



The Oval Centre, Workington – Connecting Communities Through Digital Inclusion



The Oval Centre in Salterbeck, operated by Riverside, has long been a cornerstone of the local community in Workington. As a welcoming and accessible hub, it provides vital support to residents of all ages ranging from youth services and family support to wellbeing programmes, volunteering opportunities, and community events.

In recent years, Riverside’s focus on strengthening digital inclusion has become increasingly central to the impact the Centre delivers.

Digital connectivity now sits at the heart of modern community work. For the people who rely on The Oval Centre, reliable internet access can be the difference between isolation and opportunity. Whether it’s accessing universal credit, finding employment, completing training, joining online wellbeing sessions, or staying connected with family, digital access has become essential rather than optional.

Behind the scenes, reliable connectivity underpins how Riverside supports people and communities. Staff use online tools to work more efficiently and securely, enabling case management, safeguarding, scheduling and collaboration with partners to happen smoothly and responsively. Strong digital access also allows Riverside to share information, opportunities and support more widely, helping residents, volunteers and stakeholders to engage in ways that suit them – whether through email, social media, or online event information. As Riverside develops more remote courses and blended volunteering opportunities, resilient internet infrastructure plays a key role in reducing barriers, building digital confidence, and widening access to services that support its mission.

Emma Bragg, whose role in Community Development is funded by the Riverside Foundation, explains the significance clearly:

“Reliable online connectivity is at the heart of everything we do here at The Oval. It allows us to run our services smoothly, reach people with information, promote events, guide residents to support, and build digital confidence. It’s also crucial for training our volunteers and offering accessible online learning.”

This connectivity supports not just operational efficiency but also empowerment. The Oval Centre’s digital skills sessions help residents develop the confidence to use online services independently. Volunteers gain experience with digital tools that support their career development. Local parents can join remote parenting courses, young people can participate in online creative programmes, and older residents can learn how to manage online appointments or reduce digital isolation.

Emma added: “The Centre’s work is making a real difference to people across the community. Residents who once felt overwhelmed by online government services now have the confidence to manage their benefits independently. Job seekers are using our connectivity to apply for roles, update their CVs, and take part in remote interviews that open new doors for them. Others are accessing online health services or continuing training that helps them move forward in life. For many households living with digital poverty, The Oval Centre is far more than a community building, it is a place of opportunity, support, and connection.”

As Riverside continues to support communities to become more resilient across the UK, the experience of The Oval Centre highlights a clear lesson - digital connectivity is fundamental to modern support services.

To find out more about the work of Riverside, visit their [website](#).

To find out more about the online connectivity options in your area, visit www.connectingcumbria.org.uk