



The Langholm Initiative

Building our digital future

How can we best support skills
development in a digital age?

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Age UK reports that in the UK
36% of people over the age of
65 are **offline.**



introduction

Over the past four months, we have been generously funded to undertake a period of research and development into the provision of digital skills in Langholm and Eskdale.

The result of this period is this plan: a fantastic collaboration and exchange of ideas and knowledge between people and places that want to see a genuinely better connected society.

The Langholm Initiative's Digital Skills Project will focus on improving digital literacy, raise the aspirations of young people and promote greater communication between people in an online age.

Digital skills are so much more than being able to own and operate a computer: it is the cornerstone of a modern economy and vital for social connectedness, business development and the aspirations for our region.

Having reviewed the evidence it is clear that there is an opportunity to build on our original concept and incorporate a broader scope that better reflects the digital needs of our local community. This will align Langholm Initiative's work with a local demand and help to support improved outcomes for people and place.

We want to ensure that access to high-quality learning is available for people regardless of their background, their age or their abilities.

With this in mind, the project will:

- Develop a volunteer-led programme of basic skills tuition based on best practice
- Highlight opportunities and skills development for people to respond to economic changes
- Build the capacity of people of all ages to stay safe on and make the best use of the internet

The Langholm Initiative exists to bring opportunities to people in our community. We are rooted in the belief that the best approach to community development is led by people influencing change. Our projects work to inspire people to build the capacity and confidence they need to make informed decisions about their future, their aspirations and the direction their community should take.

We have found that there is a desire in our community for better digital learning for young people, older people and the small businesses which work here. Our objective now is to deliver on this help to build our digital future in Eskdale.

the local context

Langholm, a community of 2300, is nestled in the far east of Dumfries and Galloway, culturally a part of its neighbouring Scottish Borders and economically linked to Cumbria in the south. The remote rural nature of our community means that we are further removed from the support, economy and services of our administrative region.

This presents a number of issues: young people cannot easily access further education, jobs or training opportunities. There are connectivity problems, poor transport and poorly paid jobs.

Our community is growing older. Our locality, Annandale and Eskdale, has a significantly older population (22% aged 65+ compared to 16.8% across Scotland). At the same time, we are projecting a crisis in workforce: the working age population is expected to fall 11.6% over the next 20 years. Action needs to be taken now.

As is common in rural areas, particularly those with older populations, digital exclusion is prevalent. The map below from Tech Partnership shows the wider south of Scotland as highly likely to be digitally disconnected. With poverty becoming an increasing problem in our community (20% of Eskdale residents are among the most deprived in Scotland - DAGCAS, 2017), it is important that we prevent the poverty premium decreasing opportunities for people that live here.

But there are opportunities too: small businesses are the lifeblood of our local economy and becoming digitally aware can support them. Our young people should be given the chances to explore digital careers creatively and support a stronger skills base here in South Scotland.

Our role is to broker new opportunities to support people, skills and learning within our community.





understanding the policy context

For our work to be successful, it is important that it aligns with current policy focuses at local and national level. With an increasing understanding that we must prepare people and communities for technological changes, both Dumfries & Galloway Council and the Scottish Government have recognised the importance of providing a digital skills infrastructure at community level.

The Scottish Government's policy on digital participation and growth is to effectively enable everyone in Scotland to access and utilise the benefits of our digital age. Their aim is that "Scotland is recognised throughout the world as a vibrant, inclusive, open and forward-looking digital nation". Scotland will be a nation where education and training systems focus on expanding pools of digital skills and capabilities, where we lessen the gender gap in digital careers and everyone is enabled to share in the benefits of digital.

The key focus is on economy and access to public services. With the country's digital sector turning over £4 billion every year there is a need for sustained investment in developing the skills and workforce to take this forward. Recognising and supporting the digital capabilities of our communities and businesses is an important step in realising the ambition of a globally-renowned Scotland.

Public services will be moving more and more to digital platforms, and it is vital that these remain accessible to all. By encouraging greater inclusion and participation from all corners of the country the transition to digitally-equipped public services should mean nobody is left behind.

It is our opinion that the Third Sector and particularly community organisations must play an important role in facilitating this. Scottish Government has recognised the strength of the community sector in realising their digital ambition through their relationship with SCVO and the launch of the Digital Participation Charter, which has enabled agencies and organisations to direct streams of work towards enhancing digital capabilities across Scotland.

Regionally, Dumfries and Galloway Council's Community Learning and Development Plan recognises that the expectation placed upon CLD services and partners is that programmes of work will improve life chances for people of all ages through learning, personal development and active citizenship, and will create more resilient, stronger, inclusive, supportive and influential communities.

The CLD Plan endorsed by the council explicitly prioritises improvements that should be made across equalities in Dumfries and Galloway,

specifically with reference to improving partnership work around digital inclusion with particular emphasis on older people. Dumfries and Galloway Council has recently launched their Digital Learning Partnership, of which the Langholm Initiative is a member, to better direct policy and resources towards digital skills needs in the region and increase potential for collaboration and sharing of knowledge.

Skills Development Scotland is our national skills agency that works to support sustainable economic growth in Scotland. Their Regional Skills Investment Plan (RSIP) for the south of Scotland identifies that our region needs to respond to growing sectors like ICT and “design a local offer” that will encourage expansion.

The RSIP is an action plan, and its area of action “Growing and Developing the Workforce” highlights that in order to increase the higher value jobs, promote the inclusive growth agenda and increase the capacity of our labour market, we need to “develop and enhance regional digital skills and promotion of digital career pathways”.

The role of community organisations in partnership with education authorities and schools is clear in facilitating and brokering opportunities for people of all ages to learn new skills and develop their understanding of what these career pathways might be.



"There is great confidence in Scotland's future in a digital world and a collective determination to ensure that we reap the benefits of the digital age"

Derek Makay MSP, Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Finance



shared learning

A vital part of this development project has been about broadening our horizons and learning from projects which are recognised as best practice. With the support of the Digital Participation Team at SCVO (Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations), we were connected with projects across Scotland who willingly shared their learning with us.

Case Study One: Melville Housing Association

Melville Housing Association is a signatory of the Digital Participation Charter and champions the belief that staff and tenants should have at least the basic skills needed to navigate a digital world.

Melville started their digital inclusion drop-ins in 2015 in partnership with Volunteer Midlothian, a component of the Midlothian Third Sector Interface. Working with Volunteer Midlothian allowed the classes to provide enough human resource to support one-to-one learning.

Although the sessions had a useful purpose and supported one-to-one, user-led learning, gradually attendance numbers decreased and Melville opted to rethink their engagement strategy around digital inclusion.

Alongside exciting partnerships with Discover Three and Google, Melville worked with the local authority to develop and deliver an innovative new model: the Digital Kitchen.

The aim of the Digital Kitchen was to assist tenants to improve their cooking and digital skills. These two skills are traditionally limited in low-income communities.

Over the course of six sessions, low-income adults were given the opportunity to learn the basics of digital skills on tablets, including setting up email addresses, downloading apps, finding recipe websites, health and wellbeing websites and looking at online shopping. This was mixed with learning to cook basic, cheap meals. The model, importantly, had a social element as well. It allowed adults from the community to come together in an interactive, practical setting and earn a context-based skill.

The final session acted as a fun, practical test of the skills they had attained throughout the course. Given a stock of ingredients, the participants had to use the web to find a recipe that they could follow to make a meal. This task neatly combined their learning and demonstrated an increase in self-efficacy.

Impact was measured through a baseline survey which was complemented by evaluations at the end of each session. Melville reports that feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and that participants felt they had improved their digital and financial capabilities.

A key point of learning for the project was the amount of preparation and planning required for successful execution. In their learning around general digital inclusion work, there seems to be a generational divide. Older people will engage digitally through interest (football and ancestry seemed to be successful ‘hooks’), and younger people seemed to engage more as a necessity of life (moving into the labour market, accessing Universal Credits, as examples).

The funding was sourced from within Melville’s own tenant participation budget and so fundraising was not an issue throughout.

Melville delivered the course for less than £500. By developing an interesting new model that combines two essential skills, the project could be easily replicated and adapted to local contexts. There could be potential for an intergenerational sharing of digital and life skills, if our participants saw the value of it.

Case Study Two: CLASP Digital

Based in Stevenston in North Ayrshire, the Community Led Action and Support Project (CLASP) is a community anchor organisation with similar functions and rationale to Langholm Initiative. Since 2017, they have led a successful digital participation project, CLASP Digital.

CLASP Digital grew from recognising a need among older people in the community to build their digital skills. Interest in the project has been large-scale locally, with 150 participants engaging in 1400 sessions.

By engaging people through different levels of skills (bronze, silver and gold), achievement can be celebrated and recognised.

The project works around a strong framework of adult learning based on the essential digital skills identified by SCVO. CLASP Digital’s project manager has adapted these to best suit the learning journey of the people that utilise the service and allows both the learner and tutor to track the progress made and identify areas of improvement.

The course operates with the help of volunteers who are trained using an adapted version of the SCVO Digital Toolkit. Since inception, 12 volunteers have been trained, some of whom have come through the programme themselves. There are six active volunteers who support learners on a one-to-one basis.

The key learning for this project has been understanding that group sessions are not always appropriate. People have varying needs while learning new skills and the key way to support this is through encouragement and development by working on a personal level. The project doesn’t have deadlines or a course lifetime; users are encouraged to spend as much time as they need with the project and this pace of learning is beneficial in empowering people to take control of their personal development needs.

There has been limited use of iPads and desktop computers bought by the project. A majority of the participants had their own technology that was their key motivation for taking part and learning new skills.

CLASP Digital is a best-practice project that looks at the individual learner, their needs and motivations, in a model that can be replicated and adapted to our area. Our aims are closely matched in increasing digital participation, and CLASP has provided confidence to us at Langholm Initiative that we can deliver community-level support to people in gaining essential skills.

"Scotland's workforce needs constantly changing skills, knowledge and capabilities to thrive in this **complex, ever-changing environment**"

Skills Development Scotland, *Skills 4.0: A skills model to drive Scotland's future*





reviewing the evidence

An important element of this project has been understanding digital skills models across the country through reviewing evidence provided by highlighted best-practice projects. The key focus was on a preponderance of evidence available for supporting essential skills learning.

Understanding reasons why people are offline is crucial in developing models that support change. There are three identified barriers to using digital.

- Confidence and motivation

The confidence and motivation to learn new skills is something which is unique to an individual. SCVO found that 64% of people who are not digitally active felt there was "nothing useful or interesting" for them. The evidence across a range of investigations (Age UK, SCVO, Good Things Foundation, ONS) found that in order to engage people in learning, there needs to be an area of personal interest to motivate them to take the first step and learn digital skills.

- Access and affordability

Technology is not cheap, and ongoing costs can be prohibitive for learners. One way to overcome this is to look at "digital hub" model in community spaces.

Libraries traditionally met this need but in the face of public sector cutbacks, it is not always possible to ensure access in this way. A digital hub model, while useful, would require significant capital investment. There is potential for community organisations and library services to work in closer partnership to meet this challenge.

- Basic digital skills

There is the cyclical issue that those who are least likely to participate in digital learning are those who most need access to digital service (particularly older people and lower-income families). Without an understanding of the basic skills required to participate digitally, they lose the confidence and motivation to learn.

With a broader understanding of the barriers that people face generally, the research has been useful in identifying "what works" around the country in digital participation.

Firstly, when designing a model the research demonstrates that "hyperlocal" provision is key. A service for local people, delivered locally, has been an important element in engaging people to learn.

It is also important that the model is informal and responds directly to the needs of learners. They need to be able to define their own development

journeys at a pace that works for them. By ensuring that they have control over what they are learning, their self-efficacy, confidence and empowerment will improve.

Successful projects have been collaborative, cross-organisational and integrated into pre-existing services. This allows organisations to share resources and create partnerships that benefit people. A key element of engagement is that the learning takes place in an informal, neutral place. Environment is a crucial factor in any learning experience and offering learners a familiar place will help boost confidence.

The quality of learning is important as well. A recurring theme in the research indicated that the tutoring needed to be intensive, individualised and informal. Particularly when working with older people, the key to ensuring participation is ensuring the learning is relevant, that it demonstrates the value of being online and that build self-efficacy.

While one-to-one learning works best for everyone, group sessions can sometimes inspire collective mentorship and building networks of support. However, group work may discourage those lacking confidence and motivation.

Jargon is a major issue within digital skills learning, and many people new to these concepts won't respond to its use. It is important to work closely with learners to ensure that jargon can be understood and explained when necessary.

Lapsing can be a persistent problem when ongoing support isn't offered to participants. This is one of the key rationales behind many digital inclusion projects not having a "course lifetime". A key method to prevent this is by empowering people to use the technology in their everyday life, not just during sessions.

Creating a broad path of internet use (allowing participants to explore the different uses of the internet aside from their initial interests) will prevent lapsing by constantly encouraging use.

On balance, the research demonstrates that the involvement of the learner in defining their own skills needs, providing intensive and individualised support and ensuring continued use is the best way to promote digital inclusion to people of all ages.

Models of best practice studied by this project follow the same ethos which has contributed to their ongoing success.



References:

Age UK (2018). 'Digital inclusion evidence review'.

Good Things Foundation (2019): 'Digital Motivation: exploring the reasons people are offline'.

Office for National Statistics (2019): 'Exploring the UK's digital divide'.

SCVO (2017): 'Tackling digital exclusion in Scotland'.



what do local people need?

As part of this work, we wanted to gather the views of local people and understand what the immediate local need for digital skills were.

Our informal research here had three specific priorities: the digital learning needs of older people, young people and businesses.

The digital needs of small businesses

Small businesses are the lifeblood of the rural economy. Langholm's small businesses must be resilient and adaptable to change as our economy is fragmented and isolated. In a digital age, it is essential that we provide high-quality and tailored support to the people that manage these enterprises to ensure longevity and success.

The Langholm Initiative has a key relationship with Business Gateway Dumfries and Galloway which has lasted many years, facilitating advice and support to people in one-to-one and group settings. Through this particular network and others that we have developed over time, we are in a unique position to respond to requests from our business community.

As part of this development plan, we asked local businesses what kind of digital skills they would be interested in learning more about. Their responses were varied and covered a

wide range of needs. Their individual needs are not necessarily unique to their business; rather there is potential to support several businesses at once via workshops and skills-sharing exchanges.

The needs identified by the businesses can be broadly categorised in the following terms:

Visual

Developing the capacity of the business and its employees/owners to create a meaningful visual presence online in a way that captures attention and generates engagement. The importance of developing high-quality images as a vehicle to promote a brand or product cannot be understated and in a competitive marketplace, small businesses particularly should take advantage of the free and instantly accessible tools that enable this.

Within this category, support for tools such as Snapchat, Instagram and photo editing were highlighted.

Technical

The ability to effectively manage your online presence and use it to your advantage is an important skill in ensuring a business is noticed.

Some of the enterprises we spoke to were keen to gain support in search engine optimisation and web development.

Engagement and sales

Tools such as Facebook and Twitter are great for engaging with customers and service users, meaning businesses are more accessible than ever before. It can be difficult to manage this without a working knowledge and keeping these platforms updated can be overwhelming. Within this category, people were interested in Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and eBay, and how to most effectively use these.

General skills

There was an interest from some people in general digital skills including Microsoft Office, general social media and GDPR.

Entrepreneurs, sole traders and the self-employed are in a strange position within their work: they do not have marketing departments, HR advisors or IT gurus that can step in and ensure effective management of the many systems that need to run smoothly. By building their skills and capabilities, we anticipate that we can lighten their load and help them grow.

Learning for young people

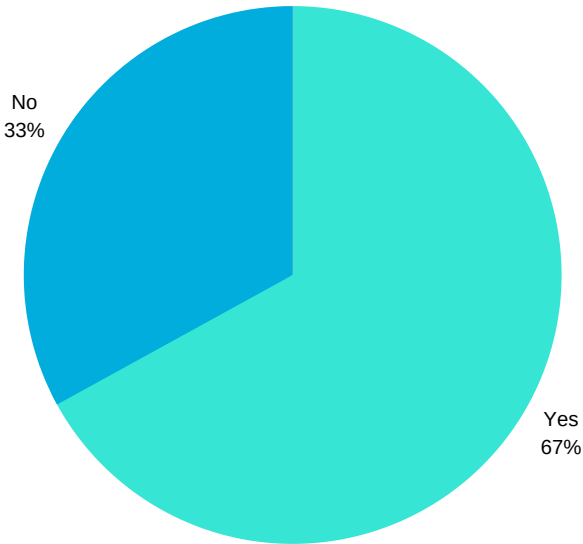
This project recognises the importance of adding value to the curriculum and broadening the experiences of young people so that they can make more informed and aspirational choices about their future. As noted in the Skills Development Scotland Regional Skills Investment Plan, we should be encouraging investment and development in high-value sectors so that the economy of our community and the wider southern Scotland is sustainable and resilient.

With this in mind, we asked a sample of 33 young people aged from S1 – S6 about what, if

anything, they would like to experience around tech and digital.

Within the results there is a significantly male-orientated gender split (61%), which may be reflective of the traditionally male-dominated STEM subjects. This will be an issue worth challenging as the project progresses.

The results were interesting: we asked if the young people felt they had enough opportunities in school to learn about technology, and 73% said they did. However, 67% of the same group said they would like more opportunities to learn about technology. This demonstrates a project such as this one could add value to the ongoing curriculum, and that digital skills and technology are subjects young people have an interest in learning more about.



I would like more opportunities to learn about technology. n=33

When we asked young people what they would like to learn about with regards to digital and technology, there was variety of responses including coding, programming, work experience, volunteering opportunities and careers days. The most interest was shown in creative applications (using technology to create arts projects – 52% of students said they would like to try this) and work experience opportunities (54% of students said this interested them).

Our understanding of this data is clear in that we need to have a joint role with local schools to provide opportunities for young people to raise their aspirations with regards to how digital can impact their career choices. It is evident that young people are considering their future work options, and combined with the expressed interest in creative arts there could be opportunities to provide activities that are creative, fun and engaging in order to give students a larger picture of how digital might be a career to pursue.

Essential skills for older people

With thanks to the Langholm Day Centre, we were able to take a closer look at the level of interest from older people in our community around essential digital skills. We distributed a survey to members which was based around the five essential digital skills (communicating, staying safe, transacting, problem solving, handling information) to effectively determine whether we would have an audience for promoting this project.

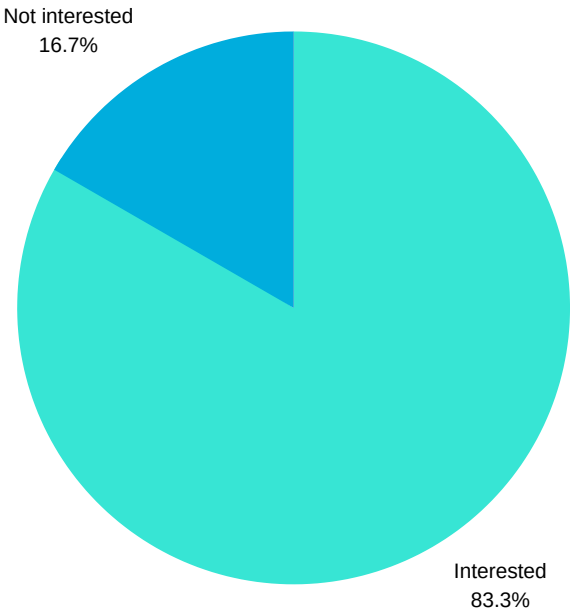
We received 18 returns, of which 84% told us they would be interested in learning more about computers, tablets and laptops and would attend informal sessions for support.

With regards to what interested the older people in learning about digital skills, staying safe online was a clear priority for them, closely followed by emails, Google and using in-built apps. There was also a smaller number of volunteers and staff that have requested more advanced support, such as spreadsheets and posters, which we can consider as part of wider provision within this project.

Our capacity as an organisation may limit the number of people we can work with at any one time. As a result, we feel that 15 positive indications for participating in an essential digital skills programme is enough to clarify that this work should be taken forward.



I would be interested in attending sessions. n=18





"The third sector should be supported to use its existing networks and **increase provision of relevant digital courses**"

House of Lords Select Committee on Digital Skills, *Make or Break: The UK's digital future*



our plan

This collaborative piece of work would not have been possible without the support of our valued contributors and partners. Our plan is reflective of the shared learning and inspiration we have taken from our research, and our understanding now of what works around the provision of digital skills.

In this plan, we present three key streams of work that we believe will help to strengthen digital skills in our community and meet our organisational goals of improving the physical, social and economic landscape of the valley, to be delivered in a one-year funded pilot.

Develop and operate an essential digital skills programme for older people.

By working collaboratively with learners and volunteers, we will launch a programme that helps to support older people to learn digital skills in an informal, relaxed and fun environment. We will work with Langholm Day Centre to encourage engagement and design and develop a volunteer training programme to take the work forward.

Our initial ambition for this project was to encourage employability for younger people through intergenerational work, and while this is still achievable, we recognise that with a limited audience of young people, volunteers of all ages should be accepted to participate.

We will work to encourage young people to participate as volunteers by linking in with employability services, including Dumfries and Galloway Council Employment TAP and Skills Development Scotland, as well as working with ongoing Duke of Edinburgh and Saltire Award students.

By supporting volunteers to lead sessions and continue the work, we will enhance social cohesion and interpersonal communication. The Langholm Initiative will, through this project, continue to be a key player in the community-wide employability development service and support volunteers with needs out-with that of the digital skills scope.

Encourage and inspire digital career pathways for young people through the provision of digital activities.

Developing opportunities for young people to increase their knowledge of all things digital is important in realising national STEM goals and filling the skills gap around digital in our region.

This project would connect high-quality learning experiences with young people through facilitating a number of engaging activities. These activities would consist of Digital Careers Days, extra-curricular learning around Micro:bits and Raspberry Pi, working

with artists to produce collaborative digital art, participating in ongoing holiday activity programmes locally, working in partnership with individuals and organisations from across Dumfries and Galloway to help young people understand the diversity of careers and opportunities in an exciting digital world.

Working with young people to raise aspirations and close skills gaps will involve tackling issues creatively, and working to build strong relationships with partner agencies. We would like to bring digital opportunities to all age groups in Langholm and the wider Esk Valley.

Support local businesses with their digital skills needs.

Small businesses are the lifeblood of our rural community. In a time of the truly global marketplace, the enterprises that support our community can struggle against competition from retail giants. While people are increasingly conscious of their shopping habits, including ethical consumption and quality over quantity, there is a recognised need to help our businesses grow their customer base and improve their capacity for digital.

What is clear is that they require advice with digital marketing and making the most effective use of social media. Social media is one of the most important outlets for engagement and allows people to be instantly seen.

We have a strong and varied network of partners and collaborators at Langholm Initiative which has allowed us to help businesses and individuals in our community for over 25 years.

In order to address this skills area, we will work with Business Gateway Dumfries and Galloway who provide a range of workshops on a broad variety of enterprise topics - including social media, websites and search engine optimisation.

We will also engage the local Digital Boost advisor from Dumfries and Galloway Council to work on a one-to-one basis when businesses request it. This has proven successful in the past.

In Langholm, we have a vibrant community of artists and creatives, often themselves entrepreneurs. We would like to utilise this bank of knowledge to create bespoke "Ask an Artist" sessions around graphic design and presentation to help strengthen brands and create confident, competent business owners.

Responding directly to the needs of our entrepreneurs here in Langholm will help to build sustainable businesses for the good of our area.





exit strategy

Sustainability for this programme will be a key element to lasting success for promoting digital skills in our area. The short-term funded nature of our work means we need to plan our resources and time well in order to create a positive legacy. We will do this through encouraging partnership working, providing skills and resources for the work to continue without our input and demonstrating the importance of the work to other organisations and agencies.

We have taken guidance and best practice from a number of sources including National Lottery and Intrac which will help us to establish a robust strategy for the future.

Our strategy therefore follows three key principles:

Ensure the work we do is sustainable through effective planning and consideration of the risks and opportunities.

We can do this by developing key strategic partnerships with other services and organisations who can support beneficiaries when our project is no longer operational. This would include embedding the importance of digital skills provision into services like Langholm Day Centre, demonstrating the

importance of digital learning in schools and youth work agencies and providing people and businesses with the skills they need to continue the outcomes we set out to meet. Through training volunteers to deliver essential digital skills workshops, we can plan ahead for the sustainability of these sessions to continue.

Demonstrate the impact of the work we do through engaging communication so that the importance and differences we make are not lost.

Our ability to share the message of the work we do will help to promote the efficacy of our programme, to ensure it continues to engage learners and volunteers. By inspiring people and organisations we can begin to embed a digital culture locally that will continue long after the project ends.

Effectively monitor our progress, and then transparently disseminate that knowledge to others.

The lasting legacy of this project will be the learning it will provide for us. This learning will be freely shared in a final project report which will set out clearly what worked for us, what we would have avoided and how the project can be implemented elsewhere. This will mean that the important work we have done over the lifetime of

the project will not be lost, and will serve as an opportunity for other organisations to take elements of the work and continue.

Our key partners in ensuring this will be Langholm Day Centre, local schools and small businesses.

The key goal of our strategy is to ensure that if and when our project ceases to operate, the beneficiaries do not lose the support they have been given so far. It will be important for project leaders to ensure the continuation or adaptation of services by demonstrating their importance and communicating the key learning to make any transition as smooth as possible.



timescales for delivery



January 2020

Funding realised, purchase equipment, marketing materials, finalised volunteer training

February 2020

Recruitment of first round of volunteers, commence volunteer training, start discussions on business workshops

March 2020

Begin to deliver EDS workshops, implement record-keeping for progress, compile activity list for young people sessions

April 2020

Deliver first business support workshop. First steering group progress meeting.

May 2020

Second business support workshop delivered. Begin delivery of activities at school.

June 2020

Six month report to funders and stakeholders. discuss summer holiday activities, group evaluation of EDS, volunteer evaluation and feedback session.

July 2020

Second steering group meeting, summer holiday workshops, future plan for EDS/exit strategy

August 2020

Deliver business support sessions in partnership, Digital Careers Day workshop planning.

September 2020

Deliver Digital Careers Day , plan for October holiday activities, second EDS evaluation

October 2020

Deliver October holiday activities, exit strategy planning , third steering group meeting

November 2020

Exit strategy in place and ready for implementation, final evaluation of activities in preparation for reports

December 2020

Final reports for funders and stakeholders written and distributed, message communicated via social media and celebration of success.

Building our digital future

How can we best support skills development in a digital age?

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The Langholm Initiative is a registered Scottish Charity SC041085

For more information on the Langholm Initiative, our projects and how to get involved with or support our work, visit our website:

www.langholminitiative.org.uk



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