



Include-IT Mersey Project Summary

What we want to achieve and how we deliver it

Include-IT Mersey provides targeted, personalised digital skills development and employment support to digitally excluded, workless (unemployed/economically inactive) residents of the Liverpool City Region (LCR) to improve their basic ICT and online skills, confidence and access to digital technologies, enabling them to overcome barriers resulting from a lack of digital skills.

Although the project's primary focus is Digital Inclusion (DI), our delivery model is firmly set in the context of skills/employment and will ultimately support participants to progress towards employment or further training, helping those furthest from the labour market to become more job ready.

Our core delivery model involves:

1. Intelligent identification, referral and engagement, using robust data from the largest network of Housing Associations across LCR;
2. Volunteer Digital Champions for localised community engagement & support;
3. Highly experienced/effective, locally based, ICT & employment support providers, with extensive employer links;
4. Localised outreach delivery through a network of Delivery Partners (DPs), community venues and Housing Associations;
5. Digital surgeries/ IT drop-ins, aligned to our training provision, run by experienced staff and volunteers, to facilitate ongoing access to digital technologies, enabling participants to practice and apply their new found skills during and after training.

The delivery model diagram is appended ([Appendix 1](#)).

The project provides individually tailored, flexible programmes of support that respond to specific needs & barriers (to DI, employment & training) faced by participants.

Our delivery model & partnership is wholly geared towards targeting and supporting those most at risk of social exclusion. Our ability to intelligently target digitally excluded, workless residents through sophisticated Housing Association data is a key component and USP of our model.

We have mobilised a team of volunteer Digital Champions (DCs) who provide the primary thrust of our localised community engagement approach. Drawn from and based in local LCR communities, housed in Delivery Partners, Housing Associations and other community organisations, DCs engage, persuade and support participants in to locally delivered ICT training and employment support. Some DCs also support the delivery of formal IT training sessions and other DCs support the delivery of Digital Surgeries.

Digital Champions support participants to learn at their own pace, only hooking them in to formal group work when they feel comfortable to do so.

Once engaged, participants are formally signed up to the project. Outreach delivery takes place in accessible community venues across the city region. Small group sizes of between 5 and 8, and delivery by appropriately qualified/experienced staff ensure that participants receive the levels of intensive support they require.

Interesting approaches to developing basic digital skills, finding the right 'hooks' to engage people (e.g. social media, shopping, entertainment) lead into more targeted, employment focused ICT delivery (e.g. online job search, universal job match, CV builder). At this point, wider employment support may be weaved in, covering topics such as:

- Assets/strengths
- Understanding recruitment & application processes, including on-line processes
- CV/ application writing
- Interview skills
- Other PSD: presentation, confidence, timekeeping, inter-personal & communication skills, teamwork, problem solving
- Workplace behaviours, rights & responsibilities
- Wider progression support

Learn my Way, the free, online digital learning platform (owned by the Good Things Foundation) is central to ICT skills delivery, enabling participants to both choose topics of personal interest and to continue learning outside taught/ supervised sessions. Through volunteer DCs and local digital surgeries, participants have the option of accessing wider supported in the ongoing application and extension of their learning.

All participants benefit from a single, integrated pathway of support to help achieve their desired outcomes. Key to our model is a focus on individual abilities, needs & aspirations, offering personalised packages of support.

Benefits to the individual (participant) include:

- Increased confidence, empowerment & inclusion through improved ability to use digital media to job search, improve skills and engage with public services, as well as friends & family.
- Renewed motivation to learn & progress in life.
- Greater confidence in self-ability to judge & combat risks associated with online activity.
- Better access to digital technology/ services and support in convenient locations.
- Improved digital skills leading to:
 - Financial: budgeting capability, savings through online shopping & cheaper communication.
 - Social: reduced isolation through social media; access to entertainment; ability to pursue interests online.
 - Health: access to online health services/advice.
- Employment benefits:
 - Ability to search & apply online, work-related IT skills
 - Improved employability & workplace ICT skills, increasing employment prospects.

- Work experience & volunteering opportunities as a pathway to employment.
- Support with job search.
- Gaining employment.

Where we deliver the project and the people who benefit from it

The project aims to support **1500** eligible, digitally excluded residents aged 18+ across the LCR LEP area, with a targeted focus on those aged 40+ and others for whom DI is a key barrier to progression. Our experience, backed up by local and national research, shows that digital exclusion correlates with increasing age, hence targeting those aged 40+.

We also know that workless people have diverse characteristics, needs & challenges including: low/no qualifications &/or work experience; resident in deprived communities; disabilities/learning difficulties, mental health or L-T health conditions; BME communities; lone parents/carers; offending/substance misuse histories; limited motivation &/or access to job finding. From experience, we anticipate the majority of participants to possess one or more of these characteristics.

To ensure greatest impact and efficient use of funding, we primarily target delivery in identified areas of high need although delivery may also take place in other disadvantaged areas. Comprehensive research has led to the prioritisation of 22 specific local areas:

- **Halton:** Widnes (Kingsway/Appleton/Broad Heath), Runcorn (Halton Castle/Halton Lea/Norton South/Grange)
- **Knowsley:** Northwood (Kirkby), Longview (Huyton), Halewood, Stockbridge Village, Dovecot
- **Liverpool:** Toxteth, Norris Green/Croxteth/Clubmoore, Speke-Garston, Kirkdale, Anfield, Everton
- **Sefton:** Linacre (Bootle), Dukes (Southport)
- **St Helens:** Parr, Town Centre, Moss Bank
- **Wirral:** Birkenhead/Tranmere, North Birkenhead, Rock Ferry, Seacombe

These areas have been selected by combining local RSL data concerning location of digitally excluded tenants, with Indices of Multiple Deprivation rankings of LSOAs.

Overall impact of the project

Overall, 819 local residents will improve their IT skills, access to digital technologies and employment skills and prospects, a minimum of 35% of whom will progress to employment, further education or training, with a further 15% moving to active job searching as a result of their involvement.

The project contributes to LCR Employment & Skills Board priorities including: targeted support, linked to local business needs; developing independent advice/guidance; preparing people for work including employability training & support into work.

LCR *Skills for Growth* Priorities include developing both digital & employability skills. It also targets tackling health-related worklessness in its aspirations for 2020 and recognises that older people (esp. 40-64) 'continue to be more likely to lack qualifications'.

The project contributes to tackling key LEP economic strategies – emphasising increased employability/ enterprise skills and reduced unemployment, particularly with people aged 40+. Expert & impartial IAG will raise awareness of opportunities in LCR's growth employment sectors.

We will ensure that the most socially excluded, e.g. those aged 50+, social housing residents, BME communities and people with particular vulnerabilities, including learning difficulties, disabilities or L-T health conditions (incl. mental health) can access the project by channelling engagement & support resources as described above.

Project partners and wider stakeholders we work with

The partnership brings together Sefton CVS, a leading VCSE sector infrastructure organisation, with 19 Delivery Partners and 11 strategic Housing Association partners; all high performing local providers with proven performance track records in DI & employment support.

Partner selection ensures highly localised pan-city region coverage. Our experience confirms the strength of this approach in engaging 'hard to reach' people, compared to a handful of larger, often town centre based providers. Our partners are known and, most importantly, trusted in their local areas, with extensive experience in supporting workless and socially excluded people.

All Delivery Partners have committed to:

- Their individual partnership delivery roles, volumes and associated financial values.
- The Partnership Agreement and individual Service Level Agreements specifying their required roles and responsibilities in delivering the project.

Housing Associations partners act as strategic enablers to support the project's successful delivery, but have no pecuniary interest in the project.

A complete list of Delivery and Strategic Partners is appended ([see Appendix 2](#)).

Funding Allocation

The project is co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) and Big Lottery Fund as part of its Building Better Opportunities programme.

Value: £3,290,600, of which 13% is allocated to Halton based activity.