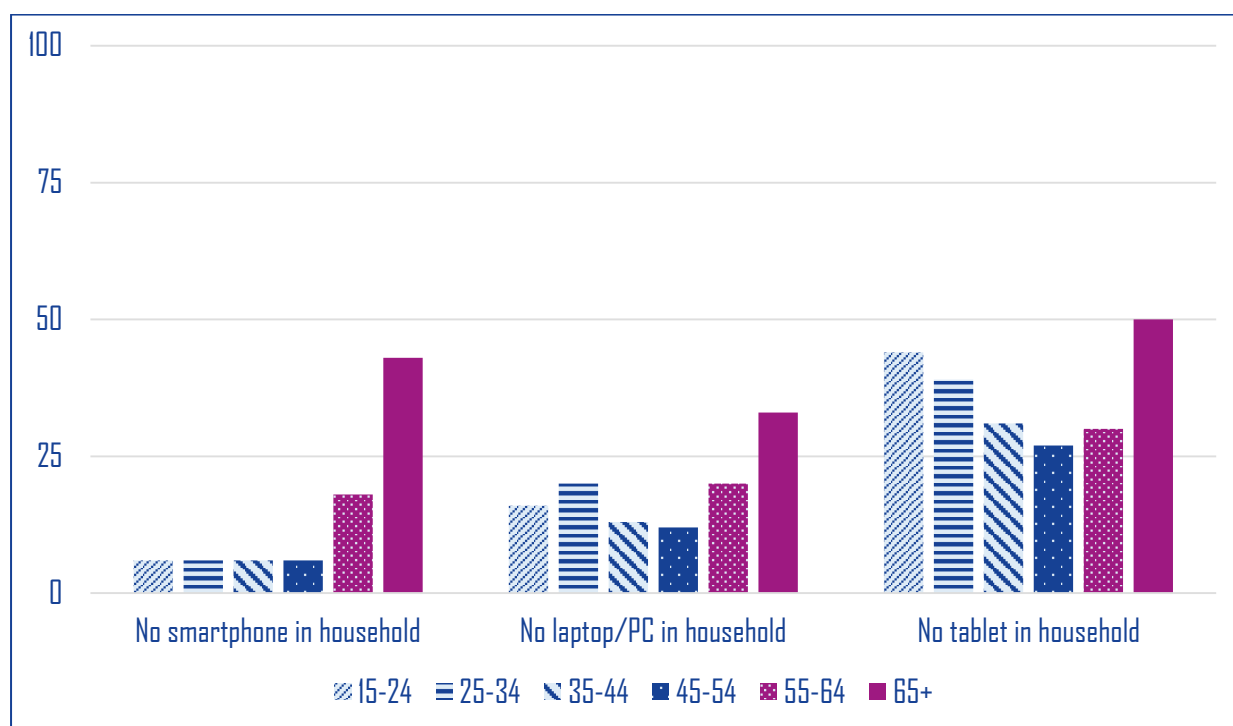


DEVICES

There have been dramatic changes in the availability and type of devices used to get online over the last 10 years. As a result, “PCs are declining in popularity – only 40% of adults are using desktop computers to access the web. 71% of internet users access the internet using smartphones. Smart TVs are also increasing in popularity with 21% of adults accessing the web through their TV”.⁴⁷

Device ownership is also associated with age: older people are less likely to have access to digital devices in their households (see Figures 30 and 31). In Charnwood, we estimate that between 24,000 and 59,000 adults (16% and 38%) lack access to one or more of these digital devices. These are significant proportions, in line with England as a whole. Smartphones are the most common device – but we still estimate about 24,000 people without these devices in Charnwood (figure 32). We estimate 30,000 do not have a laptop/PC and 59,000 do not have a Tablet in their household.

Figure 30: Proportion of households without devices, by age band



⁴⁷ McGillivray, D.; Jenkins, N.; and Dr Mamattah, S. (2017) *Rapid Review of Evidence for Basic Digital Skills*, School of Media, Culture & Society, University of the West of Scotland, July 2017. Available online at: https://storage.googleapis.com/digitalparticipation/reports/Tackling_Digital_Exclusion_Literature_Review.pdf (pdf), accessed 11/12/2019.

Figure 31: Proportion of households that do not own particular devices by age band

	No smartphone in household	No laptop/PC in household	No tablet in household
15-24	6	16	44
25-34	6	20	39
35-44	6	13	31
45-54	6	12	27
55-64	18	20	30
65+	43	33	50

Figure 32: Number and proportion of adults in Charnwood without smartphones, laptop/PCs, Tablets - Charnwood

	No smartphone in household	No Laptop/PC in household	No Tablet in household
Adults, Charnwood	23,944	30,353	58,535
% of adults, Charnwood	15.6	19.8	38.2
% of adults, England	16.0	19.9	37.6

Ofcom estimates that around a quarter of UK adults “only use devices other than a desktop or laptop to go online”. This is higher among DE households (33%) than in ACBC1 households (18%). Around 13% of DE households **only use a smartphone to go online** – compared to around 6% of ACBC1 households (and 8% of UK adults on average).⁴⁸ This is important as **many tasks are more difficult to achieve using only a smartphone or tablet – including creating a CV, and completing benefits applications.**⁴⁹ Research by Citizens Advice Scotland found people reliant on smartphones to access the internet were less likely to say that they can use a computer ‘very well’ (28% compared to 41%), and less likely to access their email ‘daily’ (37% compared to 48%).⁵⁰

Citizens Advice Scotland’s research into “the Smartphone Deficit” goes on to detail examples of the lower levels of digital capability associated with people who are “Smartphone by Circumstance”⁵¹ (in other words, constrained in their choice of device by costs and other barriers, rather than opting to use a Smartphone primarily out of choice). Figures 33 and 34 detail the lower internet use and confidence – together with greater experience of problems – reported by those with only a smartphone compared to people who also own tablets, computers, or – at the highest levels of confidence and

⁴⁸ [Internet use and attitudes, 2017 Metrics Bulletin, Ofcom \(pdf\)](#).

⁴⁹ [‘Smartphone by default’ internet users - A qualitative research report, Ofcom, 2016 \(pdf\)](#)

⁵⁰ [Locked out: the Smartphone Deficit, Citizens Advice Scotland, 2018 \(pdf\)](#)

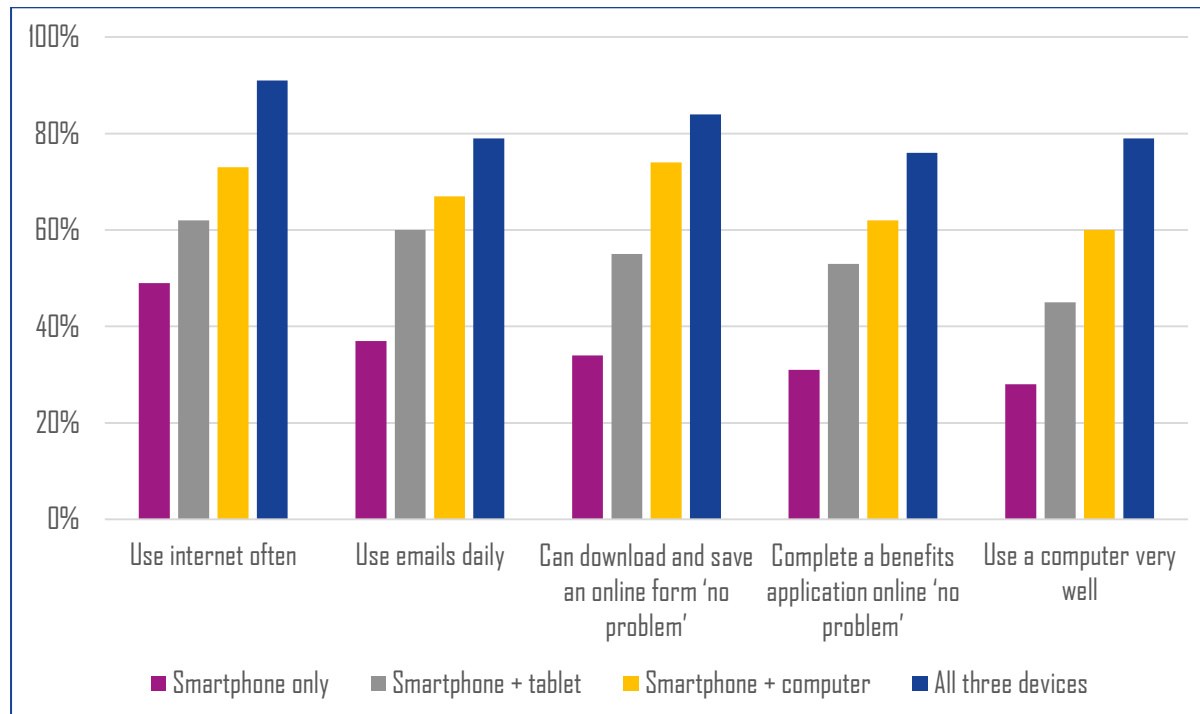
⁵¹ This terminology appears to have been adopted from the earlier Ofcom report

internet use – people with all devices. The proportion of Smartphone only users who report they can complete a benefits application online ‘no problem’ is, at under a third – 31% - less than half that for users of all devices, 76%. This leaves a large proportion of smartphone only users who experience some problem at least when filling in such applications.

Figure 33: Ability to carry out digital tasks for Smartphone only users vs those with access to any device for using the internet.

	Smartphone only			Access to any device for internet		
	No problem	Yes, but with some difficulty	Not at all	No problem	Yes, but with some difficulty	Not at all
Download and save an online form	34%	41%	25%	47%	32%	21%
Complete form	34%	49%	17%	48%	38%	14%
Scan a document	22%	36%	42%	37%	31%	32%
Upload form	24%	43%	33%	29%	37%	34%
Complete a benefits application online	31%	48%	21%	42%	41%	17%

Figure 34: Digital indicators by internet devices used



FOCUS ON LONELINESS AND ISOLATION

The 2020 Lloyds Consumer Digital Index reports that:

- 38% of the online population agree that being online “helps me feel less alone”
- 47% identified feeling “more like part of a community” as a benefit of being online.
- “34% of those online benefit from using the Internet to manage their physical and mental health. Those with the highest levels of digital engagement are more than twice as likely to benefit from this (44% compared to 21% of the least digitally engaged).”

In common with the Government’s strategy for tackling loneliness⁵², we adopt the framework used by the Campaign to End Loneliness and the Jo Cox Commission to define loneliness as:

“a subjective, unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship. It happens when we have a mismatch between the quantity and quality of social relationships that we have, and those that we want.”

The Government strategy notes though “Loneliness is often used interchangeably with isolation, [and] while they are linked and can often overlap, they are not the same.”

It is possible to be isolated without feeling lonely and conversely to feel lonely while surrounded by people. Isolation is observable: for example, we may look at how many relationships someone has or how often they speak to other people to help us understand whether someone is isolated. We cannot measure loneliness in this way. Similarly, loneliness is not the same as solitude – which some people enjoy – as loneliness is an unwelcome feeling.”

THE LOCAL PICTURE

What characteristics and circumstances are associated with feeling lonely?

The ONS Community Life Survey (2016-17)⁵³ enabled analysis of the characteristics and circumstances associated with loneliness in England. Results from this survey show that, nationally:

- 5% of adults in England reported feeling lonely “often” or “always”

⁵² [A connected society. A strategy for tackling loneliness – laying the foundations for change](#), published 15th October 2018.

⁵³ ONS (2016-17) [Community Life Survey](#)

- Younger adults aged 16 to 24 years reported feeling lonely more often than those in older age groups.
- Women reported feeling lonely more often than men.
- Those single or widowed were at particular risk of experiencing loneliness more often.
- People in poor health or who have conditions they describe as “limiting” were also at particular risk of feeling lonely more often.
- Renters reported feeling lonely more often than homeowners.
- People who feel that they belong less strongly to their neighbourhood reported feeling lonely more often.
- People who have little trust of others in their local area reported feeling lonely more often.

The Community Life Survey analysis enabled three profiles of people at particular risk from loneliness to be identified:

- Widowed older homeowners living alone with long-term health conditions.
- Unmarried, middle-agers with long-term health conditions.
- Younger renters with little trust and sense of belonging to their area.

Further investigation of these factors among the population in Charnwood may enable us to pinpoint, to a greater degree of accuracy than the MSOA map, where pockets of residents at higher risk of loneliness may be found. We know that, for example, across Charnwood there were – in the 2011 Census – **7,980 single occupancy households where the resident was aged 65 or over** (though we don’t know how many were widowers or had long-term health conditions). Another proxy indicators that may be helpful is to look at Carer’s Allowance (CA) as Carers UK report that 80% of carers have felt lonely or socially isolated⁵⁴. There were 2,756 people with entitlement to receive Carer’s Allowance in Charnwood as of February 2020, which suggests **there could be around 2,200 carers in Charnwood who have felt lonely or socially isolated**.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ “[Alarming numbers of people feel isolated and lonely as a result of caring for their loved ones](#)”, Carers UK, 2015, accessed 26/02/2019.

⁵⁵ The DWP explain on the StatXplore site that “Totals for all entitled cases show both the number of people in receipt of an allowance and those with entitlement where the payment has been suspended, for example if they are in hospital.” There were over 813,804 recipients of Carer’s Allowance in Great Britain in August 2017. To be entitled to Carer’s Allowance, a person must be providing at least 35 hours of care a week for someone in receipt of a qualifying disability benefit, not be in full-time education, and, if in paid work, have earnings after certain deductions of no more than £110 a week.

Entitlement to CA also acts as a “passport” to the carer premiums/additions in means-tested benefits such as: Income Support, Pension Credit, Housing Benefit and Universal Credit. This indicates lower financial means and therefore greater risk of digital exclusion. Those who receive Housing Benefit will move to Universal Credit and be required to apply online, so this represents a group that are likely to need digital skills support – as well as one that may be more likely to feel socially isolated or lonely.

Research by the South West Academic Health Science Network in 2014 found 45% of people over 75 admitted to A&E said they were socially isolated.⁵⁶ Triage sessions at GP surgeries to identify people who are socially isolated or lonely and who lack digital skills could be effective in signposting people to other support; including gaining digital skills which may be able to reduce perceptions of isolation or feelings of loneliness.

As indicated in the Lloyds Consumer Digital Index, being online may help people to feel part of a community, less lonely, and help them to manage and improve their health. Such a programme of work may need to involve the creation of bespoke courses on the Digital Champions Network for Digital Champions. Courses along the lines of “identifying and supporting people who are socially isolated” or “Supporting Carers with digital skills” could be developed.

A recent study, based on accounts from over 9,000 people aged 50 or over over a period of six years, found a positive long-term mental-health effect of using the internet daily.⁵⁷ Infrequent use (monthly or less) associated with deteriorating levels of life satisfaction among older people. The authors of the study “recommend encouraging older people to use the internet to socialise, to help mitigate the impacts of social isolation and loneliness on mental health.”

Carers UK’s research with the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness⁵⁸ found that 32% of employees currently juggling work and care have felt lonely or isolated in the workplace because of their caring role. These employees may be more likely to be ‘sandwich carers’, caring for both sick, disabled or older relatives and dependent children, and as such “more likely to experience symptoms of mental ill-health (27%) – which can include anxiety and depression – than the general population (22%)”.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ “Top urgent care doctor: [Impact of loneliness at Christmas causes spike in A&E numbers](#)”, NHS England, 23rd December 2014, accessed 26/02/2019.

⁵⁷ “[Frequent internet use improves mental health in older adults](#)”, UCL News, 28th July 2020, accessed 27/08/2020.

⁵⁸ [The world shrinks: Carer loneliness \(pdf\)](#), CarersUK.

⁵⁹ [More than one in four sandwich carers report symptoms of mental ill-health](#), ONS, January 2019.

Carers UK report that carers' top priority for workplace support is improved and consistent manager awareness of caring issues (37%) and more flexible / special leave arrangements (37%).⁶⁰

It is worth noting that loneliness and social isolation do not only affect older demographics and/or carers. An ONS analysis of children's and young people's experiences of loneliness⁶¹ found that 27.5% of children receiving free school meals (FSM) reported that they are often lonely, compared to just 5.5% of children who did not receive FSM. The report highlights suggestions from children and young people:

- Create a culture of openness about loneliness
- Create opportunities to make social connections
- Encourage positive uses of social media to alleviate loneliness
- Prepare young people to understand loneliness and equip them to deal with it

These suggestions highlight a key point. **While digital inclusion can help, through being an enabler or a catalyst, it cannot resolve these issues alone. Loneliness and isolation are usually more complicated and multi-faceted issues than can be addressed by relatively small amounts of support to use technology.** Indeed, loneliness and isolation are major issues in our society despite the fact that we now live in the most digitally connected age our society has ever experienced. Over-use or even addiction to digital communication can completely isolate people (whether at work or socially) and increase people's experience of loneliness. As well as building in more digital skills support, organisations should be mindful of "the need to plan for connection and design in moments of human contact" identified in the Ministerial Foreword to the Strategy:

Government can also work with communities and other sectors on the way our neighbourhoods, public services, businesses and working environments are designed and run so they consider social relationships, not just efficient transactions.

FOCUS ON DIGITAL SECURITY AND CYBER-CRIME

Feelings of trust and safety are crucial elements influencing how we feel about being online. For many, the pervasive and persuasive narrative of suspicion around what happens to our personal data online can make us worried and less engaged online.

⁶⁰ [Caring and isolation in the workplace](#), CarersUK, March 2015.

⁶¹ [Analysis of Children's and young people's experiences of loneliness](#), ONS, December 2018.

While for others, these concerns are one of the reasons why they stay resolutely offline. The Oxford Internet Institute (OII)'s [latest national survey report](#) provides insight into perceptions of privacy.

- Non-users (72%) are much more likely to be concerned with internet privacy threats than users (52%)
- Only 10% of those offline said that privacy concerns were the *main* reason they were not online
- 40% of people have taken some sort of action to increase their sense of privacy or digital security

The fact that “non-users are more worried about privacy threats than users” can be interpreted in different ways. It can be seen as causal: because they are more worried, they are not online (“if only we could make them less worried, they might go online”); it can be seen as symptomatic (because people have experienced things online that make them worried, they are now no longer online); it can be seen as critical: users are *not cautious enough* about the privacy threats.

Relatively few people realise what data on them is collected and how services are paid for, while 91% of people say it’s “important to be able to choose how much data they share with companies”, but half (51%) “can’t currently find out that information.” 43% of people say there’s no point reading T&Cs because “companies do what they want anyway,” and 47% have felt they have “no choice but to sign up to online services, even where they have concerns.” It is not as simple as making people aware (or scaring them) about privacy concerns – it is not always clear what the user is supposed to do.

The Home Office’s report on their Public Interventions Model for Serious and Organised Crime Protection notes that their definition of Serious and Organised Crime refers to three forms of online crime:

1. Online scams involving up-front payment
2. Personal information or data stolen online
3. Tricked into sharing personal information online

The report segments the population into eight groups, detailed in figure 35. We do not make an attempt to estimate the breakdown of these groups for Charnwood, but the older and lower income populations we identify earlier in this report are also more

likely to have lower digital security, and engagement efforts targeted in the areas we have identified should incorporate messaging around digital security.

Citizens Online is continuing to explore these questions and how DCs can be provided with training and information to help learners improve their skills and their understanding of privacy and staying safe online. The DCN provides courses for DCs on, “Online security, banking and money”, and a number of guides on [Internet Security](#) (covering general online safety, identity theft, anti-virus, malware, firewalls, internet safety for kids, and data protection and GDPR, as well as tips for choosing passwords and smartphone security).

Figure 35: Serious and Organised Crime Prevention: Home Office population segmentation

Group	UK adult population	Description	Who are they?	Local digital exclusion action?
Already Protected	6.6 million (13%) 4% of victims	Engaging in widespread protective behaviours, backed up by cautious and considered decision-making	Couples living with children, and over 50s, not living with children Less likely to live in large urban areas	Quite high-frequency internet users (daily), but risk of complacency. Can be reached through official websites and banks
Digitally Vulnerable	5 million (9%) 8% of victims	High levels of offline protection, but inexperience with technology makes them vulnerable to online crime	50-64s with no or lower level qualifications Lower income pensioners, unlikely to have formal qualifications Typically living in semi-urban areas	Relevant in areas with high numbers of Pension Credit claims – trust existing contacts such as GPs, Citizens Advice / Age UK, may be interested in local newspapers
Group	UK adult population	Description	Who are they?	Local digital exclusion action?
Trusting	8 million (15%) 3% of victims	Moderate levels of protection but a trusting and malleable personality makes them vulnerable	Under 35s Men aged 35+ Women aged 35+ in a relationship	Will be present in population, can be reached through variety of communications channels – likely to be online
Unconcerned and Somewhat Protected	9 million (18%) 8% of victims	Moderate levels of protection, but increased vulnerability due to risk taking mindset	Men aged 16-34 – living with parents Men aged 35+ in a couple Slightly more likely to live in rural areas	Likely to be present in significant numbers – accessible through education channels, tabloid newspapers, and

				informal online sources of advice
Relatively Savvy	10.3 million (20%) 9% of victims	Good levels of protection and 'sensible' personality, making them less likely to be victims of Serious and Organised Crime	Applies across population ACBC1s are slightly more dominant More likely to have a long-term illness	Will be present in population Can be reached through broadsheet newspapers and online information available through search
Unsuspecting and Unprotected	4 million (8%) 1% of victims	Extremely low levels of any protective behaviours, combined with a malleable personality, make them predisposed to becoming a victim	16-29 individuals 30+ families More likely to live in rural or rural-edge areas	Will be well-represented in population Can be reached through broadsheets, especially weekend editions, and through schools/universities
Unconcerned and Unprotected	4.6 million (9%) 13% of victims	Low engagement in protective behaviours, with vulnerability further exacerbated by risk seeking personality	16-44 ACBC1s Over 45s Much more likely to live in urban areas, particularly large city centres, including London	Less likely to make up much of the Harrogate population, can be reached through friends, education providers, broadsheets and current affairs TV
Unaware	4 million (7%) 10% of victims	Lack of awareness of Serious and Organised Crime, absolving responsibility to fate and not challenging others makes this group vulnerable	45-64s not living alone 65+ Less likely to live in large city centres or city high-rises	More likely to be represented in the local population – including in areas of high HB/UC and Pension Credit claims, can be reached through tabloid newspapers, and mid-market newspapers. Likely to be among those who are offline or more digitally excluded

2. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 CHARNWOOD DIGITAL INCLUSION NETWORK

Citizens Online advocates a partnership working model as the most effective way to sustain digital skills provision. Many organisations are already offering some sort of provision that is helpful for improving digital exclusion, such as free WiFi, access to technology, digital champions or help in people's homes. A network facilitates

organisations working together to share resources and avoid duplication. Information is shared so that it is clear where to signpost people who need help with digital skills.

In other projects where the network is a stand-alone project, we have found they have worked well with a 'three tier' approach (adopted by our projects in Brighton & Hove and Gwynedd). This is constituted of:

Board	Organisations who finance activity and projects.
Steering Group	Board members + organisations with a large stake in digital inclusion and skills work e.g. Citizens Advice, DWP etc.
Network	Any organisation including voluntary organisations, individual independent digital champions, third sector support, training providers that have an interest in digital inclusion and skills.

In practice, the Board and Steering Group may end up being the same and may not need to meet separately. There may be benefits to splitting these groups out as above if the Steering Group membership is large.

It is worth stressing that a network requires resource to run. This resource could be shared with another, or group of steering group organisations. There may be key organisations that are funded by CBC to carry out similar support needs that would fit with digital inclusion. There may be joint initiatives such as with local CCGs or JCP where digital inclusion would fit with the agenda. Ideally we would recommend a full-time project manager as detailed in the Digital Brighton & Hove (DBH) case study below. A network and digital champions programme could also still be successful with a part-time role but – obviously – the more resource, the more that can be achieved.

CASE STUDY – THE DIGITAL BRIGHTON & HOVE NETWORK

In Brighton & Hove the network has grown over almost four years to include 241 organisations, of which 90% are actively engaged in the project. There is a steering group consisting of: Brighton & Hove City Council, the local DWP office/JobCentre Plus, Citizens Online, Possability People, Brighton & Hove CCG, Brighton & Hove Citizens Advice, and Brighton Housing Trust. The steering group meets quarterly.

The wider network also meets quarterly, with the DBH Project Manager organising and facilitating the meetings. The Project Manager is also a Super Champion, training DCs in partner organisations and reporting to the steering group on progress. Producing case studies and marketing the project is also part of their full-time role.

The PM has organised a range of guest speakers for the network events to share knowledge and good practice on digital inclusion and digital transformation themes. External speakers have included people from organisations such as AbilityNet, Diversity and Ability (DnA), SCVO Digital, the Centre for Acceleration of Social Technology (CAST) and Lloyds TSB.

DBH has also taken part in a series of citywide working groups to ensure that digital support needs were monitored and addressed in different areas. For example, they have been represented on the Work and Learning Working Group chaired by Brighton Housing Trust, which led to new connections being made with number of local charities such as YMCA, The Passage, Just Life and The Clocktower Sanctuary.

DBH has also played an active role on the Citywide Connect Partnership Board, which brings together key stakeholders to tackle social isolation, delivering two Digital Showcases at the Citywide Connect Hub Events and leading on a collective presentation at the inaugural Ageing Well Conference.



Steering Group



Organisations engaged



... and
more!

2.2 RECOMMENDED DIGITAL CHAMPION NUMBER ESTIMATE

We have estimated that a ratio of 1 DC to every 100 digitally excluded people is a good benchmark to make an impact on digital skills in a local area. There are number of caveats about this approach.

- We're not suggesting that the problem of digital exclusion can be solved once a certain number of Digital Champions are recruited. The issue is systemic and continually changing, as we detail elsewhere in this report.
- Registering people as members of an online learning platform like the Digital Champions Network (DCN) is a positive way to track the number of Digital Champions in an area who are 'signed up' to the cause – but it doesn't mean that all of these DCs are actively helping people.
- There is wide variability in how active DCs are, and not all DCs in an area are might be registered on a learning platform like the DCN. Digital help activity is likely to be happening that is not being recorded.
- The estimate of digitally excluded people across areas is only an estimate and is also subject to change and influence from other factors such as age, local policy changes and new support services coming on / going off line.

However, from our previous experience we do know that the 1:100 ratio can be a useful guide to help areas understand the scale of the challenge and provide an aspirational number of Digital Champions to aim for that, if recruited, trained and supported, could then evidence significant impact across an area.

Figure 36 shows Digital Champion recruitment over the duration of four different Citizens Online projects. Figure 37 uses the same underlying data to provide a comparison of the number of digitally excluded people in the local area⁶² per Digital Champion recruited.

This shows that in our Gwynedd Ddigidol project we were able to recruit 1 Digital Champion for every 70 digitally excluded people, and 1 for every 112 in Brighton and Hove. Projects with higher DC : Excluded Population ratios are better able to evidence impact.

A figure of 1 Digital Champion to every 100 digitally excluded people, would suggest around **300 DCs registered to the DCN in Charnwood.**

⁶² Based Mid-Year Population Estimate data from 2018 and combining details about the age profiles of different areas, with estimates for people missing at least one Essential Digital Skill for Life by age bracket (from the 2019 Lloyds Consumer Digital Index). We know age is a significant factor in digital exclusion hence our use of these estimates. It's worth noting that, localised digital exclusion will be dependent on factors other than age. However, using this method allows a degree of consistency across areas.

Figure 36: Cumulative DCs recruited to DCN from Month 0.

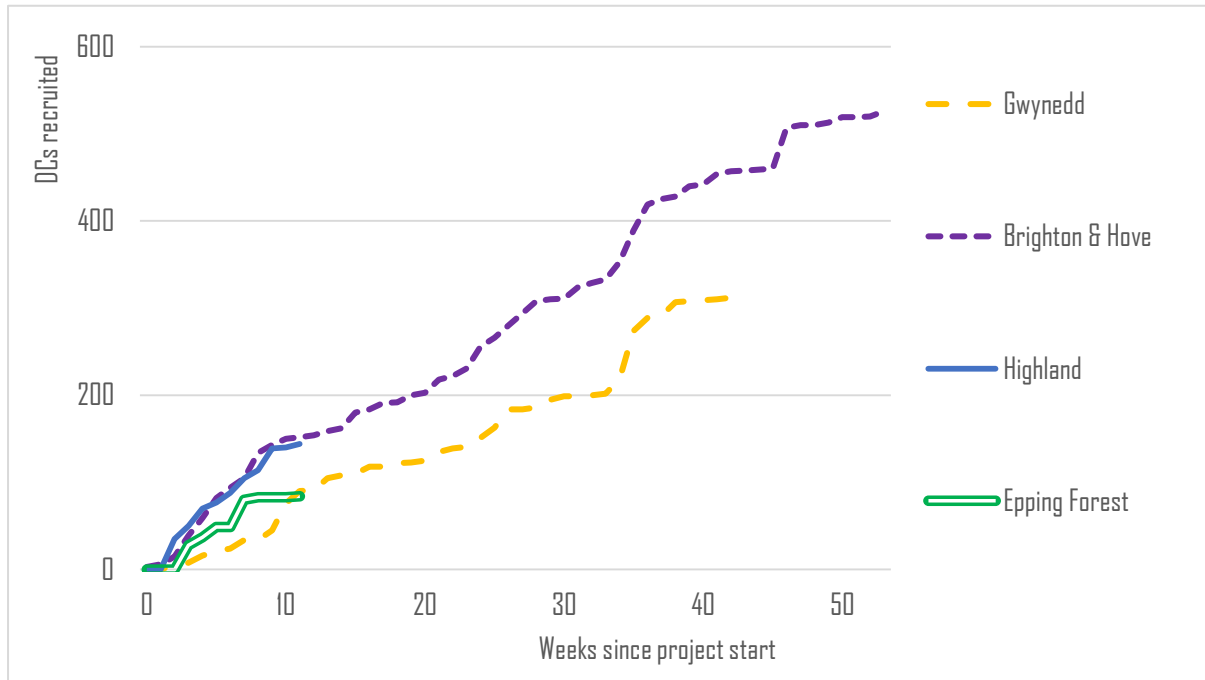
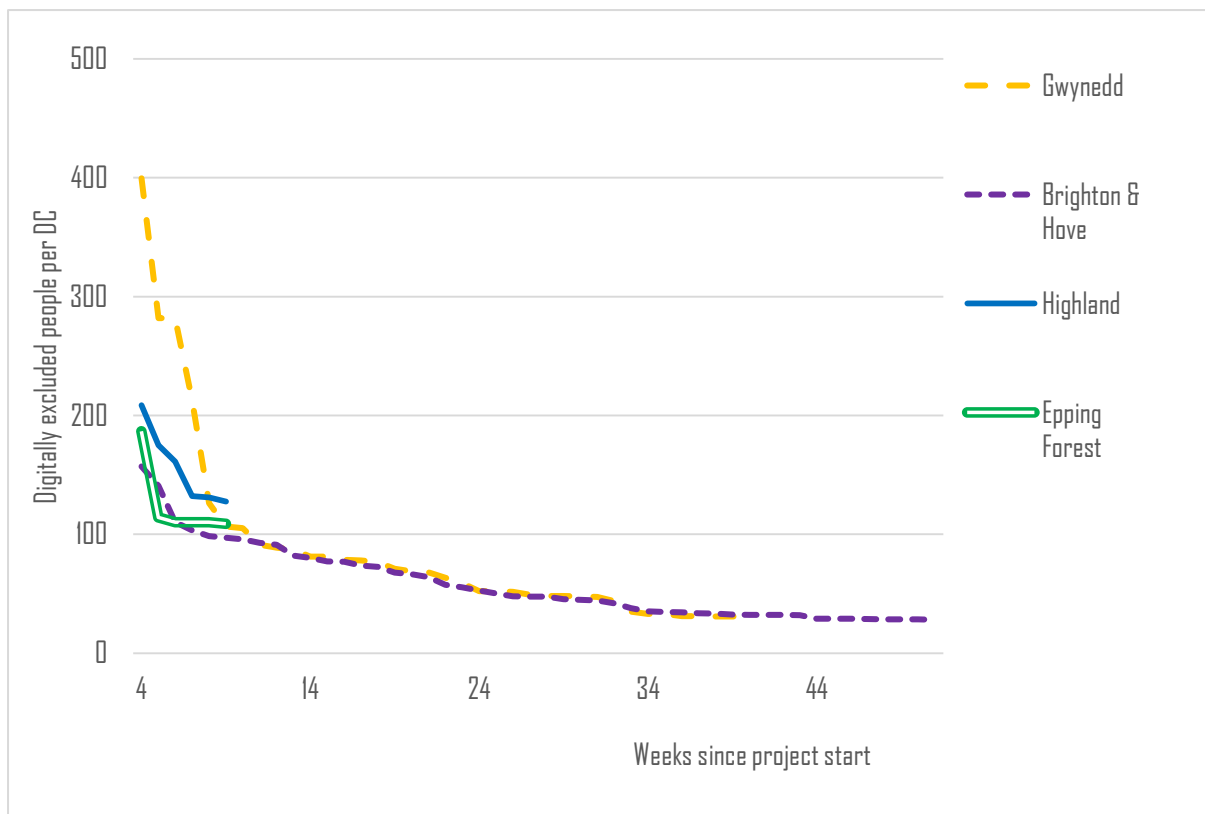


Figure 37: Digitally excluded people per DC recruited to the DCN.



ENGAGING LEARNERS

From our experience of running digital skills sessions, we know that it can be difficult to encourage learners to attend. Drawing from our work in other areas we would recommend the following pointers for advertising sessions:

- **Using images of real people that look like they come from target populations when possible** – to create a sense that sessions are for ‘people like me’
- **Including the DC helpline phone number** on all posters
- Wherever possible **communicating** with learners **via SMS**
- **Avoiding jargon** – some examples below:
 - **Avoid using ‘Android/Apple’** – often people refer to their tablets as ‘iPad’, no matter who made it or what system it is on. Using ‘device’ is a catch all.
 - **Using the word ‘Internet’ rather than ‘computers’**. People can be uncomfortable with the use of the word ‘computers’ as it gives the idea of high tech/office work/spread sheets/beyond their ability – and they may not think of their tablet or smartphone device as a computer. However, do bear in mind that often potential learners do not understand that applications such as ‘Facebook’ use the internet so internet isn’t a universally understood word. Being specific about workshops to help people with Facebook / WhatsApp / Online Banking / Universal Credit application is more useful than generic offers about help with ‘the internet’.
- **Changing ‘we can help you’ to ‘we can show you how’** - otherwise potentially you will get people attending with no interest in learning
- **Being safe online is a key concern for many people**. Especially when dealing with finance they are wary of falling victim to a scam. Addressing these concerns can be a good way to hook people in
- **Finding a hook is important**. Family / local history, hobbies (online knitting patterns), access to archive TV footage, streaming music and skype can be enticing to first time internet users

The BBC Media Literacy research⁶³ is now a little dated but emphasises approaches that we continue to endorse around the need to disarm common concerns about the internet, using language carefully to emphasise:

⁶³ [Media Literacy – Language & Branding Qualitative Research](#), 2013 - BBC Audiences North & Optimisa Research

- the ease of getting started and making progress
- taking steps at a pace set by the learner – guiding them to gradually build confidence
- ‘discovering the benefits’ – communication and convenience stand out initially
- ‘enjoying the benefits’ – that it can enhance and empower their lives or businesses
- avoiding judgements that it will make their life ‘better’ - they want to discover that

Phrases that work well include: ‘World at your fingertips’, ‘At your fingertips’, ‘Discover a new world’, ‘Explore’, ‘Open opportunities’, ‘Find out more’, ‘Explore more’. There is further information on language in the BBC Media Literacy research report.

DIGITAL CHAMPION PROJECT CASE STUDIES - WHERE DO YOU START?

To successfully launch a DC programme it’s essential that there is a ‘Super Champion’ in the first instance to train and support other DCs and be a point of contact. There could be multiple ‘Super Champions’ in various organisations keen to be part of a network. Running a formal DC programme with reward and recognition is also a good motivator for staff and can encourage more digital skills provision.

In Digital Brighton and Hove network, the ‘Super Champion’ has trained staff in Brighton and Hove City Council services including; Revenues and Benefits, Libraries, Housing, Healthy Lifestyles, Health and Adult Social Care to become DCs. The training was online training through the Digital Champions Network and face-to-face.

Revenues & Benefits: Working collaboratively with the Revenues & Benefits Service Manager contributed to supporting Revenues & Benefits Officers (frontline staff) delivering a ‘self-help’ customer service, switching from face-to-face to online services in the council’s Customer Service Centre. This involved providing both face-to-face and online ‘Digital Champion’ training to over 20 Revenues & Benefits officers. The collaboration also involved collating and sharing activity records and other relevant data to help us monitor digital support activity and provision in the Customer Service Centre.

Libraries: All Library Officers and Connect Volunteers were trained as DCs. They monitor activity, demand and provision using the Digital Champions Network.

In Dorset, the network is called, 'Routes to Inclusion'. Here a Digital Inclusion Officer manages a network of almost 100 volunteer DCs. The funding for this post and recruitment came from the rollout of Superfast Broadband across the county. The Digital Inclusion Officer recruits and inducts volunteer Digital Champions who work in a variety of locations across the county. Another part of the remit is to liaise with new venues and develop relationships with community groups and other stakeholders to allow volunteer DCs to run drop in sessions within the venues. There has been a coordinated marketing campaign to recruit the volunteer DCs and promote the sessions including a phone number to call to book residents onto sessions. Dorset Council Customer Contact Team are also known as 'Digital Advisors'; essentially they are embedded DCs and can signpost residents to the volunteer DC sessions if they can't help the resident to transact online over the phone. The Digital Advisors follow a script to help residents.

The Digital Champions in Dorset as part of the Routes to Inclusion group are well publicised, with a coordinated marketing campaign county wide for residents and employees of Dorset Council, to 'normalise' digital skills. The campaign features, '[Digital Norm](#)' who is encouraging residents to take up superfast broadband and improve digital skills.

Case Study: Customer Service Centre

Our Community Digital Champions have provided digital skills support in the council's Customer Service Centre on a regular basis over the past year, helping customers to manage their queries digitally. This work focused primarily on filling the gaps in provision in the Customer Service Centre on non 'self-help' days, that is when Embedded Digital Champions from other councils teams were not present in the Customer Service Centre.



Glenn (right) helping a customer to get online.

Based on the data recorded on the Digital Champions Network (DCN), 383 digital support sessions took place at the Customer Service Centre.

A further 444 interventions were recorded by Embedded Digital Champions who received training between March and November 2018, namely staff from the Revenues and Benefits team helping customers during the 'self-help' days.

“

“It was useful to learn about the free online resources that are available and to think about how to engage people to get online. It helped to discuss case scenarios where we might be able to signpost a customer to an online service.”
(BHCC Revenues & Benefits Officer)

“The training course was brilliant, really enjoyed it – the signposting website is very useful.” (BHCC Customer Service Officer)

”

SETTING UP A DIGITAL CHAMPIONS PROGRAMME CHECKLIST

Recruit and train 'Super Champions' (at least one) – these are go-to people for other Digital Champions

Agree your induction list for Digital Champions using the Digital Champions Network (DCN). For example, DCs may be required to complete the 'Digital Champions Essentials' and 'Using your role to help customers online' training modules.

Decide on a name and brand for the Digital Champions. They are often called digital friends / advisors / helpers etc. When promoting the digital champion role to internal staff, do stress that not everyone will be able to do things online. Rather than moving everyone online, make the argument that as more people transact online, staff will be freed to help more people 1-2-1 with assisted digital. If possible promote internally with events and a marketing campaign.

Ensure a Senior Leader is supporting the programme to champion to senior management. Some courses on the Digital Champions Network are CPD accredited so this could also be part of staff development. A reward and recognition programme may be appropriate.

Communicate to managers to get them on board. Often staff will be able to perform a DC role as part of their day job. It can be a very light touch interaction such as raising awareness by letting residents know that they can do something online as part of a conversation, or signposting residents to get help to get online elsewhere. In some cases, DCs may be released from roles for a couple of hours a week to 'floor walk' in customer centres, asking residents waiting if they knew they can do certain services online and DCs can help them. Or, drop in sessions within council buildings, where residents can bring anything they like online for help i.e., using skype, streaming music, using google maps etc.

Start with those most interested in being a DC. Often a DC programme is launched within a team. However, inviting all staff who have expressed an interest will start to embed DCs into part of the culture across departments. DCs can also help colleagues. Shared learning with peer to peer sessions can also aid roll out of new internal technologies and can also be a part of the DC role.

Keep persevering. Keep communicating with DCs and tracking activity using the DCN to report to management and more importantly to give DCs a pat on the back. The DCN has

lesson plans, supporting materials and resources to help DCs and make it as easy as possible for them to perform this role. Showcase successes with case studies and videos of learners. Use recognised digital events such as, 'Get Online Week,' 'Safer Internet Day', 'Ada Lovelace Day', or 'World Emoji Day' to keep momentum going. The DC programme will grow over time.

Work in partnership. Through a network, encourage other organisations to use the DCN and encourage their staff and volunteers to become DCs. A network will also help to standardise signposting with lists of where residents can get help locally. Also to triage residents, depending on what type of help do they need?

2.3 SIGNPOSTING AND TRIAGE

Effective triage relies on people being able to identify the different levels of digital skills need that customers may present with. Effective signposting relies on people understanding where other help and resources can be found in an area. Effective referral relies on organisations having good working relationships with each other and referral pathways being in place.

Supporting staff to triage, signpost or refer people to the digital help that they need is essential. There are often many organisations providing digital skills support and in order to reach people, all organisations need to understand where they can find information about what help is available.

We know that some Charnwood organisations refer to libraries, friends, family and Citizens Advice. However there may be people that require more specialised support. Leonard Cheshire, AbilityNet and the RNIB are good support for those with disabilities. Also Age UK and Age Concern often offer home help with digital skills, although often there is a charge for this service.

We recommend adopting a universal triage tool for Charnwood, ideally designed in partnership within a digital inclusion network, which can be embedded within training and support information (e.g. procedure documents, inductions, presentations). Having a central information resource available such a webpage or signposting and resource website would be preferable. All partner organisations need to review their websites to ensure there is easily accessible information for staff and the public on where to find digital skills help and free access points across the district. Ideally they are linking to one agreed central place such as the CBC website.

DIGITAL INCLUSION IN CHARNWOOD

The diagrams below illustrate the workflow for basic essential skills triage (figure 38), starting with first assessing if a resident can turn on a device. Figure 39 outlines the Essential Digital Skills Framework, which can be a useful reference in triage and monitoring of digital skills support work.

Figure 39: Workflow for essential digital skills triage

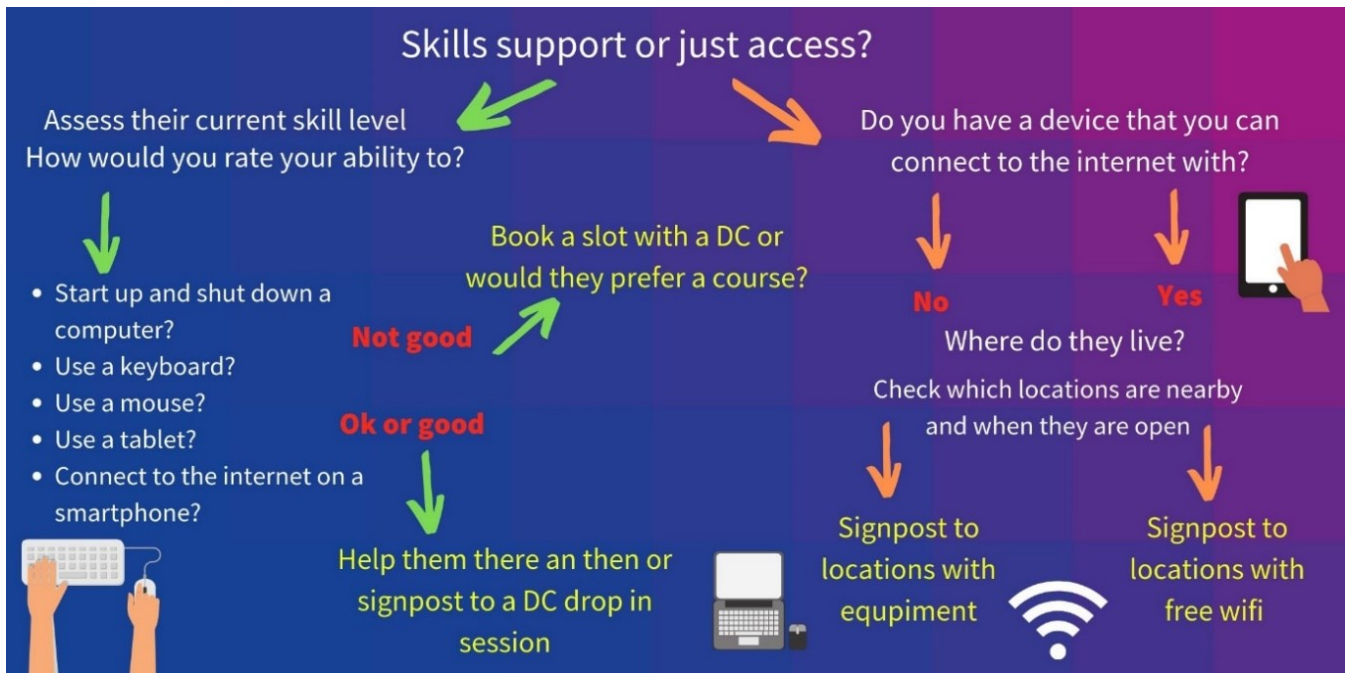


Figure 38: The Essential Digital Skills Framework



EXAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASSESS LEARNER SKILLS AND NEEDS

Where can you access the internet? (If at all)

- Home / Work / Public place / Friends or families home / I don't have access to the internet

Do you have access to a device that can connect to the internet? If so, where? (This could be through family, or at a library for example.)

- I have my own device / I use a friend or family member device / I use devices in public places

How would you rate your ability to do any of the following? [Scale from: Very good /Quite good /Ok /Not great /I can't do that /I've never tried this]

- Switching on a computer
- Using a keyboard
- Using a mouse
- Using a tablet
- Accessing the internet on a mobile phone

How would you currently rate your confidence in being able to complete the tasks below? [Scale from: Very confident /Quite confident /Neutral /Not very confident /Not at all confident /I need help /I've never tried this]

- Searching and using the internet (e.g. using Google)
- Using LBBDD online council services
- Using a word processor to write documents (e.g. letters and CV)
- Shopping and saving money online
- Sending and receiving emails -plus attachments
- Understanding how to fill in online forms
- Searching for work online (using Job boards and Find a Job)
- Using social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Skype, WhatsApp etc.)
- Being safe and secure online

Are there any areas in particular you would like additional help with?

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