

The pandemic highlighted the importance of access to the internet for information, services and the social links that are crucial to health & wellbeing. COVID-19 also exacerbated isolation and inequality and focused our attention on the consequences and scale of digital exclusion, which was beyond our previous understanding. Digital skills are vital to us all and the internet is fast becoming a basic essential in our everyday lives. We need to ensure EVERYONE has access to these skills.

Digital exclusion is the inability to access online products or services or use simple forms of digital technology. This disproportionately affects, vulnerable people, low income groups, the elderly and the more marginalised communities in our society.

Inequalities

There is a strong correlation between digital exclusion, financial exclusion, social exclusion and disadvantage. Whereas, more affluent individuals are more likely to have access to higher quality digital devices, stable access to higher speeds of connectivity & less limitation on data.

SCVO report on **Tackling the Digital Divide in Scotland, 2021**, highlighted the following;

- **1/3 of CAB clients can't use or have difficulty using a computer**
- **31% of people seeking benefit advice rarely or never use the internet**
- **40% don't have access to a laptop or computer**
- **Only 25% could apply online for a benefit with no problems at all**
- **Connection costs are a barrier for 20%**
- **There is a digitally resistant core of 22% with no skills and not willing to learn (this groups views need to be respected)**

480 Devices PLUS 480 Myfi's secured for Lanarkshire

To identify & support our most vulnerable and digitally excluded clients, Health Improvement worked with a range of partners to produce successful bids to the SG Connecting Scotland programme in 2020 & 2021.

Health Visiting Team North

150
devices
150 Myfi

Health Visiting Team South

155
devices
155 Myfi

Family Nurse Partnership

90
devices
90 Myfi

Keep Well – Gypsy Travellers

10
devices
10 Myfi

VIP Children's Charity Fallside

75
devices
75 Myfi

National & Local Responses to Increase Digital Inclusion

In response to COVID-19 the Scottish Government set up **Connecting Scotland** to be delivered by SCVO and local authorities to get vulnerable citizens online through the following;

- Providing internet enabled devices (ipads or chromebooks)
- Connectivity through free mobile data for 1 year (Myfi)
- Providing training & support – staff & volunteers to become 'digital champions' to support people to use the internet confidently & safely

Link: <https://connecting.scot/about>



National & Local Responses to Increase Digital Inclusion



There are community project to support local people to get connecting and learn digital skills
<http://www.digitalnl.co.uk/>

VANL TechShare invites the public to donate unwanted devices

<http://www.voluntaryactionnorthlanarkshire.org/article/techshare-gifting-scheme>



Policies & Strategies

Scottish Government digital Strategy 'A Changing Nation: How Scotland will Thrive in a Digital World, 2021 Outlines the steps they will take to ensure everyone in Scotland has the skills, connectivity and devices required to fully participate in our digital nation.

Link: www.bit.ly/digitalscotstrategy.

NHSL Digital Strategy 2019 - 2026 is enhancing healthcare services through use of digital technology eg. **Near Me** – video consultations & technology enhanced care including remote health monitoring eg. blood pressure monitoring.

The NLC Digital programme is also using **Near Me** to conduct housing repair visits - pilot in Chapelhall library

North & South Lanarkshire Council have a Digital Inclusion Strategy

Digital Inclusion is also part of North & South Lanarkshire's Poverty Strategies.



For more information please contact Christine Reid, Health Improvement Team Leader

christine.reid@Lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk