

Redistributing smartphones to help the 1.5 million homes in the UK with no internet access

We helped professional services company Capita donate smartphones from some of its 50,000 staff to charity. This ongoing programme helps Capita do its bit to bridge the digital gap and help the 1.5 million UK homes with no internet access.



The challenge

Digital isolation is an issue for up to 7 million people around the UK, yet up to 28 million smartphones in the UK are not in use. The Covid-19 pandemic served to further highlight the issue, with many unable to access the services they need or keep in contact with loved ones because they couldn't afford to get online.

Capita wanted to redistribute phones to charity, which staff were no longer using, but needed a digital partner with connections in the charity sector.

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Virgin Media O₂ Business really came through to help us set up an ongoing programme with Hubbub that allows us to redistribute our employees' old smartphones and do our bit to help people in the community. The arrangement worked incredibly well, and we've seen employees donate personal equipment to further support the cause.

”

Mike Rowland

Technology Partnership Manager, Capita

The Community Calling solution

While undergoing a handset upgrade programme, Capita approached us to see if we could prepare old devices for donation. We went one better and put them in contact with one of our charity partners, Hubbub, an organisation that specialises in doing exactly that.

Hubbub's Community Calling project, part of Virgin Media O₂'s Better Connections Plan, collects smartphones and distributes them to people in need.

Capita asked all its employees to send their old devices to two hubs which could then be collected by Hubbub. Devices were then data-wiped, cleaned and fitted with a new O₂ SIM card containing 20GB of data for six months. This data comes from Virgin Media O₂ and Good Things Foundation's national databank and the data allowance can be increased as needed.

The smartphones were then distributed around the country to people who need them, via Hubbub's charity network. Devices that couldn't be redistributed were recycled or used for parts.

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Being given the phone has opened up more opportunity for me. I feel less stressed and alone. Being able to call my mum has meant everything.

”

Service User

Trafford Domestic Abuse Services



“

As a purpose-led business committed to ‘creating better outcomes’, supporting communities in need with partners such as Virgin Media O₂ Business and Hubbub is a great example of our responsible business strategic goals in action. Working towards our goals of reducing inequalities and digital inclusion, we empower our colleagues to support the communities we serve and are proud of the difference the projects such as this make in society.

”

Scott Hill | People Director, Capita PLC

Benefits

So far, Capita is Hubbub’s second biggest contributor (after Virgin Media O₂ Business) and have now made device donation part of their standard operating procedure, with regular appeals to their staff to donate their old devices.

- Major contribution to tackle digital isolation
- 20GB O₂ data SIMs provided
- Ongoing initiative helps Capita deliver on its environment, social and governance (ESG) objectives
- Total smartphones donated: 2,412
- Rehomed: 1,036
- Used for parts: 104
- Recycled: 1,272

“

When Capita approached me I was more than happy to use my contacts to help them find the best way to give back to the community and help with one of their key priorities – being a responsible business.

”

Lesley Burgess

Capita Client Director, Virgin Media O₂ Business



“

We've loved working with Virgin Media O₂ Business. Their funding has allowed us to help so many people, as well as save devices from landfill. We have a great relationship and they've let us steer Community Calling to distribute second-hand devices where they're needed most.

”

Emily Watson | Senior Creative Partner, Hubbub

Journey of a smartphone



1.
Capita staff post old devices



2.
Devices collected in 2 hubs:
Ruddington and Hemel Hempstead



3.
Devices sent to Hubbub



4.
Hubbub data-wipes and cleans devices



5.
O₂ SIMs with 20GB data inserted



6.
Devices redistributed to those in need

Top recipients



Migrant Help



Bristol Drugs Project



BS3 Community Group



Avonmouth Community Centre

women's aid
until women & children are safe

Women's Aid



Glasgow Council for Voluntary Services

SWS
SWANSEA COUNCIL FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICE
CYNGOR GWASANAETH GWIRFODDOL ABERTAWNE

Swansea Council for Voluntary Services