

# WIRRAL DIGITAL STRATEGY

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CONNECTING PEOPLE,  
BUSINESS AND SERVICES

THE WIRRAL PARTNERSHIP

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## FOREWORD

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### Councillor Matthew Patrick

Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Communications

#### Our Pledge for Creating a Digital Wirral

“The Wirral Plan 2020 commits to ensuring Technology and Infrastructure in Wirral is modern, fit for purpose and allows our economy to compete in a digital economy”.

We recognise that the world, this country, and Wirral is changing and that in the 21st century people are leading different lives than they did even 5 years ago. Public services must find a way to change with them, to live up to people’s expectations and to meet their changing needs.

We have developed the Digital Wirral Strategy – a first of its kind in our borough – to support that shift, to guide the work of the entire Wirral Partnership over the next five years as we create the kind of modern, personalised set of public services that residents and businesses need.

The word ‘digital’ means different things to different people. To us it means creating a truly connected Wirral, where people, businesses and the entire community are helped to do business, access services and interact with public services and each other digitally and easily.

As austerity measures continue, and funding is reduced across local government and the entire public sector, it is clear that more efficient ways of delivering and accessing services are imperative. Across the country it is estimated that Councils alone could save £14.7bn every year if they made better use of digital technologies such as online platforms and apps.

It is also clear however that creating a truly digital community is about more than just saving money by improving efficiency, it is about making sure residents and businesses in our borough can live their lives and operate in the modern world.

Residents expect to be able to access or request a service from their smart phone. A new business expects to have access to high-speed broadband. Everyone living in, working in, or visiting Wirral expects to be able to connect and interact with each other and with services online. Failing to meet those expectations is failing in our duty as public servants.

We are aiming to create a truly Digital Wirral by 2020, where;

- EVERY resident will have the ability, and the skills, to connect to people, services and the world online.
- EVERY business will be connected to Global markets through high-speed, reliable broadband.
- EVERY service will be available online; in as simple, accessible and seamless format as they are in person.

I encourage you to read this Strategy and to get involved in helping us to create a connected, digital Wirral for everyone.



**Councillor  
Matthew Patrick**

**“ We will ensure Technology and Infrastructure in Wirral is modern, fit for purpose and allows our economy to compete in a digital economy ”**

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# OUR VISION

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**“Our vision is to create a truly digital borough, where businesses and residents are connected to each other, services and the world. Digital technology is harnessed to create efficient and seamless services for residents, to support businesses to succeed and compete in Global markets and to drive a step-change in community engagement, connectivity and participation”.**

Traditionally, the temptation is to assume that ‘digital’ is an area for the IT Department to handle. This is not how we are approaching this agenda in Wirral. We are well aware we now live in a digital world; digital is a fundamental element of every aspect of our day to day lives; and there are no limits to the ‘art of the possible’ in relation to some of the innovative and creative opportunities that the new technology agenda offers.

Technology has transformed the way we live our lives; socialising, shopping, paying bills and requesting services, people today are accustomed to – and expect – to be connected anytime and anywhere. The vast majority of our residents have access to the internet: doing business online has gone from a technical wonder to a basic expectation in an incredibly short amount of time, and the trend shows no signs of slowing down.

Public services must get ahead of this curve for many different reasons, which we will outline and explore in this strategy. We have set out three core priorities, built around Residents, Business and Public Services, within which we will transform our approach to digital in order to achieve our vision.

### Who is this Strategy for?

This Strategy is for everyone who lives, works or visits Wirral; it is for employers, it is for entrepreneurs, it is for investors and it is for our communities. Digital technology will continue to grow at an exponential rate, our lives are being increasingly led through digital platforms, and we will make sure our residents are not left behind.

### How has this Strategy been developed?

In 1997, Steve Jobs, co-founder of Apple, defined his company's approach to product and service design: "start with the customer experience and work backwards to the technology." Starting with the customer, finding out what they want and need, and designing our approach from there is a fundamental principle which underpins the development of this strategy, and the work of the Wirral Partnership.

The customers' voice is at the heart of this Strategy. The entire Wirral Partnership has come together, bringing their expertise and experience, and the needs of their customers, to design a new approach to developing Digital in Wirral. This is a true-partnership Strategy, with all public services in Wirral committing to transforming our approach to digital together, seamlessly, and in a way which puts the needs of Wirral residents and businesses first. We also recognise Digital is key to helping us to achieve many of the aims and ambitions in our Wirral Plan, for example:

- **Ageing Well** - digital can support older people to live independently in their homes and prevent social isolation and enable more volunteering and mentoring opportunities within our communities; developing online resources to enable residents to find a wide range of information from leisure and learning to statutory health and social care services on care homes, assistive technology and managing long term health conditions.
- **Healthy Lives** - developing online services for information and advice which will also allow people to undertake a self-assessment of their needs; assistive technology, implementing Digital Road Map and Wirral Care Record.
- **Strategic Transport** - opportunities for smart ticketing, remote payment for car parking and online mapping. We will also use our highways as "technology highways" ensuring that they carry the opportunities for new technology when they are constructed and that they provide future proofing to ensure that Wirral stays connected.
- **Leisure & Culture Actions** - opportunities for using technology and social media campaigns to encourage participation in sport and physical activity; calendar of events & activities publicised through a central website; use technology and social media campaigns to encourage resident and visitor participation in arts, culture and heritage.
- **All Age Disability** - disabled people, families & carers want choice and control over how they live, learn, work and play and have the same opportunities as everyone else in their community. Digital plays a key role in this; eg information, advice & universal services; enabling more disabled people to access employment; mapping out and promoting the support that is available to support organisations when employing people with disabilities.
- **Children and Young People** - supporting all children to have the best start in life; vulnerable children reach their full potential; and that all young people develop well and become ready for work and adulthood. Digital plays a key role in this eg learning material for children and teachers; linking young people with IT employment and apprenticeships.

- **Tackling Child Poverty and Improving Life Chances** - enable parents to access local provision; supported signposting which builds self-reliance; developing skills and employability; access to financial and debt advice.
- **Economic Growth** - Partners recognise the key role Digital can play in helping to deliver our Growth Strategy economic ambitions. We will increase Internet access and high speed connectivity so businesses can compete successfully; develop world class digital skills in our young people to support their future employability as well as driving economic growth for Wirral. We will increase digital engagement and skills for all our residents, with targeted support for vulnerable groups, and support for jobseekers to develop their digital confidence and skills. We will explore the opportunities to create a 'smart city' for Wirral, ensuring that our key retail and business areas are fully connected with each other and globally.
- **Community Safety** - digital is enabling greater integration with all relevant partners to achieve a Safer Wirral, so agencies can respond more quickly and more appropriately to areas of need. Eg tackling anti-social behaviour by co-ordinating all intelligence and analysis across Wirral's Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to produce a holistic view of crime and disorder, and to target hotspot locations and vulnerable/repeat victims across Wirral.
- **Love Wirral: Environmental Strategy** - partners are working with communities to gather intelligence on environmental conditions across Wirral to target cleansing resources; to map - and quickly respond to - priority 'grot spots' that affect local environmental quality.

The Wirral Partnership acknowledges, for us to achieve the ambitious outcomes set out in the Wirral Plan, and to achieve our collective aims of integration and collaboration, technology and digital tools are vital.

This point reflects the growing recognition across the country that public services cannot continue to be delivered in the way they are at the moment, there will need to be a "wholesale rethink" about what services can be delivered in the future, and public sector partners have a key role in leading this. In the recent joint position paper published May 2016, the Local Government Association, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives, the Local CIO Council, and the public sector ICT representative body Socitm, call on senior figures to become role models for the better use of technology<sup>1</sup>.

In order to deliver our vision - whether jobs, improved services or business growth - improving the local digital infrastructure is fundamental.

Government have recently acknowledged this with the announcement in the Queen's Speech on 18th May 2016 of the Digital Economy Bill, which includes plans for a broadband Universal Service Obligation (USO) as a safety net for those residents and businesses with poor connectivity. This aims to ensure all residents have access to 21st century digital connectivity. The obligation for commercial operators to extend coverage across the country means they must work closely in partnership with councils, who maintain the best overview of local areas' digital connectivity needs.

**“ Wirral becomes a truly digital borough, where businesses and residents are connected to each other, services and the world. Digital technology is harnessed to create efficient and seamless services for residents, to support businesses to succeed and compete in Global markets and to drive a step-change in community engagement, connectivity and participation ”**

A photograph of two men in an office setting. One man, who is older with grey hair and wearing a grey sweater, is seated at a desk and looking at a tablet. The other man, who is younger and wearing a red and white checkered shirt, is leaning over him, also looking at the tablet. The background shows office shelves with binders. The entire image has a blue tint.

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# OUR PRIORITIES

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We know that for us to achieve the vision for this borough set out in the Wirral Plan it requires a fundamental shift in how we do business and how we interact with our people and our businesses. This Strategy has made clear we recognise how technology is changing the world, transforming the way they live their lives; in terms of communication, buying goods and services and doing day to day business.

We also know digital represents a significant opportunity for the Wirral Partnership to harness technology to redesign our services in a way which meets the changing needs and expectations of residents and businesses. This includes opening up new ways of democratic engagement with residents and how local governance can operate efficiently and effectively

Our approach will make sure everyone in Wirral, and doing business with Wirral, is able to quickly and easily access digital technology, and are equipped with the skills they need to live in a digital world.

The priorities this Strategy will work to are:

- **Connected People:** every resident with the ability and the skills to get the most out of technology to improve their lives.
- **Connected Business:** every business benefitting from market-leading technology infrastructure, helping them to open up new markets and compete globally.
- **Connected Services:** every public service joined up, integrated and available online in a way which makes it simple and accessible to get support online.

This is an ambitious digital programme for Wirral. These priorities describe a journey which we will take from now to 2020, the end of which creates a Digital Wirral which achieves the vision articulated in this Strategy, and supports our overall Vision for Wirral.

### Priority 1 - Connected People

**We will enable residents across the borough to use digital technology to improve their lives, providing them with access to devices and the internet as well as developing their digital skills, from children and young people in our schools to our elderly residents.**

Within the next ten years, it is estimated that 90% of us will carry a smart-phone or a tablet. Internet connections such as 4G will continue to get faster and more widely available and people's expectations on getting connected wherever they are, whatever they're doing, are going to continue to rise exponentially.

People have told us they use the internet, they have told us how they use it, and they have told us how they want to communicate and interact with us: it's now our responsibility to respond to this information and work towards a borough where digital is the first, and best, choice for our residents.

From online banking to downloading music to ordering groceries on-the-go, digital tools are increasingly allowing people to conduct everyday tasks how, when and where they like. Increasingly, advanced and assisted technologies present opportunities for residents to have greater choice and control in managing their health or social care, to live independently in their own homes while receiving the care they need.

For people to get the most out of these developments, digital skills and access play a critical role – we know for some groups within the population, and in some of our neighbourhoods, there are significant concentrations of digital exclusion.

Digital Inclusion will be a key priority for us all: if we are going to move towards a more digitally connected Wirral, and we must, then it is vital for us to ensure it is an inclusive Wirral. No resident, no business, must be left behind and everyone in this borough must be equipped with the skills to live in a modern world.

Our digital programme must be built around these needs; it must be built around what our residents have told us is important to them and it must create the environment where getting connected to services, people and the world is simple, intuitive and accessible to all residents, regardless of age or ability.

### What we already know

- In total, 86% of Wirral residents have access to the internet, in-line with the Ipsos Mori Technology tracker (88%). 80% of the Wirral population have access to broadband, with 83% of those having access to Superfast Broadband, an increase of 8% in the past year<sup>2</sup>.
- A larger proportion of Wirral residents access the internet from libraries and public access points when compared to the rest of the UK (13% locally vs 6% nationally)<sup>3</sup>.
- 18.73% of households in Wirral do not receive 4G mobile data from all providers. Low income families may be unable to purchase broadband. Mobile data can be a more affordable and flexible option compared to fixed broadband packages as it can be accessed without installation costs, line rental, or long term contracts. Without access to all providers of 4G mobile data, many customers will not benefit from the same offers or deals that others receive throughout the UK<sup>4</sup>.
- 19.8% of adults in Wirral have never been online<sup>5</sup>. Offline data shows the percentage of people that have never been online or used the Internet directly.
- The majority of residents (58%) do not feel the council keeps them well informed about the services it provides. This is significantly greater than any of the other comparator authorities, where the average is 43%.

### How we will get there

- We will maximise broadband coverage – superfast broadband to residents and promote Wi-Fi in public spaces .
- Increase digital engagement and skills for all our residents.
- Improve access and provision of digital equipment and services, across all of our partners and community facilities to improve connectivity and enable people to access services in more effective ways.
- Increase opportunities for young people, giving them the confidence to start their own businesses or to develop the digital skills that businesses want.

### Priority 2 - Connected Businesses

**We will enable local businesses to improve their skills and internet access, increasing their performance, profitability and ability to invest and grow.**

Business today is not bound by geography, only by ambition. Supporting Wirral's entrepreneurs and employers to grow, to aim higher and succeed, is a fundamental thread running through our Vision for Wirral. A small business in Wirral can just as easily sell to customers in Brazil as they can to customers in Birkenhead.

It is our responsibility to make this process easier, make it more accessible and to create a borough and an economy which is truly digital enabled and able to compete on an even footing within a digital economy. It is our ambition that every Wirral business – regardless of sector or size – is able to use digital technologies to expand their horizons and grow.

Digital technology can absolutely support economic growth, and not just through equipping our businesses and people with the infrastructure and skills to do business and interact online. We can transform our approach to digital and working with local business, we can create information, networking and business opportunities to local companies through online platforms, we can use information data to tailor our business support offer and we can review our processes and systems to make sure we interact with businesses using digital technology in a way which best suits them<sup>6</sup>.

We also want to enable our businesses and places to lead the digital revolution and to remain at the forefront of it for forthcoming generations.

#### What we already know

- The UK economy is focussed on increasing its online and international trade, forecast to reach £60 billion by 2018<sup>7</sup>.
- Exporters have 59% faster productivity growth than non-exporters and 70% of companies find overseas business leads to fresh ideas and innovation.

- 2013 saw £32 billion online retail sales in the UK, of which £4.2 billion was to international customers. 46% (175 million) of Europeans shop online, and 55% (171 million) of Americans shop online.
- Wirral has a vibrant and growing digital and creative businesses sector and some strong and dynamic businesses networks. There are real opportunities to support these to grow and build as part of our wider Economic Growth Strategy.
- The digital and creative sector is a key economic driver contributing significantly to economic output and reinforcing the global brand and position of the Liverpool City Region. With an employment base of some 26,000 people across 3,500 business units the sector has a significant economic presence<sup>8</sup>.

#### How we will get there

- Ensure all businesses have access to superfast broadband and are supported on the specific advantages of digital connectivity and superfast connections.
- Target businesses with a Digital Makeover to identify business opportunities and challenges, and implement digital equipment and processes to improve its systems, increase its effectiveness, and reduce costs.
- Embrace growth in mobile by increasing mobile content, mobile advertising and mobile apps.
- Harness the emergence of social media and digital marketplaces to connect businesses, entrepreneurs and public organisations in new and innovative ways.
- Develop digital entrepreneurship skills with young people to use digital tools to build business or non-profit initiatives, including business planning and learning how to sell ideas.
- Work with Liverpool City Region partners to develop the digital economy in the region.

### Priority 3 - Connected Services

#### **Digital technology will enable Wirral Partners to tackle complex issues and work together seamlessly to deliver the ambitions and outcomes set out within the Wirral Plan.**

People expect services to be available online. People expect the service to be as easy – if not easier – to access online. If the Wirral Partnership is not meeting this expectation then it is not just old fashioned and out-of-step, it is unacceptable: we are in the business of meeting community needs and, in a digital world, ensuring seamless, efficient digital services is among the most important of those needs.

Residents' expectations of public sector services are changing significantly. People are becoming far more accustomed to doing the bulk of activities – from banking to shopping – online. The growth in the use of mobiles to access websites and services offers new opportunities and challenges; the Socitm Better Connected 2015 survey found that the lack of mobile accessibility is a major barrier to accessing local services.

Services in the public sector are about creating relationships between people: accessing support, networking with peers, finding activities, education and childcare. Digital is designed to create that connectivity; the most successful digital products are based entirely on that principle – connecting people across the Globe. We have a responsibility to harness this principle and use it to design a public sector service network that is built on connecting services and people to improve quality of life.

By 2020, a vast number of transactions will take place online. In Wirral, we will make this process easier and more efficient than ever: people will verify their identity once, we will instantly and securely share data across services to improve what we do and the service people receive, two dimensional websites will be replaced by integrative digital platforms to connect people with the support they need to meet any problem, through local services or through thousands of options for support, regionally and across the Globe.

### What we already know

- Residents want to see better co-ordination and collaboration across public services, with 90% of people indicating they would prefer to see a more joined up approach to services;<sup>9</sup>
- Moving just over half of current transactions with customers to effective digital channels would save the Council around £1.5m, which could be further invested in improving the services themselves;
- The majority of complaints received during 2015 were related to perceived lack of online options for accessing services;
- Since 2006, daily computer use and internet access among 55-64 year olds has increased by 31%, and for those aged over 65 it has increased by 28%.

### How we will get there

- Provide transactional services and information online to send information to residents electronically through processes such as e-billing.
- Enable all of our workforces to be more agile, mobile and use the most appropriate technologies to support service delivery.
- Use digital technology to work and collaborate across the partnership seamlessly, including the effective sharing and use of data.
- The development of 'Access Wirral' sets out our collective vision 'to lead in the creation of a vibrant network of individuals, community groups, companies and organisations who provide services and support which enables customers in Wirral to manage their business, through a single point of access.'

**“ Our approach will make sure everyone in Wirral, and doing business with Wirral, is able to quickly and easily access digital technology, and are equipped with the skills they need to live in a digital world. ”**

## ACTION PLANS

### Priority One - Connected People: every resident with the ability and the skills to get the most out of technology to improve their lives

Action	By When	Lead Organisation
Target any gaps in broadband / Wi-Fi coverage within Wirral	2020	to be agreed
Build a digital inclusion programme to co-ordinate opportunities for Wirral residents to access and utilise digital technologies eg community learning; digital champions in libraries/one stop shops	Sept 2016	to be agreed
Map available digital equipment and services across the Wirral Partnership, to increase and combine digital services	From July 2016	Wirral Partnership
Develop programme/activities/training eg coding clubs / digital entrepreneurship skills training to support young people to improve and enhance their digital skills (including coding) to enable them to thrive and compete in a modern digital environment	From Sept 2016	new Partnership group

Indicator	Current Performance	Source
Reduction of residents who state they have never used the internet <sup>1</sup> (Supporting Measure)	11%	UK Digital Exclusion Heatmap
Reduction of people who are offline by 2020 <sup>2</sup> (Supporting Measure)	19.8%	UK Digital Exclusion Heatmap
Successfully deliver Get Online courses (target: individual learners per year to be agreed) (Outcome Indicator)	N/A (new for 2016/17)	to be agreed

**1** Source: see UK Digital Exclusion Heatmap Wirral data  
<https://doteveryone.org.uk/resources/heatmap/#sthash.zHKOMyRQ.dpuf>

**2** As above

**Priority Two - Connected Business: every business benefitting from market-leading technology infrastructure, helping them to open up new markets and compete globally**

Action	By When	Lead Organisation
Ongoing support to businesses to develop digital skills and have an internet presence	from Sept 2016	Wirral Partnership
Implement a programme to identify and target businesses with offer of a Digital Makeover	from Sept 2016	Wirral Partnership
Implement a programme to increase mobile content, mobile advertising and mobile apps within Wirral	Jan 2017	Wirral Partnership
Activity to digitally connect businesses, entrepreneurs and public organisations in new and innovative ways	Jan 2017	Wirral Partnership
Develop a digital approach for Wirral to support the regeneration in the town centre, at Woodside and Wirral Waters	Nov 2016	

Indicator	Current Performance	Source
Increase numbers of businesses and residents able to access Superfast Fibre Broadband <sup>3</sup> (Outcome Indicator)	83%	UK Digital Exclusion Heatmap
Growth in digital and creative businesses sector <sup>4</sup> (Supporting Measure)	23%	Data cited in Liverpool City Region Skills for Growth Agreement - Digital & Creative sector; 2013
Increase in employment base of Wirral's digital and creative sector <sup>5</sup> (Supporting Measure)	to be established	As above
% of small businesses with own website / or promoting goods and services through a website (Supporting Measure)	new measure to be agreed	
Number of businesses taking up offer of a Digital Makeover (Supporting Measure)	N/a new measure	

**3** Source: see UK Digital Exclusion Heatmap Wirral data <https://doteveryone.org.uk/resources/heatmap/#sthash.zHKOMyRQ.dpuf>

**4** SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION BUSINESS UNITS, DIGITAL AND CREATIVE SECTOR; LCR 2013, using Digital and Creative business sector data; UK Commission for Employment & Skills UKCES)

**5** Source: ONS BRES and UK Business Counts - Local Units

**Priority Three - Connected Services: every public service joined up, integrated and available online in a way which makes it simple and accessible to get support online**

Action	By When	Lead Organisation
Implement Access Wirral programme to provide transactional services and information online enabling customers in Wirral to manage their business, through a single point of access	2018	Wirral Council
Further develop partnership approach to enable sharing and use of digital data across the Wirral Partnership	Sept 2016	Wirral Partnership
Develop approach to use technologies to support agile workforce and service delivery	Jan 2017	Wirral Partnership

Indicator	Current Performance	Source
100% of partner organisations utilising social media channels and offering an online presence for customers by 2020 (Supporting Measure)	proxy measure to be agreed	
% of residents who feel that the Council keeps them well informed about the services it provides	42%	Residents Survey

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## **CONCLUSION**

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**The Wirral Partnership is committed to a Digital Wirral: a place where people are connected and where public services are modern, agile and accessible to every resident regardless of their location, age or skills.**

**This Strategy provides the route-map to take us there.**



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## REFERENCES

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<https://www.socitm.net/news/17>
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- 6** NESTA, Connected Councils, March 2016
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<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exporting-in-the-digital-age/exporting-in-the-digital-age-helping-uk-companies-to-succeed-globally--2>
- 8** Liverpool City Region Skills for Growth Agreement - Digital & Creative sector; 2013
- 9** Wirral Resident Survey; IPSOS Mori 2015



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To find out more:



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**THE WIRRAL PARTNERSHIP**