OneDigital

Phase 2

Community of Practice
Final Report

May 2017- May 2020

Final Review of the Community of Practice

The Community of Practice (CoP) managed by the One Digital Learning Facilitator between August 2017 to end December 2019. This report is focussed on activity undertaken in that period.

Short summary of activity

Learning internal to the programme has involved:

- One day face to face learning sets focused on a range of topics
- 1.5 hour online learning discussions focused on a range of topics
- Regular project leads meetings that included opportunities to focus on arising learning
- Project visits by the Learning Facilitator and one to one discussions with Project Leads
- Contacts between One Digital partners (arranged primarily independently of the CoP) to focus on specific areas identified as opportunities for developmental learning
- Reports and reviews of CoP activity and learning shared with partners

External learning has involved:

- Events for partners aimed at improving practice of partners already undertaking digital inclusion work or wanting to undertake digital inclusion work – face to face and online
- Project visits by the Learning Facilitator to better understand practice
- Publication of knowledge arising from the project-based activities of One Digital through a new website with specific focus on a Knowledge Hub. In addition, project visits, case studies, research reviews and blogs have offered information on specific topics and delivery of the projects

The One Digital Communications Strategy prioritised building mechanics to share knowledge and information as widely as possible. The One Digital twitter account commenced at the start of the Community of Practice now has a following of nearly 1,000. The One Digital mailing list now has the ability to reach out to nearly 400 project-based staff to promote information and activity.

The table below provides information and statistics on activity.

One Digital mailing list (individuals) – used to provide direct information on learning and events	382 (on 6.12.19)
One Digital mailing list (projects)	240 (on 6.12.19 – under estimated as some partners signing up via the website have not provided organisational details)
One Digital twitter account	980 followers (on 6.12.19) Used to promote activities plus extensive coverage of knowledge hub pages on the website

One Digital learning sets (internal)	• Building Digital Champion approaches (2 sessions) • Building sustainable Digital Champion approaches • Digital maturity models (2 sessions) • Facilitation skills and senior leadership • Measuring impact & evaluating Digital Champion projects • Resources & support for organisations running Digital Champions projects • Volunteer management • Working in GP practices • Working with disadvantaged groups 8 themes
One Digital large face to face events	• Launch of the CoP & promotion of Digital Champion approaches • Measuring the impact of digital inclusion • Making digital accessible for everyone • Developing digital skills in rural communities • Embedding and sustaining Digital Champion support for digital skills 5 events
One Digital online learning events (for external partners)	• Online safety and security (2 sessions) • Digital Champion models 3 events
Influencing activities – numbers of strategic partners engaged with Community of Practice	• Department for Digital Culture Media & Sport – Research Working Group • Digital Skills Working Group members – 7 partners working nationally on digital inclusion • Centre for Ageing Better • Good Things Foundation • Carnegie UK • Digital Access for All programme (led by Learning Foundation) • 21 partners engaged in 'making digital accessible' work contributing from their expertise in working with specific disadvantaged groups • Lloyds Banking Group programmes • BT digital skills programmes • Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership • Citizens Advice Scotland • CAST/NCVO/Tech Trust – digital transformation • Cumberland Lodge 34 partners
Presentations at external events	• Connected Britain • Healthcare Excellence Through Technology

(CoP only)	- Brighton & Hove Digital Inclusion Network - Highland Network - Clarion Futures Digital Dialogue 5 events
Number of project visits by Community of Practice team	12 blogs/case studies published from 16 visits in year 1 12 visits in year 2 2 visits in year 3
Award nominations & successful awards (programme)	2 nominations 1 award

The Community of Practice Knowledge Hub now includes the following sections:

Developing Digital Champion models

Setting up a Digital Champion project including links to the Essential Digital Skills Framework & Essential Digital Skills Toolkit

Sustaining a Digital Champion project

Measuring the impact of a Digital Champion project & links to various external resources including the DCMS Digital Inclusion Evaluation Toolkit

Making digital accessible - working with disadvantaged groups

Resources – links to key publications – strategies and research, plus core materials for project development.

Blogs & Case Studies

In addition, we have published information about the Community of Practice with links to the published annual learning reports.

Information from events is published separately and sometimes then re-linked in subsequent Knowledge Hub sections on the same themes. One Digital videos are available from one page, as well as linked into appropriate points in the Knowledge Hub or events pages.

Review of learning from the CoP

The CoP has shared learning on a wide variety of areas. Below is some detail about what has been shared (as a recap). Detailed learning has been shared through the Knowledge Hub, One Digital website event pages, and through the annual report summaries of learning produced by the CoP Learning Facilitator.

Demonstrating the impact of the CoP is complex because how people and organisations learn is complex and attribution is challenging, as often there is no clearly evidenced learning journey. Some impacts can be directly evidenced, for instance how people evaluated One Digital events. Impacts on project development and sustainability were the primary aim of the Community of Practice.

Below each section of learning is a report on how the learning has potentially impacted and through which route.

The audiences are generally both the One Digital partners themselves, and a much wider group of over 3,000 partners that One Digital has worked with. In the review below the potential beneficiaries are generally identified.

The ability of the CoP to influence will be explored during the independent One Digital evaluation to be undertaken by Sara Dunn Associates.

Areas of learning that the Community of Practice has developed and shared learning about have included:

Digital Champion approaches through learning about:

- ➢ Types of Digital Champions
- ➢ Recruitment of Champions
- ➢ Support, training and resources for Champions
- ➢ Improved understanding of the accessibility needs of different learners
- ➢ Working with disadvantaged learners – general top tips and sections of learning about the needs of different groups explored with partners
    - o English as a second language
    - o Young people
    - o Older people
    - o People with physical disabilities
    - o People with learning disabilities
    - o People with mental health issues
    - o Overcoming financial disadvantage
    - o Working with people who are homeless
- ➢ Volunteer policies and procedures to support volunteer Digital Champion projects
- ➢ Individual projects as examples of practice including visits that had a focus on working in mental health settings, social housing, in community centres, and with older people
- ➢ Project development – including extensive learning published on setting up and developing Digital Champion projects; plus, work to develop logic models and Theories of Change for digital inclusion projects
- ➢ Measuring the impact of Digital Champion projects and specifically:
    - o Impact on learners
    - o Impact on Digital Champions
    - o Impact of working in partnership
- ➢ Sustainability of Digital Champion projects
- ➢ How to work effectively in GP practices
- ➢ Online safety and privacy – project practice and how improvements could be made to project support
- ➢ The value of the embedded approach to digital skills support through Case Study research (carried out by our independent evaluator and then shared with One Digital internal and external partners)
- ➢ Informal Digital Champions and communities of learning

Learning impacts

Further refining the Digital Champion models to show the range of activity from informal to embedded Champions including in a workplace setting was shared through a number of external partner events and the One Digital website. Digital Unite carried out a review and developed specific materials about in-work Champions. They identified this through their research activity and learning from the practice activity being undertaken by the core One Digital partners.

Key messages about flexing the use of Digital Champion models to suit the needs of individual organisations have been strengthened and shared (as above).

Improved information about the Embedded approach to Digital Champions – with individual partner Case Studies shared and key messages promoted. (Note the key learning from this work will be shared externally only in 2020.) Impact was on the Case Study partners themselves through an externally evaluated review of their activity, comparative analysis of their work and through sharing of the Case Studies with wider external partners and through the website. Impact of the event which shared Case Study learning has been published in a learning report.

Increased understanding of what metrics are available to measure the impact of digital skills projects, including general principles, was shared through external partner events and the One Digital Knowledge Hub. It was important to engage 'experts' in this area to really highlight good practice and to facilitate an event which was really honest about how challenging it is to develop effective impact measurement in this area. Beneficiaries were both the One Digital partners as they explored what would be valuable to collect internally, and wider partners through a good practice event. Internally there was significant engagement particularly about how to measure impact on learners.

Developing understanding of how to measure essential digital skills and the impact of Digital Champion projects through the use of logic models/theories of change and government frameworks, specifically reflects the learning done jointly within One Digital about the value of the Essential Digital Skills Framework and through a review of the logic models which all partners were encouraged to develop in the early stages of their projects. Further sharing of this learning with external One Digital partners was done with additional 'expert' input. SCVO were very involved in this area, developing a toolkit and sharing both internally and externally with partners. There were examples of cross-over learning between the partners, for instance SCVO and Clarion Futures explored their logic models in a one to one session with the Learning Facilitator.

Building understanding of the 'pillars of sustainability' approach and internal learning with One Digital partners on their shared definitions of sustainability, and what key elements (social, economic and environmental) that they see as valuable to achieving sustainability in a digital inclusion project. Wider sharing of the learning with external partners through an event using the model in workshops, and publication of learning through the website. The learning solidified the key elements of sustainability that are important to share more widely.

Improved understanding of the needs of vulnerable learners and good practice in supporting them 'making digital more accessible' developed through sharing of external partner learning on the One Digital Knowledge Hub and through an event. The key to the impact of this learning was the involvement of multiple partners who brought their individual expertise. The shared learning journey allowed crossover learning (for instance between Streetworks, a Scottish homeless charity, and partners working with learning disabilities who recognised the value of using and sharing their resources) to take place to the benefit of all partners involved (One Digital and external).

Identification of online safety and security as an issue for both learners and Champions and gaining clarification of why, then making recommendations on top tips for projects (learning will be externally published in first quarter 2020). This shared learning journey arose from initial work with the Centre for Ageing Better and led to a partner survey that went out to the wide group of external One Digital and Centre for Ageing Better partners and to the Online Centres Network. This work benefited Age UK particularly because concerns about online safety and security are a major barrier for older people. This work has clearly demonstrated that the CoP had the potential to involve a much wider group of partners through a variety of formats.

Increased understanding of the challenges and barriers of working in rural areas, and good practice work being done through a One Digital event, and through publication of event resources. Learning tips have been developed and will be shared in 2020. The value of this was to share learning with a group of partners with very specific project development needs. As Age UK and Citizens Online have both worked extensively in rural areas, they had contributions and learning to share that was not covered in any internal One Digital learning set. It also showcased how the CoP could operate to the benefit of a group of regional partners.

Identifying that literacy and numeracy as linked to digital skills development is an area not well understood by partners and publishing a 'thought piece' to highlight the issue. Further work in this area is being progressed by Carnegie UK and Good Things Foundation.

Improved understanding of the resources available within the One Digital partners for working with Digital Champions such as new resources developed by Age UK for projects working with older people in general (these resources were additional to the Digital Champions Network) and published learning about working in GP practices with Digital Champions valuable both internally to One Digital programme partners (particularly by Digital Unite and Citizens Online) and external partners when specific resources have been shared.

Developing understanding of the importance of maintaining a learning environment. A 'thought piece' written on communities of learning has been widely shared with external One Digital partners and provided a focus for how learning could be developed once a digital skills intervention has taken place, especially within community settings such as sheltered housing, or within workplaces. The development of informal Digital Champions – particularly by Age UK – has added value as this type of Champion would be a key building block in this approach.

Digital maturity and transformation through learning about:

- ➢ How One Digital partners were carrying out digital maturity surveys for their wider partners, looking in detail at the surveys being used and the collection and use of results.
- ➢ Improving understanding of how other external partners were supporting the development of digital maturity within organisations.
- ➢ How digital inclusion and digital transformation can be linked – focusing on key messages for external partners about the importance of strategic commitment and strategic positioning of digital inclusion work.
- ➢ The role of Senior Leaders in supporting digital transformation through reviewing the SCVO programme and learning.

Learning impacts improved understanding of:

- • The types of questions that add value to improving understanding within an organisation about the digital maturity of that organisation as well as of the staff. This was done through sharing information within One Digital on collection of data and information, and how that information could then be used.
- • Developing further understanding from inputs by external partners (on their approaches).
- • Learning between One Digital partners that impacted directly on practice included between SCVO and Clarion Futures, SCVO and Citizens Online – particularly as their new digital transformation project developed in Brighton.

The value to One Digital partners of collecting data on the digital maturity of partners and the focus on the digital skills and confidence of individuals (as potential Champions) was particularly important in the developing recognition and potential solutions to the low confidence levels of many staff in the organisations One Digital worked with. This learning was identified in phase 1 of One Digital and solutions to this were developed in phase 2 – including within SCVO an acceptance that this was a vital phase for partners (the internal building of staff confidence), and for DU through the recognition and research about in-work Champions.

The digital transformation of an organisation and how this impacts on customers as digital change takes place. Particularly how digital service change can be used as a driver for both internal and external (to an organisation) digital skills development.

The importance of strategic and senior leadership understanding and commitment to digital inclusion (alongside digital transformation) and how the need for this can be promoted to external partners was developed and shared particularly by SCVO and Citizens Online, SCVO shared learning during an internal learning set. Key messaging in this area is now being used by all One Digital partners to external audiences.

The benefits of working in partnership through learning about

- ➢ The types of partnerships that are valuable to organisations working to support digital inclusion.
- ➢ How to encourage partnership working with organisations developing digital inclusion projects, including stakeholder mapping of local digital skills support provision.
- ➢ How local partnerships could be evaluated for impact.
- ➢ Looking at the stages of external partner engagement improving understanding of the journey that organisations take.

Learning impacts

Key messages about the value of partnerships strongly promoted by One Digital partners on many levels – for instance through direct promotion of the Citizens Online Switch model, to discussions in CoP events such as on measuring the impact of partnerships. There was no specific internal learning about this within One Digital, but the importance of this was highlighted particularly through the work on sustainability of digital inclusion work where partnerships were identified as a key element of successful digital inclusion projects.

Improved understanding within One Digital of the stages of organisational engagement into the organisational support being offered by project partners and the One Digital programme more generally. Age UK shared a model (internally) that helped develop shared understanding of what stage each external partner was at in their engagement, and helped to highlight and share learning about how to move partners along a journey of engagement.

Understanding about impact of partnerships was valuable for Citizens Online in developing thinking about their evaluation of local partnerships/Switch projects. Paper published by the CoP highlighting potential areas for measuring partnership work, alongside facilitation by Citizens Online of a session on this topic for external partners at a One Digital event.

Learning Facilitator reflections on the development and value of the Community of Practice – a learning journey

Starting out - operation - a terms of reference was agreed for the CoP which refined the project and how it would function. It included a set of potential learning set areas with themes gathered from partner inputs.

Feedback was a key element of how the CoP has operated, and a set of reflections after the first learning set was a useful tool in collating views and looking at the implications. Much of this was very practically orientated – session structure and facilitation. We also explored the likely demands and 'asks' of the CoP with partners being facilitated to start work on logic models for their projects.

This was an interesting period for the programme team as there was not yet a Programme Director in post, so extra support was provided to colleagues at Age UK as they went through the necessary start up processes linked to programme management. Timing has been a key element for the CoP. Early discussions on the realities for the individual project leads became a frequent topic. How would they be able to commit and contribute to the CoP whilst at the same time delivering their project?

We began planning for our first large event, which was designed to alert the wider group of One Digital partners to phase 2 of our project, as well as being the launch of the Community of Practice. The slide below expressed our joint (internal One Digital partners) desire to make this an inclusive, honest learning space where people could share and learn, acknowledging challenges and learning opportunities.

Learn **Share** **Improve** **Celebrate**
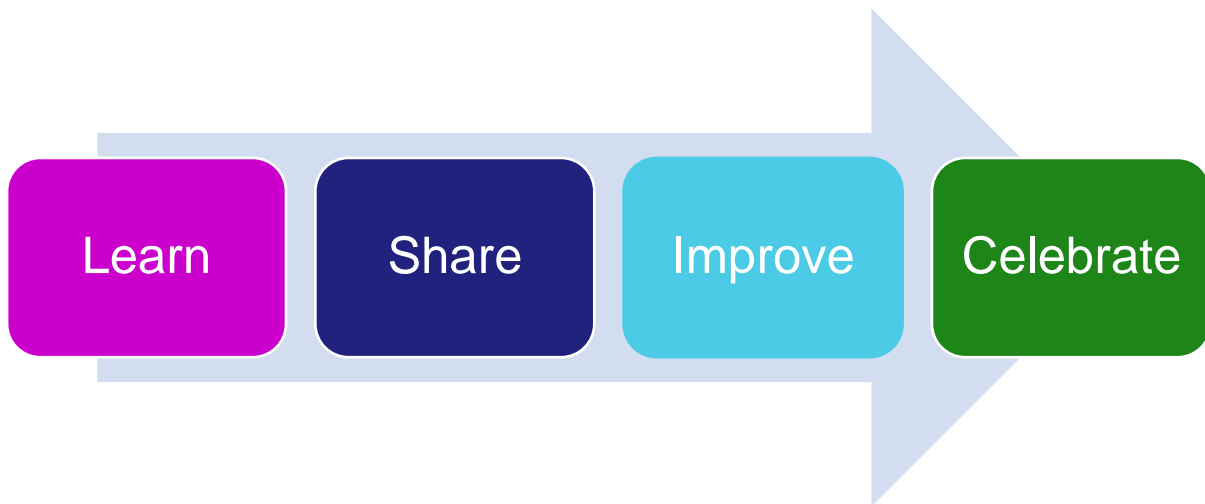
Looking back – the positives were: the people and the commitment which were and remain a very strong and important part of the CoP – without the people and their experience – the practice sharing would lack credibility. The challenges were: managing expectations and timing alongside the other pressure on the programme team and the partner organisations. In addition, the breadth of the audience for the CoP could be a challenge. The CoP was for the One Digital partners – their own learning space, and also for those partners who wanted to embed digital inclusion and digital skills learning into their work (the 3.5k organisations that the partners have now engaged with). It was to reach out to those who had not yet started projects, but also to work with existing delivery partners to help them to improve their practice. Increasingly that became about two areas – working with disadvantaged groups – and really getting that focus to improve accessibility. The second was about improving the quality of the project delivery and learning experience.

Revaluation

An early (February 2018) mid-point evaluation of the CoP by Sara Dunn Associates gave a chance for partners to feed in their views independently. Some changes were made to the internal CoP as a result, including changes to some of the later learning areas, and increased facilitation by the partners of the internal learning sets. The mid-point evaluation has also changed the direction of the CoP to a greater emphasis on the external sharing of knowledge. There was much to be shared, lots of good work – both existing and developing. Here is a reminder of the top-level outcomes the CoP was expected to deliver. There is a strong emphasis on the sharing of learning throughout it.

High Level Core Activities to be delivered by COP

Project manager learning and development	Action learning approach to extract and respond to ongoing project level learning. COP Learning lead to work closely with regional officers and project managers to extract learning from regular project reporting and local evaluation activities.

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Support strategic influencing	Produce position statements and evidence summaries to support collaboration to influence at a strategic level as guided by Programme Director / SDRG
Digital skills resources and support	Work closely with partners to ensure all project learning is woven into development of the DCN and other collaboration produced resources. Research and collate details of external resources and tools that could benefit collaboration, and wider digital skills support.
Thematic digital skills research and analysis	Focused research into evidence base for interventions in key thematic areas, and production of easy to digest summaries to guide and develop work in these areas: Employability, Housing, Disability, Literacy, Welfare, Financial Inclusion, Health, Digital transformation
One Digital DC model development	Working closely with programme evaluation team and delivery partners, develop the descriptions and evidence for the DC models which we know to work. Ensure this learning is shared and adopted beyond the collaboration through seed funding and wider COP membership.

In the early phase, partners were directly involved in the review of new materials. One colleague in Clarion Futures for instance, gave detailed feedback on the original Digital Champions toolkit. Later on, the volume of learning being shared meant that partners were less involved in direct review. The learning also came from much wider sources as more partners were engaged into the CoP to share their learning. This was an inevitable outcome of wanting to develop and share specific learning – particularly about working with disadvantaged groups.

Our engagement with many key national partners and through DCMS with the national research working group has been very positive. There has been particular value in having a research group with a practice facilitator involved. Many of the research colleagues are frustrated by the volume of research being published, and the lack of progress in using that research effectively. The CoP demonstrated an effective model. We had academic contributors inputting alongside practitioners and that was very valuable in improving good practice

Sharing knowledge

The high quality of learning that has been shared reflects the high quality of work being done within One Digital. We experienced challenges with the practical steps to developing a good quality website; for the CoP Communications Support Assistants with how to manage the sheer volume of learning and information.

Those who use the Knowledge Hub, feedback positively on what a useful resource it is, but the numbers involved remain lower than we might have hoped. The potential audience is made up of the 3.5k of organisations that the One Digital partners have engaged with during this phase of the project.

The external CoP events have been really valued by external partners and the evaluation of impact of each event has been largely very positive. We've worked hard to use a well-planned workshop experience to facilitate learning. Balancing learning inputs with sharing learning opportunities has varied event by event depending on the topic. We have also encouraged learners to consider 'what they want to get out of a day' and to reflect on that at the end of the session. That gave valuable information into the CoP, including on future interests and priorities of partners.

One challenge was maximising the reach of the CoP – the use of webinars and online sessions has been very successful and could have been implemented at an earlier stage in the CoP. The tool was used internally and we've now clearly demonstrated that there is a substantial appetite for joining such sessions. They need to be pitched accurately to participants so they recognise that two types of session could be on offer shared learning events which explore an identified area of practice, or specific sessions designed to share a section of knowledge that are more directional and less about participation. Covering both elements is possible but needs to be clearly outlined.

Widening and deepening – engagement

The strength of the Community of Practice has become the wider partner engagement. The group of partners involved in digital inclusion at a national level (and some local) have come to be at the heart of the CoP. Their contribution especially around the importance of an inclusive and accessible approach, has been vital in this second phase of One Digital. Gaining regional inputs – such as through the successful work with the Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership on working in rural areas has also added a further dimension. The time that partners, such as the Centre for Ageing Better have given to working with the CoP, has supported further engagement and deepening of the work such as the recent sessions on online safety and security.

The recently published Case Study work has also added a useful evaluated set of practice research to strengthen learning about the embedded approach. Working jointly on sustainability also has added a lot of value and is a key area of learning that will be shared in the next quarter.

Looking ahead

The work of the One Digital Community of Practice has been gratefully received by organisations across the private, public and voluntary sectors. Learning was shared and disseminated in an effective way across a range of agencies, some at the beginning of their work on digital inclusion and some who have a great deal of experience. The learning gained has been captured and is available on the One Digital website for anyone to access.

Since the contract of the Learning Facilitator ended activity in the Community of Practice has dipped as there is little resource available to maintain this. Conversations have continued in a light-touch way through the Digital Skills Working Group. All organisations involved in these conversations are keen for them to continue but there is uncertainty as to how long this can carry on without some additional support to organise and facilitate meetings. We continue to seek a solution, especially as the support provided by this shared forum is needed now more than ever, in light of the Covid crisis and the urgent need for a step change in digital inclusion support.