NHS England Digital Health Champion Programme

Final Report 31 May 2023

Background

Digital Unite have been working with NHS England since 2021 to test and learn from a Champion approach to supporting the delivery and take up of digital health services in a variety of community settings.

There were two main parts to this project.

1. Developing a Digital Health Champion **learning and training curriculum**

2. Testing that curriculum and the Digital Champion model of colleague and patient engagement in a range of health care settings through a variety of **Digital Health Champion Projects** across the country.

What we delivered

- Designed 7 CPD **accredited e-learning courses** and numerous supplementary resources for Digital Health Champions supporting people to manage their health online.

- Delivered that training through our Digital Champions Network to **26** Digital Champion Health Projects across England

- Ran **online meetups** for Champions to support, encourage and build community.

- Together with NHS England, delivered **online project meetups** for Project Managers on different aspects of their Projects and facilitating knowledge sharing.

- Designed **Recipe for Success** cards as well as pulling together other resources and regular quarterly reporting.

What YOU achieved!

26 — Projects registered on the Network

398 — Champions registered

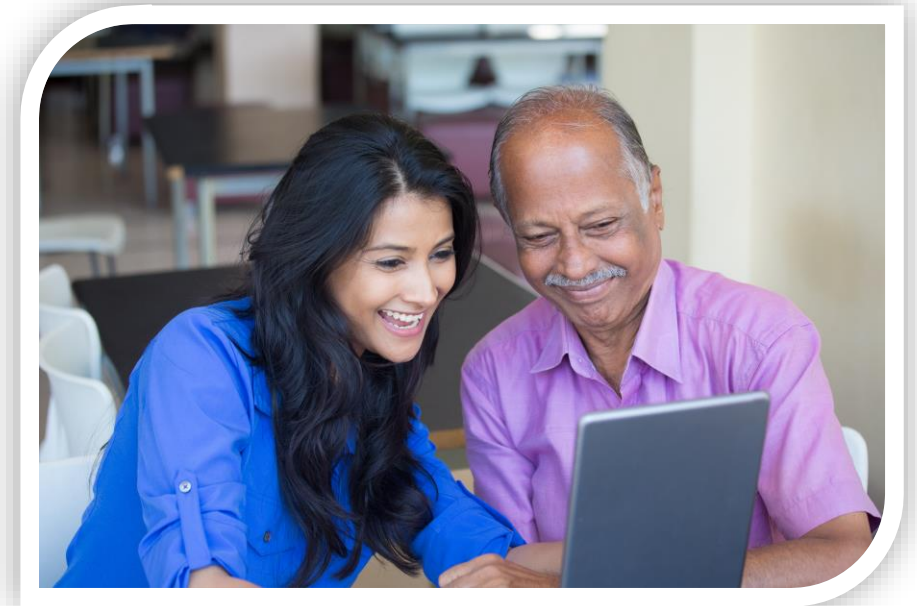**49** — Project Managers

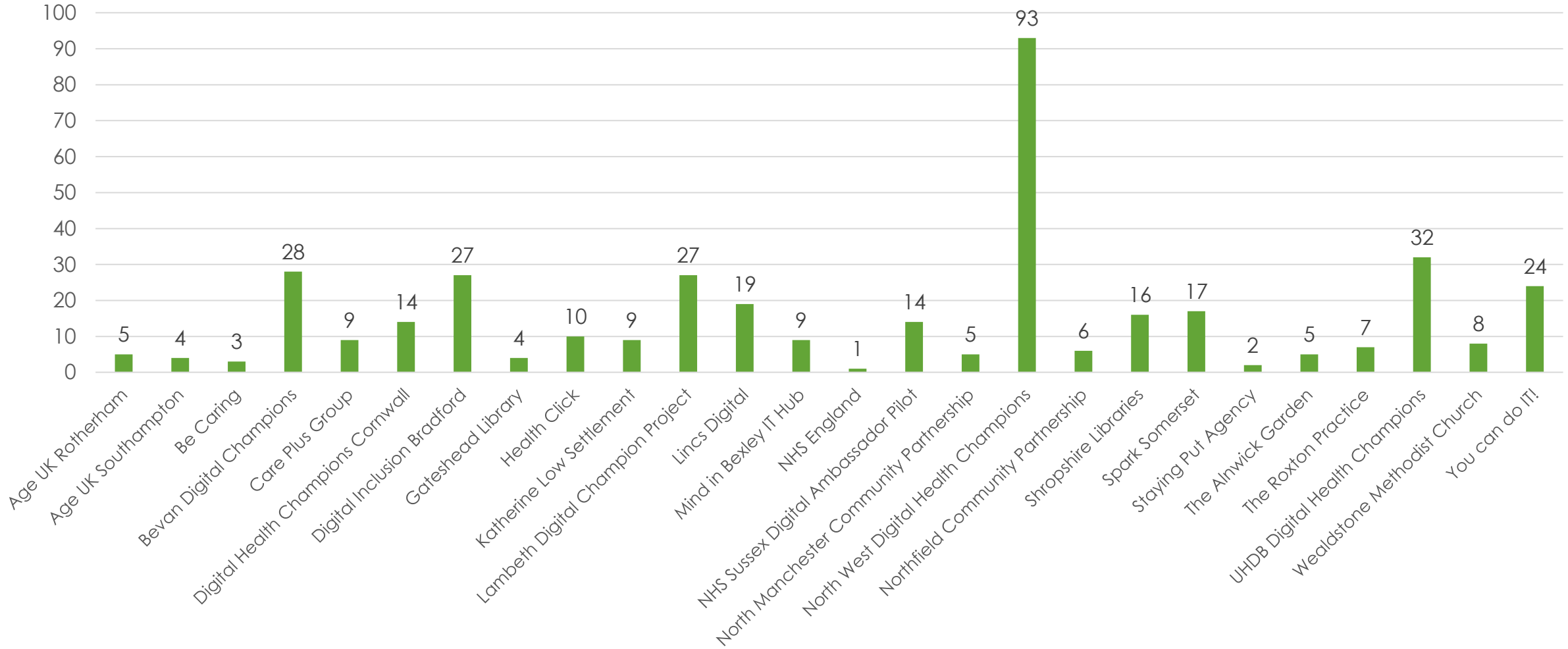**2877** — Courses completed
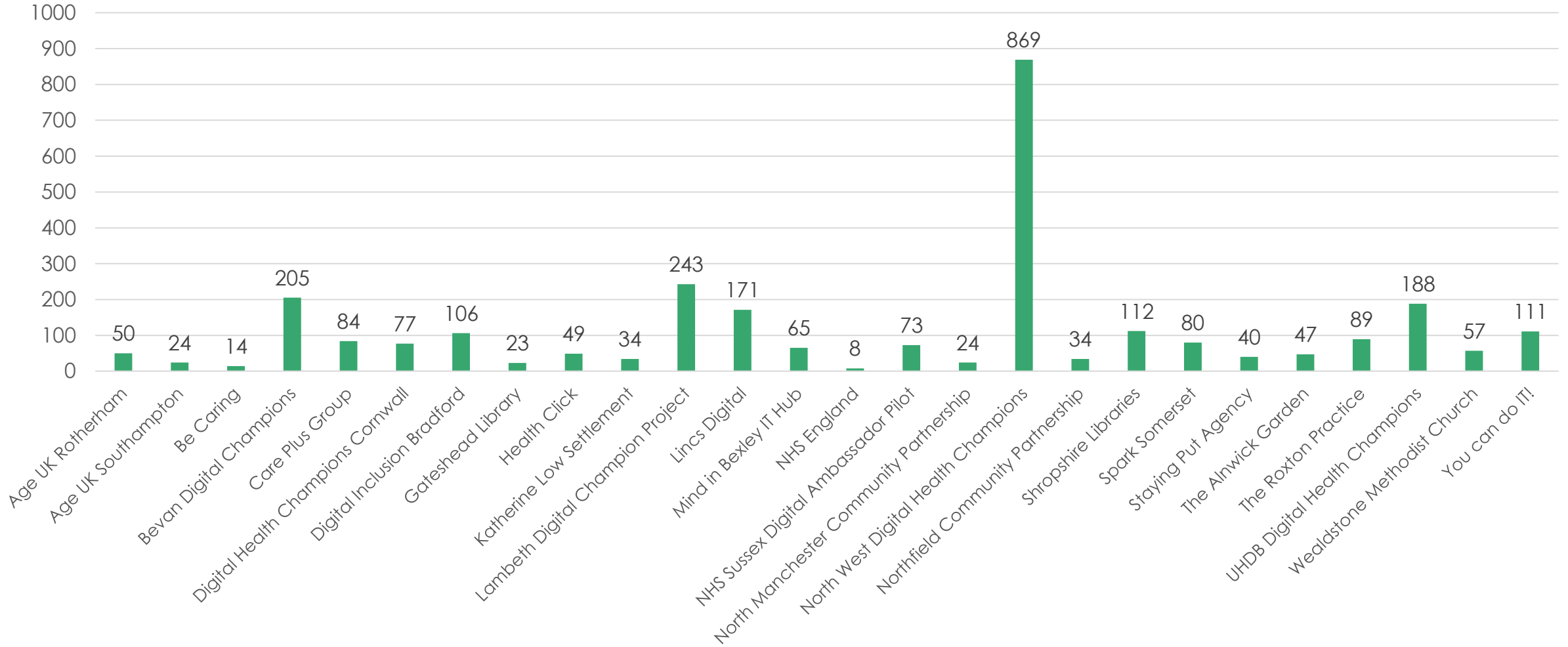
7321 — Learners helped*

6066 — Hours spent helping*

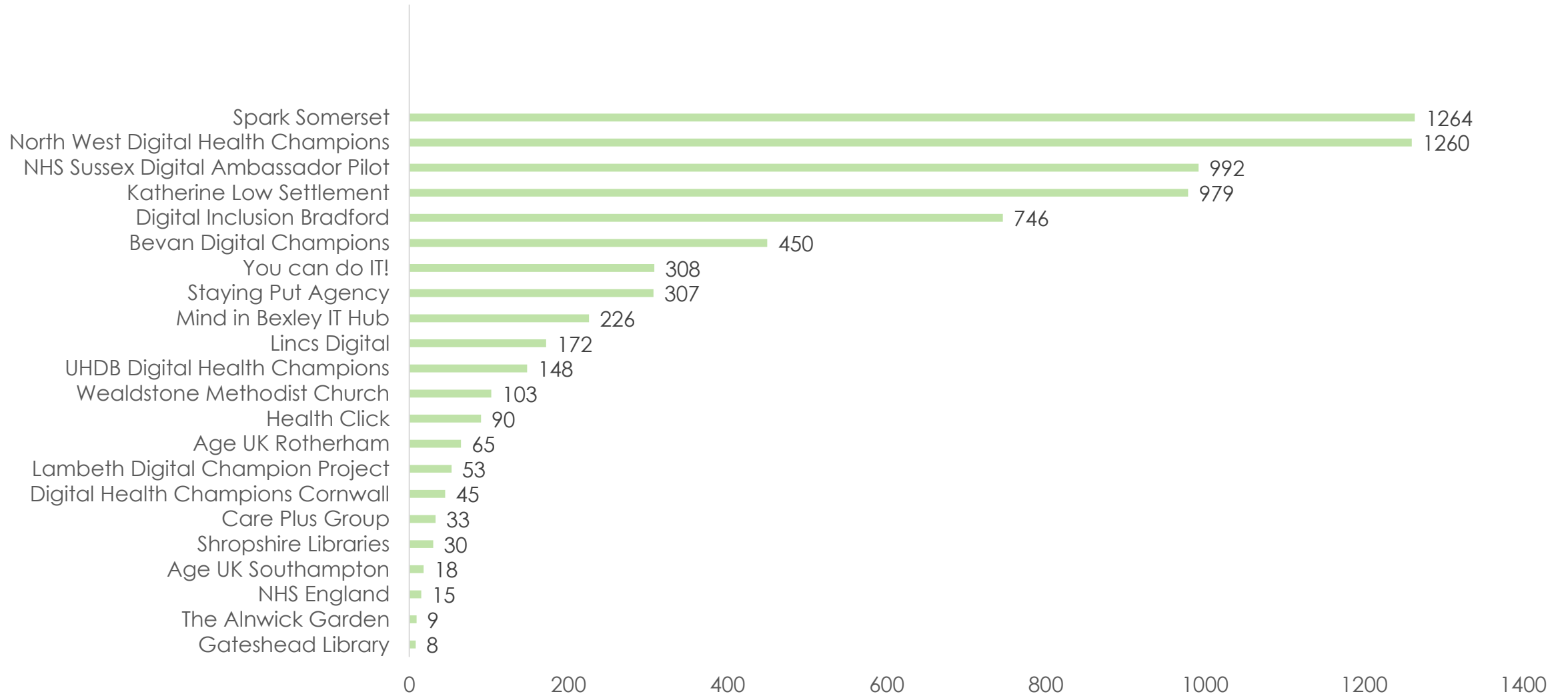* These are only the figures reported. We suspect the true figure was 10-20% higher than that.

The Champions were from across England

Each Champion in turn helped many more learners

(Overall programme average is 18 learners per Champion)

Organisation	Learners
Staying Put Agency	154
Katherine Low Settlement	109
Spark Somerset	74
NHS Sussex Digital Ambassador Pilot	71
Digital Inclusion Bradford	28
Mind in Bexley IT Hub	25
Bevan Digital Champions	16
NHS England	15
North West Digital Health Champions	14
Age UK Rotherham	13
Wealdstone Methodist Church	13
You can do IT!	13
Lincs Digital	9
Health Click	9
UHDB Digital Health Champions	5
Age UK Southampton	5
Care Plus Group	4
Digital Health Champions Cornwall	3
Gateshead Library	2
Lambeth Digital Champion Project	2
Shropshire Libraries	2
The Alnwick Garden	2

The impact of Champion support

I taught one person how to answer a phone call on his phone, we downloaded a kindle app on another gentleman's phone who is a keen reader- he was amazed and went home excited to download and read some new books.
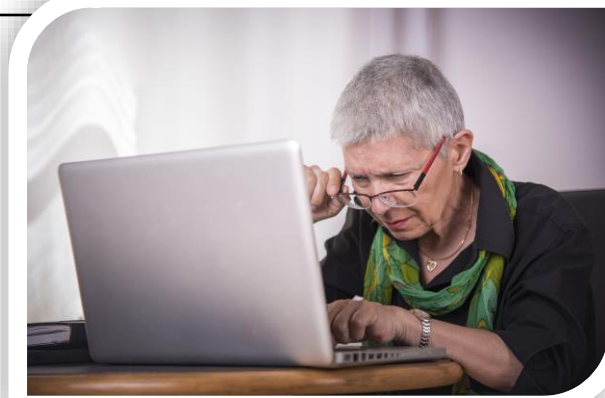
We looked at the stress and worries around trying to get appointments over the phone these days and how it is made easier with MyGP app and the NHS app. We also looked at how you can use the internet to source local groups and start new hobbies to cut down the feelings of being isolated and causing anxiety.

The learner had just bought a mobile phone so we helped him set the phone up from scratch, we then showed him around his Home Screen as he had never used a smart phone before so was very confused to begin with. Finally, we showed him his contacts and his text messages so that he can text his friend for the first time ever. He was very grateful that we have enabled him to communicate better and not be as alone has he was feeling - in turn improving his mental health.

I met with a person and his family to start learning how to be safe online whilst connecting with others. He had started to do this himself but due to anxiety he had become too anxious to contact friends or family using IT. He is now in a better position and his anxiety has been reduced through educating him on what is a scam, phishing or Malware. His world is now bigger through delivering this service to him, he is now using IT to take part in hobbies and contact family who in live in different countries.

I supported patient to set up and use the NHS App on their smartphone and how to use the patient access system to contact the GP surgery and how to use and fill in the online consultation form. This helped the client to feel confident to order their repeat medication online and have this delivered to their home to use the online form to be in touch with the GP when the phone lines are busy. This has made a big difference as client has problems with mobility and finds it difficult to come into the surgery

What we learnt from those involved

The Digital Champion model works!

A Champion approach supports wider digital inclusion strategies

Regular support provides structure and reassurance

Champions can tailor support to suit different learners

Digital Health Champions can open wider worlds

Nurturing and training Digital Champions is key

Digital Health Champion models can:

- Develop and support **staff and volunteers** to drive digital health service adoption within service delivery

- Improve **staff/ volunteer digital skills confidence**, well-being and attitudes towards digital

- Support **overall personal and professional** development through better digital skills

- Offer a **patient-centric model** meaning people get the help they need

- **Reduce inappropriate demand**, realise cost and time **saving efficiencies** for service deliverers and patients alike

- Community learning models nourish community connections and **build wider social value**
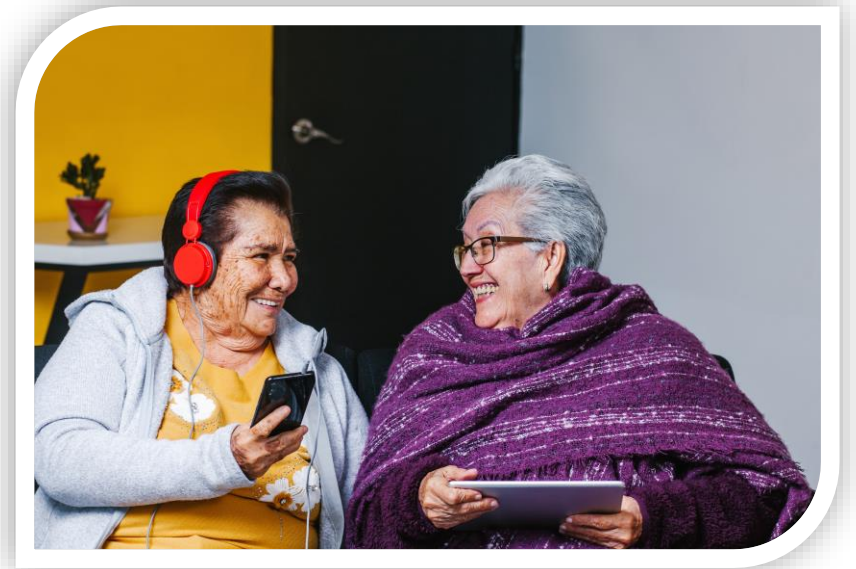
A Champion approach supports wider digital inclusion strategies

"Including Champions as part of our strategy has been very helpful. Champions help to extend reach, bring diverse perspectives and skills, grow our capacity for supporting people in our communities."

"The programme has helped us equip staff as well as volunteers to make every contact count for digital inclusion and support as part of other roles."

"Champions sometimes have lived experience of what our clients are going through both with their digital skills but also their health conditions."

All quotes from Project Managers at the Digital Health Champion Projects

Regular support provides structure and reassurance

Using Drop-In and/or regular sessions to support patients gives a familiar format and context from which to:

- Access online services
- Book GP appointments
- Access a medical record online
- Use online health apps and NHS app
- Make the most of their devices
- Stay in touch with friends and family

"One lady needed to order her prescriptions online as her son had moved away and he always did it for her. She called to see us at one of our drop ins. We showed her how straight forward it was to do. We worked with her to access her GP records and then **spent a couple of weeks** working with her showing her how to order and looking at Airmid app that she could see when the pharmacy had her medication. Being able to order her own medication and then collect it and it be ready has been life changing for her and given her son peace of mind.

Champions can tailor support to suit different learners

Digital Health Champions can build their own skills and confidence to engage patients with particular needs or in particular groups at risk of digital exclusion, for example:

- older people
- those with ESOL requirements
- with learning difficulties
- those with complex/ multiple support requirements
- those from lesser heard communities

"As we try to get patients to take more responsibility and self-management of their own health, particularly LTCs (long-term conditions), we'll need a raft of Digital Champions to help support patients as they transition ... to being involved in selfcare."
- *North West London CCG*

"I helped someone with dementia set up a reminder system on their phone; someone to use Teams so they can attend rehab session; someone with autism to manage their anxiety by teaching them how to check in with the GP services online; someone with a visual impairment sign up to RNIB libraries"
– *Digital Health Champion*

Digital Health Champions can open wider worlds

Supporting people to access digital healthcare can open so many other – more extensive - digital inclusion and skills opportunities for them.
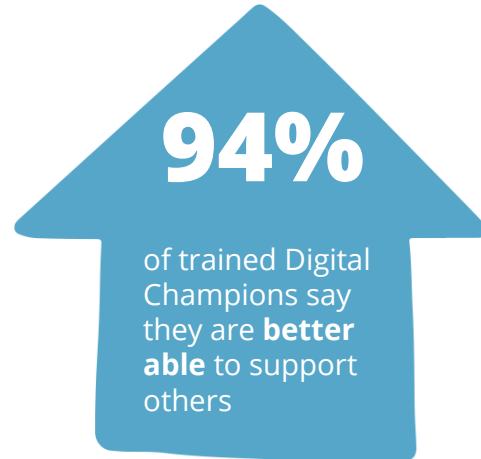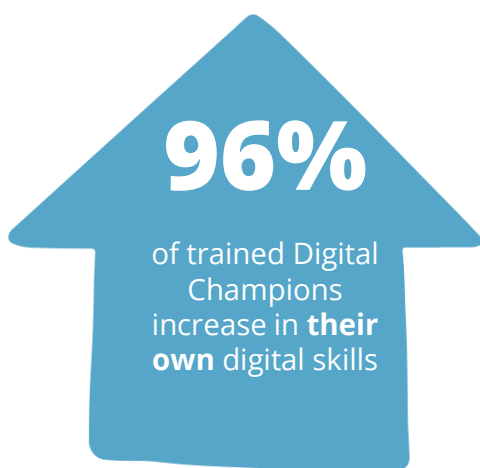
Trained and confident Digital Health Champions can help patient-learners build digital skills and confidence that support them in so many more everyday situations.

"We helped 9 people at the Cafe with a various range of needs from looking for jobs, downloading Teams for a health appointment, setting up devices with a range of email addresses, organising folders on computers and blocking people on social media."
- *Spark Somerset*

Nurturing and training Champions is key

The training, support and resourcing of Digital Health Champions – and the Project Managers who support them – is vital.

96% of trained Digital Champions increase in **their own** digital skills

94% of trained Digital Champions say they are **better able** to support others

"Volunteers and staff flourish with regular peer support and sharing of experiences."
Digital Health Champion Project

"It's great that **there is a mix of all kinds of resources** available on the DCN including options for Digital Champions to meet up too as some people prefer to meet up with others to talk."

"The DCN **has helped massively** with training volunteers to upskill people's digital skills and using NHS app as well. Thank you very much!"

Learn. Share.
Change Lives.

Welcome to the Digital Champions Network
A unique training and support community for aspiring and experienced Digital Champions.

Already got an account? Log in

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Find out more | New member? Register here | Help | Get in touch

What NHSE has to say..

"It has been a pleasure to work with Digital Unite over the last 3.5 years on developing a purpose built e-learning environment that enhances people's knowledge and confidence of how to support people to use digital to increase their access to health services more effectively.

As we grow digital services within the NHS, helping people to access those services becomes ever more important and this model of working with local champions to help their fellow citizens is highly sustainable.

Digital Unite's professionalism, enthusiasm and creativity have been key to making this project the success that it is. The organisation has been so supportive to not only central NHS England colleagues but all the regional projects that we have worked with, creating a true partnership relationship. Alongside this, the project represents excellent value for money for the service that we receive. I do expect that this project continues long into the future."

Lynn Smith, National Head of Implementation, Digital Citizen, Transformation Directorate, NHS England

Going forwards…

We are delighted to report that the following projects are continuing with their membership of the Digital Champions Network. We look forward to supporting them and seeing how their projects develop and evolve.

Lincs Digital
Supporting learners across rural Lincolnshire from GP surgeries to farm barns!

Katherine Low Settlement
Through their Tech Up programme, they are working with older people in Battersea to support health and wellbeing and reduce loneliness and isolation.

Mind in Bexley IT Hub
Helping people with mental health difficulties to access Mind's recovery college as well as develop their broader digital skills.

University Hospital Derby & Burton
Supporting patients and staff who come into the hospital each day with the digital skills needed to navigate the increasing digitisation of services.

Cornwall Council
Cornwall Council is now planning to roll out Champion training across its entire network of Digital Inclusion projects who they already engage via a device loan scheme.

North West Digital Champion Programme
The programme will continue to engage a mixture of NHS staff, volunteers and third sector organisations to deliver Champion support across Lancashire, Merseyside, Cheshire and South Cumbria.

Digital Inclusion Bradford
TBC