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Summative Assessment of 'Digital Tech Cumbria' (ICTIS – Information and Communication Technology Improvement Support)

Final Report for Allerdale Borough Council

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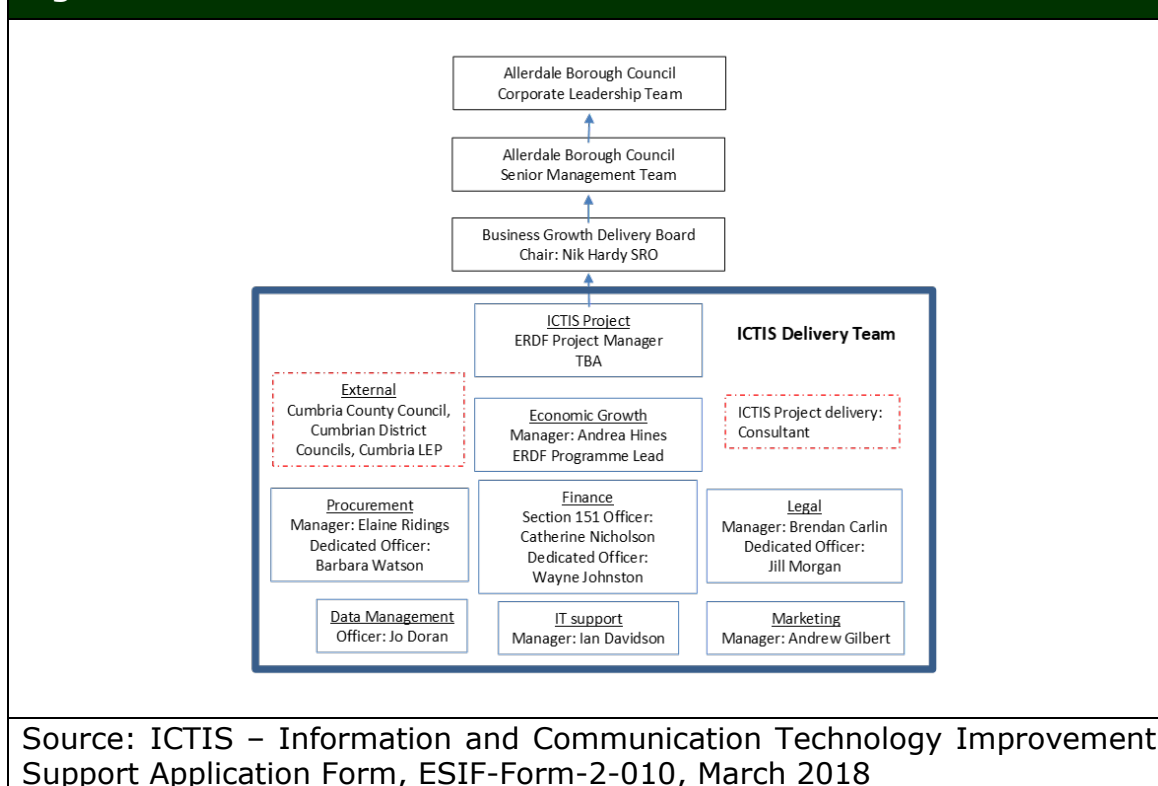
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1. INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT CONTEXT

1.1 In September 2022, Allerdale Borough Council commissioned DC Research to carry out the Summative Assessment of the 'Digital Tech Cumbria' (DTC) project (the project application reports the project title as ICTIS – Information and Communication Technology Improvement Support).

1.2 According to the Application Form, the DTC project sought to: *"provide expert ICT advice to individual SMEs. Each SME supported will undergo an intensive diagnostic review, considering in detail how ICT is being used in the business and identifying areas for improvements, which in turn will enable the SME to increase its performance and grow."*

1.3 The project was developed in response to a call for proposal under Priority Axis 2: Enhancing access to, and use and quality of, information communication and technology (ICT), as part of Investment Priority 2b of European Structural & Investment Funds: Developing Information and Communications Technology products and services, e-commerce, and enhancing demand for Information and Communications Technology.

1.4 The total project cost was £835,000, with an intervention rate of 60%, with £501,000 provided through ERDF and match funding of £334,000 provided by Cumbria LEP.

1.5 Based on the original application, the project was scheduled to be delivered between September 2018 and March 2020 (with an extra quarter for defrayment of invoices and project closure). However, delays to the start of the project (see later in this section) as well as extensions to the delivery timescale resulted in the project being delivered between January 2020 and December 2022.

1.6 Allerdale Borough Council was the applicant and accountable body for the DCT project, with the project being delivered across Cumbria, with each district council being party to the project. The project activities were to be delivered by a specialist ICT consultant, and Figure 1.1 overleaf summarises the delivery model as set out in the Application Form.

1.7 The DCT project aimed to *"provide a minimum of 12 hour package of specialist ICT support culminating in an ICT based action plan for 150 SMEs and encourage 50 of those supported to take up superfast broadband with speeds of at least 30Mbps."*

1.8 As such, the two main outputs for the project were as follows:

- C1: Number of Enterprises Receiving Support – original target of 150 SMEs.

- P4: Additional Businesses taking up broadband access of at least 30mbps – original target of 50 SMEs.

1.9 As acknowledged in the Application Form, *"Whilst not an output for the project, and based on previous ICT support programmes such as Connecting Cumbria to enable rollout of Superfast broadband, an estimated*

£2.5m increase in gross GVA of eligible businesses (based on 150 assists) should be achievable."

1.10   The extent to which it has been (or has not been) possible to include an assessment of the gross GVA resulting from the DCT project is considered in Sections 4 and 5 of this report.

1.11   There were four Project Change Requests for the DTC project, the first two of which related to adjusting the start and end dates due to the challenges to the tender process. The latter two of which were for an extension to the delivery timescale (in September 2021), and for a further extension to the delivery timescale as well as changes to the outputs, increasing C1 from 150 to 180, and decreasing P4 from 50 to 10 (in May 2022).

Figure 1.1: DELIVERY MODEL

Source: ICTIS – Information and Communication Technology Improvement Support Application Form, ESIF-Form-2-010, March 2018

1.12   This Summative Assessment was commission in September 2022, with the aim of completion by January 2023.

1.13   The key method tasks involved in the Assessment were as follows:

- **Desk Research**: document review and data analysis – which included an assessment of the project Application Form; progress reports and claims; Project Change Requests; the Summative Assessment Plan and Logic Model for the project; other relevant background reports; and the beneficiary evidence collected by the project deliverer (see Annex 3 for a summary of the relevant survey results).

- **Delivery and Key Partner Consultations** – this primary research, which took the form of one-to-one discussions with individuals from delivery, partner, and stakeholder organisations, was carried out

between October and December 2022. A total of 12 individuals were consulted and a list of the consultees is provided in Annex 1 to this report.
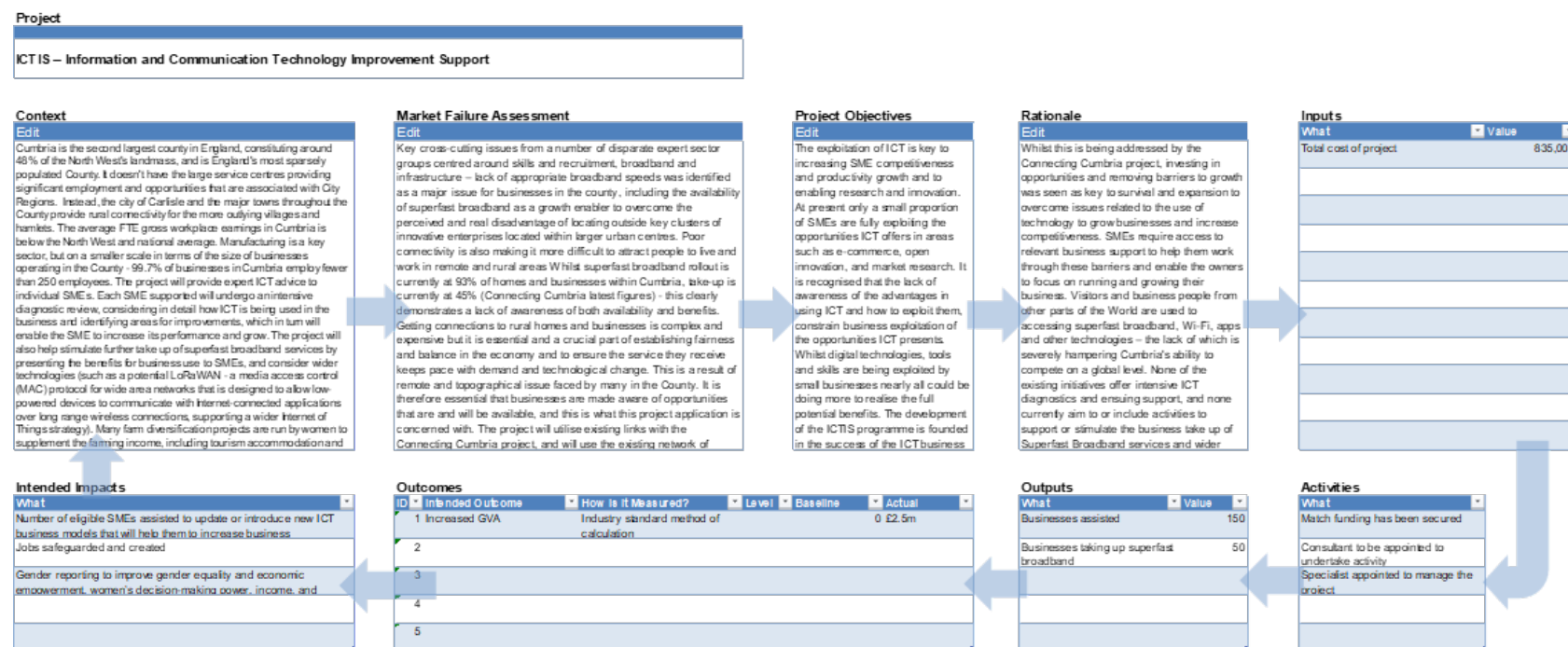
▪ **Consultations with a sample of businesses supported by DTC** – this primary research, which took the form of one-to-one discussions with representatives from a sample of business beneficiaries of DTC, was carried out in November and December 2022. A total of 10 businesses were consulted, and a list of the business consultees is provided in Annex 2 to this report.

▪ **Analysis and Reporting** – this report, which is structured and presented in a way which is consistent with the Summative Assessment Guidance, presents the findings from the Summative Assessment based on the above method tasks.

1.14 Given the timescale available for the Summative Assessment, the overall approach to the Summative Assessment worked well. There were challenges, especially in terms of engaging with some of the beneficiary businesses within the available timescale, particularly at that time of year. In addition, beneficiaries found it challenging to identifying project impacts due to the wider impacts on their businesses over the project timescale – especially due to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the challenging economic circumstances for businesses at the current time. Notwithstanding this, the combination of desk research, use of evidence from previous surveys by the deliverer, and the scale of one-to-one discussions with both businesses supported by DCT as well as delivery partners and stakeholder organisations, has enabled the Summative Assessment to address the key elements required.

1.15 Digital Tech Cumbria (DTC) sought to *"provide one-to-one mentoring focusing on the development, implementation, and management of digital commercial strategies for SMEs"*. The project also aimed to *"help stimulate further take up of superfast broadband services by presenting the benefits for business use to SMEs."*

1.16 The project application made clear that DTC would use a range of networks and initiatives to promote the availability of the offer in terms of both business support and broadband take-up. This was to include specific initiatives such as Connecting Cumbria, as well as other business support providers – Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, Cumbria LEP, and the local authorities.

1.17 The evidence for the need for the project drew on Cumbria-specific research to identify cross-cutting issues for local businesses, which included broadband and infrastructure, and whilst the role of Connecting Cumbria is clearly acknowledged, the aim of DTC was to complement this by providing businesses with relevant/related business support provision around digital – also thereby complementing other business support provision that was already in place via the Growth Hub and others.

1.18 The rationale for the project was also underpinned by the take-up of superfast broadband at the time of the application – superfast broadband rollout was at 93% at the time, but take-up was at 45% - with this gap

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being presented as evidence and a clear rationale for the project in increasing awareness, benefits, and take-up of superfast broadband.

1.19 DTC clearly aligned with and sought to help contribute towards key policies and strategies. Nationally this included the UK's Industrial Strategy and the UK's Digital Strategy, sub-nationally this included the strategy and priorities of the Northern Powerhouse, and locally there were clear links to the LEP's Strategic Economic Plan.

1.20 As noted above, DTC made it clear where it would complement existing relevant initiatives (e.g., Connecting Cumbria) as well as where it would fit with the wider business support landscape in Cumbria – something that Section 3 and 6 of this report consider in terms of how well this worked.

1.21 The approach proposed, where a specialist ICT consultant would be procured to deliver the project, was appropriate given the aims of DTC. The successful bidder was Winning Moves. However, as noted at various points throughout this report, this process was challenged by one of the unsuccessful bidders and this caused significant delays to the project.

1.22 In addition to this delay (and in part because of this delay), the delivery of the project was then further impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the wider economic challenges that this created, the legacy of which (along with the impact of wider international economic challenges) has continued throughout the project delivery.

1.23 Notwithstanding all of these issues, the logic model for the project as originally set out (see Figure 1.2) was appropriate. However, the wider external influences on the project did result in four Project Change Requests being approved – with a clear rationale, resulting from the wider context changes that impacted on the project, underpinning each of these.

1.24 The rationale for the project and the targets set were considered appropriate for the time – something that the partner and stakeholder consultees for this assessment re-affirmed. The wider impacts that affected the project delivery – especially around the pandemic impact – could not have been foreseen when the project was developed. Partners also highlight that the DTC project fitted well with strategies and priorities in each of the local authority districts, further supporting the strategic fit and alignment of the project.

Figure 1.2: LOGIC MODEL

Project

ICT IS – Information and Communication Technology Improvement Support

Context

Cumbria is the second largest county in England, constituting around 48% of the North West's landmass, and is England's most sparsely populated County. It doesn't have the large service centres providing significant employment and opportunities that are associated with City Regions. Instead, the city of Carlisle and the major towns throughout the County provide rural connectivity for the more outlying villages and hamlets. The average FTE gross workplace earnings in Cumbria is below the North West and national average. Manufacturing is a key sector, but on a smaller scale in terms of the size of businesses operating in the County - 99.7% of businesses in Cumbria employ fewer than 250 employees. The project will provide expert ICT advice to individual SMEs. Each SME supported will undergo an intensive diagnostic review, considering in detail how ICT is being used in the business and identifying areas for improvements, which in turn will enable the SME to increase its performance and grow. The project will also help stimulate further take up of superfast broadband services by presenting the benefits for business use to SMEs, and consider wider technologies (such as a potential LoRaWAN - a media access control (MAC) protocol for wide area networks that is designed to allow low-powered devices to communicate with internet-connected applications over long range wireless connections, supporting a wider Internet of Things strategy). Many farm diversification projects are run by women to supplement the farming income, including tourism accommodation and

Market Failure Assessment

Key cross-cutting issues from a number of disparate expert sector groups centred around skills and recruitment, broadband and infrastructure – lack of appropriate broadband speeds was identified as a major issue for businesses in the county, including the availability of superfast broadband as a growth enabler to overcome the perceived and real disadvantage of locating outside key clusters of innovative enterprises located within larger urban centres. Poor connectivity is also making it more difficult to attract people to live and work in remote and rural areas. Whilst superfast broadband rollout is currently at 93% of homes and businesses within Cumbria, take-up is currently at 45% (Connecting Cumbria latest figures) - this clearly demonstrates a lack of awareness of both availability and benefits. Getting connections to rural homes and businesses is complex and expensive but it is essential and a crucial part of establishing fairness and balance in the economy and to ensure the service they receive keeps pace with demand and technological change. This is a result of remote and topographical issue faced by many in the County. It is therefore essential that businesses are made aware of opportunities that are and will be available, and this is what this project application is concerned with. The project will utilise existing links with the Connecting Cumbria project, and will use the existing network of

Project Objectives

The exploitation of ICT is key to increasing SME competitiveness and productivity growth and to enabling research and innovation. At present only a small proportion of SMEs are fully exploiting the opportunities ICT offers in areas such as e-commerce, open innovation, and market research. It is recognised that the lack of awareness of the advantages in using ICT and how to exploit them, constrain business exploitation of the opportunities ICT presents. Whilst digital technologies, tools and skills are being exploited by small businesses nearly all could be doing more to realise the full potential benefits. The development of the ICTIS programme is founded in the success of the ICT business

Rationale

Whilst this is being addressed by the Connecting Cumbria project, investing in opportunities and removing barriers to growth was seen as key to survival and expansion to overcome issues related to the use of technology to grow businesses and increase competitiveness. SMEs require access to relevant business support to help them work through these barriers and enable the owners to focus on running and growing their business. Visitors and business people from other parts of the World are used to accessing superfast broadband, Wi-Fi, apps and other technologies – the lack of which is severely hampering Cumbria's ability to compete on a global level. None of the existing initiatives offer intensive ICT diagnostics and ensuing support, and none currently aim to or include activities to support or stimulate the business take up of Superfast Broadband services and wider

Inputs

What	Value
Total cost of project	835,000

Intended Impacts

What
Number of eligible SMEs assisted to update or introduce new ICT business models that will help them to increase business
Jobs safeguarded and created
Gender reporting to improve gender equality and economic empowerment, women's decision-making power, income, and

Outcomes

ID	Intended Outcome	How Is It Measured?	Level	Baseline	Actual
1	Increased GVA	Industry standard method of calculation		0	£2.5m
2					
3					
4					
5					

Outputs

What	Value
Businesses assisted	150
Businesses taking up superfast broadband	50

Activities

What
Match funding has been secured
Consultant to be appointed to undertake activity
Specialist appointed to manage the project

Source: ICTIS Information and Communication Technology Improvement Support, Logic Model

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2. PROJECT PROGRESS

2.1 This section considers the progress with the implementation of the project, drawing on lifetime performance against the expenditure, activity, and output targets.

2.2 Table 2.1 shows both the original and adjusted targets for the project spend, and also the two outputs – C1 and P4.

2.3 The results show that at the current time (to end December 2022), 98.9% of the project expenditure been achieved, and this is due to reach 100% by the end of January 2023. This will include the total ERDF spend of £501,000 being achieved and the match funding from Cumbria LEP of £334,000 being achieved. This will result in the original intervention rate of 60% being achieved.

2.4 In terms of outputs for DTC, C1 (the number of enterprises receiving support) has exceeded the revised target of 180, reaching 190 by the end of December 2022. This equates to an achievement against the revised target of 106%.

2.5 Whilst the delays to the commencement of project delivery did change the timescale of the DTC project, the achievement (and exceeding) of the target for businesses assisted by DTC, especially given the increase in the target for this output, shows that there was a clear demand from businesses for the type of support provided by DTC.

2.6 Key factors that supported the achievement of this target include: the use of a local, well-experienced and very well-networked Business Support Programme Manager; the aforementioned demand for such support from businesses – especially during and emerging from the impacts of the pandemic; the use of a local network of associates to deliver the support – many of whom were already known to and had a good reputation with the businesses supported; and the use of online delivery – which made delivery more efficient and effective.

2.7 The timing of project delivery, and the challenges faced in trying to engage some businesses that were more focused on business survival in the face of pandemic impacts during the project delivery period, emphasises the success of the project in exceeding the target for businesses supported.

2.8 For output P4 (additional businesses taking up broadband access of least 30mbps), the DTC project has achieved 7 against a revised target of 10 by the end of December 2022. This equates to an achievement against target of 70%.

2.9 As outlined in more detail in Section 3, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the current challenging economic circumstances for businesses, influenced the appetite of businesses willing to take-up higher broadband speeds. A lack of willingness from businesses to commit to the required scale of investment given the circumstances they found/find

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themselves in, had an influence on this. In addition, other businesses that have received support from DTC highlighted that they did not need faster, or already had sufficient levels of, broadband speed. Finally, some businesses highlighted that they were not able to access faster broadband due to infrastructure issues – i.e., a lack of available infrastructure to enable them to take-up faster broadband. A number of businesses that took part in the qualitative interviews for this assessment highlighted that wider infrastructure issues are the barrier to taking faster broadband and that there is nothing that DTC could have done about that.

2.10 Notwithstanding the challenges that the impact of the pandemic presented for businesses, the pandemic was also actually a driver in helping to convince some businesses about the importance of digital and operating online and the benefits that this can bring, and as such this driver may well have helped to achieve the scale of C1 outputs.

Table 2.1: Spend and Output Performance

	Indicator	Targets	Performance at Time of Evaluation		Projected Performance at Project Closure		Overall Assessment
	Original	Adjusted	No.	% of target	No.	% of target	
Revenue Expenditure (£'000)	£835	£835	£825.5	98.9%	£835	100%	
C1: Number of Enterprises Receiving Support	150	180	190	106%	190	106%	
P4: Additional Businesses taking up broadband access of at least 30mbps	50	10	7	70%	7	70%	

2.11 Businesses that received support from DTC were first offered a Digital Maturity Assessment, and this was followed by 12 hours of support with a DTC associate.

2.12 Some businesses engaged with DTC, received their Digital Maturity Assessment, but did not go on to receive the 12 hours of support – around 40 businesses were in this position as at November 2022. As such, more than 220 businesses actually engaged with DTC, but not all of them received the 12 hours support and are therefore not included in the outputs in Table 2.1.

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2.13   A number of businesses ended up receiving more than 12 hours support, with a number being in receipt of 18 hours support overall, and a very small number receiving 24 hours support. Almost 50 businesses received more than 12 hours of support, as at November 2022.

2.14   In addition to the one-to-one support provided through DTC, the project also provided a range of general webinars and Digital Skills masterclasses (on topics such as digital marketing, cloud computing, e-commerce and new product/service development) for businesses.

2.15   In terms of the geographic breakdown of businesses supported by DTC, Table 2.2 below shows this by local authority district. The results show that businesses across all six districts in Cumbria engaged with and received support from DTC. Of particular note is the proportion of businesses supported by DTC that are located in South Lakeland – accounting for almost half of all businesses supported (46%). The factors that underpin this are considered in Section 3 of the report around project delivery and management.

Table 2.2: Geographic Location of Business Supported by DTC (by Local Authority District)

Local Authority	Number of Businesses	Percent of Businesses
Allerdale	27	15%
Barrow	14	8%
Carlisle	31	17%
Copeland	7	4%
Eden	22	12%
South Lakeland	85	46%
Total	**186**	**100%**
Source: DC Research analysis of information provided about businesses supported by DTC (as at November 2022) – only those that had received 12 hours+ support are included (n=186)		

3.   PROJECT DELIVERY AND MANAGEMENT

3.1   This section of the summative assessment provides a qualitative analysis of the implementation of the project, including procurement, selection procedures, delivery performance, governance, and management.   It considers the aspects of project delivery which went well and also those aspects of delivery where challenges were faced, and the success (or otherwise) of overcoming these challenges.

3.2   DTC faced early challenges in terms of delivery – most notably two challenges around the tender procurement process by one of the unsuccessful bidders. This led to notable delays for the project by the time these issues were resolved.   This naturally had an impact on the delivery timescales for DTC.

3.3   In addition, this initial delay resulted in delivery of DTC taking place during the Covid-19 pandemic, and this was a huge issue for the project and presented a range of challenges for DTC.   These included businesses' capacity to engage, businesses' resources to commit to broadband uptake, as well as the model of delivery for DTC having to change from face-to-face to online/digital delivery.

3.4   The recruitment of a local business support programme manager for DTC – who arrived around eight months into the project – was an important step for DTC.

3.5   The manager made a notable difference upon starting, and it is acknowledged that the project had struggled before that. The use of a local, well-experienced and very well-networked manager was key to the delivery of the project. Building on a local presence, alongside the importance of having local knowledge and networks for engaging with businesses, there was a clear improvement in the delivery of the project once that person was in post.

3.6   Therefore, whilst there was a slow start to the project, once the local business support manager was in place, the project delivery worked well. This was supported by the use of a wider network of local associates to deliver the support for the project. This network of local associates also helped to get businesses engaged with DTC through their existing connections and links with local businesses.

3.7   Partners consulted also note that the signposting and referrals from other projects and initiatives – e.g. Made Smarter, Cumbria LEP, Cumbria Growth Hub, etc. – all worked well. Alongside this, other organisations including the local authorities, also helped to promote it, and cross referrals were also made from other projects and providers. In addition, business beneficiary consultees noted that cross-referrals from others to DTC was one of the routes through which they first found out about the support available from DTC. Finally, business beneficiaries referring other businesses they know to DTC was also a route for referrals and signposting.

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3.8   Within this success, it is acknowledged by consultees that there is competition between business support providers in Cumbria – primarily driven by the nature of the funding arrangements – and this is something that DTC (and any other project) has to navigate.

3.9   The enforced change of delivery model due to the pandemic, with DTC going online rather than delivering face-to-face, worked effectively – and provided benefits in terms of the efficiency of delivery as well as having a positive environmental benefit due to the lack of travel required for the delivery of the project.

3.10   This has shown that such an approach to the delivery of a project like DTC works, and this can help inform future delivery of such business support.

3.11   Whilst the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic created numerous challenges for the delivery of DTC, it did help to show some beneficiary businesses the benefits of engaging with digital and the importance of being digitally capable. This is likely to have helped with the achievement/exceeding of the C1 output target for the project.

3.12   Conversely, the lack of achievement of the P4 output target is, based on the consultations with partners and stakeholders as well as some beneficiary businesses, due to some of the wider circumstances that businesses found themselves in. Businesses were reluctant to sign up to broadband during the pandemic when the future of their business was unclear and at risk, and the more recent wider economic circumstances and challenges also made beneficiary businesses wary and 'frightened' to commit to such investments. All these factors are likely to have played a part in the lack of achievement of the P4 output target.

3.13   Given the success of the delivery model once the local manager was in post, with consultees and businesses providing positive feedback and emphasising the strengths and successes of the delivery of DTC by the local manager supported by the local network of associates, there were only a limited number of areas where consultees felt that the delivery of the project could have been improved in any way.

3.14   Most notably, an area identified by a number of partners and stakeholder consultees (especially other district local authorities) related to the communications and information provided about the DTC project when it was being delivered. Whilst general information was provided on a regular basis, due to the light-touch nature of the involvement of the local authorities once the project was being delivered (which in some cases described as very light-touch) – consultees would have preferred to have received more detailed information about the delivery and achievements of DTC.

3.15   Whilst a number of them highlighted their role in terms of signposting businesses to DTC and helping to promote it via various routes (e.g., via social media, website, newsletter, events, business meetings, etc.), this was the extent of their involvement, and as such their awareness about the scale of engagement in their area was limited (or non-existent).

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3.16 For some, there has been a lack of two-way intelligence and sharing and feedback about DTC engagement by businesses in their area. Most local authority consultees would have preferred to receive more information about the progress of DTC so that they knew how effective delivery was in their area.

3.17 Interestingly, the local authorities that reported a more proactive engagement in the promotion, publicity, awareness-raising and signposting of DTC are also those areas that have had higher levels of business engagement with the project (see Table 2.2 in Section 2).

3.18 In terms of specific feedback from beneficiary businesses about the delivery of DTC, a combination of the findings of the qualitative interviews carried out for this Summative Assessment (see Annex 2), alongside the survey results from the research carried out by Winning Moves (see Annex 3), shows that:

- **96%** of business that responded to the survey **agreed or strongly agreed that the support provided under Digital Tech Cumbria was helpful to my business**. (71% strongly agreed)

- **93%** of businesses that responded to the survey **agreed or strongly agreed that the support provided under Digital Tech Cumbria has, or will, make a positive difference to how we operate**. (68% strongly agreed)

- **70%** of businesses that responded to the survey stated that they **had already implemented at least one of the recommendations made**. In addition to which, 27% stated that they will implement at least one of the recommendations made.

- **60%** of businesses that responded to the survey **report that they expect to make other improvements to their business**, 25% have not and do not expect to make other changes, and 15% had already made other improvements. The most common types of improvements were around website/online (46%), followed by digital marketing (27%) and social media (25%). Broadband was only mentioned by 2% responding to this question.

- The **quality of support is exemplified by the proportion of beneficiaries that would recommend DTC to other businesses – 95%**.

3.19 When asked about the quality of the support they had received, interviewees for this Summative Assessment noted the following:

"absolutely fantastic person…really good support"

"good…knew what they were taking about"

"painless process"

"very pleased with the support…really strong plan developed"

"did really good job for us"

"very easy to work with…very rewarding"

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"the 1-2-1 support was amazing" and *"helped to develop the coaching idea for the business"*

"got me out of a real hole" – the website for the business *"is a whole heap better now"*. DTC associate was a *"clever, clever man"*

"hugely impressed"…"Really understanding"…"Thank you that the offer [DTC] was there"…Advisor "was passionate in it as a subject"

"great process…easy to access"…"brilliant…great to have the opportunity – certainly helped"

3.20 These findings are also supported by the survey results (Annex 3), with some examples of the feedback provided including:

"Support was very helpful. They listened to what I needed. Throughout, very easy to communicate with and to explain what I needed and not just for this situation but for other training in the future as well. Very informative."

"Our advisor was fantastic! She helped us put together a marketing strategy plan. She also advised on how to develop my service offer. She gave me examples of what similar businesses were doing. She also advised me on how to sell my online courses."

"They dug me out of the dreadful hole I was in with an awful website. The level of expertise I found was just absolutely awesome and I am eternally grateful for what they did"

"Don't know what we would have done without it. When the lockdown we had to adapt our services really quickly."

"We needed help to improve our website and social media presence. The digital specialist was very helpful and gave me direction of how to take the project forward."

"The DTC support helped with thinking about how our system works and how we could improve it."

"I just found the coaching was just really helpful. I felt like the coach was very knowledgeable and took a lot of time to understand the business needs. She was actually very good"

"The person they put us through was really good. It helped us run through everything that we are doing, so we were actually able to sit down and think on our strategies. Normally you don't have a chance to do this."

3.21 In addition, the interviews for this assessment did also highlight some (albeit a minority of) businesses that do not feel they have benefited from the support received – this included businesses who feel that the advisor didn't really understand their business, and where they have seen no tangible benefit from the support.

3.22 For many of the businesses interviewed, they report that they hope to be able to implement the actions recommended via the support received, but due to capacity issues and wider challenges for their businesses they have not yet been able to do so.

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4. PROJECT OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS

4.1 The section considers the progress that the DTC project has made towards the outcomes and impacts set out in the project logic model.

4.2 However, as noted in Section 1, whilst the project logic model (Figure 1.2) includes the two outputs (C1: Number of Enterprises Receiving Support and P4: Additional Businesses taking up broadband access of at least 30mbps) for the DTC project and also lists a GVA outcome, the GVA outcome was not a target for the DTC project.

4.3 As acknowledged in the Application Form, *"Whilst not an output for the project, and based on previous ICT support programmes such as Connecting Cumbria to enable rollout of Superfast broadband, an estimated £2.5m increase in gross GVA of eligible businesses (based on 150 assists) should be achievable."*

4.4 Given that the gross GVA achievement was not an explicit output or outcome for the DTC project, no data was collected during the project delivery that would enable an assessment of GVA to be achieved.

4.5 Whilst the beneficiary business survey carried out by Winning Moves during delivery did include questions about the impact of the support received (See Annex 3), these questions were limited in scope and for various reasons – including the delivery timescale for the project, the focus on achieving the project outputs given the delays, the timing of the survey (promptly after completion of the support), and the wider contextual challenges (i.e., the Covid-19 pandemic, and the economic context) – were not implemented in such a way as to enable any GVA assessment to be achieved. Whilst categorical questions about impact were asked (see the results presented below) no quantitative metrics about scale of potential or actual impact were collected. This is not a criticism of the deliverer because, as noted previously, there was no contractual agreement or condition around capturing quantitatively any gross GVA impacts.

4.6 However, given that the survey of businesses supported (Annex 3), as well as the primary research consultations carried out for this Summative Assessment (see the list of consultees in Annex 2) did seek to explore the outcomes and impacts of the support on beneficiary businesses, set out below are some of the headlines from the Winning Moves survey alongside some examples of impact reported via this survey and also through the primary research with businesses carried out for this Summative Assessment.

4.7 According to the survey results:

- For those **businesses that had already made improvements** to their business at the time of the survey **70% expected these changes to lead to increased <u>profits</u>**.

- For those **businesses that had already made improvements** to their business at the time of the survey **60% expected these changes to lead to increased <u>revenue</u>**.

- For those **businesses that had already made improvements** to their business at the time of the survey **60% expected these changes to lead to <u>new or increased sales</u>**.

- For those **businesses that had already made improvements** to their business at the time of the survey **50% expected these changes to lead to <u>cost reductions</u>**.

- Only 10% of businesses surveyed did not expect any of the above impacts to take place.

- For those **businesses that expected to make improvements** to their business at the time of the survey **79% expected these changes to lead to <u>new or increased sales</u>**.

- For those **businesses that expected to make improvements** to their business at the time of the survey **69% expected these changes to lead to <u>increased revenues</u>**.

- For those **businesses that expected to make improvements** to their business at the time of the survey **67% expected these changes to lead to <u>increased profits</u>**.

- For those **businesses that expected to make improvements** to their business at the time of the survey **31% expected these changes to lead to <u>cost reductions</u>**.

- Only 3% of businesses surveyed did not expect any of the above impacts to take place.

4.8 Overall, these results are positive and show that businesses expected the impact of the support from DTC to make positive contributions to increased sales, revenue, and profits, as well as cost reductions – all of which could be expected, to varying extents, to have a positive impact on gross GVA.

4.9 These results are further supported by the findings from the qualitative interviews carried out for this Summative Assessment which sought to understand some of the impacts and outcomes achieved by businesses that had received support from DTC.

4.10 Some key examples from the interviews are presented overleaf:

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- Due to the range of support received, one business reflected that DTC (in conjunction with other support) had helped to *"increase revenue"*, *"increase the quality of what they do"*, *"increase capability and machine efficiency"*; *"improve efficiency for staff"*; and *"improve delivery time efficiency"* all of which has led to *"better reputation and increased trust of customers"*.

- One business reported that they now have *"higher occupancy"* due to the support they received from the project. DTC provided a *"fresh pair of eyes"* that made a *"huge difference…needed that fresh perspective"*, and it has led to development of *"new markets"* for the business and also an *"increase in new enquiries"*.

- Another business reflected that it had *"definitely got busier"* and also that it had *"expanded the offer"* due to DTC, emphasising that the support from DTC *"gave us the confidence to offer more services"*.

- One business reported that due to the support they had received from DTC their *"website hits and sales were up"* – having increased by 35% between October and December.

As well as direct impacts on revenue and sales, and the development of new markets and expansion of the offer, other businesses reflected on some of the process improvements and efficiencies that had been achieved through with the help of support from DTC.

- For one business, *"time saving was huge"* in terms of the improved processes that DTC supported. It also helped *"increase confidence in marketing"* for the business, as well as create the capacity to *"do more marketing"* and improve the quality and customised nature of the marketing.

- One business emphasised the process impacts that DTC had supported them with, clearly pointing out that it had *"helped with the workflow of the business"* and *"helped look at the systems of the business and how to improve them"*. All of this led to *"increased efficiency"* and *"being more productive on the processing side"*. For this business, if demand for their products returns to pre-pandemic levels, the total potential output of the business has increased by 40%. The business noted that these changes had improved wellbeing for the workers in the business, it is now a *"less frenetic and happier workplace"*.

Finally, some businesses reflected that they are still waiting for any impacts of the support to occur – either due to the challenges for their business from the current economic climate, and/or as a result of the challenges around having the time, capacity or resources to implement the changes that they want to make as a result of the support from DTC.

- One business reflected that in terms of the operation of the business, it is *"hard to say…but it is better now than prior [to the support]"*; the business noted that *"website sales are better"* but that they have *"not done much yet"* on social media.

- Another business reported being in a similar position, where the changes they made as a result of support from DTC had resulted in the business *"adding value to the customer experience"* – but that *"wider impacts were not yet there"*.

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5. PROJECT VALUE FOR MONEY

5.1 This section draws on the analysis in the project progress section of this Summative Assessment in order to consider the value for money that the DTC project has provided.

5.2 This value for money assessment focuses on cost per output achieved by DTC, and, in particular, on output C1: Number of Enterprises Receiving Support. As noted in Section 2, the DTC project achieved 190 against a revised target of 180 for C1 by the end of December 2022.

5.3 Given the total cost of the project is £835,000, this achievement of 190 businesses supported equates to an average total project cost per output of £4,395. If only ERDF costs are considered, then the value for money assessment, ERDF project cost per output would be £2,637.

5.4 A common benchmark comparison[1] used for the total cost per output for C1 recommends that *"for a relatively low intensity business assist that a unit cost in the range of £2,500 to £4,700 public sector cost per business assisted is used as a starting point."*

5.5 The value for money results for DCT fall within this range, with an average total project cost for C1 output of £4,395, suggesting that it provides good value-for-money based on this overall comparator.

5.6 Further consideration of where the value for money assessment of DTC is positioned compared to other projects can be provided by looking at a small sample of other projects[2]. Whilst selection of comparators is a subjective process, results from these assessment does suggest that DTC compares favourably in terms of overall cost per C1 output when compared to projects that have a similar focus on support for small businesses. As such, DTC has provided good value for money in terms of the C1 output achievements.

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[1] England ERDF Programme 2014-20: Output Unit Costs and Definitions, Regeneris Consulting, 2013: http://www.nwueu.ac.uk/NWUEU/PDFs/Regeneris%20Consulting%20-%20ERDF%20Output%20Note%20FINAL%20Version%2018%2012%2013.pdf

[2] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1121476/ERDF_SA_Final_Reports__4__2__3_.zip

6.   CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNT

6.1   This section sets out the conclusions of the Summative Assessment, and identifies lessons learnt – reflecting on these for specific audiences: the grant recipient/project delivery body; those designing and implementing similar interventions; and policy makers.

Conclusions

6.2   Digital Tech Cumbria (DTC) has successfully engaged with a range of SMEs across Cumbria, providing support around various aspects of digital using a range of associates.

6.3   Given some of the challenges DTC faced in delivery – including at the outset with a legal challenge around the tender procurement processes from an unsuccessful bidder which caused notable delays to the project, as well as the Covid-19 pandemic impacts, and the recent and ongoing economic context and challenges within which DTC has been delivered – the project has done well to reach the scale of outputs it has achieved.

6.4   DTC has achieved and exceeded its C1 (the number of enterprises receiving support) output, supporting 190 businesses against a revised target of 180 - equating to achievement of 106%.

6.5   However, it did not reach its revised target for C4 (additional businesses taking up broadband access of at least 30mbps), achieving 7 outputs against a revised target of 10 – equating to achievement of 70%.

6.6   There are a multiplicity of reasons underpinning this lack of achievement of the broadband take-up target, the majority of which were external factors beyond the control of the project delivery.   This includes the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the current economic challenges for businesses, lack of willingness from businesses to commit to the required scale of investment given the circumstances they found/find themselves in, the lack of need for faster broadband from some businesses, as well as wider broadband infrastructure issues and challenges. Notwithstanding the challenges that the pandemic presented for businesses, it was also a driver in helping to convince some businesses about the importance of digital and the benefits that this can bring, and as such this may well have helped DTC to achieve the scale of C1 outputs reached.

6.7   Key success factors that supported the project achievements include: the use of a local, well-experienced and very well-networked Business Support Programme Manager; the demand for digital support from businesses (especially during and emerging from the impacts of the pandemic); the use of a local network of associates to deliver the support – many of whom were already known to, and had a good reputation with, the businesses supported; and the use of online delivery – which made delivery more efficient and effective.

6.8   The only issues around delivery noted through the assessment relate to the level of communications about DTC, especially with the district local

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authorities, who would have liked more detailed, regular communications about delivery and engagement of the project.

6.9   Feedback from businesses that engaged with DTC was clearly positive – 96% report the support from DTC was helpful, 93% report it will make a positive difference to how they operate, and 95% report they would recommend DTC to other businesses.

6.10   Whilst there were no specified outcomes and impacts targets for the project, evidence from beneficiary businesses does point towards a range of impacts achieved – including increased revenues and new sales, increased profits, increased production efficiencies, time savings, and cost reductions. Notwithstanding the lack of impacts and outcomes assessed, the DTC project did achieve good value-for-money in terms of the average total project cost per C1 output (at £4,395 per output) when compared to national benchmarks and other project assessments.

6.11   However, it is also worth noting that many of the businesses interviewed highlight that whilst they hope to be able to implement the actions emerging from the support received, capacity issues within their business alongside wider business and economic challenges at the current time present barriers to this.

6.12   Finally, based on the deliverer survey evidence and the business interviews for this assessment, there is ongoing demand from businesses in Cumbria for the type of support provided by DTC. However, given the changing landscape for business support in Cumbria and elsewhere due to national changes, the 'lively eco-system' of business support (as one consultee described it) within Cumbria, as well as the forthcoming local government reorganisation (LGR), there is a lack of clarity about the future provision of business support – especially around the types of support that DTC has offered.

Lessons Learnt

6.13   This Summative Assessment has identified several lessons from the development, delivery, and achievements of DTC. The key lessons are:

For the grant recipient / project delivery body

6.14   Whilst there were specific delays to the project as well as wider international contextual impacts and challenges, key success factors for the project included the use of a local, well-experienced and very well-networked delivery manager supported by a local network of associates to deliver the support – many of whom were already known to, and had a good reputation with, the target businesses. In brief, local knowledge and local networks were key to the achievements of DTC.

6.15   The revisions to the project – in terms of timescales, moving to online delivery, and revising project targets – were all necessary and the ability to be able to react to the wider context impacts and adjust the project delivery is key. Having such flexibility in delivery is an important lesson.

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6.16   Given the challenges faced around the tender processes for the delivery contract for DTC, there is a lesson in how the accountable body dealt with this – which was underpinned by a confidence that the process had been carried out correctly, and as such, was able to withstand any challenges. This is an important lesson for similar future contracting processes.

6.17   Based on feedback received, communications about DTC, especially for other partners and stakeholders (e.g., district local authorities) could have been better – this is a lesson for future projects.

For those designing and implementing similar interventions/policy makers

6.18   There is an ongoing demand from businesses in Cumbria for the type of support provided by DTC.

6.19   However, the changing landscape for business support in Cumbria (the role of/funding from ERDF, UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Rural England Prosperity Fund, as well as Local Government Reorganisation) means that the potential provision of a project/initiative with the remit of DTC is unclear at the current time. It will be important that this is considered as the future landscape for business support in Cumbria becomes clearer in the near future, especially in terms of any digital specific support offer and where this fits within more general business support provision.

6.20   Such changes in the business support landscape also provide a wider opportunity to address some of the other aspects (not specific to DTC) that influence and affect business support provision in Cumbria.

6.21   The types of forums that were used to develop projects such as DCT are no longer in place (e.g., the LEP Technical Officers Group), and as such, it will be important that appropriate mechanisms are in place, post-local government reorganisation to enable such initiatives to be developed.

6.22   The use of online delivery for DTC, which was clearly influenced by the 'push factor' of the Covid-19 pandemic, provides a very useful lesson about how such projects can be delivered in the future – with online/digital provision of support providing a more efficient and more environmentally friendly model of delivery.

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ANNEX 1: LIST OF DELIVERY AND PARTNER CONSULTEES

A total of 12 individuals from delivery, partner and stakeholder organisations were consulted via one-to-one discussions as part of the primary research for this Summative Assessment. The list of consultees is set out in the table below.

NAME		ROLE	ORGANISATION
Nik	Hardy	Asst Chief Executive	Allerdale Borough Council
Andrea	Hines	Project Manager (Digital Tech Cumbria)	Allerdale Borough Council
Matthew	Park	Planning Policy Officer	Barrow Borough Council
Ken	Lau	Economic Regeneration Officer	Carlisle City Council
Sarah	Mitchell	Economic and Community Regeneration Manager	Copeland Borough Council
Lesley	Robinson	Head of Business Support	Cumbria Chamber
Julie	Hodgson	Economic Programmes Officer	Cumbria County Council
Corinne	Watson	Place and Enterprise Manager, Economy & Infrastructure Directorate	Cumbria County Council
Lynsey	Parke	Business Growth Manager	Cumbria LEP
Emily	Bond	Economic Development Manager	Eden District Council
Matt	Williams	Senior Specialist (Economy & Culture)	South Lakeland District Council
Janet	Addison	Business Support Programme Manager	Winning Moves

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ANNEX 2: LIST OF BENEFICIARY BUSINESSES CONSULTED

A total of 10 businesses that received support from DTC were consulted via one-to-one discussions as part of the primary research for this Summative Assessment.

The list of consultees is provided below. This initially focused on businesses that were Digital Heroes for DTC (https://dtc.winningmoves.com/index.php/digital-heroes/), and this was then expanded to draw on additional consultees from the wider cohort of businesses supported by DTC.

NAME		BUSINESS
Heather	Cockett Phillips	West Point House
Brendan	Donnelly	Coniston Stonecraft
Darryl	Kelbrick	The Natural Charcoal Company
Aneta	Gibka	RAF General Engineering Ltd (Hudson Swann)
Mari	Ryan	Bite Size Admin
Martin	Rowland	Agri Evolve Ltd
Richard	Barker	The Chocolate Cottage
Barbara	Keen	All Day Bags
Richard	Coulter	Barking Mad Enterprises Ltd
Lynsey	Eland	Dandelion Coaching

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ANNEX 3: SUMMARY RESULTS FROM BENEFICIARY SURVEY

Winning Moves captured feedback from business beneficiaries of DTC during the delivery of the project.

A summary of the feedback gathered by Winning Moves between March 2021 and May 2022 is summarised below, which is based on 122 survey replies from business beneficiaries.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: The support provided under Digital Tech Cumbria was helpful to my business?	
	Percent
Strongly agree	71%
Agree	25%
Neither agree nor disagree	2%
Disagree	2%
Strongly disagree	0%
Total	100%
(n=122)	

SAMPLE QUOTES FROM SURVEY RESPONDENTS:

I would say generally it was very good. We needed help with our social media strategy. She helped us think more clearly about what we were doing at the time, and also what we needed to do.

Support was very helpful. They listened to what I needed. Throughout, very easy to communicate with and to explain what I needed and not just for this situation but for other training in the future as well. Very informative.

Our advisor was fantastic! She helped us put together a marketing strategy plan. She also advised on how to develop my service offer. She gave me examples of what similar businesses were doing. She also advised me on how to sell my online courses.

We needed support with improving our IT platforms, as well as with raising our profile in Google searches, so we wanted to make our business more visible for customers. The support was very helpful. The advisor used simple language that I could easily understand.

They dug me out of the dreadful hole I was in with an awful website. The level of expertise I found was just absolutely awesome and I am eternally grateful for what they did

The specialist advisor was so helpful. Nothing was too much trouble. So patient. I am hoping it will be helpful. Bookings will be from now onwards. The website looks really good now.

Help was really good and the digital specialist is really knowledgeable.

The digital specialist helped me prepare the application to the MADE SMARTER grant for manufacture software cause at the moment we do everything on a spreadsheet. We were successful so we are in the process now of implementing the software.

Don't know what we would have done without it. When the lockdown we had to adapt our services really quickly.

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We needed help to improve our website and social media presence. The digital specialist was very helpful and gave me direction of how to take the project forward.

The DTC support helped with thinking about how our system works and how we could improve it.

I just found the coaching was just really helpful. I felt like the coach was very knowledgeable and took a lot of time to understand the business needs. She was actually very good

The person they put us through was really good. It helped us run through everything that we are doing, so we were actually able to sit down and think on our strategies. Normally you don't have a chance to do this.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: The support provided under Digital Tech Cumbria has, or will, make a positive difference to how we operate?	Percent
Strongly agree	68%
Agree	25%
Neither agree nor disagree	5%
Disagree	2%
Strongly disagree	0%
Total	100%
(n=122)	

SAMPLE QUOTES FROM SURVEY RESPONDENTS:

I think it will help staff members make a more effective use social media.

It has helped me improve my marketing strategy which could potentially lead to increase in sales.

It is helping me take a step back around my social media posts and really understand why I am posting what I am posting, how to attract new clients and I['ve] already seen results from what the advisor advised me on.

We are now using Facebook to announce our course availability. We now send email campaigns to advertise to customers. We are receiving bookings from that.

I'm 100% sure it will help us, we are just not in a position to carry it out at the moment, because due to covid the industry has really slowed down so we just need to ride the storm.

The booking system will hopefully streamline our processes, cutting out an enormous amount of administration time throughout the whole process, which is now completely automated.

We have moved to cloud-based information storage system, and as a result we have lowered our costs.

Now I have a website that I can alter myself. I can change the message that I am getting to my customers or potential customers on a daily basis if I want to, and I could not do that before. So it has actually given me the control to reach out and communicate with customers.

It's too early to say. It still has to be measured. I am expecting it will make a positive difference.

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Makes our processes easier especially when we are working virtually. It will save us time.

The support has allowed up to focus what we do, so we have a much more defined market that we're trying to reach.

It makes us more professional. The software package manages every aspect in our business. It is linked to our accounts systems. So it collectively collects all the information.

When I find time to implement the changes it will make a difference. [the advisor] did a detailed analysis of the website and recommended actions. Her support was really hands-on and practical.

Implemented a few actions on the website. The whole point of those actions was to use website traffic analytics for lead generation. We've already seen an increase in information requests and enquiries

Will help online sales - I'm expecting at least 50% increase.

We cannot fall behind in technology if we want to be successful.

My website is now mobile-friendly and much more up-to-date. It is integrated with social media so it's much more effective. That will hopefully drive bookings through our website up

At the moment we can definitely see a difference in the speed of the broadband

It has helped me to focus on aspects of the business that I did not have knowledge of for example marketing. It is about kicking me into action going to gain the confidence on how to do it.

Could you now please select the statement which most applies to you: As a result of the support provided under Digital Tech Cumbria…	
	Percent
I have already implemented at least one of the recommendations made – what have you implemented?	70%
I will implement at least one of the recommendations made – when are you planning on doing this and what are you plan	27%
I won't implement any of the recommendations made	0%
Not applicable / Don't know	2%
Total	0%
(n=122)	

Since the support, have you made / are you expecting to make any other improvements to your business? This could include changes to your business website, social media campaigns, digital marketing, e-commerce or broadband.	
	Percent
Yes, I have made improvements to my business	15%
Yes, I expect to make improvements to my business	60%
No, I haven't made/expect to make improvements to my business	25%
Total	100%
(n=65)	

Since the support, have you made/are you expecting to make any other improvements to your business? This could include changes to your business website, social media campaigns, digital marketing, e-commerce or broadband.	
	Percent
Website / online	46%
Social media	25%
Digital marketing	27%
New processes	13%
New on site tech	6%
New product	6%
App	2%
Broadband	2%
IT systems	4%
Other	15%
(n=48)	

You mentioned that you have made improvements to your business. What potential impact do you think these changes will have on your business? Capture units (if applicable) and approximate £ value. Estimates are fine. And figures can be per month / quarter	
	Percent
Increased profits	70%
Increased revenue	60%
New/increased sales	60%
Cost reduction	50%
None of the above	10%
Other	40%
(n=10)	

You mentioned that you expect to make improvements to your business. What impact do you expect that to make on your business? Capture units (if applicable) and approximate £ value. Estimates are fine	
	Percent
New/increased sales	79%
Increased revenue	69%
Increased profits	67%
Cost reduction	31%
None of the above	3%
Other	26%
(n=39)	

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How likely is it that you would recommend the Digital Tech Cumbria Support Programme to other businesses?	
	Percent
Extremely likely	95%
Likely	5%
Neither likely nor unlikely	0%
Unlikely	0%
Extremely unlikely	0%
Total	100%
(n=65)	

How likely is it that you would recommend the Digital Tech Cumbria Support Programme to other businesses?	
	Percent
Advisors	46%
Helpful	32%
General	20%
Already have	15%
It is free	8%
Space to focus	6%
(n=65)	

SAMPLE QUOTES FROM SURVEY RESPONDENTS:

You are getting help for free. It also is a very targeted support and a great opportunity for businesses.

It was great. It has just been very beneficial and the advisor understood well what I needed. All around it has been beneficial.

Very helpful, friendly, and professional people.

The support was funded which is important. The application form was easy to complete. We received support promptly. And the specialist advisor was great.

Have already recommended DTC's support to some other businesses.

Quality of the expertise is really high. The specialist advisor was excellent.

For me not having any marketing support internally, it was being able to speak to experts in the region and get feedback. They went one step further and actually helped implement the changes on the website. It was just fantastic!

I have already recommended DTC to other businesses. It being free is great but also increasing my knowledge of who's around to help with certain aspects of the business is useful.

Because the support we received […] with writing the grant application was great, and it was successful so it will allow us to implement a manufacturing software.

The support was excellent as well as all the information that comes through online seminars in very helpful. Also now we have this ongoing relationship with the digital specialist who's helping our business.

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I recommend the digital specialist. He understands how businesses work and understands the engineering. His awareness of a business is down to earth and realistic. As far we are concerned we would recommend him any time to anyone.

Improved our business and our understanding of digital and I have already recommended it to someone who was in a similar situation, needing assistance to understand what the options were and how to implement them

When you're trying to run a business you are not always looking at the business as a whole; you are just trying to stay on top of the day-to-day things. It's beneficial to get an advisor's knowledge and expertise to help you think about things from a different angle. Businesses like us don't have that breadth of knowledge in-house.

Do you feel you could benefit from any further support?	
	Percent
Yes	86%
No	14%
Total	100%
(n=65)	

If yes, please provide details (with your permission, we will share details of any requirements with the Growth Hub and/or broker to other providers to follow up any actions as a result of this call)	
	Percent
Digital	80%
Not digital	22%
(n=49)	

SAMPLE QUOTES FROM SURVEY RESPONDENTS:

More of the same. Social media and marketing strategy.

Socia media.

PR, social media and further changes to our website.

We would like to continue working on our website.

Manufacturing support.

Need more help with the website design and functionality

Digital Analytics.

Another 12 hours of specialist support to implement the recommendations to improve our website.

Web design. Learning how to make changes to my website. Digitising other things in our business. Software. Automatisation of things.

Any support to do with social media, advertising, mailshots, cybersecurity.

Generating marketing content. Having somebody physically writing content.

More support on the website when it comes to working on the export side of things.

Improve our website and our social media strategy

I've looked at some accounting automatisation software but at the moment it is not going to be worth it for us at the moment.

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3D visualisation

Support with social media and knowing how to target different age groups. We need help with understanding how search engines find, organise and select results

If we had the time, support on marketing and social media Things are moving online so we need to be better placed in that area. There possibly are things we could sell online as another part of the business.

IT skills. Digital marketing.

We could always benefit from their level of experience if we could get some more hours. At that time it was middle of the COVID crisis, then we were trying to work out a way forward so we made some kind of basic changes but now it would be good to have some additional support.

Marketing advice, hospitality management advice, pricing strategies. We had a lot of help with our social media, like making little films and stuff like that so, budgeting advice.

Thank you for time, is there anything else you would like to add?	
	Percent
No	54%
Positive comment	35%
Recommend improvement	11%
(n=65)	

SAMPLE QUOTES FROM SURVEY RESPONDENTS:

We would like more support from DTC if available.

The whole process was very smooth from our side.

Thank you to the DTC team and hopefully we will be in a position to go forward in the future.

Was a very positive experience and we are very grateful for the opportunity. And if there was more funding that would be fantastic.

Fabulous! It's finding the level of expertise and knowledge that it's so perfect

Thank you very much. The whole help has been amazing. We have been struck hard by Covid-19

It's the best business support I've had for my business I've been running for 17 year.

I found the DTC advisor really good. She was approachable, she spoke to me in a way I could understand, she had the patience of a saint, because there were lots of things that I was doing wrong and she would take me back and go through it again

The support from both advisors was invaluable. Can't thank them enough. And also the key thing with one of the advisors is that she geared it towards my level of understanding, so it's very basic for me that I needed. So she never went all over my head with things.

The advisor who was my mentor was very good and organised, resourceful and pushed a number of resources my way and gave me opportunities without pushing. And was good in keeping me focused in the strategy.