

Dorset Challenging Digital Exclusion Toolkit



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Introduction

This document has been designed to help organisations and individuals who have an interest in supporting the digital skills of the population. Whether you are an experienced volunteer or someone who is unsure of whether to start, if you want to help someone then there is likely something for you here.

The document is set out with two key principles in mind:

- There is an **immediate need** that accompanies the digital skills need, and this may be more pressing than the learning side of their need (for example, a benefit they need to apply for with an upcoming deadline.)
- We may not always be able to meet the immediate need ourselves, but we can help people onto the path to get there, perhaps with some well-timed **signposting**.

For that reason, we include links to various services across health, Local Authorities and the voluntary sector. Links will also make clear whether a service is available in a certain area e.g. Dorset Council, or Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

Whilst there are many links in the following chapters, this is not intended as a Directory of Services (DoS). These are typically larger in scope and more complex in nature than this document seeks to be. The links are intended for the individual needing support with their skills primarily, but volunteers may also find some of them useful.

How to use this in 30 seconds



For helping someone with Hardware, skip to [page 7](#)

For helping someone with Health e.g. NHS App, skip to [page 10](#)

For helping someone with Money, skip to [page 14](#), [page 15](#) and [page 16](#)

For helping someone with employment, skip to [page 16](#)

For helping with Life Admin, skip to [page 17](#)

For helping with Leisure jump to [page 19](#) and [page 20](#)

For a guide to navigating services across Dorset, skip to [page 6](#)

Aim

The aim of a Challenging Digital Exclusion Toolkit is to support individuals, organisations, and communities in Dorset to identify, understand, and reduce digital exclusion so that everyone can access and benefit from digital services, information, and opportunities.

Through this toolkit, we want to better support people who struggle with digital services.

- 1. Improve access to online healthcare**
- 2. Reduce social and economic inequality linked to digital exclusion**
- 3. Helps organisations recognise digital exclusion and gives them practical ways to reduce it**



What do we mean by ‘Digital Inclusion’?

Digital Inclusion can sound obvious, but many people still find it unclear. A simple definition helps set the scene.

Two pillars of Digital Inclusion:

- **Access** — The ability to get online and use a device. Barriers are often economic (cost of devices, poor connectivity in rural areas). Support schemes exist, but demand is higher than supply, so many people still lack regular access.
- **Skills** — The confidence and ability to use digital tools. There is strong goodwill and volunteer support, but challenges include understanding what people actually need and recognising that low confidence can hide good underlying ability.

Showing vs. Proxy Access Support usually takes two forms:

- **Showing** — Demonstrating a skill so someone can learn and become more independent.
- **Proxy access** — Completing a digital task on someone’s behalf when they cannot or do not want to learn it.

Choosing the right approach Urgency often guides the decision. If someone has a time-sensitive need (e.g., applying for a benefit) and is anxious about doing it correctly, completing the task for them while they watch may be the most appropriate option.

Key principle - whether you show or do, the aim is to meet the person’s need — either choice can be the right one.



Navigating Resources (Local and National)

Why signposting matters: Knowing what support exists, where it is, and when to guide people towards it is a core challenge in helping people with digital skills needs.

What this section covers: A set of key resources that support Digital Inclusion (access and skills), as well as wider needs such as health, money and employment.

Recommended platforms for everyday support:

- **(BCP) digitalskillshub.org.uk** — Legacy site for the Boscombe Skills Hub.
- **(DC) [Digital Dorset - Dorset Council](#)** — Dorset Council's information on connectivity, coverage and digital skills.
- **(DC) [Digital Doorway](#)** — Currently closed, with no confirmed reopening date.
- **[Good Things Foundation](#)** — National leader in digital inclusion research, guidance and community support.
- **[Local Support Map](#)** (Good Things Foundation) — Directory of local digital inclusion support.
- **[Lloyds: Tackling the Digital Divide](#)** — Insights and reports on digital capability across the UK.
- **[Age UK: Making Devices Easier to Use](#)** — Accessibility guidance for older people.
- (BCP) **[CAN100](#)** — Network supporting thousands of voluntary organisations across BCP.
- **[Help and Kindness](#)** — Listings of activities, services and organisations supporting communities across Dorset.
- **[Staywell Dorset - Help with digital tools](#)**
- **[Staywell Dorset Page](#)**



Safe practice

- **People may be using logins and passwords in your presence - if possible, let them do it themselves and look away whilst they do**
- **If you or the person you're with are at all uncomfortable with the information that is, or will be, on the screen, suggest an alternative e.g. a relative, Citizens Advice or GP surgery.**
- **Signpost to resources on how to spot scams**
- **Use Multi-factor Authentication (MFA) where possible**

*Local markers
(BCP) = Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole
(DC) = Dorset Council

Need

In line with the themes or ‘pressing needs’ that our volunteers in Dorset have reported, this chapter is broken down into need according to what the non-digital part of the individual’s need is.

Hardware and devices

This is an area which frequently comes up. Whilst access to a device of any kind is a large issue, this section focuses primarily on those who have a device but want to understand it better, or make it more usable for them.

Updating devices

This is a frequent challenge reported by our volunteers. People who have not used their device in some time sometimes feel intimidated by the task, or worried it will harm their device.

This leads to some tedious and unproductive time waiting whilst an update downloads and installs. Little can be done to avoid this, but you might consider:

- Trying to capture this need in advance of your time with the individual
- Finding out if there is anything else they are interested in
- If possible, having another device available (e.g. a PC in the Library) so that you can show them something else whilst the update finishes.

Microsoft’s [page on installing Windows Updates](#) may be of use.



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Using Smartphones

Huge investment is made by producers of smartphones in developing user friendly and accessible features to make their phones as attractive as possible. But they still present a vastly different experience for those who are used to using laptops or PCs and who might not have kept up with their evolution into devices that combine apps across an enormous range of topics and uses.

Green smartphones’ [guide to smartphone basics](#) is aimed at older adults and beginners, and is a useful reference point for anyone who wants to get to grips with one.



Need

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Using PCs and laptops

It is quite common for people to think of smartphones and tablets, however many people prefer a laptop or a PC. These devices are not able to use apps (i.e. programmes designed specifically for those devices), but can often access something similar. The NHS App, for example, is simply a smartphone-optimised version of what can be accessed via the NHS website through NHS login.

Testimony from people who have used the Digital Doorway programme (inactive at the time of writing, but previously used to get devices into the hands of those who need them) indicates that laptops are in many cases a more user-friendly and less intimidating option than a smartphone or tablet, particularly for those with limited ability or confidence.

[BBC First Click’s guide](#) covers the basics for both well.



“There are excellent free online learning options available for people wanting to improve their laptop or computer skills. We recommend GCFGlobal for step-by-step basics, and for more structured courses, Udemy, Coursera, and FutureLearn offer beginner-friendly training, often free.”

Need - Health (Mental & Physical)

Appointments, repeat prescriptions, medical records and test results

This can be a difficult area to navigate, even for those who feel they are digitally able and confident.

The main ‘front door’ for interacting with health services is the [NHS App](#) – due to its name this is typically thought of as an app but is also available via NHS login on the website version.

[Getting started with the NHS App](#) is a useful starting point for patients who are not familiar or confident with the app.

[Help with using the NHS App](#) can guide people through particular things they want to use the app for e.g. prescriptions, test results and messages for their GP surgery.

Patients are able to access their medical records, order repeat prescriptions and check test results in the NHS App. They are also able to view, make and cancel appointments with their family doctor if their practice has these features enabled.

A minority of patients will have certain parts of their record restricted – if you are in any doubt about this, the recommended action is to **refer them to their GP surgery**. If you or the person you’re helping feel any discomfort at all at you potentially seeing parts of their medical record, you should equally refer them to their GP surgery.

As of April 2026, patients attending Dorset County Hospital or University Hospitals Dorset (Poole, Bournemouth and Christchurch) will be able to view and manage their appointments in these care settings via the NHS App.

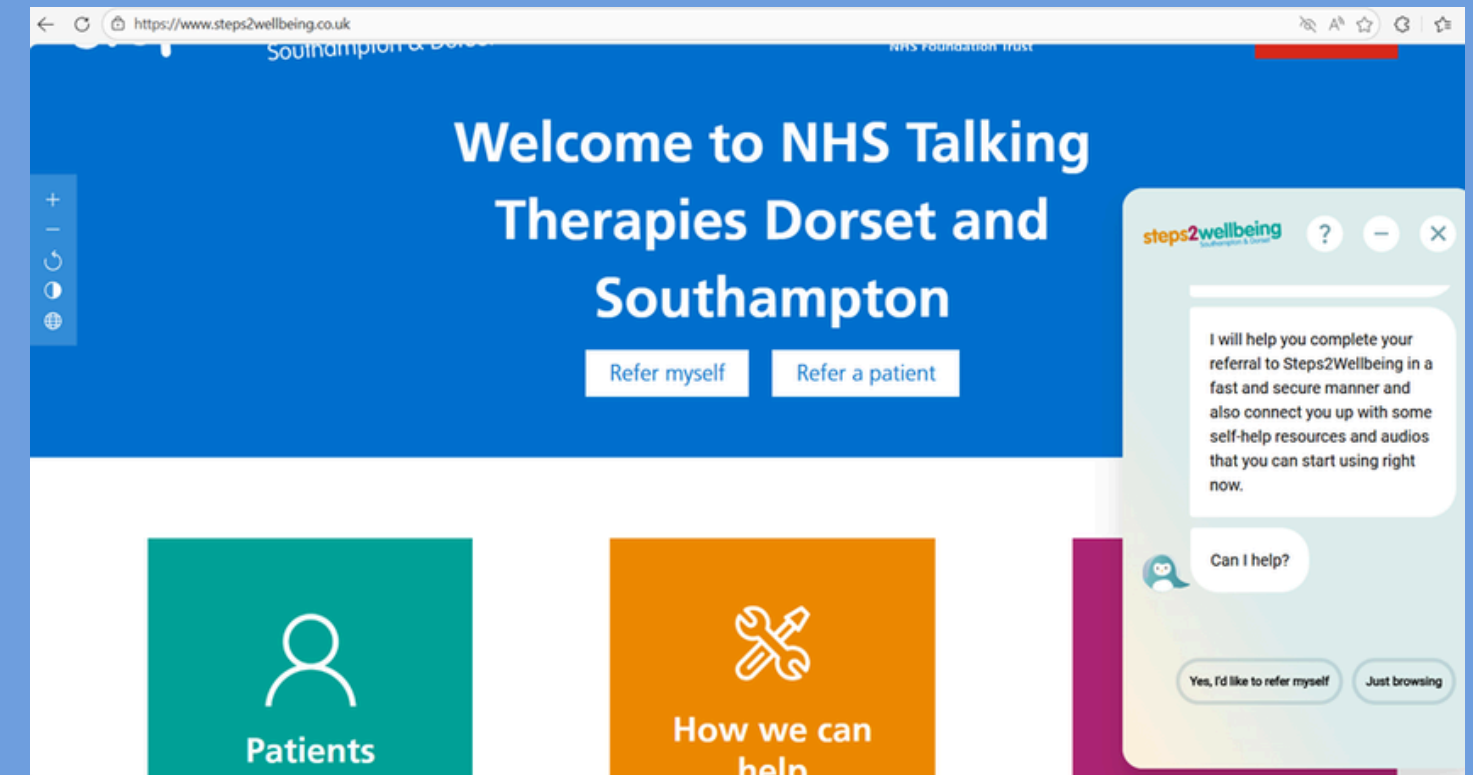


Need - Mental Health

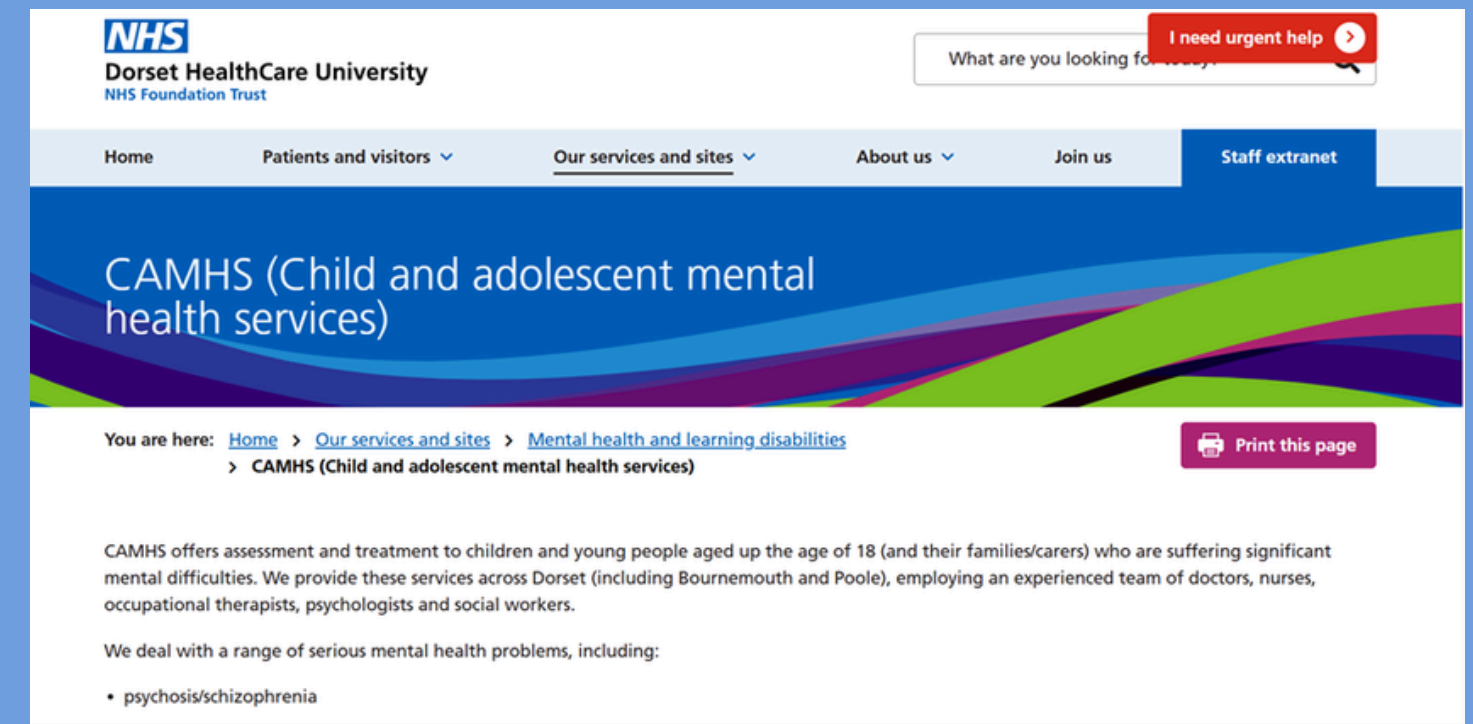
Some mental health services in Dorset can be accessed without needing a referral from your GP.

Steps2Wellbeing is the Talking Therapies service which can be booked via the website. If you choose to book via the window on the right hand side - guided by the AI Penguin named Wysa, seen below on the right hand side of the screenshot - you will also be offered a year of full, free access to **Wysa**, an app which is also available commercially.

People aged 16-17 can self-refer to CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) on the **CAMHS website**.



Above: Steps2Wellbeing web page (Wysa pop-up on right-hand side).



Above: Dorset Healthcare's web page for Child and adolescent mental health services

Need - Health Apps

Health apps have grown hugely in popularity in recent years, and come in many different forms. Some are straightforward, such as [NHS Active 10 walking tracker](#) or [NHS Quit Smoking](#).

There are several curated sets of apps that people may find helpful, with brief descriptions of how they have been chosen, on this site:

·[Adult Mental Health](#)

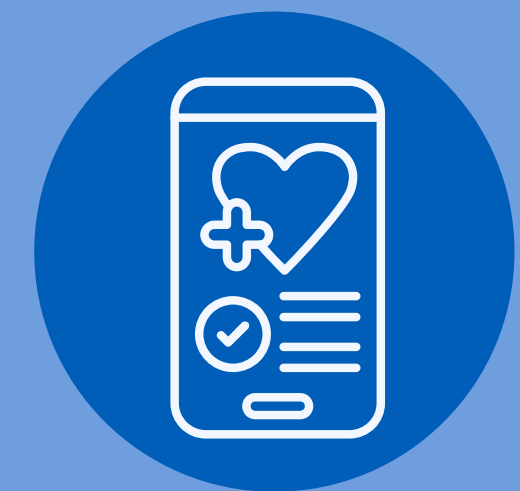
·[Young People's Mental Health apps](#)

·[Keeping well during the winter](#)

·[Menopause and Perimenopause](#)

Others, such as the [Luscii app](#) which is currently used by NHS Dorset and offered to patients for certain conditions, can provide more targeted help to allow a patient (and in some cases their care team) the ability to manage their condition remotely.

If you feel confident to help with these apps, or you have experience with them, you may be able to help people to navigate and understand them. If not, you can refer them to their GP surgery where a digital champion or Digital Care Co-ordinator with a deeper knowledge of health-focused apps may be available.



Need - Quality

One of Dorset's partners is ORCHA (Organisation for the Review of Care and Health Apps). **The Our Dorset App Library**. This is a company that reviews apps for professional assurance (Safety), data security/handling and usability. Anything scoring 65/100 or more will appear on the website, meaning people know these have achieved a sufficient level of quality.

For general health information, the **Our Dorset Video Library** has videos available on many subjects including lifestyle, long term conditions and hospital procedures. All videos have been reviewed by healthcare professionals who work in Dorset.



Need - Money and Employment

Benefits and grants

This is an example where the over-arching need is likely to be more pressing than someone improving their digital skills. The first thing to say is that if you do not feel comfortable supporting someone with a claim or application for funds, you do not have to do it and can refer them to [Citizens Advice Dorset](#) who have a track record of supporting this need.

Universal Credit

If you are happy to help someone directly with a Universal Credit issue, you may find [Age UK's guide](#) useful. This also signposts to the Citizens Advice 0800 number (page 7) which people can use to get advice and support. Other helpline numbers including Universal Credit's own are available from page 14.

Citizens Advice also have a [comprehensive set of pages](#) on Universal Credit, including claiming it.



Need - Money

Banking

The reduction in physical bank branches in the UK has led to many people feeling as though they have been forced online, and this shift also comes with some security concerns. It is generally accepted that people's accounts are far more vulnerable to individual attempts to defraud them directly (e.g. phishing, social engineering) than a hack or data breach of the bank itself. [Age UK's page on scams](#) is a useful reference point for anyone looking to understand how to protect themselves against fraud. The National Cyber Security Centre also have a [useful page on phishing and scam detection](#).



How to spot scam messages or calls

People can access online banking either through the website or app, and will need to pass identification and verification any time they log in (for apps it's likely they'll be able to set up fingerprint identification).

[Age UK's guide to online banking](#) is an excellent resource for understanding how to do it.

Money Helper also has a [useful guide](#) on this.

How to spot scam messages or calls

Scammers try to quickly gain your trust. They aim to pressure you into acting without thinking.

If a message or call makes you suspicious, stop, break the contact, and consider the language it uses. Scams often feature one or more of these tell-tale signs.

- Authority**
Is the message claiming to be from someone official? For example, your bank, doctor, a solicitor, or a government department. Criminals often pretend to be important people or organisations to trick you into doing what they want.
- Urgency**
Are you told you have a limited time to respond (such as 'within 24 hours' or 'immediately')? Criminals often threaten you with fines or other negative consequences.
- Emotion**
Does the message make you panic, fearful, hopeful or curious? Criminals often use threatening language, make false claims of support, or tease you into wanting to find out more.

Above: excerpt from NCSC's guide to spotting scams

Need - Employment

Finding, applying for and securing a job can be a lengthy process and some people may find it difficult to know where to start, especially with the vast majority of job vacancies and applications today being done via the internet.

National Careers is a sensible starting place, with skills assessments career overviews and a course finder available. You can also use the free advice line on 0800 100 900 (or webchat), and practise interview questions.

Unfortunately, the multitude of places where jobs can be posted (recruitment firms, employers' own websites, NHS, Civil Service etc.) means that there is no reliable single place to seek jobs. One large website which may be useful as an introduction is Indeed.



Need - Life admin

For many of us, keeping track of all the documents, files and information in our life can be a challenge. Managing insurance policies, photos and videos, financial information among all the other things we have going on requires understanding and organisation, and a lack of digital skill to handle the online parts of this makes things even tougher.

[Age UK's Lifebook](#) is an attempt to help people record all the necessary information in one place (with a careful eye on avoiding security e.g. not recording card numbers). This helps people to store any or all of: their personal details, life contacts, financial, documents, possessions and final wishes.

Storey also has [useful support and principles](#) in this area.

Volunteer tips:

- **Show file structures (Downloads/Documents)**
- **Keep explanations simple - avoid jargon**
- **Use real-world examples (utility bills, job sites, council services)**

Need - Leisure

Connecting with friends and family

Smartphone technology means that having phone or video calls has never been easier. But it is not easy for everyone, and there are also various ways through which it can be done.

Facetime is a popular option for people who have an Apple device (non-Apple users can join if given the link, but an Apple device user is needed to 'host' the call).

People with and Android device may want to use **Google Meet** (although the free version limits meetings to 60 minutes).

One of the most popular options is WhatsApp, which can be used on any smartphone for messaging, calls and video calls.

Resources that may help:

[Age UK's guide to Whatsapp](#)

[Easy read guide to Whatsapp](#)

Volunteer tips:

- Ask who they want to stay in touch with - start with the most meaningful contact
- Schedule a 'practice call' with a relative while you're there.

Need - Leisure

Streaming and entertainment

The market for streaming (using the internet to watch programmes that the viewer generally does not own) includes multiple platforms. This guide will not go into the paid subscription ones, but suffice to say there are several which are accessed using email address, some personal details and payment details. Monthly costs for these typically start at around £6/month for a basic offer including adverts, with several tiers increasing one or more of: the amount of content available; number of devices that can watch simultaneously; whether downloading programmes (so they can be watched offline) is available.

Some free options include:

BBC iPlayer (assuming the viewer has a TV licence)

ITVX (free version includes adverts)

All4 (free version includes adverts)

Volunteer tips:

- How to use search and categories.
- How to save/“watch later.”
- Subtitles/closed captions.

Digital Access and Support Resources

“Accessibility is a sandcastle we must keep constantly rebuilding, or the ocean wipes it away.”

This section on digital access and support brings together information on assistive technology products and solutions for persons with disabilities across Dorset to:

- Raise awareness of practical support and solutions available to aid digital access and inclusion.
- Assist community digital champions/volunteers in their work to help Dorset Residents to access digital health services.
- Support persons with disabilities and their carers to explore the range of assistive technology products and solutions and see if it is right for them.



Digital Access and Support Resources

Digital inclusion for persons with disabilities (PWDs) involves utilising a combination of specialised hardware, software, and built-in accessibility features to ensure equal access to digital content. Key solutions range from screen readers for the visually impaired to alternative input devices for those with motor impairments.

Information on this page is grouped under different categories. Click on the appropriate link below to access the relevant information.

- To find out about hardware products and solutions for Digital Inclusion for persons with disabilities click here: [Hardware for Digital Inclusion](#)
- To find out about software products and solutions for Digital Inclusion for persons with disabilities click here: [Software for Digital Inclusion](#)
- To find out about accessibility features in mainstream products click here: [Accessibility Features in Mainstream Products](#)
- To find out about enabling access to persons with mobility and motor disability click here: [Mobility and Motor Disability](#)
- To find out about enabling access to persons with low vision or blindness click here: [Vision Accessibility](#)
- To find out about enabling access to persons with hearing and communication disabilities click here: [Hearing and Communication Accessibility](#)
- To find out about enabling access to persons with cognitive and learning disabilities click here: [Accessibility for Cognitive & Learning Disabilities](#)





Digital Access and Support Resources

To find out about local voluntary and community organisations offering information, advice and support on digital inclusion click on the appropriate links below:

- [Home | British Wireless for the Blind Fund](#)
- [Assistive Technology Suite | Bournemouth Blind Society \(BCP\)](#)
- [Home | Digital Skills Hub \(BCP\)](#)
- [Catch-22](#)
- [BCHA Learn Skills Courses | BCHA \(BCP\)](#)
- [Digital Skills Hub \(BCP\)](#)
- [Digital Champion Sessions \(DC\)](#)
- [Tec Lounge - Help And Kindness \(DC\)](#)
- [Learn My Way](#)
- [Routes to Roots](#)
- [Digital Doorway - Dorset Council \(DC\)](#)
- [Dorset Digital Hotline: 01305 221048 \(DC\)](#)





Digital Access and Support Resources

For additional resources on digital access and inclusion click on the appropriate links below:

- [Good Things Foundation - Find local digital inclusion support](#)
- [Citizens Online - Help for people](#)
- [Digital Poverty Alliance - Directory for support](#)
- [Good Things Foundation - National Databank](#)
- [Good Things Foundation - National Device Bank](#)
- [Digital Poverty Alliance - Tech4Families](#)
- [Digital Poverty Alliance - Schools Donation Management Service](#)
- [AbilityNet - My Computer My Way](#)
- [AbilityNet - Keyboard and mouse alternatives and adaptations](#)
- [Scope - Phone accessibility settings](#)
- [RNIB - Computer accessibility](#)
- [Sense - Technology, mobility aids and devices](#)
- [Stonewall - Staying safe online](#)
- [Mind - Looking after your mental health online](#)
- [Good Things Foundation - Learn My Way](#)
- [Lloyds Bank Academy - Free learning to boost skills and confidence](#)
- [Age UK - Making the most of the internet](#)
- [Manchester Digital Collective - Free Online Digital Skills Courses](#)
- [National Careers Service - The Skills Toolkit](#)
- [UK Government - SHARE checklist](#)
- [NHS Digital - What we mean by digital inclusion](#)
- [NHS Digital - Digital inclusion for health and social care](#)
- [NHS England - Inclusive digital healthcare: a framework for NHS action on digital inclusion](#)

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Testimony from volunteers on their experience of supporting people with the challenges they face helped in the theming of the chapters, and individuals across NHS Dorset, Dorset Council, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, and the Voluntary sector supported with input and feedback.

Thank you for your dedication, and willingness to work together towards a digitally inclusive Dorset.



Joining the Digital Inclusion Community

If you are in the Dorset Council area and would like to become a Volunteer Digital Champion (VDC), you can email digitalchampions@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk.

Becoming a VDC means you will have access to training and guidance, as well as being able to make yourself available for bookable sessions at a local library.

If you are in the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole area, you can [find out from your local library](#) if there are any opportunities to become a Tech Buddy.



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This Toolkit was developed by NHS
Dorset Population Health Management
and Health Inequalities Team and
D@SH (Digital Services at Home) Team

Disclaimer: the information is most relevant as of April 2026