

IMPACT REPORT 2020



BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

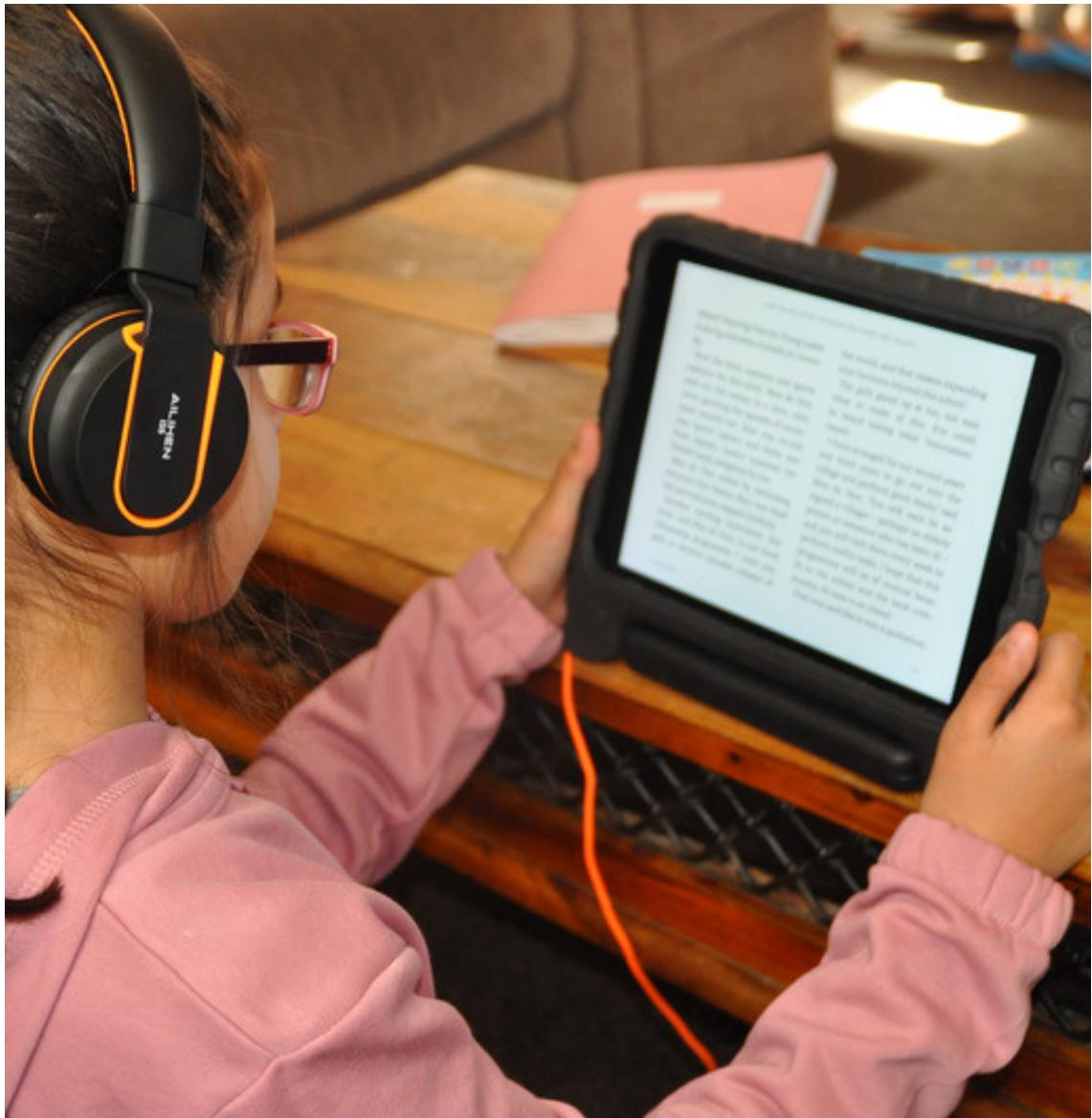


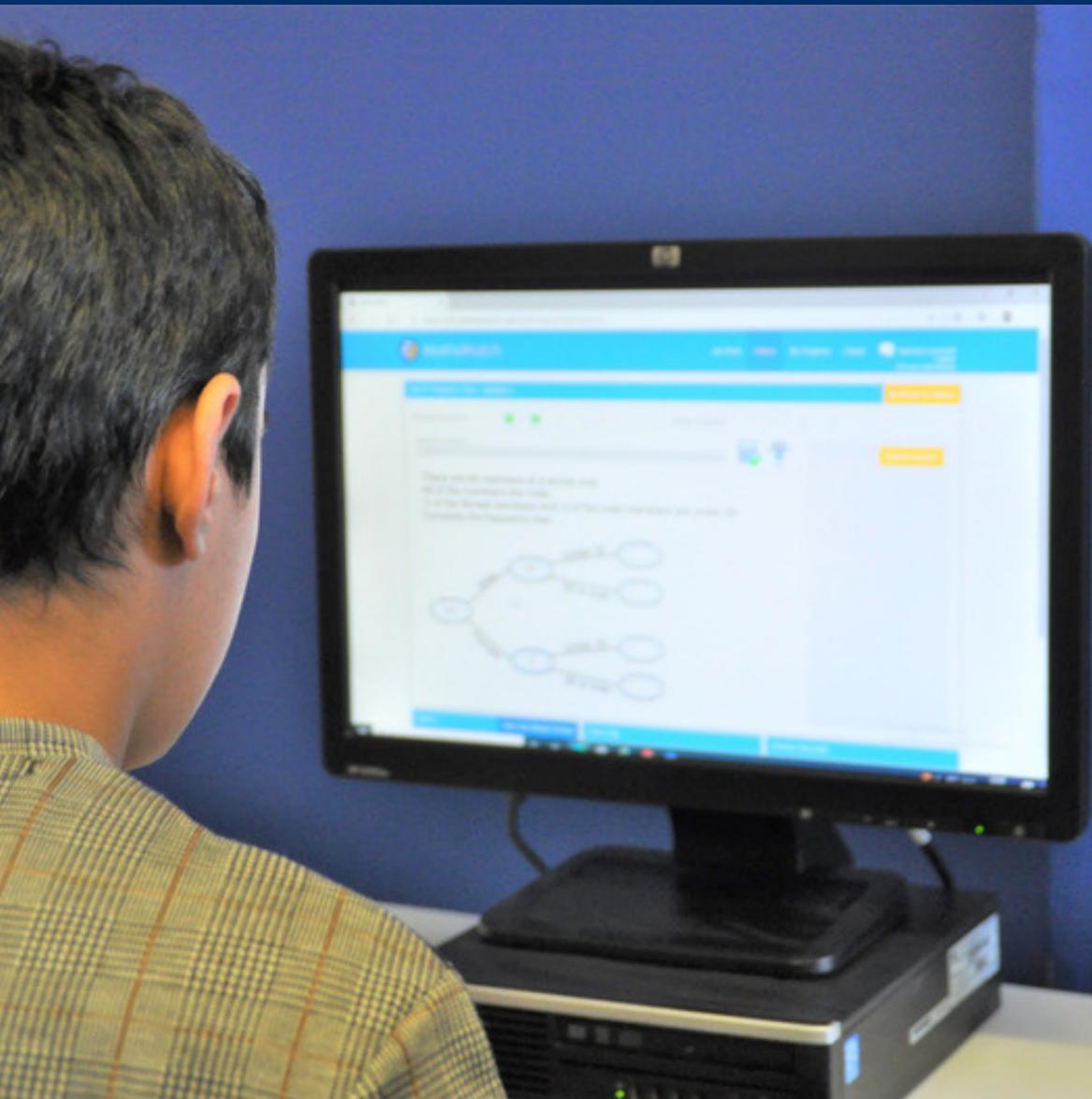
www.Bedfordshirelearninglink.com
info@highsheriffofbedfordshire.com
01234 511 511

CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Timeline	4
Which schools benefited?	5
Which young people benefited?	6
What changed?	7
Young people's stories	12
Our next steps	15
Partners and donors	16

(To protect personal data, no images or names of children who received a device from us were used in this report)





INTRODUCTION

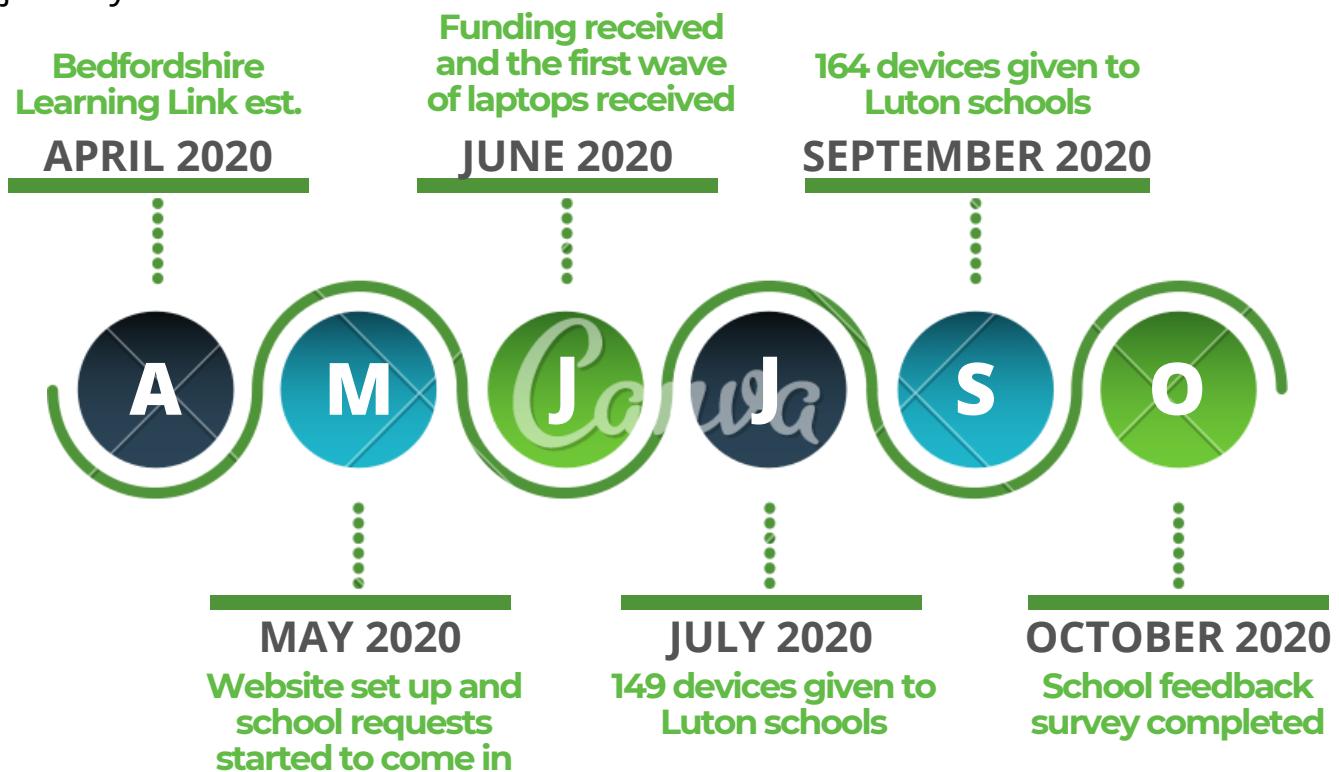
On 20th March, 2020, schools and colleges across England closed as a result of the national coronavirus lockdown. Children and young people would be taught via remote learning, with only the children of key workers or vulnerable children going to school.

Although the Department for Education supplied devices for some students in Year 10 and those with social workers, it quickly became clear that many children and young people were struggling to access learning. Some had to share a device with their siblings, others only had access to a mobile phone and others had no suitable device for learning in their home at all. A clear digital divide was emerging for children and young people across Bedfordshire.

Bedfordshire Learning Link was established to diminish the digital divide by providing laptops and tablets for schools. By raising funding through charitable grants, Bedfordshire Learning Link was able to provide over 1000 devices for primary, secondary and special schools across Bedfordshire.

TIMELINE

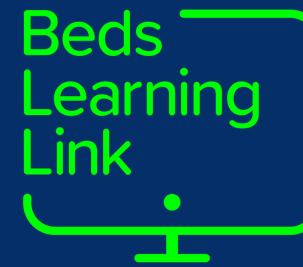
In April 2020, Bedfordshire Learning Link was established with the vision of bridging the digital divide by providing as many children in the local community with laptops and computers. Below is a timeline of events representing our journey over 2020.



We are continuing our efforts to diminish the digital divide by working with local schools, local charities and the local community.



WHICH SCHOOLS BENEFITTED INITIALLY?



Students from a wide range of schools received laptops and tablets from Bedfordshire Learning Link. Here is a representation of how many students in each school benefitted.



Ashcroft High School



Avenue Centre for Education



Cardinal Newman Catholic School



Chalk Hills Academy



Challney High School for Girls



Challney High School for Boys



Chiltern Academy



Denbigh High School



Icknield High School



Putteridge High School



Lealands High School



Stockwood Park Academy



Stopsley High School



Woodlands Secondary School



Local Primary Children known to Level Trust

WHICH YOUNG PEOPLE BENEFITTED?

The survey showed devices went to the following groups:



White



African



Bangladeshi



Pakistani



White & Black African



White Irish



Mixed Background



White & Asian



White & Black Caribbean

Schools and students who received a device from Bedfordshire Learning Link were invited to complete a survey about the impact of getting a device. 8 schools completed the survey and 36 students.

The results showed us that both boys and girls benefitted from receiving a device. 47% of devices went to girls and 53% of devices went to boys. Children and young people from a range of backgrounds received a device.



WHAT CHANGED?

87%

of those who received a device rated it highly.

71%

felt positively about receiving a device.

2 ½ hours

was the average increase in learning a week.

67%

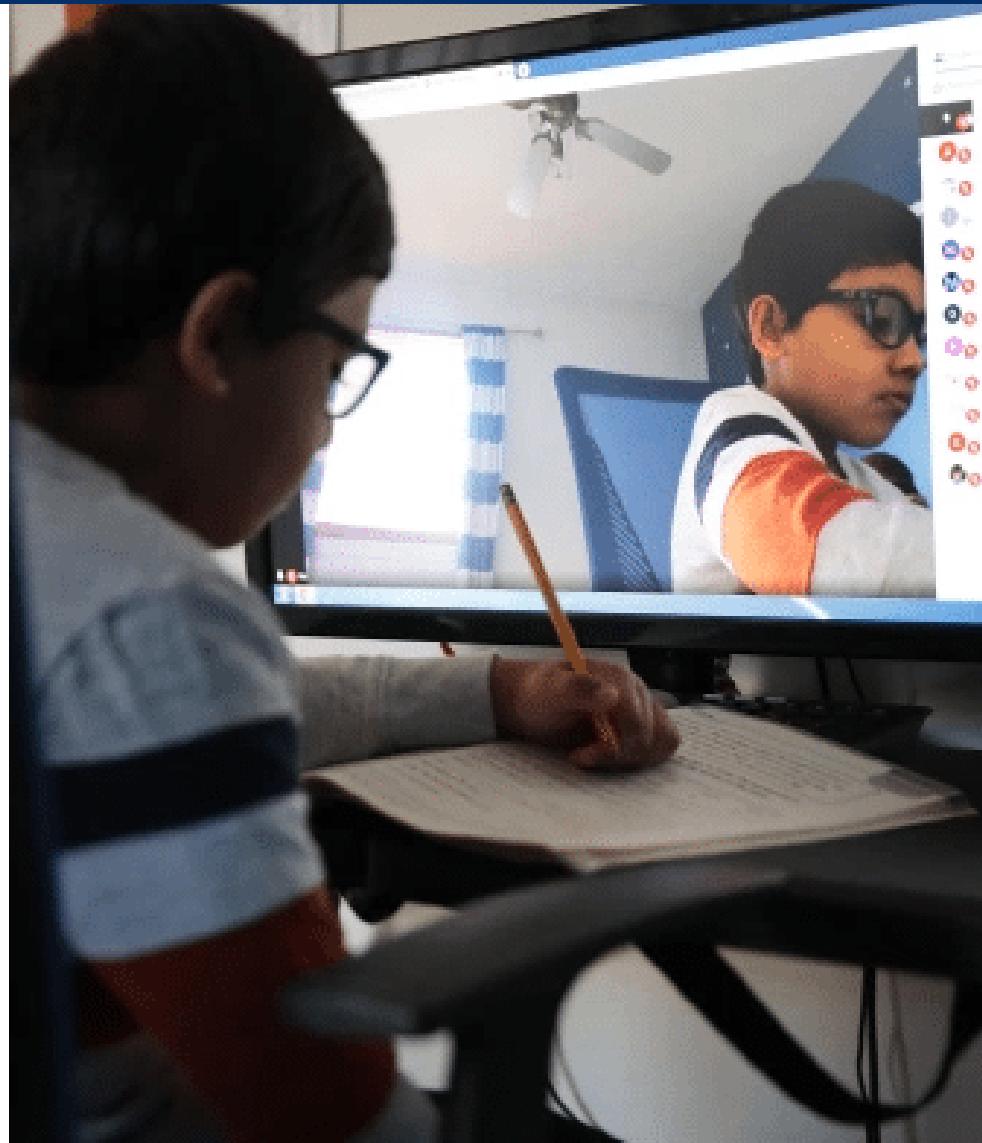
of young people said their confidence has improved.

66%

of children and young people who responded to the survey said that the amount of time they spent learning had increased since they had received the device.

63%

of children and young people who responded to the survey felt they were better connected to their friends and family after receiving the device.



WHAT CHANGED?

Young people told us how important it was that people cared about them and their learning:

“
I was **missing out** and someone knew that and did something to **help me**”

One Headteacher said:

“
Digital devices have become the new books. Without them students cannot access what they need for learning. If child does not have access to a computer or laptop at home, it is very difficult to fully participate in learning.”

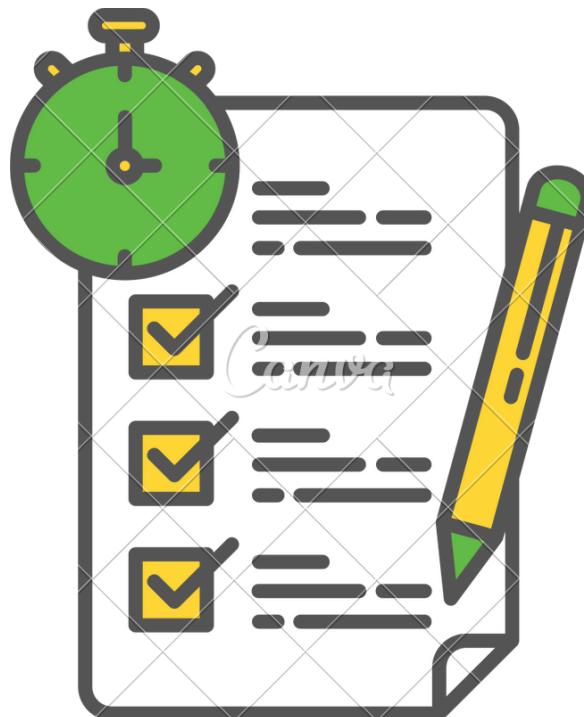
100%

of teachers said participation in learning had increased for students who received a device

WHAT CHANGED?

Children spent more time learning

Some young people felt having a device helped them complete their work to a higher standard and also focus more.



One student told us:

I had more time to learn without anyone needing the device I was using and I also had a lot more time to concentrate on the task I was doing without worrying if I wasn't going to meet the deadline. It also gave me the time to take my time and not rush so my work was up to the standard it needs to be.

Children and young people felt more confident

Many said it had increased their confidence in their school work as they now had the tools they needed to complete the work set by their teachers. Having a device also reduced the anxiety felt by students.

Children and young people felt more connected with their friends and family

Having a device meant students could join their online classroom or they could use social media to communicate with others, reducing loneliness and maintaining valuable connections. Having a device also meant students felt included in their school community and did not feel excluded because of their family circumstances.

It means I can do the things that my school friends are doing and I am not left out.

WHAT CHANGED?

Young people are using the internet more safely



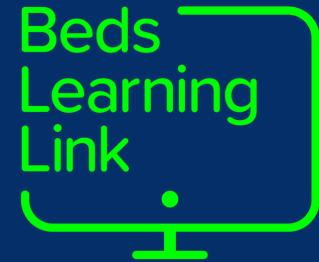
Each device was sent with information on how to use the internet safely. Young people told us that they were more confident about using the internet for learning and remembered what the schools had told them about how to keep safe online. Some young people told us they were more careful about who they spoke to online and were using privacy settings to help stay safe.

The device helped families too



Some of the young people who completed our survey told us of the wider impact of the device on their family. Having a device meant that they could keep in touch with relatives that they could not visit. They were also able to complete their supermarket shopping online to ensure that they had the food they needed. Some students even told us that the device was helping their siblings and parents and that they no longer needed to borrow a device.

WHAT CHANGED?



Teachers saw positive outcomes



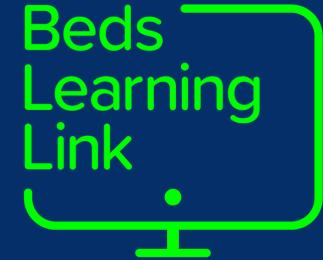
Teachers who responded to our survey explained the positive impact of the devices. They explained that, without access to a device, children and young people could become socially isolated and feel excluded. Having a device also helped students develop the skills they needed for the future, including ICT skills, research and independent learning.

Young people accessed a range of opportunities



Some young people told us that they had used the devices we provided to access extra-curricular activities and youth groups. This included accessing online youth services and keeping in touch with sports groups. Young people were also able to access youth groups, such as Scouts, and access library services.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S STORIES



Maryam's Story

12 year old Maryam lives at home with her mum and four siblings. The family were sharing one PC making it very hard for Maryam to do her work.

Maryam reflected on the start of lockdown. She said:

“It was **very stressful**, especially since we didn't have any teachers there but the teachers still offered us the same amount of support in fact even more due to the circumstances we were in. We also didn't have any teachers to ask about the work so it was a little **difficult** and a bit **confusing**.

As a result of receiving the device Maryam did 2 - 3 more hours of online learning each week and her confidence increased. Maryam was able to work whenever she wanted and take her time to do a good job. Maryam said:

“I had more time to learn without anyone needing the device I was using and I also had a lot more time to concentrate on the task I was doing without worrying if I wasn't going to meet the deadline. It also gave me the time to take my time and not rush so my work was up to the standard it needs to be.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S STORIES

Lubna

At the start of lockdown 12 year old Lubna said, "I felt a little bit lonely as I didn't have friends and teachers around me." She only had a smart phone but was managing to do 5 - 6 hours work on it a week. When she got her device from Luton Learning Link she said her confidence increased significantly. When she was asked what difference the device made to her she said, "I can see things on a bigger screen." Because she could see better she was able to increase her work to 7 - 10 hours per week.

14 year old Dalil didn't want to stay at home over lock down because he liked his school, his friends and his teachers. Dalil said, "I do not have internet or computers at home and do not have a phone so could only do the work that was posted or the teachers brought around. Because Dalil had no access to any device, he did no online learning and couldn't talk to his friends and family. When he got his device he started working 5-6 hours more every week.

Dalil

YOUNG PEOPLE'S STORIES

Tai's Story

15 year old Tai lives at home with his mum and two younger siblings. The family's only access to a device was his Mum's smart phone.

As a result of receiving the device Tai and his whole family were able to use it to video chat with friends and family reducing feelings of isolation and improving the whole family's sense of well-being. Mum was able to access online food shopping so she could remain at home with the children and also used it to apply for local authority assistance which she hadn't been able to do over the phone since the call centres closed.

Since receiving his device Tai spends 3 - 4 hours more a week learning. The school tell us that he is more engaged, more positive and feels less isolated and forgotten.



OUR NEXT STEPS

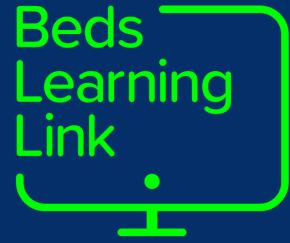


What next?

Other areas in Bedfordshire recognised our successful work and wanted our support to deliver a similar project. Bedfordshire Learning Link has since joined forces with FACES of Bedford and The Blues Foundation and is now supporting schools across the whole of Bedfordshire.

Bedfordshire Learning Link is planning to continue the support it offers to children and young people who do not have a device. We know there is much more we can do to support the mental health of young people and to ensure that those in need have the tools they need to be successful academically and socially.

PARTNERS & DONORS



OUR PARTNERS



This report was produced
with the support of:



Thank You

TO OUR PARTNERS AND DONORS
FOR YOUR EXTENSIVE SUPPORT

“ I was grateful that there were people
who wanted to help me learn ”

OUR DONORS



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And generous donations
from the communities of
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BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE



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www.Bedfordshirelearninglink.com
info@highsheriffofbedfordshire.com
01234 511 511