

# DIGITAL BOOMERS

Over recent months, RETHINK Partners and Essex County Council convened a group that included local and district councils, NHS, Fire, care delivery organisations and voluntary sector members from across the county. We asked: *“How can technology be better used across Essex to promote independent living for older people?”* and pooled our knowledge and experience around what may be enabling or hindering technology adoption amongst older people in the county.

We undertook insight across the county, meeting face to face with citizens and professionals: travelling to 24 of our towns and villages to have 160 face-to-face conversations, 21 in-depth interviews and 10 discussion groups. We discovered some perception-busting evidence on how our older people are using tech and considered what we might do to enhance this with regards their health and wellbeing. We’ve emerged from this work with a bold shared vision: **“By 2021, older people in Essex are the most tech confident in the world.”**

Tech is a pervasive part of daily life for most of our older people and they are using it as part of their daily rituals, except when it comes to their health and care needs. The ‘system’ needs to catch-up with people’s preferences and provide an infrastructure for professionals to more confidently recommend and promote health and care tech to champion more independent living and support local people to confidently utilise the best of what is available to them.

In response to this we are proposing 6 areas for collective action across the Essex system to realise our vision:...

In brief, our insight found, that in Essex:

- 1 Older people are **more tech savvy** than they realise and professionals and family members regularly underestimate this: we are a significant limiting factor through our unsubstantiated but deeply held assumptions
- 2 Older people **trust their peers** to recommend tech and share experiences and are happy to learn from young people - they would also trust professionals to recommend health related tech
- 3 Older people want to **have fun** with tech and don’t want to be targeted as ‘old people’
- 4 Older people want to **use tech to connect with their loved ones** and sometimes have a competitive streak when adopting new knowledge
- 5 Not every community has a **go-to knowledgeable ‘techie’** person for advice and support, but where they do, it builds confidence and increases take-up
- 6 Older people **don’t feel they are doing tech ‘right’ and are just getting by** – but this isn’t stopping them having a go
- 7 Our community and voluntary sectors **risk being digitally left behind by a lack of investment in skills** and infrastructure due to old-style funding models – they could be providing vital support to older people with the right training and investment

Create a radical new commissioning model for tech enabled services

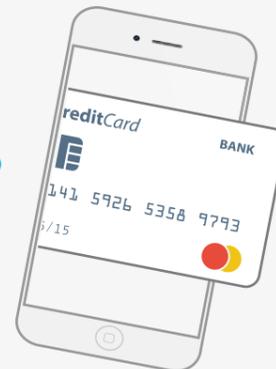
**Digital Skills for All** citizens and professionals confident and capable about technology as a core part of life and work



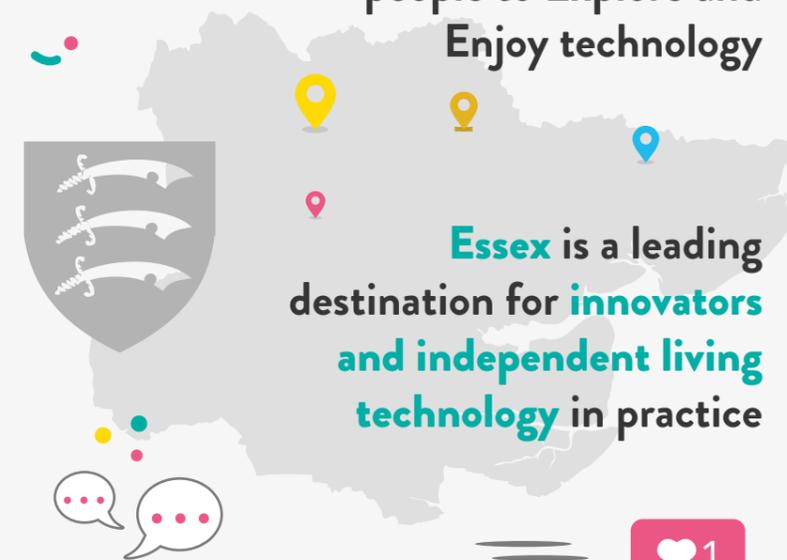
Technology is a First Line Response for **health and care**



Our **working, care and living environments** support a **digital first approach**



**Create spaces** and opportunities for people to **Explore and Enjoy** technology



**Essex** is a leading destination for **innovators and independent living technology** in practice

**Invest in the community and voluntary sector** so they can participate as equal partners

Develop and sustain Digital Boomers as the system delivery vehicle for driving the change



## Building knowledge, skills and confidence for a happier & more independent future

We now have a choice. We could wait for the inevitable shift in behaviours and skills that will happen naturally over time until everyone is using technology more effectively for independent living. Or we could be bold and confident that – based on the capabilities we've already found and the profound need for alternative health and care delivery models – we want to try to be proactive and at the leading edge of this social change. Digital Boomers is potentially the way to unite the efforts of different people and organisations in Essex who share this bold ambition. So, in order to unite organisations, professionals and families around an approach over the next three years which could harness the power of these capabilities and grow skills and confidence, we have co-designed a Theory of Change with a committed group of pioneers. This describes the target areas for intervention and the desired impacts of these strategies. It is designed for the whole county to use as a simple basis for any digital or tech strategy involving older people. It is a working strategy with high aspirations that by 2021 older people in Essex are the most tech confident in the world.

## We have a unique opportunity

This is an opportunity for Essex to tap into an existing curiosity and latent skill base to improve outcomes and lives by making the most of what is already available to us. It's an opportunity to develop and lead as a system, what local people have already started. This is an opportunity to take the best of digital and tech and combine it with the most human of approaches to augment services for professionals, patients, customers and citizens alike. This work needs executive sponsorship from a few senior leaders who have a vested interest in driving this agenda for Essex and we need all organisations to come together to test and then deliver some of these interventions. Please read on, tell us what you think and how you want to get involved.

For more information please contact:

[irene@rethinkpartners.co.uk](mailto:irene@rethinkpartners.co.uk)

