



Delivering **Digital Inclusion**

Summary of consultation responses

Delivering **Digital Inclusion**
Summary of consultation responses

April 2009

Communities and Local Government
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU
Telephone: 020 7944 4400
Website: www.communities.gov.uk

© Crown Copyright, 2009

Copyright in the typographical arrangement rests with the Crown.

This publication, excluding logos, may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium for research, private study or for internal circulation within an organisation. This is subject to it being reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the publication specified.

Any other use of the contents of this publication would require a copyright licence. Please apply for a Click-Use Licence for core material at www.opsi.gov.uk/click-use/system/online/pLogin.asp, or by writing to the Office of Public Sector Information, Information Policy Team, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU

e-mail: licensing@opsi.gov.uk

If you require this publication in an alternative format please email alternativeformats@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Tel: 0300 123 1124

Fax: 0300 123 1125

Email: communities@capita.co.uk

Online via the Communities and Local Government website: www.communities.gov.uk

75% recycled

This is printed on
75% recycled paper

April 2009

Reference: 09NRAD05890

ISBN: 978-1-4098-1383-5

Contents

| | Page |
|---|------|
| Chapter 1: Introduction | 4 |
| Background | 4 |
| The consultation | 4 |
| Research objectives and approach | 5 |
| Chapter 2: Summary | 6 |
| Introduction | 6 |
| Perceptions of the consultation | 6 |
| Perceptions of digital inclusion analysis | 6 |
| Criticisms and suggested improvements | 7 |
| Evaluating recommended actions for delivering digital inclusion | 7 |
| Digital inclusion strategy | 9 |
| Chapter 3: Understanding Digital Inclusion | 11 |
| Introduction | 11 |
| Positive response to the consultation | 11 |
| The barriers that need to be challenged | 14 |
| Criticisms | 16 |
| Chapter 4: Evaluating Digital Inclusion Actions | 18 |
| Introduction | 18 |
| Charter for Digital Inclusion | 19 |
| Digital Inclusion Champion | 21 |
| Chapter 5: Delivering Digital Inclusion | 24 |
| Introduction | 24 |
| Digital inclusion strategy | 24 |
| Strong leadership | 25 |
| Case study examples | 27 |
| Annex | 31 |

Chapter One

Introduction

Background

In October 2008, *Delivering Digital Inclusion: An Action Plan for Consultation* was published. Commissioned by the Rt Hon Paul Murphy, Secretary of State for Wales and Minister for Digital Inclusion, the document provides a framework for achieving greater digital inclusion and for championing the best use of technology to tackle ongoing social inequalities. It sets out both immediate actions and a number of proposals for consultation.

The Action Plan outlines the key issues relating to the use of digital technology and argues why digital exclusion is an increasingly urgent social problem. In summary:

- Digital technologies pervade every aspect of modern society. However these opportunities are not enjoyed by the whole of the UK population – for example, 17 million people in the UK still do not use computers and the Internet and there is a strong correlation between digital exclusion and social exclusion.
- There are significant and untapped opportunities to use technology better *on behalf* of citizens and communities. These include improved service planning, design and delivery, particularly to address the needs of disadvantaged groups and individuals.
- The purpose of the *Digital Inclusion Action Plan* is to ensure that all citizens, particularly those who are disadvantaged, realise both the **direct** and **indirect** benefits of digital technologies

The consultation

The consultation document formed the basis for a consultation with public, private and third sector stakeholders. The consultation period extended from the launch of the document on the 24 October 2008 and closed on 19 January 2009.

Stakeholder events

The consultation process included two stakeholder events with public, private and third sector organisations to gather their views and perceptions of the analysis outlined in *Delivering Digital Inclusion*.

Each stakeholder event included more than a hundred delegates and took place in London on 4 December 2008 and Birmingham on 12 December 2008. The delegates represented a diversity of audiences and perspectives, including the Information and Computer Technology Industry, Regional Development Agencies, Local Authorities, Charities working with disadvantaged groups, education specialists and researchers, and organisations whose remit is to deliver digital inclusion initiatives.

Open feedback and responses

An important part of the consultation and feedback process was the written and email responses to the *Digital Inclusion Action Plan* provided by a diversity of stakeholders from across the public, private and third sectors. In total, **99 consultation responses** of varying degrees of detail were received.

Research objectives and approach

In January 2009, Communities and Local Government (CLG) commissioned the Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute to undertake systematic secondary analysis of all stakeholder feedback and responses to the *Delivering Digital Inclusion* consultation. This report documents the key findings emerging from this analysis.

The core objectives of the research were to:

- Identify the key findings emerging from the stakeholder responses
- Understand the general perceptions and responses of the stakeholders to the document
- Articulate what the stakeholders perceive to be the core barriers to delivering digital inclusion and possible ways of overcoming these
- Evaluate stakeholders' responses to the proposals of a Digital Inclusion Charter and concept of a Digital Inclusion Champion
- Explore possible elements of a future strategy for tackling digital exclusion.

Chapter 2

Summary

Introduction

This chapter summarises some of the **key findings** from the analysis. The findings are broken down into key points taken from each chapter. The structure of this chapter is as follows:

Chapter structure

Section one: What are the stakeholder perceptions of the consultation?

Section two: To what extent do stakeholders share the same understanding of digital inclusion?

Section three: What are the problems with the consultation and its analysis?

Section four: How do stakeholders evaluate and perceive core digital inclusion actions?

Section five: What overall strategy and principles do stakeholders consider necessary for delivering digital inclusion?

Perceptions of the consultation

- All the stakeholders support the *Delivering Digital Inclusion* consultation. Most stakeholders agree with the definition of digital inclusion and the nature of the problem.
- All consider it important to tackle the digital exclusion of large sections of society, particularly because of the advantages new technology offers people in the 21st century.
- The consultation is perceived to be an important starting point for debate and policy delivery focused on reducing digital exclusion and its negative social consequences.

Perceptions of digital inclusion analysis

- The majority of stakeholders concur with the analysis provided on digital inclusion, including the benefits and barriers connected to it. Stakeholders are particularly supportive of the powerful links established between digital exclusion and social exclusion.
- Emphasis on the broader social impact of digital inclusion is widely embraced by all stakeholders. All stakeholders reject a more narrow emphasis on technological aspects of the agenda.

- As public services increasingly provide and deliver their services online, the importance of digital inclusion will continue to increase in the future. As a result, there is a concern that those digitally excluded will become further excluded as traditional means of communicating with public services are phased out.
- Given the importance of the issue, many stakeholders argue that digital inclusion needs to be supported and pushed across government.
- The key barriers to digital inclusion are differentiated into two types: internal and external barriers.
 - Internal barriers are barriers connected to individuals and include cost and affordability; poverty of aspiration; fear and anxiety connected to using digital and new technology, and lack of skills and confidence
 - External barriers are structural barriers connected to lack of access, accessibility and usability.

Criticisms and suggested improvements

- Stakeholders do raise questions and criticisms regarding the analysis that might need to be developed in the future as demonstrated below:
- Some think the consultation document offers a superficial and limited account of new technology and its benefits. This is a gap that needs to be filled.
- Some stakeholders consider the analysis of the benefits of digital inclusion to be quite “pedestrian”, not fully exploring the positive impact of technological innovation on the digital inclusion agenda.
- Furthermore, some stakeholders do not feel that the consultation goes far enough in its understanding, definition or approach to digital inclusion. Improvements are suggested. It is argued that:
 - More detailed analysis of the digital exclusion of specific audiences including low income, black and minority ethnic and disabled groups is needed
 - The consultation has to go beyond analysis. There needs to be greater emphasis on policy and how this will translate into actions to address digital exclusion
 - More needs to be made of the economic justification and argument in support of digital inclusion. This is mentioned but does not go far enough and needs to if the digital inclusion agenda is to be successful.

Evaluating recommended actions for delivering digital inclusion

Perceptions of a Digital Inclusion Charter

- The vast majority of stakeholders are supportive of the concept of developing a Charter for Digital Inclusion.
- Developing a Charter would signify the importance government places on tackling digital exclusion and could be an important first step in raising levels of digital inclusion.
- The positive reception of the Charter is based on widespread support for the principles themselves.

- The three principles of the Charter directly address what most consider the key issue: ensuring that the digital and social exclusion of the most disadvantaged groups in society is combated.
- Furthermore, the Charter could also provide public, private and third sector service providers with a benchmark for success for evaluating digital inclusion in the future.
- But many stakeholders are concerned that talk of principles of digital inclusion and its proposed benefits will not materialise into concrete actions and policy interventions. This reflects a concern, among many third sector organisations, that interest in delivering digital inclusion is limited to the 'usual suspects'.
- The Digital Inclusion Charter needs to clearly lay out the benefits, obligations, and responsibilities associated with digital inclusion. People do not want too much prescription. However, light regulation might be necessary.
- Some criticise the Charter principles for being too broad to be useful. A more effective Digital Inclusion Charter would be based on specific strategic priorities for improving the digital inclusion outcomes of socially and digitally excluded groups.
- Attached to this is the criticism that the Charter needs to be communicated in a citizen-focused and clear language that is understandable by those groups of people specifically targeted.
- The related point made is that the Charter needs to be more "people focused" not "government focused". It needs to be driven by people and not by government. This means engagement with those who are digitally excluded, and cross-sector engagement with the public, private and third sectors.

Perceptions of the Digital Inclusion Champion

- The majority of stakeholders support the proposal for introducing a Digital Inclusion Champion to establish and drive cross-sector strategy for delivering digital inclusion.
- The Digital Inclusion Champion is needed as a central driving force ensuring that digital inclusion becomes embedded across government.
- The analysis identified different characteristics of what the role of the Digital Inclusion Champion should be. But most think the key role for any Champion would be to represent and advocate the interests of those who are digitally excluded and to promote digital inclusion.
- Many like the concept but think a new name is required. Emphasis on the Digital Inclusion Champion being the "voice of the excluded" led some stakeholders to suggest an alternative name for a Digital Inclusion Champion. One prominent suggestion was "Champion for the Digitally Excluded".
- The Digital Inclusion Champion would need to be a prominent public figure. It is essential that the individual brings gravitas to the role.
- The figure must have the power and authority to enforce any changes that are necessary to ensure digital inclusion of the most vulnerable groups is delivered. To do this, the individual must be someone who has direct access to ministers and other key policy decision-makers.

- The Digital Inclusion Champion would need to have strong lobbying and media skills to ensure digital inclusion receives widespread attention, and should be effective at working with ministers and civil servants across Whitehall.
- Any Digital Inclusion Champion (be it regional or national) needs to have some experience and expertise in the areas of (new) technology and social policy surrounding social exclusion. This is necessary in order to provide an authoritative voice on the issue of digital inclusion.
- Many stakeholders think finding a Digital Inclusion Champion with all these attributes would be difficult.
- If the role of a Digital Inclusion Champion is to be successful it must be independent of government. The Digital Inclusion Champion needs to be in a position to challenge the government and openly criticise public and private institutions where they feel it appropriate.
- Stakeholders want more detail on how the role of the Digital Inclusion Champion can bring about change. At present, it is felt that there is a lack of detail or that the proposals are too generic in nature.
- A popular suggestion was to have a network of Regional Digital Inclusion Champions spread across England who would be working under a unifying figure of National Digital Inclusion Champion. They would be responsible for the 'groundwork' and ensuring effective delivery of digital inclusion at a local level.
- Regional Digital Inclusion Champions would report to a UK Digital Inclusion Champion responsible for organising a strategic approach, working across government departments, and ensuring cooperation from the public, private and third sectors.
- Another suggestion is to split the role of the Digital Inclusion Champion. This would mean having a well-known, popular and media-savvy Champion responsible for raising awareness of digital inclusion while a second Champion would have more of an executive role, deciding what changes are needed and working towards implementing them.
- There was a distinct shortage of names suggested. This reflects the difficulty in finding someone who possesses the ideal blend of experience and attributes stakeholders argue a Digital Inclusion Champion should have.

Digital inclusion strategy

- The analysis has highlighted a number of key principles central to any successful digital inclusion strategy.
- It is vital that government places the voices of local people at the heart of its digital inclusion strategy. This agenda needs to remain **social in character, not technological**. This requires that the strategy is explicitly established to meet the needs of citizens and communities.
- The successful delivery of the digital inclusion agenda will depend on **strong leadership** from the Minister for Digital Inclusion, the Digital Inclusion Champion and others (e.g. Digital Mentors) with the task of directing and implementing policy and interventions.

- Effective strategy requires a **national approach**. A national strategy must be structured, well organised, ensuring nationwide coverage. But the strategy should not be a 'one size fits all' approach.
- The strategy needs to be flexible and closely tailored to the **different needs of communities and individuals**. This national approach should thus seek to build on existing local arrangements and expand on the most successful ones, indeed applying these to other areas where appropriate.
- The digital inclusion strategy needs **benchmarking and measurable outcomes** with **a clear time frame** for delivery. These should be established through sustained engagement and dialogue with not only industry and service providers, but consumers and service users themselves.
- The digital inclusion strategy needs to have **long term and secure funding**. Without this it will be impossible for the digital inclusion agenda to be successful.
- The digital inclusion strategy will require **strategic planning and targeted allocation** of funds to the "right areas" to ensure that the most digitally and socially excluded groups and individuals are empowered. This is related to having Regional Digital Inclusion Champions and the emphasis on local delivery.

Chapter 3

Understanding Digital Inclusion

Introduction

This section of the report focuses on three key objectives.

Objective one

First, an outline overview of stakeholder responses to the *Delivering Digital Inclusion Action Plan* and the analysis is provided. This includes commentary on the key themes of consensus identified.

Objective two

Second, the stakeholder response and evaluation of the understanding of the digital inclusion agenda is given. The chapter looks at whether there is a general consensus regarding the linking of digital inclusion specifically as a driver for social justice and inclusion and looks at stakeholder perception of the key barriers connected to digital inclusion more broadly.

Objective three

Third, we look at the criticisms made of the consultation document's understanding of digital inclusion and suggestions for improving its understanding and focus.

Positive response to the consultation

All the stakeholders support the *Delivering Digital Inclusion* consultation. Many expressed their gratitude at being consulted on such an important and far reaching issue and considered the consultation itself to be important.

"Clearly a very good idea. The digital inclusion of older people is a key issue and hopefully this will address that"

"17 million people not even using the Internet. That is awful. Something needs to be done"

One of the key findings from the analysis is that the vast majority of stakeholders concur with the analysis provided of digital inclusion, including the benefits and barriers connected to it.

"The analysis of the benefits and barriers looks spot on to me. They are on the right track here"

"We agree with the comment in the paper that to be most successful "engagement programmes and applications need to focus on their benefits rather than the ICT itself. Focus must lie on specific targeted benefits"

Stakeholders are particularly supportive of the powerful links established between digital and social exclusion. The argument that 75 per cent of those who are digitally excluded are also socially excluded is perceived to be a compelling argument for focusing on the digital inclusion of those currently not taking advantage of the benefits of new technology and digital progress.

“The strong links between digital and social exclusion are powerfully made. Demonstrating this is essential in gathering support for the agenda itself”

Some stakeholders consider the analysis of the benefits of digital inclusion to be quite “pedestrian”, not fully exploring the positive impact of technological innovation on the digital inclusion agenda.

“Clearly the direct and indirect benefits of digital inclusion are well-made. But more needs to be made of the overall benefits of technological progress. This is a key mechanism for delivering social justice. But in focusing too exclusively on the social side as isolated from technological advancement, this is a logical problem. It’s not a choice between the social or the technological – they go hand in hand”

Some, however, particularly third sector stakeholders dealing directly with groups with acute social needs, think that the links between social and digital exclusion are even stronger than presented in the consultation document.

“Our experience tells us that digital exclusion is more deeply embedded among older people, particularly those over the age of 65, than it suggests”

“There is an assumption that young people are all up to speed with the latest developments in technology. But our experience clearly shows us that a lot of young people from particularly deprived parts of the country are just as digitally excluded as any other group of people...while we like the fact that there is some reflection of this in the document it needs to go further”

The consultation is perceived to be an important starting point for debate and policy delivery focused on reducing digital exclusion and its negative social consequences. It is not perceived to be an end in itself.

“This is clearly the beginning of a dialogue. It asks the right questions. Now we need the right answers”

Most stakeholders agree with the definition of digital inclusion and the nature of the problem set out in Chapter One. Based on a solid and recent evidence base, many stakeholders embrace the emphasis on the “strong correlation made between social and digital inclusion”.

“The first chapter provides a good overview of the current evidence base which demonstrates a strong correlation between social and digital exclusion”

Emphasis on the broader social impact of digital inclusion is widely embraced and seen as an improvement on a more narrow emphasis on technological aspects of the digital inclusion agenda.

“The most positive aspect of the consultation is its real and sustained emphasis on improving the lives of excluded groups. This is a positive step in the right direction”

Most perceive the consultation to be focused on the gap between the “haves” and the “have nots”. The focus of the consultation for most stakeholders should be the “have nots” as the quote below highlights:

“The action plan is about reducing the widening divide between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’. The measurement of success of the Digital Inclusion Action Plan is the extent to which the number/depth of missed opportunities to improve the quality of life and life chances are reduced over time. We believe that the definition should focus on the ‘have nots’.

There was broad agreement with the analysis set out in Chapter Two. Many stakeholders felt that the chapter succeeded in setting out the importance of digital inclusion as a social issue. In the current economic climate, stakeholders particularly felt that focus should be paid to the relationship between digital inclusion and other key determinants of social inclusion such as education and employment.

“Being IT literate is essential now for getting a job. Not only does it facilitate better levels of education, but once entering the job market, it is usually very important for potential employees to be computer literate”

As public services increasingly provide and deliver their services online, the importance of digital inclusion will continue to increase in the future. There is a concern that those digitally excluded will become further excluded as traditional means of communicating with public services are phased out.

“This intervention is absolutely timely. Our society is increasingly dependent on new technology. Unless something is done, the people who are digitally excluded at the moment will only become more and more disadvantaged”

In this context, the *Delivering Digital Inclusion Action Plan* is best perceived as a complementary document to other recent government publications, including the recent white paper, *Communities in Control: real people, real power* (CLG 2008).

For some stakeholders, the document’s focus on digital and social inclusion fills a gap in the white paper, which is perceived to be light on policy looking at how people experiencing multiple forms of exclusion can be empowered.

“It fits alongside other Government policy. It fills a gap in Government policy about how the most excluded of people might be empowered. That is the potential of new technology”

This is directly related to a key driver of the likely success of the digital inclusion agenda. Many stakeholders argue that digital inclusion needs to be supported and pushed across government. It should not just be a CLG policy. Digital inclusion needs to be a cross-governmental policy to make sure the agenda is receiving the support and financial stimulus it requires.

“Ensuring the benefits of technology are available to all people in society is the aim... if this is to happen, it needs to have buy in across Whitehall, particularly at the Treasury, where financial decisions are made”

The recent publication of *Digital Britain – The Interim Report*, published in January 2009, which complements the document – goes some way to showing that digital inclusion and empowerment through technology have wider government backing.

The barriers that need to be challenged

There was much agreement with the barriers outlined in the consultation document. There is particular agreement with the importance of the following key barriers:

- individual lack of awareness/confidence (motivation)
- lack of skills
- lack of support
- areas where the market may not be reaching the digitally excluded (design inequalities and marketing inequalities)

“The analysis of the barriers is sound. It offers a good starting point and exploration of the important issues and barriers surrounding digital inclusion”

But many stakeholders felt it could have gone further. There are concerns that analysis of the barriers needs to be more detailed. The stakeholder responses tend to differentiate between two types of barriers preventing digital inclusion. These are:

- internal barriers (e.g. personal or subjective barriers), and
- external barriers (e.g. structural barriers)

Internal barriers

The key internal or personal barriers to digital inclusion are considered to be:

- affordability
- poverty of aspiration
- anxiety and fear
- lack of confidence

Cost and affordability

For most stakeholders, cost and affordability is less important as a barrier than it was five years ago. This is partly as a result of the diminishing cost of technology and partly a result of private and public service providers making a conscious effort to extend the uptake and access to the Internet, broadband and other digital technology. But this is still seen as a major barrier affecting low income social groups.

“Cost is not as big a problem as it once was. But for the poorest in society, having the Internet in the home is still a cost they cannot afford”

Poverty of aspiration and interest

One of the other most challenging barriers identified was poverty of aspiration and desire or interest in using technology. It is argued that without the basic understanding of the benefits or inspiration to use digital technology in their everyday lives, the biggest barrier is taking the first step in using it.

“Some people do not even have a basic interest in using technology. This is because they don’t know the benefits it can have for them in their lives”

For many stakeholders, this highlights the need to focus on the individual context and needs of people. This will require a cultural change both in terms of how some people integrate technology into their everyday lives and how services are actually delivered.

“A culture change is needed. This is why it will be difficult to deliver. It requires a change in the attitudes and aspirations of people. It will also need a radical change in the delivery of services. Services targeted at the individual are expensive and difficult to deliver”

Fear and anxiety

One of the key findings from the consultation workshops reflected in some of the stakeholder feedback is the importance of personal fear and anxiety related to using technology. Indeed, there are not only physical barriers to overcome in reaching the right audiences with the right messages, but significant psychological barriers.

“Many of those who are digitally excluded have had bad experiences with learning or with technology in the past, which needs to be overcome if they are to become digitally included”

Skills and confidence

Some stakeholders draw attention to the individual lack of skill and confidence with technology as a barrier to be addressed. Raising basic levels of confidence and aptitude with technology is key to addressing this.

“One possibility, which is likely to have the most impact, is localised forms of action targeted at specific communities. In this respect, the voluntary sector has an important role to play”

Many stakeholders argue that it is also important to highlight the correlation between poor numeracy and literacy skills and digital inclusion.

“Poor levels of literacy and numeracy contribute to a lack of confidence and ability in using any technology, from phones to computers”

External barriers

The key external barriers identified and discussed by stakeholders were:

- access
- usability and accessibility

Access

Access remains a significant barrier to digital inclusion. This is particularly emphasised as a key barrier for those who live in more rural locations in the UK. Indeed, there were several mentions of “rurality” and “lack of access” as important barriers which were not given enough attention in the consultation. Rural areas often encounter problems with access to the internet due to slow connection and poor coverage.

“Access is still a major issue for many people irrespective of money in some of the most rural parts of the country. This needs to be addressed otherwise the geographic divisions in access will remain. This is improving. But there is still a long way to go”

Usability and accessibility

Usability and accessibility is a significant external barrier and one whose disadvantages are not evenly spread. Some groups – particularly older people and low income families – are seen as most at risk of being digitally excluded as a result of this factor.

More focus needs to be given to making sure online services are as user friendly as possible; increasing accessibility to the lowest common denominator is an important way in which the “digital accessibility” barrier can be overcome.

It is argued that this factor needs to be integrated into the very design of services. Some call for new legislation to ensure that people do not remain digitally excluded as a result of poor design.

Most stakeholders agree with the assessment of risks and opportunities around the indirect benefits of technology presented in Chapter Four. However, again, there was a sense of not going far enough in highlighting the dangers of digital exclusion. As usage of internet and computers continues to increase in all aspects of life, those who are digitally excluded will be alienated yet further.

“As citizens live longer in a more competitive global economy, the technology has to be used to enhance ones life chances in education, re-training, seeking employment, trading, managing health, managing finances and maintaining and sustaining friends and family contacts as part of a personal support network. The costs of digital exclusion will rise and continue to rise”

Criticisms

Despite widespread support for the consultation and broad agreement with the focus of the digital inclusion agenda, stakeholders did put forward some objections and criticisms. The most prominent concentrated on the following key issues:

- Targeted definition and action
- Need for policy and action-focus
- Lack of economic justification

These should also be perceived as suggestions for **improving** the case for digital inclusion.

Need to improve the definition and have targeted policy

Some stakeholders do not feel that the consultation goes far enough in its understanding, definition or approach to digital inclusion. For these stakeholders, the definition could have gone further to include a more detailed analysis of the relationship between digital inclusion and social inclusion of particularly socially excluded groups of people, including those from lower income backgrounds, black and minority ethnic populations and those with disabilities.

There is acknowledgement that the consultation document does attempt to address particular audiences, but not in the detail that is required to develop an effective strategy to tackle their digital and wider social exclusion. This will be a key factor determining the success of the delivering digital inclusion strategy.

“This is a good start. The argument for digital inclusion is well made. But we advocate a more detailed and specific analysis of how groups most likely to be digitally and socially excluded can be reached. You need to understand their specific needs before this can happen”

Furthermore, stakeholders propose that the consultation document needs to focus in more detail on a wider selection of new technology as a means of empowering people with particular acute needs as the following quotes highlight:

“The definition of technology needs to be broadened to include a wider range of Information and Communications Technologies (i.e. personal computers, Internet, digital television, mobile telephones, digital cameras and mobile entertainment/communications devices)”

“The ability to use these technologies will ensure that an ageing population will be confident in using a wider range of telecare and telehealth technologies (e.g. telecare pendants, mobile tracking devices, remote environmental sensors and hubs, remote chronic disease management devices). The definition should not include wider assistive devices such as hearing aids and motorised wheelchairs as these are static medical technologies without interactive communications abilities”

“Although this chapter refers readily to the whole range of digital media, for the most part the Action Plan focuses on computers and the internet. We believe there should be more emphasis on other media, including DiTV and gaming machines, especially as the media progressively merge”

Policy and action focus

Many stakeholders consider the consultation document to be lacking policies and recommendations to meet the challenges of digital exclusion. Even the most supportive and affirmative of stakeholders note that the consultation document itself is “light on practical policy” and “less an action plan and more a discussion piece”. This gap will need to be addressed to demonstrate to people that the consultation is driven by a serious desire to improve the outcomes of those who are digitally and socially excluded.

“There needs to be more than analysis. You need policies. And these are largely absent”

“We like the messages. But there are very few ideas excluding the role of a Digital Champion, for how this programme of digital inclusion is going to be implemented”

Economic argument

Some stakeholders would have liked the consultation document to have given more detail and justification for the economic case in support of the digital inclusion programme. Those who note this argument think there is an economic case, which needs to be demonstrated more clearly and systematically than is currently presented in the consultation document.

“There is very little on the economic benefits. It mentions this but it is not an attempt to outline in any detail how compelling the case is”

This is seen as a key instrument necessary to ensuring that the push for digital inclusion is not lost or diminished in the current economic climate. A number of stakeholders suggest this as a reason for ensuring that HM Treasury are involved from the outset.

“Unfortunately, it will all come down to funds. The way things are with people losing their jobs and the economy going from bad to worse, you can see it happening – funds will be re-directed. This needs to be guarded against”

Chapter 4

Evaluating Digital Inclusion Actions

Introduction

In chapter six, *Delivering Digital Inclusion* outlines recommendations for achieving digital inclusion in the UK and tackling the problems and consequences of digital exclusion.

The recommendations concentrate on two central proposals:

- The introduction of a **Charter for Digital Inclusion** that would create a framework of principles for cross-sector dialogue and engagement on the agenda. The Charter outlines three specific categories of principles, which are:

Direct benefits

Citizen and community empowerment: assist and motivate the most disadvantaged citizens and communities to achieve increased independence and opportunity through direct access to digital technology and skills

Indirect benefits

Effective services: promote, across all sectors, the more efficient and effective use of digital technology to support the design, delivery and personalisation of services around the needs of the most disadvantaged groups and communities

Sustainable benefits

Sustainable development: monitor and evidence the risks and opportunities of emerging digital technology for excluded groups and communities and minimise the environmental impact from these technologies

- The appointment of a **Digital Inclusion Champion** is to:
 - develop, embed and promote the Charter
 - support the digital inclusion needs of the most disadvantaged citizens and communities
 - maintain strategic oversight of the issues and agenda from the perspective of the excluded citizen
 - work with all sectors to identify emerging issues and solutions

In this chapter, we outline the key responses and reactions from stakeholders to the introduction of a Charter for Digital Inclusion and a Digital Inclusion Champion.

Charter for Digital Inclusion

Support for the concept of a Charter

Overall, the analysis shows that the vast majority of stakeholders are supportive of the concept of developing a Charter for Digital Inclusion.

"We agree with the principles set out in the Charter and support the actions proposed"

For the majority of stakeholders, developing a Charter would signify the importance government places on tackling digital exclusion and would be an important first step in raising the level of digital inclusion.

"This is important. It sends out the signal that having 17 million people not using the Internet is unacceptable and needs to be changed"

Some stakeholders contend that the Charter provides public and private service providers with a benchmark for success for evaluating digital inclusion in the future.

"We agree with the Charter. It provides a guide to what digital inclusion should and could achieve if successfully delivered"

Widespread advocacy of the Charter principles

The positive reception of the Charter is based on widespread support for the principles themselves.

A great deal of the positive feedback is derived from the fact that each of the three principles directly addresses what the majority of stakeholders deem to be the key issue: ensuring that the digital and social exclusion of the most disadvantaged groups in society is tackled.

"What is vital is that the actions coming out of the consultation tackle the exclusion of excluded groups, in particular the elderly and those who are digitally excluded largely as a result of poverty"

Because of this emphasis, most stakeholders focus their positive feedback on the principle of direct benefits. This is because they perceive this principle to impact on digital exclusion most directly.

Our analysis found differences between different stakeholder types on perceptions of the Charter and its principles in particular. While all stakeholders agree that tackling the social side effects and disadvantages related to digital exclusion is extremely important, some are more likely than others to emphasis this issue.

"The first one (Direct Benefits) covers everything the Charter should. Digital inclusion needs to be seen as a wider aspect of citizen and community empowerment"

As one would expect, this was truer of third sector organisations whose organisational objectives are specifically focused on rectifying wider social disadvantages experienced by specific social groups such as older people, those with physical or sensory impairment, and those living in poverty.

"The key principle is empowering those people who need to be empowered most and who can most benefit from being digitally included"

Those who least emphasised the social justice angle of the debate were also more likely to focus on the technological and innovation infrastructure of digital inclusion. These tended to be private sector stakeholders or those whose area of expertise was digital technology.

“The only way digital inclusion is going to be delivered is through harnessing the potential of technology and the innovations that are happening. The next problem is making sure these benefits are spread more evenly than they are at present”

Digital Inclusion Charter: concerns and improvements

Yet some stakeholders have reservations about the Charter. While some offer recommendations for how the Charter can be improved, others provide direct criticisms of it.

The majority of stakeholders place great emphasis on the consultation and the Charter moving beyond “principles and discussion” and delivering actual results that improve the lives of people.

Some stakeholders are concerned that this movement from talk to action will not materialise. This criticism is not generally intended as a criticism of government. It reflects a concern, among many third sector organisations, that interest in delivering digital inclusion is limited to the “usual suspects”.

“There needs to be action. Any Charter needs to be the basis for change not more talk”

It is vital that any Digital Inclusion Charter is clear regarding the benefits, obligations, and responsibilities associated with it. While some question the idea of having something too prescriptive in nature, others feel this is necessary if the objective of improving digital inclusion is met.

“In itself the Charter is a good idea. But it needs to be more developed. It needs to be communicated what the actual benefits of this Charter is [sic] likely to have in practice, and what it means for businesses and organisations in terms of any obligations that need to be met”

Some argued that the Charter principles are too broad to be useful. A more effective Digital Inclusion Charter would be based on specific strategic priorities for improving the outcomes of socially and digitally excluded groups.

Attached to this is the criticism that the Charter needs to be communicated in citizen-focused and clear language that is understandable by those groups of people specifically targeted.

“These are certainly in the right area but at the moment are too broad to be particularly useful. We would like to see the charter [sic] being much clearer so can be truly understood by everyone including those being targeted. This would mean a longer list of principles written in plain language”

This emphasis on clear communication and language on digital inclusion is predicated on the argument made by a number of stakeholders suggesting that the Charter needs to be more focused on the individual, and not government.

Some stakeholders, particularly those who took part in the *Delivering Digital Inclusion* stakeholder events, emphasise the need for the Charter to “belong to the people”, which would require further engagement with targeted groups of the general public.

“It is important that the Charter actually belongs to the people it is designed to help”

“It appears to focus a little too much on the needs of Government and not people”

It was important to many of the stakeholders that the Charter and its principles need to be co-produced across the public, private, and third sectors, who should all be involved in drafting it. This is essential for getting buy-in from the relevant bodies and organisations. It will also ensure that the different needs of those who are digitally excluded are understood and met.

“For the Charter to really work it needs to be shaped by the input of a wide selection of organisations from the public and private sectors, but also the third sector. This is vital”

It is vital that the Charter – indeed any policy proposals, recommendations or action plans coming out of the consultation – are underpinned by clear metrics of success with clear timescale targets so it is very clear to understand both the aims and success of actions taken.

“There needs to be a barometer of success and a clear metric for evaluating how effective the digital inclusion programme is in delivering digital and social inclusion”

Digital Inclusion Champion

Support for the concept of a Digital Inclusion Champion

Overall, the majority of stakeholders back the proposal for introducing a Digital Inclusion Champion to establish and drive cross-sector strategy for delivering digital inclusion.

Stakeholders offer numerous reasons why they support the introduction of a Digital Inclusion Champion. Most derive from the contention that the digital inclusion agenda requires a central driving force to ensure that digital inclusion becomes embedded across government.

“We fully support the idea of having a Digital Champion. There needs to be someone – a figure head – to drive the agenda forward and make sure change happens”

There was a distinct shortage of names suggested. This reflects the difficulty in finding someone who possesses the ideal blend of experience and attributes stakeholders argue a Digital Inclusion Champion should have. Indeed, very few specific suggestions are offered by stakeholders in the formal written consultation responses as a possible Digital Inclusion Champion.

The changing structure of the economy and workplace will place greater emphasis on people being media and digitally literate. The consequence, if current digital exclusion is not adequately tackled, will be an increase in digital and social exclusion as a result of these shifts. This places greater importance on having a Digital Inclusion Champion.

“We need to have a Digital Champion or a figure like this to make sure digital inclusion does not fall off the radar in these changed [sic] economic circumstances. If this happens, the consequences would be dire”

The attributes and objectives of the Digital Inclusion Champion

However, the analysis identified different conceptions of what the role of the Digital Inclusion Champion should be.

Most stakeholders agreed that the key priority for any Digital Inclusion Champion would be to represent and advocate the interests of those who are digitally excluded and promote digital inclusion.

“The objective of the Digital Champion should be to ensure the most vulnerable and socially excluded members of society are not left in ever deepening digital exclusion”

Many stakeholders advocate the idea of having a Digital Inclusion Champion who is a prominent public figure. It is essential that the individual brings gravitas to the role. The figure must have the power and authority to enforce any changes that are necessary to ensure digital inclusion of the most vulnerable groups is delivered. To do this, the individual must be someone who has direct access to ministers and other key policy decision-makers.

“The Digital Champion would be pointless if they had no real authority to insist and enforce the changes they feel are necessary”

“The person needs to have direct access and contact with ministers”

In order to succeed in doing so, any Digital Inclusion Champion would need to have “strong lobbying and media skills”. Therefore, while bringing publicity to the cause, stakeholders also felt it is important for the Digital Inclusion Champion to be effective at working with ministers and senior civil servants across Whitehall.

“The person needs to be a great communicator, someone who could draw attention to the issue and have influence”

Stakeholders suggest that any Champion (be it regional or national) needs to have some experience and expertise in the area of (new) technology and social policy. This is necessary in order to provide an authoritative voice on the issue of digital inclusion and will also help in the Champion’s understanding of what is perceived by stakeholders to be one of the role’s most important challenges – to increase access to new technology. Stakeholders think this combination of attributes might be difficult to find.

“The person needs to be well-known and be an expert and authority in this field”

“The Digital Champion needs to know the social policy agenda surrounding social and digital exclusion. They also need to understand the benefits and advances happening with digital technology”

However, if a Digital Inclusion Champion is going to add any real value then stakeholders feel the position must be independent of government. Stakeholders feel that in order for a Digital Inclusion Champion to be worthwhile they must be in a position to challenge the government and openly criticise public and private institutions where they feel it appropriate.

“Independence is key. The Digital Champion needs to be able to hold the powers that be to account if the action plan for delivering digital inclusion is to be taken forward”

However, some stakeholders express concern that a national, public figure could fall into the trap of being too closely linked with central government. This would undermine the person’s credibility among wider groups of stakeholders and capacity to ensure the needs of digitally excluded people are the top priority.

“The top priority needs to be identifying best practice for ensuring digital inclusion. Because of this the independence of the individual is paramount”

A sentiment shared by many stakeholders was that one of the most important things the Digital Inclusion Champion should do is publicise the importance of digital inclusion both in the public domain (via the media) and throughout central government.

Making it work

Stakeholders want more detail on how the role of the Digital Inclusion Champion can bring about change. At present, it is felt that there is a lack of detail or that the proposals are too generic in nature.

“We support the role of a Digital Champion. But we need to see more detail on how it would function and work in practice”

A popular suggestion was to have a network of Digital Inclusion Champions, one in each region across the country, working under a unifying figure of the UK Digital Inclusion Champion.

“You need a figurehead and people on the ground who are going to make things happen and implement digital inclusion successfully”

Under these proposals there would be a national figure responsible for organising a strategic approach, working across government departments, and ensuring cooperation from the public, private and third sectors while the Regional Champions would be responsible for the ‘groundwork’ and ensuring effective delivery of digital inclusion at a local level.

“Regional Champions would be familiar with the particular needs and challenges that each locality has in the struggle towards digital inclusion”

This approach would allow the Digital Inclusion Champion to focus on other important facets of the role such as raising awareness of digital exclusion and the intricate relationship between social and digital exclusion.

Another suggestion from some stakeholders would be to split the role of the Digital Inclusion Champion. This would mean having a well-known, popular and media-savvy Champion responsible for raising awareness of Digital Inclusion while the second Champion would have more of an executive role, deciding what changes are needed and working towards implementing them.

Chapter 5

Delivering Digital Inclusion

Introduction

In the previous chapter, stakeholder responses to the proposals to introduce a Digital Inclusion Charter and Digital Inclusion Champion were evaluated. These are the two core proposals for tackling digital exclusion outlined in the consultation document.

The analysis has already identified a number of factors stakeholders consider to be important to increasing digital inclusion. This chapter looks at other **core factors** that can be incorporated into a wider strategy for delivering digital inclusion.

Core factors

- 1. Citizen focus NOT technology focus**
- 2. Strong leadership**
- 3. National approach, local delivery**
- 4. Benchmarking, timeframes and measurable outcomes**
- 5. Sustainable, long term funding and planning**

This chapter has three objectives:

- To explore what stakeholders perceive to be the core factors shaping the successful delivery of the digital inclusion agenda
- To provide a concise summary of possible interventions to be incorporated into government strategy; and
- To offer some case study examples of what stakeholders are currently doing to deliver digital inclusion themselves

Digital inclusion strategy

Citizen focus NOT technology focus

It is vital that government places the voices of local people at the heart of its digital inclusion strategy. As this report has identified, this agenda is social in character not technological. This requires that the strategy is explicitly established to meet the needs of citizens and communities.

“People need to be at the centre of the whole thing. The real positive of this is the emphasis placed on social needs and experiences and how these impact on access to new technology. The focus on the social needs to remain”

This will require sustained dialogue and engagement with the general public and specific groups of people that should be targeted for digital inclusion. One possibility would be to establish a **citizen's panel** who would act as a consistent reference point for testing and debating policy interventions and recommendations for achieving social inclusion through digital inclusion.

"The strategy needs, first and foremost, to meet the digital and social needs of the most excluded in society"

"To make sure the digital inclusion agenda is driven forward from a citizen perspective I would advocate having a group of citizens who act like a board to assess policy options and thinking"

Strong leadership

The successful delivery of the digital inclusion agenda will depend on strong leadership from the Minister for Digital Inclusion, the Digital Inclusion Champion and others (e.g. Digital Mentors) with the task of directing and implementing policy and interventions.

"Strong, clear and transparent leadership driving digital inclusion through and embedding it into wider organisational culture is an essential and challenging requirement"

In addition to influencing the domestic political and policy landscape, the Digital Inclusion leaders (particularly the Digital Inclusion Champion) should be able to influence the European and international agenda and help ensure that the UK becomes a world leader in delivering social justice outcomes through digital inclusion.

Other key elements of sound leadership will include:

- outlining clear and actionable policy in the coming months
- establishing a coherent framework for measuring the success or failure to tackle digital exclusion, with specific targets for the most vulnerable social groups
- setting robust and firm targets for delivering digital inclusion and holding organisations to account where necessary
- disseminating best practice
- communicating the digital inclusion agenda widely and effectively
- being transparent and producing annual reports and progress reports
- developing sound and productive relationships with public, private and third sectors, ensuring that "grass roots" organisations are involved from the outset

National approach with local delivery

Effective strategy to empower individuals and communities through digital inclusion should be predicated on a national approach. A national strategy must be structured and well organised, ensuring nationwide coverage. It will be vital to ensure that Local Strategic Partnerships are involved to ensure successful delivery across the regions and to avoid geographic inequality.

"There needs to be a national approach with national coverage. But the delivery needs to be focused at a local level"

But the strategy should not be a 'one size fits all' approach. The approach needs to be flexible and closely tailored to the different needs of communities and individuals. This national approach should thus seek to build on existing local arrangements and expand on the most successful ones, indeed applying these to other areas where appropriate.

"You cannot have a one-size fits all approach. This would be doomed to failure. We advocate a more sophisticated strategy based on rigorous research and knowledge"

Having regional Digital Inclusion Champions is suggested as one strategy for ensuring effective local delivery.

"One of the real benefits of having regional champions will be their knowledge of the local area. This is necessary if the different digital and social needs of different areas are to be met"

Benchmarking, time frames and measurable outcomes

The success of the digital inclusion agenda requires solid benchmarking and measurable outcomes with a clear time frame for delivery. It is strongly felt that this is established through sustained engagement and dialogue with not only industry and service providers, but consumers and service users themselves.

"There absolutely needs to be a clear metric of success and key measurements to ascertain areas of improvement and areas in need of more emphasis...this needs to happen through direct engagement with organisations across the sectors and also the people themselves"

There was little detail provided on what the key measurements should be. But some suggestions are made. These include measures for evaluating:

- Whether the profile of the digital inclusion agenda has improved, to what extent and among which audiences
- The extent to which key audiences (i.e. those groups already identified as most likely to be digitally and socially excluded) are benefiting from the direct and indirect benefits of digital inclusion
- Overall levels of access, accessibility and usability of digital inclusion and the contextual factors shaping this

It is felt that there should be regular updates and an annual review documenting this detail for both organisations and individuals to be able to assess the impact of the digital inclusion agenda and policy. Some stakeholders also advocate the establishment of an auditing process as one measure for doing this.

"We would like to see progress in the form of reports and updates"

"It might be useful to have a regular audit of digital inclusion assessing what is going on across the country and whether or not targets and processes are being adequately met"

Sustainable, long term funding and planning

There is a pragmatic realism across the stakeholder responses on the necessity of having long term and secure funding. Without this it will be impossible for the digital inclusion agenda to be successful.

“Without the funding nothing substantial can be achieved. On this basis, great efforts need to be made to secure long term and sustainable funds to ensure the digital inclusion strategy can be adequately implemented”

Furthermore, stakeholders want a movement beyond short termist thinking and funding, which is poorly targeted.

This is perceived to come back to securing both cross-governmental buy-in and effective networking with the private and third sectors to raise sources of income. This is likely to be a key function of the Minister for Digital Inclusion and the Digital Inclusion Champion.

“This comes back to the figurehead being an entrepreneurial type with excellent and diverse networks. These informal relationships will be extremely important in identifying and securing funds”

Related to this, there is some focus on strategic planning and targeted allocation of funds to the “right areas” to ensure that the most digitally and socially excluded groups and individuals are empowered. This is related to having Regional Digital Inclusion Champions and the emphasis on local delivery.

Case study examples

The document is seen as identifying a number of good examples of best practice. The stakeholder responses also highlighted a diversity of different mechanisms already focused on delivering digital inclusion and ensuring that people and communities can benefit from technological developments.

This section includes some case study examples of this:

Post Office Limited (POL)

The launch of its Post Office Broadband service in 2007, offering a better, fairer, and easier to use broadband service with accessible support for its customers. Post Office Broadband’s simple flat-rate offer, with 24-hour customer assistance, delivers exactly the kind of simple offering required to engender customer trust among those less convinced, or intimidated, by digital technology.

POL has also taken steps to break down the technological and terminological barriers identified in the consultation. In November 2007, POL published an internet jargon buster guide, designed to demystify the language of the internet. In December 2008, POL launched a new Internet Buddy Guide, a step-by-step guide, designed to teach those with no previous experience of the internet how to send e-mails, browse the web, or download files. In a parallel programme, since January 2008 POL has been rolling out pilot internet training sessions in Post Office branches.

BBC

The BBC's activity in this area in recent years has been considerable. Examples include:

Computer Tutor: helping people to get started online – beginning with the most basic things like how to use a mouse. Feedback indicates that this has benefited a range of licence payers, including people wanting to start shopping online and grandparents wanting to use online chat to keep in touch with their grandchildren.

Webwise Guides: a series of online guides, developed by the BBC, using familiar presenters to demystify new technology, providing practical support to around 77,000 UK users a week. Questions answered include: what is a podcast?; how can I share photos?; what is social networking?; and what can broadband do?

People's War: capturing people's experiences of the Second World War before they are lost forever. Working with partners including Age Concern, libraries, museums and veterans' organisations, some 47,000 stories and 15,000 photos were captured and made available online. Aimed at an older, less media-literate generation, for many it was their first experience of going online.

Me and My Movie: inspiring children aged six to fourteen to make their own films and tell their own stories. The initiative has included on-air activity involving Blue Peter and other CBBC programmes, red button content and an online resource providing information about film-making, and the opportunity for children to upload and share films they have made. The film-making pack has been downloaded 300,000 times to date.

Related events included free film making workshops for children in 18 cities around the country and a celebration of children's achievements through the Me and My Movie Award, in association with BAFTA.

New activity planned for 2009 includes:

RaW: launched in late January 2009 of a new BBC RaW site, which will build on the existing RaW offering – providing resources for adults to develop their reading, writing and number skills – to also offer a range of new video-rich content on computer skills, essentially updating Computer Tutor. The BBC is drawing on partnerships with the library network and other organisations to help people gain free access to computers and the web. Three hundred workshops take place from February, organised by the BBC, to spread awareness and confidence amongst tutors and other facilitators of the site.

Help the Aged

Their campaigns, projects and activities include:

Connect with IT: Connect with IT is the name given to Age Concern's umbrella campaign to support the digital inclusion of all older people by promoting the benefits of accessing technology. Age Concern runs a number of annual week long activities that underpin the campaign, including Silver Surfer Week, ITea & Biscuits, and Myfriends Online Week.

Sunshine Project: Help the Aged's Sunshine Project provides IT training in a small number of care homes in Clacton.

Help the Aged Grants Programme: through the Help the Aged Regional Development Officers, Help the Aged donates around £1 million per year to local community projects, of which a number are IT and learning projects.

Information Age Project: to date, the project has provided 639 training opportunities to access basic ICT training courses to older people, carers, volunteers and 38 community/voluntary organisations across Northern Ireland. In addition to promoting Lifelong Learning, the project encourages social interaction. The Big Lottery has funded the project to £153,000 over 3 years. Funding will end 31 October 2009.

Digital Inclusion (DI) Network: the DI Network is a network of organisations and projects that provide ICT training and support to older people. The Network was simultaneously launched across the UK by James Purnell MP in 2006 and currently has 140 members actively delivering technology projects and has engaged with 130,000 older people in 2006/07. The DI Network has received funding from BT to the value of £450,000 over a three year period and an additional £50,000 of sponsorship in the form of Gifts in Kind have been secured for Network members.

BT Silver Surfer Grants: BT have supported the development of the DI Network, helping host 5 networking events across the UK to inspire and inform practitioners and the distribution of £104,861 in grants to support 68 local projects. An additional £240,000 in grant funding is to be distributed over the next three years.

Silver Surfers Week: this is an annual event with the last week attracting 17,000 older people engaging with computers for the first time at 600 events run throughout the UK.

Myfriends Online Week: this is a new week-long campaign being launched 16 – 20 March to encourage older people to get online to be able to communicate with friends and family, near and far, and establish new friendships.

Computer Explorer Buses and Mini Explorer Van: the Bus is modified to be fully accessible with 12 workstations for older people to learn about technology. Both the Computer Explorer buses and the Mini Explore Van (kitted with laptops and volunteer trainers) provide technology outreach to rural communities and older people in residential care homes.

YouthNet

YouthNet are the UK's first exclusively online charity founded in 1995. YouthNet's impartial and entrepreneurial approach is to harness the power of new technology, to enable 16-24 year olds to learn, support each other, and participate in society on their own terms.

They are doing a number of things at the moment:

www.TheSite.org is designed to be the first place all young adults turn to when they need support and guidance through life. They provide an inclusive social environment when and where their users needs it most: the dynamic and participative online community, breadth of topics, editorial integrity, expert advice partners and peer support make them the essential trusted guide and allow them *to tell it like it is*. Young people are able to come up with self-help strategies to tackle the everyday challenges they face, including drink and drugs, sex and relationships, money and financial management, health and well-being, travel and free time.

A secure online community forum on TheSite.org enables young people to share experiences with their peers through discussion boards and live chats, which are moderated by trained staff and volunteers. Their expert question and answer service askTheSite also enables young people to confidentially ask questions and receive expert advice back, tailored to their needs. Their archive of previously answered questions, visited by over 80,000 users each month, reassures young people facing similar challenges that they are not alone in the problems they face. Over 500,000 users visit TheSite.org every month, creating 2.2 million page impressions in their search for advice and support.

www.do-it.org.uk is volunteering made easy. They connect people, communities and organisations to inspire positive change, providing a central place on the internet for finding out about volunteering. As the digital backbone of volunteering, do-it.org.uk holds over one million opportunities to volunteer, searchable by postcode and provided by over 490 partners representing 40,000+ volunteer-involving organisations through Volunteer Centres and hundreds of national charities. Partners upload opportunities directly onto the National Volunteering Database and manage their volunteering opportunities, using bespoke software known as V-Base. This volunteer management software tool is uniquely developed by YouthNet for this purpose, and V-Base is now recognised as the industry standard within the volunteering sector.

BT

BT has contributed to the evidence base through the Crossing the Divide project where non users from a variety of backgrounds were helped to develop computer and internet skills.

As part of the project, cognitive neuropsychologist, Dr David Lewis, investigated the impact of going online on the brain and nervous system. For first time users, it was found that going online can create the same level of anxiety as that found in learner drivers taking the wheel for the first time. In some cases, the levels of anxiety were as high as those found on someone taking their first bungee jump.

Delivering **Digital Inclusion**

Annex

The responses to the consultation

This annex documents topline analysis of stakeholder responses to the 21 questions raised in *Delivering Digital Inclusion – An Action Plan for Consultation*.

April 2009

| Consultation Question | Topline Stakeholder Feedback |
|---|---|
| <p>1: How far do you agree with the definition of digital inclusion and the nature of the problem set out in Chapter One?</p> | <p>The vast majority of stakeholders agreed with the definition of digital inclusion. Stakeholders were particularly supportive of the emphasis placed on the link between social and digital inclusion/exclusion.</p> <p>But more needs to be made, in particular, of the economic benefits of digital inclusion. This will be key to ensuring it does not disappear from the political policy landscape.</p> |
| <p>2: How far do you agree with the analysis set out in Chapter Two? Is there other evidence we should consider as to why digital inclusion is an important social issue?</p> | <p>The vast majority of stakeholders concur with the analysis provided of digital inclusion, including the benefits and barriers connected to it.</p> <p>The argument that 75 per cent of those who are socially excluded are also digitally excluded is perceived to be a compelling argument for focusing on the digital inclusion of those currently not benefiting from the benefits of new technology and digital progress.</p> |
| <p>3: How far do you agree with the analysis in Chapter Three of the main barriers which prevent people and communities from engaging in digital technologies?</p> | <p>The majority of the stakeholders consider the analysis offered of the barriers to be convincing and detailed, focusing on many of the specific social groups who are proportionally most likely to experience the negative impact of digital exclusion.</p> <p>However, some stakeholders – particularly third sector organisations who advocate the needs of particular social groups – think more specific analysis of the barriers facing those who are already digitally excluded would have improved the analysis. This includes older people, low income groups, black and minority ethnic groups and those with physical and/or sensory impairment.</p> |

| Consultation Question (<i>continued</i>) | Topline Stakeholder Feedback (<i>continued</i>) |
|---|---|
| <p>4: What are the most effective ways of removing these barriers and ensuring that all individuals can exercise an empowered choice about their use of digital technologies?</p> | <p>Stakeholders put forward a number of suggestions. Some of the most prominent mechanisms were:</p> <p>The need to focus on the needs of individuals and offer personalised services; ensuring effective input from third sector organisations and those who work closely with the digitally excluded; cross-sector partnerships with private, public and third sector organisations working together; improving information provision and awareness of the importance of digital inclusion to the every day lives of people; proactive engagement and consultation with those who are digitally excluded.</p> |
| <p>5: What are the risk factors and benefits for different communities associated with current and next generation access?</p> | <p>Stakeholders find the analysis of the risks and benefits of next generation access to be sound. Some stakeholders – particularly those focused more on the technological side of the digital inclusion debate – strongly contend that more could be made of the benefits of new technology and its innovations as a means of delivering some of the positive social outcomes of digital inclusion.</p> |
| <p>6: What should be done to empower communities and local partnerships to address these risks and benefits?</p> | <p>Many arguments are offered:</p> <p>There needs to be sustained focus on the specific needs of those who are digitally excluded.</p> <p>Developing partnerships between private and third sector organisations is a key mechanism for delivering empowered communities and partnerships.</p> <p>Securing long term funding.</p> <p>Ensuring digital inclusion is embedded as a major cross-governmental concern.</p> <p>Strong leadership. This will be a vital role of the Digital Inclusion Champion and the Taskforce more generally.</p> |

| Consultation Question (<i>continued</i>) | Topline Stakeholder Feedback (<i>continued</i>) |
|--|---|
| 7: How far do you agree with the summary of issues around the direct use of technology presented in Chapter Three? Are there any other important issues we have not mentioned? | Stakeholders agree with the issues surrounding direct use of technology. There are no big omissions. But there needs to be a greater focus on empowering individuals whose needs will be very different. However, notable by its absence in this section is an in-depth discussion of accessibility issues. This gap needs to be plugged in taking the Action Plan forward. |
| 8: How far do you agree with the assessment of risks and opportunities around the indirect benefits of technology presented in Chapter Four? | There is a broad consensus regarding the indirect benefits of technology presented in the document. But the sections on the risks and opportunities of indirect benefits are too government or process focused. |
| 9: How can we raise awareness of the indirect benefits of technology for service design, planning and delivery across all sectors? | <p>A sustained communication campaign. The digital inclusion agenda needs to be fed into broader public consciousness.</p> <p>Cross-sector networks from across the three sectors working together to raise awareness.</p> <p>There could be 'best practice' networks of organisations that spread the word of the positive impact of digital inclusion.</p> |
| 10: Does the way in which services, particularly public services, are currently delivered adequately support individuals and groups who are socially disadvantaged? What more could be done to ensure they do? | <p>There is a consensus that while some public services are extremely good, the majority are not. This was not related to type of public service (e.g. local council, PCT etc).</p> <p>There needs to be more private-public partnerships to improve overall service delivery with public services learning from innovations in the private sector.</p> <p>Closer working with the third sector is vital for an improved understanding of the specific needs of different social groups. Without this, adequate support cannot be provided.</p> <p>Financial incentives are a powerful motivator for many people and particularly those who are socially excluded. It is critical that the monetary benefit of digital inclusion both in terms of buying commercial products and services online is demonstrated.</p> <p>New technology (its functionality and benefits) needs to be presented to people in a language they understand and value.</p> |

| Consultation Question (<i>continued</i>) | Topline Stakeholder Feedback (<i>continued</i>) |
|---|--|
| 11: Are you aware of any other examples of good practice not mentioned in Chapter Five? | A plethora of examples are provided. Some of these are included in the report. See Chapter 5. |
| 12: What aspects of previous or current digital initiatives and strategies have been most successful in tackling digital exclusion? | <p>A number of examples are provided and many focus on the following:</p> <p>Local action and partnership.</p> <p>The importance of local understanding and expertise must be recognised and supported. Building trust and personal relationships – directly or via community partners – is key to engaging those who are deeply excluded.</p> <p>Long term intervention and funding.</p> <p>For many of the most excluded individuals and groups the journey to digital inclusion will take time.</p> <p>Flexibility.</p> <p>One size of learning doesn't fit all and neither does one style of delivery. New and diverse ways need to be found to assess quality without enforcing rigid structures and targets.</p> <p>Holistic support.</p> <p>Focus should be on the person and not the technology or the cause. Addressing all of an individual's needs and priorities is vital.</p> |
| 13: What actions need to be taken to support better partnership approaches? | <p>Leadership to ensure that different organisations are working together and see digital inclusion as a joint agenda.</p> <p>Better partnerships between the three sectors are vital. Stakeholders see leading collaboration as a potential role for the Digital Inclusion Champion.</p> <p>Central to this is equality between partners; transparency of communication and information sharing.</p> |
| 14: What should be the extent of Government's intervention in tackling digital exclusion? | The role of Government is generally seen to focus on: determining of national priorities and strategy for delivering digital inclusion based on the knowledge and input of those working 'on the ground', setting national targets for delivery; securing funding and policy prioritisation on digital inclusion. |

| Consultation Question (<i>continued</i>) | Topline Stakeholder Feedback (<i>continued</i>) |
|--|--|
| <p>15: How else can the impact of current activity be maximised?</p> | <p>Some stakeholders provide detailed feedback on this question.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There needs to be a clear vision, focus, targets and timeframe • There is still too much talking about the problem and not enough time and resource spent on action • Too much small scale, unconnected and inefficient activity. They need to isolate the big opportunities to tackle digital exclusion and focus on delivering scalable programmes to meet these • There cannot be a one-size fits all approach but a connected and scalable solution delivered locally • There needs to be a way of sharing best practice and a willingness to roll-out broadly. This may be from the UK but could be programmes developed in other countries • There needs to be greater collaboration and to look at how the funding system can be used to make this happen • Improved co-ordination between Government, the private sector and the third sector • Make e-inclusion grants easier to access and remove the link to qualifications to access much of the funding • Clear commitment from Government to support this agenda. This could be direct financial input or incentives to support digital inclusion e.g. employer National Insurance (NI) contributions for Digital Inclusion Technology Group (DITG), tax breaks for pensioners • Longevity of commitment, structures, funding e.g. 10 year commitment • There also needs to be clear leadership with either individuals or organisations taking responsibility for delivering the improvements which would enable the UK to meet digital inclusion targets. |

| Consultation Question (<i>continued</i>) | Topline Stakeholder Feedback (<i>continued</i>) |
|--|--|
| <p>16: How far do you agree with the proposed principles outlined in the Charter? Are there others we should consider?</p> | <p>There is widespread support for the principles underlying the Charter. The focus on the link between digital and social inclusion is the basis for much of this support.</p> <p>But the principles need to be backed up with actual actions and policy and need to establish a metric of success based on more specific policy interventions.</p> |
| <p>17: How far do you support the actions which underpin the principles? Are there others we should consider?</p> | <p>There is widespread support for the actions. This is true of all stakeholder types.</p> <p>The idea of the Digital Inclusion Champion is strongly supported. In addition, some stakeholders suggest regional digital champions, to ensure delivery is tailored to those who most need support, and who have a detailed knowledge and understanding of the needs of those who are digitally excluded.</p> |
| <p>18: What issues need to be considered in determining a baseline measure for digital inclusion?</p> | <p>It is considered vital that baseline measures (not a single measure) with a clear timeframe for driving the digital inclusion agenda forward are set.</p> <p>Some of the most important measurable factors contributing to digital inclusion are household computer ownership, internet access, and broadband penetration, and these should be the starting point for any appraisal of digital inclusion.</p> <p>Others talk about the need to demonstrate the financial benefits of digital inclusion measuring both the benefit to the individual and to society.</p> <p>The consultation document provides specific figures that could be used as baselines, such as the 17 million of those over the age of 15 who don't use a computer and the proportion of people who are digitally and/or socially excluded. Reducing these figures would be a good baseline.</p> |

| Consultation Question (<i>continued</i>) | Topline Stakeholder Feedback (<i>continued</i>) |
|--|--|
| 19: What should be the brief of the Digital Inclusion Champion role? | <p>The core brief of the Digital Inclusion Champion is to tackle digital exclusion.</p> <p>The Digital Inclusion Champion will need to be a well-connected ‘big hitter’ with influence in government but independent; a figurehead who knows how the media works and someone who the public recognise and know; someone who has expertise in issues attached to social justice and new technology.</p> |
| 20: What would be the single most effective thing government could do to drive its digital inclusion agenda? | Ensuring digital inclusion becomes a cross-government issue that receives secure, long term funding and advocacy. |
| 21: Are there any other issues you would like to raise in relation to this consultation? | <p>Other issues were not generally raised, rather this question was used to re-emphasise key priorities. Typically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn analysis into actual policy and action • Make sure digital inclusion is strongly pushed across Government and does not fall off the policy agenda • Keep the focus on the social aspects of digital inclusion • Demonstrate the economic benefits of digital inclusion • Make sure the benefits of new technology are fully incorporated into any future strategy |

ISBN: 978-1-4098-1383-5

ISBN 978-1-4098-1383-5



9 781409 813835