Dadansoddi ar gyfer Polisi

YMCHWIL GYMDEITHASOL Y LLYWODRAETH

GSR

GOVERNMENT SOCIAL RESEARCH

Analysis for Policy

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Social research number: 9/2026

Publication date: 27/01/2026

# Digital Communities Wales: digital confidence, health and well-being. Final update report

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

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# Digital Communities Wales: digital confidence, health and well-being. Final update report

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Full Research Report: Bryer, N. & Bebb, H. (2026). Digital Communities Wales: digital confidence, health and well-being. Final update report. Cardiff: Welsh Government, GSR report number 9/2026.

Available at: https://www.gov.wales/digital-communities-wales-digital-confidence-health-and-well-being-final-update-report.

Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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# Glossary

**Digital Communities Wales (DCW)**

A Welsh Government funded programme which aims to reduce digital exclusion and improve basic digital skills.

**National Health Service (NHS)**

A publicly funded healthcare system in the United Kingdom.

**Key Performance Indicator (KPI)**

A measurable metric used to assess progress made towards a specific objective.

# 1. Introduction

OB3 Research was appointed by the Welsh Government to undertake an evaluation of the Digital Communities Wales: digital confidence, health, and well-being (DCW) programme. DCW was a 6-year programme, following a decision by the Welsh Government to activate the option to extend the original 3-year delivery contract. The programme was delivered by Cwmpas, in conjunction with the Good Things Foundation and Swansea University, to reduce digital exclusion and help improve basic digital skills levels across Wales.

The Welsh Government invested £6 million revenue funding into the programme over a 3-year period between 1 July 2019 and 31 June 2022 (the first phase, Years 1 to 3). Additional revenue funding of £6 million was made available for a further 3-year period between 1 July 2022 and 31 June 2025 (the second phase, Years 4 to 6). The Welsh Government also later granted a further 3-month period extension to allow the programme to deliver up until 30 September 2025 with an additional £0.5 million funding allocated for this purpose.

The aims of the evaluation were to:

- review and summarise existing evidence around the relationship between digital inclusion and health.
- review the effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of the programme.
- assess the extent to which the programme aims have been achieved and targets met.
- provide evidence of the outcomes of the programme for individuals and the services they access.

The evaluation was undertaken across three key stages:

- the first stage involved the preparation of a process evaluation and theory of change report, published in 2021
- the second stage involved the preparation of an interim process and outcome evaluation report, published in 2022 and a short update report on programme performance, published in 2023
- the third stage involved the preparation of a summative final evaluation report, published in 2025. The final evaluation report did not include data and outputs from the final quarterly reports for year 6 of the programme (Quarter 3 and Quarter 4) which were gathered after the completion of the final report and made available in the autumn 2025.

This final update report draws upon the evidence set out in the programme's quarterly progress reports for Quarter 3 and Quarter 4 of year 6 and provides an assessment of overall performance against agreed targets. It focuses specifically on delivery during the

period from July 2024 to September 2025. No additional fieldwork was undertaken in the preparation of this report.

# 2. Performance and achievements

This chapter considers the overall performance and achievements of the DCW programme.

## 2.1 DCW KPI performance: Years 1 to 3 (July 2019 to June 2022)

A detailed analysis of performance over the programme's first 3 years of delivery, between 2019 and 2023 is provided in the 2023 update report.

During the first phase of DCW and up until the end of March 2021, the programme reported against 9 annual key performance indicators (KPIs). The KPIs are set out below. The interim process and outcome evaluation concluded that the programme was performing well against four of its nine KPIs (KPIs 1, 4, 6 and 9), having exceeded two of these by some margin. It was performing reasonably well against another three KPIs (KPIs 2, 5 and 8) but was substantially under-performing against the remaining two (KPIs 3 and 9).

**Key Performance Indicators (July 2019 to March 2021)**

| | |
|---|---|
| KPI 1 | People directly supported through intensive interventions. |
| KPI 2 | People supported indirectly via engagement with organisations. |
| KPI 3 | Large Private Sector organisations engaged with |
| KPI 4 | Third and public sector bodies engaged with |
| KPI 5 | Public sector organisations engaged with (to include every Health Board and Local Authority) |
| KPI 6 | Digital Inclusion volunteers recruited and placed by organisations supported by the programme. |
| KPI 7 | Health and care staff supported to engage with technology to improve health outcomes. |
| KPI 8 | Patients supported to engage with technology to improve health outcomes. |
| KPI 9 | Front Line Staff (non-health and care) trained to support service users to engage with technology. |

The Welsh Government and DCW reviewed the original set of nine indicators and agreed to adopt four KPIs and three programme level outcomes from 1 April 2021 onwards. The new KPIs and outcomes are set out at Table 2.1 and Table 2.2. Between April 2021 and June 2022, DCW exceeded its target for KPI 1 (People supported to become digitally confident) but, whilst good progress was made against the other 3, the programme did not fully achieve them.

## 2.2 DCW KPI performance: Year 4 to Year 5 (July 2022 to March 2024)

Over the second phase of funding, annual targets were set for 3 of the programme's 4 KPIs. A detailed analysis of performance up until March 2024 is set out in the summative final evaluation report and summarised at Table 2.2. It should be noted that three of the 4 targets had been calculated on a proportionate basis, using the annual targets set for the DCW programme for the three-year period between July 2022 and June 2025. However, in the case of KPI 3, no annual targets were set therefore the overall target of 55 was expected to be achieved over a three-year period.

Over the 21 month period between July 2022 and March 2024, the programme exceeded its target for KPI 1 (People supported to become digitally confident) and made good progress against KPI 2 (Volunteers providing support to citizens) and KPI 4 (Health and care, public, private and third sector staff supported to become digitally confident). By March 2024, the programme achieved over half of its 3-year target set for KPI 3 (Support to ensure digital inclusion is recognised strategically and embedded within organisational delivery). Under KPI 3, the programme was particularly successful in supporting third sector organisations and also achieved at least half its target with public sector organisations. The small target allocated to supporting private sector organisations was not achieved.

**Table 2.1: DCW KPI performance during Years 4 to Year 5 (July 2022 to March 2024)**

| KPI Number | Key Performance Indicator (KPI) | Target | Achieved | Achieved as % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | People supported to become digitally confident (motivation, basic digital skills, and confidence) | 59,500 | 65,752 | 111% |
| 2 | Volunteers providing support to citizens | 1,750 | 1,530 | 87% |
| 3 | Support to ensure digital inclusion is recognised strategically and embedded within organisational and delivery across the:<br>• *Private Sector*<br>• *Local Authorities*<br>• *Health Boards (IMTP)*<br>• *Third and Public Sector*<br><br>Total | <br><br><br><br><br>*10*<br>*12*<br>*9*<br>*24*<br><br>55 | <br><br><br><br><br>*0*<br>*6*<br>*5*<br>*20*<br><br>31 | <br><br><br><br><br>*0%*<br>*50%*<br>*56%*<br>*83%*<br><br>56% |
| 4 | Health and care, public, private and third sector staff supported to become digitally confident | 4,050 | 3,525 | 87% |

Source: DCW programme quarterly reports

## 2.3 DCW KPI performance: Year 5 (April 2024 to June 2024), Year 6 (July 2024 to June 2025) and Year 7 (July to September 2025)

A new delivery plan was put in place for the final 15-month delivery period, covering April 2024 to June 2025, which was subsequently extended for a final 3-month extension period to September 2025. This new delivery plan contained 3, rather than 4, KPIs. These were initially set at a lower rate compared with previous delivery periods to reflect the shift to a more thematic delivery approach focusing on a smaller number of priority areas, including health, social care, social housing, older people and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities from April 2024 onwards, and the winding down and closure phase during the final few months of delivery. Revised targets were also put in place to reflect the 3-month extension between July and September 2025.

However, in light of the strong progress achieved by mid-2024 and to reflect the programme extension to September 2025, the targets were later revised upwards as shown at Table 2.3. By the end of the programme period in September 2025, DCW had exceeded all 3 KPIs by a considerable margin. The programme should be commended for its strong

performance during its last few months of delivery having indirectly supported 93,419 people and directly supported 2,238 staff to become digitally confident over the final 18-month period up until September 2025.

**Table 2.2: DCW KPI performance Year 6 to Year 7 (April 2024 to September 2025)**

| Number | Key Performance Indicator (KPI) | Original target | Revised target | Achieved | Achieved as % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | People indirectly supported to become digitally confident (motivation, basic digital skills and confidence) | 16,660 | 19,920 | 93,419 | 469% |
| 2 | Staff directly supported to become digitally confident (motivation, basic digital skills and confidence) | 1,000 | 1,200 | 2,238 | 187% |
| 3 | Support to ensure ownership of digital inclusion by stakeholders and clients | 6 | 8 | 15 | 188% |

Source: DCW programme quarterly reports

## 2.4 Discussion of KPI achievements: April 2024 to September 2025

We now turn to consider some of the key issues for these KPIs:

### KPI 1: People indirectly supported to become digitally confident

Whilst it is not possible to aggregate the programme's achievements against this KPI across the delivery period, it is worth noting that DCW directly supported 106,451 people to become more digitally confident between April 2021 and March 2024 and indirectly supported a further 93,419 to become more digitally confident between April 2024 and September 2025.

Since April 2024, this KPI continued to be mainly achieved through the delivery of Digital Consultation Plans, which were developed for organisations who engaged with DCW and set out how organisations would support their users/members to become more digitally confident. These plans accounted for 86% of the achievements reported against this KPI.

The reported outputs included people supported indirectly by those who engaged in DCW training - every person who attended DCW training had to pledge that they would support 5 people. These indirect support outputs accounted for 12% of the achievements reported against this KPI since April 2024.

### KPI 2: Staff directly supported to become digitally confident

Between April 2021 and March 2024, DCW supported 4,916 staff to become digitally confident. Since April 2024, a total of 2,238 staff were directly supported to become digitally confident. This brings the total number of staff directly supported to become digitally confident between April 2021 and September 2025 to 7,154.

Over the final 18-month period of delivery, DCW continued to appropriately target its resources to support staff from the health and social care sector. Since April 2024, 57% of the achievements reported against this KPI were for staff based in health and social care organisations whilst the remaining 43% were based in other sectors, most notably third sector organisations.

Just over half of the training delivered over the 18-month period between April 2024 and September 2025 was delivered to staff online. For example, 25 of the 46 sessions delivered during the final quarter July to September 2025 were online sessions. The most delivered training sessions were digital champions, digital tools to support people living with dementia, online safety, inspiring digital activities, digital accessibility and helping people to get online. Several bespoke sessions tailored for individual organisations were also delivered.

### KPI 3: Support to ensure ownership of digital inclusion by stakeholders and clients

The final DCW quarterly report as of September 2025 noted that the programme had engaged with 2,202 organisations in total, and of these, 854 had received a Digital Consultation Plan.

A total of 15 organisations were reported as an output against this KPI, and these included charities, health boards, National Health Service (NHS) trusts, local authorities and housing associations.

## 2.5 Progress against programme outcomes: Years 1 to 7 (July 2019 – September 2025)

Previous evaluation reports considered feedback captured by the DCW programme from client organisations and individuals trained, to measure the extent to which programme outcomes were being achieved.

There was a marked improvement in the outcomes reported by trained participants over the first half of the programme delivery. Whilst feedback from supported organisations showed a slightly more mixed picture, there was an improvement in the outcomes reported by participating organisations by the midpoint of programme delivery.

From July 2023 onwards (the start of Year 5), different outcome reporting indicators were used by DCW which means it is not possible to combine the data with that of previous years.

The outcomes data reported by DCW over the final 9 months of delivery from January to September 2025 (the last 6 months of Year 6 and first quarter of Year 7) are set out below. It shows that the programme continued to report very high proportions of trained participants reporting positive outcomes because of their engagement with the programme.

The programme appears to have had a notable positive impact upon participants' confidence to stay safe online, followed by increased confidence in helping others, communicating online, and solving problems online. A high proportion, at 94%, also thought that they better understood how to use technology to improve and manage their health because of their engagement with DCW.

**Progress against DCW programme outcomes (January to September 2025)**

Outcome 1: People having sufficient basic digital skills and confidence to be able to engage digitally (and with digital services) in their everyday and working lives.

- 93% felt more confident using the internet and technology.
- 100% said they know how to stay safe online.
- 96% felt more confident helping others get online.
- 96% felt more confident communicating online.
- 96% felt more confident using the internet to solve problems.

Outcome 2: Increased levels of people using technology to manage their health (physical & mental) and wellbeing independently.

- 94% better understand how to use technology to improve and manage health.

Outcome 3: Increase in ownership of digital inclusion by stakeholders and clients.

- No specific metrics were reported within the quarterly reports against this outcome, but the outcome was evidenced via case study examples, set out at Chapter 8 of the summative final evaluation report.

Source: DCW programme delivery over the last 9 months of delivery between January and September 2025 (318 participants)

# 3. Conclusions

Over its last 18 months of delivery, up to September 2025, DCW performed well against its KPIs and substantially exceeded the final set of targets. This shows that, despite considerable change and a shift to a new thematic approach from April 2024, the programme successfully reached a greater number of participants.

Progress in supporting health and care staff was initially slow, but this improved considerably over time and continued into the final months of delivery. The challenging targets associated with recruiting and training volunteers and working with private sector organisations were removed by the Welsh Government over the course of delivery. As a result, the final outputs reported by DCW compared very strongly to funded targets, although this may partly obscure these earlier delivery challenges.

DCW's KPIs were revised several times by the Welsh Government to reflect external factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and the shift to thematic delivery. This makes it difficult to aggregate overall achievements across the programme period, and highlights the value of adopting broader, more flexible KPIs for future programmes which can accommodate any changes to delivery.

Evidence captured by the programme shows that most participants reported improved outcomes. Case study data captured via primary research as part of the final summative evaluation confirms that DCW effectively achieved its 3 core programme outcomes.

Overall, the programme delivered its objectives, reached a wide range of participants, and produced meaningful benefits for those involved.