

**Digital three:  
Fully Digitally  
enabled**

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The best digital strategy and services in the world will be of no use to our residents and businesses unless they have the means, confidence and skills to access them and get best value from them. Digital inclusion has long been a key focus for us, but our experiences during the pandemic shone a light on just how fundamental and critical it is. It highlighted that not everyone has accessible, affordable and equitable access to the digital world.

Our digital strategy will strongly focus on digital inclusion and skills, innovation for businesses and employment opportunities linked to digital neighbourhoods working with many partners and stakeholders as part of our Deal commitments. We will ensure that our public services continue to transform by offering services and volunteering opportunities through projects like #TechMates and that all our residents and businesses can benefit from the transformative potential of digital. We will be creating a framework of support for local organisations to collaborate, share best practice and shape a robust digital inclusion offer for residents.

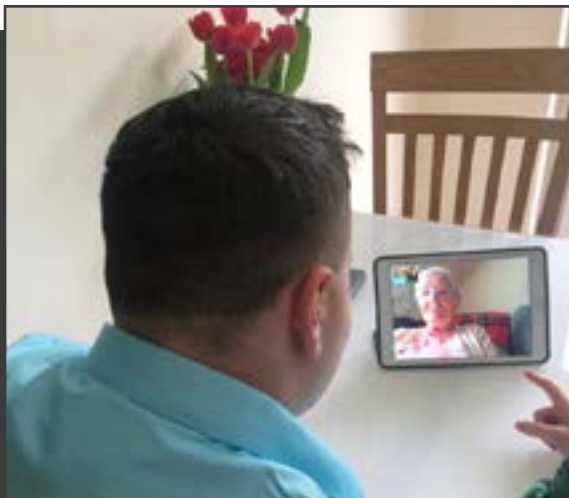


When our residents experienced lockdown, digital was THE only way to maintain contact with loved ones, continue in education, work and get essential goods such as food. Those without the digital tools and skills to do that were adversely affected in a significant way.

However, part of our learning during lockdown, was that more and more people have embraced the benefits of digital engagement. Over the next 12 months we want to further improve the way we engage with our residents and introduce a new engagement platform. Through this, we can hear from people like never before and can target by geographic location, interest groups, sectors, ages and more.

We want our residents to have more channels of engagement and allow them to share their feelings, ideas and thoughts around changing the place and influencing the direction we should take, as well as creating connections within our own communities to remove some of the experienced isolation.

To do this we continue to build upon our Deal principles to deepen further our relationship with the people of the borough.



## Digital Communities Partnership

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Our new Digital Strategy will be a key driver in identifying and supporting the delivery of projects and wider initiatives, and how we can generate more positive and engaging ways of involving people, businesses and the wider community in articulating new visions, strategies and practices that stress accessibility, diversity and key principles which contribute to economic recovery.

This new Digital Communities Partnership gives our community partners, voluntary and social enterprise sector opportunities to tackle digital exclusion together through the sharing of their knowledge, working collaboratively, and developing digital strategies to create better ways of reaching communities that remain digitally excluded.

We will focus our joint efforts on providing access to devices, connectivity and digital skills for those in greatest need. The digital investment narrative has become even more

pertinent considering the exacerbation of digital inequalities brought about by the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic.

The economic prospects and wellbeing of our residents are under threat from the societal challenges of mass unemployment and social isolation. National lockdowns have created an environment where citizens feel disconnected from everyday life, unable to socialise. Moreover, lockdowns prevent everyone from supporting local businesses through participation in the local economy.







Our Libraries are at the forefront of digital support for our residents, they offer a free safe space in the heart of our digital neighbourhoods to help residents learn, grow and discover their digital potential and ambitions and will be so important in meeting these challenges as we build an inclusive economic recovery.



## Devices and Connectivity

The council always puts our customers at the heart of everything we do, and we view the digital agenda as a solution to improving the lives of residents. Successful digital transformation is centred around the people, what our residents and staff want. Technology can then be wrapped around them to ensure they have the right solution for what we want to achieve.



 <p>Over <b>1,000</b> devices distributed to students.</p>	<p>Devices to support The Deal for Foster Carers in Wigan Council.</p>
 <p>Over <b>200</b> tablets jointly distributed via our Healthy Wigan Partnership teams which supported residents in care and within health settings to keep in touch during Covid-19</p>	 <p>Care Leavers provided with digital access as per the GM Care Leavers Covenant.</p>
<p><b>50</b> devices provided for our most vulnerable residents along with #TechMates support.</p>	 <p><b>60%</b> reduction in falls in Care Homes due to the introduction of wearable sensors.</p>
 <p><b>85%</b> of GP appointments carried out remotely, with most patient queries resolved with 1hr and <b>95%+</b> patient satisfaction.</p>	 <p><b>70%</b> reduction in intrusive night turns in Care Homes for residents wearing sensors.</p>

During the pandemic, we witnessed excellent work and commitment to get as many devices as possible to those in need, but this wasn't enough to support every need and without the ability to afford the connectivity required to make use of the devices, in the long term it fell short.

Some of our Digital Community Partners have supported our residents and school aged children by lending devices and setting up donation schemes, and these community assets will continue to support residents moving forward.

Access to online learning will continue to be a vital component of every child and young

person's education and we are determined to ensure everybody can access what is increasingly becoming a fundamental human right. We are working with our colleagues in the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, with digital businesses and network providers to develop a package of support to make 100% digitally enabled a realistic ambition.

Our ambition is that we focus on ensuring that every resident and business in our borough has the kit and connectivity along with the skills and confidence to thrive in a digital world. We are fully committed to seeking out partnerships and organisations who will work with us to create resolutions and ways forward in which we address the

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digital poverty challenges we face in the borough. We are confident that with right network and partnership, we will find a way to provide access to subsidised or free broadband options for children who are eligible for free school meals and enable all council homes to be digitally connected.

We continue to invest in our network of public use computers which are available and free to access in our community libraries. We will expand this offer to include the ability to loan devices and data from our library network and community partners so that digital access is opened to more and more of our residents. This will be offered alongside support from our #TechMates programme. Provision and accessibility to devices will not only strengthen the way in which we can provide our services differently, it also reduces the need for paper files and diaries making it better for the environment too. Our Deal for Foster Carers in Wigan is committed to digitising and making this happen.

We know digital poverty prevents young people from accessing support, maintaining contact with friends, family and professionals and sets them apart from their peers in society. Our care leavers aged 16 - 25 have found it difficult to engage in virtual activities provided during the pandemic and couldn't access training, education or employment online. Access to digital services is a priority for our care leavers as per the GM Care Leavers Covenant

Our residents have also told us that growing older in their own home was really important to them, so we will continue to invest in cutting-edge assistive technology which can support them to do this.

We have tested and demonstrated how this type of innovation can change lives in our

Smart Bungalow. By filling a vacant property in the borough with assistive technology, we have transformed the health and social care sector. From voice-activated systems that can be customised to help those in supported housing, mobilisation equipment to help residents live independently when they otherwise may not have been able to, through to cutting-edge devices to help residents with visual impairments carry out everyday tasks, such as making a brew.

In the future we want to increase the use of digital technology in care homes to ensure the continuation of virtual wards, provider training and greater connections with family and friends. We want to provide a clear digital offer within adult social care and health that helps in hospital discharge, reablement, supported living and wider social care needs. We will work with homecare providers to use technology wider for medication management and reduce social isolation. We will support day care providers / CIC to provide a digital offer that ensures a hybrid offer of face-to-face support and digital offer for people with disabilities.

We experienced a rapid adoption of digital technology during 2020 and we want to build upon that momentum. We will use the power of technology to improve access to health improvement services, by making advice and support available to suit the needs of our residents. We will develop digital solutions to encourage healthy lifestyles, manage long-term health conditions and reduce the future demands on health and social care.

## Case Study – iPads at Lime House Care Home

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With social distancing measures in place and non-essential visits from friends and family temporarily stopped, digital devices have become a lifeline to ensure residents in Wigan Borough could stay connected with their loved ones and receive vital health support throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the pandemic, our Healthy Wigan Partnership, (which includes Wigan Council, WWL NHS Foundation Trust and Wigan CCG) distributed 100 tablets across each of the 54 care homes in the Wigan Borough. Lime House Care Home, based in Lowton, were just one of the care homes who have been involved in the iPad donation scheme and benefitted from the provision.

Kath Hurst, Lime House Care Home manager, said: **“The donated iPads have been a fantastic tool for us during the last few months.”**

**“It has allowed us to virtual ward rounds with the GP so they can actually see the residents and give them the best treatment and care that they need.”**

**“They have also been used for the staff to access training and to have conversations with residents’ families and friends”** she added.

The distributed iPads also meant that 100-year-old resident Bertha could celebrate her special birthday. Bertha’s family and friends from across the world were able to celebrate with her via Zoom and watch as she blew candles out on her cake, opened presents and her card from the Queen.

Kath said: **“The feedback from the family was that it allowed them all to be together as a family when otherwise they wouldn’t have been able to. It has led them then to keep in touch via Zoom.”**

**“It has helped other people too, and that is what it is all about- keeping people connected during these difficult times.”**

Now, Kath and the team at Lime House are looking at future planning and utilising the iPads in innovative ways to continue to support and provide the best possible service to residents and their families.



# Together We Will:

Key Pledges	Timeline
Implement a device and data loaning scheme across our library network and community partners.	2021
Develop a digital package of support for access to devices and connectivity for our most vulnerable residents so that they can stay at home longer.	2021-2022
Upskill and train- Create accredited #TechMate volunteers training pathway (AQA) and upskill/train 500 graduates.	By early 2023
Support development and access to resources for our Digital Community Partnership to provide new training and skills opportunities to our residents & communities with the digital skills they need in life.	By 2023
Increase usage of digital tools in care homes to ensure the continuation of virtual wards, provider training and greater connection with family and friends.	By 2025
Develop a digital Health Improvement offer supporting primary illness prevention activity (including stop smoking and weight management) and also secondary prevention supporting residents to manage long-term conditions. Digitally developing and expanding the traditional support to better reflect the way our residents routinely engage with technology.	By 2025