



# Reducing Health Equalities through Digital skills

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Project Evaluation  
April 2024



Hodge Hill  
Neighbourhood Network  
Scheme (NNS)

# Project Outline

The initiative to address health disparities through digital skills was catalysed by insights gleaned from a 12-week program focusing on diabetes management. It was disheartening to discover that a significant proportion of participants lacked fundamental knowledge about their health condition beyond the label of 'diabetic'. This not only impeded their ability to derive full benefits from the program but also underscored broader systemic issues such as limited access to healthcare professionals. Moreover, as more services transition online, there is a growing sense of alienation among women, particularly those lacking digital literacy skills, exacerbating existing health inequalities.

*Reducing Health Inequalities through Digital skills* project endeavours to harness the potential of digital skills to empower women to take charge of their health. Building upon lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, where reliance on digital platforms became imperative, the project aims to bridge the gap in digital literacy and health awareness. By delivering health education programs through digital media, the project seeks to engage women from communities grappling with low mood or health issues.





Part 1 of the project entailed weekly sessions aimed at enhancing participants' health knowledge and digital proficiency. The curriculum covered a spectrum of topics ranging from basic computer skills to navigating healthcare systems and utilising digital health resources such as patient services and mental health apps. Importantly, recognising the diversity of participants' needs and abilities, the project employs tailored approaches, such as utilising pictorial methods and the WRAP app, to ensure accessibility for all.

Individual mentorship forms a cornerstone of the project, providing personalised support to participants in understanding their medical records, communicating with healthcare professionals, and addressing any barriers they encounter. Through this one-on-one guidance, participants are empowered to navigate their health journey with confidence and agency.

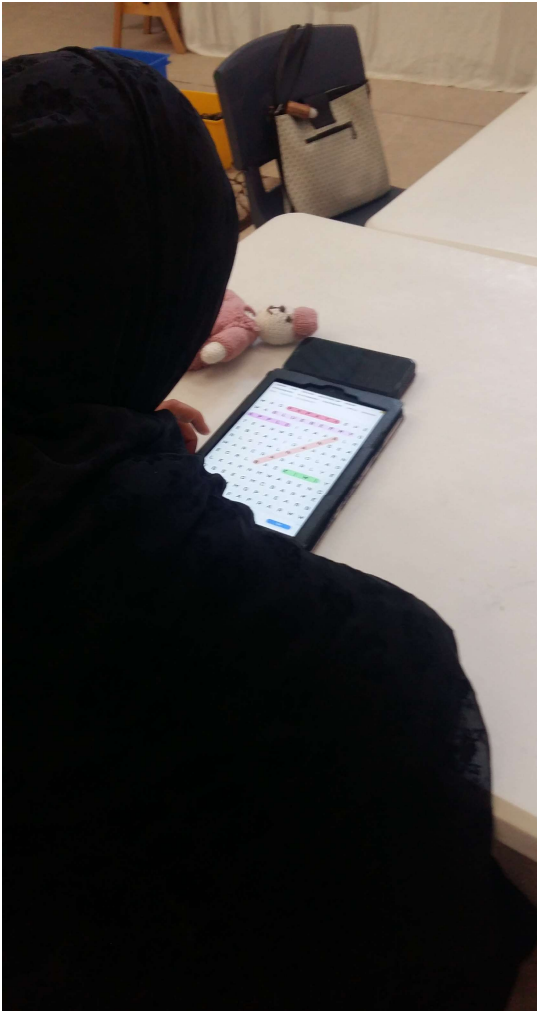
The project's design encompassed two cohorts, each comprising of eight beneficiaries, allowing for focused attention and support. Upon completion of the program, participants requiring additional assistance will be offered enrolment in a tailored well-being program, further cementing the project's commitment to holistic health empowerment.

The importance of access to health information for motivation and self-management cannot be overstated. The anecdote about the "Walking with Words" program underscores the potential of self-motivated activities in improving health outcomes. However, the lack of validation from healthcare professionals poses a significant barrier to sustaining positive health behaviours. By equipping participants with the tools to access and interpret their health information online, the project aims to foster a sense of ownership and accountability, thereby bolstering the continuum of healthy lifestyle choices.



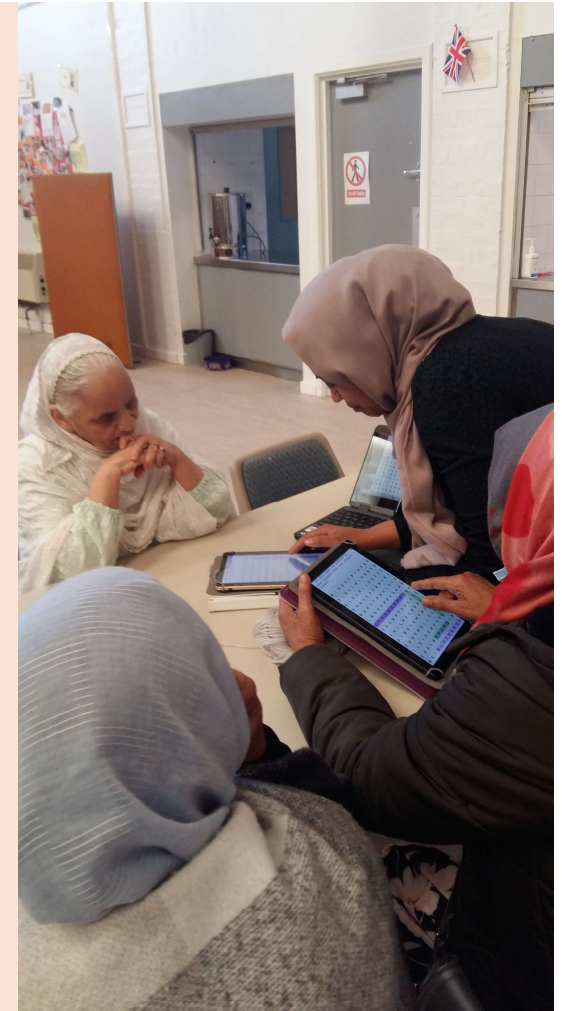






## Project Delivery

Twenty-seven women completed a basic digital skills program, unlocking the potential of computers. The sessions covered fundamental computer skills, downloading apps such as the NHS app and using Patient Services to make appointments, order repeat prescriptions and access health records. Many participants have continued to develop their digital skills by attending weekly computer sessions at GOAL.





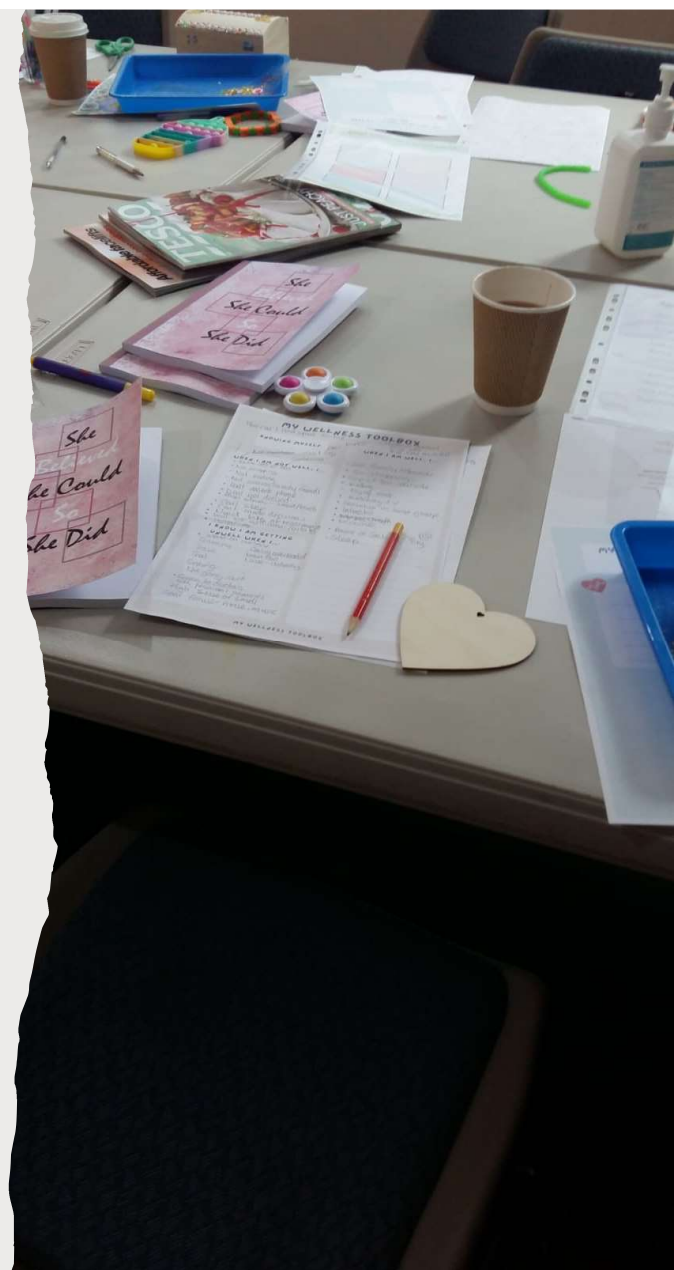
## Wellbeing Toolbox

Six learners with significant poor mental health participated in the 'Wellness Toolbox' program. This included two targeted workshops, where participants created personal wellness toolboxes to use during low periods. These toolboxes can be continually added to, providing an evolving and effective toolkit.





Participants received a diary with inspirational quotes, encouraging them to add their own thoughts. This diary served as a tool to reference during low moments, offering inspiration and personal reflections.





# Wellbeing celebration

The group celebrated by visiting an exhibition at the MAC. They enjoyed exploring the outdoors and delving into a unique display showcasing past crafts and bygone eras.



# Conclusion

Reducing Health Equalities through Digital skills project led to the development of the 'Wellness Toolbox' programme, which integrates digital skills training with wellness strategies. This programme ensures that individuals can access their health data while learning effective wellbeing strategies. By equipping participants with both digital literacy and wellness tools, the initiative aims to reduce GP visits and empower individuals to manage their own health more effectively. The holistic approach combines technical skills with personal wellbeing, fostering self-sufficiency and improved mental health outcomes in the community.



## Crafting Joy Shazia's Journey to Wellness and Inspiration

Shazia faces numerous health challenges, which have taken a toll on her mental well-being. Additionally, she cares for her husband, who also struggles with mental health issues. Despite these difficulties, Shazia is a talented woman, especially skilled in crafts, which provide solace during her darkest moments. However, her lack of digital skills and difficulty accessing GP appointments added to her struggles in understanding her health issues.

Through the "Wellness Toolkit" program, Shazia enhanced her digital proficiency and developed personalised strategies for maintaining her well-being. Her participation in the program also led her to the exhibition, where she was captivated by the craftsmanship of the past.

Reflecting on her experience, Shazia expressed her admiration for the exhibition's depiction of historical craft techniques, inspiring her to recreate them herself. She shared her excitement with her children, who were fascinated by her journey. For Shazia, the outdoor setting, the exhibition's rich history, and the company of others provided an unparalleled sense of fulfilment and peace.

