

Digital skills-building in disadvantaged+ communities: a novel pathway to addressing health inequalities?



**100%
Digital
Leads**

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99%

of the UK are online,
however over

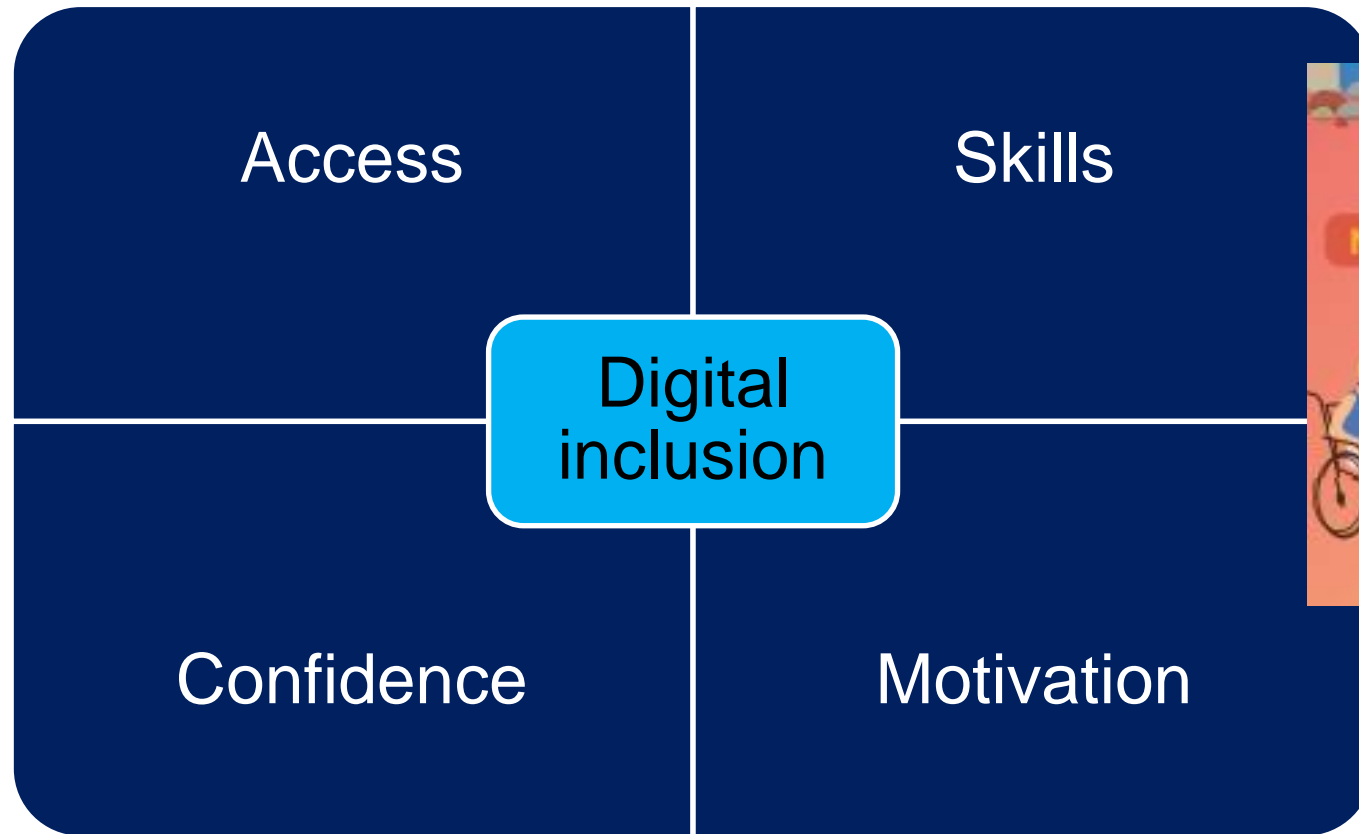
1/4

still have very low
digital capability

Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital Index 2022



Introduction: Digital health inclusion



Good Things Foundation, Digital Nation 2023

UK Digital Strategy, 2017

'Digital-first primary care'



NHS Long Term Plan, 2019

Chapter 5: Digitally-enabled care will go mainstream across the NHS

5.1. Virtually every aspect of modern life has been, and will continue to be, radically reshaped by innovation and technology – and healthcare is no exception. Sustained advances in computing and the democratisation of information are driving choice and control throughout our daily lives, giving us heightened expectations around digital services. Technology is continually opening up new possibilities for prevention, care and treatment. Premature babies, who would have died ten years ago, live long and healthy lives; people who would have been house-bound in pain now walk thanks to new drugs; and genomic testing is increasingly available to help diagnosis and treatment. The NHS is a hotbed of innovation and technological revolution in clinical practice.

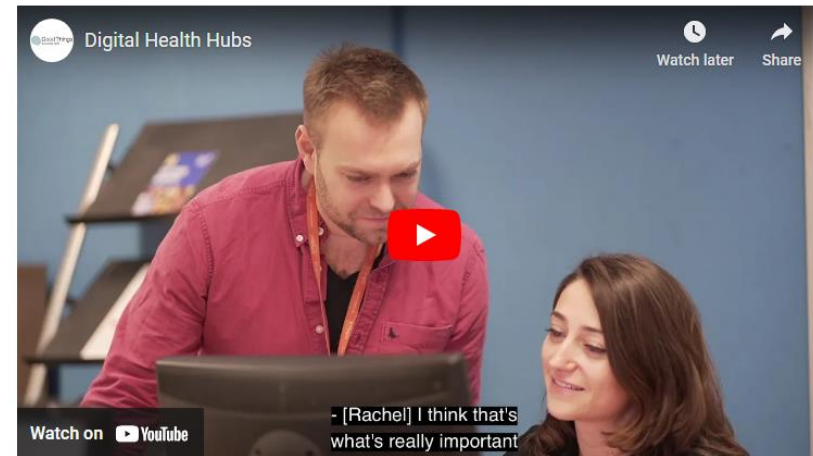
Did you know?

Every patient in England will have the right to online GP consultations by **2024**.



Digital health hubs

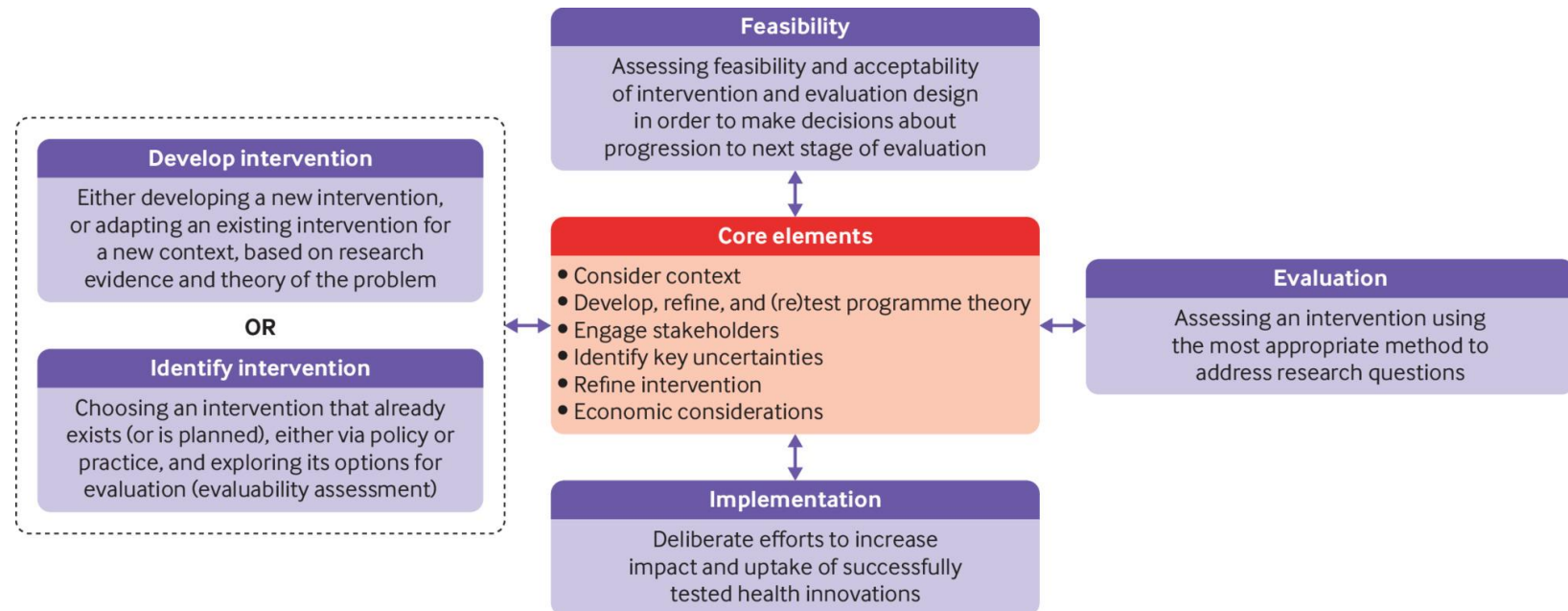
- Dedicated Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations (VCSOs) with trusted people to help service users overcome barriers to digital inclusion
- Established referral pathway for local GP practices and Social Prescribing teams to refer patients for support in accessing online NHS services (100% Digital Leeds, 2022)
- Lack of robust evidence from high quality evaluations for how digital health hubs work & how to optimise impact



Good Things Foundation,
Digital Health Hubs:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZfXyoH9y4ew>

How do community-based digital skills building programmes contribute to tackling health inequalities in disadvantaged population groups?

- How do they produce their impacts (or why they don't)?
- How do they interact with context?
- What are key questions for evaluation?
- How can they be optimised?
- And how can evidence be used to support real-world decision-making?



Skivington, 2021. A new framework for developing and evaluating complex interventions: update of Medical Research Council guidance

Study setting: South & east Leeds

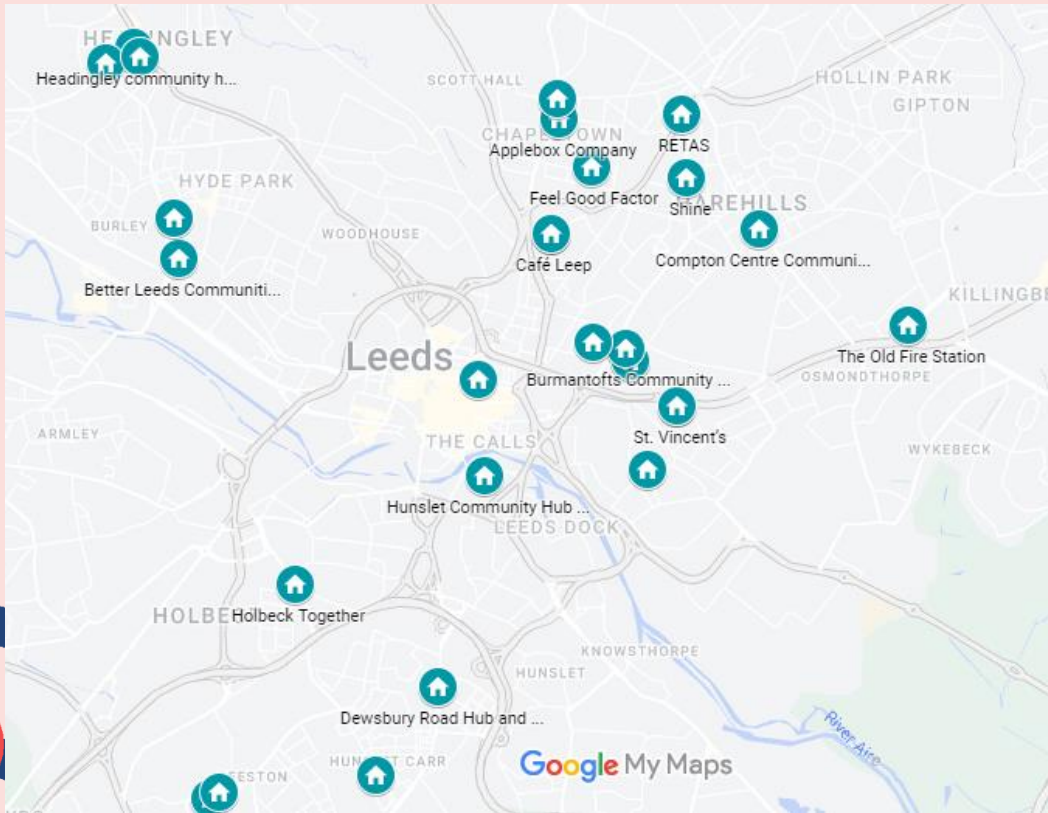
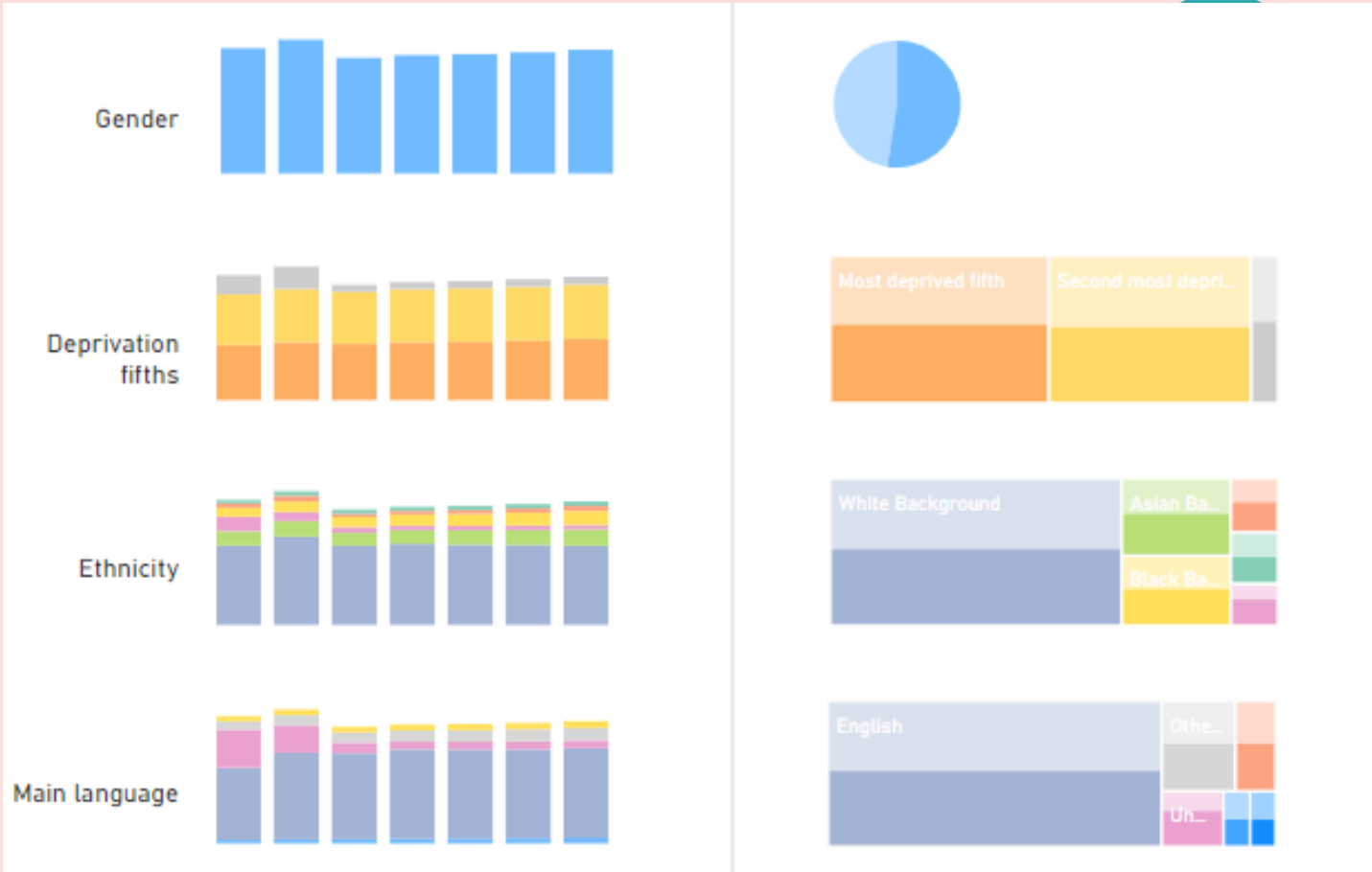


Image: 100% Digital Leeds (<https://digitalinclusionleeds.com/our-work/key-initiatives/digital-health-hubs>)



Leeds Observatory, Demographics dashboard Leeds Inner South, 2023

Study setting: Digital health hubs



Image (& with permission from): Burmantoff's
Community Friends October Newsletter



Digital Group
Celebration

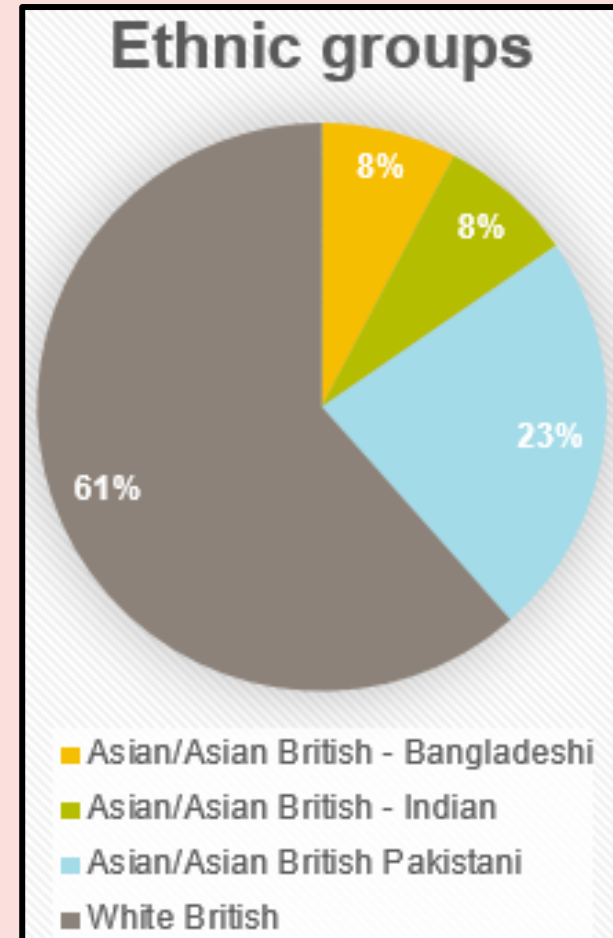
Bridlington
Trip

Participant demographics

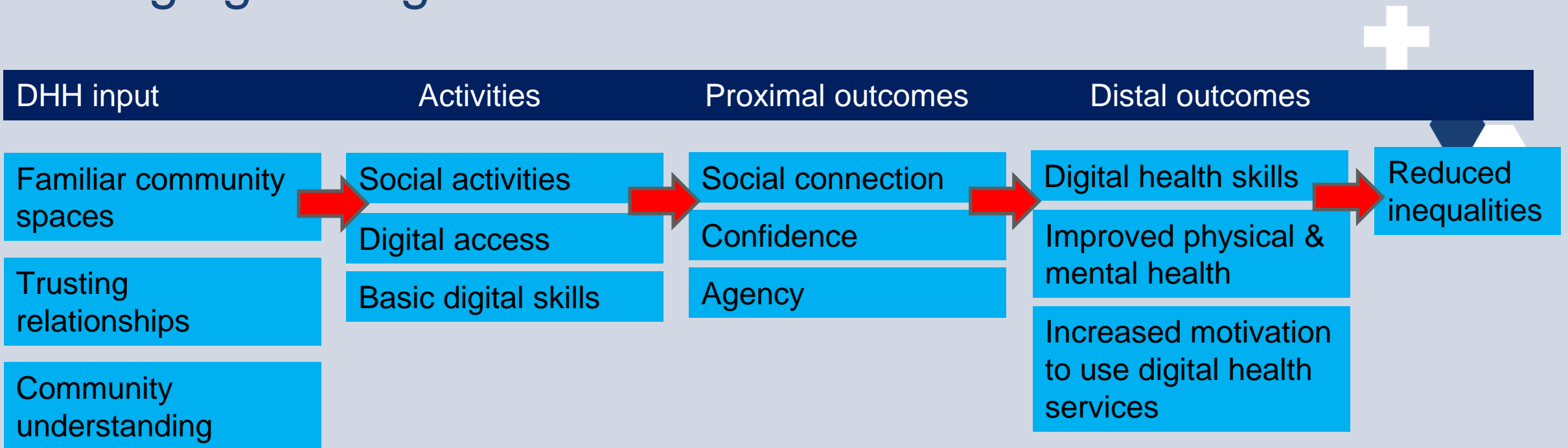
N=24

63% Service users:

- Mean age= 71 years
- 56% Male
- 100% retired/unemployed
- 85% have long-term health conditions



Emerging findings



Emerging findings - themes

1. Familiar community spaces

“a clinical setting, where it feels a bit more intimidating, it might not be as comfortable – rather than potentially sat in a room with a cuppa and a cake or a biscuit or music playing or just familiar faces. All of those different components that put people at ease around certain things that might make them anxious around their long-term condition, and apps and digital more generally, if they’re not confident.”

P05, Senior Digital Inclusion Officer, 100% Digital Leads



Emerging findings

2. Social activities

“I come here, well I go to Bingo on a Monday, I come here on Tuesday afternoon for my education on my tablet and I come here on Friday for breakfast, because I meet people and it’s nice to just socialise a bit because the rest of the time, I’m on my own. So, it just breaks the week up.”

P09, Female Age 81, White British



Emerging findings

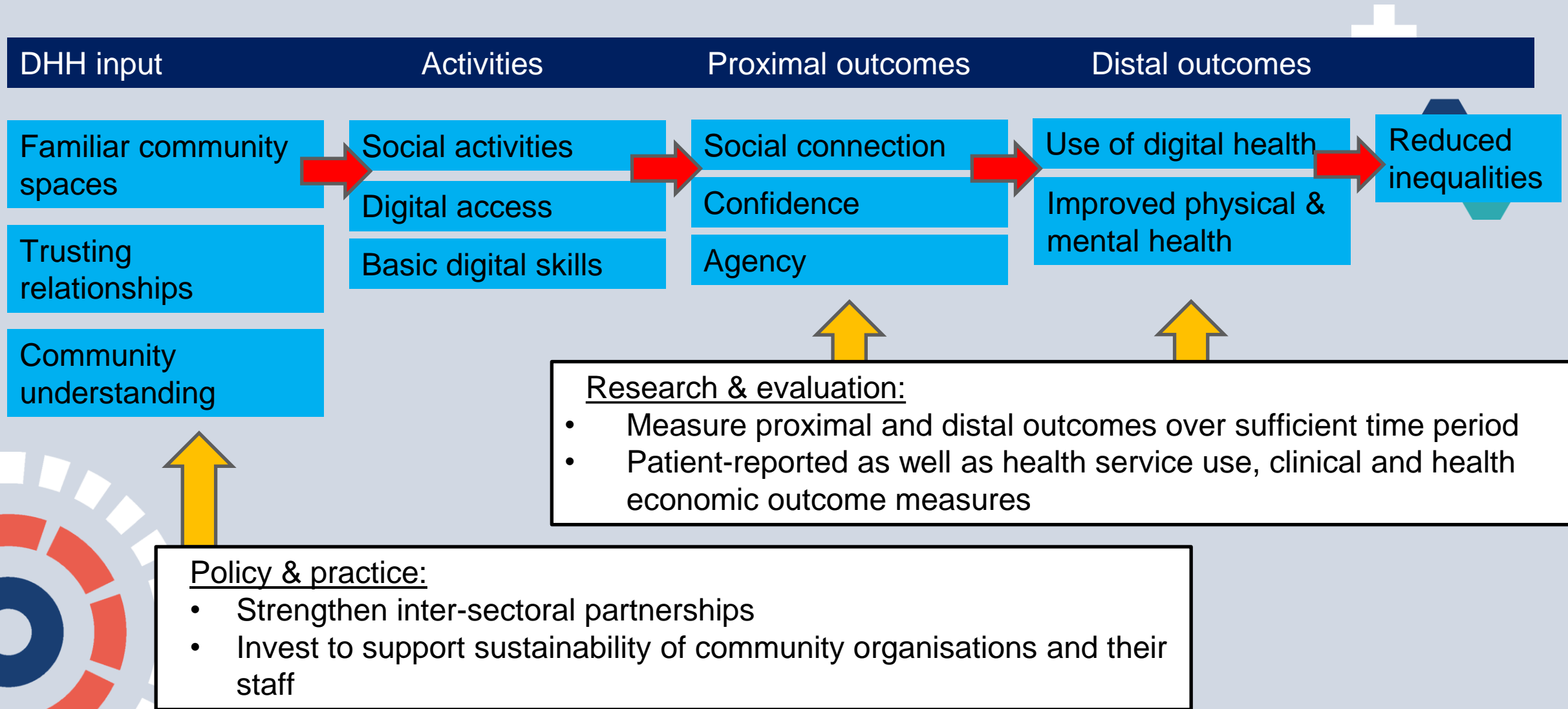
3. Basic digital skills are a first step

“some of the digital health hubs are supporting opening up digital using creative things and games and fun, light things that if you don’t manage it, it doesn’t matter. There’s not any dire consequences for not being able to do it; there’s no pressure, which might seem like it’s not connected to health, but actually, it’s helping people just develop the skills and confidence in a way that means when they are offered an app, they can think, I know what an app is; I can do an app. And that app might be playing on ‘Bejeweled’ (app-based video game). It doesn’t really matter. It’s all transferable stuff.”

P04 Digital Inclusion Manager, 100% Digital Leeds



Conclusions & recommendations



References

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6. Leeds Observatory. Demographics Dashboard (Leeds GP recorded population) 2023 [Available from: <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiaMTMwMDA0NWEtY2QyYy00YTAxLWlONTEtN2QzYmRhZTI3NjVmliwidCI6IjE2ODY0ZmFLTI4NmUtNDcwNy1hNzhiLWQ3MTg4ZDYxNDlhNyJ9&pageName=ReportSectiona21ebe732d1498400dca>].

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- This is a UCL research staff study which has been ethically approved by the UCL Research Ethics Committee (ID no 6761/004). Lead researcher: Dr Shoba Poduval. Email: s.poduval@ucl.ac.uk

