

## How Digital Champions are helping Brent become a digital borough



Since the launch of their first digital strategy in 2017, [Brent Council](#) has been committed to helping everyone in their area with using and benefiting fully from technology.

From helping staff and residents to businesses and partners, they have a clear direction to become a truly digital borough.

In the past couple of years, their Digital Champion approach has become an integral part of that vision. They've set themselves an ambitious five-year target to have 500 Digital Champions by 2025, and with 105 so far, they are well on their way to achieving it.

In 2020, they joined our [Digital Champions Network](#), using it to ensure all Champions are confident and well prepared for helping people with digital skills and capturing the overall picture across the borough.

So, how is a Digital Champion model working so well in Brent? Well, it has three important ingredients:

- The first ingredient is that it has **senior leadership support**. Brent's strategic corporate priorities now state that each of their five directorates should have Digital Champions. This leadership commitment makes a huge difference when galvanising staff and partners to get involved and having consistent awareness about the available support across the Council and beyond.
- Secondly, their Digital Champion programme is centred around **partnerships**. They have an active Digital Inclusion Network made up of libraries, housing providers, community hubs, health organisations and charities who meet quarterly. Many of these organisations have adopted a Digital Champion approach. Partners like Metropolitan Housing and a local first primary school are really taking the Digital Champion ball and running with it, recruiting dozens of staff and volunteers to support parents and tenants.
- The third ingredient is that the Council is seeing digital skills through a compulsory lense, positioning it next to safeguarding as an **essential area of support and training**. They recognise that, things like when making doctors' appointments and claiming benefits rely on people being online, digital skills support must become part of everyday practice. Their frontline council staff are supported to become Digital Champions and shown how digital support and signposting must be part of their customer interactions.

[Cllr Mili Patel, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources & Reform at Brent Council said:](#)

*"In today's fast changing world, it's vital our residents not only have the digital skills they need for everyday life and fostering connections, but skills that can help to open up new opportunities."*

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*"We're committed to supporting our residents to gain the skills they need to find good, secure well-paid work. Digital skills are now essential in most industries and remain a big area of focus for us.*

*"We are delighted with how our Digital Champion programme has grown over the past couple of years. There is now a strong level of engagement with the network across the borough.*

*"Like anything, there have been challenges along the way. We have a wide variety of community and voluntary people onboard and many are still nervous around digital themselves. We've tried to stay at a comfortable distance, providing training and guidance to our partners where they need it but allowing them the space to grow their digital skills support at their own pace.*

*"We've learnt that a culture change like this takes time and having dedicated digital inclusion staff and resources like Digital Unite's Network are vital for its success. Together, we will ensure nobody is left behind."*

## **Create your own Digital Champion army today**

[Get in touch with us](#) to find out how our Digital Champion training and support can be used in your organisation.