



# Sunderland Digital Inclusion Plan



**SUNDERLAND**  
oursmartcity

# Our Plan

## Sunderland's Smart City Vision is one of an engaged collective of people, places and opportunities

Opportunities to live, learn and earn - to grow as individuals and as successful businesses, with no one and nowhere left behind. Underpinned by the next generation of connectivity to stimulate economic growth and reduce digital exclusion

### Smart Digital City

All sectors can connect better with people who live, work and visit our city

### Smart Digital Workforce

Build a council workforce with an enthusiastic attitude to embrace, evolve and continuously develop everyone's digital knowledge and skills

### Smart Digital Residents

Ensure those most at risk of digital exclusion due to age, ability or social circumstances should have a choice to Go Online

## Shared priorities building upon the Co-operative Council Values

1. Better digital infrastructure and access to equipment
2. Improve digital knowledge and skills
3. Create motivation and awareness

4. Build trust
5. Designed for all
6. Coordinate intervention

- Investment in 5G and free Wi-Fi hotspot zones across the city
- Create a city-wide digital resource hub
- More organisations shifting to digital platforms
- Secure a pledge from anchor institutions to fix the digital divide
- Support Organisations to access external funding streams which contribute towards the priorities set out in this Strategy

- Support staff to use devices and access buildings to Go Online
- Upskill the workforce and support career progression
- Support local and national decision-makers with data
- Create a fully integrated website, covering transport, environmental, enterprise, housing, employment, education, culture and health digital platform that is designed for all and fully accessible

- Develop connectivity with fastest download speeds
- Reduce barriers and challenges facing digital inclusion
- Support people to use devices and access buildings to Go Online
- Improve the availability of digital skills support to help people gain Skills for Life
- Establish a Minimum Digital Standard Offer to residents

## Shared Outcome Measures

A Dynamic Smart City is a lower carbon city with greater digital connectivity for all, more and better jobs and housing, with local people gaining qualifications and skills

A Healthy Smart City establishes equitable opportunities and life chances, reduced health inequalities, supports independent living, cleaner neighbourhoods with greater transport and travel links

A Vibrant Smart City supports more resilient people, feeling safer, proud of their city and participating in their community with a vibrant cultural offer

The implementation plan supports the delivery of Sunderland's Digital Strategy and has been created using a range of national and regional research, insights, and data as well as information gathered about Sunderland's digital landscape from interviews, workshops and lived experiences shared whilst talking to residents, partners and colleagues. The implementation plan will remain a live plan and will continually develop to take into account emerging needs, challenges and system changes.



# Digital Inclusion landscape in Sunderland

## People more likely to be digital excluded:

Ethnic minority groups, Carers, Children and young people, People on low wages, People without a job, Older people, People with physical and learning disabilities, Refugees and Asylum Seekers, Single parents and Veterans

## Probability of digital exclusion increases for those who are at risk, or experiencing:

Addiction issues, Domestic abuse, English as a 2nd language, Few or no qualifications, Homelessness, Long term health conditions, Mental health issues, Physical and learning disabilities, Poverty or on a low income, Living in social housing or socially isolated

## Biggest indicators for digital exclusion are:

Unemployment, low income, Retirees, Disabilities and no or few qualifications



Bottom ranking for Gross Weekly Wage and second worst amongst NE Local Authorities; Bottom 20% of employment rates of those in working age; 70% of households in the UK that earn less than £17.5k only have foundation digital skills



The city has a higher than average proportion of the population over 65; 48% of those 75 or above stated they did not know how to use the internet



Significantly higher level of persons with long term illness or disability (23.5% in Sunderland, compared to a national average of 17.6%)



Bottom 20% for young person's (%) achieving GCSE's in English and Maths by age 19

North East is one of the worst digitally excluded regions in the UK

Increasingly smartphones are how people access the internet

The primary reason for businesses being unable to adopt digital technologies were a lack of digital skills within their organisation

Advanced Digital Skills: 1 in 4 Employers said that many of their roles required advanced digital skills, which offer 40% higher than average salaries. 60% of employers stated that reliance on digital skills with increase in the next 5 years

Top six Wards registered on the Digital Exclusion Risk Index are: Hetton, Barnes, St Chads, Hendon, Washington Central and Copt Hill based on deprivation, demographics and broadband scores

Limited broadband connectivity  
Top 10 wards: Washington Central, Hetton, Shiney Row, Doxford, Hendon, Houghton, St Peters, Fulwell, Silksworth and Copt Hill

Children and young people have foundation digital skills, but costs remains the key barrier for families to access the internet at home

More people over the age of 40 don't know how to use a laptop or computer to access the internet

In Sunderland it is estimated that 30,000 people have never been online and 77,000 people are limited users (UK Consumer Digital Index)

# Shared priorities and actions

## 1. Better digital infrastructure and access to equipment

### Smart Digital City

Support the roll out of fibre across the city  
Map broadband/internet/fibre provision across the city, including Internet Service Providers and tariffs  
Increase the number of free WiFi hotspots in public buildings, parks and open spaces  
Review the Council's ICT Go Online Recycling Scheme  
Encourage more data banks in the city  
Invest in public libraries and community buildings

### Smart Digital Workforce

Deliver engagement sessions in the Digital Touch Down Zones for all employees to access  
Promote and encourage digital device loan schemes to digitally excluded employees  
Assist in deploying devices and/or licences to all Managers and employees, or consider alternatives solutions, such as, using personal devices instead or accessing community-based WiFi hubs

### Smart Digital Residents

Raise awareness about low-cost broadband tariffs  
Deliver digital device loan schemes into digital excluded households  
Encourage more people to access and receive free data SIMs gifting cards  
Expand 'Leaky Wi-Fi' within publicly accessible building within priority wards

## 2. Improve digital knowledge and skills

Create a flowchart of the different levels of tech support and training available  
Support the North East Learning Enterprise Partnership' delivery of Digital Skills Partnerships  
Develop work experiences/placements for people interested in digital skills  
Develop opportunities to access advanced digital qualifications  
Connect families to their digital school  
Coordinate lifelong digital skills to enable everyone to have a choice to participate fully in the digital world

Raise awareness that the City Council has a strong commitment in place by providing staff with time for digital training and development as part of every role profile  
Understand the existing and required capacity and capability of our workforce when shaping the future of our Digitally Ready Workforce  
Introduce a standard entry requirement when recruiting all staff to have basic digital skills, or be willing to work towards developing these digital skills, once employed

Promote digital training and digital projects in the city, avoiding duplication and encouraging collaboration  
Establish mechanisms for recruiting residents to feed into the digital education pipeline  
Create educational progression maps and occupational progression maps, to develop career opportunities, covering pathways at different entry levels, regardless of age and knowledge

## 3. Create motivation and awareness

Raise awareness of free and impartial career advice service and the Occupational Maps to learners, employees and employers to demonstrate how technical qualifications and skills are aligned to employment opportunities  
Increase the number of members to the National Digital Inclusion Network  
Raise awareness of how digital and data solutions will aid decarbonisation to reduce the carbon impact and available funding sources

Share examples of good digital practices  
Maximise opportunities to digitally upskill our workforce by removing barriers (paid time to train) to digital learning and skills training  
Plan a single day of activities for National Go Online week for all services to take part mid-Oct  
Managers are provided with the right digital tools, skills and knowledge to develop a digital learning culture which encourages their Team(s) to embrace the digital change, allowing them time and support to Go Online

Develop a Communication Plan that increases the appetite for a digital world, ensuring that the tone and language used is personable, empathetic, accessible, friendly and trustworthy  
Attend local events across the city to promote digital inclusion through 'word of mouth' to target digitally excluded people, giving them a reason to Go Online  
Promote digital community hubs which residents can use to Go Online  
Use the information from the city directory to analyse gaps, join the dots and where feasible encourage collaboration

## 4. Build trust

### Smart Digital City

- Establish a Data Sharing agreement
- Share best practice
- Promote positive success stories
- Support Sunderland by promoting digital adoption
- Work with other local authorities and organisations who want to fix the digital divide

### Smart Digital Workforce

- Ensure all Managers have a key role to play in championing and embedding digital inclusion in the authority
- Establish an IT Coaching Scheme
- Build upon existing internal groups to champion digital inclusion eg Tech Forum, Business Champions, Health Champions, Green Champions, etc

### Smart Digital Residents

- Launch Smart City App to establish greater communication channels to build trust between the Council and residents
- Support the Ageing Well Ambassadors deliver the digital literacy engagement tool for older people across the city, We're Shining the Light
- Ensure there is a real person available to support people to make the transition from never being online to Go Online

## 5. Designed for all

- Develop a 'Go To' resource webpage, for all things digital and Smart
- Reduce the jargon and help organisations choose the right tech for them
- City Leaders raise the priority of digital inclusion in the Devolution Deal
- Support Organisations shift to inclusive digital platforms

- Develop a framework for a minimum digital offer for the entire workforce
- Upskill staff who have regular contact with customers (Every Contact Counts) to raise awareness about what community digital support exists in the City to help with signposting customer's into doorstep provision

- Promote support available to others, which helps design accessible websites for all
- Support existing outreach provision into people's homes i.e. adult social care, by providing capacity to support the most vulnerable residents Go Online

## 6. Coordinate intervention

- Establish a minimum digital offer standards delivered to our residents, workforce and city to Go Online
- Maximise and align funding opportunities that progress the intentions of this plan
- Agree a centralised performance management framework to measure the impact of the Digital Inclusion Plan
- Pool resources to grow Digital Inclusion across communities, the city and sectors

# Indicative timeline



