

Subject: The Digital Inclusion Landscape Review – Taking Stock post Covid 19 Lockdown

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Report builds on the Digital Inclusion Landscape Review initially undertaken in September 2020. It reflects on some of the measures and their effectiveness that were introduced to minimise the impacts of both digital exclusion and digital poverty. It reviews the current situation to establish whether the previous conclusions and recommendations are still valid and considers the findings of recent reports from leading authorities on digital inclusion as well as other national and regional reports in order to gain a more informed understanding of the impacts of Covid-19 on citizens and communities and their abilities to access digital services.
- 1.2 The original Review will not be rewritten and has been included as an addendum to this update. Instead, this Report will build on the previous recommendations and will be used to inform the City-wide Digital Inclusion Strategy and action plan as part of the Council's response to the Community Recovery activities.

2.0 Executive Summary

- 2.1 There is no doubt that the pandemic has increased the importance and the necessity of digital connectivity as an essential tool for everyday living leaving those without connectivity and access in greater poverty and exclusion.
- 2.2 There has been an acceleration in digital uptake since the pandemic. The UK has made five years' worth of progress in one year in terms of its digital engagement. A further 1.5 million more people are now online, increasing the percentage of people online from 92% in 2020 to 95% in 2021. On average people are spending an extra 13 hours online a week with increasing levels of willingness to enhance their digital skills if appropriate support is available.
- 2.3 It was inevitable that the pandemic would increase the dependence on the internet and lead to a massive acceleration in many pre-existing digital trends as alternative channels such as face to face were no longer possible. The lockdown has been a catalyst for breaking through the inertia that existed in some sectors in relation to digitalisation. It is likely that these trends will not be reversed, and further services will move to a greater online presence.
- 2.4 In 2021, there remains 2.6 million people completely offline, 39% of whom are under the age of 60 dispelling the idea that all offline people are older, with 11.9 million adults still lacking essential digital skills. There have been some positive impacts for those who are connected and have the right skills and capabilities, leading to significant increases in the use of online services. However, there are significant concerns that digital exclusion remains. It is also worth noting that the current definition of digital inclusion (i.e. going online at least once in the last 3 months using any devices) does not reflect the lived experiences of many citizens of all ages who throughout the pandemic have suffered from digital poverty, ranging from a lack of devices, access to data and the skills to effectively engage.
- 2.5 Work undertaken by the GoodThings Foundation 2020, further recognises that digital inclusion is not a linear process and draw a distinction between differing levels of digital engagement. It highlights that there are limited users i.e. young people, for example, may be able to use their

phone for social media, but may not have the skills, capabilities or even the right device to apply for jobs online or undertake learning and training.

- 2.6 According to the Lloyds DCI 2021 report, the West Midlands has one of the highest levels of digital inclusion at 97%. However, in recognition of the lived experiences and anecdotal evidence presented by citizens and communities, the West Midlands Combined authority has set up the West Midlands Coalition for Digital Inclusion which brings together the local authorities and other stakeholders to share knowledge and exchange ideas for addressing digital inclusion.
- 2.7 At the Birmingham level, there has been increased activities by local organisations including the Neighbourhood Network Service (NNS) to support digital inclusion such as; the setting up computer loan schemes, recycling devices, digital champions programmes and digital skills courses. Some NNS have really accelerated their activities such as Hall Green and Northfield and have even conducted hyperlocal surveys to gauge the extent of the digital exclusion issues within their locality.
- 2.8 Whilst the increased levels of activity at both a regional and local level are very welcomed, not surprisingly, this has not changed many of the findings of the initial Digital Inclusion Landscape Review carried in September 2020 (Addendum A). Many of the factors that give rise to digital exclusion have remained the same and many of the local activities and projects being undertaken still tend to be siloed, fragmented in their approach and there continues to be missed opportunities to joined up working and collaboration for creating the pathways for developing end to end digital journey for citizens and communities to develop their skills and capabilities in a sustainable way.
- 2.9 In conclusion, the pandemic has laid bare the issue of the digital divide and recast the UK's view of digital access as a critical component to an equitable society. It exposed systemic weaknesses in infrastructure, skills, digital poverty at all age groups and, for those with existing vulnerabilities, such as mental and physical disabilities, those socially excluded and already in poverty.
- 2.10 This Updated Review re-enforces the conclusions and recommendations outlined in the initial Digital Inclusion Landscape review carried out in September 2020 and therefore, recommends that the Council works with city partners and stakeholders to co-design and co-produce a Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan that addresses the root causes of digital inclusion as identified in our findings in a sustainable way.

3.0 Strategic Update

National Landscape

- 3.1 Since the pandemic various reports have been published on the impacts it has had on peoples' lives. Nationally, there are some noteworthy statistics that demonstrate that despite improvements in the percentage of people who are digitally included, there remain a persistent digital divide which has deepened and has been further exacerbated by increases in poverty for the most vulnerable citizens and groups. This is further supported by a report by Citizens Advice (Broadband Must be Available to Everyone (Jan 2021) which found that some groups have been disproportionately affected; disabled people, people on means-tested benefits, and people from ethnic minority backgrounds were finding it harder to pay.

3.2 The most recent Lloyds Consumer Digital Index Report 2021 indicates that 1.5 million more people are now online, increasing the percentage of people online from 92% in 2020 to 95% in 2021. It outlines that;

- (i) The UK has made five years' worth of progress in one year in terms of its digital engagement
- (ii) On average people are spending an extra 13 hours online a week
- (iii) 28% of people say they have digitally upskilled themselves for work related reasons
- (iv) 67% of people said they would improve their digital skills if they knew there was support available

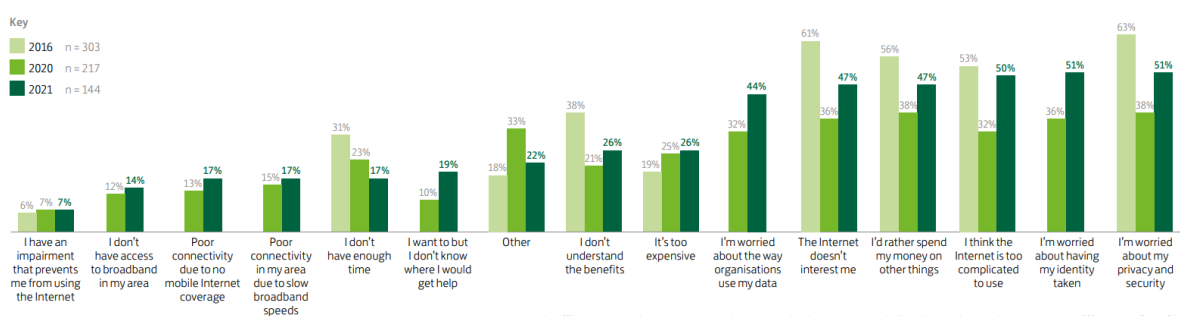
3.3 However, the report also noted that 2.6 million people remain completely offline. A further 20.5 million adults have Low or Very Low digital engagement. It re-enforced that digital poverty is exacerbated by existing vulnerabilities, never more so than in the last year. It put forward the following findings.

- (i) One-in-ten (10%) of those offline are under 50 years old
- (ii) 55% of those offline earn under £20,000
- (iii) 27% (700,000 people) remain offline due to a lack of adequate Internet connectivity

3.4 In previous editions of the Consumer Digital Index, it has been well evidenced that the people using digital tools and services have a real advantage such as finding new ways to save money, more easily finding and accessing new information as well as managing their wellbeing and keeping connected to loved ones. In the last year, its findings concluded that this has moved from an advantage to a necessity. For those shielding at homes, without the lifeline of the Internet, have been locked out during lockdown.

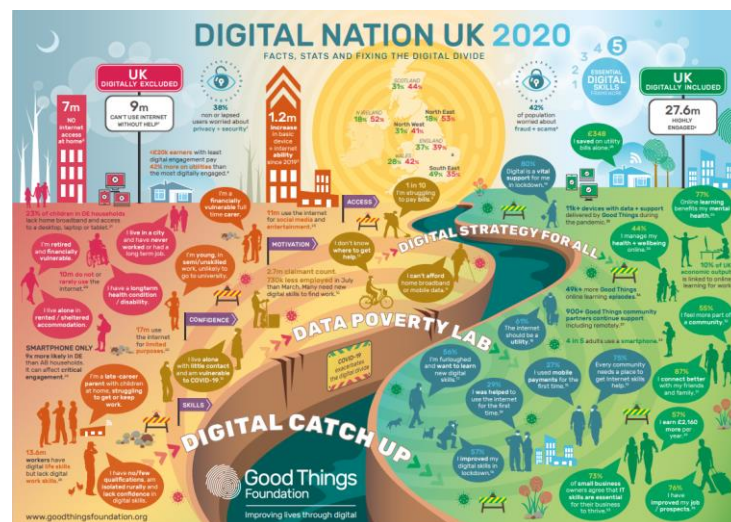
3.5 The Lloyds Consumer Digital Review identified a number of reasons why citizens were offline. This is shown in figure 1. The findings showed that the percentage of people who believe that it is too expensive has increased year on year. For some, fears of the unknown or the threat of Internet scammers prevail, but for others a lack of interest is a key barrier. However, most notably cybersecurity, theft of identity and the complexity of using the internet have all increased since 2020. This further re-enforces our previous findings that affordability and trust and confidence in using the internet are still recognised barriers to digital inclusion. The full findings of the Lloyds Consumer Digital Index report can be found at ([210513-lloyds-consumer-digital-index-2021-report.pdf \(lloydsbank.com\)](https://www.lloydsbank.com/digital-index-2021-report.pdf)).

Figure 1 Reasons why People are offline



- 3.6 The lockdown also exposed that for those in digital poverty, many of the inequalities and disadvantages they encountered were further exacerbated. For example, the analysis undertaken by the GoodThings Foundation (GTF) in their 2020 update of the Digital Nation infographic (figure 2) re-enforces that just having an internet connection and access to devices does not necessary mean that you are digitally included. A summary of the infographic highlighted;
- (i) that COVID-19 has exacerbated the digital divide.
 - (ii) the challenges compounded by COVID-19 including reduced incomes, increased redundancies, unaffordability of internet access, increased isolation, and a limitation of citizens options
 - (iii) how digital has helped people in the pandemic: as a vital support, in using mobile payments, improving digital skills, and increased desire to improve skills.
- 3.7 The infographic also stressed that a number of 'limited internet users' (in orange) are online but use the internet for very few things. For example, young people with no or few qualifications who only use the internet for social media or entertainment and lack the digital skills needed for work. The GTF identified four factors needed to cross the digital divide; point of access, motivation, confidence and skills. This is consistent with our findings outlined in the initial Digital Landscape Review and further re-enforces its conclusion and recommendations

Figure 2 GoodThings Foundation Digital Nation UK 2020 Stats



- 3.8 A review of several reports and publications also recognises that although the UK is coming out of lockdown, the use of the internet will continue to grow and, in many cases, services will further shift to online and may not necessarily provide alternative ways to access goods and services. This will be the new normal. This is being further explored in a publication by the House of Lords, Beyond Digital: Planning for a Hybrid World. [Beyond Digital: Planning for a Hybrid World \(parliament.uk\)](https://www.parliament.uk/publications/54441/beyond-digital-planning-for-a-hybrid-world). The House of Lords report reflected on those aspects that have a known impact on wellbeing: mental and physical health, social interaction, work and education and stressed the following areas that required further attention;

- Digital inequality;
- Skills and training;
- Data and research;
- Co-operation;
- Resilience; regulation and rights;
- and online harms

3.9 The House of Lords Report concluded that unless comprehensive action is taken to address these issues, with government interventions to maximise the opportunities and mitigate the risks, the new hybrid world will neither achieve its full potential nor serve the interests of all, and instead will leave many behind.

Regional landscape

3.10 Overall in the West Midlands, there has been an increased internet usage on par with London in terms of its proportion of connected citizens 97% in 2021 compared to 89% in 2020 according to the Lloyds Consumer Digital Inclusion Review 2021.

Figure 3. Have you used the Internet in the last three months? (e.g. desktop, laptop, mobile or tablet), 'Yes', split by region, 2021 and 2020

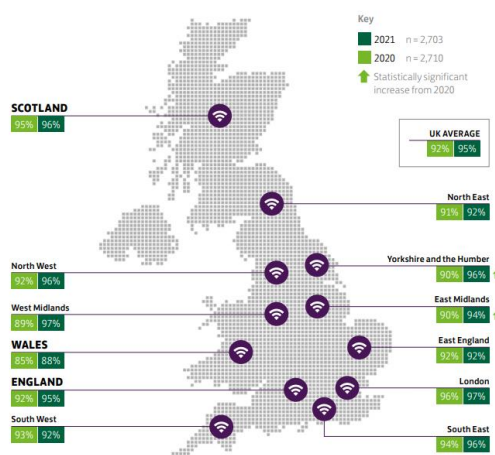
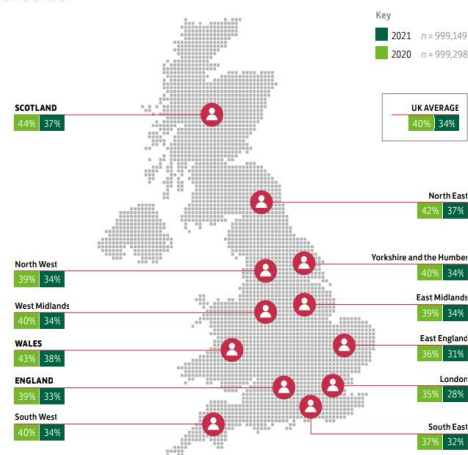


Figure 6. Proportion of benefit claimants with Very Low digital engagement. Split by nation and region, 2021 and 2020



3.11 However a deeper analysis of local data in the West Midlands shows that:

- 21.7% of people in the West Midlands are non-users of the internet, compared to 12.6% in the South East. (Yates, 2020).
- 34% of benefit claimants have very low digital engagement (Lloyds CDI 2021)
- 56% of the population in the West Midlands do not have essential digital skills for work ('Lloyds Digital Index 2020')
- 5.5% of people are unemployed compared to 4% for the UK ('West Midlands State of the Region Report 2020')
- 19.2% of residents live in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods (as above).

3.12 In recognition of the extent of the challenges concerning digital inclusion and skills highlighted by Covid, the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) set up the WM Coalition for Digital Inclusion, which brings together the local authorities and several local and regional organisations that are delivering digital inclusion opportunities. The WMCA is aiming to

establish the West Midlands Digital Catch Up, a pilot that will build the confidence of those who are digitally excluded and who do not traditionally access WMCA funded digital skills provision, to take their first steps online as well as providing kit and data/broadband access to people who can't afford it. Their aim is to build a coalition of funding partners from both Government and the private sector in recognition that the West Midlands has;

- Highest proportion of non-internet users in the UK (21.7%, with a further 23% who are limited users (Yates, Analysis of Ofcom data 2020)
- Low broadband connectivity, particularly in the Black Country
- Limited cross-regional governance to address issues including digital inclusion
- As with the rest of the UK, a high proportion of non-internet users who are disabled.

3.13 Birmingham City Council is working with the WMCA to support the delivery of the WMCA Digital Roadmap and the further development of the WM Coalition for Digital Inclusion

Local Landscape

3.14 The Lloyds Consumer Digital Index 2021 Review only provides statistics at a national and regional level and therefore there are no recent Birmingham specific statistics. Many of the previous digital inclusion statistics relating to Birmingham were obtained from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the equivalent report for 2021 have yet to be published. However, in line with national and regional improvements, it is most likely that there will be equivalent improvements in digital inclusion.

3.15 At a local level, the Neighbourhood Network Services (NNS) and charities, community and voluntary sector organisations have continued to develop and deliver digital inclusion projects and activities that have either been commissioned by the Birmingham City Council or they have secured funding from other sources to deliver a variety of hyperlocal computer loans schemes, digital champion programmes, digital skills programmes and recycling of devices initiatives.

3.16 Some of the NNS have undertaken surveys to gauge the extent of the digital exclusion issues within their locality. Whilst the surveys are limited in number of responses, they do challenge the national statistics that suggest that only 5% of the UK population digital excluded. For example, the Hall Green NNS survey showed:

Local citizens:

- About 14- 20% of people have no access to the internet at all.
- Approximately 50% of respondents who said they have access to the internet, are accessing the internet by sharing.
- 30-40% of respondents indicate they need support to get online and to be confident online with general day-to-day online activities like form filling, benefit information, skills development, applying for jobs etc.
- 40-50% could do with assistance with equipment to connect online

Hall Green organisations:

- A good proportion have developed online services (60%) but 40% or so of these have not felt it's been well taken up and therefore need support with their online / digital offer.
- Most of these would seem to have old and inefficient equipment, a lack of reserves to upgrade and a lack of IT support to develop it well.

- 20-30% of them would likely be able to and be interested in being digital delivery partners.
- 30-50% of the organisations would benefit from IT support/ training mainly around common software e.g. Excel, web development, Zoom etc.

3.17 Whilst it is recognised that the above survey is not representative of Birmingham, it is very much in line with the lived experience of many citizens and communities who have been disadvantaged as a result of digital poverty. Being able to use the internet once in the past 3 months does not reflect a person's ability to have access to a device, their affordability of data packages to stay connected nor the digital skills to improve their learning or employment opportunities. The lived experience of our vulnerable communities over the last 12 months has shown that digital poverty is persistent across all ages leaving many excluded and increasing the level of inequality and vulnerability across the City. This is further backed up in the Lloyds CDI 2021 which suggests that data and device affordability is a real issue – with almost a third of those offline (31%) saying cheaper mobile data would motivate them to get online.

3.18 In response to the lack of connectivity and devices, Birmingham City Council is undertaking several activities to support those that are socially and digitally excluded. For example, it is;

- Delivering a programme to install fibre broadband connectivity into its multi-storey dwellings to ensure tenants can have access to internet services in recognition that those in social housing are more likely to be digitally, financially and socially excluded.
- Making available 650 recycled desktops to charities and community and voluntary sector organisations to help these organisations deliver frontline training and skills development
- Establishing a pipeline of recycled laptops for distribution to vulnerable citizens, families and communities to meet the demand of devices
- Ensuring that social value requirements that support digital inclusion are built into supplier contracts

4.0 Conclusion

4.1 The latest Lloyds CDI 2021 report indicates that there has been an acceleration in the uptake of digital services, leading to a reduction in the percentage of people who are offline down to 5% of the UK population. This was inevitable given that most face to face channels were no longer available. However, the measures used to determine whether someone is digitally included is misleading as it only it is only an indication of whether someone has used the internet in the last 3 months at least once and from any device. It does not take into account the person's levels of competency, whether the device was suitable or where or how they accessed the internet.

4.2 Both at a regional and local level the lived experience of vulnerable citizens and communities indicate that there continues to be a digital divide which has been exacerbated by Covid and the lockdown and has led to deepening digital and data poverty and greater inequities between those who have access and the digital skills compared to those who do not

4.3 There has been an increase in digital activities at all levels, and new projects and activities to support digital inclusion activities ranging from the setting up of computer loan schemes, recycling devices, digital champions networks etc, have been established. However, many of the issues identified in the initial Digital Inclusion Landscape Review (Addendum A) are still relevant. There is still no overarching governance to bring together the various stakeholders,

many organisations are still working in silos, potentially duplicating and/or competing for the same resources and there continues to be missed opportunities to establish end to end pathways and defined handovers for citizens that enable them to determine their digital journey and ensure they achieve their overall outcome.

5.0 Recommendation

- 5.1 Many of the recommendations outlined in the initial Digital Inclusion Landscape are still valid. Therefore, it is recommended that the Council works with city partners and stakeholders to co-design and co-produce a Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan that addresses the root causes of digital inclusion as identified in our findings in a sustainable way.

Addendum A

Subject: The Digital Inclusion landscape

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 It has been over 30 years since the launch of the world wide web. The internet has transformed services and continues to radically change the way people live, learn and work. New government figures show the country's thriving digital sector contributed £149 billion to the UK in 2018, accounting for 7.7 per cent of the UK economy. Over the years a number of initiatives have been implemented to support citizens, communities and businesses to take advantage of the internet and gain the skills to enhance their quality of life chances and business prospects. However, despite these initiatives, there still remains a persistent number of citizens and communities who remain digitally excluded, leading to a widening and deepening digital divide. COVID-19 and the recent lockdown has highlighted the importance of reducing the levels of digital exclusion and the need for City Council to intervene.
- 1.2 The report provides an overview of the current digital inclusion position in Birmingham compared to the UK. It provides the initial evidence base which will be used to develop the Council's Digital Inclusion Strategy which will include an action plan co-designed and co-produced with city stakeholders and delivery partners. The focus of the strategy will cover citizens, communities and businesses and will align to the Council's overall Digital Strategy which will include the further digitising of our services and improving accessibility through our Citizen Access Strategy.
- 1.3 According to ONS figures the percentage of internet users in the UK 89.8% in 2018. This has increased to 90.8% in 2019. This means that there still remains 3.9 million offline in the UK. Nationally, there only been a small increase in this percentage over a 12 months period. In comparison, Birmingham has seen a faster rate of digital inclusion in recent years, and its has now moved to 91.4% (2019) from 88.6% (2018). The most recent stats also indicate that in Birmingham the percentage of digitally excluded has reduced from 11.2% in 2018 to 8.6% in 2019. Whilst the increase is greater than the national average, its does concur with national findings, that digital exclusion remains persistent and is becoming difficult to address.
- 1.4 There are many reasons why people are not digitally included. Most common reasons are cited below and many people who are excluded will experience at least one if not all of these issues:
- Affordability of devices and connectivity costs
 - The skills gap to use, or means to learn
 - A lack of internet and / or device access
 - The motivation and confidence to use, understand or engage
 - Trust and a fear of crime, or not knowing where to start to go online

However, the factors impacting on digital inclusion are complex and multifaceted and there are different levels of digital inclusion. Having connectivity in the home does not mean people are digitally included. They may lack skills in using the devices and applications, they may only afford limited data packages, or have inappropriate devices, and/or inadequate numbers of devices to meet family needs. There is a risk that further digital transformation of Council services will widen the digital divide and inequalities rather than narrowing them. Our Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan will aim to address these issues

- 1.5 Whilst those over 65s remain the largest excluded group, there are other groups that require intervention and support. For example;
- 700,000 of those aged between 11 and 18 years (12%) could not access the internet at home from a computer or tablet, and a further 60,000 had no internet access at home ([ONS, 2019](#))
 - 23.3% adult internet non-users were disabled compared with only 6.0% of those without a disability ([ONS, 2019](#)).
 - Older people, people with long term conditions and disabilities,
 - people living in poverty / with social deprivation
- 1.6 The socio-economic conditions in Birmingham has an impact on digital inclusion as there is a correlation between social exclusion and deprivation. It is widely anticipated that like many other metropolitan cities, Birmingham will be heavily impacted with job losses and economic downturn, leading to a further increase in deprivation following COVID-19. According to Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) in 2018, the likelihood of Birmingham's citizens being digital excluded was medium. It is inevitable that without intervention digital inclusion will not improve and digital poverty will likely increase across the City.
- 1.7 The digital landscape map provides a snapshot of the types of digital activities and the organisations currently delivering them. In the main the activities are delivered by the public sector, educational institutions, non-profit/charities, the private sector and religious establishments. It shows that;
- Most of the activities relate to the development of digital skills.
 - The skills training covers the full range of skills identified in the essential digital skills
 - Most of the digital inclusion work is being carried out by the Neighbourhood Network Service (NNS) and their Assets (ie local organisations based in the locality) for older adults
 - Very few organisations provide access to connectivity (13) and/or devices (7) compared to skills developments (79). See figure

However, despite the number of skills initiatives, Birmingham and the West Midlands still has fewer initiatives than most areas in the UK according to FutureDotNow (2019) based on their analysis. It also noted that there are fewer initiatives for NEETs compared to those for adults in the West Midlands

- 1.8 Many of NNS and local partners identified lack of connectivity and lack of devices as the key constraints that are stopping them from delivering their digital skills training as much of it was delivered in libraries, community centres, shared spaces or even cafes, all of which have closed due to COVID-19. As the analysis shows only 7 organisations are currently making devices available with a further 13 offering connectivity. In both cases, these services are time limited and do not meet the current need.
- 1.9 Much of the views on the levels and reasons for digital inclusion at the local level is anecdotal. There does not appear to be any data collected to identify the level of inclusion and the reasons for it at a local level. Most of the activities being undertaken are reactive and based on demand from the communities. Without this data, it will be difficult to develop a targeted digital inclusion action plan.

1.10 Given the multitude of organisations delivering digital inclusion activities with varying outcomes and a focus based on different funding regimes, there is a lack of transparency in the work being delivered and its overall impact on digital inclusion. Prima facie, it appears that;

- Services are not joined up enough and efforts are duplicated across providers
- Some of the work is uncoordinated and siloed, with a lack of visibility of some of the opportunities
- There is a lack of clear pathways or co-ordinated handovers to ensure that people continue to develop or even use their skills

There needs to be better links and coordination between the public, private and voluntary sector, so that their efforts add up to more than the sum of their parts and so that they can work together to maximise expertise, experience and resources to better meet user needs

1.11 A review of the digital strategies of other local authorities and their successful interventions suggest that there was a strong focus on;

- Securing a level of dedicated investment and resources to drive an inclusion programme
- Co-design and co-production of skills programmes with communities and partners
- Connectivity and building community capacity
- Ensuring that activities are led by the communities rather than the Local authorities

1.12 The Council recognised the importance of digital facilitation within its Information and Communications Technology and Digital Strategy 2016-2021. Through its Digital Birmingham Partnership, the Council pioneered a number of successful initiatives to help address digital inclusion ranging from providing connectivity through free Wi-Fi schemes, to creating a network of digital champions, providing computer equipment to vulnerable people and working with commercial organisation and as such as Google Garage, BT, Virgin Media, and communities group to develop a range of digital skills. Unfortunately, many of these schemes were either grant funded or time limited and have now ceased.

1.13 Based on our findings, a good digitally inclusive City is one;

- Where every citizen has easy access to an Internet enabled device ideally within their own household.
- Where there is city wide locality based and online educational sessions, giving basic, intermediate and advanced tuition to meets specific needs and enables a person to develop their digital journey.
- There is signposting and targeted campaigns to remove the barriers of those most excluded
- That provides citizens with a digital by choice preference by creating innovative solutions that enable citizens to access services using their device of choice.

Next Steps and Recommendations

1.14 Based on above findings, the Report recognises that it is imperative the Council develops a Digital Inclusion Strategy to address the above concerns. It recommends the following approach and suggests some areas for quick wins;

1. Establish a task and finish group to develop a Digital Inclusion Strategy, co-designed and co-produced with communities and businesses and based on the principles set out in section 6.0 of this Report. This should be part of a wider ICT and Digital Strategy

2. Identify a level of investment and resources to build internal capacity help to facilitate, shape and act as an interface with stakeholders and partners to enable a more strategic and joined up approach
3. Develop an approach that enables a rapid and radical approach to digital inclusion if/when a second wave impacts on Birmingham
4. Work with established partners such as the NNS to identify the extent and reasons for persistent digital inclusion within their localities and to create a network of digital champions cross the City that work directly with communities to build community capacity and greater sustainability
5. Work with existing programmes and opportunities to identify quick wins e.g.
 - leverage the deployment of 5G small cells to create Wi-Fi or connectivity hotspots in areas of low take up and deprivation
 - work with telecommunication infrastructure providers to ensure that communal areas in our Social housing stock and Sheltered accommodation have access to free Wi-Fi as part of our wayleave requirements
6. Work with the community libraries, local businesses and other public sector orgs to establish a city-wide equipment loans service with connectivity
7. Establish an Action Plan that sets out sustainable medium and long term approaches to address digital inclusion, recognising that one size does not fit all
8. Consider establishing East Birmingham as an exemplar testbed & blueprint for piloting new initiatives and joining up activities for greater sustainability/impact

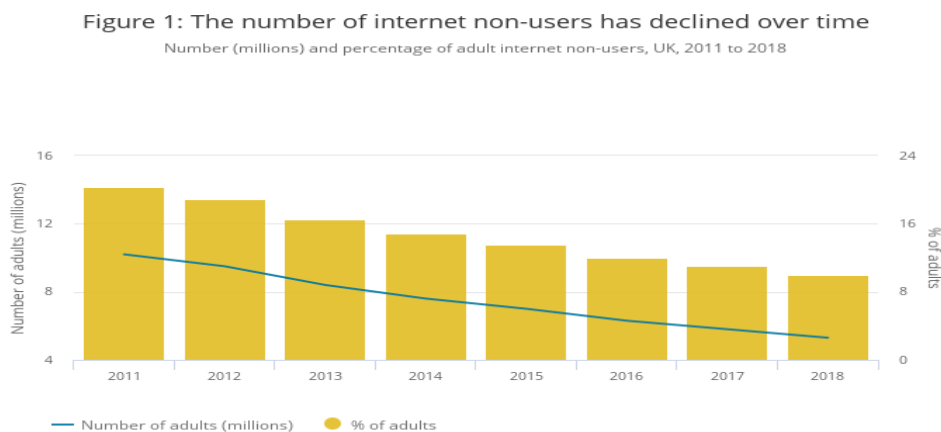
2. Introduction

- 2.1 This Report provides a starting point for creating a wider digital inclusion strategy. It establishes the national digital inclusion position and draws comparatives with the position in Birmingham in order to use the data to gain a better understanding of the factors that Birmingham City Council needs to consider in developing its own strategic response and to make recommendations for the better co-ordination and alignment of digital inclusion activities to respond to the Council's recovery strategies post COVID
- 2.2 It provides an overview of the levels of digital inclusion and the factors potentially contributing to it across the City. It provides a snapshot of the key current initiatives being undertaken by the Council, its partners and agencies that are working to improve the digital inclusion landscape and skills capabilities for its citizens, communities and businesses. It offers a high-level overview of the impacts of some of the existing strategic and reactive approaches used to address digital poverty and digital inclusion and draws conclusions and recommendations on how a more strategic and joined up approach can be envisioned.

3.0 Evidence of Digital Inclusion

The National Position

- 3.1 The most recent ONS data for 2019 shows that the average data shows that the percentage of internet users (individuals who have used the internet in the last three months) has increased to 90.8%. In the UK over the last 7 years the, there has been a steady increase from 79.4% in 2012 to 89.8% in 2018. (ONS 2019).



Source: Office for National Statistics - Internet Users, Labour Force Survey (LFS)

- 3.2 A summary of the key stats from the latest Lloyds Consumer Index 2020. <https://www.lloydsbank.com/banking-with-us/whats-happening/consumer-digital-index/key-findings.html>, paints the following picture;

- 3.8 million (7%) people in the UK remain completely offline.

- An estimated 9 million people (16%) are unable to use the Internet or their devices without assistance
- 6.5 million (12%) people cannot open apps.
- Circa 2.7 million (5%) people can access the Internet but lack the ability to use it to its full advantage;
- in total, an estimated 11.7 million (22%) people in the UK are without the digital skills needed for everyday life.
- Two-thirds (66%) of those online have not used the Internet or digital apps and tools to manage their health.
- Only 15.7 million people have the Essential Digital Skills needed for Work <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/essential-digital-skills-framework>
- Two-thirds of jobs need digital skills of some kind, and yet 52% of the UK workforce are not fully digitally enabled.

3.3 There are certain groups that are more vulnerable to digital exclusion than others, in particular the elderly. However, the research shows that there are many factors that impact on digital exclusion irrespective of age.

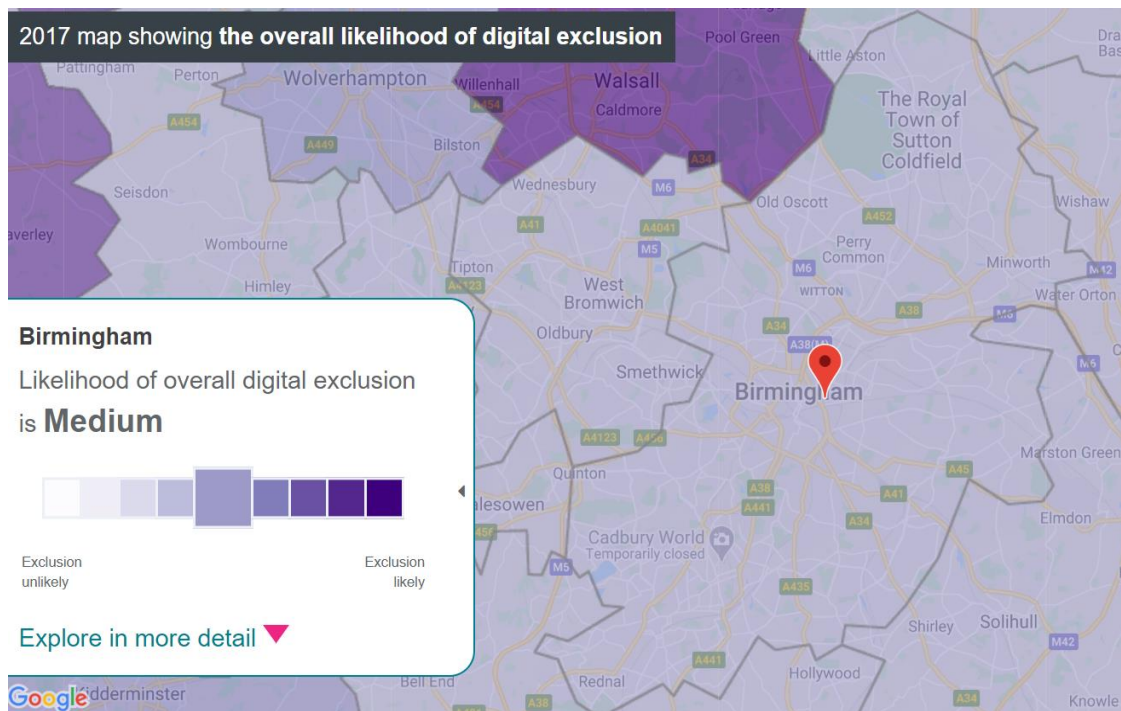
- According to Age UK, 82% of the adults that have never used the internet are aged 65 years and over.
- In 2018, 12% of those aged between 11 and 18 years (700,000) reported having no internet access at home from a computer or tablet, and a further 60,000 had no internet access at home at all (ONS, 2019)
- In 2018, 23.3% adult internet non-users were disabled compared with only 6.0% of those without a disability (ONS, 2019).
- People who are homeless make widespread use of phone and internet; almost as much as the wider population, but their experiences of use (and barriers) are different

The Birmingham Position

3.4 In comparison, Birmingham's internet usage in the most recent ONS 2019 has increased to 91.4% and is slightly higher than the UK figures and it has risen faster, going from 76.1% to 91.4%. However, it is still below Solihull which has gone from 86.5% – 96% in the same time.

3.5 The most recent data shows that the percentage of digitally excluded people has reduced to 8.6% in 2019 from 11.2% in 2018. The [digital exclusion heatmap](#) shows several contributors to digital exclusion, including social factors such as age, education and income, as well as access to fast broadband and 4G connectivity (SCVO, 2018). It concludes that in 2017 the likelihood that Birmingham is digitally excluded is medium compared to the rest of the UK.

Figure 2 – Digital Exclusion in Birmingham 2017



- 11.2% of adults in Birmingham have not been online within the last 3 months
- 77% of adults in Birmingham have all five Basic Digital Skills
- 39% of adults in Birmingham have used all five Basic Digital Skills in the last three months
- 12.9% of adults in Birmingham are over 65.
- 41.5% of adults in Birmingham have no qualifications and/or no Level 1 qualifications.
- £21,500 is the average income per taxpayer
- 18.4% of adults in Birmingham have long-term illness or disability

It has not been possible to locate comparative figures for Birmingham covering 2018.

- 3.6 The outbreak of COVID identified approximately 19800 shielded and vulnerable people in Birmingham. Of these people it is estimated that 44% provided an email address to contact them. The email addresses may have been of family members rather than the individual, however, in the absence of more recent other data, this provides a potential proxy of the percentage of the vulnerable people digitally excluded.

Summary of Digital Inclusion position

- 3.7 The national statistics show that there still remains 3.9 million (ONS2019) offline in the UK in 2020. Despite a range of initiatives to build skills within communities, only circa. 1.2 million more people are able to use the Internet themselves, and circa 15.7 million people have the Essential Digital Skills needed for Work. As two-thirds of jobs need digital skills of some kind, and 52% of the UK workforce are not yet fully digitally enabled, there is much to be done
- 3.8 Also the national evidence indicates that the people who most need health and care services (older people, people with long term conditions and disabilities, people living in poverty / with

social deprivation) are those least likely to be able to use digital health services. Without tackling digital inclusion, there is a risk that digital transformation widens health inequalities rather than narrowing them.

- 3.9 At the local level, given Birmingham's City demographics and the factors that impact on the level of digital inclusion, it is most probable that there remains a significant proportion of people that are still not digitally included. According to the latest set of Birmingham specific data 8.6% (2019) of people had not been online for 3 months compared to 11.2% (2018) and only 39% (2017) had used all 5 basic digital skills. Whilst, there has been some improvement, this suggests that there are high levels of exclusion especially compared to Solihull which is at
- 3.10 The lack of digital inclusion has an impact on how the Council and other public sector organisations deliver their services, for example in Birmingham, vulnerable people can only access housing tenancy and benefits services if they are online. Many of these people may not have connectivity at home and are reliant on libraries, community hubs or localities with the availability of computers or free wifi. This has been made worse when those access points have been closed
- 3.11 The socio-economic conditions in Birmingham has an impact on digital inclusion as there is a correlation between social exclusion and deprivation. Birmingham is ranked 7th in the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and 42% of its population lives in the top 10% most deprived Super Output Areas (SOA) in the UK and this was predicted to increase by further 1% before COVID 19 and the Lockdown. The inequalities in the West Midlands is stark, with Solihull having an IMD ranking of 171 compared to Birmingham's ranking of 7.
- 3.12 It is widely anticipated that like many other metropolitan cities, Birmingham will be heavily impacted with job losses and economic downturn, leading to a further increase in deprivation. It is inevitable that without intervention digital inclusion will worsen and digital poverty will likely increase across the City.

4.0 The Current Digital Landscape

4.1 National – Regional – local Landscape

- 4.1.1 At a national level, organisations such as FutureDotNow are coordinating industry action through a new initiative, DevicesDotNow, targeting the 1.9 million households who don't have access to the internet and are not digitally included. The initiative is supported by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, (DCMS). The DevicesDotNow campaign is asking businesses to donate tablets, smartphones and laptops, as well as connectivity in the form of sims, dongles and mobile hotspots so that these can be redistributed to those in need. Since the launch of the initiative in March 2020 to end of May 2020, only a total of 1700 devices have been provided to approximately 250 community organisations, some of which are in Birmingham.
- 4.1.2 Major technology companies, such as BT, Microsoft, EE, Vodafone, Google etc. have also been approached by Central Government to support national initiatives and national charities of their choice. These organisations provide a combination of digital skills training as well as connectivity

and devices. For example, [BT](#) will provide in-need families with six months' of free access to their network of [WiFi](#) access points, and Barnardo's are offering support for vulnerable children and young people suffering from 'digital poverty' with no access to fixed internet. Whilst welcomed, many of these initiatives are short term, restricted to specific and limited content and do not provide access to internet services that many of us take for granted. These initiatives have also impacted considerably at a local level, with these organisations stating that they are unable to support local initiatives and are re-directing requests for support to national organisations.

- 4.1.3 The Department for Education (DFE) also announced a £100million package to support vulnerable young people in schools, recognising that there are significant numbers of young people who do not have access to devices nor connectivity at home. Birmingham City Council has been allocated 4,408 laptops and 786 4G routers. However, this is been restricted to a proportion of year 10 pupils and those young people are leaving care or have a social worker allocated to them. Again the offer is time limited and with connectivity only available for until October 2020 and a monthly data allowance of 8GB.
- 4.1.4 A number of national charities, organisations and funding bodies are also providing a variety of digital inclusion activities, such as Barclays, (the Barclays Eagles), UK Online Centre (Learning My Way) and the Big Lottery Fund.
- 4.1.5 A snapshot of the regional and local organisations and their activities is shown in Appendix 1. At a regional level (WMCA and GBSLEP) the focus is not on digital exclusion, but on improving digital skills of businesses and citizens to enhance their job readiness. In 2019, The West Midlands Combined Authority set up the Digital Skills Partnership which brought together tech firms, businesses, universities, colleges and training providers from the region, in order to improve local people's digital skills and qualifications. In October 2019, the partnership launched a £5 million '**Beat the Bots**' fund, which aims to help upskill workers whose jobs could be under threat of automation, whilst also providing digital training to those with no previous experience. The fund aimed to provide over 1,100 training places for all ages, people with disabilities and those from the BAME community.
- 4.1.6 At a local level, many of the digital inclusion activities are co-ordinated through either the Birmingham Voluntary Service Council (BVSC), the 10 Neighbourhood Networks, the Birmingham Childrens and Early Years Partnership, 10 locality hubs, Digi-kicks, the Birmingham Education Partnership and Birmingham Adult Education Services. Many of these organisations target specific age groups.
- 4.1.7 The Council's Birmingham Adult Education Services <http://www.learnbaes.ac.uk/> provides both accredited and non-accredited digital skills courses for those aged 19 years and above. All their essential digital skills courses are free for those with low levels of IT and cover digital skills for everyday living and IT for Work. They have a SEN provision and provide accredited vocational training courses at a cost. Since Lockdown, they are providing hybrid online courses as well as classroom-based training.
- 4.1.8 The Neighbourhood Network Services, (NNS) and their Asset partners (organisations within the locality) have been commissioned across a ten locality based model covering the City. Their

primary aim is to support older people to connect with assets and resources which enable them to live healthy happy independent lives within their communities. The NNS are the main community facing organisations and they have picked up aspects of digital inclusion agenda and are providing “assisted digital” capabilities as part of their wider role. Following meetings with them a number of observations have emerged as well as further opportunities to work with them;

- The NNS support the delivery of the community based social work model, with a strong focus upon strength based approaches to seek community based solutions close to where people live.
- They operate upstream, by generating local assets which older people access independent of the City Council
- The main focus of the NNS is on the over 50s though they do support other age groups
- Much of the funding for the NNS is time limited to March 2021 and secured from the Better Care Fund and Prevention First Grant (£6.7million) via the City Council
- Some of the NNS have secured some funding for digital inclusion activities
- Many of the NNS have little or no information on the extent of digital inclusion within their area, most of the requests for devices have come via the Assets to enable them to deliver their training/support on line rather than the citizens and communities.
- The main focus of the NNS and their associated assets is on delivering basic and every day digital skills.
- Many of the digital courses provided by the Assets were face to face and centred on individual needs
- Many of the assets are unable to deliver digital training as their usual locations, e.g. libraries, cafes and communities centres where they have access to free wifi and devices are closed under Lockdown
- Many of the Assets do not have access to digital devices to enable them to continue providing digital skills training
- A number of NNS have advised that they have the funds to procure devices, but lack the knowledge as to what type and from where to get good value devices
- The majority of NNS have stated that the biggest issue is lack of connectivity which is preventing them from delivering many of their online courses
- Digi-kicks, one of the Assets working across several NNS, identified the need for co-designed and tailored training especially for those already dis-enfranchised
- Evidence from their various projects has shown people learn best from repeated, informal, face-to-face and one-to-one support
- Digi-kicks identified a need for greater diversity in training, i.e. little provision for training non-English speaking citizens
- There is little support for carers of the elderly and those with physical disability, learning and mental health conditions. These carers tend to be older and lack many of the digital skills to optimise the use of technologies on offer

4.1.9 A number of other organisations have also created new initiatives since the lockdown. For example, the Birmingham Education Partnership has partnered with a number of organisations including the Titan Partnership for schools and has identified a conservative estimate of 5000

young vulnerable people who may not have access to devices or connectivity out of school. They have started a campaign to raise funds and are working with schools to provide recycled devices to schools with connectivity. To date they are in the process of delivering over 300 devices to young people. In addition the Children and Early Years Programme has set up the Resilience Fund which provides £150 vouchers for digital connectivity for citizens and families. It has also provided £22500 to the Digital Education Partnership to support the 5000 young vulnerable people in schools with connectivity.

4.1.10 There is also been a recognition that the BAME community is vastly unrepresented with the digital economy and Brum MUSE, a new collaborative organisation is drawing considerable interest in bringing together key tech organisations, and institutions to implement key strategies to solve the digital skills gap within schools.

4.1.11 There is a significant number of funding opportunities across the region ranging from £120 to £250,000 as a response to COVID 19. Many of the NNS and their assets have taken advantage of these opportunities to support digital inclusion activities for example, Midlands Mencap has procured Kindle Fire devices and are distributing them into the community.

4.1.12 Birmingham City Council is lobbying the ESIF Growth Programme Board to combine ERDF and ESF in support for the most vulnerable of our society which includes the youngest and oldest workers, and those suffering with Mental Health, Learning and Physical disabilities and other labour market disadvantages. This alignment of funds could see enhanced support for digital inclusion, giving projects the flexibility to provide IT equipment to those who need it, and equip training programmes with moveable assets for vocational training needs, especially for new and growth industries where digital machinery plays an increasing role.

4.2 Summary of our key Findings

4.2.1 There are some national schemes to support access to devices and connectivity. However, these are time limited and do not meet existing levels of demand. There are little or no sustainability plans beyond the initial announcements. It has also meant that many of the major tech and telecommunications companies have been unwilling to provide any local support.

4.2.2 There is significant funding for digital skills at the regional level (WMCA and GBSLEP). However, many of these programmes relate to enhancing existing digital skills and enabling people to become more work ready. Their focus is not on digital inclusion for hard to reach groups or those who lack the basic skills.

4.2.3 Some of the digital inclusion work in Birmingham is currently being carried by the NNS and their Assets. However, there is no information or data to indicate the extent of the number of people who are not digitally included in their areas. Many of the digital skills activities have had to stop as the usual locations for training such as libraries, cafes, and community centres with connectivity or access to devices are currently closed.

4.2.4 Our findings show that local voluntary and community sector organisations are reporting that many elderly and vulnerable people are isolated in their homes with limited means of

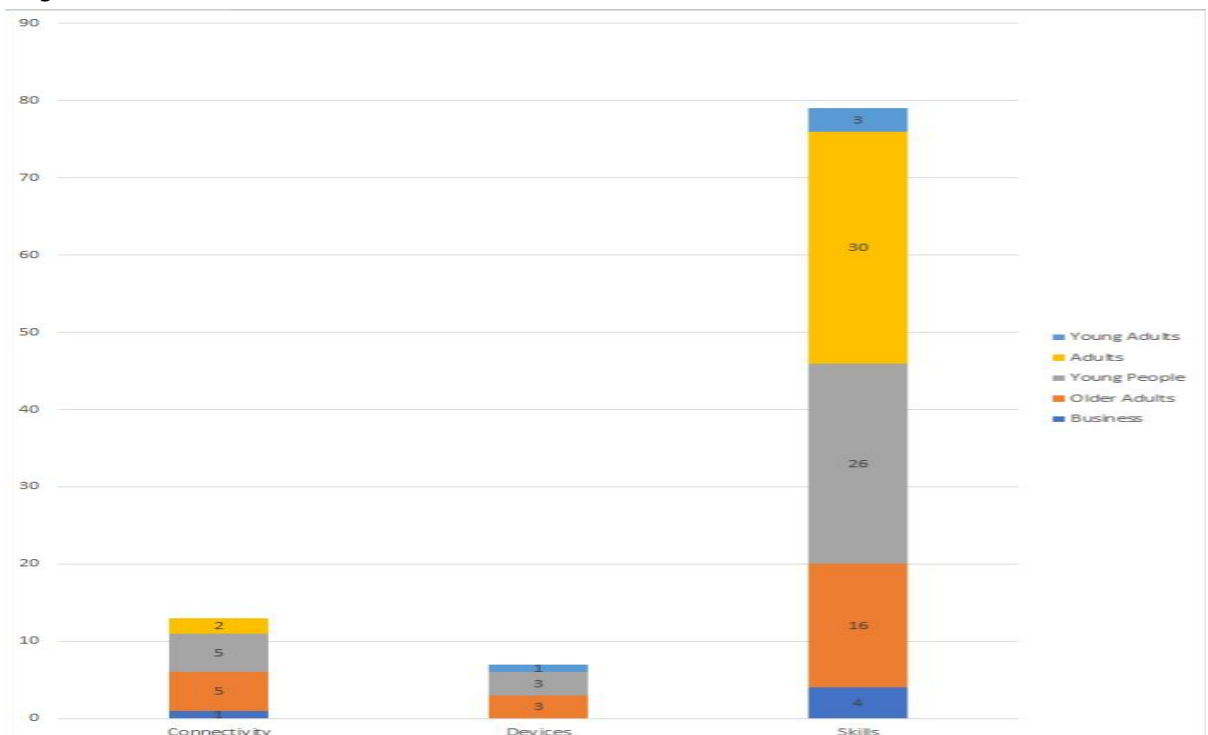
communicating with the outside world, or getting access to vital services such as health, benefits, housing, food or banking.

4.2.5 Front line community organisations are in desperate need of digital devices to be able to mobilise into the community in order to support households facing self-isolation. There is an imperative to support digital inclusion activities as given the relaxing of the social distancing rules, there is a real risk that there will be a second wave of COVID-19.

4.2.6 Digital inclusion and digital poverty is no longer about having access to a digital device and connectivity in the home. For example, many young people have smart phones irrespective of their levels of deprivation. However, they may have limited data, or there is only one device amongst within the family or the device is not suitable for educational and other learning experiences

4.2.7 The digital landscape picture shows that there are numerous organisation delivering various aspects of digital skills, and there is some excellent work being undertaken in the region. This is just a snapshot and there are other organisations that we have not captured as yet. It is clear that much of the work is uncoordinated, with a lack of visibility of some of the opportunities for joint working. A lot of the work is siloed and aimed to deliver particular outcomes. There does not appear to be many clear pathways nor co-ordinated handovers to ensure that people continue to develop or even use their skills.

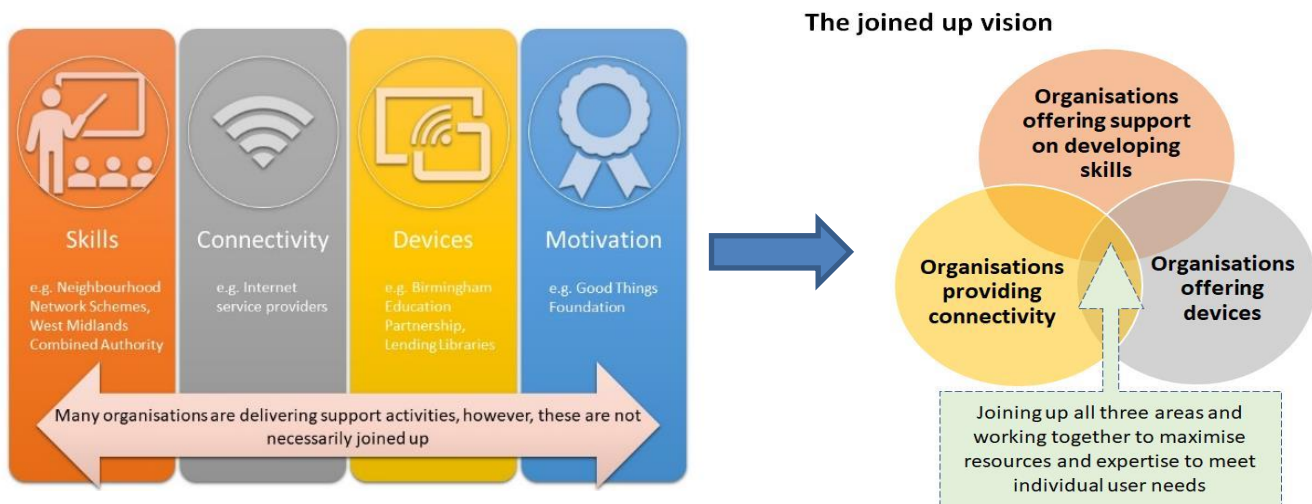
Figure 4 Shows number of organisation providing connectivity, devices and Skills training and their targeted audience.



4.2.8 Services to help people go online are not joined up enough. Efforts are duplicated across providers, funding is sporadic and does not always align with users' needs. Work together to

maximise expertise, experience and resources to better meet user needs. Better links and coordination are needed between the public, private and voluntary sector, so that their efforts add up to more than the sum of their parts.

Figure 5 shows how services are siloed and need to be joined up



4.2.9 Whilst there is a recognition that digital skills, access to devices and connectivity are all factors needed to deliver effective digital inclusion, lack of affordable connectivity has been identified by the NNS as the most significant barrier.

4.2.10 From the above we can draw out that there are many reasons why people are not digitally included. Many people who are excluded will experience at least one if not all of these issues:

- Affordability of devices and connectivity costs
- The skills gap to use, or means to learn
- A lack of internet and / or device access
- The motivation and confidence to use, understand or engage
- Trust and a fear of crime, or not knowing where to start to go online

4.2.11 Currently, there are multiple sources of funding and the amounts available can be substantial. Many of the organisation submit bid for specific and siloed outcomes. There could be an opportunity to develop cross city proposals that could deliver more sustainable and joined up outcomes. The Council is also lobbying the ESIF Growth Programme Board to combine ERDF and ESF in support for the most vulnerable of our society. This alignment of funds could be used to increase digital inclusion activities.

5.0 Evidence from successful Strategies

5.1 Over the last 20 years there have been numerous strategies and activities deployed to address digital inclusion both at a national and local level. For example, in 2014, Government published its Digital Inclusion strategy which set out 10 actions that government and partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors will take to reduce digital exclusion. A list of these action is shown in Appendix 2. It was intended to that by 2020 everyone who can be digitally capable

will be. Whilst some progress has been made, there still remains an estimated 9 million people (16%) who are unable to use the Internet or their devices without assistance

5.2 In 2016, Birmingham City Council published its Information and Communications Technology and Digital Strategy 2016-2021 which set out its approach for improving digital facilitation across the City. This introduced a number of new initiatives and built on the work undertaken by its Digital Birmingham Partnership, who were pioneers in developing partnership with the private, public and community and voluntary sectors to address digital inclusion and delivered a number of successful programmes, some of which could be replicated today. Some examples include;

- The Award-winning Aston Pride Initiative which provided children and families in the Aston area with computers and connectivity via the schools' network. This led to increased education attainments in both Maths and English
- Keeping IT in the Family, both an online and paper-based comic codesigned by young children to show parents and grandparents how to use the internet safely for every day use. This won the European Excellence in Childrens Services Award for its impact and reach.
- The Computer for Pupils Initiative – providing access to laptops for young vulnerable children. This is similar to the current Department for Education scheme.
- The recruitment over 1000 digital champions from the community
- Worked with partners to establish Online Centres including the Council's libraries to enable citizens with free access to computers and connectivity
- Worked with entrepreneurs to set up and promote the use of social media surgeries in local areas and enabled community group to design their digital skills programmes tailored to their community needs.
- Attracted the Google Garage to Birmingham to support digital skills for businesses as well as hard to reach groups.
- Provided free wifi in community and leisure centres, communal areas in Housing Associations and some charities and cafes

Many of the above activities were grant funded and without mainstream funding, have lapsed.

5.3 A review of the recent digital strategies of some of the neighbouring authorities and core cities suggest there is some commonality in approach for digital inclusion. Many local authorities have published digital inclusion strategies and actions plans to cover gaps in access to connectivity, skills and capabilities enhancement through assisted digital programmes, as well as schemes to provide access to equipment as part of their wider digital strategies. However, most recently, Leeds City Council's approach to digital inclusion has been identified an exemplar approach that other local authorities should consider. Their focus is three-fold;

- Skills – building a network of organisation to work together to tackle digital exclusion
- Access – Increase the number of places where people can get online for free
- Motivation – Get everyone championing digital

5.4 The most successful approaches have started from understanding the extent and scope of the problems. For examples, as part of their annual citizen opinion surveys Local authorities were

able to gain a better understanding of the types of inclusion, and their locality, thus being able to delivery targeted interventions. Many local authorities no longer undertake these surveys and lack the insights to develop targeted and locality driven programmes.

- 5.5 Also the evidence does show that the more sustainable and effective successes have been where programmes have been delivered in partnerships recognising that there are many organisations out there that are already doing great things, and it makes sense to draw upon their experiences where relevant. Also, there are examples where Local authorities have partnered with commercial organisations eg Barclays Digital Eagles, BT Rangers, Virgin Media Pioneers, O2 Guru
- 5.6 Leeds City Council recognised that a focussed investment is required whether that is for equipment or a team of people to drive the delivery. It has developed a strength-based approach which enables a multifaceted approach codesigned with existing communities. It has established local digital champions and empowered them to be the interface with their communities thus enabling more sustainable and successful outcomes.

6 What does a good Digital inclusion strategy look like

- 6.1 A good digital inclusion approach needs to start with the user needs. People need tailored support to help them overcome their own particular barriers; whether that's around access, cost, confidence or skills. Services need to be built for the user, not for the council
- 6.2 It needs to recognise that digital inclusion is not about the number of people who simply log-on. Equally, being able to go online is not an end in itself. There needs to be a better way to measure digital inclusion
- 6.3 The strategy needs to ensure that there are processes in place to evaluate and test what works, and prioritise these against wider outcomes, agreeing common measures, as well as iterating and making things better. This is critical to realising the benefits of going digital and achieving sustainable impacts.
- 6.4 It needs to understand behaviour issues such as motivation and trust. This is really important for those hard to reach groups. Nobody wants to learn digital skills for the sake of it. Having an internet connection is useless unless people have a reason to want to use it. Therefore, it is essential to bring digital into people's lives in a way that benefits them; helping them do things they care about and can readily be done online, for example keeping in touch with your grandchildren who live abroad.
- 6.5 It is vital that they can rely on trusted sources to get the help, support and assurance they need to build their confidence in a digital world. Providing training and assurances on how to stay safe online by providing simple and straightforward advice and tools will encourage a greater and more sustained use of the internet.
- 6.6 The outcome we want to achieve is a city where every citizen has easy access to an Internet enabled device ideally within their own household. There should be the availability of city wide locality based and online educational sessions, giving basic, intermediate and advanced tuition. There should be signposting and the expansion of targeted campaigns to remove the barriers

of those most excluded. It should provide citizens with a digital by choice preference by creating innovative solutions that enable citizens to access services using their device of choice.

7.0 Overall Conclusions

- 7.1 Birmingham has slightly higher levels of digital inclusion at 91.4% than compared to the rest of the UK at 90.8% in 2019. The most recent figures show that the levels of digital exclusion has improved from 11.2% in 2018 to 8.6 in 2019. Whilst, this is positive, the national findings suggest that despite a range of initiatives to build skills within communities, digital inclusion levels remain relatively unchanged. According to the SVCO rating, Birmingham is viewed as being medium is its rating on levels of digital exclusion in 2017.
- 7.2 There are multiple factors that impact on digital inclusion but there is a strong correlation with social exclusion and deprivation. Given Birmingham's ranking on deprivation and a potential worsening of its economic position due to the lockdown, it is likely that the digital divide could widen and as well as deepen.
- 7.3 Whilst the majority of people who are digitally excluded are over 65years, there is still exclusion in other age groups for example 12% of those aged between 11 and 18 years (700,000) have no internet access at home from a computer or tablet and those with disabilities are four times more likely to be excluded than those without disabilities.
- 7.4 There are many reasons why people are not digitally included, such factors includes affordability of devices and connectivity costs, the skills to make use of the internet, motivation and confidence as well as lack of trust and personal data safety concerns. Many people who are excluded will experience at least one if not all of these issues.
- 7.5 There is little or no data at a locality level to identify the level of digital inclusion and the reasons for it. Much of the views on the levels and reasons for not being digital included is anecdotal. Most of the activities being undertaken are reactive and based on demand from the communities. Without this data, it will be difficult to develop a targeted digital inclusion action plan.
- 7.6 The digital landscape map provides a snapshot of the types of digital activities and the organisations currently delivering them. It shows that there is some excellent work on digital inclusion activities being undertaken across the region.
- 7.7 In the main the activities are delivered by the public sector, educational institutions, non-profit/charities, the private sector and religious establishments. This is just a snapshot and there are other organisations that we have not captured as yet. It shows that;
 - Most of the activities relate to the development of digital skills.
 - The skills training covers the full range of skills identified in the essential digital skills
 - Most of the digital inclusion work is being carried out by the NNS and their Assets for older adults
 - Very few organisations provide access to connectivity (13) and/or devices (7) compared to skills developments (79)
- 7.8 However, despite the number of skills initiatives, Birmingham and the West Midlands still has fewer initiatives than most areas in the UK according to FuturedotNow (2019) based on their

analysis. It also noted that there are fewer initiatives for NEETs compared to those for adults in the West Midlands.

- 7.9 The NNS and their Assets delivered most of their skills training in local facilities. However, these activities have had to stop as the usual locations for training such as libraries, cafes, and community centres with connectivity or access to devices are currently closed. The lack of connectivity and devices is has significantly impacted on the ability to deliver skills training.
- 7.10 Services to help people go online are not joined up enough. Efforts are duplicated across providers, funding is sporadic and does not always align with users' needs. Work together to maximise expertise, experience and resources to better meet user needs. Better links and coordination are needed between the public, private and voluntary sector, so that their efforts add up to more than the sum of their parts.
- 7.11 Currently, there are multiple sources of funding and the amounts available can be substantial. Many of the organisation submit bid for specific and siloed outcomes. There could be an opportunity to develop cross city proposals that could deliver more sustainable and joined up outcomes.
- 7.12 Having connectivity in the home does not mean people are digitally included.
- they may lack skills in using the devices and applications,
 - may have limited data packages,
 - may in appropriate devices, and/or inadequate numbers of devices to meet family needs.
- 7.13 There have been a number of successful strategies and programmes delivered by Local authorities and their partners to improve address digital inclusion, However, many of the initiatives have grant funded or have not been sustainable. The most successful approaches require
- A level of dedicated investment and resources
 - Co-design and co-production with communities and partners
 - Lead by the communities rather than the Local authorities

8 Next Steps

- 8.1 The Report recognises that it is imperative the Council develops a Digital Inclusion Strategy to address the above concerns. It recommends the following approach and suggest some areas for quick wins
1. Establish a task and finish group to develop a Digital Inclusion Strategy, co-designed and co-produced with communities and businesses and based on the principles set out in section 6.0 of this Report. This is should be part of a wider IT and Digital Strategy
 2. Identify a level of investment and resources to build internal capacity help to facilitate, shape and act as an interface with stakeholders and partners to enable a more the strategic and joined up approach
 3. Develop an approach that enables a rapid and radical approach to digital inclusion if/when a second wave impacts on Birmingham

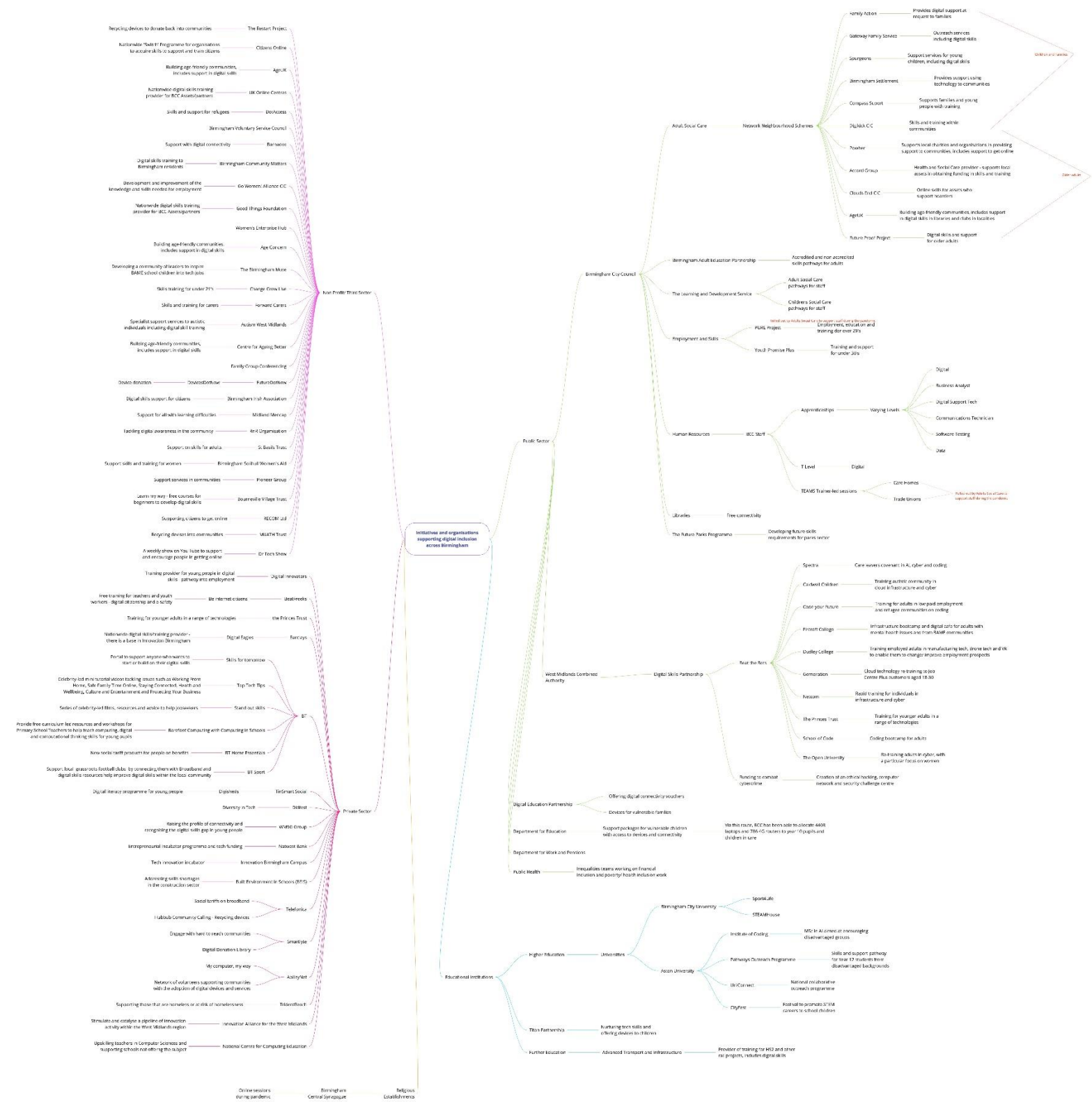
4. Work with established partners such as the NNS to identify the extent and reasons for persistent lack of digital inclusion within their localities and to create a network of digital champions cross the city that work directly with communities to build community capacity and greater sustainability
5. Work with existing programmes and opportunities to identify quick wins eg
 - leverage the deployment of 5G small cells to create Wi-Fi or connectivity hotspots in areas of low take up and deprivation
 - work with telecommunication infrastructure providers to ensure that communal areas in our Social housing stock and Sheltered accommodation have access to free Wi-Fi as part of our wayleave requirements
6. Work with the community libraries, local businesses and other public sector orgs to establish a city-wide equipment loans service with connectivity
7. Establish an Action Plan that sets out sustainable medium and long term approaches to address digital inclusion, recognising that one size does not fit all
8. Consider establishing East Birmingham as an exemplar testbed & blueprint for piloting new initiatives and joining up activities for greater sustainability/impact

9 Appendices

Appendix 1 – A snapshot of the current organisations delivering digital inclusion activities

Appendix 2 – Government Inclusion Strategy – 10 Actions - 2014

Appendix 1 - A snapshot of the current organisations delivering digital inclusion activities



	Government Digital Inclusion Strategy – 10 Actions
1	Make digital inclusion part of wider government policy, programmes and digital services
2	Establish a quality cross-government digital capability programme
3	Give all civil servants the digital capabilities to use and improve government services
4	Agree a common definition of digital skills and capabilities
5	Boost Go ON UK's partnership programme across the country
6	Improve and extend partnership working
7	Create a shared language for digital inclusion
8	Bring digital capability support into one place
9	Deliver a digital inclusion programme to support SMEs and VCSEs
10	Use data to measure performance and improve what we do