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# AbilityNet Digital Lifeline: Supporting people with learning disabilities Impact report

Digital Lifeline is an emergency response project. Funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport Good Things Foundation delivered the project in partnership with AbilityNet and Digital Unite, supported by Learning Disability England, the Voluntary Organisations Disability Group, self-advocacy groups

and other disability and digital inclusion organisations.

AbilityNet was lead accessibility partner for the project providing specialist advice and support to community partners and beneficiaries.

## **Who we have helped and how:**

Through the project AbilityNet supported

* 121 Community Partners accessing services to support 2978 beneficiaries
* 971 individual beneficiaries
* 371 Assessments were carried out
* 213 Community partners recieved training
* 2,354 items of equipment were provided
* 101 volunteer buddies assigned to provide ongoing support to organisations beyond the life of the project

We surveyed individual beneficiaries and community partner organisations to collate the impact from the project.

## of the individuals surveyed,

* **92% felt better able to use technology**
* 92% felt more Confident
* 90% felt better able to manage their health and wellbeing
* 79% felt less lonely and isolated
* 76% felt more Connected to friends and family
* 73% felt better able to participate in education
* 66% felt more connected to community
* 18% felt better able to access money/ banking/benefits

Janet Groves, digital lifeline beneficiary from Worcestershire said:

“It’s given me more independence. It’s allowed me to keep my interests and access them in a different way.”

## Our impact on organisations

* **100% are better able to support learners**
* 92% are knowledgeable and confident about tech
* 95% are able to work in a more disability inclusive way
* 100% are better able to engage with learners

A Community Partner said:

“ Digital inclusion will be an ongoing priority for our organisation, and a large proportion of our participants have additional support needs, so we would love to

continue engaging with Ability Net. We will certainly use the website resources.”

A community partner said “Tablets are built into people’s routine now.. it’s something they’ll continue for the rest of their lives… everyone seems to be enjoying them”

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**Key Learnings Digital Lifeline:**

During the assessment we asked the beneficiaries what goals they would like to achieve and what barriers they currently experienced with technology

### Goals:

### Using the tablets to help with:

* obtaining groceries, medications or essentials 4.6%
* My education 50.4%
* My health 11.1%
* My relationships 59.3%
* My wellbeing 65.6%
* My Work 3.8%

### Barriers:

* Inputting text 72%
* Understanding text 71%
* Operating tablet 61%
* Remembering how to do things 44%
* Speaking to the tablet 33%
* Hearing things 16%

58% of assessed beneficiaries recorded multiple disabilities

### Top Adjustments:

These percentages reflect the percentage of people recommended adjustments who have already made these adjustments. The full report shows that there is a large appetite from respondents to make future adjustments and learn other skills.

Adjustments that helped the beneficiaries with communication

* Action Blocks 58%
* Voice Assistant 25%
* Contact List 33%

Adjustments that helped the beneficiaries with Dexterity

* Action Blocks 59%
* Voice Assistant 33%

Adjustments that helped the beneficiaries with Hearing

* Live Transcribe 25%

Adjustments that helped the beneficiaries with Reading and writing

* Predictive text 27%
* Voice Assistant 26%

Memory

* Alarms 18%
* Reminders 6%

Adjustments that helped the beneficiaries with Vision

* Voice Assistant 57%
* Magnification 50%

### Assistive Hardware that helped the beneficiaries

* Big Letter keyboard 14%
* Headphones 34%
* Ruggedised tablet case 39%
* External keyboard (Wireless) 20%
* External keyboard (Wired) 60%
* External keyboard and trackpad 50%
* Stylus 52%
* Keyboard and grill 50%

Other popular recommendations:

* 26 Gooseneck tablet holders
* 5 Be My Eyes apps to provide assistance with vision
* 26 Symbio talk apps to help with communication
* 48 Colouring Apps
* 33 Jigsaw apps
* 30 Number Apps
* 15 Phonics and spelling apps
* 18 Photos Apps
* 7 Stories apps
* 40 Games apps

A Community partner said:

“Personalised recommendations meant people didn’t all get the same things - they all got what they actually needed”

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## **Early Goals achieved:**

During a follow up meeting with the beneficiaries around 3 weeks after their AbilityNet assessment we recorded some goals that had already been achieved. Of those that wished to complete the following goals this was the proportion who had already been able to do so

Health and wellbeing goals

* 43% had accessed Online exercise classes
* 17% had Checked for healthcare symptoms online
* 7% had made a GP appointment
* 5% had attended an online GP appointment
* 74% had Joined online social groups
* &4% had Participated in online forum/chat
* 90% had Played online games

Relationships

* 26% had Sent and received emails 26%
* 72% had accessed social media 72%
* 49% had used online messaging apps such as (WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger) 49%
* 48% had used Video calling 48%

Household finances and shopping

* 25% had tried Accessed government information (including benefits) 25%
* 17% had used Online banking 17%
* 25% had created accounts for online services 25%
* 50% had done grocery shopping online (groceries) 50%
* 50% had done online shopping for other items (other) 50%
* 50% had accessed travel information & maps 50%

Work

* 67% had used their device to work from home 67%
* 17% had tried Looking for jobs 17%
* 33% had attended online interviews 33%

Education

* 15% had looked for an online course 15%
* 56% had continued with a course 56%

### Early Goals achieved:

* Using my device (general) 88%
* Changing device to meet my needs 75%
* Getting help with tech problems 60%
* Staying safe online 68%
* Downloading new apps 47%
* Setting an appointment/reminder 23%

### **Volunteer Buddies:**

A buddy (or buddies, depending on the size of the organisation) were assigned to Community Partners

They provide:

* Consistency of support
* Familiarity to service users
* Local knowledge – we will always try our best to allocate someone as geographically close as possible.

Buddies also offered support in the form of:

* Technical assistance with tablets / MiFi devices
* Accessibility advice
* Demonstrations/ support with apps

The buddies map shows pins for buddies and volunteers spread relatively evenly across a map of the country with 101 Volunteer buddies assigned in total for the Digital Lifeline project

## Impact measured based on the following sample:

Data collected via initial assessment information capture and follow up interviews and surveys with 256 beneficiaries and 26 Community Partners.