

# Libraries and dementia: connecting people with dementia



Innovations  
in Dementia



COMMUNITY  
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# Introduction

We know that libraries are a safe place of connection and opportunity for people – they are trusted places full of trusted people.

During 2022 we worked with a number of libraries in the UK to explore their experiences of dementia and opportunities for further work and connection.

We surveyed **74** staff members from **54** libraries across the UK about what was currently happening for people with dementia, and about ideas for future developments. A range of people completed the survey including librarians, managers, and people with additional responsibilities such as development, heritage, health, wellbeing and volunteering.

It is true to say that people with dementia are accessing libraries. **96%** of people filling in the survey said that people with dementia are customers at their library. **64%** said they had direct contact with customers in their work role. Most of the remaining **36%** of staff were working in strategic or behind the scenes roles.

Many libraries are implementing an array of initiatives to support people with dementia. As well as loaning dementia specific books and resources and running dementia groups (e.g. shared reading groups and dementia cafes) they acknowledge that library services should be inclusive for everyone. Consequently, many are focusing on dementia accessibility including signage and a dementia aware workforce. There was often an acknowledgement that more dementia training would be of help.

We were interested to find out how confident library workers are in supporting people with dementia to use library computers. We know that there is a digital divide for older people (including people with dementia). But we also know that valuable resources exist on-line for people with dementia as well as virtual ways that people with dementia can connect to each other.

**66%** of respondents said that they would be confident to support people with dementia to use computers.

Perhaps libraries might hold a key for opening up the on-line world to people with dementia?

You can read the full survey report here: <https://bit.ly/3GSDIed>

Eight libraries joined a webinar in Autumn 2022 to hear the results from our survey. They asked for a one stop resource that would help them to build on their digital work with people with dementia, including ideas for funding.

This report is our response!

You will find ideas, examples and funding opportunities which we hope will be helpful in furthering your digital work with people with dementia.

It is organised into four sections:

**Section 1:** Some key statistics about digital exclusion that can help you make your case

**Section 2:** ‘How To’ tips on bidding for and managing funded dementia projects

**Section 3:** Case examples of what has been done in various locations across the UK to respond to digital exclusion

**Section 4:** ‘How To’ guides for supporting and encouraging people to access and embrace the simplest of digital technology

## Section 1. Some key statistics about digital exclusion that can help you make your case

The Centre for Ageing Better – has published a very clear document ‘*Covid 19 and the digital divide*’ published by the Centre for Ageing Better in July 2021

<https://bit.ly/3ZOHO10>

It contains powerful statistics and examples of good practice. For example:

“32% of those who had never or not recently used the internet were aged between 50 and 69 (over 1 million individuals). (ONS, 2020a)”

“There is a significant digital divide among 50–70 year olds, exacerbated by the pandemic”.

“Digital inclusion is not just about being online, it’s also about building skills and confidence. Even a small number of skills building sessions can really boost confidence and use.”

“3m people are offline across the UK”. (ONS, 2020a)

The Centre for Ageing Better also published Digital Skills to Connect (2021) which highlights the fact that—as well as the age factor—poverty plays a significant role in digital exclusion. <https://bit.ly/3wvBZ9X>

“Our research emphasises the role income, as well as age, plays as a risk factor. ... It implies that the majority of those aged 50-70 who are offline (around 1.2 million people) are those living in households with incomes under £25,000 (around 994,000 people).”

## Section 2. ‘How To’ tips on bidding for and managing funded dementia projects

### 1. Gather your data

- How many people with dementia use your library?
- Do you know where they live?
- Which services do they use?
- What feedback do you get?
- What else do you know about them?

### 2. Make your case

- What/who is the funding for, and why do you need it?
- Have you had funding from elsewhere for this work? If so, what difference has it made?
- What impact will the funding have on your work with people with dementia?
- What is working well and could be expanded?
- Find good examples of how the services you offer have helped people’s lives
- Stress any positive effects your work is currently having

### 3. Practicalities

- How much money do you need?
- Have you produced a budget & costed in everything, including staff time?
- When does it need to start and finish?

- ‘Core funding’ is funding you can spend on anything, such as staff costs, equipment, furnishings, lighting, signage re-decorating etc.
- ‘Project funding’ is funding earmarked for a specific project, such as an IT class aimed at people with dementia/socially excluded people

#### **4. Reporting back to funders**

- Keep records of how many people attend, their ages, gender, ethnicity, postcode etc
- Note what they enjoyed/found useful
- Collect any feedback they gave for improving things

## **Section 3. Case examples of what has been done in various locations across the UK to respond to digital exclusion**

Here’s an interesting blog about the role libraries can play in health, with some examples from around the country.

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/blog/social-prescribing-at-the-library/>

The Digital Inclusion in London Report is full of examples highlighting a shift to libraries as local digital hubs.

<https://bit.ly/3XkwPcx>

A common theme coming out of the research was the core role that libraries play as a key piece of London’s digital inclusion infrastructure:

*“Libraries now play a new role, that of a hub for the local community, a place where people can obtain information on any area, where they can come to educate, be entertained and to integrate and socialise within the community. And of course, a place to learn basic IT skills and get online.”– Brent Library Manager.*

## DIGITAL ACCESS FOR ALL - DIGITAL EXCLUSION & SKILLS

### Many still do not have the devices, skills or connectivity to get online

Experience from councils and the VCS during the crisis highlighted that many Londoners still do not have the devices, skills or connectivity to get online and make the most of the opportunities the internet provides.



#### Pandemic demand for connectivity

55% of London's civil society organisations reported an increase in demand for digital connectivity from the people they support during COVID-19.



#### 10% do not possess smartphones

Ofcom estimates that 10% of Londoners do not possess smartphones – devices which enable Londoners to access more advanced applications and services.

#### Anticipate a shift to more online services

The benefits of being online include increased chances of finding work; buying cheaper goods; communication with family and friends and accessing government services (ONS 2019). Recovery should anticipate a shift to more online services.

### If you are poor, you have much less chance of being online.

The likelihood of having access to the internet from home increases along with income.



#### Lower Income Home Internet Access

Only 51% of households earning between £6000 - 10,000 had home internet access



#### Higher Income Home Internet Access

99% of households with an income of over £40,001 had home internet access.

#### Basic Skills

At least 9% of Londoners do not possess ANY of the seven foundational digital skills, including being able to open an internet browser and connect to a Wi-Fi network.

9%

However, 18% of Londoners lack one or more basic digital skills.

18%

<https://bit.ly/3QPHJoa>

As such, many local councils have made libraries an integral part of their digital inclusion offer, with libraries being used as:

- A place where residents can go to get online and use a device
- A place to learn basic digital skills
- A place to get 1-2-1 support with basic IT issues
- A distribution network for laptop gifting and lending schemes
- A coordinating service that brings together digital inclusion initiatives across the council.

## Case study 1: Newham's Digital Inclusion Hubs

In July 2020, in response to the growing digital divide caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, Newham led a digital inclusion workshop with various council services, as well as voluntary and community sector groups in the borough. As a result, Newham decided to pilot new Digital Inclusion Hubs in two libraries.

Newham decided to use libraries because:

- they represented an existing infrastructure of public buildings embedded in local communities across the borough
- residents tend to stay relatively local to where they live to access this kind of support
- libraries were well placed to take on the role as they were a place where a lot of digital inclusion work had happened before.

As part of the pilot, Newham upskilled their front-line library staff through digital skills training to enable the library to deliver three main functions as a digital inclusion hub.

Firstly, it acts as a hub for digital champions, recruiting and training volunteers to act as digital champions (e.g. via online courses such as Digital Unite's).

Secondly, it provides basic digital skills training and support to digitally excluded residents, via a referral process. The training and support is bespoke and tailored around what people want to do online, rather than a more formal fixed IT course.

Lastly, Newham Council allocated funding to purchase a number of new devices. They used the digital inclusion hubs, in partnership with local voluntary and community sector groups, to distribute them to residents in need, along with data packages to help residents get online.

To date, Newham has over 40 digital champions, has trained over 100 residents in basic IT skills, and gifted more than 100 devices from the two libraries. The aim is now to scale the model across all libraries as well as supporting local community organisations with physical buildings to become digital inclusion hubs.

The **Good Things Foundation** reported on libraries delivering digital inclusion and how they might reduce social isolation <https://bit.ly/3GMXk37>

The 'Learn My Way' system can help capture the impact of all your work locally. There is a good infographic here: [https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/digi\\_libraries\\_infographic.pdf](https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/digi_libraries_infographic.pdf)



## Case study 2: Leeds Libraries dementia service

Leeds Library Service is part of a cross-sector collaboration in Leeds promoting 100% digital inclusion. This ...created a mechanism to advocate for the specific needs of people who might otherwise miss out: people living with dementia and their carers.

Make the most of community assets: Working with existing local partners and building on community assets was an important focus. Early on, Leeds Library Service did a mapping exercise to update existing information about services for carers and people with dementia.

You can read more about how they did it, what it cost and who was involved here <https://bit.ly/3iKAJfL>

“To enable the library service to deliver the 100% Digital Leeds programme, we have received 2 funding allocations totalling over £750,000.

Over £350,000 came from other council budgets and enabled us to:

- appoint permanent staff to the library service (3 Digital Inclusion Coordinators and 1 Digital Inclusion Support Officer)
- expand our **tablet lending scheme** to 150 tablets with connectivity, professional services and a managed framework that other organisations can buy into
- work with the **Good Things Foundation** to support our efforts to build a digital inclusion network across Leeds, embed sustainability, and evidence return on investment

£400,000 came from the **Leeds City Region Business Rates Pool**. This additional funding will enable us to:

- double the size of our tablet lending scheme to 300 tablets
- introduce a grants programme to help organisations in the city remove barriers to digital inclusion for their staff and customers
- install free wifi in 20 community buildings

Investment on this scale demonstrates the council’s commitment to tackling digital exclusion. It also demonstrates confidence in the library service’s ability to deliver this high-profile programme.

# Examples of reaching different audiences

The Carnegie UK trust project 'Engaging Libraries' sought to enable public libraries to pilot public engagement activities on health and wellbeing.

<https://bit.ly/3WAYg0C>

Here are a few highlights:

- **New topics** – were introduced to library users including brain development, body image, end of life, the ageing process and empathy
- **Participants** – A wide range of participants were engaged in activities, including those with learning difficulties, older people and young children
- **Impacts** – Positive impacts from projects including increased self-awareness, increased social interaction, improved confidence and changed perception of others”
- **These projects** were delivered by library services in collaboration with a wide range of partners
- **Engaging Libraries** showed that, as safe and trusted spaces at the heart of their communities, public libraries are well suited to acting as a space for discussion and debate about “tricky” subjects which can be taboo or difficult to talk about (for example, death, body image and mental health)

**Libraries Connected Awards 2021** highlighted examples of what people have done to help different groups of people get connected:

Click here for examples from Libraries in Kingston, Solihull, Staffordshire, Harrogate, Merton and Hampshire:

<https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/page/libraries-connected-awards-2021-information-and-digital>

## Section 4. 'How To' guides for supporting and encouraging people to access and embrace the simplest of digital technology

We have found quite a range of really practical guides that you can draw upon as you explore new ways of working:

- Help older people use the Internet:  
[https://www.onlinecentresnetwork.org/sites/default/files/a6\\_your\\_guide\\_to\\_helping\\_older\\_people\\_use\\_the\\_internet.pdf](https://www.onlinecentresnetwork.org/sites/default/files/a6_your_guide_to_helping_older_people_use_the_internet.pdf)
- Use games to teach Tablet skills:  
[https://www.onlinecentresnetwork.org/sites/default/files/a6\\_your\\_guide\\_to\\_using\\_games.pdf](https://www.onlinecentresnetwork.org/sites/default/files/a6_your_guide_to_using_games.pdf)
- Understand why and how to set up digital classes for older people:  
[https://www.onlinecentresnetwork.org/sites/default/files/older\\_people\\_handbook.pdf](https://www.onlinecentresnetwork.org/sites/default/files/older_people_handbook.pdf)
- Make the most of WhatsApp, Facebook, Internet:  
<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/work-learning/technology-internet/>
- Understanding Dementia – an excellent free online series of videos for anyone wanting to learn a little more about dementia. Relevant for volunteers and anyone engaging with people with dementia in their everyday lives.  
<https://memorycafehub.org.uk/dementia-awareness-films/>

How to use Zoom – A short series from Innovations in Dementia.

- Getting Zoom on your i-phone  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jT0t7eNj-\\_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jT0t7eNj-_c)
- Joining a meeting on the i-phone  
<https://youtu.be/goknDTsE-Kk>
- Starting a meeting on zoom for i-phone  
<https://youtu.be/iQsNrhqITMo>

We hope you find this resource useful and that it has helped spark some ideas that you might consider piloting in your library.

## As for you

As well as those case examples and resources above, here are some further ideas stemming from our survey and initial conversations with library staff from around the UK:

- You could open up opportunities for people with dementia as volunteers within the library.
- Set up ongoing dialogue with local people with dementia about their library – a two-way thing to bounce ideas around.
- Establish a consistently inclusive approach across all libraries in a locality – a local ‘gold standard’ perhaps?
- Reach out to care establishments to identify people with dementia who might value your library’s services.
- Support people with dementia to use computers.
- Carry out simple way-finding and signage audits with local people with dementia who use the library service.

As you continue to engage with local people with dementia more ideas will come and more questions to investigate will arise. In the meantime feel free to ‘pick’n’mix’ what suits you from anything we have collated here.

## As for us

We’re happy to keep in touch and collaborate if you wish in piloting some of those ideas too. We will:

- Continue to think about how we can support you in your own plans.
- Share this report and its resources more widely and...
- Explore the possibility of setting up a national advisory group involving people with dementia, of course.

Many of you will have discovered already that the involvement and inclusion of people with dementia can only enrich the lives and work of all concerned. Although there may be hurdles to overcome, remember that people with dementia CAN.

## Keep in touch

Damian Murphy [damian@myid.org](mailto:damian@myid.org) or Rachael Litherland [rachael@myid.org.uk](mailto:rachael@myid.org.uk) would love to keep in touch with you, to explore ideas further.

Thanks to Helen Ramsbottom for carrying out the desk research that forms a lot of this report.

## Innovations in Dementia

Is a not-for-profit Community Interest Company (CIC). People with dementia are at the heart and start of all our work. We promote a positive but realistic view of dementia, demonstrating that, although it is life changing, it does not have to be life ending. We support people with dementia to live with hope and keep control of their lives.

**To find out more scan the QR code below.**



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