

Digital Inclusion

Notes from Digital Conference 24th March - 11am-12 session

Three local organisations with experience of addressing digital exclusion in their activities share their advice and tips on good practice and overcoming key challenges

Busola Afolabi: Success for All www.S4a.org.uk

- Facebook @S4ALearningHubsandClubs
- At Success4All We know that children and young people from certain areas aren't reaching their full potential, however this is not due to a shortfall in their capabilities but more of a lack of opportunities, support and confidence. We engage, empower and equip children and young people because educational success should be for everyone. We do this by running relaxed learning spaces where children and young people can access support tailored to their needs.
- Busola demonstrated how some interactive games can be used in a Zoom session, to engage users and help them build digital confidence.

Good practice includes:

- Make instructional guides, use the correct terms and be consistent with using them.
- Give clear explanations of what the functions are.
- Give people plenty opportunity to practice to become confident.
- Understand what devices people are using: tablet, Chromebook, phone are all different.
- S4A encouraged and enabled use of one type of device (Chromebook) and meant advice and support could be consistent.
- Our learning journey showed us that short engaging sessions where we try not to pack too much in, work best.
- Being online can be extremely tiring. Zoom fatigue is real.
- We keep our sessions to one hour.
- Within that hour we encourage our participants to play games for part of the time, to keep learning fun.
- We break everything up to smaller bite-sized chunks.
- Always consider "How can we get our audience to interact with us?" They need to be talking to us as well as us talking to them.
- There are many different apps and online platforms available which can be used to encourage interactivity.
- Encourage everyone to try new things and experiment.
- For staff members it is daunting. Encouraging staff to try it, see what is available and possible.
- Online learning can be difficult but it is always achievable.

Ronnie Johnstone: Digital Voice www.digitalvoice.org.uk

- Facebook @digitalvoiceforcommunities
- Digital Voice is a Community Interest Company based in Gateshead and we work across the north-east. We use creative digital media as a means to support people to increase their self-esteem self-confidence as well as digital skills.
- Digital Voice created Digital Buddies as a way to give peer support online.
- A Digital Buddy is a volunteer who can be trained up to help people get online and bridge some of the barriers that stop people getting online.
- Digital Voice worked with Search to train up their Digital Buddies - their role was to help people on the doorstep to get connected.
- Digital Buddies are really important and help fill the gaps in digital illiteracy in our area.
- 11million people lack basic digital skills in the UK.
- 5 million never go online in the UK.

Main barriers:

- Access to broadband and devices, it costs money
- Not everyone has the ability or basic skills.
- There is a fear for people when online, we overcome this by teaching them about scams, how to be safe and secure whilst online.
- Motivation is a massive issue. 48% of people offline say they won't go online. This is where the Digital Buddy comes in to show them how the internet can be used, success stories, calm fears.

The people who are affected the most:

- Older people, people on low income, geographically disadvantaged, people who are homeless, people whose first language is not English.
- 53% of people cannot afford to go online, we can help with advice and good services with good value or help find funding streams.

Key challenges

- Need to train more people to give the disadvantaged more skills, give them more confidence and not overwhelming people.
- Show people how it does enrich people's lives.
- Learn what people need. Get to know them and help them with what they want to do online. This helps them have a good experience and makes them want to go on with training.
- A Digital Buddy needs to be: clear about what is safe, respectful, always listening to people, spotting opportunities when they arise, encouraging when they have a success, reassuring and patient, not make assumptions.
- Not every device is going to be perfect to every person. What other assistive technologies can you use?
- Best place to start is to do fun, creative things, such as taking and sharing photographs.
- Google maps is great for learning essential gestures to operate a tablet (e.g. swiping), whilst being fun and engaging (e.g. you can see where you lived as a child) and is a great way to stimulate debate and chat.

- It's about the experiential aim and to have a good experience.
- Team viewer is a fantastic resource – you can connect to their device and talk them through processes.

Clare Levi: Search www.searchnewcastle.org.uk

- Search is one of the oldest voluntary projects in the West End of Newcastle, set up in the mid 1970s to help the welfare of local pensioners.
- We have a range of activities, advice and support services
- We already ran tech clubs, but then lockdown happened and we needed to develop our online offer.
- First we provided devices to people who didn't have them and paired them up with a Digital Buddy
- People were keen to continue and get online to join in on the activities.
- We added quizzes, drop in sessions and other activities such as card-making.
- It was important to give lots of direction such as creating a video of how to get onto the Zoom classes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SAINefplzMM>
- Staff would be on the zoom call to welcome people in and make them feel comfortable and set the tone.
- More informal approach works really well
- There were lots of challenges and issues, doorstep connecting was easier said than done, but we overcame them and got people online.
- Used 4G devices rather than getting people to commit to a broadband contract
- We had insights from Search Volunteers who explained how they got people online or supported them in other ways such as over the telephone.