

# Digital and technology



Digital tools enhance the reach, accessibility and efficiency of the Hub's employment support. This section explores how technology strengthens engagement, removes barriers for people with low digital confidence, and ensures employers, partners and learners can connect seamlessly with opportunities in flexible, modern and user-friendly ways.

## How we use digital to deliver our offer

Digital tools extend the reach and flexibility of the Employment and Training Hub, making support accessible regardless of location, schedule or confidence level.

- **Sharing CRM with employer self-service** – employers upload vacancies directly, and staff targeted people by postcode, sector interest or skills.
- **High traffic to the portal** – the 24/7 online platform lets people register, search vacancies, book workshops and access training without visiting the Hub.
- **Event-day digitisation** – iPads speed up registrations at fairs, with next-day follow-ups linking attendees to vacancies and contacts.
- **Mobile enrolment during outreach** – staff complete quick, on-the-spot registrations and bookings in community venues.
- **Digital recruitment tools for employers** – providers promote events, upload roles and receive referrals at pace.
- **Digitised learning activities** – QR-enabled materials and electronic workbooks streamline Care Academy delivery.
- **Immersive VR career experiences** – VR headsets offer safe, realistic exposure to workplaces before training or interviews.



# Tackling digital poverty

Reducing digital inequality is essential to ensure people can engage with job opportunities, training and employer communications.

- **Phones and SIMs via the Databank** – devices and data are provided to residents who lack digital access so they can search for jobs, complete applications and stay in contact.
- **Free Hub computer access** – public PCs provide a place to complete CVs, applications and e-learning at no cost to those without equipment at home.
- **QR-enabled materials** – printed information links directly to digital resources, making it easy for people to access further support once they are online.

**“Digital poverty is very real. At the council we’ve got a digital poverty initiative. If someone doesn’t have a phone or data, there are funds they can access – and just this week alone we’ve given out three phones and SIM cards.”**

**Fallon Dunleavy**, Employment and Training Hub Manager  
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

## Building digital confidence

For the people accessing the Hub, digital confidence is built gradually through supported practice, familiarisation and one-to-one help.

- **Introducing digital tasks in a supportive classroom setting** – Care Academy learners use laptops and iPads to complete research activities, helping them practise real world online tasks with guidance.
- **Offering one-to-one coaching where needed** – people who struggle with online applications or interview tasks are linked to Hub staff for focused digital support.
- **Using VR to reduce anxiety and familiarise people** – virtual walkthroughs of the Hub help people become comfortable with new environments, making them more confident using digital tools in unfamiliar settings.



## Key decisions

**“The reality is that to apply for a job today you need some kind of digital tech; the days of dropping off a CV and waiting for a call are long gone. Without access, people really struggle, so if they’re out in the community, a phone becomes vital. If not, they can always use the public computers in the Hub.”**

**Sophie Proud**, Recruitment Co-ordinator, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

- The team embedded digital processes from the outset, ensuring outreach, training and recruitment all linked directly into a single online system that people, employers and partners could access at any time.
- A decision was made to pair digital tools with in-person support, recognising that technology alone would exclude many people unless it was accompanied by patient, practical help from staff.
- The team reduced the cost of VR procurement by positioning it as a community-benefit tool rather than a commercial training product, ensuring high-quality digital innovation was delivered at a fraction of the expected cost.



## Key learning

Digital transformation within employment support must be intentional, inclusive and grounded in real people experience.

- **Pair tech with people** – use digital tools for speed and access, and human support to reduce fear and build confidence.
- **Build digital confidence through safe spaces for practice** – enable learners to make mistakes, try again and gain reassurance as they develop skills.
- **Treat digital inclusion as a prerequisite for engagement** – providing device access and low-pressure digital support as essential components, not optional add-ons.
- **Ensure technology reduces fear rather than increases it** – designing tools such as VR walk-throughs around comfort, familiarity and gradual exposure.