

DIGITAL INCLUSION

HOUSING

2ND

MARCH

STAKEHOLDER EVENT

SUMMARY



Digital Inclusion in Housing

What we learned from our engagement with stakeholders across the housing context

Understanding Digital Inclusion in Housing

The Scottish Government's Digital Health and Care Directorate are launching a new programme, delivered in partnership with the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations and Connecting Scotland, that will focus on digital inclusion in mental health and housing.

As part of the programme development, we held a stakeholder engagement event on 2nd March to bring together people and organisations from across housing. The aim of the event was to share more information about the programme, identify existing digital inclusion work across the housing context, and hear people's perspectives on the challenges and priorities to inform the programme development.

We also shared an outline framework – 'Pillars for digital inclusion' - that we have developed as part of our discovery work and invited stakeholders to share their expertise and experiences to gain a deeper insight into the pillars and their potential in a housing context.

We have synthesised what we heard during the event and share the key themes and insights from the stakeholders who took part about the landscape of digital inclusion in housing.



Stakeholder participation

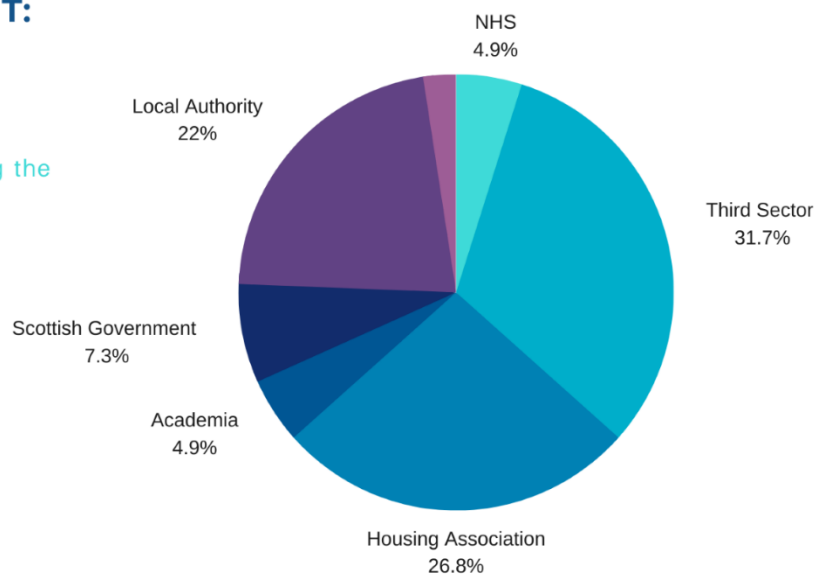
Where you joined us from:



DIGITAL INCLUSION STAKEHOLDER EVENT: HOUSING

Organisations involved during the session:

- Scottish Government
- Housing Association
- Local Authority
- Third Sector
- The NHS
- Academia
- Representative Body



Existing Digital Inclusion Work: Housing

Prior to attending the event, stakeholders were invited to share any existing work or projects they were aware of or involved in that are focusing on digital inclusion in housing. These were mapped across areas of digital inclusion initiatives, skills and confidence, connectivity, digital services and products/apps.



Setting the scene

Marian Reid, Digital Citizen Housing Advisor with the Scottish Government's Digital Health and Care Directorate gave an overview of why digital inclusion matters in the housing context, what's currently happening and where we might go from here.



Digital Inclusion
Housing Overview

Presentation link:

What we heard about digital inclusion in housing: challenges, potential and priorities

Stakeholders were invited to share their experience in small groups of what is currently working well to improve digital inclusion in housing. Key points from the conversations included:

- Start with motivating the person and what digital can do for them as an individual, rather than emphasising the benefits to the organisation. Examples given included highlighting using google maps and YouTube, and becoming confident about completing official forms online.
- IT drop-in centres in community spaces can encourage social interaction, provide learning support, and help with skills and confidence.
- Group learning can work well in rural and remote communities, where one-to-one interactions are less practical.
- Assumptions should not be made about what people can/cannot do, for example, based on age.
- Intergenerational learning such as children helping parents learn about digital.
- Partnership working and a clear strategic vision are necessary for success in digital inclusion projects.
- A co-design approach helps in understanding barriers and finding solutions.

Several challenges and barriers were identified, including:

- Fear and embarrassment about 'getting it wrong' can be a barrier for people.
- Some people will not engage digitally and would rather go without services.
- Older people can be concerned that in-person services will be withdrawn if they connect to services digitally.
- Like individuals, organisations are at different stages with digital. Staff need to have the required skills.
- Setting up devices can be intensive and time-consuming for staff.
- There could be more information about social tariff options. However, customers may be transferred to more expensive deals when these end.
- For some people, smartphones are difficult to understand. There is a market for a more straightforward phone with good connectivity.
- Organisations may not have the resources to give people the one-to-one support.

- There may be a distrust of digital and online interaction linked to concerns about data security.
- Language and lack of translation can be a barrier.
- Online information accessed (e.g. from local authorities), can be complex and difficult to understand.
- Long-term investment is needed, as temporary funding impacts projects.
- Covid has impacted some people's willingness to meet in groups.
- People may need additional resources to travel to group sessions.

Some stakeholders identified potential priority groups for the digital inclusion housing programme:

- Young people (including younger single parents)
- Older people
- People with disabilities
- People in care settings
- Veterans
- Gypsy/Traveller communities
- People who are homeless



Pillars for digital inclusion

Aaron Slater, Digital Participation Manager at SCVO, presented an overview of the Pillars for Digital Inclusion. Most models articulate digital inclusion as having access to a device, connectivity and the skills and confidence to navigate the online world. Digital inclusion therefore has a financial implication, as well as a skills requirement.

These are the things a person needs to become digitally included and enjoy the benefits that many of us take for granted. But the benefits of digital inclusion do not only exist at an individual level. Everyone benefits from a digitally inclusive society. It is therefore important to consider how responsibility for digital inclusion can be shared beyond individuals to wider services and organisations. How can services across health and social care consciously design for digital inclusion?

Pillars for Digital Inclusion is an evolving framework that will shape work across the programme. The pillars are:



Motivation: Motivation is the first step on the journey to digital inclusion. If you the benefits of being online are not clear, people will be less likely to take that first step. Motivation can be best understood by the ‘hook’ - tapping into personal interests to help someone understand the benefits of being online. It is unlikely that the hook will be a specific public service like completing a Universal Credit journal. Therefore, how do services accommodate the digital inclusion journey in a person-centred way? The other side of motivation relates to fears and barriers. One of the most common fears for people who are not online is data privacy. How can services be transparent and clear about how they capture and use data? How is this incorporated into digital services and platforms in a way that does not overwhelm or create barriers to people using it?



Devices: Devices can be a significant one-off cost. Different people will have different requirements for devices e.g. smartphones, tablets or laptops. The device needs to meet the people’s individual needs of both the purpose for use and any accessibility requirements. Do services know what devices, if any, their users/patients/tenants have access to?



Connectivity: A device will have limited use without connection to the internet. This involves cost and can exclude people on lower incomes. For anyone with unlimited data or home broadband, thinking about data usage isn't likely to be a problem. For anyone using pay-as-you-go data, everything you do online can be a financial decision as to how you use your limited resources. How do services ensure that digital delivery does not disadvantage people on limited data packages? How are digital services designed to minimise unnecessary data consumption? This can be further exacerbated in remote and rural areas where there are infrastructure deficits, creating 'not-spots' where connectivity isn't available.



Skills & confidence: The [Lloyds Consumer Digital Index](#) estimates that 15% of people in Scotland do not have Foundation Digital Skills e.g. turning on a device, using basic controls, connecting to the internet. Informal, frequent support is the best way to help build digital skills, often through a 'Digital Champion'. A lack of digital skills can feel stigmatising and embarrassing for many people. How do services support people to build their digital skills? Do services have a digitally confident workforce to enable this?



Inclusive design: How do services incorporate the first 4 pillars to consciously design digital inclusion in their work? This could be thinking about how they handle data privacy concerns, understanding what types of devices people might need to access their digital support, optimising websites and apps for accessibility and minimal data usage, supporting a digitally confident workforce, embedding Digital Champions in frontline services or working in partnership in communities to provide digital skills support. Involving people in the design of services and support (digital and non-digital) is critical to ensuring people can access, interact with and experience services which meet their needs.

What we heard about the pillars for digital inclusion through the lens of housing

In small groups, stakeholders were invited to share their perspectives on, and/or experiences related to the pillars for digital inclusion.

Motivation



- Start with the person rather than having services as the priority.
- Being person-centred means also involving friends, family, support staff and carers.
- Encourage people to connect with different digital platforms by making sure they connect (the example was given that Alexa and Near Me do not connect with each other).

Device



- There should be flexibility on the range of devices available (iPads, smartphones, Chromebooks, laptops, computers, Alexa and Fitbits were mentioned during discussions).
- The digital technology provided should be accessible, depending on the individual's needs.
- There should be equality of access, with people given the device appropriate for their needs.
- Some people prefer a computer or laptop with a mouse and keyboard.
- Staff should be trained to help people find the most suitable device.
- More straightforward, lower-tech devices may be more accessible for some people.
- Older and refurbished devices can cause issues and negatively impact the experience of the person using them.
- There could be 'try before you buy' sessions where people can test out what works best for them.
- It's essential to consider the operating systems devices people are already used to when issuing devices – e.g. android or iOS.
- Older people may have devices but be unsure how to use them.
- Help the person understand the benefits of using the device, e.g. the advantages of cloud-based services.
- The costs of devices, upfront and ongoing, should be considered.
- Advice and support on security software may be needed.
- The design of some websites is sometimes only suited to smartphones.

Connectivity



- Internet and phone connectivity can be an issue in rural areas.
- Connectivity speeds should be considered when issuing devices.
- Access to connectivity, including social tariffs, was discussed (National databank and Vodafone were mentioned).
- Data pooling was given as an example of being cost-effective for people being digitally connected.
- The sustainability of connectivity must be considered so that people carry on having digital access.
- It can be easier to sustain connectivity with longer-term funding.
- Websites should be optimised to appear the same on all platforms – phone, laptop, and tablet.

Skills and Confidence



- Being in a social environment with peers can make people more confident about asking questions.
- A 'hook' can encourage people to use digital tools. For older people, this may include seeing their family and friends online.
- Building trusted relationships is a factor in success. Digital inclusion can extend beyond the individual to the family.
- Staff training is essential to help them begin conversations with people about digital inclusion.
- Trauma-informed approaches and training for staff in this area were suggested.
- Consideration should be given to mental health conditions, neurodiversity, and how digital inclusion can positively impact.
- People sometimes move through services, and keeping in touch with them can be challenging.
- Access via community spaces may work for some people, but others will not use this option and will need services brought to where they are.
- The length of time support is required for will depend on each individual.

Inclusive Design



- Online forms often need to be more user-friendly. For example, rural postcodes may not be recognised; translation may be required. More work is required to make forms accessible to everyone.
- Digital content should be designed taking account of people's capabilities and accessibility needs.
- Tenants should be involved in the co-production of information on housing websites.
- Customer experience feedback should be used to make improvements.
- Monthly coffee mornings/drop-in sessions can be used to get views of customers.
- Staff should have training in producing digital forms.

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to all the stakeholders who took part in the event for sharing their expertise, experience and ideas for digital inclusion in housing. Thank you to Marian Reid for presenting and we would also like to thank colleagues who supported the event to help us facilitate and capture the conversations.

For more information about the programme or to be kept up to date on programme activities please contact:

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