

Digital Enablement of the Third Sector in Leeds

1. Introduction

Digital enablement refers to the use of digital technologies to achieve predefined objectives or goals. Drawing upon recent examples of digital work within the Third Sector and citing current strategic drivers, this paper provides a case for the development of a cohesive digital strategy which recognises and addresses current inequities faced by the Third Sector. With a particular focus on digital integration of the Third Sector, as a means of achieving sectoral and broader system objectives, the paper provides an update and refresh on a draft document shared with city leaders in May 2021.

This paper highlights progress and learning to date, and exposes significant risk factors imposed by a lack of support around digital enablement within the Third Sector.

2. Background

Across the Covid-19 pandemic, the Third Sector in Leeds has demonstrated its reach, strength, dynamism and impact in numerous ways; engaging and communicating with people and communities who experience the greatest inequalities, proactively attending to the needs of vulnerable and socially isolated people and delivering support and essential resources to people who are shielding.

“The VCS has always been a key player in the public health system, and this is even more evident in the current situation. They are often closer to and better at connecting with marginalised groups than other sectors and are ideally placed to implement more community-centred approaches. Their role in reducing health inequalities is essential. National charities and larger VCS organisations support the vital work of local organisations by helping to co-ordinate efforts across the sector.”, [Professor Jane South, Public Health England](#)

The pandemic has stimulated significant digital developments across the health and care system, and highlighted the key role of digital in meeting the health, care and broader social needs of people and communities in Leeds. Three streams of digital work within the Third Sector have come to the fore throughout this period. These are:

- 1) **Translation of core activities** to the digital world (e.g., provision of support purely through digital platforms or in a hybrid way, rather than face to face).
- 2) **Digital inclusion** – Providing access to digital devices and networks and promoting knowledge, skills and confidence to use digital tools for new and existing activities.

- 3) **Digital integration** – Work which seeks to open up existing digital systems to the third sector, underpinning joined up local and citywide partnership work, as part of the #TeamLeeds approach and broader proposals outlined in the government’s white paper [‘Integration and Innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all’](#)

The aforementioned work has emerged in parallel with significant change within the health and care system. The publication of the Health and Care Bill in July 2021 and the proposed introduction of Integrated care systems (ICSs) at regional level and Place Based partnerships at city level, will bring together providers and commissioners of NHS services with local authorities and other local partners (including the Third Sector) to plan, co-ordinate and commission health and care services as a means of joining up services and improve population health outcomes.

Structural changes, within the established health and care system provide opportunities for more cohesive eco-system of care provision between statutory and Third Sector providers. It also poses challenges for the sector; with a need to develop and adapt infrastructure and models of working to engage and connect with new structures and statutory partners. System change arrives with the backdrop of growing need within communities, challenges around financial sustainability of service provision, and broader organisational and [sector resilience](#).

In order to sustain momentum, and maximise the impact of recent developments, there is a need to produce a coherent and coordinated shared plan for digital, that embraces the diverse Third Sector in Leeds and recognises its assets, disparities and vulnerabilities.

3. What is the Third Sector?

The Third Sector in Leeds is broad and diverse, ranging from large organisations delivering ‘direct care’ embedded and integrated into the established health and care system (e.g. St. Gemma’s Hospice, St. Anne’s, Touchstone and Community Links), to local community anchor organisations with incomes below 500K, providing essential support within localities; to grassroots groups which provide invaluable support to people and communities, but have little or no funding and may operate outside of the established health and care system.

Approximately three quarters of organisations working in the VCSE sector (77%, 1,180) in Leeds have impacts contributing to wider determinants of health. Of these, around 170 registered VCSE Organisations (approximately 11% of registered organisations) have purposes directly relating to physical and mental healthcare services. State of the Sector Report, 2020

While Third Sector organisations across the spectrum have an integral role to play in meeting health and care challenges, homogenising the sector should be avoided. The sectors strength is in its diversity and separation from statutory organisations, but also how it can work with the broader system. The benefits of embracing this diversity can be seen throughout the Local Care Partnerships, within which the Third Sector plays a vital role in the planning, and delivery of cross LCP programmes of work such as Population Health Management (Frailty),

LCP specific projects such as Seacroft’s Domestic Violence and connecting primary care to Third Sector provision through the Linking Leeds Social Prescribing Service.

In the context of this paper, the label ‘Third Sector’ is used throughout, however the points raised will not be reflective of the sector as a whole.

4. A Case for Digital Enablement of the Third Sector

Digital enabling the Third Sector is a priority not just for the Third Sector, but the broader health and care system, and a corner stone of achieving the city’s ambition of Leeds as ‘*a caring city for people of all ages, where people who are the poorest improve their health the fastest.*’

Digital enablement provides a means of strengthening connections between people and services, strengthening connections between organisations working to keep people well and helping create a ‘one health system’ with integrated services, with people at the heart of conversations. The rationale for improving digital capabilities of the sector is seen and heard at strategic and operational levels, as articulated below.

4.1. People’s Perspective

We know having a joined-up system, where there is ‘no wrong door’ improves peoples experience of care; it means information around [accessibility needs](#), prior diagnoses, contact with services and health and care preferences established through ‘better conversations’ can be shared with colleagues in other parts of the health and care system. But, we also know this doesn’t always happen, and when people share information with Third Sector providers there is rarely a secure mechanism to feed this into service delivery in other parts of the health and care system.

“The less I have to repeat myself to professionals when I am unwell the better – I’d like the info to be shared to help people talk to me better and create an accurate picture of my mental health needs too.”

[Current or past user of mental health services in Leeds](#)

With essential information being shared between providers, people have more time to talk with professionals about the things that matter to them. They are able to have more progressive conversations with professionals, with the assurance that each professional contact has an understanding of the persons priorities and the portfolio of support already in place.

4.2. The Third Sector Perspective

Third Sector providers of health and care services offer support and care to some of the most vulnerable people and marginalised communities within Leeds. Third Sector

colleagues have highlighted the challenges of advocating for and practically supporting people and communities without information sharing mechanisms being in place. The quotations below provide two examples of the impact this has on organisations and the people they support.

“Several times when I visited our client, her health was so bad, that I insisted on contacting her GP for them to carry out a home visit. Our client was becoming increasingly frail and underweight. When I tried to gain any information from her GP about who was involved in her care, I was told again due to Data protection that the information was limited. “

Third Sector Provider

“We have often been concerned that our lone worker may walk into a Safeguarding situation that could have been avoided had we have had access to vital risk information.”

Third Sector Provider

With information sharing mechanisms in place, which include appropriate Third Sector providers of care and support, colleagues in the sector have stated that they would be able to:

- Generate a better understanding of the individual’s health and care needs
- Be able to make more appropriate referrals based upon access to accurate clinical diagnoses and pre-existing contact with services.
- Deliver support with a better understanding of any safeguarding issues, in a way which mitigates risk to service user and deliverer.
- Develop joined-up care plans, with partners, which are built around the needs of the individual.
- Work more efficiently with colleagues in other parts of the health and care system and reduce pressure points, such as within hospital discharge, when they occur.
- Use staff time in a more efficient way which avoids duplication of work and is aligned to each individuals care needs.
- Support people to better manage their own long term health conditions.

4.3. Strategic Drivers and Enabling Factors

Transformation plans put forth by NHS England, within the white paper ‘Integration and Innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all’ and subsequent legislative changes proposed within the Health and Care Bill published 6th July 2021 have driven forward integration plans. Plans for ‘place-based’ working, sitting under an Integrated Care System (ICS) focusing on joined up, strategic commissioning to achieve population outcomes have been developing at pace.

Within Leeds, this proposed way of working has been in development in advance of national plans through a range of health and care strategies, which have sought to maximise access

to Third Sector assets across the city. While the role of digital varies considerably in these plans, the strategies share common objectives of greater involvement of the Third Sector in health and care planning and delivery.

Some of the key strategic and transformation plans underpinning this vision include:

Leeds Health and Wellbeing Strategy: While the Health and Wellbeing Strategy was developed within a different context, the aspirations still feel current. Linked to the digital inclusion work the plan references 'maximising the benefits from technology' as one of the 12 priority areas. The plan also references a vision of 'one city...everyone plays a part' in which we 'make best use of community assets and leadership to create local solutions', both of which form key components of broader integration agendas

The City's Left Shift Blueprint (and the Healthy Leeds Plan) developed by NHS Leeds Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), the Left Shift Blueprint offers a strategic framework for more integrated and coordinated working across the health and care system, bringing in matters linked to both digital inclusion of people and digital integration of systems. For example, a paper previously presented at the Partnership Executive Group (PEG) on the Blueprint, highlighted a number of enablers under a theme of digital, including:

- Broadband available to all communities and health and care teams across the City
- Supporting the population to be IT literate, potentially providing some populations with IT equipment to support self-care.
- Ensuring health and care staff have mobile technology to access care records when working in the community and to be able to input into them.
- Consistent IT platforms for virtual appointments, MDT meetings and other cross system meetings.
- A consistent care record across agencies that allows all health and care professionals to both view and input information.

Shaping Our Future : NHS Leeds CCG's innovative Shaping Our Future programme has been developed in response to the national and local direction of travel towards more strategic commissioning for population outcomes. Forum Central has been commissioned to support Leeds CCG by carrying out a scoping exercise to better understand the transitional infrastructure required to ensure a wide range of Third Sector organisations in Leeds are able to become equal partners in the new approach. Stakeholders within the scoping exercise highlighted the following conditions relevant to this work, in which the plans could thrive:

- Empower through intelligence and technology – utilising data to ask the right questions, having inbuilt feedback loops to check what they are doing is right
- Effective leadership that is long term and strategic
- Effective leadership that offers co-ordinated approach across health and care
- Develop people and organisations – invest in facilitation, shared resources, governance, information
- Shared risk between public sector and third sector organisations

Community Mental Health Transformation: The Community Mental Health Transformation Programme is a partnership of NHS organisations, community and voluntary sector, Adult Social Care and service users and people with lived experience coming together to transform how primary and community mental health services are currently organised and delivered.

The programme articulates a vision to 'Create a radical new model of joined-up primary and community mental health that responds to local people's needs and removes barriers to access, so that people can:

- Access care, treatment and support as early as possible
- Live as well as possible in their communities

Harnessing the Power of Communities (HPoC): At both Leeds and West Yorkshire and Harrogate level the HPoC Transformation programme seeks to embed the third sector across all areas of activity through both inclusion and investment. Stated aims for the programme include the implementation of the Five Year Forward View and NHS Long Term Plan ambitions to join-up community services, through which digital surely plays a key role.

Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust: Third Sector Strategy: Locally, LCH have developed a third sector strategy in collaboration with Forum Central and broader third sector partners. The strategy includes a number of priorities relevant to the Digital Inclusion and Integration agendas including:

- Utilising the third sector expertise in understanding and tackling health inequalities to help improve the health of the poorest the fastest.
- Developing integrated working and co-delivery between LCH and the third sector that recognises the collective role in achieving the ambition of left shift
- Championing a 'one health and care system' where infrastructure is aligned to enable all partners including the third sector to contribute successfully

Operationally, streams of work including the rollout and ongoing development of the **Local Care Partnerships** (LCPs), the CCGs Community Mental Health Transformation, Social Prescribing, and the city's Frailty Programme and developing work on Health Inequalities provide opportunities for implementation of overarching strategies referenced above. .

5. Progress to date

The pandemic has stimulated significant developments across the broad field of digital within the third sector. This has gone hand in hand with pre-existing work aiming to support joined up working with the third sector through digital integration as part of broader integration plans.

5.1. Translation of core activities

Across the pandemic, Third Sector organisations within Leeds have adapted their support offer in tune with guidance and good practice. The benefits and challenges for the sector were explored in [‘The New Different’](#) project delivered by Forum Central.

5.2. Digital Inclusion:

In mid-2020 [Healthwatch Leeds](#), and the [People’s Voices Group \(PVG\)](#) published the [Digitising Leeds](#) reports and updated this in October (see here). Collating information captured through a range of different methods and sources the report highlighted the experiences of the people of Leeds throughout the move to digitised health and care support and provision during Covid-19.

Findings from the report illustrate the need to take a nuanced approach to digital, which recognises inequalities within communities, the barriers faced and the accessibility requirements of different people and groups in Leeds - “Digital is not a “one-size fits all””.

Since the publication of the first Digitising Leeds Report, a number of third sector led groups and workstreams have emerged with support and guidance provided by Leeds City Council’s [100% Digital Leeds](#) team, these include:

- [The ALaDDIN Network](#) - The ALaDDIN group has been formed through the coming together of 20 third-sector organisations in the city to improve digital inclusion and participation for people with autism or learning disabilities, supporting the ambition to make Leeds the most digitally inclusive city for everyone.
- [Neighbourhood Networks Digital Inclusion Working Group](#) - The group reflects the needs of Neighbourhood Networks and older people in light of the growing digitisation of the health and wellbeing agenda across the city and will support organisations, staff and volunteers to prepare and skill service users for engagement in this growing area.
- [Beeston & Middleton LCP - Digital Health Hub](#) – Anchored within Beeston and Middleton LCP, the goal of this project is to develop and test a place-based model for enabling inclusion to digitised health and care services, and the learning from the development and implementation of this model will inform the future development of digital health and care services to ensure they are inclusive across Leeds. Led by the 100% Digital Leeds team, the project has created a network of Third Sector organisations who alongside Dewsbury Road Hub, can support people build digital skills and confidence; get online and use tools to connect with services and manage health and wellbeing (see Appendix 1). (see appendix XX).

Complementary work around accessibility is also being conducted through the [Inclusion for All](#) group facilitated by Healthwatch Leeds. This group brings together expertise around the accessibility of information and information systems.

5.3. Digital Integration

Digital integration is a foundation stone of joining up health and care service. Developing a digital infrastructure which is inclusive and flexible; achieving consistent levels of compliance around Information Governance (IG) across the broad health and care system; and embedding data sharing in how we operate is essential if we are to achieve shared visions set out in strategy.

Since June 2020, the City Digital Partnerships Team, which is hosted in Leeds City Council has commissioned and funded a Principal Information Governance Officer (Dani Mistry) to work with Third Sector organisations, delivering 'direct care' around Information Governance (IG). Supported by Forum Central the project aims to prepare and support organisations to apply for access to Leeds Care Record (LCR). Working with an initial cohort of 13 organisations identified as delivering 'direct care', (based upon assessment criteria to access LCR), Dani has conducted an IG audit on each organisation. Following the audit Dani has assisted organisations to complete the NHS Digital [Data Security and Protection Toolkit \(DSPT\)](#) providing evidence for data protection compliance. Organisations who successfully progress through the IG audit, and have all the prerequisites for the LCR application have been supported to complete the LCR application.

Project Outcomes:

The project has provided a better understanding of IG compliance within the Third Sector, including examples of organisations which have exceeded expected standards within the DSP Toolkit.

It has also highlighted a significant gap in IG support for Third Sector organisations, seeking to integrate their work with other parts of the health and care system.

Two organisations have been given approval to access Leeds Care Record, through the Leeds Information Governance Steering Group (LIGSG), neither organisation has been granted access due to a decision not to develop Third Sector specific Role Based Access Controls (RBACs).

Four organisations have made applications for NHSmail with support from Dani, each completing the DSPT and receiving advocacy from Dani. Unfortunately, only two of the four were granted access.

All organisations have demonstrated improved IG compliance.

The aforementioned project, is one of a number of projects, some of which involving the Third Sector which has been monitored under the personalised care steering group, digital sub group which promotes connections between services, but also supports people to self-advocate and self-manage their health and wellbeing. This work includes:

Leeds Open Online Platform (Loop): led by The City Digital Partnerships Team. Through Loop, third parties including third sector organisations can build their own websites and systems

that connect to Loop and form part of a shared information repository. This work is currently paused, however significant work is been undertaken within Forum Central and Third Sector partners to progress project objectives.

Helm- Person Held Record: Verified citizen access and contribution to an integrated view of their health, care, wellbeing and government services information to support and promote improved awareness and self-management.

The Helm objectives are:

- Helm users able to access and edit their shared support plans in Helm and share them with their health and care providers
- Helm to host a questionnaire
- Helm users have access to structured data from the secondary care
- Identify and trial integration with the NHS App
- Implementation pack to support the regional roll out

Helm is currently paused.

Curated apps Library: The Curated Apps Library will signpost the citizens of Leeds to apps which are aligned to local health and care priorities and which have been tested to ensure that they are clinically safe, effective, user-friendly and use data in a safe manner. The library will also provide health and care professionals the with the reassurance they need to signpost citizens to a suitable app that will meet their needs.

The status of the curated apps library is unknown

The learning amassed from the above projects and their current status raises significant concerns around the implementation of digital plans within the city. It has also highlighted a disconnect between NHS strategic plans and the resourcing and implementation of digital projects. This disconnect poses a significant risk to achieving the city's strategic vision.

5.4. Strategic development

Since developing the initial Digital Enablement paper shared in May, Forum Central have informed the development of a West Yorkshire and Harrogate Digital Strategy, through the West Yorkshire and Harrogate Digital Board. It is not known what the current status of this document is.

The City Digital Team in Leeds are currently leading on the development of a cross sector digital strategy for the city, with involvement of the Third Sector. Themes are around Primary and Community Healthcare, Supporting Place Ambitions and System-wide working. Consultation workshops around this strategy development will be taking place across December and January (see appendix)

6. Discussion

The translation of Third Sector and broader system support and services to digital platforms during the covid 19 pandemic has highlighted the significant inequalities around digital access, capability and confidence within communities and within Third Sector organisations who support them. The need to work as a coordinated system, to meet the challenges of Covid have also exposed significant inequalities across the health and care system. With the Third Sector seen as providing a key role in a new, personalised, holistic and joined up health and care system which keeps people well for longer within communities, these digital inequalities must be addressed.

The development of inclusive systems which enable the sharing of information between staff across the health and care system, would provide a foundation stone which supports transformation to joined up system working across sectors. Moreso, it would provide routes to reduce the gap between people and services; connect intelligence from communities via the relationships with people, Third Sector organisations work is built upon.

The projects referenced within this paper, demonstrate the wealth of activity the Third Sector in Leeds has engaged and delivered over the past two years; and the learning which has been amassed. We have witnessed a number of these projects been hampered by blockages within parts of the established system, particularly around Information Governance, but also the absence of a citywide plan to enable Third Sector partners to overcome barriers to joined up working. Progress on the development of citywide digital strategy, since the previous iteration of this paper is welcomed (see Appendix 2). There are however ongoing concerns around the disjuncture between new developments and previous digital workstreams involving Third Sector partners.

In order to achieve a shared digital vision for the city, which embraces assets within the Third Sector, there needs to be a commitment to collaboration and joined up working from across the health and care system. This commitment must be built upon an understanding of Third Sector assets and deficits.

7. Recommendations

Drawing upon learning from across the workstreams outlined above, Forum Central proposes the following recommendations for future digital work in Leeds:

- Identify resources to enable Third Sector organisations which have committed resources in support of digital integration to achieve previously agreed outcomes (specifically in relation to Leeds Care Record and Loop)
- Continue with the co-production of a comprehensive, coordinated digital strategy for the city, with input from all system partners. This should:
 - Include diverse voices from the Third Sector and the people and communities of Leeds.
 - Take an asset-based approach building upon progress, and learning amassed to date.
- Address disparities in Third Sector digital infrastructure and support, through investment in roles, leadership, training and resources which are accessible to, and embedded in the sector as a means of achieving parity.

8. Key Considerations and Risk Factor

The focus of this paper has been digital integration of the Third Sector within the Leeds Health and Care system. It is however important that integration plans are developed as part of a cohesive digital plan for Leeds which recognises broader priorities for the third sector. Key considerations include:

- Work should support measures to maintain the scope, diversity, capacity and sustainability of the Third Sector in Leeds.
- We must invest in work which breaks down silo-based working across the health and care system and cultivates relationships between those working in the Third Sector and the mainstream health and care system.
- Consideration of the impact of overarching system change (particularly the shift of power to the Integrated Care Partnership and Integrated Care System on long term digital strategy, and what that means for Leeds based third sector organisations.
- Third Sector organisations have proven that they are an essential component of the health and care system across the Covid-19 pandemic and before, despite significantly lower digital capabilities compared to other sectors and minimal resources.
- We must ensure that the experiences and voices of Leeds people continue to be at the heart of the work. How does this make it better for people in Leeds?

There is no 'quick fix' to the underlying inequalities faced by communities, similarly digital solutions require longer term commitments to addressing inequalities within communities and across sectors, but if we work together, building on Leeds' exceptionally strong foundations and the radical progress made during this exceptional year we can make a significant shift.

Appendix 1

Visit your local Digital Health Hub

Digital Health Hubs are local community spaces with friendly people ready to help you build your skills and confidence, get online, and use the tools that can make it easier for you to manage your health and wellbeing and engage with the NHS in the way that works best for you.

Belle Isle Tenant Management Organisation (BITMO)

Everyone
 Aberfield Gate, LS10 3QH
 0113 378 2190
www.belleisleltd.co.uk
gate@belleisleltd.co.uk

Holbeck Together

Everyone
 99 Domestic Street, LS11 9NS
 0113 245 5553
www.holbecktogether.org
admin@holbecktogether.org

Dewsbury Road Community Hub and Library

Everyone
 Dewsbury Road, LS11 6PF
 0113 378 5747
www.leeds.gov.uk/community-hubs
libraryenquiries@leeds.gov.uk

MHA Communities South Leeds

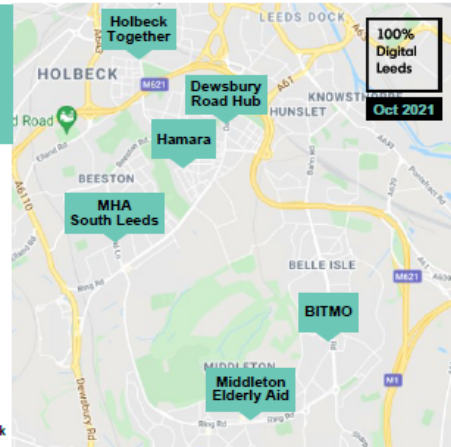
Older people
 St Andrews CC, Old Lane, LS11 8AG
 0113 271 6201
www.mha.org.uk
southleeds@mha.org.uk

Hamara

Everyone
 Tempest Road, LS11 6RD
 0113 277 3330
www.hamara.org.uk
admin@hamara.co.uk

Middleton Elderly Aid

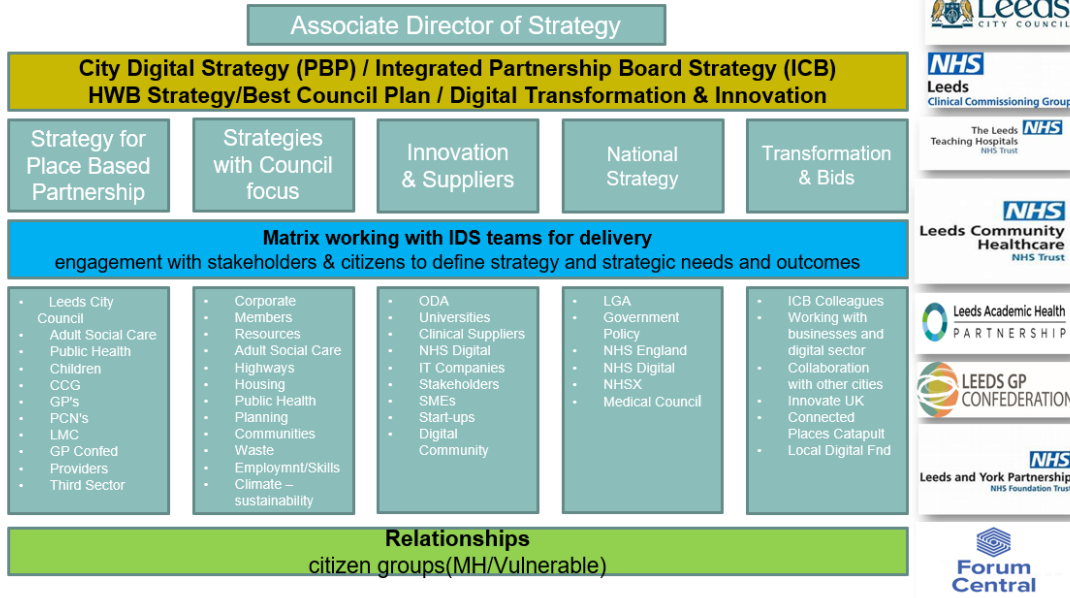
Older people
 Acre Road, LS10 4LF
 0113 272 1050
middletonelderlyaid.org.uk
info@middletonelderlyaid.org.uk



Support available at each Digital Health Hub	Connectivity			Digital Skills Support			Help to get started with...			
	Wi-Fi on site	Device + 4G lending	Equipment for use in centre	Drop-in any time	One-to-one by appointment	Group session	NHS App covid pass	Online prescriptions	Online appointment bookings	Virtual consultations
BITMO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dewsbury Road Hub and Library	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Hamara	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Holbeck Together		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
MHA South Leeds	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Middleton Elderly Aid	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Appendix 2

DEVELOPING OUR DIGITAL STRATEGY



DRAFT

workshops

Workshop 1 -The future for digital primary care <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vision of a digital practice – PCN – LCP – community healthcare• Life after the pandemic what's changed• Barriers to adoption and change• Citizens perspective• Supportive the national agenda v local agenda's	Workshop 2 – Digital life in Leeds <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Digital to support city plans, community, cohesion, climate, inclusive growth, industry, investment & sustainability• Wider determinants of health – public health
Workshop 3 – Integrated services <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on digital to support council delivery teams, LCP's, PCB – Leeds as a place how does digital enable change• What is required to support seamless working• Supporting service users – empowerment, innovation , change and inclusion	Workshop 4 – System Sustainability <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bringing the outputs together• Digital as an enabler for workforce development & wellbeing• Agile responses• Behaviour and culture change

workshops

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[10:09] McNally, Rob

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-one-stop-service-for-govuk-unveiled>

Proposed Digital Enablement Model

Consistent Strategy

- Place-based third sector Infrastructure, including [Forum Central](#) and Voluntary Action Leeds provide robust platforms for strategic engagement with the sector

People's Voices

- The [Peoples Voices Group](#) offers a coordinate access point for citywide engagement within Leeds
- [Local Care Partnerships](#) provide a mechanism for a 'test and learn' approach in localities, with local people involved throughout.

Equitable investment (and resourcing)

- Transformative strategy in H&C seeks to devolve resources to communities and unlock assets across the third sector.
- [State of the Sector](#) report and pilot work led by Leeds City Council provides insight into investment priorities.

