

DIGITAL INCLUSION IN THE LEEDS CITY REGION

Context

Being digitally capable can make a significant difference to individuals and organisations day to day. For individuals, this can mean cutting household bills, finding a job, or maintaining contact with distant friends and relatives. For organisations, going online can provide ways to reach more customers and reduce operating costs. The internet also provides broader benefits, by helping to address wider social and economic issues like reducing isolation and supporting economic growth.

Digital services are becoming the default option for accessing public services, information, entertainment and each other. Those who are offline and not capable of using the internet risk missing out on the benefits that the internet can offer.

For individuals, this can mean reduced costs of living. Households without access to the internet are missing out on significant savings from shopping and paying bills online, or being able to keep in touch with family members and friends.

The internet also provides improved job prospects as being digitally capable is critical in finding and securing a job.

Similarly, reducing digital exclusion can help address many wider equality; social, health and wellbeing issues such as isolation. 81% of people over 55 say being online makes them feel part of modern society and less lonely.

The **Leeds City Region Digital Framework** aims to transform the lives of citizens and businesses across the City Region by opening up opportunities through digital tech. It provides a framework for digital activities and investments in the City Region and includes five high level outcomes to further develop digital skills amongst residents and businesses, as well as digital infrastructure and digital capacity for businesses. These outcomes include:

- Digital opportunities for all businesses
- Digital skills for all
- The digital sector to serve the rest
- World class digital infrastructure
- Tech for Good

What is Digital Inclusion?

Digital inclusion, or rather, reducing digital exclusion, is about making sure that people have the capability to use the internet to do things that benefit them day to day. Digital inclusion is a cross cutting theme across all of the five outcomes listed above.

Digital inclusion is often defined in terms of:

- **Digital skills** - being able to use computers and the internet. This is important, but a lack of digital skills is not necessarily the only, or the biggest, barrier people face.
- **Connectivity** - and access to the internet. People need the right infrastructure (at the right cost) but that is only the start.
- **Accessibility** - services should be designed to meet all users' needs, including those dependent on assistive technology to access digital services. Accessibility is a barrier for many people, but digital inclusion is broader.

Each of these definitions addresses a single specific barrier that some, but not all, people face. There is seldom just one reason why people are digitally excluded, and there is no single approach to solving it. Digital inclusion is thus about overcoming all of these challenges, not just one.

The challenge

There are four main challenges people face are:

- **Access (and understanding)** of the infrastructure (fixed broadband or 4G/WiFi) and access to the right devices e.g. phone, laptop or tablet (most broadband connections require a long term contract, credit check and penalty charges for missed payments, which can be prohibitive for people on low incomes.)
- **Skills** – required to use and engage with content on the internet (literacy skills; basic digital skills and capabilities; confidence about doing something wrong; security)
- **Motivation** – people's attitudes and choices for being offline (worries about doing something wrong; being online out of a specific need rather than maximising real benefits - financial, social, housing and wellbeing benefits)
- **Trust** – the fear of the risk of crime (identify theft; safety of personal information; understanding of standards online; trust about content and sites)

National evidence (The Real Digital Divide 2017, Good Things Foundation)

- 90% of people not using the internet are likely to be disadvantaged. This takes into account poor health and disability, social class and those who left school at 16 or under.
- Although age is a factor in defining non and limited users, it is not the only one:
 - o 18.9% of under 65s are non- or limited users of the internet; a population of approximately 7.5m people.
 - o Nearly half (48.9%) of non- or limited users of the internet are under the age of 65.

- The most pronounced indicators of non and limited use include age, disability, social class, income and the age at which people leave education:
 - o 64.4% of non-users are aged 65 or over: 25.3% aged 65-74; and 39.1% aged over 75.
 - o 47.7% of non-users have a disability or long standing health issue.
 - o 49.5% of non-users are in DE social class, including semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers (D) and non-working residents (E).
 - o 44.5% of non-users have an annual household income less than £11,500.
 - o 78.3% of non-users left education at aged 16 or under

- There are significant regional hotspots for non-users:
 - o There are estimated non-user populations of approximately 1 million people in each of the West Midlands, North West and Yorkshire and Humber regions.

Digital Skills by Region, 2018

	Yorkshire and Humber	UK average
Proportion of people with full basic digital skills	81%	79%
Proportion of people who feel their digital skills have improved in the past year	68%	60%
Proportion of people with zero basic digital skills	6%	8%
Proportion of people who say they use the internet to manage and improve their health	48%	47%
Proportion of working population without full basic digital skills	13%	10%
Proportion of people who say using the internet helps them to save money	68%	29%
Proportion of benefit claimants with low or no digital capability	19%	18%
Proportion of people who say internet/mobile banking helps them to avoid overdraft fees	62%	66%
Proportion of those aged 60+ who are online	72%	72%

Source: UK Consumer Digital Index 2018, Lloyds Bank

Some examples of existing activity in Leeds City Region

Good Things Foundation is running a three-year programme - Widening Digital Participation - funded by NHS Digital. Widening Digital Participation aims to reduce digital exclusion in the UK, and ensure people have the skills they need to access relevant health information and health services online.

Leeds City Council and Good Things Foundation are working together to create the 100% Digital Leeds movement, made up of organisations across the city who can support people to get to grips with digital. 100% Digital Leeds is part of the council's wider SMART LEEDS programme, created to identify and deliver new technologies and innovative solutions to help make Leeds the best city to live, work and visit and includes tablet lending and digital champions.

Leeds City Council has partnered with wireless broadband provider 6G to offer the service to 160 flats at Grayson Crest in Kirkstall and Clyde Grange in Armley.

The partnership is part of the council's 100% Digital Leeds programme aimed at improving digital inclusion and bringing positive outcomes including financial savings, reduced isolation, better employment prospects and improved health and wellbeing.

Leeds City Council has also partnered with #techmums to take the mystery out of technology, including helping to reconnect with old friends via social media, chatting about online safety with children or finding out how to use technology to help at work. The first #techmums pilot took place in 2012, and it proved to be a huge success. Research found that not only was there a huge confidence boost in mums' ability to use technology, there was also a significant increase in their more general personal confidence. Alongside boosting mums' confidence, there was a marked difference observed in their children as well.

Discussion round:

1. What are the main challenges in relation to addressing digital exclusion in the region/ your local area?
2. What are the possible local solutions to overcome these challenges?
3. What are the examples of good practice in your local area which the Inclusive Growth working group could gain a practical understanding from?