



The DigitALL Project

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
April 2024 – March 2025



What is DigitALL?



Led by Open Age, DigitALL for the last year has supported the most digitally excluded residents in Kensington and Chelsea. We continued working in partnership with Age UK and Equal People Mencap and recruited a new partner, Midaye, who support the Somali community and other local migrant groups.

We support some of the most digitally excluded participants in North-West London; older adults, adults with learning disabilities and ESL adults within those cohorts. In recent years we have partnered with charities supporting the most digitally excluded residents in Westminster, Hammersmith and Fulham and Brent.

We provide devices, data and bespoke skill support to participants, who are initially referred to a central coordinator at Open Age. We are looking to build the formative skills and provide adequate resource to communities so they can access recreational, social and health based services online.

Our partnership model allows organisations, local authorities, social prescribers etc to feed referrals into a central coordinator. The project offers both a “single point of entry” provided by the coordinator and an ‘any door is the right door’ approach to enhance our community reach.

Open Age has led on the creation of a new Digital Assessment Readiness Tool (DART), which we use with every participant when they join the project. This segments our participants’ needs so that we can match them with an appropriate device, support type and organisation that they are comfortable with. Participants are asked questions about prior experience, current confidence and the associated barriers and topics of interest. We group DigitALL graduates by their interests when their time on the project is ending so that they will be able to access follow-on support with learners at a similar level with mutual interests.

Social Return on Investment The RBKC Social Investment team has used a social value measurement tool to produce a Social Return on Investment calculation for the DigitALL programme. The measurement tool is accredited by the Institute for Social Value and uses the HM Treasury’s Green Book methodology for social cost-benefit analysis to monetise social value.

The outcomes measured were:

- Improved digital skills
- Improvement in mental health (depression or anxiety)
- Improved general health and wellbeing
- Reduction in social isolation

Between **April 2024 and March 2025**, the DigitALL project produced **£289k** (£289,723.71) in social value, resulting in a social return on investment of **£3.15 for every £1 spent**. Further evaluation is planned to deepen understanding of the impact of DigitALL.

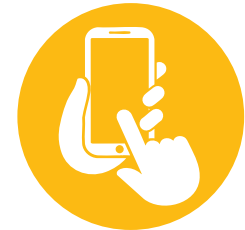
From April 2024 to March 2025 :



280 residents in Kensington and Chelsea were supported



96 tablets were provided to residents



173 SIM cards which enable free internet access were distributed



12 laptops were purchased to set up two digital hubs in Midaye and Mencap.



20 sets of headphones and accessible keyboards were provided for learners with additional sensory needs

Since the project pilot in 2022 and up to March 2025 , a total of **898** RBKC residents have been supported through DigitALL



68% of participants were of Asian, Black, and Mixed ethnicities



72% of participants did not have English as a first language

71% of participants have a long term health condition

73% of participants living in a ward in the most deprived list (as per the Core20PLUS5 Framework)

83% of participants demonstrating improved confidence accessing a health service online

97% of participants demonstrating improved digital literacy skills

The most represented groups were 'Asian/Asian British' and 'Black/Black British'

The most represented ward was Golborne



92% of participants reporting improved-wellbeing

92% of participants reporting reduced anxiety

DigitALL at Open Age

Locations

- Second Half Centre (St Charles Health and Wellbeing)
- Kensal Library (Golborne Road)
- Home Visits (North Kensington)

We run DigitALL three times a week at Open Age, providing one-to-one training with digitally excluded members. We take the majority of referrals from our Outreach and Link-up teams, who work with clients through My Care My Way. Projects like Time for Me for unpaid carers and Mens Space for older men regularly refer to us.

Since September we have based ourselves in Kensal Library, in partnership with Golborne Medical Centre who refer directly to us. This has led to an increase in participants with a long term health condition and has seen more participants interested in downloading and using the NHS app. This is how we met Maria, below:

Maria's Story

Maria was referred to DigitALL by Golborne Medical Centre. She is Portuguese and has a lot of relatives who live over there. Her main interest was learning how to set up different ways of communicating with them, and also look at booking tickets so she could visit her brother. She only had a very basic phone which would only allow calls and texts to people in the UK. On her first session she was set up with a brand new Android tablet and sim card so that she could try downloading some apps and navigate her way around the internet.

At the end of her five sessions, Maria had set up accounts for Gmail and WhatsApp and was sending photos to her relatives, as well as having WhatsApp video calls with them. She schedules a weekly video call with them which she is now able to join independently. She is currently with family in Portugal and used her tablet to look at flight deals so she could find an affordable flight.

Maria has signed up for an Open Age Adult Community Learning course which she will be starting upon her return. This is what she said about her DigitALL experience:

'Thank you to Derek for his help with getting me set up on WhatsApp and setting me up an email address. It has been so nice being able to talk to my family as I couldn't really do it before. The tablet screen is bigger which is better for my eyes. I am going to see my family now and it is so good for me to know I can call them at any time and speak to them. I am excited for my course in June

Thank you to Golborne Medical Centre and Open Age!

DigitALL at Equal People Mencap

Sonia Timlett – Centre and Project Manager, Equal People Mencap

The DigitALL project is a fantastic initiative aimed at empowering people with learning disabilities by helping them build new skills and seize opportunities, including job experience and volunteering. By focusing on digital skills, the project likely offers participants the tools they need to engage with technology in a meaningful way, which can be an essential asset in today's job market.

Initiatives like the DigitALL project can play a key role in bridging gaps, promoting inclusion, and ensuring that people with learning disabilities have equal access to opportunities in the workforce and beyond. By providing the right tools, resources, and support, such projects help individuals achieve their full potential and contribute to their communities.

Below is a story from one of our learners:

Case Study: YS's Journey to Independence and Employment

Introduction

This case study highlights the journey of YS, a 46-year-old man with a learning disability, as he develops his business idea with the support of Equal People Mencap (EPM) at the Digital drop in. It explores his challenges, growth, and the successes that came from pursuing his passion for DJ-ing and selling t-shirts for Bubble Club. Despite facing frustration and obstacles, YS's story shows how personalised support can help individuals with disabilities build confidence and independence while turning their ideas into reality.

YS is part of several social groups and is well-liked within the EPM family, where he receives support to help with tasks that require reading and understanding written information. YS's social life includes spending time with his girlfriend, watching football matches, and attending events with his friends. He is also a big fan of WWE and frequently shares updates with his friends through EPM's monitored WhatsApp group, a vital social space for him. YS's first experience with technology at EPM was when he needed help with downloading music for his DJ gigs. He had been using CDs, but with guidance from EPM staff at the digital drop-in, he was introduced to Spotify, which revolutionised the way he organised and played music. This experience sparked his confidence in using technology and boosted his self-reliance and EPM gave a tablet as a result.

Activity Sessions at EPM

At EPM, YS is supported at his own pace. He has been attending activities for many



years, although he typically participates for short periods. One of his most frequent activities is the Wednesday morning computer session, where he often drops by to work on his IT skills or to seek help with technology. A turning point for YS occurred during this computer session when he shared an idea he had been thinking about for some time. He wanted to sell Bubble Club t-shirts, an idea that emerged from his role as the DJ at Bubble Club. The process of bringing this idea to life, however, was not without its challenges. YS initially struggled with the logistics of the project and encountered many obstacles he hadn't anticipated. He was disheartened by the complexities of selling on behalf of an organisation, but the support he received from EPM staff helped him overcome these barriers.

Developing the T-shirt Project

YS's idea to sell t-shirts at Bubble Club began as a simple thought but grew into a full project with EPM's support. The first step was to gain permission from Bubble Club, which was facilitated by YS from EPM. After securing approval to sell t-shirts on their behalf, they worked together to design the shirts and find a cost-effective manufacturer. YS actively participated in the planning process, helping with the design and practicing his announcement for the sale at Bubble Club events. The t-shirts were sold out within the first 30 minutes of the event, and the project was deemed a success. The sales generated a profit of £35, which was a major achievement for YS and a testament to his creativity and entrepreneurial spirit.



Conclusion

YS's journey at Equal People Mencap demonstrates how individualised support can help someone with a disability achieve independence and pursue their goals. Through the support of EPM staff, YS was able to turn his idea into a reality, gaining confidence, new skills, and a sense of accomplishment along the way. His story highlights the importance of providing people with the space and resources to explore their ideas, as well as the power of community in fostering personal growth and success. Additionally, the skills YS has developed in project management, communication, customer service, and budgeting open doors to future employment opportunities. His ability to apply these skills to real-world situations is a testament to how tailored support can prepare individuals with disabilities for a more independent and fulfilling future.

Through his work with EPM, YS has developed key employment skills such as project management, budgeting, and stock management. Working on the t-shirt sales allowed him to practice customer service and marketing, learning how to engage with others and promote a product. In addition, managing the financial aspects of the t-shirt sale, including the profits and understanding commission structures, has given him a practical understanding of business operations. YS's involvement in these tasks has enhanced his confidence in professional settings, which is invaluable as he looks to expand his role in the future.

DigitALL at Midaye

Filsan and Maryam, Midaye

We welcomed Midaye to the DigitALL partnership this year. They offer support for migrant ethnic minority communities in West London (especially those who do not speak English as a home language), with a particular emphasis on reaching the most isolated and disadvantaged families and individuals. Midaye hold peer support group sessions in Kensington and Chelsea as well as offer community counselling to local residents. Their professionals also speak Somali and Arabic.

Case Study 1

Progress and Achievement Report: Digital Literacy Journey of I.A.

This report shows the progress and achievements of I.A., a client who took part in a digital literacy class at the Midaye Community organisation. At first, I.A. was afraid of using devices like iPads and laptops, worried she might break them. However, through hard work and support, she has become more confident and is now able to use these devices and programs to help her in daily life and support her children with their homework.

I.A., a 52-year-old client, began her journey in digital literacy at the Midaye Group with little experience and a fear of using technology. She was worried about breaking devices like iPads and laptops and didn't know how to open apps, type, or use basic programs. Her goal was to build confidence in helping her children with their homework and using the internet in her free time. Over time, I.A. made remarkable progress. She learned how to navigate digital devices, use programs like Microsoft Word, check and send emails, and browse the internet. Her confidence grew, and she no longer feared damaging gadgets. I.A. is now able to complete tasks independently and is proud of how far she has come.

Looking ahead, I.A. is eager to continue improving her digital skills. She wants to learn how to use Microsoft Excel, PowerPoint, and Canva for both personal and educational purposes. She also expressed interest in becoming more familiar with the NHS app to access healthcare information. I.A.'s journey shows how digital literacy can empower individuals, regardless of age, and open new opportunities. With continued support, she is well on her way to achieving her future goals and becoming even more confident with technology.

Case Study 2

L.A, a 56-year-old women who was a newcomer to technology, joined a short IT course filled with eagerness but also nerves. Having never used a laptop before due to fears of breaking it, she was ready to overcome these challenges.

On the first day, I introduced her to the basics of the laptop, focusing on building her confidence. Over the following weeks, we covered essential skills: switching on the laptop, creating passwords, and using programs like Word and Excel. She learned how to browse the internet, write letters, and even attach files to emails.

It was inspiring to see L.A's confidence grow as she embraced these new skills. She went from feeling anxious to becoming self-sufficient, no longer needing to rely on her family for help. Excited about her progress, L.A expressed her desire to continue learning.

This experience not only equipped her with valuable IT skills but also fostered her independence, allowing her to take charge of her technological needs with confidence.



DigitALL at Age UK Kensington and Chelsea

Tasio and Proscovia, Age UK

Locations

- Thorpe Close
- North Kensington Library
- Mary Smith Court
- Chelsea Pensioners
- The Big Local
- St. Cuthberts Centre
- Pepper Pot
- Dadihiye

Case Study: A Journey in Digital Learning

Introduction

A 62-year-old gentleman originally from Greece joined DigitALL in May 2024, hoping to improve his digital skills. Although he didn't have much experience with technology, he came in with a positive attitude, ready to learn and open at every opportunity. As a volunteer having supported many people through their learning journeys, I was very surprised by his creativity, enthusiasm, and willingness to go beyond the basics, it was very impressive.

From May to July 2024, he took part in a three-month course focused on essential digital skills using both a laptop and a tablet. We lent him a tablet to help him practice at home, which boosted his confidence and allowed him to learn step by step how to use the Android tablet.

As he didn't have Wi-Fi access at home, he also received a SIM card with free mobile data. I believe this is incredibly helpful, as it allowed him and other individuals who attend to stay connected outside the centre, continue practicing what he learned, watch tutorial videos, and explore apps and tools in his own time. Having internet access made a huge difference in his ability to learn independently and at his own pace.

During the sessions, he learned how to:

- Browse the internet and use basic apps
- Set up his device in a way that suited his needs
- Download and use translation apps to help him learn more quickly

What impressed me most was how he took the initiative to explore new tools on his own. He wasn't afraid to try things out and often looked for ways to improve and build on what he'd learned in class.

Conclusion

He was a joy to support—motivated, reliable, and open to learning. Watching him go from a digital beginner to someone confidently creating and sharing content online was truly inspiring.

As a long-time volunteer, I've seen firsthand how much of a difference access to technology, the internet, and patient guidance can make. This story is just one example of how digital inclusion can open up new opportunities, especially for people who may not have had the chance to use technology before. Every person I have encountered in these sessions has been a lesson for me, and have learnt a lot from them; it's enriching.



This journey is a great reminder of the positive impact digital learning can have. The support provided by Age UK Kensington and Chelsea through DigitALL—including devices, internet access, free mobile data added to the tablet for free to take home with them, and one-to-one help—continues to empower people to build confidence, skills, and independence in today's digital world.

A message from the DigitALL Coordinator - Niall Reilly – Open Age



DigitALL's work in Kensington and Chelsea has built on the success of our pilot phase, supporting the residents in most need and demonstrating what good digital inclusion looks like. It is great to see our work continuing to support adults of global majority backgrounds and with learning disabilities and I'm pleased to see that almost three-quarters of our learners this year live in wards that need our support the most.

By continuing to utilise a 'no wrong door' policy and building meaningful partnerships we have been able to make a lasting impact by providing short-term support. DigitALL shows that good digital inclusion shouldn't just benefit those affected by digital poverty; it should support social prescribers and link workers looking for a service to help their clients; it should support the staff who plan and lead digital sessions to those who need it. Open Age in particular have benefited from our partnership with Golborne Medical Centre, allowing us to integrate a new stream of members into our activities.

The last year of work would not have been possible without our colleagues in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea who have continued to support us with Section 106 funding. We were also supported by colleagues from the local NHS Health Inequalities Team whose insights enabled us to develop a targeted approach at local level to prioritise those most in need. Residents of Kensington and Chelsea who have joined us in the last year have benefited from the support shown by Tim Ellis, Maria Agiomyriannaki and Gillian King and others.

With DigitALL, we believe we are doing digital inclusion right – and you can too. If you would like to know any more about the project then please do reach out to me on nreilly@openage.org.uk or 07570428756.

All the best,

Niall

Want to find out more?

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