



## Case study

# ClwydAlyn

Louise Blackwell, former Community Development Officer at ClwydAlyn housing association, explains how digital has improved the quality of life of the vulnerable people ClwydAlyn supports.



ClwydAlyn is a housing association that supports a wide range of people and their needs. With 'together to beat poverty' as their mission statement, the charitable organisation provides general needs accommodation, as well as running sheltered housing schemes, rough sleeper shelters, supported living schemes, extra care schemes and older generation support.

### Louise said:

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From rough sleepers to young people, older people, single-parent families and those with extra care needs, there's a wide variety of people that we serve.

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Although the needs of the older and vulnerable people ClwydAlyn support vary, their work towards digital inclusion has improved the quality of life for their residents, whatever their background.

### Louise explains:

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As it's such a diverse cohort of people that we work with, their needs vary. Some of our residents are struggling to get into work, but using digital can help them with this, whether it's attending interviews online or completing job applications. Whereas our older residents are more interested in using technology to keep in touch with their family and friends and to use technology for enjoyment.

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Over the years, ClwydAlyn has undertaken a range of different community projects that benefit the people they serve and the local community. Many of these projects support digital inclusion, such as their paired reading project, which matched up sheltered housing residents with school children to share skills.

### Louise explained:



The sheltered housing residents helped the young people with their reading skills by listening to them read, but as it's all done over e-readers the young people have also been able to teach the residents how to use the technology.



After identifying that older people in their extra care schemes wanted to learn new technical skills, Louise and Community Support Assistant Erin decided to share their knowledge with their residents.

### Louise said:

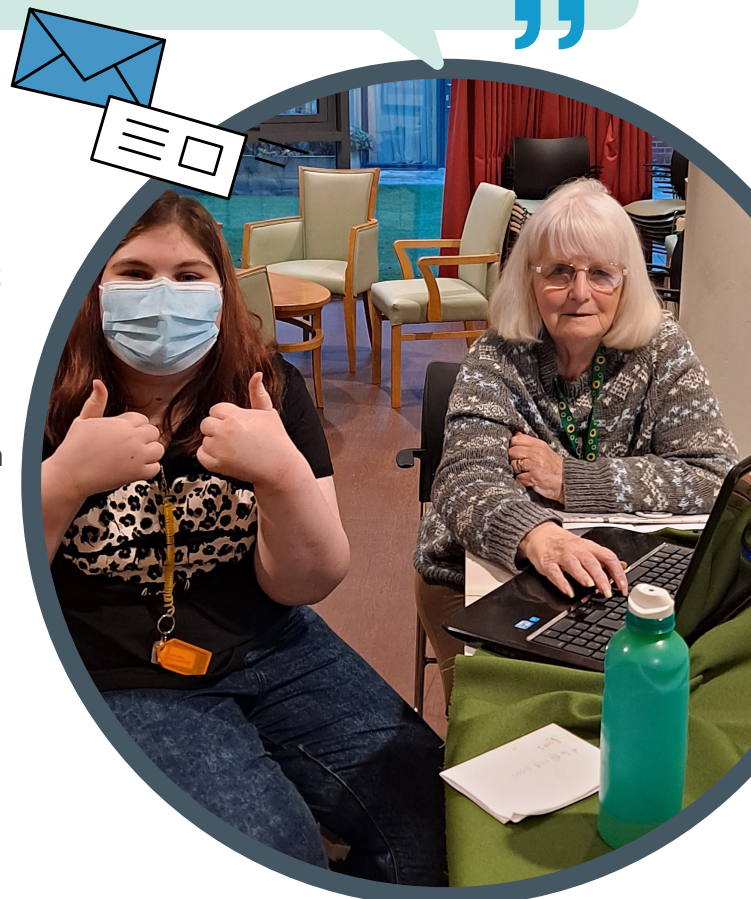


They wanted to use technology for everything from looking up knitting patterns to researching their family trees. We booked in one-to-one sessions before Christmas, in case anybody wanted to use technology to keep in touch with family and friends over the holidays. Since that went so well and we've had some lovely feedback, we've been asked to come back again and do more.



ClwydAlyn has been working with Digital Communities Wales to expand their digital offering. One project involved purchasing a VR kit to support extra care facilities during lockdown but is still continuing to benefit residents. Extra care managers have been sharing the VR headsets amongst older residents to do everything from meditation sessions to travelling the world to walking with dinosaurs, allowing them to have a little fun and boost their mental health.

Another success story has been a tablet loan programme for ClwydAlyn's extra care and sheltered housing schemes. If a resident doesn't own or can't afford a phone or tablet of their own but would like to use technology, they can loan a tablet from the programme.



### **Louise said:**

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The tablets have been used to help residents with everything from setting up home if they'd just moved into sheltered housing to staying in touch during lockdown. It's enabled people to stay connected, which is huge for wellbeing.

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Community Development Assistant Erin has also undertaken training with Digital Communities Wales training to become a digital champion. Erin joined ClwydAlyn from the Flintshire Project Search, a collaboration between ClwydAlyn, learning disability support charity HFT and Flintshire County Council. The project works with young people with learning disabilities or autism, to help them develop their job readiness skills and access work. Erin has been using her training to help residents learn new digital skills, but the project has also boosted her confidence.

### **Louise said:**

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It's lovely to see. It's not only nice for the residents and making a difference, but it's also teaching Erin skills that she can use in her job search in the future.

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Louise believes that digital technology can make a difference to the lives of everyone, which is why it is important to discuss digital in a language everyone can understand.

### **She explained:**

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Digital can be overwhelming at first and use of complicated jargon can also put people off. It suggests that 'technology is not for me.' Digital technology is for everybody and being able to use digital is invaluable. It's important to be inclusive.

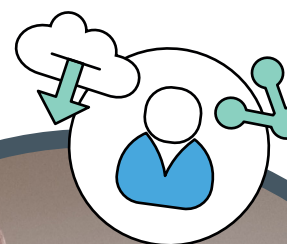
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In the future, ClwydAlyn plans to keep championing digital inclusion amongst the different groups they support, as well as continuing to develop projects with like-minded partners and organisations.

### Louise said:



Each group has something to offer another, and we want to keep exploring what people want and working with Digital Communities Wales and other partners to bring everyone together.



### Three top tips from ClwydAlyn

1. Digital can be used in different ways to meet different needs
2. Don't use jargon
3. Digital is for everyone

Help your community learn life-changing digital skills with our free training.  
Get involved here:



[digitalcommunities.gov.wales](https://digitalcommunities.gov.wales)



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