

**DIGITAL
NEIGHBOURHOODS
WITH
PLYMOUTH
UNIVERSITY**

Digital Venue Toolkit

**A guide to getting your
village or community
venue online**



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What is the Digital Venue Toolkit?

This publication is intended to help local communities provide digital skills training and access in their village or community. The aim is to enable local communities to work with a community venue such as a village, parish hall or community centre or similar venue to go online.

The toolkit is structured around first outlining the rationale and making the case, second providing information about what digital skills and access means and then providing a step by step guide as to what needs to be done. There are a series of appendices that cover more practical information and resources such as equipment lists and costs, some information on possible funding, and best practice examples of village halls that have become digital venues.

Introduction

Rural communities benefit from owning well-maintained, multi-purpose facilities that provide opportunities for local social activity, sports, arts and recreation, alongside providing access to services and civic participation. But rural communities are also recognised to be behind urban areas in terms of digital skills and connectivity. A village hall or community centre can provide a key venue to address these issues.

It is possible to turn village halls and community centres into digital venues through installing a broadband connection, installing equipment and offering training for digital skills. This can help to support the viability of the venue and to play a key role in creating a strong community. This toolkit gives an overview of why to go to digital, what it may involve and also some practical information and resources for venues thinking about going digital.



Digital inclusion in your community

There are 10,000 village halls in England representing the largest network of community owned facilities in rural Britain. The term 'village hall' covers a range of rural buildings, including church halls and community centres, in which a variety of community activities take place. Village halls and community centres often provide the only place to meet within a rural community, offering vital and diverse support to improve quality of life, particularly for those who are least able to travel to more distant centres of activity.

“We are one of the building blocks of community life like the shop, the post office, the church and the chapel”¹

Digital connectivity and rural

Rural villages are often thought of as geographically and economically 'remote' or isolated. This can correlate against other ways that a community can lack access such as access to digital skills and connectivity- something that is termed digital exclusion. It has also been shown that many rural communities experience digital isolation; in terms of both access to connection and to skills. Generally, people in rural communities have been shown to have poorer access to digital connectivity³ (broadband, mobile phones)⁴ and digital skills.

Some facts and figures:

- In 2017, almost 1 in 10 adults had never used the internet.⁶
- In 2017 89% of adults in the UK had recently used the internet (in the last 3 months), while 9% had never used the internet.⁶
- Virtually all adults aged 16 to 34 years were recent internet users (99%), in contrast with 41% of adults aged 75 years and over.⁶
- 21% (11.5m) of the UK are classified as not having Basic Digital Skills.⁷

- Many consumers remain unable to access broadband with acceptable speeds the problem is particularly bad in rural areas. A quarter (25%, or 960,000) of premises in the UK's rural areas cannot get download speeds greater than 10Mbit/s.⁸
- Only 80% of rural households in the UK have standard broadband availability compared to 98% of urban households.
- Only 21% of rural households in the UK have superfast broadband availability compared to 86% of urban households.⁹

Being online and using technology is becoming an increasingly regular and important factor, for work, learning or recreational use. Good digital literacy skills and access to technology allows us to benefit in many different ways such as saving money through online shopping and paying bills. Technology is increasingly used in rural areas to create supportive local relationships and to build social cohesion.¹¹

1. St Breward Memorial Hall Committee Member, St Breward, Cornwall. 2. Dijk JV [2006], Digital divide research, achievements, and shortcomings, *Poetics* 34, 2006, pp. 221-235. eEurope [2008], rapport "e-Inclusion : nouveaux défis, nouvelles politiques", ec.europa.eu/.../kaplan_report_einclusion_final_version.pdf. 3. The study ('Two-Speed Britain: Rural Internet Use') claims that more than 1 million people in Britain are "excluded or face challenges in engaging in normal online activities because they live in remote rural areas", where slow or non-existent Internet connectivity is still a serious problem. 4. In urban areas, just 5% of those sampled had an average broadband speed below 6.3 Mbps; however, in deep rural areas, over half (53%) of people were unable to achieve this. The gap is most pronounced in upland areas of Scotland, Wales and England, but also in many areas in lowland rural Britain. It affects 1.3 million people in deep rural Britain, and 9.2 million people in less remote areas with poor internet connections (see commentaries from ThinkBroadband, ISP Review, Cable.co.uk and Broadband Choices). 5. ONS, *Internet Users 2015*, p36. 6. Ofcom, *The availability of communications services in the UK*, May 2013, p 26-27. 7. Government Statistical Service, *Statistical Digest of Rural England 2012*, February 2012, p. 65. 8. OFCOM *Connected Nations 2016*, <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/multi-sector-research/infrastructure-research/connected-nations-2016>. 9. Ofcom, *The availability of communications services in the UK*, May 2013, p 26-27.

What is Digital Inclusion?

A key approach to addressing the skills gap with digital technology is termed digital inclusion. There is a wide variety of perceptions about what is meant by the term 'digital inclusion', and what the most important features are. Studies of digital inclusion and exclusion have highlighted differences in:

- Access to equipment or connections – which can be considered as ownership of a technology or having a connection at home, availability of a connection at convenient locations in everyday life¹² or having access to the internet anywhere, including public access points.
- Capability to use information technologies – since unmet primary needs may present barriers to effective use: literacy difficulties, for example, make use of the internet problematic, and some disabilities may present challenges.
- Engagement with technologies – including perceptions of the relevance of ICT to individuals' lives and expectations of what sort of interaction is possible.¹³
- Use of technologies – whether differences of degree, quantity, or quality of use. Differential usage of ICT is arguably an even more significant factor than differential access.
- Skills in using technologies – for example, the Riga Ministerial Declaration focuses on 'digital literacy and competence'.¹⁴
- Confidence in using technologies – particularly for those without family members or friends from whom they are able to learn.
- Application of creativity, in the sense of being able to interact effectively and flexibly with technologies – this is particularly important for promoting confidence and self esteem among users.¹⁵

According to a review by Plymouth University Digital Neighbourhood Research Project¹⁶ between 2010 and 2014 Superfast Cornwall delivered the Get IT Together Programme of digital inclusion training (post 2014 this was taken on solely by Superfast Cornwall¹⁷). This primarily consisted of 5-7 week training sessions delivered locally in towns and villages throughout Cornwall, mainly aimed at over 60's demographic. This has been delivered to 57 locations in Cornwall, 18 of which have been village locations. In towns, typically libraries, church halls and Job Centres have provided venues for delivering this training. However in villages, approx. 75% (13 of the 18) of the sessions have been delivered in local village halls or community centres (the remainder being church halls and housing association venues).¹⁸ This clearly shows that, in villages, the village hall is the key venue to provide digital inclusion training.

12. eg. UK online centres/Simpson Carpenter/Regeneris 2006. 13. Cabinet Office 2004. 14. EU 2006. 15. http://www.tinderfoundation.org/sites/default/files/research-publications/digitalinclusion_a_discussion_of_the_evidence_base_1.pdf. 16. www.digitalneighbourhoods.net. 17. This is staffed by Jay Chapman of Citizens Online (and post 2014 Superfast Cornwall) and Jane Morgan of CRCC. 18. Full list of Digital Inclusion village venues: Blackwater (Village Hall), Carnon Downs (Village Hall), Foxhole (Phillimore Court Housing), Gorran Haven (Gorran Haven Memorial Hall), Gwinear (Hall for Gwinear), Leedstown (Village Hall), Mullion (YMCA), Newlyn (The Centre), Perranporth (Age Concern), Pendeen (The Centre of Pendeen), Penryn (JCP), St Dennis (ClayTAWC Training and Work Centre), St Brevard (Institute and War Memorial Hall), St Columb Major (Wellbeing Café), St Columb Minor (Church Hall Community Centre), St Mawes (Millenium Rooms), St Keverne (Band Hall), Stoke Climsland (The Old School), Treknow (Village Hall), Whitstone (St Anne's Parish Hall).

Digital inclusion in your community venue

The digital village hall or community centre

Village halls and community centres are not just a venue to meet but also a set of resources; people, skills and knowledge and building/ facilities/ equipment. Village halls and community centres are often aware that they need to adapt to make themselves useful and appropriate for changing community needs. One of the ways that village halls and community centres can address this is by taking steps to go 'digital'.

What is Access?

The key element in all of this is not "access" either to infrastructure or end user terminals (bridging the hardware "divide"). Rather what is significant is having access and then with that access having the knowledge, skills, and supportive organisational and social structures to make effective use of that access and that e-technology to enable social and community objectives".²⁰

The ways in which people may choose to connect and interact with others are changing. The communication options afforded by superfast broadband and the opportunities it presents for ICTs to be utilised as community organising tools are significant. It is not simply a matter of access but of engagement, too, which requires some combination of motivation, skill and confidence.

The Rural Village context:

According to The Good Things Foundation the issues with access in rural communities are as follows:²¹

- Rural areas are often last to have newer, faster technologies such as broadband and fibre.
- Due to poor or non-existent transport and longer distances to delivery venues, it can be more difficult and expensive to access computer classes or outreach venues.

- With places such as libraries often having shorter opening hours in rural areas, access to publicly available computers is limited. This can make learning slow - learners forget what they have learned and do not consolidate their skills, especially if they rely on weekly outreach sessions in locations where there isn't regular access to computers or the internet.
- Additional challenges associated with disability, older age and low income are compounded in rural areas. Hard to-reach groups living in rural areas are more likely to suffer from increased social isolation.

Digital Inclusion and Access

Digital inclusion²² is often defined in terms of Digital skills - being able to use computers and the internet. This is important, but a lack of digital skills is not necessarily the only, or the biggest, barrier people face.

Connectivity - and access to the internet. People need the right infrastructure but that is only the start.

Accessibility - services should be designed to meet all users' needs, including those dependent on assistive technology to access digital services.

There are 4 main kinds of challenge people face:

Access - the ability to actually go online and connect to the internet.

Skills - to be able to use the internet.

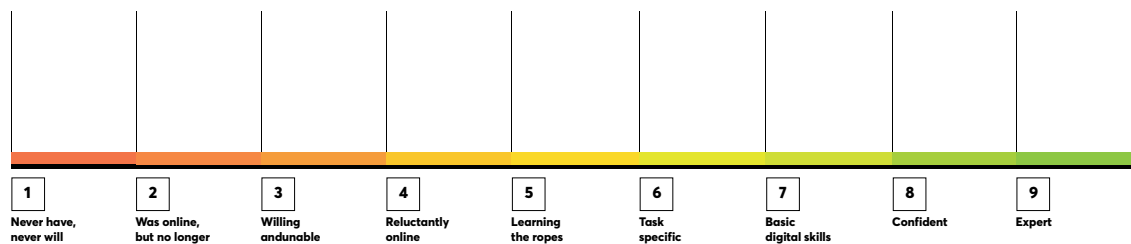
Motivation - knowing the reasons why using the internet is a good thing.

Trust - the risk of crime, or not knowing where to start to go online.

²⁰ Gurstein, M(2003). Effective use: A community informatics strategy beyond the Digital Divide. Journal of Community Informatics. **21**. http://www.tinderfoundation.org/sites/default/files/research-publications/doingdigitalinclusion_rurallinks.pdf. ²² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-digital-inclusion-strategy/government-digital-inclusion-strategy>.

Why go digital?

A digital venue can support people going online in a number of different ways. People may be at many stages in getting digital skills - from having no computer experience to being competent. The key thing is to aspire to have people moving up the the digital inclusion scale:



Digital inclusion scale

The benefits of going digital

There are a range of reasons and motivations as why it makes sense to go online: What will people use it for?

1. Digital outcomes

These include access, use, skills, and motivation, and are the 'intermediate outcomes' (or steps along the way) needed to achieve wider economic and health/social outcomes.

2. Economic outcomes:

These relate to employment, education, managing money, and creativity/entrepreneurialism.

3. Health and social outcomes:

These relate to health, communicating and connecting, leisure and entertainment, public services, and democratic and civic participation.

The benefits of going digital

Economic outcomes

Employment

Many jobs now require you submit an online application form. Job Centres increasingly see the need for offering digital support.

Accessing Government services

Many government services now require online access. The rollout of Universal Credit (which will require online access) will also have an impact on how people manage their access to benefits and support. But a number of key government services now require online access and basic digital skills:

Car tax / Farming subsidies / Job Centres / Universal Credit

Education

Increasingly in all aspects of everyday life, having basic digital skills is invaluable. It can be about keeping in touch with friends and family, buying online or filling in a job application. Underlying this is the fact that going digital means learning new skills, and getting better access to information and resources.

Managing Money

Many people or organisations find going online invaluable for saving money, such as getting advice, purchasing online and also accessing financial services.

Creativity/entrepreneurialism

If people are working from home, planning to set up their own business or run their own business the internet is often a lifeline.

Health and Social Outcomes

Communicating and Connecting

Going digital means other ways to stay in touch with friends and family. This can be via email or through social media, but increasingly Skype or video conferencing can be a good way to keep up with people wherever they are in the world.

Democratic and civic participation

Getting online helps you keep in touch with your local community and events through social media such as Parish council meetings, community and history groups, arts clubs and social gatherings.

"A good thing about Internet is that you can have access to a lot of information from all over the world! The problem is that technology is going so fast that people are been left behind. That's why places like this are necessary. People come not just to use the computers but to learn to use them. We give them advice on how to fill documents and formats to receive benefits."

Sandra Coak, The Centre of Pendeen

"It has become a big part of my life: email friends; family history research, shopping online, finding out info, book holiday."

An aerial photograph of a coastal town, likely in Cornwall, UK. The town is built on a hillside, with a prominent church featuring a square tower. The sea is visible in the background under a cloudy sky. The foreground is filled with dense green trees.

“Digital Champions in local communities have the most tremendous potential to improve the quality of life for their families, friends and neighbours, transforming the way everyone works, lives and plays.”

"Being online is no longer an optional extra. At its heart being a Digital Champion is about shining a light to help others find their way."

"In my experience getting support from your local community to both get and stay online has the most transformative impact on quality of life for any person."

"Small things like the ability to get online with the support of your local community is how amazing changes can happen to people."

Why go digital?

Benefits and Risks

Venue Benefits

The benefits are far-reaching and you can offer wider variety of activities possible in the venue. This in turn helps community groups broaden their activities and increases visitor numbers. Offering training sessions will create new users and visitors, make the community resilient and future proof, whilst also countering rural isolation and lack of access to services.

Challenges and risks

A policy for safe use and protecting vulnerable people needs to be implemented. Maintenance of equipment and security/insurances (due to cost of equipment in the venue) can add to costs where budgets are usually low.

An older-than-average population in rural areas is more likely to actively resist the internet and/or have mobility and dexterity issues, making it difficult for them to use technology and seek support.

Rural communities suffer from ongoing out-migration of young people with digital skills, so peer-to-peer and family support are less likely. Smaller rural areas will have fewer local opportunities for digital skills training, and having to travel greater distances to attend support can reduce the motivation to learn.

“the internet is not the be all and end all, it’s just another facility that you’ve got there. It’s like having a decent kitchen, it’s just another facility.”

“I learnt to use Internet in the Hall. As I have no Internet access at home, the hall has been my main source to get connected and mainly to learn to use technology as computer and laptops, but also the basic devices as a mobile phone. At the hall I found the support to learn new things and to keep up active as a mature adult.”

Pendeen workshop participant 2014

How digital helps in your community

Parish council meetings

Parish Councils increasingly need to operate digitally – whether for accessing planning applications, managing the meeting organisations to circulating information.



Photography/art/history clubs

Whether your club or society is interested in painting, knitting or photography there is so many resources that can be accessed digitally that can enhance how the club runs. This can potentially increase club or society memberships, widen the scope of the what activities the club or society can offer or make links with organisations/events and people elsewhere who have similar interests.



Computer classes

By offering digital training skills, you can not only attract new visitors to your venue, but also upskill people and potentially address underlying social issues such as unemployment, mental health or physical health issues.



Digital champions

By training up a digital champion for your venue you can make delivering digital skills and activities more viable, but also ensure your venue has the necessary skillset to offer a wider range of services.

For example – the Cornwall Council digital champions programme trains people up to work in the community, and these people then often go on to train community members locally.

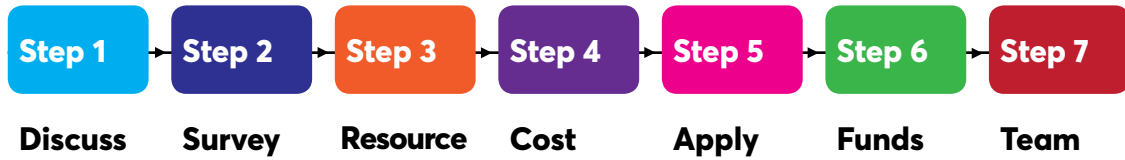


Centre of Pendeen Facebook page

We have leisure courses as well like an art group, loose threads, sewing, knitting. There's the Cornish Society. Cornish lessons. Silver Surfers club. We expected more and more had to be done online'

(Di Mlynek, St Dennis ClayTAWC)

A step by step 'how to' guide



Step 1

Discuss at community organisation, parish council or village hall committee

The first step is to discuss going online within your committee or organisation. Find out the level of awareness amongst members, and assign someone/a working group to champion the project. Decide who are your stakeholders for the project. A focus group can be useful to understand awareness levels, needs and expected outcomes.

Step 2

Do a survey within the community, and of the space of their digital needs

Find out who uses the space, both individuals and groups and whether they have access to or use the internet. You can use the DCMS (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport) Digital Inclusion Evaluation Toolkit or create your own survey ²³.

Step 3

Undertake a feasibility study of costs, equipment needed and people

Create a spreadsheet that outlines the equipment, outline costs and resources needed to equip your venue

Step 4

Assess demand/Get quotes for equipment/connection

Further investigation into costs and delivery. This includes identifying ongoing costs, such as who can install the equipment and maintenance, support and service costs.

Step 5

Identify funding and resources

Unless your venue has funds available you will almost certainly need to look at external funding. One of the basic costs will be the broadband connection, but this is rarely funded as it is an ongoing cost. It is usually better to identify equipment costs and hardware/software as this is more likely to be funded. You may need to find an organisation that can help you find suitable funding sources and help write a funding application. See page 20.

Step 6

Secure funding

You will often need to factor in a delay with making your funding application and securing funding. It is often a good idea to try multiple funding streams. If one fails there should be an alternative.

Step 7

Appoint a 'digital team' - A Digital Champion and a set of volunteers

Once you have the resources available to create a digital venue or hub, then you will need people who will help to set it up, run it and maintain it, as well as raise awareness in the local community. They may need training and support.

²³. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-inclusion-evaluation-toolkit>



Step 8	Purchase equipment and install	Finalise your equipment requirements and find an appropriate person or company with expertise to install. It is usually good to form a business relationship with a local group or company so that they can assist in the maintenance and technical support.
Step 9	Awareness raising in the community	Once you are up and running, raising awareness is key to your venue being used for digital activities. Advertise it! Especially through social media such as Facebook and through web pages, newsletters and flyers or posters.
Step 10	Run Digital Inclusion training	A good initial activity is running digital skills training courses to get people online. These usually run for 6-8 weeks and there are a number of external organisations that may be able to help run or facilitate these.
Step 11	Share knowledge with local groups that use the venue	Raise awareness locally with community groups about your venue. Do this through social media such as Facebook and through web pages, newsletters and flyers or posters.
Step 12	Evaluation	Once you are up and running it is important to see the role of digital skills and training as an ongoing process. Set up an evaluation and review process that runs at regular intervals and if necessary identify further funding, training and initiatives that continue to raise the digital inclusion scale of individuals and groups at your venue.

Government Digital inclusion checklist²⁴

1. **Start with user needs - not our own**
2. **Improve access - stop making things difficult**
3. **Motivate people - find something they care about**
4. **Keep it safe -build trust**
5. **Work with others - don't do it alone**
6. **Focus on wider outcomes - measure performance**

24. <https://gds.blog.gov.uk/2014/01/13/a-checklist-for-digital-inclusion-if-we-do-these-things-were-doing-digital-inclusion/>

Types of digital venue

Digitally enabled village halls tend to fit in one of four types. This typically corresponds to the number of activities and the degree of staff/volunteer support together with access to funding:

- **Digital Hubs**
- **Digital Venues**
- **Switched On**
- **Switched Off**

Digital Hubs²⁵

The proactive village halls and community centres have a computer room, typically consisting of a set of 4-8 computers, an interactive whiteboard and projector, a superfast connection and a volunteer who will typically support activities in the room. These rooms can be used as the venues of digital inclusion training. They also have a digital champion who coordinates, trains local people and raises awareness and a wider group of digital volunteers who support them.

Digital venues

These venues have actively engaged with digital training and will have run either one or a series of digital inclusion training sessions. These venues tend not to have equipment, but will have a broadband connection (often not Superfast). They have identified a need to offer digital training and resources, but often don't have funding to support the purchase. These venues typically have an active organising committee and a busy range of events at the venue. They also have a digital champion who coordinates, trains local people and raises awareness.

Switched on

These venues have identified a need to offer digital inclusion training and access at the venue, but have not managed to organise or drive involvement from the local community. Most have an internet connection, but typically not a superfast connection.

Switched Off

A large number of rural village halls and community centres have not engaged with digital training and do not have either equipment or a connection.

²⁵. For best practice examples see the case studies in the appendix



Digital hub

St Breward is a lively village in rural North Cornwall with a population of 886 (2011 Census), with a strong community spirit. It is geographically isolated, being 30 minutes drive to the nearest town and with an infrequent bus service.

As part of a renovation programme in 2013 of the Institute and War Memorial Hall, funding was secured for wireless superfast broadband, and two rooms were each equipped with a SMART Board, speakers, a visualiser, a PA and a hearing loop system. In 2013 the hall hosted its first 5 week Get IT Together course for local residents, and this was repeated in 2014, this time with a concurrent "IT Drop-In" taking place in an additional space within the hall.

Over 214 unique visits to the hall have resulted from people participating in the Digital Inclusion training alone.

In 2017 it has upgraded to include a village cinema, and the Hall is still continuing to run IT training courses.

Many clubs and societies, as well as the Parish Council use the internet as part of their meetings. These include the Camera Club, The History Club, The WI, The Garden Club and the Art Group.

In addition, the Hall has attracted new bookings for children's parties and school events, as the organisers use the screen for presentations, playing video games and projections (see picture above).

The Institute and War Memorial Hall committee is very active and linked in with St Breward residents, and committee members act as informal digital champions by raising awareness and providing information about the possibilities offered by the digital facilities in the hall. Now the Hall describes itself online as :

"A warm and welcoming Village Community Hall with Superfast Broadband and WiFi"

Equipment

Interactive Smartboard and Projector, (Laptop and DVD Interface), which also connects to an overhead webcam for tabletop demonstrations (Reading Room) Superfast Broadband with wifi Public Address System with microphone and hearing Loop System. 60 inch wall mounted monitor, (Laptop and DVD Interface) (War memorial room).

Resources and contacts

The following is a non exhaustive list of contacts that may be of use when looking to transform your village hall or community centre:

Digital Inclusion/Digital Skills

• Citizens Online

A national charity that was set up to tackle the issues of digital inclusion

www.citizensonline.org.uk

• Good Things Foundation

A charity which supports digitally and socially excluded people to improve their lives through digital.

www.goodthingsfoundation.org

• www.onlinecentresnetwork.org

• ACRE

Action with Communities in Rural England

www.acre.org.uk

CRCC

• NCVO

Supporting UK voluntary sector

www.ncvo.org.uk

• Dot Everyone

A think tank that explores how technology is changing society

www.doteveryone.org.uk

Funding

There is generally no one source of funding. You will need to be resourceful and see what is available and aim to tailor what you need against this. You can generally apply for funding through different routes:

- Digital skills training for local community
- Equipment/resources for local venue
- Benefits to specific socially excluded groups (e.g. unemployed, older people, NEETs)

Below is a list of potential funders:

National Lottery

Landfill Communities Fund

Local Councillor

Community Chest Fund

(from Local Councillor)

Local Town Council

Town/ Parish Council section 137

JobCentre Plus

1. Please be aware that these links were correct as of 2017, but they may change or disappear.

Equipment and costs

Equipment

Broadband Connection

This is the basic start for becoming a digital venue. Initially a simple low speed broadband can be fine, but a superfast broadband line will make things like streaming videos and getting fast access possible.

Costs - Depending on the type of connection this can be from £15-£40 a month.

Screen

If you want to deliver anything in a way that can be shared with a group a flat screen can be invaluable.

Costs - A standard 50" flat screen will be between £600-£1000.

Speakers

For any community activity or event you will need speakers.

Costs - £300-£500.

Induction loop

Induction loop systems help people who are deaf or hard of hearing pick up sounds more clearly, by reducing background noise. This can be a costly item, so you will need to assess the level of use and installation requirements.

Whiteboard

An option instead of a flat screen is a whiteboard. This will enable you to use the screen 'interactively' and is great for school activities or other teaching related events.

Costs - £500-£600.

Laptops

It is useful to have a pool of standard laptops that can be used by clubs and societies, but also can be used for digital skills training. One laptop can be set up ready to use with the screen for projecting images from the screen or viewing online material communally.

Costs Approx - £400-£500 for a standard laptop. Software such as Microsoft Office will need licences.

Tablets/iPads

iPads or tablets are a great entry way for people to get accessing digital. They have less functionality but since they are cheaper than a laptop they can be a great way to get started and they don't need specialist software. You can download a range of apps (often for free) to increase functionality.

Costs - £200-£500 per device.

Printer

A printer can be useful, especially for clubs and societies

Costs- £50-£200.

Installation

You will probably need to pay a company to install the equipment and set up all the cabling etc.

Maintenance

You need to factor in running costs for when things go wrong and also for making changes and updates to equipment.

Equipment and costs

	Switched on	Digital Venue	Digital Hub
Broadband connection- fixed line and Wifi	✓	✓	
Superfast broadband			✓
1 laptop	✓	✓	✓
Computers- desktop/laptop/tablet		✓	✓
Speakers		✓	✓
Projector		✓	✓
Flat Screen		✓	
Whiteboard			✓
Maintenance	✓	✓	✓

“Technology is going at such a pace and we really want to try to keep up with it for the benefit of the community.”

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Background

The Digital Neighbourhoods research project investigates the role of superfast broadband access on rural neighbourhoods. It studies the impact of the integration of online social networks with place-based networks for rural communities. The study aims to investigate the link between the use of public spaces, such as libraries, and social integration, through community based online social networks, as an approach to overcoming digital divides. The research is part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund bringing greater connectivity to Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (Superfast Cornwall).

**Digital Neighbourhoods Research Project (2013-2017)
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