DIGITAL CHESHIRE

Digital Inclusion:

Summary of Findings

March 2025 – April 2026





Cheshire East Council

Cheshire West and Chester

WARRINGTON Borough Council

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

CONNECTING CHESHIRE

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Section 1

Introduction

This document contains findings from a 12-month period, in which we delivered 35 digital inclusion events across Cheshire East and West, Warrington and Halton. The goal was to understand the real-world barriers people face when trying to get online, to test a delivery model that meets them where they are and to support residents with their concerns or queries.

This document assesses the impact of those events, evaluates what worked best during the period of increased digital inclusion activity, and provides a clear evidence base for how these efforts can be scaled to support even more residents in the future.

DIGITAL CHESHIRE

Whether you are enjoying fibre connectivity, exploring ways to get your community connected or looking into how you can make the most out of your connectivity, our team are here to support your journey.

Digital Cheshire works directly with communities in gaining access to better broadband, in addition to providing direct support to residents through events and community gatherings. Our approach ensures residents can freely access assistance and learn about vital online services, giving them the confidence to use the internet safely.

Digital Cheshire also works with partners, the commercial and voluntary sector, and other organisations to promote and signpost a variety of digital inclusion interventions, such as databanks, social tariffs, local IT classes, and more.

At a Glance

The following figures highlight everything from attendee numbers to the sessions delivered over a 12-month period.

Number of sessions:

35

Number of attendees:

597

Number of Signposts

121

Sessions were delivered across the following areas:











Promotion, Outreach and Resources

A range of promotional channels were used to reach the intended audience and maximise community awareness. To facilitate the sessions, a suite of delivery resources was produced, including presentations, factsheets, guides and signage.

Posters and social media assets were created for all events, (apart from those where the partner requested for the event to be closed to the general public), and shared directly with the venues to help promote the sessions. The partner venues were encouraged to display the posters around their premises and local area, share the assets on their social media accounts and spread word of the events with their networks.

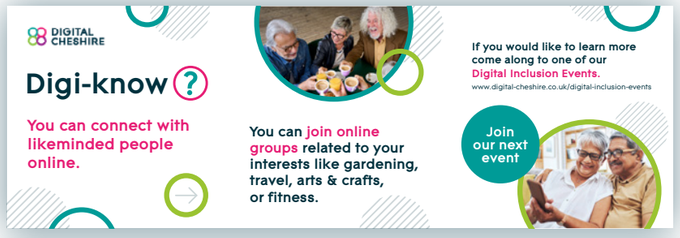
Poster

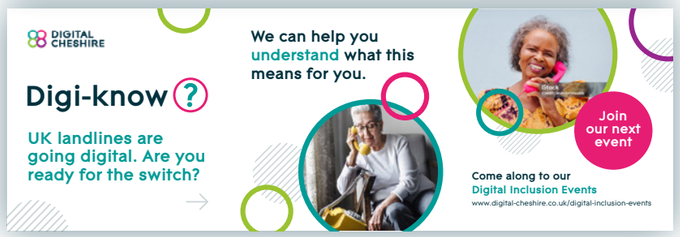


Social Media



We launched 'Digi-Know,' a dedicated brand of informative content designed to provide residents with accessible facts and practical digital insights. This content was delivered in a bite-sized format to remain engaging and easy to digest.





Presentations and interactive activities were designed for focused sessions to ensure information was delivered effectively. This approach created a more memorable experience and helped drive participant engagement. A particularly popular activity was 'The Wheel of Scam,' which featured multiple-choice questions for each section of the wheel. This served as an effective way to check understanding while providing an enjoyable, hands-on experience for attendees.



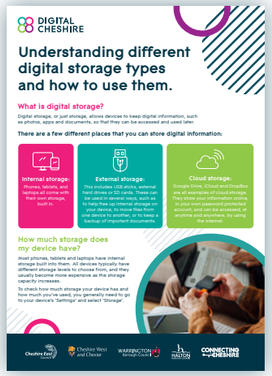


A digital guide was produced, covering a range of key topics, from the Landline Switchover to broadband access. It also included contact details for additional sub-regional support, which served as a valuable sign-posting tool during events. To address some common queries, six factsheets and how-to guides were created, focussing on topics such as the Landline Switchover and using the NHS App.

These resources were distributed at events to provide residents with in-depth answers that they could refer back to at home. To ensure the materials remained inclusive, they were also made available in Easy Read formats for those with additional accessibility requirements. These factsheets and guides can also be found on our website: **digital-cheshire.co.uk/guides-and-factsheets**















To maximise visibility and ensure the events captured the attention of residents in high-footfall areas, a metal A-frame was produced alongside two roller banners. The metal A-frame was for external use and made passers-by aware of the support available inside the venue.

The roller banners served a dual purpose. While one provided a clear overview of Digital Cheshire's core aims, the second was designed as an interactive engagement tool. By asking attendees to 'Rate Your Digital Confidence' on a scale of 1–10, the team were able to break the ice and initiate meaningful conversations. This visual and interactive approach proved effective in lowering the initial barrier to engagement, allowing the team to quickly assess an individual's needs in a friendly way.





Event Highlights

These specific events, delivered alongside partners such as BT or as part of national campaigns like Get Online Week, demonstrate the successful application of the digital inclusion events across various settings and scales.

Nantwich Show

On July 30th 2025, Digital Cheshire and BT attended the Nantwich Show at Reaseheath College. This large-scale agricultural event provided a unique opportunity to meet with residents from rural backgrounds who often face greater barriers to broadband and digital skills. With a total of 70 conversations held throughout the day, this was one of the highest-reaching events.

The Digital Cheshire team also spoke with a variety of age groups at this event, from young children to older adults. The Wheel of Scam proved an effective tool for engaging with all age groups, and questions were prepared for both children and adults.





Get Online Week

In October 2025, Digital Cheshire joined Get Online Week, the UK's largest annual digital inclusion campaign hosted by the Good Things Foundation. Throughout the week of the 20th–24th of October, at least one digital inclusion event was held each day, with a double session taking place on the 23rd.

Specific highlights from the week included a collaboration with BT at Fearnhead Cross Community Centre and a scam awareness presentation at Springboard in Congleton, a charity providing free training and employment support for adults.

To drive awareness of Get Online Week and Digital Cheshire's participation, a 'Digi-Know' social media asset was produced and shared, along with two countdown posts (a month and a week in advance). A final summary post followed, to showcase the week's impact.





Practical Digital Skills for Carers

On March 2nd, 2026, a full-day event was co-delivered to provide digital information and guidance tailored specifically for carers. This event was hosted in collaboration with Cheshire and Warrington Carers Trust, BT, Barclays, OPAL, and BlueCap AI. The day began with a series of presentations, two of these were led by Digital Cheshire, focusing on digital inclusion for carers and navigation of the NHS App.

The afternoon transitioned into rotational workshops, allowing attendees to engage with different speakers in focused groups. Digital Cheshire ran two different workshops, one expanding on the NHS App guidance and the second on scam awareness.







Petty Pool

Two focused sessions were delivered at Petty Pool Vocational College for young adults with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The sessions focused on online safety, a topic chosen in collaboration with the college's Curriculum Manager to directly address students' concerns. Some of the students on Petty Pool's Digital Course also volunteered to help the team during the sessions.

To ensure the content was accessible, Widgit, (a communication tool which uses symbols to help represent words), was used throughout the presentation to aid students' understanding. Participation was encouraged continuously by supplying each student with red and green flags; students used these throughout the sessions to signal whether they felt various online scenarios were safe or unsafe. This provided a constant, inclusive way for students to engage with the material and allowed for immediate checks of understanding alongside interactive activities like 'The Wheel of Scam.' In total, 100 students and staff members attended both of these sessions, making it the highest attended event during the 12-month period of increased digital inclusion activity.





Key Learnings

This section provides a comprehensive evaluation of the lessons learned over the 12-month period. By examining the full lifecycle, strategic takeaways have been identified to provide insights for the future scaling of digital inclusion efforts.

Initial learnings affirmed

Initially captured at the 6-month mark, these key observations have been consistently reaffirmed throughout the 12-month period. They represent the foundational lessons that have held true throughout and beyond this period of increased digital inclusion activity.

Be where the people are

An imperative insight was that reaching the digitally excluded required a physical presence in spaces where residents already felt comfortable and secure. Many of the event attendees were older residents and so attending a 'one-off' digital event could present several barriers.

Beyond practical hurdles like physical ability to get to events due to limited transport or the need to arrange travel, there can often be a psychological barrier. Many residents may lack the initial confidence or motivation to seek out a dedicated digital session. Furthermore, as these were standalone events, building community awareness for a single date was challenging.

Digital Cheshire learned to counter these issues by 'meeting people where they are' and providing digital support at existing social groups such as, established coffee mornings and friendship circles. This approach helped to boost attendance, proving that attendance rates were determined as much by the event's setting and social context as they were by the content.

Assist venues to promote events

A key finding from the increased digital inclusion activity, was the impact of helping partner venues to spread awareness of the events. Digital Cheshire achieved this by sharing posters and social assets unique to their event, alongside guidance on high-visibility placement, such as the venue's notice boards or reception desks. Venue partners were also asked to share the news with their network.

By ensuring events were promoted well in advance, this allowed attendees the time to consider their own digital challenges and arrive with prepared questions or specific devices. This ensured that sessions were both well-attended and productive.

The importance of building partnerships

Collaborating with established organisations, such as BT regarding the Landline Switchover, ensured high-quality guidance was delivered directly 'from the source.' These partnerships addressed key community concerns and served as a major incentive for attendance. By leveraging the credibility of trusted industry leaders, this helped participants receive the most relevant support available.

Additional learnings recognised

Building upon the period's initial successes, several new key learnings were identified during the latter half of the increased activity.

Benefits of written communication

Throughout the 12-month period, a consistent trend emerged where attendees requested for the advice they had received verbally, to be written down so that they could refer back to it in future. Consequently, having notepads to hand became a staple at the events. This demand was also a consideration when creating the factsheets and how-to guides which were handed out consistently. These resources proved vital in ensuring the support delivered had a lasting impact, providing residents with a permanent reference point.

Making digital approachable

There were several instances at events where some attendees initially presented as 'closed off' to digital topics, often feeling that technology was either too complex or irrelevant to their everyday lives. In these instances, the most effective strategy was to bridge the gap by making digital concepts relatable.

Through shifting the conversation toward everyday activities such as, sending a text message or using email to stay in touch with family, this helped residents realise they were already engaging with digital. Once they recognised their existing skills, residents became more open to learning and talking about digital, proving that making technology relatable is a key first step in digital inclusion. The 'Rate Your Digital Confidence' roller banner taken to events was a useful way to get these conversations flowing. By asking attendees how digitally confident they were it helped them to open up about their views and use of digital.



Common Themes

This section outlines where the need for assistance was highest. These insights will help to inform future digital inclusion efforts so that they can provide the most necessary and impactful support.



1 Landline Switchover

The Landline Switchover was discussed at over half of all events. Questions ranged from "what does it mean for me?" to concerns about telecare devices and power cuts.

2 Scam Awareness & Online Safety

Scam awareness was also a frequent topic. This spanned email, phone call, text, WhatsApp, and Facebook scams.

3 Photos & Storage

Photos and storage were a consistent pain point, covering cloud storage, freeing up space, and moving photos between devices.

4 Email

Email questions varied from setting up accounts to blocking senders and managing junk mail.

5 Broadband & Connectivity

Broadband and connectivity often tied into Landline Switchover discussions, particularly around router compatibility and getting better deals.

Impact and Effectiveness

This section showcases both key figures and feedback from partners and attendees, gathered throughout the 12-month period.

Number of sessions:
35

Number of attendees:
597

Number of signposts:
121

> Digital Cheshire delivered presentations and workshops at our recent carers event which were clear and informative and well researched. Attendees to the event commented that the speakers were engaging and approachable and helpful.

Nicola Rutter
Cheshire and Warrington Carers Trust

CARERS TRUST
Cheshire and Warrington

> The time you have afforded us in both venues (The Windings and Elton Memory Cafe and Friendship Circle) was invaluable for the volunteers, carers and users of the services we offer.
>
> What we all particularly liked was the way you wrote things down and gave it us for future reference. As we get older and technology becomes more complex, we tend not to retain the information we have been given verbally - so that was much appreciated.
>
> One of our elderly volunteers was astounded by what she learned to make life easier, and two of the ladies who are on the committee for a housing association had all their questions answered.

Lesley Gardner
Bee Friends

Petty Pool

> Working with Digital Cheshire has been a fantastic experience for our college. They took the time to understand the specific online safety needs of our learners and collaborated with us to design a completely bespoke set of workshops that truly met our learners where they are.
>
> The sessions they delivered were interactive, engaging, and fully accessible, with learners and staff contributing questions that reflected real concerns and everyday challenges. Our learners responded incredibly well and found the workshops fun, informative and relatable. More than 70 learners took part, and the impact across the groups was clear to see.
>
> We are very grateful for the partnership with Digital Cheshire and the thoughtful, learner centred approach they brought to this work.

Mike Kirkman
Curriculum Manager, Petty Pool

> I enjoyed the digital online safety and social media training. I thought that the session was remarkably interesting about how to ignore people and block people from that you do not even know. I had so much fun with the activities. I feel more confident about staying safe online after the session and I strongly agree that the online safety should be safer than not being safe.
>
> Thank you so much for helping on how to be safe on social media and a huge thank you for having me helping you out with your session.

Katherine
Student at Petty Pool

> I am writing to express my sincere thanks for the online safety workshop you held at Petty Pool yesterday. I thoroughly enjoyed learning about the various aspects of staying safe online, and the session provided me with a lot of valuable information. It was particularly empowering to be treated like an adult throughout the training. I found the interactive activities very effective; specifically, the spinning wheel activity was a great way to learn, and it really helped me understand things better and feel more confident about staying safe online.

Ben
Student at Petty Pool

Section 8

The Need for Structured Support

As identified at the 6-month mark, there is a need for structured support, and this has remained relevant throughout the 12-month period. While one-off events were effective for initial engagement and supporting residents with their queries, attendees would often ask whether the team would be returning to run more events and expressed that recurring topic specific sessions would be of value.

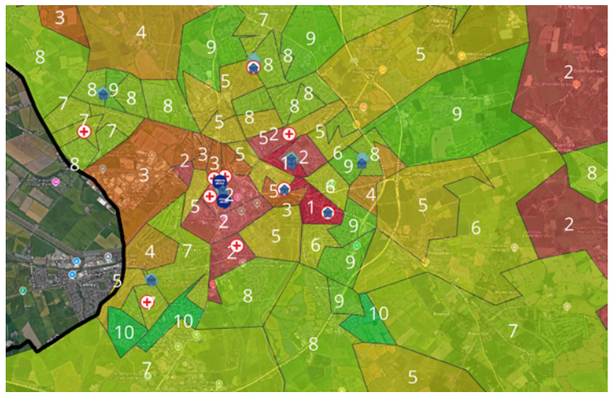
Crucially, many attendees shared that they would often go to their children or grandchildren for help with their devices. However, they expressed that they would often move too quickly and do tasks for them, rather than explaining the process step-by-step, which they felt they needed so they could become self-reliant.

Recognising this need highlights the opportunity for future programme development. Shifting toward structured learning sessions would allow residents to progress at their own pace, enabling them to build their confidence and become digitally independent.

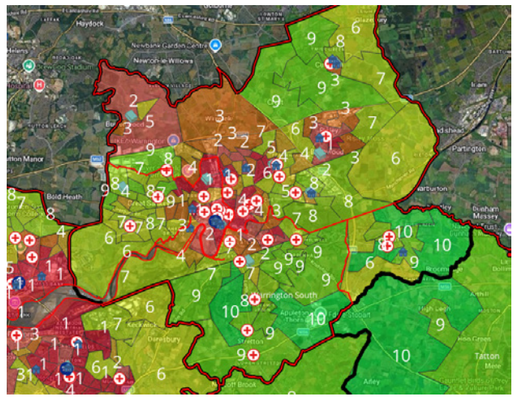
> “I hope you run courses, that would be good.”
>
> **Attendee of the Sandbach Library Drop-in**

Furthermore, through the application of data mapping, Digital Cheshire has pinpointed specific geographic areas currently lacking in digital support. These locations represent high-priority zones for future provision, specifically for the structured learning sessions which have been identified as an evidence-based requirement.

Chester



Warrington



Section 9

Ongoing Support

Whilst this period of increased digital inclusion activity has now come to an end and we look for further opportunities to bridge the digital divide, we’re still offering the following support to local residents...



Browse all of the useful guides and factsheets we developed on our website:

digital-cheshire.co.uk/guides-and-factsheets

Partner with Digital Cheshire:

Are you part of a local community group or charity?

We can come along to one of your meetings to help your group feel more confident online. From spotting scams to using a smartphone, you choose the topic, we’ll cover it!

Tell us about your group here:

digital-cheshire.co.uk/partner-with-digital-cheshire



DIGITAL CHESHIRE









Contact Digital Cheshire:

Website:
www.digital-cheshire.co.uk

Email:
digitalcheshire@cheshireeast.gov.uk

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