BRIEFING TO:	Health and Wellbeing Board
DATE:	27th September 2023
TITLE	Rotherham Place Digital Inclusion Programme

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Report Summary
To brief and obtain the continued support of the Health and Wellbeing Board on the progress of the Rotherham Place Digital Inclusion Programme, detailing work undertaken to date, future actions and associated costs.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1   Digital Inclusion Review – Rotherham Place
Appendix 2   Rotherham Digital Inclusion Strategy
Appendix 3   Digital Inclusion Action Plan
Appendix 4   Digital Inclusion Action Plan on a page
Appendix 5   Communication & Engagement Plan
Appendix 6   Equality Impact Assessment
Appendix 7   Risk Register

1.	Background
1.1	Digital inclusion remains a challenge for some people in Rotherham and a lack of digital access can have a detrimental impact on residents. The associated problems can be significant for citizens and families contributing to educational and economic disadvantage, health inequalities and increased social isolation.
1.2	The shared view across the Council, Health, and third sector organisations is that whilst Covid-19 created increased digital engagement, it had also widened the gap between those who are digitally included and those who are digitally excluded; leaving some members of the community at risk of missing out on opportunities to find jobs, save money, learn new skills and socially engage from the comfort of their home.
1.3	Whilst national research already supported this view, the degree to which this was happening in the local area was unknown.
1.4	Talking to both residents and service providers was the best way to gain a better understanding of the level and quality of the "digital offer" of services within the Rotherham Place, the local appetite for digital inclusion and the identification of any barriers that prevent the people of Rotherham accessing and benefiting from online services and digital channels.
1.5	In 2021 Rotherham Health and Rotherham Council therefore jointly proposed establishing a Rotherham Place Digital Inclusion Programme. The programme funding was secured through the NHS Digital Aspirant Programme grant (£200,000), RMBC Capital Digital Strategy (£200,000) and 2021/22 Council revenue budget (£50,000).
1.6	The programme's overarching objective is to deliver strategies, governance, and operational practices that maximise access to technology, training and support for the people, small businesses, and organisations across the Rotherham borough.
1.7	A key focus of the Digital Inclusion programme is on working collaboratively and co-productively. As such a cross organisational stakeholder working group was established to jointly input into and shape the aims and outcome of the Digital Inclusion programme; ensuring the needs of all customers and communities within the Rotherham place are fully considered and represented in all digital inclusion activities and reflected within a future co-designed Digital Inclusion strategy.
1.8	The Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group currently consists of representation from different organisations within the Rotherham Place including AGE UK Rotherham, Rotherfed, VAR, REMA, NHS, RNN Colleges, Rotherham Council; although membership invitations are likely to be extended as the delivery of the programme progresses.
1.9	Each member of the group is expected to contribute to the delivery of the programme objectives which were grouped into four delivery phases: **Phase 1**: Information gathering **Phase 2**: Develop evidence-based intervention strategies and programme governance

	Phase 3: Delivery **Phase 4:** Develop a sustainability and ongoing financial model
1.10	The purpose of this paper is to provide an update on progress to date and to gain the continued support of members of the Rotherham Place Partnership Board and Rotherham Together Partnership board in terms of the planned approach/priorities.
2.	**Programme Phases**
2.1	**Phase 1 - Information gathering (completed)** **Objective** *A third-party organisation with a proven track record of assessing and analysing digital inclusion/exclusion, be commissioned to*: - Identify and profile the target group within the Rotherham Place. For example, adults, children and businesses who are offline and/or lack basic digital skills/confidence to engage online - Understand the local barriers to digital inclusion at an individual and Rotherham Place level - Identify existing digital inclusion activity (and the gaps) across the Rotherham Place - Identify best practice Digital Inclusion activities and programmes at a local and national level to inform the type of digital inclusion activities that best respond to the brough wide needs and aspirations. **Approach and Actions** i) A specification document outlining the objectives and intended outcomes of the knowledge gathering phase was created and signed off by members of the Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group. - An independent consultancy was appointed (Attain) to produce a Rotherham place baseline review which involved: - National and Rotherham population level analysis - Consultation with residents: 454 online surveys received 67 postal surveys returned (500 sent out) 9 focus group sessions held across the borough in areas with high levels of deprivation and groups where English isn't the first language ii) An assessment of the digital maturity of Rotherham provider organisations was undertaken. Participants were asked to complete a self-assessment across seven key areas using the 'What Good Looks Like' (WGLL) framework which organisations can choose to use to accelerate digital and data transformation.

Providers who contributed included VAR, Rotherfed, Clifton Learning Partnership, RMBC, AGE UK Rotherham, and three NHS trusts.

Objective Outcomes
The findings of the Digital Inclusion Rotherham Place Review identified:

i)   Groups most at high-risk groups of digital inclusion:

- Older People
- Deprivation
- LTC / Learning Disability
- Disadvantaged Young People

ii)   The combination of deprivation and poor internet infrastructure puts some populations at particularly high-risk of digital exclusion, with following areas considered to be most high risk:

- East Herringthorpe
- Rotherham Central
- Thrybergh
- Maltby East

iii)   Common barriers to digital inclusion:

- Internet availability in venues such as sheltered housing.
- Language
- Residents wanting more 'one to one' support to help them use their own devices and be more aware of internet safely.
- Age –increasing age increases the need for digital support, but there are also pockets of younger people who are at risk of being digitally excluded
- Based on the survey responses around 54% of residents need some form of digital support

iv)   Organisational digital maturity:

- 'Empower Citizens' Place score was the lowest in the WGLL framework which indicates that organisational focus moving forward needs to be on the resident offer.
- There are some established digital support offers across Rotherham, mostly delivered through groups in libraries or courses provided by Rotherham College
- Other community digital support offers have now ceased (e.g., Digital Dan, Rotherfed).

Appendix 1 provides a full copy of the 'Digital Inclusion Review – Rotherham Place.' (April 2022)

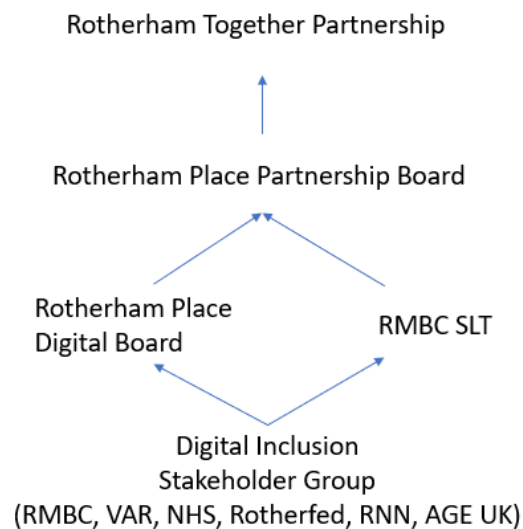|	
2.2	**<u>Phase 2 – Develop evidence-based intervention strategies and programme governance (Complete)</u>**
2.2.1	**Objective 1** *Establish a governance framework that ensures accountability to the Rotherham Together Partnership and partner working arrangements reporting and decision-making boards.* **Approach and Actions** • Created Terms of Reference for Digital Inclusion Stakeholder Group • Established regular meetings with key stakeholders • Provided regular financial updates with key programme leads • Created programme highlight report and risk register **Objective Outcome** Governance Structure in Place: **Rotherham Digital Inclusion Governance Structure** Rotherham Together Partnership ↑ Rotherham Place Partnership Board Rotherham Place Digital Board RMBC SLT Digital Inclusion Stakeholder Group (RMBC, VAR, NHS, Rotherfed, RNN, AGE UK)
2.2.2	**Objective 2** *Develop a Digital Inclusion strategy, the outcomes of which can be delivered by a range of projects and initiatives that target Rotherham's most digitally excluded using the most appropriate method of delivery within the budget available.*

Approach and Actions
Members of the Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group have worked collaboratively with both organisations and members of the public to create the Rotherham Place Digital Inclusion strategy. **(Appendix 2).**

The key criteria for the shaping of this document are:

- It aligns with the 'Rotherham Together Partnership' and Place Board priorities

- It is person centric:

  o Focuses on the things that matter to people who live, work and do business in Rotherham

  o Anyone who reads it can identify with something in the strategy

  o Accessible and understandable – using simple, plain and meaningful language with no 'jargon'

  In November a workshop was held with over 22 representatives from different organisations[1] across Rotherham inputting into the creation of a Digital Inclusion Action Plan (A**ppendix 3**) which sets out a range of projects and initiatives aimed at supporting Rotherham's most digitally excluded communities (as identified from the *Digital Inclusion Review – Rotherham Place'*).

Objective Outcomes
- Creation of a Place Based Digital Inclusion Strategy
- Action Plan on a page – easy reference document for general circulation/promotion (**Appendix 4**)

2.2.3	**Objective 3**

Objective 3
Agree target priority areas and communities in terms of geography and demographics to maximise impact and fully exploit organisational presence in the community.

Approach and Actions
The baseline report 'Digital Inclusion Review – Rotherham Place' provided the information needed to identify High-Risk groups and Wards (Page 14):

High-Risk Groups
- Older People
- Deprivation
- LTC / Learning Disability
- Disadvantaged Young People

High-Risk Wards
- East Herringthorpe
- Rotherham Central

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[1] AGE UK Rotherham, RotherFed, Rotherham Older Peoples Forum, RNN Group, RDASH, NHS, Rotherham Council

	- Thrybergh - Maltby East **Objective Outcome** The priority activities and actions agreed by the Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group will be initially focused on the high-risk groups in the high-risk wards. For example, the creation of 'digital surgeries' in libraries and community centres in East Herringthorpe, Rotherham Central, Thrybergh, and Maltby East.
2.2.4	**Objective 4** *Establish a process for evaluating the Rotherham Digital Inclusion Programme and provide a robust and transparent measurement framework.* **Approach and Actions** - Through discussion with stakeholder group members it was accepted that there are numerous initiatives expected to help improve digital inclusion; but none are likely to be the single solution. It will therefore be critically important to review and evaluate the work we are doing regularly and continuously. - The stakeholder group agree that the programme's fundamental approach should be based on a test and learn methodology; making best use of resident stories and case studies to highlight successes. This will be achieved by: - Maintaining constant dialogue with all delivery partners, and more importantly through conversations with those who are directly receiving help. - Consistent and frequent user consultation - Capturing evidence of how initiatives and activities are helping residents and enabling them to become more digitally included and active. - Being confident and decisive as a group - Listening to feedback so that we can quickly change or amend anything that isn't working and refocus our energies. - Keeping residents updated about the programme - Re-visiting the groups that took part in the initial baseline report research to share progress and find out from them how the programme is making a difference. **Objective Outcome** A robust and transparent measurement framework has been implemented and adopted, providing the evidence source for continuous evaluation of the Rotherham Digital Inclusion Programme and the impact it is having on the lives of local people.
2.3	**Phase 3: Delivery (in progress)**
2.3.1	**Objective:** *Following the completion of phases 1 and 2, identify the different delivery mechanisms that can add most value to the communities of Rotherham.*

Approach and Actions

The Digital Inclusion workshop held in November was used to debate, identify, and agree a range of priority projects, activities and initiatives to support Rotherham's most digitally excluded communities.

i) Activities already underway:

RNN Digital Champions

A volunteer programme has been jointly developed with the RNN group. Students attending Rotherham college who are undertaking a digital qualification are encouraged to volunteer as 'digital champions' to gain experience of working with local people and help them make better use of technology.

- o 10 community groups have signed up to be involved in the initial pilot.
- o There are 18 Student volunteers; who have each been matched to a group that is local to where they live to help limit travelling distances.
- o Sessions held to date include:
  - Bramley Coffee Morning, Bill Chafer Centre.
  - Catchup Café, Rotherham Minster
  - Mindfulness & Wellbeing, Kimberworth Park
  - The Salvation Army, Maltby

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

- o Students say they have felt accepted and welcomed, increasing their communication skills and confidence
- o Community groups have said how extremely useful they found it
- o Students have told us that since volunteering, they now feel less nervous going out on placements outside of college
- o RNN feel this work has helped them further strengthen their link with the community which has also led to requests for assistance with other activities unrelated to digital inclusion.

The initiative is set to continue when the college reopens in September.

Good Things Databank Pilot with the libraries

Good Things Foundation offer free sim cards to organisations through their Databank programme.

This is a national programme designed to support people on low income who have limited/no access to online services.

Rotherham Council are piloting the scheme which was launched in May from Riverside House library; enabling local people who might otherwise be unable to afford to communicate/engage digitally to benefit from a free mobile data, calls and texts.

A phased roll out of the free sim card initiative to other Library & Neighbourhood sites will commence in September (Maltby, Rawmarsh, Dinnington and Swinton).

Subject to the success of the initial pilot, it is anticipated that other Stakeholder organisations will sign up to the scheme. In addition, the Digital Support Officers, once in post, will have the ability to offer sim cards directly through their work in the community.

ICT Classes and Employability classes for residents
Free training courses on specifics subjects for individuals like Excel and Word are important for individuals to upskill themselves ready for employment. These are available across Rotherham, and we will work with the deliverers to ensure what they offer is fit for purpose and to help them be advertised throughout Rotherham.

ii) ***Activities and initiatives that are planned*** *to deliver the priorities in the Baseline review and help communities/people become more digitally included, active, and confident. Delivery of these actions requires:*

Resource

All members of the Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group are unanimously agreed that the success of this programme is reliant on resource that is dedicated to place-based digital inclusion related activities.

A Digital Inclusion 'team' managed by a single organisation is required to ensure the 'place based' approach remains fully intact with the focus of any activity/time dedicated to the delivery of the priorities agreed by the Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group.

To deliver the agreed activities set out in the Action Plan, the following posts are required:

- 1 FTE Digital Inclusion Delivery Manager (Currently in post until November 30th, 2023. Contract to be extended to 31st March 2025) – To oversee the programme as a whole and manage the Digital Support Officers to ensure the agreed action plan is being delivered as agreed and to timescales

- 2 FTE Digital Support Officers (until minimum 31st March 2025) - To undertake the activities identified in the action plan and deliver interventions across Rotherham Place. These post holders will spend most of their time working within the communities of Rotherham.

It is proposed that the employment/management of these roles be established with Rotherham Council as they are the budget holder. The advertised roles closed 10th September with interviews expected to take place w/c 25th September

Devices

	The findings of the report indicate that device ownership is a real barrier to being digitally included. As indicated on pages 35,52,53 and 56 of the baseline report a device loaning scheme would help reduce this barrier to digital inclusion. There are various best practice examples in other authorities that highlight successes with schemes such as device lending services and 'gifting' using previously owned donated devices. The action plan therefore includes the need to further explore the feasibility of offering one or both schemes, or anything similar, which would be initially introduced as a proof of concept to deliver on one of the identified priorities. **Community engagement across Rotherham** A key part of the success of this programme is reaching as many people as possible from different demographics within Rotherham; particularly those groups that are harder to reach. A Communication Plan has been created and signed off by members of the Rotherham Digital Inclusion Stakeholder Group (Appendix 5); a small budget for which has been included for various activities including things like a presence at events, and costs for pitches, promotional material etc. **'Rotherham Digital' Website** A website will be created as a focal point for the Rotherham Digital Inclusion programme and related activities, and information; publicly accessible and inclusively designed to encourage and inform residents, communities, and businesses. This will be a galaxy site hosted by Rotherham Council designed with an independent look and feel and using a previously acquired 'Rotherham Digital' domain name (URL). **Programme Funding** Section 3 (Financial) of this report sets out in detail how the available budget will be used to support the delivery of the agreed actions. Please note, not all activities on the action plan require funding from the programme as some represent initiatives/approaches already in situ that are already aimed at increasing digital inclusion and will continue. **Objective Outcome** The different delivery mechanisms that can add most value to the communities of Rotherham have been identified, with some already underway and others set to be delivered subject to the dependencies referenced above.
2.4	<u>**Phase 4: Develop a sustainability and ongoing financial model (not yet started)**</u>

Objectives

- *Agree a programme of continued support for all partner organisations to establish digital inclusion activities as a core component of service offerings.*
- *Explore options for additional funding and pool potential match funding to support the programme and future sustainability.*
- *Evaluate the effectiveness of digital inclusion interventions to demonstrate how the programme has added value; the evidence from which can be used to inform "what future delivery would look like."*

Approach and Actions

To be formed over the course of the next 12-18 months.

3.	**Financial**

3.1 As referenced in 1.5, the programme funding has been secured through the NHS Digital Aspirant Programme grant (£200,000), RMBC Capital Digital Strategy (£200,000) and 2021/22 Council revenue budget (£50,000).

3.2 Spend to date as follows:

Costs Incurred to date	Funding Amount	2021/22	2022/23	Total Costs	Balance Carried Forward
Funding Stream		Costs	Costs		
RMBC Revenue Budget	**50,000**				
Digital Inclusion Delivery Manager (Band I)		16,440	33,560	50,000	0
DAP - Revenue	**200,000**				
Digital Inclusion Delivery Manager (Band I)			10,383		
Digital Inclusion Baseline review - Attain			55,080	65,463	134,537
RMBC Capital Digital Strategy	**200,000**				
		0	0	0	200,000
	450,000	**16,440**	**99,022**	**115,463**	**334,537**

3.3 To deliver the priorities listed in the Digital Inclusion Action Plan, it is expected that the available funding will be allocated as follows:

Digital Aspirant Programme	2023/24	2024/25	Total Expected Costs	Budgets Available
Funding Stream	Expected Costs	Expected Costs		
DAP - Revenue & Capital				
Project Management: Digital Inclusion Manager - 2 years	45,893	48,188		

	Expected Costs	Expected Costs		
Year 1 - Creating digital infrastructure (RDASH capital)	40,000			
Travel	250	206		
	86,143	**48,394**	**134,537**	134,537

Funding Stream	Expected Costs	Expected Costs		
Digital Inclusion Project - Capital				
Creating programme and digital inclusion delivery model – Support Officer 2 FTE Band F 2 years	69,542	73,019		
Website Development	17,400	3,406		
Marketing Materials	1,500	1,500		
Year 2 Creating digital infrastructure		21,951		
Contingency	7,000	4,682		
	95,442	**104,558**	**200,000**	200,000

2023/24 salary costs have been calculated based on an assumption that current 22/23 local government pay scales could increase by 5.5% for Band I and 7.8% for Band F.

2024/25 salary costs have then been calculated on the estimated 23/24 cost shown plus a further percentage increase of 4% and 7% respectively.

4.	**Equality & Diversity**
4.1	An Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix 6) has been completed and signed off by the Rotherham Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group members.
4.2	This will be reviewed every six months.
5.	**Risks and Mitigation**
5.1	Please see Appendix 7
6.	**Recommendations**
6.1	That the Health and Wellbeing board: • Note the progress of the Rotherham Digital Inclusion Programme to date • Continue to support the programme and the approach being taken to improve digital inclusion across the borough of Rotherham • Note the intention of the Rotherham Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group to deliver the actions outlined in the Action Plan • Note the intention of the Rotherham Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group to keep the Health and Wellbeing Board, Place Board and Rotherham Together Partnership Board informed of progress on a periodic basis

This report is published on the Rotherham Digital Inclusion website (once established)