

# Digital Health Hubs in community assets

A How To Guide for  
community-based  
digital inclusion in health

Updated January 2020



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# Introduction

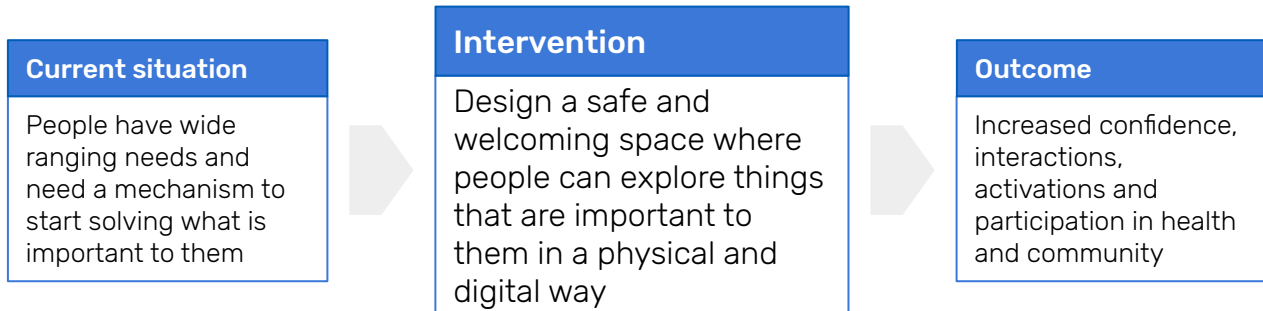
*Digital* is uniquely placed to provide some of the health information that people need at a time when is convenient to them. However, for those who don't have the skills, motivation or means to access digital it can facilitate further exclusion.

We have found through the Widening Digital Participation Programme that 3 distinct avenues of trust have to be in place in order to help those people who are excluded from services.

- 1) A trusted place. Where people feel like power is evenly distributed
- 2) A trusted person. Who understands you as a peer, not a health professional
- 3) Trusted Information. E.g. Websites and apps that display the NHS logo

Community assets have proven to be the ideal setting for 1 and 2 and this guide seeks to help those community assets understand what is needed in 3 so that digital health inclusion can become a core part of their offering and thus become a Digital Health Hub.

The power in this model is in treating *digital* as a facilitator. It is not the answer for everything (and nor should it be). This is about community assets offering the right thing at the right time to satisfy the needs of the person in front of them. This is about people, not tech.



# Intervention model

STAGE 1: Design the place

STAGE 2: Physical and digital

STAGE 3: Relationships

STAGE 4: Stay relevant

1

Find out what your community needs and how people engage with local activities and community

1a

Think of the whole journey of the person. From walking past to spending time in the place

2

Have no agenda. Start with "What matters to you?"

3

Become the centre of activities both physical and digital

3a

Provide access and see digital as part of the toolkit for health and wellbeing

4

Develop relationships with local GP's, community organisations and schools

4a

Increase the pool of volunteers. Peers understand better than anyone

5

Keep improving the offer, learning from what works and what doesn't work

# Before you start

## You already have a premises

People already visit your community asset. This means you have an audience that you can try out some of the things that we will suggest during this guide.

## You might want to change it

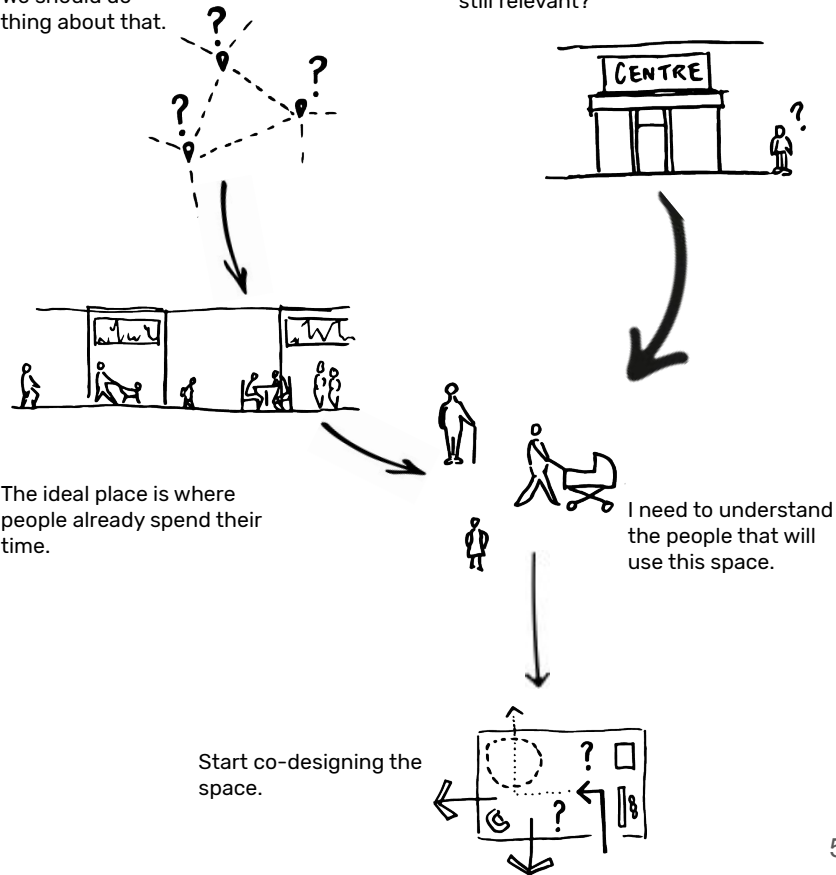
It can be difficult to take a fresh look at a community asset that is working. After all, it may have been successfully delivering things for a long time. So why change? This process will help to take a fresh look at the building and what people think when they come into contact with it.

A digital health hub is a concept. It's shape and activities will be individual to your area, demographics and resources.

The main thing to recognise is your ability to have informal conversations with people and help them with **'that is important to them'**

There doesn't seem to be any community assets here. We should do something about that.

I have ran this community centre for a long time. Is it still relevant?



# STAGE 1: Design the Place

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# STAGE 1: Design the Place

There are two stages to designing the place.

**Stage 1:** Talk to your users / potential users to find out what a space could be for them.

Open the place up (if safe) for a few days and ask people what they need in the community. Give them a blank slate. Even if their ideas aren't feasible you will get insights as to what is important to people and why. They may not want to discuss health. We found that the term 'health' put some people off.

This activity isn't about taking people at their word or trying to recreate every idea that they share. It's about understanding why they would need it. For example:

- People may say they need a free coffee shop, but when you dig further it's because they need a place to sit and talk.
- People may say they need more clubs and activities but when you dig further it's because they aren't aware of what is going on in the area and need a way to find out.

You want to find out how people participate in things now (physically and digitally) and what problems go unsolved in their lives at present.



Open up the premises as a pop up place. Talk to as many people as possible.



**IDEAS:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Find out what your community needs - take ideas to a deeper level of understanding.

Remember your mission. Digital inclusion and health are very emotive and scary prospects for excluded people to talk about.



Does your mission fit in with what you have found out?



# STAGE 1: Design the Place

**Stage 1a:** Designing or redesigning the space.

From your user research (stage 1) you will have an idea of how the place could work. Take this insight and think of the journeys people will take.

[We thought about four parts of their journey:](#)

**Outside** - how do you make a place welcoming and show what the place is for?

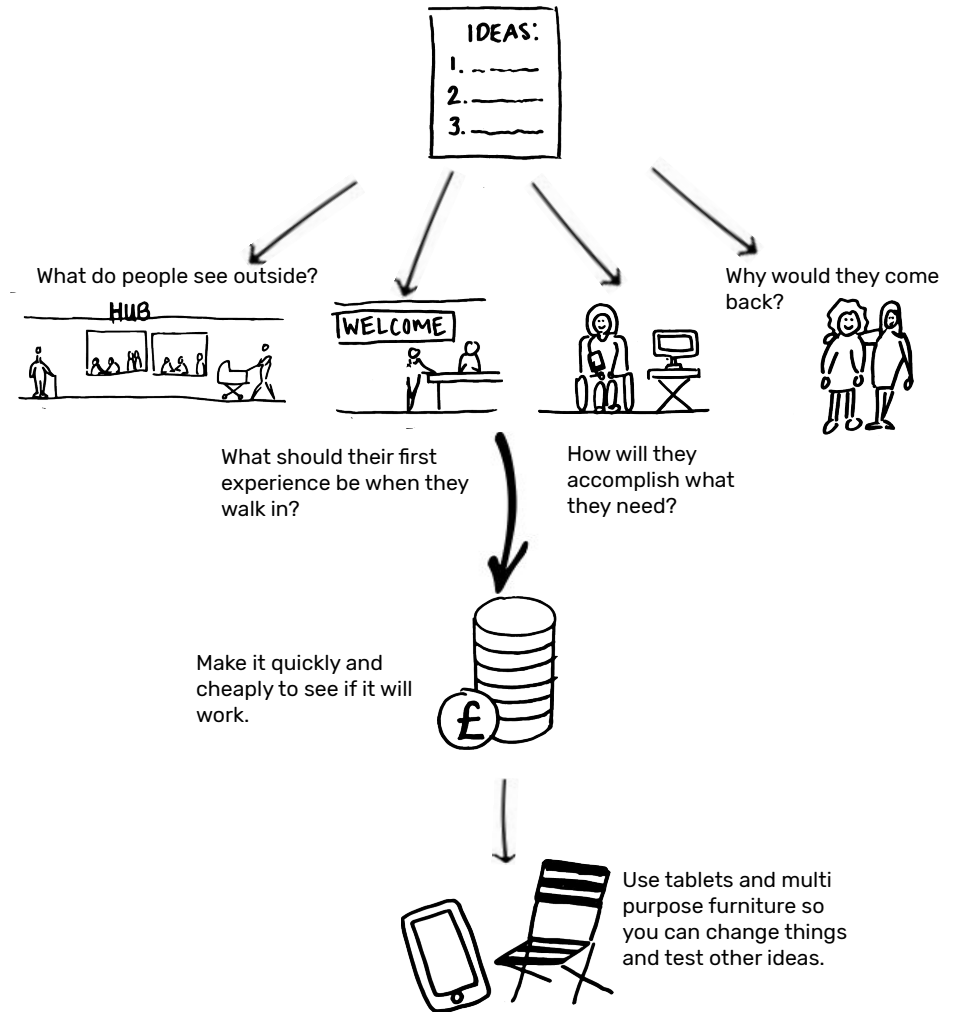
**First Experience** - what will people think when they walk in, do they need guidance or is it self explanatory?

**Stay Longer** - how will people spend time there and is this enough to accomplish what they came for?

**Repeat Visits** - what makes someone a regular? How do they become a champion of the place?

Test your work in a lean way - make it usable (not perfect) in the beginning to see how things go before you invest too much money.

Think of your available spaces as multi purpose and use the most portable equipment such as tablets and portable furniture like fold-away chairs so you can adapt to the new things that you learn.





# STAGE 1: Design the Place

## People who are needed (not exhaustive)

**A centre lead** this could be the manager of an existing centre or the person who is looking to start a new premises.

**Local Council sponsor** to be able to back the process and start building relationships.

**Volunteers** who can help open the place up during the design phase.

**People** who are walking past so you can gain insights.

## Resources that are needed

**Stationary** to capture insights that you get during the design phase. This can be put up on the wall for people to contribute to in their own time.

**Folding furniture** cheaply sourced so you can test different set ups and room configurations.

**Free coffee and tea** so people have a reason to come in.

**Places to sit** so conversations can be as in depth as they need to be.

**Signs** for the outside so people can see what is happening and know what to expect if they come in.

**A list of the community activities and groups** that can start people thinking about other local assets.

# STAGE 1: Design the Place

## Don't:

- Try to make the space perfect – this can make it hard to change if you've spent a lot of time and money setting things up at the beginning.
- Start by talking about people's health. Health is private and often sensitive subject. Give people other reasons to come in.

## Do:

- Ask people what matters to them and take the conversation from there.
- Be flexible in your approach. Use paper for signs, chalk pens to write on windows and use whatever furniture you have to hand to begin with. You can invest in more permanent things once you know they work.

## Don't:

- Start with digital. Introduce it once you get to know what the person needs. Show them first and encourage them to take over when they're comfortable.

## Do:

- Be experimental. Try multiple things and change them regularly to gauge people's reactions. Leave what doesn't work and keep what does.

# STAGE 2: Physical and Digital

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STAGE 2: Physical and digital

STAGE 3: Relationships

STAGE 4: Stay relevant

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# STAGE 2: Physical and Digital

Digital Health Hubs have been successful because they don't overtly mention health nor do they suggest digital can fix everything.

It simply asks the people who come in – 'what matters to you?'

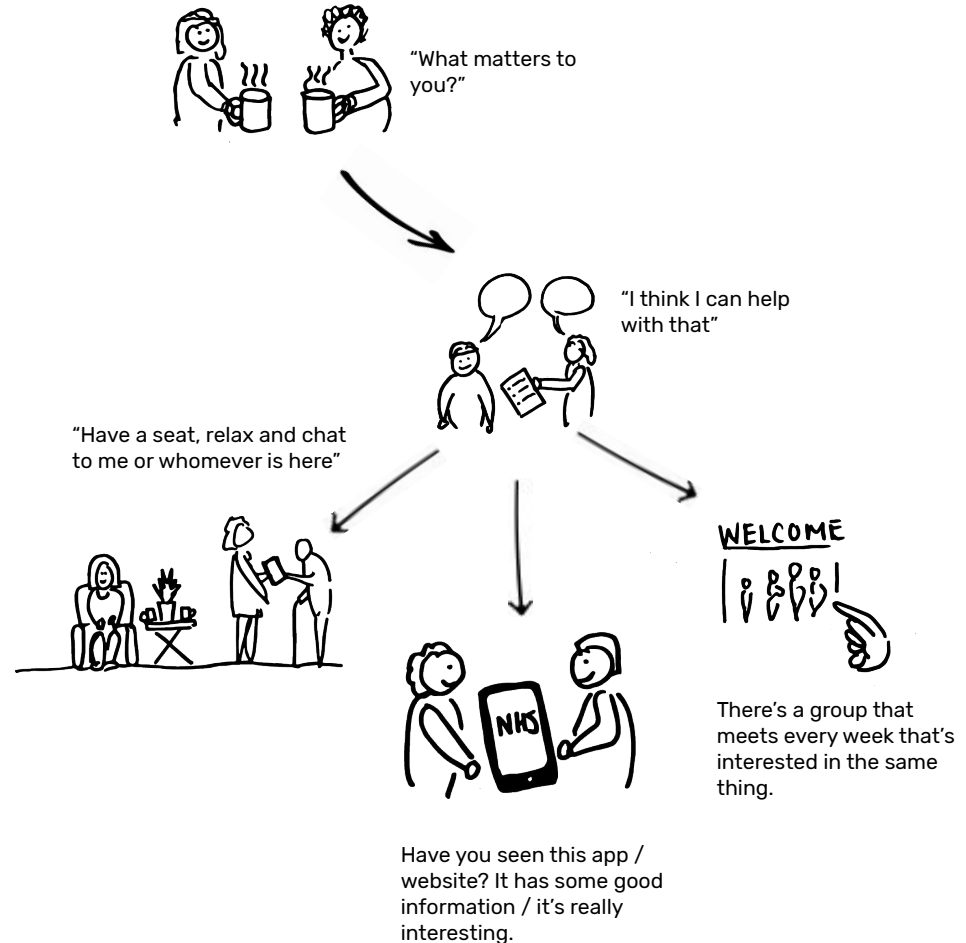
People's wellbeing can be improved using a blend of physical (e.g face-to-face activities, group membership, spontaneous interesting conversation) and digital (e.g skyping a family member, looking up new skills, learning about conditions) and a digital health hub can offer all of this.

We have found that very often people don't know about all the activities going on in an area.

Providing access to tablets is important as it allows people to explore things at their own pace, when they want to.

The volunteers at Digital Health Hubs don't distinguish between physical and digital, they just use whatever works in a given scenario.

No labels necessary.



# STAGE 2: Physical and Digital

It can be difficult to start from scratch. Here is a table of activities that have helped shape our Digital Health Hubs and helped us gather the evidence that community assets need to show the difference that they are making.

**Any 2 of the following (one of which has to be from left column)**

**Digital skills training** - Any Courses in 'Improve your health' section of [Learn My Way](#)

- GP services online a how to guide
- NHS website a how to guide

**Finding health information and tools includes**

- Using [NHS.UK](#)
- Finding Trusted Apps ([NHS Apps Library](#))
- Searching condition specific websites
- Forums of support (condition specific forums or groups)

**Transactions Online** - Practical application, doing it live

- GP appointment online
- Repeat prescription online

**Finding Local support includes**

- Using digital champion knowledge of activities and groups
- Searching for local support or activities on line
- Referring to groups / scheduling in

**Well being activity including**

- Using the internet for what interests you
- Social media to keep in contact with family and friends
- finding out local information for activities

**Other**

- Other related Digital Health Activity
- Supporting registering on to NHS App

# STAGE 2: Physical and Digital

## People you need

**A centre lead** to set the tone of the place.

**Local Council sponsor** to visit and be an advocate of the place.

**Some committed volunteers** who are willing to learn and have open conversations with people.

**Local group members** to start meeting there and spread the word.

**People** who have things they want to talk about or have a problem they need to solve.

## Resources you need

**WiFi** so people can use the place free of charge for their own needs.

**Tablets** placed on tables for people to explore.

**Screens up** on the wall to show people what is happening in the area.

**Tea and coffee** so people and volunteers can relax.

**Community organisations / groups** list to show what is going on in the area.

# STAGE 2: Physical and Digital

## Don't:

- Expect people to come in and start opening up about their health needs or their lack of digital skills. They will need another reason to come in first.

## Do:

- Give people time and space for them to feel comfortable first before asking them to do something.
- Admit when you don't know something – if you don't know the answer, take the time to find out with them.

## Don't:

- Be too specific about the help you can offer. Just a space to talk and be listened too can help people even if you can't solve their problems.

## Do:

- Make people feel welcome without any pressure for them to stay or do any more than they feel comfortable doing.
- Spend time looking for information with them – help them find what's right for them in their own time. Don't take over.

# STAGE 3: Relationships

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# STAGE 3: Relationships

There are two types of relationship that are important:

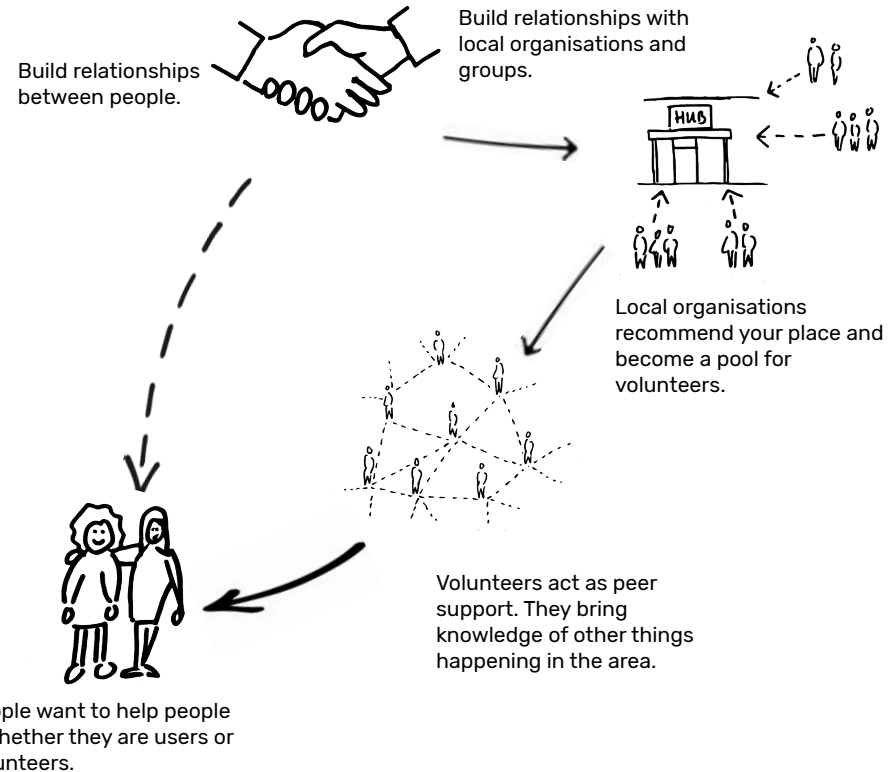
**Relationships with other organisations** – between your place and other local service providers such as councils, colleges, local community groups and GP Practices. Building relationships with GP Practices is not always easy. Use the [Digital Health Lab](#) to show what you are offering and how that might help them.

E.g. 52% of those who gain digital skills reduce their number of GP appointments by more than 3 per year

By building relationships with other organisations you can grow your reputation and volunteer pool. Reputation attracts more activities, opportunities for your place to be recommended and volunteers who can bridge the gap between structural advice and peer advice.

**Relationships with people** – between volunteers, people using the place, group members and other people in the community.

Be a place that encourages relationships between people. A place where anyone who enters will want to help if they hear a conversation and think they can add something to it. These organic conversations can lead to some exciting improvements (see stage 4).



# STAGE 3: Relationships

## People you need

**A centre lead** who can build relationships with local organisations.

**Local Council sponsor** to broker introductions to local organisations.

**Volunteers** from new places who can bring their knowledge and advertise your place.

**Local CCG** to help broker relationships with GP practices in the area.

**Local GP Practice** to help 2 way referrals

**People** who will use your place and help spread the word.

## Resources you need

**Time** to invest in these relationships.

**A facebook page** so you can get involved with online communities.

**Referral mechanism** from GP's or other public sector organisations.

# STAGE 3: Relationships

## Don't:

- Limit the relationships with other organisations. If they're similar to you, they will be able to share their experiences. If they are different, they will have other perspectives and opportunities for you to learn from and work on together.

## Do:

- Be open to other organisations using your place for their activities. Sharing assets will help to grow a better support offer to the community and help your reputation.

## Don't:

- Try and force relationships. People will naturally build their own relationships with people they trust and share values with. You'd may be surprised how much school children and pensioners have in common.

## Do:

- Spot opportunities to introduce people to others who you think they may share interests with. A shared problem or hobby can be a great way to start conversations.

# STAGE 4: Stay Relevant

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# STAGE 4: Stay Relevant

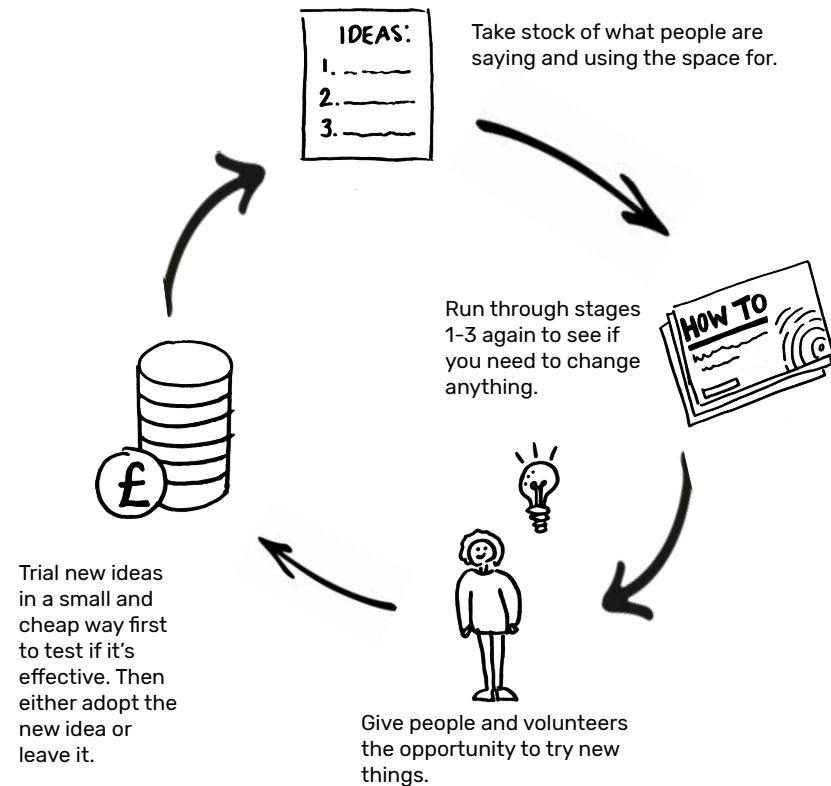
Following stages 1-3 you will notice that a big part of creating a digital health hub is being able to adapt when needed.

This can be designed into your transformation by having a multi purpose space, taking note of ideas from people who come in and letting them try something themselves.

Staying relevant can be achieved by periodically going through these steps again to check things are right for what you want to achieve.

This doesn't have to require lots of money. It could be as simple as changing the schedule or activities that are offered or making sure the website is kept up to date with local activities etc.

The main thing is to keep new people coming in and providing an place for them to explore the things that matter to them.



# STAGE 4: Stay Relevant

## People you need

**A centre lead** who is willing to take stock of things and run through the process again

**Local Council sponsor** to talk about local priorities

**Volunteers** who are empowered to try new things

**Local CCG** to talk about local priorities

**People** who want to help and have ideas

## Resources that are needed

**Time** to keep checking things are working and still relevant

# STAGE 4: Stay Relevant

## Don't:

- Dismiss people's ideas. If it is something they think will improve your place, try it and see if it does.

## Do:

- Encourage people to suggest changes and new ideas.

## Don't:

- Try to be all things to all people. Keep the space flexible so that it can be changed for different activities and different people's needs without having to make wholesale changes each time.

## Do:

- Be transparent about any new ideas or changes. Keeping people aware of what you're thinking can help them embrace changes and help you try to make them successful.

# In your area

This is how we did it in 27 areas across the country. We have tried to make the model as flexible as possible allowing for local context and local needs

To embed this into another area we recommend;

- Finding a council sponsor for creating a digital health hub
- Adopting the set of principles

If you would like to discuss how you might be able to try something in your area please contact [pete@goodthingsfoundation.org](mailto:pete@goodthingsfoundation.org)

# Assets

## Coming soon

We're working with partners to evaluate the health hubs. We'll publish the report on our [Digital Health Lab website](#) later in 2020.

## More about the Nailsea health hub pathfinder

[Evaluation of Nailsea health hub pathfinder](#)

[Case Studies](#)

[Design Workshop Stakeholders](#)

[Design Workshop Pop up shop \(user research\)](#)

[Alpha Review](#)

[65 High Street Micro Blog](#)

[Nailsea Place Website](#)

## NHS and Good Things digital health resources

[Learn My Way](#)

[NHS.UK](#)

[NHS Apps Library](#)