Good Things Foundation

Place-based collaboration for digital inclusion

A how-to guide

people know HOW
Unlocking Your ideas

Contents

Welcome

Welcome to the how-to guide for place-based collaboration written in collaboration between People Know How and Good Things Foundation as part of Power Up.

This guide focuses on place-based collaboration with a view to creating a local ecosystem to support digital inclusion.

We aim to inspire and provide practical pointers about how you can engage in collaboration both within and beyond your sector, achieving organisational aims and driving social innovation.

Digital inclusion: All of us benefit fully from digital

People: Individuals are confident using digital skills to improve their lives

Place: Organisations connect digital support across communities

Provision: Organisations understand and deliver digital throughout their service

Digital inclusion

People

Place

Provision

About Power Up

Power Up is a pioneering initiative to drive economic inclusion through digital in disadvantaged communities. It does this by helping organisations embed digital skills into support for employability, financial inclusion and small businesses. It's delivered by Good Things Foundation and funded by JPMorgan Chase Foundation.

Power Up 1.0 ran from February 2020 to June 2021 and was independently evaluated. Participating organisations included housing associations, law and money advice centres, employability and financial health services, organisations supporting young people, one-parent families, and families with disabled children, and those advising new microbusinesses or start-ups. Most people supported were vulnerable or living in challenging circumstances.

The programme set up a **framework for local action** to help bring about a step change in the way that support for individuals, businesses and communities is designed and delivered.

**Power Up People
By building digital confidence:** individuals are motivated to learn and keep on learning, and to apply digital skills in their lives, businesses and at work.

**Power Up Provision
By boosting existing services:** digital is embedded into what programmes already know about effective support, to improve tangible outcomes for individuals.

**Power Up Places
By connecting organisations:** through partnerships of local providers, individuals, businesses and communities get the joined-up support they need to thrive.

Why does place based collaboration matter?

Collaboration can transform an organisation's capacity to drive social innovation and affect change at scale. In working together, learning from one another, and drawing on different strengths, collaborating groups can direct energies into deriving the best support for the community, rather than competing to provide similar services.

Working together can take many forms, from running a project in partnership, to creating manifestos or strategic documents together, to simply developing relationships to draw on in future. Each requires different resources, commitments and perhaps most importantly, trust.

By engaging in *place-based* collaboration, further emphasis is placed on communities, working with local organisations, local government, public and business sectors, as well as involving the community itself in the design, development, and delivery of the support it is receiving.
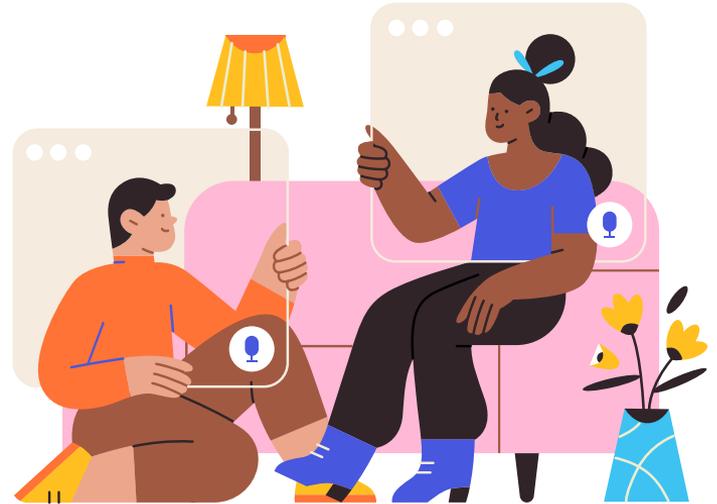
People Know How: Sharing our experiences of place-based collaboration

People Know How is a Scottish social innovation charity. At the heart of our approach is our belief that people know how to identify their needs and the solutions that will help them fulfil their potential and solve social issues.

Our services support all parts of the community, and we begin each project by asking individuals, community groups, local organisations and other sectors to share their ideas, needs, strengths and assets.

Place-based collaboration also enables us to share our learning and models of practice, allowing us to continue driving social innovation beyond service delivery. A key factor in our approach is looking to all four sectors - third, academic, public and business - to find potential collaborations. This is why we named our platform for collaboration Connect Four, because we aim to drive all four sectors to work together to identify solutions to common issues.

We have found that systems can sometimes have an unintended effect of stifling a community's wellbeing, but one potential way of reducing these effects is collaborating across sectors. From receiving device donations from large businesses to running office

buildings in collaboration with other charities, collaboration has taken us to new and exciting places.

People Know How was one of the participating organisations in Power Up in Edinburgh. We knew we were amongst many other wonderful organisations, each with their own strengths. We brought them together and formed the **Edinburgh Collective**, communicating and complementing each other to collectively harness the benefits of being part of Power Up.

It is from this footing that we write this how-to guide, so that others can consider ways of collaborating to **power up places** for long-lasting impact and more effective ways of helping people to improve their lives, communities, and businesses through digital.

Powering up places: making it happen

Place-based collaborations can be established through events, social media, Slack channels, working groups and a large variety of different forms of networking. But no matter how they begin, a key foundation of a strong collaboration is shared values. Several Power Up grantees used place-based collaboration to work with other organisations who shared their visions of digital inclusion in their communities.

**Powering Up
Edinburgh**

People Know How and the
Edinburgh Collective

**Powering Up
Tower Hamlets**

Poplar HARCA
London

**Powering Up
Bournemouth**

Bourne Digital
by Ansbury Guidance

Powering Up Edinburgh: People Know How and the Edinburgh Collective

Scottish social innovation charity People Know How became Power Up grantees as part of their Reconnect service supporting adults and families to improve wellbeing through increasing social and digital inclusion. Through place-based collaborations, they have been able to reach a larger group of service users, grow project capacity, increase knowledge and experience, and launch a national campaign in Scotland to end data poverty.

Identifying a need

After becoming Power Up grantees People Know How took a lead role in bringing a group of Edinburgh based grantees together under the name the Edinburgh Collective. This group focused on driving the digital agenda in Edinburgh through a network of partners sharing common values including One Parent Families Scotland, the Salvation Army, Prospect Community Housing, Community Renewal Trust and Family Fund.

When the Edinburgh Collective first met, they agreed to form a network through which they could refer service users between

one another, ensuring the best digital support could be provided for each individual. This worked particularly well because of how each organisation differed both geographically and thematically. By coming together to support different areas of Edinburgh across a range of different themes, they could reach more people while sharing knowledge and resources.

In working together, the Edinburgh Collective identified the need for a digital inclusion strategy for Edinburgh. Alongside this came a need to further engage the public sector, local authority and other charities. To take this forward, the Edinburgh Collective and Good Things Foundation came together to develop a series of workshops with the aim starting the conversation around the strategy. Good Things Foundation facilitated the sessions and brought together stakeholders in Edinburgh from service providers and the council to discuss existing projects, opportunities, obstacles and next steps.

Adapting through COVID

With the pandemic the collective was unable to meet, but the idea of developing an Edinburgh digital inclusion strategy remained. In the meantime, People Know How went on to support over 4,000 people to improve digital inclusion and wellbeing, including

> By coming together to support different areas of Edinburgh across a range of different themes, they could reach more people while sharing knowledge and resources.

delivering over 2,000 devices to the community, launching a national campaign in Scotland to end data poverty named Connectivity Now, and becoming operators of the Scottish government's national Connecting Scotland helpline.

Looking beyond the pandemic

Throughout all of this the charity continued to build on the digital networks developed as part of the Edinburgh Collective, establishing local partnerships with organisations across the four sectors, receiving device donations and exchanging referrals with charities, businesses and groups across the city.

In the meantime, the need for an Edinburgh digital strategy continued to grow, prompting People Know How, the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, Good Things Foundation and EVOC to come together to create the first draft of an All Age Digital Inclusion Strategy. This group is now in the process of engaging with local councillors and MSPs to connect them with local organisations across the four sectors and establish a city-wide digital inclusion strategy for Edinburgh that can be launched in 2022.

Powering Up Tower Hamlets: Poplar HARCA, London

For Poplar HARCA, a housing association in London, the Power Up project acted as a stepping-stone to forging partnerships with local schools, providing families with children on free school meals with a means to catch up with home-schooling through the provision of devices and faster broadband connections.

🔍 Identifying a need

In their 2016 strategic plan, the housing association outlined the vision of all Poplar residents having access to fast broadband and online services: a vision for a 'Wireless Poplar'. Plans to achieve this ambition didn't materialise at that time, but the vision had been set and the groundwork had started.

In the meantime, Poplar HARCA ran digital inclusion projects in community centres and won a small grant enabling them to recruit 20 digital champions. When they received grant-funding to be part of the Power Up initiative, they harnessed this experience to further improve the digital skills of both unemployed and under-employed local residents to help them get into jobs or move to better-paying, more secure jobs.

Adapting through COVID

With the arrival of COVID, service delivery moved online and Poplar HARCA's community centres and training venues had to shut their doors. In the meantime the need for devices, broadband and the skills to navigate the internet became apparent for most, including older people, home-schooling children and those who now had to work remotely from home. As Power Up grantees, Poplar HARCA were well-placed to loan out 30 tablets to vulnerable residents who had expressed fears of isolation and being cut off from the wider world due to the pandemic. Soon after, requests for laptops and connections began pouring in from various quarters including local schools. The Power Up grant provided a springboard for further, more ambitious collaboration.

Looking beyond the pandemic

As a result, Poplar HARCA collaborated with LETTA Trust to revisit and refresh earlier plans for a 'Wireless Poplar'. Through meetings and networking, the Connected Communities Inclusive Broadband partnership scheme was developed, led by Poplar HARCA in partnership with LETTA Trust Schools, Tower Hamlets Council, East End Community Foundation, and Community Fibre to reach as many as 10,000 families.

Read the report: Stories of change from the Connective Communities Inclusive Broadband Project, an independent evaluation by the Institute of Global Prosperity.

Powering Up Bournemouth: Bourne Digital

When careers and employability charity Ansbury Guidance partnered with Skills & Learning, Bournemouth Libraries and Dorset Council, they brought together a range of knowledge and experiences to form Bourne Digital - using grant-funding from the Power Up initiative.

🔍 Identifying a need

Bourne Digital developed a partnership offer - an online structured programme of learning based on Good Things Foundation's Learn My Way resources, which help people learn foundational and essential digital skills. This was provided alongside fully funded device loans and mobile data for all eligible clients. Clients attended weekly sessions with their digital champion and could explore any digital skill from creating a CV to looking up bus timetables.

By collaborating with multiple local partners both formally and informally, Bourne Digital was able to achieve a much wider reach across the local area. The benefits of this consortium approach range from obtaining client referrals, to sharing information and raising

awareness of the project through their respective networks. It also allowed the project to use the expertise and resources of the stakeholders to offer beneficiaries a robust programme, including software licenses, devices, training and venue resources.

Adapting through COVID

Working throughout the pandemic, place-based collaborations have helped Bourne Digital reach more clients. This was especially important given that their target audience is not easily reached through digital channels. A total of 89% of clients were referred to the project through local partner organisations.

Partners also played a large role in providing progression pathways for clients, from further learning to volunteering opportunities to financial support, allowing the project to refer clients on with confidence in the knowledge that their support will continue.
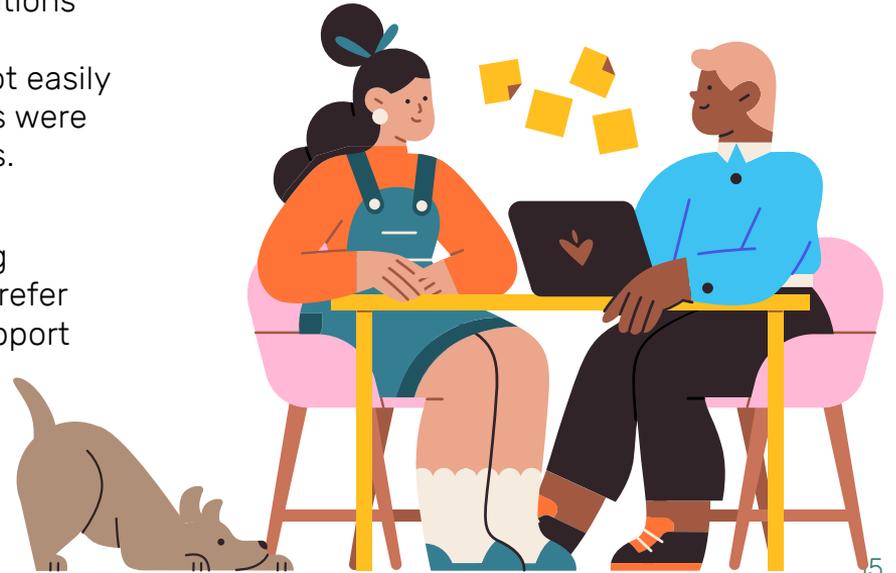
🚀 Looking beyond the pandemic

At the heart of this collaboration is its place-based approach, broadening the project's reach through a network of organisations that support each other throughout all aspects of the project including client referral, service delivery, raising awareness, and client progression. Bringing together these organisations with common values and goals built up links and presented opportunities to work more effectively to respond to local needs. The importance of this came to the fore when one of the partners, Ansbury Guidance, had to close its doors due to no further funding. The place-based collaboration made it possible to sustain some of the work and secure a longer lasting legacy.

Powering up places: moving forward

Collaboration can take place in many areas of operation for an organisation, but the trick to a fruitful collaboration is to sustain a balanced partnership that achieves measurable goals which benefit service users as much as possible. Here we outline some key steps in moving forward with place-based collaboration.

Find and engage with your partner

As a community-based organisation, you have access to local networks, community centres, schools, cross-party groups and more. By engaging in face-to-face and online spaces, organisations can build up their networks and identify potential project partners, which in turn can help your organisation can get an idea of what others are doing, and where your values may align or differ.

Timing and conditions in which a collaboration can develop are also key factors. For example, the pandemic kickstarted many a collaboration, building momentum in key areas of community support such as digital inclusion. With communities suddenly needing to adapt their lives online, many organisations sought to improve digital inclusion, and looked to others doing the same for skill sharing and partnerships.

Importantly, collaboration doesn't have to happen just between third sector organisations, particularly when the focus is on place. Places are made up of organisations from across the sectors – third, academic, public and business – all of which share similar obstacles within the same community.

Third sector

There is a wealth of voluntary and charitable organisations in the third sector spanning across different themes and areas. Rather than competing, there is great potential to form collaborations that can result in shared project referrals, community resources, and more. A great place to start when looking for other third sector organisations is your local third sector interface.

Academic sector

Working with the academic sector opens many opportunities for growth and innovation. Many universities have community engagement teams who strive to strengthen their relationship between the university and local community, whether through research, partnership projects or donations. Student bodies are also a great place to recruit volunteers, with many students keen to gain experience in new areas.

18
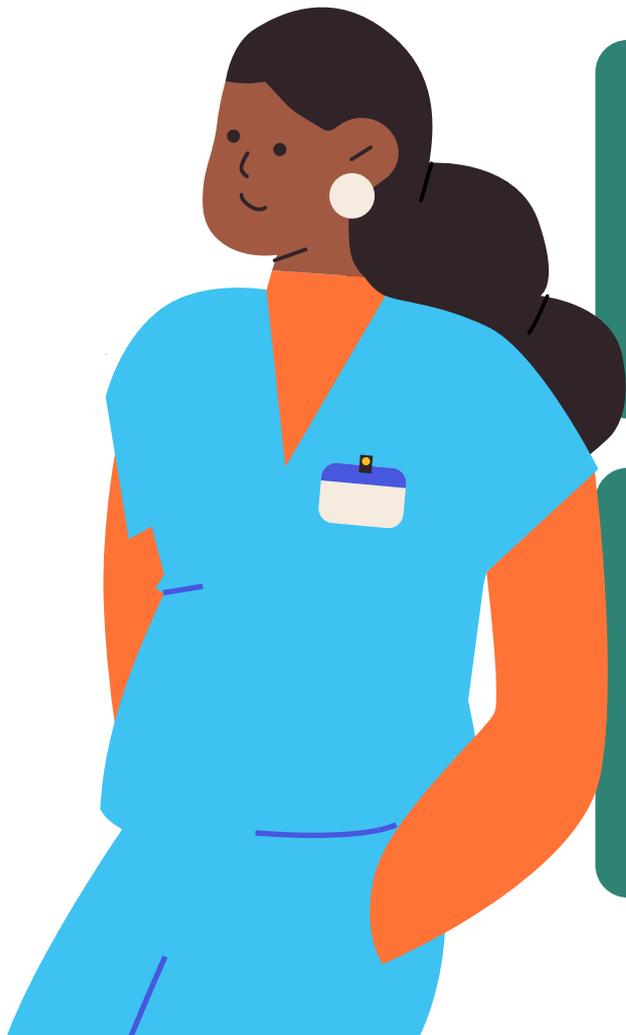
Business sector

Both small and large businesses play a key part in any place. Many businesses have a corporate social responsibility team, which aim to help their business be socially responsible and engage in charitable causes. This can range from holding a fundraising event, to donating old devices or office furniture that would otherwise go to landfill.

Public sector

Engaging the public sector and local authorities can raise awareness of social issues and influence policy. Maintaining an open dialogue with the public sector and sharing findings from work in the community can shape public services while placing communities at the centre. From local councillors and MSPs, to schools, the NHS and place-specific public bodies; there is a long list of public sector representatives that can contribute to place-based change.

⚙ Types of collaboration

There are many different types of collaboration that can result from using different channels, resource commitments or modes of delivery.

Sharing learning

Collaborating doesn't always mean joint service delivery. Sharing learning between organisations, groups and sectors allows you to identify the most relevant change needed in your community and learn about existing solutions or ideas that have been tried and tested by other organisations. Sharing learning can take the form of:

- Sitting on cross-party groups
- Attending or hosting conferences and events
- Engaging with local networks
- Sharing knowledge and learning online

Supporting and amplifying

Gaining support for a project doesn't need to be a big commitment, but can help increase your project's exposure and spread awareness which in turn can help to gain funding, recruit volunteers and more. You can attract this sort of support and amplification by:

- Inviting guests with a large following to events, such as local councillors, MSPs, business owners, university professors, etc.
- Tagging organisations or individuals with large followings on social media to increase post shares
- Exchanging support with other organisations and their projects and campaigns

Sharing resources

This method of collaboration can take place when two organisations' values align, but their methods of delivering on that value may differ. Rather than merging delivery models and greatly changing their respective projects, they can instead share facilities, assets, expertise and resources such as:

- Sharing venues, rooms or community spaces
- Receiving donations of digital devices, office furniture, etc.
- Collaborating in research projects or studies.

Collaborating in partnership

The most integrated form of collaboration is through equal partnership, from joint design to joint delivery. When working so closely together, it's a good idea to set out your goals in the early stages of the partnership, allowing parties to think about what they want from the collaboration, as well as what they expect from their new partners. It will also create space for discussions around monitoring and evaluation, communications plans, and legal precautions that can futureproof your project.

Risks and reflecting on collaborations

The benefits of place-based collaboration are clear, but it's important to note a few risks to take into account when working in partnership.

If shared values are the cornerstone of a great collaboration, then we must also recognise when two organisation's values take different paths. This may mean it's time to reassess your collaboration's goals, and whether they still align with each partner's values.

It may not always be clear when things change, but key indicators can include a shift in the role each partner is playing or a sudden drop in communication. In these cases, it's a good idea to revisit your initial partnership agreement and assess whether your collaboration can change to continue to move towards its goals, or whether it might be time to celebrate your successes together and part ways.

If your collaboration is excelling, there may be opportunity to widen your view and delve further into cross-sectoral collaboration.
This can open a new realm of opportunity for solving issues and delivering community benefit.

Celebrating successful collaborations

When your project meets its goals or celebrates achievements it's important to take time to celebrate your success. Celebrating increases awareness of your project which can in turn attract new potential service users, volunteers and funders. You're not just celebrating your project's achievement, but also the efforts of your volunteers and staff, and the impact on your local community.

Celebrating can take many different forms and levels of commitment. You can celebrate online through social media posts showcasing your work, or write up a good news story showcasing a case study. If you're keen on celebrating the support of your team or showcasing an activity, an in-person event might be right for you, to which you can invite stakeholders, the local community or local government officials and can share photos of the event online.
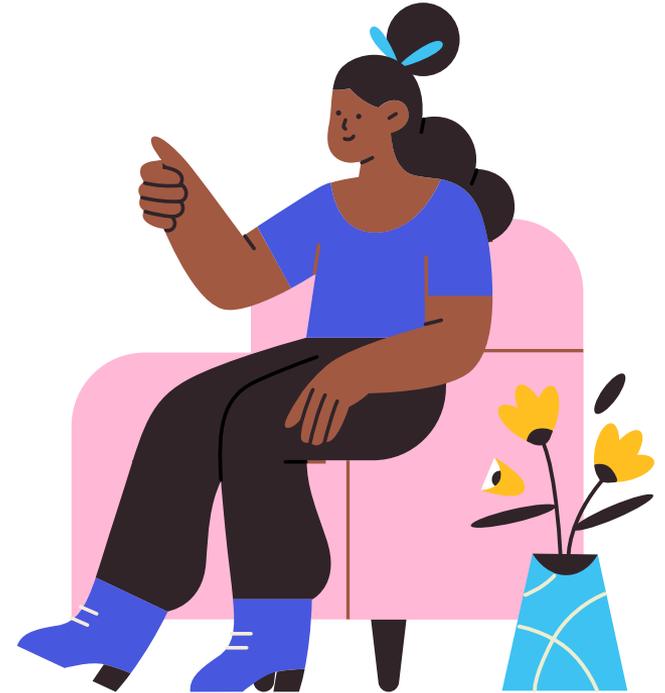
Powering up places: summary

We have seen that place-based collaboration can transform an organisation's capacity to drive social innovation and affect change at scale. Three Power Up case studies have shown how three very different organisations used place-based collaboration to improve digital inclusion in their communities through:

- Identifying a need in their community through sharing knowledge and learning
- Engaging with the place-specific bodies such as local authorities, local businesses and other charities
- Adapting and developing their visions through the pandemic to address the most current need
- Forming networks across the third, business, academic and public sectors to collaborate with a variety of different organisations
- Harnessing the resources of Power Up as a springboard for further project development and collaboration

Engaging across sectors

Each sector impacts a place in a different way, so by working together common obstacles can be overcome and innovation can thrive
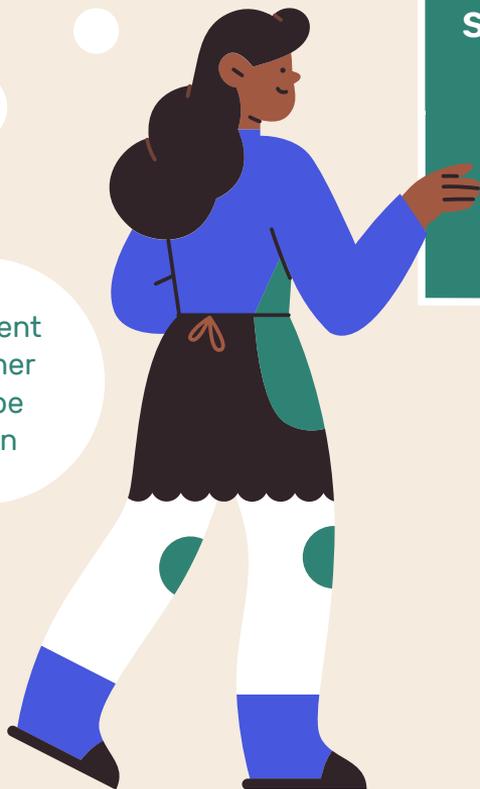
Third sector

Academic sector

Business sector

Public sector

Branching out

Tag others on social

Exchange support

Invite key figures to events

Supporting and amplifying

Share spaces

Recycle devices, furniture, etc.

Sharing resources

Joint research

Sit on cross-party groups

Sharing learning

Attend or host events

Share learning online

Collaborating in partnership

Joint service delivery

Engage in networks

Joint service design

26

Helpful links and contacts

People Know How

People Know How is a Scottish social innovation charity with a passion for solving social issues. Based in Edinburgh and East Lothian, we work with people and communities to develop innovative strategies and services to address social issues both locally and nationally. Our aim is to support and empower both individuals and organisations to mobilise their assets and realise their true potential. Often, people do not realise that they know how. That's where we come in, unlocking ideas for a brighter future. We call this social innovation.

Our core services support children, young people, adults and families, and we also collaborate and work in partnership with others in running our projects and services and driving social change. Key services we have mentioned in this guide include:

- Reconnect: our service supporting adults and families to help them to improve wellbeing by increasing digital and social inclusion
- Connect Four: our platform driving social innovation through cross-sectoral collaboration

Find out more at:

https://peopleknowhow.org

Or contact us at: contactus@peopleknowhow.org

Good Things Foundation

Good Things Foundation is a leading digital inclusion charity working in the UK, Australia and beyond. We work in cities, towns and communities to help people thrive in a digital world. We want to fix the digital divide.

We have a range of resources which can help you respond to local needs around digital inclusion:

- Helping people to get and stay connected through devices and data connectivity.
- Helping people to learn essential digital skills through Learn My Way.
- Helping you to embed digital inclusion in what you do through joining a community of practice.
- Helping you to campaign as part of a wider movement for digital inclusion.

Find out more at:

https://www.learnmyway.com

https://www.onlinecentresnetwork.org

https://goodthingsfoundation.org

Or contact us: hello@goodthingsfoundation.org

Other Power Up reports

**Embedding digital skills in your support offer:
A how-to guide**

This guide explains the benefits of embedding digital in services and support and offers tips to get your organisation started or further on.

https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/what-we-do/our-partnerships/jobs-and-money/power-up

Measurement & evaluation: A how-to guide for Power Up 2.0 grantees

This guide aims to explain our Power Up approach to measurement and evaluation and provide practical pointers.

https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/what-we-do/our-partnerships/jobs-and-money/power-up

Power Up Independent Evaluation: Summary Report
November 2021

https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/insights/power-up-an-independent-evaluation-summary-report

Powering Up: How more people, communities and businesses can participate in a digital economy
June 2019

https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/power-up_report_final_web.pdf

Improving digital skills for small and micro businesses
June 2019

https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/small_business_v4.pdf

Improving digital skills for employability
June 2019

https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/employability_v3.pdf

Improving financial capability through digital skills
June 2019

https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/financial_capability_v3.pdf

Other useful resources

Institute for Global Prosperity (2021)

Stories of change from the Connected Communities Inclusive Broadband Project: Research evaluation of a Universal Basic Services experiment.

https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/igp/sites/bartlett/files/new_cover_final_draft_ph_report.2020.01.22_2.pdf

ESES Communities

The online community benefits portal matching communities and good causes with suppliers and business in the ESES City Region Deal area.

https://www.esescommunities.org

Why collaborations fail – Spring Impact

What lies under the word "uncollaborative"?

https://www.springimpact.org/2018/06/why-collaborations-fail

Midlothian Council digital strategy

Aimed at 'empowering people and enabling growth'.

https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/news/article/3204/new_digital_strategy_aimed_at_empowering_people_and_enabling_growth

The Place-Based Framework

Building on existing good work across Scotland and provide a mechanism for how place-based working can be implemented effectively.

https://www.ourplace.scot/place-based-framework

20-minute neighbourhood - City of Edinburgh Council

Information from the City of Edinburgh Council's on the 20 minute neighbourhood principle.

https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/adaptation-renewal-programme/20-minute-neighbourhood/1

Content by:

Claudia Baldacchino, Communications & Digital Manager at People Know How
With support from Good Things Foundation

Design by:

Claudia Baldacchino, Graphic Designer

Illustrations by:

Honey Badger: Tina Connelly
Claudia Baldacchino

www.goodthingsfoundation.org

Good Things Foundation

people know HOW
Unlocking Your Ideas

POWER UP

J.P.Morgan