Community TechAid

Impact Report

A summary of the impact we have had in our community throughout 2022-2024

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Letter from our Chair

Community TechAid (CTA) was founded with a clear and compelling mission: to combat the digital divide in our community and prevent environmental decline by rescuing IT devices from landfill and repurposing them.

In a world that is increasingly digital, access to technology is essential for full participation in society. Yet, over **1 million households disconnected their broadband last January due to rising costs**, joining the many others who are already cut off from the digital world. We know that expanding digital access is crucial to fostering community cohesion and well-being.

Our dedicated team has fostered an environment that is not only productive but also welcoming and supportive, allowing our volunteers to thrive. By engaging volunteers in our mission, we've discovered that CTA is also meeting other critical needs in our community. Young people find valuable work experience and opportunities to build their skills and confidence. For those returning to work after a health crisis or a period of full-time caregiving, rebuilding self-esteem is essential. Asylum seekers and refugees gain much-needed experience in a British work environment, improving their English language skills, and reducing isolation. And many others simply appreciate the chance to give back in a meaningful way.

Whatever their motivations, our volunteers are the heart of CTA. We are deeply grateful for their incredible contributions, from refurbishing laptops to enhancing our social media presence and delivering digital skills sessions. Without their dedication, none of our achievements would be possible.

We are thrilled to share how our efforts have significantly expanded our impact year after year, making a tangible difference in the lives of those we serve. This report documents how the move into our new premises has been essential to increasing our capacity and improving our ability to deliver our much needed service.

Linda Heiden | Chair of Trustees

What we do and why:
Our Theory of Change

Last year e-waste officially became the fastest growing waste stream in the world, with the UK ranking second only to Norway in per capita production.

At the very same time households across the UK, only just beginning to recover from the pandemic, have been hit with some of the highest inflation we have seen in decades, resulting in the ongoing cost of living crisis and more people being isolated from the digital world.

We know that to have long-term sustainable change we must look to community driven circular economies; where waste is repurposed to tackle social and economic challenges faced by a growing number of people. Underpinning our work is our Theory of Change, which demonstrates how our work impacts our community.

DIGITAL INCLUSION IS A HUMAN RIGHT!

- **Champion the importance of universal digital inclusion**

- **Collect, refurbish and redistribute technology; providing online access and opportunities to develop the skills to use it**

- **Connect organisations and communities together to actively participate in a circular economy**

Community outcomes

Individual outcomes

- **Increased online access, digital knowledge & skills**

- **Increasing people's confidence in their ability to use their technology**

- **Greater access to technology required to get online**

- **Increased awareness of the digital divide and the impact e-waste has on our environment**

- **Strengthened relationships in our communities**

- **More opportunities for our communities to reuse and recycle e-waste**

- **A digitally included community where people are able to live healthy, happy and fulfilling lives**

- **A circular economy witn 100% of technology reused or recycled**

Our Strategic Aims

Community Digital Needs

Support **more** people, by focusing on our community's digital needs, so that together we can address the three key barriers faced by those in digital poverty:
    a) Connectivity
    b) Foundational Digital Skills
    c) Access to devices

Volunteering

Increase our opportunities so that our volunteers reflect the community we work in and serve, whilst providing **meaningful** development and support for our volunteers to **thrive**.

Circular Economy

Reuse and repair more e-waste, showcasing how strong **circular economies** can support environmental and social change.

Awareness Raising

Platform our community's voice at a local and national level, ensuring that digital inclusion becomes a national **priority**.

Organisational Sustainability

Increase organisational sustainability so that we are **resilient** and in a position to **share** our knowledge and experience with the wider community.

Who Benefits:
Our Impact in Numbers 2022-2024

2,041 devices
reused and rehomed

> +50% increase 2020/22

3,912 hours
donated by volunteers

> Equivalent to over 300 days!

569 people
provided with connectivity

161 tonnes CO2e
avoided through not using
primary materials

9.9 tonnes
E-waste recycled, repaired
and reused

> +20% increase 2020/22

380 orgs
partnered with to identify
those who need support

> +45% increase 2020/22

350+ people
supported through digital skills
coaching and workshops

£169,176*
worth of technology gifted to
our community

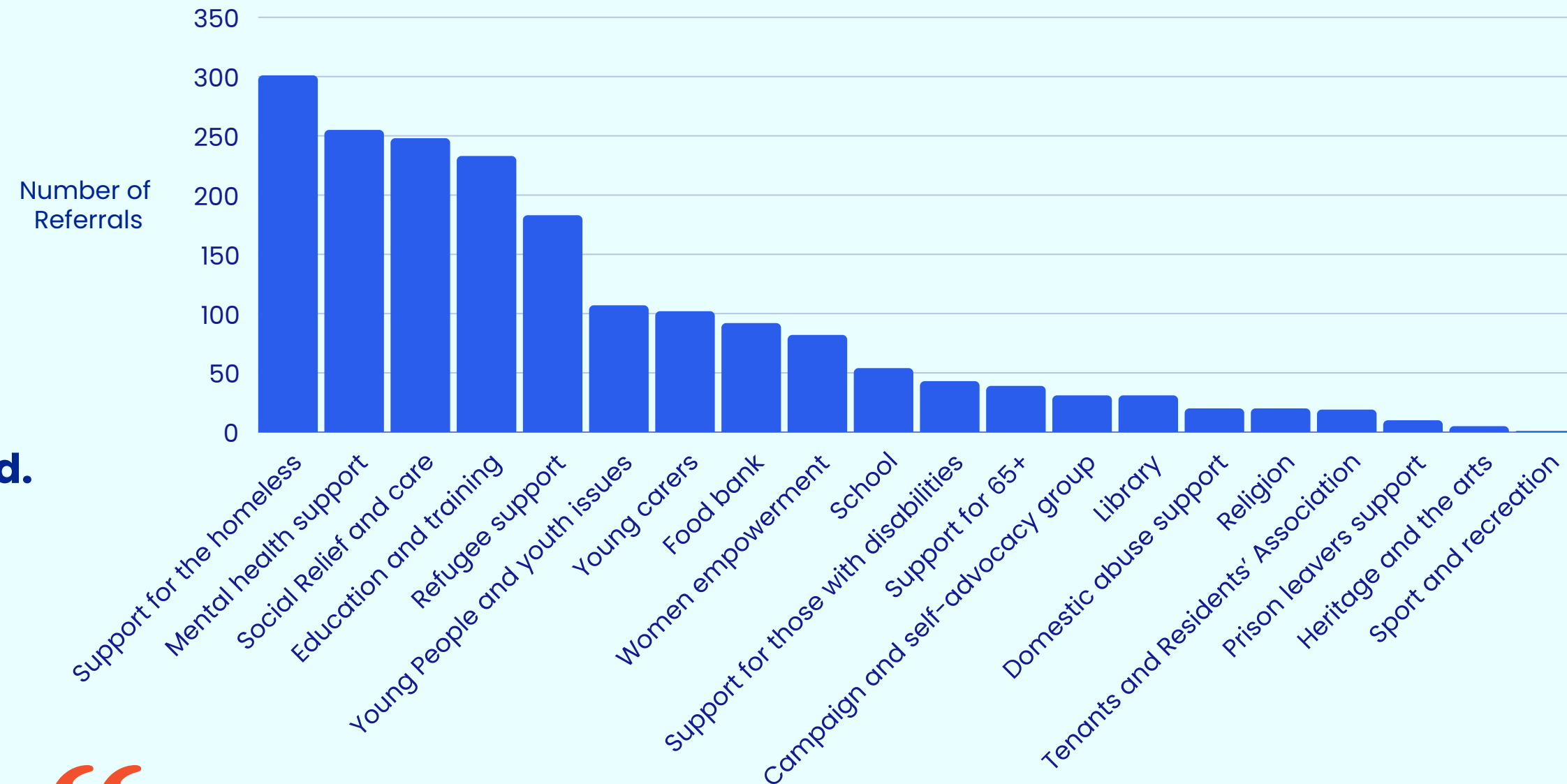*based on average resale value of devices

Who Benefits:
How we identify those who need our support

Our work by its very nature is collaborative. We work with a vast range of local organisations embedded in the community to identify and reach those who are isolated from the digital world. Everyone from local GPs and disability support, to schools, food banks, homeless shelters and refugee support groups are involved.

A key part of this year has focused on strengthening these relationships, and improving the way we work together to provide better outcomes for our community.

Many of the organisations we work alongside support people in multiple ways, and we recognise that the work they do can include help across a spectrum of need. The chart below highlights the primary focus of the organisation who made the referral, for example via Domestic Abuse support service.

Number of Referrals

(Bar chart showing Number of Referrals by organisation type, y-axis from 0 to 350)

- Support for the homeless — ~300
- Mental health support — ~255
- Social Relief and care — ~248
- Education and training — ~233
- Refugee support — ~185
- Young People and youth issues — ~108
- Young carers — ~102
- Food bank — ~92
- Women empowerment — ~82
- School — ~55
- Support for those with disabilities — ~45
- Support for 65+ — ~40
- Campaign and self-advocacy group — ~30
- Library — ~30
- Domestic abuse support — ~20
- Religion — ~20
- Tenants and Residents' Association — ~20
- Prison leavers support — ~12
- Heritage and the arts — ~5
- Sport and recreation — ~2

"You have helped us in so many ways, not just our clients but our staff too. It makes such a difference when you feel you are able to achieve something tangible as part of your role, especially in the social sector.

– Local Referee

Who Benefits:
Our service users throughout 2022 - 2024
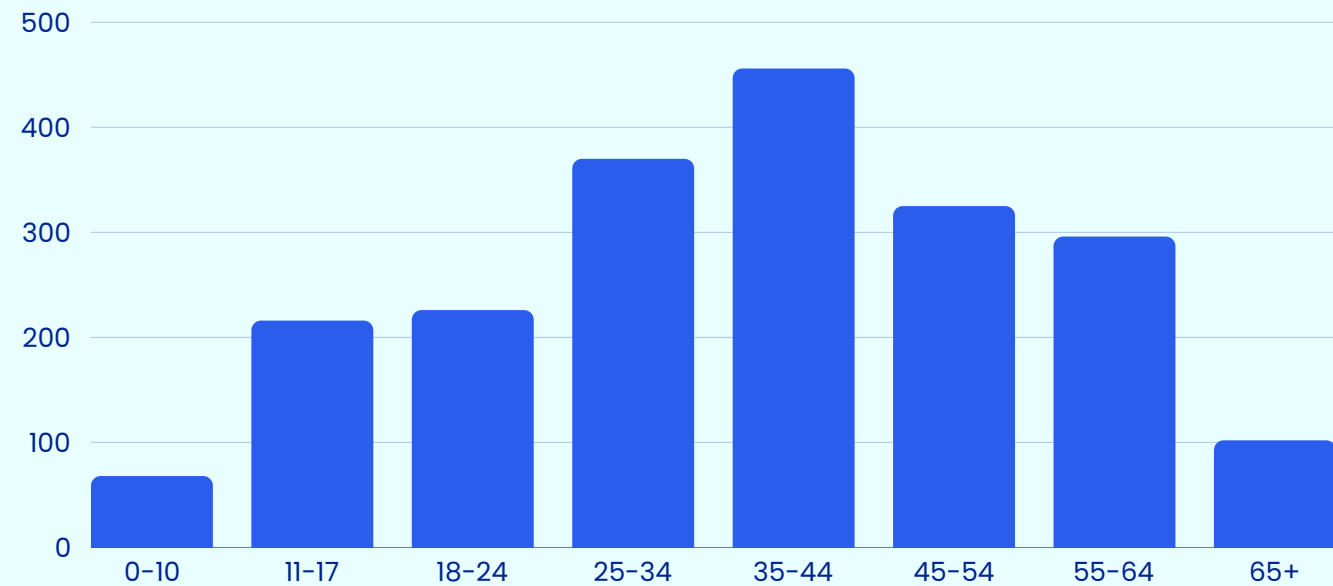
The majority of our beneficiaries are adults between 25-44 years old looking to improve their circumstance or their families

19%
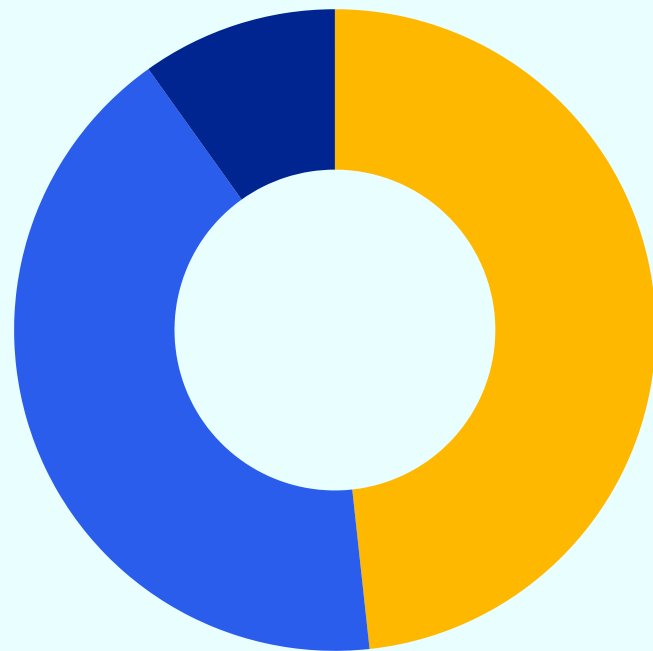of our beneficiaries have no recourse to public funds*

> Everyone we work with is experiencing financial hardship

51%
Identify as Black, African or Black British
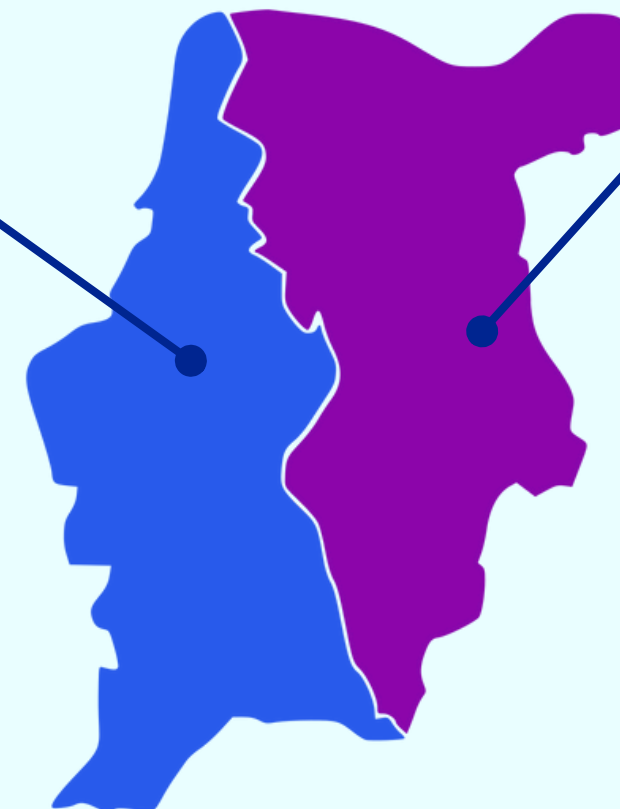
> Compared with 24% in Lambeth & Southwark

42%
of our beneficiaries have a disability or long term health condition

> Compared with 15.3% of London

Legend:
- No
- Yes
- Prefer not to say

1413 people
in Lambeth

627 people
in Southwark

*unable to access financial support due to immigration status

Henry Fawcett & ClearCommunityWeb Case Study:

Supporting families with digital skills

Deepening our impact and providing a holistic approach to address digital exclusion has been a key focus for our work this year. We're delighted to have been working with the team at ClearCommunityWeb to deliver desperately needed digital skills workshops to parents.

Henry Fawcett Children's Centre Is part of a cluster of three centres that support families and their children. Many of the families they work with are experiencing complex needs and often require additional support, from healthcare and mental wellbeing to employment and housing. We first began working together in 2021, supporting families with laptops and smartphones so they could access online support, but we were only tackling part of the issue.

Lian Pitt, Deputy Manager at the children's centre, explains,

> **Our parents were really desperate for digital skills support. We hold parent forums and at nearly every session we would be asked for it. They recognise the value in being online, but don't have the equipment or skills to engage**
>
> **– Karen, participant**

In January 2023, we launched our first round of workshops, inviting eight participants to join.
Every participant was given a refurbished laptop for them to use during the sessions and to take away once they had completed the short course. As a pilot we wanted to understand what subjects were most useful and so surveyed parents beforehand. It was really important to us that the workshops were driven by need and not assumption.

9

Henry Fawcett & ClearCommunityWeb Case Study:
Outcomes

All those who took part are now able to access tools and services they couldn't before:

- **80% are now using the device to support their child's homework**
- **50% mentioned that it would be used to write job applications**
- **All spoke about how taking part has helped to alleviate stress**

93%

feel more knowledgeable about using their laptop and going online as a result of the training

" **I can now create and edit documents at home which will help with work and day to day life. It also means I will use my phone less to carry out certain activities helping to preserve battery and potentially reduce screen-time.** "

This programme has helped to strengthen our existing partnerships with ClearCommunityWeb and the North Lambeth Better Start Children's Centre network, as well as improving outcomes for participants.
Lian Pitt from the Children's Centre explains:

"This programme is so valuable because it addresses barriers at an important stage. Parents who attended told us the sessions were informative and engaging and they felt adequately supported to learn during them. For many of the families, having access to a creche for their children meant that they could attend without the obstacle of having to find (and potentially pay for) alternative child care options. We are so grateful to have been able to host these sessions, thank you!"
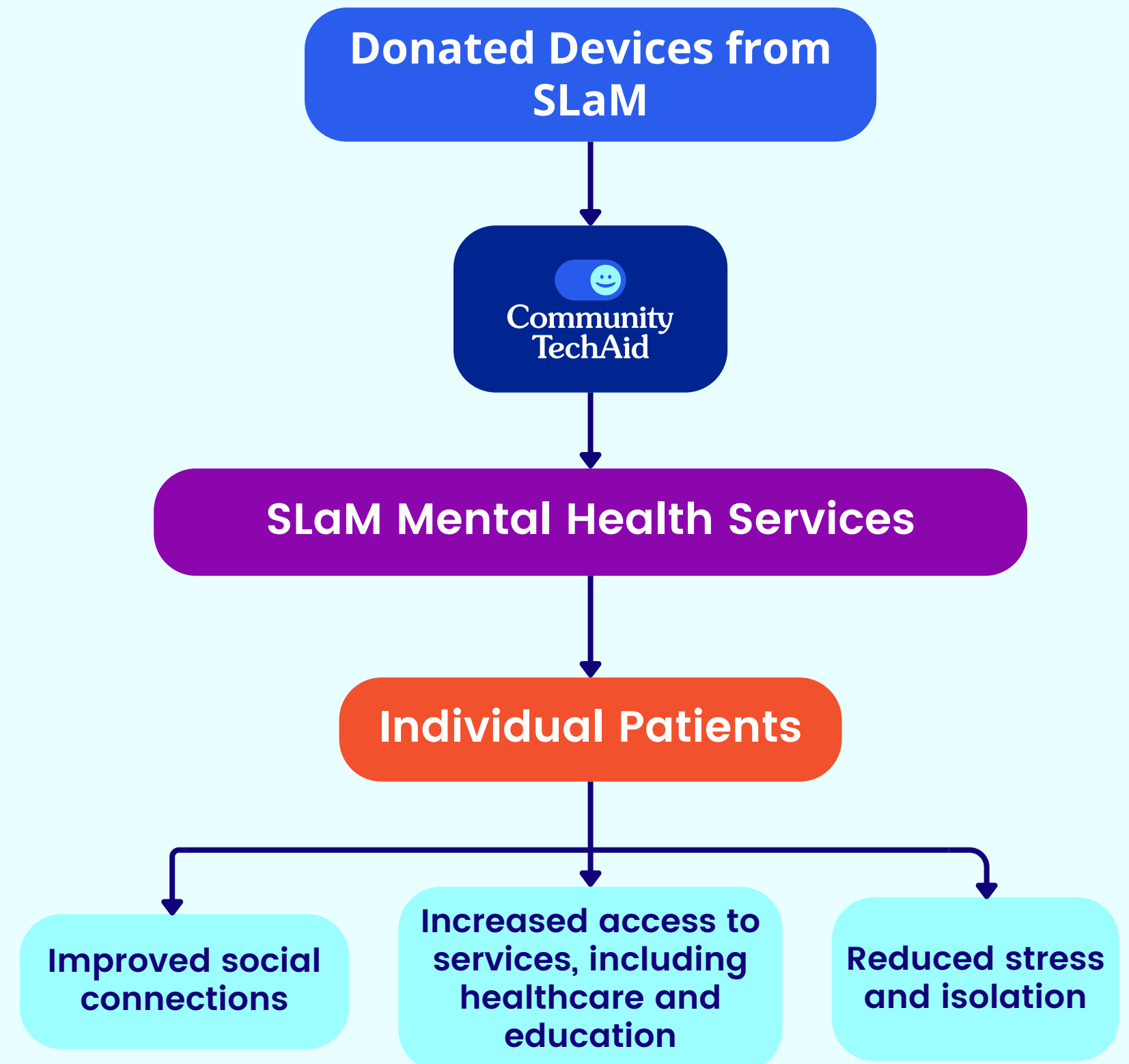
Our Partners

South London & Maudsley Trust (SLaM) Circular Economy Case Study

Our work by its very nature is collaborative, we don't do anything in silo. Our model uses existing networks and infrastructure to reach those who are isolated from the digital world; from local GPs, to schools, food banks and community groups.

Since 2020, the South London & Maudsley Trust (SLaM), the UK's largest mental health provider, has been one of Community TechAid's key partners. So far, we have provided digital inclusion support to over 400 of their patients.

In November 2022 we were delighted to launch our ground-breaking device reuse partnership, where SLaM's own technology has gone back into the very community it supports. These devices have been hugely impactful to not only patients but also staff, providing means of communication, helping to build independence and grow confidence, resulting in increased treatment engagement and overall wellbeing.

This project doesn't just ensure more tech in the hands of people that need it, but demonstrates how community delivered and focused economies can provide meaningful and impactful solutions for people.

Donated Devices from SLaM

Community TechAid

SLaM Mental Health Services

Individual Patients

Improved social connections

Increased access to services, including healthcare and education

Reduced stress and isolation

Our Partners

South London & Maudsley Trust (SLaM) Impact

Engaging in online activities and learning new skills can be hugely beneficial for recovery and improved mental health. Being online is not just about access to health services, it provides opportunities to grow and develop connections, as well as reducing the stress of having to manage access.

Laura* is a young parent and has been juggling everyday life alongside visits to her local library, to do essential tasks online. With school, health appointments, and a part time job, fitting in visits is challenging and stressful. Thanks to a laptop this stress has been removed, and she can access tools and other resources at a time that suits her.

Another of the laptops donated by SLaM has been passed onto an asylum seeker so that they may take part in a language course. David* has been experiencing poor mental health due to the trauma experienced in his home country and his subsequent experience in getting to the UK, and has been receiving support from Waterloo Counselling. (Established in the 1980s as a local community health project, Waterloo Community Counselling (WCC) delivers life-changing counselling and mental health support to individuals across London.)

This laptop has helped to improve David's circumstances significantly, and has been a valuable tool helping him navigate a particularly tough time. during an incredibly difficult time. He can now access course materials and engage with his course peers, as well as explore further opportunities and keep in touch with his family.

This partnership has supported many others at really challenging points in their lives and we are excited to continue growing our work together.

*names have been changed for privacy

Our Partners

Working with business to increase digital inclusion

We know that there is an abundance of technology that gets discarded every year that could go on to change someone's life. Earlier this year we piloted our 'e-waste made good' programme, working with businesses throughout London to help them rethink their own technology and make a positive impact in our local community. Our e-waste made good programme provides organisations an opportunity to engage in our work, reduce their own carbon footprint and make a real difference to the lives of others.

SportPursuit became one of our first device partners, helping spread the word of our mission and facilitating the donation of close to 200 devices, including laptops and smartphones.

One laptop was passed onto Elkin via Healthy Living Platform. (Healthy Living Platform supports communities to lead healthier and more sustainable lives. They focus on connecting people through food across neighbourhoods at a hyper local level.)

Elkin was struggling to progress in his life without a working laptop. Receiving one has started to help him turn his ambitions into reality, making a huge difference to his life.

To learn more about our e-waste made good programme and how your company can participate click link here

Corporate Volunteering

Our Corporate Volunteering Programme, launched late last year, has helped us to strengthen relationships with our partners and increase the number of people we support.

Our group volunteering sessions raise awareness about the impact of the digital divide, and how circular economies can be harnessed to help overcome environmental and social challenges. We're extremely proud to have facilitated over 100 hours of corporate volunteering over the past 6 months. Not only does it support more people online, it provides an opportunity to share our story and the stories of our community.

When we pass on a device to an individual, it's important to us that it feels brand new. Our pipeline process can take a long time, especially when handling second-hand technology. Corporate group volunteering helps us to refresh more devices, speeding up the process and reducing the wait time for our community. It also provides a tangible connection to our impact for those volunteering, knowing that a laptop they helped prepare has had a profound impact on a previously excluded individual.

> **A lot of the team came away feeling like they have more to do in this space and have all considered donating or recycling old tech in a way they hadn't before.**
>
> **It was such an inspiring day, the team are fantastic and we learnt so much!**
>
> **– Kanatar**

Introducing our Digital Community Hub

2023 was a big year for us. Thanks to support from the National Lottery Reaching Communities fund, we were able to open our new Digital Community Hub in the heart of Lambeth.

The need for our services and support skyrocketed in 2022 and 2023 and, thanks to the hard work of our team and supporters, so did the number of organisations, businesses and residents keen to donate and volunteer. By early 2023 we knew that we needed to find a larger home for our growing community. Many who visited our old space will have been familiar with our cramped workshop!

We know that a key part of the journey to being online is about building trust and confidence, all of which often happens offline. We want our community to have a safe space where they feel welcome, supported and able to explore technology and its benefits, whilst learning about the repair and reuse of devices.

Keeping true to our values, nearly everything in our new home is second-hand, with furniture donated from various offices, and even an old TV set (thanks Prop-Up Project). We sourced second-hand paint from the fabulous Paint Place in east London and our incredible teams helped us to decorate, move and re-organise!

> "It's been so pivotal for our organisation. It's wonderful to be able to welcome more people into our TechAid community and join the team at WeAre336, we're so excited to see what the future holds!"
>
> **Cat Smith, CEO**

Our Device Pipeline and the TechAid Database App

Central to the logistics and management of our 'device pipeline' is our app. Built by one of our founding volunteers, it has become an important part of our daily operation and has enabled us to keep track of and record the technology we receive, providing transparency to our donors and ensuring we can help as many people as possible.

As we continue to grow and strengthen our circular economy we have been improving our device pipeline, increasing our capacity so that we can support more individuals. A key part of this has focused on developing our app, Ta-Da, thanks to support from Power to Change and our incredibly talented team of volunteers.

Starting last year, we began looking into improvements that will streamline our work and provide a platform for our community to help manage their engagement with our service. All those involved with our work, from our 30+ volunteers to the organisations we partner with, engage with this online platform and play an integral role in shaping its direction.

Owning and developing our app means that we have control over its direction and can ensure that we build it with our community in mind. It has also provided an exciting learning opportunity for our volunteers who, alongside Tony Anzelmo, our app developer, have supported systems administration, API development and data mapping.

As we strengthen our internal processes the app will continue to be an integral part of our organisation and ensure that we are able to continue supporting our wider community.

> **Although I originally joined to fix laptops, I quickly joined the software team at CTA.**
>
> **Volunteering is a great way to socialise and meet interesting people and learn and try new things. The fulfilment it provides also does wonders to one's mental health. Community TechAid especially is all about the beautiful people behind it and the commitment to good deeds** 😊
>
> **- Akhil Muraleedharan**

Our Structure

Our Trustee Board

As a small charity we are supported by our wonderful Trustee Board. All are passionate about the work we do and bring varied personal and professional experiences to Community TechAid.

Our Staff & Volunteers

Community TechAid is led by our CEO, Cat Smith, supported by our two senior managers Stephanie Charbine and Steve Woolnough. Also part of the team are Justin Hughes, Charlotte Kinnah-Brown and Bola Adeniji

We have a team of over 40 volunteers who support our work, from device refurbishment to administration, publicity and app development. All play a vital role in helping us to achieve our mission!

Learn more about the team by clicking the link here

Soha Adams
Treasurer

Shamima Akhtar
Trustee

Ivan Beckley
Trustee

Ashley Horsford
Trustee

Ben Roback
Trustee

Phil Shoesmith
Trustee

Jason Scott-Taggart
Deputy Chair

Linda Heiden
Founder & Chair

Cat Smith
Chief Executive Officer

Tony Anzelmo
Freelance Developer

Steve Woolnough
Technical Operations Manager

Stephanie Charbine
Partnerships & Engagement Manager

Justin Hughes
Transport Officer

Bola Adeniji
Technical Coordinator

Charlotte Kinnah-Brown
Volunteer Coordinator

Volunteers

Device Volunteers
Technical team & pipeline support

Community Outreach
Digital skills coaching & community support

Monique Szpak
Senior Technical Volunteer

Tom Cronin
Senior Technical Volunteer

Carlos Gomez
Senior Technical Volunteer

Wayne Asher
Senior Technical Volunteer

Volunteering at Community TechAid

Volunteering is central to our work at Community TechAid. We are incredibly proud of our volunteering community who share their knowledge, experience and skill to help build upon and improve our work.

Our volunteering opportunities help to develop people's tech skills and confidence, with 9 out 10 having learnt new skills as a result. As we have grown, we have been delighted to welcome users of our service as volunteers, providing opportunities for asylum seekers, those seeking work and those who want to improve their confidence. As a result we have an extremely diverse community with a vast array of experience, all learning and supporting one another.

Our volunteer-driven team has developed robust processes for data wiping, installation, repair and assessment, significantly increasing the number of devices we return to the community with high standards of data security and resilience. This year, over 40 volunteers contributed more than 3,900 hours to improve and share these processes, building on their collective knowledge to continuously enhance our work.

In November, we welcomed Charlotte Kinnah-Brown as our new Volunteer Coordinator. Charlotte's role is essential in expanding our talented volunteer team, allowing us to support even more individuals in our community with reliable online access.
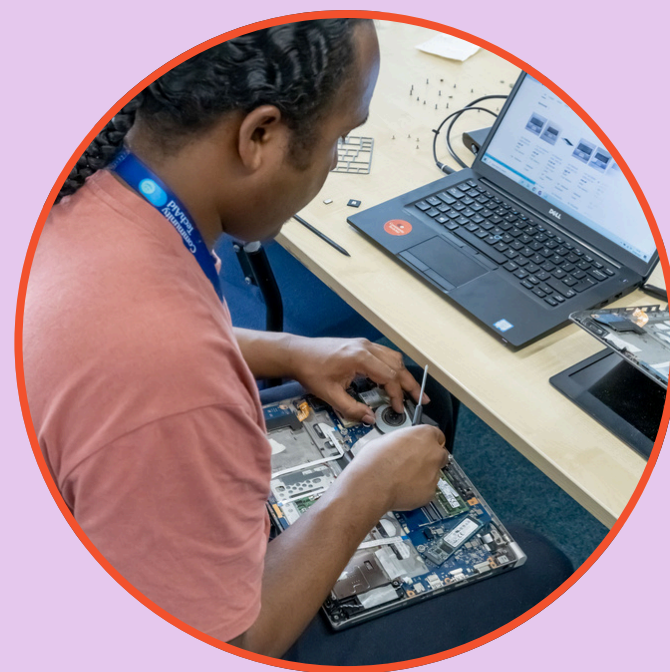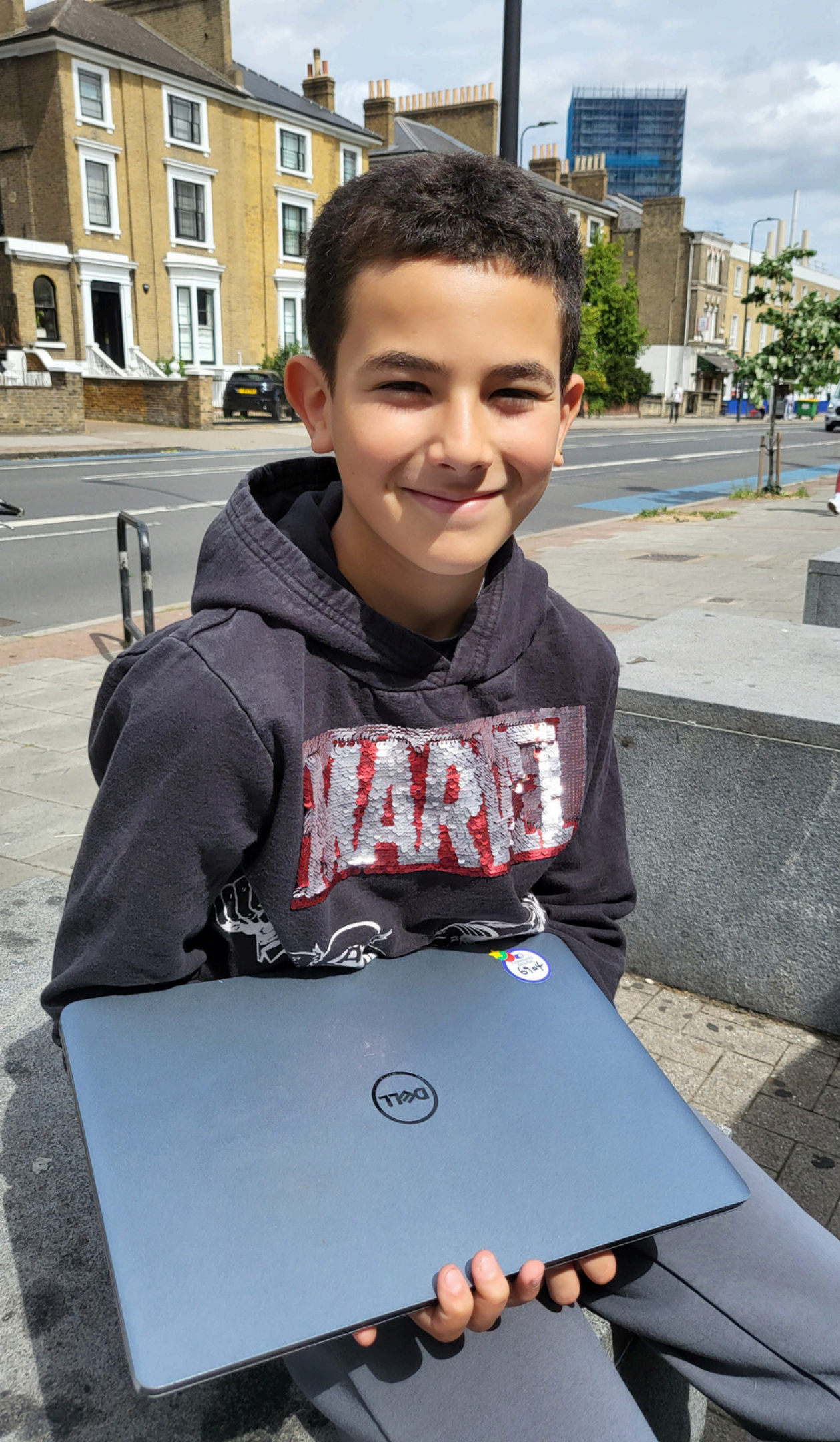
"It's been so lovely to meet new people and put my skills into practice, I've learnt so much.

Everyone is so welcoming and supportive!"

– Volunteer
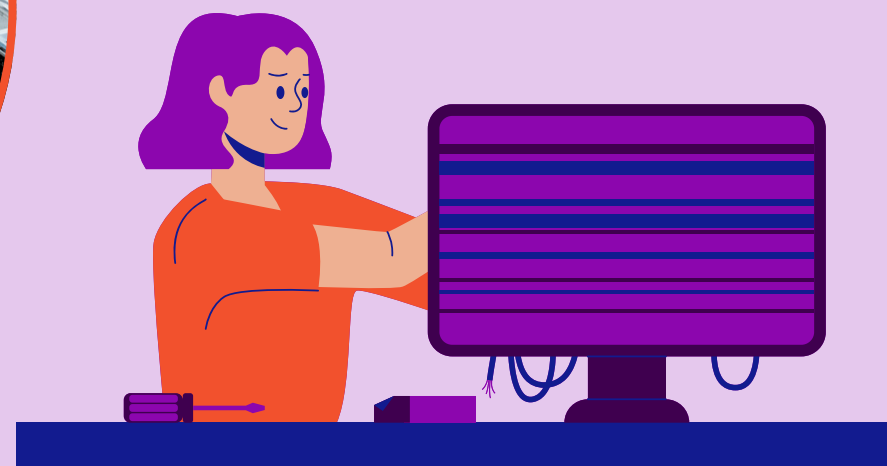
How to Support Us!

Donate your technology

Help more people online by passing on your technology whilst reducing the waste that ends up in landfill. Visit one of our drop points or join our 'e-waste made good programme.

Volunteer

Join our volunteer team and support us with everything from repair and refurbishment to digital coaching and social media. Get to know your community and learn new skills!

Donate Funds

We rely on generous donations to continue our work, from spare part replacement to transport costs. Even just £5 can provide a new part for a laptop.

Spread the word!

Digital exclusion has a devastating impact on local communities, but many people still don't consider access to the digital world essential. Help raise awareness of our work and ensure no one is left behind.

Our Funders & Partners

Our work would not be possible without the generous support of our funders and partners. With thanks to all those who have supported us throughout 2022–24.

Last but not least, we thank all our generous crowd funders and device donors

Get in touch

Whether you have tech to donate or are interested in partnering, we'd love to hear from you. Get in touch with a member of the team using the details below:

📞 020 3488 7742

✉️ contact@communitytechaid.org.uk

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