Triaging Digital Inclusion Case Study:

Southwark pilot

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Key findings of Southwark pilot

1. Outline of delivery model

- Southwark residents who were identified as having a possible digital need were referred to the borough's digital inclusion team by council teams and external agencies, such as the NHS, Jobcentre and community centres

- Residents were triaged in person using the digital inclusion questionnaire at drop-in digital inclusion sessions in community centres across the borough

- Staff from the council's digital inclusion team as well as volunteer digital champions took residents through the questionnaire

- Southwark varied from the other three boroughs as it used the 8-week pilot period to test the efficacy and viability of the digital inclusion questionnaire rather than testing the full triage process

2. Key insights from project data

Who was supported?

Table 8. Breakdown of Southwark residents triaged

Triage gateway	Residents triaged	Residents with a digital need	Residents signposted
Digital inclusion team	12	12	12

Figure 30. Proportion of Southwark residents who previously received digital support (yes) and who did not receive support (no)

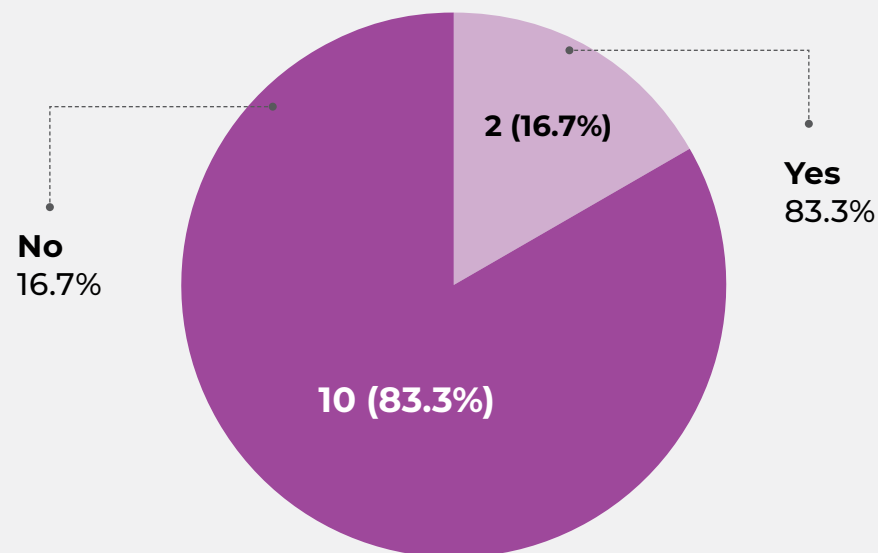Southwark: Had residents received digital support before?

2 (16.7%)

Yes 83.3%

No 16.7%

10 (83.3%)

Figure 31. Age profile of Southwark residents triaged

Southwark: Age range of residents triaged

2 (16.7%)
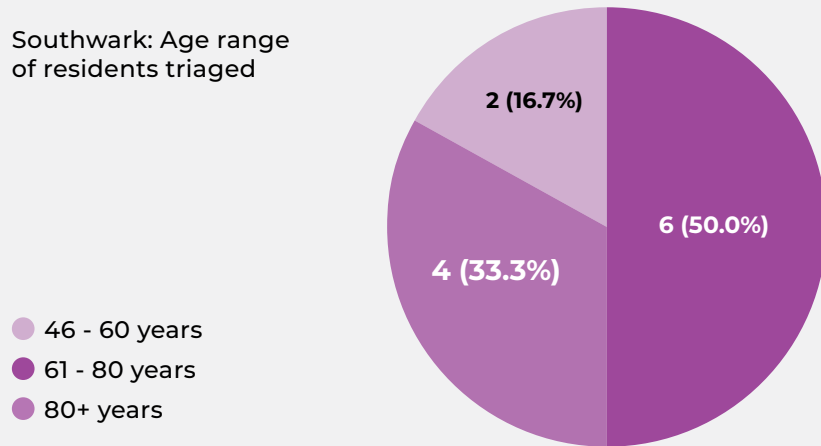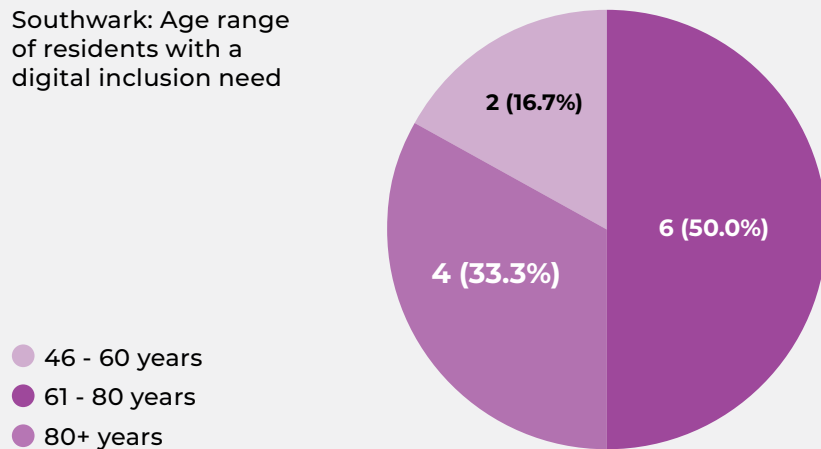
6 (50.0%)

4 (33.3%)

- 46 - 60 years
- 61 - 80 years
- 80+ years

Figure 32. Age profile of Southwark residents with a digital need

Southwark: Age range of residents with a digital inclusion need

2 (16.7%)

6 (50.0%)

4 (33.3%)

- 46 - 60 years
- 61 - 80 years
- 80+ years

What were the residents' digital needs?

Figure 33. Breakdown of Southwark resident needs by digital inclusion segment

Southwark: Which digital inclusion segments did residents fall into?

1 (8.3%)

1 (8.3%)

5 (41.7%)

2 (16.7%)

3 (25.0%)

- B. I have little or no interest in the internet or getting online
- C. I have some interest but find it too complicated and tend to rely on other people to use the internet for me
- D. My main issue with the internet is my lack of confidence using it
- G. I have accessibility needs and need support using the internet
- H. I have received digital support in the past and would like to receive further support to develop more
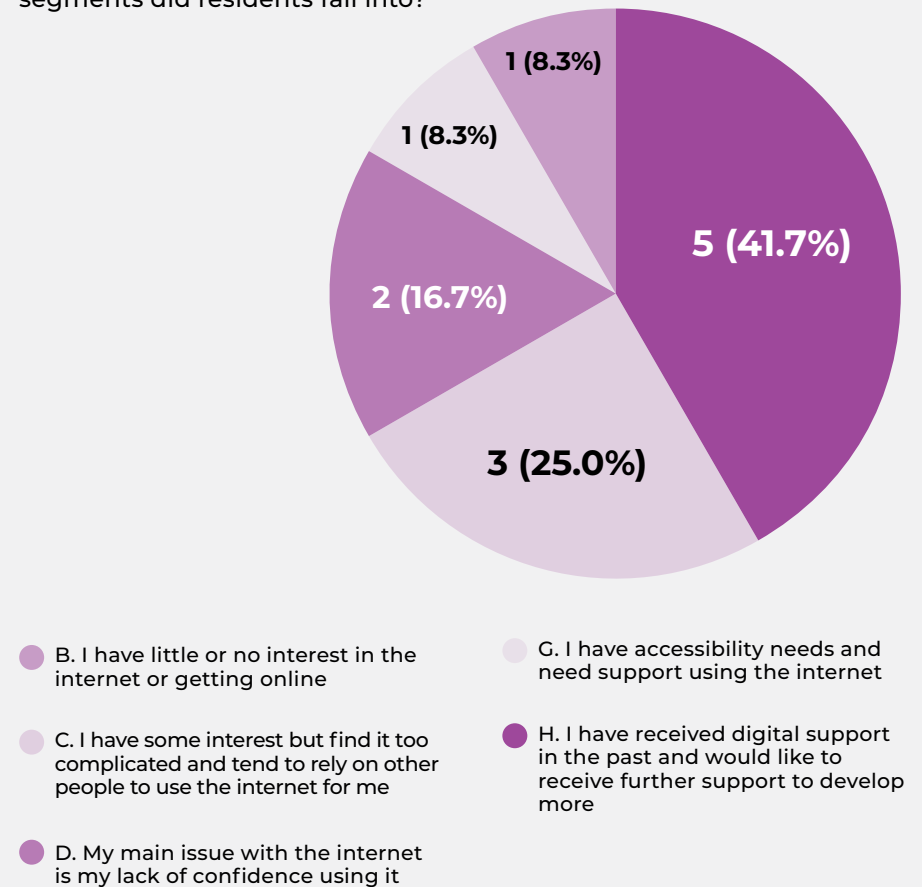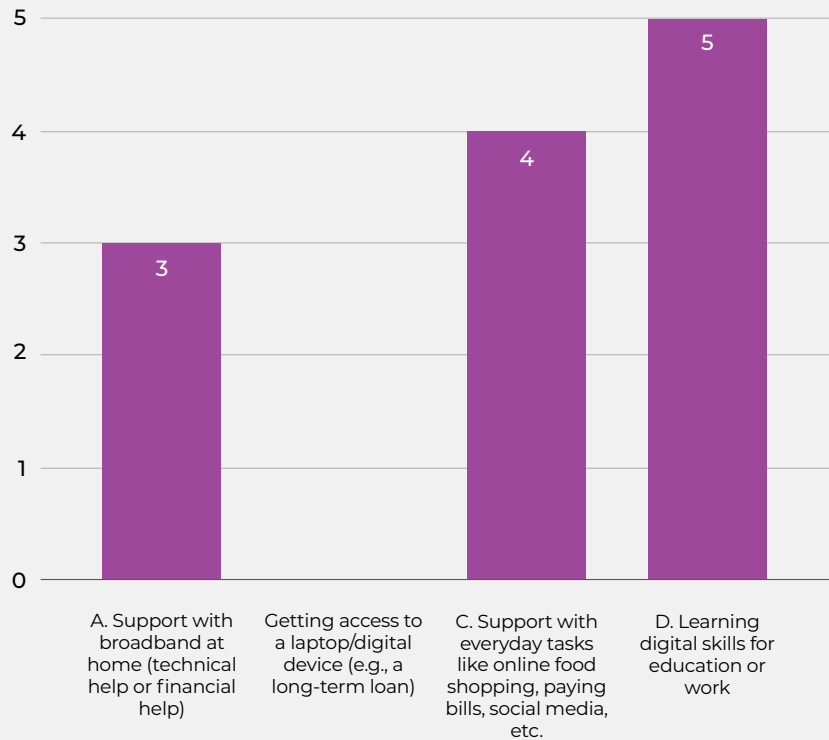
Figure 34. Breakdown of Southwark resident needs based on what they wanted to gain from digital support

What were Southwark residents hoping to gain from digital support?

What support did residents receive?

Figure 35. Breakdown of digital support Southwark residents were signposted to
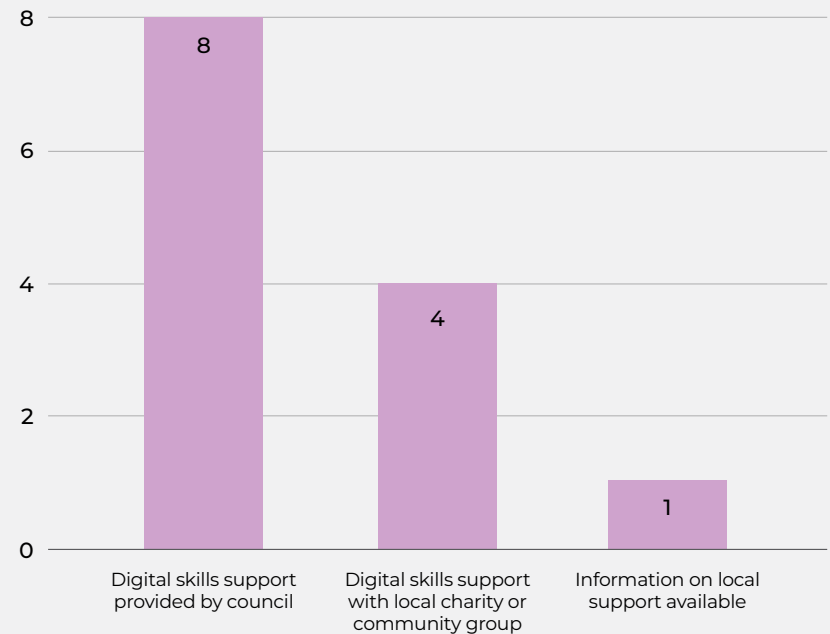
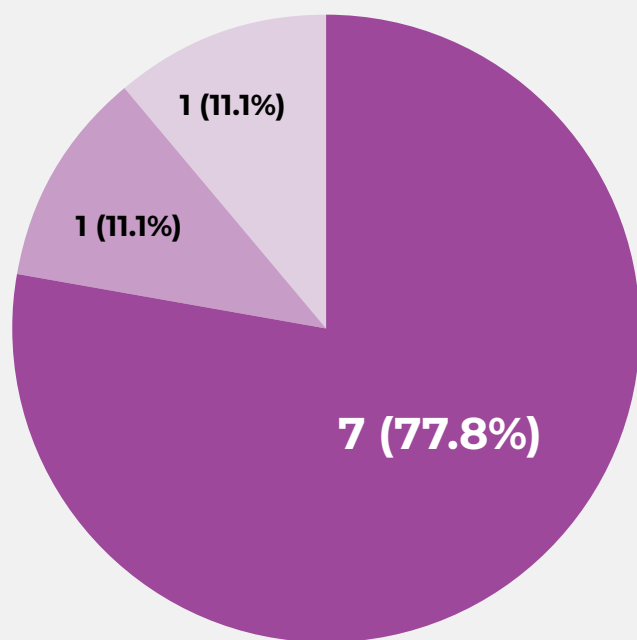What were Southwark residents signposted to?

Figure 36. Proportion of signposted Southwark residents who received digital support (yes) or did not (no)

Did the 9 residents surveyed from Southwark receive the support they were referred to?

1 (11.1%)

1 (11.1%)

7 (77.8%)

● Yes

● No (expecting support, but I have not received it)

● No (I decided not to/haven't got round to it yet)

3. What worked well

Effective referral pathways into the digital inclusion team

Southwark's digital inclusion team appears to have developed well-established referral pathways that are well used by multiple services and agencies, such as local health services and Job Centres.

The digital inclusion team has a dedicated number that services, agencies and individual residents can call and a digital phone helpline.

Use of volunteers increased the capacity to triage

While the total number of residents triaged was low, Southwark was the only borough to utilise digital champions to triage residents using the digital inclusion questionnaire.

This example highlights the potential of using trained volunteers to increase the capacity to triage and support digitally excluded residents.

Simple and straightforward questionnaire

The digital inclusion questionnaire was easy to fill in and included useful multiple-choice categories based on residents' needs.

> "It was nice and simple and quick to ask and categorise people quickly. The idea is that someone who phones in can be readily identified as having a digital need."

Digital Inclusion Community Project Manager

> "Speed and ease of use is an important consideration – and it was able to get information about the people fairly quickly. You're going to lose some of the subtlety of people's needs anyway with something like this – it's always a trade-off."

Digital Inclusion Community Project Manager

4. Key challenges

Current digital support capacity might not meet future demand

The most prominent issue was around the lack of capacity of the council's digital support. This meant that if an effective triage process was rolled out across the borough, the increase in demand could not be met.

> "The biggest problem was that [the questionnaire] referred people to services whether or not they had access to those services. (e.g. on very low income on the other side of the borough). We've set up hubs so people can access support close to where they live. If people phone up our helpline, we can point people to their closest hub. But the questionnaire didn't take this into account."

Digital Inclusion Community Project Manager

> "The biggest fault with this type of idea is that it's almost ahead of the borough's capacity to support people's digital needs – we've got a very under-funded service that can't meet the demand."

Digital Inclusion Community Project Manager

"We're saying we can triage people's needs, but if we could, the numbers would just overwhelm the current capacity... It's just pie in the sky at the moment... It's got to be practical because the support's not available at the level that is needed at the moment... You can't signpost people to something that doesn't exist."

Digital Inclusion Community Project Manager

There are gaps in the current digital support

A related issue is that some types of digital support, such as helping residents in Southwark to access digital devices, are not currently available – but the questionnaire suggests that they are.

"Some of the services it says we offer just aren't available or available [everywhere] across the borough. For example, the router service hasn't worked very well and we have no access to devices in the borough at the moment for someone who wants to borrow one."

Digital Inclusion Community Project Manager

"I wouldn't know who to refer someone to if they wanted financial help with a device."

Digital Inclusion Community Project Manager

The questionnaire did not include support with specific online tasks

Many residents require basic digital support to help them with everyday tasks, such as filling in online forms or submitting an online application for a council service or other public service. The questionnaire did not include this.

"We get lots of people asking about basic applications and help filling in online forms, which is not really considered in the questionnaire."

Digital Inclusion Community Project Manager