

## Digital Poverty Grants update, Summer 2023

As part of the **LLEP Digital Skills Partnership**, in early 2022 grants worth £300,0000 were awarded to seven LLEP area projects to address digital inclusion. The LLEP grant funding supports the area with a range of innovative projects, including recycling devices, skills support and digital access. See updates on each of the projects below.

### L3 Digital Cs (WEA)



Employment prospects for **disadvantaged adults** are being improved through community-based education and tailored support from the adult education charity WEA. Sessions have been designed to develop digital confidence, creativity and competence among low-income workers to support career progression. The project has also assisted older members of society by teaching them how to stay in touch with their friends and family electronically.

To date, **95 learners have enrolled on the digital skills classes**, and after course completion, many students have then moved on to a further course with WEA to continue their IT studies or to gain an accredited IT qualification. In addition, the project is also tackling social and digital integration via workshops with community leaders, to encourage collaboration to support the educational needs of their communities.

**WEA continues to take referrals for basic digital skills classes** within communities or at their Leicester training rooms. Contact [rphipps@wea.ac.uk](mailto:rphipps@wea.ac.uk) or call 0116 2556 614. The project ends on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023. See two case studies, Farzana and Imam, below.



Farzana case study.pdf



Imam case study.pdf

### Essential Digital Skills (Acorn Training Ltd)

This programme assisted individuals across **North West Leicestershire** and **Charnwood** through a dedicated team and access to technology, with two **new digital hubs** in Coalville and Loughborough established. During the project, **40 customers** (with a very low level of digital skills) were helped to access learning and enhance life skills such as using email and accessing online banking.

Acorn have **continued to support** the development of customers at the hubs, with help in employment searching or further learning, and job search units have been added to help learners towards future opportunities. See more on: [www.acorntraining.co.uk](http://www.acorntraining.co.uk) or email [info@acorntraining.co.uk](mailto:info@acorntraining.co.uk). The project ended on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022; however, they continue to use the IT funded by the LLEP to support people through various ongoing programmes.

## Refurb IT (Reaching People)

Refurb IT is fighting digital exclusion faced by the most disadvantaged in Leicester and Leicestershire by **promoting a green, circular economy**. The life of personal devices is extended by saving them from gathering dust or going to landfill and getting them to people who need them the most.



**Donations of laptops, tablets and phones from businesses, organisations and individuals are welcome!** Each device is securely wiped and refurbished, then through local charities and community organisations, it is delivered into the hands of those who can't afford a device together with the data, skills and support that they need to use it. Ultimately, the aim is to turn this into a sustainable social enterprise. So far, 77 laptops, tablets and phones have been received for refurbishment and re-gifting! See: [Refurb IT | Reaching People](#)

Demand for our refurbished devices is always high, **so if you, your family, friends or organisation have devices to donate**, please contact [refurbit@reachingpeople.co.uk](mailto:refurbit@reachingpeople.co.uk) or call 07737 213477

## Highfields Digital Hub (Highfields Community Association)



The Highfields Digital Hub at Highfields Centre was established in April '22, and provides **free digital access, training, and access** to equipment to a large and diverse population of Leicester and Greater Highfields. The Hub addresses **digital poverty issues across all ages**, along with those on low incomes and the unemployed, through a computer suite with state-of-the-art facilities, including 13 computers with the latest Microsoft software, along with laptops to support people with their access

needs. The centre also offers

- A variety of **digital skills courses, English classes, CV and job search help**
- Support for young people with **homework and employability** sessions.
- Sessions for **older people** to learn about how to use a mobile phone, social media, take photographs and basic digital skills.

In 2022, the centre utilised the Kickstart initiative (with DWP) to employ four young people who used the computing facilities for training courses and job search; all four have secured jobs.

The Hub has supported **over 200 local people** to access vital digital support and is striving to support more people. See: <https://highfieldscentre.ac.uk> or email: [info@highfieldscentre.ac.uk](mailto:info@highfieldscentre.ac.uk)

## Christ Church Community Hub (Christ Church PCC)

The Christ Church Community Hub in Thurnby Lodge now has **free community Wi-Fi installed** and a printer. The Hub is working with Age UK on a start date for weekly sessions to commence, to aid individuals or groups to use tablets or Chromebooks to access the Wi-Fi and receive support, especially the vulnerable (through age-related issues or low incomes), as council services and benefits go online.

## Breward's Hub – Student Assisted Technology Coaching (Homefield)

Homefield College are in the initial stages of exploring activities for students to provide the elderly, jobseekers and disadvantaged people in Mountsorrel with access to the internet, devices and IT support, based at the college's coffee shop, Breward's. The aim is that this will be run by students who are autistic and/or have learning and communication disabilities; it will help to address community technological barriers, as well as aiding students with social, communication and employability skills.



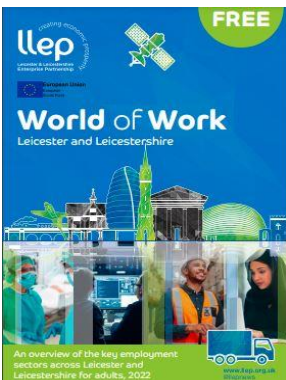
## Leicester Connected (Leicester City Council)

Leicester Connected have made **80 device loans** to date to help individuals with digital access but are seeing that the key demand is mainly for internet access so will be withdrawing the device loan scheme from libraries. There is some demand for devices for existing adult education students which will be supported from existing resources.

## Do you support young people and/or adults?

- See area **events, courses** (some of which can help with digital) and jobs on [Home | Leicester Employment Hub](#).
- For information on **post-16 and post-18 choices**, how they compare, see: '**Get the Jump**' <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/explore-your-education-and-training-choices>
- See options for **adults to upskill** here, including digital skills bootcamps: <https://skillsforlife.campaign.gov.uk/>
- See the area **Collective Intelligence Skills Observatory** (CISO) tool to help educators, businesses and citizens to better understand the skills landscape of their local area: <https://www.insight-unlocked.co.uk/> (part of the area Local Skills Improvement Plan work led by East Midlands Chamber)

## LLEP World of Work Leicestershire 2023 free resource for adults



This **annual skills resource** is created for partners that support **adults into work**; as an easy-read summary to increase awareness of the local world of work, including:

- Key sectors, including digital, skills in demand
- Overview of Enterprise Zones
- What employers want
- Working for SMEs
- Starting a business

See: <https://llep.org.uk/app/uploads/2023/03/LLEPLABOUR-MARKET-2023Adults.pdf>

For further information on this projects summary please contact: [Anna.cyhan@llep.org.uk](mailto:Anna.cyhan@llep.org.uk)

The area **Digital Skills Partnership** is now being managed by De Montfort University, on behalf of the LLEP. A partner update on this will be available soon.