## Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales From Inclusion to Resilience 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

An agenda for digital inclusion

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## About us

The Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales (DIAW) was created as part of the Welsh Government funded Digital Communities Wales: Digital Confidence, Health and Well-being programme, delivered by Cwmpas. DIAW brings together organisations from across Wales that are working together to make Wales a digitally-inclusive nation. With over 90 members, the Alliance comprises public and third sector organisations, private sector companies and academia, all focused on ensuring that everyone who wants to in Wales is able to access and use digital tools and technologies in their everyday lives and has the confidence to do so.

If you think this describes the work of your organisation, but you are not yet a member of the Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales, please contact us for further information.

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# Introduction to the second edition

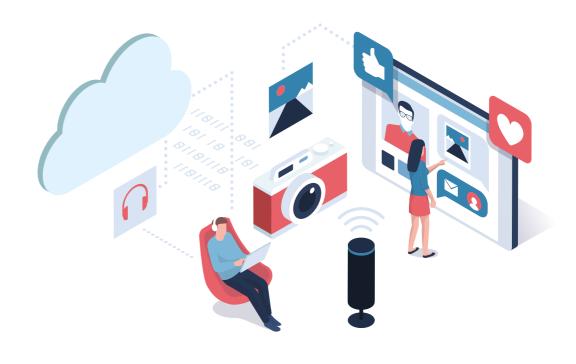
#### By Hamish Laing, Chair, Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales

'From Inclusion to Resilience' was first published in early 2021. It set out a cross-sector agenda for digital inclusion in Wales. In it we identified five priority areas where a real difference could be made:

- 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

Even in the short time since the launch of 'From Inclusion to Resilience', the context has changed considerably and so we are releasing this second edition. Encouragingly the National Survey for Wales found that 93% of adults (aged 16 and over) said they personally use the internet in 2021/22, up from 90% in 2019/20<sup>1</sup>. However, as more and more of our lives and public services are online, it is vitally important that we ensure that everyone in our communities has the skills and resources to use the internet confidently and safely. As our communities recover from the Covid-19 pandemic, new economic and social challenges lie ahead. The Cost of Living Crisis continues to deepen across the country, and people are having to make difficult choices about how they spend their money. This makes our work in the five priority areas even more crucial. It is vital that the work to create inclusive and resilient communities is maintained and accelerated. In the two years since we first published this Agenda, the Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales has been working hard to make Wales a truly digitally-inclusive nation. In this second edition, we outline the work that has been achieved by the Alliance or its individual members across the five priority areas, discuss what has changed, and propose amendments or re-assessments that need to be made. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of every action taken, but an overview of the new context for digital inclusion in Wales. The five priority areas are:

Priority 1	Embedding digital inclusion acro
Priority 2	Mainstreaming digital inclusion
Priority 3	Addressing data poverty as a key
Priority 4	Prioritising essential digital skills in the economy
Priority 5	Implementing a new minimum d



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digital living standard

### Cross-cutting themes

In the first edition of From Inclusion to Resilience, the Alliance called for the adoption of co-production approaches in Priority 5. However, it is now felt that this should be the approach used across all our priorities, and across all digital interventions in Wales that are addressing these priorities. Co-production principles and user-centred design start with the lived experience of people who face digital exclusion and should be at the heart of the design of all digital interventions. DIAW Network members work in and with communities across Wales to tackle digital exclusion and so they have those lived experiences to help services design better interventions.

Research into digital inclusion has shown that the groups most likely to be digitally excluded are older adults, disabled people, people with long-term health conditions, those with lower educational attainment, lower income individuals and families, people in rural areas, Welsh speaking people and others who do not use English as their first language, socially isolated and lonely people, and homeless people<sup>2</sup>. A cross-cutting theme across all five priority areas listed below is the need to focus on these groups when designing any digital services or digital inclusion interventions.



<sup>2</sup>National Survey for Wales 2022 and Lloyds Bank Consumer Index 202

Priority 1

#### Embedding digital inclusion across all sectors

In 2021 we set out an objective for everyone who wants or needs to be online to be able to access the internet and technology confidently and safely. This necessitated a concerted effort across all sectors and government departments, and the Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales wanted to promote and facilitate this. We must recognise that no one organisation or sector can do this on their own, it will only be achieved through partnerships and collaborations across sectors.

There has been continued digital transformation in the public sector in Wales. The Centre for Digital Public Services has published Digital Service Standards for Wales<sup>3</sup> following consultation with stakeholders, which have been promoted by the Alliance, aiming to ensure that the needs of the user are always at the centre of the way services are designed and delivered. Audit Wales have published "Digital inclusion in Wales" which sets out questions for public bodies to ask themselves as they consider their approach to digital inclusion<sup>4</sup>.

The Alliance has been successful in bringing different sectors together and supporting the development of better strategic relationships with a consensus that ending digital exclusion is everyone's responsibility, not just the Government's. Organisations such as NHS Health Boards and Trusts, local authorities, charities, and the housing sector, among others, now have a space in which to share what they are doing and to identify opportunities for collaboration.

User-centred design or co-production principles are vital to embedding digital inclusion. They are also vital to the creation of successful digital services and products. Poorly designed digital services and products discourage people from using them and further exclude those who are not digitally confident. Upskilling your workforce and citizens is only useful if the digital services created are usable and designed alongside users. All digital public services and products must also meet WCAG AA accessibility standards<sup>5</sup> and the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018<sup>6</sup>.

A geo-spatial mapping exercise<sup>7</sup> developed by Welsh Government and CDPS using Data Map Wales has been promoted by the Alliance to identify the many digital inclusion initiatives across the country, leading to a more joined-up and complementary approach. Across different sectors, more organisations are signing up to Digital Communities Wales: Digital Confidence, Health and Well-being (DCW)'s Digital Inclusion Charter<sup>8</sup> and are achieving accreditation in recognition of the work they are doing.

#### Priority 2

#### Mainstreaming digital inclusion in health and social care

We noted in our Agenda that digital - access, skills and confidence is being recognised as a social determinant of health and identified the health and social care sectors as a vital part of a digitally-inclusive country. The sectors have undergone, and are still going through, a digital transformation. While this can create a stronger health and social care service and fairer communities, it is vital that this does not create a digital "inverse care law"<sup>10</sup> in Wales that exacerbates health inequalities.

A lot of progress has been made on this priority in the two years since the Agenda's publication. We have had successful engagement with the newly formed Digital Special Health Authority, Digital Health and Care Wales, who have recently signed DCW's Digital Inclusion Charter and are working towards accreditation. At a Digital Summit event held to bring together health, care and the voluntary sectors to collaborate on how digital tools can support and enable inclusion Simon Jones, Chair of DHCW, said:

"People are going to see more opportunities for digital engagement with their services and managing their own care much more. As we develop digital systems and application, we want to make certain that those people who need access to services and consume more health and care services than others, aren't in some way worse off than they might otherwise have been. What we want to do in Wales is make inclusion an intended consequence not exclusion an unintended consequence of digital innovation in health care."

Health Boards and Trusts across Wales are now engaging with digital inclusion and progress has been made to embed digital inclusion in their plans. For example, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board have worked with DCW to put digital inclusivity at the heart of their health care<sup>11</sup> in implementing its new 'Our Digital Future' strategy, and likewise following consultation and support from DCW, Digital Inclusion is now one of the six themes of Velindre University NHS Trust's new Digital Strategy. Hywel Dda University Health Board has recently appointed a Digital Inclusion Manager and team which is a first for Health Boards in Wales. Alliance members are members of the assurance boards and Programme Board for the NHS Wales app and the Digital Medicines Transformation Portfolio to ensure that the principles of digital inclusion are designed in from the outset. Health Education and Improvement Wales is developing a digital capability framework for healthcare staff which will be launched in April 2023. Social Care Wales has worked with Digital Communities Wales to create an e-learning module for their workforce. Moving forward, the Alliance would support a stronger focus on digital inclusion in the formal and informal care sectors.

Since the publication of the Agenda, the digital inclusion ecosystem in Wales has become more joined up, with networks and partnerships being developed across sectors, organisations and institutions. The consistently high attendance at Alliance Network meetings is evidence of how much it is valued by its members. In the context of the cost of living crisis and the potential impact of reduced spending within public services, it is essential that this is maintained and developed further. We must ensure our communities are resilient to future challenges and able to protect and support the people and families most severely impacted by challenges including digital exclusion. For the next step to be successful, we believe we need greater engagement with the private sector – especially SMEs and micro-businesses – and this will be a key focus of our work. We will continue to work to embed digital inclusion and facilitate the exchange of best practice that is being developed in the co-production of digital services and user-centred design.

- Welsh Government to incorporate our priority outcomes in future iterations of the delivery plan for the Digital Strategy for Wales<sup>9</sup>.
- Build on work already done to raise awareness of how digital inclusion contributes to each of the seven national Well-being Goals for Wales.
- Digital inclusion of service users and staff as a core element of all public sector digital transformation projects.
- Further action by the private sector, including communications providers, SME's and micro-businesses, to address digital exclusion across Wales.



#### **Priority 3**

#### Addressing data poverty as a key issue

A Wales-wide Digital Strategy for Health and Social Care is being published by Welsh Government with digital inclusion woven into it, thanks to the work of DIAW members. The Alliance is also looking forward to working with the new Chief Digital Officer for Health and Social Care to develop this momentum further.

The feedback we get from our members is that the Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales has given added credibility and stature to digital inclusion activities within health and social care. Key stakeholders and decision-makers inside and outside of Government are aware of the cross-sector alliance and listen to it. The priority is to ensure that these new relationships are maintained and developed further, as the challenging economic and social contexts that are ahead of us demand a greater focus than ever on ensuring a strong, robust and inclusive health and social care sector in Wales.

#### **Key Outcomes**

- Every health and care provider in Wales recognises digital inclusion as a key determinant of health and supports patients and carers to have digital access, skills and confidence.
- Health and social care providers and Heath Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) provide training to develop the digital skills of the Welsh health and social care workforce, so that they can participate safely and effectively in digital services and support patients to do the same.
- Addressing digital inclusion is a mandatory requirement in all digital health investment decisions. All digital services and products are designed using co-production approaches or user-centred design principles to meet accessibility standards and the needs of Welsh citizens and our health care professionals.
- The new Digital Strategy for Health and Care in Wales is published with a focus on digital inclusion and which supports the outcomes recommended in Digital Inclusion Guide for Health and Care in Wales 2019<sup>12</sup>.

Covid-19 exposed the already prevalent and growing issue of data poverty in Welsh society. Research by Nesta shone a light on the issue<sup>13</sup>, with the conclusion that more research and a greater policy focus was needed. In the time since the publication of the Agenda, there has been a growth in awareness of the problem and the challenges it creates and more interventions focused on reducing it. However, the cost of living crisis that is hitting Welsh communities means that the issue is far from being solved and is, in fact, worsening<sup>14</sup>.

The Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales has sought to promote awareness of the issue among key stakeholders and partners. Addressing data poverty was a focus for one of the DIAW Quarterly Network meetings<sup>15</sup>, with contributions from Alliance members that highlighted both the different ways in which people experience data poverty, and how it impacts their lives and opportunities; and the support which is available - but often not widely used or known about.

At a UK level, Ofcom has published a series of reports on affordability of communications services<sup>16</sup>, including broadband and mobile data; and strengthened guidance on 'treating vulnerable consumers fairly'. It is encouraging to see Ofcom reporting on this matter, and we would like to see them continue to strengthen its role as a regulator in this area; reporting on social tariff take-up and households who are disconnected.

Alliance members have helped Good Things Foundation to produce a practical short guide for local charities and organisations on 'Supporting people with data connectivity<sup>17</sup>'. The guide fills a gap in information and aims to help local charities and organisations know how they can support people experiencing data poverty. Several Alliance members provided comments on earlier drafts to make the guide clear and useful and are now promoting the guide through their networks. The National Databank<sup>18</sup> has also been set up by Good Things Foundation - local databank partners can now access free mobile data connectivity donated by O2, Vodafone and Three so they can distribute this support to adults and households in their communities / using their services who need this.

The National Device Bank<sup>19</sup> (Good Things Foundation) and other Alliance members provide services which recycle and refurbish I.T. equipment and then distribute them to people in need through organisations. We would encourage all our members to consider donating to these services when they are replacing I.T. equipment across their organisations. These services contribute to a more sustainable solution to digital exclusion.



<sup>12</sup> NHS Wales Informatics Service & Wales Co-operative Centre

13 NESTA <sup>4</sup>Public Health Wales <sup>5</sup> Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales Good Things Foundation(a) <sup>18</sup> Good Things Foundation(b) <sup>19</sup> Good Things Foundation(c)

Public spaces such as libraries and community centres continue to provide internet access for those unable to afford it otherwise. Digital Communities Wales and Good Things Foundation support many of the public spaces in Wales who provide this service and the Alliance would urge Welsh Government and local authorities to ensure these spaces remain open and able to meet rising costs of utilities and broadband contracts. The closing of public spaces such as these disproportionately impacts those who are already excluded. Alliance members have offered to work with the Welsh Government to raise awareness of support such as discounted social tariffs and the National Databank - so that take up within Wales might increase, particularly in the context of the current cost of living crisis and pressures on household bills. Ofcom and the UK Government are calling on industry and charities to promote social tariffs to encourage more uptake.

Given the extremely challenging economic context that communities are now in, addressing data poverty as a key issue should be a bigger priority than ever. The Alliance has identified that the first step should be to better promote the support that is already available. There is also a need for more research in this area to truly understand the contexts of people who are digital excluded due to data poverty. The work to create a Minimum Digital Living Standard in Wales (Priority 5), in partnership with Alliance members, will support work in this priority as the creation of the MDLS will necessitate further research and understanding of the complex issues which contribute to data poverty in Wales.

The Alliance is very well placed to act as a key deliverer of this priority because it is cross-sector, with organisations big and small across the country.

As well as this short-term promotion of what is already available to help communities through the challenging period ahead, the Alliance wishes to continue to be a network and platform for developing further, long term, sustainable Welsh solutions to data poverty such as incorporating fibre where possible in all new social housing builds.

- Internet access is recognised as an essential utility in Wales, with Ofcom continuing to strengthen its role as a regulator in its reporting and in its support for vulnerable customers, groups and communities.
- There is co-ordinated, collaborative promotion of available support such as discounted social tariffs for broadband and mobile data and the National Databank.
- · There is free public provision of safe and easy to use WiFi, and community-based support for digital inclusion across all areas of Wales.
- Cross-sector collaboration continues to research and design . long term, sustainable solutions to data poverty with a specific focus on Wales.
- There should be free and equal access to public services for all people in Wales<sup>20</sup>. Work should be undertaken to allow the current zero-rating of some public sector websites to be extended to all digital public service websites and apps and they should be designed to minimise data usage as much as possible.





#### Priority 4 Prioritising essential digital skills for work and life in the economy

Covid-19 had a huge impact on the economy, as well as our communities and the people in it<sup>21</sup>. On top of being a tumultuous time for businesses and public services, lockdowns changed the way people work, learn and connect. The Agenda sought to ensure that everyone had the digital skills needed for today's Welsh economy, whilst recognising that skills interventions must be accompanied by accessibility, access and well-designed digital services.

The UK Community Renewal Fund provided a channel and resources for combined authorities, city regions and local authorities to partner with others (including industry and the voluntary sector) with an interest in pilot projects supporting the development of basic digital skills to close the digital skills gap. Several DIAW members have been involved in supporting the development of approaches to building basic digital skills in Wales through this.

The new UK Shared Prosperity Fund is a potential route to continue this work. The detailed Regional Action Plans for the Shared Prosperity Fund are anticipated to be completed by end of the current financial year. The Alliance is working together with the Growth and City Region Deals to ensure that digital inclusion remains a priority within this funding stream.

To improve the learner experience across both English and Welsh language versions, Good Things Foundation has been working with support from Cwmpas' DCW programme team on improvements to Learn My Way<sup>22</sup>. This was created to offer free online courses for beginners to help them to develop digital skills to make the most of the online world - ranging from using a keyboard to support with how to claim Universal Credit.

A programme of digital skills development and support for the third sector, NEWID, has been developed in Wales. This is co-ordinated by WCVA, Cwmpas and ProMo-Cymru, and developed in consultation with the voluntary sector to ensure maximum impact. With 'digital' having a wide-ranging role within the work the third sector undertakes, it is vital that organisations have access to information and support to help make judgements around how digital can complement the range of activities being undertaken. The project has captured information from organisations across Wales to learn more about their relationship with technology, enabling the development of approaches that fulfil the needs of sector. It found that the pandemic had led to a massive surge in the use of digital technology, but that additional support is needed to ensure this reaches everyone in a confident and secure way.

Digital Communities Wales, a Welsh Government procured digital inclusion programme, delivered by Cwmpas in partnership with Swansea University and Good Things Foundation, has continued its free digital support to organisations across Wales to ensure that everyone has the digital skills, confidence, and access to get online and use digital technology safely and in a way that is meaningful to them. Since the Agenda's publication in March 2021, DCW has conducted digital skills audits with local authorities, health board directorates, third sector organisations, housing providers and other organisations and community groups in Wales, gathering insight on over 2,600 staff and volunteers as of February 2023. DCW's digital skills audit is built from the Essential Digital Skills Framework<sup>23</sup> and allows for an evidence-based approach to benchmarking and increasing digital skills and confidence. It gives organisations a data driven understanding of the digital skills and confidence of the workforce, and what support and training interventions are needed. Health Education and Improvement Wales is developing a version for healthcare staff, working with DCW to ensure close alignment and a common language through the complex pathways in and out of different sectors.

The Alliance has promoted the importance of digital skills in the challenging post-Covid economy but knows there is a lot more to be done to meet the lasting impacts of that challenge and to face the challenges of the future.

- Every adult has access to appropriate, ongoing basic digital skills training and confidence building. This needs to be face-to face where required; it is not sufficient to put learning resources online and assume that the people who need them can and will access them.
- A digital skills audit of employees across Wales is undertaken by employers and the data gathered is used to make data-driven decisions about digital skills interventions.
- Businesses and employers from all sectors across Wales train and upskill their workforce in core digital skills.
- Data collected by capability frameworks, digital skills audits and other research leads to a commitment to funds to address these with co-produced interventions.
- Growth and City Region Deals work to ensure that digital inclusion remains a priority within the SPF funding stream and that digital inclusion activities are coordinated to avoid duplication.



#### Implementing a new minimum digital living standard **Priority 5**

The Agenda called for the establishment of a Minimum Digital Living Standard (MDLS) for Wales. This would be an agreed standard of what it is to be digitally included; aligned with our national Well-being Goals.

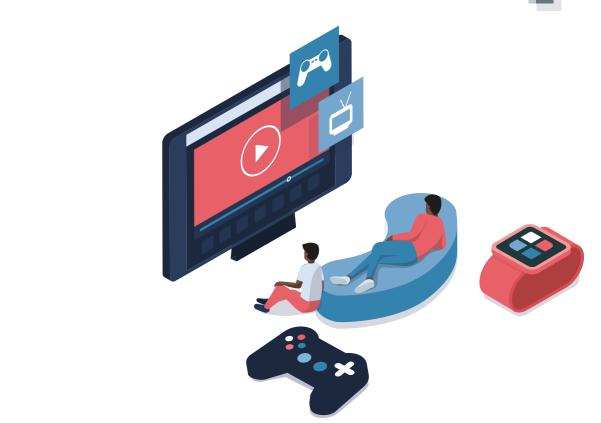
We were delighted that Welsh Government supported our call around a Minimum Digital Living Standard for Wales.

This year, Cwmpas and Swansea University have partnered the UK Minimum Digital Living Standard Project Team (from University of Liverpool, Loughborough University, Good Things Foundation and City University) in research commissioned by Welsh Government to explore what a Minimum Digital Living Standard for Wales should include. The research included a literature review; online interviews and a survey with stakeholders from across the Welsh digital landscape including Alliance members. The team also held a mix of face to face and online deliberative focus groups with members of the public in Wales to test and explore the relevance of the MDLS definition and contents to Wales. The findings from the first Phase of the research are available online<sup>24</sup>. The MDLS for Wales research sits alongside the interim report from the UK MDLS project team<sup>25</sup> which has focused initially on developing the MDLS for families with children.

The MDLS was originally defined by the UK Minimum Digital Living Standard project team as:

'A minimum digital standard of living includes, but is more than, having accessible internet, adequate equipment, and the skills, knowledge and support people need. It's about being able to communicate, connect and engage with opportunities safely and with confidence.'

We knew that this would be a complex task, but through the principles of co-design and citizen engagement, the ambitious objective could be fulfilled. Alliance members have already played a key role in setting up focus groups and contributing to the development of this research. Looking ahead, the Alliance will play a significant role in promoting the outcomes of the research and - alongside other key partners - in developing and implementing recommendations about how this can be achieved in Wales. During challenging social and economic times, the MDLS for Wales will be a vital tool to catalyse action and help ensure that everyone in our communities has access to what they need.



Having a MDLS is not enough in itself. Our Alliance will make the case for the findings of the MDLS research to be implemented and will promote its effective use as a tool to influence policy and practice across different sectors in Wales. This is a crucial step in a journey towards Wales having an MDLS that creates real change in how services are designed and delivered, and we want to see growing awareness of it and the role it can play in creating a digitally-inclusive Wales.

- The creation of a Minimum Digital Living Standard for Wales for households with children is the catalyst for Welsh Government to commission further research to understand the implications of the Minimum Digital Living Standard on a range of households and communities facing digital exclusion in Wales.
- Effective cross-sector strategies, policies and actions are developed together with financial and political commitment to implement a Minimum Digital Living Standard to ensure that no households in Wales are below the MDLS threshold as part of the vision for digital inclusion in Wales.



## Conclusion

Since Inclusion to Resilience was first published, the Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales has grown to over 90 members and has held six well-attended quarterly meetings where members have been joined by Ministers and Welsh Government policy leads to discuss these priorities, their own challenges and successes within those and forged partnerships and collaborations which have gone on to support Wales to be a more digitally inclusive nation. The Alliance plans to continue this work, sharing with each other, looking at good practice from other nations, fostering collaboration and partnerships, working across sectors and organisations, and creating an environment where digital inclusion is the key to good services and a better quality of life for the people of Wales. The times ahead are challenging but the Alliance will strive to ensure that digital inclusion continues to have a high profile for Welsh Government and for organisations across Wales and that it continues to establish itself as an effective and independent voice for digital inclusion in Wales.



## **Appendix: DIAW Members**

AbilityNet	Home-Start Cymru	
Action for Elders	Hywel Dda University Health Board	
Active Wales	Iberian and Latin American Association in Wales (ILA)	
African Community Centre	Innovate Trust	
Age Connects Torfaen	Internet4Everyone Ltd	
Age Cymru Gwynedd a Mon	Learning and Work Institute	
Antur Cymru Enterprise - Antur Teifi	Learning Disability Wales	
ateb Group	Leonard Cheshire Cymru	
BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT	Macular Society	
Big Lemon	miFuture	
Blaenau Gwent Council	Mirus	
Blaenau Gwent Libraries/Aneurin Leisure Trust	Monmouthshire County Council	
Blood Cancer UK	Monmouthshire Housing Association	
Bridgend County Borough Council	Newport City Council	
BT Group	Newydd Housing Association	
Caerphilly County Borough Council	Neath Port Talbot Adult Community Learning	
Cardiff and Vale Recovery and Wellbeing College	Neath Port Talbot CVS	
Cardiff Capital Region	Oxford Internet Institute	
Cardiff County Borough Council	Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services	
Cardiff University	Perago	
Care & Repair Cymru	Pobl Group	
Carmarthenshire County Council	Powys County Council	
Centre for Digital Public Services	Powys Teaching Health Board	
Citizens Advice Cymru	ProMo Cymru	
Citizens Online	Public Health Wales	
ClwydAlyn Housing Ltd	Race Council Cymru	
Community Housing Cymru	RareQoL Ltd	
Community Lives Consortium	Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB)	
Competition and Markets Authority	RWG Mobile	
Computer Recyclers UK	SCL - Society of Chief Librarians Wales	
Computeraid	SCVS - Swansea Council for Voluntary Services	
ConnectED Cymru	Serco	
Cwmpas	Skills and Volunteering Cymru	
Cyngor Ysgolion Sul ac Addysg Gristnogol Cymru	Social Care Wales	
Cynon Taf Community Housing Group	SOCITM Advisory	
Denbighshire Housing - Denbighshire County Council	Sub-Sahara Advisory Panel	
Digital Communities Wales	Swansea Council	
Digital Health and Care Wales	Swansea Music Art Digital	
Digital Poverty Alliance	Swansea University	
Disability Sport Wales	The Big Issue	
Disability Wales	the DigiCoach	



DVLA	Health Ed
Dŵr Cymru	University
EYST Wales	Velindre U
Flintshire County Council	WCVA - W
Good Things Foundation	Women C
Hafod Housing	Youth Cyr

Health Education and Improvement Wales	
University of Wales Trinity St David	
Velindre University NHS Trust	
WCVA - Wales Council for Voluntary Action	
Women Connect First	
Youth Cymru	

This list was correct at time of publication. For an up to date list, please visit <a href="https://www.digitalcommunities.gov.wales/diaw-network/">https://www.digitalcommunities.gov.wales/diaw-network/</a>

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

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