

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY, 1 OCTOBER 2019
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES
AT 7.00 - 8.45 PM**

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Members Present: | Y Knight (Chairman), I Hadley, J Lea, A Mitchell, J H Whitehouse, D Wixley, R Brookes and H Kane (Vice-Chairman of the Council) |
| Other members present: | N Bedford, S Kane, A Patel, J Philip and C Whitbread |
| Apologies for Absence: | J Share-Bernia, A Beales, J McIvor, D Plummer and S Rackham |
| Officers Present | R Pavey (Service Director (Customer Services)), S Lewis (Customer Services Manager), J Leither (Democratic Services Officer), G Woodhall (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and M Warr (Economic Development Officer) |

12. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Chairman reminded everyone present that the meeting would be broadcast live to the internet and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

13. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.07.02)

The following substitutions were reported:

That Councillor R Brookes substituted for Councillor A Beales; and

That Councillor H Kane substituted for Councillor S Rackham.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct.

15. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the notes of previous meeting of the Stronger Communities Select Committee held on 2 July 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

16. TERMS OF REFERENCE & WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman, Councillor Y Knight advised that the Terms of Reference and work programme for the Select Committee had been agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

- (a) Terms of Reference

The Select Committee noted the Terms of Reference as there had been no changes.

Councillor J H Whitehouse referred to the Terms of Reference Items (1) and (8) as below:

(1) To engage in policy review and development, with a focus on improvement and how this can be best achieved; and

(8) To monitor and review relevant projects and associated closure and benefits reports.

She asked if there was a list of the policy review and development and relevant projects that were already taking place so that Members knew what topics were encompassed by this Select Committee and could decide if there was anything that the Select Committee members would like to know more about.

The Customer Services Director, R Pavey stated that a list could be generated and advised that there were policies relevant to this Select Committees work programme, which centred around the design of services around the Customer and was an opportunity for this Committee to suggest topics that they would like to scrutinise.

(b) Work Programme

The 2019/20 work programme would be updated following each meeting to reflect the ongoing progress. The items on the current work programme had been assigned deadline dates for when the Committee would consider these items throughout the year and it would evolve to include suggestions from the Select Committee.

The Chairman, Councillor Y Knight referred to the work programme and stated that it was up to this Select Committee to put forward ideas and highlighted item 12, Health and Wellbeing Strategy – To consider outcomes for the district. Would anyone have any ideas of what this Select Committee could put forward.

Members agreed new items to be considered by the Select Committee:

- A review on Sheltered Housing;
- A presentation from a Loughton based group called GROW Community Garden which help people who are socially isolated; and
- A Group/Organisation that could give a presentation of Post Traumatic Stress Disorders and the people who it affected.

The Chairman suggested that an event / open day be organised inviting the Mental Health Services that we have in the district to present their services and for all councillors to be invited to attend to bring awareness of the services that were available in the district.

Councillor A Patel, Portfolio Holder (Commercial and Regulatory Services) stated that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were reviewing Mental Health services in West Essex and that they were receiving a presentation from the Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust at their meeting on the 17 March 2020.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Select Committee noted the Terms of Reference; and

(2) That the new topics listed below be added to the Work Programme;

- A review on Sheltered Housing;
- A presentation from a Loughton based group called GROW Community Garden which help people who are socially isolated; and
- A Group/Organisation that could give a presentation of Post Traumatic Stress Disorders and the people who it affected.

17. SWITCH DIGITAL INCLUSION PROJECT

The Customer Services Director, R Pavey gave a presentation to update the Select Committee on the Switch Digital Inclusion Project he advised that this would be in two parts, Switch Project and Digital Buddies.

At the last meeting of the Stronger Communities SC the Customer Services Director gave a presentation on the Switch Digital Inclusion Project and advised that the Council were working with Citizens Online, a registered charity whose aim was to ensure the benefits of the internet and digital technology was available to everyone. Citizens Online have now presented an 80 page document to the Council with recommendations for action within the district which they would like the Council to undertake.

(1) Switch Project

What's the story in Epping Forest

- Older population than UK average;
- Thriving, well connected third sector and community spirit;
- Good level of willingness to be Digital Champions
EFDC staff – 46% and Partner Organisations – 75%;
- Organisations are at different stages of transformation;
- Group to support those claiming Universal Credit; and
- Better joint working with libraries.

Recommendations

- Establish a Digital Inclusion Network.
- Launch a Digital Buddies programme,
1 Digital Buddy for every 100 people and there were 21,000 people therefore 210 Digital Buddies were needed.

The Digital Champions Network

- Membership of resource network including e-Learning;
- CPD / Mozilla accreditation;
- Online Community Forum; and
- Session Plans and worksheets.

Triage and Signposting

Skills and support

(a) Assess the current skill level and rate of the customer's ability, can they:

- Start up and shut down a computer;
- Use a keyboard and mouse;
- Use a tablet;
- Connect to the internet on a smartphone.

(b) If they are capable of basic skills then either help them there and then or signpost to a Digital Champion drop in session.

Access

Establish whether they have a device that can be connected to the internet and if not:

- Signpost to a location where there is equipment they can use for example a library.

If they have a device but no internet connection:

- Signpost to locations with free wifi.

Strategic Leadership

- (a) Support and promote the work of the DI network;
- (b) Embed DI into all procurement frameworks;
- (c) Digital Leadership and Lifelong learning for staff and residents;
- (d) Embed DI into HR process.

Centralise all information about digital skills into one place.

Geographic Recommendations

It was recommended that the areas most needing the support were Waltham Abbey and the South West Corridor. These were the areas with the higher levels of older residents on pension credit. It was noted that 4 out of every 5 residents on pension credit lived alone and suffered with isolation and loneliness.

Councillor R Brookes asked approximately how many people in the EF District were claiming housing benefit.

The Customer Services Director advised that there were approximately 8,000 people claiming housing benefit in the District.

Councillor J Lea stated that there were a lot of older people who did not have computers or internet and asked how would they get the help needed.

The Customers Services Director advised that they would be made aware of resources that were publicly available to them for example libraries, Citizens Advice and the Job Centre.

Councillor Mitchell informed the Select Committee that sheltered accommodation units had communal areas with one or two computers and it would be good to go into these units and help the residents to become digitally aware.

The Customer Services Director stated that imbedding digital skills in the community was at the forefront and sheltered accommodation units reduced the overheads.

(2) Digital Buddies

What is a Digital Buddy?

- Digital Buddies are people of all ages, from all backgrounds and communities.
- They help others understand the benefits of using the internet and can show them how to do simple things online that can make a huge difference to people's lives.
- Anyone can be a Digital Buddy, you don't have to be an IT Whizz. It's about sharing information and signposting to guidance.

Courses Available

There are many courses available to help and support disadvantaged people.

Community Forum

- Peer to peer support available
- Ask questions and get advice from other Buddies
- Share achievements
- Find Buddies near you and make local connections

Buddies can team up together and share achievements.

Record Activity and Monitor Progress

- Digital Buddies are asked to record their engagement with learners.
- This is a simple tally which tracks the number of learners and how many sessions.
- The Council can also track the development of Buddies through their completion of the courses.

What is the Role of a Digital Buddy

- (a) Offering colleagues support with technology or systems;
- (b) Advising residents how they can access online Council Services (where the resident already has access to internet); and
- (c) Signposting a resident to digital skills support to help get people online, such as;
 - Local Digital Learner Sessions hosted by VAEF
 - Referrals for support to the Customer Service Team Manager
 - Referring anyone who expresses an interest in becoming a Community Digital Buddy to the Customer Services Team Manager.

Partnership Working

Below are some of the Partnerships that the Council were working with:

- VAEF Digital Learners & Living Smart Homes Projects
- Uttlesford CVS Digital Boomers Project
- Epping Forest Community Champion Volunteers

- DIZ Board
- Epping Forest Digital Inclusion Network
- Library Service
- DWP
- Citizens Advice
- NHS / CCG

We were allowing these organisations to access the Epping Forest DCN so that they could set up their own Digital Buddies Programmes, with the support of the Customer Services Team Manager, Susan Lewis.

What's Next

- (a) We would like to embed Digital Skills support into all job roles in the Council.
- (b) We would like to explore the potential of a Volunteering Policy to allow staff time during their working hours, to volunteer and support local residents.
- (c) We will continue to recruit to our Digital Buddies Programme and work with the buddies to develop them.
- (d) Continue partnership working and development to launch the 'External Digital Buddies Programme'.

Councillor J H Whitehouse asked when would the Council be ready to launch this initiative.

The Customer Services Director stated that the programme was in hand and the Council were getting themselves up to speed internally.

Councillor A Patel asked how were the Council engaging with Town and Parish Councils to get them involved as it was important to reach the wider network.

The Customer Services Director advised that the Town and Parish Councils had been invited to get involved.

Councillor Wixley asked how would you engage with the community to let them know that help was available.

The Customer Services Director advised that the Council would publicise events into community centres and multi-agency centres.

Councillor Wixley asked where were the multi-agency centres in the District.

The Customer Services Director advised that the Job Centre in Loughton was a multi-agency centre.

Councillor Wixley stated that the target areas should be narrowed down to the Wards as this would be useful for Ward Councillors to recognise in what areas the most help was needed.

The Customer Services Director advised that he would ask if Citizens Online could break the target areas down into Wards.

Resolved:

The presentation of the Switch Project and Digital Buddies was noted.

18. CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY

The Customer Services Manager, Susan Lewis gave a presentation on the Customer Service Strategy. She advised the Select Committee that the Customers were at the heart of everything.

The Council were keen to know what the customer wanted, and early indications showed this to be honest and open, transparent, helpful and trust in what we do.

A recent poll showed that the highest rated organisation in public services for their customer experience was the Post Office, Debenhams and First Direct topped the poll for their customer experience (*as reported by the Institute of Customer Service*).

The secret to their success was they all have the following in common:

- An organisation that is simple to deal with;
- Helpful staff; and
- Easy to use website.

Here at Epping Forest, if our customers are saying

- You know me and understand my needs;
- I can access your services how and when I want;
- You not only respond to my needs but offer me advice and support on other services;
- When you get it wrong you put it right and you act upon my feedback;
- Your staff really put themselves in my shoes, they show they care with everything they say and do;
- You don't stand still you adapt to my changing needs; and
- Most importantly I trust you – you are open, honest and transparent at all times.

...Then we will know we are delivering a great customer experience.

Our Customers are anyone that the Council provides a service to:

- Residents;
- Members;
- Colleagues; and
- Businesses.

Key facts from the Digital Inclusion report:

- District population 124,659
- Number households: 54,000
- Working age in receipt of benefits: 8,700
- State pension in receipt of benefits: 25,795.

Key facts from the Essex County Profile report:

- Higher than average waste recycling levels
- Increasing number of people with dementia
- Highest rise in house prices
- Fourth longest average travel time by public transport or walking to key services
- Below average percentage of residents satisfied with roads and local transport
- Ageing population impacting availability of health care, housing and care homes.

The way Customers contact the Council

| Channel | Quantity | Most Common Reason |
|---|--|--|
| Phone (to the Customer Contact Centre) | 29,981 calls (Q1 2019) 37.31% resolved by contact centre 57.49% internally transferred 00.29% 3 rd party referral 00.17% customer to follow up 01.00% referred to County | Waste Planning Council Tax Housing Highways & Recycling Centre |
| Phone (to Council Tax) | 95.48% resolved 01.28% internal transfer 02.07% referred to County | Council Tax |
| 'Contact Us' Web forms | 2,745 (Q1 2019) vs 2,018 (Q1 2018) Savings of £27,303.84 per annum in channel shift | Special collections, missed collections and fly tipping |
| Face to face | 21,343 visitors in past year 1,778 in past month | Main reason was to collect recycling sacks |
| Email | Tbc | Waste & Planning |
| Facebook Twitter | 68,5000 engagements (clicks/likes) in past month 861 (on newsfeeds, visibility) | Various ie Local Plan |

Key fact: Cost for interaction - £8.62 (face to face), £2.83 (phone), 15p (digital interaction).

Therefore, it would be more economical to educate our customers to contact us via our website.

The way Customers currently feel about the Council's service

- Customers don't like being passed from pillar to post to get answers;
- Queries can't be resolved at first point of contact on many occasions;
- Our website is frustrating to use (this stops us channel shifting);
- Staff don't always get back to them in a timely manner;
- We are not always clear in setting expectations (what we will do, who and when);
- Letters don't always have a contact name or number on; and
- They are not clear on the services we offer (ie. highways and footpaths).

Therefore, the Council need to, fix the basics, change our culture and embrace new technology by listening to what our customers have to say. Our customers will be:

- They will be consulted on our strategy to make sure we are addressing the things that matter most to them;
- If we make a change to our service or introduce something new we will ask our customers what they think;
- After every interaction customers will be offered the opportunity to leave feedback on their experience;
- We will encourage customers to tell us about our service superstars who have gone that extra mile;
- We will launch annual customer satisfaction surveys; and
- We will improve our call causation data to really drill down into the reasons WHY customers contact us and by WHAT method – helping us to channel shift.

The Council are committed to building a service that our customers want and when they want it:

- One single customer contact centre with staff upskilled to resolve as many queries at first point of contact as possible;
- New single customer reception designed around our customers' needs;
- New service guide - easy to access, we will all know who does what – no more passing customers from pillar to post;
- Consistent service across all areas – customer response times, staff approach, style and tone of communications;
- Customer strategy working group – resolutions to all barriers;
- Pro-active customer communication – staff encouraged to feed through customer communication to contact centre and for a customer information screen in reception;
- New technology will capture contact history so customers don't have to repeat themselves
- Cut waiting times - artificial intelligence will intervene and provide an answer if it's appropriate cutting wait time
- Pay it, Report it, Apply for it, Book it – all on the front screen – and our website will keep improving!
- Tell us once – Moving in/out of the district or reporting a death, residents only need tell us once we will ensure relevant areas informed
- My Council – customers will enter postcode to access information on their home and area
- Personalised service! Customers will be able to sign up to receive information on what matters most to them;
- Our digital champions will provide upskilling on social media – 21,000 residents don't currently use social media; and
- Targeted service - flexible agile working means we can be exactly where our customers need us to be.

If we get it wrong, we will learn from it:

- If we make a mistake we will put it right;
- Customers can easily report complaints to us via our website and will receive an immediate acknowledgement;
- Members can flag up issues directly to us via our Members contact form;

- Complaints will be dealt with by one consistent approach across all areas of the Council along with compliments, MP letters, Ombudsman and Freedom of Information;
- Service Managers will ensure complaints are dealt with in an efficient and timely manner; and
- Customer Champions will help to ensure we get to the root cause to prevent recurrence.

Councillor J Lea stated that it was impossible to talk to anyone in a service area now, I am told to put it in an email, to which my query may be simple and could be answered immediately but now I have to wait for an email reply. I feel we as Members are losing the customer contact.

The Customer Services Manager advised that by directing queries to the Members Contact form or email address, the contact centre can log, track, ensure a timely response and provide Members with trends data if needed.

Councillor Hadley stated that companies had fantastic perceptions on customer service for instance Kwik Fit have a nice room for the customer to wait with a free coffee which makes it a pleasurable experience for the customer.

The Customer Services Manager stated that it was good customer relations and that by making small subtle changes when interacting with customers we can make a good lasting impression.

Councillor Wixley asked if there would be any issues around agency staff who do not have any allegiance to the Council, they would need proper training.

The Customer Services Manager clarified that all front line staff would be fully trained.

Councillor J H Whitehouse asked how could Customer Services answer specialist questions for example a question on a specific planning matter.

The Customer Services Manager advised that the contact centre could answer general questions but anything technical would go direct to the technical officer or department.

Councillor S Kane stated that a lot of effort was going into training to get this right, we as Members are customers and therefore should follow this new regime and not bypass the contact centre and go directly to officers pulling them away from their work. Therefore we should start with the customer service interface and as Members lead by example.

The Chairman asked if training was being rolled out to officers could this training be opened up to Councillors as well.

The Customer Services Director said he could see no reason why training could not be opened up to include Councillors.

Resolved:

The presentation of the Customer Services Strategy was noted.

19. CUSTOMER SATISFACTION - WHAT OUR CUSTOMERS ARE TELLING US

The Customer Services Director, R Pavey presented a report to the Select Committee on what our customers are telling us.

The report updated Members on the feedback customers were providing on the services they received from the Council. The feedback included customer satisfaction performance, compliments and complaints. As the customer engagement process developed through a new customer service strategy the feedback will incorporate a more comprehensive view from residents, businesses and visitors.

Customer Satisfaction was currently measured via feedback provided through the Govmetric solution. Whilst this was useful in terms of feedback provided for a range of services via telephone, e-mail and web, it was not exhaustive in terms of every service through these channels, nor could it measure satisfaction of those who have not needed to contact us. Officers are working towards solutions that will provide the Council with a more holistic measure.

The feedback results from Govmetric for the period 1 June 2019 to 31 August 2019 were:

| Telephone | Satisfied | Average | Not Satisfied |
|---------------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Number of respondents | 528 | 25 | 7 |
| Percentage of respondents | 94% | 4% | 1% |
| | | | |
| Web | | | |
| Number of respondents | 100 | 43 | 267 |
| Percentage of respondents | 24% | 10% | 65% |
| | | | |
| E-mail | | | |
| Number of respondents | 222 | 11 | 74 |
| Percentage of respondents | 72% | 4% | 24% |
| | | | |
| Overall | | | |
| Number of respondents | 850 | 79 | 348 |
| Percentage of respondents | 67% | 6% | 27% |

At the last meeting of the Select Committee more information was requested and the statistics show how customers were using our new website:

- There were 309 published pages at 31 August 2019, this did not include news stories or search results. There was a 41% decrease from the 525 website pages at 31 August 2018. This demonstrated a leaner website with redundant pages having been removed.
- During the 7 months from 1 February 2019 to 31 August 2019 there were 585,440 visits, an increase of 6.2% on the same 7-month period in 2018.
- Over the same comparative period the number of page views decreased by 23.2%. this shows that in the main, and notwithstanding some issues identified in paragraph 3 above visitors are achieving their business in a more direct website journey.

Councillor J H Whitehouse asked for a more detailed report showing areas of

complaints and would also like to see the new report quoting numbers and not percentages.

The Customer Services Director advised that the column before the percentages was the actual number of complaints which was then put into percentages in the next column. He also added that comparing the number of contacts the Council had the complaints were very small.

Councillor Wixley queried pages 30 and 31 of the report and asked the Customer Services Director why in Stage 1, Street naming and numbering there were 0% but in the Stage 2 column the figure was 2.86% and how this had come about. He also asked about page 32 Loughton Fairmead, Car parking and that it stated not resolved 1, could he also have some explanation on what that was about as he was the ward Member for that area.

The Customer Services Director advised that he would get some clarification and report back at the next meeting.

Resolved:

That the Customer Satisfaction report was noted.

20. ESSEX POLICE - POLICING & CRIME ISSUES

The Local District Commander for Essex Police, Chief Inspector Lewis Basford will be attending the next meeting of the Stronger Communities Select Committee on the 4 February 2019, to report to Members with regard to current policing and crime issues across the Epping Forest District.

Members are therefore invited to submit questions for Chief Inspector Lewis Basford for the attention of Jackie Leither at democraticservices@eppingforestdc.gov.uk by the 31 October 2019, so they may be collated and submitted to Chief Inspector Basford before the meeting.

The Chairman would like to extend an invite to all Members who would like to attend.

21. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that future meetings of the Select Committee would be held at 7.00pm on:

- 4 February 2020; and
- 21 April 2020.

The Select Committee noted the change of date of the next meeting from 21 January 2020 to 4 February 2020.

SWITCH PROJECT

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Research Digital Inclusion Risk
Evidence base
Develop Digital Inclusion Network
Increase provision through Digital Buddies

Citizens Online

What's the story in Epping Forest?

- Older population than UK average
- Thriving, well connected third sector and community spirit
- Good level of willingness to be DCs
 - EFDC staff – 46%
 - Partner Orgs – 75%
- Organisations are at different stages of transformation
- Group to support those claiming UC
- Better joint working with libraries

Recommendations

1. Establish a Digital Inclusion Network



2. Launch a Digital Buddies programme

1:100

210 DBs



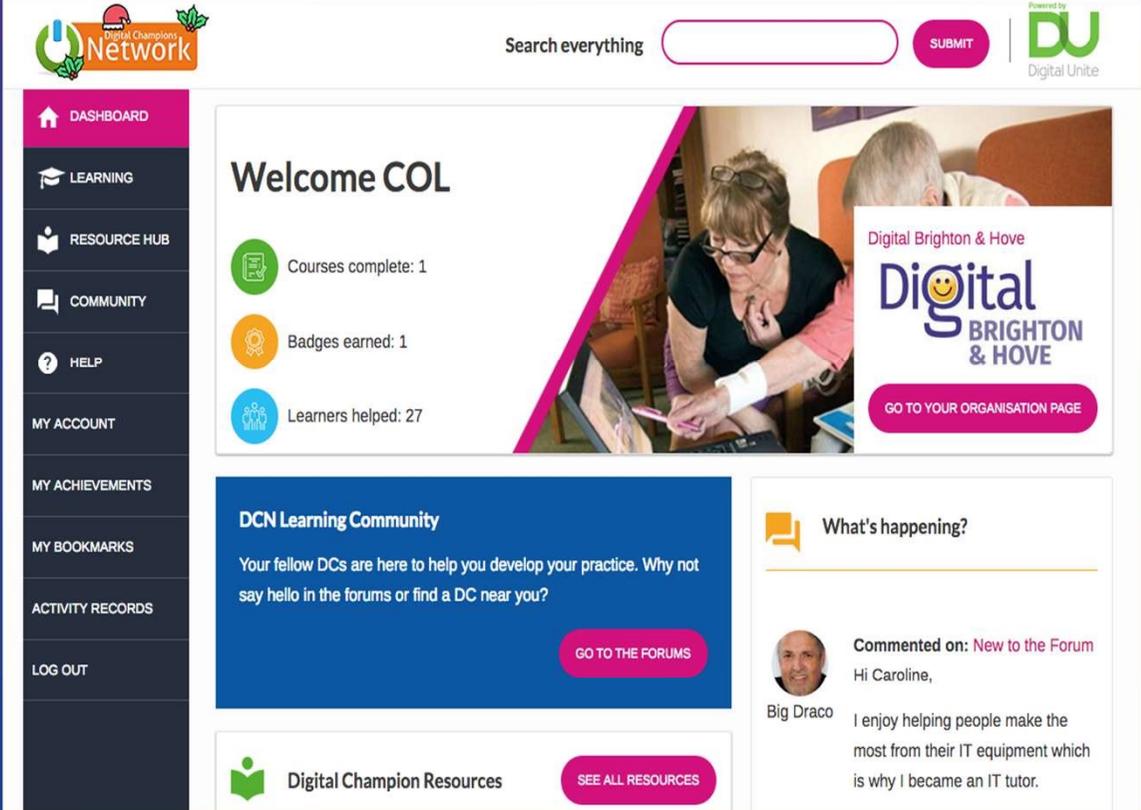
The Digital Champions Network

- Membership of resource network including e-Learning

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• CPD / Mozilla accreditation

- Online community forum

- Session Plans and worksheets



The screenshot shows the user interface of the Digital Champions Network. At the top, there is a search bar with the text "Search everything" and a "SUBMIT" button. The logo for "Digital Champions Network" is in the top left, and "Powered by DU Digital Unite" is in the top right. A vertical navigation menu on the left includes: DASHBOARD (selected), LEARNING, RESOURCE HUB, COMMUNITY, HELP, MY ACCOUNT, MY ACHIEVEMENTS, MY BOOKMARKS, ACTIVITY RECORDS, and LOG OUT. The main content area is titled "Welcome COL" and displays three statistics: "Courses complete: 1", "Badges earned: 1", and "Learners helped: 27". Below this is a "DCN Learning Community" section with a blue background, stating "Your fellow DCs are here to help you develop your practice. Why not say hello in the forums or find a DC near you?" and a "GO TO THE FORUMS" button. At the bottom left, there is a "Digital Champion Resources" section with a "SEE ALL RESOURCES" button. On the right side, there is a "What's happening?" section featuring a user profile for "Big Draco" with a comment: "Commented on: New to the Forum Hi Caroline, I enjoy helping people make the most from their IT equipment which is why I became an IT tutor."

3. Triage and Signposting

Skills support or just access?

Assess their current skill level
How would you rate your ability to?

- Start up and shut down a computer?
- Use a keyboard?
- Use a mouse?
- Use a tablet?
- Connect to the internet on a smartphone?



Not good

Ok or good

Help them there an then or
signpost to a DC drop in
session



Book a slot with a DC or
would they prefer a course?

Do you have a device that you can
connect to the internet with?



No



Yes



Where do they live?

Check which locations are nearby
and when they are open



Signpost to
locations with
equipment



Signpost to
locations with
free wifi

4. Strategic Leadership

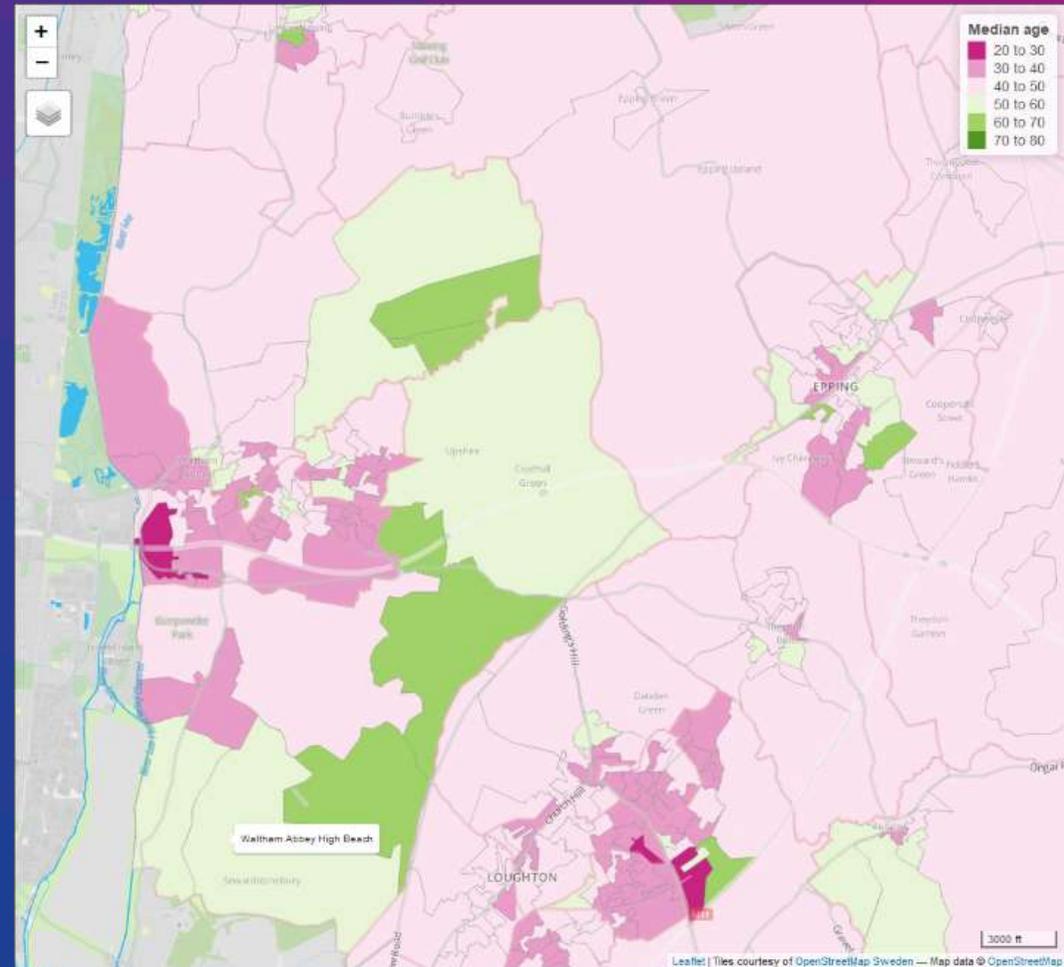
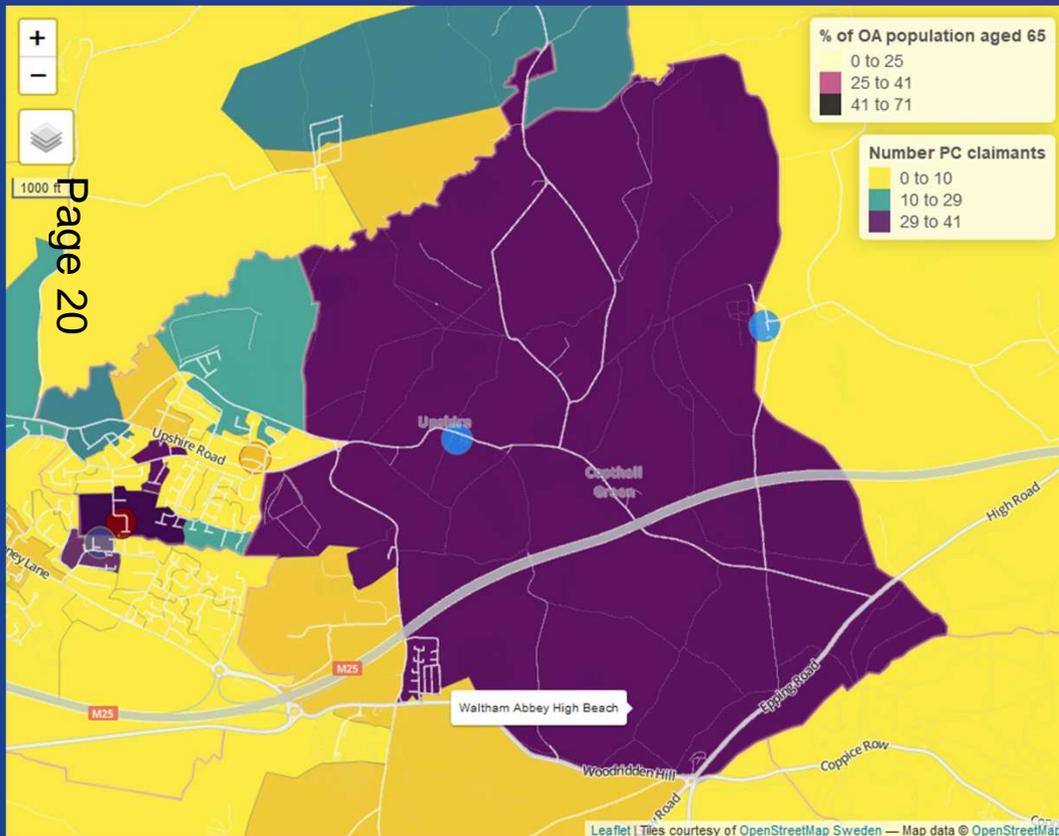
- a) Support and promote the work of DI network
- b) Embed DI into all procurement frameworks
- c) Digital Leadership and Life Long Learning
- d) Embed DI into HR process

5. Centralise all information about digital skills in one place

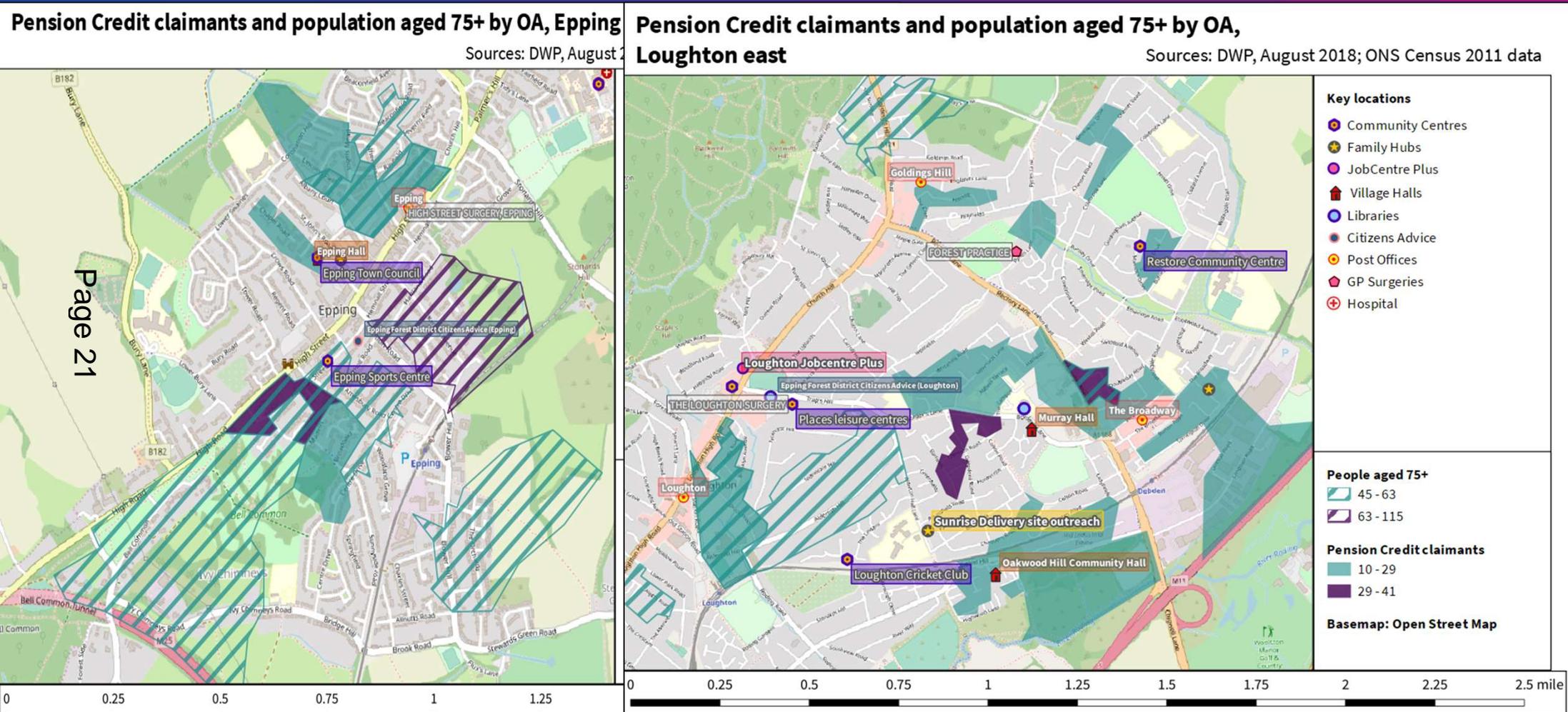


Geographic Recommendations

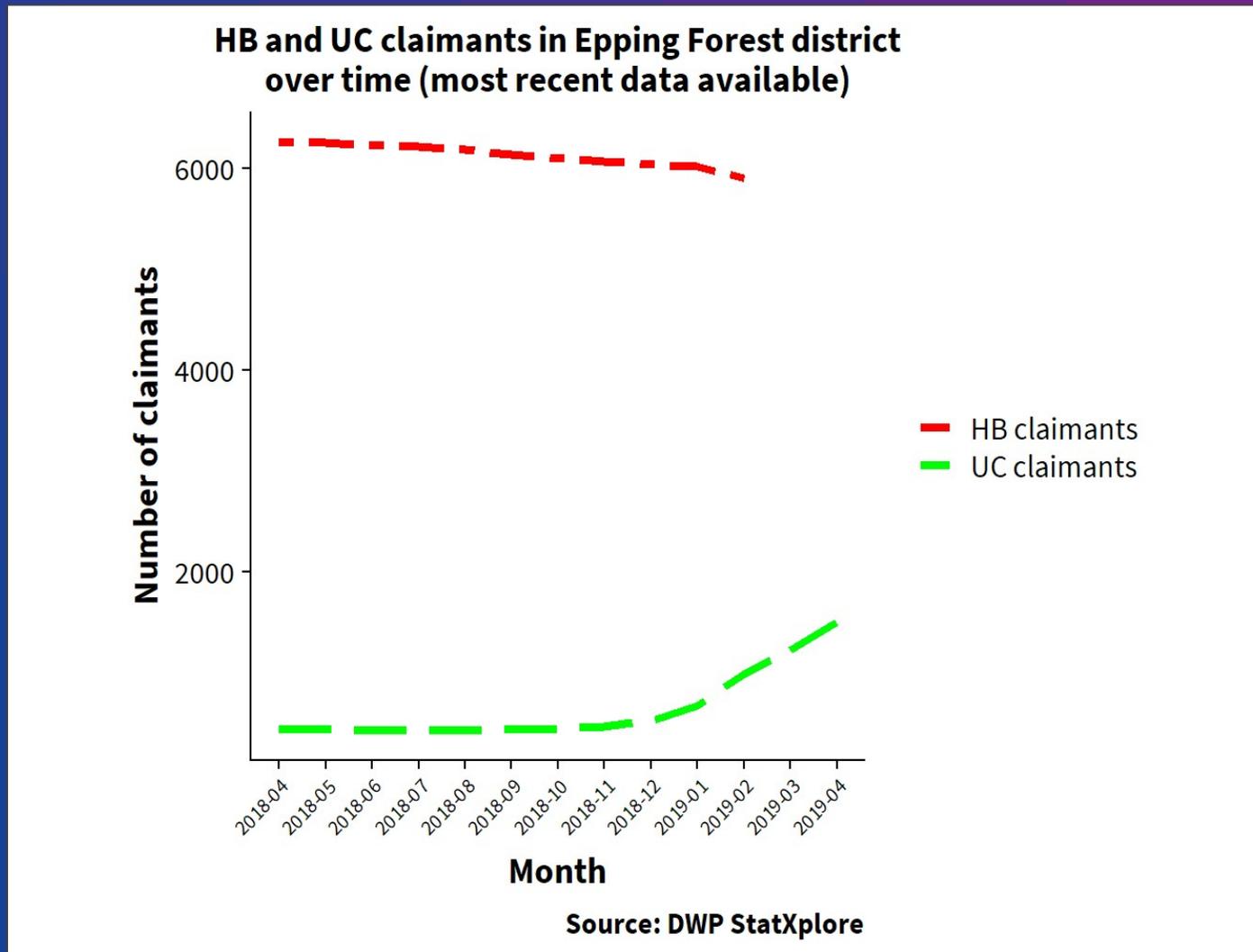
6a. Focus Waltham Abbey east and the “SW Corridor”.



6b. High Pension Credit Areas in Epping Town and Loughton



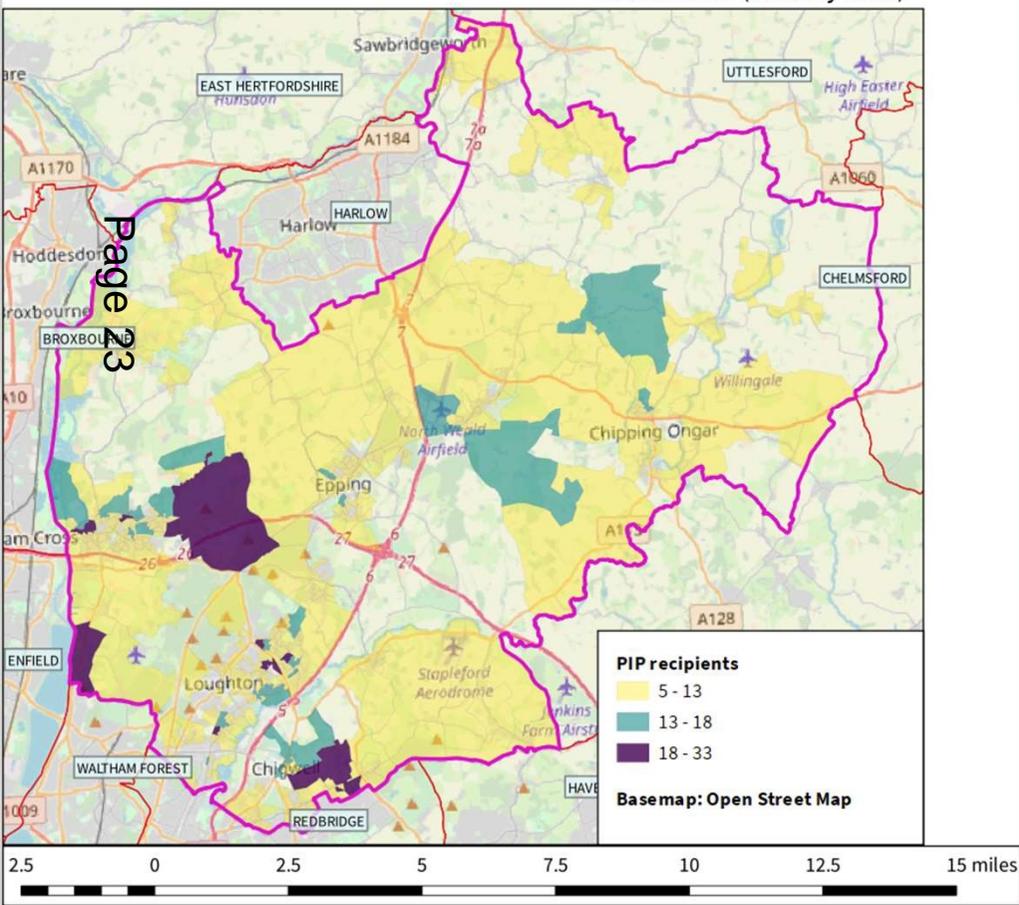
6c. UC migration in North Weald, Waltham Abbey and Epping



6d. PIP and DSA Claimants – Loughton East, Chigwell and 'SW Corridor'

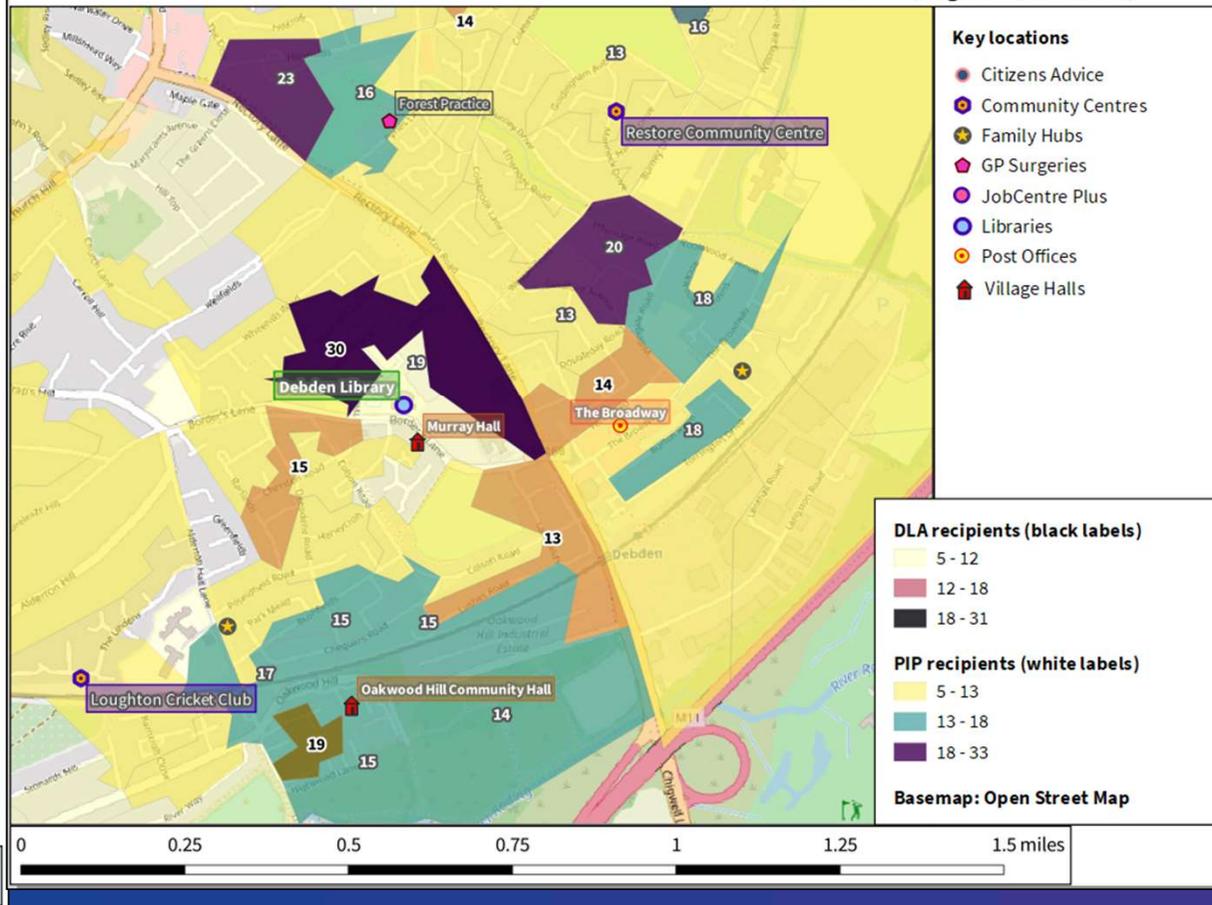
PIP claimants, by OA, Epping Forest district

Source: DWP (January 2019)



DLA and PIP claimants, by OA, Loughton east focus

Source: DWP (Aug 2018, Jan 2019)



Key locations

- Citizens Advice
- Community Centres
- Family Hubs
- GP Surgeries
- JobCentre Plus
- Libraries
- Post Offices
- Village Halls

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7. Develop and promote digital skills training

