**Cymunedau Digidol Cymru**
Hyder Digidol, Iechyd a Lles

**Digital Communities Wales**
Digital Confidence, Health and Well-being

# Digital Inclusion
## Exemplars in Wales

Wales **Co-operative** Centre
Canolfan **Cydweithredol** Cymru

**Cymunedau Digidol Cymru**
Hyder Digidol, Iechyd a Lles

**Digital Communities Wales**
Digital Confidence, Health and Well-being

Rhaglen
**Llywodraeth Cymru**
**Welsh Government**
Programme

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Digital exclusion in Wales at the start of the 2020s

Digital exclusion is not a new issue. Almost 30 years after the launch of the World Wide Web, many people are still excluded from digital services. They still lack the equipment, connectivity, motivation and digital skills needed to make full and confident use of the online services and other opportunities offered by the internet.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ARPANET, the precursor to the internet, launched in 1969** | **International internet connections have been in place since the 1980s** | **The first popular graphical web browser, Mosaic, launched in 1993** |

In 2020, 7% of the UK (equivalent to 3.6 million people) were almost completely offline. An estimated 9 million (16%) were unable to use the internet and their device by themselves.[1] They were unable to do any of the activities described in the following list of five basic digital skills:

### Handling information and content:
The skills required to find, manage and store digital information and content securely, e.g. use search engines to find information; access information and content from different devices; organise information and content using a device or on the cloud; use the internet to legally access content for entertainment

### Communicating:
The skills required to communicate, collaborate, and share information, e.g. set up an email account; communicate using email and messaging apps; share documents via email; use video conference tools; post on social media platforms

### Transacting:
The skills required to register and apply for services, buy and sell goods and services, and administer and manage transactions online, e.g. set up an account online to buy goods or services; access and use public services online, including filling in forms; manage money and transactions securely online through the use of websites or apps

### Problem solving:
The skills required to find solutions to problems using digital tools and online services, e.g. use the internet to find information; use the internet to find sources of help; use chat facilities on websites; use online tutorials, FAQs and advice forums

### Being safe and legal online:
The skills required to stay safe, legal and confident online, e.g. respond to requests for authentication of online accounts and email; use secure passwords for websites and accounts; set privacy settings on social media and other accounts; identify secure websites; recognise suspicious emails, websites and social media messages and understand the risks; make sure information is backed up frequently

## Five basic digital skills:

33% were estimated to only have limited abilities online. They were missing at least one of the basic digital skills.

The level of digital exclusion in Wales is higher than in the UK, with as many as 10% of the population, or 255,000 people, not using the internet.[2]

The Welsh and UK Governments have invested in delivery of better broadband to citizens. It has been estimated that a 10% increase in broadband penetration generates a GDP increase of approximately 1% and enables delivery of faster, easier to use and more cost-effective public services.[3] Ensuring equality of access to digital services, reducing digital exclusion, and enabling citizens to participate in the digital world is recognised as an important social justice challenge by Welsh Government and by the Digital Inclusion Alliance for Wales (DIAW, See Appendix 2 for a list of DIAW members).[4] [5]

## 1.2 What types of people are digitally excluded?

Although many people can access the internet and, for example, may use social media, they remain uncertain about accessing other services, that would increase their ability to operate in a society and in communities that increasingly have a digital dimension, from companies, public sector organisations or charities.

Groups affected by digital inclusion include:

### Older adults:

There is a higher proportion of digitally excluded people in older age groups. Only 36% of people over 75 have the five basic digital skills, compared with 84% of 16–49-year-olds.[6] Older adults are not, however, a homogenous group. Internet use is increasing among older adults. 53% of people aged 65-74 have all five basic digital skills. Some older people may have developed digital skills through their

working lives or have developed digital skills in retirement due to individual interest and motivation or may have been encouraged and assisted to adopt use of digital services by carers, friends and younger family members. Many others may have had no experience of digital systems or may have no knowledge of them or motivation to adopt them.

### People with disabilities or long-term conditions:

82% of people with a disability or long-term condition use the internet, compared with 90% of those without.[5] People with disabilities may require help in identifying appropriate assistive technologies. Support from peers and advocacy organisations can aid adoption as it helps relevant experience to be shared. Younger people with disabilities have a high level of digital adoption and can often access good peer to peer support.

### Less well-educated people:

81% of those with qualifications at degree level or above demonstrated all five digital skills compared with 49% of those with no qualifications.[6] Many may benefit from more assistance in initial adoption of digital services or in broadening the range of services and activities which they use and participate in online. Organisations can help by ensuring digital services make use of plain, easy to read language and clear, streamlined, and well-designed user interfaces that help users to complete tasks more easily. Systems designed to assist less well-educated people will also usually support the whole range of users better.

### Lower income individuals and families:

Those who are economically inactive are less likely to visit a website (71%) than those in employment (82%).[7] Lower income families and individuals may be affected by access to and affordability of devices and connectivity.

As they may not have access to devices and networks, they may also not have developed digital knowledge, motivation or skills.

## People in rural areas:

People living in rural areas who are not online are usually excluded due to problems in broadband provision, both for fixed line and mobile broadband services.[8] There are still many areas of Wales affected by not-spots, although the prevalence of these is reported by our case study participants to be diminishing.

## Welsh speaking people and others who do not use English as their first language:

Digital systems and their associated support processes need to be designed to accommodate the needs of Welsh speakers and speakers of common minority languages. Public services are required to treat Welsh and English languages equally.[9] This does require consideration in how services are implemented and supported.

## Socially isolated and lonely people:

Digital exclusion can be a facet of other social issues faced by individuals, for example, those facing social isolation and loneliness may also be excluded from digital interaction.

Conversely, increasing digital interaction can help to alleviate social isolation and loneliness. Discussions with many organisations including the Life Sciences Hub Wales and Swansea University's Centre for Innovative Ageing has supported this view.

## Homeless people:

It may be assumed that homeless people are excluded as a by-product of their situation. Homeless people, however, include groups that, while they may not have access to permanent housing, may be 'sofa surfing' or may be in temporary accommodation such as hostels. Many people in these situations do have access to mobile devices and may face issues of affordable connectivity rather than complete exclusion from digital services. They may also make use of community charging facilities or of digital provision in libraries. Digital access may be required for housing and benefits applications.

It should be noted that long-term trends in digital exclusion show that the problem is reducing over time, for example internet use by people over 75 increased from 22% to 36% between 2012-13 and 2019-20. The level of digital exclusion among disadvantaged groups remains high and there remains a need to address this problem, delivering equality of access. Uptake remains short of where Wales needs to be as a digitally inclusive nation.

# 1.3 Why might people be digitally excluded?

A person's access to online services might be limited by several factors: [10]

## Knowledge and skills

- Awareness of what is possible and what prospective users can do online and a resulting lack of motivation to engage with the digital world

- Issues of confidence, fear or lack of trust in the technology

- Skills gaps that make it hard for people to access and make use of digital opportunities
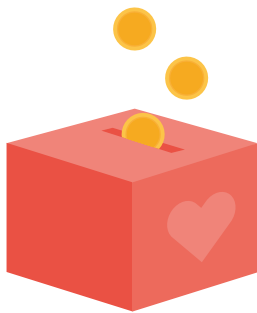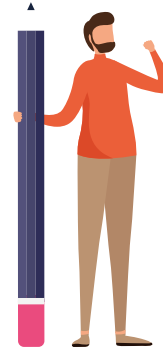
## Access

- Access to and cost of devices

- Cost of fixed line or mobile connectivity

- Local availability of fixed and mobile connectivity (although this is reported to be a diminishing problem in Wales, local not-spots persist in some areas)

- Barriers of accessibility that might include disability and need for assistive technology

## Service provider organisational issues

- **Service provider organisation staff skills:** What ability does the service provider have to support digital service delivery and users?

- **Organisational awareness:** What is possible? What demand is there from customers for online service?

- **Organisational priorities:** How high up the agenda is support of digital service delivery and digital inclusion?

- **Ownership (strategic and delivery)**: is there clear ownership within the service provider organisation of issues of digital inclusion?

A primary motivator for people to go online is to find specific information that is of interest to them and therefore a *one size fits all* approach is unlikely to succeed. A more differentiated and personalised approach is needed in which individuals are supported in finding *hooks* that engage them and encourage them to get access.[11] Once people are persuaded to enter the digital world, further help is required to support them in adopting digital services and ways of interacting with service providers. There is an ongoing role for service providers in the public and third sectors as well as in commercial service companies in supporting citizens in adopting digital services. This includes support from, for example, health and social care, housing, social work, employment support and community development service providers.

Digital poverty is a recognised phenomenon. Access to broadband is a necessity if people are to be digitally included. The cost of broadband and the terms of its availability, the need to enter into commitments to pay a fixed sum per month over a 12-to-18-month contract, are reported by our case study participants to be a key barrier to digital access. Lower income families might prefer pay-as-you-go models or may need to be guided to more affordable fixed or mobile broadband packages.

## 1.4 Future trends

Although there is a pattern of declining numbers of people lacking digital skills over time, the Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index 2020 estimates that if these rates continue and trends remain the same, by 2030 one-quarter of the UK will still have a very low level of digital engagement. [12]

Ever more organisations ask the public to transact and communicate with them online. Online applications for services and benefits have become the norm, and people without digital access and skills are increasingly excluded from everyday transactions that the rest of the population now take for granted.

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted society's reliance on digital. Children and families working from home have been reliant on a range of digital services. Children with less access to digital equipment have been asked to write essays on mobile phones. Older people without digital skills have been less able to stay connected with family and friends. Shielding people without adequate access have been unable to access home deliveries of essential food and medicines. The greater dependence on digital has emphasised the ever-widening digital divide.

Digital inclusion is no longer a *nice to have*. It is essential as a tool for participating in modern society. That is why it underpins the missions Welsh Government seeks to address in its new Digital Strategy for Wales.[13]

## 1.5 A new Digital Strategy for Wales

In 2021, Welsh Government recognised digital inclusion as one of the six 'missions' in its new Digital Strategy for Wales. In addition to digital inclusion, the digital skills agenda is also very relevant to the work we discuss in this document.

### Overall goal:

Digital in Wales: improving the lives of everyone through collaboration, innovation and better public services

## Mission 1
### Digital Services:

Deliver and modernise services so that they are designed around user needs and are simple, secure and convenient.

## Mission 2
### Digital Inclusion:

Equip people with the motivation, access, skills and confidence to engage with an increasingly digital world, based on their needs.

## Mission 3
### Digital Skills:

Create a workforce that has the digital skills, capability and confidence to excel in the workplace and in everyday life.
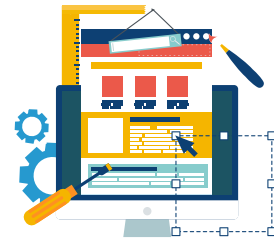
## Mission 4
### Digital Economy:

Drive economic prosperity and resilience by embracing and exploiting digital innovation.

## Mission 5
### Digital Connectivity:

Services are supported by fast and reliable infrastructure.

## Mission 6
### Data and Collaboration:

Services are improved by working together, with data and knowledge being used and shared.

Mission (2) Digital Inclusion recognises the need to help people to access services that will improve their quality of life and ability to participate in society.[14] This includes the richer communication with family and friends that can reduce social isolation and loneliness, and ways of contacting health or housing services that might be more convenient or offer better information than a phone call made between 9am and 5pm on a weekday.

The Welsh Government sees digital inclusion as a *social justice* challenge. Senedd member and Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport, Lee Waters, is quoted as saying that:

## "Digital inclusion is not just about computers: it's about people."

**Lee Waters**

Welsh Government advocates an approach to digital that solves problems based on user needs and wants. It wants to support Welsh citizens to gain the motivation, confidence and skills to use digital tools and services. Citizens should be enabled to make informed decisions about how they participate in, and make the most of, an increasingly digital world. It recognises, however, that some citizens cannot, or decide not to, participate digitally and that alternative ways to access services need to be developed which are just as good as those offered online. In many cases these will be supported by digital infrastructures put in place by service providers but mediated by telephone or face to face contact. The Welsh Government's position is, therefore, that people should be offered services that are *Digital by Choice*. Digital tools and services offer an opportunity to tackle wider social justice issues, such as financial and social exclusion, through the use of technology, but service providers need to ensure everyone can fully participate.

Welsh Government proposes nine actions that need to be delivered to increase digital inclusion:

## Mission 2: digital inclusion

Equip people with the motivation, access, skills and confidence to engage with an increasingly digital world, based on their needs.

### Action 1:
Learn from people who are digitally excluded so that we understand their needs and the barriers they face

### Action 2:
Understand why some people do not want to go online

### Action 3:
Provide support to people who want to go online and use digital services

### Action 4:
Listen to the needs of people from all population groups or those with limited digital access, basic digital skills and confidence

### Action 5:
Understand the reasons for and impact of data poverty and how this might be addressed

### Action 6:
Understand the links between digital exclusion, data poverty and financial and social exclusion

### Action 7:
Work across public, private and third sector organisations to make sure digital confidence (motivation, access and skills) is recognised as a barrier for people to engage digitally

### Action 8:
Provide workforces across all sectors with the basic digital skills, knowledge and confidence to deliver and support people to benefit from digital

### Action 9:
Ensure no one is left behind as we embrace a digital first approach, keeping digital inclusion at the heart of all we do

The Welsh Government has recognised the risks of digital exclusion and has stated that access to digital technologies and to the internet is a key factor that leads to a better life. It is committed to ensuring that at least 95% of citizens have, at a minimum, basic digital skills to "create a more prosperous, healthier and resilient [and equal] society" [15] Traditional service providers, such as the NHS, Royal Mail, local authorities and UK central government departments have recognised the need to support users in accessing the technologies that underpin online services.

As public, private and third sector organisations move some or all services online or make new or novel services available to users (such as booking facilities, online consultations, facilities for uploading information, online identity confirmation to support online consultation) it is critical that organisations work with service users to ensure that they have the necessary skills and abilities to fully participate. Effort is needed to ensure people are not excluded because they lack digital skills, access, or motivation.

The Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales has set out five priority areas[16] that its members will prioritise and asks others to do the same.

These are:

**Priority 1**
Embedding digital inclusion across all sectors

**Priority 2**
Mainstreaming digital inclusion in health and social care

**Priority 3**
Addressing data poverty as a key issue

**Priority 4**
Prioritising digital skills in the post-Covid economy

**Priority 5**
Setting a new minimum digital living standard and adopting co-production approaches

## 1.6 Goal and purpose of this report

To meet Welsh Government's goals for digital inclusion in Wales, effort is needed to maximise the uptake of services and to ensure that service users and service provider staff are not excluded because of a lack of access or skills. Service provider organisations need support to embed best practice in digital inclusion.

Digital Communities Wales: Digital Confidence, Health and Well-being (DCW) is a Welsh Government funded three-year programme delivered by the Wales Co-operative Centre. The programme builds on the legacy of previous digital inclusion initiatives Communities @One (2005-2009), Communities 2.0 (2009-2015) and Digital Communities Wales (2015-2019). DCW has recognised that there has been a growing need from organisations for strategic guidance and support in how to move services online and how to support their service users. DCW wishes to meet this need by better understanding the digital inclusion landscape in Wales at a strategic level so that it can provide guidance on design of services and help organisations to better allocate resources. Although DCW was already aware of very good examples of approaches by organisations that are having an impact at the community *'grass roots'* level it needed a clearer idea of how organisations are, at a strategic level, embedding digital inclusion strategies to maximise outcomes for staff, users and other relevant stakeholders. It therefore commissioned this research study to identify best practice in digital inclusion in Wales.

# 2 Case studies

## 2.1 Case study methodology: initial interviews

We have used a qualitative research methodology. We identified a range of third and public sector bodies and large firms in the private sector as prospective case study candidates. We contacted named individuals known to us within these organisations and scheduled initial calls with each. These calls included a broad discussion of digital inclusion as a topic, the research goals of the current study and a discussion of digital inclusion within their organisations.

Many of the organisations contacted were known to have implemented projects to address digital inclusion. Some interviewees had relevant academic backgrounds in digital inclusion that helped us to flesh out issues and to develop lines of enquiry for use in our more detailed case study interviews.

DCW had been particularly interested in identifying exemplar organisations in which digital inclusion was embedded at a strategic level within the organisation. Feedback from initial interviews revealed that adoption of digital inclusion at a strategic level through, for example, inclusion in the corporate plan, was still comparatively rare. We agreed, therefore, to include exemplars of organisations that had successfully deployed grass roots projects and were now considering how the outcomes of those project might be fed back into next-round corporate strategy and planning processes.

Many grass roots projects have delivered measurable benefits and real change for staff and for users. There is a need now to embed that change at a strategic level. Many of our interviewees recognised that the time had come for digital inclusion to become a strategic matter.

## 2.2 Case study methodology: case study interviews

Working with DCW Advisors, we shortlisted seven organisations as case study exemplars. A conversation guide was developed to provide structure and consistency to the case study interviews (see Appendix 3). Interviews were, with the permission of participants, recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions were used to develop the case studies reported on the following pages using a standardised case study document format. Case study participants were given the opportunity to review, comment on and edit the draft case studies.

The use of a structured interview format aided derivation of quantitative data from qualitative responses, presented in the Review and Analysis section of this report.  We used this approach to identify common themes, issues and learnings.

## 2.3 About the case studies

The following pages contain seven case studies based on interviews with the following organisations and people:

### Case 1
**Dŵr Cymru**

**Kit Wilson**
Head of Transformation

**Paula Burnell**
Vulnerable Customer Manager

### Case 2
**Torfaen County Borough Council**

**Jim Wright**
Social Care Service Development Manager

**David Williams**
Service Manager, Governance and Engagement, Regional Partnership Team

## Case 3
### Care & Repair Cymru

**Neil Williams**
Head of Agency Support
and Development

## Case 4
### Denbighshire County Council

**Matthew Hazlewood**
Project Manager,
Corporate Programmes Office,
Business Improvement
and Modernisation

## Case 5
### Tai Calon Community Housing

**Ross Watts**
Head of Communities

**Amy Williams**
Business Improvement Manager

**Ina Nysschen**
Technical Services Manager,
Up Team Technical Lead

## Case 6
### Newydd Housing Association

**Scott Tandy**
Digital Lead

## Case7
### Hafod Housing Association

**Dr. Jamie Smith**
Director of Research and
Innovation, Hafod

**Dr. Deborah Morgan**
Senior Researcher, Centre
for Innovative Ageing,
Swansea University

Our work in understanding approaches to digital inclusion in Wales was also assisted by interviews undertaken with other organisations listed in Appendix 1. We would like to thank all participants for their assistance in completion of this report.

The case studies we present are not intended to be prescriptive; they are not set out as ideals to be copied, but to provide exemplars of what has worked in the participating organisations and from which others might borrow ideas when thinking about how to tackle digital exclusion. The intent is to illustrate what can be achieved when organisations adopt digital inclusion as a strategic priority and how successes can, when adopted at a strategic level, be translated into ongoing and effective interventions to alleviate digital exclusion.

# CASE STUDY ONE

**Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water**

# Dŵr Cymru

## Service design for digital inclusion

## Participants

Kit Wilson
Head of Transformation

Paula Burnell
Vulnerable Customer Manager

## Strategic context

- Largest water supplier in Wales, serving most of the population

- Focus on improving service delivery and access to online services

- Not-for-profit role in community investment

## Summary

Dŵr Cymru designs its online services to be usable by customers with a wide range of abilities. Simplifying design and targeting maximum usability helps all users.

## Classification

- Addressing service accessibility

- Designed for digital inclusion

- Targeting grass roots opportunities to increase digital inclusion

# Key programme features

## Who is affected?

- Older people
- Lower income people and families
- People with disabilities
- People with limited education
- People with poor broadband
- Socially isolated and lonely people
- Welsh speakers and other people whose first language is not English
- Homeless people (through re-homing and community engagement partners)

# Key reasons for digital exclusion

- User awareness, confidence, motivation and fear; user skills gaps
- Cost of bandwidth and, to a lesser extent, cost of/access to devices. Local availability is a diminishing issue
- There is still a need to support staff in adopting digital ways of working and supporting customers

# Critical success factors

- Understand the customer journey
- Design for digital inclusion
- Enable service users to be digital by choice: continue to support other ways for users to interact
- Include representative users in the design process
- The main platform for user access is the smartphone
- Work with partners to access digitally excluded users
- Alternative communications methods can be valuable, such as advertising services to excluded users on prescription bags
- Digital inclusion is part of a continuous, iterative improvement process and needs to become part of "business as usual"

# About Dŵr Cymru

Dŵr Cymru is Wales' not-for-profit water company, providing drinking and wastewater services to most of the population of Wales and to parts of England that border Wales. It serves 1.4 million households and about 3 million people, supplying nearly 830 million litres of drinking water per day. Because Dŵr Cymru serves nearly everyone in Wales, service users include people from the broadest set of all the groups that might be affected by digital exclusion.

# How digital inclusion fits in at Dŵr Cymru

Kit Wilson is Head of Transformation at Dŵr Cymru. His remit includes digital transformation and digital inclusion. The Dŵr Cymru executive team take a close interest in digital service delivery including digital inclusion. The Dŵr Cymru Board receives regular presentations on digital transformation, addressing digital inclusion among other transformation programme matters. The Board is actively engaged in the development and implementation of digital strategies and digital transformation and inclusion is addressed in the Dŵr Cymru five-year plan.
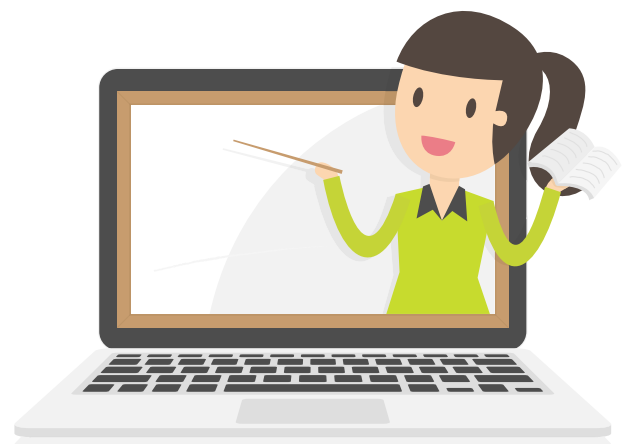
Dŵr Cymru sees digital inclusion;

**"as a key strategic priority … we need to do everything we can to make our services as accessible as possible, and to play more of an active role in supporting our vulnerable users and communities."**

**Kit Wilson**

In re-designing its own online services, Dŵr Cymru is working to implement features and supporting services that are designed to maximise digital inclusion. This includes, for example, designing online services to meet the needs of users with limited reading abilities. Dŵr Cymru's focus on simplicity and usability has benefits for all users and is designed to ensure Dŵr Cymru online services become more accessible to all.

## Solutions implemented

Dŵr Cymru is delivering large scale programmes to renew water delivery infrastructure across Wales. These projects can, as they are being implemented, cause inconvenience and disruption in communities. As a not-for-profit operator, Dŵr Cymru can invest in the needs of communities affected by its programmes. These include some of the most disadvantaged communities in Wales. Delivering projects that alleviate digital exclusion is a priority.

Paula Burnell runs the Vulnerable Customer Management team at Dŵr Cymru. Her team is tasked with assisting service users in accessing affordable tariffs and other forms of support available to customers in debt. The team works

with other utility providers, local resilience forums, and local authorities to ensure that the availability of low-cost tariffs is communicated to vulnerable service users. The group assists service users in applying for support from Dŵr Cymru. Dŵr Cymru has found that helping vulnerable users to use digital applications for support is a more efficient and attractive way for service users to access schemes.

Dŵr Cymru designs services in consultation with users. Service users are involved in the design, testing and roll-out of services. Dŵr Cymru has worked to understand the whole journey of customers facing debt, how they can understand the services available to them and how they can set up payments online. Dŵr Cymru seeks to learn from customers and tries not to assume it knows what the answers are.

Key deliverables in Dŵr Cymru's digital programme have included:

- Re-design of its website has allowed Dŵr Cymru to address digital inclusion. The website has been designed to promote digital inclusion by improving accessibility. It has been designed to make it as easy as possible for customers to transact with

- As part of this, Dŵr Cymru recently launched *my account*, a service enabling customers to access their bills and to transact with it. The new *my account* service has proved to be popular with users, experiencing a huge uptake up over the last 12 months

- Launch of the vulnerable customer team to support Dŵr Cymru social tariff service delivery transformation. 35,000 new priority service users have been added in the last two years.

## Lessons learnt

Tackling digital exclusion is owned at a strategic level within Dŵr Cymru. It is part of an overall digital transformation strategy and of the Dŵr Cymru five-year plan. Strategic management means that digital inclusion is integrated with other strategies including an overall customer service strategy and with Dŵr Cymru's approach to supporting vulnerable users.

Peter Perry, Dŵr Cymru's new CEO, has identified digital as one of the big challenges he wants the organisation to tackle along with other topics such as climate change and inclusivity and diversity. The company has created a 'rethink group' from across the organisation that meets to drive digital innovation. This lends weight and focus to delivery of its work to alleviate digital exclusion.

The impact of digital inclusion work influences key metrics that Dŵr Cymru is required to report publicly, for example how customers interact with the company and how many vulnerable users are signed up to social tariffs. What gets measured gets done.

Dŵr Cymru works to gain understanding from customer feedback and sentiment and learnings that can be applied to new service development. It also seeks to learn from partner organisations and competitors.

Engagement of customers in the design of its digital services, and in understanding the needs of its customers in the creation of those services, and then measuring the success of deployed services and feeding back learnings into new service and strategy development is a key process for Dŵr Cymru.

**"In any change that you want to deliver, unless you involve your customers in the process, whether it's digital exclusion, process redesign, building new systems, whatever, unless you involve your actual customers in that process, you're very unlikely to succeed. It's got to be a core fundamental principle of delivering change."**

**Kit Wilson**

There is a need to develop internal skills within a company like Dŵr Cymru so that staff can support service users accessing services through digital platforms. Digital support staff are, however, recruited based on having the required skills.

Dŵr Cymru also gains insights from its own digital team – they analyse which parts of the service do and do not work and look for opportunities to improve service delivery. Digital inclusion is part of a continuous transformation process.

**"The majority of people now have some form of access to a device, usually a smartphone, but actually, the real barrier can often be … access to and the cost of the bandwidth"**

**Kit Wilson**
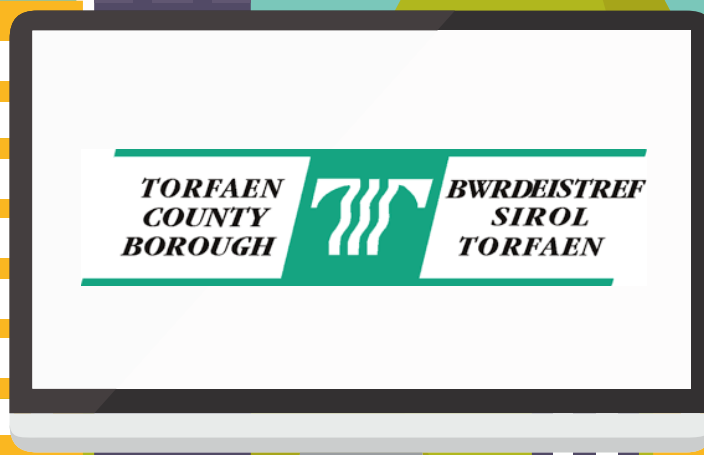
# Torfaen County Borough Council

## Assisting people in accessing community

### Participants

Jim Wright
Social Care Service Development Manager

David Williams
Service Manager, Governance and
Engagement, Regional Partnership Team

### Strategic context

- Local Authority adult social care provider

- Providing citizens with means to engage
  with other people and a wider community

- Working with citizen panels and service
  users to develop programs to increase
  community inclusion

### Summary

Torfaen Council is developing a range of
digitally enabled services and working to
improve accessibility of its online services and
to support service users in accessing digital
services.

### Classification

- Already delivering a range of digital
  inclusion interventions

- Iterative implementation, evaluation and
  new strategy development supported by co-
  production with service users

- Digital by choice

# Key programme features

**Who is affected?**

- Older people
- Lower income people and families
- People with disabilities
- People with limited education
- People with poor broadband
- Socially isolated and lonely people
- Welsh speakers and other people whose first language is not English
- Homeless people (through re-homing and community engagement partners)
- Staff members – some of the workforce have IT skills development needs

# Key reasons for digital exclusion

- User awareness, confidence, motivation (particularly for older people) and fear; user skills gaps
- Users may see cost of devices as the initial barrier. Cost of bandwidth is also an issue. Local availability is a diminishing issue. Some blind spots remain
- There is still a need to support staff in adopting digital ways of working and supporting customers

# Critical success factors

- The iterative process of implementation, evaluation and new strategy development, informed by customer input, is key to success
- Leadership involvement and interest in digital inclusion is also critical to success
- Most digital inclusion activity at Torfaen is instigated and managed from leadership, board or steering committee level
- Internal knowledge sharing can prompt adoption of new ways of working and prevent re-invention and reduce waste
- Different things are suitable for different people and being willing to be flexible in the technology you deploy is important
- Peer-to-peer support promotes adoption

# About Torfaen County Borough Council

Torfaen County Borough Council (Torfaen) is developing approaches to improve inclusion and engagement with citizens, a process that has been accelerated and given more urgency by the Covid-19 pandemic. Torfaen is concerned about how people are included in various aspects of life. The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted how important digital is within that mix of inclusion. Torfaen has recognised that digital platforms can provide a lifeline to some people, providing access to support. This can be the only lifeline that some people have, and one that provides a connection with other people and a wider community.

Jim Wright, Social Care Service Development Manager at Torfaen works within Adult Social Care. The Council provides Adult Social Care services to a range of people including older citizens, people with chronic and long-term illnesses, younger adults, people with physical and learning disabilities, and people with mental health conditions.

David Williams, in his role as Service Manager, Governance and Integration working across the five Gwent local authorities and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (hosted by Torfaen) supports the Regional Partnership Team Board and also the regional citizen panel that works with the five Gwent local authorities. The panel has representation from people of different ages including older people, carers, people with learning disabilities and others.

# How digital inclusion fits in at Torfaen

The leadership team at Torfaen take a close interest in digital inclusion. It links to the Transformation, Education and Neighbourhood Services teams. Alison Ward, Torfaen's Chief Executive rates digital inclusion as high on its list of priorities. Digital inclusion is seen as an issue within general strategy development and is addressed regularly at leadership level and in the Regional Partnership Board. It is seen as a cross departmental strategy matter, led by James Griffin, the Council's Head of Transformation.

# Key digital initiatives

Digital platforms have been used by residents in Torfaen care homes to give them access to activities, and a sense of connection and being part of the community, enriching their daily lives. One resident in her 90s can use the technology to stay in touch with relatives in Australia.

## "I think digital is a key tool and means for service users to be able to reach out."

**David Williams**

Torfaen has also tackled digital exclusion through its involvement in Communities First, through employment programs, and through financial inclusion programs and others. Torfaen reported on a variety of different digital inclusion initiatives in different parts of the Council.

# Solutions implemented

**Adult Social Care:** In Adult Social Care, Torfaen is making good use of assistive technology, giving service users access to solutions that can help them in everyday life. It has used smart speaker technology to help service users to turn the television on or to draw the curtains and to access news. This has offered independence to service users that may be seen as mundane to those familiar with digital solutions, but that has been truly enabling for them. Torfaen highlighted the importance of addressing accessibility when offering service users digital tools.

**Online Council services:** Torfaen is working to improve its 'digital front door', by improving the way the Council's website supports users in accessing services. This will include access to Adult Social Care services, giving service users access to regularly updated information on progress of applications for, for example, equipment or home adaptions. This is coordinated by its *T22* Board which manages digital and customer transformation projects. Torfaen partners with centres of expertise, including the Centre for Digital Public Services, which provides advice and information on best practice. It also works with reference to Welsh and UK Government legislation (such as the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014) and digital guidelines that set standards for accessibility. These address screen reader support, Welsh Language support, and support for those with educational or learning disabilities who need easy to read content. Torfaen is committed to supporting people's preferred way of interacting with the Council, offering *'digital by choice,'* not by default.

## "There is a solid commitment and desire to improve digital inclusion. Digital solutions might help people feel less socially isolated, more independent, offer opportunities to vote or to take part in the wider community, giving access to more rights and choice."

**Jim Wright**

Torfaen is also participating in the Gov. Tech. Challenge, a digitally enabled programme to encourage better input and representation from citizens, creating accessible inclusive ways to communicate with the Council, supporting assistive technologies.

**Integrated Care Funds, direct payments and social housing:** Direct payment can be used to support digital inclusion if there is an assessed need for, for example, a tablet or smartphone for a service user. Torfaen has also been able to use ICF funds to purchase equipment for people and to loan mobile broadband dongles on trial. Carers' grants can also support digital adoption, with grants of £200 to £250 being large enough to purchase basic tablets or smartphones. Torfaen is aware that some housing associations are offering broadband packages to tenants on a trial or longer-term basis and is considering how it might support service users in accessing similar provision. Torfaen has also accessed the Digital Communities Wales scheme for equipment loans into nursing home.

## Lessons learnt

Leadership involvement and interest in digital inclusion is critical to success. Most digital inclusion activity at Torfaen is instigated and managed from leadership, board or steering committee level.

Internal knowledge sharing between, for example, people involved in assistive technology, and with external sources of advice and best practice, contributes to success. It can prompt adoption of new ways of working and prevent re-invention and reduce waste. The Regional Partnership and other ways of sharing experience between local authorities are valuable. Making use of more informal sources like Twitter can also be useful, seeking insight from the community.

Co-production is a key principle. Torfaen believes it should involve service users in developing the solutions it expects them to use. The iterative process of implementation, evaluation and new strategy development, informed by customer input is key to success. Different things are suitable for different people and being willing to be flexible in the technology organisations choose to deploy, support or fund is important.

Trusting feedback from front line staff, social workers and care staff, is important. Bringing the hard to solve issues to a group of people and trying to work out the best solutions between them works well, ensuring that Torfaen listens to them and values and acts on their experience.

Torfaen believes that it is important to capture stories and to analyse data on the success (or otherwise) of the use of digital technologies to foster inclusion, learning from experience. Peer-to-peer digital inclusion support can be very successful as demonstrated by Torfaen's work with people with learning disabilities using video calling.

Digital technologies are no longer alien to people. Staff are very familiar with what they can do at home. Staff more frequently consider digital options in the solutions that they look for, to address the issues that are being presented by the people Torfaen works with.

**"I'd say that person-centred approaches are important to digital inclusion. Sometimes the inflexibility of human systems can present barriers to this."**

**Jim Wright**

Care & Repair Cymru

# Care and Repair Cymru

## Learning from delivery experience

### Participants

Neil Williams
Head of Agency Support and Development

### Strategic context

- Major provider of care services to older people in Wales, enabling them to live in their own homes

- Believes Wales must be a nation that empowers and provides choice for its ageing population

- Older people should be able to use technology to help them live independently

### Summary

Care and Repair has recognised the need to incorporate plans that address digital inclusion in its next strategic plan. Experience from delivering services that already contain digital inclusion elements and gained while maintaining service to users during the Covid-19 pandemic will inform this.

### Classification

- Already delivering grass roots digital inclusion interventions in limited projects

- Senior Management and Board already engaged in digital inclusion

- Now recognising need to incorporate digital inclusion at a strategic level

# Key programme features

### Who is affected?

- Older people
- Lower income people and families
- People with disabilities (including people with sensory impairment, living with dementia or survivors of stroke)
- People with limited education
- People with poor broadband
- Socially isolated and lonely people
- Welsh speakers and other people whose first language is not English

# Key reasons for digital exclusion

- User awareness, confidence, motivation and fear; user skills gaps
- Cost of bandwidth and, to a lesser extent, cost of/access to devices. Availability of bandwidth and accessibility of services
- Staff need training and to develop experience in helping service users to select digital services that will help them to manage better

# Critical success factors

- Care and Repair recognises it now needs to translate service delivery experience from pilot programmes and projects into more formal policy
- A forum is needed for organisations to learn from each other's experience (in the care sector and across sectors). Building in-house experience without this could be wasteful and delay action
- Care and Repair is capturing data and individual case studies on the impact of digital interventions. Positive impact data from digital interventions has already been captured
- Staff familiarity with devices allows them to learn what they might do for service users

# About Care and Repair Cymru

Care and Repair Cymru is a charity that helps older people in Wales to live independently in their own homes. It acts as the coordinating body for a network of 13 local Care and Repair groups providing services across the 22 local government areas of Wales. It delivers practical help to create safe, warm, and accessible homes. Work may involve delivering major modifications for people most in need or may only require advice and recommendations to people who need reliable professionals to carry out work.

Care and Repair works, primarily, with older people. Within this group it serves a broad range of service users including people with disabilities, people who may be less well off, or who may have been less well educated. It also works with comparatively affluent service users.

Neil Williams has worked with Care and Repair for 18 years. His role is to encourage service development, to identify opportunities and to translate these into interventions and policy, to seek and secure funding and, more generally, to develop Care and Repair's business operations. As such, he currently leads on digital service delivery for Care and Repair.

# How digital inclusion fits in at Care and Repair

Care and Repair recognises that working to support digital inclusion is a matter of growing importance for it and its service users. The organisation has found through experience in recent years, including through its response to the Covid-19 pandemic, that digital exclusion is an issue for its service users across Wales. Care and Repair believes that citizens who are digitally excluded cannot access their full rights or fully participate in their community or society more generally. This overlaps with other social justice considerations such as financial inclusion, access to information and

services, and in fostering connections with other people to alleviate loneliness and isolation.

While Care and Repair has been involved in limited roll-out of devices and connectivity designed to provide digital access to service users, digital inclusion programmes are not, yet, a formal part of its services or business plan, but Neil, and the Senior Management Team and Board have recognised the need to develop digital services.

## Solutions implemented

**Managing Better:** Care and Repair was recently awarded funding by Welsh Government to develop digital inclusion services as part of its *Managing Better* sustainable social services programme. Care and Repair has been delivering this programme for over five years. It is a co-production partnership with RNIB, RNID, Alzheimer's Society and the Stroke Association. Through relatively small-scale investments in housing adaptations and improvements, *Managing Better* helps to reduce easily preventable poor health, increasing people's personal safety, reducing falls, increasing confidence, independence and well-being at home, for older people living with sensory loss, dementia and stroke. Taking such a prudent and preventative approach helps to reduce people's visits to the GP, admissions to hospital and reliance on social care. *Managing Better* works with about 3,000 service users across Wales, serving those over 50 years old, but more often with people in their 60s or 70s.

The second phase of the *Managing Better* programme includes a strand that is examining the use of digital technologies to deliver services to older people. The programme can provide information on services and access to equipment and broadband services to people who own their own homes or who live in private rented accommodation or social housing. About 350 people have already been helped with digital inclusion solutions in the first nine months of operation. Information is provided to help service users to choose the technologies that will help them most, to benefit their health and well-being. Where assistance is needed, the programme can introduce specialists or assist service users in obtaining the technology they need.

## "We're using Managing Better to pilot an inroad into how we should deliver digital and new technologies to our service users."

**Neil Williams, Head of Agency Support and Development**

The project builds on experience from an earlier Care and Repair pilot, delivered with support from Communities 2.0 nine years ago, in which frontline staff were issued with iPads to assist them in their work but also to promote their use by service users.

**Smart speaker roll-out:** The Bridgend Alexa project, funded by Rockwool, builds on experience from an earlier Care and Repair pilot, also delivered with support from Communities 2.0 nine years ago.

Care and Repair was able to purchase 35 Amazon devices, costing £2,500, which have been distributed to service users. Initial outcome data gathered from 30 users has demonstrated significant cost benefits, with

12 reporting using the devices to alleviate loneliness and isolation, 19 using them for reminders and prompts, 4 to facilitate family drop-ins and 5 to shop for groceries. 26 users made use of music, talking books and other sources of entertainment and stimulation. Users included 10 living with dementia and 19 with sensory impairment.

**"New [digital] skills also improve the client's self-esteem, confidence and well-being, and ultimately help to reduce a feeling of social isolation."**

**Beverley Evans, Caseworker, Blaenau Gwent C&R**

One lady living with dementia was reported to be really enjoying using the Amazon device. She able to use on screen lyrics to sing along with her favourite songs and her daughter-in-law had set the device up so she could now ask Alexa to make calls to friends and family. The user reported that this, as well as prompts to

**Staff and user skills:** To deliver digital services, Care and Repair has needed to undertake a programme of training and familiarisation with those of its staff who work with service users to identify needs. It has built a relationship with Team Amazon to develop its knowledge of Amazon Alexa enabled smart assistants, and with Apple to develop app training for older people. It is partnering with RNIB Cymru's Technology for Life service to further develop *Managing Better* and to assist people with sight loss to be independent, access information, grasp opportunities and to be creative, while also supporting Care and Repair frontline staff. It has also received training from Digital Communities Wales to support the *Managing Better* project. Staff from across Care and Repair have been trained by DCW.

**"...Unless you see the need to use something and understand what it can do for you, you probably won't be motivated to use it."**

**Neil Williams, Head of Agency Support and Development**

Care and Repair has developed promotional videos for its digital inclusion projects, including a *'nannies and grampas'* video to demonstrate the value of video calls and other capabilities that can be delivered using iPads. This has encouraged take up among service users.

## Lessons learnt

Care and Repair is increasingly aware that it needs to take the next step of developing practical experience of delivering services addressing digital exclusion as a more formal part of its business strategy. Care and Repair intends to now review the experience it has gained and to incorporate this into its next five-year plan. Expanding services to include monitoring of falls and other aspects of telecare is also being considered.

Care and Repair has recognised that there is a danger in delivering digital solutions through a series of funded projects. Once funding ends the energy behind the initiatives diminishes, services may end if there is no funding to continue them, and valuable lessons learnt can be lost. Projects need to be transitioned into main-line strategy and service delivery.

Care and Repair has also identified a need to work with other provider organisations to learn from their experience. This also ensures that

effort is not wasted on reinventing solutions or building new experience that can be gained more efficiently by sharing experience. Care and Repair values its existing partnerships with Amazon, Apple and RNIB Cymru, but believes that a wider forum to share experience, for example across Wales, would be valuable.

Care and Repair already captures data on service delivery, including about interventions that address digital exclusion. It intends to refine its data capture process to gain greater insights into digital interventions. It has been able to target service users with health conditions or from lower income backgrounds through, for example, social prescribing, and has already been able to record positive impacts from digital interventions.

Care and Repair has, through its iPad roll out nine years ago, demonstrated that giving staff access to technology to allow them to learn what it can do for service users is valuable. This is reinforced by recent experience gained through its Amazon Echo programme. Care and Repair has appointed a national project coordinator for its *Managing Better* service. One of their roles will be to ensure organisation shares its experience and best practice with its case workers and with other organisations.

# Denbighshire County Council
## Digital buddies and community digital inclusion

## Participants

Matthew Hazlewood
Project Manager, Corporate
Programmes Office, Business
Improvement and Modernisation

## Strategic context

- Local Authority services; libraries, employability and social care and other services

- Providing citizens with means to engage with the local authority and the wider community

## Summary

Denbighshire County Council is promoting digital inclusion through its Digital Buddies support service, working through libraries, social services, employment and skills, community support, health, social care, and housing services.

## Classification

- Implementation of a program that directly addresses digital exclusion

- Capture of learnings from the programme to feed back into the next round of strategy development

# Key programme features

## Who is affected?

- Older people
- Lower income people and families
- People with disabilities
- People with limited education
- People with poor broadband
- Socially isolated and lonely people
- Welsh speakers and other people whose first language is not English
- Staff members – some staff had IT skills development needs.

# Key reasons for digital exclusion

- User awareness, confidence, motivation (particularly for older people) and fear; user skills gaps
- Users may see cost of devices as the initial barrier. Cost of bandwidth is also an issue.
- Local availability is an issue. Blind spots remain
- There is still a need to support staff in adopting digital ways of working and supporting customers

# Critical success factors

- Leadership involvement and interest in digital inclusion is critical to success
- "You don't have to reinvent the wheel." Denbighshire has implemented a project based on work in London Borough of Hackney but has tailored it match local need and context
- Work with internal and external stakeholders is needed and more input from service users will be sought in the next round of Denbighshire's programme
- The Denbighshire program has drawn on external expertise from Digital Communities Wales to multiply experience and capacity
- Learnings from the programme can now be captured and fed back into the next round of strategic planning
- Support within peer groups, such as Welsh speakers, is important to digital adoption

# About Denbighshire County Council

A primarily rural county in North-East Wales, Denbighshire understands that access to goods and services is key to maintaining people's independence. However, depending on where you live, this is not always easy. Through its corporate plan, Denbighshire has made it a priority to ensure that communities throughout the county are connected and have access to the goods and services they need. It is also aiming to promote people's health and well-being and encourage them to remain as independent as possible, by ensuring that there are strong support networks in place and people have more involvement in decisions affecting their future well-being.

# How digital inclusion fits in at Denbighshire County Council

Matthew Hazlewood is a project manager within a team delivering high profile corporate plan related projects, all associated with business transformation. One of these projects is focussed on alleviating digital exclusion. Denbighshire has prioritised tackling digital exclusion within its 2017/20 corporate plan:

**"The Council had highlighted the need to build digital skills as being something of importance even in 2017 - somebody had that foresight and thought that they needed to do something about it."**

**Matthew Hazlewood**

As part of the corporate plan, the project is owned by the corporate programme board. The Council's Senior Leadership team participates in the corporate programme board and there is a councillor assigned to each corporate plan project. The board reviews progress at least quarterly with more detailed reviews annually.

# Solutions implemented

Denbighshire's digital exclusion project is designed to help those who are digitally excluded, and to build up their skills to be able to access services. The project works with service users through a *Digital Buddy* programme, and through libraries and other council services including adult social and residential care, housing and Working Denbighshire, the local employability programme.

The project began by mapping needs and planning a roll-out through its digital volunteers in libraries. It has adapted to changing needs, responding to the Covid-19 pandemic which reduced opportunities for face-to-face interaction with service users. Another strong strand of activity has been development of inter-generational activities between young people and care home residents. Libraries provide a *'backstop'*, a centre enabling access to digital devices, broadband and expertise within the community, supported by the *Digital Buddy* network. The buddy model in Denbighshire was based on a similar programme developed in the London Borough of Hackney but modified to match local context and needs and redesigned to work collaboratively with Digital Communities Wales (DCW) and Denbighshire Voluntary Service Council.

Denbighshire's project addresses groups identified in Welsh Government's list of those who are digitally excluded. Its programme is designed to access older and lower income people. It is also designed to help people with lower educational attainment. It works through the Council's employment and skills programme and, for example, works with young people to develop interview skills using virtual reality technologies.

**Developing staff skills to support the project:** Denbighshire is working to ensure that, as it becomes more digital in the way it delivers its services, its staff have the capacity to engage with and support service users. The project has benefited from assistance from DCW in bolstering staff skills and, at a project management level, in the development of the project.

The work is focussed on Council service user skills development, but when the project started, the initial stages needed to focus on development of skills within the Council and then among volunteers. It took 12 months to get to the stage where the project could move its focus to working with service users.

The Covid-19 pandemic initially delayed implementation, but DCW was able to tailor its training to be delivered online and to meet the needs of different Denbighshire Council staff groups including social services, community support, health, social care, and housing as well as the *Digital Buddies*.

Many staff attending training have found that they already have the digital skills they need to assist users. The training gives them the confidence they need to know that they can assist service users with many digital use issues. Training sessions of about two hours duration were found to be sufficient and effective.

Social care was a sphere within local authority settings in which a particular digital skills gap among staff had been identified. This is recognised as a need to be addressed to enable staff to support and pass digital skills on to residents. Social Care Wales also currently has an initiative to improve digital skills among social care staff and to ensure that they are provided with equipment that supports digital interaction with their organisations and service users.

**Supporting initiatives by proactive staff members:** Project team members and others within the local authority bring drive, expertise and capabilities that add to the effectiveness of the roll-out.

For example, a residential care manager has taken ownership of practical issues such as getting broadband connected to support intergenerational work with residents in care homes, as well as installing a Facebook portal. The project has supported them in applying for funding for iPads and other devices.

Library funding from Welsh Government for digital transformation training has also contributed to Denbighshire's programme development.

## "Libraries are championing digital inclusion … because they recognise that people want both face-to-face and digital services."

**Matthew Hazlewood**

Staff now bring a familiarity with what digital solutions can do from their own home experience that can be applied in their workplaces. The Council recognises a need to support them in applying that experience.

## Lessons learnt

The project has now reached a point where the Council has begun to evaluate successes, and to identify gaps and lessons learnt. It intends that this will be fed back into the next cycle of corporate planning which will take place next year. Successes have been captured in highlight reports, and factors such as how the project can be implemented on a larger scale are being considered.

Denbighshire has recognised opportunities to access other sources of funding to multiply delivery, for example through applications for community funding from local wind farm companies.

End-user requirements have been represented through the expertise of staff from the services that have taken part, who know the needs of their service users. More direct engagement with digitally excluded people in service design is being considered for the next stage of the project.

Partnerships, such as that with DCW, can be used to draw on experience and capacity that support implementation and roll out of digital services. DCW also participates in Denbighshire's corporate programme board and provides a valuable source of expertise and learning from the other projects it is involved in and contributes to innovation.

## "Having the wider view of what's happening across Wales [that Digital Communities Wales brings], is very useful."

**Matthew Hazlewood**

For local authorities, how project successes should be communicated to constituents is also important to ensure ongoing support from them and from their elected members.

# Tai Calon Community Housing

## Digital inclusion and continuous improvement

### Participants

Ross Watts
Head Communities

Amy Williams
Business Improvement Manager

Ina Nysschen
Technical Services Manager;
Up Team Technical Lead

### Strategic context

- Largest social housing landlord in Blaenau Gwent County Borough

- Digital inclusion now embedded in corporate plan through a focus on increasing customer satisfaction

### Summary

Tai Calon has used the capabilities of a new business system to open a range of online services to tenants and is now considering how experience from making these services available can be fed back into its strategic planning process to deliver greater digital inclusion.

### Classification

- Tai Calon has adopted a 'digital by choice' policy, but still supports other ways for tenants to interact with it

- Digitally enabling existing services; enabling self service and convenience

- Recognise need to support tenants in becoming more digitally skilled and in accessing digital devices and broadband as a utility

# Key programme features

**Who is affected?**

- Older people
- Lower income people and families
- People with disabilities
- People with limited education
- People with poor broadband
- Socially isolated and lonely people
- Welsh speakers and other people whose first language is not English
- Staff members – some staff had IT skills development needs.

# Key reasons for digital exclusion

- Tai Calon sees cost as one of the major barriers to digital inclusion. For those who must choose between heating and eating, broadband is further down the list of priorities
- Mobile phone minutes and data are seen as something of a priority by tenants and pay-as-you-go gives users control over spend. A similar mechanism for wired broadband might be attractive. With mobile data there are limits on data use in many packages that limit digital adoption
- Factors of user awareness, confidence, etc. are seen as lesser barriers, especially among younger tenants
- There is still a need to support staff in adopting digital ways of working and supporting customers

# Critical success factors

- Small steps have enabled the organisation to become ready to deliver more ambitious digital services online
- Involvement of tenant representatives in the design, test and roll-out process has been important to the success of service launch
- Don't think of projects and programmes. Consider digital inclusion as part of continuous improvement – an activity that should not have an endpoint

# About Tai Calon Housing Association

With more than 6,000 homes, Tai Calon Community Housing is the largest social housing landlord in Blaenau Gwent County Borough. Founded in July 2010, after tenants of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council voted for their homes to be transferred to a not-for-profit organisation, Tai Calon is a community mutual organisation, a limited company and registered charity.

New CEO Howard Toplis has made raising customer satisfaction the core element in Tai Calon's renewed corporate plan for 2020 to 2025. The focus on this objective is already yielding results in delivering 90%+ satisfaction among tenants. Improving digital access to Tai Calon services is an important element of the plan.

# How digital inclusion fits in at Tai Calon

At Tai Calon, digital inclusion is seen as part of continuous improvement – an activity that should not have an endpoint. It belongs in business improvement or business transformation.

Digital inclusion is closely linked to the organisation's goal of increasing customer satisfaction. Tai Calon is seeking to deliver Amazon-like levels of convenience through self-service and automation. This is a reasonable expectation for tenants to have in 2021. *Housing Online*, Tai Calon's existing online portal, has shown that there is an appetite to engage with it digitally. However, *Housing Online* is limited in what it does for tenants, so Tai Calon is working to expand its self-service offering to meet that appetite.

Tenants need more flexibility in how they interact with housing associations. Having to ring up with repair requests between 9am and 5pm is outdated and inconvenient. Improving digital access for tenants will help Tai Calon to serve them better.

## Solutions implemented

**Up programme:** Tai Calon recently implemented a new business system that has enabled it to open up a range of new online services to tenants and prospective tenants. Up is a business transformation programme that makes use of the capabilities of the new system. Tai Calon will implement (i) a new iteration of *Housing Online*, a tenant view of their housing account with Tai Calon, and this will be followed by (ii) reactive repairs and (iii) new tenancy application services. The investment in the new system has been substantial at about £0.5m in investment costs plus substantial staff time.

> **"It's about making sure that our customer service experience is driven forward by technology that makes our service easy, effortless, convenient."**

**Ross Watts**

### Increasing online engagement:
Tai Calon is working to increase online engagement with tenants, for example through Facebook Live, to develop better digital ways of listening to tenant needs. Although organisations may be concerned about whether digital services will exclude certain demographics, evidence may be emerging

that, so long as a digital by choice approach is taken, and other ways of interacting continue to be supported, this fear is exaggerated and that digital increases opportunity for interaction. Tai Calon knows that about two thirds of its tenant households can receive email, that is they have an email address on their tenant record.

**Other approaches to digital inclusion:** Tai Calon, through the work of its Communities team, supports tenants through employability programmes and assists them in claiming benefits such as Universal Credit. It has recognised a need to grant ownership of digital inclusion to a champion within its organisation and to develop approaches to alleviating digital exclusion as part of its overall strategy. Due to overlaps with employability and community this may fall into the Communities remit.

**A broader digital strategy:** Tai Calon has not made promoting digital adoption by tenants a strategic goal at this point. Its focus has been on opening services to tenants who are already digitally able. New systems have enabled development of its online offer and small steps have enabled the organisation to become ready to deliver more ambitious digital services online.

More thought is needed as to how digital access might be supported in Tai Calon's tenant community. Tai Calon believes its focus will be on developing digital access to its own services

for some time to come and that this aligns with its customer satisfaction agenda. It is probable that there may be a need to incorporate plans to increase digital take-up in its next strategic planning process.

Broadband is becoming a necessary utility for tenants and there may be a gap in the market for a wired pay as you go broadband service. Housing associations might have a role in developing such an option or in developing mobile broadband access for tenants on a shared tariff basis.

## Lessons learnt

The initial *Housing Online* service, offering online access to rent accounts, is not one that tenants are likely to be driven to engage with regularly. Initial user support has been about practical issues such as incorrectly spelt usernames, rather than technical difficulties for users accessing the service.

The launch of a repairs service is expected to increase tenant interaction with *Housing Online*. Demand may be larger than anticipated. The repairs service has been more complicated to implement, given the need to translate tenant repair requests into coded repair tasks for Tai Calon's repair teams. The repairs service will require more staff support, for example updating repair requests and managing re-booking of repairs.

Housing associations need to have trust in their digital offer to tenants. They need to develop confidence that the new digital offer won't overwhelm the organisation or lead to too many wasteful requests.

There is a big challenge in translating housing association internal processes in a way that is accessible to tenants accessing services. There is also an organisational fear that giving tenants access will lead to a loss of control over, for example, repair costs.

Tai Calon has used tenant representatives in the service design process, and in testing services before roll-out. It believes this has been critical to the successful service launch.

Tai Calon has found that it is harder to write more accessible 'easy read' content and to streamline designs for pages supporting online transaction. It is a skill that organisations need to develop.

A forum for sharing experience in digital inclusion between housing associations and other similar bodies across Wales would be valuable.

# Newydd Housing Association

## Delivering digital inclusion through partnerships

### Participants

Scott Tandy
Digital Lead

### Strategic context

- Charitable housing association that offers 3,000 affordable homes for rent and sale to people in mid and south Wales

- Commitment to affordable homes, sustainable communities and excellent services

### Summary

Newydd has developed an approach of directly assisting tenants and other community members in accessing online services and content, directly addressing problems of digital exclusion. Digital access opens up the other services Newydd can offer to tenants such as employability.

### Classification

- Newydd works directly with digitally excluded tenants and other community members, supporting adoption of digital services

- Newydd is now beginning to think how it can move on from project-based approaches to digital inclusion to incorporating digital inclusion at a more strategic level

## Key programme features

**Who is affected?**

- Older people
- Lower income people and families
- People with disabilities
- People with limited education
- People with poor broadband
- Socially isolated and lonely people
- Homeless people
  Staff members – some staff had IT skills
- development needs.

## Key reasons for digital exclusion

- User awareness, confidence, motivation (particularly for older people) and fear; user skills gaps
- Ongoing cost of bandwidth is a big problem. The initial cost of devices is also an issue
- Staff skills need to be developed to support service user use of digital services, especially for workers in care homes

## Critical success factors

- Work is needed to share experience across Wales and to allow programmes to share successes and resources to enable broader roll-out through local partners and tailored to meet local needs
- Co-operation between service providers could enable the funding each has to support digital inclusion to be more efficiently used collectively
- Gathering good outcomes data and case studies is critical to the process of securing ongoing funding and this should be standardised across the country
- Newydd is about to employ a digital apprentice to support day-to-day delivery to allow the Digital Lead to spend more time gathering outcome data and evidence
- Deploying low-cost devices is a false economy. You spend more staff time supporting them. Newydd adopted a policy of delivering higher quality devices in 2019

## About Newydd Housing Association

Newydd Housing Association (Newydd) is a charitable registered social landlord (RSL) that offers 3,000 affordable homes for rent and sale to people where need is at its greatest in mid and south Wales. It makes properties available on affordable rents and has programmes to deliver low-cost home ownership as well as supporting a range of community regeneration initiatives.

## How digital inclusion fits in at Newydd

Newydd has employed a Digital Lead officer to develop and deliver a range of digital inclusion initiatives. Newydd's approach to digital inclusion is delegated to Scott Tandy, its Digital Lead. Scott has worked energetically to deliver a broad range of grass roots initiatives to address digital exclusion among its tenants.

Newydd and other housing associations are becoming more focused on problems of digital exclusion and on helping tenants to access digital services.  More tenants need help to get access to devices and internet connectivity, and they need support to develop the skills needed to undertake essential digital tasks such as communicating, transacting, problem solving, and being safe and legal online.

Digital has now become an essential life skill and without the right access or support, people are substantially worse off than those with access and who have the necessary skills. A key example is claiming benefits, such as Universal Credit, online.

# Solutions implemented

Newydd has developed initiatives that directly assist tenants and service users to overcome barriers to digital inclusion. Newydd supports tenants in getting access to devices, the internet and to support that ensures they can access online services.

Demand for support and, in response, Newydd's support of digital inclusion has increased in recent years. The recent Covid-19 pandemic has further accelerated demand.

**Loan and gifting of devices:** Newydd has run projects that offer tenants access to a device through loan or gifting schemes, if they don't have one of their own.

**Tablet loan schemes:** Newydd is involved in two tablet loan schemes – the Vale Tablet Loan Scheme with the Get the Vale Online (GTV) partnership, which is driven by the Local Authority, and its own technology library, which enables users to borrow devices like tablets and mobile broadband access points over periods of up to three months.

The schemes have demonstrated the value of mobile device management software and the ability to be able to deploy apps to the loan devices. Regular monitoring ensures devices remain in use.

Scott has considered how equipment loan projects could be delivered at scale. He believes that different organisations within an area should contribute funding to a single loan scheme and that local authority leadership or coordination of schemes may be needed, as happens with the Vale Tablet Loan Scheme managed by the GVT partnership.

**The Digital Health project:** This programme began in schools and centred on distribution of Fitbit devices to encourage physical activity among children and young people. The programme sets and rewards achievable targets for physical activity. Rewards include healthy canteen meals and trial access to local gyms.

The programme led to the development of the Get Fit Wales initiative.

To support activity at home, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the programme has developed leader boards to encourage an element of competition, leading to greater participation.

The *Digital Health* project is developing into a tenant and family support programme that includes family centred health and well-being initiatives. It has also developed links to the Cwm Taff and Rhondda Cynon Taff Health Boards, being adapted for use in a pre-diabetic programme. Work is underway to expand these programmes across Wales.

**A Facebook Portal roll-out** to independent living scheme lounges was originally targeted at extending the reach of activity programmes by linking them across communal lounges. This increases the cost effectiveness of activity delivery.  The solution emerged from Newydd's participation in an NHS Hack day. Now it is in place, the Facebook Portal equipment is now delivering impromptu video calls and socialising between lounges as well as access to online content such as exercise classes etc.

**Broadband and mobile internet access schemes:** If tenants have no access to broadband or have no motivation to install broadband due to a lack of experience of what being online can deliver to them, Newydd has been able to provide trials of access to mobile broadband hotspot devices to encourage uptake.

**"Because people don't know the benefits of going online, they don't want to commit to paying for the cost of a contract or to be committed for 12-18 months."**

**Scott Tandy**

Current broadband contracts can be expensive, based on a desire for unlimited use. Tenants may need advice when selecting a contract that is affordable and suitable for them. Newydd has just received funding for a pilot programme to pool mobile broadband data between tenants, allowing for data allowances to be shared between users as their use of services varies from month to month.

**Tenant digital skills and support:** Where the issue is lack of digital skills or support, or awareness of what tenants can do online, Newydd has provided 1-2-1 end user support and skills development sessions.

Online 1:1 sessions are delivered using Teams or Zoom. The first step is to help users by telephone to get access to those platforms. Once that link has been created, Newydd uses the connection to deliver digital clinics to help users to address specific digital skills needs. Newydd is expanding this approach to be delivered by a group of 20 volunteer digital champions.

Newydd has found that tenants and service users in their 40s, 50s or older have limited awareness of what the internet can do for them. They may be aware of Facebook and other big platforms, but do not have developed search or online problem-solving skills. As a result, their use of online services remains restricted.

Tenants want help in upskilling themselves and extending their use, for example, of video calls to remain connected with family. Older people are often driven to develop digital skills to stay in touch with the younger members of their family. Use of video calling and online socialising is developing in importance in Newydd Independent Living Schemes. Other users find they become interested in the online world when they find it will support existing interests. For example, one tenant who had been a merchant mariner found he could view information about his old ships through Google.

Staff skills also need to be developed to help service users to adopt digital services, especially for workers in independent living schemes. Introducing Facebook Portal into schemes needs care workers to know how to help residents. With staff support, residents can learn to use it themselves.

**Tenancy Ready support:** This project is supporting prospective new tenants in the Vale of Glamorgan in learning about the realities of renting and what to expect when searching for and moving into a new home. The aim is to contribute to making tenancies more sustainable.

Newydd and its partners, Vale of Glamorgan Council, Wales & West Housing, United Welsh, and Hafod Housing, have used a Google Classroom to provide those supporting prospective tenants with information and learning resources on tenancies during the Covid-19 pandemic. Users are provided with documents, videos and other resources that they can work through at their own pace and with a small test at the end to reinforce what they have learnt.

## Lesson learnt

Newydd and other housing organisations understand that digital needs to be a key part of their strategy, but they are unsure of how digital exclusion can best be addressed by an RSL. Newydd has recognised the value of a forum to connect housing associations working in digital inclusion to share experience of successful grass roots projects and to support the development of digital inclusion strategies.

**"In a partnership, digital inclusion would be a little extra work for everyone, but it is a mammoth task for one person or one organisation. Together, we can achieve more, get more done and meet needs."**

Scott Tandy

Digital inclusion needs visibility and support at Board level. Newydd's Board is engaged and asks a lot of questions about digital adoption work across departments. Newydd is analysing where in its organisation the digital inclusion agenda should be owned. Newydd wishes to ensure that it becomes even more a key part in its corporate plan and that senior managers are empowered to drive the digital inclusion agenda.

Newydd has found that partnerships with external organisations like Digital Communities Wales can inform best practice and provide a source of ideas, especially about digital solutions that have worked elsewhere. Work is needed to share experience across Wales and to allow programmes to share successes and resources to enable broader roll-out through local partners and tailored to meet local needs.

Standardising outcomes data gathered from projects across Wales is important in being able to compare successes and learnings and to support funding propositions. Obtaining buy-in from partner organisations, like libraries or councils, is important to successful implementation. Evidence is also needed so that organisations support the tailored 1:1 approach that individual users need when being guided through digital adoption. Helping people to become digitally included takes time and prospective users need to be made aware of the services available to them.
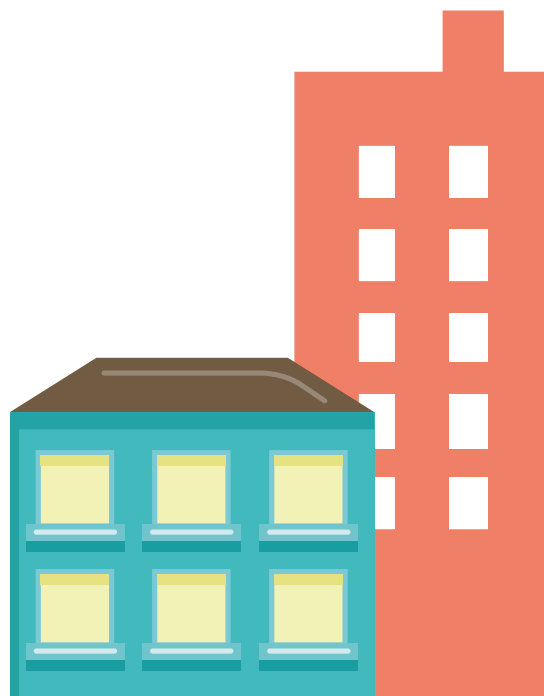
# Hafod Housing Association
## Home Care and Community Calling initiatives

### Participants

Dr. Jamie Smith
Director of Research and Innovation, Hafod

Dr. Deborah Morgan
Senior Researcher, Centre for Innovative Ageing, Swansea University

### Strategic context

- Improving health, well-being and prosperity in communities by helping to integrate the systems of housing, health, social care and support

- New Customer Charter sets out a more reciprocal relationship with customers and aims to create new forms of involvement in the way services are designed and delivered

### Summary

Hafod has recognised data poverty as a real issue for tenants. It is examining how it can move on from successful projects that address digital exclusion to incorporating digital inclusion as a strategic issue.

### Classification

- Has delivered a number of projects that address digital exclusion

- Has recognised data poverty as a key issue for tenants and other service users

- Is considering how to embed digital inclusion as a strategic issue

## Key programme features

**Who is affected? More so..**

- Older people – the majority are digitally excluded.
- Lower income people and families
- Socially isolated and lonely people
- People whose care needs have progressed beyond domiciliary care
- People with disabilities – but some are quite adept and can help peers
- Staff members – specifically residential care workers, helping them to learn how to support residents digitally. Of 1,400 staff 1,100 deliver front line care

**Less so..**

- People with limited education
- People with poor broadband – this issue is diminishing
- Welsh speakers and other people whose first language is not English

## Key reasons for digital exclusion

- Confidence and skills gap issues are key reasons for digital exclusion. Fear is also a factor, especially when dealing with something important to the service user like a benefits claim
- Data poverty seen as a bigger issue than availability of devices. Trade-offs between data access and food or clothing for some families. Data limitations constrain digital adoption
- Care staff strongly affected by digital exclusion and data poverty - have a need for support in developing digital skills useful to themselves and those they care for. Need to quantify and then address this problem

## Critical success factors

- Projects need to address organisational fears about device theft or improper use of the devices and connectivity for potentially illegal activities. While this must be addressed, there is little or no evidence that any misuse has happened on Hafod projects. Hafod's approach is to ensure it is indemnified against misuse, rather than trying to monitor or prevent it
- Involvement of tenant representatives in the design, test and roll-out process has been important to the success of service launches
- Hafod is appointing a Digital Lead to understand customer need, and translate that into digital solutions

## About Hafod Housing Association

Hafod is a not-for-profit housing association committed to Making Lives Better for its customers and communities. Hafod has grown to be one of the largest providers of housing, care and support in South Wales. It continues to develop and grow and is proud to support people throughout their lifetime, working across nine local authority areas, helping over 16,000 people each year while employing over 1,400 staff with a turnover more than £60m. It manages 6,000 homes and is also a significant care provider.

Hafod provides social housing, social care and support services, with a progression from general housing needs, through domiciliary care and sheltered housing, right through to end of life care. Hafod also has some specialist services such as dementia care, care for those with acute physical disability, and for people with substance misuse problems. The bulk of its services are, however, in delivering general needs housing. It supports more than 1,000 people in domiciliary care in their own homes.

## How digital inclusion fits in at Hafod

Hafod's view of digital exclusion has changed, accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic. A previous view that it would be hard to scale interventions has been overcome by the necessity of dealing with the isolation among tenants caused by the pandemic. Hafod has recognised data poverty as a real issue for tenants, that is lack of access to internet connectivity or devices. People have had difficulty with home schooling and working from home for this reason. Hafod has seen that in its own workforce. Accordingly, it has really ramped up its agenda. The issue is now of great interest to its executive team and something that the Research and Innovation team are being challenged on by its Board members. How can the organisation ensure that people are not being left behind?

**"Digital is an enabler to living a good life and to being able to function in modern society. Increasingly, it's not optional. There are clear disadvantages to being digitally excluded. It's a utility now, and an essential one."**

Dr. Jamie Smith

Hafod is considering whether a device and connectivity might be offered to tenants at the start of a tenancy. This would offer a portal to Hafod for tenancy related issues (rent, reactive maintenance etc.) but also offer tenants an enabling capability, a device they can use to communicate with others and to access digital services more generally.

A Hafod Board member worked with Welsh Government on the 5G roll-out in Wales. His experience has enabled him to become a champion for digital inclusion on the Board. He has influenced other Board members to adopt the view that Hafod has a role in helping tenants and service users to overcome digital exclusion.

For many tenants, a smartphone data package has become a necessity not a luxury. It is their lifeline, how they interact with organisations, community, and family, especially in recent months.

**"I think there's a recognition that we what we had [been doing] before just wasn't enough. And [our Senior Managers and Board] looked really to us, as a group of innovators to try and chart a new way forward."**

Dr. Jamie Smith

The Covid-19 pandemic meant that Hafod had to dramatically increase welfare phone calls and its safety net services to make sure that people were able to do what they needed to do, such as ordering shopping, making benefits claims, accessing foodbanks or sending food parcels. The Smart Money team, for example, can help tenants make claims online.

## Solutions implemented

**Home Care project:** The *Home Care* project was developed with Accenture and with Swansea University's Centre for Innovative Ageing. It uses smart speaker technology to provide in-home support to service users affected by social isolation and loneliness. Initial roll-out has targeted a sample of 1,500 single person households, prioritising those who receive welfare calls. Hafod found many of these were in younger age groups, including people under 35. The lockdown and social isolation seem to have had a particularly strong impact on this younger group. Furloughed people have had to reduce costs, and this has exacerbated data poverty and affected well-being. People used to being digitally connected have been forced to cut back.

*Home Care* users are provided with 12 months mobile broadband access that includes the three months of the *Home Care* trial. Hafod intends to obtain unlimited data contracts for trial participants so that they can get a good appreciation of what they can do online. Hafod is considering if it can underwrite longer term contracts and if pooled data usage across its tenant group can be negotiated with broad-band suppliers.

Roll-out has been slowed by Covid-19. Users without digital skills need to have equipment set up for them and to be trained. Limits on home visiting has prevented this, so initial roll out has focussed on more digitally capable users. Hafod will reach less capable users in a second post pandemic phase.

> **"It's going to be difficult to help those people until we can get into their homes, sit with them, walk them through the set-up process."**

**Dr. Jamie Smith**

Swansea University's involvement is in managing the process of co-production with service users and the capture and evaluation of outcomes data. Hafod and Swansea University want to measure if the provision of technology has improved users' perception of loneliness and their mental well-being. The team think that is really important and that it will allow them to present that evidence to fundholders: "Without data, it's all just anecdote." The initial success of the project means that Hafod now intends to scale up to thousands of participants.

**Community calling:** Hafod is also delivering a project working with Hubbub, a charity that repurposes smartphones, from businesses or from members of the public. Hubbub data wipes used smartphones and cleanses them so that they are hygienic. It tests them, makes sure they are electrically safe, and then packages them and redistributes them to people. Hafod is acting as the community connector in that project. Hubbub has made 500 smartphones available to Hafod. Based on Hafod's understanding of people's needs in its community, it will distribute the smartphones along with a generous data package. The mobile phone networks are involved in and support the programme. The devices come with basic skills training, but Hafod intends to work with Digital Communities Wales (DCW), and some of its local authorities, to see how it can provide the training for people to get the most out of the devices and data packages on offer.

**Care homes:** helping tenants to talk to each other: A newer initiative focuses on care homes. It makes use of an Internet of Things low powered network to link care home residents together when they want someone to talk to. It's simple: the user just pushes a big button, and the system connects them to another resident in one of Hafod's care homes to talk to. During the pandemic, residents were confined to their rooms 22 hours a day when infections were at their highest. This inspired Hafod to speed up the implementation of a system that will still help lonely care home residents even when the pandemic has passed. This project is still at an early stage in development and results have not yet been collected or outcomes analysed.

## Lessons learnt

Insight from *Home Care* and *Community Calling* are delivering data and evidence that provide support for developing digital inclusion work with tenants and service users. Hafod is still working on how it should address digital inclusion as a strategic issue for the organisation and more clarity is needed on where in the organisation the issue needs to be owned. The Board and senior management are pleased with what Hafod digital inclusion projects are delivering so far and want to build upon that. Hafod intends to appoint a Digital Lead to address the issue. Their role will be to understand customer need and translate that into digital solutions.

Hafod learns from engagement with other organisations. It highlights work on digital poverty with Nesta in Wales and Scotland and believes that it and other organisations, like DCW, have a useful role to fulfil in sharing best practice and in developing approaches that have national application, with necessary tailoring to meet local needs.

Work is in process to create a new spin-out company from Hafod. It will work with Hafod and other clients developing innovative solutions to problems and challenges faced by communities. It will work on a range of issues from sustainable lifestyles to the future of social care, including community resiliency and financial well-being. This work represents a progression from work the team have already been delivering within Hafod and will build upon the outputs of that previous work.

# 3 Review and recommendations

## 3.1 Findings: principal approaches to digital inclusion strategy and implementation

Participants can be classified in three broad groups:

### Group 1

**Classification:**
Addressing digital inclusion through development of own digital service offers

**Description:**
Making aspects of customer service delivery more digital. May also have initiatives that address exclusion in connection with other strategic issues, e.g. employability

•Tai Calon
Housing Association

### Group 3

**Classification:**
Already managed as a strategic issue and/or included in current corporate strategic plans

Digital inclusion as part of a more general strategic priority, e.g. as part of a more general inclusion or digital strategy

**Description:**
These organisations already have clear strategic plans and corporate ownership of work to address digital exclusion

•Torfaen County Council
•Dŵr Cymru
•Denbighshire County Council

### Group 2

**Classification:**
Learning from digital inclusion grass roots programmes or projects

**Description:**
Many are now ready to incorporate learning into strategy, e.g. in next round corporate plans

•Hafod Housing
•Newydd Housing Association
•Care and Repair

**Group 1: developing accessible online services:** These organisations have worked to improve customer service through development and support of online services designed to improve the efficiency and convenience of how customers interact with them. The focus is less on encouraging digital adoption or access by digitally excluded groups. In many cases, however, these organisations, like Tai Calon, also work with service users who are digitally excluded through, for example, employability programmes, benefits claim support and other initiatives to encourage adoption and use of digital services. These organisations have information, experience and outcomes data to share on developing services that are more accessible, usable and efficient for customers.

Many Group 1 organisations have recognised a need to develop strategies that more directly promote digital inclusion. The profile of digital inclusion and the view that this is an issue that they have a role in alleviating may need to be developed in some Group 1 organisations. Group 1 organisations have indicated their willingness to engage with peer organisations with different approaches to digital inclusion and with subject matter experts like Digital Communities Wales (DCW) or national partnerships like the Digital Inclusion Alliance for Wales (DIAW) in developing digital inclusion strategies.

**Group 2: delivering grass roots projects and programmes:** These organisations are able to report many examples of successful grass roots initiatives that promote digital inclusion. Examples include giving service users access to devices on a loan or gifting basis and free access to broadband for periods of time to encourage uptake of digital services. Initiatives also include programmes to support users in overcoming technical issues and with skills development, and the development of parallel programmes, for example in encouraging activity and healthy eating.

These programmes are often based on time or budget limited project funding and many initiatives have not yet moved on from being projects to being adopted and scaled up as part of business-as-usual service delivery.

**Group 3: digital inclusion managed as a strategic issue:** Organisations addressing digital inclusion as part of a broader inclusion or digital strategy rather than as a specific strategic priority may not focus fully on delivery of activities designed specifically to alleviate digital exclusion. They may benefit from exposure to experience and outcomes data from peer and national organisations that demonstrate the value of directly addressing digital exclusion.
Organisations who have already developed a more mature strategic approach to digital inclusion are also likely to benefit from evidence and data from peers to aid them in evolving their strategies and in developing specific actions to address digital exclusion.

## 3.2 Recommendations arising from our case study research

**Recommendation 1:** All organisations should now be designing their own services to maximise digital inclusion and to be accessible to all.

**Recommendation 2:** Digital inclusion requires ownership at Senior Management and Board level. For continued success, and to fully address Mission 2 of the Welsh Government's Digital Strategy for Wales, organisations need to develop strategies and programmes of action to alleviate digital exclusion as part of their corporate planning process.

**Recommendation 3:** Digital inclusion needs to become part of established business strategy, service design and delivery, part of business as usual, not as a series of time and funding limited experimental projects. It is now time to learn from grass roots projects and to adopt their outcomes and learnings as part of how day-to-day services are delivered. Organisations need to adopt an interactive and continuous improvement approach to delivering systems that are accessible and to supporting users in adopting digital services and ways of transacting with them.

**Recommendation 4:** Digital inclusion needs to consider staff training needed to support service user adoption.

**Recommendation 5:** Digital by choice is still the preferred mode of operation. Organisations should continue to support other ways of transacting with them. Some citizens cannot or decide not to participate digitally and there will continue to be a need for alternative ways to access services, developed to be just as good as those offered online.

**Recommendation 6:** Digital service development is a co-operative process, not one that organisations should impose on users. Peer-to-peer support of service users can be useful where shared personal experience can assist in promoting digital use, for example among Welsh and minority language speakers, BAME users or people with disabilities. Hence co-production of services with prospective service users is key to success.

**Recommendation 7:** Responsive design principles should be used to ensure online services adapt to the devices users have. In 2021, most users access digital services by smartphone. Responsive design should address accessibility and ensure services are able to adapt to use on new devices as they are adopted by consumers.

**Recommendation 8:** Co-operation between service provider organisations could enable the funding each has to support digital inclusion to be more efficiently used collectively.

**Recommendation 9:** There is a need for evidence and experience to be gathered from individual projects and to be shared among peer organisations in similar sectors. Many organisations in Wales, across the UK and globally, have valuable experience and data on the outcomes and effectiveness of grass roots projects.

**Recommendation 10:** National support programmes such as DCW and national partnerships such as DIAW should consider the role they can take in gathering and sharing experience between peer organisations. This should include developing digital inclusion strategies and in working, perhaps collectively, to address digital exclusion, assisting them to respond to Mission 2 of the Welsh Government's Digital Strategy for Wales.

# Appendix 1: Research participants

## A1.1 Case study participants

| CASE | ORGANISATION | PERSON | ROLE |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Dŵr Cymru | Kit Wilson,<br>Paula Burnell | Head of Transformation<br>Vulnerable Customer Manager |
| 2 | Torfaen County<br>Borough Council | Jim Wright,<br>David Williams | Social Care Service Development Manager<br>Service Manager, Governance and<br>Engagement, Regional Partnership Team |
| 3 | Care & Repair Cymru | Neil Williams | Head of Agency Support and Development |
| 4 | Denbighshire<br>County Council | Matthew Hazlewood | Project Manager, Corporate<br>Programmes Office, Business<br>Improvement and Modernisation |
| 5 | Tai Calon<br>Community Housing | Ross Watts,<br>Amy Williams,<br>Ina Nysschen | Head of Communities<br>Business Improvement Manager<br>Technical Services Manager<br>Up Team Technical Lead |
| 6 | Newydd Housing<br>Association | Scott Tandy | Digital Lead |
| 7 | Hafod Housing<br>Association | Dr. Jamie Smith,<br>Dr. Deborah Morgan | Director of Research and Innovation, Hafod<br>Senior Researcher, Centre for Innovative<br>Ageing, Swansea University |

## A.1.2 Other interviewees who contributed to our research

| CASE | ORGANISATION | PERSON | ROLE |
|------|-------------|--------|------|
| 1 | Clwyd Alyn Housing | Rachel Turgoose | Affordable Homes Manager |
| 2 | Age Connects Morgannwg | Natasha Applasamy | Head of Business Support |
| 3 | Life Sciences Hub Wales | Helen Northmore | Head of Innovation Adoption (Digital &AI) |
| 4 | University of South Wales | Prof. Andrew Ware | Professor of Computing |
| 5 | Valleys to Coast | Emma Howells | Director of Housing and Customer Services |
| 6 | Welsh Government | Michael Groves | Programme Director Digital Infrastructure |
| 7 | Age Cymru | Victoria Lloyd | Chief Executive |
| 8 | Diverse Cymru | Zoe King | Acting Joint CEO |
| 9 | Mediwales | Gwyn Tudor | CEO |
| 10 | Office of the Older People's Commissioner for Wales | George Jones | Community Services and Inclusion Lead |
| 11 | Social Care Wales | Lisa Trigg | |
| 12 | Tai Calon | Phillip Meek | Employment & Skills Programme Manager |

# Appendix 2: Digital Inclusion Alliance for Wales

The following organisations are currently members of the Digital Inclusion Alliance for Wales:

- Antur Teifi
- Audit Wales
- Board of Community Health Councils
- BT
- Caerphilly County Borough Council
- Caerphilly County Borough Council / ADSS
- Cardiff & Vale UHB
- Care & Repair
- Cartrefi Cymru
- CAST
- Centre for Digital Public Services
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Clwyd Alyn Housing Association
- Community Housing Cymru
- Competition & Markets Authority
- Digital Communities Wales
- Digital Inclusion Consultant
- Disability Accessibility Centre
- Disability Wales
- Dŵr Cymru

- Go Compare
- Good Things Foundation
- HEIW
- Innovate Trust
- Internet 4 Everyone
- Microsoft
- Monmouthshire County Council
- Older People's Commissioner
- PAVS (Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services) on behalf of Third Sector Support Wales
- Public Health Wales
- RNIB
- Social Care Wales
- Society of Chief Librarians Wales
- Swansea University
- University of Wales Trinity St David's
- Velindre University NHS Trust
- Wales Co-operative Centre
- WCVA
- Welsh NHS Confederation

If you or your organisation would like to find out more about DIAW and join the digital inclusion movement in Wales, please get in touch via diaw@wales.coop

# Appendix 3: Case study conversation guide

The conversation guide used in the case study interviews is set out below:

| About the organisation/ interviewee | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Tell me about your organisation (sector, products/services, service users) | |
| | What is your role in the organisation and how does it relate to digital inclusion? | |
| | How does your organisation view digital exclusion? | |
| | Any other information on background and context? | |
| | What digitally excluded groups are relevant to your organisation? | Older people<br>Lower income individuals and families<br>People with disability or accessibility issues<br>People with lower educational attainment<br>People affected by geographic/access issues<br>Those who don't use English as a first language (Welsh speakers and also minority languages)<br>People affected by social isolation / loneliness<br>Homeless people<br>The Organisation's Staff |
| | What are the principal reasons for their exclusion? | **Skills and Knowledge:**<br>Awareness<br>Confidence<br>Skills Gap<br>Motivation<br>Fear<br>**Access:**<br>Access to / cost of devices<br>Cost of bandwidth<br>Availability of bandwidth<br>Accessibility of services (design)<br>**Organisational Issues:**<br>Staff skills<br>Organisational Awareness<br>Organisational Priorities<br>Ownership (strategic & delivery) |
| | Discuss the factors that apply in more detail … | |
| | Who has ownership of digital exclusion / inclusion matters within your organisation? | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Strategic approach to digital inclusion** | How is digital inclusion represented at Board level? | |
| | How often is digital inclusion considered by the Board? | As part of general strategy development?<br>As part of digital strategy development?<br>When issues arise?<br>Quarterly, Annually, less often? |
| | How does the organisation learn from its own experience and from that of others? (in relation to digital inclusion) | |
| | What are the key elements and scope of your current digital inclusion strategy? | |
| | What digital inclusion initiatives have been instigated or championed by the Board? | |
| | What digital inclusion initiatives have been instigated or championed by the senior management team? | |
| | How are issues recognised, captured and addressed strategically? (in relation to digital inclusion) | |
| | How is success measured, captured and reported? (in relation to digital inclusion) | |
| | How is best practice identified and adopted? (in relation to digital inclusion) | |
| | How does the organisation's digital strategy maximize inclusion outcomes for staff, users and other relevant stakeholders? | |
| | How is strategy actioned into implementation? | |
| **Practical approach to digital inclusion** | Please describe key digital inclusion initiatives your organisation has delivered in the last 3-5 years? | |
| | What are the key digital inclusion outcomes from those initiatives? | |
| | How will you scale and build upon digital inclusion successes? | |
| | How is success measured, captured and reported? (in relation to digital inclusion) | |
| | How will the outcomes of initiatives be fed back into your organisation's strategic planning process? | |
| | What key challenges were encountered (in each initiative)? | |
| **Success factors** | What were the key success factors? | |
| | What buy in is required from internal and external stakeholders to assure successful implementation | |
| | What common themes/factors would you identify if considering all of the initiatives you have delivered? | |
| | What key lessons have you learnt? What (actionable) recommendations can you share with other organisations from your experience? | |
| | How is/was user feedback recorded and used? | |
| **Investment** | How much has your organisation invested in digital inclusion initiatives? | |

# Footnotes

[1] Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index, 2020

[2] National Survey for Wales 2019/2020: Internet Use and Online Public Sector Services, February 2021

[3] Ofcom, Communications Market Report, 2012

[4] Welsh Government, Digital Strategy for Wales, Digital Inclusion, 2021

[5] Digital Inclusion Alliance for Wales, From Inclusion to Resilience: an Agenda for digital inclusion, 2021

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[8] BBC, Digital broadband divide grows in rural Wales, 2016

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[10] Based on NHS Digital, Definition of Digital Inclusion, 2021

[11] Carnegie UK, Making Digital Real, 2014

[12] Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index, 2020

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