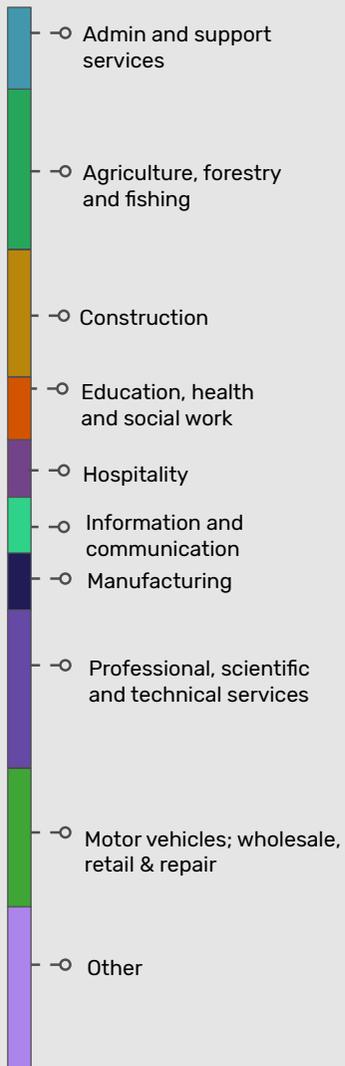


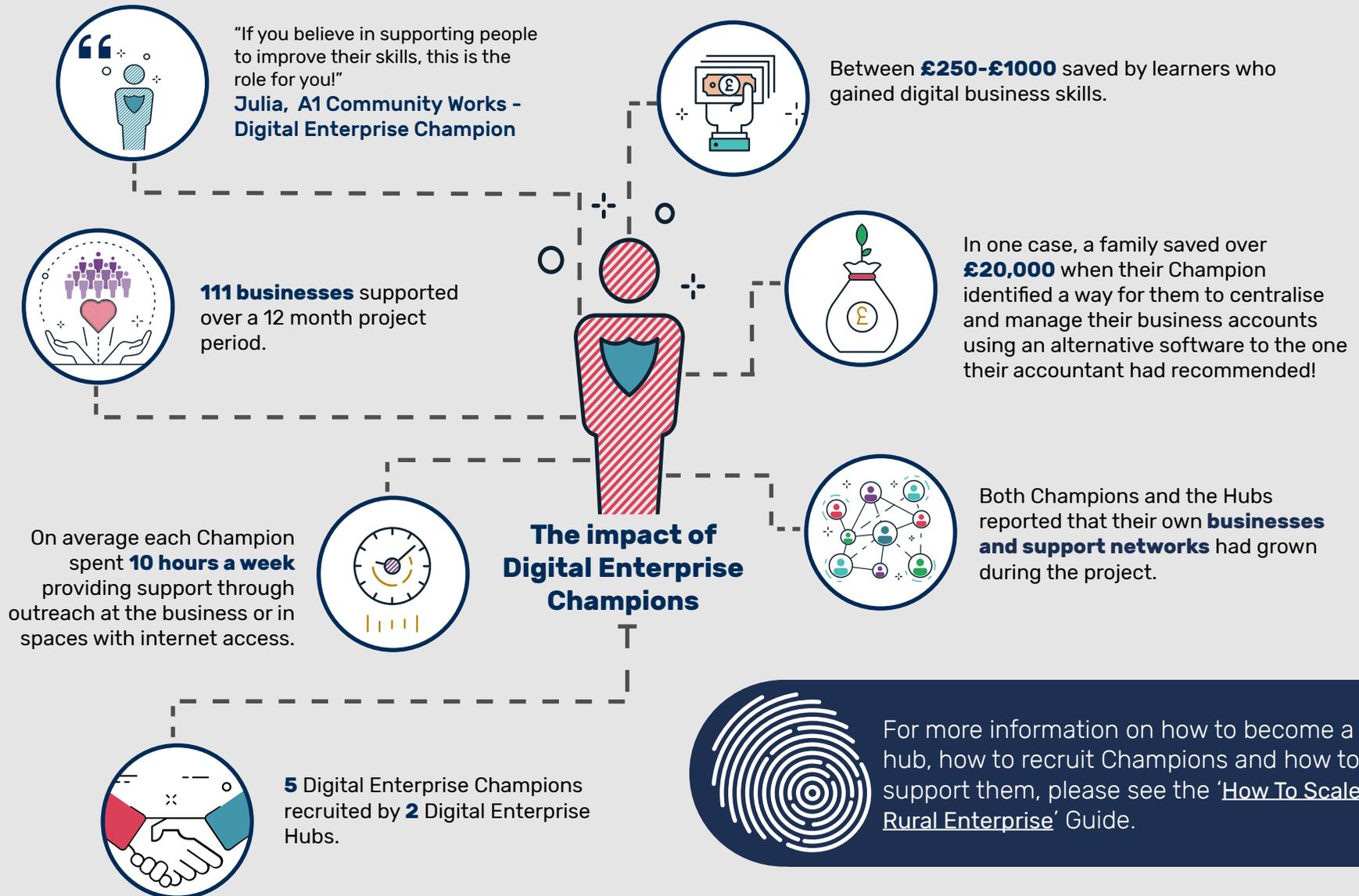
Scaling Rural Enterprise

- The Scaling Rural Enterprise project was a 12 month pilot delivered by Good Things Foundation in partnership with A1 Community Works and Airedale Enterprise Services, it was funded by The Princes Countryside Fund.
- The aim was to test a Digital Enterprise Champion volunteering model to see how digital support for rural businesses could be scaled to ensure they aren't left behind.
- Two Digital Enterprise Hubs were recruited. The Hubs in turn recruited, trained and provided guidance to Digital Enterprise Champions who volunteered to support learners with specific digital business needs.

What kinds of business can you find in rural areas? (DEFRA, 2019)



24% of all registered businesses are in rural England. They employ **3.6 million** people. (DEFRA, 2019).



Why does supporting rural enterprise matter?

- Any settlement with less than a **10,000** resident population is classified as 'Rural' ([DEFRA, 2017](#)).
- **9.3 million** people live in rural areas in England - that's 17% of the population ([DEFRA, 2014](#)).
- **545,000** businesses are based in rural areas ([DEFRA, 2019](#)).
- **3.6 million** people are employed by rural businesses ([DEFRA, 2019](#)).
- **1 million** people work from home in rural areas. Overall rural areas have a higher rate of home working compared with urban areas. ([DEFRA, 2020](#))
- **8%** of homes cannot get access to a decent broadband service and **5%** do not have access to indoor 4G coverage ([Ofcom, 2019](#))
- There are currently **1,738 rural Online Centres**. The majority do not report offering enterprise support.



It's opening a door for them, sometimes that's all they need."
Victoria, A1 Community Works - Digital Enterprise Champion



What kinds of support do businesses need?



Our business clients were doing exactly the same things we would do with our personal clients. We're showing them either free resources e.g. spreadsheets, or where you can find low cost tools."

Tanya, A1 Community Works - Digital Enterprise Hub

- **16%** of small businesses have low levels of digital capability ([Lloyds Business Digital Index, 2019](#)).
- Businesses lacking full Essential Digital Skills are **2.5 times more likely to close** than their counterparts with these skills ([Lloyds Business Digital Index, 2019](#)).
- **Sole traders, women, migrant entrepreneurs, and older business owners** are most likely to experience or report a lack of confidence with digital tools (The Good Things Foundation, 2019).
- **Disabled people** are more likely to be self-employed than non-disabled people but may face a number of additional and specific challenges when completing digital tasks (ERC, 2018 & The Good Things Foundation, 2019).
- Rural enterprises were more likely than urban enterprises to cite 'Regulations / red tape', 'Taxation, VAT, PAYE, National Insurance, Business rates', and 'Staff recruitment and skills' as major obstacles to businesses ([DEFRA, 2019](#))



For more information on how to become a **Digital Enterprise Hub**, how to recruit **Digital Enterprise Champions** and how to support them, please see the '[How to Scale Rural Enterprise](#)' guide. For tips and advice on the resources our Champions used, please see the How to Guide. To find out more about becoming a Online Centre Network member, go to www.onlinecentresnetwork.org/ournetwork/join-the-network.