Cymunedau Digidol Cymru — Hyder Digidol, Iechyd a Lles | Digital Communities Wales — Digital Confidence, Health and Well-being

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Case study

Get RCT Online Partnership

Scott Tandy, a member of the Get RCT Online Partnership explains why local community hubs – and the people behind them – are vital for getting more people online. The partnership meets quarterly for people to develop ideas and collaborate for digital inclusion initiatives.

Get RCT Online (Rhondda Cynon Taf) was set up by Digital Communities Wales (DCW) to bring together local partners and groups interested in championing digital inclusion activities. The project is supported by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and its digital inclusion strategy, with around 20 organisations involved in the partnership each bringing their unique insights and know-how.
Scott Tandy, Digital Lead at the Newydd Housing Association and a member of Get RCT Online, describes the partnership as:

> " Working together collectively to develop ideas and meet the needs of each other's service users, from our tenants to the local community and everyone in between. "

The partnership's Digital Champions – volunteer experts in different types of digital and tech – are vital to the project, supporting the local community with their skills and knowledge. In Rhondda Cynon Taf, the library service and its community hubs have also been crucial for encouraging digital inclusion, with their Digital Fridays – held in libraries across Rhondda Cynon Taf – a particular success in increasing digital literacy in the community.

Scott said:

> " During our Digital Fridays sessions, a volunteer digital expert is on hand to support anyone who needs a little help getting online. It's great because anyone can just walk down to their local library and get the help they need. "

Another way that Get RCT Online support people to use digital technologies is through their loaning out of data enabled tablets to members of the community who may not be able to afford or commit to buying a device themselves. Working with DCW, the partnership can reach more excluded parts of the community in this way and help them build confidence to get online.

Whether it's turning on a new device, learning how to use email, or navigating specific websites, there are many areas that can be explored when helping the community to use digital services and technology. It isn't just about using the internet for practical reasons, but for fun too. In fact, making that bridge between someone's interests and the digital world is an important tool for sparking an interest in learning to use the internet and demonstrating to them the many benefits that can be gained.

He added:

> "It's important to make that connection. Sometimes, when showing people new things you can overload them with information, but by connecting and practising new technology together, that knowledge is more likely to stick."

For schemes such as Digital Fridays and the tablet loan scheme to succeed, Scott believes it is important to support the volunteers too – something the internet can also facilitate. In this way, sharing knowledge and resources within the partnership, community hubs and wider channels exploring digital exclusion has proved vital to the success of initiatives by partners in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Scott explains:

> "The variation of requests we get on Digital Fridays is great, but you might not know the answer yourself! In these instances, our Digital Champions' Microsoft Teams Channel has been invaluable. We've been able to use the channel to share knowledge and find the right expert to solve the problem."
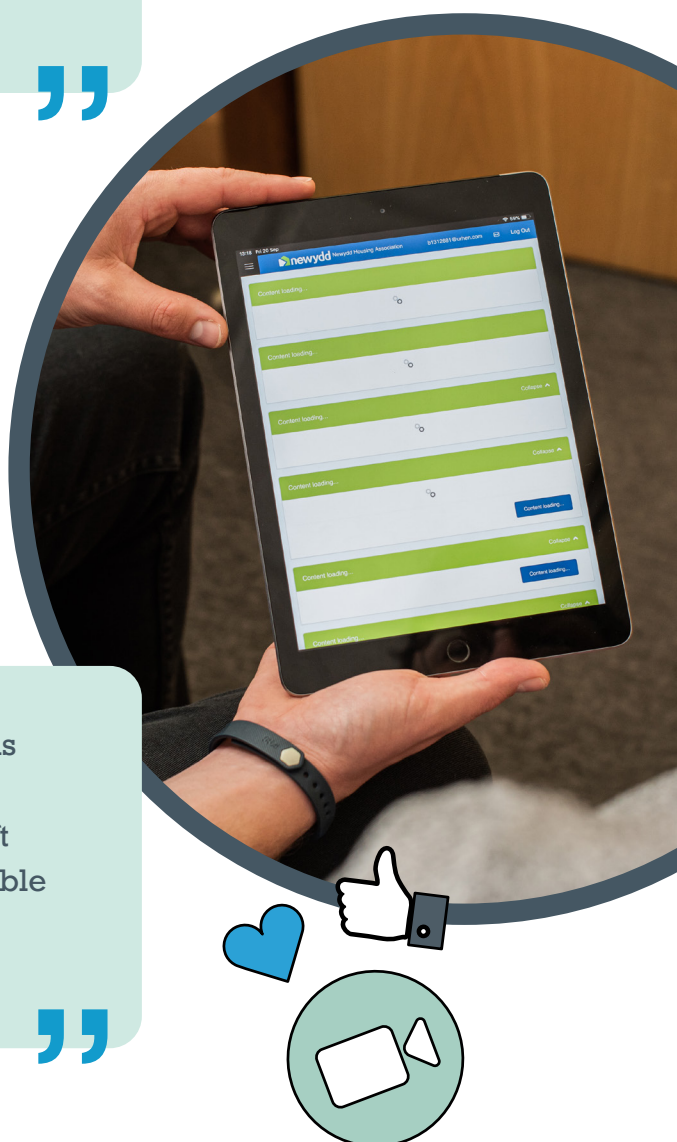
He continues:

"
We work hard to make our volunteers feel valued. The depth of our Digital Champions knowledge is incredible, and ranges from e-readers to digital photography. The project works really well and it's all because of them.
"

Building on the success of Digital Fridays and the Digital Champions in RCT, the partnership has developed a webpage to promote their device loaning scheme and signpost people locally and nationally to digital support options. Get RCT Online are also working with the local authority and borough council to deliver against their digital strategy by addressing issues such as the cost of wi-fi in the area, to remove barriers for people being able to get online.
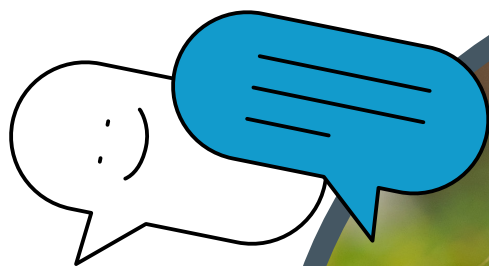
Three top tips from Get Online in RCT

1. Focus on building human connections
2. Ensure your volunteers feel supported
3. Never underestimate the importance of local community hubs

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

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