
REPORT OF THE
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR FOR SERVICE REFORM

TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

ON

Wednesday 3rd November 2021

TITLE: Customer Service – Post pandemic and Digital Inclusion

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Overview & Scrutiny Board note and support the work outlined in the report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This paper provides information on the council's Customer service offer within the localities; it provides information on progress of individual initiatives covering 3 main areas of focus:

Customer Services – Gateways/Spirit of Salford
BetterOff in Salford – Cloud Coffee and Chat and BetterOff in Salford Website
Digital You - Phase 2

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None

KEY DECISION: No

This report is to provide an update on:

- 1. Customer Services – Gateways/Spirit of Salford**
- 2. BetterOff in Salford – Cloud Coffee and Chat and BetterOff in Salford Website**
- 3. Digital You - Phase 2**

1. Customer Services – Gateways/Spirit of Salford update:

Gateways offer a range of public services under one roof in a friendly and welcoming environment. We have specially trained staff on hand to provide information, help and advice on a range of services. There are five centres across the city located in Broughton, Pendleton, Swinton, Eccles and Walkden. All have a mixture of services that are in addition to the city council. At the start of the Covid Pandemic and following Government Instruction, the Gateways closed its customer service reception desks.

On the 20 March 2020 our Digital, Data and Technology (DDAT) and Customer Services teams started to plan our humanitarian response to the Covid crisis. A decision was made that we had the skills and technology to build what would turn out to be lifeline to our most vulnerable residents in the city during the pandemic and beyond.

The Spirit of Salford Helpline was set-up to support customers during the coronavirus. The helpline and online referral system (CRM) were built and operational in 72 hours. This included enabling and equipping staff to be able to work from home and operate a virtual call centre.

The helpline is delivered by the Locality Service and managed by the Locality Service Manager, we have been providing support to customers online and over the telephone by:

- Taking incoming calls and completing a referral webform with customers
- Making outbound calls to our most vulnerable citizens (shielded) and completing a referral webform
- Receiving and mediating Spirit of Salford webforms completed online by customers
- Completing and facilitating automated referrals to appropriate support services
- Working closely with Elected Members and services on escalated and urgent enquiries

The Spirit of Salford Helpline is open Monday to Friday 8.30am - 6.00pm and Saturdays 9.00am – 13.00pm.

Spirit of Salford Helpline • Salford City Council

1.2 Current Services available through the SOS Helpline:

- Council Tax
- Benefits
- Salford Assist and emergency funds

- Social Well-Being including dog walking and shopping assistance
- Welfare Rights & Debt Advice
- Citizens Advice Salford
- Mental Health Support
- Public Health
- Digital Buddies
- Salford CVS
- Connexions
- Pregnant Mums
- Salford Credit Union
- Skills and Work
- Test and Trace Payments
- Housing and Homelessness

Since opening the SOS helpline, we have received 30,300 incoming calls, made 12,000 outbound calls to our most vulnerable residents across the city and delivered over 3,000 emergency food parcels.

1.3 Customer Feedback

- Really impressed – My mum and Dad received a welfare call today from the Spirit of Salford. It's a huge worry lifted for me to know they are not on their own.
- The shopping came in a taxi and a lovely young man brought it. He was lovely and asked me if there was anything else, she needed. I just want to say I can't believe how wonderful you are and how grateful I am for your help – I live in a brilliant city!
- Wow wow wow, amazing guys
- This is amazing, the help you guys have provided throughout the pandemic is unbelievable
- I am one of the people who has used the SOS line, the help that three of your teams have helped me with has been unbelievable. Me and my family will be forever grateful x
- When I needed someone to pick my food and prescription up because I was shielded, your team helped! It was a god send.
- The stuff you are all doing around digital inclusion is amazing. It is needed now more than ever. So proud to see Salford leading the way on this!
- Salford are leading the way forward...I have family that live outside Salford that do not get as much support as I do in Salford...truly blessed to be in Salford.
- I work for another local authority and this is brilliant what you have pulled together, true partnership working.

2. BetterOff in Salford – Cloud Coffee and Chat and BetterOff in Salford Website

During COVID-19 we have launched our brand-new cloud coffee and chat sessions. We're now offering face to face chats for customers to meet with a member of a locality team via video calls to replace the drop in BetterOff sessions usually held in our Gateways.

It's easy to do. If customers need help with rent or council tax, are struggling with money or simply don't know where to turn, we can help them become better off. Our advisors provide support on council tax, business rates and benefits or put customers in touch with a wide range of services that can help such as housing and health and well-being.

Other than having to make your own brew, it is just the same as the Gateway sessions except in the comfort of the customer's own home. This service has the bonus of offering a text type service that our advisors are happy to show the customer how to use.

Customers can book a 30-minute session with a local Gateway representative, choosing a date and time that's suits them.

Since the new service launched in June, we have helped 3,000 customers online with 100% customer satisfaction.

2.1 BetterOff Salford Website

BetterOff Salford is about helping residents become better off and helping them to help themselves. It's part of our plan to create a better and fairer Salford by tackling poverty and inequality.

Our new website, BetterOff Salford, is an easy way to find out if you're entitled to benefits and help you apply for them online. At the click of a button, you can also find jobs, childcare, and information on debt or money management.

Since 2018, the total potential customer monetary gain is 24 million, this figure is calculated on the basis that the customer applied for the relevant benefits / support.

3. Digital You update – Phase 2:

The pandemic has caused a seismic shift in highlighting the nations need for access to three main verticals - Kit, Connectivity and Skills. In Salford a clear target operating model has been created which harnesses the learning of Digital You and creates a clear role across the City.

In December 2020, the locality service recruited a full time Digital Inclusion Manager (Karen Snape) to help drive digital and social inclusion forwards and Digital Everyone was created. This section will explain what is happening as part of the roadmap:

- Digital providers network
- Digital Everyone Partnership Website
- Device Gifting Scheme
- Salford Schools Device Donation Scheme / GM's Tech Fund
- Community Calling Programme
- Young Persons Tech Committee (YPTC)
- Skills City in the Community

3.1 Digital provider's network

Digital Everyone has mobilised a 'movement' of organisations and projects with the capacity to engage digitally excluded residents and incorporate digital support into their service delivery, rather than seeing digital as a bolt-on. To help achieve this we have launched our Digital Providers Network, a network of digital partners and providers from across the public sector, voluntary and community sector as well as business partners. This network serves to jointly tackle digital exclusion and will work collaboratively to find solutions for our residents. The network provides readily available and ongoing digital support via our online centres that are placed in the heart of our communities

3.2 Digital Everyone Partnership Website - <https://digitalinclusion.salford.gov.uk/>

The Digital Providers Network have co-designed a new Digital Inclusion Partnership Website – a single front door for digital inclusion in Salford. The website aims to provide a hyper-local experience for customers and organisations who need digital information and support, the website will: -

- Feature events
- Promote projects
- Share good news stories
- Showcase what we have achieved
- Skills and Jobs Section
- Single space to access support to learn digital skills in the place where you live
- Marketplace for sponsors, gifts, and funding opportunities
- Blogs section
- Google Translate

The site showcases the great work that is happening across the city, it is an interactive space that can be updated instantly by members of the Digital Providers Network. We have collaborated with the network and listened to their requests as to what they would like to see on the website.

3.3 Results from the Digital Everyone Partnership Website:

3,285 users since it launched in April 2021

27,985 Website visits since it launched in April 2021

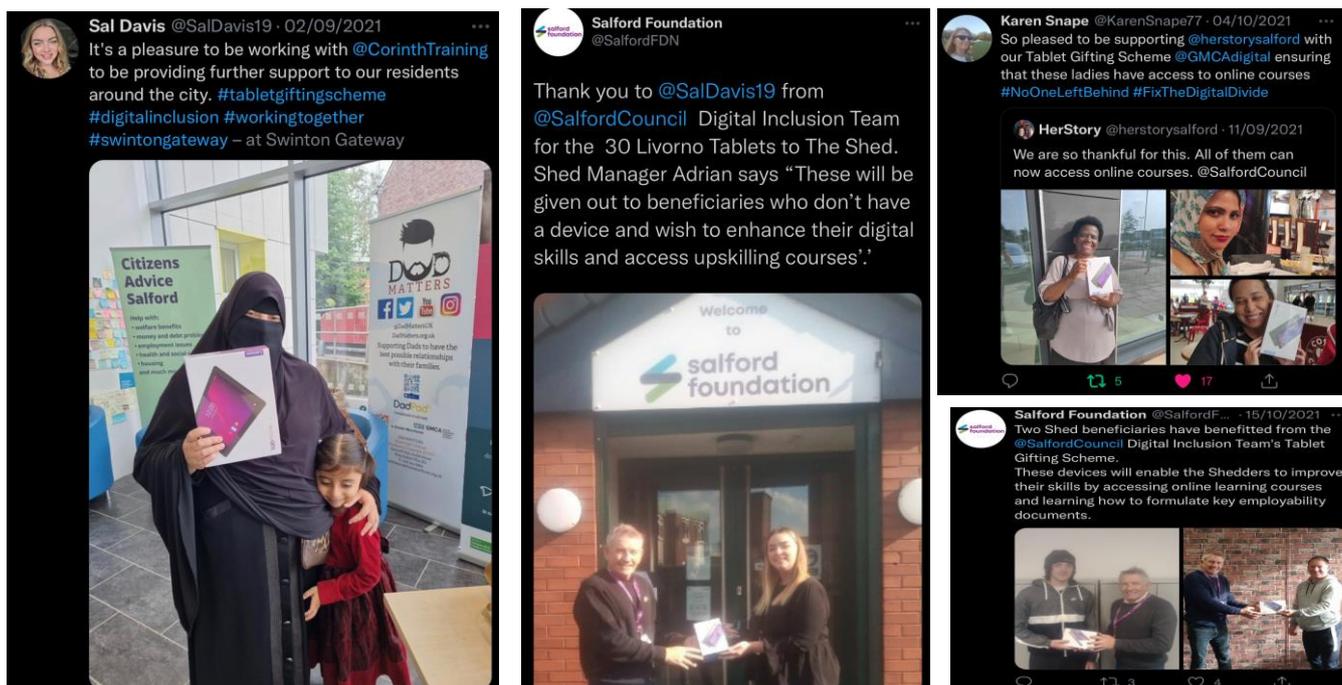
372 New Users in the last month

3.3 Device Gifting Scheme

Salford Digital Providers Network have secured £50,000 from Greater Manchester Combined Authority to fund a digital inclusion project in Salford. The network has agreed to purchase devices to gift to our most vulnerable and digitally excluded residents. Successful applicants will

receive a device and wraparound support to become comfortable, confident, and safe online. The scheme will gift 500 devices to support our most vulnerable residents to tackle social isolation and access to online services. The tablets will be gifted to digitally excluded residents in Salford, via an application process which will be panel approved by members of the Digital Providers Network.

Online applications have been made via Salford Council Website by the individual and referrals have also been made by members of the Digital Providers Network. Once the applications are approved, applicants are contacted to arrange collection of devices and a support package. The scheme was launched In March 2021 and so far, 277 devices have been gifted.



3.4 Salford Schools Device Donation Scheme / GM's Tech Fund

Salford is supporting the GM's Tech Fund and assisting in the distribution of donated devices to Salford Schools. Salford have also set up a direct donation scheme for businesses that would like to donate direct to Salford. The scheme has been shared via social media and to our businesses network which has resulted in several direct donations in Salford. The scheme was launched earlier this year and so far we have received 96 donated devices.

3.5 Community Calling Programme

The Community Calling programme is a mobile device donation scheme, working with a charity called Hubbub who have partnered up with O2 to offer a mobile device donation scheme. Old smartphones are donated to the scheme and are data-wiped and then re-circulated (free of charge) into the community. There are five drop off and collection points across the city in all our gateways/hub. Each successful applicant will receive a mobile device plus 12 months of

unlimited calls and messages and 6gb of data per month for 12 months. Wraparound support will be provided to ensure that the successful applicant can use the device to communicate, transact and keep safe online.

Salford Council are working on upscaling donations into the scheme with an agreement being made with Hubbub that any donations made to Salford will be recirculated into Salford. We will be promoting both internal donations from Salford Council Employees and external donations from both members of the public and local businesses. The scheme launched earlier this year and so far we have received and recirculated 30 phones.

3.6 Young Persons Tech Committee (YPTC)

Working with the Youth Service, Digital Everyone has recently established a Young Persons Tech Committee. The fortnightly group enables young people to have a voice in tackling digital exclusion in our city and shape our services. The chair of the YPTC also attends the Digital Providers Network ensuring that young people have a representation at these meetings. We are working with our YPTC to create five technology spaces in each of our gateway/hub localities, bringing access to tech in the community.

3.7 Skills City in the Community:

Working with IN4 at the Landing as part of the kickstart programme, Skills City will operate a comprehensive carousel of digital and technology careers education, working with young people and adults from disadvantaged and underrepresented communities showcasing the entirety of digital and technology futures, aligning skills with knowledge and tailoring personality and passion to career choices.

The Gateway network will be working with IN4 to develop taster sessions that will be delivered in the Gateways. Taking Skills City into the community will enable us to reach, on board, and recruit individuals that previously would not have had fair access. This is in addition to several digital inclusion initiatives that take place locally in our gateways.

Learners will receive development across 6 core areas:

- Cyber
- AI and Machine Learning
- Immersive XR
- Cloud and IoT
- Software Engineering
- Creative Digital Media

4. Recommendations:

That the Overview & Scrutiny Board note and support the work outlined in the report.

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