

# The Ridge: Digital You

## A Digital Participation Charter Fund Case Study



↑ ‘Digital You’ is a hyper local and accessible service, that is embedded within the existing activities of The Ridge, a community based Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Here, Maggie McCole, Managing Director at The Ridge discusses the benefits of accessing SCVO’s Essential Digital Skills Toolkit, a sense of empowerment and community within the people ‘Digital You’ engages with, and how they are maximising the impact of the project in their ongoing activity.

“ ‘Digital You’ came about to help those lacking in the digital skills necessary to do day to day tasks online, often where an ‘offline’ alternative no longer exists. Imagine not knowing how, or being able to afford, to get online. The geographical, social, professional and financial isolation that a lack of digital skills creates for so many in society today. These are the people that ‘Digital You’ strives to reach.

SCVO's Essential Digital Skills Toolkit, especially the Checklist, proved useful for Digital You when introducing the idea of digital upskilling to new participants.

When 'M' was first introduced to the idea of upskilling digitally, we were met with a 'wall', a blanket - "I don't need the internet", "no use to me". Completing the Checklist was a big step for 'M' on many levels. It allowed him to see that he did have skills, that he would not be starting from ground zero and that there were areas on there that he WOULD like to know more about and that he could see the benefit of learning about. Working through our Digital You programme has validated and bolstered 'M's skillset and opened paths to further skills and a more resilient digital citizenship. It was important that we used the Checklist as a tool that allowed him to realise his own strengths and to see how he would like to take his digital journey forward.

Digital You helped people interact with others, breaking down barriers between themselves and others in the community.

Reaching out to those individuals that normally exist on the very edges of the community gave them a chance to connect that can lead to increased self-awareness, a sense of belonging and the ability to empathise with and relate to others within the community. Mitigating the effects of social isolation and loneliness.

**“**Gaining Essential Digital Skills proved to be empowering, allowing people to come together to share experiences and learn how to break down complex barriers of social isolation and exclusion which exacerbate mental health issues.

We were able to reach and provide support to local people, in particular those facing specific barriers like; unemployed males, those with a criminal justice background, those with mental health issues and care experienced people.

Moving forward and maximising impact; The Ridge is pursuing digital through many avenues.

**“**The funding from the Charter Fund has long reaching effects past the year. We have the devices to continue to help people who don't have access to their own hardware.

Haddington Citizens Advice Bureau ran out of funding to offer a digital service, so we have taken it on. We're using the same hardware that we purchased with Charter Fund funding, and hosting it in the local library. We have a volunteer who is running it who did Digital Champion training with SCVO, we provide flexibility and support to him so that he can dip in and out of it as he struggles with his mental health. He is just buzzing after computer club though, it's really fantastic for his self-confidence.

We were recently successful in attaining another bit of SCVO funding; the next round of the Community Capacity Resilience Fund which we will use for an Income Advice Worker, so she'll be using our hardware and weaving digital into the way that she offers income advice and income optimisation; helping people with their Universal Credit accounts, making them familiar with their computer, using the laptops... She'll then be able to refer anyone she encounters to the computer club or to our Digital Champions for some one-to-one if they need more help. So, we have almost put those two bits of funding together to maximise the impact.