

**Ofcom**

  
VISION  
West Nottinghamshire  
College

# DEMYSTIFYING DIGITAL

PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Taking place between March 2023 and March 2024, this project had the aim of promoting media literacy to adults in economically disadvantaged areas local to West Nottinghamshire College (based in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire).

The project was commissioned by Ofcom as part of its Making Sense of Media programme of work to help improve the online skills, knowledge and understanding of UK adults and children. The commission enabled West Nottinghamshire College to expand its outreach activity with adults in a targeted way, and test out innovative approaches.

The project was designed to improve media literacy knowledge, skills, and confidence, as well as to support adults in the use of online applications (NHS & Local Council).

The intention was to provide community-based interventions where there was more chance of reaching people most in need of support. To this end, the project was delivered by a small team from West Nottinghamshire College in venues such as community centres, homeless shelters, Job Centres, and the local shopping centre where the college has an adult learning provision.

There were 72 participants in the project, 8 fewer than the target. All participants lived in the Nottinghamshire area (within 15 miles of the college), with most living within a 3-mile radius of the college.

Each participant had access to a total of 4 hours of sessions and the offer was very flexible. Most students (60) attended four 1-hour sessions over 4 weeks. Others attended two 2-hour sessions over a shorter period. We delivered 6 group sessions (6-8 participants in each) and then a combination of individual and paired sessions.

The content of sessions was always learner led and covered the following topics:

- How to protect against misinformation and online fraud
- Setting up security on personal devices
- Set up and use of online banking (secure set up)

- Online shopping; setting up two-factor authentication
- Using digital resources to identify energy savings and other savings to support through the cost-of-living crisis
- Using digital resources to access services (NHS/Bank/Council).

We also covered topics that were requested by participants, such as: choosing the most appropriate device for needs, creating a family budget sheet, and understanding internet tariffs when comparing provider services.

In addition to the sessions, we distributed 200 postcard 'facts' and project flyers to promote the project and provided participants with skills guidance booklets to support their learning beyond the sessions.

A mixed methods approach to evaluation, involving questionnaires and follow-up interviews, was designed to extract insights from a range of perspectives on project impact, what works well and what could be improved in future projects.

The impact of the project is evident, with most students reporting increased confidence in all areas, while a sizeable number also progressed on to other digital courses and qualifications offered by the college (for example, 31 participants progressed to further digital courses at the college).

In addition to benefiting participants, the tailored nature of delivery has allowed the staff team to design more flexible courses for adult students and include more content relating to individual needs. Staff have used discussion drop ins to inform their session content and are generally more confident in adapting resources for students to take away with them.

The project has provided the college with important lessons for future media literacy work in areas including recruitment, delivery methods, resource requirements, project management, the value of responsiveness to learner needs and peer-to-peer networking, future training needs, and data capture.

# INTRODUCTION

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

'Demystifying Digital' was commissioned by Ofcom as part of the Making Sense of Media programme to help improve the online skills, knowledge and understanding of UK adults and children. This project was one of thirteen projects commissioned in December 2022 to improve media literacy skills across four cohorts:

- Older adults
- People living with disabilities, learning disabilities or cognitive impairment
- Children and young people
- Communities experiencing financial disadvantage.

## PROJECT RATIONALE

In preparing for the project, West Nottinghamshire College identified the very real fear amongst older adults about safety and security of information and data whilst online, which can prevent them from making the most of online opportunities and services.

Identified demand from these groups has shown a need for support to increase confidence of online use, support set up and use of online banking (around security set up) and online shopping (setting up accounts) allaying concerns about entering credit card details online (setting up two-factor authentication) and setting up NHS logins and logins for council services.

This project aimed to address these issues by providing online media literacy interventions for older adults and those at risk of digital exclusion in areas experiencing financial disadvantage.

## DEPRIVATION IN THE LOCAL AREA

The West Nottinghamshire College is in an area of Nottinghamshire where communities are experiencing financial disadvantages. In Nottinghamshire (excluding Nottingham City), there are 31 LSOAs (Lower Layer Super Output Area) in the 10% most deprived LSOAs in England, an increase from 25 in 2015.

The most deprived LSOA's in Nottinghamshire are concentrated in the college's hyper local districts of Ashfield (12 LSOAs), Mansfield (10), Bassetlaw (5) and Newark & Sherwood (3). The most deprived LSOA lies within the Mansfield district where the college is based. Mansfield is in the top 20% of the most deprived districts in the country. Over 30% of residents in Mansfield & Ashfield are older adults (55+).

## WEST NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COLLEGE

West Nottinghamshire College has solid existing relationships with the local target community, currently supporting over 2,800 adults per year both on campus and in community venues on a variety of programmes. The college works very closely with local employers and organisations including NHS, Police, and local councils. We are currently working closely with Mansfield District Council to look at digital inequality in our area and have already identified pockets of need for online media literacy interventions for older adults/those at risk of digital exclusion.

West Nottinghamshire College has existing relationships with several community groups in the area, delivering courses including maths, English, digital skills, sewing, flower arranging and many others.



West Nottinghamshire College Adult Learning Centre

West Nottinghamshire College currently delivers 'First Steps in Digital' which is a one-hour session where students discuss issues they face when using IT, which skills they wish to develop or improve, and also complete a diagnostic assessment in order to identify current skills gaps. The information gathered in these sessions allows teachers to plan a learning pathway for students. This may be a non-accredited 11 week (22 hours) introductory course which covers the basics of MS Office packages (both desktop apps or 365 versions) and gives an introduction to internet use and security. Alternatively, students may prefer to undertake an accredited 'Essential Digital Skills' qualification at Entry 3 or Level 1.

For students who are particularly anxious about using IT, we offer short basic IT sessions (up to 4 hours) in a variety of topics under the umbrella of Demystifying Digital. Courses in the suite include:

- Demystifying Digital: Online Shopping
- Demystifying Digital: Smart Phones & Apps
- Demystifying Digital: Online Banking
- Demystifying Digital: Creating a portfolio for Employment.

These courses are not fundable for anyone who does not meet the government eligibility criteria for adult education funding e.g., not in receipt of benefits or who are earning over £20,319 per annum.

In addition, we offer non accredited short courses in web design, graphics, and animation. More substantial courses in Software Development and Infrastructure Technical Skills are offered as part of the governments Skills for Jobs initiative.

## PLANNED OUTCOMES FOR PARTICIPANTS.

The Ofcom-commissioned 'Demystifying Digital' project was designed to contribute to the following outcomes for participants:

- Improved online knowledge and skills
  - how to protect against misinformation and online fraud
  - setting up security on personal devices
  - set up and use of online banking (secure set up)
  - online shopping; setting up two-factor authentication
  - using digital resources to identify energy savings and other savings to support through the cost-of-living crisis
  - using digital resources to access services (NHS/Bank/Council)
- Better awareness of the benefits of using online services
- Increased confidence using online services
- Less fearful of using online services
- Greater use of online services.

In the longer-term, it was anticipated that more confident and capable adults would be able to benefit from the full range of online services and opportunities, improving their social and civic engagement. This would allow public services (e.g. health and council services) to expand the reach of cost-effective online provision.

# OUR APPROACH

## DELIVERY OF THE PROJECT

West Nottinghamshire College ran a series of short courses under the umbrella of 'Demystifying Digital' to help support older adults who may have little or no previous experience of online and digital media.

These drew from our current suite of short courses which were adapted to meet participant needs and expectations, meaning existing resources and delivery methods were tailored to suit individuals.

The project team ran 1-2 hours sessions at six locations within the catchment area, as well as one to one session at our town centre location, to offer digital skills support.

Teachers used a bespoke approach to meet the participants' needs, and sessions were fluid and adaptable to their demands or skills. Some of the sessions were traditionally structured and taught from the front, others were very informal, and learner led.

The starting point for most sessions was to assess prior knowledge and skills, considering and understanding students' individual knowledge and understanding of basic technology, firstly looking at their mobile phones.

The reason for looking at mobile phones was because all students owned one, so they started with a device that they already had some knowledge of. This starting point involved looking at, and learning about, the security of these personal devices. This then moved on to look at general internet use, avoiding scams, protecting yourself from misinformation, moving on to look at online services and finally using the internet to save money.

The college also provided 200 flyers promoting the interventions and 200 postcards with information on phishing, fake news, phone security and two-factor authentication for distribution at local community hubs, councils, libraries, and cafes in the area.



*Demystifying Digital postcards*

The college provided all resources to enable this delivery, including laptops, Wi-Fi hubs, help guides, and any other resources deemed necessary or appropriate. We utilized existing community venues (Shirebrook, Ladybrook & Clipstone village halls/ community centres) and digital hubs based at Mansfield and Ashfield District Council offices and the adult learning centres at Chesterfield Road and in the Four Seasons Shopping Centre.

The team very quickly found that it was not always practical to take laptops to community venues. This was overcome by uploading resources to Microsoft Teams and using Ipad. This proved to be much more accessible and more effective for use in venues which were not traditional training venues.

# EVALUATION

The overall aim of the evaluation was to understand what impact the project had, what worked well and what could be improved in future. To this end, the evaluation was designed to address the following Key Evaluation Questions:

## **IMPACT**

- Do participants feel more confident and able?

## **PROCESS**

- What parts of the project could we develop further (e.g., courses)?
- Was the delivery method effective? What could we improve?
- What did we learn about this demographic's needs?

This evaluation has reviewed the outcomes for participants of the project, the success of the delivery methods (assessed through feedback from staff and participants), delivery of project outputs, and the extent to which the project has met the outcomes and objectives that it set out to achieve, and the impacts that the project has had on its intended participants.

The college strongly encourages feedback from our learners and employers, and there were several methods used to gather feedback including verbal feedback during the delivery session, surveys and follow up phone calls with participants 3 months after the intervention (see Appendix 1 for further details about our methods).

# PROJECT OUTPUTS

## THE PROJECT IN NUMBERS

Number of participants	72
Number of locations where courses were delivered	6
Number of hours delivered to each participant (minimum)	4
Number of postcard 'facts' distributed	200
Number of flyers distributed	200
Number of help booklets distributed	72
Number of Students progressing to further digital courses at the college	31
Number of project participants enrolling to an accredited digital skills qualification since taking part in the project	12

## OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS

The target audience for the project was originally intended to include retired, semi-retired or vulnerable adults, minority communities, those experiencing financial disadvantage, and those with protected characteristics and/or health challenges from former mining communities including Mansfield, Clipstone, Shirebrook and Ashfield. However, the project was open to all adults and consequently recruited some individuals who did not meet this targeted profile.

There were 72 participants in the project, 8 fewer than the target (recruitment issues are discussed in the Lessons and Recommendations section later in the report).

All participants lived in the Nottinghamshire area (within 15 miles of the college), with most living within a 3-mile radius of the college.

Image 3 shows venue locations within a fifteen-mile radius from West Nottinghamshire College





Despite the project being aimed at adults of all ages, 60% were over the age of 50. Although the project was not specifically designed to target the unemployed, promotion of the project within the local job centres meant that recruitment of unemployed people was remarkably successful and over 60% of participants came from this group.

**Table 1: Participant Data**

<b>NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>72</b>	
Over 50	43	60%
BAME	8	11%
Employed	25	35%
Unemployed	45	62%
Disability Declared	13	18%

Participants were aged between 19 and 88, with most participants being in the 55–74-year-old category.

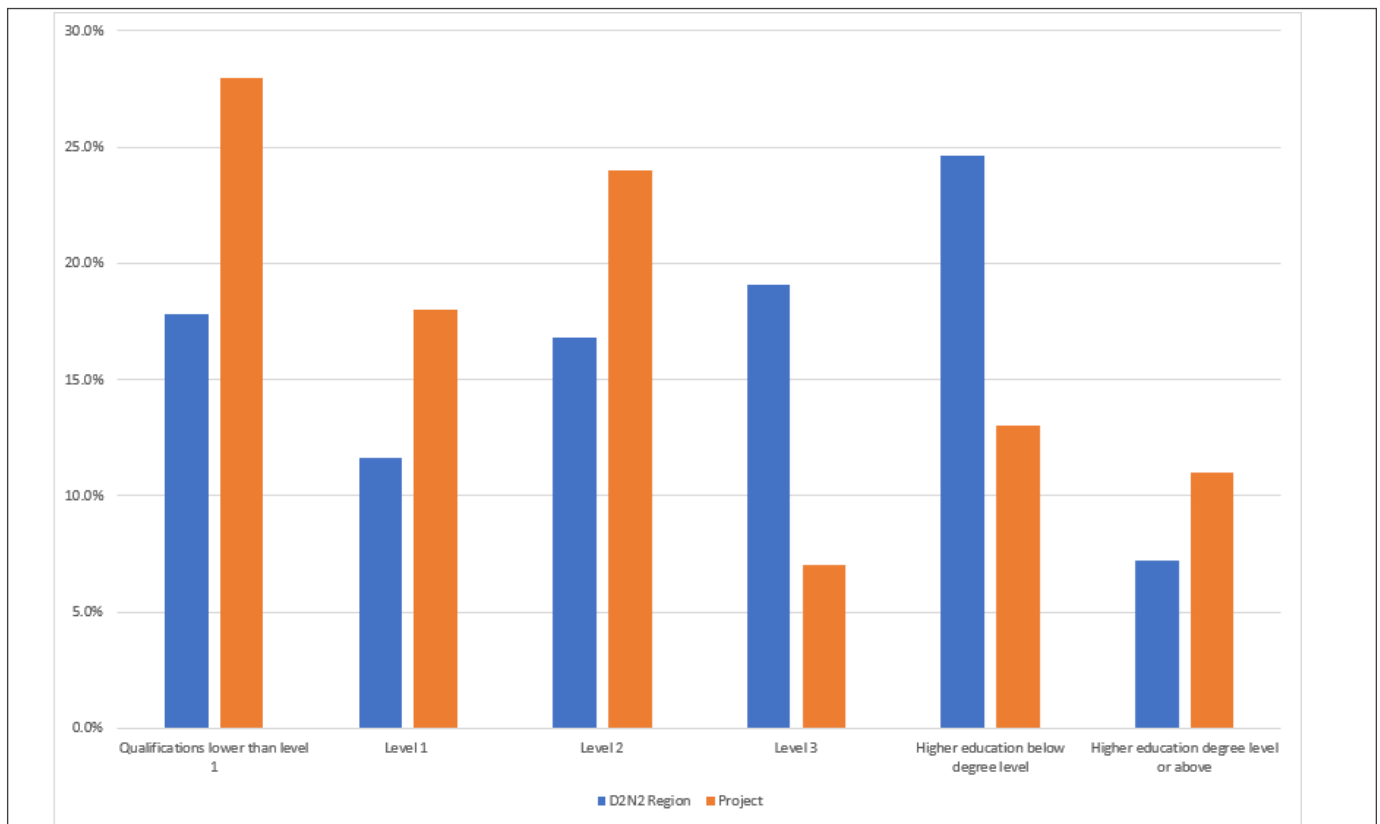
**Table 2: Age profile of participants compared with the local population profile**

	<b>DEMYSTIFYING DIGITAL PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>NOTTINGHAMSHIRE REGION POPULATION</b>
Under 16 years	-	19%
16 to 34 years	20%	28%
35 to 54 years	22%	24%
55 to 74 years	54%	21%
75 years+	2%	8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	100%	100%

Sources: Demystifying Digital project records and Lightcast data for Nottinghamshire region

The team anticipated that participants enrolling to the project would have low levels of prior academic achievement - in line with the D2N2 data shown in Figure 1. In the event, the cohort of project participants generally had a lower level of qualifications than the local population.

**Figure 1: Educational attainment in D2N2 (Source: Lightcast 2024) compared to the participants in the project group**



Previous academic achievement of participants in the project ranged from below Level 1 to Level 7 and although 46% of participants had prior academic achievement at Level 1 or lower, we found that more than 50% participants already held a Level 2 or higher and 31% held a Level 3 or higher. It was surprising to learn that participants with high level of academic achievements often lacked basic digital, especially as many 12 of them (17% of all participants) were employed and in stable, middle to higher management roles (12 participants).

Prior to starting the training, participants were asked what type of device they owned and whether they had an email address. Over 90% of participants did not own a laptop, desktop, or tablet and most of their online activity took place using a mobile phone. 21 learners (29%) did not have an email address prior to the project.

# FINDINGS

Most people who took part in Demystifying Digital reported being more confident in going online and using different services.

## CONFIDENCE ONLINE

Self-report survey data, collected at the end of a participant's engagement with Demystifying Digital sessions, shows that most people who took part reported were more confident about going online and using different services after the project (Table 3).

Participants were asked to rate their confidence levels on a scale of 1 to 5 before and after the intervention (1 = lowest confidence, 5= highest confidence). These baseline and endline ratings (both collected at the end of the intervention) were compared to see whether there were any changes in participants' confidence.

- Most people indicated that before taking part in the project they had low confidence across the areas of digital activity examined in the survey (Table 3). Before the project, participants were least confident (on average) about recognising fake news and scam emails/texts and using two-factor authentication.
- All areas of digital activity examined in the survey saw an increase in confidence levels on average (Table 3), and it is encouraging to see there were strong increases in those areas where baseline confidence was lowest before the intervention.
- Looking at the data in another way, we find that as a result of the intervention, over 88% of participants felt that their confidence in using digital tools and apps had increased (Table 4).
- Older age groups (55+) tended, on average, to have lower confidence at the beginning of the project. This age group tended to rate the increase in confidence higher than those of other age categories for most questions (Figure 2). In contrast, many younger participants gave baseline ratings of 3 or 4 out of 5 (indicating some pre-existing confidence at the start). Encouragingly, they also showed improved confidence across the areas addressed by the project.
- It is also worth noting that when considering the use of the two apps by participants of the project (NHS and Council), there were marked increases in confidence among participants aged 35-54 (Figure 2). This is a positive outcome of the project as the NHS and local council are strongly promoting these apps to this age group as it makes up a significant percentage of their client/customer base.



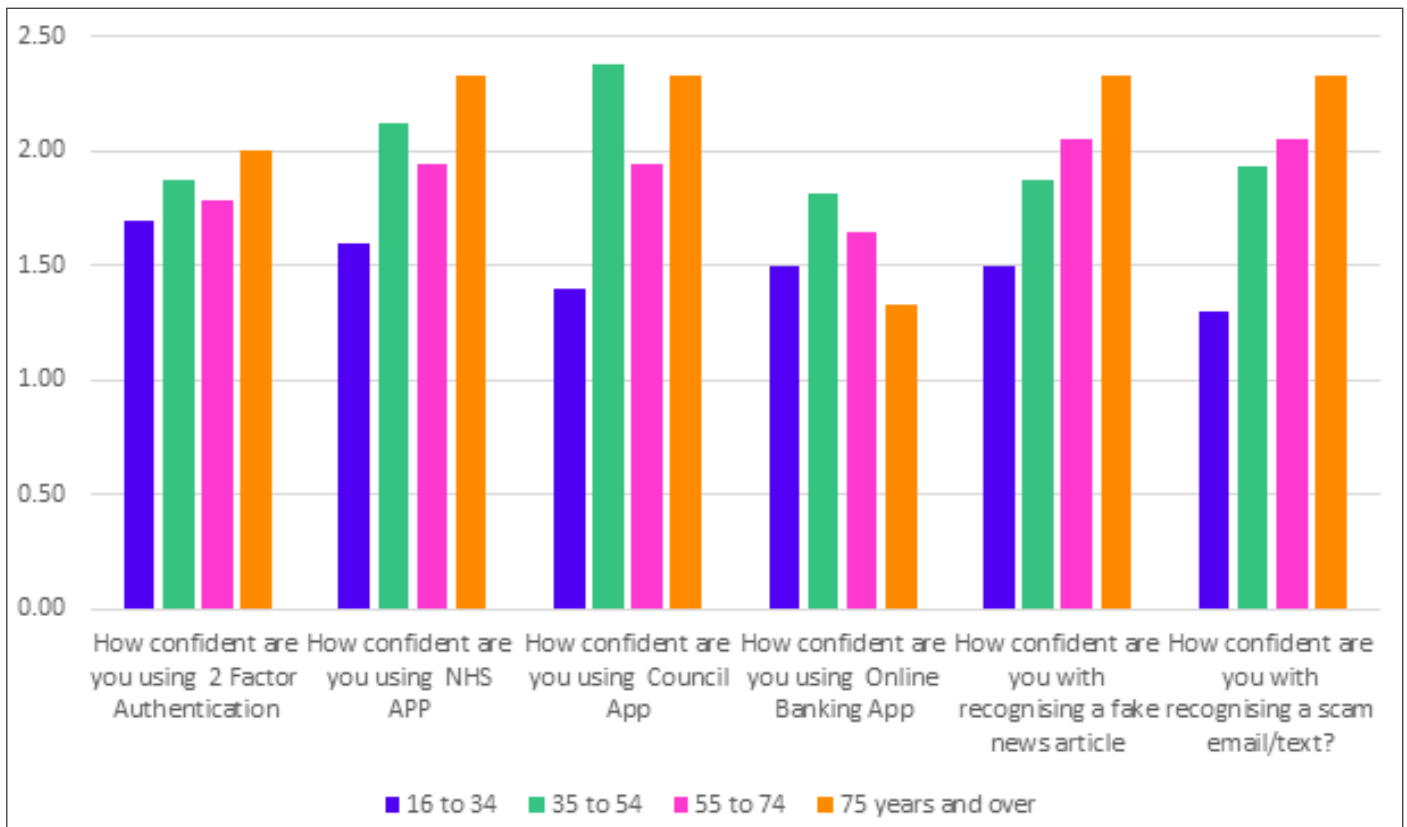
**Table 3: Average confidence ratings before and after the intervention**

<b>SURVEY QUESTION</b>	Average rating before	Average rating after	Change
How confident are you using Council App	1.86	3.85	+1.99
How confident are you using NHS APP	1.76	3.71	+1.95
How confident are you using Online Banking App	1.70	3.35	+1.65
How confident are you using Two-Factor Authentication	1.67	3.47	+1.80
How confident are you in recognising a scam email/text	1.65	3.58	+1.93
How confident are you with recognising a fake news article	1.56	3.50	+1.94

**Table 4 Participant Survey Results**

<b>SURVEY QUESTION</b>	Number of participants whose confidence improved following intervention	Percentage of participants whose confidence improved following intervention	Number of participants whose confidence did not improve following intervention
How confident are you with recognizing a fake news article	61	92%	5
How confident are you using NHS APP	60	91%	6
How confident are you using Two-Factor Authentication	59	89%	7
How confident are you using Council App	59	89%	7
How confident are you in recognising a scam email/text	59	89%	7
How confident are you using Online Banking App	58	88%	8

**Figure 2: Average increase in confidence levels by age category**



Although the evidence presented above is based on self-assessment, it is important to note that when people feel more confident using digital tools and apps, they are more likely to increase their usage and build additional skills and confidence.

## SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND ONLINE ACTIVITY

In addition to survey evidence about confidence levels reported above, qualitative feedback provides an indication of the project's impact on skills development and subsequent online activity.

An open-ended comment box in the survey asked participants: 'What was the most useful thing you learned on this course and what will you do differently?'

Most respondents gave responses linked to specific elements of course content such as 'two-factor authentication', 'changing settings' or 'safe passwords'.

However, three respondents gave more detailed information, which gives some indication of the immediate impact of newfound knowledge, skills, and confidence in their daily lives:

"I now order repeat prescriptions from my app so don't have to visit the surgery."

"I can see my bank statements on my phone so can keep check on finances."

"I will be more careful about using safe passwords."

Evidence of longer-term impact is provided by verbal feedback from follow-up phone calls with 8 participants two months after the project ended.

All 8 participants reported that they were still using the skills and knowledge learned in the sessions on a regular basis. Some reported that they were now using other devices and technology (albeit for some, this is still involved support from their tutor). See Appendix 2 for a brief summary of the notes taken during each call.

These findings are exemplified in the following case studies. The selected participants had little online experience prior to the project and by the end there is evidence that they had:

- Gained new skills
- Overcome their anxiety about going online
- Started to use online services (including banking, shopping, and online search).

#### **Case study 1: Female, aged 70, Social Prescription**

The participant came to us via a social prescription, as she had recently been widowed and was struggling to use her mobile phone. The project team had met with the social prescribing team for Mansfield & Ashfield and explained the Demystifying Digital project and had handed out flyers to all local doctor's surgeries. The participant completed Demystifying Digital over four one-hour sessions and became a much more confident user of her mobile phone. She has continued to study with us and is now developing skills to be able to shop online and contact her relations via video chat, both of which she had never done prior to joining the project.

#### **Case study 2: Male, aged 54, community student**

The participant came to us with some basic IT skills; however, he was only an occasional user of the internet. After completing Demystifying Digital, he has developed skills and now can confidently and safely use the internet. He found the session on payment methods for secure online shopping particularly helpful as he had previously had concerns about the security of his financial details when shopping online so had not used it. He is now happy to bank, shop and search online for information.

Some participants had decided to take their studies further by enrolling on, or completing, additional courses to further develop their knowledge, skills, and confidence:

#### **Case study 3: Female, aged 65, community student**

The participant started without any previous skills and was struggling with her confidence. She completed Demystifying Digital and really wanted to continue her studies; she is now attending a weekly beginner's class at the college. During a recent feedback request, when asked if the project had improved her skills and confidence she stated: "Definitely, I had never used a computer before! I was incredibly nervous on the first day, but now I'm loving it."

#### **Case study 4: Male, aged 47, employee of local district council**

This participant came through our work with a local council who wanted to improve their employees' IT skills. The participant did not have any IT skills when he started, however after completing Demystifying Digital he has since gone on to further study and is currently completing his second qualification-based IT course. He particularly enjoyed the project sessions as they allowed him to develop skills in a non-pressurised environment, whilst also stretching and challenging him.

#### **Case study 5: Male, aged 61, employee of local district council.**

The participant came to us through our work with a local council. He was happy to use his mobile phone but had never used a laptop and was nervous about trying, despite wanting to. By completing Demystifying Digital, he developed his keyboard and touchpad skills and gained confidence when using online services. He is now confident in using online banking services, NHS services and online shopping services since completing the project. He has gone on to complete a qualification-based IT course and is currently studying for a higher-level IT qualification.

# DISCUSSION

## DELIVERY METHODS

It is hard to determine which method was more effective as they all had strengths and weaknesses:

- Sessions that were delivered traditionally, with the teacher at the front, worked well with groups that had been set up in venues that already ran other types of adult courses, e.g., community centres.
- Delivering to a small group worked well in this setting as these students were used to learning using these methods. This method of delivery is more cost effective as there is a higher student to teacher ratio and students can share thoughts and ideas with each other. However, a disadvantage to this type of delivery is that some students do not always feel confident asking questions in front of a group.
- One-to-one delivery worked well for students who were either extremely nervous or lacked skills and knowledge. By using this one-to-one approach students felt confident asking questions as they did not feel embarrassed as it was just them and the teacher. However, in contrast to the previous delivery method, one to one teaching does not give students the opportunity to discuss ideas or topics with each other. This method of delivery prevents peer support which is hugely beneficial to students' progress and understanding.

## LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The project has provided the college with important lessons for future media literacy work. The key lessons and recommendations are shown in table 5 below. They have been split into those that relate to the delivered sessions, and those that relate to the strategic and operational delivery.

**Table 5 Challenges, lessons learnt and potential solutions for future schemes**

STRAND	CHALLENGE/ LESSON LEARNT FROM DELIVERY	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE SCHEMES
Recruitment	Initially recruitment was quite difficult, and we were slow to engage potential participants. We looked at the media we had used for marketing, and it was mostly digital, so we decided to use more traditional methods of marketing, and this improved recruitment. Despite the shortcomings of our marketing, we were still able to recruit up to 90% of the target. It was suggested that the level of marketing required for the project was underestimated	Establish a thorough understanding of potential audiences and use marketing media which reflects their needs. For older adults, this includes posters, flyers, postcards and highlighting the offer in meetings with local councils, JCP and CVS. Continue to develop targeted campaigns to increase project awareness and engagement across underrepresented groups for future projects. Future projects should consider allocating additional resources to marketing, particularly at the initial stages of delivery.

STRAND	CHALLENGE/ LESSON LEARNT FROM DELIVERY	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE SCHEMES
Delivery method	One-to-one delivery worked well for students who were either extremely nervous or lacked skills and knowledge. Group delivery was more appropriate for established groups	Future projects could also look at delivering closed courses for established groups and more individualized methods for new participants who exhibit signs of anxiety around group working
Responsiveness	Staff noted that one of the key successes had been the project's responsiveness to students' individual needs in relation to digital literacy – the project design enabled delivery to be reactive to this	Ensure that future projects have the flexibility built in to allow them to be responsive to learners needs
Future learning needs	Learners and staff reported areas where they felt future training was needed	Feedback from staff & learners suggests that future training is needed in all aspects covered within this project and excel and basic bookkeeping (family budgets especially) and AI (Artificial Intelligence) and its use in daily work tasks
Sharing practice Events	Staff found the events to be beneficial for networking and sharing challenges with other project leads	Continue to include sharing practice events in future projects
Networking	Participants welcomed the chance to network/ meet other people who were facing similar challenges through the project	Continue this as part of the training offer and look to develop the networking between diverse groups/ cohorts/ courses to further increase this
Funding	Despite the coexistence of the Adult Education Budget (AEB) alongside the project, there are many restrictions associated with AEB funding which did not exist within the project. This allowed the project to be flexible in meeting the needs of anyone wishing to participate without declining the training to those who would not qualify for AEB funding and have a learner-centered approach	Continue to create projects which are not dependent on a participant's age, economic status, or prior qualifications



Resources	iPad bought from project funds were extremely beneficial for this project as most participants did not own a laptop or desktop PC	Consider resources in relation to project delivery methods for all future projects
Data capture	Once the participant was no longer engaged in the training there was no incentive for them complete surveys or answer calls for feedback and some outputs were lost because of this	Ensure all data is captured whilst the learner is on programme
	It was recognised shortly after the start of the project that information regarding previous digital interventions or digital training was not gathered formally, and had this been recorded, it may have given an insight into whether any previous skills and knowledge had been retained and thus show the effectiveness of any previous intervention.	Ensure data capture includes information about relevant previous experience
Project Management	All staff agreed that the project was professionally managed and that support from OFCOM was valuable	For future projects, ensure project leads are fully invested in the outcome of the project. Where possible, include project leads in the delivery team

# CONCLUSION AND PROJECT LEGACY

The digital divide can only be narrowed by tackling the root causes such as providing better pathways for digital skills development via training programmes and creating digital hubs which offer access to technology, internet access, and employment training services to locally disadvantaged communities.

The Ofcom commission enabled the project to reach people who would not otherwise be able to access media literacy training from the college because of restrictions in adult skills funding.

For some students, this intervention has been all they needed to safely use the internet. These students did not feel they needed to continue studying as they achieved the outcomes for this intervention. However, there were also students who wanted to further develop their skills and knowledge. This group of students gained the most confidence of all the students on the project.

In addition to benefiting participants, the tailored nature of delivery has allowed the staff team to design more flexible courses for adult students and include more content relating to individual needs. Staff have used discussion drop ins to inform their session content and are generally more confident in adapting resources for students to take away with them.

It is hard to identify the extent to which the intervention will have lasting impact on the wider community, but it has enabled participants to access services that they were previously unaware of and have the confidence to use online applications for the first time.

In reflecting upon the conclusion of our demystifying digital project for adults, it has become clear that the initiative was extremely beneficial, not only for the participants but for the teaching team as well. The interventions were far more than a simple transmission of knowledge; it was a reciprocal exchange of learning and personal development. We've seen firsthand

how empowering digital skills can be, and along the way, we've picked up new teaching strategies, learned better ways to connect with a diverse range of learners, and helped instill a love of learning in many of our project participants. The project has highlighted the significance of innovative educational approaches in meeting the digital era's demands. The project, therefore, stands as a testament to the transformative power of education, for both learners and teachers, highlighting the profound impact of empowering individuals with essential digital skills in our increasingly digital world.

# APPENDIX 1: EVALUATION METHODS

We used a short post-completion participant survey and follow-up phone calls to gather evidence for the evaluation. This light-touch approach was chosen to ensure data capture was not a burden to participants who are wary of form-filling and might be deterred from taking part.

## PARTICIPANT SURVEY

At the beginning of the course participants shared information about prior digital media skills and self-assessment of confidence in using digital resources to establish starting point and ascertain any prior knowledge. Some students carried out BKSB initial assessments to ascertain skills gaps, but this was not mandatory part of the course as the assessment itself requires basic digital skills.

Post-completion surveys were used to determine the impact of the programme on participant confidence. At the end of their final session, participants were asked to score their confidence in a number of areas on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being the lowest and 5 the highest) BEFORE and AFTER the sessions:

- How confident are you using two-factor authentication?
- How confident are you using NHS APP?
- How confident are you using Council App?
- How confident are you using Online Banking App?
- How confident are you with recognising a fake news article?
- How confident are you in recognising a scam email/text?

We had been quite specific in asking about two apps, the NHS and local council, as two other projects which the college is currently working on are looking for information on whether the local population knows about these apps and are confident in their use. As both are useful apps for our community, we wanted to capture some of this information as part of the project. The project included interventions relating to safe use of both apps.

## FOLLOW-UP PHONE CALLS

Two months after the end of project delivery, we made follow up phone calls lasting approximately 15- 20 minutes. Participants were asked the following questions:

- Have you used the new skills you developed on the course in the last month?
- Are you now using equipment you didn't previously use?
- Are you now using apps you didn't previously use?
- Are you continuing your studies in digital?

In total, 8 participants agreed to provide feedback (11% of all participants). Calls were not recorded, instead we took handwritten notes.

# APPENDIX 2: FOLLOW UP CALLS

## Call 1

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Participant said he feels more confident using computers and that he thoroughly enjoyed the course. He is currently using his phone and his Chromebook in his day-to-day life. He is also using Windows 10 operating system at work. Whilst the course was good, he is not interested in completing another course with us as he does not have the time.

## Call 2

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After speaking with the participant's mother, she said he had thoroughly enjoyed the course and could use a tablet, something he could not do before the classes. He has been using an Android Tablet and able to use a Bank Card to do online shopping. The participant has additional learning needs and really benefited from the class, and he would love to join a longer course. He also had lots of positive feedback for the tutor.

## Call 3

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The participant has benefitted from the classes; he has said he has become better at using technology. He took the classes so that he could become more able to use his phone. He has also said he would like to attend more classes.

## Call 4

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The participant said she benefitted from the sessions and has become a bit better at using technology. She has mentioned though she doesn't use it too much more than what she did before from the class, but still benefitted. She is using her iPad rather than using her laptop which she used more before. She has said she would like to come back for classes, but she currently does not have the time to be able to do so. And, if she comes back, she would like to start from the very basics again so she can gain a more comprehensive understanding.

## Call 5

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The participant is using the skills he was taught in the classes, but only with his tutor's support. He has said that he needs to gain more confidence before using the computers as he still does not feel confident. Independently, he is currently only using his mobile phone and no other technology. He is also currently still attending Essential Digital Skills classes so he can build up his skill level.

## Call 6

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The participant is still using the skills that she was taught. She originally came to classes quite terrified as she had never used a computer before and felt like she was falling behind in the work. She is only using technology then she comes to our sessions but is able to navigate a computer much more efficiently now. She is still attending classes and says that the tutor is incredibly supportive and really has helped her gain confidence when using IT equipment.

## Call 7

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The participant is using the skills she was taught but still needs assistance with using technology. She is currently using a Mobile Phone and Laptop at home. The participant felt that she needs more lessons and finds it difficult to vocalize that she is struggling.

## Call 8

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The participant reported that she did not continue after the intervention due to being so behind with work and decided to attempt the course again in the new year using Teams IT equipment. During her working day she only ever used a Desktop PC and at home she would use her mobile phone. She would be interested in further courses if the opportunity were to arise.