

Doing Digital Inclusion: Libraries Handbook

Tinder Foundation works with hundreds of public libraries across the country through the UK online centres network. This handbook outlines the challenges that people wanting to acquire digital skills may face and offers tips and resources for libraries to recruit learners and tackle digital exclusion.

Key stats:

- **12.6 million UK adults lack basic digital skills¹ and 5.9m people have never been online.²**
- Investment to get everyone online by 2025 will see a net economic benefit of **£14.3 billion.³**
- **88%** of people say that getting direct support with basic digital skills makes them more confident using the internet.⁴
- Government investment in WiFi across the public libraries network will ensure **WiFi is available to all public library users by April 2016**, following recommendations in Sieghart's 2014 Independent Library Report for England.⁵
- **14,000** members of public library staff in England have improved their digital skills following the national implementation of an online digital champion training programme, designed and developed by Tinder Foundation, funded by ACE and managed by SCL.
- For 2015/16, Tinder Foundation has awarded **£278,750 to 37 library services** across England, to engage and support **13,139** people to develop their digital skills.

All the tips, suggestions and examples of best practice in this document have been provided by libraries already at various stages of delivering basic digital skills, keen on sharing their experiences.

1. Go ON UK Basic Digital Skills, UK report 2015,

2. ONS, Internet Users 2015, p36.

3. The economic impact of Basic Digital Skills and inclusion in the UK: a report for Tinder Foundation and Go ON UK, November 2015

4. Tinder Foundation Annual Review 2014/15.

5. Sieghart, W. (2014). Independent Library Report for England. DCMS. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-library-report-for-england>

What libraries told us...

In 2014/15 Tinder Foundation undertook a piece of insight work, talking to over 25 library services about the barriers and challenges they've faced delivering digital inclusion.

Many of the services we spoke to are already doing excellent digital inclusion work, and this document is an opportunity to share their practice with services who might be at the start of their journey delivering basic digital skills.

Through our work, it became clear how keen libraries are to support local people to feel more equipped for today's digital world. Staff also said how useful it is to hear from other services having the same experiences and facing similar barriers, to find out what's working for others and which solutions could work for them.

Before considering solutions, the libraries we spoke to raised some of the key barriers that library users can experience when learning how to use the internet for the first time:

- Having led an offline life, some people **struggle to see how the internet is relevant** to their everyday lives and how it would be of benefit.
- **Low literacy skills** can compound feelings of fear of engaging with the digital world.
- **A lack of trust or a fear of fraud** during tasks such as online transactions can lead to a lack of digital confidence and reduced motivation to get online.
- Those who have **mobility and dexterity issues**, and require assistive technologies find it more difficult to access technology.

How to engage and recruit learners

1. Library space

- Libraries are viewed as welcoming, neutral, non-judgmental community spaces. Make the most of this perception by reaching out to people who may be reluctant to go into more formal environments such as Further Education colleges, and engage them in a variety of digital activities.
- If possible, make sure computer equipment is accessible to everyone, with assistive reading technologies and accessible keyboards, if available.

2. Think outside the box

- Identify what motivates people, to encourage those least likely to come into the library and engage with digital inclusion activities. Key motivators could be; keeping in touch with family and friends; saving money; applying for jobs; or accessing information around health and wellbeing.
- Use these hooks when devising and marketing your sessions. Try 'Learning to Skype' rather than 'computer classes', for example. Once they're engaged, they can progress to further digital learning.
- Keep potential learners - and their friends and family - engaged with regular social media updates on digital inclusion related activities.

"If you say to someone: 'Do you want to learn about computers?' they will often say no. If you ask: 'Do you want to speak to your daughter in Australia, listen to your favourite music on YouTube, find a job?', it's a different matter. It's finding what's important to people."

Charlotte Self, Leeds Libraries

How to engage and recruit learners (cont.)

3. Delivery style

- Potential learners may have had bad learning experiences through formal education. Help them overcome their fears by offering informal learning sessions in small groups, or even one-to-one.
- While some people might feel intimidated in group sessions, others will welcome them, valuing social interaction and the possibility of peer-supported learning. If possible, consider offering a combination of booked and drop-in sessions.

4. Partnership and outreach

- Building partnerships with local organisations, such as housing associations, Jobcentre Plus, foodbanks and children's centres can be a great way to engage and recruit learners, and raise awareness of regular digital skills sessions.

"A local high school has been an invaluable source of enthusiastic, young volunteers. They're extremely knowledgeable about all things digital and the older learners really value both their support and company."

Nicola Tervit, Northumberland Libraries.

- Engage hard-to-reach people in places where they feel comfortable, by attending community fairs and local groups. Try coffee mornings, family history classes, craft groups and carers' groups. Take an outreach session to them using tablets and a MiFi device.

5. Organise events

- Library events provide great opportunities for recruiting and engaging new learners and volunteers. Weave digital activities into library events such as National Libraries Day or Macmillan Tea Parties.
- Work with local creative partners to organise events around demonstrating new technologies such as 3D printers, gaming and computer coding, as well as the latest tablets and mobile phones. Many people prefer a hands-on approach to engaging in new things, and an event is an excellent way to let people see and touch new technology and learn how they can benefit from digital.

6. Use word of mouth

- Word of mouth is perhaps one of the most powerful ways of recruiting new learners. Consider a 'refer a friend' campaign - existing learners are your best advocates.

Things to consider before you deliver

1. Training

- Considered training of staff and volunteers is key to ensuring they have the confidence to help learners gain basic digital skills and an understanding of the benefits digital can bring.
- Be creative with your approach to digital inclusion activities. Promote sessions as informal learning opportunities that are friendly and relaxed - not like school or college.
- Look for opportunities to embed digital inclusion into other life-long learning activities such as ESOL, family learning, employability skills and health delivery, as well as into non-digital informal learning.
- Encourage library users to get their own devices where possible, so they can use it in their own homes. Organise drop-in tablet sessions offering a basic introduction on how to use them and popular apps and features such as Skype, syncing photos etc.
- Check the Digital Libraries Hub regularly, for training opportunities such as support with social media or volunteer management.

"Working with SCL and Tinder Foundation, we trained library staff as Digital Champions who then went on to upskill their colleagues. There was nervousness from some members of staff but it's just about giving them the skills and confidence to help someone."

Carolyn Waite, Lancashire Libraries

Things to consider before you deliver (cont.)

2. Working in partnership

- Some libraries work in partnership with local organisations who already deliver basic digital skills training, like their nearest UK online centre. You could arrange for them to deliver in your library space. Working in partnership can also enable skills sharing.
- Partnerships can often support volunteer recruitment. Students from local colleges, or people working in local companies (as part of their corporate social responsibility) can bring new expertise.
- Networking with local organisations such as schools, healthcare providers and Jobcentre Plus can be time consuming, but can reap large benefits and generate joint ventures.

3. Procurement of digital equipment

- When sourcing hardware for your sessions (procurement regulations permitting), do your research and try a variety of devices. Computer recycling companies will often do deals for bulk purchase. Weigh the pros and cons of high quality kit versus more affordable devices and budget for wear and tear and breakages - this will happen.

- If possible, purchase a stock of tablets that can be used both in the library and for outreach activities. Invest in mobile connectivity equipment for places where broadband isn't installed.

"The banks of PCs in our libraries are still massively popular and essential to our digital inclusion activity but we also have a range of other devices, like tablets and eReaders. Helping people learn how to use these is just part of our growing digital offer."
Rachel Ridley, Gateshead Libraries.

- Consider lending kit to learners so they can practise and develop skills between sessions. Some of Tinder Foundation's Research Partners on the **Library Digital Inclusion Action Research Project** are piloting this approach and seeing its value to learners who are improving their digital skills.

- Consider which is the right device for a particular learning theme. For instance, laptops might be better than tablets for employability sessions and creating CVs.

- Plan ahead and look out for funding opportunities to help purchase equipment.

4. Managing volunteers

- Libraries have told us that working with volunteers brings many benefits and is a cost-effective option when considering offering one-to-one support to learners.
- Build up a network of volunteers and, if you do not have a volunteer policy, consider specialist training, DBS checks and safeguarding.

5. Networking and social media

- You can learn a lot about other libraries and how they deliver digital inclusion through networking opportunities such as regional or national events or through social media and email subscriptions, which provide a medium to share ideas, best practice and to discuss issues.

6. Evaluation

- At the start of any digital inclusion project, be clear about your objectives and targets, and think about the kind of information and data you'll need to collect. Why not look at **the Government Digital Service's Digital Inclusion Outcomes Framework**?

Digital Libraries Hub

For more support on delivering basic digital skills, and access to learning resources and peer support, join our online community built especially for library staff working in digital inclusion at www.digitallibrarieshub.ning.com



Thank you to the libraries that supported the production of this handbook. If you'd like to find out how being part of the UK online centres network could support your digital inclusion work, visit www.ukonlinecentres.com/join-the-network