Building Digital Readiness for Youth Workers in Oxfordshire

The Intel® Skills for Innovation (Intel® SFI) initiative with Oxfordshire Youth is addressing digital inequality by empowering youth work practitioners to integrate technology into their work.

Oxfordshire Youth is a dedicated and highly professional youth development charity working directly with young people aged 8-25 years, and the grassroots leaders, volunteers, and youth organisations that support them. With over 75 years of expertise, we are doing whatever it takes to ensure that wherever a young person's starting point in life may be, or whatever challenges they face, they have the skills, support, and connections to thrive.

What?

Oxfordshire Youth researched the digital competencies and skills of youth work practitioners in the county. As case management increasingly moves online, it requires a level of confidence with navigating online systems. Oxfordshire youth delivered bespoke training to address key areas of need to support staff working with young people and the youth work sector.

In February and March 2025, Oxfordshire Youth delivered 8 training workshops to over 30 unique individual youth work practitioners as part of the Digital Natives Project.

"Digital competence involves the confident, critical and responsible use of, and engagement with, digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society. It includes information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, media literacy, digital content creation, safety, intellectual property related questions, problem-solving and critical thinking."

European Commission (2019)

A Youth Work Approach to Addressing Digital Exclusion

Young people access digital spaces as part of their daily life, whether communicating privately, socialising, looking for work, entertainment, or to do their homework. As many young people within our service also navigate the complexities of social housing systems, universal credit and benefit management, it is repeatedly found that this is made harder without access to a laptop or computer. Despite services seemingly available on smartphones, they are not accessible to navigate effectively. Thus, support to young people increasingly involves recognising where young people may not have the skills they need to work effectively online.

Youth work today, whether delivered online or face-to-face, requires youth work practitioners to develop their own skills and confidence to support their young people using digital technologies. Practitioners often provide support for young people to access online services safely and create a context for young people to build confidence and experiences of using evolving technologies, mitigating social and digital divisions.
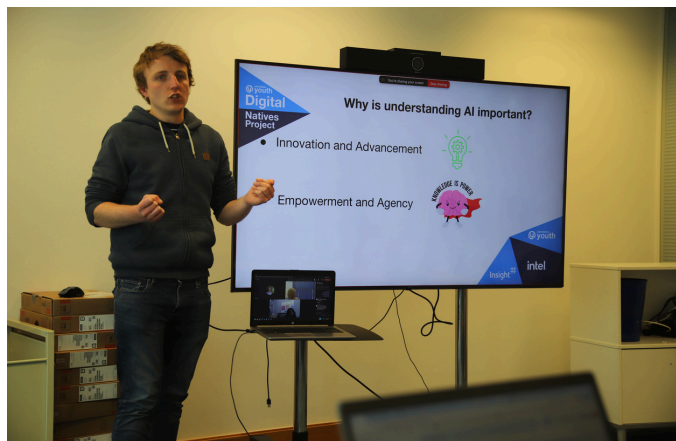
Youth work practitioners need to be able to support young people to access and use digital spaces in a way that is safe and appropriate. This requires youth workers themselves to become competent and confident in the use of digital technology and digital media.

Research

Oxfordshire Youth surveyed 85% of staff members to assess competence, confidence, and priorities in digital skills and systems. This included 22 people working directly with young people 23 people in support roles and working directly with youth workers and sector organisations. A further 10 respondents were surveyed from four other youth work organisations that OY partners closely with.

Surveys among youth work practitioners addressed:
- Confidence with digital tools within the organisation
- Confidence supporting young people with online skills and competencies
- A self assessment tool (the EU DigComp (Digital Competency) Framework) designed to measure digital competencies across five key areas.

Results

Progression Coaches (supporting young people in our Young People's Supported Accommodation Services) and youth workers indicated a number of priority areas for further training to be able to support young people with administrative tasks and navigating digital technologies including:

- Creating budgets using apps / spreadsheets
- Managing benefits
- Online safety
- Healthy online habits
- Being critical information consumers

Across all the staff surveyed, results indicated both an interest and a need for training around platforms including Google Suite, Microsoft Teams, CRM systems, and project management platforms.
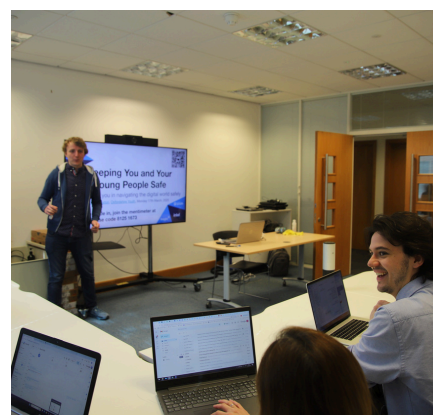
Intel® SFI includes professional development for Educators that includes accessible methods for upskilling professionals. Oxfordshire Youth has worked with youth work practitioners to better understand their needs and will pilot elements of the professional development in Intel® SFI to support this.

Feedback and Impact

Staff who took part in the trainings completed post evaluation surveys to measure their digital skills and confidence.

Oxfordshire Youth staff across different areas of their work were able to connect the digital skills training to practical aspects of their work with young people, the sector and system management.

Training Sessions

After undertaking the Intel SFI training, Oxfordshire Youth's Digital Skills Coordinator planned and delivered the following training sessions to support staff working with young people and the sector:

- Keeping you and your young people safe online (safeguarding, AI, phishing/ scams, data privacy)
- Getting the most out of G drive (Sharing, folder organisation, profiles, shortcuts)
- Using project management software
- Problem solving and generative AI
- Working with spreadsheets

Feedback

- 100% respondents rated the content of the training sessions as good or very good.
- 100% respondents felt the trainings increased their confidence accessing and applying digital skills.
- 100% respondents felt the trainings gave them practical skills that you can use in your role.
- 95% respondents working directly with young people told us the training had increased their confidence in working effectively with young people.

"The content for me professionally is enough for a six week course. On a project with part-time hours I am so time limited and the demands of my time are huge. I am so grateful to learn these skills as I did not work with Google Drive before. The trainer's impact has been monumental. They helped me to understand how to manage data and online platforms better which has lifted surmountable pressure from me."
- Project Coordinator

"The digital skills training has helped me to frame my engagement with our changemaker network on digital safety, safeguarding and policy development regarding digital literacy! I'm now mapping out ways to capture my own learnings to pass on to the network and continue to use resources mentioned in the workshops."
- Youth Sector Development Coordinator

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The 'keeping you and young people safe online' training was incredibly valuable. It offered up-to-date insights into online spaces young people engage with and practical ways to support them. Given how rapidly the digital landscape evolves, it's easy to feel uninformed. This training not only provided essential knowledge but also signposted me to valuable resources, increasing my confidence in my ability to effectively guide and support young people when using online spaces.

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- Youth worker