Improving lives through the internet in rural Hertfordshire

Impact Report
April 2022 - March 2024

CDAHerts

CLARION FUTURES

Our impact during 2022/23 and 2023/24

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

3,074 hours of individual digital support and advice provided

£5.13 of social impact generated for every £1 invested in the project

4,310 hours of volunteer time utilised to support new digital learners

28 new 'digital volunteers' recruited and trained

285 new digital learners supported

£172,197 of social impact generated through the opportunity for regular volunteering

£303,240 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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Annual breakdown

	2022/23	2023/24
Number of digital 'drop-in' sessions delivered	85	104
Number of new digital learners supported	130	155
Number of hours of individual digital support and advice provided	1,280	1,794
Number of digital volunteers recruited and trained	28	25
Number of volunteer hours utilised to support new digital learners	1,810	2,500

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**

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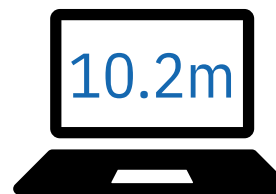> — **Digital learner**

Who we are

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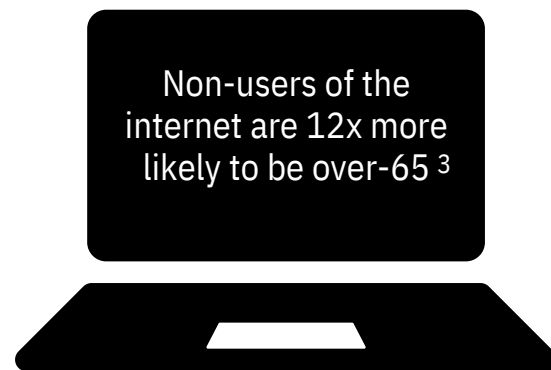
We are also the Rural Community Charity for Hertfordshire and work to raise awareness of the needs of rural communities, farmers, businesses and voluntary organisations.
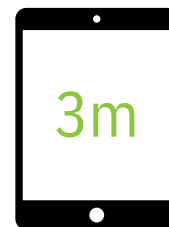
What we do

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.
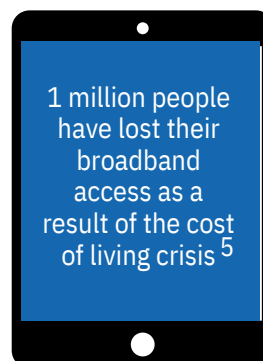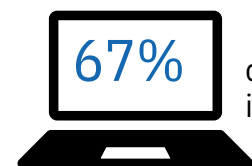
Did you know?

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

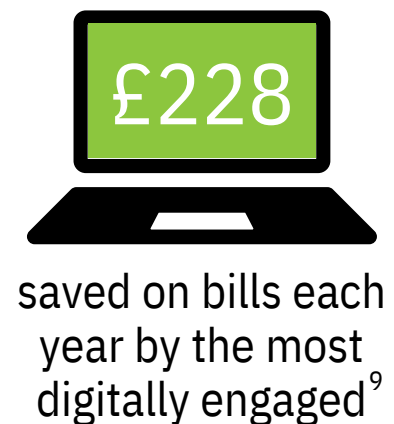Non-users of the internet are 12x more likely to be over-65 [3]

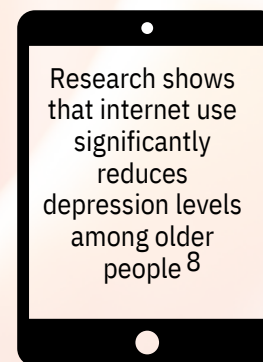**3m** people aged 55 and over have never been online [2]

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]

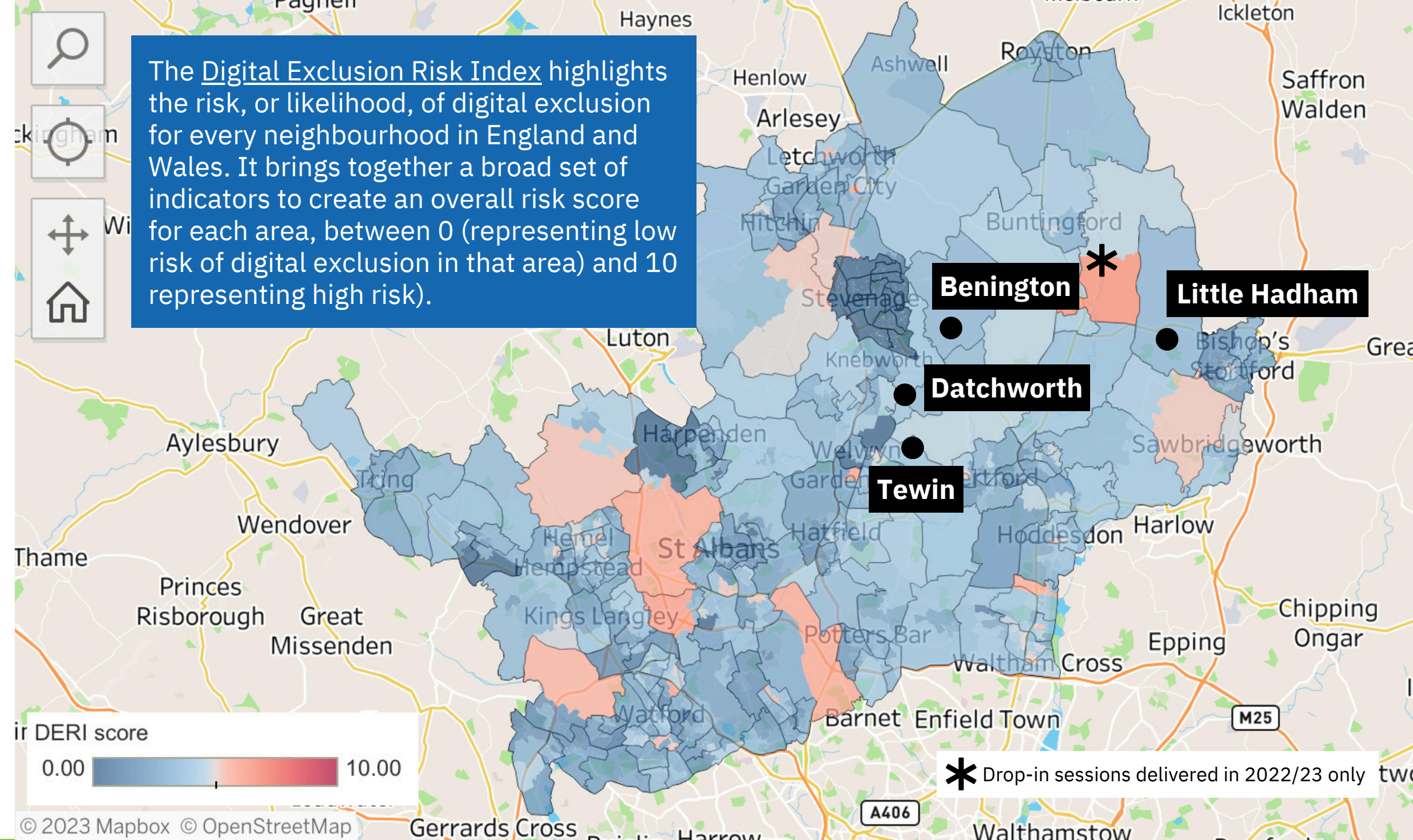**85%** of regular internet users connect better with friends and family and report being happier [10]

"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

* Drop-in sessions delivered in 2022/23 only

© 2023 Mapbox © OpenStreetMap

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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

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Jack's story

Jack, 93, has been attending the weekly digital inclusion 'drop-in' sessions at the local village hall for the past two years, following the death of his wife.

Whilst Jack was devastated about losing his lifelong partner and the thought of living alone, he was adamant that he wouldn't be cut off from the world from a technological and digital point of view and was keen to sustain a level of independence. Upon seeing an advert promoting the digital inclusion support in the parish newsletter he therefore decided to attend the sessions to get some digital help and advice.

Jack enjoys the two hour 1:1 sessions each week and is now using an Apple iphone, ipad and iwatch (which are all synced) to keep up with his family and friends and to do more and more everyday tasks online. He has even fitted a Go-Pro camera to his mobility scooter to record his travels, which he then transfers to his ipad to show people where he has been.

Jack's new digital skills also proved to be critical when he found himself in a recent emergency situation. Having fallen over in the shower at home, his poor mobility meant he was neither able to get up by himself, nor reach his phone. He knew that he was in a potentially difficult situation, but remembered that he could 'ask Siri', through his iwatch, to call his daughter-in-law to come over and help him. He was therefore able to talk to her and tell her what had happened so she could come to his rescue.

"The individual IT help given on a one-to-one basis is so reassuring for someone of my age."
— **Digital learner**

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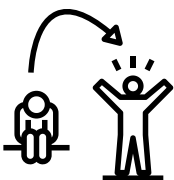
Digital learner feedback

100% of learners......

👍 would recommend the digital 'drop-in' sessions to friends

👥 rated the support as excellent or good

🙋 now feel more confident in the use of IT and digital technology

💬 said the set-up provided at the village hall was excellent

"As neither of us drive, it's so wonderful to be able to get free IT support and guidance at our local village hall"
— **Digital learner**

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.
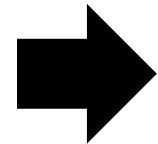
£15,000 of project funding **+** **£44,100** of 'in kind' volunteer time

= Total investment of: **£59,100** ➡ Resulted in a total of: **£303,240**

This means that every £1 invested in the digital 'drop-in' sessions generated £5.13 in social impact.

£1 ➡ **£5.13**

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.

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

£68,400 related to improved confidence

£72,105 related to reduced isolation

£82,650 related to time saving

£12,540 related to more time spent on hobbies

£49,305 related to financial savings

£18,240 related to improved job seeking skills

"You get great support and individual digital advice every week." — **Digital learner**

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Annual breakdown

		2022/23	2023/24
Investment	Project funding	£7,500	£7,500
	'In-kind' volunteer time	£18,100	£26,000
	Total	**£25,600**	**£33,500**
Social impact	Related to improved confidence	£31,200	£37,200
	Related to reduced isolation	£32,890	£39,215
	Related to time saving	£37,700	£44,950
	Related to more time spent on hobbies	£5,720	£6,820
	Related to financial savings	£22,490	£26,815
	Related to improved job seeking skills	£8,320	£9,920
	Total	**£138,320**	**£164,920**

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Helen's story

Helen, in her mid sixties, has been attending the weekly digital inclusion 'drop-in' sessions at her local village hall for the past two years.

Although a component mobile phone user, Helen really wanted to improve her skills in using a computer with a larger screen and keyboard. Whilst Helen had a relatively new desktop PC at home that she shared with her husband, she didn't feel confident enough to use it. She was worried that she might possibly do something wrong which would permanently damage it or cause it to malfunction when her husband next wanted to use it.

However, by using one of the loan laptops available at the sessions, and with guidance from the locally recruited digital volunteers, over the two years Helen has steadily improved her computing skills, becoming more confident in doing numerous things online, such as booking appointments and paying for goods/services. Above all, however, what she most enjoys is surfing the internet, looking at resorts, planning where to go on holiday and places to visit with her friends. In this regard, Helen's new computer skills have had a positive social impact and significantly helped to improve her sense of wellbeing.

Improving lives through the internet in rural Hertfordshire

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 £303,240 of social impact was generated during 2022/23 and 2023/24 through the delivery of 189 CDA Herts digital 'drop-in' sessions and the support provided to 285 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 £15,000 funding and £44,100 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 £172,197 of social impact was generated through the delivery of the 'drop-in' sessions during 2022/23 and 2023/24 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

This report has been produced on behalf of CDA Herts by GRE Consulting as part of the Clarion Futures' funded Digital Grants and Capacity Building Programme.

The aim of the programme is building the capacity of a select number of Clarion's established digital grant partners to support their longer-term sustainability, so that they can reach more beneficiaries, deliver a higher quality of service and generate more positive outcomes for customers and stakeholders.

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

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