

An aerial photograph of Durham, England, showing the River Wear flowing through the city. The River Wear is on the left, with a bridge crossing it. The city is built on a hillside, with a dense forest of green trees in the foreground. In the background, the Durham Cathedral is prominent, featuring a tall, dark stone tower. The sky is blue with some light clouds.

# Inspiring digital inclusion with Let's Get Digital Durham

A community-driven digital inclusion initiative delivered with the Home Office and Digital Unite, equipping volunteers and organizations with the skills to improve digital access and confidence across County Durham

**Client:** Home Office

**Region:** United Kingdom

**Industry:** Public Sector

**Client challenge:**

The Home Office wanted to tackle digital exclusion in County Durham – where many residents face barriers to accessing public services moving online – by building local digital capability through community networks.

**Solution:**

Capgemini and Digital Unite partnered with local charities to develop a Digital Champions Network in Durham, equipping volunteers with the skills needed to support sustainable, community-led digital inclusion across the county.

**Benefits:**

- Growing network of skilled Digital Champions providing sustainable digital inclusion support
- Fostered collaboration between 12 active community organizations (with eight more preparing to join)
- Residents gained the confidence and essential digital skills to access online services independently
- Inspire training event drove local momentum, with 50 participants and a 100% recommendation rate

The Home Office partnered with Capgemini and Digital Unite to tackle digital exclusion in County Durham through the Let's Get Digital Durham program. By developing a strong Digital Champions Network and working directly with local organizations, the initiative has expanded digital capabilities across the region. This community-led model is already improving confidence, skills, and access for residents while strengthening long-term resilience.

## Tackling digital exclusion in the UK

The Lloyds Essential Digital Skills Report (2024) estimates around 4 million UK adults lack the essential digital skills needed for everyday life. Durham ranks 12th most digitally excluded in the UK (DERI), with 14.2% of residents not using the internet versus a 7.8% UK average.

As services move online, people without access, skills or confidence risk being left behind. To address this, digital inclusion and local community upskilling form a core element of the Social Value commitments in Capgemini's contract with the Home Office (in place since December 2023) – focusing on creating employment and training opportunities for those facing barriers or living in deprived areas.

Let's Get Digital Durham was born from this Social Value work. Delivered with Digital Unite, a key digital inclusion partner of Capgemini, the program uses a train-the-trainer model through the Digital Champions Network. Local volunteers are equipped with practical tools and resources to help others build essential digital skills in support of social mobility and sustainable community development.

***“At Capgemini, digital inclusion is a cornerstone of our social mission. We believe in not only advancing technology but also making it accessible to everyone. Our commitment to this vision is demonstrated through this program, delivered as part of our Social Value initiative in partnership with the Home Office and Digital Unite. Together, we are incredibly proud to be transforming lives by bridging the digital divide.”***

**Gary Van Heerden,**

Home Office Account Director and contract lead at Capgemini

## Rolling out the Let's Get Digital Durham initiative

Implementing Let's Get Digital Durham involved three key elements, each aiming to embed digital inclusion into the foundations of the wider community network:

### 1. Hosting a Let's Get Digital Durham kick-off event

Capgemini and Digital Unite hosted the Let's Get Digital Durham kick-off event at Durham Town Hall, gathering over 80 participants to enhance digital inclusion methods.

During the event, attendees received Inspire training, developed by Digital Unite and Capgemini, to build confidence and readiness to help address digital inclusion. The training raises awareness of digital exclusion challenges, highlights the importance of digital skills, and motivates participants to take practical action by making pledges to support digital inclusion. This helped accelerate momentum for Let's Get Digital Durham and broadened the network of people and organizations benefitting from the initiative.

***“There's nothing quite as powerful as getting people together to share, listen and learn about things that are important to them. Today in Durham the energy was palpable. People came from all sorts of places, with all sorts of experiences; colleagues in local authorities, health, community and charity sector, as well as our corporate partners Capgemini.”***

**Emma Weston OBE,**

CEO of Digital Unite

### 2. Developing a community-based digital inclusion network in County Durham

Let's Get Digital Durham was developed by Capgemini with the support of a diverse network of partners and volunteers from across the region. We launched the program with five local organizations – Foundation for Good, Livin, The Fulforth Centre, West View Advice & Resource Centre and Building Self Belief – to train their staff and volunteers as skilled Digital Champions.



Since then, the network has expanded to include [Durham County Carers Support](#), [Aspire Learning Support and Wellbeing](#), [Shotton Partnership](#), [Blind Life in Durham](#), [Headway County Durham](#), [TCR Hub](#), and the [Newton Aycliffe Youth and Community Centre](#).

### 3. Recruiting and training Digital Champions to help residents build essential digital skills

The Digital Champions Network's recruitment and training is pivotal to the project and exemplifies a commitment to long-term, community-led empowerment.

Through Digital Unite's training platform, Digital Champions from partner organizations receive e-learning resources and tools for their community roles. The Digital Champions Network has 36 current users, including 15 active Digital Champions and 21 Project Managers. They support local community members through initiatives like hosting a Digital Café and assisting elderly residents.

### The immediate and ongoing impact of Let's Get Digital Durham

Let's Get Digital Durham is building a sustainable foundation for digital inclusion across County Durham. The program directly supports the Social Value commitments in our contract with the Home Office and has achieved the following:

- A network made up of 15 active Digital Champions and 21 project managers.
- 20 organizations registered; 12 currently live, with eight onboarding.
- 159 training hours completed by network members.
- 49 participants in Inspire training, with 100% of respondents recommending it.
- ~25% of the 1,300 people supported by Building Self Belief in 2025 received support that included a digital inclusion element – an increase since joining the Let's Get Digital Durham program.
- Residents, including the elderly, report improved confidence, online safety, and ability to access digital services.

Beyond the numbers, Digital Champions are gaining the knowledge, resources, and confidence needed to

identify and support people at risk of digital exclusion, strengthening local networks. These local experts are helping residents build practical skills so that they can use devices, navigate online platforms, stay safe online, and complete tasks like accessing services.

One Digital Champion said: "This has been an amazing experience. Not only have I gained more knowledge on being digitally inclusive, but it's enabled me to help people so that they feel digitally included and help them in all things digital! It means we get to do more, and we have access to wider opportunities! It has been really empowering to help people, in a very short space of time, overcome barriers that have been quite stressful and difficult for them to overcome as individuals."

Let's Get Digital Durham shows how community-led digital upskilling can tackle digital poverty and build long-term resilience. Next, the program will onboard a further eight organizations and continue supporting existing partners, bringing the network up to 20 organizations and exceeding the target of 17.

Let's Get Digital Durham has even been shortlisted as a finalist for the '[Dynamite Awards](#)' Skills Developer category, recognizing its strong commitment to advancing digital skills.

***"The 'Let's Get Digital Durham' program has been a huge benefit to our Building Self-Belief CIO. It has given us the opportunity to train our staff and also volunteers in aspects of digital learning that we would not have had access to otherwise. These skills have been a huge benefit to our community-based program across County Durham, including our 'Know Your Neighbors' program combatting digital isolation, and our 'Food & Fuel Poverty' and 'Energy Affordability' programs."***

**Peter Thomas,**

Founder, Building Self Belief

## About Capgemini

Capgemini is an AI-powered global business and technology transformation partner, delivering tangible business value. We imagine the future of organizations and make it real with AI, technology and people. With our strong heritage of nearly 60 years, we are a responsible and diverse group of over 420,000 team members in more than 50 countries. We deliver end-to-end services and solutions with our deep industry expertise and strong partner ecosystem, leveraging our capabilities across strategy, technology, design, engineering and business operations. The Group reported 2025 global revenues of €22.5 billion.

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