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Digital Inclusion

Disclaimer: This evidence summary includes relevant literature identified from searches on the above topic, it is not an exhaustive list, it presents key finding and not recommendations for practice.

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Evidence summary

Barriers to digital inclusion

- Access - internet access, equipment access, affordability [2, 3, 4, 11, 14, 19, 21]
- Confidence - in own ability, online safety/security worries [2, 3, 4, 10, 11, 14, 19]
- Online skills - lack skills to use the internet and online services [2, 3, 4, 11, 14, 21]
- Motivation - don't see how the internet could be relevant and helpful [2, 3, 4, 14, 21]
- Design - accessibility, usability, complexity [1, 2, 4, 11, 14]
- Awareness - digital services, products and support available [2, 10, 21]
- Language - not in Welsh or other native language [4]

Risk of digital exclusion

Some sections of the population are more likely to be digitally excluded these were identified as:

- Older people [2, 3, 4, 6, 10, 14, 17, 21]
- People in lower income groups [2, 6, 14, 17, 21]
- People without a job [2]
- People in social housing [4]
- People with disabilities [2, 3, 4, 14]
- People with fewer educational qualifications [2, 3, 6, 21]
- People living in rural areas [4]
- Homeless people [2]
- People whose first language is not English [2]
- Refugees and asylum seekers [11]
- Benefit recipients [17]
- No children in the household [21]
- Confidence in general literacy [21]

Recommendations to increase inclusion and reduce exclusion

- Accessibility built in to reduce stigma [1]
- Still need alternative avenues (phone, face to face) to avoid excluding people [2, 10, 17]
- Some may need help, assisted support [2, 9, 10]
- Digital skills training [2, 3, 15, 17]
- Digital champions [2, 3]
- Intergenerational support – young people support older people to develop skills [2, 3]
- Assistive technologies [2, 3, 11, 13]
- Free public or affordable Wi-Fi [2, 3, 9, 13, 17]
- Workforce digital skills [2, 3, 11, 12, 17, 19]
- Raise awareness of support [2, 3, 10, 17]
- Make online services and support accessible [2, 3, 13]
- Co-designing, so solutions to fit their needs [2, 6, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18]
- Collaboration; local authorities, public libraries, NHS, voluntary organisations, Online Centres Network, commercial organisations and specialist digital inclusion partners [2, 3, 10, 13, 16, 17, 19]
- Encourage innovative use of technology [3, 17]
- Social prescribing [3], combining digital with non-digital support more effective [6]
- Target those with greatest need/interest [6, 9, 21]
- Instead of basic skills train to do things people need or want to do [6]
- Understand the barriers for the individual [6]
- Embed support within local services/support [6, 10, 19, 21]
- Person-centred and ongoing support [6, 9, 11, 13, 15, 19, 21]
- Peer to peer support [6, 10, 13, 19]
- Engage by generating interest or finding purpose [6, 7, 9, 15, 19, 21]
- Specialist support and assistive technology for those who need it [9]
- Include family or carers for those with learning disabilities [9]
- Build confidence and trust [10, 11, 12, 13, 17]
- Providing devices [10, 11]
- Identification of those in need of some kind of support [11]
- Recognising the importance of digital inclusion [11, 12, 19]

- User friendly, easy to use [13, 15, 17]
- Consider connectivity in rural areas [17]
- Targeted support for hard to reach groups; Welsh speakers, minority ethnic groups, LGBTQ+ [17, 18]
- Transport to access support [18]
- Small achievable goals [19]
- Older people preferred dedicated sessions rather than integration into activities [20]

Supporting digital inclusion

The Digital Communities Wales website has many examples of digital inclusion case studies, that are relevant to health and care, including [5]:

- Learning Disability Wales – Developed a new course easier for those with learning disabilities
- Digital Inclusion Ambassadors – supporting older people to develop skills
- Get the Vale Online – a collaboration between local organisations
- Creating Enterprise – Digital champions programme embracing diversity
- And many, many more!

Other case study examples:

- Digital Buddies Salford - links trained younger volunteers with older people for remote 1-2-1 support and a general chat [7]
- TechMates Wigan - basic one-to-one support by phone, video call or in person [7]
- Heywood, Middleton & Rochdale Circle Digital Support Service - individual or group sessions at people's home or in public settings such as a supermarket café or local medical centre [7]
- Opening the door to possibilities – combining social connection with digital skills to enhance inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities [8]
- Digital Lifeline Fund - free devices, data and digital support to with learning disabilities [9]
- NAViGO - Digital inclusion needs assessment and dashboard for mental health and social care services [11]

- Digital Health Hubs – supporting digital and health literacy and wellbeing in the community including; ASHA (asylum seeker/refugee charity), Seaview (homeless and mental health), and Leeds Library Service (dementia) [12]
- Sunderland Age UK – needs led digital skills programme for older people [13]
- ORBIT – Assisted living scheme included digital skills training/support [13]
- Mencap Connected Living – using technology to enhance independence for those with learning disabilities [15]
- One Digital Age UK – digital champions supporting digital skills in older people [15]
- Digital Boomers – improving skills of health and social care workforce [15]
- Gaunless Gateway Big Local – identified data poverty among single men in shared accommodation with no internet, so focused support on local Wi-Fi hot spots [16]
- 100% Digital Leeds – cross-sector working to deliver funding programmes and support [16]
- Big Local Central Jarrow – providing devices and internet access but issues with this being sustainable, affordable and scalability [16]
- Ageing Better Isle of Wight – upskilling over 50s to use devices and access the internet [18]
- Community Connector - linked with Mind Aberystwyth programmes to gain interest; Side by Side Cymru, a community peer support initiative, and My Generation, a resilience and wellbeing programme for over 50s [19]
- Community Connector - Mind in Salford embedded digital elements into Mental Health First Aid training sessions and Mental Health Awareness workshops [19]
- Clevercogs - designed to increase digital participation in adults with disabilities receiving care and support packages, to reach the most digitally excluded [22]

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