

Triaging Digital
Inclusion Case
Study:

Westminster pilot



Key findings of Westminster pilot

1. Outline of delivery model

Westminster simplified the digital inclusion questionnaire to include a single question about whether or not a resident had a digital need. It adopted a two-step approach where:

1. Residents with a digital need were identified using the simplified questionnaire and their details recorded.
2. A dedicated digital inclusion team followed up with each resident to find out what support they wanted and offer them help from the council or refer them to other appropriate support.

In step one, two referral routes were described during the practitioner interviews:

- Face to face in four housing offices
 - Westminster knew that people in social housing are more likely to be digitally excluded and that housing officers already had engagement with this group but were not digital exclusion experts.
 - Housing officers received training on digital inclusion and were asked to complete a digital inclusion postcard whenever they engaged someone with a digital need so they could capture their information for a follow-up triage call.

- Automated phone questionnaire via the council's Contact Centre
 - When a resident called the council Contact Centre, they were asked if they would like help getting online or using a device.
 - Westminster used its Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system to add an additional automated question as part of its customer feedback questions that everyone is asked at the end of their call.

In step two, Westminster's digital inclusion team followed up with each resident identified as having a digital need during step one. This triage call was kept very simple – e.g. “We're calling from the digital inclusion team regarding a recent survey you've completed when you contacted housing. We're just wanting to find out more about what you need.”

Initially, Westminster had wanted to get digital ambassadors (trained volunteer roles) to make the follow-up calls and triage residents but they did not have capacity for this, so the digital inclusion team had to do that.

“The golden question was initially far too long - so we shortened it dramatically so it only told us whether someone had a digital need, not what the specific need or segment was. But this meant we had to do more of the triage work on the back of it.”

Senior user researcher

2. Key insights from project data

Who was supported¹⁰?

Table 9. Breakdown of Westminster residents triaged (by pathway)

Triage pathway	Residents triaged	Residents with a digital need	Residents signposted
Housing offices	12	Data not available	Data not available
Contact centre	45	Data not available	Data not available
Total	57*	53*	40

*These figures include the three duplicates

¹⁰ It is not possible to provide a profile of which residents were supported due to lack of data.

What were the residents' digital needs?

Figure 37. Breakdown of Westminster resident needs by digital inclusion segment

Westminster: Which digital inclusion segments did residents fall into?

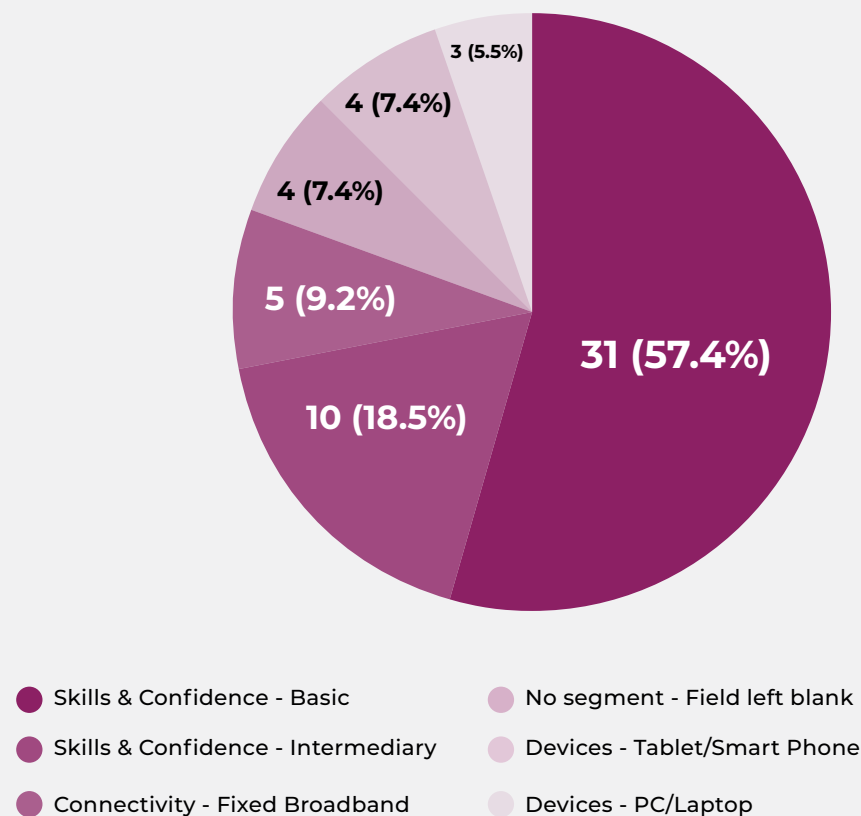
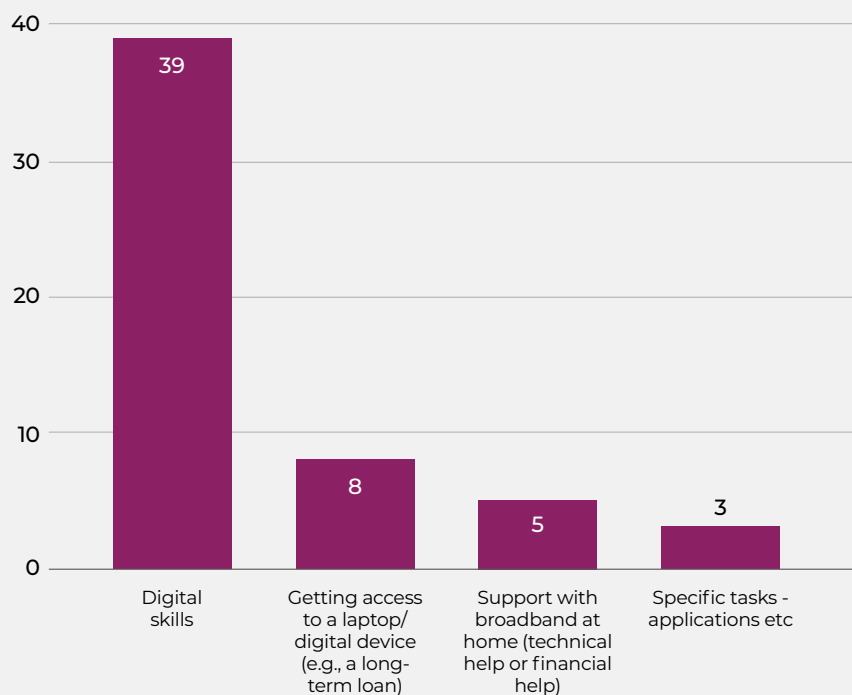


Figure 38. Breakdown of Westminster resident needs based on what they wanted to gain from digital support

What were Westminster residents hoping to gain?



What support did residents receive?

Figure 39. Breakdown of digital support Westminster residents were signposted to

What were Westminster residents signposted to?

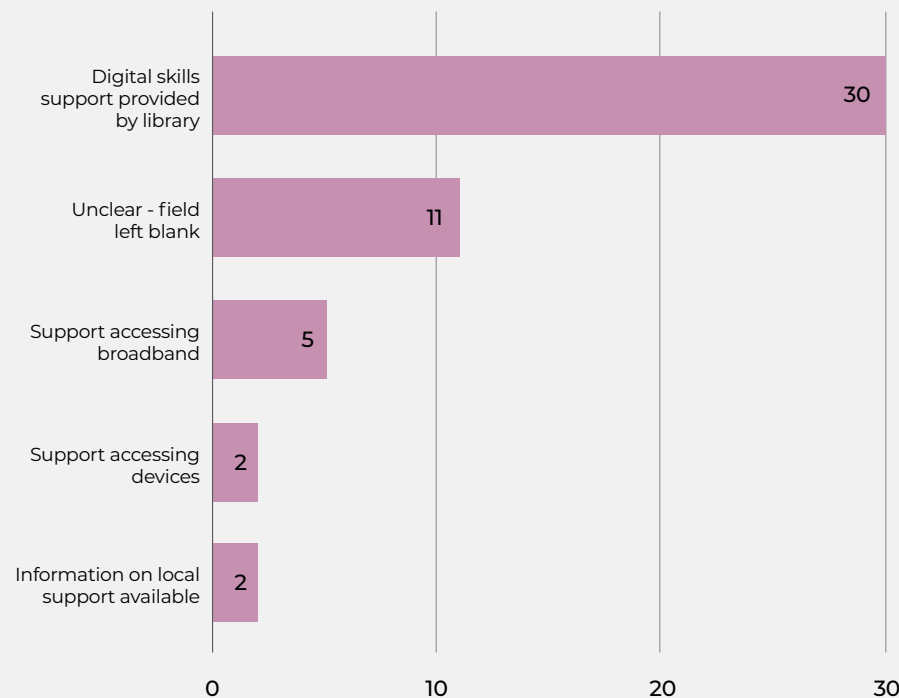
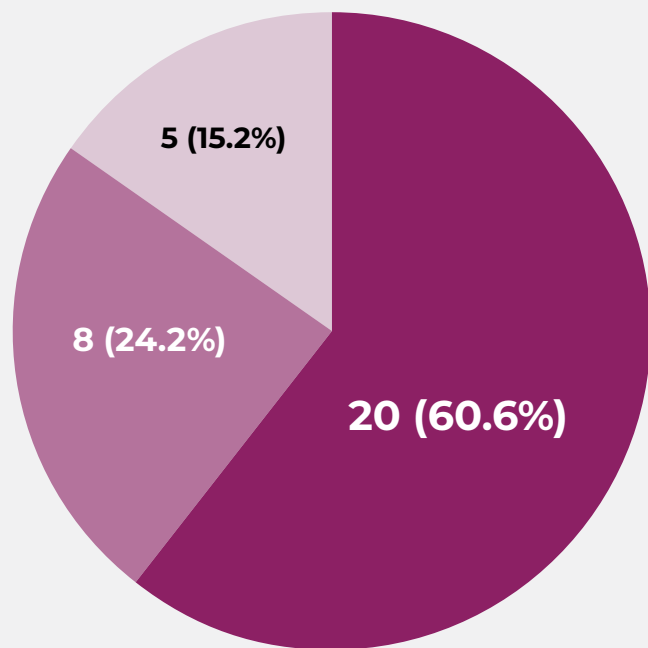


Figure 40. Proportion of signposted Westminster residents who received digital support (yes) or did not (no)

Did the 33 residents surveyed from Westminster receive the support they were referred to?



- 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

Digital inclusion postcards were simple and easy to complete

The housing officer reported that the postcards were clear, self-explanatory and simple. They said it was a helpful resource to signpost quickly.

“We had little postcards. If you identified a need, for example if someone needed help filling a form and would like me to arrange some help... the little postcard is a quick and easy referral form. I'd go onto a portal and fill in a link and [the digital inclusion team] will sort out digital support.”

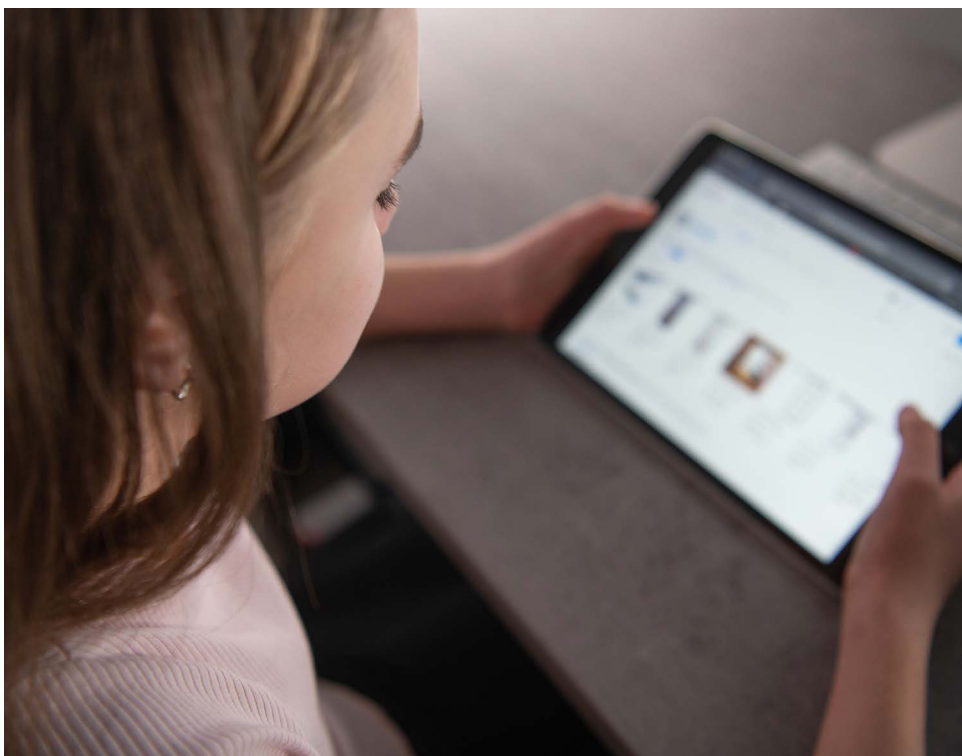
Housing officer

“Because we're so busy and understaffed here, it's really good that we can signpost really quickly, as long as we know there's a need. It's good enough that we've got those postcards and when we see someone who needs help digitally we can hand over to [the digital inclusion team].”

Housing officer

The IVR system identified lots of residents to follow up with and triage

The automated telephone-based questionnaire appeared to be a simple, cheap and effective way of generating a list of hundreds of Westminster residents who self-identified as needing help with the internet or using a digital device. The single question could be fine-tuned, as well as how and when it is asked, to increase the quality of leads generated.



4. Key challenges

Low conversion rate for the automated contact centre route

It was reported by two Westminster interviewees that, while the IVR system was very effective at generating leads, 80-90% of residents who were followed up with did not need or want any digital support. In their view, the process was too resource intensive to be sustainable on an ongoing basis.

“We used an automated question at the end of a call. In hindsight, I’m not sure if that’s the best. We were calling back so many people and the majority of people didn’t actually want support. It’s quite time consuming to do. There was a week we had about 40 numbers sent across. It took me and my colleague 4 hours in total. Out of those 42 residents, only 4 people were a yes.”

Digital inclusion project officer

“The IVR telephone system was quite difficult. Probably 8-9 in 10 responses didn’t have a digital exclusion need, which resulted in lots of calls to people without digital inclusion needs. It just doesn’t work well because of its inability to select people who were the target.”

Senior user researcher

It should be noted that this conversion rate is still likely to be higher than many face-to-face routes where anecdotal reports suggest that the vast majority of residents either did not want to answer the triage questionnaire or did not need digital support.

It may be worth exploring possible reasons why this may have been the case, testing different approaches to asking the question to increase the conversion rate, and/or recruiting digital ambassadors to conduct follow-up calls with residents.

Housing office route triaged a low volume of residents

The low numbers of residents triaged by this pathway reflected a pattern seen with other face-to-face routes. This may be due to a combination of factors that were suggested by interviewees – e.g. residents often just wanted help with the specific issue they came in with and there was a lack of staff capacity with busy staff having to try and remember and fit in another task on top of their day job.

“It can be difficult [to identify a digital need], unless they specifically come in with a query they need access to a computer for. The general assumption is that most people can use a computer and people are quite reluctant to say I can’t do it if that’s the case.”

Housing officer

“A lot of residents that come in are upset about something. So to strike a balance, you have to use your judgement and know when to [do a digital triage] with the residents.”

Digital inclusion project officer

“If we had more resource, we would have liked a digital inclusion team or digital ambassadors to staff reception [in our housing offices] and ask those questions but we didn’t have capacity to do that.”

Digital inclusion project officer

“Their capacity is one day a week to talk to residents, because they have lots of jobs to do. It was a big ask to put on top of everything else they do. The numbers speak for themselves. 11 is good but could have done more if we had more capacity.”

Digital inclusion project officer

