



ROCHDALE
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Digital Experience Strategy 2022 to 2025 Update

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Preliminary Engagement

- January 2020 – **partnership engagement session** with approx 30 colleagues from the Council, CCG, GMCA and Action Together.
- Throughout 2020 – engagement with Corporate Overview and Scrutiny at early and draft stages of the Strategy.
- October 2020 – **Equalities Assembly Session** on Digital Poverty and Inclusion. 25

Many people in greatest need do not have an email account

A survey by Falinge Park High School at the beginning of the pandemic found a 1/3 of children did not have internet access at home

Digital access is becoming an essential commodity like other utilities

South Asian communities are facing increasing challenges around use of digital equipment , this challenge is aggravated by additional language barriers

Access to digital equipment and having the skills to use it is a big issue

Many services have moved to online and a digital offer. However online services and activities are not appropriate for all and a choice of phone or face to face is required

Formulating the Strategy

March 2021: consultation with the Council and CCG's joint leadership team, the Local Care Organisation Senior Management Team, Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny, relevant portfolio holders, members, the digital steering group and other strategic partners. Feedback from these sessions was used to update and finalise the strategy.

April 2021: The draft Digital Strategy was taken to **Action Together's Inclusive Messaging Group**. A raft of recommendations were made:

Importance of co-design.

Importance of accessible information standards.

Health: platforms for info need to be easy to use.

The need for champions to address digital exclusion.

Importance of investing/long term approach to digital

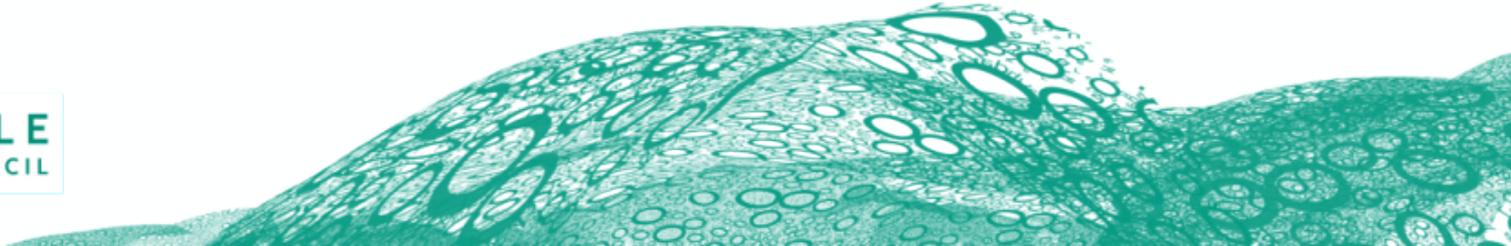
Training : in all wards, different settings by trusted people

Implications of increasing screen time on health

Engagement with Business to understand challenges and barriers

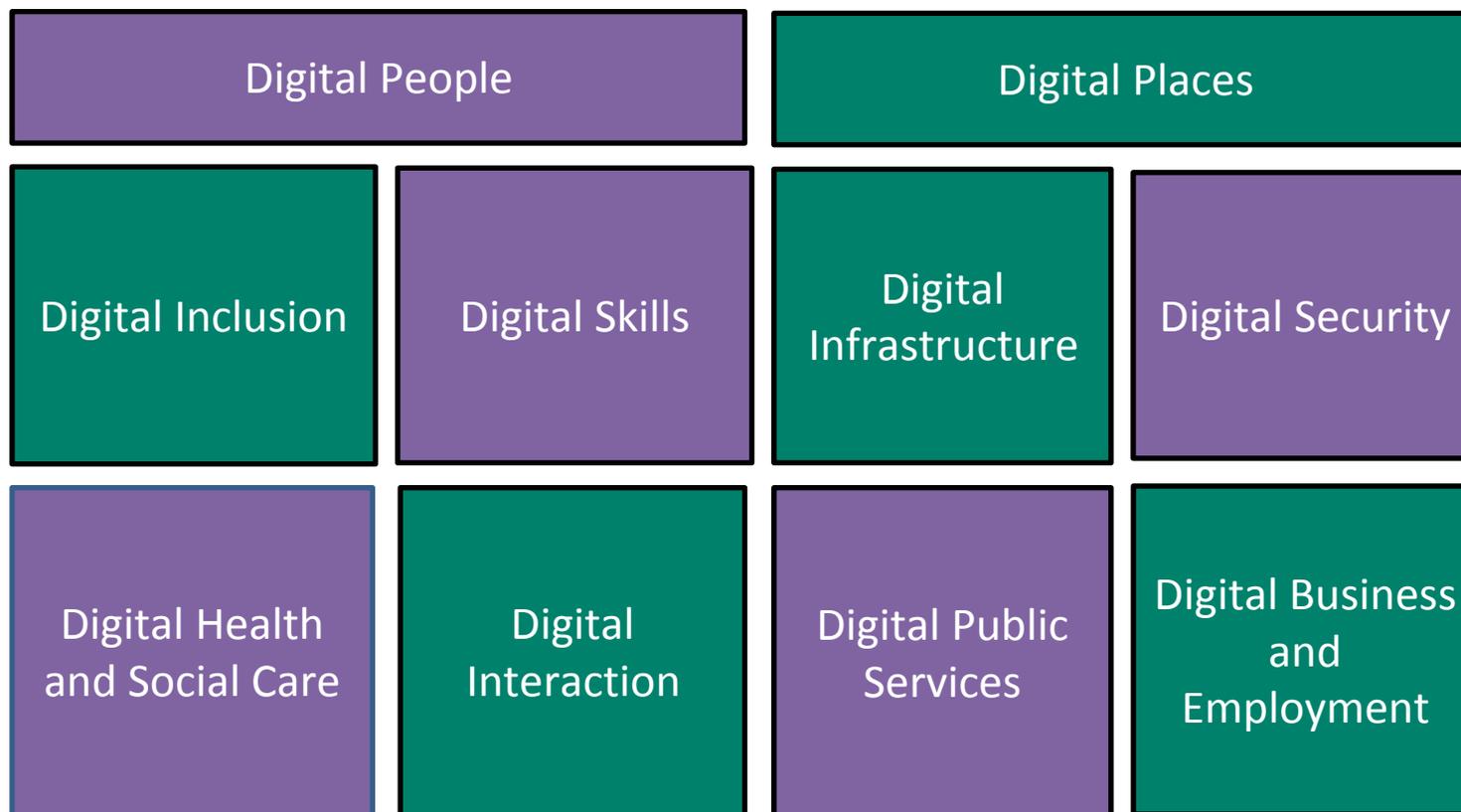
A Focus on Digital Inclusion

- Mindful of the recommendations, underpinning the entire strategy is the recognition that a proportion of the population in Rochdale is digitally excluded, through lack of access to tech, wifi or lack of skills.
- **Reasons for digital exclusion – low income, age, disabilities, learning difficulties, ethnic origin, location, culture, language and lack of capability.**
- As services are more prevalent online, significant numbers of people may miss out because they can't or don't have the motivation to engage digitally.
- Digital exclusion is not new but the pandemic has highlighted that it is a barrier for many people.
- **Equality Impact Assessment** – The initial screening document highlights the need for the Strategy to address digital exclusion and the scope for certain digital solutions (such as AI and machine learning) to exacerbate existing inequalities.
- A full Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken in conjunction with consultation around the supporting Delivery Plan to the Strategy.



Key themes

- There are 8 broad themes forming the Strategy which, in order to provide alignment with the Corporate Plan, fall into two key areas:



Broad ambitions

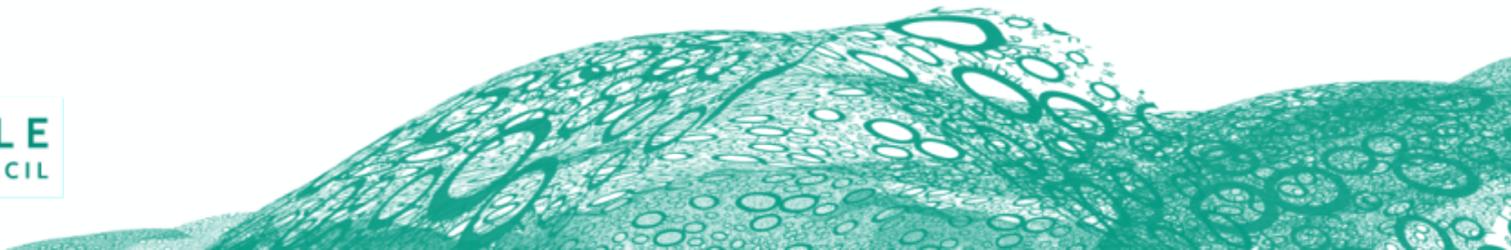
- The Digital Strategy is ambitious in its scope and seeks to ensure manifold outcomes as part of the borough's digital journey. The overarching aims are:
- **Digital People**

We want to encourage all age groups to develop basic digital skills to support them in getting online. We want to inspire people to pursue careers in the digital sector.

We want everyone to have a positive digital experience, benefitting their health and wellbeing, education, employment. No one will be excluded on our journey.

We want to transform and enhance health and social care through technology. We will also enable people to maximise their full potential and gain independence.

We want to ensure that everyone in the borough, whatever their age, needs, location or situation can use digital technology to interact and share with others and participate in civic and community life.



Broad Ambitions (contd.)

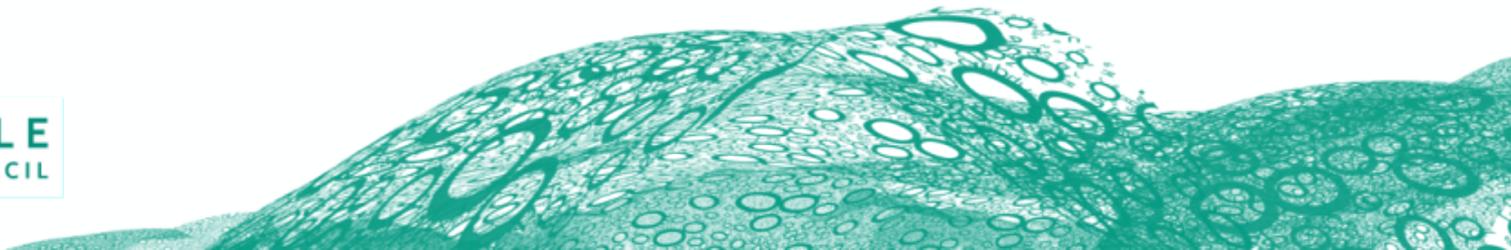
Digital Places

We want all areas of the borough to have increased and reliable mobile coverage and faster broadband connectivity

We want citizens and businesses to be safe when using digital services

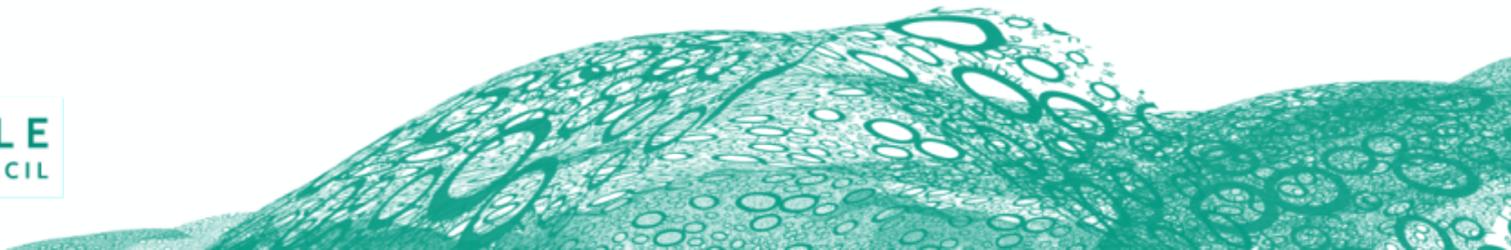
We want the borough to be an attractive place for digital businesses, offering high speed connectivity, local digital talent and a range of support.

We want to lead by example in maximising the use of innovative technology to improve services.



Interim Work on the Strategy

- The work on the strategy has been taken up by the Policy, Performance and Improvement Team.
- A broad internally facing consultation exercise within Council Directorates and NHS CCG around the draft strategy, has been undertaken over the past few months.
- This resulted in little deviation from the original draft and the incorporation of further achievements and progress.
- It has reinforced the fact that digital inclusion must be the top priority.
- An Internally facing Digital Strategy Working Group has been reconvened and widened. The initial focus of the working group will be the formulation of a linked Delivery Plan. It will also drive forward the engagement and consultation work around the delivery plan in the borough.



What next? Digital Strategy – Formal Sign Off

- Informal Cabinet – 2nd December 2021
- Following Informal Cabinet the Strategy will be professionally designed.

- HMR CCG Governing Body
- 22nd January 2022

- Cabinet
- 25th January 2022

What next? Delivery Plan

- The Digital Working Group is to host two workshops in the near future, one around Digital People, the other around Digital Places.
- The workshops will centre on the formulation of the Delivery Plan, which is linked to the Strategy.
- They will provide specific focus on the resources required – both financial and staffing, to deliver the Strategy.
- A further key area of focus will be the delivery of consultation with the public around the Delivery Plan and Digital Exclusion.
- There is a pressing need to establish an external facing Digital Partnership with other key Stakeholders in the borough to achieve the ambitions of the Digital Strategy.
- The Council is involved in several Digital Projects at GM level, which will further assist in pushing forward the borough's own digital projects and digital infrastructure.

