



Young
Westminster
Foundation



City of Westminster

DIGITAL FUTURES

Project Report

May 2020 - April 2021





Background

9% of UK families do not have a laptop, desktop or tablet at home.¹

Digital Futures was delivered in partnership with Westminster City Council to tackle **digital exclusion** during the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdown from March 2020.

Face-to-face service provision stopped or was minimised and services, education and opportunities were provided online for children.

The project aimed to provide **devices** and/or **connectivity** to eligible young people in Westminster.

Why does Digital Inclusion matter?

Digital inclusion is a minimum and basic requirement to experience equal opportunities.

A device for young people with no device or a shared device enables them to:

- Take part in school
- Develop digital skills
- Improve chances of finding work
- Enable a sense of belonging

Digitally excluded young people lack voice and visibility in society.

Only **51%** of households earning between **£6,000 and £10,000** had home internet access. Compared to **99%** of households that have an income of over **£40,001**.



Source: Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research (CCHPR), 2020



• Our research in Westminster primary schools found that in some schools, **35-45% of children** in each year group had **no access to the internet** or relied on one shared family smartphone for access.

Source: Young Westminster Foundation, 2020

**25.4% of
Westminster's
22,714 pupils
receive Free
School Meals.²**

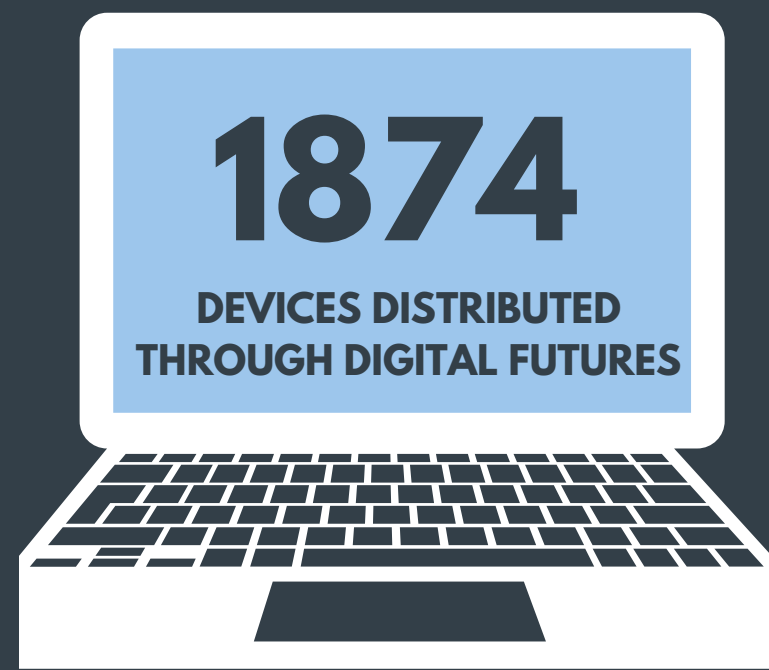
The project specifically targeted children and young people eligible for **Free School Meals**.

Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds were already **twice as likely** to leave formal education without GCSEs in English and Maths compared to their better off classmates.³

The Covid-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted the education and future life chances of these same pupils as schooling moved online.

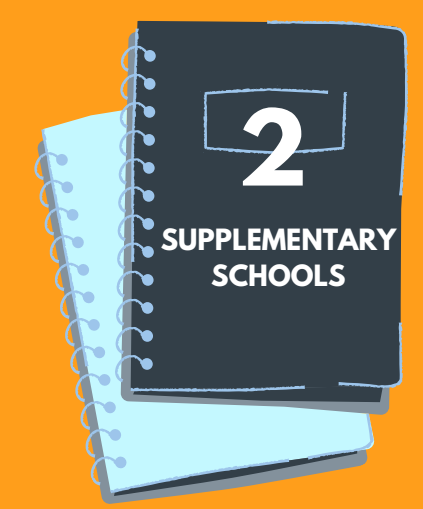
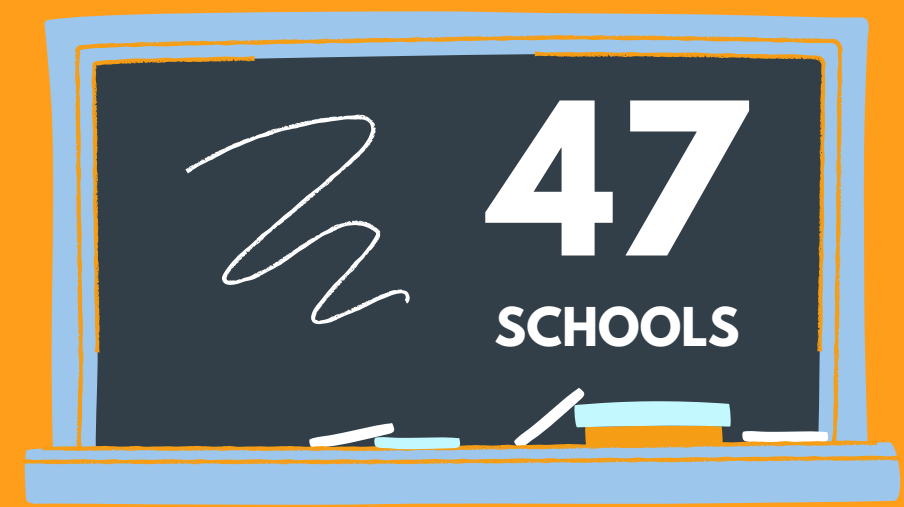


What did we do?



Through Digital Futures, we worked with **Westminster schools**, alongside wider youth organisations and care leavers. This supplemented wider support schemes run by Westminster City Council and the Department for Education.

At close, the project had allocated devices through:



How were devices allocated?

Following a consultation period, Westminster schools were invited to apply for devices in December 2020. A staff panel assessed individual need against criteria including Free School Meals data and specific lockdown circumstances.

To 'recycle the benefits', it was agreed that devices from the scheme would be **owned and distributed by the schools themselves**, and loaned to students.

Devices were first distributed in December, with regular drop-offs over the following months. We were updated by schools around any outstanding need. **By the beginning of March 2021**, the project had met all of the need identified by Westminster's schools.



Where were the devices from?

▶ **Computacenter**

After a robust procurement process, Computacenter became our primary supplier and partner, helping to identify the correct device spec and creating a custom build for Windows devices based on the needs of young people. Funding for the devices was provided by Westminster City Council.

1,375 devices provided.

▶ **London Grid For Learning (LGFL)**

An additional project supplier who provided devices that were sent straight to schools during the third lockdown in January 2021.

250 devices provided.

▶ **Business Suppliers**

We reached out to businesses, who generously donated reconditioned devices.

Devices were supplied by Vodafone Foundation, DragonRouge, Bouygues, For People & Ognisko.

114 devices provided.

▶ **Westminster City Council**

A number of reconditioned devices were also donated by the WCC Housing and Corporate departments.

166 devices provided.



The Impact

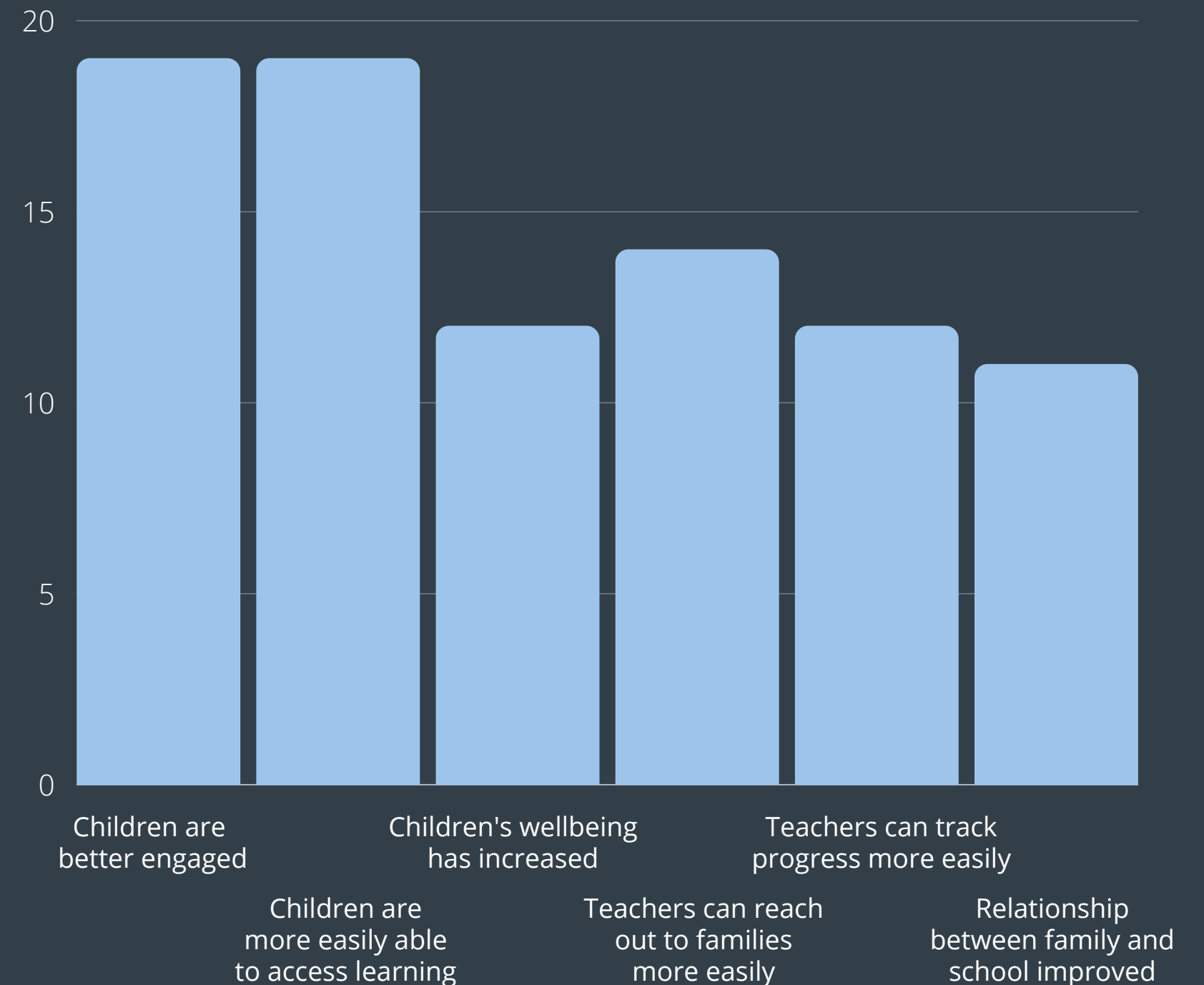
Response from School Survey

Based on responses from 27 schools

Teachers reported that the devices had a **very positive impact** on student's attendance, engagement and even on their progress:

- **90% of schools** said children are both better engaged and more easily able to access learning
- **57% of schools** said their students' wellbeing has increased
- **66% of schools** said teachers are able to reach out to families more easily
- **57% of schools** said devices allowed teachers to track their student's progress more easily

Which of these changes have you noticed as a result of children being able to attend the school's online offer (tick all that apply)?



Feedback from Schools

"The benefit to our pupils has been immense. The improved engagement in all year groups is clear."

"We are so grateful for the devices we received and it has made a huge difference to increasing engagement during lockdown and also further enhancing the digital literacy of both pupils and families. This is essential to succeed in the modern world."

"Families felt supported and teachers felt valued, as children were able to access the learning more consistently."

"Because we knew all children were able to access learning online, we were able to provide a very comprehensive provision to ensure children were continuing to learn and stay connect to their friends and teachers throughout this time."

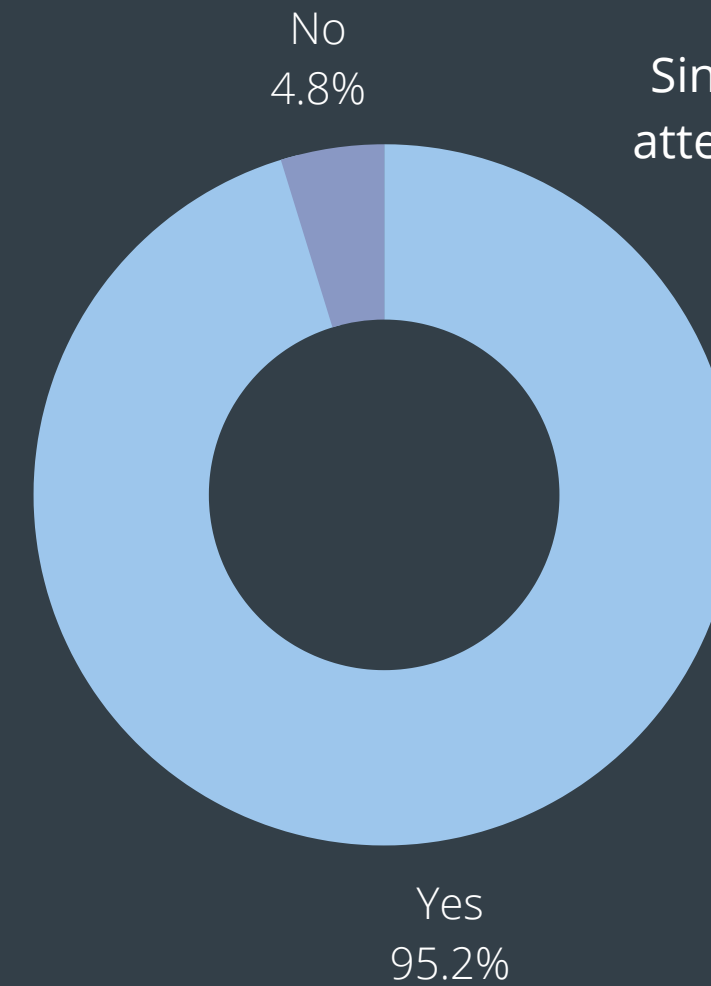
During the first lockdown, we didn't have this and it has made the biggest difference."

Response from Parent Survey

Based on responses from 85 family members

Both parents and young people responded to the survey and gave us an insight into how they used the laptop and how it helped them in their learning.

- **95% of families** reported that their children attended more online lessons as a result of being given a device by the school.
- **55% of young people** didn't use the laptop just for school work, giving evidence to the fact that digital inclusion isn't just about taking part in remote learning.
- **73% of families** reported that their school hadn't asked them to return their laptop.



Since having the device, did your child(ren) attend more online lessons than previously?



Did your child(ren) use the laptop for school work only?

Feedback from Families

"Thank you very much because if it wasn't for this laptop my sister, my mum and I wouldn't have been able to do online lessons and they still help with homework."

"Before given the laptop, the remote learning was difficult. Their generosity has made lockdown and virtual learning much better."

"My daughter really benefited a lot from this thank you so much."

"It made my daughter (Year 1) feel more excited to participate in the online learning and I think it made her feel more studious and serious about her schoolwork since she had her own laptop to work on."



Lessons Learned

Digital Inclusion

We learned that there are a range of interlinking factors contributing to digital exclusion, including poverty.

The monitoring activity revealed that devices are required not just for school work, but for other important activities including job search and keeping in touch with friends.

It's clear that digital exclusion is an ongoing issue where need changes as family circumstances change.

Wider Family Need

The feedback we received tells us that whole families need digital training and technical support. We are able to identify this as an additional issue to address, which can also inform future project developments.

Partnerships

Given the urgency of the project, collaboration with our partners was key to its success.

Working alongside Computacenter, we benefited from additional project management and capacity despite the global challenges of supply of devices.

Our partnership with Westminster City Council also contributed to a targeted fundraising campaign, which engaged businesses with social value commitments and existing relationships.

Role of Schools

Schools played a big part in the smooth running of the project. They spent much time and effort in reaching out to their families to identify the need and worked closely with us to secure devices for their students.

They also stepped in to support families at home to access the new technology as there was a lack of technological expertise in many homes. This showed the crucial role schools play in closing the digital exclusion gap.

Sustainability

Despite being in response to remote learning, ensuring that the schools can keep the devices means that the impact of the project is sustainable beyond the end point.

The schools will be free to continue lending to students to further tackle digital exclusion.

Assessing Need

Free School Meals provided a useful benchmark for determining allocation. Other criteria, including SEND and number of children in the household, were also important to inform this process.



Thank You

Westminster City Council

The funding made available by Westminster City Council to deliver Digital Futures has made an enormous difference to the lives of children and young people in the borough; supporting their education and ongoing inclusion during the pandemic.

Initiated by Councillor Tim Barnes, we were able to use this funding to meet every request made for a device by Westminster's schools.

This is a brilliant example of what can be achieved through a cross-sector strategic partnership in Westminster.

**Cross-sector
collaboration to
support children
and young
people**

Corporate Partners

We are grateful to have raised **£43,000** in corporate donations which contributed to the procurement of devices for the project.

Digital Futures received generous financial contributions from: **Grosvenor Estates, Capita, British Land, Howard De Walden Estates** and **Ecoworld**.

This was alongside support from individual givers, who donated a total of **£1,184** via our LocalGiving fundraising page.

Thank you also to **Dragon Rouge, Vodafone Foundation, Bougues, Ognisko** and **For People** who donated devices.

**THE
HOWARD
deWALDEN
ESTATE**



ECOWORLD
— LONDON —
CREATING TOMORROW & BEYOND

Capita


GROSVENOR



DRAGON ROUGE

 **Vodafone
Foundation**



Ognisko
RESTAURANT

Schools and Youth Organisations

- All Souls Cof E Primary School
- Barrow Hill Junior School
- Burdett Coutts CE Primary
- Christ Church Bentinck CE Primary School
- Churchill Gardens Primary Academy
- Edward Wilson Primary School
- Essendine Primary School
- Gateway Academy
- George Eliot Junior School
- The Grey Coat Hospital CE School for Girls
- Hallfield Primary School
- Hampden Gurney CE Primary School
- Harris Academy St Johns Wood
- King Solomon Primary
- Marylebone Boys' School
- Millbank Academy
- Our Lady of Dolours RC Primary School
- Paddington Academy
- Pimlico Academy (Secondary)
- Pimlico Primary Academy
- Queen's Park Primary School
- Robinsfield Infant School
- Soho Parish
- St Augustine's CE Primary School
- St Augustine's CE High School
- St Barnabas CE Primary
- St Clement Danes CE Primary School
- St Edward's Catholic Primary School
- St George's Catholic School
- St George's Hanover Square
- St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
- St Luke's CE Primary School
- St Mary Magdalene's CE Primary School
- St Mary's Bryanston Square
- St Marylebone CE Bridge School
- St Matthew's CE Primary School
- St Peter's CE Primary School
- St Peter's Eaton Square
- St Saviour's CE Primary school
- St Stephen's CE Primary School
- St Vincent de Paul Catholic Primary School
- St Vincent's Catholic Primary School
- St. Gabriel's CE Primary School
- St. Mary of the Angels Catholic Primary School
- Westminster Cathedral School
- Westminster City School
- Wilberforce Primary School
- Amberley Youth Project
- Westminster Supplementary School
- Al-Ola Supplementary School
- Caxton Youth
- The Avenues Youth Project



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