



Library Digital Inclusion Fund Action Research Project Evaluation

Final Report
July 2016

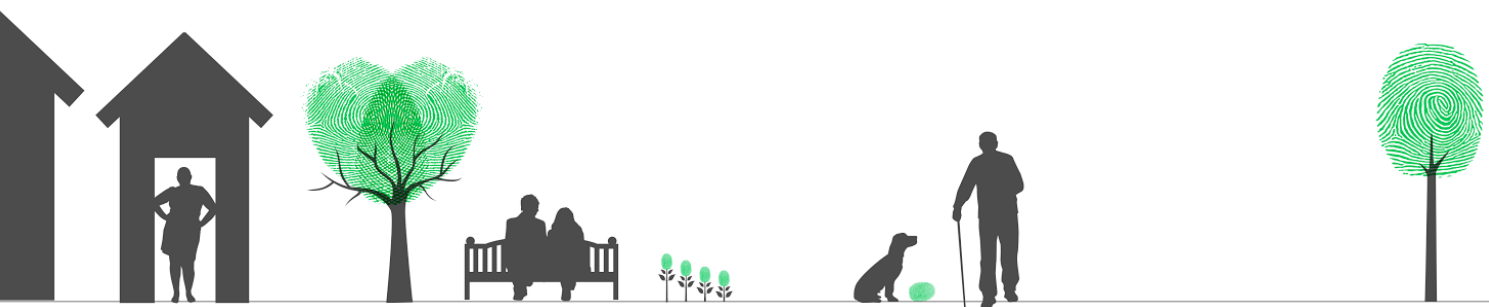


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Forewords

Helen Milner OBE

In today's society, more than ever, it's vital that people can gain the digital skills they need - in order to apply for benefits and search for jobs, find information and access financial savings. But there are still 12.6 million people in the UK who don't have basic digital skills. In order to close this gap, and ensure everyone has the digital skills that they need, it's key that we work together across sectors, building lasting partnerships and sharing expertise.

Libraries - as trusted, accessible places in the local community, staffed by experts who are committed to opening up learning to their communities - are key to us achieving this.

Through the UK online centres network, we support thousands of libraries every year to help people in their communities develop the digital skills they need to improve their lives. But we want to do more, to ensure libraries can work with other partners, both locally and nationally, can reach deeper to support excluded groups, and can embed the most effective delivery models that complement the other services they offer.

Through our Library Digital Inclusion Fund, we've aimed to investigate the barriers that prevent libraries from delivering digital inclusion activity, and to investigate and highlight what does work in helping them to do more, and to have the biggest impact on the communities they support.

This report sets out what we have learnt through the project, including how libraries can better access online platforms to measure their impact, can build strong local partnerships, and can use innovative approaches to reach some of the most excluded groups in their communities. For the 16 library services that took part, the project has been a great way for them to test new approaches and discover what works.

We will now aim to work with partners from across the sector - including the Libraries Taskforce, the Society for Chief Librarians and Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals - to ensure that these findings can be shared and embedded across the sector. We'll also use the findings to create new resources, tools and services that can help libraries to do more, more effectively, to really maximise their reach and impact, ensuring everyone in their communities can benefit from digital skills.

Helen Milner
Chief Executive
Tinder Foundation

Executive Summary

As the UK's leading digital inclusion organisation, Tinder Foundation works closely with public libraries to deliver innovative and sustainable digital inclusion projects, with more than 2,900 libraries as part of the national network of UK online centres that Tinder Foundation manages and supports. In September 2015, to build on this experience and following consultation with the Libraries Taskforce, Tinder Foundation launched the Library Digital Inclusion Fund: a six-month action research project that ran between 1 October 2015 and 31 March 2016.¹ The £100,000 fund was open to libraries that already had WiFi installed in their premises, and was intended to help them engage hard to reach library users who were socially and digitally excluded, and to deliver basic digital skills training through innovative delivery models using WiFi and mobile technology as enablers.²

Funding was awarded to 16 Library services located around the country ('Library Research Partners' - see Appendix 1) and enabled them to run action research pilots that would:

1. Test and learn from a range of **library delivery models using WiFi and mobile technology** and explore how these can be used to support development of digital skills for local populations, both within and outside the library setting.
2. Identify the **cost per head of delivering digital skills training** and digital inclusion activities in libraries, with a particular focus on engagement and delivery models which support hard to reach groups.
3. Identify any universal or flexible online methods of **tracking development of digital skills** which could be used across libraries nationally in order to manage digital inclusion activities and provide evidence of impact to stakeholders.

In addition, and following the £7.4m invested by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport last year which saw the completed installation of WiFi in 99% of public libraries in England, the project was designed to highlight to library services, local authorities and the Government the **need for further investment in digital skills training in libraries**, to ensure people can develop digital skills through library services and mobile technology.

¹ Libraries Taskforce was set up in response to the Independent Library Report for England, to provide leadership and help to reinvigorate the public library service

² Digital skills as defined in the [Digital Skills Framework](#) developed by Go ON UK in collaboration with the London School of Economics (LSE), Citizens 8 Online, the London Business School and Tinder Foundation.

Tinder Foundation's Research and Innovation team conducted a detailed evaluation of the project, comparing the experiences of the 16 Library Research Partners that participated in the project, to identify important lessons and examples of best practice that will be of significant interest to key stakeholders. as outlined below.³

The Library Digital Inclusion Fund supported **1,630** digitally excluded people to improve their basic digital skills, of which **827** have been supported to access health information online and develop their digital health literacy skills to enable them to better manage their own health.^{4,5} Delivery took place in over **200** library branches and in a **variety of outreach locations** including people's homes, day care services, and a social enterprise that provides support for unemployed adults with learning difficulties or debilitating illnesses.

Summary of Key Findings and Best Practice

1. Library delivery models identified

Delivery using library branch network - Library Research Partners took advantage of the installation of WiFi across libraries by delivering in over 200 library branches in their hyper-local network, using WiFi enabled laptops and tablets in urban and rural areas.

Tablet delivery - Library Research Partners lent tablets during digital skills sessions, providing a 'try before you buy' opportunity for learners. Barnet Libraries lent tablets to learners within the library space, which they could then use independently, and Leeds Central Library lent tablets to housebound learners for use in their own homes.

Mobile classroom delivery - Somerset Libraries' innovative 'Open the Box' delivery model took the form of a mobile classroom consisting of a box containing 10 WiFi enabled tablets, a screen and a projector, which was taken out to library branches with WiFi around the county, enabling outreach delivery to older people with limited mobility living in rural areas.

³ See Appendix 2 for a description of the evaluation approach.

⁴ Learners were required to complete a minimum of 2 courses on the Basic Online Skills package on [Learn My Way](#) or a minimum of 4 digital skills taught through library partners' own support materials that were reported back using an Online Tutor Return tool called CaptureIT

⁵ This was achieved by library research partners signposting learners to the [Being Healthy page](#) on Learn My Way; by supporting learners to complete the health courses on Learn My Way; or by completing a health online tutor return on CaptureIT

Partnership delivery - Library Research Partners developed partnerships to support their delivery models to help them recruit volunteers, to reach established groups of hard to reach people, and to deliver in outreach locations. 75% of Research Partners recruited volunteers as Digital Champions to increase their capacity to deliver digital skills, including local residents, Halifax Digital Champions,⁶ Barclays Digital Eagles,⁷ and student volunteers.

2. Cost considerations for library digital inclusion activities

We estimate that the **average cost per head** of delivering digital inclusion activities through the project to be **approximately £40**, but this single figure belies the complex considerations described by Library Research Partners who reported their costs.⁸ These included different levels of existing infrastructure and different hourly rates for staff and tutors involved in delivery, as well as additional costs incurred due to changes in staffing as part of ongoing restructures and cuts. But cost also depended heavily on what Libraries Research Partners were trying to achieve, and how excluded their target audience was, which could incur additional expenditure for travelling to and hiring outreach venues, contracting specialist tutors, and delivering to smaller groups. A relatively large group session delivered within a library - ideal for supporting high volumes of learners with good mobility and the confidence and motivation to attend such a class - was costed as low as **£25 per head**; a support model based on one-to-one sessions delivered in outreach locations - better suited to supporting a small number of hard-to-reach learners with limited mobility and low confidence - was costed at **£125 per head**. Across the project, success and value meant more than simply keeping costs to a minimum.

3. Methods for tracking the development of digital skills across library network

In order to test a flexible, universal method of tracking libraries' delivery of digital skills, we asked Library Research Partners to use Tinder Foundation's own online learning platform [Learn My Way](#), which automatically captures MI data on learners' activity and progress, and online tutor return tool [CaptureIT](#), which allowed Library Research Partners to track learners and record digital skills delivered using their own materials and resources. Library Research Partners were free to use either one or both of these tools to track and record learners progression.

⁶ Halifax staff have been trained as digital champion volunteers and are part of Lloyds Banking Group's work in financial and digital inclusion

⁷ Barclays Bank staff also have digital champion volunteers who go out into community organisations

⁸ The average cost per head of delivering digital inclusion activities refers to the ongoing delivery of digital skills training and excludes one off set up costs such as equipment and staff training. More information on set up costs can be found on p.14.

Learn My Way was well-received, with 13 out of 15 Library Research Partners stating they were likely to continue using it beyond the project lifetime. Only 8 stated that they would continue to use CaptureIT, since they had their own established reporting procedures in place, or preferred Learn My Way. This suggests that an online tool which combines learning with automatic MI data capture meets libraries' needs better than a simple online tutor return, since it adds capacity at a time when library staff are under pressure and have little time to deliver digital inclusion activities. However, Library Research Partners that did use CaptureIT reported that it enabled them to record a greater range of digital inclusion activities delivered using a wider variety of learning materials. As with cost per head, the ideal approach for tracking and evidencing digital skills depended on local conditions and the aims of individual pilots. This suggests that there is a balance to be struck: to find a tool that is flexible enough to meet the needs of individual libraries, while universal enough to collect comparable data across an entire Library Service.

Interviews also revealed that, while both tools were well received, it was important for Library Research Partners to have access to ongoing training and support so that library staff could fully understand the process of using such tools and to embed the ethos of capturing MI.

4. Project Impact and Return on Investment

Return on investment of delivering digital inclusion activities - We calculate that project beneficiaries moving from face-to-face and telephone to online channels will generate potential cost savings of more than £800k per annum - more than £492 per person supported - across local and national government services in areas where library services participated in the project. This suggests that libraries are an important resource for local authorities and government services seeking to implement digital by default and channel shift agendas, and that investment in libraries to deliver digital skills is justified by a significant potential return on investment. It could be assumed that if similar activities were recreated across all 151 library services in England, over £7.5 million of cost savings could be achieved. See Appendix 4 for full details of the methodology used in calculations.

Impact on Learners - The project supported hard to reach demographics: typically those less likely to engage with libraries, adult learning or digital skills training due to specific access barriers such as financial difficulties, health and disability issues, lack of motivation due to

previous negative learning experience, lower levels of literacy or English-language skills and limited or non-existent computer or internet access at home.

These demographic groups included people on low incomes, physically disabled people, people with sensory impairments, people with learning disabilities, unpaid carers, people with mild to moderate mental health issues, job seekers, older people over 65, those who are housebound or socially isolated, and non-native English speakers.

All of the learners interviewed reported increased confidence in using a computer and going online, which in some instances allowed them to go on and practically apply these skills to their lives, allowing them to become digitally engaged and benefit from improved social and economic outcomes.

Impact on libraries - All Library Research Partners reported that they will continue to deliver digital inclusion activities using models developed through the project, and that their pilots enabled frontline library staff to engage with digital and learn delivery skills. 94% of Library Research Partners formed at least one new partnership with another organisation to deliver basic digital skills in their communities, and 73% of the Library Research Partners agreed that the project helped them raise awareness of library digital inclusion activities at local authority level, and 80% agreed that the project helped them advocate the vital work libraries do in relation to supporting digitally excluded people.

Next Steps and Recommendations

Evaluation of the Library Digital Inclusion Fund has suggested a number of ways in which Library Services and national library stakeholders can work more effectively - individually and in partnership - to put digital inclusion at the heart of libraries' activity, and how Tinder Foundation can support and champion libraries within the UK online centres network. This report concludes with recommendations for Library Services, National Library stakeholders, Government, and for Tinder Foundation.

Introduction

The role of libraries in digital inclusion

It is estimated that there are currently 12.6 million adults in the UK who lack basic digital skills and 5.3 million who have never used the internet.^{9,10} Lack of digital skills and access - known as digital exclusion - correlates with a range of other forms of social exclusion including loneliness, low educational attainment, low income, disability and poor health. Digital exclusion compounds these disadvantages, limiting access to online routes to communication, learning, health information, and employment.

Libraries are well-known and heavily used by digitally and socially excluded people. They are trusted, local spaces, freely accessible to all, and the key role they can play in tackling the problem of digital exclusion is recognised by library stakeholders. The Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) includes digital inclusion as one of its key Universal Offers; the Libraries Taskforce has recognised digital inclusion as a key priority in its Libraries Deliver document; and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) has developed a Digital Inclusion Statement.^{11,12} Arts Council England's 2014 Evidence review of the economic contribution of libraries also evidences how libraries regularly support people to get online for the first time and gain basic digital skills.¹³ Libraries also have an important role in enabling those on low incomes to access the internet, as evidenced by the most recent Library Users' Survey of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants (CIPFA), which concludes that "library computer use is proportionally far higher for those living in the most deprived areas and this group also rate the computer services far higher."¹⁴

The Libraries Digital Inclusion Fund

Tinder Foundation also understands the important role public libraries can play in delivering innovative and sustainable digital inclusion projects. Libraries comprise more than half of the UK online centres network, and in 2015-16 Tinder Foundation awarded more than £316,000 of grant funding to 46 library services across 486 individual libraries in England to undertake digital inclusion activities, as well as providing support to more than 2,900 other libraries in the network, through the curation of a free online learning platform, Learn My Way, as well

⁹ [Go On Basic Digital Skills UK Report 2015](#), p.7

¹⁰ [ONS, Statistical Bulletin Internet Users, 2016](#)

¹¹ [SCL Universal Digital Offer](#)

¹² [Libraries Deliver: Ambition for public libraries in England 2016-2021](#)

¹³ [Evidence review of the economic contribution of libraries](#), (p.44 2014)

¹⁴ [CIPFA Public Library Users' Survey: Deprivation Report 2012/13](#) (next report due in the summer of 2016)

as other online tools, free marketing materials, training, advice and advocacy. Libraries in the online centres network form an essential national infrastructure with the capacity to deliver digital inclusion activities to the heart of communities across the UK (see Appendix 3).

Following last year's £7.4m investment from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), which saw the installation of WiFi in 99% of public libraries in England, Tinder Foundation saw the need for research and insight into how mobile technology could be used to maximise the impact of WiFi in libraries and to demonstrate the importance and benefits of investing in the development of library users' digital skills.

Following consultation with the Libraries Taskforce, Tinder Foundation launched the Library Digital Inclusion Fund, a six-month action research project that ran between October 2015 and March 2016. Funding was open to libraries that already had WiFi installed, to help them to engage and support hard-to-reach learners who were socially and digitally excluded, and to deliver innovative basic digital skills training using WiFi and mobile technology.¹⁵ Library Research Partners were funded depending on their capacity to deliver, with contract sizes of £5,000, £7,500 and £10,000. Funding equated to £50 per learner, reflecting the time required by library staff to engage and support learners through the various activities demanded by our evaluation.

Evaluation Approach

The evaluation approach used action research principles, to ensure *reflection, data collection, and action* occurred throughout the project, and to enable findings to be fed back into the success of the project to shape delivery. Members of the Research & Innovation team at Tinder Foundation gathered in-depth qualitative data through webinars, and baseline and progression interviews with Library Research Partner project leads. Qualitative data was also collected from library staff, tutors, volunteers and learners. Quantitative data on learner numbers and activity was gathered and analysed through Learn My Way and CaptureIT, Tinder Foundation's specialist online learning and learner management tools, and an end of project survey. Full details of the evaluation approach can be found in Appendix 2. An interim findings report for the the project was published in February 2016, outlining some of the approaches the Library Research Partners used to engage people who are socially excluded.

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¹⁵ Basic Digital Skills are defined in the [Digital Skills Framework](#) developed by Go ON UK in collaboration with the London School of Economics (LSE), Citizens 8 Online, the London Business School and Tinder Foundation.

¹⁶ [Library Digital Inclusion Action Research Project Evaluation - Interim Findings Report](#)

Project Findings

1. Delivery models identified to help support the development of digital skills for hard to reach audiences.

Library Research Partners ran digital inclusion pilots that enabled them to engage and support a wide range of hard to reach learners who were socially and digitally excluded, testing and learning about innovative models that used WiFi and mobile technology and can be replicated and scaled.

Common themes across projects included the use of fixed wireless, mobile WiFi hotspots, and WiFi enabled laptops and tablets that were owned either by the library service or brought in by learners.¹⁷ 15 out of 16 Library Research Partners used tablets as part of their delivery and all encouraged learners to use mobile technology. Pilots were managed by senior staff, and delivered by frontline staff, tutors, and staff from partner organisations; in some cases volunteers were recruited to support delivery. Delivery took place within library spaces as well as outreach locations. Some Library Research Partners used one model of delivery, others used a combination.

Delivery models

Use of Library Branch Network

With WiFi in all of their library branches, the 16 Library Research Partners together delivered in over 200 library branches, using WiFi enabled laptops and tablets that were owned either by the library service or brought in by users, to engage with hard to reach learners who were willing to travel to their local library. **Doncaster Libraries** organised digital skills sessions in all of its branch libraries, including volunteer-led libraries. **Somerset Libraries** and **Derbyshire Libraries** delivered to learners in libraries in rural locations, with free WiFi bringing the internet into the heart of these isolated communities. Some of the Library Research Partners, including **Newcastle City Libraries**, **Nottingham Libraries** and **Doncaster Libraries**, delivered at their central library where they had access to IT suites and up-to-date laptops, tablets, and library PCs. The city location also had the highest concentration of learners from target

¹⁷ A mobile WiFi hotspot is where a mobile WiFi dongle broadcasts a local wireless network connection which is available to any authorised users in the vicinity with a wireless enabled device

audiences, and easy access to local partnership organisations such as Jobcentre Plus, community organisations and housing associations.

Lending tablets within library space

A number of Library Research Partners, such as **Gateshead Libraries** and **Somerset Libraries**, lent tablets within the library space during digital skills sessions, delivered by library staff and tutors, for learners to use, whilst offering a 'try before you buy' opportunity if learners were interested in having a tablet. **Barnet Libraries** went one step further by lending tablets to learners, in the same way a book would be lent, with the proviso that learners used the tablet within the library space which they could then use independently.

Mobile classroom delivery

Somerset Libraries innovative delivery model 'Open the Box' was delivered in the form of **mobile classroom delivery** where a box containing 10 WiFi enabled tablets, a screen and a projector, was taken out to library branches with WiFi around the county, enabling outreach delivery in rural areas to isolated populations and older people who are less mobile.

Tablet Home Loan scheme

Leeds Central Library's digital inclusion pilot 'Connect-Ability' included a tablet home loan scheme which tested to see how lending tablets along with personal support through home visits can help to engage isolated, housebound or disabled people with digital and the world around them. Sessions were delivered by staff and volunteers to housebound learners exclusively in their own homes, using WiFi enabled tablets, 4G SIM cards and a mobile WiFi dongle. Tablets were lent to learners for up to three weeks at a time to allow them to practice in their own time between sessions.

Partnership delivery

A number of Library Research Partners worked in partnership with organisations to help them recruit volunteers, to reach established groups of hard to reach people, and to deliver in outreach locations. **Newcastle City Library**, for example, partnered with housing association Your Homes Newcastle and delivered sessions to housing tenants in the central library. **Doncaster Libraries** partnered with their local authority digital team who then delivered digital skill sessions in a social enterprise that provides support for unemployed adults with learning difficulties or debilitating illnesses. Other outreach delivery locations included a hospital, a church, a foodbank, and local community centres. **Cumbria Libraries**

partnered with a day care service and delivered sessions within their premises. Four out of the 16 Library Research Partners **partnered with educational institutions**, such as colleges and universities, to recruit volunteers to build capacity for library services, support library staff, and to provide one-to-one intergenerational support to learners, using WiFi, mobile WiFi hotspots and Wifi enabled laptops and tablets that were owned either by the library service or learners.

Partnership library delivery model case study - Cumbria Libraries

Cumbria Libraries established a successful partnership with a local college, recruiting Health & Social Care students as student volunteers to help deliver group sessions and provide one-to-one support to learners with physical and learning disabilities. Thanks to the success of Cumbria's pilot, this partnership is set to continue beyond the project.

"We literally couldn't have delivered this project without the students - they've been wonderful, and they've taught us a thing or two about technology along the way.... Our original aim was to target people with physical disabilities and learning difficulties through key partnerships with intermediaries. We knew that this audience would need individual support, and that's when we approached the Lakes College to talk about the students on the Health and Social Care course."

Kathryn Flagner, Cumbria Libraries.

"The collaboration with Cumbria Libraries was invaluable, giving students a fantastic breadth of experience. They got to work with such a diverse range of service users, from a lip reading group to groups with physical learning or other communication difficulties. It was extremely useful and rewarding for the students to learn how to support different people in different ways."

Tina Sellars, Work Placement Coordinator at Lakes College working with Health and Social Care students.

2. Cost considerations for library digital inclusion activities which support hard to reach audiences.

Library Research Partners revealed a range of considerations when calculating the cost per head of **running digital inclusion activities** in libraries and outreach locations through the project. Cost considerations differed between delivery models and pilots which we have split between **set up costs of pilots** and **costs of delivering basic digital skill training**.

Set up costs of their library digital inclusion pilots included **staff costs**: preparation and planning of their pilot; **hardware costs**: procurement of tablets, SIM cards, mobile WiFi dongles, memory sticks, and headphones; **training costs**: staff time required for training i.e. attending Tinder Foundation training webinar at the start of project, using Learn My Way online tutor resources and eLearning courses, and project leads' delivery of training to library staff; **marketing costs**: design and printing of leaflets/flyers to promote their digital inclusion activities.

Delivery costs of their pilots included on going **staff and tutor resource costs** needed to deliver basic digital skill training; **operational costs** including **staff and volunteer management** by Digital Inclusion leads; and **travel costs** for volunteers and library staff travelling to branch libraries or partnership locations to deliver digital skills training (one Library Research Partner also covered travel expenses of learners travelling to their library to ensure they engaged with a specific group of learners).

Taking into account the range of delivery costs, we estimate that the **average cost per head** of **delivering digital inclusion activities** through the project to be **approximately £40**, but this single figure belies the complex considerations described by Library Research Partners who reported their costs.¹⁸ These included different levels of existing infrastructure and different hourly rates for staff and tutors involved in delivery, as well as additional costs incurred due to changes in staffing as part of ongoing restructures and cuts. But cost also depended heavily on what Libraries Research Partners were trying to achieve, and how excluded their target audience was, which could incur additional expenditure for travelling to and hiring outreach venues, contracting specialist tutors, and delivering to smaller groups.

¹⁸ The average cost per head of delivering digital inclusion activities refers to the ongoing delivery of digital skills training and excludes one off set up costs such as equipment and staff training.

Cost comparisons and examples

Based on feedback from Library Research Partners, a relatively large group session delivered within a library - ideal for supporting high volumes of learners with good mobility and the confidence and motivation to attend such a class - was costed as low as **£25 per head**; a support model based on one-to-one sessions delivered in outreach locations - better suited to supporting a small number of hard-to-reach learners with limited mobility and low confidence - was costed at **£125 per head**. Across the project, success and value meant more than simply keeping costs to a minimum.

Best practice example of identifying all costs involved in setting up and running a digital inclusion pilot

Somerset Libraries took a rigorous approach to identifying costs involved in setting up and running their 'Open the Box' pilot, providing a replicable costing model for other library services.

Set up costs accounted for included marketing costs for branding, posters, flyers and banners; planning, coordination, materials and training costs; and costs of equipment tablets and covers. **Delivery costs** accounted for included staff costs to deliver basic digital skill sessions and travel costs to rural library branches.

Providing detailed costings allows libraries to provide evidence, demonstrate their role in delivering digital inclusion activities, and is useful for when applying for funding opportunities.

Findings from the project revealed whilst the initial cost of implementing their individual pilots was high, this would reduce over time once pilots were established and sustainable mechanisms were in place such as the upskilling of staff, the recruitment and training of volunteers, the formation of partnerships, the procurement of mobile technology, and the creation of training notes, that would enable delivery to continue beyond the project.

When considering the costs of delivery, the significant and economic benefits of equipping people with Basic Digital Skills, including both cost and time savings, as well as the social

and wellbeing benefits should also be acknowledged.¹⁹ Arts Council England has also produced research on the health and wellbeing benefits of public libraries and the medical cost savings associated with library usage.²⁰

3. Methods for tracking the development of learner digital skills across library network

One of the aims of the project was to ascertain how a single learning platform and reporting system for libraries could be used universally or flexibly as a method for tracking the development of learners digital skills, whilst capturing Management Information (MI) and evidencing outputs, that could be used across libraries nationally in order to manage digital inclusion activities and provide evidence of impact to stakeholders.

This was achieved by Library Research Partners testing examples of such a platform, namely Tinder Foundation's online learning platform, [Learn My Way](#), which has a built-in learner management information tool; and [CaptureIT](#), a simple online tutor return that allows libraries to track and record digital skills learning delivered using their own materials and favourite online learning resources, whilst capturing MI.²¹

Library Research Partners universally used one or both of the MI tools to track and record learners progression as a condition of the project, however a small number of Library Research Partners reported they were unlikely to continue using either of the tools tested as they have other reporting tools in place, suggesting that a flexible method for tracking the development of learners digital skills, whilst capturing MI is preferred. This is further evidenced as the project evaluation revealed significantly more of the Library Research Partners are likely to continue using an online learning platform that captures management information automatically, compared to using a simple online tutor return that captures MI.

Tracking Basic Digital Skills

Library Research Partners commented that the MI tools tested were useful for them to be able to evidence their digital inclusion activities. A number of the Library Research Partners commented how they hadn't previously tracked the progression of learners' digital skills, focussing instead on the collection of attendance data. Where Library Research Partners

¹⁹ [The Economic impact of digital skills and inclusion in the UK, CEBR, 2015](#)

²⁰ [The health and wellbeing benefits of public libraries, 2015](#)

²¹ [Capture IT online tutor return allows libraries to record and track digital skills gained by learners using their favourite learning resources \(outside of Learn My Way\)](#)

were tracking learner progression, they were using tools such as SharePoint and their own learner evaluation forms which didn't always capture learning outcomes, highlighting the need for library staff to develop evidence-based practice.

In terms of learning resources, before their involvement in the project, most Research Partners used a combination of their own learning resources and online learning guides such as Digital Unite.

Online learning platform with built-in MI

Library Research Partners reported that the online learning platform with its built-in learner management information tool provided them with a flexible approach to delivering digital inclusion sessions as it could support both group and one-to-one sessions, and be used as part of a blended learning model (digital and face to face support) or used as a standalone online learning resource for learners to use independently, whilst capturing MI automatically. This makes it a particularly useful tool during a time when library staff are under pressure and time short to deliver digital inclusion activities as it provides library staff access to instant learning materials.

Library Research Partners reported that learners found the online learning platform accessible, and easy to follow, and it provided them with a sense of security as it was an online resource being used by the library. It also provided learners with the opportunity to develop their skills in a safe environment, before using a more complex website like Universal Jobmatch.

After doing learning their basic digital skills through Learn My Way, the majority of learners went on to develop their digital skills further, through Learn My Way or other online resources such as FutureLearn. Popular Learn My Way course packages completed outside of those required for the project included *Internet Safety*, *Managing Money*, and packages related to job seeking such as *Jobs and Skills*, and *Skills for Job Applications*.

87% of (13/15) Library Research Partners reported they are likely to continue to use Learn My Way now the project has finished.

Online tutor return with MI

Library Research Partners reported the MI online tutor return less intuitive to use, than the online learning platform with its built-in learner management information tool, however those that did use it successfully - CaptureIT being the example used - found it really useful, as while capturing MI it also enabled them to track and record a wide variety of digital inclusion activities using a variety of learning materials, whilst reacting to learners individual needs.

To ensure digitally excluded learners gained maximum benefit, some of the Library Research Partners introduced a form, that could be filled out by learners to engage them into asking for bite-size IT skills support whilst at the same time providing information for initial assessment. This in turn helped Library Research Partners ensure learners were given the best support, and differentiate group sessions whilst recording information that could be recorded through the MI tool. While some of the Library Research Partners highlighted this was time consuming, it also allowed them to capture qualitative information that they could then use in their own reporting and evidence outputs.

62% of (8/15) Library Research Partners reported they are likely to continue to use CaptureIT to record and track digital skills gained by learners now the project has finished.

Those Library Research Partners less likely to use CaptureIT in the future, reported they already have established reporting procedures in place, or preferred to use an online learning platform with built-in MI, such as Learn My Way.

Training and ongoing support are essential for ongoing use of a digital skills tracking tool.

With not all Library Research Partners having used tracking tools before, project leads and Tinder Foundation helped library staff to master MI tools using Learn My Way and CaptureIT. Across all 16 Library Research Partners, library staff completed 82 digital skills courses across four course packages, as evidenced through data captured through Learn My Way. Training undertaken included *Introduction to Learn My Way; Digital Champion Training; Capture IT and Management Information; and Delivering Health Information online*, acknowledging the importance of such tools. This highlights the importance for Library staff to have ongoing training and support, to fully understand the process of using such tools and to embed the ethos of capturing MI.

73% of (11/15) Library Research Partners agreed the Library Digital Inclusion Fund has helped them track and record the development of learner’s digital skills with online tools.

Library case study - Using Learn My Way in a library setting

Barnet libraries delivered digital sessions using WiFi, mobile devices and Learn My Way in a number of their branch libraries in North London. Library staff put together session delivery plans based on Learn My Way, so that individual libraries could then tailor their delivery to their different audiences.

“The beauty of Learn My Way is that the content is there for them [library staff] to follow, and once they’re familiar with the courses they want to deliver they’re good to go””Learn My Way lets us track learner progression, although we’ve also kept offline learner diaries. So far satisfaction levels have been really high. 85% of our learners say they now use the internet more, and all say they’re more confident online, thanks to our classes. Many have moved on to other Learn My Way Courses or were referred to other IT courses at local colleges or elsewhere.”

Neil McLaughlin, Service Development Librarian at Barnet Libraries

4. Project Impact and Return on Investment

Return on investment of delivering digital inclusion activities - We calculate that project beneficiaries moving from face-to-face and telephone to online channels will generate potential cost savings of more than £800k per annum - more than £492 per person supported - across local and national government services in areas where library services participated in the project. This suggests that libraries are an important resource for local authorities and government services seeking to implement digital-by-default and channel shift agendas, and that investment in libraries to deliver digital skills is justified by a significant potential return on investment. It could be assumed that if similar activities were recreated across all 151 library services in England, over £7.5 million of cost savings could be achieved. See Appendix 4 for full details of the methodology used in calculations.

Impact on Learners - The project supported hard to reach demographics, typically those less likely to engage with libraries, adult learning or digital skills training due to specific access barriers such as financial difficulties, health and disability issues; lack of motivation due to previous negative learning experience or awareness; lower skill levels such as low literacy or English language skills, and often no or limited computer or internet access at home.

These demographic groups included people on low incomes, physically disabled people, people with sensory impairments, people with learning disabilities, unpaid carers, people with mild to moderate mental health issues, job seekers, older people over 65, those who are housebound or socially isolated, and non-native English speakers.

The training received on basic digital skills led to all of the learners interviewed reporting increased confidence in using a computer and going online, which in some instances allowed them to go on and practically apply these skills to their lives, allowing them to become digitally engaged and ultimately benefit from improved social and economic outcomes. For example, we know through the project a number of learners applied for jobs online, something which they had not done before; became less socially isolated as they were able to communicate with people via email and video chatting; or went onto further learning.

Learner story

Andrew has been looking for a job after a break from the workplace following a series of strokes.

“I’ve liked learning on the tablets. I had one at home but I couldn’t make it work and it was just sat in the cupboard. Now I’ve got it back out. Things go very fast when you use the touch screen, but there’s plenty of help available here so if you go wrong someone helps you fix it pretty fast.

“This Learn My Way course has really put all the pieces of the jigsaw together for me, and started to make it make sense. I particularly like the Universal Jobmatch system. Four days after doing that bit of the course I actually got an interview. My second application. It really lifted me off the ground. You hear about people sending off thousands of applications and never hearing anything, and here I am with instant results! It’s definitely the way forward.

“That job wasn’t meant to be, but I know what I’m doing now and I’ve got every confidence I’m going to find the kind of job I’m looking for. It’s early days, but I know good things are going to happen because of this course. It’s been great.”

Andrew Keogh, Chipping Barnet Library learner

Impact on the wider community - 94% of Library Research Partners formed at least one new partnership with another organisation to deliver basic digital skills in their communities, such as housing associations, other departments within their local authorities, and with local organisations such as community centres. 75% of Library Research Partners recruited volunteers as Digital Champions to increase their capacity to deliver digital skills sessions, including local residents, Halifax Digital Champions and Barclays Digital Eagles.^{22,23} Carillion Cultural Services (CCS Libraries) reported they provided volunteers with references and a number of the Library Research Partners reported volunteers successfully went on to get a job following the project.

25% recruited student volunteers, from local educational institutions, such as colleges and universities, to support learners develop basic digital skills, benefitting all involved as the students gained useful work experience, while the libraries were able to provide intergenerational volunteer support with tech savvy young people.

The project **increased awareness, both at local authority and community level**, of library activities used to support digitally and socially excluded people through digital skills training, free WiFi, access to mobile devices and safe public spaces. Increased awareness was achieved through a number of means including advocacy, the formation of partnerships, and volunteer recruitment campaigns. For example, Leeds Central Library’s ‘Connect-Ability’ mobile device home loan pilot is likely to feature in Leeds City Council’s wider plans for digital inclusion, and Somerset Libraries’s ‘Open the Box’ - mobile classroom delivery concept - where a box containing WiFi enabled tablets, a projector and a screen, is taken around library branches in rural areas, is to be included in Somerset County Council’s Glass Box Project - a free, community space designed to help business start-ups, innovators and digital makers come together.

²² Halifax staff have been trained as digital champion volunteers and are part of Lloyds Banking Group’s work in financial and digital inclusion

²³ Barclays Bank staff also have digital champion volunteers who go out into community organisations

Next Steps & Recommendations

Evaluation of the Libraries Digital Inclusion Fund has suggested a number of ways in which Library Services and national library stakeholders can work more effectively - individually and in partnership - to put digital inclusion at the heart of libraries' activity, and how Tinder Foundation can support and champion libraries within the UK online centres network. In recognition of the importance of libraries in the UK online centres network we've created a specialist network just for libraries - Library Online Centres. Library Online Centres form an essential national infrastructure with the capacity to deliver digital and social inclusion activities to the heart of local communities across the UK (see Appendix 3).

Recommendations for Library Services

Partnerships & Consultation

Library Services have a crucial role to play in digital and social inclusion, and need to make sure that role is understood by key local stakeholders such as local authorities, Jobcentres and housing associations. Consultation with such organisations will help Library Services to understand local needs and design digital inclusion programmes that are targeted at those who need help most, and establish effective referral pathways that integrate digital skills training with other vital support services such as employability and financial inclusion; local partnerships also build capacity by helping libraries to recruit volunteers and secure venues for outreach delivery. **Tinder Foundation's** national network of online centres and associated partner organisations provides an excellent resource through which Tinder Foundation can help libraries identify, develop and strengthen local partnerships to assist in their digital and social inclusion services.

Digital Resources

Delivery models must account for the needs of target audiences and desired outcomes, and cannot take a 'one size fits all' approach: technology solutions may differ across and even within Library Services, and careful research and consultation is required before investing in permanent IT resources. Where WiFi and mobile technology is available libraries will be able to access **Tinder Foundation's** existing and future [resources](#) to develop their mobile technology offer through developing and sharing ideas, knowledge and identified good practice from both the research undertaken to date - through the Library Digital Inclusion Fund evaluation (see Project Findings section) - and from across the existing library network.

Staff & Volunteers

The availability of human resources - whether paid staff or volunteers - as well as the goals and motivations of learners, need to be considered in curriculum design, choice of delivery venue, and whether to use a blended or digital-led approach. Above all, successful engagement and progression requires learners to be treated as individuals, with initial assessment, flexible learning and individual learning outcomes. **Tinder Foundation** is working to improve the training and support materials available to [library online centres](#) to reflect these findings from the Libraries Digital Inclusion Fund, and to help library partners to develop digital inclusion services which are sustainable, cost-effective and relevant both to learners and to policymakers at a local and national level. Materials available include case studies; guidance notes on specific subjects such as using mobile technology and working with volunteers in libraries; session delivery plans on topics such as touch screen basics, internet safety, and using Universal jobmatch and Universal Credit. Also resources on how to use Capture IT and Learn My Way in libraries and links to resources such as the [Digital Libraries Hub](#), the [Libraries Handbook](#) and research.

Recommendations for National Library stakeholders

Advocate

National stakeholders need to continue to advocate for the libraries they support and represent: there remains a lack of understanding of the important role libraries have to play in digital and social inclusion, and individual libraries and Library Services do not necessarily have the resources or expertise to promote the full breadth of their work through the media. The online centres network provides a robust and effective advocacy network which is currently used to promote and champion the impact online centres have on digital and social inclusion. **Tinder Foundation** intends to work with national library stakeholders to further highlight the essential digital and social inclusion work which library online centres undertake, such as through the further development of the Library Online Centres network - a specific network through which a co-ordinated approach to advocate and promote the essential digital inclusion role libraries play across the country.

National Communications Strategy

As well as a training offer on traditional and social media for Libraries Services to help them promote their work locally, a national media strategy on libraries is also required, to disrupt

the prevailing narrative of cuts and closures, and challenge the misconception of libraries as places with fading relevance, that only provide access to books and other print media. As a first step towards such a strategy, **Tinder Foundation** is using the wealth of qualitative data and case studies collected during the Libraries Digital Inclusion Fund to communicate the incredibly important role libraries have to play, and the huge return on investment of library-led digital inclusion programmes.

Quantitative Data

The case for libraries as a national digital inclusion resource also needs comparable, quantitative data across Library Services on learner demographics, activities and progression, and such evidence can only be gathered with co-ordination at a national level. With a shortage of compelling statistics on library digital inclusion activities, **Tinder Foundation** is currently working with library stakeholders to accurately capture what's happening across the UK library network. The ultimate goal - as tested by the Libraries Digital Inclusion Fund - is a universal digital learner management tool that's flexible enough to meet the diverse needs of different Library Services, backed up by training and ongoing support.

One of the research project's aims was to identify the average cost per head of delivering digital inclusion activities. The range of approaches to calculating cost across the research partners highlighted a lack of consistency. The true impact of digital inclusion activities - or any other activity - cannot be truly gauged without a consistent standardised approach to calculating costs of delivery and therefore, in turn, identifying a return on investment. As such **Tinder Foundation** will look to work with the library network, the Libraries Taskforce and SCL to develop a standard methodology for calculating the true cost of digital inclusion activities in libraries in relation to the significant return on investment identified in the section entitled "Project Impact and Return on Investment" on p.18.

Recommendations for Government

Digital by Default

As the hubs of local communities with access and support for many people wanting to use the internet, libraries are increasingly becoming the frontline for a variety of local authority, government and other agency services. As these services continue to shift online, people are increasingly being directed to libraries as locations to access further information about these services. As such the government should recognise that the 'digital by default' agenda and associated channel shift will result in an increased pressure on libraries from the 12.6 million

adults in the UK who lack basic digital skills and the estimated 5.8 million people who have never used the internet at all. Libraries therefore require the necessary investment, resource and support from government to cope with this increased demand from people wanting the help and skills to access and use these services.

Where libraries are given the support and resources to deliver digital inclusion activities and make use of investment such as free WiFi, not only can they; help address digital exclusion at a local level, have a positive impact on people's lives and the wider community, contribute to alleviating wider social challenges, but also deliver significant returns on investment. Based on the channel shift savings calculated across the local authorities whose library services participated in the project, it can be assumed that significant savings could be made nationally, by government, if similar activities were replicated across all library services in England (over £7.5 million if the same level of activity was replicated across all 151 library services - see Appendix 4).

Digital Skills Crisis

The recent release of the Government Science & Technology Committee's report on the digital skills crisis states that 'Digital Exclusion has no place in 21st Century Britain' and that urgent action is required to tackle the crisis.²⁴ It is clear that well resourced digital inclusion activities can help reduce the amount of people excluded from the benefits of digital technology, and also help ensure people have the basic digital skills to find and secure work in an increasingly digital economy. It is clear that libraries are already helping to address the digital skills gap which is costing the UK economy £63 billion a year in lost GDP. Given the national network of libraries working with individuals and communities at a local level, we believe they are best placed to continue to be at the forefront of providing people with the digital abilities required to help close the digital skills gap.

Tinder Foundation hopes to see libraries recognised as an essential institution ideally positioned to tackle digital exclusion and the digital skills gap in the Government's forthcoming digital strategy. In addition to this the Government should further recognise the value and need for further investment in libraries nationally in order to provide them with the essential resources and support to tackle digital inclusion, and provide the basic digital skills which play such a crucial role in our society and economy. In recognition of their

²⁴ [House of Commons Science and Technology Committee: Digital skills crisis. Second Report of Session 2016-17](#)

importance in tackling digital and social exclusion, Tinder Foundation will include libraries as an integral part of any funding opportunities sought through both the Government Digital Training & Support Framework and other relevant funding sources.

Social Challenges

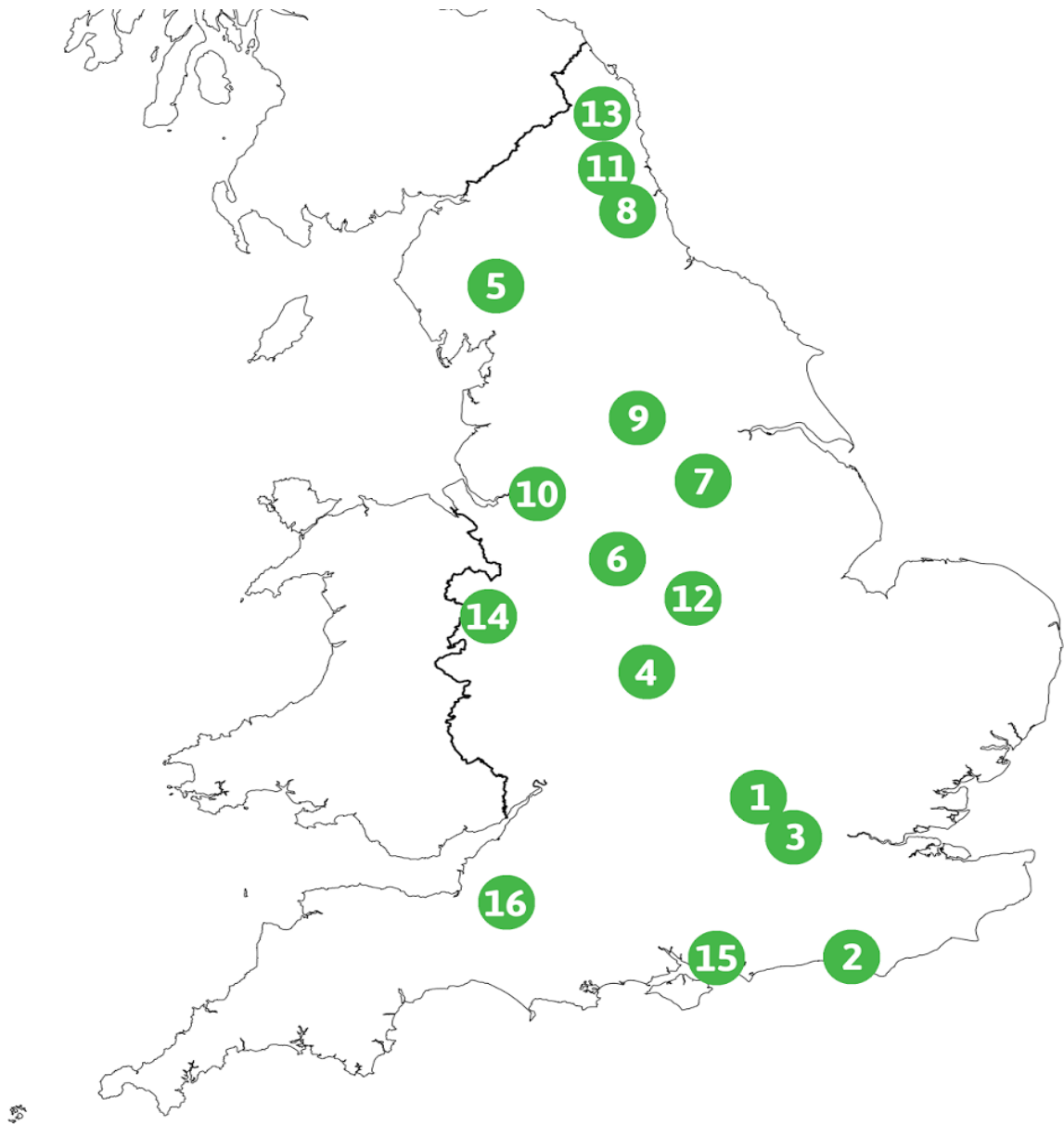
There also needs to be more recognition both locally and nationally of the contribution libraries make to combating the wider social challenges people face in the communities libraries are often located at the heart of. In particular the action research project highlighted a number of examples of where digital inclusion activities have made a significant contribution towards tackling social challenges such as loneliness and isolation, health inequality (poor mental health, poor physical health), social inequality and unemployment.

Recommendations for Tinder Foundation

- Continue the development of Tinder Foundation's library offer; as the **default national partner for libraries** in delivering digital inclusion and addressing other social inequalities through digital, Tinder Foundation will continue to support over 2,900 libraries who are members of our UK online centres network.
- Create bespoke support and training for library services and library staff delivering digital skills, and develop library learning resources including 'how to' webinars on subjects such as; using mobile technology, working with volunteers and measuring and demonstrating the impact of digital inclusion services.
- Libraries can learn from best practice from within their sector and from other sectors. Tinder Foundation will showcase the successful blended approach taken by Library Research Partners and other centres within the UK online centres network when using and delivering Learn My Way.
- Continue to develop and promote the [Digital Libraries Hub](#) to provide networking and shared best practice opportunities from across the library network.
- Continue working with national partners such as SCL, CILIP, and Libraries Taskforce to ensure a coordinated approach to support libraries tackle digital exclusion and delivering digital skills.
- Develop evidence-based practice tools so libraries can effectively demonstrate the reach and value of their digital inclusion activities using management information captured through online tools such as Learn My Way and CaptureIT.

- Tinder Foundation to hold library focused event (planned September 14th 2016) and attend other relevant library partner and stakeholder events to highlight and promote the contribution libraries make to digital and social inclusion activities across the UK, and demonstrate the practical support and advice available to libraries through the online centres network.
- Identify and secure funding through both the Government Digital Training & Support Framework and other relevant funding sources, which can be used to further support and enhance libraries delivery of digital and social inclusion activities across the UK.
- Continue to build on our research on digital inclusion activities in public libraries to demonstrate their importance in delivering basic digital skills training to people who are socially and digitally excluded.

Appendix 1: Location of Library Research Partners



1. Barnet Libraries
2. Brighton & Hove City Council Libraries - Jubilee Library
3. CCS Libraries
4. Coventry Libraries
5. Cumbria Libraries
6. Derbyshire County Council Libraries
7. Doncaster Libraries
8. Gateshead Central Library

9. Leeds Libraries & Information Service
10. Livewire Warrington (CIC)
11. Newcastle City Library
12. Nottingham City Library
13. Northumberland Libraries
14. Oswestry Library
15. Portsmouth Central Library
16. Somerset Libraries

Appendix 2: Evaluation Approach

The evaluation **aims** of the action research project were to:

- Identify engagement and delivery models which support hard to reach target audiences (including the unemployed, disabled people, unpaid carers, homeless people and people with mild to moderate mental health issues)
- Identify the cost per head of delivering digital skills training and digital inclusion activities in libraries with a particular focus on engagement and delivery models which support hard to reach groups.
- Identify if there are any universal or flexible methods of tracking development of digital skills which could be used nationally across libraries.

The evaluation **objectives** were to:

- Test and learn about the range of delivery models used by libraries to support the development of digital skills amongst local populations
- Understand the relationship between library WiFi and digital skills training and the successful development of digital inclusion activities.

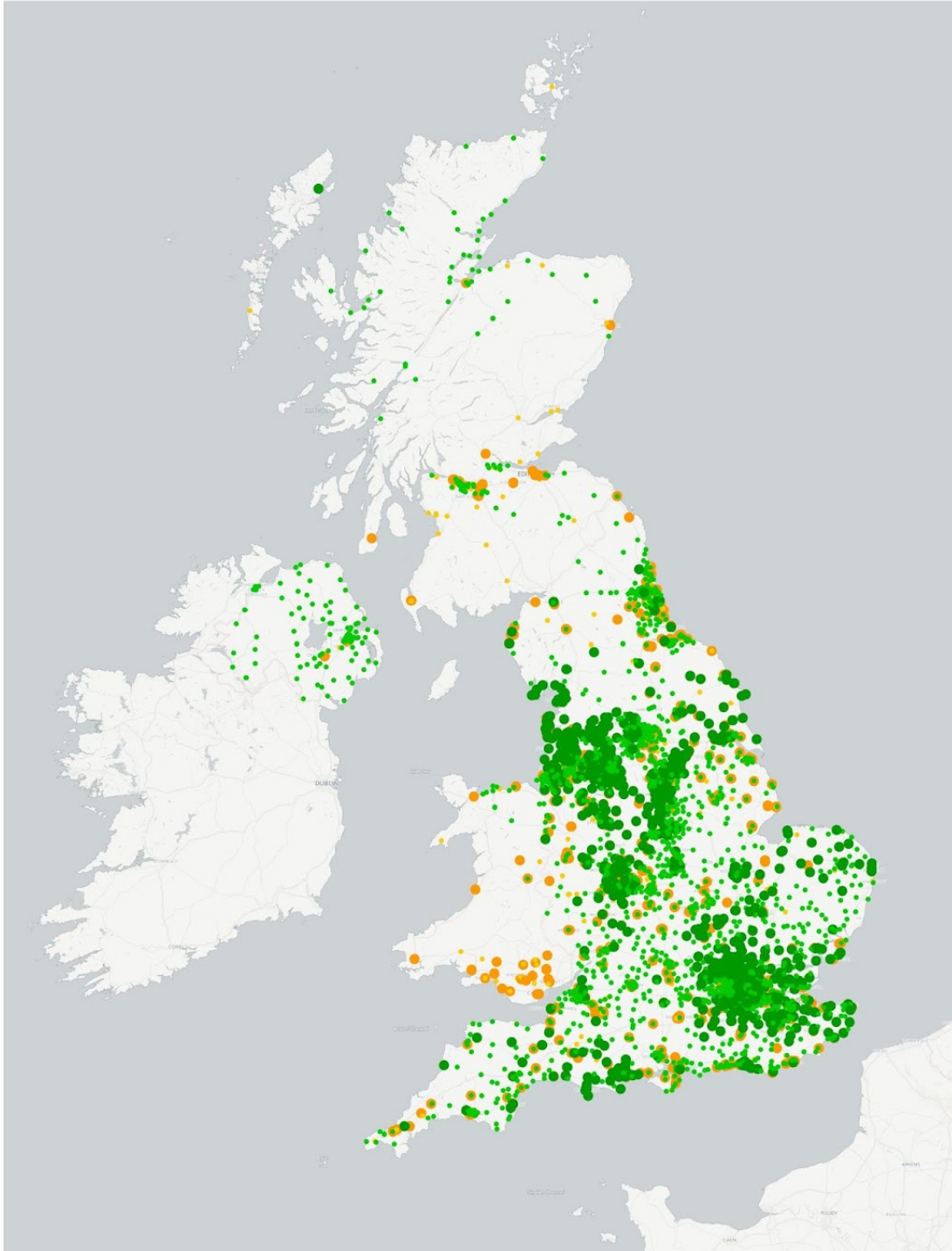
Evaluation of the Library Digital Inclusion Fund used action research principles, to ensure *reflection, data collection, and action* on project findings to shape delivery. Specific evaluation activities were as follow:

- **Baseline and progression interviews with key Library Research Partner staff** involved with planning, managing and delivering project activities.
- **An end of project survey** completed by these staff
- **Scheduled Library Research Partner webinars** to exchange information about Libraries' activities, identifying innovation, challenges and considerations and learnings about emerging cross-project themes.
- **Semi-structured interviews with learners** at each Library Research Partner, to understand their experience and motivations of learning digital skills.
- **An analysis of the cost per head of delivering digital skills training** and digital inclusion activities in libraries, and how costs vary depending on individual needs.
- A **full qualitative analysis** of Library Research Partner interviews, learner interviews and learner case studies.
- Desk research for library digital inclusion **literature review**.

Appendix 3: UK Online Centres / Library Online Centres Map

Online Centres Network - Libraries and Non-Libraries

July 2016



OGL

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Appendix 4: Example Channel Shift savings calculation

Source	Face to face visit	Telephone	Online
PWC Report ²⁵	£10.53 (potential saving of £10.45 against online)	£3.39 (potential saving of £3.31 against online)	£0.08
SOCITM ²⁶	£14.00 (potential saving of £13.83 against online)	£5.00 (potential saving of £4.83 against online)	£0.17

Table. 1 Estimated cost of interactions with public services

This example calculation is based on savings to local authorities only. The same methodology using equivalent data has been used to calculate the additional savings which includes Job Centre Plus, Benefits Office, GP appointments, A&E visits, NHS 111 Phone Service and other local or national government offices.

From Tinder Foundation's Learner and Progression Surveys, exploring what people have done following their development of their basic digital skills, we know that²⁷:

- 17% of all learners made fewer phone calls or visits to their local council in the last 3 months now they are able to find information they require online;
- Of those that made fewer calls to their Local Council, 56% saved 3 or more calls in the preceding 3 months, with the mean saving being 5.2 calls.
- Of those that made fewer visits to their Local Council, 44% saved 3 or more visits in the preceding 3 months, with the mean saving being 4.7 visits.

Applying this methodology to the project equates to 1630 people x 17% making fewer calls or visits = 277 people. Average calls saved is 5.2m therefore the number of calls saved is 277 x 5.2 = 1440 per quarter, or **5761 annually**; average visits saved is 4.7m therefore the number of visits saved is 277 x 4.7 = 1302 visits per quarter, or **5208 annually**.

Using the estimated cost of interactions, as in Table 1, and taking an average, the average cost saving per channel shift from telephone to online = £4.07, and the average cost saving per channel shift from face-to-face visit to online = £12.14

²⁵ The Economic Case for Digital Inclusion, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Oct 2009

²⁶ Local Government Information Unit, going where the eyeballs are, connecting councils with their communities, Oct 2011

²⁷ These figures are from learner responses across many different organisations and departments and would vary within specific service contexts.

Therefore total annual savings for telephone to online = $4.07 \times 5761 = \mathbf{£23,274}$

Total annual cost saving per channel shift from face-to-face = $12.14 \times 5208 = \mathbf{£63,225}$

Total saving of £86,499 (to local authorities)

Using equivalent calculations for other local and national government services, the total savings quoted of £800k comprises of;

Government Service	Annual Saving
Jobcentre Plus	£87,605.33
Benefits Office	£78,818.45
Local Council ²⁸	£86,701.26
Your GP ²⁹	£270,418.37
Accident & Emergency ³⁰	£206,553.60
NHS 111 Phone Service	£9,553.08
Any other local or national government office	£62,820.46
Estimated Annual Savings	£802,470.55

Table. 2 Potential annual cost savings broken down by government services³¹

Estimated project annual saving	£802,470.55
Average cost savings per library service (16)	£50,154.41
Potential cost saving across local & national government services if activity was recreated nationally	£7,573,315.82

Table. 3. Potential annual cost savings if research project activity recreated across all 151 library services in England.

²⁸ The Local Authority cost saving figure in Table 2. differs slightly from the example savings calculation due to the effect of rounding figures in the simplified example calculation.

²⁹ GP uses £45 per visit [The Economic impact of digital skills and inclusion in the UK, CEBR, 2015](#)

³⁰ A&E uses £132 per visit [Department of Health \(2015\) "Reference Costs 2014-15"](#)

³¹ Full data available on request

Appendix 5: Acknowledgements

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- Charlotte Self, Leeds Libraries
- Andrew Scrogham & Lisa Dawson, Newcastle Libraries
- Sarah Coulsdon, Nottingham Libraries
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- Dave Percival, Portsmouth Libraries
- Tina Redford, Livewire Warrington (CIC)
- Catherine Murphy, Somerset Libraries

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