

Scrutiny Inquiry Report

Powering Up the Leeds Economy through Digital Inclusion

Scrutiny Board (City Development)

**Scrutiny Inquiry Final Report
Powering Up the Leeds Economy
through Digital Inclusion**



Contents

	Page
1. Desired Outcomes and Recommendation Summary	3
2. Introduction and Scope	6
3. Conclusions and Recommendations	9
4. Evidence	24
5. Appendix 1	26



Desired Outcomes and Recommendations

Desired Outcome – To identify the potential benefits to Leeds and the Council that can be realised through digital inclusion.

Recommendation 1 – That the Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Resources considers and identifies the investment to benefit ratio for the Leeds economy and Leeds City Council to identify the potential level of Council resources that could be appropriated to support the recommendations identified in this report and increase digital inclusion.

Desired Outcome – To fully enable a stronger digital infrastructure that provides greater choice.

Recommendation 2 – That the Director of City Development in consultation with the Chief Digital Officer utilise the intelligence gathered to facilitate better infrastructure planning and enable smaller commercial providers to identify and deliver services to provide greater choice and opportunities for internet access in areas where choice is limited.

Desired Outcome – To reduce digital exclusion by increasing access to free wifi

Recommendation 3 – That the Director of City Development and the Chief Digital Officer work collaboratively to:

- a) oversee the provision of information to aql in order to identify the areas that would maximise investment for free wifi in Leeds.
- b) update the Scrutiny Board on progress of the concession agreement with aql and the roll out of free wifi in areas of high need in Leeds.

Desired Outcome – To identify what is being provided in across the city to facilitate better coordinated support, remove duplication and spend money wisely.

Recommendation 4 – That the Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Resources identifies organisations in Leeds working to increase digital capacity, reduce the digital divide or provide digital inclusion programmes with a view to better understand:

- a) what activity is being provided and where there are gaps geographically and in activity type.
- b) how activity is being coordinated.
- c) if efficiencies can be made by the Council by removing duplication.
- d) how Leeds City Council can co-ordinate activity city wide to reduce fragmentation and ensure that investment is maximised and resulting in the best outcomes.

Desired Outcome – To identify supporting organisations in Leeds and facilitate access to information by the public.

Recommendation 5 – That the Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Resources and the Chief Digital Officer:

- a) utilise the information provided by the Tinder Foundation to enable the Council to identify some of the organisations providing digital support in Leeds.
- b) consider how the API could be embedded on the Council website to help members of the public identify support in their locality



Desired Outcomes and Recommendations

Desired Outcome – To increase support to the citizens of Leeds by looking at resources across the wider council

Recommendation 6 – That the Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Resources determines and implements the best approach to utilising existing staffing resources across the Council, so that they can demonstrate to citizens the benefits of being digitally engaged, and provide tailored digital skills training where a need is identified.

Desired Outcome – To raise awareness about the support available

Recommendation 7 – That the Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Resources further investigates alternative communication options in order to raise awareness about the support available for building digital skills, particularly to those who are more likely to benefit the most from digital inclusion.

Desired Outcome – To identify what is being provided across the city to facilitate better coordinated support.

Recommendation 8 – With reference to recommendation 4, that the Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Resources considers how organisations can work in partnership with Leeds City Council to effectively deliver digital skills training and support and how volunteers in Leeds can also assist in this delivery.

Desired Outcome – To identify and target priority areas for the delivery of support in order to spend money wisely

Recommendation 9 – That the Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Resources identifies areas/communities in the Leeds area where there are likely to be significant skills gaps to facilitate the prioritisation and targeting of digital skills training and the proactive promotion of services available.

Desired Outcome – To make best use of local knowledge and established networks to reduce digital exclusion

Recommendation 10 – That the Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Resources and the Assistant Chief Executive Citizens & Communities consider the role of Area Support Teams and Community Committees to facilitate:

- a) the identification of communities most at risk of digital exclusion
- b) the support of local groups and organisations in the delivery of digital skills training to residents in their communities.

Desired Outcome – To improve the digital skills of the Council workforce

Recommendation 11 – That the Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Resources undertakes a skills audit to identify Leeds City Council staff who do not have the 5 basic digital skills, and provides the development opportunities to improve their skills.



Desired Outcomes and Recommendations

Desired Outcome – To increase support to the citizens of Leeds and improve the digital skills of the Council workforce

Recommendation 12 – With reference to Recommendation 6 that the Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Resources explores the potential for the delivery of a digital development programme to Leeds City Council staff who have direct engagement with people in their homes and in the community.

Desired Outcome – To minimise the risk of increasing digital exclusion due to channel shift

Recommendation 13 – That Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Resources and Chief Digital Officer ensures that processes are in place, during the initiation of projects which require a shift to digital based service provision/access, to ensure that the risk of excluding citizens from services is minimised and mitigated through alternative avenues of support. Positive action should be taken to counter negative impact with citizens and in communities.

Desired Outcome – To make a difference... to produce an ambitious Digital Inclusion Strategy and Delivery Programme for Leeds which is supported and resourced.

Recommendation 14 – That the Chief Executive of Leeds City Council with the agreement of the Executive Board oversees the production of an ambitious Digital Inclusion Strategy for Leeds which is co-produced in partnership with other supporting organisations in the City.

This strategy should:

- a) take full consideration of the findings of this Scrutiny Inquiry and responses to recommendations.
- b) define what action is needed and the scale that is required
- c) provide clarity and purpose and define how this will be lead and co-ordinated
- d) define the overall benefits to the City and the Council economically.
- e) provide clarity about the role of the Council, partner organisations and how smaller organisations and volunteers will be supported.
- f) define how the agenda will be delivered with a commitment to investing resources based on the economic benefits that digital inclusion will deliver.



Introduction and Scope

Introduction

- 1 The vision for Leeds 2011 – 2030 states that that Leeds will be fair, open and welcoming with an economy that is prosperous and sustainable. Where communities will be successful and people can access support where and when it is needed and have the opportunity to get out of poverty.
- 2 The Scrutiny Board at its meeting on 17th of June 2015 resolved to undertake an inquiry looking at Digital Inclusion. Research has identified that poverty is a barrier to internet connectivity and concern was expressed that many areas, including welfare services and access to employment, are evolving to 'digital by default'. The Board acknowledged that paradoxically research also shows that those who are digitally engaged have greater opportunity to reduce poverty through increased opportunities for work, knowledge and financial benefit. Therefore the Board understood the need for citizens to have the opportunity, skills and resilience to improve their lives in a self-sustaining manner.
- 3 To ensure that Leeds is an attractive proposition with regard to inward investment, and to enable existing enterprise and communities to flourish the Board recognised the importance of a robust digital infrastructure.
- 4 We also recognised that a more digitally capable population will enable businesses to offer cheaper digital access to their services which in turn provides economic savings. Commerce and industry can also increase productivity and expand their reach to

potential customers. These benefits could also be realised in Local Government.

Scope of the Inquiry

- 5 Terms of reference for this inquiry were agreed at our Board meeting on 9th September 2015, when we concluded that the purpose of the inquiry would be to make an assessment of and, where appropriate, make recommendations on the following areas:
 - The city approach to reducing the digital divide and enhancing the economic prosperity of individuals and small enterprises.
 - Infrastructure, internet access and connectivity across Leeds
 - Improving digital literacy. The provision of education, learning and equipment to provide the necessary skills, confidence and support to embrace technologies.
 - Partnership working including the co-ordination of activity, identifying what adds value and the management of practice and spend to minimise fragmentation and duplication.
 - To inform the development of a Digital Inclusion Strategy that supports the city's aspirations for citizens in Leeds.
- 6 The inquiry was conducted over three evidence gathering sessions which took place between October 2015 and December 2015 when we received a range of evidence both written and verbal.
- 7 This inquiry was supported by a number of organisations such as the Tinder Foundation, aql, Crossgates and District



Introduction and Scope

Good Neighbours Scheme and mHabitat. The information provided was motivating, enlightening and valuable, and we would like to thank them for their input to this inquiry. A full list of those who participated is detailed at the end of this report.

Best Council Plan

- 8 The scope of this inquiry fulfils a number of best council objectives and proprieties as defined in the Best Council plan

Support for digital inclusion across the city contributes to the Strategic Objectives of:

- supporting communities, raising aspirations
- supporting economic growth and access to economic opportunities
- providing skills programmes and employment support
- supporting health aging

and link strongly to the Best City Outcomes of:

- Percentage of Leeds households in receipt of benefit and in work
- Percentage of adults in Leeds who have all 5 basic digital skills

Desired Outcomes, Added Value and Anticipated Service Impact

- 9 Our recommendations require a number of significant improvement measures and we anticipate that these measures will require investment and resources.
- 10 In conducting the Inquiry the Board reflected on the value and impact of Leeds City Council, partnerships and organisations to identify effectiveness in reducing the digital divide and promoting economic prosperity for people who live and work in Leeds. The Scrutiny Board aimed to establish if robust strategies, governance, partnership arrangements and high impact operational practices are in place to maximise access to technology, training and support. The Board gathered intelligence and were informed through the collective knowledge and experience of all those who contributed to the inquiry. We hope that our findings will highlight the need for Leeds collectively to demonstrate a significant and co-ordinated effort to reduce the digital divide; supported by a clear, robust and ambitious digital inclusion strategy and delivery plan.
- 11 The focus of our recommendations aim to ensure Leeds residents old and young have the access and capability to use the internet in order to do things that benefit them in their everyday lives.



Introduction and Scope

Equality and Diversity

12 The Equality Improvement Priorities 2016 – 2020 have been developed to ensure that the council meets its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010. The priorities will help the council to identify work and activities that help to reduce disadvantage, discrimination and inequalities of opportunity to achieve its ambition to be the best city in the UK.

Equality and diversity issues have been considered throughout this Scrutiny Inquiry. The evidence submitted and the topics debated in this inquiry have highlighted that older people, those on low incomes and people with disabilities are most likely to be digitally excluded. It is therefore important for all Council services to consider the impact of switching service delivery methods to digital so that these groups are not further disadvantaged. Further specific information is detailed later in this report.

13 Where a Scrutiny Board has made recommendations and these are agreed, the individual, organisation or group responsible for implementation or delivery should give due regard to equality and diversity and where appropriate an equality impact assessment should be carried out



Conclusions and Recommendations

The Digital Divide

14 Accessing the internet is something that most of us take for granted to supplement so many aspects of our lives, whether it be accessing our bank accounts or looking up information that is inevitably only now available online. As technology progresses we will rapidly reach a point where it is going to be difficult to live an effective life without access to the internet.

15 The World Development Report 2016 by the World Bank Group states that 'The internet supports job creation and makes workers more productive. New opportunities for entrepreneurship and self-employment are (also) growing in the digital economy. The internet's ability to reduce transaction costs increases opportunities for people who face barriers in finding jobs or productive inputs. This promotes inclusion for women, for persons with disabilities, and for people in remote areas.'

16 We were advised that nationally, internet access has risen from just 9% in 1998 to 86% in 2015, however, despite this huge growth and the evident benefits of internet access, there remains a sizeable number of people who have not been able to experience the benefits that digital literacy and connectivity can offer. With 320k households in Leeds, this equates to approximately 45k households without access through broadband or landline.

17 We were further advised that in the UK approximately 12% of the adult population have never been online and this increases to 61% for those over 75 years of age. For Leeds this equates to

over 91k adult residents never having used the internet, over 33k of whom are over the age of 75.

18 Those that are not digitally engaged or capable face multiple disadvantages which we should aim to reduce. National data provided highlighted to us that digital exclusion affects some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in our communities

- those in social housing - 37% of those who are digitally excluded are social housing tenants
- those on lower wages, or unemployed - 17% of people earning less than £20,000 never use the internet, as opposed to 2% of people earning more than £40,000. 44% of people without basic digital skills are on lower wages or are unemployed
- those with disabilities - 33% of people with registered disabilities have never used the internet. This is 54% of the total number of people who have never used the internet
- older people - over 53% of people who lack basic digital skills are aged over 65, and 69% are over 55
- young people - 6% of people who lack digital skills are between 15 and 24 years. Only 27% of young people who are offline are in full-time employment ¹

19 The variables that cause the digital divide are shown at appendix 1. This information highlights the reasons for the gap between those who do and do not access the internet. This is often summarised as:

¹ Government Digital Inclusion Strategy 4 December 2014 (source: Gov.UK)



Conclusions and Recommendations

- Digital skills - being able to use computers and the internet. This is important, but a lack of digital skills is not necessarily the only, or the biggest, barrier people face.
- Connectivity - and access to the internet. People need the right infrastructure but that is only the start.
- Accessibility - services should be designed to meet all users' needs, including those dependent on assistive technology to access digital services. Accessibility is a barrier for many people, but digital inclusion is broader.²

All of these reasons were considered during this inquiry.

Why is Digital Inclusion Important for Leeds?

- 20 During the inquiry we discussed the numerous benefits of digital inclusion. Individual contributors from Leeds City Council, the Health Service (mHabitat) and Crossgates and District Good Neighbours Scheme advised us about their experiences of increased social inclusion through involving communities and members of marginalised groups in the social aspect of learning and improved networking.
- 21 We learned that digitally capable individuals can gain financially due to increased consumer choice and better access to information resulting in savings on shopping online and household bills. 'Consumers who do

have digital capability have told us they are saving £744 on average per year and £516 for low income people. People without digital skills are missing out, and are less likely to be able to manage their money efficiently, find cost savings, or access good quality advice on how to make the most of their money'.³ For Leeds residents experiencing financial hardship and/or poverty this represents a considerable saving.

- 22 Other individual benefits include improved educational attainment due to better access to knowledge and information, and due to the benefit of online learning. Significantly, being digitally capable also enhances employment prospects and earning capability. Using the internet is now essential when searching for jobs. Data states that 90% of all new jobs require digital skills, the proportion of people using IT in their job is now at 77% and the vast majority of positions that employers recruit for require applicants to hold at least basic level IT skills.⁴ Options for flexible and remote working are also enhanced.

- 23 We were advised that in the last 20 years Leeds City Council's website has grown considerably. Consisting of 1400 pages, it is now an interactive site, having enabled £16.5 mil in online payments and 200k bids for council homes so far this year (Oct 15). Being digitally capable enables people to have knowledge about and access to public services in a flexible way. This includes information on available benefits and support, health and wellbeing, jobs, schools and housing.

³ Consumer Digital Index 2016, Lloyds Bank

⁴ The economic impact of Basic Digital Skills and inclusion in the UK, A report for Tinder Foundation and GO ON UK – November 2015

² Government Digital Inclusion Strategy 4 December 2014 (source: Gov.UK)



Conclusions and Recommendations

24 In terms of the wider economy and business, digitally capable people are able to run internet based enterprises and businesses, utilise internet based applications to work efficiently and increase productivity, expand the reach of business and maximise sales through the internet. These benefits are also applicable in Local Government.

25 Since 2010, the government has reduced its funding for local government in England as part of its plan to reduce the national deficit and Local Authorities are increasingly seeking other appropriate means of providing services in a more cost effective way. Online interactions such as providing information or enabling online payments are often cheaper than face to face or telephone interactions. Changing a method of delivery or 'channel shift' can offer a more convenient service to internet users at any time and from any place. Although we recognise the clear benefits we did raise concerns during the inquiry regarding channel shift which are highlighted in this report.

26 We were informed that the skills required to use the internet are increasing and therefore so is the digital divide, between those who benefit and those who don't. It is estimated that 23% of the UK population lack at least one Basic Digital Skill, equivalent to an estimated 12.6 million of the adult UK population. This digitally excluded section of society is missing out on a wide range of benefits that the majority of the population are already enjoying.⁵

27 It was brought to our attention that the study 'The economic impact of Basic Digital Skills and inclusion in the UK' considers the investment required over a 10 year period to equip 100% of the UK population with basic digital skills. It states that nationally an investment with a present value of £1.31 billion would be required over the ten year period (2016 to 2025). However, based on the specific costs and benefits to individuals and the Government, it estimates a benefit of almost £10 for every £1 invested. These findings suggest that investing to increase peoples digital skills would represent a good investment, not only for the residents of Leeds for the reasons already stated in this report but also for Leeds City Council and the wider Leeds economy.

Recommendation 1 – That the Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Resources considers and identifies the investment to benefit ratio for the Leeds economy and Leeds City Council to identify the potential level of Council resources that could be appropriated to support the recommendations identified in this report and increase digital inclusion.

Connectivity and Infrastructure

28 Earlier in this report we identified that one of the elements for digital inclusion is having the right infrastructure. It was clarified to us that where connectivity options are limited and/or deemed to be expensive there can be a negative impact in digital inclusion terms. Having choice and access to good quality connectivity is recognised as an

⁵ The economic impact of Basic Digital Skills and inclusion in the UK, A report for Tinder Foundation and GO ON UK – November 2015



Conclusions and Recommendations

important driver of digital inclusion and a key determinant of economic development, therefore we determined that any progress in making going online affordable must reduce this barrier significantly.

29 In addition, the Leeds City Region Digital Infrastructure Plan states that greater bandwidth, availability and adoption of broadband will enable councils to offer more services online and develop new and innovative ways of communicating with and providing services to their residents.⁶

30 We were advised that the Government is currently aiming to deliver a transformation in broadband access so that everyone in the UK is able to access broadband speeds of at least 2 megabits per second (Mbps) and 95% of the UK receiving far greater speeds (at least 24Mbps) by 2017, and invest £150 million in 'super-connected cities' across the UK⁷. The Government has created a delivery arm Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) primarily working with BT to deliver superfast broadband connectivity.

31 Part of this transformation included a Connection Vouchers initiative which provided subsidies to Small and Medium Enterprises and Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise who want to cover the cost of a high speed internet connection, or upgrade existing internet connections, to improve their broadband speed or get started with superfast broadband.

32 In the West Yorkshire area phase 1 of 'Superfast West Yorkshire' has been completed which has served 64.5k premises across Leeds, Bradford, Wakefield and Calderdale, with phase 2 in the contracting phase. Work on Superfast West Yorkshire also included raising awareness and communicating the advantages of improved broadband speeds. We were informed that the project has improved the infrastructure position and customer take up in general had been good.

33 However, a number of explanations were presented to clarify why Leeds residents had not taken up the option of superfast broadband, one being affordability. To access superfast broadband residents will need to have a phone line installed (with exception of Virgin who do offer some broadband only deals). Those with poor credit histories can find it difficult to get a broadband contract.

34 Mindful of complaints received from residents within the communities we represent as Elected Members, we sought clarity about the current infrastructure in Leeds to identify which communities are facing barriers with regard to broadband connectivity. We were informed that despite the overall success of the programme in delivering improved infrastructure there are flaws within the scheme as a whole.

35 In postcode areas where Virgin Media services are available, even if they are not available to every property within that postcode, publicly funded activity through BDUK has not taken place. In these areas (so called grey areas) if residents want to take up superfast broadband they will only be able to do

⁶ May 2012 (regeneris consulting ltd)

⁷ Policy Paper "2010-2015 Government Policy: Broadband Investment", May 2015 www.gov.uk



Conclusions and Recommendations

this through Virgin. We were also concerned about the apparent difficulties currently being encountered in clearly mapping where infrastructure was lacking, therefore it was still unclear at the conclusion of the inquiry which areas are at a significant disadvantage. Also of concern was that in some parts of Leeds residents and businesses may be in limbo with no certainty about when BT may provide infrastructure upgrades.

- 36 We were advised that in terms of speed, there are anomalies. Being close to Leeds City Centre does not mean good connectivity as there are a large number of exchange lines and therefore it becomes expensive to upgrade these with fibre, whereas in new developments the infrastructure can be built in.
- 37 In July 2015 a Commons Select Committee announced its intention to undertake an inquiry into establishing world-class connectivity throughout the UK. In response the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) provided feedback with regard to the West Yorkshire area in a letter dated the 30th of September 2015. This letter was shared with the Scrutiny Board to support the inquiry.
- 38 The feedback stated that there are significant numbers of businesses and residents in, for example, Leeds and Bradford City Centres that do not have access to affordable superfast broadband services; which is hampering business growth and social inclusion. In addition many end users (both residents and businesses) suffer from poor access to superfast broadband and/or lack of customer choice – these issues are prevalent in urban as well as rural

areas. WYCA suggested to the Select Committee that 'In order to not only tackle social exclusion but also to support activity to re-engage people in the workforce, broadband access and training support needs to be prioritised for deprived communities and people who are out of work.' Following consideration of all the evidence provided for this inquiry we fully support these statements.

- 39 At our November meeting Dr Adam Beaumont the Chief Executive of aql explained that there is potential for smaller commercial providers to facilitate internet access in areas that have not received public funding. However this would require the provision of information about current infrastructure that providers like aql can access. Despite the limitations in mapping current infrastructure we were reassured that the Council's agenda is to promote competition and choice for end users therefore efforts will be made to produce this information.

Recommendation 2 – That the Director of City Development in consultation with the Chief Digital Officer utilise the intelligence gathered to facilitate better infrastructure planning and enable smaller commercial providers to identify and deliver services to provide greater choice and opportunities for internet access in areas where choice is limited.

- 40 In response to our concerns about affordability we were advised that Super Connected Cities funding had been used to install free public wifi into 106 public buildings in Leeds. The buildings



Conclusions and Recommendations

in the programme included local libraries, leisure centres, community centres, one-stop shops, children's centres, museums and visitor attractions. In addition free wifi access has been provided to some tower block residents in the City. We consider this a positive initial step in enabling affordable internet access. We were also advised by mHabitat that health services are putting free public wifi into dementia wards.

41 We were keen to explore the potential to expand the delivery of free wifi, particularly in areas of concentrated social housing or high unemployment. We were informed that a concession agreement with telecommunications operator 'aql' will widen access to free public wifi across more areas of the city, allowing more people to connect for free using their own devices. aql utilises Council assets such as lamp posts and street furniture to develop free public wifi networks.

42 Dr Beaumont explained their data centres house the Leeds internet exchange which is where Internet Service Providers send their traffic from their end users to get it to the internet. Heavy usage or 'traffic' generates more income which is then invested back into free wifi. High traffic usually occurs in areas of high footfall/population such as high density housing, airports and shopping centres. It was made apparent to us that aql need to know where the best opportunities are in the city so that they can make best use of the framework in place with Leeds City Council, requesting support from the Council to identify high density areas.

43 The Scrutiny Board considers that maximising the provision of free wifi across the city particularly in areas of high density social housing, would enable many of those digitally excluded due to cost to get connected. We are hopeful that aql and the Council will work constructively to ensure success in the roll out of free wifi as swiftly as possible.

Recommendation 3 – That the Director of City Development and the Chief Digital Officer work collaboratively to:

- oversee the provision of information to aql in order to identify the areas that would maximise investment for free wifi in Leeds.
- update the Scrutiny Board on progress of the concession agreement with aql and the roll out of free wifi in areas of high need in Leeds.

Building Digital Capacity – The Leeds Landscape

44 The Government has stated that it does not have a consistent or joined up approach to helping people build their digital capability. This makes it confusing and difficult for people and organisations to know what support is available from government.⁸

45 Early in the inquiry we sought to clarify the role of the Council in increasing the digital capabilities of Leeds residents and what is already being delivered by

⁸ Government Digital Inclusion Strategy 4 December 2014 (source: Gov.UK)



Conclusions and Recommendations

other organisations in the City. We also sought to establish how activity is being coordinated, if any services are being duplicated, what is being done to identify gaps in support, reduce fragmentation and ensure that investment is resulting in the best support in quality terms.

46 We were advised that Leeds has established a Smart Cities Steering Group chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Resources and involving officers from across the Council, representing Economic Development, Adult Social Care, Public Health, ICT, Policy and Intelligence, as well as the Library and Information Service. Within the Smart Cities framework Library and Information Services are leading on improvements in digital literacy for citizens. This involves determining the approach and framework for closing the gap, and the co-ordination and communication of digital skills training and learning opportunities across Leeds.

47 We are mindful of the reducing budgets now being managed by Leeds City Council and consider the responsibility for reducing the digital divide rests with many organisations that operate in the City, not just the Council. Many private sector organisations provide support through corporate responsibility programmes and a number of financial institutions are raising awareness of the benefits of going online in the media. The Council should be actively seeking to maximise opportunities for Leeds citizens utilising the support of these organisations, and with other organisations yet to be identified.

48 At the time of the inquiry full knowledge about digital support and training across

the whole of Leeds was unclear. We were reassured that more work is being done to find out about supporting organisations, where they are operating and to identify what is being delivered locally.

Recommendation 4 – That the Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Resources identifies organisations in Leeds working to increase digital capacity, reduce the digital divide or provide digital inclusion programmes with a view to better understand

- a) what activity is being provided and where there are gaps geographically and in activity type
- b) how activity is being coordinated
- c) if efficiencies can be made by the Council by removing duplication
- d) how Leeds City Council can co-ordinate activity city wide to reduce fragmentation and ensure that investment is maximised and resulting in the best outcomes.

49 In December 2015 Helen Milner of the Tinder Foundation spoke to the Scrutiny Board. She explained that together with their network Tinder has helped over 1.6 million people to use the internet and improve their digital skills. They work with a number of organisations in Leeds including the Library and Information Service.

50 In addition to supporting people to improve their digital skills, they also enable them to gain other essential skills, and to overcome social challenges, all using digital technology. They aim to always put the needs of socially excluded people first, and build



Conclusions and Recommendations

programmes and solutions based on their needs.

51 Generously Helen offered to provide digital information about the organisations they work with in Leeds. This was offered in a format (API) which can be held on the Council website enabling the public to identify if support is available in their locality in addition to that already provided by the Council.

Recommendation 5 – That the Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Resources and the Chief Digital Officer:

- utilise the information provided by the Tinder Foundation to enable the Council to identify some of the organisations providing digital support in Leeds.
- consider how the API could be embedded on the Council website to help members of the public identify support in their locality.

- Communication, keep in touch using email, instant messaging, video calls and social media
- Transacting by understanding and using marketplaces to buy and sell or order your shopping
- Problem solving such as using tutorials or feedback from other internet users to solve common problems
- Creating social media posts, text documents or sharing a photo album.

53 It was claimed that enabling people to develop these skills would make people more self-reliant in times of austerity in addition to providing the benefits described earlier in this report.

54 We were informed that the Library and Information Service is aiming to determine the basic digital skills required for citizens and communities and the training courses, tools, strategies and other resources available that would be of benefit to address the skills gap.

55 We were further advised that the training provided by the Library Service is mainly at council sites such as libraries and through community hubs, which is available free of charge to anyone who lives, works or studies in Leeds. Leeds Library and Information Service has also received funding through the Tinder Foundation to conduct a more outreach based action research project to deliver a digital inclusion initiative called 'Connect-Ability'. This will engage housebound and disabled people in Leeds with digital technology. The lending scheme enables the target audience to borrow tablets, with support, so that they can enjoy the benefits of being online.

Closing the Digital Divide, Leeds Approach to Helping People Build their Digital Capacity

52 It is evident that having internet connectivity does not enable people to be digitally capable. We were advised that to fully utilise the internet people require 5 basic digital skills which are as follows:

- Managing information such as using a search engine to find information or search for deals on comparison sites



Conclusions and Recommendations

56 We sought to clarify how much training is provided through formal courses in council buildings and how much is delivered through tailored support and outreach work such as the Connect-Ability project. It was our concern that offering generic support does not help some people go online or reach isolated groups that may need specific support to help them overcome their own particular barriers. 'Services need to be built for the user, not for government or business - putting their changing needs first.'⁹ In terms of time and resources we were advised that if the entire cohort of existing non users all came to a library to receive their basic skills training at the present rate of delivery it would take almost 15 years to complete, therefore we consider that the provision of tailored support is an aspect that requires considerable further focus. The Council employs a significant number of officers who work in areas that have direct contact with individuals in their homes or in the community. There is the potential to develop an innovative solution to deliver digital skills training by equipping these staff with the skills and knowledge to provide digital support where it is identified.

Recommendation 6– That the Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Resources determines and implements the best approach to utilising existing staffing resources across the Council, so that they can demonstrate to citizens the benefits of being digitally engaged, and provide tailored digital skills training where a need is identified.

⁹ A checklist for digital inclusion – if we do these things, we're doing digital inclusion – 13 January 2014, digital Inclusion GDS team (source Gov.uk)

57 Following this, we wanted to identify how we proactively raise interest in digital skills training and advise Leeds residents of what is available. We were advised that support is mainly communicated through word of mouth, through the library network, community hubs, job clubs and at one stop shops. Information is also shared on the internet. We concluded that better communication is required. Channels and networks should be built particularly to inform those who are harder to reach and those who do not regularly visit council buildings.

Recommendation 7– That the Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Resources further investigates alternative communication options in order to raise awareness about the support available for building digital skills, particularly to those who are more likely to benefit the most from digital inclusion.

58 Government guidance advises that partnerships have proved fruitful in both engaging learners and attracting volunteers. Examples included: AgeUK, Adult and Family Learning, Job Centre Plus, Barclays Digital Eagles, Schools/Colleges/Universities, Libraries and Social Housing Providers.¹⁰ We asked if the Leeds Library and Information Service has explored this approach and/or currently working in partnership with organisations in order to support the delivery of digital skills training and outreach work.

59 We were advised that the Halifax Community Bank have offered digital

¹⁰ What place does digital inclusion have in digital literacy? – Tinder Foundation February 2016



Conclusions and Recommendations

skills support through the deployment of volunteers across their network. This opportunity was in discussion to see how this could complement other existing support within libraries and community hubs to help more people to get online.

- 60 We feel that that once we clearly understand which organisations are providing digital skills support and training in Leeds there will be a valuable opportunity to build strong partnerships for delivery. This should not just be limited to organisations but should include student volunteers from the many Leeds based colleges and universities, particularly those studying to teach, as this may also help them to gain useful experience of working with people.

Recommendation 8 – With reference to recommendation 4, that the Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Resources considers how organisations can work in partnership with Leeds City Council to effectively deliver digital skills training and support and how volunteers in Leeds can also assist in this delivery.

- 61 During our inquiry there was a considerable focus on the purpose and function of the Smart Cities Steering Group particularly in resolving some of the wider concerns expressed by the Scrutiny Board. In addition to the particular responsibilities appropriated to the Leeds Library and Information Service we were advised that the steering group is also focusing on Leeds being the 'Best City to Grow Old'. In partnership with three other local authorities (Bradford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge) Leeds is involved in a

consortium bid for funding which would provide greater opportunity to offer the delivery of services, such as transport, healthcare and energy through digital access.

- 62 Leeds focus is predominantly on healthcare with work having already started to get older people, the voluntary sector and IT experts working together to design digital solutions under the umbrella of the best city to grow old. It was highlighted to us that the aspiration is that digital companies will develop something that improves people's lives through the use of technology, and that the one of the biggest benefits identified so far is people are connecting with other people, communicating across networks, sometimes on a very basic level.
- 63 With regard to the identification of problems and the co-design of digital solutions, we stated that those who are predominantly using the digital solution should have an influence on how the solution looks and feels. We were reassured that people are being listened to.
- 64 We were further advised that enabling people to be more self-sufficient and better informed through access to digital health information will help them to manage and live with their conditions avoiding the need to enter the healthcare system. This in turn should reduce the anticipate budget pressures predicted for the NHS in future years due to demographic changes in population.
- 65 To obtain a further insight into how digital inclusion can benefit people from a health perspective we invited



Conclusions and Recommendations

representatives from Crossgates and District Good Neighbours Scheme to contribute to the inquiry, to discuss the health based digital inclusion project that they had undertaken. They advised us that the project was designed to provide elderly residents with new skills and bridge the digital divide as well as allowing clients to self-monitor health conditions. This was done by providing people with iPads and access to the YECCO (health based) software. The residents meet once a week, to discuss their skills, how the apps and devices were working and their effectiveness. The project also involved going into peoples homes, to discuss general health and how to use the technology. A further phase to this project was about to start with a focus on housebound people, to visit them in their homes and use the facetime application for contact.

66 Barbara, a representative who participated in the initial stages of the project told us that prior to getting involved she had very little IT experience at all. She valued the companionship with other people involved in the project and thinks it is an excellent idea. Examples such as this clearly demonstrate the good work already being done within our communities which could be replicated in other areas of the City. See recommendation 8.

67 Victoria Betton from mHabitat (NHS) also advised us that they are loaning tablets to patients, in addition to providing free wifi access and support, which is proving to be successful in terms of up skilling patients.

68 Early in the inquiry we discussed the different ways of accessing digital

information such as smartphones, tablets and computers. We heard about the importance of giving people the digital skills to enable the completion of complex information on the internet, such as job or welfare applications, using laptops and desktop computers. Smartphones and tablets have limitations therefore we asked for clarification about the loan of tablets in the projects and initiatives presented to us as examples.

69 It was explained to us that that tablets are great for outreach activity, for specific interventions and as an introduction to accessing the internet, they are also relatively cheap to provide. Helen Milner advised that people assume that because people are using tables or smart phones there is not a problem. They are intuitive and useful but the use of these does not mean that there is not a digital skills problem. The Board agreed with this view and that clearly training should be provided which supports people to obtain the 5 basic digital skills, including support provided though outreach work. We do however recognise the clear benefits that using tablets can provide in introducing people on a more basic level to the digital world.

70 In a time of limited resources the question also arises about how and where organisations, including the Council, should target support. We sought to clarify how support is prioritised and targeted. We reflected on the main reasons for digital exclusion and were informed of the options to target resources such as super output areas, communities with high levels of local deprivation, high unemployment, and above average welfare claimants.



Conclusions and Recommendations

This information is already known, in addition to Joint Strategic Needs Assessment data (which highlights health needs). The consideration of all this intelligence and national research could provide a practical starting point.

Recommendation 9 – That the Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Resources identifies areas/communities in the Leeds area where there are likely to be significant skills gaps to facilitate the prioritisation and targeting of digital skills training and the proactive promotion of services available.

71 We were reminded by Helen Milner that many initiatives are operating at a local level. Therefore we consider that there is merit in reflecting on what role the Council's Area Support Teams and Community Committees could have in the development and delivery of digital support and training. The teams and committees have extensive local knowledge about the demography of their areas and in addition have already established connections with local community groups and organisations.

Recommendation 10 – That the Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Resources and the Assistant Chief Executive Citizens & Communities consider the role of Area Support Teams and Community Committees to facilitate

- the identification of communities most at risk of digital exclusion
- the support of local groups and organisations in the delivery of digital skills training to residents in their communities.

72 'Get your own house in order' was the clear advice provided by Helen Milner during her presentation to us. She asked 'do all staff and elected members have the 5 basic digital skills?' adding 'You will have front line staff who work with the digitally excluded every day. Those front line workers can be the engagement people who can discuss building resilience and giving that support.'

73 It was reported that the 'digital maturity' of Local Authority service heads is generally very low¹¹ which we believe could have a direct impact on the culture and attitude towards the development of the workforce's digital skills in our organisation.

74 We have identified that there is a need to evolve into an organisation where staff that have direct contact with our citizens can confidently provide digital advice, and train effectively where there is a need. A number of these staff may need to be up skilled before this can become a reality.

75 Victoria Betton from mHabitat advised us that they are developing a digital practitioner programme as they found that digital confidence and literacy in health staff was variable. The purpose of the programme is to develop the digital confidence of practitioners so they can support digital inclusion for people in order to access things online that may support good health. The programme is due to be launched in April 2016 and delivered to health and care staff including GP's.

¹¹ Smart Cities: Delivering a Sustainable City in the Digital Age – 17th December 2014 Report to Executive Board



Conclusions and Recommendations

Recommendation 11 – That the Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Resources undertakes a skills audit to identify Leeds City Council Staff who do not have the 5 basic digital skills and provides the development opportunities to improve their skills.

Recommendation 12 – With reference to Recommendation 6 that the Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Resources explores the potential for the delivery of a digital development programme to Leeds City Council staff who have direct engagement with people in their homes and in the community.

Digital by Default and Channel Switch

76 The term ‘digital by default’ is now becoming a common phrase which describes the predominant mode of accessing services. Switching to digital services can deliver efficiency savings as demand for more expensive ways of providing the same service or ‘channel’ diminishes. ‘The welfare system is moving towards a digital by default model which means that those accessing means tested welfare and benefit – low income and job-seeking sectors of the population – will face additional pressures to use the internet.’¹² Seeking employment as previously stated is also becoming increasingly internet based.

77 The objective of digital by default is embedded within the Leeds City Region Digital Infrastructure Plan which states that ‘Public sector agencies in the Leeds City Region will be at the vanguard of implementing new digital service delivery in order to drive up adoption, secure efficiency savings and extend opportunity.’¹³

78 The Leeds City Council website has evolved to support many online services such as online payment, searching for planning applications and to obtain general information about services across the City, which many residents will find accessible and convenient.

79 We highlighted that there will always be a minority of people who cannot or do not wish to embrace technology and digital access to services, and that the needs of these people cannot be forgotten. We were advised that not everything will be delivered in a completely digital way as there would be a risk of excluding some residents from services.

80 The continued need to find efficiencies within Leeds City Council and the drive for digital service delivery within the Leeds City Region, we believe, will inevitably result in the increased shift of services to digital. We consider that this could present a risk in further excluding those who are not digitally engaged unless considered support and training is provided. We feel it is the responsibility of each and every council service, when considering the change in service delivery to digital, to fully assess the impact of channel shift on those that

¹² Reboot UK Digital Skills for the Hardest to Reach - Tinder Foundation, January 2016

¹³ Leeds City Region – Digital Infrastructure Plan May 2012 (regeneris consulting ltd)



Conclusions and Recommendations

are digitally excluded, who are some of the most vulnerable in our communities. When making this assessment service areas should clearly define the process of supporting customers who could be excluded, and where necessary ensure digital support and training is provided.

Recommendation 13 – That Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Resources and Chief Digital Officer ensures that processes are in place, during the initiation of projects which require a shift to digital based service provision/access, to ensure that the risk of excluding citizens from services is minimised and mitigated through alternative avenues of support. Positive action should be taken to counter negative impact with citizens and in communities.

One City Strategy for Leeds

81 To be a compassionate city with a strong economy, digital inclusion needs to be a priority which is progressed in a co-ordinated way. It is evident that the Leeds Library and Information Service is evolving and expanding the way in which digital skills training is delivered to citizens, however this does not yet encompass potential opportunities for delivery that may exist within the wider authority. It is also evident that there is scope to enhance access to free wifi provision working within already established agreements.

82 The number of providers offering support within the City was unclear at the time of the inquiry making it difficult to assess if efforts are duplicated or if

funding is being invested in the most efficient and effective way. There is a need for better knowledge, links and coordination between the public, private and voluntary sector so that we are achieving more together.

83 It was highlighted to us that digital inclusion has not been a priority for the Council and in the absence of a clear strategic approach the potential to reduce digital exclusion has not been maximised. The need for a Digital Inclusion Policy was specified in the Executive Board Report dated 24 June 2015¹⁴, which states that ‘the strategy will set out the outcomes, objectives and actions required to improve digital inclusion within the city.’ We feel that the development of such a strategy is essential; it should be bold in its ambition and co-produced with public, private and VCSE organisations providing digital support and training services. This should be supported by a plan of action which defines the objectives to be delivered and enables the monitoring of progress and success. Leadership and responsibility for the delivery of the plan should be clearly defined.

84 We understand that work so far has been done with limited resources and that there is a need to improve our approach in securing external funding sources in a more co-ordinated way. To deliver the aspirations set out in this report will potentially mean that resources may be required to coordinate and oversee the effective delivery of the proposed vision and strategy. We hope however that the wider potential benefits

¹⁴ Citizens@Leeds – Supporting Communities and Tackling Poverty



Conclusions and Recommendations

to the Council and the Leeds Economy would mitigate this demand.

Recommendation 14 – That the Chief Executive of Leeds City Council with the agreement of the Executive Board oversees the production of an ambitious Digital Inclusion strategy for Leeds which is co-produced in partnership with other supporting organisations in the City.

This strategy should:

- a) take full consideration of the findings of this Scrutiny Inquiry and responses to recommendations.
- b) define what action is needed and the scale that is required
- c) provide clarity and purpose and define how this will be lead and co-ordinated
- d) define the overall benefits to the City and the Council economically.
- e) provide clarity about the role of the Council, partner organisations and how smaller organisations and volunteers will be supported.
- f) define how the agenda will be delivered with a commitment to investing resources based on the economic benefits that digital inclusion will deliver.



Monitoring arrangements

Standard arrangements for monitoring the outcome of the Board's recommendations will apply.

The decision-makers to whom the recommendations are addressed will be asked to submit a formal response to the recommendations, including an action plan and timetable, normally within two months.

Following this the Scrutiny Board will determine any further detailed monitoring, over and above the standard quarterly monitoring of all scrutiny recommendations.

Reports and Publications Submitted

- Scrutiny Inquiry into Digital Inclusion Session 1, Director of City Development & Chief Information Officer 14 October 2015
- Internet use, quarter 1 (Jan – Mar) 2015, by NUTS 3 area, United Kingdom, Office for National Statistics
- 2014 Digital Nation?, Tinder Foundation
- Scrutiny Inquiry into Digital Inclusion Session 2, Director of City Development & Chief Information Officer, 18 November 2015
- Update on Age Friendly Leeds Smart Cities Project
- Get online in Leeds, Leeds City Council, June 2014
- West Yorkshire Superfast Broadband maps
- Inquiry into establishing world-class connectivity throughout the UK, Commons Select Committee, Superfast Broadband Terms of Reference 27 July 2015
- WYCA response to the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee Superfast Broadband Inquiry Submission, 30 September 2015
- List of free public wifi available in buildings owned and maintained by Leeds City Council, November 2015
- Scrutiny Inquiry into Digital Inclusion Session 3, Director of City Development & Chief Information Officer, 16 December 2015
- Tinder Foundation, Biography of Helen Milner CEO
- Digital Nation 2015, Facts, Stats and Closing the Gap, Tinder Foundation
- Doing Digital Inclusion, Libraries Handbook, Tinder Foundation,
- Creating people centred digital innovation, mHabitat, December 2015
- The Universal Offer, SCL Leading and Managing Public Libraries, Society of Chief Librarians



Witnesses Heard

Helen Milner OBE, Tinder Foundation
Jane Robinson, Crossgates and District Good Neighbours
Barbara Hiscott, Crossgates and District Good Neighbours
Victoria Betton, mHabitat (Health Service)
Dr Adam Beaumont, Managing Director of AQL
Cllr J Lewis, Executive Board Member (Resources and Strategy)
Cllr D Coupar, Executive Board Member (Communities)
Dylan Roberts, Chief Digital Officer
Richard Hart, Deputy Head of Service (Libraries)
Jason Tutin - Digital & Learning Development Manager
Katie Dunlevey, Senior Economic Development Officer
Phil Cole, Head of Funding Programme and Business Support
John Bullivent, Contract Manager
Lee Hemsworth, Chief Officer (Customer Access)
Ian Jones, Solutions Architect
Adam Quesne, Head of Customer Contact
Nick Hart, Community Hub Manager

Dates of Scrutiny

- 14 October 2015
- 18 November 2015
- 16 December 2015



Appendix 1



Table 27: Reasons for households not having internet access, 2006 to 2015

	2006	2008	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Don't need internet (not useful, not interesting, etc)	34	33	39	50	54	59	53	53
Lack of skills	:	14	21	21	22	20	32	31
Equipment costs too high	21	15	18	19	15	13	12	14
Access costs too high (telephone, broadband subscription)	16	11	15	13	14	12	11	12
Have access to the internet elsewhere	10	9	8	8	8	7	8	7
Privacy or security concerns	8	3	4	5	4	2	6	5
Physical or sensorial disability	3	1	2	3	3	2	3	5
Other reason	13	18	13	18	15	13	12	14

Base: Households in Great Britain without internet access.
 These questions were not asked in 2007 or 2009.
 : Data not available.

Source: Office for National Statistics

Scrutiny Board (City Development)
Powering Up the Leeds Economy through Digital Inclusion
27 April 2016
Report author: Sandra Pentelow



www.scrutiny.unit@leeds.gov.uk