Digital Connectivity in Dumfries and Galloway

Friday 8th October 2021

Digital Connectivity

The Carnegie UK Trust defines 'adequate digital access' or Digital Connectivity as it is also known as:

'Having sustainable affordable access to a suitable digital device, an internet connection and an appropriate level of skills and abilities to navigate the digital world safely, securely and productively".

'Digital exclusion is the inability to access online products or services or to use simple forms of digital technology.'

Within Dumfries and Galloway, throughout the Covid 19 Pandemic a range of both Dumfries and Galloway Council Services and project partners including Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations helped to provide a large number of digital devices to help individuals and families who had no access to Laptop's or any other devices including Mobile Phones. This helped to ensure that they could continue to complete basic actions which were no longer possible including, for example, accessing Universal Credit Accounts to provide updates which would ensure that these benefits continued to be paid.

We know that there are still a large number of people who need help and advice on how to access support and for any queries, please contact Wendy Jesson, Anti-Poverty Officer on 0788 094 2909 or on Wendy.Jesson@dumgal.gov.uk.

Funding for Organisations

The Scottish Government is continuing to run additional support to organisations who wish to apply for funding to distribute to those in need who they are supporting and all of the information on this Fund and process is listed below:

Connecting Scotland Fast Track

Connecting Scotland is the Scottish Government Programme set up to tackle digital exclusion during the Covid 19 Pandemic. It is delivered with the support of local councils, the SCVO and a wide range of organisations from across Scotland and the UK.

Previous application rounds have targeted those at high clinical risk from coronavirus, families with children, young care leavers, older people and disabled people.

We are now inviting 'fast track' applications from organisations working with people at risk of social isolation and loneliness. If you apply through this process you are committing to distribute devices and provide basic monitoring information within 14 days of receipt. This means you should already know who you plan to support prior to applying.

Organisations can apply for support for up to 10 people they are currently working with. This support can include:

- Digital devices – iPads and/or Chromebooks
- Internet connectivity – a mobile WiFi hotspot with 24 months unlimited data
- Training and support – for staff and volunteers to become 'digital champions' to support people to use the internet confidently and safely

Fast track applications are intended for organisations who can identify specific people they are currently working with that meet the eligibility criteria and have capacity to deliver devices to them quickly over the summer.

For more about this fund, click Here.

Digital Champions – Do you have time to volunteer as a Digital Champion?

Everything you need to know if you are, or you're thinking about becoming, a Digital Champion

This guide covers what a Digital Champion is and what they do. It also includes guidance and links to resources to help you to support the learners you're working with.

What a Digital Champion is

Digital Champions help people who get devices through Connecting Scotland to do things online like:

- connecting a device to the internet using the Wi-Fi settings, and putting in the password when they need to
- sharing documents by attaching them to an email
- understanding that not all online information and content that they see is reliable

The aim is that, with support from Digital Champions, learners will be able to use the internet safely, confidently and effectively.

Digital Champions usually work in frontline positions in third and public sector organisations. For example, support workers, advice officers or befriending volunteers.

But all staff who come into regular contact with service users can be Digital Champions.

You do not need to be a technology expert to be a Digital Champion. But you do need to be confident in your own digital skills. You also need patience, enthusiasm and a desire to help others.

What Digital Champions do

The kinds of things that Digital Champions might help learners to do include:

- setting up their device
- setting up an email address
- showing them how to use video calling
- showing them how to shop online

Here's a video of a Digital Champion from Fife Housing Group, talking about his experience of supporting others.

How much time does it take

Support sessions with learners usually take place in person, once or twice a week. But if it's only possible to provide support sessions remotely, they'll take place on the phone.

30 – 45 minutes is usually enough time to make some progress without overwhelming the learner.

All this will depend on who you're working with and what they need. It also depends on how your organisation usually delivers support.

The support relationship should last for up to 6 months. But it could be shorter if your learner picks up all they need, or want, to know pretty quickly.

Building your digital confidence

You probably already have the softer skills you need to be a Digital Champion. For example, active listening, problem solving and empathy. And you may also have most of the digital skills to offer support to others.

But it's important to check that you're confident in the digital skills you use inside and outside work.

Use our Essential Digital Skills Checklist to help you measure these skills. It will help you find the main areas you need more support to develop.

Once you've worked through the checklist, you'll get a list of resources to help you build your skills based on the results.

Your online preferences and fears

As well as your skills, it's important to be honest about your fears, and dislikes, about being online.

We all have them, but it's important that you're aware of yours and don't allow them to have a negative impact on, or scare, your learner.

For example, just because you don't use online banking, it doesn't mean it isn't a useful or safe service for your learner.

Where to get support

You can email help@connecting.scot if you have any questions about your becoming, or being, a Digital Champion.

You can also chat with other Digital Champions from across Scotland in our Slack workspace. If you would like to join the conversation just click this link.

There are some great resources you can use to help build your own digital skills and confidence. Here are a few examples:

- Learn My Way by Good Things Foundation
- BT Skills for Tomorrow
- Technology Guides from Digital Unite

All of the above will enable you to help those you are supporting to master the following five Basic Digital Skills:

- Managing information: having the skills to use a search engine to find information, search for deals on comparison websites, able to bookmark useful websites and services and store data on a device or in the cloud.
- Communicating: the individual is able to keep in touch with family and friends using emails, instant messaging, video calls and social media. This includes the ability for an individual to post comments on forums, connect with online communities and leave feedback e.g. on shopping websites and for service providers about purchases or experiences they've had.
- Transacting: the ability to undertake financial transactions, such as completing a Universal Credit application, ordering shopping, booking travel, managing bank accounts, using digital government services and understanding how to buy and sell on the virtual marketplace.
- Problem-solving: The individual should be confident to solve problems using digital skills such as teaching themselves simple tasks using video lessons, using feedback from other internet users to solve a common problem and accessing support services e.g. 'live chat'.
- Creating: having the skills to create basic digital content. For example, creating a social media post, drafting a text document, creating and sharing photo albums and providing feedback to online communities.

An individual who can successfully undertake the above tasks is considered to have Basic Digital Skills.