Improving lives through the internet in rural Hertfordshire

Impact Report 2022/23

CDAHerts

CLARION FUTURES

Our impact in 2022/23

85 digital 'drop-in' sessions delivered across 4 rural venues

1,280 hours of individual digital support and advice provided

£5.40 of social impact generated for every £1 invested in the project

1,810 hours of volunteer time utilised to support new digital learners

6 new volunteer 'digital champions' recruited and trained

130 new digital learners supported

£73,687 of social impact generated through the opportunity for regular volunteering

£138,320 of social impact generated through the delivery of the 'drop-in' sessions

Georgina's story

Georgina, in her 80's, is a novice learner who regularly attends her local digital 'drop-in' session, or 'computer club' as she calls it.

Although a Doctor in her working life, Georgina had never set up a personal online ID or email account and neither does she or her husband have any form of internet connection at home.

She does have a secondhand Apple Mac however, which the local digital volunteers have helped her to start to use. This support has included downloading various useful apps and setting up her first ever personal email account so that she could email her daughter in Scotland.

Without the internet at home, being able to make use of the Village Hall's internet connection at the weekly 'drop-in' sessions to catch up with matters that she needs to do online, has become an important part of her life and as such, Georgina now wholly relies on the Village Hall as a local Digital Hub.

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"The welcoming atmosphere of the volunteers and their patience and encouragement to a nervous OAP was wonderful."
— **Digital learner**

Who we are

<u>CDA Herts</u> has been supporting communities and delivering projects and services to help improve people's lives within both rural and urban Hertfordshire for over 50 years.

We are also the Rural Community Charity for Hertfordshire and work to raise awareness of the needs of rural communities, farmers, businesses and voluntary organisations.

What we do

We bring together people and communities, champion the disadvantaged and provide advocacy for minorities and excluded groups. We also provide support for voluntary organisations in need of infrastructure & resources and help in delivering innovative projects aimed to reach and assist people gaining access to services, support, help and advice.

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Did you know?

10.2m people in the UK lack the most basic digital skills[1]

Non-users of the internet are 12x more likely to be over-65 [3]

3m people aged 55 and over have never been online [2]

57% of people over 65 say they would like to become more confident using digital technology [4]

1 million people have lost their broadband access as a result of the cost of living crisis [5]

67% of people would improve their digital skills if they knew support was available [6]

£1,064 per year of social impact generated for each new internet user [7]

£228 saved on bills each year by the most digitally engaged [9]

Research shows that internet use significantly reduces depression levels among older people [8]

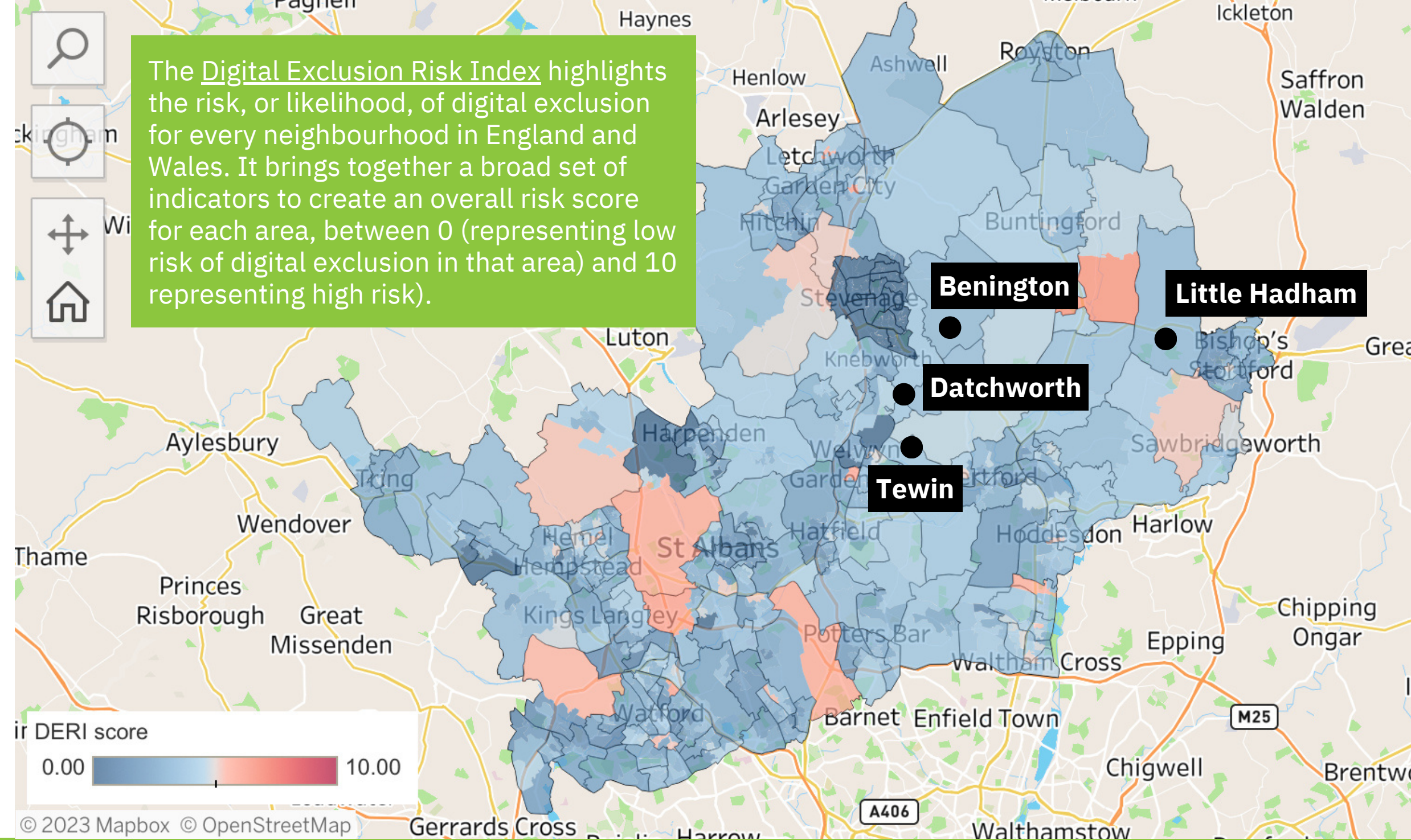**85%** of regular internet users connect better with friends and family and report being happier [10]

"I liked the company of other people on the course and I have learned a lot about using my phone and tablet effectively."
— **Digital learner**

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Digital inclusion in Hertfordshire

Over the past 2 years we have set up and successfully run weekly free-to-access 'drop-in' style digital inclusion sessions within four rural village locations across Hertfordshire, as highlighted on the map. This has been made possible through grant funding support from Clarion Futures.

We are now currently working to widen the project's coverage within other rural communities and therefore seek local partner input and support to help develop more accessible sessions in other rurally isolated areas. We are particularly keen to deliver in those areas where the local population is at a higher risk of digital exclusion - shaded red on the map.

The Digital Exclusion Risk Index highlights the risk, or likelihood, of digital exclusion for every neighbourhood in England and Wales. It brings together a broad set of indicators to create an overall risk score for each area, between 0 (representing low risk of digital exclusion in that area) and 10 representing high risk).

Benington

Little Hadham

Datchworth

Tewin

DERI score

0.00   10.00

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Digital 'drop-in' sessions

Our Digital 'Drop-In' Sessions run for 2 hours at each village hall and are open to everyone, from total beginners to those who may just have a few IT queries about how to do things.

We ask people to bring along their own devices, but we can provide various IT devices for those who don't have any of their own, or perhaps want to try out using something else.

Learners receive technical guidance, support, and advice on a wide range of issues from our local Digital Volunteers and have the opportunity to improve their digital skills within a welcoming and supportive setting (and always with a cup of tea and a piece of cake!).

- Setting up tablets & mobile phones
- How to make better use of a device/gadget
- Downloading and installing apps
- Taking and sending photos
- Using social networks
- Setting up email addresses and managing email accounts
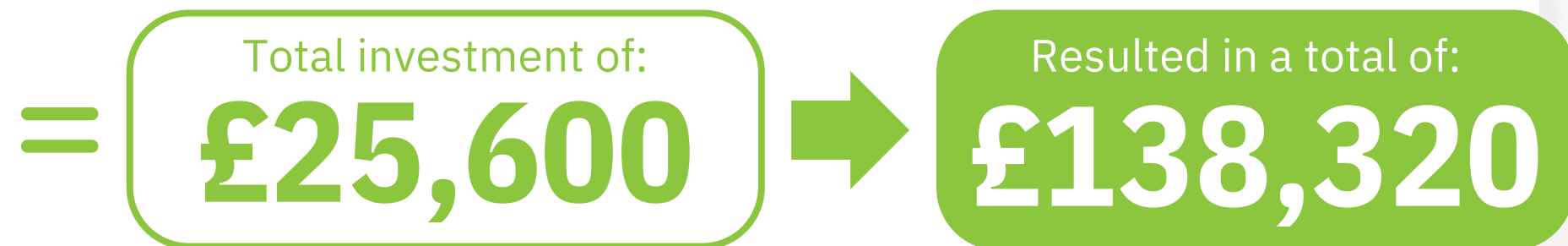- Using the internet for shopping, banking and to access services like NHS online
- Applying for jobs online
- General advice about staying safe online

Generating social impact

By helping people to access, and make effective use of, the internet, the digital 'drop-in' sessions generate a range of outcomes and additional value that can be measured in pounds and pence.

£7,500
of project funding

+

£18,100
of 'in kind' volunteer time

= Total investment of:
£25,600

→

Resulted in a total of:
£138,320

worth of social impact being generated - that can be broken down as:

£31,200 related to improved confidence

£32,890 related to reduced isolation

£37,700 related to time saving

£5,720 related to more time spent on hobbies

£22,490 related to financial savings

£8,320 related to improved job seeking skills

This means that every £1 invested in the digital 'drop-in' sessions generated £5.40 in social impact.

£1 **→** **£5.40**
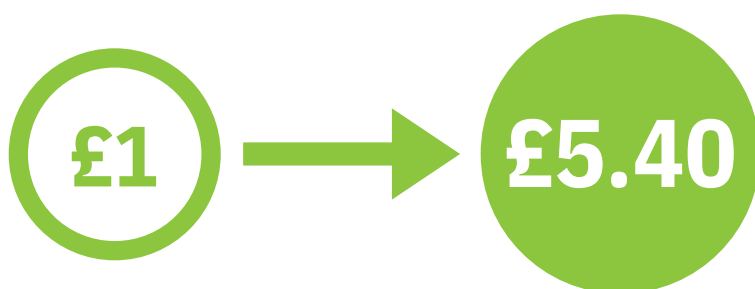
As a comparison, an evaluation of the NHS Widening Digital Participation programme estimates a return on investment of £6.40 for every £1 spent by the NHS on digital inclusion support.

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Rachael's story

Rachael, who is in her 70's and a social housing tenant in East Hertfordshire, has been attending the weekly digital inclusion 'drop-in' session in her local village hall for the last two years.

During this time, she has received assistance and support from the available digital volunteers across a wide range of topics and digital queries that she has each week. These range from successfully applying online for her disability blue badge for parking via the local authority website, through to setting up an online supermarket account so she can benefit from regular food deliveries.

Rachael enjoys the weekly sessions and really appreciates the digital help & support she receives and the positive impact it has on her daily life. In fact, she has now become part of the 'family' at the weekly sessions and although she has mobility conditions of her own, she always helps out where she can to ensure that even more people can benefit from the digital support that is on offer.

"The sessions are great as you can get individual and practical help on any digital issues you may have - you're not just sat in a class listening to people. The volunteers are great too as they're all so welcoming, friendly and enthusiastic."
— **Digital learner**

Calculating social impact

Social impact measurement provides a method for placing a value (in pounds and pence) on outcomes related to people's wellbeing. The social impact figures in this report have been produced using the evaluation framework detailed in the Valuing Digital Inclusion report by Just Economics for BT (June 2014). This report evidences that getting online is worth £1,064 a year due to increased confidence, less social isolation, financial savings and new opportunities in employment and leisure.

This framework has therefore been used to estimate that £138,320 of social impact was generated in 2022/23 through the delivery of 85 CDA Herts digital 'drop-in' sessions and the support provided to 130 new digital learners. In addition, a ratio of investment to social impact has also been estimated using project costs related to the delivery and administration of the sessions, including £7,500 funding and £18,100 worth of volunteer in-kind time.

Social impact is also generated through volunteering activity. For example, the HACT Social Value Bank identifies a social impact outcome for regular volunteers, as a result of the positive impact that volunteering has on their wellbeing.   The figure for this outcome has been used to estimate that a further £73,687 of social impact was generated through the delivery of the 'drop-in' sessions in 2022/23 and the regular volunteering opportunity they provided for 28 people.

Report references

1. The Good Things Foundation
2. The state of ageing 2022
3. The Good Things Foundation
4. ibid
5. Citizens Advice
6. The Good Things Foundation
7. Valuing digital inclusion (Just Economics for BT)
8. Internet use and depression among retired older adults in the United States (Cotton et al, Journal of Gerontology)
9. The Good Things Foundation
10. ibid

To find out more about the digital inclusion work of CDA Herts, please contact:

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