



# Reboot UK Final Evaluation Report

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**LOTTERY FUNDED**



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# 1. Executive Summary and Recommendations

**Reboot UK is a landmark project supporting the most vulnerable in society to improve their health and wellbeing through digital.**

The consortium project, managed by Good Things Foundation alongside consortium partners Family Fund, Mind and Homeless Link, developed and tested new approaches to engaging and supporting families in poverty, people with mental health issues, and homeless people, through three targeted interventions:

- Peer support
- Shared practice
- Home access

Between January and August 2016, Reboot UK supported **994 beneficiaries** to improve their digital skills and wellbeing through 21 delivery partners.

This final report presents the summative findings from the project, with a particular focus on the outcomes for beneficiaries, the key features of the delivery models, and the conditions needed for these features to emerge.

Headline findings from the project are:

- Across the project, learners have increased their digital skills by an average of **14.6%**
- Learners are **17% more confident** to use the internet without help
- Improved digital skills helps beneficiaries feel more **confident, in control**, and **ambitious** about the future
- There is strong evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, to show digital skills **increases mental wellbeing** for individuals supported by the programme. The average wellbeing score for beneficiaries has increased from **21.41** to **23.46**, against a national mean of **23.6**
- As digital skills support, particularly at a basic level, is seen as an informal skill, it helps **raise individuals confidence**, making them more **open to further learning**, as well as leading to **job progression**
- Improved digital skills helps people to take specific steps that lead to **positive wider benefits**, such as being able to cope with benefits payments, moving towards work readiness, and feeling more in control
- Both community and specialist delivery organisations are **well placed to engage vulnerable individuals**, and support them to improve their digital skills.

In addition to the outcomes, we have also identified factors key to the success of the three trial interventions:

## Peer mentoring

- Reboot UK's peer mentoring model is an adaption of the successful therapeutic model used most commonly in mental health. For this reason, peer mentoring interventions were **particularly successful in mental health and homelessness services**
- Peer mentoring creates an **open and informal learning environment**, through the sharing of skills, which facilitates learning for **individuals with low confidence**
- Volunteering pathways give vulnerable people **progression routes after crisis points** in their lives, providing a **structure and purpose to beneficiaries' lives**
- Peer mentoring provides a **clear route back to employment and positive employment outcomes**, for people supported through the programme
- The peer mentoring model has shown **significant wellbeing benefits** for individuals supported by it.

## Shared practice

- The shared practice delivery model has helped to **improve the capacity of organisations who are unable to provide digital skills support in-house**, helping them to **achieve positive outcomes** for their beneficiaries by **building sustainable partnerships**
- The digital skills training and support provided by Reboot UK has provided a significant value particularly to specialist mental health services, contributing to **recovery and integration**
- Reboot UK has helped delivery partners with digital inclusion expertise to find **new ways to reach and engage target audiences** by adapting to their needs.

## Home Access

- Home access has the potential to lead to **significant impacts for individuals**, as it allows them to **reinforce digital skills with home learning**
- The model is most successful where it combines **digital skills training** with **device loans**
- However, as home access requires the organisation of **equipment loans, and in some cases home tuition**, it is **resource intensive** and **difficult to manage**
- Because home access is so resource intensive, it has been **difficult to implement** across Reboot UK
- Evidence suggests that, despite its benefits, this model is best delivered by local practitioners where resources and conditions allow, and so it **is difficult to scale**.

Partnership working has been critical to the success of the Reboot UK model, both at the level of the national consortium, and in the close relationships developed with front-line delivery partners. Putting people in the lead, using a collaborative and co-creative model,

has been equally important. New and productive links between digital skills and specialist support organisations have been developed, allowing all partners to share their own expertise and learn from others. In this way, as well as driving significant positive impact for beneficiaries, Reboot UK has realised significant capacity-building benefits for both the digital inclusion sector, and the specialist sectors the programme supports.

## Recommendations

Reboot UK has shown powerfully the impact of bringing digital inclusion into specialist support for vulnerable groups, delivering both substantial **personal benefits** for beneficiaries and **transformational change** for delivery partners. By developing successful and sustainable models that have been adopted by a diverse range of delivery partners, the project has demonstrated that the approach could be successfully scaled across the sector.

Two key features of Reboot UK are unique in digital programmes:

- No other digital programme in the UK brings digital inclusion tools and approaches into specialist support focusing on hard to reach audience groups. Some digital skills programmes work through community partners but deliver a 'standard offer', whilst others stay rooted in formal delivery mechanisms such as colleges or libraries which exclude those less confident with learning.
- Unlike other digital skills interventions, Reboot UK focuses on understanding deeply the individual needs of each beneficiary, and tailoring the intervention provided to meet those needs.

Experiencing multiple disadvantage, the beneficiaries supported by Reboot UK are very unlikely to have been able to access mainstream digital skills provision. Their circumstances often meant that they had neither access to the internet nor a social network that would develop their skills through exposure to digital technology. In many cases, this was combined with further complexities; such as substance abuse, full-time caring duties, benefit conditionality, or very high anxiety, which affected their ability to concentrate, learn, and embed what they have learnt into everyday life.

**On this basis, the key recommendation is that Reboot UK should continue to be supported as an innovative, transformational and impactful way of changing the lives of the most vulnerable in society.**

12.6 million people in the UK still lack basic digital skills, of which a significant number face multiple or extreme disadvantage; and although there are a range of organisations delivering digital inclusion support, this activity is unlikely to engage the hardest to reach in society at the scale required to realise significant impact. Reboot UK addresses this specific gap in the market, working where Government programmes and private sector-sponsored digital inclusion find it harder to operate.

**Further funding will enable the Reboot UK model to be scaled, working with more beneficiaries in the existing target audience groups and extending the reach of the model to new audience groups.** In this way, Reboot UK can continue its impact on the most vulnerable in society, and can also continue to transform the sector, providing a sustainable model of 'digital-social inclusion' which will have substantial and continuing benefits in the years to come.

## 2. Introduction

Reboot UK is an innovative and ambitious consortium project that aims to support groups of people in poverty to **realise positive health and wellbeing outcomes by improving their digital skills.**

The consortium has been managed by Good Things Foundation, together with partners Mind, Family Fund, and Homeless Link. Joseph Rowntree Foundation also acted as consultant to the project, informing the evaluation approach and providing expert advice.

Reboot UK set out to test how targeted interventions for **families in poverty, people with mental health issues and homeless people** could lead to significant personal benefits. The selection of these audience groups was driven by the following factors:

- The high propensity of digitally excluded people within these groups
- The potentially significant health and wellbeing benefits that these groups can realise from digital technologies
- The expertise of experienced partners (Family Fund, Homeless Link and Mind) in supporting these groups.

There are currently 12.6 million people in the UK without basic digital skills, and people without these skills are more likely to experience factors relating to social exclusion. The majority of digital skills initiatives are 'mass-market', and are unable to tackle the complex barriers faced by the most excluded groups in society.

Reboot UK is unique because:

- No other digital programme in the UK brings digital inclusion tools and approaches into specialist support focusing on hard to reach audience groups. Some digital skills programmes work through community partners but deliver a 'standard offer', whilst others stay rooted in formal delivery mechanisms such as colleges or libraries which exclude those less confident with learning.
- Unlike other digital skills interventions, Reboot UK focuses on understanding deeply the individual needs of each beneficiary, and tailoring the intervention provided to meet those needs.

Building a strong consortium bringing together a digital inclusion expert (Good Things Foundation) and specialists in working with specific audiences (Mind, Family Fund and Homeless Link) has been critical to the success of the Reboot UK. Joseph Rowntree Foundation provided advice on the research framework and expert insight into poverty and social exclusion in the UK.

The Reboot UK consortium received funding of **£329,956** over 12 months to support 1,000 beneficiaries, at a cost per head of **£330**.

Reboot UK is a **test and learn project**, and was designed to develop new approaches to addressing social exclusion through a process of iteration and improvement. The approach involved identifying best practice in the delivery of specialist/digital support to hard to reach groups, testing it and sharing it amongst on-the-ground delivery partners. This has led to the development of an evidence-based model with strong, measurable impact that can be scaled across the sector.

The original impetus for Reboot UK came from a hypothesis that digital inclusion could change the lives of the most vulnerable in society. The aim of the project was to link together the internet and the improvement of wellbeing. The test and learn approach has allowed us to explore, deploy, adapt and refine the most effective and practical ways of achieving this aim.

Reboot UK was carried out in two phases:

1. **Phase one (months 1-3): consultation**, identifying the needs of people from our target groups and the range of models for helping them to improve their health and wellbeing.
2. **Phase two (months 4-12): testing and evaluating interventions** through an action research project with 21 specialist local partners, engaging at least 1,000 beneficiaries.

The project concluded in August 2016.

### 3. The Delivery Model

The conception and delivery of Reboot UK was established in line with the Big Lottery Fund's vision of *People in the Lead*. The project was collaborative and co-creative from the outset. A network of 21 delivery partners was recruited, each supporting one of the target audiences. All 21 delivery partners, together with the project consortium, shaped the design of the interventions tested by the project.

To develop its delivery model, Reboot UK began with a **three month consultation phase**, including:

- A detailed [literature review](#), assessing current examples of good practice in supporting the three key audiences

- In-depth focus groups with consortium partners, delivery partners and beneficiaries
- One-to-one interviews with consortium partners and delivery partners.

As its starting point the project took a model of teaching vulnerable groups specific digital skills to enable them to access health information online. During the consultation, it became clear that this proposed delivery model would not be suitable for the specified audience groups, with both consortium and delivery partners confirming that due to the significant digital exclusion of their clients, other digital priorities posed a more immediate concern and needed to be addressed as part of the interventions.

As a result of the consultation, the focus of the project therefore shifted towards exploring and iterating the most innovative and effective ways of engaging and teaching more general digital capabilities amongst the designated groups. This enabled Reboot UK to be a catalyst for others; we prioritised listening to, acting on, and facilitating the kinds of intervention that our delivery partners told us were relevant for their communities.

The consultation phase also shaped the research framework for the project, developing an agreed set of anticipated outcomes for beneficiaries with advice from Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Surveys measuring digital skills and wellbeing (used as a proxy for other health outcomes) were selected and agreed by all partners as the basis for measuring distance travelled by beneficiaries.

**Reboot UK has a core focus on exploring, creating and measuring the wellbeing benefits of skilled internet use for vulnerable people.** This is based on an underlying premise, that:

- Digital skills create benefits for new internet users that can be felt immediately
- Many of these benefits impact positively on the wellbeing of the learner.

Through the initial research phase of the project, it became clear that positive benefits were not due so much to the specific digital content or resources that an individual is exposed to (for example, online health information), but instead to the **skills** and **attitudes** that digital skills - and the internet more broadly - can open up in relation to their life.

Following the consultation period, **three core interventions** were developed:

- Peer mentoring
- Shared practice
- Home access.

These interventions provided individual delivery partners with a clear outline structure within which they could develop new ways of teaching and engaging beneficiaries. Delivery partners had the freedom to choose any of the interventions, and deploy and iterate the outline models to best suit the needs of their client group. Webinar training sessions were developed by Good Things Foundation, supported by consortium partners, to allow delivery partners to understand and discuss the three interventions, and present their approaches to delivering them. We recognised that delivery partners would be using



diverse approaches to meet client need, but used discussion and dialogue to ensure that the project moved towards a shared vision.

Delivery partners included those currently already delivering **digital inclusion** and digital skills support, with Reboot UK funding allowing them to formalise their offer, provide new services and reach new groups. The project also involved **specialist partners** who were using Reboot UK as their first opportunity to embed digital inclusion within their delivery. The combination and integration of digital inclusion with specialist support has been critical to the success of the programme. Each of the 21 delivery partners selected an intervention, or set of interventions, that they wished to test.

As a core principle, Reboot UK encouraged diversity in the models deployed by delivery partners, and an 'innovate and fail fast' model of engagement. Throughout the project, the Reboot UK project team shared practice (both successful practice, and that where challenges have presented themselves) amongst delivery partners, discussed training approaches, and offered direct advice on intervention adaptations. The result of this 'agile' approach has been the continuous adaptation and refinement of delivery by each partner.

Throughout the process data on experience, benefits and impact has been collected from project beneficiaries, measuring their progression to improved skills and wellbeing, and interviewing them to understand how Reboot UK has helped them to achieve other positive benefits.

## 4. The Reboot UK Consortium

Reboot UK is founded on a strong consortium which brings together four national organisations with significant expertise in engaging some of the most disadvantaged people in the UK, and with combined networks of thousands of community partners:

- Good Things Foundation, which has supported almost 2 million people since 2010, of whom over 80% are socially excluded, to develop digital skills
- Family Fund, which supports families in poverty raising disabled or seriously ill children
- Homeless Link, which works with the homelessness sector to make services better
- Mind, which supports people experiencing mental health problems.

Bringing digital inclusion expertise together with specialist service delivery has been a key feature of the Reboot UK consortium. As well as driving substantial positive benefits for participants across both digital skills and wellbeing, the value of Reboot UK as a **transformational change programme for the sector** has been considerable and will be a lasting legacy of the project. This has been achieved by:

- Boosting in-house digital inclusion in specialist services
- Allowing digital inclusion services to develop partnerships with specialist services.

Reboot UK has enabled digital skills training to take place in 10 specialist organisations, where there was previously no digital skills provision. The project has also facilitated

numerous referral partnerships between specialist and digital inclusion organisations, so has created considerable value in the digital skills ecosystem by joining up specialist services and digital skills. Top-level support from consortium partners has been vital to this outcome.

Gavin Atkins, Head of Community Programmes and Grants at Mind, believes that Reboot UK has been a “great opportunity for Mind to explore and think about the wider applications and benefits of digital inclusion for our beneficiaries”. Reboot UK has added value to the wider support on offer in Mind centres by creating the opportunity to “engage people in non-traditional delivery and addressing perceived barriers for some in getting online.”

Tasmin Maitland, Head of Innovation and Good Practice at Homeless Link, speaks of how Reboot UK has combined flexibility and innovation. Tasmin praises the way in which the project has capitalised on “partners’ understanding of the specific needs of their service users and combined this with new ways of engaging homeless people with digital skills”. She believes that:

“The project has allowed us to test new approaches in depth and with dedicated staffing resources which has supported digital inclusion work through trained peer mentors, client-led sessions, one-to-one and group work, and the innovative delivery of Open Cinema. We’ve seen positive outcomes for both the service users developing digital skills and for the peer mentors, some of whom have already gone on to paid work.”

Family Fund directly delivered the project by providing digital skills training to families in their own homes. Family Fund delivered directly as part of Reboot UK, and took a real test and learn approach along with other community delivery partners. Jenny Laycock, Digital Skills Manager at Family Fund says of the project:

“Good Things Foundation have facilitated a partnership that has allowed us to truly work together with partner organisations and share knowledge, experience and best practice. Family Fund has been able to use this to explore different methods of delivery and support that we had considered to be impracticable in respect of our families, such as peer mentoring and support. This kind of partnership working is enabling Family Fund to widen its own experience and understanding in a way that can only benefit the families we serve.”

As part of the consortium, Family Fund were supported to “deliver a programme that tackles specific needs and really makes an impact.” From the perspective of the rest of the consortium, Family Fund’s involvement has highlighted the issues particular to families in poverty, and has specifically broadened understanding of the possibilities for digital inclusion with such a group.

As the key national digital inclusion partner, Reboot UK provided Good Things Foundation with an opportunity to test a new way of supporting digitally excluded people who need

very personalised and targeted support, and has created lasting partnerships with specialist organisations both nationally and locally.

Nicola Speake, Project Manager for Reboot UK, says the project has “significantly broadened our understanding of how we can support hard-to-reach groups with particularly complex needs”, as well as “building a supportive, expert consortium of partners who are learning from each other, and strengthening each other’s expertise and delivery models on an ongoing basis.” The Reboot UK model will shape the way Good Things Foundation supports these audience groups, and other vulnerable groups in the future.

For all consortium partners, Reboot UK has added considerable value both in terms of their own strategic positioning on digital inclusion, and in terms of the impact they can have on their beneficiary groups. It has brought new partners into digital inclusion bringing new expertise and approaches to delivery, significantly strengthening the sector, and widening awareness and understanding of the benefits of digital inclusion for a broader range of audience groups. This model of capacity building has created significant value in engaging vulnerable and excluded audience groups, and provides a model that can be scaled into the future.

*“Reboot UK has gained momentum as positive outcomes have been achieved. We are keen to look for ways to sustain and extend this work beyond this initial phase.”*

**Tasmin Maitland, Homeless Link**

## 5. Theory of Change and Project Methodology

Reboot UK aimed to test how three targeted interventions (peer mentoring, shared practice, home access) could lead to significant personal benefits for families in poverty, people with mental health issues and homeless people.

There are 12.6 million people in the UK without basic digital skills, and there is a substantial correlation between digital exclusion and social exclusion. Only 40%<sup>1</sup> of people with no formal qualifications are online and 58%<sup>2</sup> of households with an income less than £12,500 per year have access to the internet. This is in comparison to internet access amongst 99%<sup>3</sup> of households where there is an income of more than £40,000 per year. Among sociodemographic groups, 87%<sup>4</sup> of ABC1s have basic digital skills compared to just

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<sup>1</sup> Cultures of the internet: the internet in Britain, Dutton, W & Blank, G, Oxford Internet Institute, Nov 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Basic Digital Skills UK report 2015, Ipsos Mori, 2015.

65% of C2DEs. Disabled people are particularly less likely to be online with 25% of those who are disabled having never used the internet compared to 5.7% who are not disabled.<sup>5</sup>

Reboot UK started from the premise that digital exclusion is a key factor in social exclusion, and that providing people with digital skills can help them to become more socially included.

## **Theory of Change**

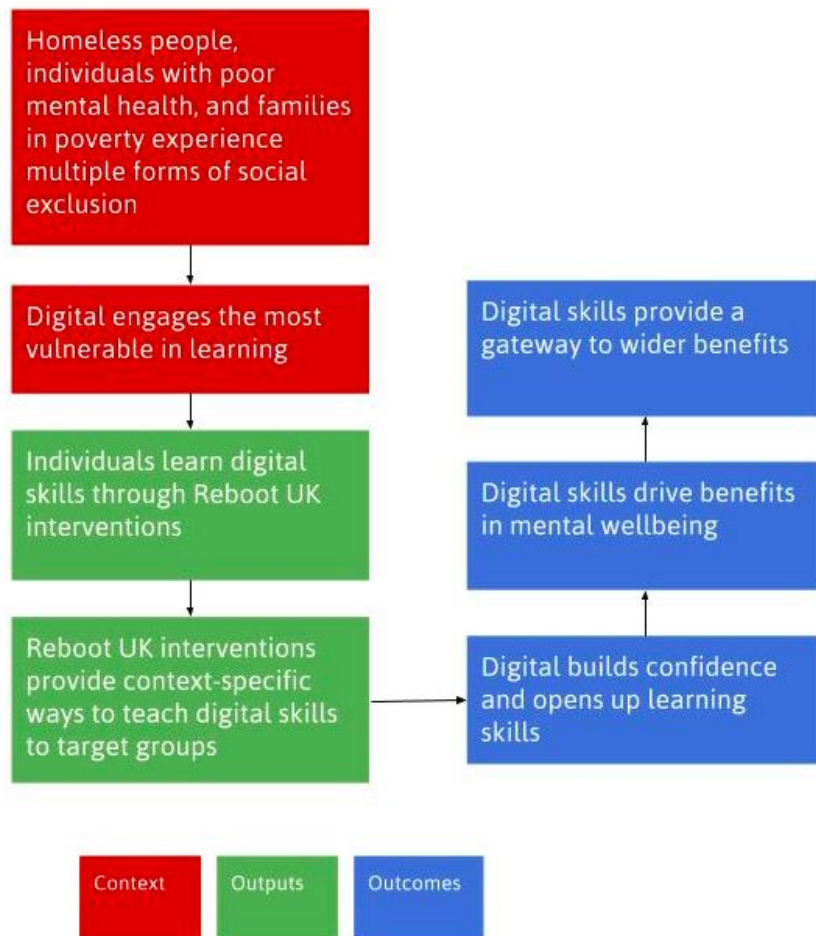
Reflecting this premise, a Theory of Change was developed to explore how digital skills can be taught through three targeted interventions focused on driving positive outcomes for the project's three target audience groups. This Theory of Change has the following steps:

- A. Digital engages the most vulnerable in learning
- B. Digital builds confidence and opens up learning skills
- C. Improved digital skills lead to wellbeing benefits
- D. Improved digital skills and confidence provide a gateway to wider benefits.

### **Fig 1. Reboot UK Theory of Change**

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<sup>5</sup> Internet Users in the UK: 2016, ONS, May 2016.



Reboot UK was designed as a test and learn project. During delivery, this test and learn design has been supported by project management which facilitated the identification of good practice, and the ability to test it and share it amongst delivery partners. We wanted to generate a robust evidence base about what works, and for delivery partners to rapidly adapt and change their delivery models according to what worked for their communities.

The test and learn approach means that delivery models used in Reboot UK have been diverse, supporting vulnerable individuals from a wide range of backgrounds and with varying and complex needs.

Evaluation of the interventions has provided a wealth of qualitative evidence and quantitative data demonstrating impact. This report focuses on identifying the key features of successful delivery across the local partners delivering the project, and the conditions required for those features to emerge.

## Methodology

Evaluation of the project used a mixed-methods approach that combined qualitative interview data, observational data, and quantitative survey data:

- **Surveys** of the learner cohort were used to collect demographic data, wellbeing and skills progression, and additional education and employment outcomes. Surveys were completed by a 50% sample of the learner cohort. This is a large sample size which enables us to draw robust conclusions about the overall efficacy of the project
- However, because of the complex needs of the audience group, the use of surveys has not always been appropriate or manageable. Good Things Foundation has therefore collected **qualitative data to supplement the quantitative data**. This combination has enabled us to measure both the efficacy of the project in total, as well as the efficacy of individual delivery partners
- The evaluation of Reboot UK has sought to measure the link between digital skills and increased wellbeing, and to do this quantitative data has been collected across these two fields. As part of the progression surveys, we collected robust **quantitative wellbeing data**. This has been collected through three separate verified measures: the Shorter Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Survey (SWEMWBS), the wellbeing questions from the ONS, and a single social trust question.<sup>6</sup> The diversity of these measures has allowed data to be collected on a range of feelings which contribute to a picture of wellbeing. These include questions about self-efficacy, confidence, anxiety, future planning, and social relationships
- As part of the progression surveys, **quantitative digital skills data** has also been collected on digital skills outcomes. Digital skills outcomes are very difficult to capture through surveys as individuals with low skills tend to overrate their skills initially. As they learn more about digital technology, they rate their skills as being relatively lower, as they become more aware of the functions and skills that they do not understand. To try and mitigate for this effect, surveys contained three kinds of questions, asking about:
  - Frequency of use of digital;
  - Self-rating of internet confidence and general skill;
  - Self-rating of specific digital skills.

Data from these measures has supplemented the self-reported skills progression reported in interviews.

- **Qualitative data** collection has been extensive in the project. Semi-structured interviews, peer interviews, and observations have been used to explore how learners articulate their own experience of digital skills. Qualitative data is vital because:
  - It explores the link between digital skills and wellbeing, providing causal data for the project
  - It provides greater outcome accuracy by allowing learners to articulate what they believe their outcomes to be

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<sup>6</sup> Full list of the questions that these measures contain is available in the following paper: <http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/measuring-wellbeing>.

- Qualitative data collection methods are more client-focussed. Clients often engage better with interviews than surveys, and this produces better data.
- Wellbeing and digital skills data has been reinforced with **qualitative interviewing** with beneficiaries and project leads. Interviews provided the opportunity to explore self-ratings, and ask learners to reflect on distance travelled. Interviews also allowed learners to articulate the link between internet use and wellbeing. This reinforced the qualitative data with causal findings.

## 6. Findings

This final report is a presentation of summative evidence for the impact of Reboot UK collected across the life of the project. Evidence is presented firstly against each stage of the Reboot UK Theory of Change; and then against each of the three interventions the project tested. Data has also been thematically analysed to develop cross-project conclusions about the impact on beneficiaries.

The test and learn approach has provided a wide range of evidence and data. The flexibility of approach meant that delivery partners all approached the project differently, with many adapting delivery during the course of the project. This means that quantitative comparison within the data is difficult. However, the data available is sufficient to:

- Identify examples of best practice within and across the interventions
- Identify the conditions that make these interventions successful
- Compare the success of each intervention in terms of adoption and outcomes.

From this evidence, we can draw clear conclusions about the conditions that need to be in place for specialist and digital inclusion partners to improve positive outcomes for the most vulnerable. This allows us to make conclusions and recommendations about how digital skills interventions should be implemented with vulnerable groups, and the importance of scaling these models.

This section of the report:

- Outlines the learning from the project mapped against each step of the Reboot UK Theory of Change, and
- Sets out the key learning from each of the three targeted interventions tested through the project.

### **Learning mapped against Reboot UK Theory of Change**

For each stage of the Reboot UK Theory of Change, the key learning gathered through the life of the project is set out below.

#### **A. Digital engages the most vulnerable in learning**

<b>What we wanted to test</b>	Targeted interventions, delivered through specialist partners, engage the most vulnerable in digital skills.
<b>What we have learnt</b>	Community and specialist services are well placed to deliver digital skills to vulnerable groups. Because this method of engagement is informal, digital skills can provide an accessible gateway to further learning and increased wellbeing.

Community and specialist services are well placed to deliver digital skills to vulnerable groups. Reboot UK measured improvement in digital skills across seven measures and **as a result of the programme, there has been improvement across all measures.** The table below shows the mean progression across each measure:

How often do you use the internet?	<b>15%</b>
How would you rate your ability to use the internet?	<b>17%</b>
Overall, how confident are you in using the internet when there is nobody there to help?	<b>17%</b>
People have different opinions about the internet. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement "The internet makes my life easier"?	<b>15%</b>
How does the statement: "I am confident about writing a comment on a blog, website or forum" relate to you?	<b>14%</b>
How does the statement: "I feel comfortable deciding who to make friends with or follow online (e.g. on services like Facebook, Twitter or Tumblr)" relate to you?	<b>16%</b>
How does the statement: "I know which information I should and shouldn't share online" relate to you?	<b>8%</b>

Across all measures of digital skills, this led to a mean improvement of **14.6%** per learner.

Learners improve their digital skills through community support. By being engaged in digital skills, vulnerable learners are entering informal adult learning. Reboot UK has shown that individuals understand that digital skills are increasingly necessary to participate in society and interact with government. They also understand that the internet offers benefits to them.

In today's society, digital is a required literacy, and digital skills are an expected norm. Services are now designed around the expectation that users will possess digital skills, and individuals understand that they are excluded through a lack of digital skills:

"Clients are really interested in the project, and are feeling the need to go online because of government and council services going online. A lot of people have



come along because they have been anxious about using the internet and worried that they wouldn't be able to use it if they had to."

**Matthew O’Gorman, Mind in Croydon**

Some beneficiaries expressed the desire to access the internet as they know that they are excluded by their lack of digital skills, and respond well to support that is accessible to them. The evidence suggests that community support through Reboot UK can make digital skills accessible and engaging for vulnerable individuals. As one learner stated:

"I'm quite happy in this learning environment because I'm not intimidated at all."

If learners are engaged in the right way, by an organisation that can offer them the support they need, then they start to overcome their fear of digital, and start to become motivated by the opportunities that digital offers. When asked about digital skills, one learner said:

"Your confidence grows and as you get comfortable in terms of doing things for yourself. Then you realise that it's not actually that hard, it's something you can learn. I think it's really helped me in terms of confidence, me doing it for myself"

## B. Digital builds confidence and opens up learning skills

<b>What we wanted to test</b>	Digital skills build confidence and help vulnerable individuals be more open to progression and future planning.
<b>What we have learnt</b>	Learning about digital is accessible and exploratory. Progression is easy to see, and this boosts the learning confidence of the most vulnerable. Increased confidence indicates increased wellbeing.

The vulnerable individuals reached through Reboot UK often had low learner confidence. This means that they tended to be very anxious, not only about gaps in their own skills, but about the process of learning and their ability to learn. This may be informed by poor experiences in formal education, distance from education or low literacy and functional skills. Across the mental health target group, low learner confidence was frequently compounded by low information retention, brought about by medication or medical intervention.

Reboot UK has shown that learning digital skills helps vulnerable people boost their confidence both through:

- The acquisition of new skills, and the functional use of the internet
- Successful engagement with a learning process. Supported digital inclusion is a learning process, and through digital inclusion, learners become more confident about their wider ability to learn and retain information.

Learning digital skills is simple, accessible, and favours exploratory learning. Reboot UK has found that when digital skills are offered in combination with appropriate specialist support, learners can progress quickly; and that progression in learning boosts learner confidence:

“It’s made us feel more confident on what I’m trying to achieve whether or not the jobs acknowledge you, that’s a different thing altogether but it’s made us more confident in learning.”

“I really don’t know a lot about technology, but what I’m learning here, I’m benefiting from, and the way I’m supported gives me a lot of confidence, and it gives me the confidence to ask for support.”

Learners in Reboot UK linked this newfound confidence to **planning for the future**, **optimism about the future**, and **feelings of control**. These feelings are all positive indicators of wellbeing. Learners are articulating these effects of digital skills as follows:

“I just feel a lot more motivated to get up and get out of bed and do things, which is good, because at least I’m achieving something.”

“It’s new to me, what I’m learning. What I’m doing now has opened up other aspects of the future, which I would like to consider.”

The ability to plan for the future is a very important factor of wellbeing, with progression to further learning and job outcomes particularly important. Reboot UK has shown that digital skills boost confidence, and in doing so, establishes digital as a gateway skill, demonstrating to the individual that further learning is possible and achievable. The project has shown that digital skills help individuals to take steps to plan their future, further learning, and wider skills development:

“The learning thing has made me think about other things. I’m going to enrol on a course at college, Maths and English. It would be good if I can get them, because they are GCSEs.”

“I learnt a lot more about spelling through Facebook than anywhere else.”

“I just like felt good in myself because I’m actually doing something to make myself better.”

Finally, evidence from Reboot UK has demonstrated that digital skills are taught most effectively in supported, informal settings. Learners do not have the confidence to access formal education, and need support models that are sympathetic to their learning requirements and level. Informality is key for many learners, because they are anxious about comparing themselves to other learners. They want to learn at their own pace, with support and goal setting from a mentor. One learner said of centre support:

“You don’t feel silly because you don’t know if somebody is doing better than you or not. You’re not wondering why you can’t keep up with them”

These settings open a route into education for vulnerable people with very low learner confidence. In turn, this creates benefits through the process of learning, support from tutors and mentors, and the wider benefits of digital inclusion.

### C. Digital capability drives benefits in mental wellbeing

<b>What we wanted to test</b>	By supporting individuals to improve their digital skills, they will also improve their wellbeing.
<b>What we have learnt</b>	That there are measurable, significant, and attributable increases in the mental wellbeing of those being helped through Reboot UK; and these compare favourably with other similar community projects.

Reboot UK showed strongly that learning digital skills helps vulnerable people boost their confidence. Qualitative evidence collected by the project showed that learners described the impact of digital skills using a range of wellbeing terminology, including **self-efficacy**, **usefulness**, and **reduced anxiety**. This qualitative evidence is supported by quantitative data which measures the wellbeing change of beneficiaries across time.

Reboot UK used three core measures to collect **quantitative mental wellbeing progression data** across the project. The measures selected are widely used in health and public policy to measure wellbeing.

The data collected showed that the wellbeing of individuals has improved across all delivery partners. There is slight variance between the separate wellbeing measures, but all measures showed positive change between initial engagement and completion of the Reboot UK intervention:

- The data for **social trust** as an indicator of wellbeing increased by an average of **0.4** data points
- Aggregated data from the ONS wellbeing measures showed a positive effect of **1.5** data points
- Data from the Shorter Warwick and Edinburgh Mental wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) showed a positive change of **2.05** data points.

At the beginning of the project, the average wellbeing score through SWEMWBS was **21.41**. At the close of the project, this was **23.46**. To put this in context, the Health Survey for England places the national mean at **23.61**. Throughout the full range of the scale, the SWEMWBS value can range between 7 and 35. As a result of Reboot UK, the wellbeing of participants has increased from **21.41** to **23.46**. This means that the support they have received has helped participants to be more optimistic, relaxed and useful, as well as thinking more clearly, feeling closer to other people, and better able to make up their minds about things.

**The mean increase in wellbeing score across Reboot UK was 2.05.** An increase of 2.05 is very positive when compared to other 'hard' effects within wellbeing. For example, an individual's income doubling leads on average to an increase in life satisfaction of 0.2.

**An increase of 2.05 also compares well with other Big Lottery Fund community projects.** In a large scale evaluation of community interventions ranging from healthy eating, to community exercise and gardening, mean wellbeing increased from 22.3 at entry to 23.6 at exit. This is an average increase of 1.3, but also with a starting point that is higher than Reboot UK.<sup>7</sup> Separately, a peer reviewed journal measuring the impact of exercise projects to promote mental wellbeing recognised a mean wellbeing score improvement of 1.5, from 21.5 to 23.<sup>8</sup> Again, the average baseline score is higher than the Reboot UK cohort, and the mean increase is less than that achieved through Reboot UK. Finally, another community intervention, this time for dementia support recorded an increase from 22 to 23, giving a mean increase of 1 point.<sup>9</sup>

The evidence collected shows that not only has Reboot UK helped vulnerable people to develop digital skills, making them more confident, and helping them progress to employment and further learning; it has also increased participants' wellbeing significantly, and to a greater extent than similar community projects.

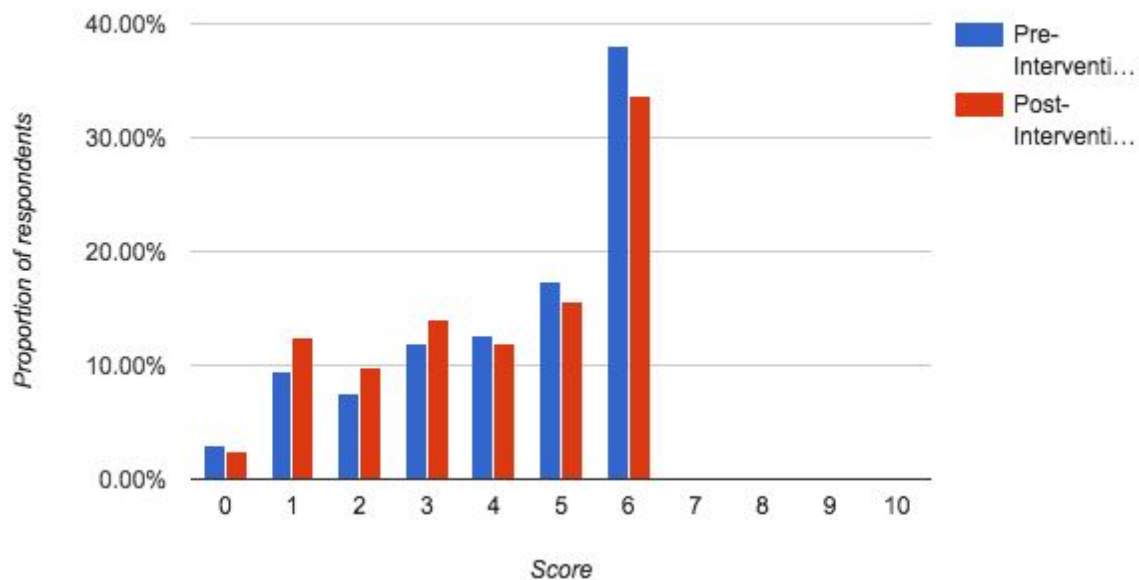
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<sup>7</sup> CLES Consulting and new economics foundation, 'Big Lottery Fund National Well-being Evaluation', 2013.

<sup>8</sup> E. Malcolm et al. 'The Impact of Exercise Projects to Promote Mental Wellbeing', *Journal of Mental Health*, 2013; 22(6): 519–527. This evaluation used the longer, 14 point, Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, rather than the 7 point short version used in Reboot UK. Results from the full scale can be compared with the shorter scale by halving the aggregated scores. In 'The Impact of Exercise Projects to Promote Mental Wellbeing', the reported increase is from 43 at baseline to 46 at exit. This has been halved in this blog to make results comparable with Reboot UK data.

<sup>9</sup> Mental Health Foundation, 'Evaluation report Peer support groups to facilitate self-help coping strategies for people with dementia in extra care housing', 2014. Accessed online:<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/dementia-self-help-report.pdf>.

Reboot UK has also reduced levels of **anxiety** amongst participants. The graph below illustrates measured change against the ONS measure for anxiety:



This question asked by Reboot UK was ‘Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?’ where 0 is 'not at all anxious' and 10 is 'completely anxious'. The graph shows that Reboot UK has delivered a marked reduction in anxiety through the course of the project.

In both pre- and post-intervention measurements, participants were heavily weighted towards 5 and 6 on the scale. They are significantly more anxious than the general public. ONS data puts 30.4% of the public at 5 and above on the scale. Before the intervention, **55.51%** of Reboot UK participants scored over 5 on the scale. After the intervention, **49.37%** of participants scored over 5 on the scale. 26% of the cohort showed reduced anxiety after the intervention. This shows significant improvement given the short timescales of the project and the complex client group that Reboot UK supports.

#### D. Improved digital skills provides a gateway to wider benefits

<b>What we wanted to test</b>	That digital skills are an essential gateway in enabling the most vulnerable to take specific steps that generate wider and sustained personal benefits.
<b>What we have learnt</b>	Because digital is a necessity for modern life, digital skills can immediately be applied by vulnerable individuals to take steps they otherwise would not have been able to take, particularly in improving their confidence and efficacy in seeking work.

Through Reboot UK, we know that learning digital skills has specific benefits for long-term unemployed people. The combination of conditional welfare benefits and low digital skills often experienced by vulnerable people creates anxiety. Jobseekers need digital skills to meet the terms of claimant commitments imposed by their jobcentre, and this is a major drive for learners to seek support with digital skills:

“I went to the dole and they said “What can you do?”. I saw the computer and said “I’m not sure I can do that”. I’m not sure I can do that and I don’t want to do it on me own in case I mess it all up.”

The characteristics and drivers of lower anxiety are complex in these cases. When learners seek digital skills support as part of wider unemployment support, wellbeing improvements can relate to a range of reasons. Jobseeking beneficiaries articulated the following benefits of Reboot UK that are specific to their unemployment:

- They feel more able to cope with the specific conditions of their benefits payments
- They feel like learning digital skills is part of wider job-readiness
- They feel closer to the job market
- They feel more in control of their situation.

Reboot UK reached unemployed learners who were a long way from the labour market, and although moving individuals towards job readiness was not a headline aim for the project, beneficial outcomes have been identified. Unemployment was a factor across all target groups, but was concentrated in the **families in poverty** and **homeless** target groups. For long-term unemployed individuals on Jobseeker’s Allowance, whether they are homeless or not, the use of the internet to fulfill JSA conditions is a priority to help them avoid deeper poverty. For this reason, learners across these target groups reported similar experiences of using the internet, and the benefit of supported digital skills.

As is to be expected, learners needed support to fulfil the conditions of their benefits:

“They’ve helped me find my Universal Jobmatch numbers, which was difficult for me. Any part of using a computer that was difficult for me, they’ve helped me with. They’ve helped me, and then I’ve learnt and I’ve done it myself.”

“Because of benefits, you’ve got to use a computer, no matter what. It’s good to have a person there to help you. If you don’t understand a thing, then you can ask.”

Because jobseeking online is a relatively complex digital skill, even learners with the confidence and skills to access the internet for recreation still required support to interact with Government services:

“I love computers [...] When I’m in the house and I’m lonely, I go on the internet on my phone. It’s great and I wouldn’t be without it. But I often ask for help when I use the computers for job search. Not as much now as when I first came, but sometimes.

"I'm not very good at uploading CVs direct to companies. It's something that I need reminding of a lot."

Benefit conditions complicate the relationship between unemployed people and job advisors. Reboot UK has shown that the delivery of supported digital skills can help to address some of the anxiety this creates:

"I don't know if it's just the way it's set up at the Jobcentre, but because it's a requirement to use the internet, you're anxious about it and there's that expectation on you so it's almost like there's a glass barrier between you and the advisors. You can't have a conversation."

Learners in this cohort engaged by the project cited employment as a direct goal; and digital skills (and a record of achieving digital skills) were seen in the context of job readiness:

"I'm hoping that once I've passed it, it will lead me on to a good job."

Although online jobseeking was a priority for many learners, they still frequently articulated the wider benefits of digital skills. One learner recognised a point at which he started to distinguish between seeing digital skills as a functional way of collecting 'evidence for the Jobcentre' and the wider benefits of digital skills:

"I think it's really helped me in terms of confidence, me doing it for myself, and also maybe helping others to do the same thing because at least I've seen the benefits and I've seen what it's done for me, so at least I can be able to encourage others, or pass what I've learnt to someone else."

## **Learning from Reboot UK Interventions**

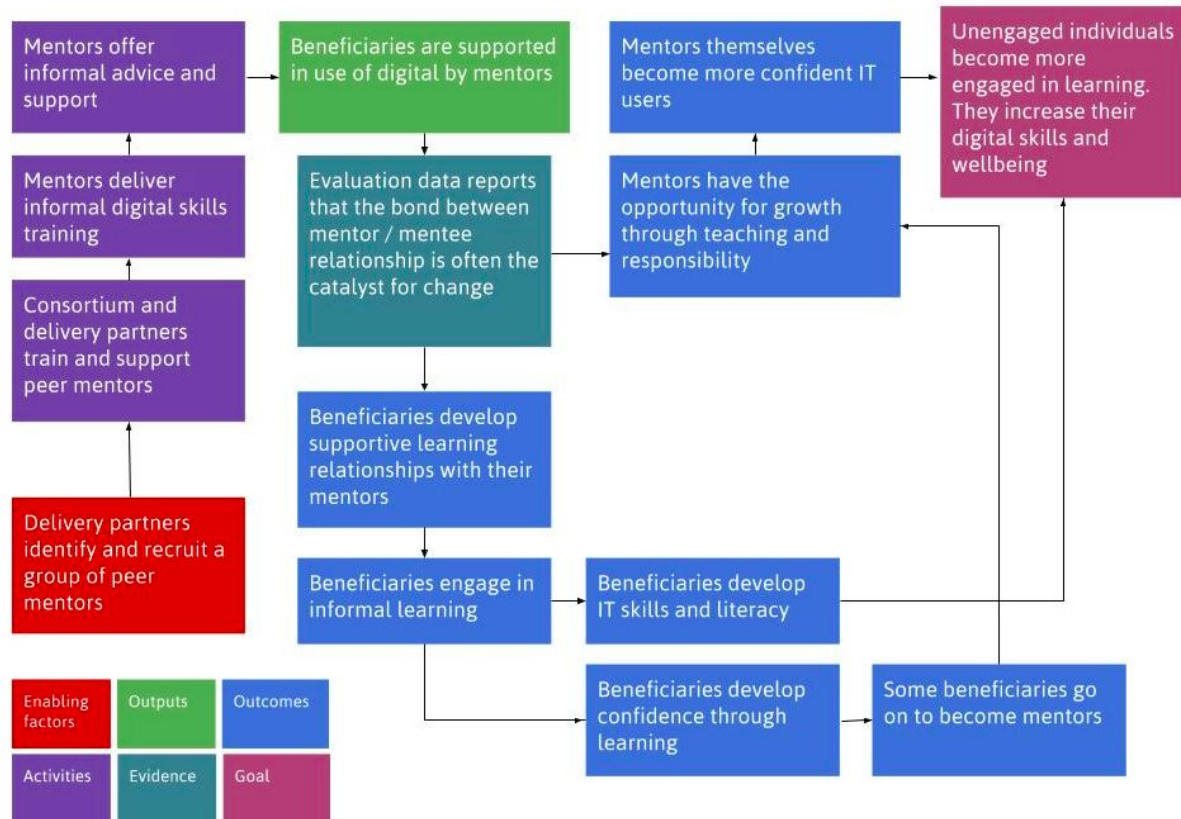
Reboot UK tested three different interventions. These interventions were designed to be flexible, and delivery partners were encouraged to iterate and adapt delivery models according to the initial success of their activity, and the needs of the client group. Throughout the course of the project, qualitative data was collected from each delivery partner about what worked, what didn't work, and how they changed their delivery model to reflect their ongoing process of learning.

The following section provides a Theory of Change for each intervention, based on learning from the project. The section also collates insight from the delivery of each intervention, and discusses the relative merits of each approach.

### **A. Peer Mentoring**

Peer mentoring encourages people from similar circumstances to support each other to build independence and resilience. Reboot UK used this model as a critical part of digital skills support. Peer mentoring creates a non-hierarchical learning environment, which facilitates support and 'discovery learning'. In Reboot UK, this model of support has often

be facilitated by volunteer peer mentors and expert tutors.



### Conclusions

- Peer mentoring interventions were particularly successful in specialist mental health and homelessness services
- Peer mentoring creates an open and informal learning environment, which facilitates learning for low-confidence individuals
- Volunteering pathways give vulnerable people progression routes after crisis points in their lives.

### Mental Health

Peer mentoring is a common support technique used in mental health services. In support settings, it is commonly used therapeutically. Reboot UK has taken this model, and adapted it in informal learning settings to develop digital skills. The synergy with techniques already used in mental health contexts lead to the widespread adoption of peer mentoring within Reboot UK. This was particularly marked among specialist mental health partners.



Mental health is the most distinct target group within Reboot UK. This is because some individuals with poor mental health have specific learning needs:

- Reboot UK reached learners with severe and enduring mental health needs. The health of this group was significantly poorer than the general project cohort
- Learners with severe mental health needs may be on medication, or subject to medical interventions, which impair cognitive functions. Memory and attention span are particularly diminished.

In addition, individuals in this target group may not be required to actively seek work. When this is the case, individuals do not need to prioritise digital skills for work. This creates opportunities for more experimental delivery models.

### Peer Mentoring as a Recovery Route

Peer mentoring creates a progression route for service users. By creating volunteering roles within the service, peer-led delivery has impacted both integration and learning outcomes for mentors. Peer mentoring has offered a progression route for both learners who have benefitted from Reboot UK directly, and individuals from within specialist services who are digitally skilled and able to pass on their skills.

Peer mentors reported how Reboot UK had enabled them to integrate into their communities, and how volunteering had given structure and purpose back to their lives after points of crisis. One learner from Evolve Housing + Support described this with particular accuracy:

“I wasn’t taking part in any sort of involvement I suppose, and I was kind of going to my room, drinking and you know feeling quite lonely but now because I’m taking part and peer mentoring I’ve built up a few friends. I don’t feel that loneliness anymore so that’s curtailed the drinking and actually given structure back to my days.”

There is evidence from the project that peer mentoring can provide a route back to employment, and better employment outcomes. Crisis services delivering Reboot UK often support individuals who are making changes in their lives, following points of breakdown. Often these individuals are changing career, and finding ways to integrate back into society:

“On this volunteering path, I think I’m bringing some kind of self-satisfaction knowing that I’m helping others and on top of that working towards paid employment again.”

This kind of integration has clear wellbeing benefits. Peer mentors are responsible for other learners, and take specific responsibilities within the project. One Reboot UK project used peer mentors to engage younger service users. This gave additional responsibility to mentors, which produced additional value within the role:

“I think I have changed, I think of course I’m mindful, more mindful of the fact that I’m a mentor to people younger than myself, I take myself more seriously.”

The positive engagement of peer mentors in the project has been vital to the outcomes for beneficiaries. Reboot UK’s mentoring programme provided unique volunteering roles for beneficiaries and service users. These volunteering roles created outcomes in themselves, by creating personal development opportunities for mentors. Within crisis support, these progression routes are key for recovery.

### Case Study: Owen’s Story

Owen Popperwell walked into Evolve Housing + Support, desperate to find somewhere to live. Over the course of two weeks, he got a referral from the Council, an interview with a support worker, and a room at the hostel. For Owen, “it was like the turning point in a road that was going nowhere.”

He explains: “I was going through a difficult part of my life, you know, I was living with girlfriends and then living with brothers and then living on couches and then living on park benches and in cars, and it was just getting worse and worse. One day when I went back to my Mum’s, again, she just said, “No, you can’t stay.” I think they call it tough love. It hurt. They just wanted me to sort myself out, but I didn’t know where to start.”

It took Owen a while to settle in at the hostel, and at first he kept himself to himself. But Gamel, his support worker, soon persuaded him to get involved in the activities, including Evolve’s new peer-run computer classes.

“I’d used the computers but I was going on Facebook, YouTube, just recreational stuff, killing time,” explains Owen. “Then one day I thought, ‘You know what? I need to sort my CV out’. I’ve not worked in years but it was like I was just ready. I felt good enough and better enough and settled enough to start looking for work.

“I was looking for something part time, because I didn’t want to get deep into work and then realise it’s a bit too much and then go all the way back again to where I was. I wanted to build it up.

“I knew about these websites and stuff to look for jobs but not how to use them, and I didn’t have anything like a CV to send out. So the tutor, she got me to gather together all my qualifications and put them on the computer. At the same time the IT classes were going on and I was finding out things I didn’t know you could do on a computer, like attaching documents to your email and things like that.”

Owen started job hunting online, too, applying for 10-15 jobs a week. He says: “I got feedback from quite a lot, and then all of a sudden, bang, I’m getting interviews - people actually want to see me, which I’ve never had in my life!

“Now everyone’s talking to me again. People are phoning me, and my Mum, she’s so proud of me. I don’t think she thought I could turn myself around, you know? She speaks very highly of Evolve and everything they’ve done for me. She said to me, “You need to give something back, they’ve given you so much, you need to give something back.” So when Gamel suggested I become a

customer rep - like the guy on the front desk that first day - I decided to do it.

"I thought I was being taken for a mug at first, and I thought, 'how am I going to help anyone?' But I went to a few meetings and started slow. And I started to engage with the other customers and started getting involved with things. Helping others get involved, too. The kind of service Evolve laid on for me, I mean, I sometimes I think about where I was and where I am now and it's frightening. I believe for this to really work, for me to really complete this circle, I need to give something back. It's part of keeping my feet on the ground, you know, not getting too above myself because it's a long way to fall all the way back down."

Now Owen is a customer rep at Evolve and a peer mentor in Evolve's computer classes. He's also working 16 hours a week, and he's finally got his own place in a block of flats in New Addington. He's keeping himself busy decorating, sorting his bills out, getting to know the neighbours and working.

"I feel good in myself now," says Owen, "I feel like Owen. I wasn't myself for a long time. But then that's the frightening bit, because when things are good you think 'is it all going to start falling apart?' and you start thinking the worse and everything.

"I wouldn't be where I am now - I wouldn't have done even a quarter of it - without Evolve. Without Gamel helping me, being so positive, believing in me. Without the computer centre, and the shelter, and all of that. I've come from sleeping on park benches to my own place, my own job. And I'm pretty happy with that - in fact I'm over the moon. I owe everyone there a really big thank you."

Tano Bellone is Work and Learning Manager at Evolve Housing, and he's seen how far Owen's come since he first walked through their doors. He's delighted that the Reboot UK project allowed them to offer computer classes on site, because it's been an important part of Owen's journey. He says: "Being able to offer computer classes has really enhanced what we do at Evolve, and Owen's a great example of how it's already making a difference.

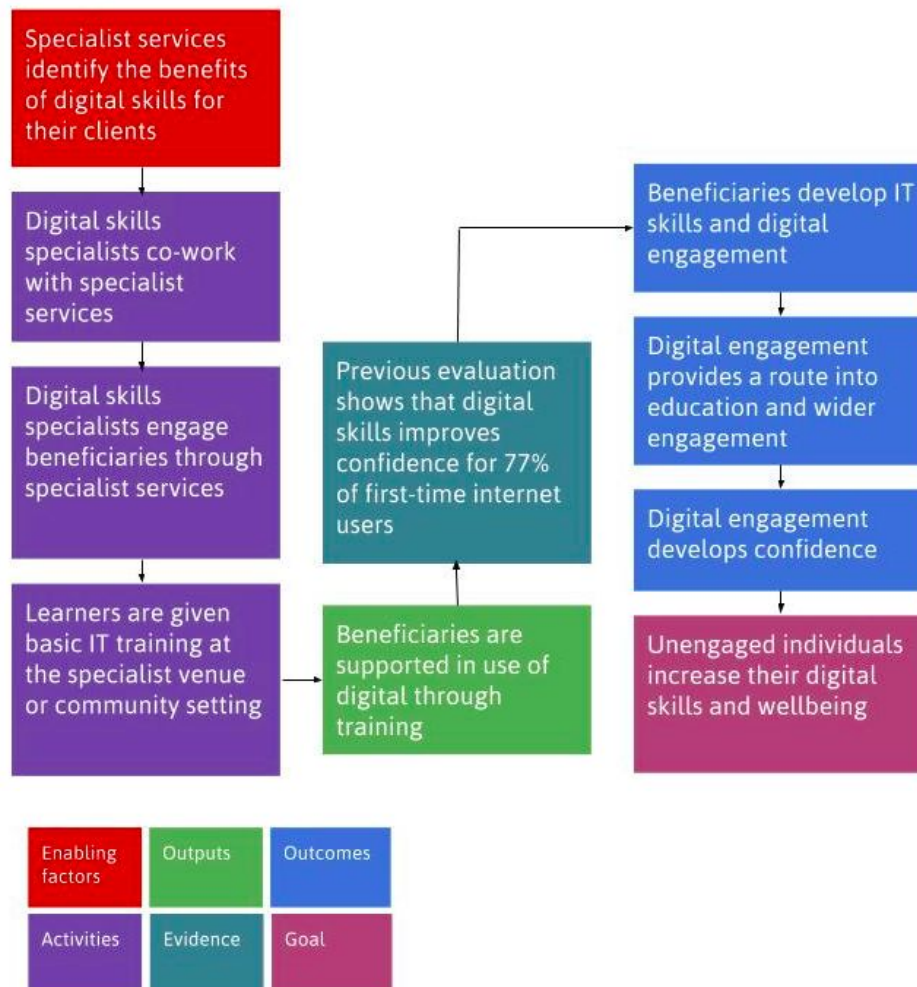
"Much of what Gamel has done with Owen has been about finding information and re-making connections, and these days the internet is a key part of that. It's also obviously important in finding work and building skills for work. Learn My Way is a really effective tool for us because it's bite-sized, and people can dip in and out and learn relatively independently - at their own pace, with support available as and when they need it.

"The computer classes are now the most popular classes we run, and there's always someone asking about them. We want to extend them so we offer them at all of our shelters, and perhaps have peer-to-peer mentors, like Owen, helping us to run the lessons. Hopefully that will see even more people build their confidence and skills, and move into stable employment and accommodation - just as Owen has."

## B. Shared Practice

Shared practice brings together specialist services and digital skills support. As part of Reboot UK, the intervention facilitated and supported the delivery of digital skills within

settings that have no capacity for the in-house delivery of digital skills. Some delivery partners used this model to reach out to crisis services, such as food banks, but the greatest success using this intervention was seen through the coupling of specialist social care and mental health provision with digital skills delivery.



### Conclusions

- Shared practice has driven digital skills outcomes in specialist support settings which are unable to deliver these skills in-house
- Digital skills education is valued by specialist mental health services for its contribution to recovery and integration
- Reboot UK has supported digital inclusion partners to find new ways of reaching and engaging target audiences by adapting to the needs of that audience.

## Partnerships and Community Integration

Reboot UK has funded diverse organisations to develop meaningful ways of supporting vulnerable adults to develop digital skills. Across the mental health target group, Reboot UK has supported shared practice as a way of providing informal digital skills support to individuals in specialist mental health settings.

Reboot UK supported a range of delivery models which sought to meet the specific learning needs of the target group within the shared practice model. Abington Centre of Education provides a key example of the impact that shared practice can create, providing both outreach skills on the ward and a safe learning environment in the community. This approach combined skills training and pastoral care, a combination endorsed by occupational therapists within the NHS. Digital skills programmes are particularly important in mental health organisations because clinicians recognise the occupational therapy benefits of education. Education is seen both as a way of increasing skills, and as a way of facilitating recovery. As Carlotta Oakenfull, Lead Occupational Therapist at Berrywood Hospital, explains:

“There was no education provision until Abington Centre of Education came along. They help to prepare patients for the outside world at the same time as supporting their mental health and wellbeing.”

Elsewhere in the programme, shared practice took a number of forms. Shared practice was predominantly used as a way of engaging the mental health target group, and adapted to suit the needs of this group in the most effective way. Leeds Mind provided successful outreach at mental health day centres. Northfield Community Partnership also developed outreach at a specialist mental health social care provider, Creative Support. To facilitate the occupational health element of delivery, Creative Support tried to refer clients to Northfield Community Partnership, rather than rely on outreach delivery. This referral route did not work as clients needed more intensive support to access services at an unfamiliar location.

In response to this, Northfield Community Partnership adapted their delivery to include a ‘pick-up’ service, through which workers would travel to their specialist referral partner, Creative Support Ltd, and walk clients from the specialist service back to the IT support centre. Northfield Community Partnership are also spending more time at the specialist centre in order to build relationships which can then be built upon through further support. These are small adaptations to delivery, but they provide a good example of how community education pathways should adapt to the needs of the client group.

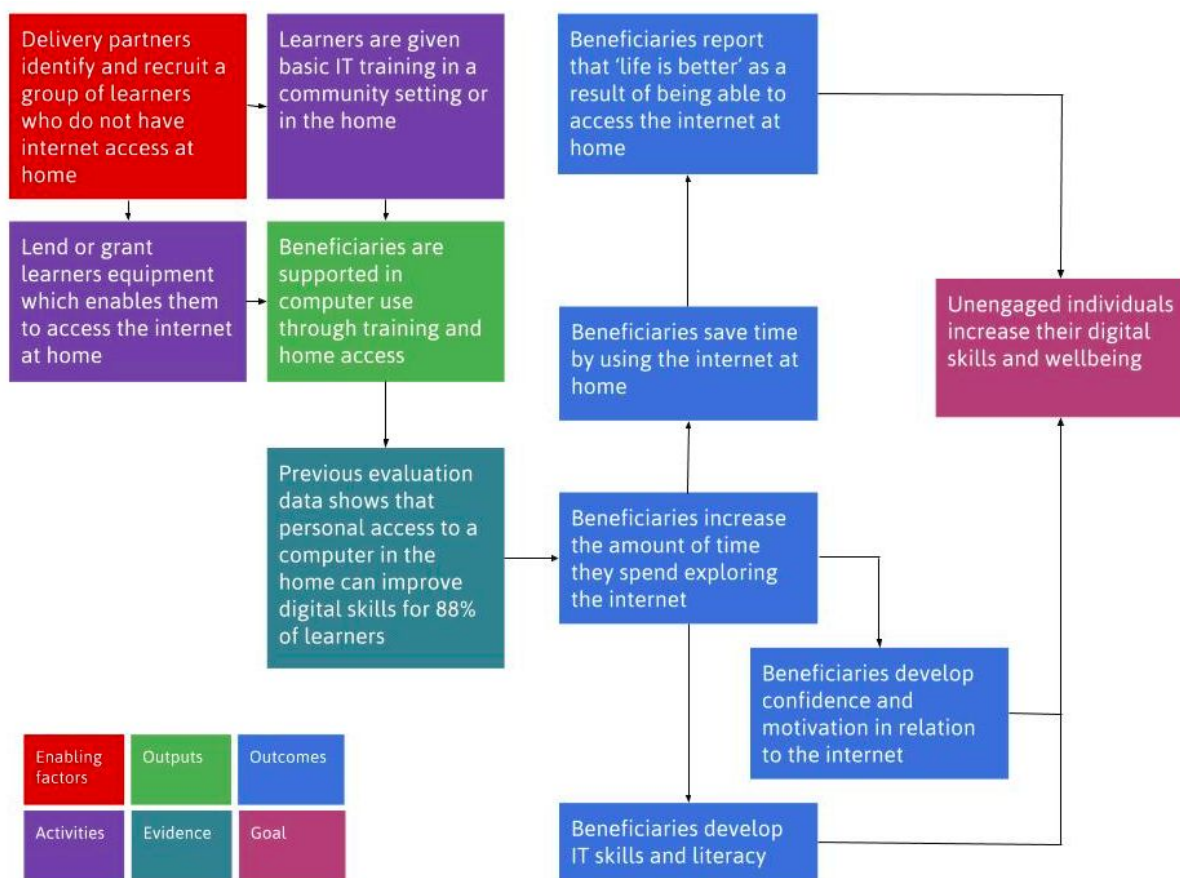
Elsewhere in the project, shared practice has been less successful, despite the best efforts of delivery partners. Easy PC, a community IT training provider in Croydon attempted to set up a number of referral partnerships with specialist mental health services in Croydon. However, they were unable to engage clients through these referral routes. Good Things Foundation took steps to address this, engaging with Croydon Mind to increase the provision of digital skills support within the borough. As a result, Croydon Mind have successfully started to deliver in-house digital skills. Good Things Foundation supported

Croydon Mind to develop in-house capacity through direct project visits, sharing resources, and coordinating best-practice webinars in which delivery partners shared their experiences of delivering digital skills.

In addition to this delivery, the funding facilitated co-working between Croydon Mind and Easy PC. Now, in addition to delivering in-house support, Croydon Mind refer clients to sessions that Easy PC run in the community. This is carefully managed to ensure that clients are referred only when they are comfortable and secure with the referral process. Easy PC tested the shared practice intervention by approaching specialist services directly. We learned that time, resources, and additional buy-in from both partners are needed to develop successful shared practice.

### C. Home Access

Home access is personal access to suitable IT equipment in the home. As part of Reboot UK, the home access intervention was conceived as the granting or lending of equipment to beneficiaries, in combination with appropriate digital skills support.



## Conclusions

- Home access produces high-value individual impact by allowing beneficiaries to reinforce digital skills with home learning
- Because home access requires the organisation of equipment loans, and in some cases home tuition, it is resource intensive and difficult to manage
- Because home access is so resource intensive, it has been difficult to implement across Reboot UK
- The evidence suggests that, despite its benefits, this model is best delivered by local practitioners where resources and conditions allow. This makes it difficult to scale.

Home access projects were implemented by two delivery partners (West Harton Action Station, Family Fund). Although two additional delivery partners took interest in this intervention at the project outset, they were unable to implement a project which focussed on lending digital equipment. Those delivery partners who implemented home access projects have found them intensive, and difficult to manage at scale.

West Harton Action Station engaged 13 individuals in the home access element of their delivery. They provided group digital skills tuition, supplementing this tuition with equipment lending. However, with only four devices available to loan, the time demand on the equipment has been considerable. West Harton Action Station have been loaning devices for 4-6 week periods, to ensure that learners receive long-term benefits from the support; and this has created strain on their equipment resource, resulting in them being unable to deliver this element of the project at the intended scale.

Family Fund's Reboot UK model involved the implementation of a digital skills programme to reinforce a pre-existing equipment granting programme. As part of this, Family Fund delivered one-to-one training to 180 individuals to supplement grants of IT equipment.

During the research phase of Reboot UK, Family Fund tested a model which combined one-to-one training in the home with a grant of IT equipment. One-to-one training was identified as the most suitable delivery model, with evidence suggesting that this could effectively overcome the barriers to using digital technology faced by Family Fund clients.

This has been borne out through high demand for training, and training has been very positively received by the families who have received support to date. However, the resource required to deliver 1-1 training in the home is significant, and Family Fund has adapted their delivery model to account for this, including the addition of group sessions to the offer of one-to-one training. Constant iteration in each stage of the EOI and training process has allowed Family Fund to develop an efficient model for ensuring that their families can make better use of digital technology.

### Case Study: Anna and Malyn's Story

Anna's six-year old son, Malyn, has autism and sensory difficulties meaning that his communication skills are limited. After receiving an iPad through Family Fund, Anna realised that learning digital skills through Reboot UK could help her support Malyn to make the most of his new technology.

Anna first applied to Family Fund for a tablet to support Malyn's learning and communication needs. This was an important step:

"Despite being just five when he received the iPad Malyn knows more than me because he uses them in school for maths and other subjects. Routine is very important, his behaviour is more challenging at certain times of the day. The transition from school to home is very stressful, and immediately after school is a very testing time."

Having the iPad now means that Malyn can take some control of his routine. He picks it up as soon as he returns home from school. "He watches videos on YouTube and plays games. It helps him to unwind at the end of the school day and settle down, which gives me some time to do other things I need to do."

"It wasn't all plain sailing though. The iPad brought along its own challenges in the early days, especially when Malyn wanted to use it away from a wifi connection. We live in a rural area where Wifi access can be patchy and Malyn couldn't understand why YouTube wouldn't work when he was in the car and would get frustrated."

All this changed after Anna and her husband received training through the Family Fund's digital skills programme. The training provided by Family Fund as part of the Reboot UK project helped Anna to download videos and games, which could then be viewed without a Wifi connection. The training also highlighted useful apps and other resources for Malyn. As a result, Malyn can now watch his favourite videos without internet access, and this has reduced the number of outbreaks of frustration. "It was, and still is, really hard to make Malyn understand how Wifi works," said Anna. "But now he can watch videos away from internet connection, he's a lot calmer, and I feel like he is starting to understand a bit more."

"Through the training Malyn was also introduced to a drawing app and he can now draw things on screen using his fingers which has helped his confidence in using the iPad to develop his motor skills. He's particularly interested in the solar system, so we downloaded an interactive app which lets him move around a 3D planet. When he's not doing this, he's watching Brian Cox videos over and over."

"We found the digital skills training extremely useful. The trainer spent the whole morning talking through mine and Malyn's specific needs and how the iPad could be useful to us as a whole family. He's now fully engaged with the iPad and it's definitely benefitted all the family, because we've reduced the flashpoints in Malyn's behaviour. My husband and I are both more confident in using the iPad as a result of the training but we only get to use it when Malyn has gone to bed!"

## 7. Issues and Resolutions

The innovative model used by Reboot UK, based on co-design, iteration and adaptation generated a number of issues which required consideration during delivery. The learning



from these issues has been as important as the identification of best practice in helping shape a model which can be scaled into the future.

### **Data Methods and Collection**

The complex needs of the client groups engaged by Reboot UK meant that data was difficult to collect for a number of reasons. At the outset of the project, it was hypothesised that engagement in a digital skills programme would improve mental wellbeing. To make this link, data had to be collected on both digital skills and wellbeing. To collect strong data for wellbeing, the consortium followed the guidelines established by the New Economics Foundation and implemented data collection using three wellbeing measures. These measures are those used by Government and in social science and clinical settings. Although this approach was theoretically robust, during the course of the evaluation close monitoring and delivery management of partners was required to ensure robust participation in data collection. This was for a number of reasons:

- Delivery partners felt that data collection compromised their engagement with beneficiaries
- In some cases it was necessary for support staff to implement data collection. The robustness of the data collection was not always rigorously enforced by staff who were peripheral to the main delivery of Reboot UK
- Clients were unwilling to engage with data collection
- Clients were unable to engage with data collection: medication or substance abuse issues compromised their ability to remember their initial engagement with the surveys, and meant that they were unable to reflect on their progress through the programme
- In mental health settings, overcompliance may have resulted in beneficiaries taking a passive role in data collection, rather than the reflective attitude that is necessary for accurate data
- Observational data suggests that clients in some settings did not fully engage in the data collection process because of survey fatigue. We used clinically verified surveys to ensure that they were at the correct standard. However, the SWEMWBs survey is also widely and frequently used in mental health settings. This means that clients are over-familiar with the content of the survey, and do not necessarily engage at each data collection point
- The method of engagement meant that some settings experienced difficulty implementing data collection at an appropriate point. This was the case with Family Fund, who rapidly adapted the time points for collecting data, and the method of data collection.

These factors were exacerbated through an outcomes-based project management strategy. This strategy built data collection into the project management of all centres, aiming to develop strong data through the development of a large dataset. However, the rigorous enforcement of this data strategy may have contributed to a lack of engagement in data collection amongst some delivery partners.

Reboot UK tested the capability of front line partners to deliver digital inclusion to hard to reach audiences. To evaluate this process, we allowed delivery partners broad flexibility to deliver digital inclusion interventions in ways which they thought best suited their client group. For this reason, we could not define a research question that was narrow enough to be tested through a Randomised Control Trial (RCT) or quasi-experimental design. There is space in a scaled model to test interventions through RCTs, drawing on the learning from the test and learn pilot to specify a deliberately more consistent delivery model and a less holistic research design.

### **Unsuccessful Delivery**

During Reboot UK, two delivery partners were unsuccessful in implementing interventions and engaging service users in line with targets. In both cases the project was attempting to implement new interventions in contexts which have not previously supported them, and in both cases the consortium was able to draw learning from the experience that has supported the adaptation of practice and development of a scaled model.

One of these partners was attempting to engage with severely and multiply disadvantaged homeless adults. As a hostel, they provide crisis support to these individuals. Because of the nature of the clients at this service, the hostel staff found it very difficult to engage them in education services.

Those clients who did engage in Reboot UK were individuals at the point of transition from supported to independent living. Staff identified that this was a key point for educational engagement because the move to independent accommodation is indicative of a wider engagement in independence and future planning.

This particular challenge has shaped the design of a scaled model for Reboot UK. Services will be identified and targets aligned with the number of clients at a service who are able to engage in education services. Clients with severe and multiple disadvantage often need a longer crisis intervention before they are engaged in digital inclusion, and other education programmes. Lower targets allow delivery partners working with this client group to tailor digital inclusion support so that it occurs at the key point in engagement, when clients show interest and ability in the learning process.

## **8. Conclusions and Recommendations**

**Reboot UK has had a significant impact on its target audiences:** families in poverty, people with mental health issues, and homeless people. Bringing together specialist support services with digital inclusion partners, the project has developed new models of delivery, explored the inter-relationship between digital skills and wellbeing, and on a broader level has created sustainable change for front-line delivery partners across the sector.

Between January 2016 and August 2016, Reboot UK reached **994** beneficiaries who, without the support of the project are very unlikely to have been able to access mainstream digital skills provision.

The project supported individuals experiencing **multiple disadvantage**, and helped them to realise significant and measurable benefits in both wellbeing and digital skills. Their circumstances often meant that they had neither access to the internet nor a social network that would develop their skills through exposure to digital technology. In many cases, this was combined with further complexities; such as substance abuse, full-time caring duties, benefit conditionality, or very high anxiety, which affected their ability to concentrate, learn, and embed what they have learnt into everyday life.

These personal and environmental constraints are constraints on learning. Within its focus on digital skills and wellbeing, Reboot UK has focused on **reaching individuals who are excluded from education** and providing a supportive context in which they are able to learn, though:

- Tailored support and teaching practices to develop learner confidence
- Prioritising informality and the development of a learning community
- A user-led approach to skills: if digital has been able to provide a specific improvement to the quality of life of beneficiaries, Reboot UK has focused on developing this
- Using digital skills as a way to develop learning skills.

Reboot UK was not just about delivering a skills programme. It was a way of **using digital to engage and empower**. The person-focused support that it provided helped beneficiaries to develop significant wellbeing outcomes. By embedding digital skills within a wider context of recovery and progression, the project has shown the significant value of digital inclusion as a supplement to wider therapeutic approaches to improving wellbeing. Reboot UK has developed therapeutic value; as a means of social inclusion, as a way of alleviating specific pressures relating to benefits and government interactions, and as an inclusive entry point to wider education.

More generally, Reboot UK has shown powerfully the impact of bringing digital inclusion into specialist support for vulnerable groups, delivering both substantial **personal benefits** for beneficiaries and **transformational change** for delivery partners. By developing successful and sustainable models that have been adopted by a diverse range of delivery partners, the project has demonstrated that the approach could be successfully scaled across the sector.

Two key features of Reboot UK are unique in digital programmes:

- No other digital programme in the UK brings digital inclusion tools and approaches into specialist support focusing on hard to reach audience groups. Some digital skills programmes work through community partners but deliver a 'standard offer', whilst others stay rooted in formal delivery mechanisms such as colleges or libraries which exclude those less confident with learning.

- Unlike other digital skills interventions, Reboot UK focuses on understanding deeply the individual needs of each beneficiary, and tailoring the intervention provided to meet those needs.

The most successful delivery in the Reboot UK programme has come from organisations who have identified and dedicated specific staff resource to delivery of the project. This has allowed staff the time required to engage learners, build trusted relationships with them, and develop a person-centred approach to learning around their needs.

**On this basis, the key recommendation is that Reboot UK should continue to be supported as an innovative, transformational and impactful way of changing the lives of the most vulnerable in society.**

The Reboot UK consortium has now secured further funding to extend the benefits of Reboot UK to new delivery partners, and new beneficiaries. This funding is vital to ensure delivery partners can continue to support beneficiaries using the new approaches developed through the test and learn, and that this delivery can be supported by national consortium partners who can advise, support and share findings widely. Central co-ordination for Reboot UK is key, as it ensures clarity in vision, outcomes and models amongst delivery partners, and provides a direct mechanism to spread out and amplify the project's impact.

12.6 million people in the UK still lack basic digital skills, of which a significant number face multiple or extreme disadvantage; and although there are a range of organisations delivering digital inclusion support, this activity is unlikely to engage the hardest to reach in society at the scale required to realise significant impact. **Reboot UK addresses this specific gap in the market**, working where Government programmes and private sector-sponsored digital inclusion find it harder to operate.

**The additional funding we've received will enable us to work with additional beneficiaries in the existing target audience groups.** We believe the Reboot UK model could have significant impacts on new audience groups as well, and we will seek to investigate this and secure further funding for this delivery. Good Things Foundation and its national consortium partners will promote and share findings from the test and learn widely across both delivery networks and national influencers, raising awareness of the model, driving further debate, and encouraging best practice to be adopted. In this way, Reboot UK can continue its impact on the most vulnerable in society, and can also continue to transform the sector, providing a sustainable model of 'digital-social inclusion' which will have substantial and continuing benefits in the years to come.