

Digital Exclusion in Scotland

June 2020

Anna Halliday, Specialist Volunteer

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Introduction

As the third sector joined the rest of the country in turning to online solutions, we knew the levels of digital exclusion across Scotland would become forefront.

Our calls with charity leaders and frontline staff highlighted what we knew: Pre-existing inequality meant that people across Scotland were excluded from accessing support services and that many of these services were compromised, reduced or couldn't be delivered due to lack of connectivity.

The third sector has been quick, nimble and innovative in its response to mitigating this, however lack of equipment, connectivity and technological skills alongside those they were trying to help, has been a challenge.

As a funder and partner to the third sector we wanted to understand more about the digital landscape. This report was written by Anna Halliday, an Inspiring Scotland specialist volunteer. Anna has provided us with an excellent overview of the current digital exclusion landscape and provide an excellent starting point to guide and inform our own work and help us understand what more we can do. We are keen to share this learning for the greater good.

Our sincere thanks to Anna for her time and expertise and to all those who participated in this research,

Celia



Digital Inclusion Research

Problem Statement

Pre-existing inequality means that people across Scotland are digitally excluded, at a time when connectivity is more important than ever.

The third sector is trying to respond, but sometimes they, and more often those they are trying to help, do not have the technology, connectivity and the skills needed to connect with one another.

As a result, support services are compromised, reduced or can't be delivered and the lack of connectivity is impacting on the poorest and most isolated in society.



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Report Author

Anna Halliday is a Specialist Volunteer at Inspiring Scotland.

Anna has a wide range of experience in the philanthropic sector, both at home and abroad. She is passionate about finding effective solutions to poverty and inequality and providing everyone with the opportunities to succeed that they deserve. Anna currently works as a strategy consultant in London.

Digital Inclusion in Scotland: Executive Summary

Part 1: Executive Summary of Research Results

A Call to Action

- The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted digital inequalities in society like never before.
- Digital access, already crucial for being an active member of society today, has become ever more vital throughout this extended period of lockdown and social distancing.
- Not being digitally connected is leaving many thousands of people isolated and excluded.
- This could have extensive negative impacts for years to come, as those who are digitally excluded are less able to access education, employment, social interaction and other services that they are entitled to. The fallout will be long-term, with many effects emerging downstream, such as mental health and loss of income.
- Aside from advising on the types of needs that exist and solutions to solve these, this report is also designed to convey the **urgency of need**. This report is solution-orientated while portraying the 'big picture'. More intervention is needed to tackle the current crisis phase.
- However, the needs will also continue far beyond the next few months. The required investment needed to tackle the **long-term impacts** of the crisis is unknown. The majority of the impacts will be felt in the second half of this year and beyond.

The Current Policy and Support Landscape

- The Scottish and UK Government have clear policies and goals for tackling digital exclusion that predate the COVID-19 crisis.
- A **£5 million** programme announced by the Scottish Government in partnership with SCVO and COSLA to provide technology and skills to **9,000** at-risk individuals who are digitally excluded. The scheme will target those who are **shielding** i.e. older people and people with underlying health conditions. The scheme will take **c.1 year** to complete.
- Scotland's First Minister announced a **£9 million** fund to purchase laptops, tablets and data for **25,000** digitally excluded school children.
- The UK Government's Department for Education announced an **£85 million** programme to provide free laptops, tablets and internet connection to disadvantaged school children in England who cannot access the internet already.
- The third sector is also launching efforts to tackle the problem. These efforts are targeting the immediate needs of charities and their beneficiaries.

Digital Inclusion in Scotland: Executive Summary

Part 2: Executive Summary of Research Results – The Recommendations

Taking Action: The Recommendations

- **Digital exclusion is a complex, multi-faceted issue** that requires collaboration and co-operation across sectors and between organisations in order to solve it.
- This is not just about supplying suitable technology. Beneficiaries must also be provided with the appropriate skills, confidence, mentoring and support for the long term.
- Overall, it is clear that **tackling digital exclusion is essential for individuals and communities to thrive and to ensure that everyone in society receives the opportunities needed to succeed** in today's modern world.
- The Coronavirus Pandemic **provides an opportunity for a turning point**. Now, a concerted and extensive effort is needed to turn the tide.
- This report aims to **inspire an action-orientated approach**. Possible interventions and opportunities are numerous, the following are only meant to serve as a rough guide.

Crisis Response: 0-3 months

- In the **ongoing emergency / crisis response**, the application process for support should be simple and the response should be **rapid**
- Work alongside communities and grassroots organisations to **build resilience** in the communities
- **Increase collaboration** between private funders and trusted local organisations to share resources and avoid duplication of efforts
- The focus should be on building the **core capacity** of organisations through digital infrastructure, technology, systems, basic training and support

Adjusting and Adapting to the New Normal: 0-6 months

- Focus should be on helping organisations and individuals to adjust to **the new normal**
- Society will be different than it was before the lockdown and ensuing crisis. Some aspects of society may take years to fully return, other changes (such as hybridised working from home models) may be permanent
- Funders should support installing suitable and affordable IT infrastructure and hardware that will allow groups and organisations to keep progressing and advancing for several years. In addition, funders should support the training and organisational development required for these groups to evolve and succeed in the future
- Digital buddies / champions should be assigned to individuals and organisations to provide mentoring, confidence, training and support as they adopt these changes, thus alleviating pressure on public services

The Recovery: 6+ months

- Priority should be given to funding training, supporting and raising awareness for **mental health concerns** amongst community members and the organisations that help them
- Focus should be on **those left behind** as society begins to reopen:
 - Vulnerable people with health concerns
 - Those caring for people with health conditions
 - Those who have lost employment / income / education due to the crisis (this will overwhelmingly be **young people**)
- Planning should reflect the strong possibility that poverty and inequality may increase

Overview of Digital Exclusion in Scotland

- The Hidden Crisis
- A Demographic View
- Digital Skills
- Third Sector Response
- Scottish Government Programme
- UK Government's Response

The Hidden Crisis

In today's digital age, it is reasonable to expect that all aspects of modern life should be readily available at our fingertips and within our own home – internet connectivity being one of them. It is also often taken for granted that everyone, young people in particular, is connected via some personal device, whether that is a laptop, tablet or smartphone, and that people possess the basic skills required to use them.

The current lockdown has shown the importance of being digitally connected in supporting our personal and community wellbeing. These days, everything is online. From the ability to search for health information, purchasing essential goods, remaining in contact with family and friends or performing work tasks, having access to the right technology has been a lifeline for Scottish people practicing social distancing.

However, whilst we are a highly developed nation, Scotland's fragmented, isolated rural landscape and societal inequalities mean that many have less opportunities than others. These factors, contribute the issue of digital inequality being of particular concern in Scotland.

Digital exclusion is strongly correlated with poverty with some cohorts more likely than others to experience digital exclusion.

Collecting data can be difficult. According to the ONS in 2019, **100%** of households with children in the UK have some internet access, with **99%** of households having fixed broadband and **1%** having mobile broadband only. These numbers can mask the realities faced by many across the country. One of the most challenging facets of tackling digital exclusion is the lack of conclusive data on who is affected.

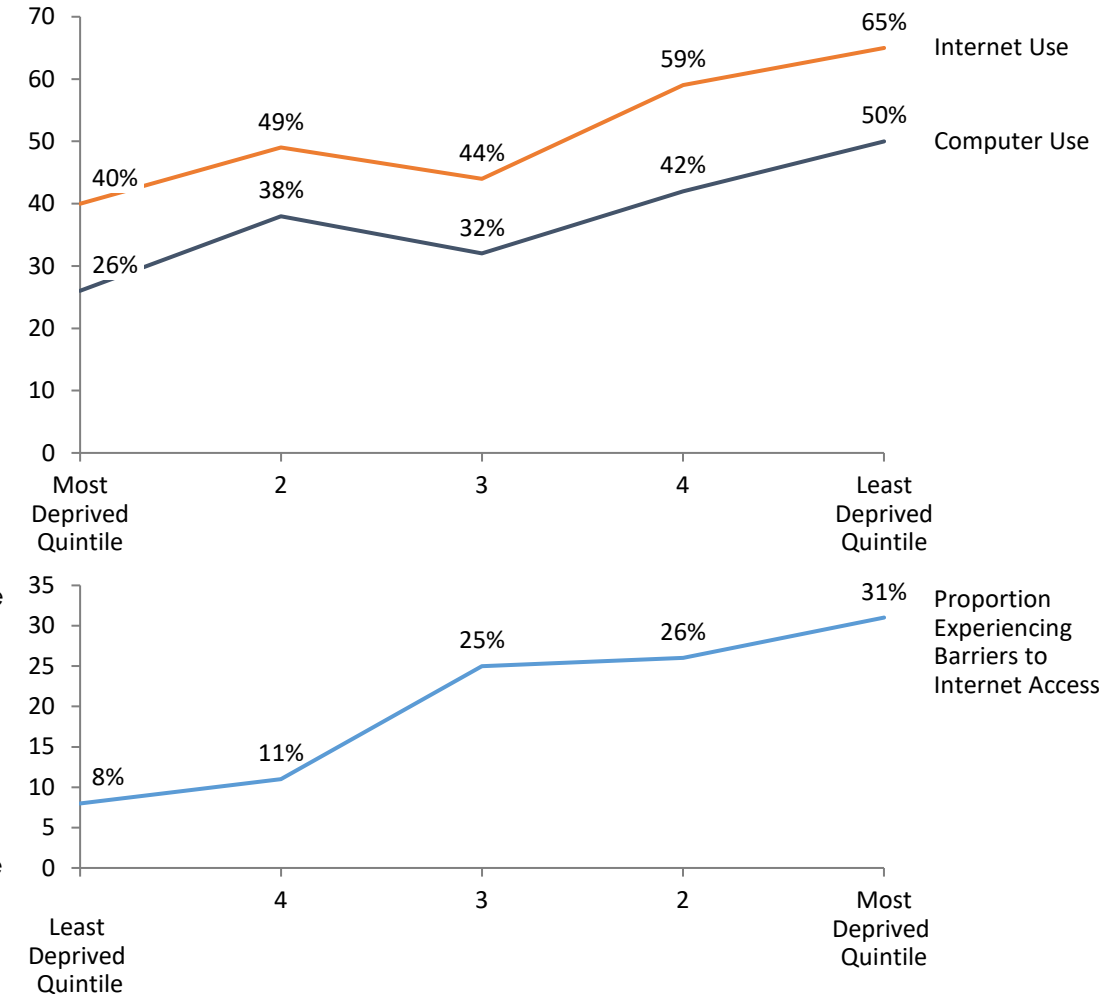
By other measures, c. **800,000** people are estimated to face digital inequality in Scotland. In 2017, the Scottish Government estimated that over a **third** of households in lower income brackets do not have any internet access at all. It is thought that **19%** (c. **1 million**) of Scottish people do not know how to use digital technology and, as of 2017, an estimated c. **400,000** do not live in areas with 4G coverage.

Where digital skills and technology are viewed as a luxury for the few, it might instead be more constructive to regard them as a right and as a necessity for all.

Source: The Scottish Government, ONS, Citizen's Advice Scotland

Computer and Internet Use Across Scotland by SIMD Quintile

Source: Citizens Advice Scotland



A Demographic View

Poverty as a Key Driver

- Entrenched inequality and class division have long been key issues in society
- Digital exclusion can be associated with poverty and be seen as a manifestation of prevailing inequalities.
- The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the digital equalities in society in a way that has never been done before.
- There is a clear and extensive digital divide in Scotland (and the UK as a whole). The largest determinant of digital access is a person's socioeconomic grouping.
- The main barrier to digital access for many is **cost** (see chart). In Scotland, another major barrier is slow internet, which occurs most commonly in rural areas.
- In 2017, the Scottish Government found that over a **third** of low-income households do not have any internet access at all.
- Whilst the negative impacts of the current crisis will be felt by all, they will be felt most strongly by low income households.
- The disadvantage and inequality gap, already wide, will widen further, and the repercussions of this will be felt for years to come.

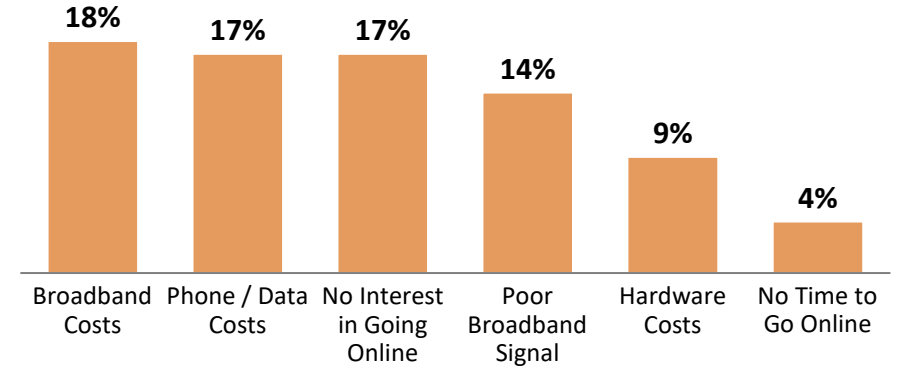
Impact on Young People and Families

- Regardless of demographic, many of those who are offline in lockdown may be at a disadvantage and there may be deeper implications for young people.
- After lockdown, some estimates put unemployment rate at **c.12-15%**, a figure it is assumed will disproportionately affect people under the age of 25.
- The closing of universities, colleges and schools, effectively overnight, may compound inequalities in access to education and development.
- The effects of inequality can be manifested and compounded through **education**.
- Current school closures mean that any attainment gap experienced by pupils facing inequality could widen even more.

Source: Citizen's Advice Scotland, The Scottish Government, The Economist

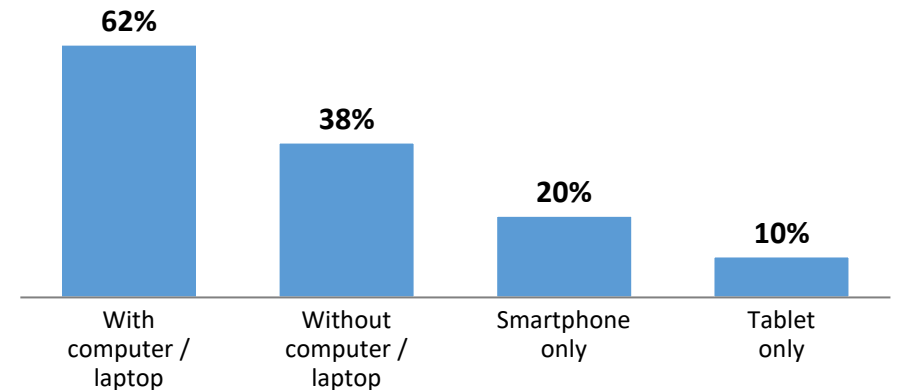
Barriers to Using the Internet

Survey Data, N = 1,267. Source: Citizens Advice Scotland



Internet Access by Type of Device

Survey Data, N = 1,034. Source: Citizens Advice Scotland



Digital Skills

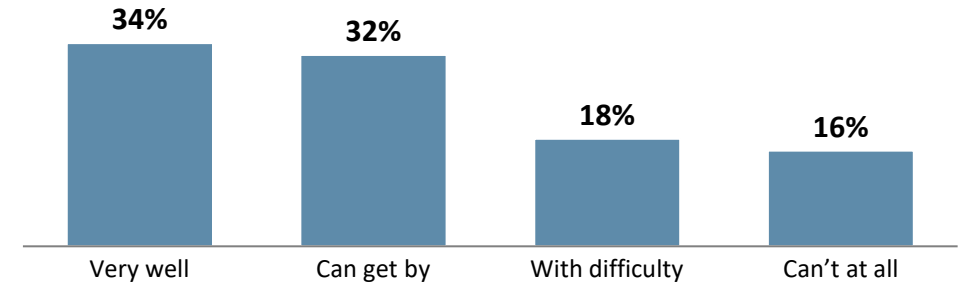
It is Time for a Rapid Response to the Digital Exclusion Challenge

- According to Good Things Foundation, **11.3 million people** in the UK do not have the basic digital skills that would allow them to actively participate and thrive in today's world.
- According to the Scottish Government, **19%** of Scottish **people have no digital skills at all**.
- Lack of digital skills is another major manifestation of digital exclusion likely to result in significant, long-lasting consequences for those caught on the wrong side.
- A potential for lack of digital skills can often be overlooked in young people, as due to their demographic, it is taken for granted that all young people are digitally fluent. However, many young people from low income households may not have these skills because they are not able to access the technology in the first place. In young people, an absence of digital skills can mean that time spent online is concentrated on a few activities such as messaging or gaming as opposed to completing schoolwork or development.
- Parents who have not had access to Higher or further education, may be less able to assist children in school work due to inability to access learning materials or understand the content. Many parents may also restrict child access to the internet due to concerns over safety and lack of knowledge over the value of digital access.
- Aside from individuals and families, many of the charities on the front line in the response to the crisis may not have equipment, software and skills necessary to complete their work. According to Charity Digital, **37%** of British charities have cancelled services amid the lockdown due to a lack of access to digital infrastructure and skills.
- According to the 2020 Charity Digital Skills Survey, **39%** had applied for additional money to adapt services to an online setting since the current lockdown began and **34%** needed extra funding to buy essential technology.
- The third sector has less capacity than the private sector to upgrade their digital assets. Many charities and organisations were not equipped to work remotely when entering the crisis and have had to rapidly upskill to cope with the changes. With many organisations looking at permanently adopting remote working beyond the lockdown, it is essential that workers and volunteers have the skills and confidence to cope.

Source: 2020 Charity Digital Skills Report Survey, The Scottish Government, Citizen's Advice Scotland

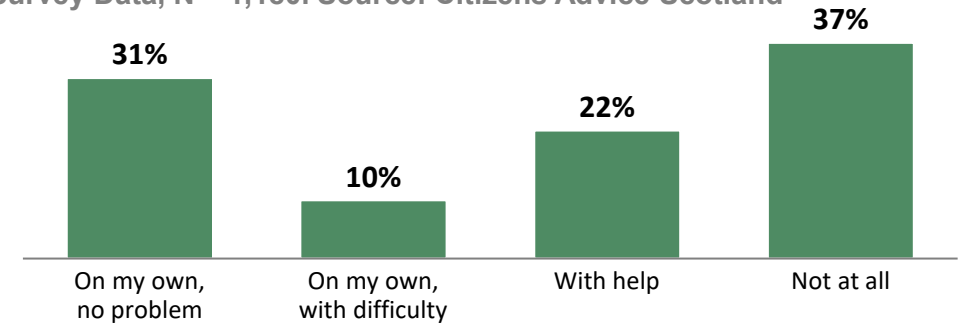
Can Use a Computer

Survey Data, N = 1,254. Source: Citizens Advice Scotland



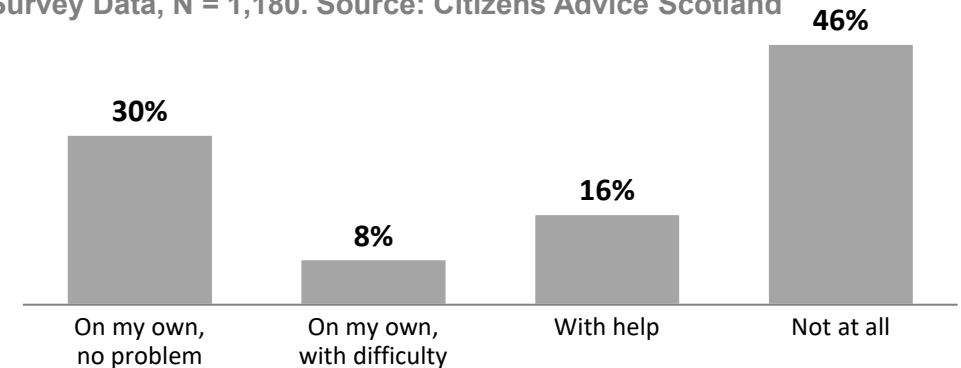
Ability to Upload a Form Online

Survey Data, N = 1,180. Source: Citizens Advice Scotland



Ability to Upload a Form Online and Do So in Privacy

Survey Data, N = 1,180. Source: Citizens Advice Scotland



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The Third Sector Response

Current Interventions, Donations and Schemes in Scotland

New National Emergency Funds

- New national emergency funds have been established to facilitate charities to form initial responses to the crisis posed by COVID-19. Examples of funds include:
 - The **Third Sector Resilience Fund**
 - The **Wellbeing Fund**
 - These funds are primarily aimed at facilitating crisis management and providing charities with sufficient cash runway to remain operating for several months as they adjust to working remotely.
- The cash injections are being funnelled to address the immediate and practical needs of their recipients, as well as alleviate pressure on public services such as healthcare.
- The majority of funds are not being directed towards helping charities evolve and adapt towards the new normal.
- Some funds are targeting digital exclusion, but these are relatively small and form a small aspect of the overall funding landscape.

“Around **10-15%** of applications for the Wellbeing Fund (worth £350 million in total) had a strong digital inclusion element.”

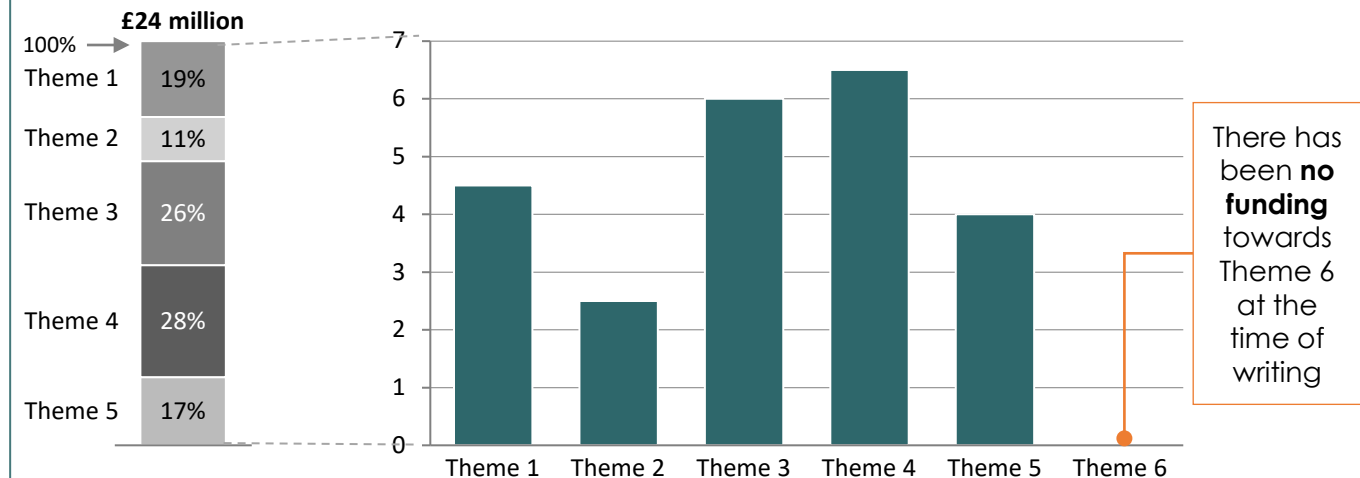
Director at SCVO

Source: SCVO

Disclaimer: The information presented will date quickly. SCVO publish updated reports regularly.

Funder Responses to COVID-19 by Theme (£ million)

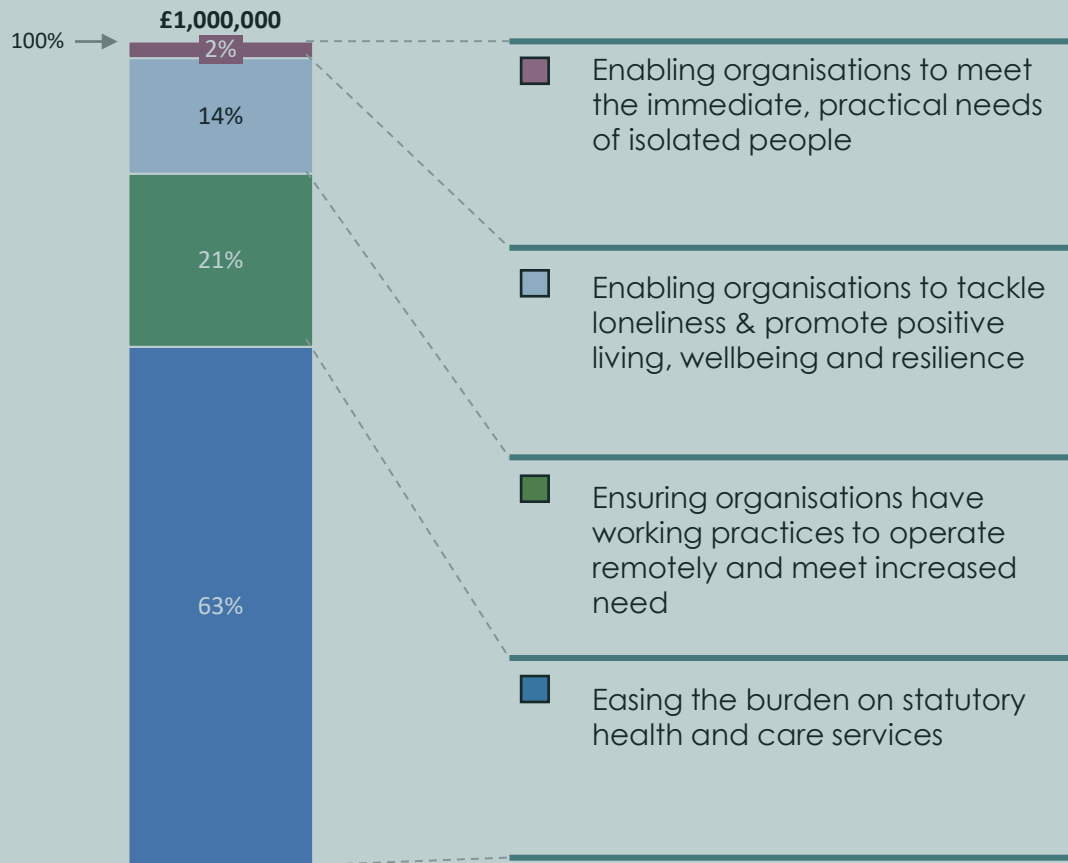
Source: SCVO



Themes of Need:

1. Enabling organisations to meet the immediate needs of isolated people
2. Enabling organisations to tackle loneliness & promote positive living, wellbeing and resilience
3. Ensuring organisations have working practices to operate remotely and meet the increased need
4. Ensuring organisations remain operating i.e. have a sufficient cash runway
5. Easing the burden on statutory health and care services
6. Providing support to adapt and evolve for the 'new normality'

Case Study: The Response, Recovery and Resilience (RRR) Fund

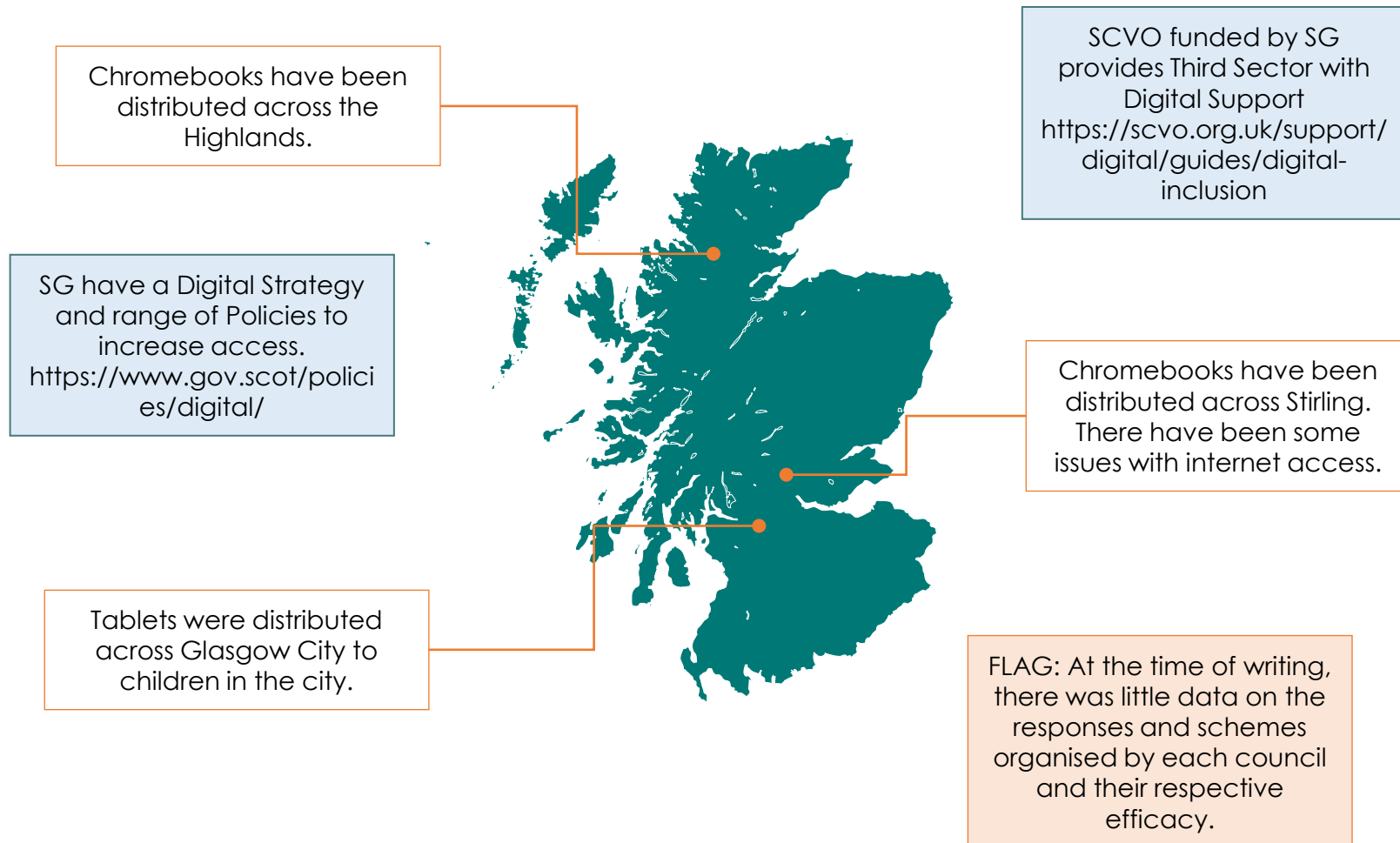


Source: Foundation Scotland

An Evaluation of the Response, Recovery and Resilience (RRR) Fund by Foundation Scotland and its Impacts

- Foundation Scotland launched the RRR Fund on the 27th March with funding from the National Emergencies Trust (NET).
- The aim of the fund was to distribute money as quickly as possible to those most affected by the crisis brought on by the COVID-19 outbreak. It was distributed to help with the immediate response and crisis management of grassroots organisations on the front line of helping the most vulnerable in society.
- **£1 million** was distributed to c.**300** projects within 12 days.
- The main impacts of the fund have been:
 - Meeting the immediate practical needs of isolated people through provision of food, IT packages and crisis grants.
 - Helping to develop working practices to operate remotely and meet increased need i.e. purchasing IT equipment, training staff to adjust to new working practices, developing platforms and systems for collaboration.
 - Tackling loneliness and promoting wellbeing and resilience.
 - Easing the burden on public services such as health and care. This has usually been an unintended outcome of the various projects.

The Scottish Government's Programme



Tackling the Problem at a Local Level

- In Scotland, the Scottish Government has delegated the task of combating digital exclusion to local authorities.
- While every area and indeed every person within that area is different, this approach has meant that a variety of solutions have been adopted across the country.
- The solutions have faced differing challenges, with additional factors to consider such as extended time lags due to supply chain challenges.
- **Little information is available publicly** on the collective work by local authorities previous to the pandemic outbreak and since the beginning of the lockdown.

The Connecting Scotland Programme

The Scottish Government's Programme to Get People Online

Outline of the Scheme

- On the 7th May 2020, The Scottish Government announced a programme to enhance digital access across vulnerable groups in Scotland.
- The Connecting Scotland programme, worth **£5 million**, aims to distribute laptops or tablets, training, support and an internet connection to those who are not already online during this current period of lockdown and beyond.
- The programme aims to reach **9000** people who are considered 'clinically at risk'.
- The recipients will be paired with a digital champion who will support them for six months as they become established online.
- The technology will be owned by SCVO and distributed through local authorities and referrals by community organisations.
- The digital champions will be sourced and trained by SCVO.

Partners and Supporters

- This programme will be delivered by the Scottish Government in partnership with local authorities, Healthcare Improvement Scotland, SCVO and ScotlandIS.
- Shortly after social distancing was implemented to suppress the spread of COVID-19, the Scottish Government teamed up with several organisations to help formulate a response to digital exclusion. These organisations included:
 - Microsoft;
 - Leidos;
 - Data Lab;
 - Accenture;
 - And others.
- The programme will be rolled out by SCVO and COSLA.



The Connecting Scotland Programme

The Scottish Government's Programme to Get People Online



Challenges and Drawbacks

- This programme is small-scale and may only 'scratch the surface' of a problem that affects hundreds of thousands of Scottish people.
- The programme is targeting those who are '**shielding**', meaning that it is targeting mainly **older people**.
- Due to the definition of 'shielding' the individuals helped could come from a range of demographics such as age and income. This means that wealthy, digitally literate people who are deemed 'at-risk' could be eligible for support.
- Due to supply chain lags and constraints, it can take months after the initial orders for the technology to be delivered.
- Everyone in the world is trying to do the same thing at the moment. There has been a dramatic increase in demand for tech globally. At the same time, the capacity of suppliers has been squeezed due to social distancing measures.
- The support is primarily targeted towards individuals and not charities.
- The exact scope of the scheme and its details are still being decided upon
- While this is an example of helping large numbers of digitally excluded people through large-scale and cross-sector co-operation, there still exists a significant amount of unaddressed need.

*"The programme is primarily targeting those who are shielding. This means that we are targeting mainly **older people** and people with underlying health conditions."*

*"We are still in the very **early stages** of piloting the programme and deciding who is a priority in terms of need."*

*"We will aim to distribute the first **1,000** devices over the **next month or so**."*

*"It could take **up to a year** to distribute all of the **9,000** devices."*

*"This programme does have the potential for scale but this **could take several years** and is entirely dependent on government funding."*

Co-ordinator at COSLA

*"There is a **4-5 month delay** for buying tablets and laptops at the moment. The biggest time delays are with the WiFi / MiFi devices."*

"We will provide 12 months of connectivity with the devices. We aren't sure what will happen after that."

"We will be providing a national helpline for support."

Director at SCVO

Update: The Scottish Government announced a £9 million fund to supply School children facing inequality of access with technology for remote learning



On the 21st May 2020, the First Minister announced a **£9 million fund** to purchase **25,000** laptops or tablets for school children experiencing inequality of access to technology across Scotland. The laptops and tablets will be supplied alongside an internet connection where necessary.

Due to time constraints in the research, the exact nature of the scheme, distribution channels and time scales remain unknown.

The scheme can be seen as a positive development, yet there remains a significant amount of unaddressed need.

An estimated **250,000** children in Scotland are eligible for Free School Meals. If we accept that poverty and digital exclusion are closely linked, in its current form this scheme will not be able to reach all of the children who need it.

If many young people, young families and charities are going without sufficient tech or skills, it follows that there remains a need for further support.

The UK Government's Response

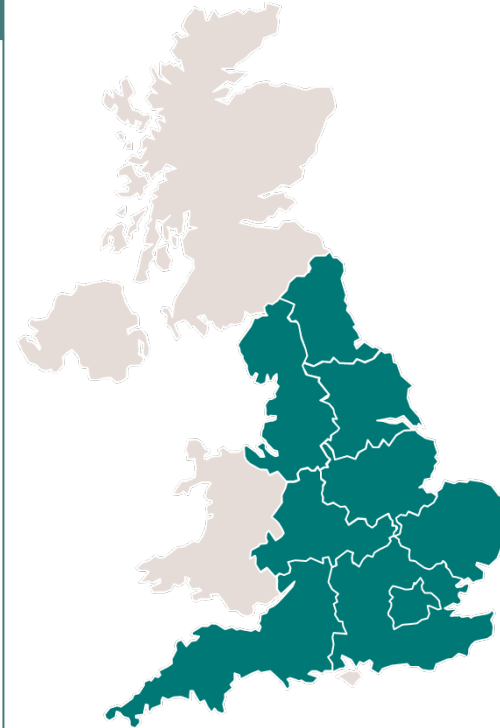
The Online Learning Programme by the Department of Education

Outline of the Scheme

- On the 19th April 2020, the Department of Education announced measures to make education accessible for all as schools closed due to COVID-19.
- The UK Government is to allocate **£85 million** towards funding the scheme.
- The government will provide free laptops, tablets and/or 4G routers to households that do not already have mobile or broadband internet in the household.
- Devices will be provided for children who do not have a laptop or tablet and are preparing for exams (Year 10), receive support from a social worker or are young carers.
- Devices will be distributed through local authorities or organisations who are best placed to assess which children have the greatest need within the respective area that they operate. Many children eligible will also qualify for Free School Meals.
- In addition, to support schools in delivering remote education, the UK Government launched the **Oak National Academy** on the 20th April 2020. The platform has been created by 40 teachers and will provide 180 lessons each week across a range of subject for children from Reception age up to Year 10.
- The UK Government also provided **£1.6 million** for the **NSPCC** to expand and promote its national helpline for adults for those parents who are worried about their child's welfare or are seeking support.

Challenges and Drawbacks

- The scheme is to be rolled out across **England only**.
- Due to supply chain constraints and time lags in deciding on which students to target, many students will not receive the laptops or tablets until the **end of June**, at which point the school year will be almost finished.
- The scheme does not support children aged 16-19 as this group is already covered by the 16-19 Bursary Fund.



Themes of Need

What are the principal needs right now?

- Technology
- Data and internet access
- Digital Skills
- Low Engagement
- Mental Health
- Inequality
- Returning to Normalcy

Technology

Themes of Need



- We are currently still in the crisis response stage
- Many individuals, community organisations and charities remain without adequate technology and digital infrastructure and require funding and donations immediately

*“Around **30%** of pupils in Scotland do not have the necessary technology or internet access to complete courses remotely.”*

Director at SQA

“Many of our pupils do not have either a device or internet or both at home and as a result cannot access any learning.”

CEO of Young Carers Edinburgh

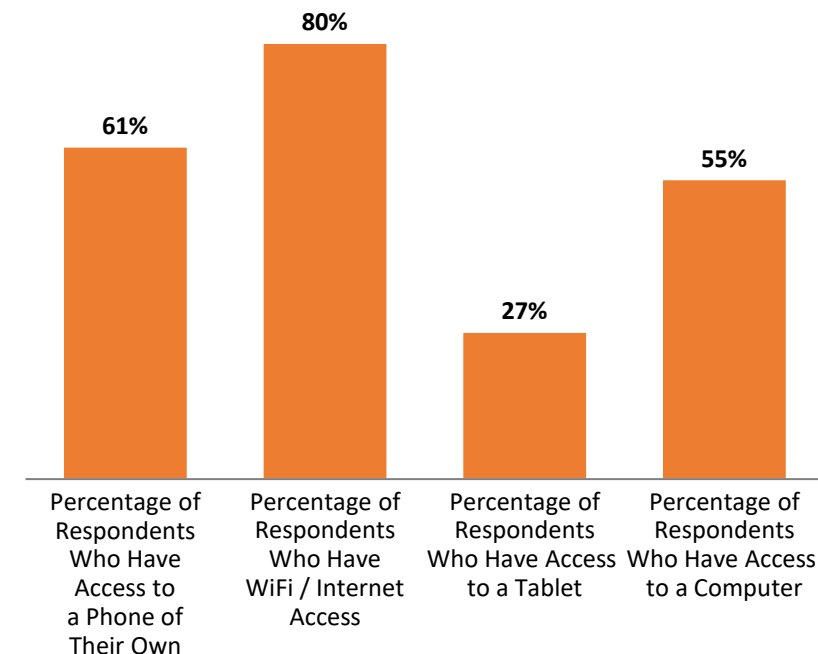
*“At least **50%** of our network are digitally excluded.”*

“The intervention that would have the biggest impact would be more donations of equipment – laptops, tablets and WiFi. Many people don’t have WiFi access.”

Director at Neighbourhood Networks

Extract from Survey Results from Charities Supported by the intandem Fund of Inspiring Scotland

Source: intandem Survey Results

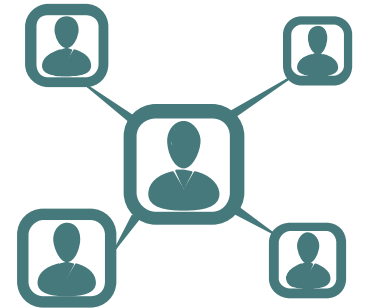


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Data and Internet Access

Themes of Need

- Lack of access to data and internet access often comes in tandem with a lack of access to the most appropriate kinds of technology
- Many people in Scotland do not have sufficient data allowance or phone credits and rely extensively on public WiFi
- Most helplines cost money to phone and as a result have experienced low engagement as concerns over money heighten for many individuals and households
- Slow internet is still a wide issue in Scotland, particularly in rural areas
- Possible solutions include handing out data cards, dongles, making helplines free and providing tech (such as tablets) with data included



Digital Skills: The Need for Training and Mentoring



Themes of Need

- Tackling digital exclusion is a complex, multi-faceted issue
- In addition to access to a suitable device and an internet connection, people also need the skills, confidence, encouragement and motivation to be able to use them
- There are many people across Scotland that lack basic digital skills
- This can inhibit young people from completing schoolwork and adults from accessing work, learning opportunities and public services
- Charities can also be severely constricted if staff and volunteers lack digital skills
- Low-income groups report challenges in accessing public services due to difficulties in completing required forms online
- There is a wide and far-reaching need for digital skills training
- Confidence and feelings of lack of agency or authority online can be problematic
- There are examples of organisations and individuals who have expressed interest in having some form of digital buddy scheme for mentoring, training and ongoing support
- A common theme is the expression of interest in some form of digital skills hub (preferably physical), a common space where individuals and charities can access training and guidance
- There is a potential for public spaces, such as libraries, to be used for this purpose as the lockdown eases

"We must provide digital guidance for members on the phone to complete basic tasks. This can take 2-3 hours at a time and inhibits us from completing our other work."

*"One of the interventions that would make the biggest impact is having an adequately trained **digital champion**."*

*"We would definitely be interested in a **digital skills training hub**. We would definitely signpost towards this. Usage would be very high."*

Director at Neighbourhood Networks

"People have perception based barriers to using technologies – it's a confidence issue."

"Most of the people we engage with will have had no institutional training."

"We need a more sophisticated way of using data."

"We need to develop a common platform for use by young carers, young disabled people and other young vulnerable people."

Director at ARC Scotland

"As a charity, many of our staff were IT illiterate before the lockdown."

CEO of Young Carers Edinburgh

Low engagement: Pupils, Parents and Education



Themes of Need

Pupils

- Despite schools providing teaching and learning platforms and the pupils having suitable technology with an internet connection, engagement levels with schools can still be low
- Levels of engagement correlate with economic and social demographics
- According to the Economist, in families with parents who have graduated from university, lesson engagement tends to be around **50%**
- In families where parents have lower levels of educational attainment and who may work in jobs that do not require higher levels of education, engagement can be **10-20%**
- It is well documented that children from low income households fall behind their richer counterparts over extended time breaks in teaching such as summer holidays
- Current attainment gaps could widen to an extent that may be impossible to reverse for some individuals

Parents

- In many cases, to achieve engagement in pupils, you must achieve engagement with the parents
- Due to schools closing, the responsibility of teaching pupils has fallen to parents themselves
- Many parents do not have the skills, knowledge or motivation to carry out the required teaching
- Some schools are offering support services for parents and check in with them regularly to monitor wellbeing
- If supplying tech donations to children, there is a risk of parents withholding access to that tech. This might happen for a range of reasons e.g. use for their own work, withhold it as punishment
- Families need to be supported to understand the benefits of technology and online learning for any third party efforts to have effect

"No intervention for a child will work unless you have full buy-in from the parent(s). Engagement and understanding of the value of the work is crucial, otherwise the scheme is redundant."

Teacher in Stirlingshire

"With school, many of the kids have stopped engaging."

"The schools aren't doing anything to engage with them."

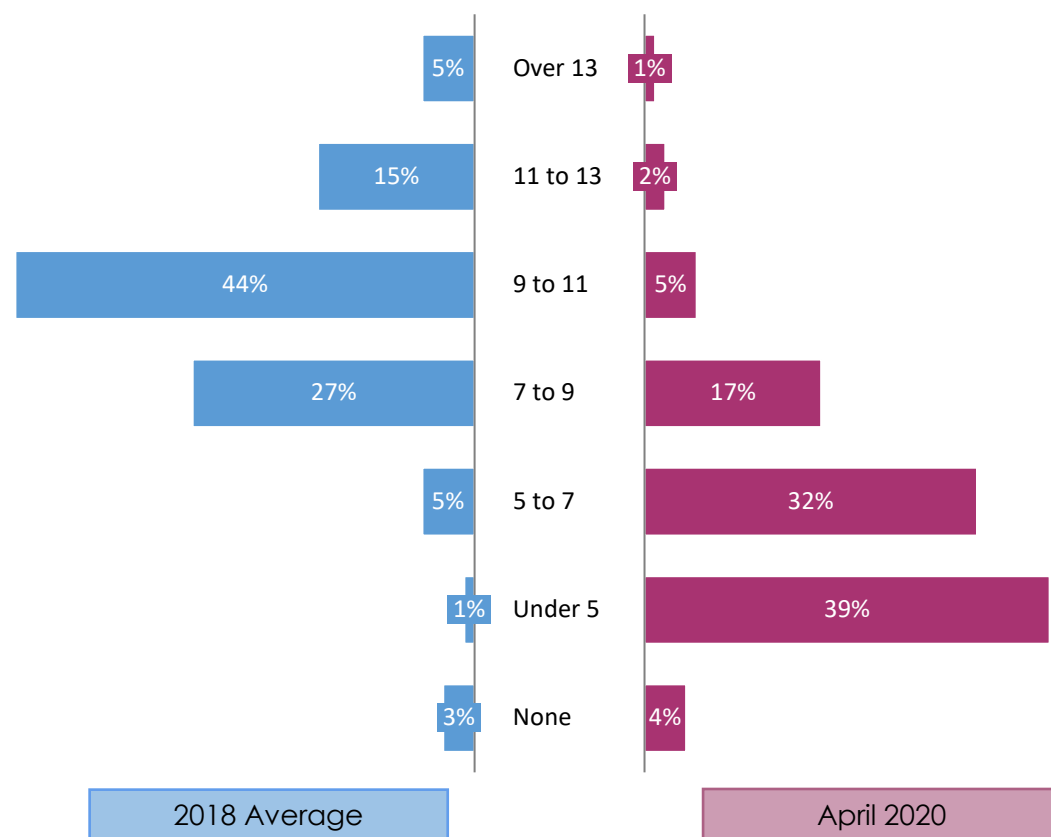
Development Officer at Stirling Young Carers

Low engagement: Schools

Themes of Need

Daily Hours Worked by Teachers in the UK

Self-reported, %. Source: Teacher Tapp



Source: The Economist, Sutton Trust, Teacher Tapp

A study in the US found that 8-year-olds from poor socioeconomic backgrounds forget up to **1 year** of maths tuition over the summer holidays.

Teaching when schools are closed is challenging. Many teachers aren't even trying.

- Two months after schools closed in the UK, it is difficult to know how much schoolwork children are doing.
- **There is evidence to suggest that some schools may be providing limited remote tuition for pupils.**
- A recent poll by education charity, Sutton Trust, found that **50%** of secondary school pupils and **64%** of primary school pupils were working **3 hours** a day or less.
- Unsurprisingly, children from lower socioeconomic groups tend to suffer the most compared to their wealthier counterparts. According to Teacher Tapp, **74%** of private secondary school teachers and **58%** of private primary school teachers use Zoom or other interactive tools to provide lessons on a given day.
- For state schools, these figures are **6%** and **3%**, respectively.
- As Scottish schools plan to return in August. The exact form this will take is as of yet unclear. Schools may be opened part time, in shifts or on a rotational basis. Whatever form it takes, some children are at risk of further exclusion as many will remain at home.

In England, the Department of Education launched the Oak National Academy as a universal platform. It will provide 180 lessons each week for children aged 5-16.

In France, teachers and pupils were directed to use a single and universal online portal.

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Case Study: Castlebrae High School

Needs and Solutions



Castlebrae Community High School is a small school situated in what would have traditionally been called an area of multiple deprivation in Edinburgh. Originally destined for closure, the school is now a model example of a turnaround public institution and has grown from 100 pupils to 256 within a few years. The school became a registered charity last year. They have been attempting to tackle the problem of digital exclusion for several years. They set up a new home learning website in February and have been training their staff and pupils on digital skills. They make extensive use of online platforms such as Microsoft Teams for lessons and upload all learning materials to SharePoint. A wide array of coursework and learning materials are available for all age groups.

Entering the lockdown, 22 pupils out of 256 did not have internet access at home, meaning that at least c.10% were digitally excluded.

Some parents have not engaged with remote learning at all.

They also provide food packages every fortnight, checking in with pupils in the process, in addition to one on one counselling and mental health therapy. 3 guidance teachers are active in contacting pupils once a week by phone to check wellbeing.

Each teacher devotes 2 or 3 sessions a week (time available in a universally accessible timetable) for those students who are struggling. They also have a Support for Learning team which actively engages with students who are struggling with the remote learning.

Since entering lockdown, they have received the following support:

- A £500,000 donation from a private donor
- 15 desktop computers from People Know How
- Light Up Learning – ongoing meetings and partnerships
- Funding from Standard Life
- Laptops from Comms and Baillie Gifford
- Scottish Attainment Funding
- Have applied for support from Connecting Scotland programme – yet to hear back

Source: Castlebrae Community High School

Note: This is a model turnaround school and is not representative of other schools

*“Around **50%** of our pupils have access to broadband or data.”*

“We plan to provide support to parents every fortnight to achieve buy-in and engagement.”

“Getting children to sign in is a real challenge – may be due to culture, lack of knowledge or lack of workstations. No privacy. No ‘workspace’.”

“Engagement is staggeringly low. May have class of 20, 4 or 5 will be signing in.”

“The best way to achieve engagement in the kids is through having a network effect – having your friends check in.”

“The most beneficial change to happen would be for schools to re-open.”

“There are problems with this. At-risk kids and young carers may not attend school at all when it re-opens. There will be added stress and concerns with leaving home.”

We have The Hub designed to support children who are struggling at school or at home. Staffing has been a struggle – mental health, stress, health concerns over contracting the virus. It makes me worry about what things will be like when schools start to reopen.”

Headteacher at Castlebrae Community High School

“Digital exclusion for our pupils... is frighteningly high.”

“Many of our pupils do not have either a device or internet or both at home and as a result cannot access any learning.”

“When we only had 100 pupils we handed out iPads but these devices were damaged and weren't used effectively. We had to pull them back in.”

Future Improvement Co-Ordinator at Castlebrae Community High School

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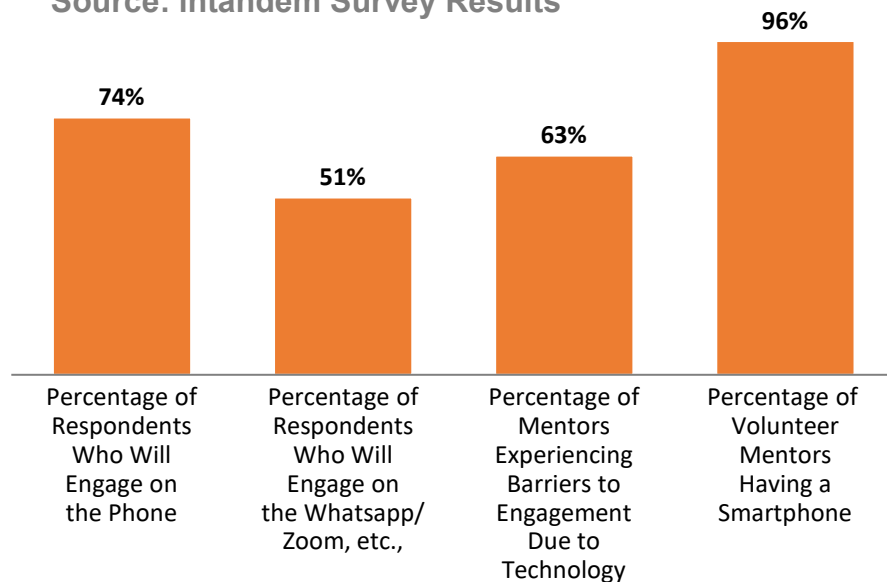
Low engagement: Marginalised Groups

Themes of Need

- Aside from education, there has also been a significant drop in engagement with other support services in Scotland such as mental health treatment, therapy or group counselling
- This is especially pronounced for highly specialised services that are usually provided on a 1:1, face to face basis
- It is difficult to garner trust and assess the level and nature of needs of an individual when communicating solely online
- Organisations have observed that that virtual communications require an entirely new skillset compared to interactions that happen in person
- Due to increased anxiety levels, stress, as well as many other reasons, some people are choosing not to engage with these services at all and, as a result, are 'falling through the cracks'

Extract from Survey Results from Charities Supported by the intandem Fund of Inspiring Scotland

Source: intandem Survey Results



"Everyone in our network has a smartphone now but engagement is low."

"Digital training for our staff to give them confidence online is absolutely key."

"If staff are not confident in their digital skills, there is no way that they can conceivably encourage members to use the tech and platforms."

Director at Neighbourhood Networks

"Around 50% of people in our network have been reluctant to engage or have stopped engaging with us altogether. We have no way of contacting them."

"We have a national phone number, but it costs money to phone. Many people in our network have acute financial worries – no one has engaged with this."

"We have not been able to move our group or therapy sessions online. There has been low engagement with our therapy services as they have become virtual."

Director at Stirling Young Carers

"A small proportion of people have access to online or we are unable to contact them because of digital illiteracy on our side."

"I would estimate that we are operating at a 10% engagement level relative to normal circumstances."

"Tens of thousands of people in Scotland had social care removed at the beginning of lockdown as it was deemed 'non-essential'. We have no way of knowing how they are getting on as we have no way of contacting them."

Director at ARC Scotland

Case Study: Edinburgh Young Carers

Needs and Solutions

Edinburgh Young Carers is one of the largest charities in Scotland dedicated to the support of young carers. They work to improve the lives of young carers throughout Edinburgh.

They support and provide services to up to c.**400** carers a year and actively help c.**180** carers at any one time. Between **40-50%** of the carers in their network are currently experiencing **digital exclusion**.

They recently received emergency funding which was used to purchase **70** tablets for their carers to be used for schoolwork, social interaction and as a means for providing support and contact. As part of their crisis response, they spent £7000 on laptops for (10-12) staff, £6000 on tablets for carers, £5000 to comply with health and safety for working at home and £3000 on virtual digital training for staff.

Among concerns for the future are the continued digital exclusion of their carers, engagement, digital skills of staff and mental health.

"Many staff were not skilled in technology entering this crisis."

"IT illiteracy was widespread and evident."

"There is a huge amount of pressure on staff at the moment – we must also take care of their mental health."

"50% will be digitally excluded to some extent. They may have telephone access but they have no money on their personal phone, if they have one and no data."

"We are still able to perform counselling on the phone or Zoom but not everyone is taking up the offer. They're feeling isolated and the uptake is less"

"Some are in a state of crisis due to mental health or financial struggles."

"Some are coping okay. Now they are starting to deteriorate. The call numbers are increasing."

"Parents may be alcohol or drug dependent. May have people coming in or out of the house. They may be overheard – so there's no confidentiality or privacy."

"Post lockdown I have significant worries about the mental health of our carers."

"When schools do reopen many of these kids may still not go due to fear of bringing the virus back to an ill parent. The parents themselves may not want them to go."

CEO of Edinburgh Young Carers

Mental Health

Themes of Need

- Mental health should be viewed as a primary issue in all communities
- The volume of news coverage of the pandemic spread, loneliness and lack of routine are all factors with the potential to affect us all
- However, some will suffer more than others
- For people who have suffered from mental ill health in the past, the current crisis and lockdown has the potential to be particularly damaging
- People may lose self esteem due to digital (and thus social) exclusion
- The mental health of those who lose their jobs and incomes may suffer
- Counselling and therapy recipients may experience difficulties accessing the full range of service that they usually do
- Young people have not been able to access the full range of support services usually available at school
- Carers may be feeling particularly isolated and might not have normal forms of respite care available
- As the world remains online for the foreseeable future, organisations that deal with mental health issues face having to scale substantially and adapt their services to continue to work virtually

Returning to Normality: Inequality

Themes of Need

- As the infection curve flattens in many countries, many governments are looking to re-open schools.
- However, several governments are considering making school attendance voluntary.
- Concern has been expressed that this approach may further entrench educational inequality.
- A recent poll showed that c.**50%** of wealthy families would send their children back, whereas only **17%** of poor ones would.
- Even if attending school were to be made compulsory, many of the poorest children may still be left out due to care obligations to family members or fears of bringing the virus home to ill parents or siblings.
- In addition, increased stress, anxiety, losses in confidence and fear of contracting the illness could mean people may choose to stay at home.

“Post lockdown I have significant worries about the mental health of our carers.”

“When schools do reopen many of these kids may still not go due to fear of bringing the virus back to an ill parent. The parents themselves may not want them to go.”

CEO of Young Carers Edinburgh

“There are problems with this. At-risk kids and young carers may not attend school at all when it re-opens. There will be added stress and concerns with leaving home”

Headteacher at Castlebrae Community High School

Recommendations, Challenges and next steps

Recommendations

Crisis Response: 0-3 months

- In the **ongoing emergency / crisis response**, the application process for support should be simple and the response should be **rapid**
- Work alongside communities and grassroots organisations to **build resilience** in the communities
- **Increase collaboration** between private funders and trusted local organisations to share resources and avoid duplication of efforts
- The focus should be on building the **core capacity** of organisations through digital infrastructure, technology, systems, basic training and support
- Priority should be placed on those not currently being supported by the state (school children, vulnerable young adults, families and charities) and efforts should bypass bureaucratic time lags

Adjusting and Adapting to the New Normal: 0-6 months

- Focus should be on helping organisations and individuals to adjust to **the new normal**
- Society will be different than it was before the lockdown and ensuing crisis. Some aspects of society may take years to fully return, other changes (such as hybridised working from home models) may be permanent
- Funders should support installing suitable and affordable IT infrastructure and hardware that will allow groups and organisations to keep progressing and advancing for several years. In addition, funders should support the training and organisational development required for these groups to evolve and succeed in the future
- Digital buddies / champions should be assigned to individuals and organisations to provide mentoring, confidence, training and support as they adopt these changes, thus alleviating pressure on public services

The Recovery: 6+ months

- Priority should be given to funding training, supporting and raising awareness for **mental health concerns** amongst community members and the organisations that help them
- Focus should be on **those left behind** as society begins to reopen:
 - Vulnerable people with health concerns
 - Those caring for people with health conditions
 - Those who have lost employment / incomes / education due to the crisis (this will overwhelmingly be young people)
- Plan for **increases in poverty and inequality** as the disadvantage gap widens

“Many charities are looking for support in tech and skills.”

“With regards to protecting and supporting young people, we’re still in the crisis response stage. The main impacts of this crisis will be felt in the second half of the year with things such as mental health and unemployment. There will be a delayed impact – that is when the money will run out.”

“My major concern going forward for the third sector is money.”

There has been a lot of funding to support the initial crisis management. However, the needs will be much greater in 6-12 months time. Charities will miss out on fundraising opportunities in the summer, and the public services that usually supply grants will be struggling. There will be more demand and less income, and it's not clear where the funding will come from.”

“Digital exclusion, which is a hidden problem, will comprise a huge segment of this need.”

Director at SCVO

Challenges

- For providing technology, large levels of demand mean **long time delays** between ordering equipment and delivery. These delays are particularly pronounced for the delivery of WiFi / MiFi devices.
- Assessing priority of need due to **lack of clear information**
- Some digitally excluded individuals may pretend to have access **out of embarrassment or pride**
- If delivering equipment to young people or young families, there must be **buy in and engagement from parents, carers and guardians**. And training provided.
- If technology **breaks or goes missing**- how should devices be insured, and who should own them and take responsibility for them?
- Concerns that some may **fall through cracks**
- Each case for support and each person is **unique**, living under specific circumstances. As such, the solution must be tailored to that individual. There is no 'one size fits all', each person will have multi-faceted needs and concerns to address.
- **Lower engagement** in those who third sector organisations work with to support due to health concerns, care concerns, loss of confidence, mental health issues
- All must be protected online and **kept safe whilst also ensuring they are instilled with skills and confidence**.
- Concerns over **standards of service** and **lack of transparency of standards**
- **Upskilling and training** staff rapidly around new technology, constant learning, adapting and evolving at pace.
- **New 'soft' skills** need to interact with beneficiaries online in order to gain trust and assess level and nature of needs
- Potentially using a **centralised hub** for training – physical, online or both? Many charities and organisations are enthusiastic for physical digital hubs – how practical is this going forward?
- **Protecting staff and volunteers**, especially when face-to-face
- Be mindful of **Staff exhaustion**, acting as first responders. Support their mental health and wellbeing
- Many of the material impacts will be felt in the second half of 2020, 6-12 months after the initial fallout from COVID-19

Next Steps

1. Share and disseminate
2. Connect and collaborate
3. Identify partners to support proactive solutions

Find out more. Visit our website
www.inspiringscotland.org.uk

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Future Research, Thanks, Methodology and Disclaimers

Future Research: Next Steps

Suggestions for Further Research

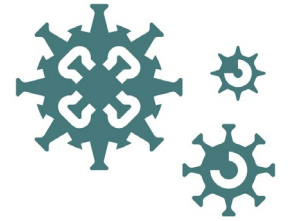
- Third Sector Lab: Organisation providing training for charities throughout in response to COVID crisis and lockdown
- 'Soft Skills' Training Guide for Counsellors and Mentors Engaging Online: Reengage UK Guide for Volunteer Telephone Callers
- Council level response: acquiring data
- Scottish Government's £9 million fund for purchasing 25,000 laptops or tablets for digitally excluded young people in education
- The Child Poverty Action Group is conducting research involving 2,000 parents and carers and 800 children to understand the impacts of having to be educated from home - Look at data when available
- The DevicesDotNow campaign

Thanks

Many thanks to the following organisations and colleagues who participated in this Research.

- COSLA;
- SCVO;
- Neighbourhood Networks;
- ARC UK;
- Castlebrae Community High School;
- Stirling Carers;
- Reengage UK;
- Break the Silence;
- Edinburgh Young Carers;
- Inspiring Scotland Teams;
- and independents.

Research Methodology: Intelligence Gathering Process during COVID-19



Information was gathered through various methods over three weeks:

- Phone calls (c.20-25) with charity CEOs and directors, teachers, headteachers, community leaders, government officials and corporate strategists;
- Survey results;
- Academic journal articles;
- Government publishing and statements;
- Newspaper articles.

Disclaimer(s)



- Both the Scottish Government and UK Government have allocated funding and resources towards tackling the isolation of older people and people with underlying health conditions (i.e. those who are “shielding”) due to digital exclusion.
- As a result, it was decided that the research should focus primarily on solutions to remedy the digital exclusion of **young people and families**.
- In addition, as this is an area where large changes take place over small time spans, the information presented in this document may be out of date quickly. This document is intended as a guide based on information that was correct at the time of completion (May 2020).

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Inspiring Scotland

Riverside House, 502 Gorgie Rd.
Edinburgh, EH11 3AF

T. 0131 442 8760

E. enquiries@inspiringscotland.org.uk

www.inspiringscotland.org.uk

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