**Cambridge City Council Digital Access Strategy 2018-2020**

1.0 Introduction and background

1.1 Over the past 40 years, technology has developed rapidly, bringing far-reaching changes to the way that people communicate, access goods and services, work, and live their lives. Internet usage has increased steadily in recent years, to the point where the vast majority of people are currently able to access and use the internet.

1.2 As Figure 1 below shows, 90% of households in Great Britain had internet access in 2017, compared with 56% in 2006. The percentage of adults in Great Britain using the internet on a daily basis increased from less than 35% in 2006 to 80% in 2017[1]. The picture is similar in Cambridge. The Council's 2016 Cambridge Resident's Survey found that 94% of respondents were able to access the internet.

Figure 1 – Households with internet access, 1998 to 2017, UK and Great Britain
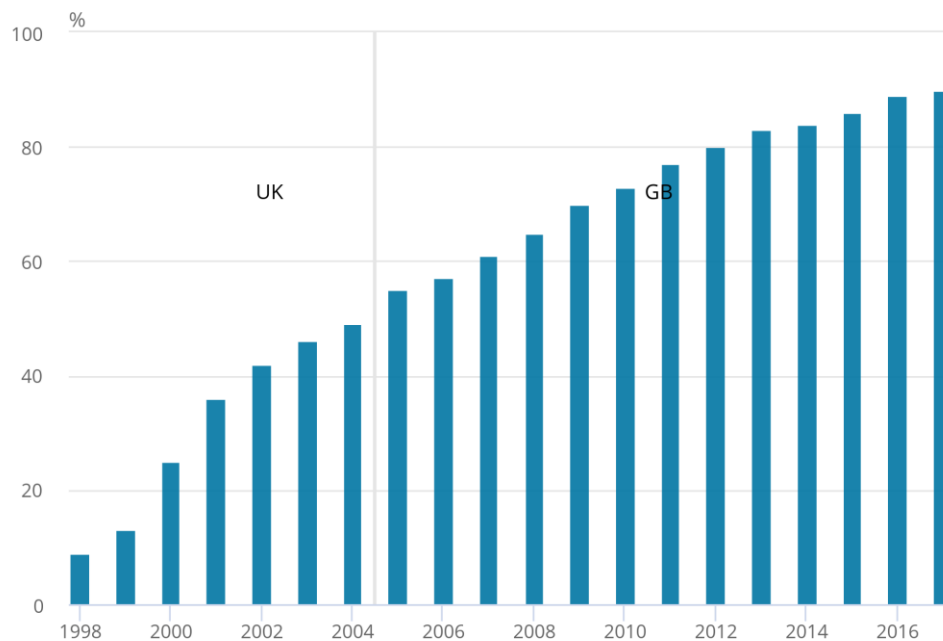
Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS)

1.3 However, a significant number of people are not currently able to access the internet or lack basic digital skills. A 2016 report by the Commons Science and Technology Committee found that 5.8 million adults in the UK have never used the internet, and 12.6 million adults in the UK (34%) currently lack basic digital skills[2].

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[1] Office for National Statistic (2017) Statistical bulletin: Internet access, households and individuals: 2017
[2] Commons Science and Technology Committee, (2016) Report: Digital Skills Crisis

1.4   Evidence suggests that particular groups and individuals can experience significant barriers to accessing the internet and the benefits that it can bring. In particular the following groups of people in Cambridge are more likely to be offline:

- **Older people** - Older people are much less likely to use the internet than other age groups. In 2016, only 38.7% of adults in the UK aged 75 years or over had used the internet in the last 3 months, compared to 87.9% of all adults[3]. The Council's 2016 Cambridge Residents Survey found that only 58% of respondents aged over 75 had access to the internet compared to 99% of adults aged up to 44[4].

- **Disabled people** – Disabled people are less likely to use the internet than people without disabilities. In 2016, 25% of disabled adults in the UK had never used the internet[5]. Disabled people also less likely to continue using the internet after they have first accessed it. There were 0.5 million disabled adults in the UK who had last used the internet over 3 months ago, making up more than half of the 0.9 million lapsed internet users[6].

- **Social housing tenants** - People living in social housing are less likely to access the internet than people living in other housing tenures. The Council's most recent Tenants Satisfaction Survey found that in 2014 39.2% of City Council tenants did not have access to the internet[7]. For those who do not have access to the internet, the most common reason given (46.3%) was that they could not afford it. Other reasons included not being interested (45.8%) and not knowing how to use the internet (18.5%).

- **People on low incomes** - The evidence also suggests that people on low incomes are less likely to have digital access and basic digital skills. Nationally, 17% of people earning less than £20,000 never use the internet, as opposed to 2% of people earning more than £40,000[8]. 44% of people without basic digital skills are on lower wages or are unemployed[9]. The Council's 2016 Cambridge Residents Survey found that 76% of respondents who received state benefits and allowances had access to the internet, compared to 94% of all respondents.

1.5   There are a variety of reasons why people are not able to, or choose not to, access the Internet. These include:

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[3] Office for National Statistics, (2016) – Statistical Bulletin: Internet users in the UK: 2016
[4] Cambridge City Council, (2016) Residents Survey
https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/sites/default/files/residents-survey-2016-report.pdf
[5] Office for National Statistics, (2016) – Statistical Bulletin: Internet users in the UK: 2016
[6] Office for National Statistics, (2016) – Statistical Bulletin: Internet users in the UK: 2016
[7] Cambridge City Council, (2014), Tenant Satisfaction Survey
[8] Cabinet Office, (2014), Government Digital Inclusion Strategy
[9] Cabinet Office, (2014), Government Digital Inclusion Strategy

- Not having access to the right hardware and software. This can be a particular issue for disabled people, who may need adaptations to equipment or software
- Not having access to a reliable internet connection, either at home, on a mobile device or in a public venue.
- Not being able to afford the cost of hardware, internet connection or software.
- Not having the confidence to learn how to access and use the internet.
- Fears around privacy and security, including computer viruses, data theft and fraud.

1.6 The aim of the Council's 'Digital Access Strategy' is to support residents in the city who are not currently online to access the internet and develop their digital skills. The strategy aims to achieve this through developing projects that build on the existing support provided by the Council and partner organisations in the city.

1.7 The Council is committed to increasing digital access for three key reasons:

1. Increasing digital access to City Council and partner services
2. Reducing poverty and sharing prosperity
3. Supporting inclusive economic growth

1.8 <u>Increasing digital access to City Council and partner services</u> – Many services provided by the Council and partner organisations in Cambridge are already being provided online. For example, residents are being encouraged to manage their benefits on line, many schools expect pupils to be able to complete homework online and doctor's appointments can be booked in advance online at some surgeries in Cambridge.

1.9 The Council's wider Digital Transformation Strategy, recognises the need to make make more of our services and transactions available online, reflecting the digital world our residents inhabit and expect when doing business with any large organisation. This approach has the benefit of making services quicker and more accessible for residents who are online, whilst potentially achieving efficiency savings for the Council by replacing costly, labour-intensive tasks with automated and self-service options. However, it is essential that we ensure that as online service provision increases, residents who do not currently have digital access are not excluded from Council services.

1.10 <u>Reducing poverty and sharing prosperity</u> – By increasing digital access, the Council can help reduce poverty in the city. As identified in the Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy, digital access can help people to achieve immediate financial savings

through access to cheaper deals on utilities (e.g. energy bills, telephone bills) and online shopping discounts.

1.11   Digital access can also increase incomes in the longer term, by helping to address the educational attainment gap currently experienced by young people from lower income families. In 2015 less than a third (28.1%) of pupils receiving Free School Meals achieved GCSE 5+ grades A*-C including English and Maths, compared to two thirds (66.4%) of children not eligible for free school meals in Cambridge[10].

1.12   Research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies[11] found that children that had access to the internet at home gained ten GCSE points on average. The same study found that under one in two participants from the poorest households have home internet access, compared to almost all participants from the richest families.

1.13   <u>Supporting inclusive economic growth</u> – Through supporting residents to develop basic digital skills, the Council can help support the continued economic growth of the city and help residents on lower incomes to access employment. In 2014 almost 90% of new jobs nationally required digital skills, with 72% of employers stating that they are unwilling to interview candidates who do not have basic IT skills.[12]

1.14   Higher level digital skills are particularly in demand in the Cambridge economy, which is an international centre for higher education, research and development, hi-tech and bio-technology companies. In the wider Greater Cambridge sub-region (which includes the districts of Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire), there are over 4,700 knowledge intensive companies with more than 54,000 employees and a combined revenue of over £12bn[13].

1.15   Our digital access strategy will help ensure that a broader cross-section of the Cambridge population are able to engage in the digital economy. It will help support people from our more deprived communities the confidence and capability to use digital channels to find work and training, and to develop the digital skills needed to access higher skilled, higher paid employment available in the Cambridge economy.

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[10] Cambridgeshire County Council, 2017, Educational attainment data
N.B. Data for 2016 onwards is not currently available, because the Department for Education has changed the GCSE benchmark from '5+ GCSE grades A*-C, including English and Maths' to a broader benchmark (across English, Maths, the English Baccalaureate subjects, and then other qualifications). The new measure is called attainment 8 and gives each school a score that equates to an average GCSE grade.
[11] Chowdry, H. et al (2010) The role of attitudes and behaviours in explaining socio-economic differences in attainment at age 16. Institute for Fiscal Studies
[12] Tinder Foundation (2014) A Leading Digital Nation by 2020: Calculating the cost of delivering online skills for all
[13] University of Cambridge, 2017, Cambridge Innovation in Numbers
https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/innovation-at-cambridge/innovation-in-numbers

2.0   Digital activity to date/previous strategy (ask Digital Partnership to identify key activities

2.1   Since 2014/15, the Council has directly delivered a range of activity to support digital access, particularly for older people, social housing tenants and people on low incomes. Projects have included:

- **Free public wi-fi access and internet access points** – In partnership with the University of Cambridge and Cambridgeshire County Council, the Camb-wifi project introduced free public wi-fi access public buildings, including City Council civic buildings and community centres. Residents can also use free internet access points at the Council's Customer Service Centre in Mandela House, and a number of community centres, including the Meadows Community Centre, 82 Akeman Street and Buchan Street Neighbourhood Centre.

- **Laptop loan and training scheme** – The Council's Housing Service has piloted different approaches to help tenants to get online. During 2014/15, the service leant 40 laptops to Council housing tenants who were either on benefits and/or out of work. In 2015/16 the service piloted a 12-week digital training course for 10 learners at Browns Field Community Centre, which was followed by a combined laptop loan and training scheme that was rolled out more widely across the city for Council tenants. As part of this, 4 12-week training courses for a total of 24 Council tenants were held at Ross Street Community Centre, The Meadows Community Centre and Rock Road Library. The training sessions helped tenants to save money, apply for housing or benefits online, and use social media to communicate with friends and family.

- **Social housing project** – In 2017/18 the Council's Housing Service worked with a specialist training provider to provide digital access sessions for Council housing tenants at Barnwell Baptist Church in Abbey and at Ross Street Community Centre. Initially the sessions were delivered on a drop-in basis, but to increase participation the project moved to delivering 12 week, structured courses, which included opportunities to work towards recognised qualifications. In 2017/18 a total of x training sessions were delivered and there were x attendees.

- **60 + Getting On line project**– The Council's Housing Service delivered a 60 + Getting On line project in 2016/17 and 2017/18. The project has recruited 13 volunteer Digital Champions who are currently running 4 digital access drop-in groups for older people each week in sheltered housing schemes (Lichfield Road, Talbot House, Whitefriars and Stanton House). In 2016/17 and 2017/18 a total of 266 sessions were delivered and there were 139 attendees at the sessions (some of the attendees attended regularly throught this period, while other attended for a number of

sessions). The project supports volunteers by providing an initial 5 week training course, and providing IT equipment, technical advice and other support

- **Intergenerational project** – The Council's Neighbourhood Community Development team delivered an intergenerational project at Mayfield Primary School, which successfully brought together school children and local older people to support them to develop digital skills.

2.2   The Council has also funded a range of activity delivered by partner organisations to promote digital access, with a particular focus on supporting disabled people, older people and social housing tenants:

- **Camsight** – In 2015/16 Camsight were funded from the Council's Sharing Prosperity Fund to provide a package of advice, assessment, training in basic digital skills and ongoing technical support to 29 visually impaired Cambridge residents.

- **Cambridge Housing Society** – In 2015/16 Cambridge Housing Society (CHS) were funded from the Council's Sharing Prosperity Fund to: develop the specialist IT skills of CHS support staff to enable their clients to get online and practise their digital skills; and work with volunteers from Lloyds bank to support digitally excluded older people living in CHS housing. The Council has also funded CHS from 2015/16 to 2018/19 through its Community Grants to deliver a flexible programme of 1-to-1 tuition and loan of equipment to promote digital inclusion and employability for social housing tenants

- **Cambridge Online** – The Council has provided funding through its Community Grants to Cambridge Online to carry out digital outreach work at the Meadows Community Centre, and Hanover Court and Princess Court housing schemes. The Council has also part-funded a learning centre at the Hester Adrian Centre, which helps people to use computers and access the internet; and a digital champion project, which recruits volunteer mentors and tutors to provide one-to-one support for learners.

    In 2015/16 Cambridge Online was awarded funding from the Council's Sharing Prosperity to run taster sessions and digital inclusion clubs in community venues in Arbury, Abbey, East Chesterton and Kings Hedges. In total Cambridge Online ran 86 sessions with 6 volunteer digital champions and supported 41 learners.

- **Microhub project** - In 2016/17 and 2017/18, the Council provided funding to Cambridge Online from its Sharing Prosperity Fund to deliver a 'Microhub' project. Instead of asking families or individuals on low incomes to attend a number of sessions providing different types of support at different locations, this project sought to offer multi-agency and multi-activity services, including digital access support, in one place at a particular time. The aim of the project was to identify existing groups and networks and provide digital support as a 'bolt on' to pre-existing

activities. The project has delivered sessions at a range of venues including Mandela House, Meadows Community Centre, 82 Akeman Street, Browns Field Youth and Community Centre, and the IT suite at Cambridge United Football Club's Abbey Stadium. In 2017/18 there were 195 attendees at these sessions and a total of 258 attendances. These attendees completed a total of 426 1-hour digital access drop-in sessions.

- **Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service (CCVS)** – In 2017/18, the Council provided funding from its Sharing Prosperity Fund to CCVS to deliver a programme of 12 digital training sessions to voluntary sector organisations. Sessions will cover a range of topics including developing a digital strategy, ensuring digital access is part of the organisations delivery, using digital tools to promote and market local services, and internet safety and crowd funding. There have been some delays to the programme, with 5 of the sessions delivered in 2017/18 and the remaining 7 to be delivered in 2018/19. There were a total of 41 attendees at the 5 sessions delivered to date.

2.3   A range of partner organisations have also delivered a range of digital support in the city. We have sought to ensure that the activity delivered and funded by the City Council complements digital provision in the city by other partners.

2.4   **Cambridgeshire County Council** has prioritised digital inclusion, with the aim of creating a more digitally literate workforce, improve people's employability by increasing levels of digital capability, and helping people to realise the wider benefits being online. The County Council's programmes include:

- Increasing broadband access - The Connecting Cambridgeshire Programme was established to provide the infrastructure needed to increase access to broadband for residents and businesses across the county. The programme aims to bring superfast broadband to 99% of homes and businesses by the end of 2020.
- Providing free internet access - The Library Service provides free public access to library computers during library opening hours.
- Providing digital access sessions - The Adult Learning and Skills Service has provided a range of digital support directly, including basic skills support for people aged over 60, online drop-in sessions for those wanting to download audio books or use e publications, and the 'Learn My Way' online training module. The service also annually provides funding for learning and skills projects, some of which include a focus on digital access.

2.5   A number of voluntary sector partners also provide digital access support for Cambridge residents. A Digital Directory has been produced which captures all of these services, but some of the Council's key partners include:

- **Cambridge Online -** which provides people with access to computers and the internet, as well as specialist training and advice. In addition to activity above which is funded by the Council, Cambridge Online have delivered a range of other digital inclusion projects.

- **CHS Group** - has delivered a number of financial, social and digital inclusion projects over a number of years. These have included including more recently 'Making Money Count', a website providing debt, benefit and financial advice, and the New Horizons team, which offers face to face coaching for those who are not in work on financial issues, getting on-line and getting closer to employment.

3.0   Aims and objectives for future work

3.1   The Council is committed to continuing to promote digital access to ensure residents that residents can access digital services provided by the Council and partners, as part of reducing poverty in Cambridge and to support continued economic growth in the city.

3.2   The objectives for the Council's future work in 2018/19 and 2019/20 on digital access are:

1. Increasing access to the internet and digital skills for residents in Cambridge, with a particular focus on older people, people with disabilities, social housing tenants and residents on low incomes, who are more likely to be digitally excluded.

2. Ensuring that Council services are accessible to all residents, including those who are online and offline

3. Developing and strengthening partnerships with others organisations, including Cambridgeshire County Council, community and voluntary organisations, and businesses to ensure that services are co-ordinated and to maximise the collective impact of projects and resources.

4.0   Activity planned for 2018/19 and 2019/20

4.1   Over the next two years, the Council will continue to provide staff resources and funding to promote digital access for vulnerable residents who are not online or lack digital skills. The Council has committed a total of £113,000 from its Sharing Prosperity Fund over 2018/19 and 2019/20, funding from its Community Grants programme for 2018/19, and ongoing staff resources from its Corporate Strategy, Community Services and Housing Services teams.

4.2   As the available evidence suggests that disabled people, older people, social housing tenants, and residents on low incomes continue to be more likely to be digitally excluded, we will continue to focus our activity primarily on activity that will support these groups of residents.

4.3   We will continue to work in partnership with and other organisations that provide digital access services. As part of this, we will continue to convene meetings of the Cambridge City Digital Group. The group meets regularly (every 6 weeks) and has successfully engaged a range of key local organisations that are delivering digital access projects and activities, including Cambridgeshire County Council, JobCentre Plus, Cambridge Online, CHS Group, Cambridge United Community Trust and Cambridgeshire Council for Voluntary Service. Members of the group work collaboratively to share skills and resources, maximise collective impact and avoid duplication.

4.4   Over the next two years, we will continue to deliver the following projects, scaling them up where there is demand from residents and sufficient delivery capacity within Council and partner resources:

- **60+ Getting Online project** – In 2018/19 and 2019/20, the project will continue to advertise and recruit volunteer Digital Champions, who will run 4 weekly digital access groups for older people in sheltered housing schemes (Lichfield Road, Talbot House, Whitefriars and Stanton House). The project will continue to provide training and ongoing support for volunteers, and will explore opportunities to expand provision to new neighbourhoods and venues (e.g. in to more sheltered housing schemes across the city and to people in their own home unable to join the groups), subject to capacity and technical considerations.

- **Social housing project** – In 2018/19, volunteers will continue to deliver digital access courses for social housing tenants at Ross Street Community Centre. A programme of 2 six-week digital access courses will be also be delivered by a training provider for social housing tenants at the new Clay Farm Community Centre in Trumpington. Once the courses are complete, they will then be evaluated to determine how successful they have been and whether they are viable going forward.

- **Microhub project** – the project will continue to deliver 4 digital access sessions per week in 4 different locations in the city with 12 digital champions. Cambridge Online will continue to run MicroHub sessions at Mandela House and the Meadows Community Centre, and will explore and trial run MicroHub type activities at other locations, including in Abbey, Arbury, East Chesterton and Kings Hedges wards.

- **Digital training for voluntary and community organisations** – the project will deliver a further 12 training sessions for voluntary and community organisations in Cambridge to help build their capacity to provide support to residents to get online.

4.5   The table below provides details of the targets for the above projects:

Table 1 – Targets for digital access projects 2018/19 and 2019/20

Project	Number of volunteers	Number of digital access sessions	Number of attendees
60+ Getting Online project	15	460	100
Social housing project	TBC	TBC	TBC
Microhub	15	800	200
Digital training for VCS groups	n/a	12	75
Total	**28**	**1,272**	**375**

4.6   In addition to the four projects above, over the next two years we will also explore opportunities to:

- Help residents to develop skills needed in the digital economy by engaging volunteers from local high- tech companies to run code clubs in libraries and community venues in disadvantaged areas of Cambridge. This work would aim to complement existing code clubs operating in the city.

- Work with IT companies to trial communal wi-fi provision in Council housing blocks.

- Complete a Digital Directory to provide residents with details of the digital access services offered by organisations within Cambridge.

- Share learning and good practice on digital access with other local authorities and EU countries through events.

- Develop a more sustainable, self-financing model for funding digital access activity in Cambridge post-2019/20.

Action Plan 2018/19-2019/20

No.	Action	Lead organisation	Completion date	Funding source	Success measures and targets (2018/19 and 2019/20)
1	Continue to train and support volunteer digital champions to run weekly digital access groups for older people in 4 sheltered housing schemes	Housing Services, Cambridge City Council	March 2020	Sharing Prosperity Fund	• Number of volunteer digital champions supported to run groups (Target: 15) • Number of sessions delivered in sheltered housing schemes and community venues (Target: 460 sessions) • Number of attendees (Target: 100)
2	Deliver digital access training courses for social housing tenants at Ross Street Community Centre and Clay Farm Community Centre	Housing Services and Community Services, Cambridge City Council	March 2020	Sharing Prosperity Fund	• Number of volunteers • Number of training sessions delivered (Target: TBC) • Number of attendances (Target: TBC)
3	Deliver 'microhub' digital access sessions as a bolt-on to existing community groups and activities at 4 communities venues across the city	Cambridge Online	March 2020	Sharing Prosperity Fund	• Number of sessions delivered (Target: 800) • Number of attendees (Target: 200)
4	Deliver training sessions for voluntary and community organisations in Cambridge to help build their capacity to provide support to residents to get online	Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service (CCVS)	March 2020	Sharing Prosperity Fund	• Number of training sessions delivered (Target: 12) • Number of attendees (Target: TBC)

No.	Action	Lead organisation	Completion date	Funding source	Success measures and targets (2018/19 and 2019/20)
5	Deliver a flexible programme of 1-to-1 tuition and loan of equipment to promote digital inclusion and employability for social housing tenants	CHS Group, in partnership with other social housing providers	March 2019	Community Grants	TBC
6	Explore opportunities to engage volunteers from local employers to run code clubs in libraries and community venues in disadvantaged areas of the city	Corporate Strategy and Community Services, Cambridge City Council	March 2019	Sharing Prosperity Fund	Number of volunteers engaged (Target: TBC) Numbers of code club sessions delivered (Target: TBC) Numbers of residents attending (Target: TBC)
7	Explore opportunities to work with IT companies to trial communal Wi-Fi provision in Council housing blocks.	Housing Services, Cambridge City Council	TBC	Housing Services budget	TBC
8	Complete a Digital Directory to provide residents with details of the digital access services offered by organisations within Cambridge	Corporate Strategy, Cambridge City Council	July 2018	Corporate Strategy budget	• Number of hard copies of the directory distributed to residents, libraries and community venues

No.	Action	Lead organisation	Completion date	Funding source	Success measures and targets (2018/19 and 2019/20)
9	Share learning and good practice on digital access with other local authorities and EU countries through an event at the Guildhall and Clay Farm Community Centre	Cambridgeshire County Council and Cambridge City Council	June 2018	Corporate Strategy budget	• Number of attendees at good practice event (Target: TBC) • Number of organisations represented at good practice event (Target: TBC)