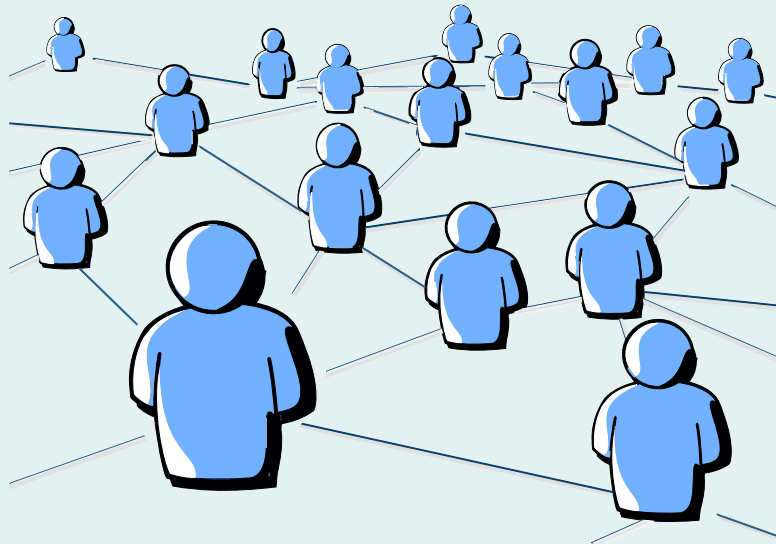


Superfast Essex Broadband Champion toolkit

*A short guide to
setting up a network of
programme ambassadors*

1 Why create a network?

Having a team of Champions can help to spread the word about state-funded rollouts by raising awareness among residents you might not otherwise reach.



2 What's on offer?

Consider how to make your Champion network an appealing proposition for volunteers. Why should people sign up?



3 Build your community

Once you've finalised your ideas for your network, consider how you're going to get the word out for people to sign up as volunteers.



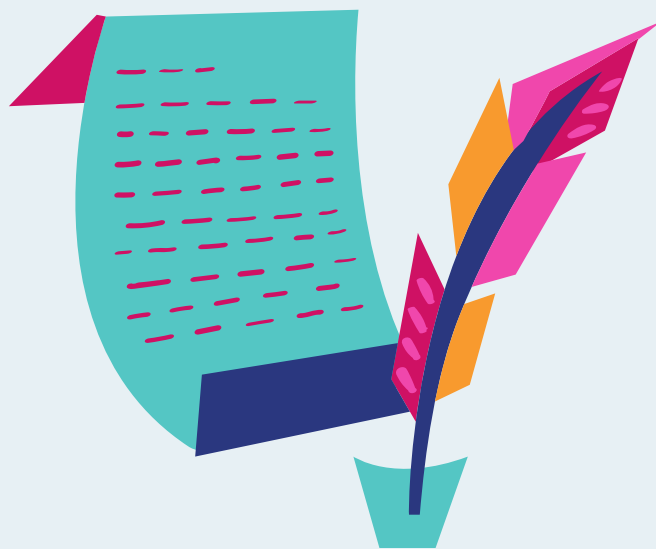
4 Make your network visible

List contact details for your Champions on your website, so their local communities can easily contact them.



5 Develop special content

Make your Champions feel like they're part of a network by regularly providing them with dedicated content that only they receive.



6 Collect feedback

Check in with your Champions to get their thoughts on the network and feedback on anything that could be improved.



For further information, contact the Superfast Essex comms team at make.theconnection@essex.gov.uk



Welcome to our toolkit!

This guide has been created to provide other local authorities with information on how to set up a network of programme ambassadors.

Who we are

Superfast Essex is the broadband improvement programme at Essex County Council, which launched in 2012 to improve digital connectivity across Essex.

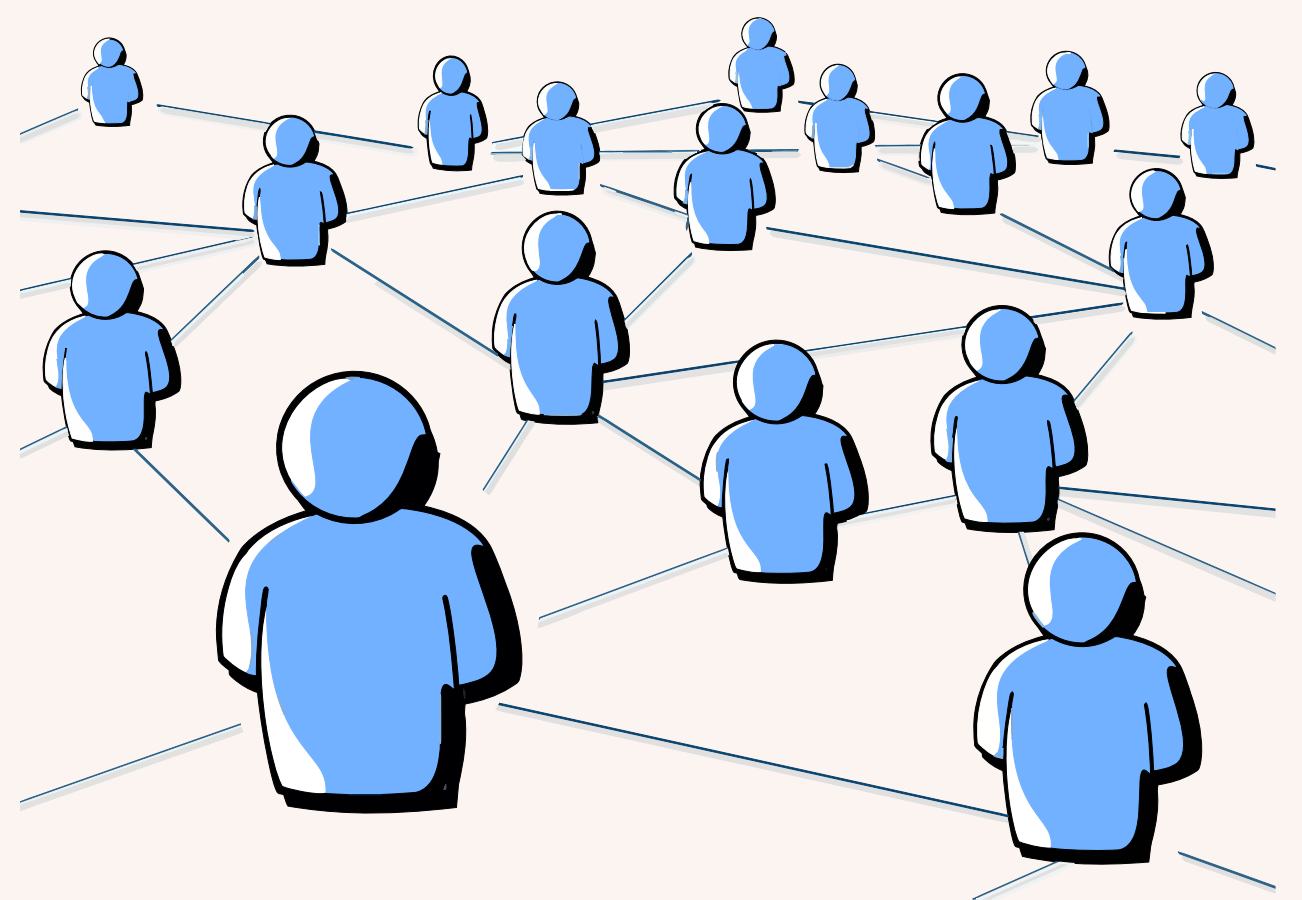
We target addresses not included in commercial rollouts, with state-aid funding. To date, we've rolled out superfast broadband (speeds of at least 30Mbps), and more recently gigabit-capable broadband, to more than 146,000 addresses across Essex, making our county one of the best connected in the UK.



Our Broadband Champion network

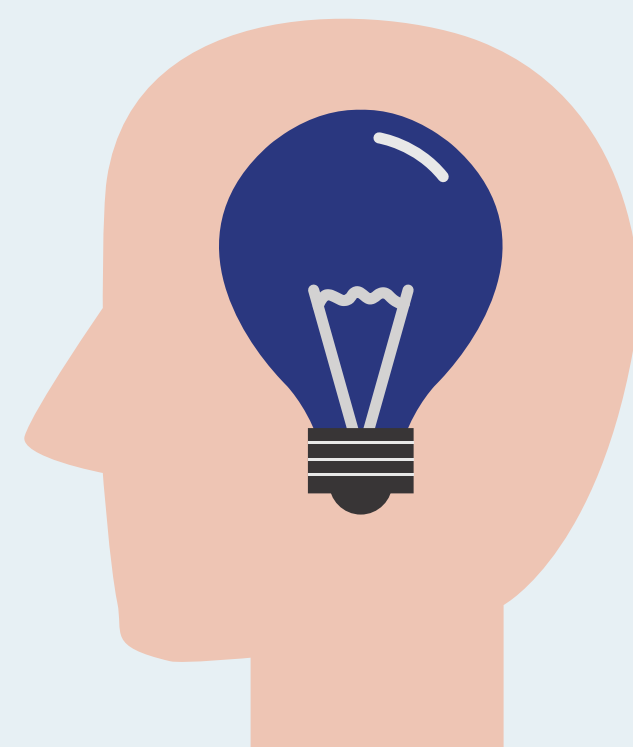
Our network came about in 2016, when we recognised it as a way to increase engagement with local communities and help raise awareness of, and interest in, the Superfast Essex programme.

Today, we are proud to say that we have more than 300 active Broadband Champions representing 250 parishes and wards across Essex.



What to expect from this toolkit:

- Insight into how to set up your own network of programme ambassadors, including tips on recruiting and more.
- View dedicated content we have created for our Broadband Champions, including newsletters.
- Hear from Superfast Essex's Broadband Champions.



How to set up your own programme ambassador network

A short guide to setting up a network of Champions

Think about the purpose of your network

- Do you want your Champion network to reach local residents, businesses, or both?
- What is the age range of the people you want to reach? And where do they go to access information?
- What can you see working best – Champions putting notices up in their local shops, talking to neighbours on the street, attending local council meetings, sharing posts on social media, or a combination?

Figuring out the answers to these questions first will give you a better idea of how to engage with your Champions from the get-go.



What would make people want to sign up?

Think about what would make your Champion network appealing to volunteers. Some selling points to our Broadband Champions included:

- Access to information on the rollout before the general public.
- Opportunity to engage directly with the network operators we partner with, for example at specific Broadband Champion events.
- Enquiries sent to our team via a Broadband Champion are given priority over the general public.
- Being a voice for their local community, representing their views and making sure these are heard.
- Opportunity to help people in their community access digital services – this is especially important for elderly and vulnerable people.



Case study: Paul Martin



A slow, unreliable internet connection made running a business from home a major headache for Paul. But his search for a better solution led him to the Superfast Essex programme and he signed up to be a Broadband Champion.

Soon after, Paul attended a meeting where he heard from Superfast Essex and their partners, Openreach and Gigaclear, about the rollout across Essex.

He learnt his home was 100 yards too far from the cabinet installed by Openreach and decided to engage with his neighbours, encouraging them to register their demand for superfast broadband. "I went to my neighbours and said, 'The more of us who show an interest, the better'."

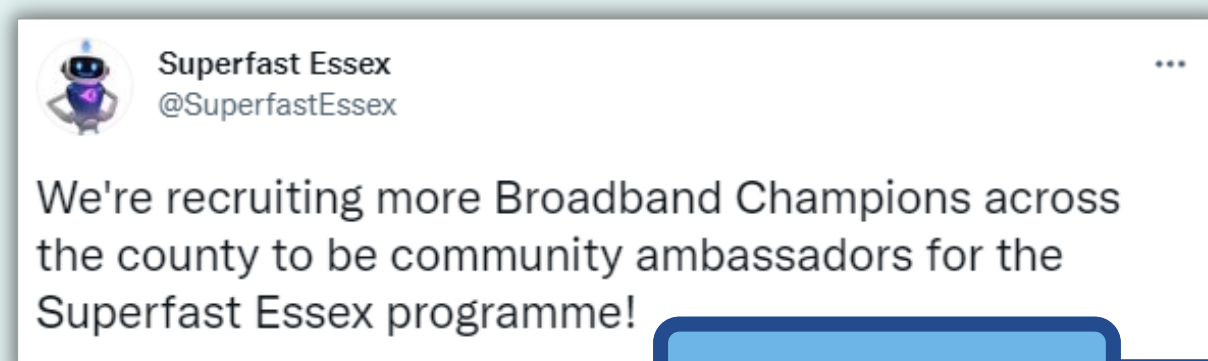
Not long after, Openreach installed a cabinet at the bottom of Paul's road. "Within a week from there, life got a lot better!" he says. "It's transformed the way I can use the internet for business."

How to set up your own programme ambassador network

A short guide to setting up a network of Champions

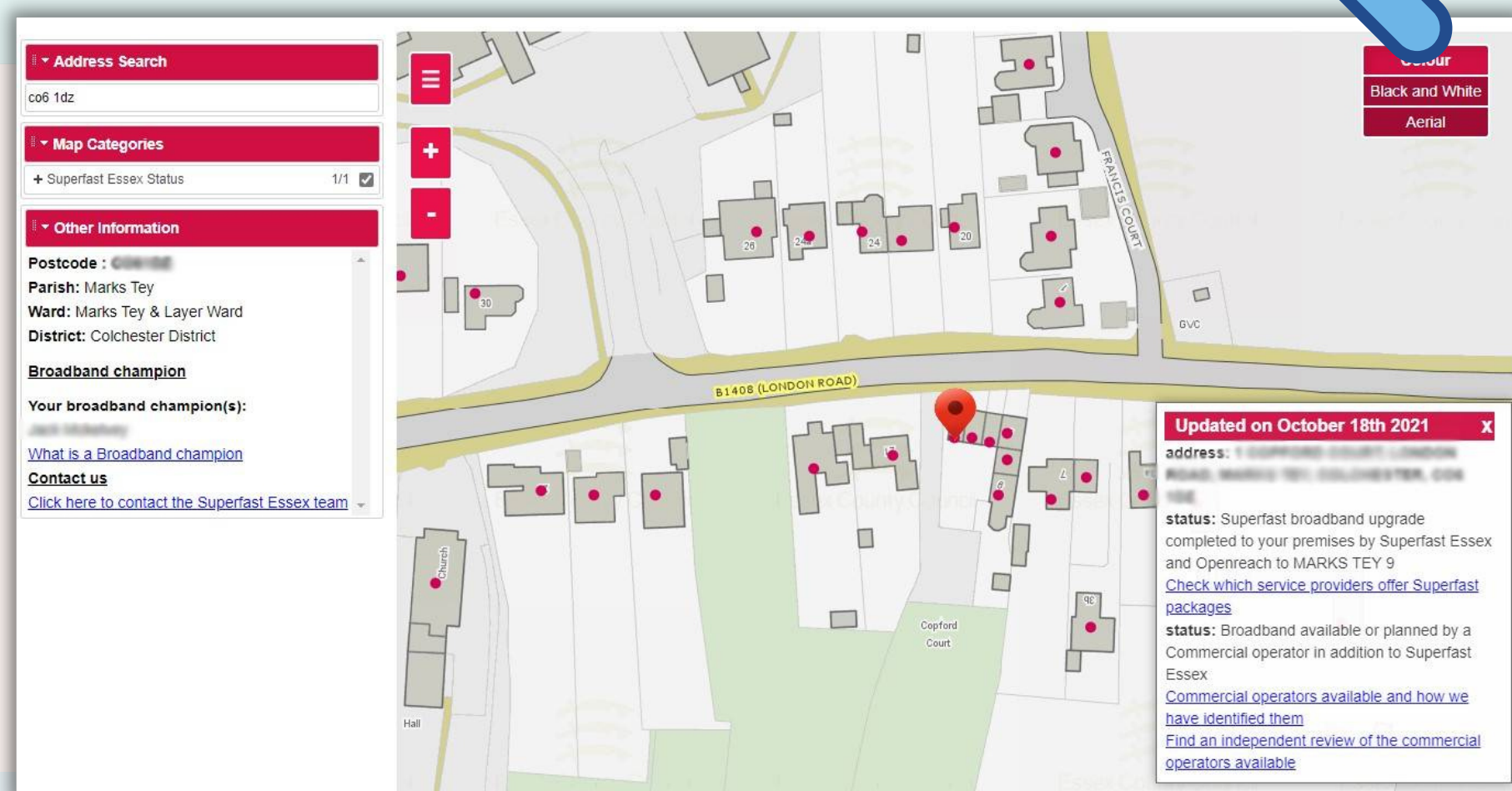
Recruit your volunteers

- Create a dedicated page on your website.
- Advertise for volunteers in your newsletter, social media accounts and your website.
- Create a press release to distribute to local media.
- Contact your stakeholders to let them know about your network – for example, your local Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), parish and town councils, and community groups. You could create a short toolkit with easy-to-share assets for social media and newsletters.



Make your network visible

- We list the name of each Broadband Champion on our [website](#), along with the area they represent and their contact details.
- Broadband Champions also show up when people search for their address using our [interactive map](#).
- We showcase our Champions on social media and in newsletters.



Case study: Tom Charman



PhD student Tom Charman was at a pivotal point in his studies when the first national lockdown forced him to work from home with what he describes as a “virtually non-existent” internet connection.

Tom was even considering moving, but then he discovered Gigaclear were laying fibre optic cables in his area as part of Superfast Essex’s full fibre rollout. Soon after, he came across the Superfast Essex website and signed up to be a Broadband Champion.

“I was already keeping track of the network build in our area, so I thought it made sense to also keep the community informed,” he says.

Since the rollout, he’s helped several people in his community switch over to a full fibre broadband package. “It’s nice when people message you and say how good it is now and that they’re really happy,” he says.

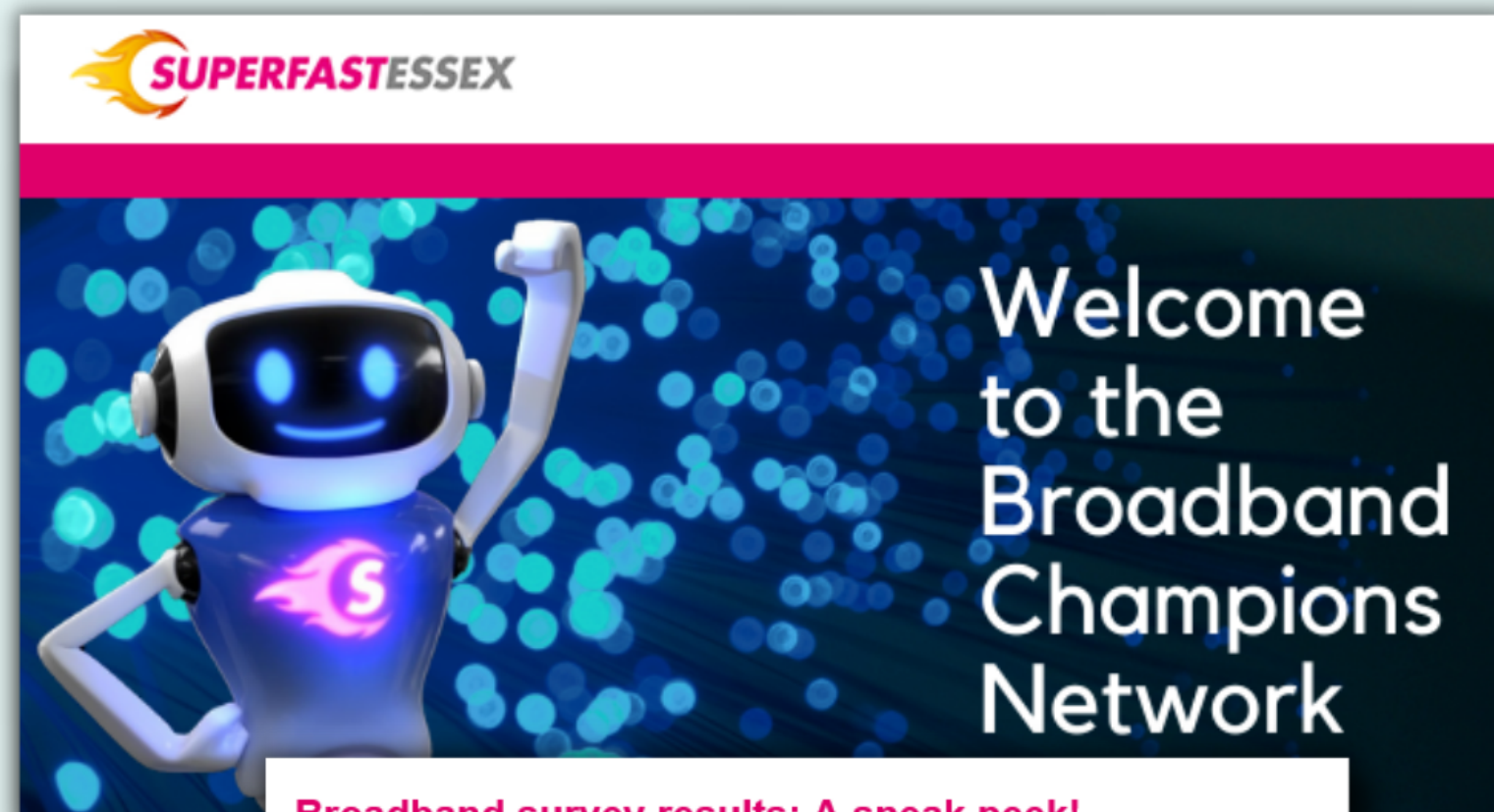
How to nurture your network

Ways to regularly engage with your programme ambassadors

Create dedicated content

We regularly engage with our network of Broadband Champions, providing them with content created specifically for them:

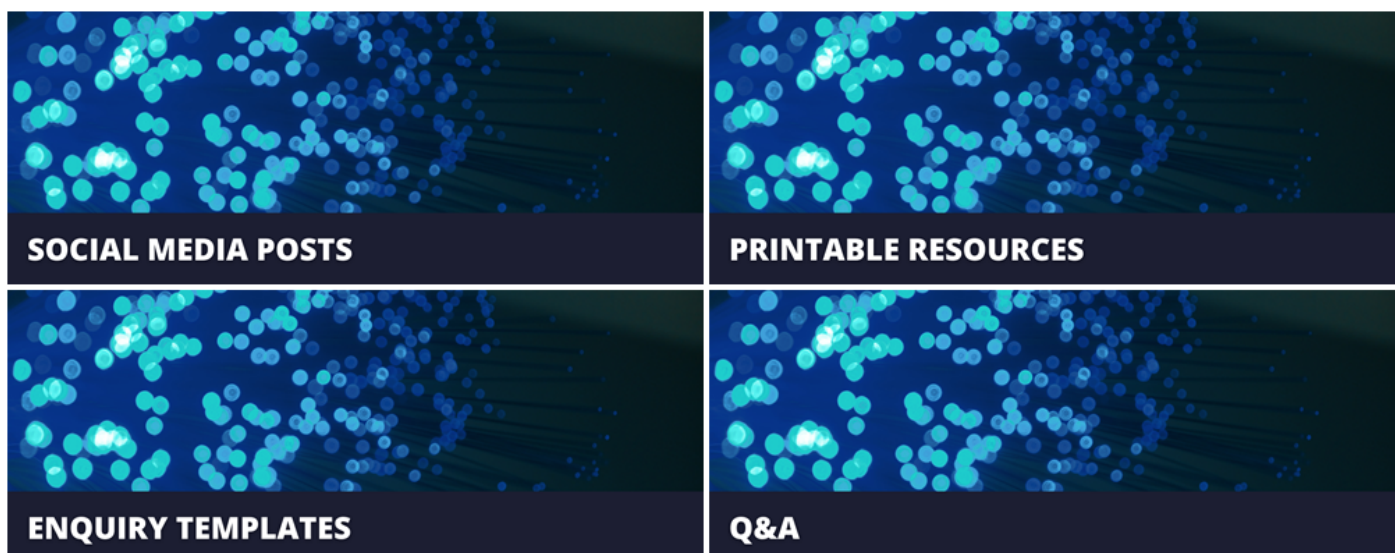
- Quarterly Broadband Champion Network newsletter – featuring stories specifically for them.
- [A toolkit](#), featuring social media assets which promote our programme and campaigns, as well as email templates they can use to respond to enquiries they receive from their local community.
- Direct emails with information on the rollout and updates, such as delays – ahead of the general public.



Broadband Champions toolkit

Welcome to our dedicated toolkit page for our network of Broadband Champions.

Superfast Essex relies on our Broadband Champions to help raise awareness of fibre broadband in communities across Essex. We want to make it easy as possible for you to use, so we've put together this dedicated toolkit. Click on each of the boxes below to find shareable content for you to use.



Broadband survey results: A sneak peek!

You may have already seen some statistics from our recent broadband survey in the Programme Update we sent out in July. We're working on a full report of our findings which we'll share soon, but in the meantime we wanted to tell you about another interesting statistic our survey has revealed.

More than 2,600 people completed our survey and of those, just 7% said they can access speeds over 80Mbps – speeds which are achieved with full fibre broadband (also known as fibre-to-the-premises). But, across Essex, we know that full fibre is accessible to 23% of addresses.



Findings like this are really helpful as they show us there's more work to do in raising awareness of [what full fibre broadband is](#) and where it is already available in our county.

The main aim of our survey was to give Essex residents the opportunity to let us know about their current broadband service, to help us identify addresses that should be included in future state-funded broadband rollouts.

This is part of the work we're doing with [Project Gigabit](#), the government's national £5bn investment programme which aims to bring gigabit-capable connections (up to 1000Mbps) to parts of the county where commercial investment is not viable.

With the help of our survey results, we're working together with the government to help shape a procurement and decide which addresses should be included. We hope to have news to share on this soon, but for now, watch this space!

Enquiry templates

Here you will find templates you can use to respond to enquiries from your community

As a Broadband Champion, your contact details will most likely be [listed on our website](#) – and you might find you're broadband rollout in your area.

We want to make answering these enquiries as easy as possible, so we've put together some downloadable templates.

How can I find out if I can get broadband at my address?

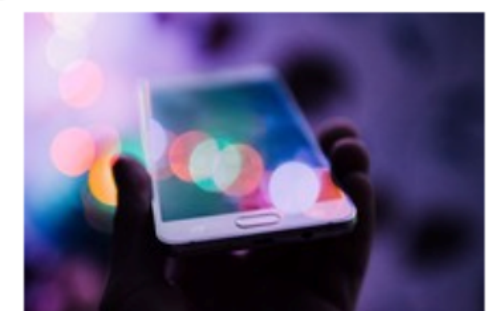
Dedicated toolkit now live

In our last newsletter, we told you about a new toolkit we were creating for our Broadband Champions. We're pleased to let you know this is [now live on the website](#) and ready for you to use! In it you'll find:

- [Pictures, videos and written content](#) you can share on social media.
- [Email templates](#) you can use to respond to enquiries from your community.
- A selection of [Q&As](#).

We're also planning to include posters and leaflets you can distribute in your local area, and we'll continue to add to the toolkit when new content becomes available.

As ever, we'd appreciate your feedback and we're keen to get your thoughts on how we could improve the toolkit. Please [email us](#) if you have any suggestions, or take part in our [Broadband Champion survey](#).



“ Superfast broadband changes your life and the way you do things without any doubt. ”

PAUL MARTIN
Broadband Champion in Fryerning and director of Excel in Business



How to nurture your network

Ways to regularly engage with your programme ambassadors

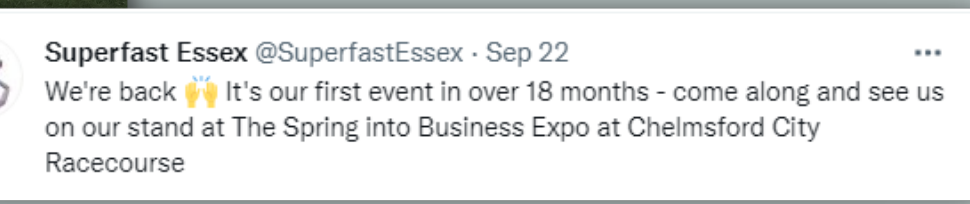
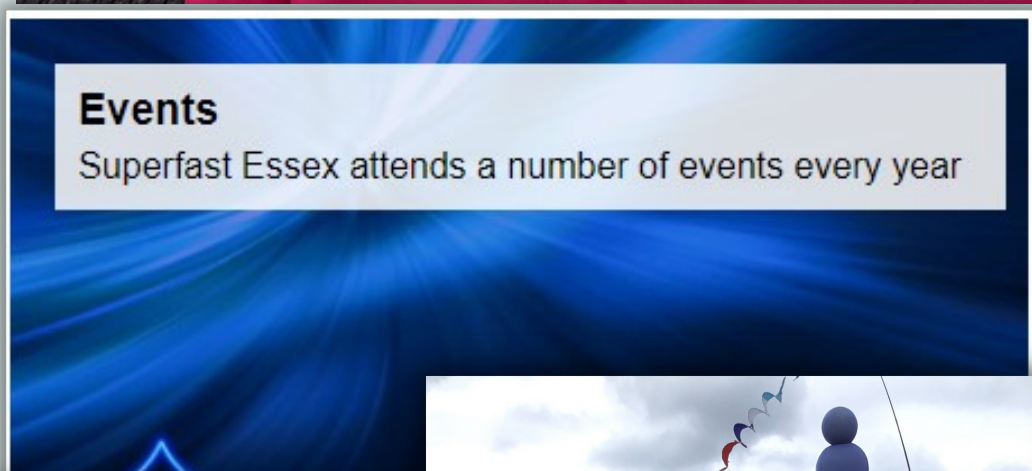
Be visible to your network

The Superfast Essex team holds virtual twice-yearly events, which Broadband Champions are invited to, along with parish and town councils.

These events include presentations by Superfast Essex, Openreach and Gigaclear. We also run a Q&A session chaired by Essex County Council's cabinet member for Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning, Cllr Lesley Wagland.

Our parish events also coincide with key milestones happening, such as delays to the programme of work, as this provides an open forum for questions.

We also attend events in the community, where people can visit us to find out information about the programme and check the broadband status at their home. We advertise these events on social media as well as our website.



How to nurture your network

Ways to regularly engage with your programme ambassadors

Collect feedback

Holding annual surveys can be a useful way to collect feedback from your Champions on their experience of being in your network, as well as gain insight into any changes or improvements you can make.

Findings* from our 2021 survey include:

General

- 62% of respondents have been Broadband Champions for more than two years.
- Just over half (54%) use the Superfast Essex website every month.
- 90% prefer to be contacted by Superfast Essex via email.

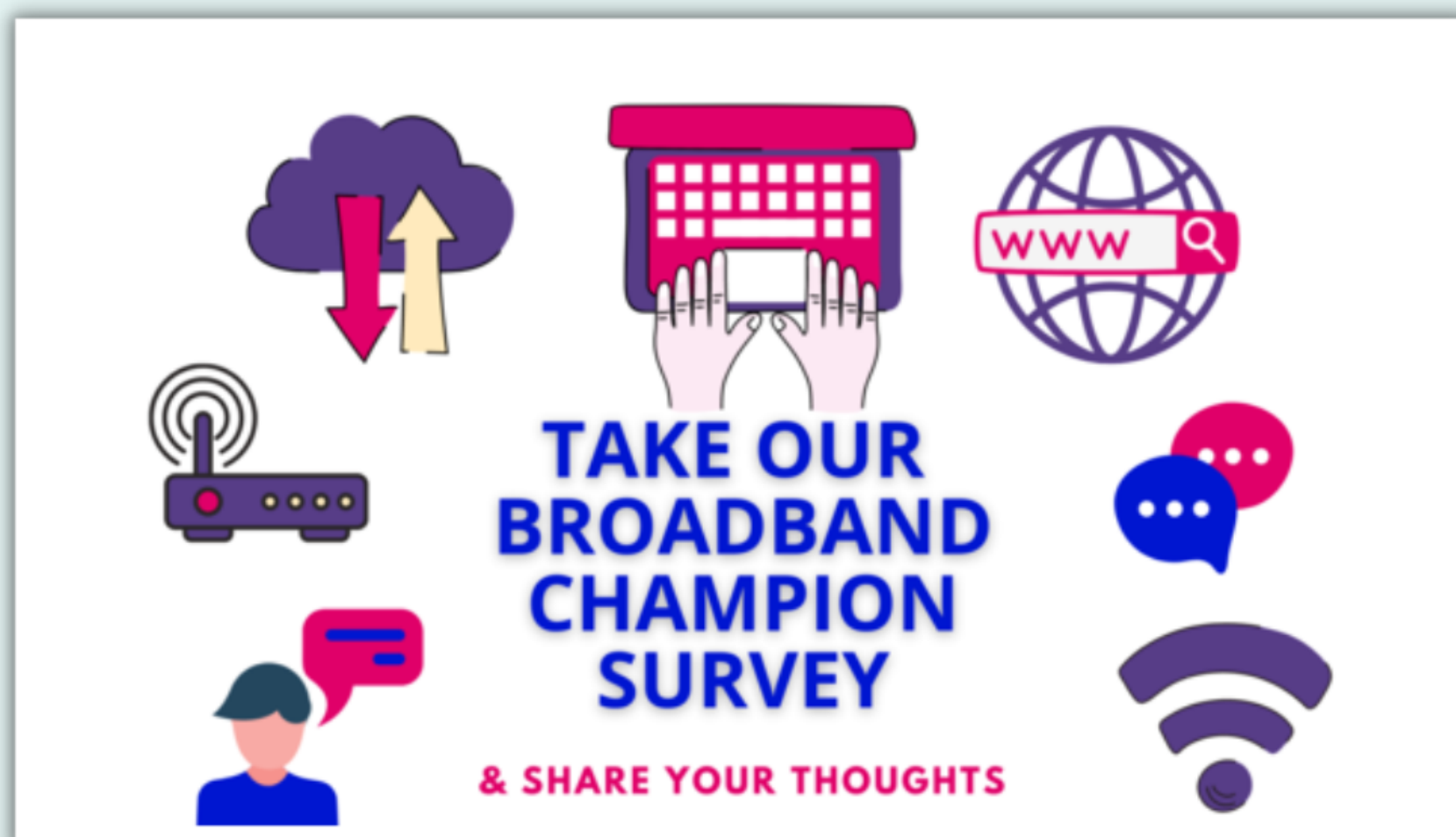
Contact from their communities

- 30% of Broadband Champions have had contact from at least five people in their community in the last six months.
- Of the enquiries received, the majority were asking when fibre broadband is arriving (41%), followed by enquiries about delays with the rollout (22%). Just under a fifth were about speed/reliability issues, and why people's addresses weren't in plans (18%).
- More than half (57%) of the Broadband Champions who received enquiries said they could answer them; 19% said they couldn't.

The Broadband Champion toolkit

- The Q&A section scored highest, with 56% of respondents stating that they were likely to use it.
- Nearly half (47%) said they would share the social media assets in the toolkit.
- It was an equal split of Broadband Champions who said they were likely and unlikely to use the enquiry templates we created.
- However, 75% of respondents said they were either unlikely or very unlikely to distribute printed materials in their communities.

**Based on 39 responses (13% of our Broadband Champions at the time of conducting the survey)*



Broadband Champion survey

The survey will take approximately 4 minutes to complete.

1. How did you find out about becoming a Superfast Essex Broadband Champion?

Social media

Superfast Essex website

Parish or town council

Friend or family member

None of the above

2. If you selected 'None of the above' in question 1, please state how you found out about becoming a Broadband Champion.

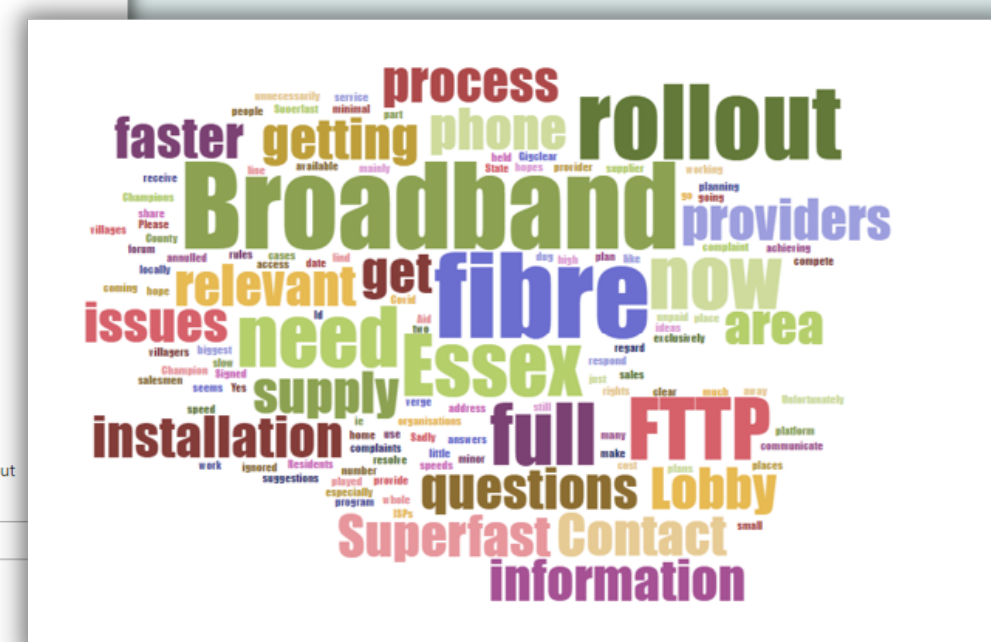
Enter your answer

3. Which area do you represent?

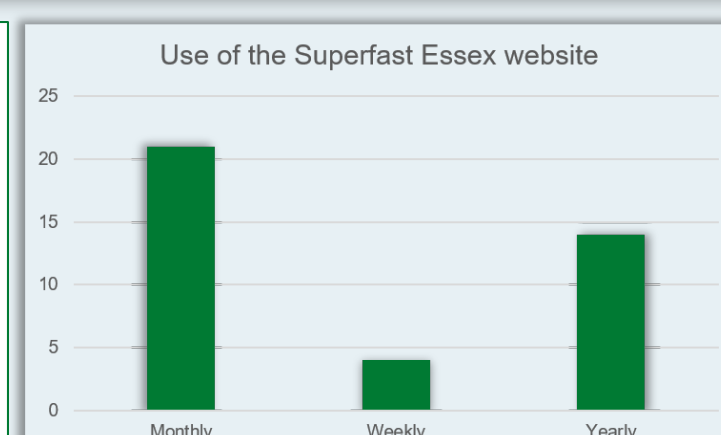
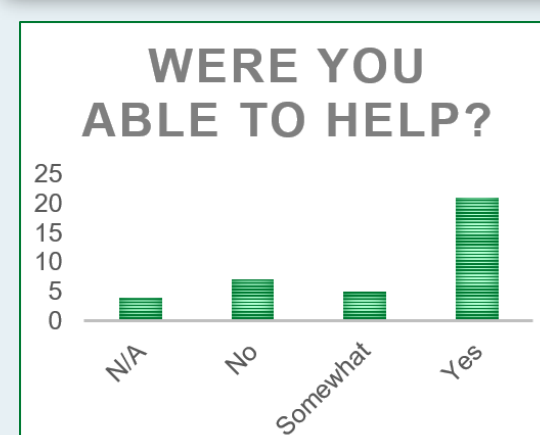
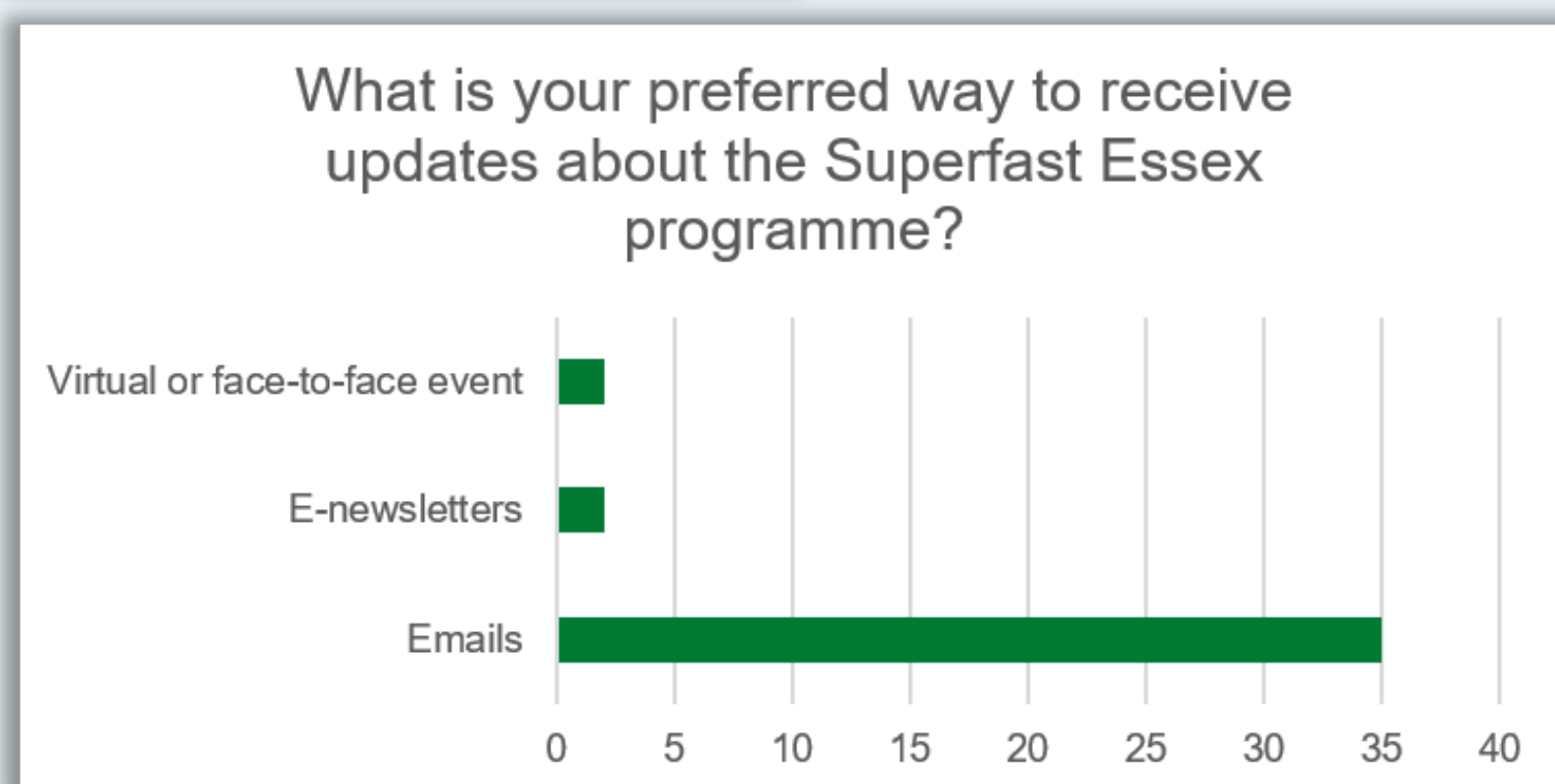
Enter your answer

4. How long have you been a Broadband Champion for?

Select your answer



A word cloud of comments received in the survey.



Lessons learnt from our network

*Here, we share
some insight...*

1 Keep it virtual

- The pandemic has forced many of our previously face-to-face communications online, including our countywide parish events. We saw attendance increase and will continue to run our events virtually in future.
- Our Broadband Champion Survey 2021 also showed that people prefer to share information about our programme online – with 75% of respondents telling us they were either unlikely or very unlikely to distribute printed materials in their communities. This compares with almost half (47%) telling us they were either likely or very likely to use the social media assets we created in our toolkit.



2 Don't underestimate the power of email

It's simple, yet effective. And 90% of the Broadband Champions who took part in our survey told us this is their preferred way to be contacted by Superfast Essex.



3 Keep in regular contact

It can be challenging when you're a small team with limited time and resources, but a crucial lesson we've learnt about our Broadband Champion network is the importance of keeping in regular contact and making this group feel valued. The majority of negative comments in our recent survey were around not being given enough information, or feeling forgotten about. Even if you're unable to give positive news, keeping in touch can go a long way.



For further information, contact
the Superfast Essex comms team at
make.theconnection@essex.gov.uk

