

# Supporting Digital Inclusion



Norfolk continues to have many children who are digitally excluded and lack the resultant digital skills. The Ofcom report in 2021 highlighted that 8% of children aged 5 – 15 nationally do not have home access to a device to connect to the internet.

The Coronavirus pandemic during 2020 shone a spotlight on the importance of digital access for children and young people across Norfolk and highlighted the inequality that existed across the region with regards to owning devices and basic internet connectivity. In addition to the Department for Education device scheme, Norfolk County Council in partnership with Norfolk Community Foundation provided 5463 devices and 500 4g MiFi devices to vulnerable children during the pandemic.

As a society, technology and digital skills are now a fundamental part of everyday life. However, we must not assume that just because young people have grown up in the digital age that they automatically have the infrastructure, skills, and confidence to navigate the digital world effectively. Many young people need support to obtain devices, develop their skills and to take advantage of the many benefits that technology can bring while also managing the risks.

The need for online safety measures remains critical to the success of this work, as without this safe environment young people are unable to fully utilise the online world.

Removing barriers and creating opportunities to facilitate digital inclusion will have a positive impact on our society as a whole and help prepare our young people for success in their future working lives.

## Join the Pilot

Norfolk County Council are piloting a **'Family Loan'** scheme, providing schools with a bank of devices which can be used to support children and families at risk of digital exclusion. These devices have filtering software installed so they can be used both in-school and at home, and are provided with template loan agreements which can be used with families.

Additionally, the school is not liable for any loss/damage to the devices under this scheme.

Some examples of use cases for these devices:

- Short-term loan to families to support employment applications
- Loans to students to support home education support
- Supporting tuition programmes out of school hours

We are currently working with schools as part of a pilot scheme, loaning devices to families in need of support. We are looking to expand this programme - if you are interested in participating, please register your interest here: [bit.ly/NCCFLS21](https://bit.ly/NCCFLS21)



Scan QR code to register



**Norfolk County Council**