How we've helped

3 August 2022   *Ben Tuppen*

Introduction

Whilst we're working on our formal evaluation and case studies, I hope these stories help bring the Getting Oxfordshire Online project to life when promoting with your communities.
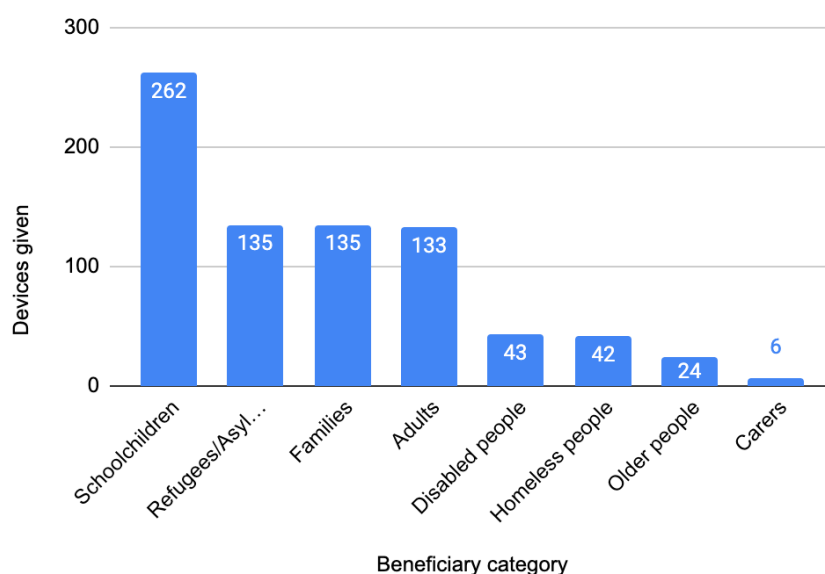
Headlines

Since we got up to speed in September 2021, we've donated 829 devices to good causes, averaging 75 devices / month, a number we're working hard to double in the coming months!

You can see in the chart below that our first focus when we started mid-pandemic was working with schools to help schoolchildren who had no access at home. We have also worked closely with Asylum Welcome and other refugee charities, supporting new arrivals from Afghanistan and more recently Ukraine. As we build our relationships with local charities and community groups, we're seeing growth across all the other groups we are supporting, including helping vulnerable adults find work, families and individuals access core services such as benefits or online banking, and providing volunteer support via the Connect! service to help those who need additional training to be effective and safe online.

Beneficiaries

(Chart: Devices given vs. Beneficiary category)

- Schoolchildren: 262
- Refugees/Asyl…: 135
- Families: 135
- Adults: 133
- Disabled people: 43
- Homeless people: 42
- Older people: 24
- Carers: 6

Examples

Here are some examples of individuals we've helped.

Individuals

AF, an isolated SOFEA larder user who had not used a computer before, was given a device as well as basic training from the SOFEA team. He now eagerly returns each week to show them his latest YouTube discovery and explain how it has opened a whole new world to him.

DH was referred to the Connect! service for Volunteer support. His only device was an old-style Nokia phone. We upgraded one of our laptops with the necessary components to work with a Vodafone 6-month-free SIM card so he had everything he needed to get started, and the Connect! team were booked in for a 1:1 support volunteer to meet him and help him learn to use everything. He explained that he was out of work, had recently got into debt from a friend after a misunderstanding about benefits payments, run out of money for food, and before he received our call earlier in the day to say that the laptop was ready to collect, he was considering taking his own life. This device and support represented an opportunity for him to turn his life around. He talked of the struggle trying to find and apply for jobs at the library where there was now a 30 minute limit on accessing their machines, not enough time to. He also explained he'd tried local group training sessions but had found they were too busy to be able to learn and he was getting stuck. As this was with the SOFEA team, we introduced him to the community larder and explained their offer of cheap food, and that there was a chance he could start on a free deal whilst he got back on his feet. This was a rewarding example of how much difference can be made by working in partnership, supporting people with their individual, complex challenges.

UA, a refugee, now settled for four years, who was just-about making ends meet teaching French lessons. Since COVID, she was using her smartphone to teach on video calls, despite it having a badly smashed screen. We provided her with a laptop which transformed her ability to teach and interact with her students, as well as being of use to her two primary-school-age children for their education (see her testimonial below).

CG, a vulnerable older woman who was being supported by citizens advice to settle in the UK after many very difficult years abroad. She had no internet access and the laptop we provided enabled her to start writing again, which had been her profession and passion, as well as letting her seek work.

Community projects and groups

Our devices have enabled these groups to set up new digital training and support programmes.

Digital Donnington run by Donnington Community Centre are using 5 laptops to run training sessions to build confidence with older people.

Oxford Asian Woman's Voice are using 4 laptops and supported by a Connect! volunteer to work with vulnerable women in the Rose Hill area of Oxford to build online skills to help them integrate fully in the community.

Cottsway Housing are using 10 laptops to offer a loan scheme and digital skills workshops for vulnerable people in their housing, to support with job-seeking, with the aim that once people have found a job, they will be able to buy their own device and be proud to return the loan one to support someone else.

Partners and Programmes

We are building relationships with many partners who refer multiple clients, including Oxfordshire Mind, local housing authorities, citizens advice, NHS mental health services and numerous local community groups. Here are some examples where partners have put particular programmes in place beyond giving individuals devices.

Asylum Welcome we work with their team to run their in-house laptop scheme, helping them securely wipe and refurbish donated devices and providing parts. This supports Asylum Welcome clients when they arrive in the country, to help them access crucial government services and get set up in the country. The laptops are also valuable for ongoing support to help people make the most of their online life once they're settled in the UK, working with the AW team to help them with training and jobseeking, for example.

When the allies retreated from Afghanistan, we pushed for laptops and phones to be provided for Afghan refugees as they arrived in the county. We prioritised smartphones as our first devices. The difference these made to vulnerable women in particular, was extraordinary, isolated in a hotel, or worse, stuck in a room with an abusive partner. These phones (which we provided with 6-months free voice and data from Vodafone) were an absolute lifeline to family and friends, wherever they were in the world. The Asylum Welcome team were also grateful to be able to work in partnership when their team was extremely stretched responding to this sudden influx of asylum seekers.

We have continued working with AW to provide devices and connectivity to arriving Ukrainians. In particular, the SIM cards to let them use their existing phones in the UK with six months free have been an important service. Both through AW and through direct connections with local host groups, we are continuing to see high demand from Ukrainian arrivals.

Adapt Oxford provide housing and support to people recovering from addiction, and we provided desktop computers so each house has internet services available, as well as laptops to individuals who were progressing, enabling them to complete courses and work towards their career.

Oxford Community Action bring together a diverse group of local communities in East Oxford, supporting people in need with food, education and initiatives for children and families like summer camps and scouts. Their principle of community support has helped them find those people who aren't asking for help, for example letting single parents at the food bank know that they could have a tablet or laptop for their children. During their summer camps, they run treasure hunts for the children where some of the prizes are laptops or tablets. A life changing prize for a digitally excluded family!

Testimonials

The Oxford Academy: "We were delighted to receive 32 reconditioned laptops in November from Getting Oxfordshire Online. This enabled us to give students devices to work on at home, who previously were working on their mobile phones, and in some cases had no devices at all. For example, we gave devices to a family who had only recently moved to the country who were facing considerable financial difficulty. We also were able to provide devices to some of our 6th formers who previously needed to complete their work at school only. All our homework is set on a platform called google classroom which enables students to access work and communicate with their teachers. The devices were also extremely valuable during a period of remote learning to enable students to access the live learning lessons - We're grateful to work in partnership with our community to support our learners."

Wroxton Church of England Primary School: "We have received 10 laptops via this scheme. The process was efficient and simple. The laptops will be used within school to support children with their learning across the curriculum - receiving these laptops for our school has been truly beneficial. Being a small village school we have an extremely tight budget. Our current laptops are over 6 years old and many are no longer working. Receiving these means we will be able to continue to cover the computing curriculum whilst also supporting children in other curriculum areas."

Didcot Girls School: "I am the Deputy Safeguarding Officer at a school in Oxfordshire and I requested two devices to help young people that we support in school; one who is a Child We Care For and the other student is in receipt of Pupil Premium. These devices have been invaluable to support these young people, particularly when there are occasions due to Covid-19, that lessons are having to be provided remotely. As a school, when remote provision is having to be accessed, this is being provided through Teams and now both students can access these with no issues. We also use online learning platforms, such as Hegarty maths and Satchel:One, where they can now work from at home without any difficulties. As a school, and the two students themselves, are exceptionally grateful for these devices so that they can access their education and to be able to support them to reach their full potential."

Asylum Welcome: Thank you so much for the donation of five great quality Dell laptops, via Getting Oxfordshire Online. These will be a huge help in our support of Refugees and Asylum Seekers.

We will use two of them for staff members who currently have very old, unreliable computers. This will help them to support a number of clients, especially those who we are helping remotely via zoom.

The rest will go directly to clients, many of them currently living in the Asylum hotels across Oxfordshire. These are life-changing for the recipients, providing a link to the outside world, letting children do homework and access online learning, helping adults access education and training (including our zoom support) and apply for work.

Thank you very much again for your generosity and support.

Refugee direct feedback: Dear Get online service, Asylum Welcome team, and my dear Mentor, I cannot say how much I appreciated the laptop you generously gave me yesterday!

It was a shock when my machine broke during my emergency move, I struggled for a few months to finish my work on time with my mobile phone, and with your help, I managed to tutor French this morning while typing some notes :)

Thank you for welcoming me, Mr Ben Tuppen and your co-worker who kindly spent time to get my new laptop started with his useful tips!

Laptop donation criteria

What we are looking for

We are looking for laptops that can run Windows 10 or Chrome OS. Most laptops made in the last seven to eight years are capable of this.

Signs that a laptop might be suitable for use in our project include the following:

- It was purchased with Windows 7, 8 or 10 installed. There will often be a sticker on the bottom of the laptop (sometimes it is inside the battery compartment) that states the Windows version, for example:
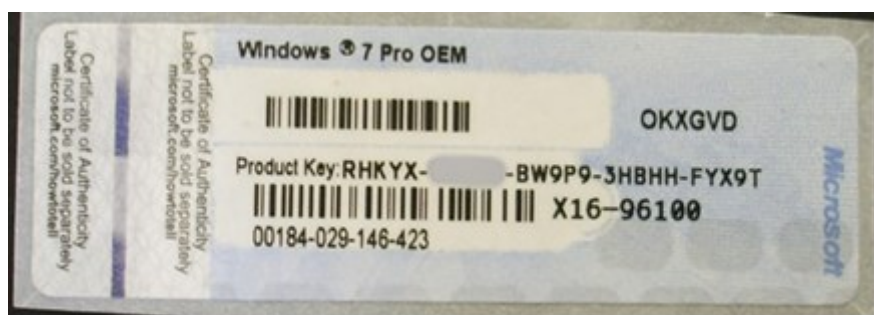
- It has 4GB of RAM or can be upgraded to this level.
- It has a minimum dual-core Intel or AMD CPU (e.g. Intel Core i3, i5, i7 or AMD A4, A8, A10).

This information can be found by following these steps.

- In the bottom left-hand corner of your screen type 'PC' in the search bar.
- Click on the 'PC' app.
- On the next screen right-click on 'This PC' icon and select 'Properties'.

This should show details of your processor and the amount of RAM installed.

We can only accept machines in full working order, complete with power cable and working batteries. Ideally the machine should be capable of booting to a Windows login screen. All devices donated to the project will be securely wiped as part of the refurbishment process. We also provide instructions for individual donors to perform a factory reset on their devices before donation, which we encourage where possible.

If you are not sure whether a laptop is suitable or not, please email photos which include any labels on the top and bottom of the machine to john@aspireoxford.co.uk at Aspire in Oxford, or lorraine@sofea.uk.com at SOFEA in Didcot, and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

We can also use Apple Macs of a similar vintage and condition, and recent Chromebooks. Please contact us if in any doubt.

We can potentially accept corporate donations of machines without hard drives, as we are aware that some donors have confidentiality requirements that mean they cannot risk transferring data outside their organisations.

Thank you for your donation!

What we're looking for

- Laptops up to 12 years old (Windows 7 or later and all "unibody" Macs)
- Tablets up to 10 years old
- Phones up to 6 years old (including iPhone 5s or later)

We can fix minor faults (failed disks or batteries, missing chargers, damaged keyboards or screens). If in doubt, please email a photo and a few details of the device to hello@gettingoxfordshireonline.org or call your local hub and we'll confirm it'll be of use to us.

All set to donate?

Please read and sign to confirm you are ready to donate (or call your local hub if you have any questions):

- You own the device and have authority to donate it to us.
- Upon donation you will no longer have right of ownership.
- As well as donating it to good causes, you understand that we may sell your device to raise funds.
- The device, as far as you are aware, poses no safety or ongoing legal issues.
- You have removed and/or backed up any personal data. (We will wipe all data upon receipt.)
- **Smartphones & tablets**: you have factory reset it to release it from your Google / Apple account.
- **Phones**: you have cancelled any contracts and/or removed your SIM.
- **Computers**: you have removed any enhanced security (BIOS, EFI or Firmware passwords, for example)

Donor Signature _____ Received by _____

Please provide these contact details in case we need to speak to you to unlock your device:

Date		Collection hub (if applicable)	
Donor name		Address (incl. Postcode)	
Phone number		Email address	

Where did you hear about the GOO initiative? _____

Device details

Please continue on the reverse if necessary

Quantity	Device	Notes