

Get Online Tower Hamlets

**Tower Hamlets Partnership
Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan**

March 2015 – March 2018

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2. FOREWARD

As Mayor of Tower of Hamlets I am committed to tackling exclusion in all its forms and as this report makes clear, digital exclusion will have an increasingly damaging impact on the lives of our residents. This is why I pledged in my Manifesto in 2014 to make Tower Hamlets an 'Online Borough: Set up WiFi zones and help more residents get online' through working with big IT providers to set up free and low-cost WiFi in locations across Tower Hamlets.

The Tower Hamlets Fairness Commission, in their 2013 'Time to Act' Report, spoke of digital inclusion as being "essential to creating a fairer environment in terms of both money and jobs...a fundamental utility that residents should not be without. It is true that online skills are fast becoming an essential life skill. From seeking and gaining employment, to helping your children with homework or to stay safe online, to staying in touch with friends and family to accessing essential government services, those who are not digital included are at a disadvantage.

There has never been better time to help residents get online. This strategy will help us to make that a possibility. Although it is mainly older people that are thought to be digitally excluded in the borough, we find that a large range of people in our borough are digital excluded. Shockingly, many of these people are disabled, and a disproportionate number come from lower income families.

The Digital Inclusion Strategy has been developed in partnership with key organisations in the borough including the Council, housing associations, the local NHS, community and voluntary groups. This partnership strategy will bring co-ordination and learning between organisations to embed digital activities and learning across services and ensure there is digital provision across the borough.

I want to ensure that residents feel confident and supported to go online and to take full advantage of the benefits that being online can offer to them. I want residents to have access where possible and most of all, for them to feel motivated and to understand how digital resources can make their lives easier. We hope that this strategy goes some of the way to doing that.



Lutfur Rahman

MAYOR OF
TOWER HAMLETS

3. INTRODUCTION

The Tower Hamlets Fairness Commission and the Council's Strategic Plan highlighted the need to make Tower Hamlets an "online borough".

In addition, the push for digital is also emerging from central Government, whose *Digital by Default Agenda* was launched in 2012. This agenda works to both incentivise citizens to go online by moving more information and services online and by obliging citizens to go online by making some services digital only. Of particular importance for Tower Hamlets residents are the new DWP Universal Job Match requirements which require residents in receipt of JSA to apply for jobs online and the introduction of the Universal Credit, which can only be applied for online. Tower Hamlets has just been chosen to be in tranche one of the national roll-out, which is scheduled for March 2015.

Finally, one of the emerging themes from the Council's future savings planning is *Resident-centred Service Re-design*, which includes the delivery of more online services.

Digital Inclusion can be viewed as an individual's effective and sustainable engagement with Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in ways that allow full participation in society in terms of economic, social, cultural, civic and personal well-being

Being digitally included is fast becoming an essential life skill and helping our residents to become digitally included is now a priority for the Council and partners.

This strategy and action plan respond to this challenge.

4. WHY WE NEED A PARTNERSHIP APPROACH TO TACKLE DIGITAL EXCLUSION

Strategic Drivers:

1. The Strategic Plan

Following the Mayor's manifesto commitment, the Council's Strategic Plan commits the council to: Develop proposals to respond to Local Support Services Framework

The delivery of this commitment, coupled with the recommendations of the Fairness Commission, outlined below, form the main basis for this strategy.

2. Fairness Commission

The Tower Hamlets Fairness Commission's report "Time to Act" highlighted the key importance of digital inclusion:

Achieving digital inclusion in Tower Hamlets is an essential element in creating a fairer environment in terms of both money and jobs. Access to the internet should be regarded in similar terms as access to water, electricity and gas – a fundamental utility that households should not be without. Tower Hamlets will not effectively tackle the poverty premium nor maximise access to job opportunities without reducing the number of people who can't access the internet.

The growing use of the internet by the majority of the UK population and the increasing number of services more efficiently, or only, available online means that digital inclusion is essential for social and economic inclusion.

In recognition of this importance the Fairness Commission recommended that:

Tower Hamlets becomes an online borough and that a partnership is developed in which local universities, and or the creative and digital industries, take the lead in making free access to wireless internet universal in Tower Hamlets. (Recommendation 2)

In response to this recommendation, the Council's Action Plan, agreed in Cabinet in April 2014 agreed to:

- Undertake research and analysis of digital exclusion in Tower Hamlets.
- Increase internet connectivity on housing estates and in public spaces, through commercial and/or public sector partnership.
- Develop and promote a package to support people to access the internet.

3. Digital by Default

National Government has committed to a “digital by default” agenda in their Digital Strategy in November 2012¹. Through this the government aims to make digital services most citizen’s preferred option when using government services. The accompanying action plan includes:

- From April 2014, all new or redesigned transactional services will meet the Digital by Default Service Standard
- Policy teams will use digital tools and techniques to engage with and consult the public
- Collaborate with partners across public, private and voluntary sectors to help people go online

The actions set out in the strategy aim to reduce the number of people without basic digital skills and capabilities by 25% through incentivising citizens to go online by moving more information and services online and by obliging citizens to go online by making some services digital only.

Following the Government’s lead, Health information, employment opportunities, and other key services are also increasingly provided via digital channels.

A growing focus on online delivery increases the importance of ensuring that Tower Hamlets residents are able to access online services.

4. Universal Credit

In 2012 the Government announced that 25 ‘exemplar’ transactional services would become digital by default in 2015. Of these, the biggest impact will be felt by the new Universal Credit system, through which all benefits claimants will eventually have to apply. All applications have to be undertaken online and the system works in real time, requiring residents to alter their application as soon as their circumstances change. For some residents in irregular employment, that may require very regular online updates.

Tower Hamlets will be in tranche one of the Universal Credit national roll-out, in March 2015 which will have implications for all working age single people making a new benefit claim.

Department for Work and Pensions data suggests that 80% of future Universal Credit claimants, particularly younger people, are already online. However local anecdotal experience from front line services and advice agencies in the borough suggest that a high percentage of future local Universal Credit claimants will struggle to apply online. Ensuring residents are prepared for the Digital by Default agenda and are able to apply for those services moving online will be a key challenge for the Council and Advice Agency Partners.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-digital-strategy/government-digital-strategy>

In addition Personal Independence Payments, Carers Allowance, Electoral Registration and Apprenticeship Applications are all moving online.

5. Council Objectives

There are many services provided by the Council and by other public sector partners where the most efficient provision, for most residents and the service provider, is online.

The Annual Residents Survey shows that for a growing number of residents, online services are their preferred way of contacting the Council. In June 2004, 21% of residents used email or the website to contact the Council in the last year, a number which has steadily increased over time, and 27% of residents would prefer to use this method in the future. The Budget Consultation Survey, carried out at the end of 2014, indicated that of all savings methods, the second most supported (30% of respondents) was to deliver more services online rather than face to face.

However, this use is not uniform across different groups: The Annual Residents Survey (2014) found that only 12% of residents in social housing; 15% of residents aged 50+; 13% of Bangladeshi and 12% of low income and low skilled (DE) households had used digital methods to contact the council in the last year.

Therefore as more services move online, it is crucial that residents are provided with the skills and access to use them. We know that some residents, especially some older residents, residents with disabilities and BME residents, as well as residents who live in social housing, may require significant support to be able to use online service. Positively across all groups there is a growing interest in using online methods to contact the Council in the future.

This Strategy and Action Plan is designed to accompany the Council's emerging Digital Strategy which will outline how the Council is planning to develop further online services and also the infrastructure required for the Council to provide further public access to online services.

Wider Importance of Digital Inclusion

In addition to the strategic drivers outline above, there is a wealth of research which outlines the benefits for citizens who are digitally included.

1. Employment Benefits:

These benefits are twofold. Firstly the need for digital skills within the workplace is increasing; 72% of employers stated they were unlikely to offer an interview to an entry level candidate if they did not have basic computer or internet skills² with the demand for digital literacy amongst employees increasing. Secondly job seeking is increasingly moving online, with research from 2012 suggesting that 25% of jobs were advertised exclusively online³, a percentage which is likely to increase.

² <http://www.tinderfoundation.org/our-thinking/research-publications/online-jobs-report>

In addition, from March 2013, Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claimants have been required to use the online Universal Jobs Match system to look for jobs. Failure to do so will result in sanctions.

2. Financial inclusion:

The range of retail, financial and comparison services available online means that goods and services are on the whole cheaper when purchased online.

Research for Race Online 2012, states that offline households are missing out on savings of £560 per year from shopping and paying bills online and that people living in the 3.6 million low income households which are digitally excluded are missing out on annual savings of over £1 billion a year from shopping and paying bills online.⁴

However to gain most of the benefits of shopping online, digital inclusion is not sufficient. Residents also require an accepted current account and debit card and for some services the ability to pay through direct debit payments.

Online banking also provides customers with accessible and instant mechanisms to manage their money. Many banks and independent applications enable customers to breakdown their expenditure improving ease of budgeting.

3. Education:

ICT and Computer courses in schools are now an established part of the curriculum. In addition there is an increasing requirement for children and young people to complete homework and assignments on computers.

Research suggests that children with computer access at home have better academic outcomes. A PricewaterhouseCoopers' ⁵ report estimated that if all digitally excluded children had at computers at home, GCSE performance could increase by 4.5%. However computer provision within the home is not in of itself sufficient to increase attainment and could instead be used for social media and gaming.

A generational digital divide also exacerbates the risk of children using a computer within the home unsupervised, with parents not understanding the possible risks and online dangers. This increases the need for more parents to become as digitally included as their children.

In addition the National Institute of Adult Education⁶ suggests that digital inclusion also helps adult education. Their study found that adults with no internet access are three

³ <http://www.tinderfoundation.org/our-thinking/research-publications/online-jobs-report>

⁴ <http://ukdigitalchampionmodel.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Evaluation-of-UK-Digital-Champion-and-Race-Online-2012-vFINAL.pdf>

⁵ <http://ict-industry-reports.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2013/10/2009-Economic-Case-for-Digital-Inclusion-PWC-UK-Oct-2009.pdf>

⁶ <http://ict-industry-reports.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2013/10/2009-Economic-Case-for-Digital-Inclusion-PWC-UK-Oct-2009.pdf>

times less likely to take part in learning (just 6% reporting current participation), than adults with internet access (22% currently learning).

4. Overcoming social isolation and improving wellbeing:

Digital technology has the ability to help overcome social isolation, especially for some older or disabled residents, who are less able to leave their home on a regular basis.

A Cabinet Office study found that the prevalence of persistent social exclusion for older people without access to digital communication devices is almost three times as high as for those who have digital connections⁷.

Reducing isolation is not only beneficial in its own right, it also improves health and wellbeing, by keeping residents more active and engaged.

In addition a wide range of health services can also be provided online, including Skype consultations and health advice. This enables easier access to health support as well as reducing the cost of providing equivalent support. A recent large scale project by the Tinder Foundation and the NHS developed a range of pilot schemes (including one at Bromley by Bow Centre) to encourage those who are both digitally excluded and have low health outcomes to access online health information. Their evaluation suggested that “By supporting people to develop their digital skills for health, individuals have not only felt more empowered to better manage their own health, but these skills help people feel more confident, and reduced social isolation”⁸.

Wellbeing outcomes from using the internet are not limited to older or disabled residents, positive benefits are felt by all new internet users. For example, a poll of UK online Centre Users showed that 87% of respondents believe that the internet has changed their life for the better⁹.

⁷ <http://ukdigitalchampionmodel.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Evaluation-of-UK-Digital-Champion-and-Race-Online-2012-vFINAL.pdf>

⁸ <http://nhs.tinderfoundation.org/our-activity/>

⁹ <http://www.tinderfoundation.org/our-thinking/research-publications/digital-divide-and-happiness>

5. WHAT IS DIGITAL EXCLUSION?

Measuring levels of digital inclusion is complex. There are primarily three key elements to inclusion:

Access:

Access to the internet is the basic pre-requisite for digital inclusion and comprises both access to hardware (a computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone) and the ability to go online (usually through a Wifi connection or through a data connection). This access could be at home or work, or through a public access computer at an Idea Store or Job Centre.

In addition specialist access for residents with different types of disabilities is key to overcoming digital exclusion. This includes hardware that is accessible to people with physical impairments, software appropriate to those with sensory impairments, reducing barriers to access for those with dyslexia and learning disabilities, and reducing the number of inaccessible (either in primary design, or due to compatibility issues with specialist disability software technologies) websites.

Access to the internet is often used as a proxy measure for digital inclusion. However there are several key reasons why this suggests an over-estimate of levels of inclusion.

Primarily, access does not mean use. As laptops, tablets and smartphones become increasingly cheap and more popular, residents are likely to own this technology or have it in their homes, without the skills or motivation to use it. This is especially true for families with children, who are more likely to be digitally literate than their parents.

Using smartphone ownership as a proxy for digital inclusion is especially problematic. Anecdotal evidence suggests that whilst residents may have smartphones with the capacity to access the internet, they are using them only to receive and make calls and to text message.

Finally, depending on the online activity, different types of hardware and different access points are more or less suitable. For example, whilst residents may be happy job searching on a computer in an Idea Store, they may be less comfortable filling in a Universal Credit Claim on a public computer. Smartphones too provide limited capacity to enable complex online activity, such as e-learning or form filling.

Skills and Confidence:

The ability to fully use the internet to access a range of services requires a wide array of skills.

As well as requiring support to develop skills online, many users are fearful of doing something wrong when using a computer or accessing the internet. An Age UK study found that 'the main barrier appears to be a lack of understanding of and confidence with

‘how it works’. A number of fears and anxieties were expressed about ‘doing something wrong’.¹⁰

In addition to developing confidence using a computer and the internet, the skills required include literacy, especially understanding very specific digital vocabulary. For some younger digitally excluded residents, their main barrier may be language skills.

Skills levels required vary by the type of services accessed online. Some residents may already be comfortable accessing services such as Skype, which are extremely simple and intuitive to use. However internet banking or using comparison sites require a greater level of skill.

Motivation and Trust:

A lack of understanding of the relevance and benefits of going online is one of the most frequent reasons given by residents who aren’t online. In the 2013 Office for National Statistics Opinions and Lifestyle Survey 59% of offline residents are not motivated and feel they do not need the internet. However, it is likely this lack of motivation may stem from fear due to a lack of skills and confidence. For those people experiencing more extreme disadvantage, including some disabled people, it may be that they do not see gaining access to the Internet as a priority in comparison with coping with day-to-day life.

This lack of interest and understanding of the relevance of being online is most often expressed by older residents. Other people who are digitally excluded also often require support with overlapping social issues and needs.

Whilst the government’s move to digital for key services, including benefit applications, will force many residents to move online, motivating residents to use computers and access the internet for a wide range of activities will require a focus on activities residents wish to undertake, rather than have to undertake. There is a danger otherwise that digitally excluded residents will only go online to access a narrow set of services, perhaps relying on advice agencies or family members to support them.

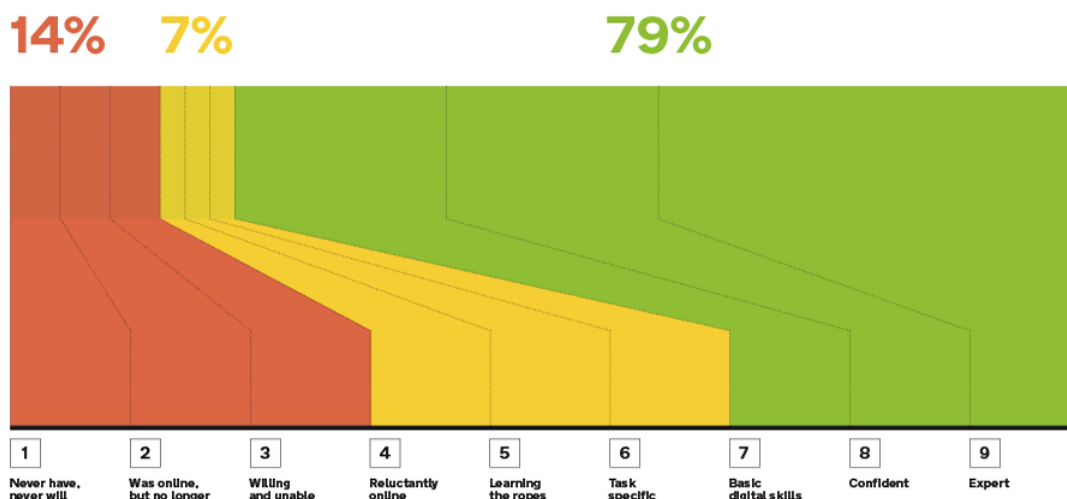
A lack of trust in online services is also a key barrier which de-motivates residents to go online. The Department for Work and Pensions Identifies that nearly one in five people cite fears about data security as a reason they would not make an application for benefits online.¹¹

¹⁰ http://www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/For-professionals/Computers-and-technology/Digital%20exclusion%20in%20later%20life%20-%20Research%20Report_pro.PDF?dtrk=true

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dwp-digital-strategy>

The Digital Exclusion Scale:

In recognition of the complex nature of inclusion and the varying degrees to which residents are digitally included, the Government's digital service created a digital inclusion scale in 2013¹² for the whole of the UK population, based on the BBC GO ON UK survey. The different categories and the main characteristics of each group are explained below:



Never have, never will

This category predominantly includes older people or people who were born before digital technology became common and often have negative perceptions of the internet.

Was online, but no longer online

This category includes those users who may have lost trust in the internet or no longer require the internet to access a particular service or have lost access due to cost or reducing physical or mental capability. 90% of these people have someone to do online transactions for them (usually a friend or relative).

Willing and unable

People in this category predominantly have a positive perception of being online but have problems with a lack of access, confidence and skills. They are mostly 'empty nesters', with low skills and who struggle to learn. They may have low levels of literacy. Cost may also be a problem.

Reluctantly online

These people may be resentful of the internet. They associate it with being forced to learn something they find hard. For example, they may have had to go online for work or to claim benefits, such as Jobseeker's Allowance. Whilst they use the family computer (70% have children at home), they struggle to learn new computer or internet skills, despite help from children.

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-digital-inclusion-strategy/government-digital-inclusion-strategy>

Learning the ropes

These users are predominantly very positive about the benefits of the internet and have willingly started to engage with digital technologies. They may still need help when they use digital services as they develop digital skills.

Task specific

This category predominantly includes people who can use certain digital services. Their tasks may include online banking or updating social media. These tasks are often limited and specific. These people have enough skills to be able to navigate online independently and perform all tasks at a basic level.

6. WHO IS EXCLUDED IN TOWER HAMLETS?

Introduction:

The local data available on levels of digital inclusion is heavily focussed on access, with some data available on use. However there is limited local data on why residents are excluded (access, motivation or skills).

Within Tower Hamlets general levels of access are similar to the London average. Estimates from the 2014 Tower Hamlets Annual Residents' survey suggest that around 86% of adults had access to the internet. This closely mirrors the findings by the Office for National Statistics on internet use, which estimates that 87% of adults in Tower Hamlets use the internet, compared to 88% of Londoners.

However it is likely digital inclusion is stratified within Tower Hamlets, reflecting the high levels of inequality on different scales within the borough. For example in the 2011 Census, Tower Hamlets had the highest level of online returns, 29% compared to a UK average of 16%. However this varied greatly across wards – with 39% in Millwall and 22% in Bow West.

The Tower Hamlets Annual Residents Survey also asked residents where they accessed the internet. The majority (82%) accessed it at home, with 38% having access at work, 9% at school or college and 7% at a Library or Idea Store. Of those with personal internet access, the majority had access via a laptop (81%) and two thirds said they had access via a mobile/smart phone (figure 3). One third of residents said they used a PC and a similar proportion used a tablet.

The use of smart phones is most popular with younger residents: 72 %of those aged 18-34 used a mobile for internet access compared with 35 %of the over 50s who used the internet (figure 4). Younger residents were also more likely to use a laptop than older residents to access the internet (83% vs. 66%).

Younger residents were more likely than older residents to use more than one method to access the internet than older residents. The average number of platforms used by residents to access the internet was 2.3 for 18-34 year olds compared with 1.7 for those aged 50 and over.

Finally, of those with internet access, most said they accessed the internet at least once a day (93%) and the most popular online activities were: email (80%); browsing for information about goods and services (79%); social media (68%); and buying and selling online (61%). The percentage of residents who currently use the internet for paying for Council services was 37%, well below the proportion who use internet banking (59%).

In addition, the survey conducted of 1,010 residents on behalf of the Council's paper East End Life by ICM asked residents if they have access to the internet, and if so, where. 90% said they had access, with 86% accessing at home, 17% at work, 2 % at an Idea

Store. The poll was also conducted in 2007 and 2009, and shows a rapid increase of residents who have access to the internet at home.¹³

Excluded Groups:

There are several groups who are significantly digitally excluded, both in the UK and in Tower Hamlets.

Age: Internet access and use is most strongly associated with age. According to the 2014 Annual Residents Survey, most (97%) of borough residents aged 18-34 had internet access compared with just over half (55%) of those aged 50 and over. This figure reduces even further to 21% when residents were asked if they used over 6 different internet activities a day. On average, of those aged 50 and over who did use the internet they only used 3.6 internet activities, the lowest of all groups.

Disability: Borough residents who are disabled or have a health problem were far less likely to have access to the internet compared with non-disabled residents with no health problem (60 vs. 90%). The prevalence of disability increases with age, so this is consistent with the findings on age. In addition, there is anecdotal evidence from local organisations that indicates that levels of exclusion are significantly higher for disabled people who are also part of another group, e.g. from an ethnic minority. The Annual Residents Survey does not have a large enough sample size to verify this information statistically robustly. It is also quite possible that rates will differ significantly for different impairment types.

Ethnicity: Data from the Tower Hamlets Annual Residents' survey suggests that Bangladeshi residents were a bit more likely to have access to the internet than White households (88% vs.85%). However, they were less likely than White residents to use online methods to contact the Council. Across all internet activities BME residents had lower usage than white residents.

Housing Tenure: Data from the Tower Hamlets Annual Residents' survey suggests that Borough residents in social rented housing were less likely to have internet access (82%) compared with private renters (93%) or owner occupiers (84%).

Social grade: Internet access was lowest (76%) for Tower Hamlets households from social class DE (which typically includes low income households) and highest for those in social grades AB and C1 (94% and 96%).

Use is also much higher across all activities among AB/C1 households, particularly for transactional purposes such as internet banking, or paying for council services online. For example, the proportion of households with internet access who use internet banking ranges from 73 %of those from ABC1 households down to 47 %of C2DE households.

Gender: Analysis of UK data for 2014, finds no significant difference in internet use between men and women among those aged under 65. However, a gender differential is

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http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/news__events/news/april_2014/no_town_hall_pra_vda_here.aspx

evident among older age groups: for example, 70% of women aged 75 and over had never used the internet compared with 53% for men in the same age group.

Finally, exclusion may be compounded for those individuals who have more than one of the above characteristics and may require a range of support to overcome multiple barriers to inclusion, including cost, specialist equipment and language skills.

Why are residents excluded?

Whilst we have only limited local data on why residents are digitally excluded, there are several national studies which provide this detail.

The 2013 ONS Opinions and Lifestyle Survey provides reasons why households do not have internet access at home. Overwhelmingly (59% of) residents are not motivated and feel they do not need the internet. 20% cite a lack of skills and a further 13% and 12% state that equipment costs and access costs are too high.

The Government Digital Inclusion Strategy, published in 2014, includes a more extensive list of reasons cited by non-users, compiled by LSE researchers.¹⁴

I'm not interested	82%
I don't have a computer	60.4%
I don't know how	60.3%
It's not for people like me	59.3%
It's too difficult	52.5%
It's not for people my age	50.3%
It's too expensive	42.6%
There's no connection where I live	40.4%
There's nothing interesting on the internet	38.7%
I'm worried about my privacy	35.7%
It's not useful	30.3%
It's too time consuming	26.6%
I'm worried about SPAM	16.5%
I don't have time	15.3%

Locally the Tower Hamlets Citizens Advice Bureau asked 150 service users, during April 2013 to March 2014 about their levels of digital inclusion. 57% of users have experience of using a computer, 24% graded themselves as having poor computer skills and 26% average. 61% had access to a computer or Wifi at home.

In terms of use, the majority had not applied for a job online (56%) or completed a benefits form online (88%). In terms of motivation to improve skills, 52% were not aware of computer courses available and only 48% would be willing to take part in an available course (however this may be due to the high levels of reported existing use).

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-digital-inclusion-strategy/government-digital-inclusion-strategy>

Finally, whilst the borough has universal broadband coverage, there have been concerns raised by residents that the current broadband capacity in some areas is insufficient, leading to reduced bandwidth availability, slowing connection speeds. This is of increasing concern in areas with high development where higher demand is not yet matched by higher capacity. In order to encourage more residents to go online it is important that the service they can access is of the highest possible quality.

7. TACKLING DIGITAL EXCLUSION: Current Activity

An awareness of the importance of digital inclusion is not new and different Council services and partner organisations have developed different actions to support residents to become digitally included; providing free access and skills training to residents. Efforts to co-ordinate the work around digital inclusion in the borough led to Tower Hamlets' first participation in the annual UK Get Online Week in October 2014, with a series of events across the borough.

1. Idea Stores:

The borough's 2 Libraries and 5 Idea Stores provide the largest number of publicly accessible computers in the borough (approx. 300 machines) and also provide free publicly accessible Wifi at most sites. These are available to all residents, are fitted with accessibility hardware and software, and are open extended hours and at weekends. Staff currently provide adhoc assistance to new users, especially those referred by the job centre to use Universal Job Match. Core services are available online, including the catalogue, renewals, booking and joining. A wide range of digital resources are available online, including learning resources and e-reading through the 24 hour library and the Idea Store Online Directory, which provides a wide range of information about services available in the borough as well as health information.

2. Idea Store Learning:

Idea Store learning provide digital skills learning as part of the provision of ESOL, citizenship, job clubs and homework clubs. A new course for September is a 10 week course of digital inclusion for ESOL. This is in addition to starting to include digital inclusion skills for ESOL in all their courses, including pre-entry levels. All courses include a basic safety online course. They also provide 18 laptops and 18 tablets for use during classes.

3. Children's Centres

Several of the Children's Centres run Literacy, numeracy, IT skills and money mentoring classes are provided through drop-in sessions, set courses and one-to-one sessions on a weekly basis. Some classes are targeted at specific groups and some have crèche facilities.

4. Skillsmatch

There are 10 publicly accessible computers in the Skillsmatch office, with an additional 15 available for training and 12 available for job searches. Training is available on using online job searching tools, as well as digital skills for employment (such as email and CV writing).

5. Economic Development Service

In Cabinet in November 2014, the Mayor agreed to start the commissioning process for free Wifi Zones in the borough. This will deliver Wi-Fi networks in high-footfall locations

(e.g. town centres, transport hubs) which will be free for a limited period of time per day per user and provide universal free access to some websites. The network will be run by a commercial partner who will provide an income for the Council, which could be used to support more digital inclusion provision. This should be in place by 2016.

6. Benefits Service

The Benefits Service is currently encouraging new benefit applicants to apply in the first instance online and are receiving approximately 100 – 200 applications online a week, approximately 21% of the total. Wherever possible they are signposting and encouraging callers to use the online forms as part of the telephony service. They are about to launch an sms text service which sends the form link to smartphones.

7. Adult Social Services

The Council's Assisted Technology service started in November 2012 and supplies different devices to residents homes to improve independent living.

This year, the next stage of the project has started and one of the key areas of focus is reducing isolation for older and vulnerable people, especially those who are house-bound, through interactive technologies.

The project will support a small number of older and vulnerable residents within the community, to use new technology (probably tablets). The focus will be on videoing conferencing skills, both to increase socialising and also for health consultations. Learning from this small group, will inform rolling the provision out to more residents.

The aim of the project is to reduce social isolation and improve health outcomes. Social isolation is a common issue for older people. As a person ages, their familial and friendship networks shrink and the ability to socialise can diminish, for example, as a result of reduced mobility. Social isolation can be a factor in wider physical and mental health deterioration, leading to increased demand and requirements for health and social care services. This can impact on domiciliary and residential care, GP surgeries, A&E and wider hospital admissions.

The project is currently identifying suitable partners to help deliver the project, suitable hardware and software, and is developing guidance to support residents to use the technology.

8. Linkage Plus / Age UK:

Age UK East London has set up an IT project via the Tower Hamlets Older People's Reference Group. The project aims to help reduce social isolation and increase participation in the community via IT.

This has included group training sessions and they are now offering a home support short course for housebound residents. The provision is for 3 2 hour sessions.

Skills taught include online food shopping, Skype and health services.

9. Housing providers:

Many of the Borough's housing providers have publicly accessible computers, including Swan Housing, Southern Housing Group, Circle Old Ford, One Housing, Poplar Harca and Tower Hamlets Homes (at the Residents Resource Centre at Wingarret Street); Tower Hamlets Community Housing provide free public Wifi.

They also often provide skills provision, for example:

Tower Hamlets Community Housing provide free one-to-one sessions for those who are claiming benefits. The sessions are carried out by the community development team in THCH community centres. They are aimed at those without computer access at home or for whom language is a barrier. They can accommodate up to 8 individuals.

East End Homes sponsors 'Techmums' classes which teach internet safety and awareness. The classes are held weekly, and the techmum course lasted around 10 weeks. It is run through George Green's School. They also provide ESOL with integrated ICT courses.

Swan Housing provides a Digital Champions programme for residents to pass on their digital skills to excluded residents. Champions are provided with training and free laptops.

Southern Housing Group operates a Lend-a Laptop scheme and offers ICT training using the "learn my way" website.

Poplar Harca offers two free sessions a week of basic computer skills and using the "learn my way" website on a drop in basis.

Old Ford (Circle Anglia) also provide training and are a UK Online centre.

10. 3rd Sector Learning Providers and Advice Agencies

The Limehouse Project provides an online support project, which is used to develop residents' confidence and capability in making claims online, also allowing them to access advice and help by workers. The sessions are drop-in and are held twice a week.

In addition one of the ESOL classes provides learners with tablets through which the learning is delivered. At each class more functions are made available and at the end of the class the learner is able to keep the tablet.

Toynbee Hall provides drop in training support

The Bromley by Bow Centre, who are part of the UK Online network, has publicly available computers and provide drop-in classes to improve basic IT skills, accessing online health advice, and ability to fill out online forms/access information.

Real provide unfunded drop in sessions to improve basic IT skills and ability to fill out online forms/access information staffed by volunteers. The sessions are run and cater to deaf and disabled people and people with long term health issues. Technology available

at Real includes a number of computers with adaptive technologies, including physical equipment and specialist software for supporting people with different physical impairments and sensory impairments (including sight loss).

Toynbee Hall is also seeking to provide drop in sessions for residents to get support with accessing a small number of public access computers and CAB are currently exploring how they can resource similar activities to support residents with on line claims.

The Stifford Centre are working with Swan Housing to deliver a digital literacy course for residents of the Exmouth Estate.

11. JCP

Job Centre Plus in Tower Hamlets have recently installed fifteen new public access computers in all their offices to enable the use of universal job match and online benefit applications.

12. NHS – Clinical Commissioning Groups

Tower Hamlets CCG have provided the technology for all GP surgeries to install WiFi. Roll out started in December and is due to finish by the end of March. This will give clinician access only but with the ability for the practices to extend the provision to enable public access. Installing public access WiFi will be the choice of individual surgeries and depend on a range of factors including space and facilities available in the surgery. The CCG will be encouraging surgeries to widen their WiFi access to give public access.

8. TACKLING DIGITAL EXCLUSION: Gap Analysis

It is clear that from the above activities that there are already a range of support options available for residents to improve digital inclusion. This mainly focuses on skills development, with some services also providing access, and with less work undertaken on motivation.

However there are gaps emerging:

1. Co-ordination:

There is no current co-ordinating mechanism for provision, especially skills training and 1:1 support which could benefit from better progression and referral routes.

2. Communication:

There is no current common borough wide branding of digital services and limited information provided to residents or services about current public access and skills training availability.

3. Provision:

Currently the Idea Stores and some of the housing providers and larger third sector organisations provide the core access and skills provision. This could be widened to other publicly accessible services, including schools, other Council services and additional third sector organisations.

Provision is not evenly distributed around the borough, with the Isle of Dogs and Bethnal Green and Bow currently under served for both access and skills training.

4. Targeting:

Most of the current provision is available to all residents, with some provision restricted to residents of housing providers and very little targeted to specific groups of need, be that job seekers, benefit claimants or other particularly excluded groups. Given the particular policy drivers around universal credit and access to key services, there are some groups which may need further targeted support.

In addition the research suggests that different approaches are needed to engage different key groups and that a more targeted approach may be more successful.

Within the partnership, most organisations do not regularly collect data on who is digitally included, which reduces our ability to target support to those excluded and measure progress towards digital inclusion.

5. Engagement:

We know that most digitally excluded residents are excluded due to low levels of motivation. This is often due to believing they may not be able to pick up new skills or feeling that it has nothing to offer them. To overcome this, different forms of engagement and approach need to be developed to reach out to different excluded groups. Our current digital offer provides a limited attempt to use different partners and methods to engage.

9. TACKLING DIGITAL EXCLUSION: Action Plan

Key principles

- Work in partnership with a range of organisations to bring co-ordination and learning between organisations
- Resident focused and flexible with different approaches for different excluded groups
- Embed digital activities and learning across services and programmes
- Develop locality based solutions to address gaps in access, including disability-friendly access, and skills training
- The strategy should be linked to Partners' Digital Strategies, including the Council's, to ensure service design and ICT provision improve digital inclusion.
- All elements should be underpinned by a shared Communications Strategy

Action Plan

Key Actions:

1. Co-ordination:

- Create a co-ordination Group (similar to the External Partners Advisory Group for ESOL) to standardise digital training offer and referrals.

2. Communication:

- Develop a communications plan which will build on the Tower Hamlets Go Online Brand and Messaging.
- Launch Strategy and Action Plan with Partners to promote the importance of digital inclusion and ways to support residents.

3. Provision:

- Increase the number of public access computers and other devices in both Council and Partner's buildings, including some with accessible IT features.
- Increase the number and range of places residents can access free Public Wifi, in both Council and Partner's buildings and in residents' homes.
- Ensure there is digital skills provision in each locality area /LAP to increase the provision of taught courses, drop in sessions and 1:1 support

4. Targeting:

- Provide targeted support for residents most in need of Digital Skills, including for residents moving onto Universal Credit, Job Seeking Residents, Disabled Residents, Parents and Older Residents.

5. Engagement:

- Increase the number of organisations operating digital champion / buddy programmes, with Idea Store Learning supporting the exchange of best practice and learning.
- Embed Digital Learning in all learning provision, thereby reaching residents who may not sign up for digital learning.
- Provide more services online which are simple to use, to promote the convenience of online services.

The Complete Action Plan is below:

Focus: Improving residents' ACCESS to hardware and WiFi

Objective 1: Increase free public access to internet enabled computers and devices and free public access to Wifi

Action	Activities:	Target Date	Lead	Resource
1.1 Increase the number of public access computers and other devices.	Increase the number of public access computers and devices in Council Buildings, including the Town Hall, Children's Centres, One Stop Shops, Ideas Stores and Youth Centres.	Autumn 2015	ICT / Asset management	Seek external funding to pilot the use of tablets.
	Increase the number of public access computers in Housing Providers' Offices, Estate Community Centres, and in Youth Centres.	Autumn 2015	THHF Management Subgroup	Within Existing Budgets
	Encourage the provision of internet access and equipment to residents in sheltered housing, hostels and care homes	Autumn 2015	Sheltered Housing	Within Existing Budgets
	Encourage local Voluntary Groups, Faith Groups and Community Centres to provide public access computers.	Autumn 2015	Third Sector Advisory Group	Within Existing Budgets
1.2 Increase the number and range of places residents can access free Public Wifi	Provide free WIFI in public spaces in the borough	WiFi in place in 2016	Economic Development	Self-Funding and provides income for LBTH
	Enhance the provision of free WiFi in Idea Stores, Libraries and the Town Hall.	2015	ICT Digital Strategy	Within Existing Budgets
	Explore the possibility of providing free public access WIFI in all other council buildings	2015	ICT Digital Strategy	Within Existing Budgets
	Increase the number of Housing Providers' Offices, Estate Community Centres, and GP surgeries providing free WIFI access	Autumn 2015	CS & E THHF HWBB	Within Existing Budgets

			THCCG	
	Encourage local voluntary groups, faith groups and community centres to provide free WIFI access in their buildings.	Autumn 2015	THCVS / Third Sector Advisory Board	Within Existing Budgets
Objective 2: Help more residents to own internet enabled computers and devices and access WiFi at home				
Action	Activities:	Target Date	Lead	Resource
2.1 Encourage more organisations to provide equipment loans or give-aways	Explore the provision of tablets to residents, pre-loaded with information or applications including tenancy information, the ability to report repairs or to make decent homes choices	2015	THHF CIN to explore, Housing Providers to deliver.	Within Existing Budgets
	Provide more technology for learners	April 2015	Idea Store Learning / learning providers	Seek external funding from adult learning funders
	Work with the Council's Strategic ICT partner to provide recycled computers for Tower Hamlets organisations and residents.	End of 2015	ICT	No cost
2.2 Explore WIFI / fibre-optic internet provision within a social housing block	Housing Providers to explore existing models from providers including Community Fibre and Hyperoptic to determine feasibility for delivery in their housing blocks.	Summer 2015	THH / Gateway Housing / Swan Housing / Other housing providers	No revenue cost to the Housing Providers
2.3 Lobby for improved broadband infrastructure in the borough	The improved provision of utilities will be reflected in the refresh of the Local Development Framework.	2015	Planning and Building Control	No Cost
Focus: Help more residents to learn digital SKILLS				

Objective 3: Increase provision and improve standardisation of digital skills training

Action	Activities:	Target Date	Lead	Resource
3.1 Ensure there is digital skills provision in each locality area /LAP to increase the provision of taught courses, drop in sessions and 1:1 support	Map provision and analyse gaps	Ongoing	CS & E	Within Existing Budgets
	Include Digital Skills Training in any new MSG funding round	2015	Third Sector Team	Within Existing Budgets and opportunity to use the income raised from Free Wifi provision.
	Create a co-ordination Group (similar to the External Partners Advisory Group for ESOL) to standardise digital training offer and referrals	Spring 2015	Idea Store Learning	Staff Capacity Required – Navigate project possible
	Share the Idea Store Learning digital module with Voluntary Sector organisations to deliver, including training around internet safety.	April 2015	Idea Store Learning	Within Existing Budgets
	Work with JCP to bid for funding for two digital co-ordinator posts to work with the third sector to work across the borough to improve the co-ordination, delivery and referral routes for the provision of digital inclusion work.	Autumn 2015	Economic Development	Flexible Support Fund
	Third Sector organisations to explore applying for additional external funding for more digital skills training	2015	Limehouse Project / Stifford Centre / Third Sector Advisory Board	External Funding Providers
3.2 Increase the number of	Idea Store Learning to host a Digital Champions / Buddies seminar to advertise existing buddying schemes and promote best practice,	May 2015	Idea Store Learning	Within Existing Budgets

organisations operating digital champion / buddy programmes	involving the Tinder Foundation			
	More organisations to establish Online Buddies Programmes and use buddies to teach skills on residents' own equipment (tablets/phones etc.)	September 2015	Idea Store Learning / Volunteer Centre / Housing Providers /	Within Existing Budgets
3.3 Embed Digital Learning	Include a digital element in all adult learning and training (ESOL, Employment, financial inclusion etc) delivered by Idea Stores	Ongoing	Idea Store Learning	Within Existing Budgets
	Include the provision of a digital skills element to all adult learning within any new MSG funding round.	2015	Third Sector Team	Within Existing Budgets
	Provide Training for front-line service workers in Idea Stores, schools, children's centres, one stop shops to use and deliver digital skills.	Spring 2015	Digital Inclusion Co-ordination Group	Pilot Universal Offer National Librarian Training in Idea Stores.
3.4 Promote online independent digital skills training	Install "Learn My Way" on all Council Public Access Computers	January 2015	Idea Store Learning	Within Existing Budgets
	Encourage other providers of public access computers to also install "Learn My Way"	Spring 2015	CS & E THHF Third Sector Advisory Board	Within Existing Budgets
3.5 Provide targeted support for residents most in need of Digital Skills	Work with services and partners to develop actions to help identify digitally excluded residents.	2015	Economic Development / Housing Providers / Skillsmatch / JCP / Children's Centres / Advice Agencies	Within Existing Budgets
	Develop a triage tool to identify digitally excluded residents, as part of the Integrated Support Service Project.	Spring 2015	Integrated Employment Service	Within Existing Budgets

	Work with front line staff to enable them to use the triage tool, at key engagement points, to be able to identify clients and users who may be digitally excluded.	Summer 2015	Integrated Employment Service	Within Existing Budgets
	Identify, using the triage tool, residents in receipt of benefits who will need support undertaking welfare claims online and refer them to training	Summer 2015	Integrated Employment Service via ESCW / Skillsmatch / JCP / Children's Centres / Housing Providers/ Housing Options / Benefits Service / Advice Agencies	Within Existing Budgets
	Provide support to be delivered in JCP officers or partners' offices specifically for online job seeking	Summer 2015	JCP	Within Existing Budgets or through additional funding through the Delivery Partnership Agreement with JCP in advance of Universal Credit
	Work with more schools to provide digital training to carers / parents and access to internet enabled computers, with a particular emphasis on online safety.	Ongoing	Parent Engagement Team	Offered as a procured service to schools
	Provide customised I.T training for people with particular disabilities	Spring	Real / Idea Store	Within Existing

	and access needs support and improve the provision of assisted technology across the borough.	2015	Learning/ Local providers	Budgets and opportunity to use the income raised from Free Wifi provision.
	Develop specialist support for older, isolated residents to access health and social care services online, as well as learning online skills to stay connected and promote independence.	After the first stage of the Age Uk pilot	ESCW Assisted Technology Team / Age UK / Idea Store Housebound Service / Health Outreach Workers / Public Health / Health and Wellbeing Board / Lunchclubs	Within Existing Budgets and opportunity to use the income raised from Free Wifi provision. Explore support available from Barclay's Digital Eagles scheme.
	Support small businesses to get online	Ongoing	Economic Development	Within Existing Budgets

Focus: Help more residents to be MOTIVATED to go online

Objective 4: Make more service available online and increase their ease of use:

Action	Activities:	Target Date	Lead	Resource
4.1 Increase the number of residents accessing Council	Improve ease of use of the Council's website, especially online forms	First phase of Council	ICT/ Communications	Within Existing Budgets

information and using Council services online		Website improvement delivers in 2015		
	Increase the number of online and mobile transactions for council services, including parking permits and benefits	Summer 2015	ICT/ Communications /Customer Access	Within Existing Budgets, possible resulting savings
	Promote use of online services, including social media, as an alternative method of contacting the council, through contact centre messaging and communications.	Spring 2015	Communications /Customer Access	Within Existing Budgets, possible resulting savings
	Improve online and mobile transaction for council services, to incentivise online service use (explore the potential of providing discounts or a quicker service) and provide online tracking	2016	ICT Digital Strategy	Within Existing Budgets, possible resulting savings
	Support residents to use online services, by providing support at One Stop Shops to help residents access and learn how to use Council's online services	2016	ICT/Customer Access	Within Existing Budgets, possible resulting savings
4.2 Encourage partners in the borough to place more services online and promote their use	Housing Providers to increase the number of online service including tenant portals, repairs information, decent homes choices and promote this form of engagement	Spring 2015	THHF / THH	Within Existing Budgets
	GPs to investigate increasing access to health records and health information	Spring 2015	Public Health / HWBB	Within Existing Budgets

Objective 5: Increase awareness of the benefits of online skills and the support available

Action	Activities:	Target Date	Lead	Resource need? Available?
5.1 Develop a communications plan	Build on the Go Online Campaign – To maximise the outcome of “Get online week” and create an ongoing digital campaign, in line with national campaigns, to promote positive benefits of going online	Ongoing	CS&E / Idea Stores / Communications / UK Online Partners in borough	Within Existing Budgets
	Create a common brand for all organisations with public access computers and Wifi	Spring 2015	CS&E / Communications	Within Existing Budgets
	Promote all Public Access Computers and Wifi spots and digital skills provision, including in a range of community languages.	Spring 2015	CS&E / Communications	Within Existing Budgets
5.2 Engage with a wide range of partners to encourage residents to go online.	Deliver presentations on the benefits of digital inclusion and what partners can do to support digital inclusion, at: THHF; Interfaith Forum; THCVS; HWBB; Heads’ Consultative	By March 2015	CS&E / Economic Development / Communications	Within Existing Budgets
	Encourage Engagement from large companies in the borough who may be interested in supporting digital inclusion through their CSR activity.	2015	CS&E / Economic Development / Communications	Within Existing Budgets to draw in additional funding
5.3 Encourage more community organizations and community resource centres to become UK Online centres access point or network members.	Provide guidance for organisations on what this involves and actions required. Including briefing on promoting online safety.	Spring 2015	CS&E / ICT	Within Existing Budgets
	Work with existing UK Online Centres in the borough and smaller organisations, to sign up as an UK Online centre Access Point and provide free or low cost access to the internet	Spring 2015	Stifford Centre / Third Sector Advisory Group	Within Existing Budgets
5.4 Launch Strategy and Action Plan	Organise a launch event to promote the strategy and action plan and promote opportunities to organisations. Invite wide range of partners, national promoters, local technology companies.	Spring 2015	CS&E	Within Existing Budgets