



Starting Point

DigiKnow Device Library

February 2021
6 Month Report



Helping Stockport get online

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“We established the DigiKnow Alliance in 2018, as a collaboration between Stockport Council, Stockport Homes, The Prevention Alliance, Starting Point Community Learning Partnership and Good Things Foundation. It was established to help Stockport residents who were not online, gain access to digital skills, grow their confidence, and make connections. By having access to the internet we have seen people gain employment, connect more with friends and family, take control of their health, and smile more.

Since it was established, a further 33 business, voluntary and public sector partners have joined DigiKnow, and together we have helped over 9,000 residents to get online and recruited over 50 digital champions volunteers to act as mentors. The success is down to all partners who have worked as equals towards one goal of supporting people to be online.

When the pandemic hit, we knew that the role of technology had a huge part to play in people’s lives, and together we adapted our services fast. Within a month a dedicated helpline was established offering digital support to residents as well as the DigiKnow Device Library and the laptops from the Department of Education, which has seen over 1,000 devices and data loaned to our community to help with home schooling and job recruitment. There has been a real passion to work collectively and what happened in the two years before COVID, only paved the way to respond and expand as we have. No one part of the collaboration could have done it without the others and there has been a real recognition of that.”

Device Library – Pre-Pandemic and the Original Scope

To understand the growth of the Device Library, we are first looking at the initial thoughts and ideas behind the creation of Stockport’s first ever digital Device Library.

At the end of 2019, with 8 years’ experience of tackling digital inclusion in Woodley, Werneth, other communities across Stockport and as part of the DigiKnow network, we saw an opportunity to create a Device Library.

The Device Library would allow digital champions alongside small and local community organisations access to a community resource to support new and existing learners as they explored and experienced new and different technology and devices. This came as a result of listening to members of the DigiKnow network and them highlighting that access to equipment, appropriate equipment, was a barrier to supporting people to get, and stay, online. Community groups and network members also expressed that purchasing the right equipment and the financial implications of purchasing the wrong kit could have severe impact on the financial robustness of some of the small, grass roots organisations that make up the core of the DigiKnow network.

We envisaged sets of both laptops and tablet devices that would allow digital champions and community groups the space to use a device before making any final decisions on which device they were going to try and learn long-term and purchase. We felt as ‘Community Ambassador’ for DigiKnow, that the Device Library would be a vital asset for groups across the borough and would allow those best placed to offer support, the support they needed

to continue to help those most in need. We knew it would help extend our reach into new, underrepresented communities, allow members of the network to grow their reach as they could support more people to take the first steps to getting online and grow the reach of DigiKnow as more and more individuals, organisations and communities became aware of the great work being done in digital inclusion across Stockport.



Covid-19, 2020 & beyond

We submitted our bid to the Stockport Local Fund in the final weeks of 2019, prepared for Christmas, and looked forward to the opportunity that 2020 would bring...

As we waited to find out if our bid was successful, the looming threat posed by Covid-19 arrived first and DigiKnow was forced to change the way in which it was supporting Stockport residents. Some groups stopped in March of last year and have been unable to support people since. Some have started and stopped as the country has moved in and out of various lockdown restrictions but most, have continued to use a blended approach to making sure people get the help they need to get online. We initially wanted 12 devices. We realised we would need much more than this! The initial need for devices and demand for support was only about to get bigger. We were supported by the team behind the Stockport Local Fund, who fast-tracked the application as we displayed to them the emerging need to provide devices and connectivity for residents.

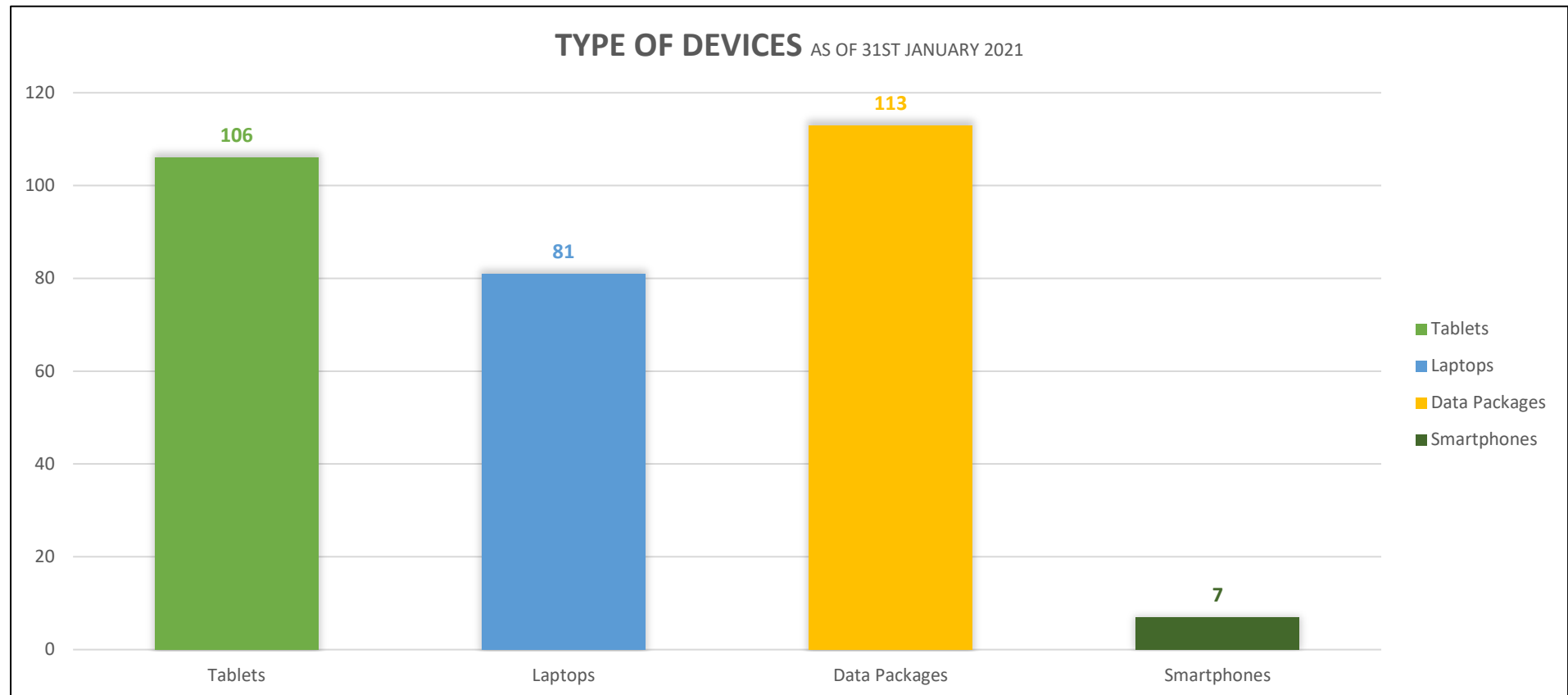
DigiKnow prided itself on trusted faces, in local places. We knew digital inclusion needed 3 things – devices, data, and digital champions. Stuff, surfing, and support. As the pandemic worsened and spread, we were able to highlight the voices of those who make up the network. Those organisations that saw the risk of not having the appropriate tech before the pandemic was a reality. We were able to share their experiences and amplify the voices of those most in need. There was a real sense of motivation, from the DigiKnow network and the people we spoke to. People needed and wanted to get online, and there was no time like the present. Through this work and the tireless work of organisations like ours throughout the country, local, regional, and national initiatives began to shape up, offering devices.

By the middle of 2020, the country in lockdown, the Device Library's original scope was a distant memory. We went from loaning devices to community groups and digital champions to loaning devices to those seeking work, families tackling home schooling and those wishing to use digital as a means of communicating with friends and family. Those who were taking their first steps into the online world were also offered support as well as remote Zoom digital support sessions open to all.

Partners, opportunities, and initiatives began to appear, and DigiKnow has been lucky to work with and continue to work with some of the best placed organisations locally, regionally, nationally, and even internationally. With the support of the Stockport Local Fund, Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council, the DigiKnow network, Greater Manchester Combined Authorities, DevicesDotNow, Hubbub, Lloyds Banking Group and Good Things Foundation, Stockport's first ever digital Device Library has been able to support over 300 devices since March of 2020.

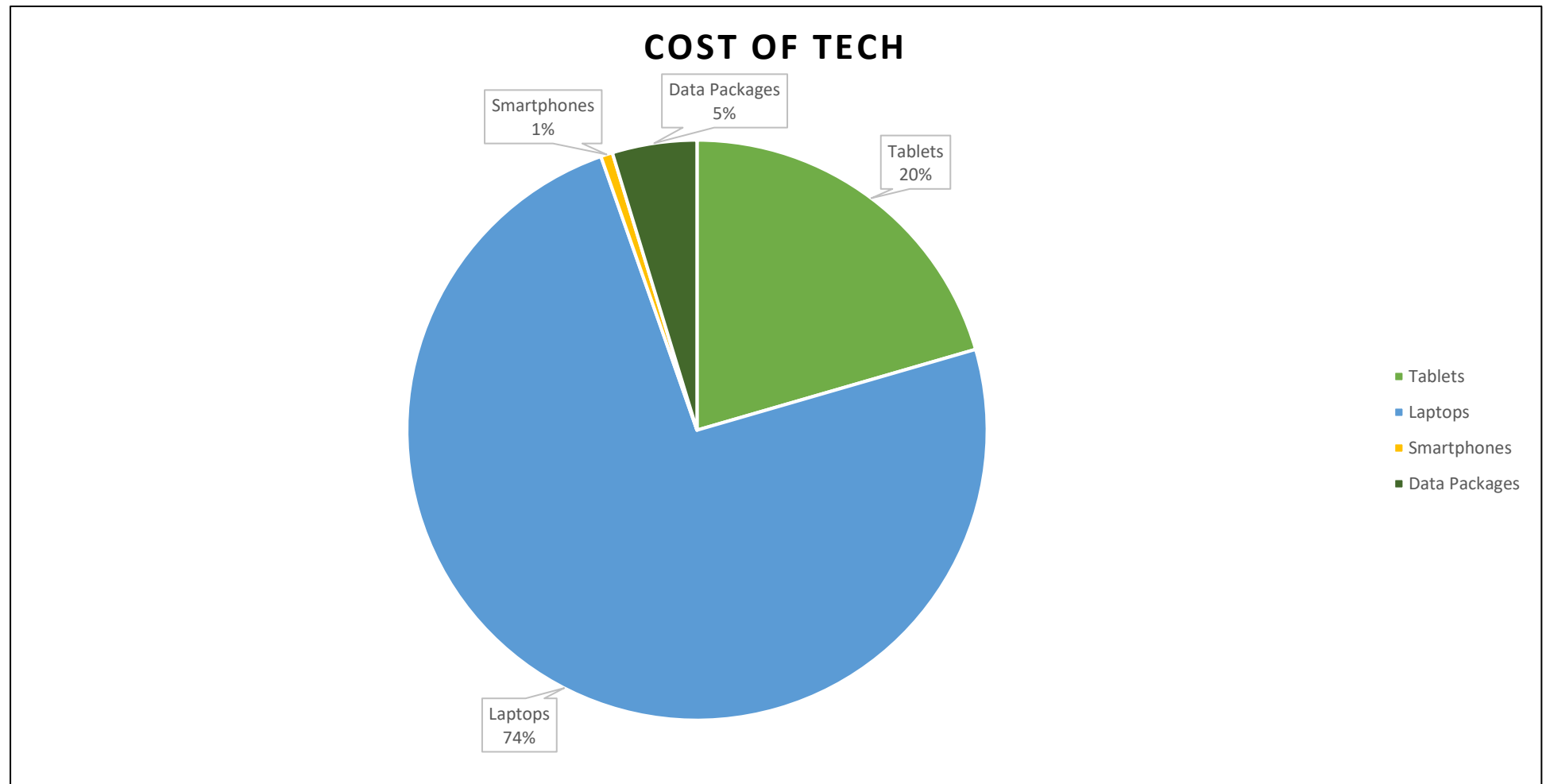
Devices and data

Alongside the 307 devices being loaned as part of the Device Library offer, data was identified as a necessity too. Data packages are the sole highest percentage of any support offered by the Device Library at 37%. Especially when you consider that not every device recipient needed data as some had home broadband but were struggling with multiple people relying on one device, yet still data outweighs the other needs. As of 2020, the average household uses in excess of 400GB of data a month and this was pre-pandemic¹. Suggestions are that average household data usage could exceed 1TB of data by 2025. With a Zoom call potentially using 2.5GB an hour, the need for additional data packages and sources, quickly became the biggest need being tackled by the Device Library.



1 - <https://www.increasebroadbandspeed.co.uk/average-home-monthly-internet-usage-forecast#:~:text=We%20forecast%20that%20average%20UK,2019%20reached%20about%20300%20GB.>

We know the cost of getting online is a huge barrier in preventing people from accessing the online world. As of January 2021, the cost of the provision provided by the Device Library stands at approximately £53,024. The true figure is much higher with a data bill per month of over £1,000, plus the time spent triaging referrals, and working with device recipients on both a 1-2-1 basis and in a group setting. On average these figures give us a per person investment of £108 and a data allowance totalling £4 per person per month. We share this graph and the cost of the devices and the running cost to show the level of investment from the various partners and initiatives into Stockport and the hypothetical cost of running such a scheme. We know that those using the Device Library could not afford to pay for this service and that more needs to be done to make devices and data more affordable from those from low-income backgrounds.



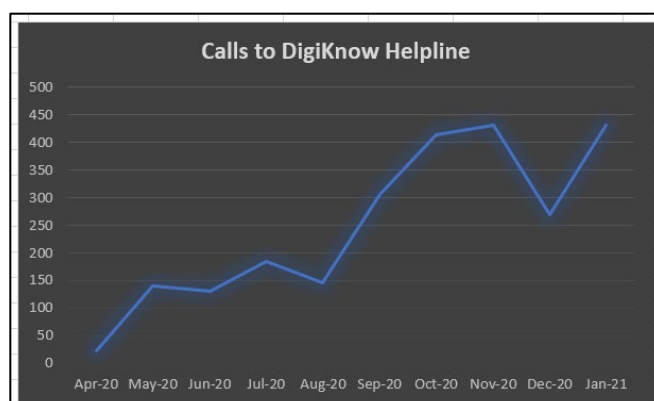
DigiKnow helpline



As part of the evolving offer of DigiKnow and the Device Library, the digital helpline was established. Initially, used as a single point for those requiring digital support, this phone number has grown and seen more and more facets of wider digital support built into its management. It is now a robust and resilient digital triage system that has seen 2,423 engagements (calls and texts) since April 2020, working out at an average of 9 a day. The digital triage system has allowed us to expand the number of organisations able to refer in as well as identify pathways to signpost those who require support outside of the Device Library and allowed us to increase our advocacy work on behalf of those digitally excluded. As part of the DigiKnow network, we are able to work with multiple organisations and services from across the borough and have a real understanding of what other options are available, their appropriateness and the level of the support they offer. This helps ensure that during the triage process, nobody is turned away and that they receive the best support possible.

Below is an example of some of the phone calls we have received:

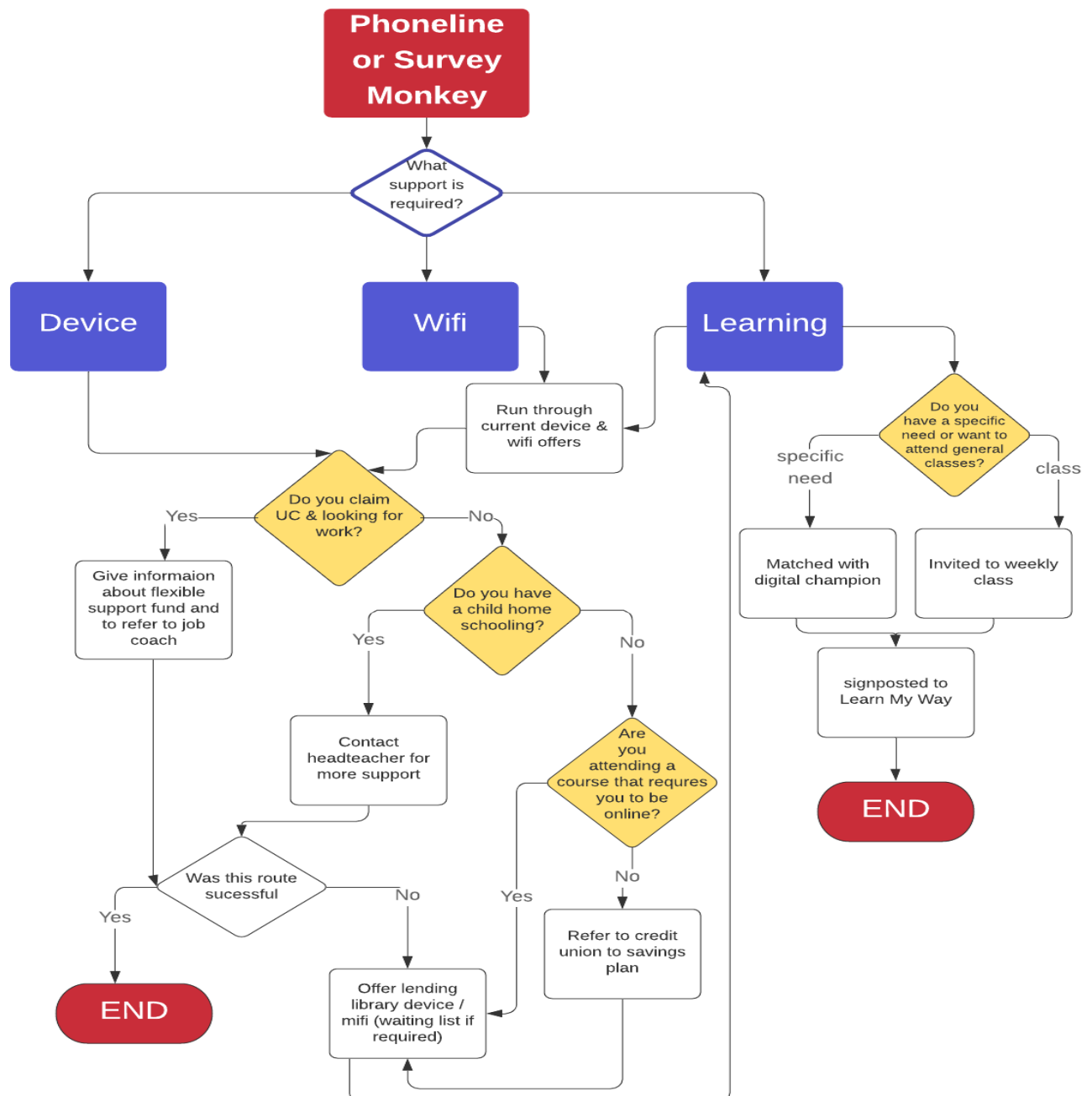
- Enquiries from nurseries, primary and secondary schools, academies. and further education establishments regarding our ability to support those accessing education remotely.
- Help with using specific medical apps such as the My COPD app.
- Working alongside the Prince's Trust to help young girls in Stockport access STEM courses.
- Working alongside various employment teams to offer short- and medium-term device loans for those seeking employment.
- Consultation phone calls with VCSE organisations and local authorities across GM and from around the country as they seek to learn more about the work we are doing in Stockport.



We ensured that the number was shared with all of our network partners and shared further afield at every opportunity. If there were packs going out to support shielding and vulnerable social housing tenants, we included it. If there was information being sent to primary and secondary schools in the borough, we shared it. This number is contactable

Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm and although it is mainly used for referrals from any Stockport based organisation, we have had fantastic community groups from elsewhere wanting to share best practice about the Device Library, we have had conversations with local authorities looking to replicate the scheme and calls from large organisations wanting to know more about our insight in to helping our community and how they can get involved.

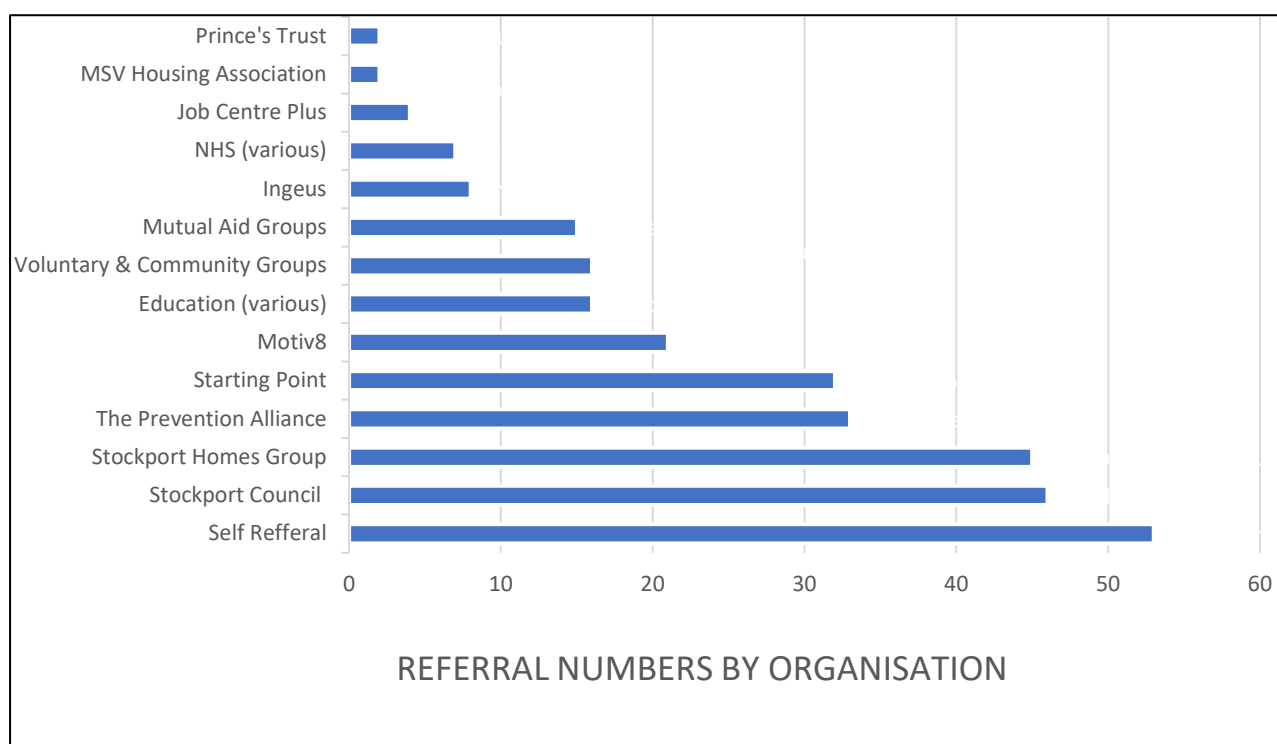
Starting Point DigiKnow Helpline Process Flowchart Jan 2021



Referrals

With a range of devices, initiatives, and a digital helpline as a central place for people to contact the DigiKnow network soon began to refer in residents for support from the Device Library. DigiKnow is a movement that prides itself on the cross-sector workings and partnerships and the Device Library is a brilliant example of this with self-referrals being the highest route into the scheme through the successful sharing of the helpline number and the great efforts of many marketing and communications teams to ensure that the scheme was shared in all the right places.

Some of the largest organisations across the borough were large contributors with various teams at both Stockport Homes and Stockport Council totalling over 90 direct referrals into the Device Library. The largest referrer into the scheme from an organisation outside of the DigiKnow movement was from Motiv8, a GM wide partnership established to help those aged 25+ return to work, of whom Stockport Homes are the delivery partner for Stockport showing that the true total for Stockport Homes is probably much higher than stated in this report.



Over 20% of all the direct referrals came in from voluntary and community organisations including Mutual Aid groups established to help fight the impact of Covid-19 in communities across Stockport, showcasing the breadth of the reach of the Device Library and DigiKnow as a movement.

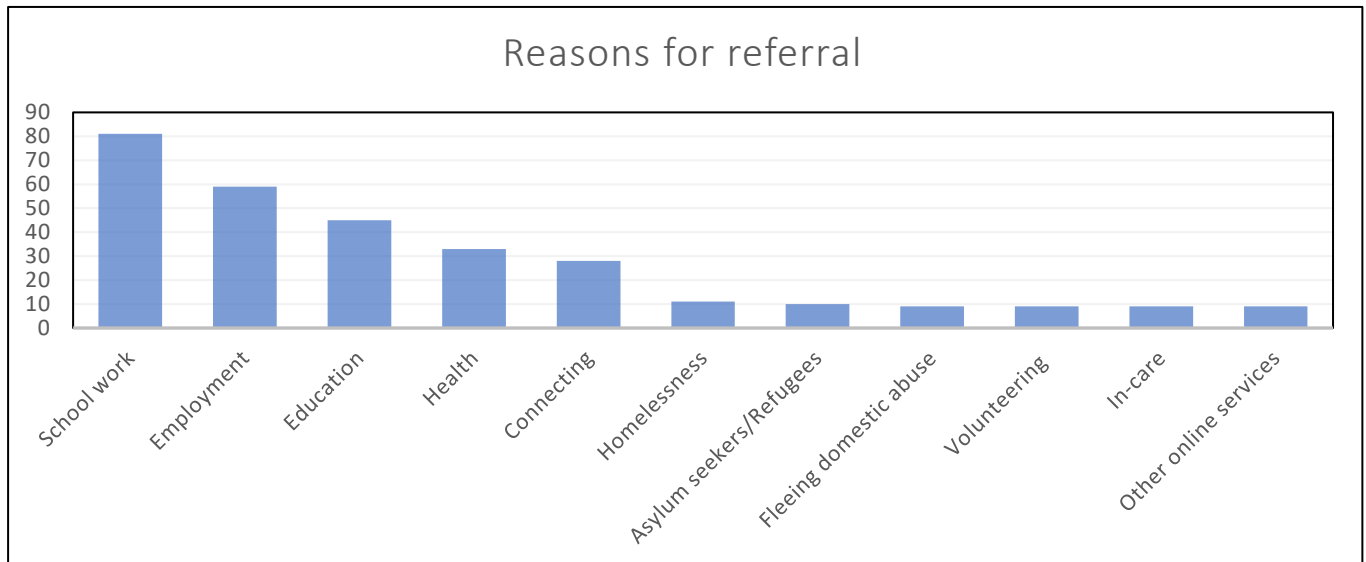
When people are referred into the Device Library, one of the first things we ask them as part of our triage, is why they have contacted the Device Library. Partly, this is because of criteria attached to some of the devices but mainly this is to allow us to better support the individual with the appropriate device, the right amount of data and the offer of digital skills

support if needed. Some organisations that refer in are going to be doing so for obvious reasons – the various NHS organisations as a way to tackle mental health, loneliness, and isolation as well as practical, online applications such as ordering prescriptions and accessing health information.

However, with the closure of all schools and colleges, the need for home-schooling was the largest contributor to needing support from the Device Library with over 25% of referrals. With employment coming in second and education (further and adult education courses), it is obvious that the role that digital plays as a tool in which to upskill yourself for employment and/or education reasons.

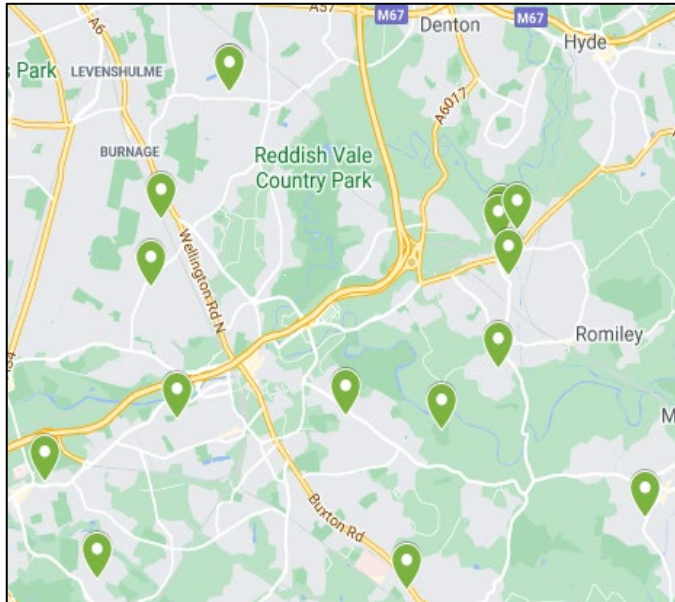
The next 2 most populous reasons for referral are also linked with health and the need to connect to friends and family. With communities across the borough struggling with lockdown and the separation from our loved ones, ensuring our health needs were looked after and that we had a way to stay in touch with the people we were physically and socially distanced from.

Finally, some of the less numerous reasons for referral into the Device Library are tackling some of the biggest issues we see across our country with homelessness, assisting refugees and/or asylum seekers, supporting those fleeing domestic abuse and helping those living in the care system being relatively new pathways into the scheme. Totalling just over 10%, most of these referrals have been since December 2020 and are largely in thanks to the Hubbub initiative and us being able to triage more than just a smart phone for those in need.



Geographical reach of devices

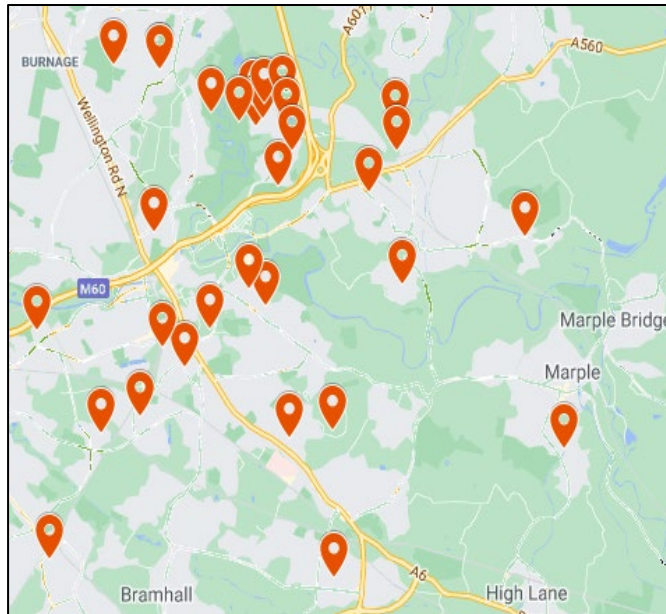
Devices Dot Now kit (through Good Things Foundation) *:



Postcode	Devices No.
SK1	2
SK3	1
SK4	2
SK5	2
SK6	6

*These numbers identify the household based on their post code and not the number of devices. Some households may have received multiple devices as well as a data package but are only identified by one pin.

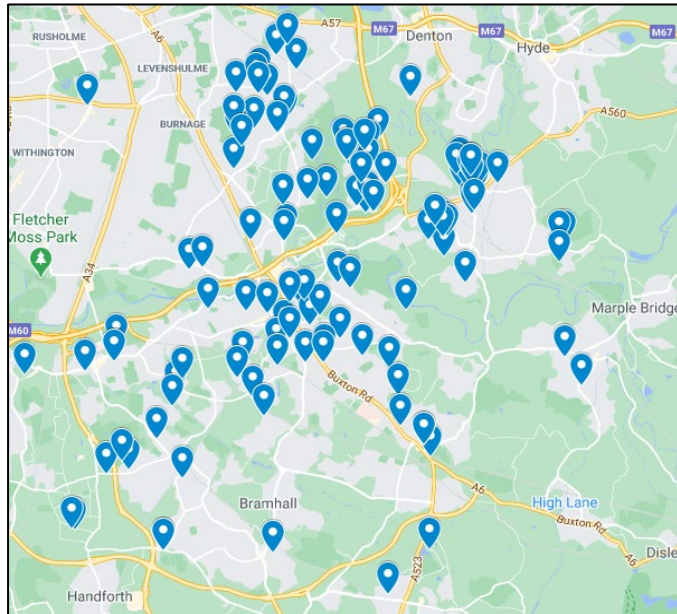
Connecting Families kit (Children in Need through Good Things Foundation) *:



Postcode	Devices No.
SK1	3
SK2	3
SK3	3
SK4	2
SK5	12
SK6	6
SK7	1
SK8	2
SK11	1
Misc.	2

*These numbers identify the household based on their post code and not the number of devices. Some households may have received multiple devices as well as a data package but are only identified by one pin.

DigiKnow Device Library kit (Stockport Local Fund, Department of Education and GMCA Digital) *:



Postcode	Devices No.
SK1	8
SK2	10
SK3	8
SK4	8
SK5	35
SK6	31
SK7	6
SK8	17
SK12	2
Misc.	3

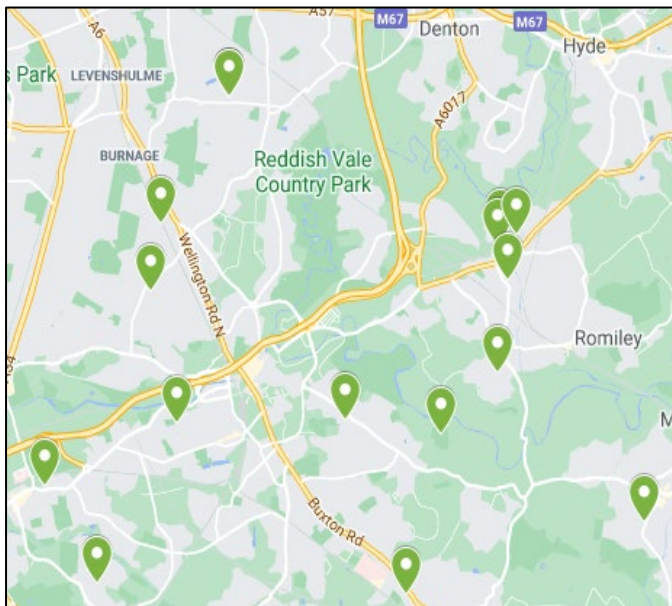
*These numbers identify the household based on their post code and not the number of devices. Some households may have received multiple devices as well as a data package but are only identified by one pin.

Maps

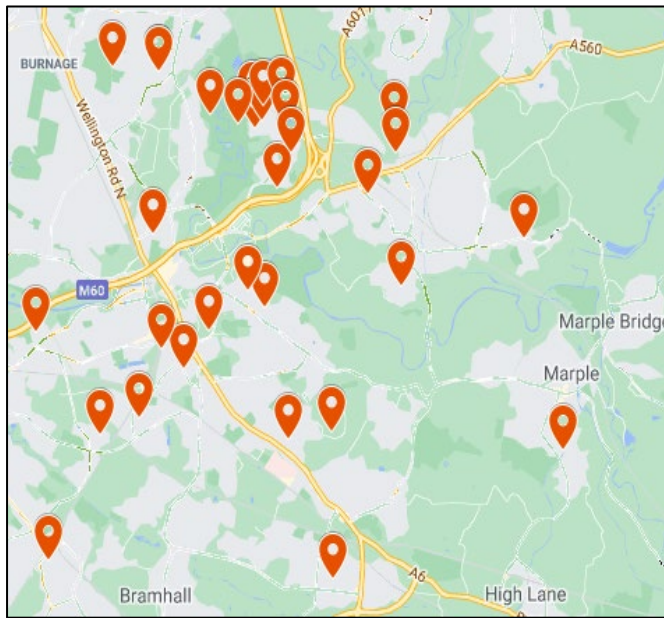
With so many engagements, referral partners, and devices out across Stockport, the geographical reach of the Device Library is another great way to help display the wider impact. Below are some insights from the map above and previous graphs.

The previous maps detail, based on post code, the location of the device recipients based on the various initiatives that feed into the larger device picture. You can see that some areas within the borough have more need than others but that the support being offered through the Device Library is evident across the entire borough. Some of the highest numbers are from areas that have been identified in other reports as Priority 1 areas or 'Left Behind' communities², alongside other areas where currently and historically there are other factors such as an ageing population, large number of school aged families or from a lower socio-economic background.

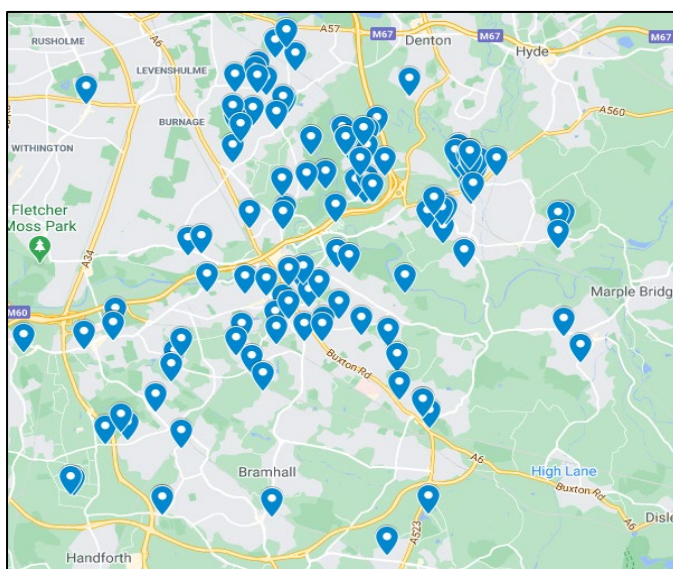
Firstly, the DevicesDotNow map. This shows that there was a pretty even spread across the borough with SK1, 3, 4, 5, 7 & 8 receiving 1 or 2 devices each. The SK6 post code, where a local mutual aid group was able to refer shielding and vulnerable people into the scheme, received the most support from the DevicesDotNow initiative. These devices were given to recipients and all included data packages from EE.



Next is Connecting Families. Connecting Families is an initiative aimed at helping families with 2 or more school-aged children, who do not have Wi-Fi at home. At the top of the list, are SK5 and SK6. With Brinnington, Reddish, Bredbury, Bredbury Green, Romiley and Marple all having multiple primary schools and a handful of secondary schools, these areas make up just over half of the Connecting Families support. Following SK5 and SK6, the support offered by the Connecting Families initiative is again quite evenly spread across several other SK post code areas.



Finally, the Device Library map. This shows the number of devices loaned out is truly borough wide. SK5 and SK6 both scores highly, followed closely by SK2 and SK8. Surprisingly, a lot of the towns that make up our town centre score lowly. This could be for many reasons. Do they not need support? Are they receiving support elsewhere? Is there a barrier to them requesting support? Initially, we expected demand in the town centre yet individually, they scored in single figures. Centrally, by combining these to create a 'Greater Stockport', it shows a large amount of provision does indeed fall here (Heaton Chapel, Shaw Heath, Central, Heaviley, Edgeley, Great Moor, Heaton Norris, Davenport, Lancashire Hill and Portwood) bringing them in as the 3rd highest area receiving support but more needs to be done to support these areas and understand their digital exclusion.



Education

In this report, we will spotlight 3 areas that the Device Library has offered the most support – schoolwork and education, employment and tackling exclusion.

Firstly, we are looking at education and schoolwork. We decided to combine schoolwork and education as they are similar. Both of these are attempts to use digital to either upskill your digital skills and/or other skills using digital as a tool. With the increase in the use of Zoom and Google Classroom for home schooling, job interviews and online training and a potential 2.5GB usage per hour, per video call, the need for data to meet this demand was easily the most referred into the Device Library, data wise, and with some houses having multiple school aged children, alongside the need to work from home, devices for educational reasons were the most requested reason for a device loan. Organisationally, every partner that referred into DigiKnow, had at least 1 referral that was to help educationally as either the primary or secondary reason for needing support.



Looking at information from the maps, SK5, SK6 and SK8 score the highest in regard to the number of devices for education purposes, with the most direct referrals from schools and/or education institutions coming from SK8 (Cheadle, Cheadle Hulme, Heald Green, Gatley and Cheadle Heath).

The need for devices has grown into the national spotlight over the time of the pandemic and does not appear to be slowing any time soon, with commitments from businesses, government and local community springing up across the country and in our own communities. With our referrals for education and schoolwork, there has been some uptake in regard to the learning support package, but only initial support with accessing home schooling materials rather than a prolonged presence in our remote sessions.

Reference in appendix:

Case Study 1 – Donna (Education)

Case Study 2 – Lisa (Education)

Employment

The next spotlight is on employment. With roughly 1 in 5 referrals coming directly to help with those accessing the job market to apply for jobs, employment was the second highest reason for referrals into the Device Library. If you include indirect referral that benefitted those applying for jobs such as those needing devices for work-based training or to access online job interviews, employment's impact on the Device Library is higher than stated. Looking at the referrals and the partners who referred in, only the Mutual Aid groups, the NHS and the Prince's Trust referrals did not include any referrals to assist with an employment digital need and half of those referral came directly from organisations supporting those seeking employment in Ingeus, Motiv8 and Stockport job centre. The most common post codes for employment related referrals are SK5 and the 'Greater Stockport' town centre.

With the continuation of the pandemic far past what was expected in March 2020, the Device Library has seen the highest amount of long-term loans supporting those needing a device/data for job seeking purposes. Although it is great that the Device Library can offer this support, we need to ensure that the Device Library is sustainable and has devices regularly coming in and out of the Device Library. We have been having similar conversations with schools that have repeatedly referred into the Device Library, but schoolwork does not have as many consecutive device/data loans. This is where the partnership between DigiKnow partners displays some of its true strength, with the use of the Flexible Support Fund (offered by the Job Centre) being able to support job seekers and allow them to return their device and/or data to the Device Library and allow us to continue to offer as much support to as many people as possible. To help make sure these devices do not stick with the recipient we are also exploring saving options with Stockport Credit Union, whereby a Device Library recipient can save money and purchase their own device. With those using digital as a means to gaining employment, we have seen nearly no uptake to our learning package. This is due to most of these recipients lacking access to technology rather than a skills deficit. Their goal is to ensure that they are meeting the requirements of their Universal Credit claim and avoiding sanctions. With restricted library access and in person job clubs cancelled, the need to be compliant and apply for work accordingly results in more of a need for a device and data more than support as they already have the skills to apply, just not necessarily the access.

Reference in appendix:

Case Study 3 – Sam (Employment)

Case Study 4 – James (Employment)

Social inclusion

The final spotlight for this 6-month report is social inclusion. You will notice we have not specified what type of inclusion we are spotlighting and that is because we believe that most exclusions are inextricably linked and interwoven. Reports such as the Marmot³ report released in early 2020 tells us that if you suffer from one inequality, one form of exclusion, you are likely to suffer from multiple. Health, housing, financial, education, social, digital, they are all linked and have severe impact on each other at an exponential rate, piling on top of each other, exacerbating the struggle.

Stockport Homes, as one of the largest referrers into the Device Library, have seen a number of referrals come through to the Device Library as a way to support their tenants to remain connected as part of their aim to tackle social isolation. Similarly to for the Mutual Aid groups as well as organisations that make up the DigiKnow network and Stockport's voluntary and community sector. Keyworkers from organisations such as the Prevention Alliance, the adult social care team at Stockport Council and other NHS teams have referred into the Device Library to help tackle the mental health of their patients and Stockport residents. Most of these referrals include an element of skills support too.

DigiKnow's role in tackling exclusion through digital inclusion has also allowed us to begin to tackle some of the other inequalities affecting Stockport residents. We are supporting organisations tackling the problems of those fleeing domestic violence, those currently in and those who have recently left the care system, aiding those living in temporary accommodation or experiencing homelessness and helping refugee's and asylum seekers who have come to the UK. With the current pandemic, we know that a lot of people living in our communities are living through a crisis. But the groups we just mentioned, alongside those with poor mental health and those who felt alone in their communities, have had their exclusion from society compounded during lockdown and the past 9 months.

Geographically, referrals for isolation and exclusion were highest in areas where there were good links between local organisations. Bredbury & Woodley (SK6) scored highly with organisations such as Starting Point, the Bredbury & Woodley Community Neighbours group (formerly a mutual aid) and Alvanley Family Medical Practice working to tackle loneliness and support those shielding. Offerton also scored highly here, with referrals from the local mutual aid group, other VCSE organisations alongside the efforts of the Computer Online Group that meets in Offerton Community Centre, with the support of Stockport Homes. Here connecting with friends and family was one of the main reasons for referral. This evidence proves that in areas with stronger community networks and organisations championing digital inclusion, more support and linking in with services happens.

Reference in appendix:

Case Study 5 – Mark (Social Inclusion)

Case Study 6 – Antonella (Social Inclusion)

Impact

What effect, positive or negative, has the Device Library and its work had on the people who have been referred in for support with access to a device, data, or skills? We are going to break up impact and look at various aspects where our impact has been most noticeable and areas where we feel more is yet to be done.

Digital confidence and the impact of being connected

As part of the Device Library and other initiatives, we make weekly phone calls to those with devices. This helps us build a relationship, gather insight into usage and tackle any other barriers. It also allows us to gauge digital confidence and the benefits of being able to access the internet is having.

From these conversations we know that:

- 97% of recipients had used the internet before the received support from the Device Library.
- The most requested support was for e-mail, Zoom and other video calling platforms, and general navigation of the new devices.
- 98% of recipients agree or strongly agree that they are more confident with technology as a result of Device Library support.
- 99% agree or strongly agree that having Device Library support has had a positive impact on their lives.
- More than 4 in 5 say that having a device or access to the internet has been a lifeline for them during their loan period and has had a positive effect on their wellbeing.

We know that without a device or access to the internet, skills are redundant. Being able to get devices out and watch people learn new skills and put pre-existing knowledge to use, has seen a positive spike in the confidence, happiness, and wellbeing of Device Library recipients.

Sustainability

Throughout the entirety of the project, we have been striving for sustainability. The original scope was for a small batch of devices, that could be loaned to organisations to check viability, before a decision was made to purchase. We wanted to ensure that the right equipment was being bought and on offer to people needing digital support. This would have allowed the Device Library to support many DigiKnow members with short-term loans. With the Device Library being a pre-pandemic idea, we were well placed to immediately react to growing need in our communities. However, this need quickly outstripped the initial pool of devices, and without accessing other initiatives and gaining additional funding, the Device Library would have been out of devices by summer 2020.

To counteract this, we joined some of the initiatives mentioned earlier in this report and utilised the DigiKnow network of organisations to help triage calls and create pathways to signpost people to for other forms of support and alternative digital equipment, where

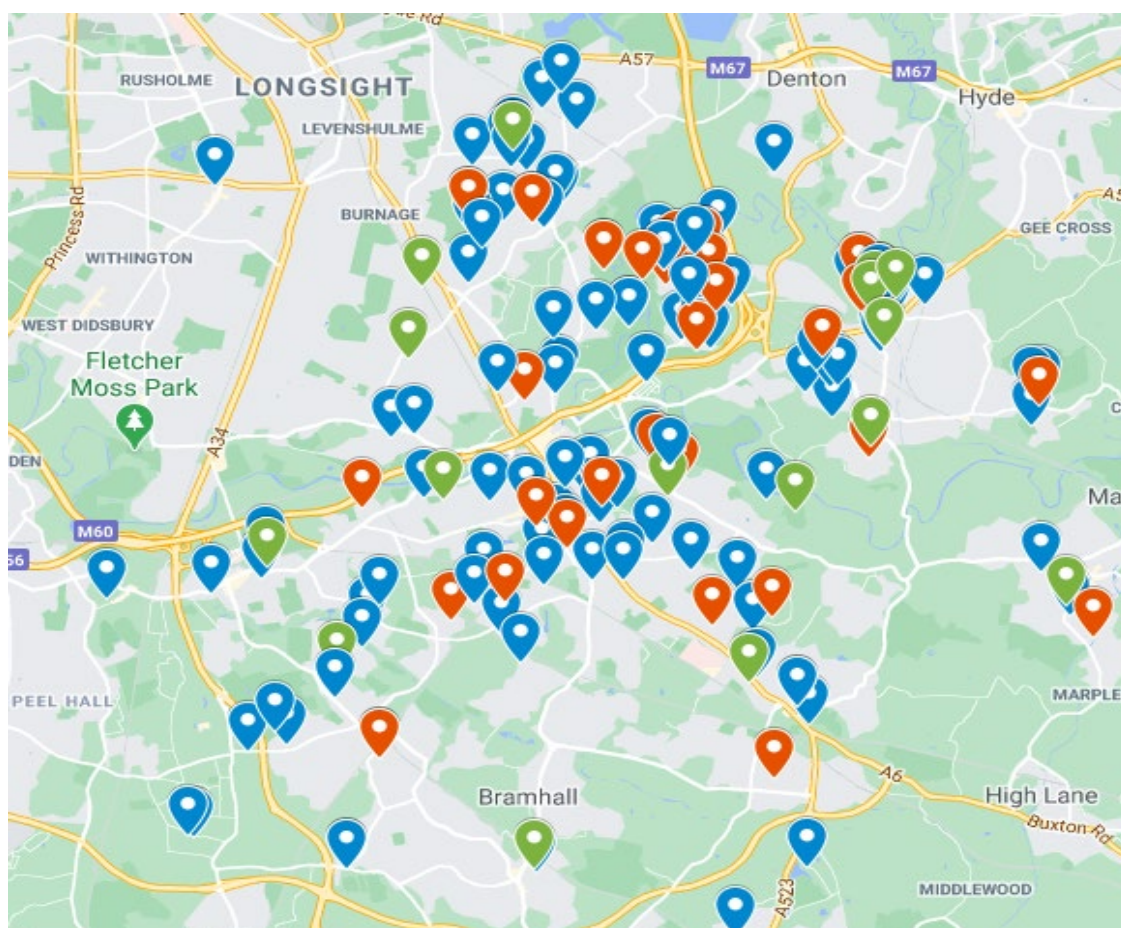
appropriate. This is an ongoing piece of work and until full school re-opening, the opening of all libraries and community venues, we envisage a need for recurring loans and a battle to remain sustainable in the long-term.

We are beginning to tackle this. DigiKnow is working with a few organisations to develop pathways to allow existing technology to be recycled and have its 'life' extended. These schemes will allow for devices to then be sold to those who cannot afford a brand-new device or can have their needs met with a cheaper device. With the option of remote support and recycling schemes offering cheaper devices, we are exploring the sustainability and affordability of data through the national campaign, Operation WiFi.

Geographical impact

Across Stockport, we know that there are communities that fall into particular categories. Some are deemed more deprived. Some have an ageing population. Some include many cultures, languages, and nationalities. As the Device Library grew, we anticipated a certain need for some communities and that some areas, would not require as much support. Although some areas have more support than others (SK5 & SK6), some areas had less requests and referrals for digital support than was expected.

Is this because the Device Library has better links in these communities? Is there active DigiKnow network member organisations in that part of Stockport? Were our assumptions all wrong? We know that there is work to do to make sure we are fully inclusive of all parts the borough, but the combined map below show that the Device Library is well spread currently.



What comes first – the device or the data?

We initially thought that the first ever Stockport digital Device Library would loan out much more devices than data packages. Obviously, a device will not get you extremely far without some form of connection. We initially thought that most homes would have some form of broadband connection. We were quickly shown that this was not the case.

Currently, 37% of all loans by the Device Library have included data, with some being solely for data as they already had a device. In fact, the amount of data loaned out is nearly double the number of laptops that have been loaned out. With families relying on mobile broadband and expensive pay-as-you-go contracts, the need for data was obvious. Even with a relatively cheap mobile broadband deal giving you 10GB a month for £10, families were quickly running out of data and paying more money for more data. With the average household using 450GB a month, this would cost a mobile broadband user £450 a month and comes in at £5,400 for 12 months broadband. You may see cheap packages being offered and wonder why people cannot access these. Often those living without broadband, are being affected by other obstacles in their lives. To be able to afford a monthly contract, be it with an internet provider or a mobile phone company, you need an address, a bank account, and a regular and stable income. Take away one of these and your ability to get a 'contract' is greatly lessened. Pay as you go can be picked up and stopped as and when you can afford it. You do not need to share any details and you can move from provider to provider easily. It is an easier, more flexible option.

We know the impact of being able to access the internet is huge. There are other reports⁴ that will go into the details of how much money you can save and the impact it has on your life expectancy by being digitally enabled. We want to spotlight the fact, that even with over a third of all loans being inclusive of data and well over 100GB of data being used by those with Device Library devices, we still get calls from individuals, families, and referrer's as they have run out of data. With just one hour of Zoom using up to 2.5GB of data, how much do you think you have used since April of last year? We know that even with a data bill that would stretch to over £1,000 a month, people still do not have enough data and the average use is climbing. By 2025, the average household will use more than a TB of data a month.

⁴ Good Things Foundation Digital Nation UK 2020 – Facts, Stats and Fixing the Digital Divide
<https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/sites/default/files/research-publications/digital-nation-2020.pdf>

Appendices

Case Study 1 – Donna (Education)



Donna is a resident of Brinnington and was referred to the Device Library by Louise Evans from Stockport Homes. Donna needed the device as her daughter was falling behind with schoolwork. They had already got Wi-Fi, but we were able to help them with the loan of a laptop. Donna's laptop loan began in July 2020 and has been extended and is still with her currently. This is due to the ongoing closures of schools and Donna wanting every opportunity for her daughter to keep up.

Donna said: "I think this is a brilliant service for those that do not have computers. It has been a real-life saver in helping my daughter stay on track with her work. She wouldn't have been able to keep up with her schoolwork if it wasn't for the laptop especially with the introduction of online classes".

Case Study 2 – Lisa (Education)

Lisa was loaned the device for 2 months between October and December of last year. Lisa was referred to us by Fairfield Primary School and needed both a device and data. Lisa was a brilliant example of where both the parent and the child benefitted from a device in the household as Lisa completed online courses and her child used the laptop for schoolwork. The indirect beneficiaries of the Device Library could be over 1,000 and Lisa is one of them.



Case Study 3 – Sam (Employment)



Sam was referred to us by the team from Motiv8 and needed a device for multiple reasons – to help his child with schoolwork and also to help him with his job searches. Sam borrowed the device off the Device Library towards the end of 2020 and has recently returned the device. Sam's decision to return the device was due to his eligibility to be given a Connecting Families tablet. This tablet allowed him to continue his job searching, allowed his children to continue their schoolwork and allowed the Device Library to loan out the laptop to somebody else in need.

Case Study 4 – James (Employment)

James was also referred to us by the Motiv8 team. James begun borrowing a tablet and dongle from the Device Library in August of last year and still has the device. As part of his loan, James is using the device to search for jobs as well as exploring setting up his own business, even purchasing a Bluetooth keyboard to make the device work better for him.

When we spoke to him about the Device Library and how much impact it had had on him, he said "Having a connection during lockdown has allowed me start my own business. It has allowed me to keep everything going and store all my files in one place".

James is hoping his business takes off and he will be able to purchase his own device and return the loaned equipment.



Case Study 5 – Mark (Social Inclusion)



Mark is one of the newer recipients of Device Library support. He was referred into Starting Point to attend Men Matter, an online men's mental health and support 8-week program. As part of this program, Mark needed to be able to access Zoom and without a device or data, would not have been able to attend this online course.

Mark was also one of the first people to borrow a smartphone through the Hubbub initiative as he is recently off the streets and living in temporary accommodation provided by Stockport Homes.

By the end of March, Mark will have completed the Men Matter program and we will be working with him to explore options as to what support he needs from us, and other organisations, moving forward.

Case Study 6 – Antonella (Social Inclusion)

Antonella was referred to us by a member of the Public Health team at Stockport Council. She was referred to us for 2 reasons – one to help her daughter with her schoolwork and to allow them access to the internet to help them learn English.

When we spoke to Antonella, she said "Staying at home without wi-fi would have been terrible. Me and my baby would not have been able to learn. With the amount we need the internet, we are desperate for a device and more data".



Next Steps

For this report to be written, we put a date in the diary and said, how many devices, how many calls, how much support as of this date. In the weeks and months since that date, more devices have gone in and out of the Device Library. More data has been used. More people have called the helpline and asked for support with digital skills. Although there seems to be a light at the end of the tunnel with schools returning in early March, and the prospect of social distancing measures being lifted later this year, we know that the need for digital is not going away anytime soon.

For those from low-income backgrounds, the cost of being online has always been a huge dent in their monthly spending. We have seen more requests for data than any individual device and if you look at devices plus data alongside data requests, it is the majority of requests into the device library. As part of the work to make data affordable for all, Starting Point (the community ambassador for DigiKnow) and Stockport Council themselves have pledged to support the national campaign, Operation WiFi. This calls for an affordable solution to data poverty and is exploring options such as a national databank, ran similarly to the food bank model, but with recipients getting free data.

The partnership work of the DigiKnow movement works but there is always an opportunity to grow this. 27% of all referrals were for schoolwork and when you combine that with further education and work-based training, it goes up to 42% yet only 6% of referrals were directly from schools or education providers as most of these referrals were self-referrals due to the great work of Stockport Council and the network in getting information about the scheme out to schools and parents across Stockport.

1 in 5 referrals were directly for employment purposes and across all of the reasons for referrals, this is one that has grown continually, and we imagine it will continue to do so when looking forward to the expected labour market. More needs to be done to support these people especially with the removal of furlough at some point in the future and the impact that will have on the employment status of thousands of people across Stockport. We have started to work with employment support teams and with Stockport Job Centre to future proof support that we can offer through DigiKnow and the Device Library.

We also encourage all the members of the network and any new organisations that refer into the device library to sign up to DigiKnow. This is important as we want to make sure that support across Stockport is not missed and that the support being offered is more than sign posting. We know there are great people and community groups supporting people but there is an opportunity for them to receive training, have access to funding opportunities and share best practice, challenges, and barriers with like minded people. We also know that sign posting is a key part of a movement like DigiKnow and referring people into other services that can best meet needs, but we want to make sure that the ethos of these organisations is aimed at helping Stockport residents live happier, healthier lives, both on and offline. We are going to continue this work and move towards greater digital opportunity for people living in our communities.



Helping Stockport get online