

Case study

Get the Vale Online

Get the Vale Online's partnership shows how collaboration between local organisations has helped communities across the Vale of Glamorgan to stay connected – and how this approach could help other organisations support people to get online.



Created seven years ago, Get the Vale Online (GTVO) is a partnership that brings together local organisations interested in championing digital inclusion in the community. Partners include Digital Communities Wales, Newydd Housing Association, Vale Homes, Vale Libraries, Adult Community Learning, and various departments from the Local Authority. The group works collaboratively to bring together like-minded organisations who want to support the digital inclusion agenda and recognise the importance of supporting people within the Vale to ensure they have the digital skills, confidence, and access to get online. By working together, the partnership recognises that collaboration is key to success.

Scott Tandy, Digital Lead at the Newydd Housing Association and a member of GTVO, explains:

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We combine our local knowledge and work on a solution together. It's all about testing ideas, seeing what works, and building on it and developing it further.

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Different organisations face different challenges but having the expert knowledge of like-minded people who are championing digital inclusion, has led to better support for the communities these organisations serve.

Scott added:



It's about having that open space to come up with solutions or signpost to those who can. Not any one person or organisation has all the answers, and by coming together we can better support the people who need these services. We're growing a community of digital leaders, and our work wouldn't be so successful without each organisations' support.



Addressing digital isolation and exclusion throughout the pandemic has been a priority for GTVO; The Vale Tablet Loan Scheme, where libraries across the Vale can loan tablets with internet access to individuals within the local community, proving particularly successful, helping to prevent loneliness and isolation which has been even more prevalent during COVID-19.

Jo Beynon, Policy Officer for the Vale of Glamorgan Council and member of GTVO, spoke about how the partnership had come together during the pandemic to address demands for digital support and why the GTVO partnership is important to her:



The Get the Vale Online Partnership is a key structure used by various organisations across the Vale to work together to tackle digital exclusion across the Vale from various angles. The Partnership is an excellent tool for allowing cross-sector and cross-organisational members to share updates, lessons learnt, and contacts with one another. The pandemic has highlighted, now more than ever, the importance of being online and the benefits that come with it.



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The partnership recognises there can be challenges in finding out what support is available, and saw the need to develop a ‘one-stop digital inclusion shop’ where residents and staff from all organisations could find information on 2 key elements: where to get a device from, and where to get support from. The Get the Vale Online webpage has recently undergone a redevelopment to become this source of vital local information, highlighting the support that is available across the Partnership along with any eligibility criteria.

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Get The Vale Online values collaboration and works with several different Local Authorities. The organisation understands the importance of working together in order to reach a common goal. Working together in collaboration to get the message out there has been of utmost importance during the COVID-19 crisis, in order to pull together as a community to help those in need.

Farida Aslam, Senior Neighbourhood Manager for Vale Homes, Vale of Glamorgan Council, and member of GTVO, spoke about the importance of working in a collective manner, both internally within the Local Authority and with partnerships like GTVO:

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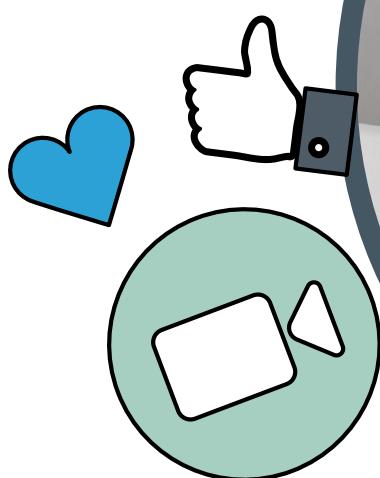
The GTVO partnership is a great example of collective working to achieve maximum impact. With a track record of operational delivery, during the pre-pandemic era, we were beginning to question how we can work smarter to achieve maximum impact. Discussions centred around who our new partners could be, but also, we really focused on what more we as a council could do. We questioned internally whether departments of the council were aware of the work we were doing, and so we began to raise the profile internally, and we’re also becoming smarter in trying to collate the impact we’re having but also joining the dots internally. For example, we now have a council wide group of managers who are influencing the new Digital Maturity Strategy for the Vale, and with the knowledge of the GTVO digital group we are able to feed in practical operational experience to help aid the future direction of the work we take in the Vale.

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We are also working towards signing the Digital Communities Wales Digital Inclusion Charter and achieving the accreditation, so we have real corporate buy in, and we're excited about the next stages in our journey in digital inclusion in the Vale.

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Three top tips from Get the Vale Online:

1. **Work together to build solutions – different organisations face different challenges; if you don't have the answer, someone else may be able to help**
2. **Remember that digital can bring people together when times are tough, whether that's like-minded organisations or the communities you serve**
3. **Put in place small goals that will help to bring about real change in the community**

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