Research into Digital Exclusion in Scotland

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, JUNE 2020

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Context

As the third sector joined the rest of the country in turning to online solutions, we knew the levels of digital exclusion across Scotland would become forefront.

As a funder and partner to the third sector we wanted to understand more about the digital landscape.

Our Specialist Volunteer Anna Halliday conducted research which provided recommendations on what we need to do to ensure a fairer more inclusive society through access to technology and connectivity.

Problem Statement

Pre-existing inequality means that people across Scotland are digitally excluded, at a time when connectivity is more important than ever.

The third sector is trying to respond, but sometimes they, and more often those they are trying to help, do not have the technology, connectivity and the skills needed to connect with one another.

As a result, support services are compromised, reduced or can't be delivered and the lack of connectivity is impacting on the poorest and most isolated in society.

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Research Recommendations

Taking Action:

- **Digital exclusion is a complex, multi-faceted issue** that requires collaboration and co-operation across sectors and between organisations in order to solve it.

- This is not just about supplying suitable technology. Beneficiaries must also be provided with the **appropriate skills, confidence, mentoring and support** for the long term.

- Overall, it is clear that **tackling digital exclusion is essential for individuals and communities to thrive and to ensure that everyone in society receives the opportunities needed to succeed** in today's modern world.

- The Coronavirus Pandemic **provides an opportunity for a turning point**. Now, a concerted and extensive effort is needed to turn the tide.

- This report aims to **inspire an action-orientated approach**. Possible interventions and opportunities are numerous, the following are only meant to serve as a rough guide.

Crisis Response: 0-3 months

- In the **ongoing emergency / crisis response**, the application process for support should be simple and the response should be **rapid**
- Work alongside communities and grassroots organisations to **build resilience** in the communities
- **Increase collaboration** between private funders and trusted local organisations to share resources and avoid duplication of efforts
- The focus should be on building the **core capacity** of organisations through digital infrastructure, technology, systems, basic training and support

Adjusting and Adapting to the New Normal: 0-6 months

- Focus should be on helping organisations and individuals to adjust to **the new normal**
- Society will be different than it was before the lockdown and ensuing crisis. Some aspects of society may take years to fully return, other changes (such as hybridised working from home models) may be permanent
- Funders should support installing suitable and affordable IT infrastructure and hardware that will allow groups and organisations to keep progressing and advancing for several years. In addition, funders should support the training and organisational development required for these groups to evolve and succeed in the future
- Digital buddies / champions should be assigned to individuals and organisations to provide mentoring, confidence, training and support as they adopt these changes, thus alleviating pressure on public services

The Recovery: 6+ months

- Priority should be given to funding training, supporting and raising awareness for **mental health concerns** amongst community members and the organisations that help them
- Focus should be on **those left behind** as society begins to reopen:
  - Vulnerable people with health concerns
  - Those caring for people with health conditions
  - Those who have lost employment / income / education due to the crisis (this will overwhelmingly be **young people**)
- Planning should reflect the strong possibility that poverty and inequality may increase

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JOIN THE DISCUSSION

Read the full report at:

https://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Digital-Exclusion-in-Scotland-final-full-report-1.pdf

Email us to join the discussion

To find out more visit our website

www.inspiringscotland.org.uk

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