



Digital Inclusion Innovation Programme Workshop 1: Summary

20 April 2021

Background and objectives	1
Objectives	1
Participants	1
Context and introduction	1
Mapping existing activities	2
Exercise 1a - Reflections: What works	2
Exercise 1b - Reflections: Challenges	3
Exercise 2 - Opportunities	3
Next steps	4

Background and objectives

On Tuesday 20 April 2021, LOTI and the GLA held the first of two workshops. This workshop sought to share the different digital inclusion projects and initiatives underway by London boroughs. It also explored what's worked and what's been challenging about these initiatives, as well as potential opportunities for boroughs to work together as part of the Digital Inclusion Innovation Programme.

Objectives

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Share the latest thinking on the Digital Inclusion Innovation Programme;
- Surface the different activities boroughs have / are currently undertaking to support digitally excluded residents;
- Understand the strengths and challenges boroughs have experienced in the delivery of their projects;
- Explore opportunities where collaboration might add value.

Participants

The workshop was attended by colleagues from a number of London boroughs, including: Brent, Barnet, Hackney, Hounslow, Hammersmith and Fulham, Havering, Kingston and Sutton, Lambeth, Redbridge, and Waltham Forest as well as Thurrock Council.

Full details of what was discussed in the workshop and the raw notes can be viewed [here](#).

Summary of discussions

Context and introduction

The workshop started with an introduction from Theo Blackwell, Chief Digital Officer for London, who spoke about the 'Digital Access for All' mission followed by LOTI's Director Eddie Copeland, who introduced the Digital Inclusion Innovation Programme (DIIP) and described its main outcomes, also below:

- **For residents:** A "minimum access package" that provides a menu of options to meet individuals' essential device, data and skills needs will be available to all digitally excluded Londoners.
- **For public servants / VCS:** Practitioners who work with digitally excluded Londoners will be easily able to access quality information, resources, services and peer support on digital inclusion to aid their users. The evidence base on what works - and the range of mature interventions that can be scaled - will be more extensive.

- **For corporates:** The evidence base on the exact need in London will be more easily accessible and understood. There will be greater awareness about the impact of moving to online-only channels on digitally excluded Londoners.

Mapping existing activities

LOTI's desire is to work on innovative projects that build on and complement boroughs' existing digital inclusion approaches. Thanks to boroughs response to LOTI's crowdsourcing call, we have now started to build the picture of what's been / being done to tackle digital exclusion in London.

Exercise 1a - Reflections: What works

LOTI wants to learn about what makes digital inclusion projects successful. The focus of this exercise was to understand what boroughs have found has worked well. Participants were invited to share details about their experiences in delivering digital inclusion support to residents, highlighting what's worked and the key factors contributing that have contributed to their successes. Here is a summary of the main points:

- New and innovative funding practices, such as crowd-funding, brought different organisations and citizens together as well as raised the relevant funds for devices.
- Combined efforts with the VCS and private sector organisations led to better outcomes for residents, for example in sourcing devices and connections and for reaching and supporting those in need.
- Cross-council and public sector partnerships led to faster distribution of devices.
- Having different types of devices available meant that needs could be better met for residents with a wider variety of needs.
- The use of libraries for reaching and supporting those in need has been of particular significance, despite closures during lockdown.
- Councils' have put in place dedicated internal programmes to tackle digital exclusion, breaking down siloed working and providing holistic support to residents.
- Working with specific services who know their users has been very effective in identifying those most in need, and reaching residents impacted in different ways.
- High levels of support from other departments and senior leadership enabled boroughs to try new approaches and get them off the ground quickly,
- Good response from network operators / mobile phone suppliers in helping.

Exercise 1b - Reflections: Challenges

LOTI's aim for the Digital Inclusion Innovation Programme is to remove the barriers to boroughs supporting their digitally excluded residents and so in this exercise, participants were invited to share their observations and reflections on the challenges they'd experienced. Here is a summary of the main points:

- Tackling digital exclusion when it has to be done remotely / digitally (this is better done face to face). By definition, it's hard to help digitally excluded people digitally!
- Getting a single view of all the different initiatives that might help a resident (risk of duplication and hard to point people to where they can help).
- Collaboration is inherently hard and can sometimes slow things down.
- Challenging to define roles when there's lots of new projects to create and run and when multiple organisations are working together.
- Hard to get residents to engage with evaluations of schemes (for instance on device usage), which aim to establish what worked / didn't work and the contributing factors.
- Lack of clarity from national schemes for devices, such as the one from DfE, have created extra challenges for councils.
- Sustainability of digital inclusion approaches (moving from pilots to scale ups).
- Difficulties with communicating and reaching residents experiencing language, cultural and social barriers.
- Lack of dedicated resources, for example for supporting residents who've received devices or for coordinating internal response.
- Issues with some types of devices, such as dongles.
- No single good solution for connectivity.
- Not easy to keep interest from residents going.

Exercise 2 - Opportunities

In this exercise, participants were asked to share their thoughts on potential opportunities where collaborative working could add value. Here is a summary of the main points:

- Sharing of resources, in one place.
- Taking advantage of relationships that have been built with private sector organisations, to secure broadband and devices.
- Better collaboration with internal council services for the provision of training.
- Addressing individual motivations for going online.
- Finding long-term solutions to the connectivity problem.
 - Installing consistent Wi-fi across London
 - Installing broadband in temporary accommodation
 - Lobbying private sector providers for better broadband offers for those on benefits
- Providing basic skills training to those who need it.

- Prevent duplication - when developing specific support services where doing it 33 times is not sensible (portals for residents and businesses) or when engaging with national initiatives.
- Leverage and direct social value from contracts towards digital inclusion related products or services.
- Collaborate on procurement where possible.

Next steps

The second LOTI workshop will be held on 25 May, 10am. In this workshop, boroughs will be invited to review and agree a prioritised backlog of potential projects.

Please contribute to LOTI's call for crowdsourcing digital inclusion projects by completing [this survey](#).