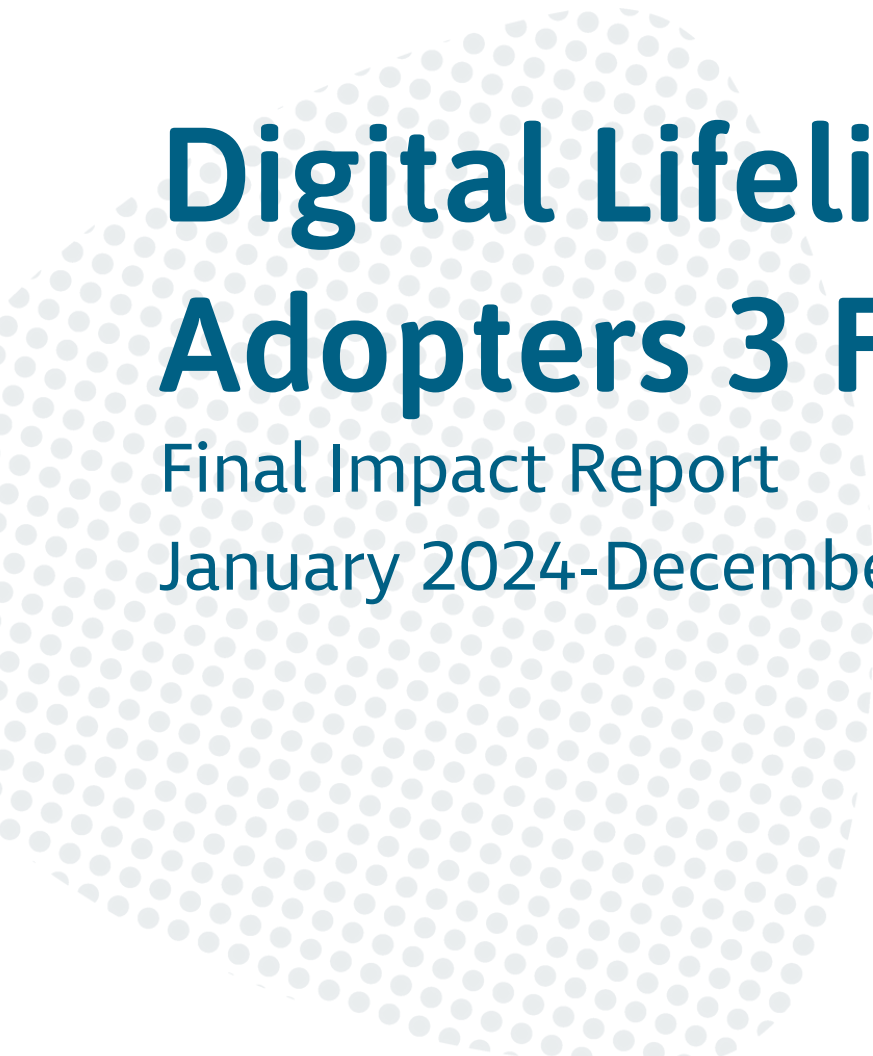




# Digital Lifelines Early Adopters 3 Fund

Final Impact Report

January 2024-December 2024



## The Digital Lifelines Programme

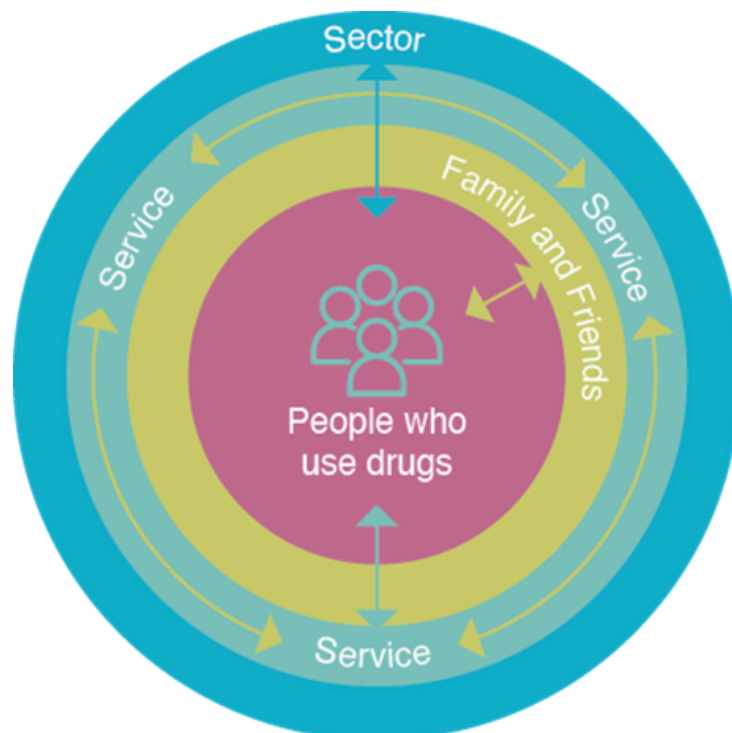
Digital Lifelines Scotland launched in April 2021 funded by Scottish Government as a partnership programme instigated, designed and delivered across a wide range of organisations.

Digital Lifelines Scotland seeks to improve digital inclusion and to design digital solutions that better meet people's needs, to improve the health outcomes for:

**PEOPLE** have greater access to the confidence, skills, and motivation alongside devices and connectivity that form digital solutions that keep them safe and that enable them to become and remain connected to family, friends and relevant services that support them.

**THE SERVICES** that support these people have the digital means to develop and strengthen the support they provide, and staff that are skillful in using and developing digital solutions to enable those they support.

**THE SECTOR** is connected and collaborating, developing joined-up services and exploring digital solutions together.



## Early Adopters 3 Fund

This report provides a summary of the impact of funding from organisations funded through the Early Adopters 3 Fund, which was delivered between December 2023 and December 2024.

After carrying out a gap analysis of the Digital Lifelines programme in 2023, it was identified that people recently discharged from hospital and residential rehab, and to a lesser extent, people released from custody, were underrepresented in the programme.

For Early Adopters 3, a targeted approach was taken to identify projects working in the underrepresented thematic areas. Projects were also sought from geographical areas previously not supported through the programme.

Funding initially covered a twelve-month delivery period, with all funds to be spent by 31 December 2024. Participating organisations were required to attend monthly Community of Learning sessions to share their learning with the programme. Initially, grants of up to £65,000 were available to support existing digital inclusion work over 12 months from June 2023 to December 2024. Two projects experienced delays and were granted extensions to complete delivery by March 2025. Due to increased demand, the programme team also agreed to uplift grant awards, allowing organisations to apply for additional funds for devices and connectivity. Four organisations applied and received grant uplifts

Twelve organisations were invited to apply. Nine organisations were awarded funding, with two being unsuccessful and one withdrawing their application out due to lack of capacity.



**Maximum  
Award Amount**

**£69,840.00**

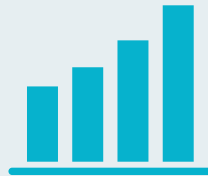
## Funded Projects

Nine projects were supported through the fund, totalling £463,002



Funded  
projects

9



Total amount  
awarded

£463,002



Average amount  
awarded

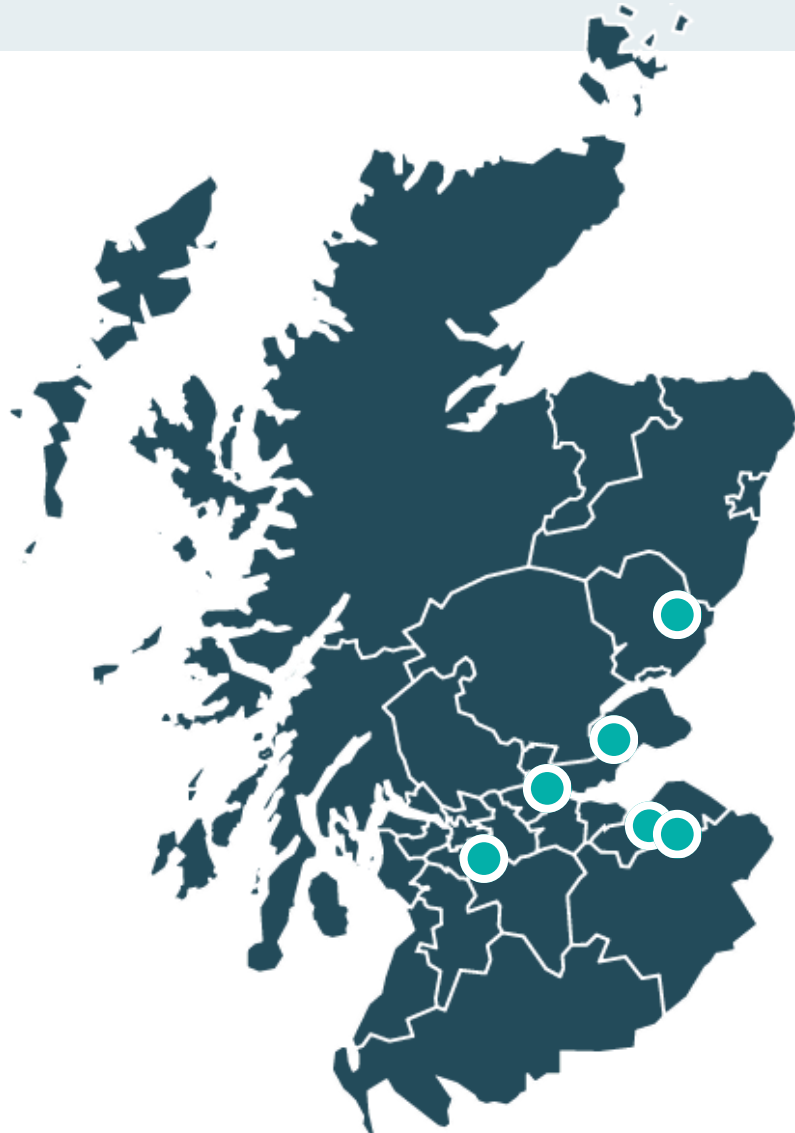
£51,445

## Project Delivery

In total, 9 of the funded projects are delivering across 13 local authority areas in Scotland.

[Find out about each funded project in our interactive Google map here](#)

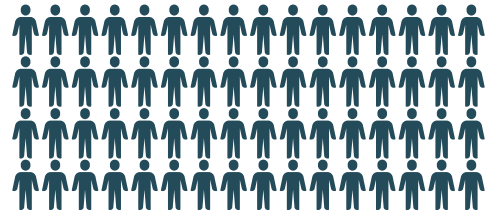
(Use the panel on the left side of the google map to select tick boxes of data you want to view or hide)



## The Beneficiaries

This programme was targeted at people who are at risk of drug related harm and are, or have recently been:

- Experiencing homelessness
- Released from custody: or
- In hospital or a residential service



630

Direct beneficiaries have  
been supported



244

People supported  
released from  
custody



238

People supported  
experiencing  
homelessness



148

People supported  
recently in a hospital  
or residential service



57

Digital Champions have  
been trained



73

Staff and volunteers have  
been supported

## Devices Distributed to date

### People Experiencing Homelessness



**100**

Phones



**59**

Laptops



**54**

Tablets



**155**

Connectivity

### People Released from Custody



**217**

Phones



**26**

Laptops



**63**

Tablets



**276**

Connectivity

### People recently in Hospital or Residential Service



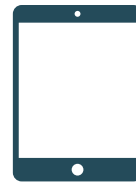
**56**

Phones



**34**

Laptops



**39**

Tablets



**119**

Connectivity

## Funded Projects

Organisation Name	Project Summary	Amount Awarded
<b>Access to Industry Limited</b>	Access to Industry worked with people who had just been discharged from hospital or residential services and returned to Dundee. They provided laptops and connectivity alongside digital skills and employability support, enabling people to access training, education, and health and wellbeing support. The project supported 43 participants, 1 staff member and volunteer, and trained 1 digital champion.	£34,340
<b>Blue Triangle (Glasgow) Housing Association Limited</b>	Blue Triangle provided digital skills and support for people experiencing homelessness and/or had been recently released from custody. The project provided devices, connectivity, and support to improve people's health and wellbeing, community connections, and access to services to support recovery across multiple areas in Scotland (Argyll and Bute; North Lanarkshire; South Ayrshire; West Dunbartonshire). The project supported 83 participants, 6 staff and volunteers, and trained 7 digital champions.	£68,534
<b>Cyrenians</b>	Cyrenians provided one-to-one person-centred digital inclusion support for people at risk of drug-related harm transitioning from hospital or custody in Edinburgh and West Lothian. The project supported 164 participants, 6 staff and volunteers, and trained 5 digital champions.	£69,840



Organisation Name	Project Summary	Amount Awarded
<p><b>Harbour (Ayrshire)</b></p>	<p>Harbour Ayrshire supported people recently discharged from hospital, residential rehab, or released from custody with intensive one-to-one support across Ayrshire. They aimed to increase digital inclusion, allowing people to be better connected to support networks and develop digital skills to help them access training, education, and employment opportunities. The project supported 35 participants, 3 staff and volunteers, and trained 1 digital champion.</p>	<p>£50,000</p>
<p><b>Liber8 (Lanarkshire Limited)</b></p>	<p>Liber8 developed digital inclusion support within their core services to reduce the negative impact of alcohol and substance use for people in South Lanarkshire. The project supported 45 participants, 22 staff and volunteers, and trained 20 digital champions.</p>	<p>£48,898</p>
<p><b>Moving on (Inverclyde)</b></p>	<p>Moving On (Inverclyde) supported people on release from prison and discharge from residential rehab returning to the Greenock area. They provided devices and digital inclusion support, enabling people to connect with family and friends, as well as support services, and continue their learning through partner-run courses, increasing opportunities to access education and employment. The project supported 81 participants, 6 staff and volunteers, and trained 4 digital champions.</p>	<p>£55,000</p>





Organisation Name	Project Summary	Amount Awarded
<b>South Lanarkshire Council</b>	South Lanarkshire Council’s Alcohol and Drug Problem Solving Court provided digital inclusion support, via peer mentors, for people with structured deferred sentences in South Lanarkshire. The project supported 54 participants, 10 staff and volunteers, and trained 10 digital champions.	£53,407
<b>The Marie Trust</b>	The Marie Trust worked with people experiencing homelessness, using devices and software to improve digital inclusion and digital literacy skills in Glasgow. The project supported 65 participants, 17 staff and volunteers, and trained 9 digital champions.	£51,861
<b>Transform Forth Valley</b>	Transform Forth Valley worked with individuals at risk of drug death within their Housing First Programme in Falkirk. They provided intense one-to-one, person-centred support to increase digital skills, allowing people to be more connected to community and support services, useful resources, and information, as well as increasing employability skills. The project supported 60 participants, 2 staff and volunteers, and trained 0 digital champions.	£31,122
		<b>£463,002</b>



## Project Insights

Throughout the duration of the project, organisations provided feedback on what worked well, key factors that contributed to success, and valuable insights.



Many staff members highlighted the value of in-person community learning sessions. Feedback emphasised the benefits of connecting with colleagues from different organisations delivering similar projects, this created a sense of belonging within a larger network. These events facilitated valuable knowledge exchange and contributed to staff development.



Many organisations highlighted the importance of peer support groups in providing vital social connections, particularly for individuals who were isolated or faced mobility challenges. These online communities played a key role in recovery and personal growth, helping participants feel more connected and supported.



Several organisations found that participants felt more independent, connected, and engaged in different aspects of life, such as managing finances, accessing healthcare, and seeking social opportunities. Access to digital services played a key role in enhancing overall wellbeing and supporting recovery.



Organisations reported that their client group often struggles in hospital environments, with some wishing to be discharged against medical advice. Providing people with a device in hospital and teaching them how to use it has led to an increase in treatment completion and a reduction in self-discharge. After discharge, having a device has enabled patients to access follow-up care, addiction support, and community services.



## The Impact

### Blue Triangle

#### Theme: Rural Support

“We provide support in Oban, where many people have relocated to escape past circumstances, often without local friends or family. Devices and connectivity have been essential in helping them stay connected. Impact surveys show that many rely on this support as their only means of staying in touch with loved ones.”



### Moving on Inverclyde

#### Theme: Support Networks

“Our project has been a crucial lifeline, enabling people to connect with others through phones, laptops, and other devices. Many previously lacked the means to stay in touch, leading to missed appointments and meetings that hindered their recovery. Providing support and access to digital tools has created new opportunities, helping people stay connected and engaged with their support networks.”

### The Marie Trust

#### Theme: Digital Skill and Online Safety

“Group delivery proved effective, providing peer support and building trust. Many participants initially feared digital tools, using their phones only for calls. We addressed common concerns through sessions on online safety, secure browsing, digital mindfulness, and password management. This helped people overcome barriers to using devices and gain confidence in mobile banking and the internet.”



## An Impact Story

### South Lanarkshire Council

Callum has faced significant challenges, including substance use, homelessness, and untreated bipolar disorder. His offending history was largely linked to substance use. Through comprehensive interventions, including digital inclusion, he has been supported on his recovery journey, with digital access playing a key role in his progress.



### What difference did the project make?

Callum faced multiple barriers in his recovery journey, including mental health struggles, substance use, and homelessness. Access to digital tools through the Digital Lifestyles Programme was a game changer. With a tablet and Wi-Fi router, he could engage in online learning, focusing on psychology and mental health. These resources helped him reconnect with his ambitions for further education and a career.

Digital access also enabled Callum to connect with online recovery communities, where he found essential emotional support. Virtual recovery meetings and workshops helped him stay focused, offering flexibility when attending in-person meetings was challenging.

As Callum shared, ‘I feel truly supported and understood here. You guys look at me as a human, not just my addiction; it has given me the tools to rebuild my life. I am now volunteering and supporting other people.’”

### What worked well?

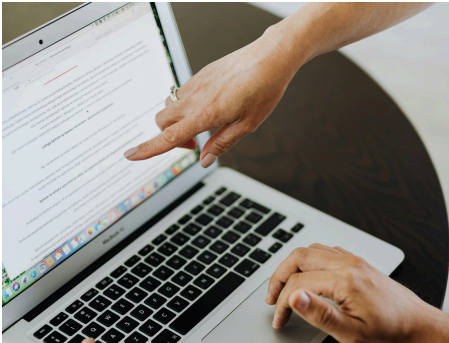


**Digital Tools and Flexibility:** The tablet and Wi-Fi router gave Callum access to online learning platforms and virtual recovery meetings, providing flexibility when attending in person wasn't possible. These digital tools also connected him with recovery communities, where he could share experiences and receive emotional support.



**Person-Centred Approach to Support:** By integrating digital resources with therapeutic interventions such as motivational interviewing and mental health support, Callum received tailored, comprehensive care. This approach kept him engaged in his recovery, education, and volunteer work, supporting his personal growth and community involvement.

## Impact Story: Liber8



Liber8's Digital Lifelines project supported 45 community members across four service locations in Lanarkshire, focusing on individuals in recovery from substance use who have experienced homelessness, prison, or residential care. The project aimed to bridge digital exclusion by providing access to devices and digital support."

Setting up digital diary reminders has helped people stop missing appointments, leading to better attendance and more engagement with services. It has also boosted confidence in using digital tools, allowing access to online training on topics like trauma and adult protection. The initiative has reduced isolation by providing online recovery spaces and made it safer to access information and services outside of social media.

The organisation learned that, despite training, many staff lacked basic digital confidence, indicating a need to focus on building internal skills first. Resistance to digital support was common, with only 2 of 11 trained staff actively delivering it. The project also prompted broader reflection on digital capacity across all 13 services, highlighting gaps in device use and skills.

**"It's great, I can now jump on the Zoom on my tablet, and take part in a recovery meeting at any time, day or night, and that's really helped me when I have struggled and needed someone to talk to. Can't thank you enough!"**

**Liber8 Community Member**

**"Community members have expressed their deep gratitude for the devices (tablets and phones), and access to the internet. And that they have had extremely positive impact on their recovery, mental health, and connections with family and friends."**

**Liber8 Staff Member**

### What's next?

Investing in additional training to build digital confidence among staff and, with the support of SCVO, conducting a Digital Skills Audit across all services to identify specific needs. The organisation will focus on promoting digital support, increasing staff engagement, and integrating digital capacity building into ongoing organisational development.

## Impact Story

### Harbour Ayrshire

Digital support has been vital in John's recovery following his discharge from rehab. Before leaving rehab, we visited John to understand his story and goals for the future, allowing us to tailor the support he needed.

As a rural resident, John was introduced to digital tools, receiving a device and training on apps like WhatsApp and Zoom. These allowed him to connect with online recovery communities, offering education and support. John found comfort in Zoom calls and joined a WhatsApp group, helping him bond with others in recovery.

Due to the shame and isolation from his addiction, John was initially afraid to leave his home. Without digital support, he would have struggled to access services and likely relapsed. Through weekly home visits and regular digital check-ins, we tracked his progress and well-being.

This digital engagement boosted John's confidence and self-worth, supporting his successful reduction of Methadone from 80mg to abstinence. Today, John is living a drug- and alcohol-free life and has been signed off by his criminal justice worker.

### What's next?

John is now in good health and able to attend community meetings as part of his recovery journey, travelling across Ayrshire by bus to participate in various groups. He is also a member of our Men's Only Ayr group and the Zoom Room, where he's preparing for the next stage of the volunteer program to become a group facilitator. John has applied for his driving licence and hopes to soon drive, offering rides to people in his village and sharing a new way of life



## Individual Impact

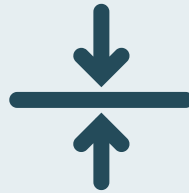
Funded projects conducted baseline and follow-up surveys to evaluate the programme's impact on individuals' mental health and well-being. These surveys assessed confidence in digital skills such as managing money online, accessing health services, and staying safe online. They also explored how these skills influenced participants' independence, social connections, and health management. Tracking changes over time provided valuable insight into the programme's overall effectiveness.

Overall, 762 impact surveys were completed by funded projects, including 447 baseline surveys and 315 follow-up surveys.



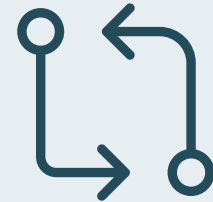
**762**

**Impact  
Surveys**



**447**

**Baseline  
Surveys**



**315**

**Follow - up  
Surveys**



Organisations were encouraged to conduct both a baseline and follow-up survey with each person they supported to measure the impact of digital inclusion efforts.



They were also advised that additional surveys could be conducted as part of the impact assessments. Beyond the figures above, 32 Round 2 surveys were completed across various organisations.



Impact surveys helped organisations understand how people wanted to use their devices. Feedback revealed that many used them to stay connected with friends and family, significantly enhancing their recovery support plans.

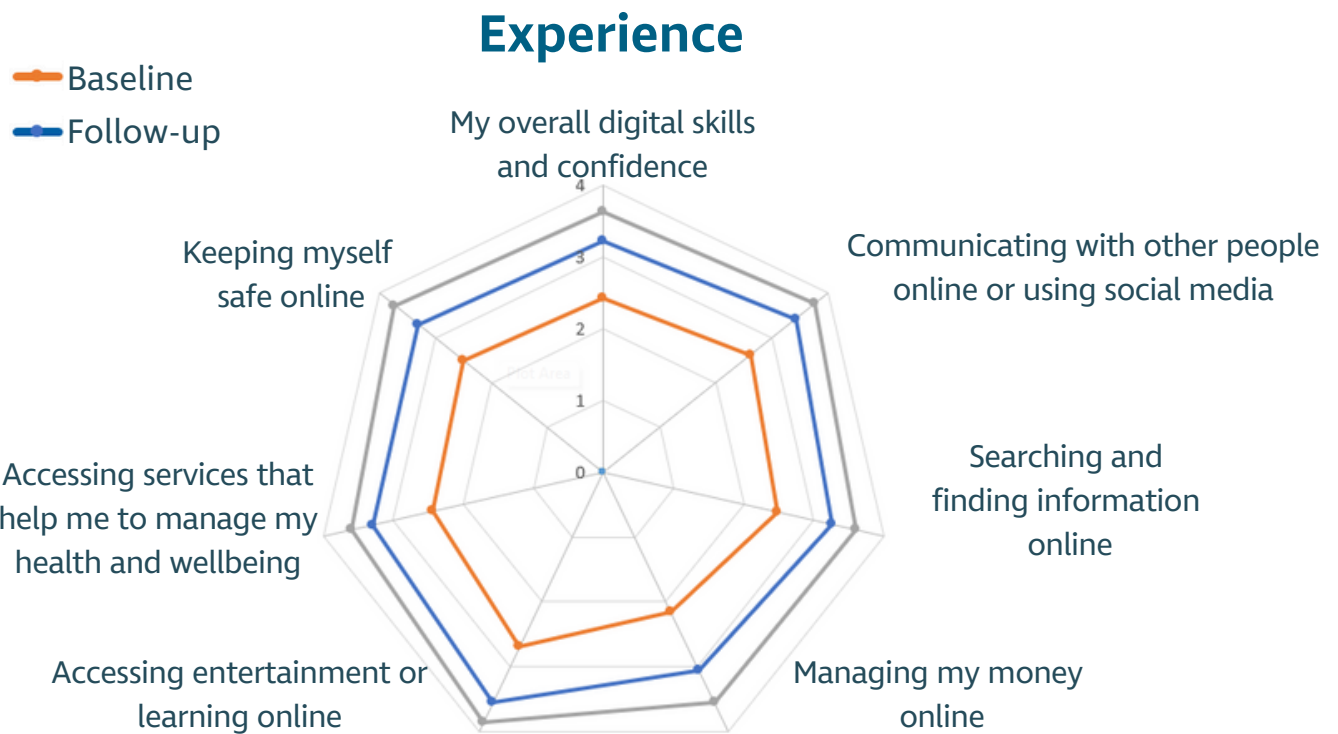


Organisations found impact surveys helpful in demonstrating the benefits of digital inclusion support and gaining deeper insight into its effects on those accessing their services.

## Individual Experience

The data indicates an overall and steady improvement in digital skills and confidence across all categories over time. Participants reported increased proficiency in key areas, including online safety, accessing health and wellbeing services, and financial management. The most significant improvements were seen in managing money online and searching for information.

The data in the graphs below represents aggregated results from participants who completed both a baseline and follow-up survey, allowing for a clear comparison of progress over time.



### Blue Triangle (Glasgow) Housing Association Limited

“I have used this device to support me in my recovery. Keeping my new device separate from my old phone helps me avoid negative influences while staying connected to important people and support. It relieves pressure, improves safety, and allows me to engage in positive activities without worrying about unwanted calls. This approach helps me live differently and focus on recovery.”

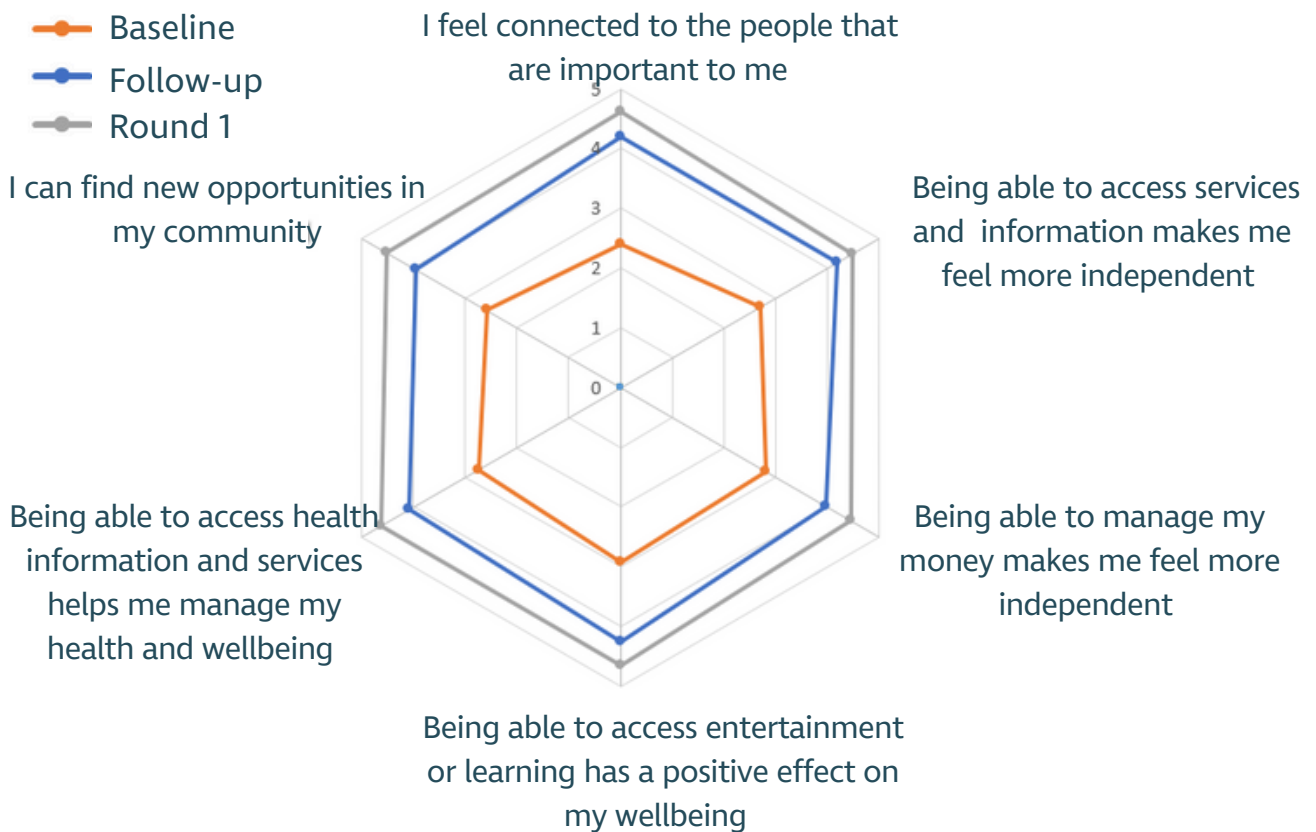
“Through digital support, I’ve learned more about managing my ADHD and accessing mental health services. Watching Euro 2024 helped me bond with others, and I’m excited to play in the Recovery Cup this year. I’ve also set up important appointments, including mental health support and a dentist visit. I’m proud of my progress in taking control of my well-being. “



## Individual Impact

The data shows a considerable positive overall impact on participants' sense of connection, independence, and wellbeing over time. Improvements were reported across all measured areas, including stronger connections with important people, greater engagement with community opportunities, and better management of health and finances. While most changes were gradual, the most significant gains were in finding new opportunities within the community, being able to access services and information which made people feel more independent..

### Impact



## Cyrenians

“Many individuals described it as a true ‘lifeline’. Impact survey scores were consistently high, with examples highlighting stronger family connections, improved access to support services and workers upon release, and better appointment management. Another recurring theme in the feedback was the ability to manage benefits and job searches online—something many had struggled with in the past due to a lack of devices and connectivity”



## The Challenges

Throughout the program, organisations share feedback on various challenges they face and the strategies they used to address them



Common challenges organisations shared were that clients' lifestyles, trauma, addiction, or mental health issues often made them hesitant to engage at first, and their participation wasn't always consistent.

To overcome this, organisations focused on building trust, checking in regularly, and incorporating digital support into the services clients were already using and being supported by the organisation.



Some organisations had expressed there were concerns about providing devices and the worry from staff around people selling the devices to purchase drugs and potentially relapsing.

They also feedback that they were able to overcome this by accepting the positives of digital support outweighed the potential risks. They also feedback that throughout the programme delivery, they have no evidence and have not become aware of this happening in any form.



A common challenge was that phones were fragile and often dropped, lost, or damaged by clients especially whilst in recovery. To address this, organisations provided screen protectors and phone cases this led to less phones being broken or damaged and needing replaced.



Organisations shared that the community learning sessions, which brought together funded projects, were beneficial for discussing ways to address challenges with other organisations.

These sessions offered a platform for organisations to exchange their challenges, connect with those facing similar issues, and collaborate on finding potential solutions.



## Key Learnings and Considerations for Future Funds

The Digital Lifelines initiative has supported multiple funds, each with similar aims but distinct areas of focus. This report concentrates on insights from the Follow-on Fund. At the same time, other funds—such as Small Grants 2024 and Early Adopters 3—were delivered over a similar period, each addressing digital inclusion in different ways. As a result, many of the recommendations and conclusions align across these programmes due to their shared objectives.



### Device Distribution and Protection

Practical considerations, such as providing protective covers for devices, should be factored into future programmes. Organisations highlighted that this simple step reduced long-term costs and helped participants value their devices more. Building this into future budgets and encouraging its use could enhance sustainability.



### Project Planning and Engagement

The length of the grant period should allow sufficient time for project planning. Some organisations faced challenges with initial engagement, which could limit the overall impact of their work. Providing structured time and support for planning—particularly through in-person Community of Learning events—could help mitigate these challenges. These events also encourage a strong sense of community and could further encourage partnership working across the programme.



### Sustaining Impact Beyond Funding

A key concern for organisations was how to sustain the impact of their work once funding ends. Greater focus and tailored support could help projects embed their success for long-term benefit. Impact surveys have proven valuable in measuring success, but smaller organisations may lack the infrastructure for effective data collection. The programme could explore ways to provide more targeted support to these organisations, helping them integrate impact measurement into service delivery.





# Grantmaking

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## Contact

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