Connecting Scotland: Phase 2 Evaluation

EQUALITY AND WELFARE

Connecting Scotland:
Phase 2 Evaluation

October 2022

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Background to Connecting Scotland

Connecting Scotland is a Scottish Government programme, delivered in partnership with the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO). It provides digital devices, connectivity and digital skills support to people on low incomes who are digitally excluded. Over 3 distinct phases, Connecting Scotland has, so far, helped more than 60,000 households to increase their digital engagement and harness the advantages of being online.

This evaluative report focuses on the experiences of people supported in **phase 2** of the programme and follows on from [the Phase 1 evaluation](). The primary target group for support in phase 2 was low income households with dependent children, though this phase also included provision for young care leavers, as well as a 'winter support package' aimed at older and/or disabled people. Phase 2 of Connecting Scotland delivered devices between autumn 2020 and spring 2021, when national lockdown restrictions were still in place.

Devices were awarded to individuals through an application process managed by the SCVO. Third sector organisations, or local authorities, applied for devices on behalf of people on low incomes, who are digitally excluded.

People receiving devices through Connecting Scotland own those devices and can use them as they wish, though the anticipated benefits for people of consistent online access include: enhanced mental wellbeing, improved financial management, greater opportunities for learning and training, access to public services, and access to more employment opportunities.

People receiving devices are also offered support from a 'digital champion'; a nominated person from the applying organisation who can provide digital skills support and help with using devices. Users can also call the Connecting Scotland helpline if they need help with a specific issue.

To understand the impact of Connecting Scotland, Scottish Government researchers have engaged with people supported by the programme at various intervals from the time they received a device. People are invited to complete surveys at the beginning of, and around 9 months into, the period of support. A sample of users is also invited to take part in qualitative interviews in which they are asked about their experience of the programme after they have had their device for a few months.

Main research findings

The findings from research with people supported in phase 2 indicate that Connecting Scotland has improved online access for households, many of whose internet use had been restricted by insufficient and inadequate devices and/or limited or inconsistent access to data. Reported impacts include:

- children being able to take part in remote learning and complete schoolwork online, especially during periods of 'lockdown'

- the ability to search and apply for job opportunities more easily

- saving money – both from not having to pay for equipment or data, and from using the internet to shop around for the best prices and deals

- enhanced ability to pursue interests and leisure activities; particularly important for children who could maintain social contact with peers

Many people supported by Connecting Scotland had previously relied on mobile phones as their main means of accessing the internet. The new devices enabled them to do things online that they either could not do, or struggled to do, before. This was due mainly in part to:

- a bigger display screen made several activities easier, including video calling and school or college work

- being able to edit and save documents vastly improved people's ability to participate in education, and to apply for jobs as they were able to easily update CVs

- portable MiFi meant that people could use their internet connection outside of the home at no extra cost

- people commented that their Connecting Scotland devices were able to support a greater range of applications, expanding the ways in which people used their connectivity

Recommendations for future phases

The majority of users in phase 2 reported being confident internet users which largely explains why many said that they had not needed support from a digital champion. It is, nevertheless, worth considering what kinds of support might be of service to (generally younger) users who feel capable using the internet though for whom, presumably, there remain ways in which their digital engagement could be enhanced.

There was also a significant minority of users who did not appear to know about the digital skills support available through digital champions. In future, the programme should ensure that support is well signposted and easily accessible to those who need it.

A minority of research participants felt the device they had been given did not have the functionality that they desired. It is not clear whether people simply needed more help and information to use their device, or whether a changed or expanded hardware offer should form part of Connecting Scotland's future provision. Further research and user testing will help to clarify the best option(s) for device provision.

In terms of research activities, it has proved difficult to achieve robust sample sizes in the surveys. Efforts to boost sample sizes for research involving phase 3 users have been encouraging, though exploring ways to better engage people in research activities remains a priority for future evaluative activities.

About Connecting Scotland

Connecting Scotland provides digital devices and support to people in Scotland who are digitally excluded and on low incomes. It was initially set up as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and, in its first phase, was targeted at people who were particularly vulnerable during lockdown, including those advised to 'shield'.

Providing people with their own internet-enabled device, and dedicated digital skills support, meant that people were able to keep in touch with others, find important information and stay mentally stimulated while physical restrictions were in place. **An evaluation of phase 1** of the programme was published in May 2022.

A second phase was launched in autumn 2020, targeted primarily at low income families with children. Phase 2 also focused on young care leavers - people aged 16-25 who have been looked after in the care system - and, additionally, included a 'winter support package' aimed at older and or/disabled people.

In summer 2021, phase 3 was launched with the specific aim of helping people find employment, or gain employability skills, by enhancing digital abilities and providing greater access to advice and opportunities online.

An overview of the Connecting Scotland programme, to date, is shown at Figure 1.

The focus of this evaluative report is phase 2 end users: families, young care leavers and those receiving devices through the winter support package.

Fig 1. Overview of Connecting Scotland Programme Delivery

Phase	Date phase announced	Funds	Target group	Target numbers	Delivered
1	May '20	£5M	People at a high clinical risk of COVID-19	9,000	April – July 2020
2	Aug '20	£15M	Young care leavers & families with children	23,000	August 2020 – April 2021
(2) Winter Support	Nov '20	£4.3M	Socially isolated / older and disabled people	5,000	December 2020 – March 2021

Phase	Date phase announced	Funds	Target group	Target numbers	Delivered
3	Jun '21	£26.6M	Employability Digitally excluded / low-income households	23,000	June 2021 – September 2021 August – December 2021

Programme Governance

Connecting Scotland is funded by the Scottish Government and administered by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO). Third sector organisations, or local authorities, apply for devices on behalf of individuals on low incomes, who are digitally excluded. Applicants can apply for a smart device (Apple iPads or Google Chromebooks), as well as 'MiFi' (mobile WiFi) devices if users require a means of connecting to the internet.

Limits on data use initially applied to users in phase 1 but Connecting Scotland now provides users with free unlimited internet access for 2 years; this includes phase 1 users for whom the extended data offer was retrospectively applied. Users own the devices they receive and can keep and use them for as long as they wish.

People who receive devices are offered support from a 'digital champion'; a nominated person from the applying organisation who can provide digital skills support and help with using devices. Users can also call the Connecting Scotland helpline if they need help with a specific issue.

Connecting Scotland has delivered on its target of getting 60,000 digitally excluded households online in the first 3 phases, distributing devices via more than 1,000 organisations.

Application Process

The application process for Connecting Scotland worked in the following way:

1. Third Sector organisations and local authorities applied for Connecting Scotland support on behalf of their clients.

2. Applications were made to SCVO (Connecting Scotland's delivery partner) who convened panels to assess the applications in partnership with designated local authority leads.

3. Applications were assessed on the basis that appropriate client groups had been identified who met the target criteria, and confidence in the organisation's ability to provide digital champion support.

4. An award formula was used to ensure a balance of awards across all of Scotland's local authority areas.

5. Successful organisations signed a grant agreement and committed to the programme's contractual obligations.

6. Post award, the [Mhor Collective](#) provided training for those nominated as digital champions in each organisation.

7. Devices were delivered to organisations who distributed them to their clients within a prescribed timeframe.

8. Post distribution, organisations submitted monitoring data on their device recipients to a central portal managed by SCVO.

Devices

Organisations could request the following for their clients:

- an iPad: Chosen as an easy to use device with accessibility features that would meet the needs of older clients who would be using the device to stay in touch and access information

- a Chromebook: suitable for clients with a wider range of digital needs who may need to produce documents (e.g. create a C.V.) or use other applications requiring extensive use of a keyboard

- a MiFi device: an easy way to provide internet access without the need to have a broadband connection installed and allowing multiple users to connect simultaneously. During the first lockdown, a solution was needed that avoided face-to-face contact e.g. with a broadband installer

Digital Champions

To optimise users' experience of the programme, Connecting Scotland coordinates digital skills support via 'digital champions'.

Digital champions are normally staff who work in front line positions for the organisations that have applied to Connecting Scotland and so will already possess knowledge and experience of working directly with user groups. Training and a range of resources for digital champions are provided for free as part of the Connecting Scotland programme. This covers device-specific training as well as materials to enhance core digital skills.

The role of digital champions is to 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. People receiving Connecting Scotland support, however, are under no obligation to engage with their digital champion.

More information about applicant organisations' experience of identifying and training digital champions can be found in this report: Evaluation of Connecting Scotland - Blake Stevenson.

The Connecting Scotland website also includes information for end users or others who may lack experience in online technology. Beneficiaries of the programme are also able to call a dedicated helpline to deal with any specific issues.

Programme Purpose

Connecting Scotland was initially implemented as a response to COVID-19; providing a means of connection for those most vulnerable to the effects of 'lockdown'. The overall ambition for the programme, however, goes beyond emergency response and aims to tackle digital exclusion in Scotland, ultimately helping to build a digital citizenship in which people are able to comfortably access and navigate the digital world.

The benefits of fostering digital inclusion are manifold. The online access and digital skills support provided by Connecting Scotland can help users in the following ways:

- **Mental Health and Wellbeing**: The ability to maintain connections with family, friends, social groups and organisations reduces social isolation and feelings of loneliness. Research respondents from phase 1 of Connecting Scotland reported improvements in their ability to connect with others and in their mental health[1].

- **Employment:** Improving digital skills, accessing online learning and resources, and having the ability to search and apply for jobs online increases the likelihood of people securing employment. Increasingly, the ability to work remotely is essential for multiple industries and sectors; improving access to devices and technology will allow people to retain jobs and avoid unemployment due to lack of connectivity.

- **Saving money on goods and services:** Reliable access to the internet enables people to view and compare the prices of goods and services, and to make purchases online. Being online gives access to a wider range of products and reduces transactional costs, such as phone calls or travelling, meaning people can save both money and time.

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[1] Connecting Scotland: phase 1 evaluation

- **Applying for, and managing, social security entitlements:** The majority of UK social security benefits, including Universal Credit (UC), are primarily applied for and managed online. Research by Citizens Advice found that people seeking advice on benefits were among the least frequent users of the internet[2]. Providing a connection and digital skills support to those on low incomes will enable people to check entitlements, apply in the most expedient way and boost their incomes.

- **Access to information and public services**: Many public services have embraced digital technology to make processes quicker and more efficient, for example video healthcare consultations, or online repeat prescription services. A wealth of public information and details of local services can also be accessed easily online. People who are digitally excluded are disadvantaged if they are unable to access important information in a timely way or interact with services efficiently. Interviewees from the phase 1 research told us how they had used their connection to keep updated with public health information relating to COVID-19.

This list is not exhaustive. There are countless advantages to having consistent, reliable internet access that the majority of people take for granted. Digital technologies are integral to so many facets of daily existence that those who are digitally excluded or marginalised cannot realistically participate in society on an equal footing with others.

National Performance Framework Outcomes

By providing access to a connection and digital support, Connecting Scotland potentially impacts upon each of Scotland's 11 National Outcomes. These are set out in the National Performance Framework[3] and reflect the values and aspirations of the people of Scotland.

As a programme aimed at people on low incomes who are digitally excluded, Connecting Scotland most obviously aligns with the outcome on poverty, which states that poverty is tackled by "sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally". Other specific outcomes are associated with the different groups targeted in each phase of the programme. The focus of this report is phase 2, in which the primary target group was families with children. The needs of this group of users are qualitatively different from those targeted in phase 1, where the focus was on enabling people to stay connected with others and keep mentally stimulated.

For phase 2, connectivity was likely to be used for both child and adult education, searching and/or applying for jobs, and attending groups, or support services, online. Therefore, phase 2 of Connecting Scotland supports the realisation, in particular, of the national outcome on *fair work and business* which emphasises investment in the adequate skills and training of employees; the outcome on *education* which states that *"We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to*

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[2] Citizens Advice Scotland (2018): 'Disconnected'

[3] National Outcomes | National Performance Framework

society", and the outcome on *children and young people*, by enabling children to engage with online culture and communities and not be excluded from activities enjoyed by their peers.

A table detailing how tackling digital exclusion contributes to the National Performance Framework outcomes is included at annex A.

Evaluation Approach

To understand the impact that Connecting Scotland is having for users, a programme of evaluative research has been undertaken by Scottish Government researchers. We wanted to learn about; users' needs, the barriers people face in using digital devices and the internet, the purposes for which people are using their new devices and connection, and any changes or improvements that have occurred for people since receiving support from Connecting Scotland.

A range of data have been drawn upon as part of this evaluative research. The table below gives an overview of the methods and resources that have provided evidence about Connecting Scotland users in phase 2.

Fig 2. Data used in evaluation of Connecting Scotland Phase 2

Data Source	Description	Purpose
Applications to Phase 2 (including Winter Support)	1,373 applications from organisations on behalf of people with whom they work. A sample of around 50% was coded and analysed for themes.	Reviewing information from applications helps identify the needs of particular groups of users, as well as providing insight into the barriers people face to digital inclusion.
Welcome Survey	Online survey administered shortly after users have received their devices. Response rate = 5%	Provides a broad understanding of people's online engagement and digital skill level, as well as indicating how people might hope to benefit from Connecting Scotland support.

Data Source	Description	Purpose
Impact Survey	Online survey administered 6-9 months from receipt of device. Response rate = 4.8%	Indicates the type and range of activities for which people have been using devices, and the extent of engagement with support (i.e. digital champions). Provides information about the kinds of change brought about from engagement with the programme.
Telephone 'top-up' survey	A shortened version of the impact survey conducted over the phone with users for whom email addresses were not available. N=39	A measure to balance the sample of respondents by including people who may not have had the ability, or inclination, to complete the survey online. Provides a check for possible bias in online sample.
Qualitative Interviews	Semi-structured interviews conducted over the phone with a sub-sample of users. Took place after welcome survey, but before impact survey. N=39*	Allows for more in-depth responses about people's experience of the programme and can provide insights that may not have been previously considered.

*This figure includes 3 written responses to interview questions. 1 interview was conducted with 3 participants

Analysis

Each data source has been analysed by the research team to identify the central themes and issues for phase 2 users. Using different methods of data collection allows a nuanced analysis in which evidence from each source can be compared and synthesised, so that themes can be interrogated and developed. For example, the information given in qualitative interviews can help to understand some survey responses in greater depth. If, for instance, surveys indicate an improvement in

people's mental health, interview data might explain which particular aspects of involvement in the programme have led to this improvement. The methods for analysing each data source are briefly outlined below.

Surveys

Both the online welcome and impact surveys are hosted on *Questback*. This platform includes reporting functionality that shows the pattern of responses for each question. Results can also be filtered to show a sub-section of responses.

The surveys provide an aggregate, quantitative measure of people's experience of the programme as well as detailing the characteristics of users, such as their household composition. From the survey results, we can gauge the extent to which the overarching aims of the programme have been realised. Comparing the welcome survey with the impact survey enables analysis of the extent to which things have changed for users since receiving support. Comparing responses across questions in the *same* survey can allow for broader inferences to be made about users' experience. For example, in the phase 2 impact survey, a majority of respondents described themselves as confident internet users, which may help explain why the majority also said that developing their digital skills was 'self-taught'.

The **telephone top-up survey** was designed to check that the main impact survey was representative of users' experience. Significant differences in response patterns and/or demographic features of participants, would indicate that the online survey might be subject to some degree of bias.

Application data

Approximately half of all applications to phase 2 were reviewed, and their content coded for themes with the assistance of Nvivo software. The themes show commonalities between applications made on behalf of certain groups. From analysing the application data in this way, the needs of target groups, and barriers to their digital participation, can be consistently identified. This helps in understanding the ways in which support from Connecting Scotland might benefit particular groups of people.

Qualitative Interviews

Participants were recruited via organisations that had applied for devices. The sample of organisations contacted was designed to capture a diverse group of users, varying by age, geography and representing the 3 primary target cohorts: families with young children, older and/or disabled people and young care leavers.

Semi structured interviews were conducted over the telephone between August and November 2021. Semi-structured interviewing means that a consistent topic guide is used, but that interviewers have scope to ask additional, or follow-up, questions which provide more detail about users' experiences. As well as the interviewer and respondent, a note-taker joined each call to provide a detailed record of each conversation.

Interview notes were anonymized and distributed among the research team and to staff members from SCVO (the delivery partner). Each person reviewed a small sample of interviews and were asked to summarize the stand-out topics and issues from each. A deliberate overlap was designed into the distribution of notes so that each interview was analysed by more than one person. This provided interpretive balance, and aimed to maximise the breadth of possible insights.

A group coding exercise was then undertaken in which notes were shared and discussed so that topics common to the whole sample could be grouped together into overarching themes. A coding framework was then drawn up, based on the results of this exercise, linking individual insights to wider themes and showing which interview sources exemplified these insights.

Comparability between welcome and impact surveys

Survey responses are anonymous which means that we cannot know whether the people responding to the welcome survey have also responded to the later impact survey.

Therefore we cannot say with certainty that changes and effects evidenced in the impact survey are applicable to the phase 2 cohort as a whole. We can, however, compare the demographic profile of respondents to see if there is congruence between the type of people responding to each survey. Similarities in the characteristics of respondents provides a reasonable basis for comparison where the aim is to identify broad patterns of change.

In terms of age and household composition (number of people, and number of children in household) the survey samples are broadly similar, although marginally more people in the impact survey reported having no children living in the household than in the welcome survey (26% compared to 19%).

In the impact survey, we asked directly whether respondents were young care leavers which means we can look at the pattern of response for this group in isolation. However, the same question was not asked in the welcome survey, so we cannot analyse care leaver's responses.

Both surveys show a wide geographical spread although the proportions from each local authority vary between the surveys. In both surveys, Glasgow represents the single largest location (which is expected), though there is notable variation in the response rates for some local authorities. For example, Edinburgh represents just over 5% of the response rate in the welcome survey, but increases to 8% in the impact survey. Conversely, the response from West Lothian is almost halved between the welcome and impact surveys.

There are broad similarities between people's self-reported working situation, too, with comparable numbers of retirees, people not working due to disability and people in education. The most notable difference is between rates of employment, with more people in the impact survey reporting being employed, or self-employed (+7%), with an almost exactly corresponding decrease in the number unemployed. An optimistic interpretation would be that many of the same respondents have

participated in both surveys, a significant proportion of whom have found employment since being involved with Connecting Scotland. While this may not be the case, it highlights that variance in responses between the surveys can be a reflection of changes in people's personal circumstances, as well as of changes in the sample of respondents.

While there is evidence of some variation between the samples, they broadly represent a similar profile of respondents. The overall response rate to both of the surveys was also similar. Even without grounds for direct comparability, both surveys are valid data sources, in their own right.

Findings

Phase 2 Users

This section describes the profile of people supported in phase 2 of Connecting Scotland, detailing the needs, experiences, and barriers to digital inclusion specific to this group of users. The table below summarises the distribution of awards in phase 2.

Fig 3: Phase 2 Applications and devices issued

Target Group	Successful Applications (from organisations representing target groups)	Devices Awarded
Families with Children	247	17,001
Young Care Leavers	16	4,116
Other Vulnerable Groups	25	1,527
More than one of above groups	793*	
Winter Support Package (older and/or disabled)	382	4,867
Total	**1,175**	**27,457**

*Applications on behalf of more than one group are accounted for in the 3 target groups to which devices were awarded

Needs and Barriers to Digital Inclusion

Phase 2 of Connecting Scotland was primarily targeted at families with young children, but also invited applications from organisations working with care leavers and included the winter support package, aimed at older and disabled people.

The winter support package essentially continued to fulfil the aims established in phase 1 of the programme which enabled older and/or disabled people (two groups at greater risk of digital exclusion) to maintain connection with others and alleviate the effects of social isolation. Lockdown restrictions were still in place at this phase of delivery. The profile and need of these users are discussed in detail in the **evaluation of phase 1.** This evaluative report focuses, for the most part, on those users that are an unique focus of phase 2 – chiefly households with young children, who represent the majority of support recipients in phase 2, but also young care leavers.

The needs and experiences of the primary target group for phase 2 (young families) are quite different from those targeted in phase 1. In many cases, the situation of families with young children, and that of young care leavers, may be more

accurately described as digital *marginalisation*, rather than digital exclusion. That is to say, people's digital participation is limited by certain factors, but not to the extent of total exclusion. Digital skills and knowledge are generally higher than for phase 1 users and, as one application pointed out, people understand the value of being online and using the internet. The chief barrier is the affordability of a permanent secure internet connection and suitable devices. People generally did have some experience of going online and using digital technologies but with inconsistent access to both.

Cost

Common to all applications to Connecting Scotland, though especially for phase 2, cost was consistently cited as an impediment to online access. Applications highlighted that subscribing to a long-term data plan was unrealistic for many low income families and that people relied on limited mobile data, often using a shared device.

The welcome survey for phase 2 users of the programme confirms cost as the chief barrier. Of households with children, almost 74% of respondents said that devices are too expensive, and 37% said that data is too expensive. The figures for *all* phase 2 respondents are similar (70% cost of devices; 37% cost of data).

In addition to the overriding barrier of expense, there is evidence that young care leavers face difficulties getting online access that relate to their specific circumstances. Recent research by CELCIS (Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection) shows that care leavers' online use is often mediated by institutional relationships; for instance, some supported accommodation does not allow personal WiFi, and use of the internet has to be endorsed by a corporate parent.[4] Relatedly, applications from organisations who work with young care leavers pointed out that this group, in particular, lack familial support networks who might be able to help with the cost of devices and internet access**.**

Inadequate Devices

The majority of those supported in phase 2 did use digital devices to get online, prior to their involvement with Connecting Scotland, however, these devices were not suitable to meet people's online needs. 60% of people from households with children responding to the phase 2 welcome survey said that, before receiving a device from Connecting Scotland, they used a smartphone to get online, while a further 30% relied on an old device. However, over 60% of this user group, said, in the impact survey, that their reason for getting involved in the programme was that they didn't have access to a device. From this, it can be reasonably concluded that respondents were indicating that they didn't have access *to a device that met their needs*. Indeed, this is confirmed by interviewees, many of whom told us that their devices were old and slow or that they used mobile phones that were not adequate for a range of tasks.

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[4] CELCIS, 2021; The digital divide: The impact on the rights of care leavers in Scotland

Respondents to the survey were able to also provide an open text response to this question about why they got involved; several answers highlight some of the problems with device use:

> - "Using mobile phones for school work was not appropriate."

> - "Two kids: I only had one very old and slow device."

> - "The phone doesn't provide enough support for doing course work and is too small, so I could hardly see as my eyes would hurt all the time."

Device Sharing

Relatedly, not only were devices themselves inadequate (outdated or unsuitable for certain tasks), in many cases, they were also being shared between household members, restricting access to individuals who need devices for different purposes. The COVID-19 lockdown added to pressures on families with too few devices as people were working, and learning from home. Again, open text responses from the welcome survey demonstrated this issue:

> - "We had one properly working device and 5 people working from home during lockdown"

> - "We had access to the Internet but not enough devices for the kids to home school on"

The data we have for care leavers shows they are more likely to be in full time education, themselves, and the majority indicated that they were the only person in their household using their Connecting Scotland device. This indicates that device sharing may be less of a concern for this group of users.

Data

The applications to phase 2, for both young families and care leavers, identified the unaffordability of internet data as an obstacle to digital inclusion. The impact survey found that around half of respondents did not receive a MiFi device as part of their package of support because they already had a working connection – home broadband in the majority of cases. Among the half who *did* receive a MiFi device (including the majority of care leaver respondents), the survey indicates that, had they not received a means of connection, they would have had to rely on mobile data (45%), or simply would have been unable to connect to the internet (32%).

Confidence

Some phase 2 applications cited lack of confidence on digital devices as a barrier to digital inclusion for families with children, however, the welcome survey indicates that the majority of respondents rated their confidence quite highly. 39% of respondents said they were 'fairly confident' and 24% 'very confident' internet users. These figures are higher still when looking only at responses from

households with children (42% 'fairly' and 32% 'very'). Correspondingly, over 60% of respondents from households with children said they wouldn't need any support in order to do various online activities. Digital confidence levels appear even higher for young care leavers who represent a younger cohort, although there is much less data about this group of users.

Summary

Phase 2 users from families with children, and young care leavers, are likely to be familiar with the internet and digital technologies. The main issues for families are: not having a suitable device for various tasks; sharing devices, or in many cases just one device, between the whole family; overreliance on mobile phones and, to a lesser extent, mobile data.

Phase 2 users wanted devices that could be used for children to do schoolwork from home, for adult education and for employment related activities for which a smartphone was not adequate.

Impacts

This section outlines the main impacts and outcomes, reported by phase 2 research participants, resulting from their involvement in Connecting Scotland. Data from the impact survey is brought together with responses from the qualitative interviews to show how Connecting Scotland devices have been used and the effect this has had for people. Quotations are from qualitative interviews unless otherwise stated.

A table detailing a series of impact questions asked in the experience and impact survey is included at annex B.

Studying

The impact survey shows that the majority of respondents with children in the household were sharing their Connecting Scotland devices with those children - 62% - and a further 18% were sharing with children *and* other adults in the household. The survey indicates that study was the main activity for which devices were being used by children, with 80% saying devices were being used for schoolwork and 74% for remote learning online (respondents could select more than one option). When asked, in the impact survey, what they felt the biggest change had been since receiving devices from Connecting Scotland (open text response), the single most frequent response was that it had helped children to do schoolwork at home. Indeed, some people indicated that this was the sole purpose of their device:

> "It's literally just been used for kids for school. 'That's what's most important"

Interviewees expressed how important devices were in enabling their children to complete schoolwork and not fall behind:

> "It's the best thing that's happened for the kids. It means they aren't missing out on school work and to be marked as attending school they had to log in so it meant they were able to keep up attendance."

One interviewee highlighted how, without a device, continuing to do school work while restrictions were in place was practically impossible:

> "I didn't have teams, I didn't have a device. I actually took him down to the school but because we weren't keyworkers he wasn't eligible to be in, but he couldn't completely participate in any learning and then he really struggled to catch up when he went back in."

There is also evidence that devices were being used to support adult education. Several free text responses in the impact survey mention devices being used for college or university work. Around a quarter of people we spoke to in qualitative interviews indicated they used their devices for study, usually for a specific qualification with a view to employment:

> "I'm studying childcare. I work in a nursery. The course is an SVQ [Scottish Vocational Qualification] Level 3 … equivalent of an HNC [Higher National Certificate] I believe, which will allow me to work as a child support worker. I would not be able to do the course at all without the laptop [Chromebook]".

A few people we interviewed did not speak English as their first language and were all using their devices to access language learning resources. One asylum seeker told us they were using the internet to learn more about their local area and community.

Employment

In the impact survey, 36% of respondents from households with children reported using their devices to search and apply for jobs and 57% said that their ability to do so was 'much' (41%) or 'a little' (16%) better. Looking just at the proportion of young care leavers answering the survey, almost half (47%) said they had searched or applied for jobs on their devices and 74% said that their ability to do so was much or a little better.

In qualitative interviews, people reported doing various activities related to employment, some actively looking for work, others doing online research or formal education courses which would help them to find a job in the future. Interviewees described using the internet to look for jobs, signing up to job search websites, writing CVs, and completing applications online.

> "It's good even now looking for jobs having the internet you can just type in and get a list whereas before you had to go round places or ask people."

A few people even said that they had managed to secure employment and had used their devices in the process; completing applications online and attending interviews via zoom.

> "I guess the biggest difference is that it made getting back into work much easier, so that was probably the biggest difference (…) It was the device that helped me get the job I'm currently in yeah."

Saving Money

Owning a device, and accessing the internet through Connecting Scotland, has enabled some people to save money. In some cases, people talked about the direct savings from having a device and connection provided for them, rather than having to try to pay for what they could not afford:

> "Financially things are quite tight in the house and we wouldn't have had the ability to buy her [child] another device ourselves"

One education professional told us that:

> "Some parents were buying devices on credit they couldn't afford and more would have gone into debt without Connecting Scotland. Families need the devices and it's not seen as optional."

Others said that the MiFi device provided by Connecting Scotland had saved them money, either because they couldn't have afforded to subscribe to home broadband, or because relying on mobile data is expensive. A number of interviewees told us that they had saved money from using the MiFi device, rather than their mobile data:

> "The MiFi we've connected to our phones and it's unlimited so that saves us money on our phones. I was paying about £75 a month and now it's about £45 so it's a lot of a difference!"

The other way in which people reported being able to save money was by using the internet to make financial transactions or to find information to help cut costs. For example, one interviewee told us they used the internet to compare prices and stock at different supermarkets. Another told us that they used their device to look for deals and discounts and that, furthermore, they use social media to share any tips they find with other parents.

In the impact survey, 42% of respondents from households with children said that they had used their Connecting Scotland devices to shop around for cheaper products, and a further 27% said they compared prices for services or utilities. However, 41% said they had not used their devices in a way that saved them money. A similar response rate was observed for young care leavers.

Social Use and Leisure

From the evaluative research for phase 1 of Connecting Scotland, we found that the ability to use devices for entertainment was important to helping people stay mentally stimulated and combat the effects of isolation. Though, arguably, the most pressing concerns for the primary target group in phase 2 were practical issues,

such as studying from home and searching for work, there is a strong indication in the research that real value was attached to the more social applications of owning a connected device.

The impact survey shows that 78% of households with children, and 86% of young care leavers who responded, said their ability to find interests and activities to pass the time were much, or a little, better.

Devices were used to watch television, films or videos by both adults (64%) and children (71%) and 60% of children played games on the devices. The qualitative interviews revealed also that, importantly, the devices often enabled children to maintain social contact with their peers, as well as keep up with school work, so that they did not feel left out:

> " …there was this thing called 'Sumdog' where they [children]
> compete against their mates and there was one morning a week
> where all the class would log in and play and my kids couldn't do it,
> so the devices gave them an opportunity to not be excluded."

81% of respondents from households with families (and 90% of young care leavers) reported that their ability to stay in touch with others was much, or a little, better. However, in interviews, people generally spoke about the importance of maintaining connections with others in reference to their children, rather than themselves.

Where people did not use their devices for leisure, or social activities, they often explained that this was because their Connecting Scotland device had been earmarked for a specific use, and/or that they preferred to continue to use their smartphone for certain things.

> "I use mostly snapchat for social media and facebook and it's easier
> to just get the notifications through on my phone so I just click
> through to it but obviously with the laptop I have to like log on and
> loads it up and stuff."

Information, advice and guidance

In the impact survey, over three quarters of respondents said that their ability to find advice and guidance on important issues was 'much, or a little better' since receiving a device from Connecting Scotland. In the interviews, various activities were discussed which may generally be considered as relating to advice and guidance, although there was no underlying consistency in the type of information being sought.

A couple of people mentioned that they used their device to read articles and keep up with the news. A few respondents told us that their device enabled online access to support organisations; browsing websites for information and attending online sessions via video call. One mother told us that they downloaded information and resources that helped with their child's ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder).

Another respondent, who was seeking asylum in the UK, told us they had used their device to find out information about the asylum process and their rights. More generally, a few people said that they used *Google* or watched *YouTube* videos to find solutions to, or information about, day-to-day issues.

> "… I googled the other day 'funny noise coming from brake' and it said I didn't have enough brake fluid and that was right and that's important so I got that fixed!"

Enabling Features

There are specific features of the devices and support provided by Connecting Scotland that interviewees identified as making a difference to what they were able to do online. In many cases, before their involvement with Connecting Scotland, people had been attempting to undertake certain tasks on smartphones, or using old and slow technology. New devices and connectivity meant that several activities were easier to achieve.

Devices

Several of the people we talked with in the qualitative interviews commented on the difference that having a larger screen made to various tasks, as compared to using a smartphone. This was more often a comment on Chromebooks, rather than iPads.

> "I think because I had been used to doing everything on the phone moving over onto the Chromebook was a relief. Everything was bigger and easier …"

A larger screen size also enhanced people's experience of video calls and attending online sessions, including, in the case of one child, karate lessons over Zoom, *"which was almost impossible on his phone."*

Some people also mentioned that, along with the bigger screen, having a keyboard with the Chromebook, rather than small phone buttons or a touch screen, was beneficial, especially for school, college or university work:

> - "Home-schooling was very difficult before. Chromebook is better for typing and can complete work more quickly."

> - "Being able to write my essays for college, using the chrome book makes it much easier and accessible" -[impact survey respondent]

Many of the people with whom we spoke who were seeking employment identified specific features of their devices as helping them to do this. Again, people were usually making comparisons to previous smartphone use. Three interviewees mentioned, specifically, that the Chromebook enabled them to edit and save their CVs which hadn't been possible on a phone.

> "I could create one [CV] fine but you couldn't like print it or save it or edit it. Every time I wanted to update it, I had to create a new one, which was a nightmare"

Even where respondents didn't mention one specific feature of their device, almost all of those who had previously been reliant on mobile phones for online access said that their new device represented a marked improvement. As one respondent to the impact survey summed up, the biggest difference from involvement in Connecting Scotland was:

> "Being able to access the internet using a proper device and not just my phone"

Applications (apps)

Another feature that was often identified as making a difference to the things that people were able to do was the range of applications that could be used with Connecting Scotland devices. One interviewee told us that the iPad they received had greater storage capacity (than a phone) which meant they could download and use several apps.

People mentioned a range of apps that were of specific relevance or interest to individual users. One terminally ill user told us that a speech app on their iPad had allowed them to communicate, having lost their ability to speak. A mother we spoke with said that they had used their device to download an educational app that helped with their child's learning difficulties. Others spoke about particular apps that enhanced the user's capacity for learning:

> "He's [interviewee's son] now in sixth form and he's taken a graphic design course. There's an app that he's downloaded to the laptop [Chromebook] and you can build in it and construct in it and stuff and it like designs and draws it all out for you and shows you what it would look like as a model."

Some younger recipients of devices used particular apps to pursue creative interests, including two children who were using music editing software that they had downloaded on to their iPads.

MiFi Portability

Receiving a MiFi device from Connecting Scotland meant that users were able to consistently connect to a stable internet connection, rather than relying on (limited) smartphone data. Many interviewees also highlighted the portability of the MiFi device as being an additional benefit. Users could maintain their connection when outside of the house at no additional cost:

> -"I can disconnect it and pop it in my bag when I go out. If I don't have any 4G I take it in the bag with me."

> -"They [children] also could use it outside in the garden in summer and when out with friends which was great."

Some people recognized that they could connect their portable MiFi device to their smart phones, instead of using mobile data, to which limits applied and which was more costly.

One interviewee told us that they had previously relied on visiting supermarkets to access WiFi, where they weren't allowed to use the café unless buying something, and so were limited in what they could do.

> "Obviously I could not do this too often or for too long. Consequently I was unable to do any MOOCs [Massive Open Online Courses] or access any online talks or webinars, only to get and deal with email, usually about once a week. So the best thing has been being able to get internet access wherever I am."

Reservations about Devices

While the majority of Phase 2 research participants were satisfied with their devices and the things that it enabled them to do, a minority had some misgivings over the device that they received. For the most part, these reflected a perception that the device lacked certain features or capabilities that users desired.

In the impact survey, over 90% of respondents from households with children reported using their iPad at least once a day. For the minority who used their devices less frequently, or not at all, a space for open text comments was provided. These comments indicate the perceived shortcomings of devices, chiefly related to the ability to complete work or educational activities:

> -"It wasn't compatible with office 365 which is what I required it for in order to complete my college course. I didn't have access to Word or PowerPoint which I need for my assessments and after researching I found Chromebook doesn't provide full access."

> -"It is okay to look at presentations and looking into demonstrations relating to my heavy vehicle mechanical course. But completely useless for me to do reports, electrics diagrams etc. that I require to do."

One interviewee, who described herself as digitally confident and tech-savvy, seemed particularly upset after having received a Chromebook to help with her studies, finding several issues:

> "You can't put apps on Chromebook; it's like a phone, you can only have one tab open at the same time….it's not easy. It does not have all the keys e.g. cap locks, delete button or the things you would need. You need to be online to do everything. You have to have a Google account to log in to do things."

Other respondents were happy, overall, with their device and the support provided, but still identified features of the device that were not ideal for them. One interviewee questioned the ability of the Chromebook to support offline working:

> "I haven't really had difficulty with it because I've not taken it out and about so I don't really know but, thinking about it, I guess it would be an issue getting into my documents if I took it somewhere without internet."

A younger user said that they would have preferred a laptop to an iPad because of compatibility issues with a particular programme they wanted to use. Another interviewee suggested that a device with more memory might be beneficial for the course that they were enrolled in.

Device Sharing

For most users, receiving a device from Connecting Scotland alleviated the difficulties presented by having to share limited devices among their entire family. Some of the open text responses in the impact survey testify to this:

- "My children don't have to share one smart phone for learning."

- "Less stress trying to complete all needed things online while sharing 1 device among three people. More access and productivity."

For some larger families, however, while an additional device was appreciated, the issue of not having sufficient devices to undertake all online activities within the family remained.

- "The kids love it, it's absolutely brilliant. Sometimes they argue over it because they all want to use it."

- "A second device would be welcomed as it is still a stretch for 3 children to complete homework and sometimes work is handed in late."

There is a normative argument about whether or not children should have their own individual internet connected device, although research indicates a trend towards this. A YouGov survey indicated that by age 12, 88% of children, in Britain, owned their own smartphone and 63% owned their own tablet[5]. Furthermore, Ofcom research shows that over half of UK households had 5, or more, devices through which they could access the internet and that, in 8 out of 10 households, children could access '*appropriate devices for schoolwork*' all of the time[6]. Relying on sharing devices is not commonplace and those that have to are, therefore, at a comparative disadvantage.

Digital Champion Support

The most notable finding about Phase 2 users' experience with digital champion support is that it has, for the most part, not been utilised, especially in the case of

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[5] How many children have their own tech? | YouGov

[6] Online Nation 2021 report (ofcom.org.uk)

households with children (who account for over 2/3 of phase 2 users) and young care leavers. Only around 1/5 of respondents from these groups (combined) said they had developed digital skills with support from a digital champion – the majority being self-taught. Around 2/3 of these respondents said that they had either never met with their digital champion or had not needed to.

The chief reason for this appears to be that phase 2 users generally perceive themselves as being confident online and therefore able to set up and operate devices themselves:

> "I'm good with technology (…) I did get offered help from a person from the [support organisation] but I didn't need it."

Generally, the younger the research participant, the more comfortable they were in using their devices without assistance. In a group interview with three children, all indicated that they had been 'self-sufficient' since having their MiFi set up. Even where children were unfamiliar with some features, they were able to work out, for themselves, how to operate the devices.

> "…the children seem to be able to work it all without me as well."

However, a significant minority of interviewees (around 25%) appeared to know little or nothing about the support that was available from digital champions. For the most part, in the case of users from households with children and younger users, the lack of digital champion support was not cited as a major obstacle to using their devices and getting online, though one interviewee who wasn't aware of support said that they would benefit from advice on using *PowerPoint* for their college work.

Those who *did* engage with their digital champion were generally very positive about the service provided, with 97% of those surveyed saying the support they received was either good or very good. Several interviewees praised their digital champion, even if they felt they had not needed a great deal of technical support.

> - "They checked in often and would help with anything you need. They went above and beyond what's expected, for example helping son to work new iPhone when switching from android."

> - "Yes, they gave me loads of support. Showed me how to set up device and provided a booklet. They're always available on the phone."

Because digital champions are recruited from support organisations, some users had an existing relationship with their digital champion outside of involvement in Connecting Scotland. We found, in the qualitative interviews, that some of the most enthusiastic appraisals of digital champion support were from people where a positive relationship had already been established. An extant relationship of trust might be a significant factor in facilitating support via digital champions.

In a similar vein, where people engaged less with digital champions, they often relied on existing sources of support, both formal (e.g. college tutors) and informal (family and friends):

"My son helps me if I need help quickly, like when I'm stuck."

Telephone 'top-up' survey

The main purpose of the 'top-up' survey was to ascertain whether there were significant differences, in terms of both demographic profile and experience of the programme, between people completing the online survey and those that were unable or disinclined to do so. Although the 'top-up' survey comprises a much smaller sample than the online impact survey, it provides a reasonable gauge of the representativeness of the online survey.

In terms of demographic features - age, gender, ethnicity and household composition - respondents to both surveys were similar. This indicates that there are not any particular characteristics excluded from the impact survey. The chief exception to this is that 16-24 year olds are comparatively underrepresented in the top up survey. One hypothesis for this is simply that this age group may be less likely to answer their phones.

In terms of the extent of device use, and the impact on digital skills, respondents to both surveys answered similarly – that, in general, they were using the internet more since receiving their device and that it had had a positive impact on their digital skills.

The chief difference between the 2 surveys was that half of the top-up survey participants said that they did not need to meet with a digital champion, compared with only around a quarter of all respondents to the online survey. Also, fewer top-up survey respondents had met with their digital champion more than once. This may be because these respondents had a less established relationship with representatives from the organisation that applied for their devices. This supposition is supported by the fact that the vast majority of top-up survey respondents were not aware of the initial online survey – of which their digital champion would likely have informed them. Furthermore, the top up survey was administered later than the main online survey so people had owned devices for longer. Possibly, having had more time with their devices means that the felt need for digital support was less.

Though expressed to a greater extent in the top up survey, this finding is not out of synch with the overall finding that phase 2 users are largely less needful of formal digital support.

Recognition of the Programme

It is apparent from the qualitative interviews that, despite receiving digital devices, some people have limited knowledge and awareness of Connecting Scotland and its remit. One interviewee suggested that the communications around the programme were both limited and unclear:

"It was really helpful but I've not seen it advertised much and when I have it's been very confusing about who can get help."

Evidence from some interviews indicated that the lack of clarity around Connecting Scotland was due to the existence of different sources of digital provision. One interviewee, who applied for devices on behalf of a school, said that there seemed to be overlap between different initiatives providing devices and that it would be more straightforward if everybody was provided with a device through the local authority, delivered by schools. A mother we spoke to had received 3 devices through a support organisation, only one of which was provided by Connecting Scotland.

Of course, having use of a digital device is more important than knowing where it came from. However, people may have been able to access more resources and give direct (unsolicited) feedback on the programme had there been greater awareness of the role of Connecting Scotland.

It is also worthy of mention that the term 'digital champion' was not consistently recognised. This is partly because digital champions are staff from support organisations so, in many cases, will already be known in another capacity. A lot of people were supported in a range of ways by organisational staff and did not differentiate this from support with their devices. Others did not realise that support was available and had not been in contact with their digital champion since their device was delivered.

There were a few users contacted via the telephone survey who were essentially 'stuck' and unable to use their device for what they wanted who were referred to the Connecting Scotland helpline for support. Despite being a small overall proportion of clients in the programme, their presence indicates that it is possible for users to miss opportunities to get support under the current delivery model.

For many phase 2 users, support from a digital champion was not integral to their ability to use their device; nonetheless, clear and consistent messaging about digital champions, and the Connecting Scotland programme more broadly, is important for people who do want more support and information.

Conclusions and Learning

Digital Confidence

Compared to phase 1 users, the majority of people receiving devices in phase 2 of Connecting Scotland had more experience of using digital technology and being online. This reflects an overall younger cohort of users in phase 2, the majority of whom live in a household with children. Most described themselves as confident internet users and a substantial number of respondents said that they had not needed to meet with a digital champion for support. Instead, the primary needs of phase 2 users were having access to: a device suitable for different tasks; enough devices for all household members to undertake tasks simultaneously; and a stable connection without limits on data.

This raises questions about the type of digital support required for a generally younger group of Connecting Scotland beneficiaries. If people say they are, on the whole, comfortable with digital technology and can set up and use devices themselves, then what should be the role of digital champions?

People might not actively seek support from digital champions, though it is unlikely that they will have no gaps in skills or knowledge. Perhaps people who feel they are broadly competent would benefit from specific workshops or learning events to enhance their existing skills, rather than considering support primarily as a response to encountering difficulties. Of course, the needs of the user should dictate their engagement with support.

Devices

The vast majority of research participants were positive about their devices and grateful for their provision, however, a small number of people had concerns (some more or less severe than others) over the capacity of their devices to perform certain tasks. Several of these expressed a preference for a laptop over what they had received.

To present, Connecting Scotland has provided users with one of two devices (iPad or Chromebook), plus connection via MiFi device if needed. Given the diversity of users' needs expected as the programme expands, and based upon some of the feedback in the evaluation of both phase 2 and phase 1, there may be scope to consider a broader selection of devices to offer. This could potentially include laptops and mobile phones.

It is also possible that some of people's dissatisfaction with their devices might be explained by insufficient engagement with digital champions, or another source of digital skills support. It may not, in every case, be that devices are inadequate, but that people need greater understanding of those devices in order to be able to do the things with them that they would like.

The balance between suitability of device, and sufficiency of user competence, will be further explored as part of Connecting Scotland's future provision.

Supporting Families

The evaluative research highlighted the importance of the internet to day to day family life, especially with the increased prevalence, since the pandemic, of working and studying from home. Though not, for the most part, entirely excluded, families experienced digital marginalisation by not having access to appropriate devices and/or did not have enough devices to be comfortably used by the whole household.

These issues are quite different to those faced by beneficiaries of phase 1 who received devices in the first national 'lockdown'; many of whom lived alone and who primarily wanted devices to maintain contact with loved ones, and in some cases, support services. Phase 2 users' needs were more practically focussed, requiring a device and connection to make sure children could keep up with schooling, to search and apply for jobs, to participate in adult education and to work from home.

Devices and connection from Connecting Scotland alleviated some of the pressure on families in these situations, as reflected in the majority of comments in the impact survey concerning 'the biggest change' since receiving a device:

> -" The biggest change was that my son could complete his home work efficiently and comfortably."

> -" It's made studying and accessing online classes so much easier"

> -" It's helped my daughter mainly with her school work. I use it for bills, internet banking and online grocery shopping."

A few respondents in the qualitative interviews indicated that, though grateful for support, having access to more devices would be necessary to enabling their entire household to do all that they needed to online in a timely way.

It may not be feasible for Connecting Scotland to provide households with enough devices for each person. However, the fact that there are other services providing various levels of technical support may present opportunities for coordination to ensure maximum coverage.

Evaluation Approach

The second phase of Connecting Scotland was rolled out soon after the first and followed generally the same approach to evaluation. Indeed, evaluative research activities for phase 1 were ongoing when phase 2 research began. As such, many of the lessons learned from phase 2 are the same as those from the first phase (which are presented in the phase 1 evaluation) though some changes were implemented for phase 2.

- we collected postcodes (voluntarily supplied) from survey respondents to check coverage of the programme and enable analysis by SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation)

- we included a question in the phase 2 impact survey to enable analysis of household groups known to be at greater risk of poverty, including those identified in the [latest child poverty delivery plan](#)

One limitation to the surveys, in both phase 1 and 2, is that it has proven difficult to achieve high response rates (generally around 5% of registered users). While this does not invalidate the survey results, or our findings, we would have greater confidence in our conclusions if the sample of research participants was boosted. Lower response rates can reflect bias in that those positively engaging with the service may be more motivated to take part.

To this end, we have implemented various strategies in the phase 3 research (ongoing) with the aim of increasing participation levels. These include:

- contacting participants directly using the registration data held by SCVO, rather than solely relying on organisations to promote surveys

- sending strategically timed reminders to organisations to encourage their clients to complete surveys

- reviewing response rates and targeting areas where rates appear to be lower than elsewhere, or lower than expected

The early signs from the phase 3 welcome surveys shows that these strategies have achieved some success, though boosting participation remains a priority for the programme as planning for the next stage continues.

Part of the difficulty may have to do with the inconsistent programme recognition as mentioned earlier. A strong and visible communications strategy may be a key part of increasing participation in research. There is also scope to explore additional research methods, such as focus groups or longitudinal panels.

Annex A: Analysis by National Performance Framework Outcome

NPF Outcome	Impact of tackling digital exclusion on this outcome	policy or strategy relevance
We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination	• Accessing information to understand rights • Seek advice and support via both specialist services and social networking routes	• Rights based approaches in Children's Human Rights, Care Review, Patients' Rights • Embedded in Social Security Scotland
We are creative and our vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely	• Create using digital tools • Express diversity • Consume culture • Be informed about opportunities to participate	• Cultural strategy
We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment	• Reduction in need to travel to work • Reduction in emissions	• Emissions legislation and targets
We are healthy and active	• NHS Near Me • Remote monitoring • Wellbeing apps • Self-management groups	• Digital Health and Care Strategy
We have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone	• Job search online • Self-employment opportunities opened up • Building skills needed for work, contributing more to the business • More able to work from home if Covid-19 second wave/local lockdown occurs	• Fair Start Scotland • Skills Development Scotland
We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society	• Ability to take part in online learning activities (particularly in event of local school closures from Covid-19 outbreaks)	• Raising Attainment for All

NPF Outcome	Impact of tackling digital exclusion on this outcome	policy or strategy relevance
	• Digital exclusion exacerbates students existing experience of exclusion and inequality • Further and higher education courses moving online, many free MOOCs help build skills	
We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential	• Being part of social groups online has become an integral part of growing up, and being excluded by reasons of poverty heightens feelings of exclusion • The internet can foster social connections, supporting mental health and wellbeing • For a child at risk, in any way, it can provide a route to access support and to develop relationships which empower	• Getting it Right for Every Child • Care Review
We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe	• Supports the development of local geographically defined communities • Online networks have become a more important way for communities to engage. This builds resilience, supports relationships and fights loneliness. • Where people can't access the internet, they are even less able to access support than they were in normal times	• Community Empowerment Act
We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally	• 3 drivers of poverty – income from employment, costs of living, and income from social security – all helped by tackling digital exclusion • Job search online, building skills to get better job	• Child Poverty Act and action plans

NPF Outcome	Impact of tackling digital exclusion on this outcome	policy or strategy relevance
	• Ability to apply online for benefits, less risk of sanctions • Ability to search and find better deals on goods and services to reduce bills	
We are open, connected and make a positive contribution internationally	• Engaging with international partners requires digital infrastructure • People, businesses, institutions, Government, need tools and skills needed to take their places as global citizens	• Scotland's International Framework
We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy	• If people are digitally excluded, they are also excluded from pursuing business ideas • Where people are excluded, digital businesses cannot reach them, limiting the field of customers • Increased digital participation equals greater economic participation, resulting in positive growth for all. • Businesses need employees who have good digital skills to continue to innovate.	• Economic Strategy • Digital Strategy

Annex B: Impact Questions Table

Percentage of respondents reporting 'Much' or 'a little' better to the question: 'How have the Following things changed for you since receiving a device from Connecting Scotland?'

	Phase 2 overall	Households with Children	Young Care leavers*
Mental Health	70.8%	73.1%	83.4%
Ability to stay in touch with others	82%	81.3%	90.1%
Ability to find advice and guidance on important issues	75.1%	77.4%	84.8%
Ability to search and apply for jobs	46.4%	57.2%	74.2%
Ability to access online public services	55.1%	64.7%	69.5%
Ability to find out about, or apply for, a benefit	47.9%	58.7%	71.9%
Ability to find interests and activities to pass the time	79.8%	77.5%	85.8%
Ability to access health services (e.g. GP appointments or prescriptions	50.6%	55.6%	60.4%

*N.B the sample size of respondents identifying as care leavers is significantly smaller than the other groupings presented

How to access background or source data

The data collected for this social research publication:

☐ are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics

☐ are available via an alternative route

☒ may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact csresearch@gov.scot for further information.

☐ cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.

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Social Science in Government