



Edgbaston Neighbourhood Network Scheme Newsletter

January 2026



Feature Story:

**Closing the Digital Divide:
Why Tackling Digital Exclusion in
Edgbaston Matters**

In today's world, digital access is no longer a luxury, it's a necessity. Being digitally excluded can cost an individual £500 - £600 a year, from applying for jobs and accessing healthcare to staying connected with family and managing finances, the internet underpins almost every aspect of modern life. Yet, in Birmingham, thousands of residents remain digitally excluded, facing barriers that limit their opportunities and quality of life.



>>> WHAT IS DIGITAL EXCLUSION?

Digital exclusion occurs when individuals lack the skills, confidence, or resources to engage online. This can stem from limited access to devices, unaffordable broadband, or a lack of digital literacy. For many, these challenges compound existing inequalities, leaving them isolated and unable to benefit from essential services.

>>> WHY IT MATTERS FOR EDGBASTON

Edgbaston is a wonderfully diverse constituency, but it also faces significant pockets of deprivation. Research shows that those most affected by digital exclusion are often older adults, people with disabilities, and low-income households. Without intervention, these groups risk falling further behind as services increasingly move online.

>>> THE CONSEQUENCES ARE REAL:



Employment: Job applications and training opportunities are largely digital. Without access, residents miss out on work.



Education: Children without devices or connectivity struggle to keep pace with peers.



Health and Wellbeing: Online GP appointments, mental health support, and social connections are harder to reach for those offline.

>>> WHAT CAN NNS DO?

Tackling digital exclusion requires a collaborative approach. ENNS aims to bring together community organisations, local authorities, and businesses to:

- Provide affordable devices and connectivity.
- Offer training and support to build digital confidence.
- Create safe, accessible spaces for people to learn and connect.

ENNS is taking the first steps by working with Digital NNS to set up a host of Digital Cafés across Edgbaston, offering accessible, easy spaces to support citizens with getting online. Digital inclusion isn't just about technology; it's about equity, opportunity, and ensuring no one is left behind.

>>> JOIN THE MOVEMENT

Whether you're an organisation, a volunteer, or a resident, you can play a part. Share resources, support local projects, and advocate for digital inclusion. Together, we can make Edgbaston a constituency where everyone has the tools to thrive in a digital world. Edgbaston NNS would like to see Digital Cafes and Digital Champions in every Warm Welcome across the district to ensure that all citizens are able to access digital support.

As part of our work setting up Digital Cafes in Edgbaston we spoke to **Rickie Josen**, who recently took on the role of leading **Digital NNS**, an initiative supporting Birmingham's 10 Neighbourhood Network Schemes and local community groups.



»»» TELL US ABOUT YOUR PREVIOUS WORK WITH EDGBASTON NNS AND ITS IMPACT.

“My background is in Learning and Development. Before becoming the lead at Digital NNS, I worked with Edgbaston NNS to develop and deliver a programme supporting community leaders with digital marketing outreach. The feedback was fantastic—87% of attendees said they felt more confident in marketing their organisation as a result.”



»»» FOR THOSE UNFAMILIAR, WHAT IS DIGITAL NNS AND WHAT DOES IT AIM TO ACHIEVE?

“We help local groups build digital skills capacity, source low-cost devices and data, and deliver training and drop-in support. Our work includes:

- Capacity building and consultancy: Advising groups on setting up digital inclusion activities.
- Training and webinars: Sharing practical skills and resources.
- Device and data guidance: Helping people access affordable options.
- Resource hub: Providing tools to support inclusion efforts.
- Together, our goal is to bridge the digital divide and end digital poverty.”

>>> WHY IS TACKLING DIGITAL EXCLUSION SO IMPORTANT FOR BIRMINGHAM?

“Digital exclusion goes beyond smartphones or broadband—it affects social mobility, equity, and poverty. It often leads to social exclusion, impacting those who rely most on health and social care services.”



>>> WHAT ROLE DO DIGITAL CAFES PLAY?

“They offer informal spaces where people can get one-on-one help, practice using devices, and build confidence. People can pop in, enjoy a drink, and ask questions without feeling they’re bothering family members.”

>>> WHERE DO YOU WANT DIGITAL NNS TO BE IN 12 MONTHS?

“To make digital inclusion part of everyday conversations across the city. We need to acknowledge the barriers and unite to create a more equitable society.”

Stay informed about Birmingham’s digital inclusion and accessibility initiatives, upcoming events, and capacity-building opportunities 

Subscribe to the Digital NNS newsletter [Here](#)

UPDATES

➤➤➤ **BECOME A TRUSTED PARTNER FOR THE HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND**

Gateway Family Services is calling on local community groups in Edgbaston to join us as Trusted Partners for the Household Support Fund (HSF).

The HSF, funded by the Department for Work and Pensions and delivered through Birmingham City Council and BVSC, provides vital support to households facing financial hardship. Through the Hardship Grant Community Fund, grants of up to £200 are available to help with essentials such as food and energy costs.

As a Trusted Partner, your organisation will have access to the HSF portal, enabling you to submit applications on behalf of the citizens you support. This ensures that those most in need can access help quickly and easily. BVSC offers training and tailored support, plus the opportunity to connect with a network of over 400 existing partners.

Applications for grants are open now until 31 March 2026 (or until funds are exhausted). If your group is ready to make a real difference in your community, get in touch today to find out how to become a Trusted Partner.

✉ Contact us: info@gatewayfs.org

EVENTS



➤➤➤ **LOSS & GRIEF WORKSHOPS**

We hosted two meaningful loss and grief workshops for the Wellbeing Group at Edgbaston Community Centre. The group shared deeply personal experiences about change, loss, and how culture and society shape the way we go through it all.



➤➤➤ KEEP WARM & WELL AT ROMAN WAY ESTATE

Citizens were able to get help on welfare support, energy advice and learn more about healthy eating and take part in the cooking demos and tasting sessions. Many who attended had health issues such as diabetes or heart conditions and found it helpful to speak to our Nutritionist Fiona Allan.



➤➤➤ DOODLE & DRAW AT THE SYNAGOGUE

Alongside our Adult Social Care colleagues, we visited Birmingham Central United Synagogue to see the ENNS-funded Doodle and Draw workshop in action. The creativity and personal stories behind each drawing were inspiring, showing how creative spaces help people slow down and reflect.



➤➤➤ DEMENTIA FRIENDLY HARBORNE

Funded by ENNS and Public Health, the Dementia Friendly Harborne campaign launched in November with its first market stall and awareness evening, encouraging local businesses to support conversations around living with dementia.



➤➤➤ COFFEE & COLLABORATE

A networking event like no other — no presentations, just collaboration, creativity and community. Attendees explored shared needs and strengths, visualised connections through a creative activity, and connected through laughter and ideas, led by the brilliant Barbara Nice. We'd love to hear how it impacted you.

SMALL GRANTS FUNDING UPDATE

The following organisations have been awarded Edgbaston NNS Small Grants:



>>> LIVING WELL, AGEING WELL AT ST. GERMAIN'S CHURCH

This project combines group exercise and healthy eating sessions aimed at reducing risks associated with lack of physical exercise, poor and inadequate nutrition. The project will start in January and run till May. For further information, contact Heather Baseley at Heather@stgermain.org.uk



>>> TAI CHI AT SENNELY'S PARK

Friends of Sennely's Park will run weekly Tai Chi sessions aimed at older

people who are at risk of isolation or poor mental health. The sessions are held outdoors in the park and led by a qualified, experienced Tai Chi tutor. Each session will last an hour and run once a week for 50 weeks. Tai Chi is gentle and accessible, making it ideal for older people or anyone with limited mobility. It's also great for improving balance, strength, and general health.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND TRAINING

We have the following FREE training and networking events coming up which you can reserve a place by visiting [Buy tickets – Edgbaston Neighbourhood Network Scheme](#)

12
FEB

BID WRITING

03
MAR

**GET HELP WITH YOUR
COMMUNITY GROUP**

16
APR

**GET HELP WITH YOUR
COMMUNITY GROUP**

24
MAR

**CARING TOGETHER: A
DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY DAY
FOR CARES AND LOVED
ONES**

B:Music 8 Centenary Sq,
Birmingham B1 2EA

28
APR

**EMERGENCY FIRST
AID AT WORK (FULL
DAY)**

Venue: City Road Baptist Church,
City Rd, Birmingham B16 0NE

>>> FREE SKILLS WORKSHOP FOR CITIZENS

Adult First Aid

Learn basic lifesaving skills using everyday objects. The workshop is not accredited but is a free and simple way to improve first aid knowledge and build confidence. During the workshop, participants will have the opportunity to practice hands-on techniques for administering CPR, treating wounds, and stabilising injuries.

Supporting Connections

This is to upskill people on how to support others who may be experiencing loneliness. They will learn how to spot the signs of loneliness, identify the barriers and benefits to forming connections, explore ways to help people deal with loneliness.

If you are a community group or organisation and wish to host either of these workshops for free for your citizens, please contact selinimistry@redcross.org.uk

☆ See you soon! ☆



Some of you may already know Richard — and for everyone else, here he is.

Richard has joined ENNS with over 20 years in the charity sector and a background in arts and health. He previously ran the Creative Community Mental Health department at BCAT and now spends his time championing the grassroots groups that make communities tick.

He's worked with ENNS before, so joining the team has been refreshingly smooth. Natalie, Sandra and Faraza have been very welcoming, and Gateway Family Services have kindly let him join the party.

After 15 years in local government in London, Richard came back to Birmingham and decided it was time for something different — prompted by one too many meetings. ENNS felt like the right fit: more doing, less talking, and all about people.

When he's not working, Richard is a graphic designer, artist and photographer. At home, he lives with three exotic shorthair cats — Nana, Sue and Beryl — who are fully in charge.

If you see Richard out and about (usually attached to his laptop), say hello. Rumour has it he's the person to ask about ENNS — but he's also always happy to chat about absolutely anything else.

SEE YOU NEXT ISSUE!