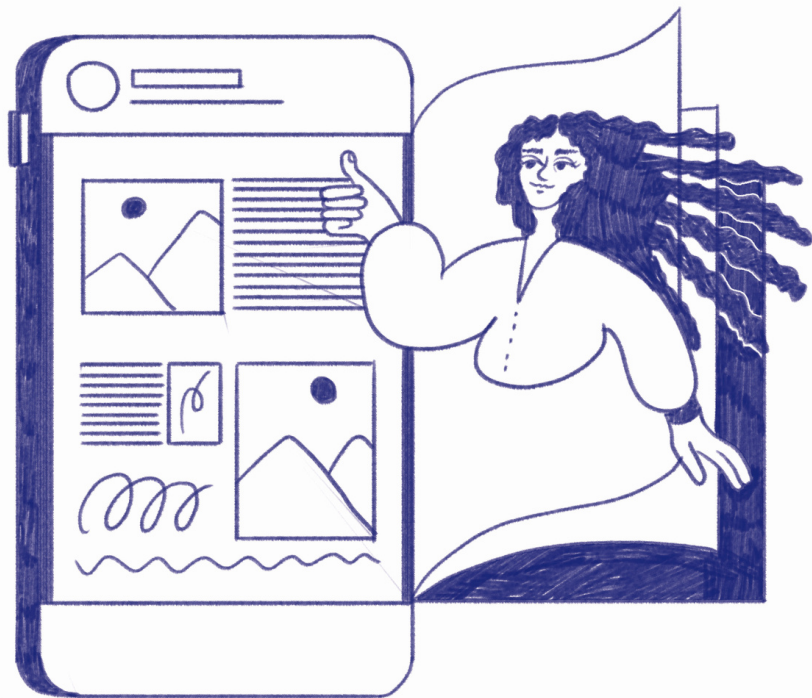


Digital Inclusion Practice Guide

for Digital Health and Care



Co-Production Session
Themes and insights
August 2023

Digital Inclusion Programme



Building capability for digital inclusion

The Digital Inclusion Programme is creating a practice guide to enable wider awareness of digital inclusion across health, social care, social work and housing, and to support the embedding of digital inclusion in practice across sectors.

This summary shares the learning from a co-production session with twenty staff members from across a range of sectors working in health, social care and housing. The co-production session was held online and involved facilitated discussions to explore:

How staff are using digital to benefit the people they support

Common barriers to digital for the people they support

Experiences of digital upskilling in the workplace

How staff help people to manage and navigate some of the risks of being online

How staff see their role/responsibility in helping people with digital as part of care and support

Aims and approach

Digital Inclusion Practice Guide



Digital Health
& Care Scotland



Emerging themes and insights

The session opened with the following questions:

As a practitioner, how does digital help you in your day-to-day work?

Why are some people not using digital – what are the barriers specific to social care, health and housing?

How do you, as a frontline practitioner, perceive risk around supporting people to be digitally included?



Themes and insights
Digital Inclusion Practice Guide



Emerging themes and insights

Who can be responsible for helping people with digital in your organisation?

There was a noted difference between responses from people working in voluntary sector and those working in the public sector for this question.

Public sector colleagues made reference to the relationship with IT, and more formal structures that are in place, albeit many of these structures are reliant on one person acting as a conduit between IT and the wider workforce. There is a greater emphasis on the strategic framework to embed digital (the role of senior leaders and elected members) as well as having a digital lead. Although this is an important aspect of embedding digital, it does not fully translate to upskilling the wider workforce. For example, staff digital queries being directed at a clinical lead who has overall strategic responsibility for digital. In general terms, public sector organisations alluded to a ‘missing middle’ whereby the capacity isn’t available to translate strategic commitments to digital into workforce support. There were some good examples of where this work was happening e.g. Renfrewshire Council has secured funding to appoint a Digital Champion Coordinator to help oversee digital upskilling of the workforce.

Voluntary sector responses were more focused on digital inclusion for the benefit of people accessing services. One participant noted that although there are Digital Champions this is for the benefit of people accessing services, rather than to help staff upskill. A common theme was the creation of informal peer networks to help support workforce development, but it was noted that it can be hard to enable such networks flourish without digital becoming the job of specific designated people. The challenge of keeping pace with the evolution of digital was noted.

Emerging themes and insights

Are there arrangements currently in place for you to digitally upskill at work?

Many of the responses to this question indicated that training opportunities were available however, they include:

1. Self-directed online opportunities, and
2. Expected to be undertaken in your own time.

There is a clear theme around the lack of provenance given to digital upskilling. Despite a consensus that informal networks work best, the structures to support this have not been formalised in the majority of organisations across both the public and voluntary sector. Participants referenced 'super users' or people who found digital upskilling easier, indicating a significant skills gap between those that are digitally confident and those that are not. The lack of structure to the approach suggests that those that are interested in digital will undertake additional training and further their own skills, while those that are not confident may struggle to prioritise this and risk being left behind.

Another common theme related to where training is provided it is specific to work-based platforms, not wider digital skills. It was also highlighted that any digital skills training tends to focus on new deployments, rather than any pre-existing platforms that people may need to use for their work.

Emerging themes and insights

Would you appreciate recognition for your work/upskilling? What would recognition look like/involve?

There was a mixed response to this question, but generally some form of recognition was viewed as being important. It was acknowledged that people are so stretched that an acknowledgement goes some way to recognising the time spent upskilling. It was also noted that in some disciplines, any learning can count towards Continuous Professional Development as long as it evidences changed practice, but this is not actively encouraged by managers.

In relation to courses/training having badges or certificates, these can be beneficial to increase the visibility of those who hold certain digital skills, an important part of an effective peer support network.

The wider benefits of digital upskilling were flagged as an important factor. Some participants noted that learning is an individual experience, and the benefits to their daily practice need to be explicit. In addition to this, it was also highlighted how upskilling could be linked to organisational values as part of an approach to influence culture and leadership.

Emerging themes and insights

How would you expect to find this (or any) digital inclusion practice guide/resource? How would it reach you?

Participants felt that bitesize pieces of information rather than a large PDF file in an email would be most appropriate so people can easily access the relevant support as and when they need it.

In terms of a location, the consensus was that Turas or SSSC were the best places to host this, as well as internal servers/intranet.

Emerging themes and insights

What could embedded digital support look like in your work? What would you need to get it to work?

A common theme emerging from the discussion was around realising the benefits of digital for the people we work with. Participants highlighted that this starts with staff feeling digitally confident, however, this is not always supported in the workplace. A key barrier to staff feeling digitally confident is staff capacity. It was also suggested that digital inclusion should be linked to strategic priorities to help staff understand the benefits of digital for the people they work with.

Participants emphasised that digital skills should be embedded in core staff training, and that there needs to be a recognition of the needs of people returning to work after a break.

The opportunities to embed digital inclusion and discover opportunities for these conversations centred around being able to signpost to digital resources. Participants noted a frustration of not having a central library of resources similar to the NHS App Library (England) that is no longer operational. The need for credible and approved digital resources was raised as a key issue, alongside being able to find local resources within the community.

Emerging themes and insights

What challenges are unique to housing, health or social care to embedding Digital Inclusion?

A range of different challenges were highlighted by participants which clustered around the following themes:

Data privacy – concerns were raised that personal data is not necessarily kept private in the digital world, with one participant noting that Google probably knows more about people's health data. Another participant echoed this sentiment, referring to the global nature of the apps and platforms we use online. The information we provide to commercial services does not necessarily remain in the UK.

Governance processes and information sharing – It was noted that internal governance processes in health made it really difficult to get anything to do with digital approved. Participants also highlighted challenges around information sharing, especially between NHS and Local Authorities. There was also a concern that information would be shared more readily without the client's consent if systems were integrated.

Workforce digital skills – Participants raised concerns about digital skills not being included in staff training, and that there is no capacity within current roles to help with digital inclusion and no one driving this forward. However, one participant did note that since Covid their HR department is now advising that digital skills should be included in role descriptions. This relates to another point that people apply for 'care' roles, not 'digital' roles.

Vulnerabilities – The vulnerability of people accessing services was of concern to some participants, and how digital might exacerbate this. One person noted that people living in social housing are at greater risk of digital exclusion, and often at risk of health and financial inequalities which can be complex to navigate. Access to technology and assumptions about everyone having smartphones were raised as a challenge.

Themes and insights

Digital Inclusion Practice Guide



Emerging themes and insights

What are the moments and opportunities to have conversations about where digital access/ support could make a difference to people accessing care and support?

Participants suggested a range of ways to start conversations about digital:

- A monthly drop-in for staff
- Passing information onto patients about opportunities to access devices etc.
- Home visits and finding out what might interest people or linking them into social tariffs
- Utilising sector networks to share learning
- Local directories to signpost people to e.g., ALISS
- Frontline workers as Digital Champions
- Digitised e-Learning
- Learning time embedded in work time

Emerging themes and insights

Which digital tools and resources do you use to support people in a social care, housing, healthcare context?

- NearMe
- Teams
- Daylight
- Sleepio
- Mind Matters
- Calm Distress (Lanarkshire)
- Silvercloud
- Local Information Systems
- Housing Apps e.g. MyHousing App
- Training resources e.g. Barclays Digital Wings, Future Learn, My Computer My Way
- In-house resource directories
- ALISS
- Resource directory
- New developments include voice activated alarms operating through Alexa to Alarm Receiving Centres and/or relatives

Future work

The co-production of the practice guide will continue with engagement with the Digital Citizen Panel and further sessions based on specific topic content for the guide.

For updates on progress of the work or to get involved please contact or visit:

nss.digitalinclusion@nhs.scot

<https://tec.scot/programme-areas/digital-inclusion>

We would like to express our thanks to the people who took part in the co-production session for sharing their experience and expertise.

Future work

Digital Inclusion Practice Guide

