SUFFOLK LIBRARIES

Connecting People at the Heart of Suffolk's Communities

Bruce Leeke, Chief Executive

SUFFOLK LIBRARIES

10 years OF

EXTRAORDINARY EVERYDAY

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DIGITAL ACCESS AND INCLUSION CONTINUES TO GROW… BUT WITH SIGNIFICANT GAPS IN COMMUNITIES

In 2018:

- The number of adults who had either never used the internet or had not used it in the last three months was 5.3 million people (or 10% of the adult UK population)
- The percentage of non-internet users in the East of England was 9%
- 20% of the population of the East of England did not have 5 basic digital skills
- 8% of the population of the East of England had zero basic digital skills

**Exploring the UK Digital Divide, ONS 2018*

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THE GAPS IN SUFFOLK

Extrapolating the 2018 ONS statistics, and relating them to Suffolk's population would give the following data:

68,512

people who are non-internet users

152,249

people who do not have 5 basic digital skills

60,900

people have zero basic digital skills

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LIBRARIES, DIGITAL ACCESS, AND INCLUSION

- Safe, neutral, and non-judgemental space

- Skilled staff and vast digital estate

- At the heart of every significant Suffolk community

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HOW WE HELP: FREE WI-FI AND PUBLIC ACCESS PC'S IN 2021-22:

79K
public computer sessions in 2021-22

51K
hours of usage in 2021-22

13K
instances where public computers were used for homework/study

11K
instances where public computers were used for job searching/ applications/CVs

5K
instances where public computers were used for universal credit applications

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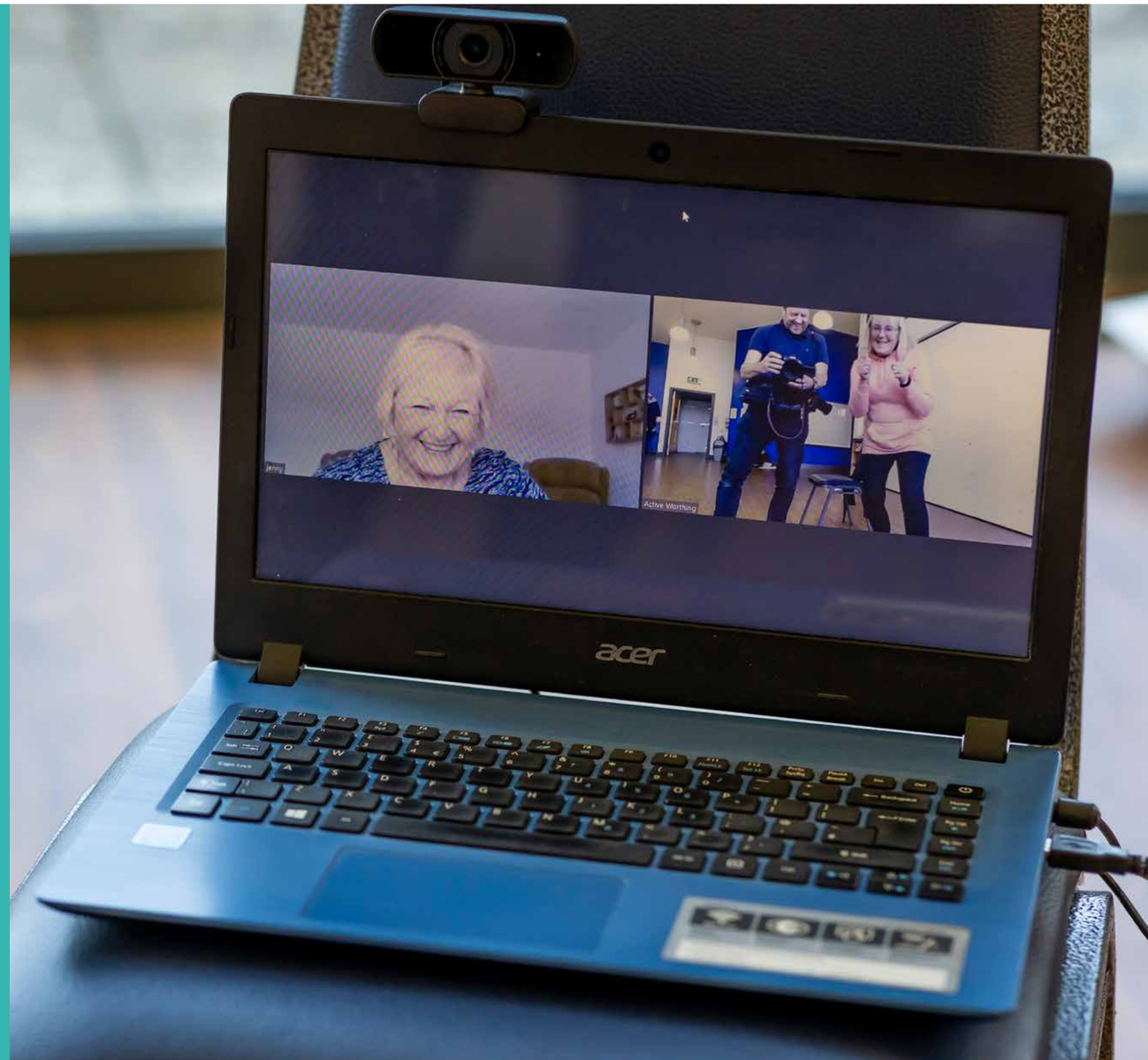
HOW WE HELP: OUTREACH

Fully equipped laptop and 4G dongle loanable for 2 weeks at a time:

- 650 regular users
- Lifeline during lockdowns when public buildings were closed

Babergh Mid Suffolk District Council Tablet Loans
- partnership with Babergh and Mid-Suffolk offering loanable tablets and some training at specific sites



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HOW WE HELP: SKILLS AND SUPPORT

- Staff team trained using Barclays Digital Eagles package
- Digital skills volunteers operating in several sites
- Colleagues who have become Digital Champions as part of SCC's programme
- Tea and Tech with Communities Together East Anglia

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HOW WE HELP: CONFIDENCE, EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AND THE BIGGER PICTURE

- Health Literacy Pilot Haverhill with Health Education England – project designed to engage people in the community and enhance their ability to access good health information
- New Chapters Wellbeing Service that offers a variety of emotional support through the library network – a service very much designed to build confidence and improve connectedness
- Financial wellbeing with Barclays. Money, Advice & Pension Service (MAPS) support and training

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CHALLENGES

- Lack of funding to increase join up with partners and grow capacity/offer
- Digitally excluded people can be hard to reach
- Making partnerships long term

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OPPORTUNITIES

- Captive audience (average of 650 people over 55 attend a Suffolk Libraries group every week)
- The power of the network and wide reach into communities, particularly traditionally hard to reach groups
- Skilled staff used to providing wraparound support that builds resilience and improves wellbeing
- Partnership and better join up

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ANY QUESTIONS?

SUFFOLK LIBRARIES AT THE HEART OF THE COMMUNITY

- Over 11,000 calls to the elderly and vulnerable during lockdowns
- In Dec 2021 digital borrowing had increased by 108% since 2019
- 378,824 web users every year
- In Dec 2021 overall borrowing had increased by 19% since 2019
- 1,200 active volunteers, providing 5,200 days of volunteering per year
- 50,000 visits to branches per week