



Sefton Residents Digital Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025

Foreword

Access to services and information digitally is becoming the norm for many, however recent data tells us that approximately 6.5% (18,000) of residents in Sefton have either never used the internet, or not used the internet in the last 3 months. Those who are unable to access the internet risk missing out on the benefits that the internet can offer. A lack of digital skills and access can have a huge negative impact on a person's life, leading to:

- poorer health outcomes and a lower life expectancy,
- increased loneliness and social isolation,
- less access to jobs and education.

This Digital Inclusion Strategy has been developed through a multi-sector approach which is crucial in bringing co-ordination and learning between organisations to embed digital activities for the benefit of our residents and organisations.

Across Sefton, we want to ensure that residents and organisations feel confident and supported to go online and to take full advantage of the benefits that can be offered to them. We want residents and organisations to have access where possible and most of all, for them to feel motivated and to understand how digital resources can make their lives easier.

Digital inclusion is about ensuring the benefits of the internet and digital technologies are available and known to everyone, enabling individuals to improve their quality of life, employability, health, and wellbeing. Access to digital services is evolving, with new and emerging technology changing how individuals access digital tools to support independence, without necessarily being aware they are digitally active. Sensor technology, smart speakers (Alexa, Google, Apple) are providing different types of interaction with assistive aids that can help people stay independent at home for longer. It is acknowledged that for the next twenty years or so there will be a cohort of people who can't or won't go online and for whom a safety net of provision will be required to ensure that they are not excluded. However, we want to put in place support and opportunities to help those who want and can become digitally active, allowing them to maximise the potential for technology to help them live well.

Our vision is to develop:

'A place where Sefton residents and organisations understand the benefits of digital, feel safe and confident online and are supported to develop their skills and thrive in an increasingly digital world'.

Executive Summary

Sefton is a vibrant and diverse borough and whilst overall health is improving, significant gaps in health and life expectancy remain between those living in the areas most and least deprived areas. The ageing population is growing much faster than the national average, increasing future demand for health and care services. The number of people with long term conditions, sensory impairment, dementia, cancer, and other health problems is growing, as is the number of children with complex health and care needs.

Sefton has:

- An ageing population and is ranked 18th out of 326 local authorities for the number of residents aged 65 or over.
- areas with high levels of deprivation and average earnings are below the national average.
- high levels of social isolation resulting in loneliness, mainly common amongst the elderly but increasingly evident in younger age groups.
- growing levels of severe frailty in the population, with signs of frailty being identified more frequently in younger residents.

Being digitally included can provide significant benefits for the most vulnerable in society including; saving money, communicating with friends and relatives, accessing public services, benefitting from developments in digital health and securing employment. Digital inclusion within Sefton will look different for different areas. The north of the borough is comprised mainly of elderly residents that fall into the internet user categories of those who rarely use the internet or have no access at all. In the south of the borough there is a high proportion of residents that fall into the 'e-Withdrawn' category; the least engaged with the internet and usually associated with more deprived neighbourhoods of urban areas. These residents have opted out of online engagement due to it being considered unnecessary or for economic reasons.

Together, partners across the borough have a collective vision to create services that are integrated, so they work seamlessly together to improve the lives of Sefton residents so that everyone has a fair chance of a positive and healthier future.

This strategy outlines why digital inclusion is an issue for Sefton residents and how the public, voluntary and private sectors can work together, building on the work undertaken over recent years, to help address the barriers that some of our residents face and need to overcome in order to access and embrace the digital world and the opportunities that it brings.

The scope of this strategy is focused on improving digital inclusion for residents and seeks to set out and adopt key principles and actions to help tackle the recognised digital exclusion barriers:

- Digital skills
- Accessibility
- Affordability
- Motivation
- Trust and confidence.

In parallel, development is underway to ensure our businesses across Sefton are supported and are provided with the opportunity to be digital included with support to develop and grow their businesses and skill their workforce. This business focused strategy will enable businesses to be informed and have access to support to help their growth and increase their opportunity flourish. This aligns with Sefton work with Liverpool City region Enterprise Partnership (LCR LEP) to simplify access to local business support.

Background

Digital inclusion is often defined in terms of:

- Digital Skills - being able to use computers, the internet and mobile technology such as smart phones. This is an obvious barrier, but it's by no means the only or biggest one that people can face.
- Accessibility – Ranging from mobile/broadband connectivity to the design and provision of services to meet all users' needs.
- Affordability - affordable access to the internet and digital devices is still an issue for many people in the region.

There are three other factors which influence whether people are prepared to use digital channels: -

- Motivation - knowing the reasons why using the internet is a good thing.
- Trust – understanding whether my data will be safe; can I really get what I need online without speaking to someone? A fear of cybercrime and invasion of privacy.
- Confidence – will I break something if I click on a button or I think I know how to find out and do what I need, but I really need someone to help me the first couple of times.

Each of these addresses a single specific barrier that some, but not all, individuals, and organisations face. There is seldom just one reason why people are digitally excluded, and there is no single approach to solving it, nor can we expect that absolutely everyone can utilise digital technology. Digital inclusion is about overcoming this range of challenges, not just one. Equally, with so many challenges, no single organisation in Sefton can address digital exclusion alone.

The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the marginalisation of those without either the basic skills and/or financial or practical means to access digital connectivity and public, financial, health, and retail services, accessing culture and entertainment, socialising and learning. There is evidence both that the removal of non-digital access has driven some previously reluctant people online, and that income reductions and competing cost pressures has made internet access unaffordable for others. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic we have also seen a significant digital shift, with large organisations moving to offering online only services only and moving away from traditionally face to face provision such as medical appointments, education and even fitness classes to a virtual world. This journey had already begun; however, the pandemic provided a significant catalyst in speeding up this transformation.

A study by Lloyd’s consumer digital index has highlighted that in the last 12 months, 1.5 million more people have started using the Internet, resulting in 95% of people now being online. In 2020, predictive modelling indicated that it would take to 2025 for 58% of the UK to have high digital capability. In 2021, 60% of the UK now have this level of digital capability; we have made five years’ worth of progress in one. More than half (55%) of the online population have increased their Internet usage throughout the pandemic – on average people are spending an extra 13 hours online a week. 93% of office workers are now confident Internet users versus 85% of manual workers. The data also shows increased personal use of the Internet, indicating a halo effect from the working day.

Digital inclusion, or rather, reducing digital exclusion is about ensuring that people and organisations have the right access, ability, motivation, and trust to use the internet and other digital channels to take full advantage of the many benefits that being online can bring.

Digital poverty is a subset of digital exclusion and is defined as affecting those who are digitally excluded because of finding the cost of appropriate equipment and connectivity prohibitive. This sits alongside other forms of digital exclusion, such as a skills gap, or the availability of and access to connectivity, and these barriers may be experienced singly or in any combination.



According to ONS, in 2017, 56% of adult internet non-users were disabled, much more than two and a half times the 22% proportion of disabled adults in the UK population.

LIMITED ONLINE ACCESS

Approximately 3,000 households in Sefton (2%) have limited or no online access



TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION

Approximately 9,000 households in Sefton (7%) fall into the category of ‘technology laggard’ households.

Digital skills are increasingly essential in relation to employment. The government estimates that within the next two decades 90% of job roles will require some sort of digital skills to both identify and apply for job opportunities



Pre-Covid, ONS also found that 7% or 700,000 young people aged between 11 and 18 in the UK lacked internet access via a tablet or computer, whilst 60,000 had no access at all. Moreover, 68% of this age group who do have internet access reported that they would struggle to complete schoolwork without it, highlighting the criticality of education and learning across all age groups.

CONSUMER VIEW

Over a quarter of households within Sefton (32,858) are thought to prefer being consulted/engaged with by post or in person



Principles

There are already numerous organisations and initiatives in Sefton focussing positively on addressing aspects of the Digital Inclusion challenge, for which this strategy seeks to set out a strategic approach including principles and framework for our region.

The following principles need to be embedded in the use of Digital services and will be supported by a comprehensive action plan which includes capturing the benefits that this work brings.

- Put people at the heart of everything we do
- Design for the outcome and be inclusive to build trust
- Test assumptions, Make, learn, iterate
- Do the hard work to make it simple
- Ensure all staff and volunteers understand what essential basic digital skills are. Provide opportunity to learn and improve on their own essential basic digital skills.
- Commit support and resources to a co-ordinated approach to Digital Inclusion and Digital Skills activities across Sefton
- Share best practice to ensure digital inclusion activity impact is maximised and measured.
- Leave no one behind by ensuring there is support for those who cannot or choose not to use online to enable equal opportunity for everyone to use our services
- Provide a framework which enables residents to have access to digital equipment, skills training, and opportunities for them to learn and have support
- Promote the benefits of digital in ways that residents can see how this will help them
- Keep things simple by using common language and create trust with our online services
- Ensure our residents understand how to protect themselves online
- Where possible, use our responsibilities under the Social Value Act to use commissioning as a tool to drive Digital Inclusion
- Maximise and align funding opportunities that could progress Digital Inclusion
- Ensure that our strategy is fit for purpose, supporting the radical changes in technology, demand, and skills by committing to annual reviews

These principles are supported across Sefton by the following transformation partners:



Wider Population Challenges

Digital skills are no longer binary with residents no longer digitally skilled or not. Digital skills are a spectrum and people move in and out of 'exclusion' depending on how long they've been away from digital in different areas of their life.

The use ability to browsing the internet as a source of information can be invaluable, however the prospect of filling in online forms and applying for jobs online may introduce further challenges for individuals who may have a lower level of literacy or confidence in interacting with digital tools.

The growing use of mainstream Social media (twitter, Facebook, Instagram, snapchat, tiktok, web forums) to connect communities may also be a daunting prospect for many with Digital exclusion and social exclusion being recognised as interrelated. By empowering our residents to get online, we can help tackle wider social issues, support economic growth, and close equality gaps. As we look to focus on helping people maintain their independence, connect with their communities, build their resilience and enjoy better health and wellbeing, it is important that we encourage and support online access, and working with partners to overcome the challenges people may face and support their development of the five digital skills referenced by Centre for Economics and Business Research.

Whilst we often assume digital exclusion is associated to a particular cohort or group of residents, there is growing evidence to show that a wider range of people are digitally excluded. Two examples are outlined below

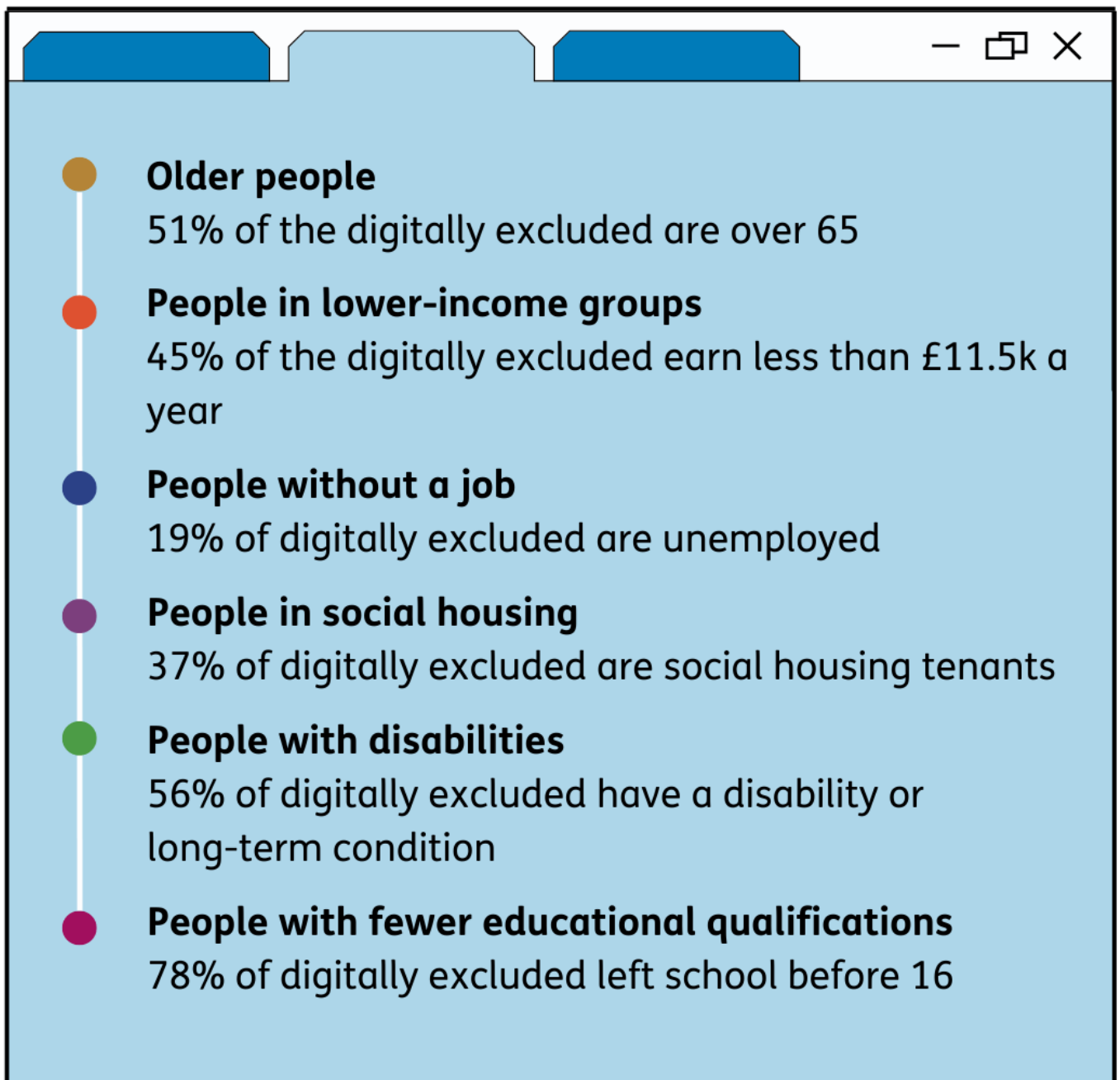
Young, digitally excluded people

- Whilst it is assumed younger people are digitally included as they might spend all day using their smart phones, it is suspected that many young people wouldn't know how to use a laptop to write a CV. These young people are hard to spot. On the face of it, they're hyper-connected digital natives. Ask them if they're connected to the web, they own a smartphone or even how frequently they use it and you'll get positive answers. But volume of use doesn't equate to breadth. So far, only a handful of employers will let you apply for a job via Snapchat and yet 10% of young people not in education, employment don't know how to send a CV online.

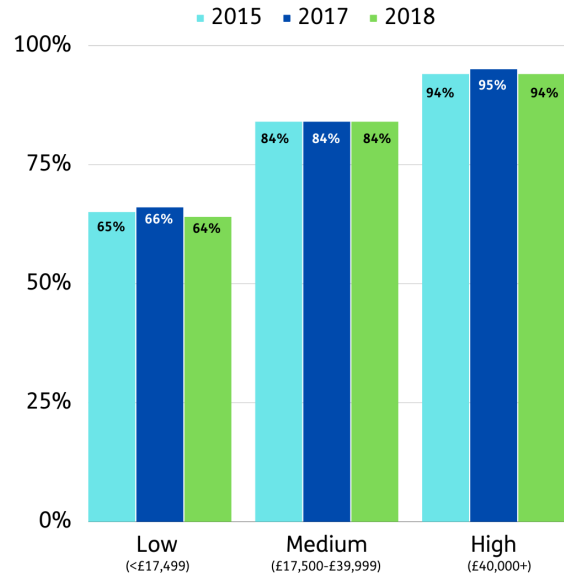
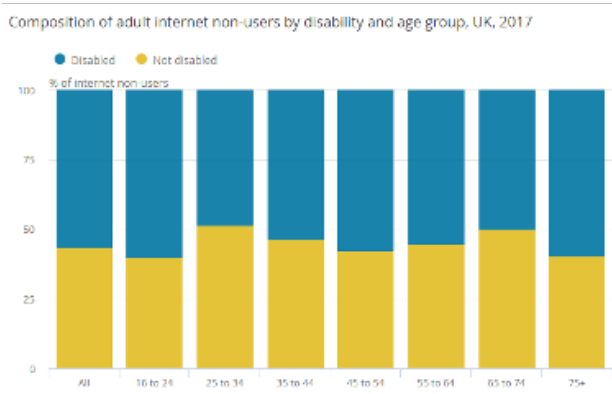
Ex-offenders

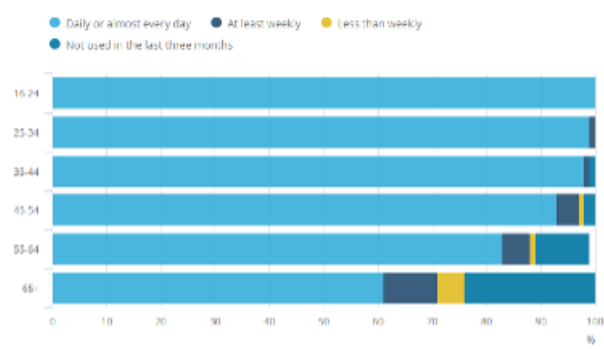
- Typically for those who have served a custodial sentence access to digital will have been severely limited at best and illegal at worst. There's an 'internet in prisons' scheme underway but until that happens an offender will leave prison with the same digital skills they went in with. For the 43% of prisoners serving terms of at least 4 years, this can have a dramatic effect on rehabilitation when they're released back into the community. Is it hard to imagine a world without the iPhone? If you've been in prison for more than ten years, that's the world you're expecting to come back to.

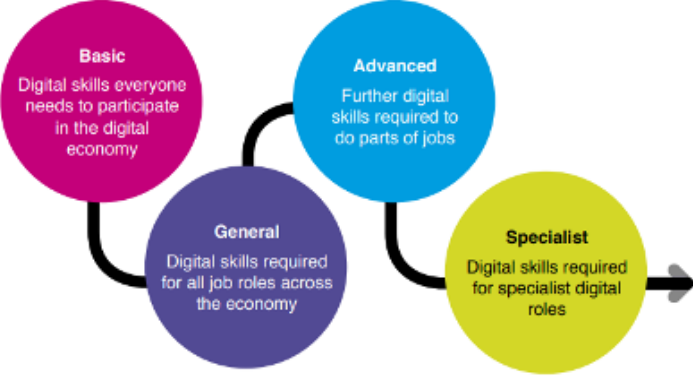
We are determined to support all residents to have the opportunity to make the most of digital technology, giving them the access, awareness, skills, and confidence to participate online safely. Considering the importance placed upon digital literacy in most jobs these days, it's arguable digital literacy should be given the same level of importance as numeracy and literacy. We want to ensure that the right provision exists to enable all young people and adults to achieve a basic level of digital literacy. This means more than simply learning the mechanical skills needed to get online: it is about ensuring people can evaluate online information, know how to stay safe and understand how to transfer skills from one activity to another.



The table below highlights a range of factors and challenges for Sefton

Factor	Background	Challenges for Sefton																											
<p>Poverty</p>	<p>Poverty has an impact on an individual’s ability to access broadband, mobile internet connections, and to afford devices. Digital inclusion and poverty are interrelated as some of the benefits of internet usage may help to alleviate some of the effects of poverty. For those that cannot afford access they are unable to feel these benefits. The impact growing up in poverty on children is significant. Poverty affects literacy, numeracy and communication skills.</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Internet Access by Income Bracket (2015-2018)</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Income Bracket</th> <th>2015</th> <th>2017</th> <th>2018</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Low (<£17,499)</td> <td>65%</td> <td>66%</td> <td>64%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Medium (£17,500-£39,999)</td> <td>84%</td> <td>84%</td> <td>84%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>High (£40,000+)</td> <td>94%</td> <td>95%</td> <td>94%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Not having access to the internet at home can seriously hinder a child’s ability to learn, research and complete homework assignments. Sefton is in the most deprived quarter of English local authorities and five LSOAs are in the top 1% nationally. The impact of poverty on digital inclusion is likely to be significant in the borough. Looking at ways to provide home broadband/mobile connections to the poorest residents in Sefton may have a notable impact on some of Sefton’s most vulnerable people.</p>	Income Bracket	2015	2017	2018	Low (<£17,499)	65%	66%	64%	Medium (£17,500-£39,999)	84%	84%	84%	High (£40,000+)	94%	95%	94%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can organisations identify individuals whose low income would prevent them from buying a device or paying for Wi-Fi or data? What provision is available to give people access to low-cost, high-quality Wi-Fi or data? What provision is available in public spaces to enable people to access Wi-Fi or data privately? What provision to access IT equipment is available to residents? (For example, Gifted equipment through charitable organisations, or access to low-cost devices) 											
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<p>Trust in Digital</p>	<p>Trust in digital services is associated to the confidence users have in with sharing information through digital services. Trust is a combination of the ability of people, technology, and processes to create a secure digital world. Concerns around data security are often key barriers preventing people from utilising digital tools. Individuals may often be reluctant to share their information or access websites due to concerns of data leak or reuse of their data for other purposes. Growing publicity of cyber-attacks and data leaks adds to individuals’ anxieties</p>  <p>Composition of adult internet non-users by disability and age group, UK, 2017</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Age Group</th> <th>Not disabled (%)</th> <th>Disabled (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>All</td> <td>~45</td> <td>~55</td> </tr> <tr> <td>16 to 24</td> <td>~40</td> <td>~60</td> </tr> <tr> <td>25 to 34</td> <td>~50</td> <td>~50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>35 to 44</td> <td>~45</td> <td>~55</td> </tr> <tr> <td>45 to 54</td> <td>~40</td> <td>~60</td> </tr> <tr> <td>55 to 64</td> <td>~45</td> <td>~55</td> </tr> <tr> <td>65 to 74</td> <td>~50</td> <td>~50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>75+</td> <td>~40</td> <td>~60</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Age Group	Not disabled (%)	Disabled (%)	All	~45	~55	16 to 24	~40	~60	25 to 34	~50	~50	35 to 44	~45	~55	45 to 54	~40	~60	55 to 64	~45	~55	65 to 74	~50	~50	75+	~40	~60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we reassure Sefton residents that their data is secure; it will not be lost or shared inappropriately; and they will not be spied on? What role can the community and voluntary sector play in familiarising people with technology and educating them about safety? How do we provide residents with the information they need about data safety in an easy-to-understand way? How do we help people tell the difference between reliable and false health and care information online?
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Factor	Background	Challenges for Sefton
<p>Complex lifestyles & Privacy</p>	<p>Residents with complex lifestyles are some of the most vulnerable people living within Sefton. Complex relationship and interdependencies between homelessness, drug and alcohol addiction, mental health problems, domestic abuse, violence, offending behaviours provides added challenge to engaging digitally.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do organisations identify residents who live in complex circumstances? How do organisations identify people whose home environments wouldn't be sufficiently private for a health or care appointment? How can people living in very complex circumstances be given permanent access to technology without being made responsible for keeping it safe? What provision is in place to enable people to disclose safeguarding issues if they don't have privacy in the home or are reliant on others to get them online?
<p>Age</p>	<p>There is a generational digital divide when it comes to internet usage. ONS statistics show that since 2011 those over 65 years old have continued to make up the largest proportion of adult internet non-users and over half of all adult internet non-users were over the age of 75 years in 2018. This gap is also prevalent in the digital skills gap. Of the 8% of the population with zero digital skills 76% are retired and over the age of 65.</p> <p>When considering age, several key factors for child poverty are parental low earnings, low parental qualifications, parental ill health, family instability and family size. Poverty affects more than one in four children in the UK today. The emerging Child Poverty Strategy will support parents for every child to have the opportunity to do well in life and share the rewards of having a stronger economy and a healthier, fairer society.</p> <p>Internet use within the last three months, Great Britain, 2019</p>  <p>Source: Office for National Statistics - Opinions and Lifestyle Survey</p> <p>Sefton has a higher proportion of elderly residents compared to the UK, 23% over 65 compared to 18% in the UK. Of 326 local authorities Sefton is ranked 18th for number of residents over the age of 65. Therefore, this digital divide could be more pronounced within the borough. Elderly residents can be difficult to engage and changing lifelong habits poses a challenge. However elderly people are a group that stand to significantly benefit from technological developments. Technology has the potential to have a huge impact on the lives of elderly people, the introduction of in-home assistance can reduce social isolation, the need for vulnerable elderly residents to leave their homes and move into care homes, and progress in the health sector is able to overcome some of the problems faced by the elderly when it comes to mobility and age-related illnesses. Lack of interest is a common self-reported reason for not engaging online but this can often mask a complex range of underlying barriers such as low confidence and lack of understanding. For this group of people, it is important to understand what each individual's needs are and what type of support is most effective for that individual. Prescribed solutions will not work for everybody. Co-production, partnership working, and a flexible approach is essential to engaging with this group of people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What can organisations do to support older people who want to use technology (for example signposting to third sector organisations)? To what extent should organisations consider unfamiliarity with technology to be a valid reason for using face-to-face services only? What provision is available to help people become familiar with IT and increase their skills and confidence? What role could the community and voluntary sector play in normalising technology and embedding it within older people's social communication networks?

Factor	Background	Challenges for Sefton
<p>Disability and Specific conditions</p>	<p>People with a disability are more than twice as likely to be offline as those without a disability. 54% of the total number of people who have never used the internet are registered disabled. According to research carried out by Scope 78% of disabled people say that having access to digital technologies is helpful and 92% also said it helps them to live independently. Digital technologies can assist those living with a disability to be more independent and access to the internet can be particularly important in reducing social isolation and connecting disabled people to their friends, families, and other social groups. Attention must be paid to accessibility and usability for those with disabilities to do more to reduce the digital divide. As with other isolated groups there is a need to design access and services around the needs of individuals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How can we identify at what points in their care people are most likely to need reassurance? ■ Which systems are most accessible to people with different conditions? (For example, compliance with Web Accessibility Guidelines) ■ How do we involve carers and extended families and support them as they assist individuals with technology? ■ How do different organisations work together smoothly when using different systems? ■ What role can the community and voluntary sector play in feeding back information about disabled people’s technology needs and preferences?
<p>Skills & motivation</p>	<p>Digital skills are vital. The Liverpool City Region’s digital sector has grown significantly over the past few years, around 77% in output from 2006 to 2016. The growth in the use of technology across a range of industries has led to a point whereby most employers require their workforce to have at least basic digital competencies. Around 90 per cent of employer’s state that professionals, technicians, clerical workers, and skilled agricultural workers are required to possess at least basic digital skills.</p> <p>The Centre for Economics and Business Research identify five areas of benefit in being digitally skilled:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ earnings benefits: increased earnings of between 3% and 10% through acquiring digital skills. ■ employability benefits: improved chances of finding work for someone who is unemployed and an increased likelihood that someone who is inactive will look for work. ■ retail transaction benefits: shopping online has been found to be 13% cheaper on average than shopping in-store. ■ communication benefits: basic digital skills can enable people to connect and communicate with family, friends and the community. ■ time savings: time saved by accessing government services and banking online rather than in person, estimated to be about 30 minutes per transaction. <p>Supporting residents to develop these basic skills is important in ensuring that as many people as possible are able to access and benefit from online services. Without these basic skills individuals are at risk of being left behind and unable to take advantage of technological developments that may lead to healthier and more prosperous lives.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How can organisations ensure staff feel confident and motivated to use technology when appropriate? ■ What can organisations do to direct people to the training they need to use technology? ■ How do organisations present the option of using technology to residents in such a way that it feels like a genuine choice rather than an imposition?

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Take-up	<p>Low take-up of broadband is an indicator of digital exclusion. Those without a home broadband connection are either not accessing the internet at all, accessing the internet in locations such as local libraries, or reliant on mobile internet connections. The most common reason for not having a household internet connection is a perceived lack of need, followed by a lack of skills. This indicates that for many people they do not understand the benefits that being online can bring. Low take-up of broadband across Sefton is highlighted below. In some areas take-up of broadband internet is as low as 57%. The same issue does impact other parts of the UK with 95% of homes and businesses having access to superfast broadband, or better, but only 45% of homes subscribing to the service.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="300 647 983 927"> <thead> <tr> <th>Premises</th> <th>Coverage</th> <th>Below USO</th> <th>Superfast</th> <th>Ultrafast</th> <th>FTTP</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Sefton</td> <td>126,811</td> <td>0.3%</td> <td>98.5%</td> <td>66.2%</td> <td>21.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Liverpool City Region</td> <td>706,707</td> <td>0.4%</td> <td>97.7%</td> <td>74.2%</td> <td>20.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>North West</td> <td>3,284,679</td> <td>0.9%</td> <td>96.9%</td> <td>60.1%</td> <td>12.3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>England</td> <td>24,403,277</td> <td>1.3%</td> <td>96.1%</td> <td>58.9%</td> <td>13.4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>UK</td> <td>29,063,154</td> <td>1.7%</td> <td>95.6%</td> <td>57.1%</td> <td>14.5%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Premises	Coverage	Below USO	Superfast	Ultrafast	FTTP	Sefton	126,811	0.3%	98.5%	66.2%	21.2%	Liverpool City Region	706,707	0.4%	97.7%	74.2%	20.5%	North West	3,284,679	0.9%	96.9%	60.1%	12.3%	England	24,403,277	1.3%	96.1%	58.9%	13.4%	UK	29,063,154	1.7%	95.6%	57.1%	14.5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What financial support can be provided to support take-up? ■ What support can be provided within our community to promote the benefits of digital, particularly to those who are not engaged?
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UK	29,063,154	1.7%	95.6%	57.1%	14.5%																																	
Connectivity	<p>96% of UK households and businesses can now access superfast broadband (download speed of at least 30 Mbit/s) with an aim to have full fibre (download speed of 1 gigabit/s) across the UK by 2033 and 5G coverage for most of the UK population by 2027. In Sefton coverage for superfast broadband is good with 99.3% of households having access with full fibre coverage at 13%, this compares to 12% in the UK. Superfast broadband is suitable for most household needs but as data intensive services (e.g. online streaming, video calls etc) continue to grow, superfast broadband will not be able to cope. Full fibre (FTTP) is the most reliable broadband technology available, and the infrastructure is important for supporting high-capacity mobile broadband networks, particularly 5G networks.</p> <p>The impact on the environment will also be noticeable with improved connectivity allowing workers greater flexibility in working from home. The knock-on effect of this being that people will be able to work more efficiently from home, reducing the need for travel and leading to a reduced carbon footprint. Connectivity to rural areas will also reduce the need for employees to live in urban areas and the result may well be an increase in people living in non-metro areas.</p> <p>The Liverpool City Region is aiming to build a digital spine across the city region through the backhaul project. This will include a full fibre network from the GTT transatlantic fibre optic cable in Southport to the Hartree Supercomputer in Daresbury.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What impact will full fibre have in Sefton? ■ How can we ensure residents are in a position take advantage of network improvements to address inequality and digital exclusion? ■ How can we develop a commercial approach to technologies such as 5G? ■ How can digital connectivity be linked into local planning and housing applications, so that all new developments are provided digital services infrastructure alongside gas, water and electricity. 																																				
Literacy & communication preferences	<p>Lacking vital literacy skills holds a person back at every stage of their life. As a child they won't be able to succeed at school, as a young adult they will be locked out of the job market, and as a parent they won't be able to support their own child's learning. This intergenerational cycle makes social mobility and a fairer society more difficult.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How can organisations identify where there are low levels of literacy? ■ How can organisations record people's preferences regarding systems? ■ To what extent can organisations adapt to people's preferred systems? ■ What training is available for people whose lack of literacy prevents them from accessing technology? 																																				

Opportunities

As a collective borough, there is a growing requirement to address the digital inclusion challenge we face, which is equalled by the support from its partners to help address these challenges by taking the following opportunities:

Digital Inclusion Transformation Group

The establishment of a dedicated Digital Inclusion Transformation Group will further align the direction of travel across Sefton to ensure we maximise the sum of our parts to make a tangible difference to the lives of our residents. A key focus of this group will be to map the current digital inclusion provision and to manage priorities and resources across Sefton. Working in partnership across Liverpool City Region, this group will support the vision and priorities outlined within LCR Digital strategy 2021-23. The group will ensure there is parity in representation across all categories of inclusion stakeholders.

Digital Skills Development

Leveraging the existing provisions which are in place across Sefton to digitally develop our resources and further promote the roles of Digital champions to support up-skilling and re-skilling our residents to become digitally included and support them live a more inclusive lifestyle. There is opportunity to link to wider regional work programmes to consider the development of a Digital Skills Passport.

Technology partnerships

Sefton has a strong local digital community which could allow us to leverage skills in the region to build and deliver solutions for our residents. Working with our local tech partners to grow and retain talent, add to our social value commitments, and build on the digital community that is growing. Alongside the local focus, opportunities exist which brings together public, private and charity sector organisations to facilitate coordination between digital skills programmes, including the sharing of knowledge and best practice.

Empower our Residents

Empower our residents to utilise digital technologies to manage their own care, take control and work in partnership in relation to their health and wellbeing. The Technology Enabled Care Solutions (TECS) Strategy refers to the use of assistive technologies, telehealth, telecare, telemedicine, tele-coaching, and self-care in providing care for people with long term conditions that is convenient, accessible and cost-effective. TECS range from the simplest information apps to sophisticated monitoring devices. TECS has the potential to transform how we care, especially making it possible for us and those we're looking after to have greater independence and peace of mind. There is the opportunity to extend and improve digital access for residents for obtaining appointments, prescriptions, test results, and maintaining a personal held record.

Network infrastructure

Work has already begun on a 212km full fibre, gigabit-capable network infrastructure. When complete, it will put city region businesses in prime position to lead the way in a host of growing sectors, from health and life sciences to Artificial Intelligence and advanced manufacturing. Half-owned by the city region’s Combined Authority, headed up by Mayor Steve Rotheram, the full fibre infrastructure will be capable of delivering speeds of 1,000mbps and beyond. The LCR Digital Infrastructure Project is a joint venture half-owned by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority in partnership with North West-based ITS Technology Group, who will lead the project, working alongside construction partner NGE, who are managing the build and roll out of the network. Digital infrastructure will be installed in carriageways, footpaths, and cycleways across the city region over the next two years, using innovative deployment techniques to minimise the impact on road and public transport users wherever possible. Work is already underway to review opportunities of how maximise this investment to improve digital connectivity across the borough.

Action Plan

The following action plan focuses upon priorities across Sefton in 2022/2023. Year one will also include the development of key performance indicators to measure impact and improvements made.

Action	Activity	Impact
Establish a Digital Inclusion Transformation Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Map the current digital inclusion provision and its utilisation ■ Monitor levels of participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide a baseline and identify areas of priority for improvement ■ Ensure participation and contributions to shape Digital Inclusion is equitable across all partners within Sefton
Agree a common framework to measure the impact that Digital Inclusion support has on residents, communities, and organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Gain greater insight into digital exclusion in the borough and the initiatives in place to reduce. ■ Establish mechanisms to capture and measure the impact the strategy is having 	Measure the improvement and take up of technology and services following the introduction of this strategy
Test our assumptions regarding the levels of digital skills across Sefton for key demographic groups	We will consult with the different demographic profile we have in Sefton to test out our theories and validate our insight regarding the different level of digital skills	We will validate our assumptions and then target our resources to work with key priority groups
Develop understanding of gaps in region and define funding avenues to solve these issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Work with partners to review the local authority digital inclusion report in 2018 to understand current gaps around access to skills and training ■ Explore funding opportunities for research ■ Engage with Higher and Further Education for research into understanding the gaps and needs in the region 	Identify opportunities for appropriate investment to support Sefton priorities

Action	Activity	Impact
Align our resources to tailor our offer of support to areas of greatest need	We will align our resources to tailor our offer of support for digital inclusion to target areas of greatest need	We will manage our resources to priorities areas of greatest need to measure and improve levels of Digital Inclusion
Clear branding and communications plan in place for the promotion of the work being undertaken	Development of strategic brand and plan for communicating digital inclusion activity arising from this strategy	Provide a consistent joined up approach and identity to align the promotion of offers across Sefton
Increase the number of public access computers and other devices available to residents and organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Review current provision /develop marketing strategy to raise awareness of current provision – map out gaps and link to community groups to increase access points ■ Work with partners regarding funding opportunities and/or recycled kit for residents, community groups and other organisations ■ Explore opportunities to create Language labs for refugees to learn English through eLearning tools ■ Expand existing tablet loan schemes ■ Support local Job clubs with the provision of laptops to help those seeking employment ■ Set-up Virtual Meeting Rooms to allow citizens to join online meetings and calls ■ Improve local meeting rooms to allow community groups better access to virtual meeting technology 	Provide Sefton residents with the opportunity to access and utilise digital tools and services through a range of solutions
Increase the number and range of places residents can access free Wi-Fi, including both Council and Partner’s buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establish feasibility of delivery of free Wi-Fi ■ Develop and publish current Wi-Fi availability ■ Engage with local community groups, GPs, NHS, Schools/colleges, and partners on whether free public Wi-Fi could be made available on their sites 	Maximise opportunity for residents to access free Wi-Fi in public sites
Accessibility Review	Review the accessibility to person facing digital services, including website, apps, video conferencing solutions	Identify and improve levels of website accessibility and compliance with WAG2.0
Device Recycling	Review current kit refurbishment plans to enable safe distribution across Sefton to those with greatest need	Maximise the opportunity for locally procured IT equipment can be recycled and offered back into Sefton
Funding Opportunities	Identify opportunity to apply for regional funding to support Sefton improve digital offers to address inclusion	Support the delivery of the digital inclusion action plan by identifying funding to support adoption and implementation
Service Design	Minimize levels of digital exclusion by focusing upon services design	Review existing and newly commissioned service to ensure non-digital offers are available to residence
Tech innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Review development of coding clubs in partnership with Girls Who Code ■ Facilitate Digi-bot, Oz bot and raspberry pie events ■ Support access to 3D printer events 	Ensure opportunities to develop the next generation of digital skills and use of technology is available to Sefton residents

Action	Activity	Impact
Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Collaboration with LCR regarding digital poverty work ■ Identify and understand the demographic who are not connected ■ Understand opportunities afforded by LCR backhaul network in terms of social value ■ Explore options and the potential benefits of deploying new digital connectivity solutions to address inequality and digital exclusion. ■ Identify pilot areas and test beds to support both digital inclusion and the development of technology to enable people to live at home for longer ■ Work with the Liverpool City Region, Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and its local Barrier Busting Task Force to develop a commercial approach to technologies such as 5G. ■ Explore the opportunities around linking digital connectivity into local planning and housing applications, so that all new developments are provided digital services infrastructure alongside gas, water and electricity. 	Increase the take-up across Sefton residents to access internet and digital services through a range of initiatives
Digital Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consider the development of a Digital Skills Passport Scheme (incorporating numeracy, literacy and communication skills) to help Sefton residents to gain future employment ■ Working with local partners such as Sefton Community Learning Service to develop and deliver bespoke training programmes to target residents in the areas identified in the Poverty Modelling and Digital Inclusion ■ Review opportunities to access The Inspiring Digital Enterprise Award (IDEA) that helps you develop digital, enterprise and employability skills for free. ■ Engage with VOLA regarding support across the VCSE sector in relation to learning, skills, employment support and criminal justice services in Liverpool City Region ■ Identify events to support older people to use tablets and mobiles ■ Monitor access to Digital Skills training to identify and shape the offer ■ Develop the Digital Champions framework to deliver training to residents ■ We will provide focus and support to ensure we are supporting our workforce to upskill levels of digital skills and promote awareness of technology 	Provide access to a consistent provision to increase individuals level of digital skill through learning and support

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