

SROI:

Volunteers gaining digital skills



OUR WHY?

As many others throughout our communities, our workforce went through the unexpected shift from working in a lively and busy office, to working from home last year. As a company who are passionate about people and focus our work on team efforts, communication, community engagement and inter agency working, this shift posed many challenges to both our staff members and volunteers.

The work our volunteers do is crucial not only to our successes and achievements, but to our functioning as an organisation. We wanted to make sure our volunteers still felt engaged, motivated, included, and appreciated by us and we have endeavoured to ensure this is the case throughout the pandemic. For many of our volunteers, notably amongst those over the age of 65, this meant providing them with IT training to develop the basic digital skills needed to join our new digital workforce.

Some of the things we have done to engage our volunteers digitally:

Virtual Coffee mornings

Provided 1-1 and group support on accessing our database and completing our online forms

Invited some volunteers to our fortnightly, organisation-wide 'Team Day'

Provided 1-1 and group support on how to use Microsoft Teams

'Volunteer Day' meetings

WHY ARE DIGITAL SKILLS IMPORTANT?

Why have we decided to focus on providing digital skills to engage our volunteers? Well, digital skills are not only considered as 'essential for life and work'[1] Essential digital skills framework - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk), but also are said to provide significant lifestyle and well-being benefits.

Studies [2] have shown that when asked about digital engagement,

87 % say it helps them to connect better with friends and family

84 % say it helps them to organise their life

55 % say it makes them feel more part of a community

44 % say it helps them to manage physical and mental well-being

With many of us having to work from home, and schools, as well as health and social care services operating online, it is fair to say that **digital skills are currently a lifeline**. Through the public feedback we hear at Healthwatch Kent, we know that many people within our communities have felt excluded and isolated from society throughout the pandemic, as a result of having no access to digital services and amenities. For example:

"I was in Waitrose yesterday and the coffee shop were insisting that people had to scan the QR code to get access to the seating area. All these old ladies were turning up for their tea and coffee and couldn't understand how to download an app that scans the QR code! Waitrose were just turning them away, insisting that they must get the app to come into the coffee shop. Can a venue legally turn you away solely because you can't scan their QR code? It's just discriminating all those older ladies that either don't have a phone, or don't have a modern phone that accommodate the app"

"I would love to download this app but it's not compatible with my older iphone. Like a lot of elderly people, my phone is an older model. As it's the elderly who are most vulnerable, I'm afraid this is not going to work very well for us"

This led us to look at how a lack of digital skills, affects our quality of life. We used QALYs to measure this.

[1] Essential digital skills framework - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

[2] [lb-consumer-digital-index-2020-report.pdf](https://www.lloydsbank.com/lb-consumer-digital-index-2020-report.pdf) (lloydsbank.com)

QALY CALCULATION - LET'S GET TECHNICAL



What is a QALY?

A QALY is a 'Quality Adjusted Life Year', which is a commonly used tool to measure the impact specific health and social care interventions have upon our wellbeing.

1 QALY is currently valued at £30,000 [3]

Considering the research around the value of digital skills (as detailed above), we have calculated that a person living in our society, and more specifically in the current climate of social isolation, without digital skills, has a reduced quality of life compared to someone who does have digital skills.

This is on the basis that without digital skills, they would have some problems performing usual activities such as working, studying, or accessing healthcare, or are moderately anxious or depressed.

Using QALY calculations, we have valued the introduction of digital skills to an individual, at £3,750 over the course of one year.

You can read more about how QALYs are calculated [here](#)[4] and see the breakdown of our calculations in the QALY section at the end of this report.

WHAT IS THE SOCIAL IMPACT?

Moving towards a year of our organisation working from home, we wanted to find out how our volunteers feel having joined our digital workforce and what social impact this has had. We wanted to measure how much, if at all, their quality of life has improved since developing their digital skills with us.

We built a survey to find out what IT skills our volunteers who have been digitally engaged with us have, how confident they are in working with us digitally, what effect their digital engagement has had on their social wellbeing through lockdown and finally, how much our intervention and support has contributed to these things.

[3] NICE value (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) based on cost effectiveness for NHS intervention

[4] What is a QALY? - Medical Sciences Division, Oxford (studylib.net)

What were the outcomes, what have we achieved?



Has our input and efforts to engage volunteers in our digital workforce, generated enough change to create an increased quality of life for some of our volunteers? Let's take a look at what the survey results told us

13 Volunteers took part in this survey, who are predominantly white and over the age of 65



Key findings from the survey results are as follows:

9

people told us they were not confident, or had some confidence, in communicating digitally before using Microsoft Teams with us.

9

people told us using Microsoft Teams has 'definitely' given them confidence in operating online video calls and communicating digitally.

12

people told us that they have taken part in Teams calls with us that have been beneficial.

These results tell us that we have successfully played a part in providing our volunteers with digital skills and strengthened existing skills our volunteers already had.

Accessing healthcare services

5

people told us they were now more confident, or a little more confident than before, to access healthcare services digitally.

These results tell us that through the digital skills and confidence our volunteers have gained with us, they are more likely to access health and social care services.

Improving wellbeing

4

people told us that using Teams to communicate with others has '**definitely improved**' their social wellbeing in lockdown and 6 people told us it has **somewhat improved** their social wellbeing in lockdown.

These results tell us that providing our volunteers with digital skills has contributed to preventing feelings of moderate anxiety and/or depression, by enhancing social wellbeing.

CASE STUDIES

Meet Pat

Pat said she was **not confident** to communicate digitally, before using Microsoft Teams with us

She **rarely** engaged in online video calling activity before working with us via Teams

Now she has said she is **a little more confident** in operating online video calls and communicating digitally, due to using Microsoft Teams with us

She has taken part in Teams calls that have been beneficial

She is also **a little more confident** than before, to access healthcare services digitally and feels that using Teams to communicate with others has **improved her** social wellbeing in lockdown

Meet Lyn

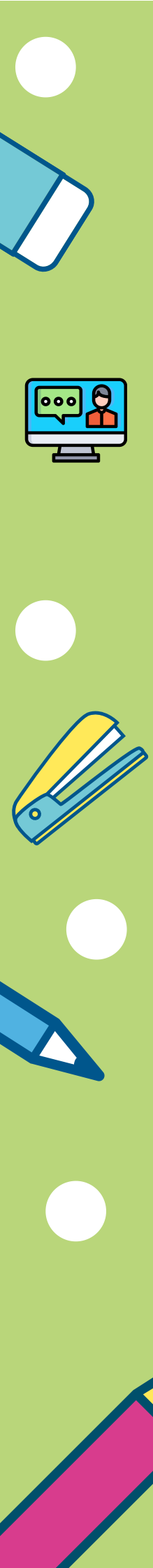
Lyn said they were **unsure** about communicating digitally before using Teams with us

She said that using Teams has **definitely given her confidence** in operating online video calls and communicating digitally

She feels **more confident than before** to access healthcare services digitally and she has gone on to use other video calling systems, such as zoom, since becoming digitally engaged with us

She also feels using Teams to communicate with others has slightly **improved her social wellbeing** in lockdown





**We have provided
digital skills**

**We have created work for
our volunteers during the
pandemic**

**We have increased confidence in
using digital software**

**We have improved existing
digital skills that some of our
volunteers already had**

**We have improved
social wellbeing**

**We have improved access to
healthcare for some of our
volunteers**

**We have prevented some of our
volunteers from facing digital
exclusion throughout the
pandemic**

These outcomes evidence that we have generated enough change, by providing our volunteers with digital skills and engaging them in our online workforce, to improve quality of life under the QALY threshold.

HOW MUCH OF THIS SUCCESS CAN WE CLAIM?

Through these case studies and the wider results from our survey, we can proudly say that we have been successful in providing some of our volunteers with digital skills and in doing so, have improved their quality of life. However, it is important that we acknowledge there will have been other factors and inputs, that contributed to this digital competence and skill development.

Whilst some of our volunteers that completed our survey already had strong digital skills before engaging with our digital workforce, others had very little to none. We included questions in our survey that would help us to measure this as organically as possible and calculated that we can claim an average of a **39%** attribution for our volunteers' digital competence, and the benefits that gaining these skills has generated.

Using the figure of **£3,750** to value the introduction of digital skills to an individual over a period of one year, with an average attribution of **39%**, we can say that "The increased quality of life, caused by our intervention of providing digital skills and IT training/support to 13 of our volunteers holds the value of **£19,012.5**, or **£1,462.5** per year, per volunteer.

OUR RETURN ON INVESTMENT

What is ROI and why is it important?

Return on Investment is the calculation which accurately reflects the value of the intervention, taking into consideration the cost of our input.

These calculations are important when it comes to evaluating the success of our work, as they are widely used throughout the business world and help others to understand the value and impact of our work.

In this case, as we did not provide any equipment for volunteers, our only input is the cost of staff time that went into training and activities to contribute to the development of our volunteers' digital skills. Some of these activities are mentioned at the start of this report.

We tallied the time which staff across our organisation contributed to providing training, support, guidance and engagement activities to our volunteers and this totalled to **19 hrs 50 mins**, at a value of **£361.28**. This is our input.

This leaves us with a final return on investment value of **£18,951.22**

Every **£1** we invested, generated **£52.46** worth of social value over the period of one year

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Completing this social value and return on investment analysis has highlighted how important, but also how effective it is to invest time and resource into training our volunteers. We are proud of the achievements and outcomes that we have exhibited through this report, such as reducing social isolation and improving digital access to healthcare services for some of our volunteers, and hope that it can stand as an example of how much value there is in the work we do at Healthwatch Kent.

This project has also highlighted the importance of our community having practical digital skills and being confident to access services digitally, and has inspired us to work harder to reach other groups throughout Kent that might be suffering the disadvantages of digital exclusion.

QALY Calculations

If quality of life is measured on a QALY scale of 0-1 (See reference 3), a person's quality of life prior to gaining digital skills is valued at 0.88 (providing they have no other health complications) and reaches 1, after gaining digital skills.

Four years in a health state with no other complications, than a lack of digital skills (0.88) would give you 3.5 Quality Adjusted Life Years.

Four years in a health state with no complications at all, having gained digital skills would mean you have lived 4 Quality Adjusted Life Years.

The additional number of QALYs generated by intervention, of providing digital skills, over four years would therefore be 0.5

We are then able to say that "The intervention of providing digital skills, developing digital confidence and competence, and reducing social isolation, gives people an extra six months of quality adjusted life, for every four years they are alive. This is valued financially at £15,000 per 0.5 QALY, or £3,750 per year"