Digital Inclusion Guide
for Health and Care in Wales

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Llywodraeth Cymru
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GIG CYMRU NHS WALES | Gwasanaeth Gwybodeg Informatics Service

Wales **Co-operative** Centre
Canolfan **Cydweithredol** Cymru

1   About digital inclusion

Key messages

The NHS in Wales is committed to enabling people to use digital technologies to manage their own health, wellbeing and care.

However many of the people who could most benefit from digital services are the least likely to be online.

11% of the population of Wales (300,000 people) are digitally excluded. These are likely to be older, less educated and in poorer health than the rest of the population.

Digitally excluded people are some of the heaviest users of health and social care services, so risk being left behind in the digital health revolution.

There are clear public policy and equality reasons for improving digital inclusion, as well as a strong business case.

Health and social care organisations can work with a range of community partners to improve digital inclusion.

This guide includes a range of resources which can help health and social care organisations to take action locally.

How this guide can help

This guide is particularly aimed at healthcare organisations in Wales, but it should also be useful to partners including local authorities and voluntary organisations.

The guide is intended to help you to understand:

- what we mean by digital inclusion
- who is likely to be digitally excluded and the barriers they may face
- why digital inclusion matters in health and care
- the benefits of supporting people to get online
- practical steps you can take to support digital inclusion locally
- resources for developing digital skills of health and care staff, carers and patients

Case Study

This case study shows how providing digital inclusion support can have real tangible benefits, both for individuals and for health and care services.

Case study: Woffington House Care Home

Woffington House is an innovative care home for seniors in Tredegar. The care home has developed a partnership with local primary schools whereby schoolchildren visit residents on a regular basis. Children from Georgetown Primary School have been Digital Heroes, befriending residents and showing them how to use technology, using tablets loaned by Digital Communities Wales.

Ken (not his real name) has lived at Woffington House for over 2 years. He has no family and has no visitors. He suffers with anxiety, mild depression and lives with dementia. At times he would bite his knuckles and hit door frames because of his frustrations. He was prescribed Lorazepam when necessary.

Using an iPad and Virtual Reality glasses, Ken has been able to revisit Aberystwyth in 1965 as well as go on rollercoaster rides. He also loves looking up songs using YouTube. Ken's health and wellbeing has improved dramatically and gone are the days of anti-psychotic medications.

Ken's experience is typical in the care home, where anti-psychotic medication on an as and when needed basis has been reduced by 100%. Falls have also been reduced significantly and ambulance call outs (which cost the NHS £300 a time) have been reduced by 28%. Furthermore, staff morale has been boosted – and primary school children say they want to work in care professions when they grow up.

2   About digital inclusion

Use this section to understand what we mean by digital inclusion, the barriers to people getting online, and who is most likely to be excluded. Use the links to the National Survey for Wales and other data sources to find more detail.

What do we mean by digital inclusion?

The rapid growth in digital technologies brings transformative opportunities, but also threatens to deepen the digital divide between the active users capable of exploiting ever improving technologies, and those who struggle to overcome the barriers to getting online.

Digital inclusion means having the motivation, skills and access to benefit fully from the benefits of digital technology. People who lack one, or a combination, of these may be digitally excluded and risk being left behind in an increasingly digital society where more and more services, including vital public services, go online.[1]

Digital inclusion in Wales

In Wales today 89% of people use the internet. This is an encouraging improvement of 4% on last year's figure of 85%. But that still means 11% of people (300,000 people) are not online (2018-19 National Survey for Wales).

Who's likely to be digitally excluded?

Overall, 11% of adults in Wales are digitally excluded, but some sections of the population are more likely to be digitally excluded than others.

The 2017-18 National Survey for Wales shows that those who are digitally excluded are more likely to be:

- Older (40% of people over 75 use the internet, compared with 97% of 16-49 year olds)
- Have a disability or long term condition (74% of people with a disability or long term condition use the internet, compared with 90% of those without)
- Less well educated (53% of those with no qualifications use the internet, compared with 95% of those with higher education qualifications)

For more information on digitally excluded populations in the UK see the annual UK Consumer Digital Index from Lloyds Bank[3]. The 2019 Consumer Digital Index shows:

- 11.9m people (22% of the population) do not have the digital skills needed for everyday life in the UK
- By 2030 it is predicted that 4.5m people (8% of the population) will remain digitally disengaged
- People with a disability are 35% less likely to have essential digital skills for life

Barriers to digital inclusion

There are several important barriers to digital inclusion, and more than one may affect individuals at any one time.

- Lack of motivation (including interest and trust)
- Lack of skills (including basic skills and confidence)
- Lack of access (including broadband connectivity, affordability and accessibility)

Today many more people are using digital technologies, helped by cheaper equipment, easier to use touch-screen interfaces and faster broadband speeds. However barriers still exist for significant numbers of people, preventing them from participating with the digital world.

A re-contact survey[4] of non-internet users from the 2013-14 National Survey for Wales (published in May 2015) revealed the extent of the multiple barriers that prevent people from going online. 90% of non-users identified lack of interest, with 75% of non-users citing lack of confidence, privacy and security concerns.

Good Things Foundation has produced an informative report[5] on understanding the motivations of non-users of the internet.

In addition to the National Survey for Wales, Ofcom[6] and Office of National Statistics data[7] provide the latest figures on internet access for the whole of the United Kingdom, including Wales. You can see the most recent data (May 2019) from Office of National Statistics on internet use in the UK here[8].
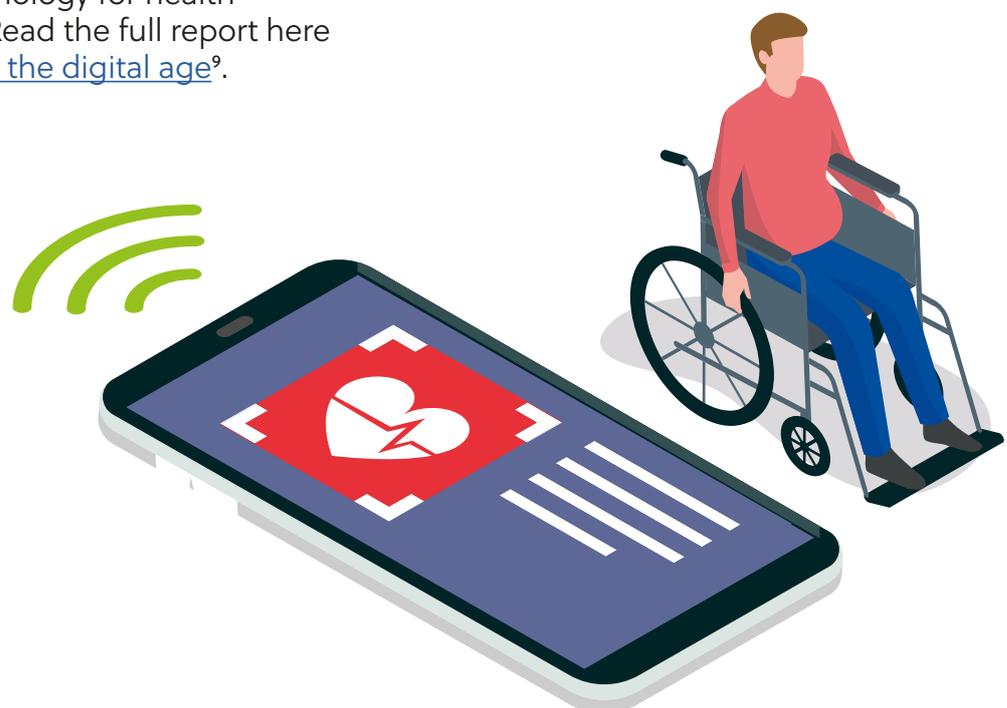
Technology and health in Wales

Public Health Wales has published the first national representative study to examine levels of digital technology for health purposes in Wales. Read the full report here Population health in the digital age[9].

Headlines from the study include:

- Two thirds of the population in Wales have used digital technology to support their health
- More women (71%) than men (65%) have done so
- A third of the population has used health technology such as wearables to monitor health behaviour
- Use of digital technology decreases with age, deprivation and low health status
- Use of digital technology decreases with health harming behaviours (such as smoking, drinking, physical inactivity)

The report concludes:

"Inequalities in access to the internet at home remain evident in Wales, with lower access in older populations, more deprived populations and those in poorer health. Continued efforts through Digital Communities Wales and others to address digital inclusion is vital, but must extend beyond internet connectivity and skills. Understanding underlying motivators and barriers to engagement in health-related activities through digital technology, and addressing differences across population groups, will help ensure everyone can benefit from advances in digital health".
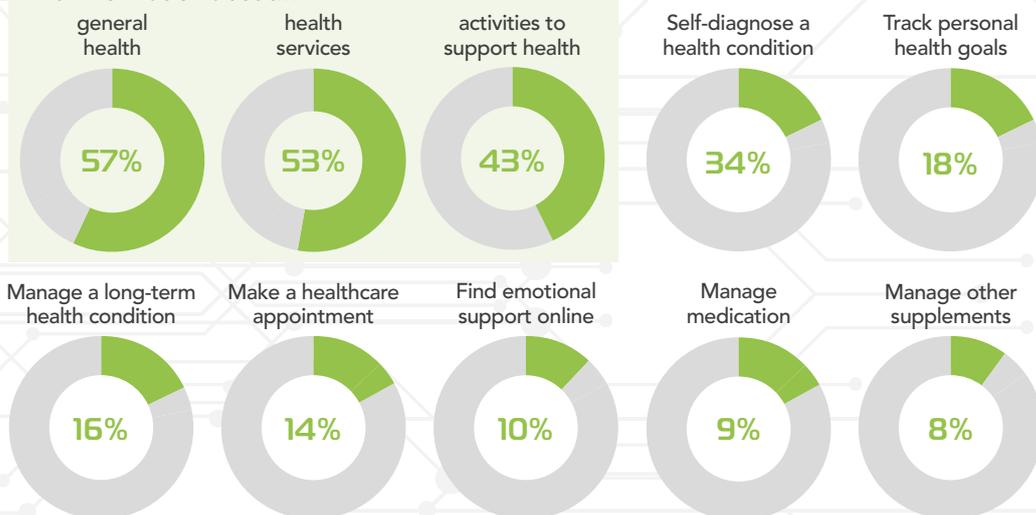
Use of digital technology for health in Wales

A nationally representative household survey asked 1,240 individuals aged 16+ years, resident in Wales, about how they use digital technology to support and monitor their health.

2 in 3 people[a] in Wales use digital technology to **support** their health through one or more of the following:

Find information about...

general health	health services	activities to support health	Self-diagnose a health condition	Track personal health goals
57%	53%	43%	34%	18%

Manage a long-term health condition	Make a healthcare appointment	Find emotional support online	Manage medication	Manage other supplements
16%	14%	10%	9%	8%

The proportion[b] using digital technology to **support** their health

By gender[c]
71% Women   65% Men

By age group[c]
87% 16-29 year olds   24% 70+ year olds

By deprivation quintile[c]
51% Most deprived   84% Least deprived

By general health[c]
68% High   72% Average   62% Low

By mental wellbeing[d]
69% Average   65% Low

By HHBs[c,e]
76% 0 HHBs   65% 1 HHB   57% 2-3 HHBs

[a]Weighted to the population Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015; [b]Proportion adjusted to the sample mean for age, gender and deprivation. See report for full details; [c]Differences between groups presented were found to be statistically significant ($p<0.05$); [d]Differences between groups presented were not found to be statistically significant ($p>0.05$); [e]HHB = Health-harming behaviour (smoking, binge drinking, physically inactive).

3 How Wales is tackling digital exclusion

Use this section to see what Welsh Government and partners are doing to tackle digital exclusion, and how digital inclusion supports the achievement of policy objectives across wider society.

Digital inclusion strategy in Wales

The Welsh Government produced a Digital Inclusion Strategic Framework[10] in 2010 which was refreshed in 2016. The Strategic Framework sets out a vision of positive digital developments throughout society, matched by the need for action to ensure no-one is left behind through a 15 point action plan:

"Having access to the internet, and the motivation and skills to use it effectively, is more important than ever with most now regarding the internet as the fourth utility. We are living in a 'digital society' with the pace of technological developments continuing to accelerate. However, for those still excluded from the digital world, this represents a real disadvantage with people increasingly feeling left behind, as more and more services, including vital public services, go online".
(Ministerial Foreword)

Digital inclusion forward look

A Digital Inclusion Progress Report and Forward Look[11] was published in 2018. The Progress Report emphasised the continuing need for digital inclusion support and highlighted practical action delivered through Digital Communities Wales[12] (DCW). DCW is the Welsh Government's dedicated digital inclusion programme, managed by the Wales Co-operative Centre[13].

Working with health and social care

The Digital Inclusion Forward Look identifies opportunities for progress within health and social care:

- Through Digital Communities Wales, look to share lessons learnt from initial work with Health Boards and explore the potential of replicating activities across Wales.
- Look to engage with NHS Wales to encourage more digital inclusion activities to take place across a range of health settings.
- Continue to explore ways to raise awareness of digital inclusion within the health sector, including but not limited to promoting digital inclusion at health conferences.
- Encourage the health and social care sector to invest in basic digital skills training for all staff in order to support citizens in the continued move towards digital services. This could include training administration staff with general practices across Wales to support customers to register and manage their appointments online
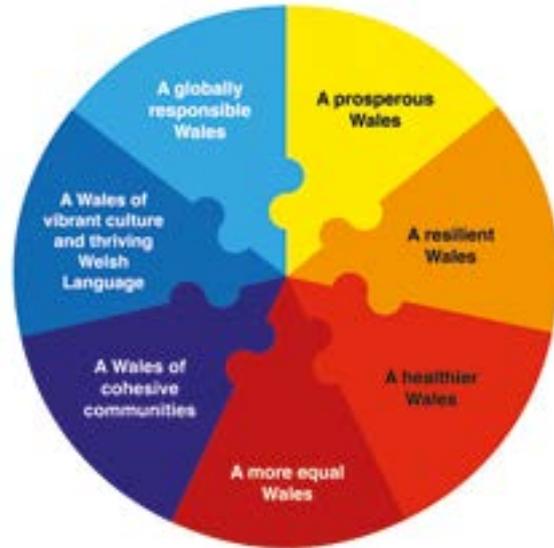
Digital inclusion supporting other policies

Creating a more digitally inclusive society is central to the delivery of major policy areas for Welsh Government, including the Wellbeing of Future Generations [14], Strategy for Older People[15] and strategies on loneliness, dementia and mental health.

In launching the Digital Inclusion Strategic Framework in 2016, the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty made the link with Future Generations:

"Creating a more digitally inclusive society can make a significant contribution to achieving the seven goals of our ground-breaking Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act".

Achievement of each of the Well-being Goals will be more likely if people are digitally confident and engaged.

4 Why digital inclusion matters to health and care

Use this section to understand why digital inclusion is particularly important to health and care, and how supporting people to get online can be crucial to achievement of priorities.

Digital inclusion matters

Digital inclusion matters to health and social care organisations because:

- It's central to the principles of prudent healthcare
- It's an equalities issue
- There are clear policy commitments
- It is increasingly a precondition for achieving health and care priorities

Prudent healthcare

Health and care services in Wales are underpinned by the principles of prudent healthcare[16]. Prudent healthcare is a blueprint for co-production of better, more integrated health and social services by identifying and prioritising need, choosing treatments wisely, and reducing inappropriate variation.

The 4 principles of prudent healthcare

Public and professionals are EQUAL PARTNERS through CO-PRODUCTION

CARE FOR those with the greatest health need FIRST

Do only WHAT IS NEEDED and do NO HARM

Reduce INAPPROPRIATE VARIATION through EVIDENCE-BASED approaches

For further information visit www.prudenthealthcare.org.uk

By recognising and acting on digital exclusion, health and care organisations can show how they are fulfilling the four principles of prudent healthcare.

- Working with patients and carers to understand and meet their digital health needs is a real demonstration of **co-production**
- Digital inclusion means that those with the **greatest health needs** are not left behind in an increasingly digital healthcare system

- Providing access to digital health resources, and the skills and confidence to use them enables appropriate self care and self management so that we do **only what is needed**
- The digital divide is an **inappropriate variation**, where increasingly some sections of society and some parts of Wales will have less access to care

Digital inclusion and equalities

Health inequality is a well recognised issue in Wales. Julian Tudor Hart[17] set out his Inverse Care Law in Port Talbot in 1971, arguing that the availability of good health care varies inversely with need. Today, there is a real danger of a new digital inverse care law where those citizens most in need of accessing new digital services will be left behind again, due to their lack of digital skills and access.

As health information and services are increasingly delivered digitally, the ability to use digital technologies is increasingly a form of health literacy. There is good evidence[18] that people with lower health literacy have worse health outcomes.

In an increasingly digital world, people who are digitally excluded are at risk of worse access to services and worse health outcomes. People who have characteristics that are protected under the Equality Act 2010 (age, disability, race) are less likely to have access to the internet, and the skills to use it. Take this into account when carrying out Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs). Check the Equality Impact Assessment in Wales Practice Hub[19] for guidance on conducting successful EIAs, including Wales specific duties.

Policy commitments

The need to ensure everyone can benefit from digital technology runs through health and care policies in Wales.

Informed Health and Care[20]

The strategic objective is:

Enabling the people of Wales to look after their own health and wellbeing supported by online access to information and their records, undertaking a variety of health transactions using technology, and using digital tools and apps to support self-care and health monitoring to maintain independent living.

But there is also recognition of the need to take action to ensure nobody is excluded:

"It is essential that the health and social care system and its staff also recognise the needs of people who are digitally excluded and those citizens are equally supported and enabled to access services and support".

A Healthier Wales[21]

A Healthier Wales, sees digital as a "key enabler of transformational change", but also recognises that not everyone will be able to access digital services:

"New technologies and digital approaches will be an important part of our future whole system approach to health and social care, but they will only be a part. Some people will be unable to access digital services, others will choose not to. Face-to-face and hands-on human contact is an extremely valuable and absolutely essential part of care and treatment. There are many things which cannot be delivered digitally or through technology. People will always be the foundation of high quality health and social care services".
Health and care priorities

Ensuring people have access to digital tools and technologies, and the skills and confidence to use them, is increasingly a precondition for achievement of priorities including:

- Preventing illness
- Supporting people to manage their own health and wellbeing
- Giving people greater control and enabling them to be active participants in their own health and wellbeing
- Helping people to make informed choices about their treatment, care and support
- Enabling people to live independently for as long as they can
- Delivering health and social care services closer to home

5 Making the case for digital inclusion

Use this section to find evidence to help build the business case for digital inclusion.

Benefits of digital health

As well as there being strong policy and equity reasons for supporting digital inclusion, there are also good business reasons.

There is increasing evidence[22] of the benefits of digital health.

The benefits to patients and carers include:

- Improved self-care for minor ailments
- Improved self-management of long term conditions
- Improved take-up of digital health tools and services
- Time saved through accessing services digitally
- Cost saved through accessing services digitally
- Reduced loneliness and isolation

And benefits for the health and care system, including:

- Lower cost of delivering services digitally
- More appropriate use of services, including primary care and urgent care
- Better patient adherence to medicines and treatments

Those who are digitally excluded risk missing out on the benefits to individuals of digital health. And health and care services will not achieve savings and service transformation unless they engage with the one in ten of their population who are not online – and are the heaviest users of health and care.

Digital inclusion and outcomes

It can be difficult to demonstrate measurable outcomes arising from digital inclusion initiatives. For example, there are likely to be a number of reasons for changes in lifestyle or service utilisation, and it may not be possible to identify a direct attribution with improved digital access or skills.

Evaluation of Digital Communities Wales[23] in 2016 focused largely on achievement of key performance indicators, awareness of digital inclusion initiatives, and impact on partner organisations. However there was some evidence of positive health outcomes for individual service users, including:

- Increased confidence in using digital technology
- Improved social interaction and reduced isolation
- Improved physical activity
- Better access to services

Evaluation of Widening Digital Participation in England

Evaluation of Phase One of the NHS Widening Digital Participation programme[24] in England provides some of the best existing evidence on the impact of increasing digital inclusion on health. Of those who were supported by the programme:

- 59% felt more confident in using online health information
- 52% feel less lonely or isolated
- 21% have had less visits to their GP for minor ailments
- 22% have progressed to booking GP appointments online and 20% to ordering prescriptions online
- 39% have saved time through carrying out health transactions online

This evaluation estimates a return on investment of £6.40 for every £1.00 spent by the NHS on digital inclusion support.

Read the evaluation report[25] in full here.

Return on investment

The most recent analysis of the economic impact of digital inclusion comes in a report prepared by Cebr[26] (Centre for Economics and Business Research) for Good Things Foundation and published in September 2018. This suggests a net present value of providing everyone in the UK with digital skills of £21.9 billion. Savings by 2028 include:

- Time savings from undertaking government and financial transactions online - £1.1 billion
- Transactional benefits from shopping online £1.1 billion
- Communication benefits from keeping in touch, reducing isolation and participating in recreational and cultural activities £400 million

Benefits for wider society

Increasing digital inclusion has benefits for society as a whole as well as for the NHS. It is important to take these benefits into consideration when considering the impacts for public health.

A 2016 analysis of Scottish data carried out by Ipsos MORI for Carnegie UK Trust[27] illustrates how the wider societal benefits of internet use is associated with better health and wellbeing. Those who use the internet are more likely to have been to a cultural event, visited the outdoors for recreation, taken part in sport or volunteered. Conversely those who are not online are more likely to have visited their doctor once a month or more.

Case studies

Case studies can provide a rich source of qualitative evidence for the impact of digital inclusion support on individuals. There are dozens of illuminating case studies relevant to health and care on the Digital Communities Wales[28] website.

How can we evaluate digital inclusion support?

A range of quantitative and qualitative methods could be appropriate for evaluating digital inclusion. These include activity measures (such as numbers engaged or trained), surveys, user interviews, stakeholder interviews, observation, and case studies.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has produced a practical toolkit[29] on evaluating digital inclusion initiatives to demonstrate social impact. The Digital Inclusion Evaluation Toolkit contains a range of resources which you could use to measure the impact of digital inclusion initiatives.

Look at the Digital Health Lab[30] to see how different evaluation methods have been used in Widening Digital Participation pathfinders in England.

6   Act on digital inclusion locally

Use this section to consider practical action you can take to support digital inclusion locally.

Get Board level commitment

In July 2018 Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board (now Swansea Bay University Health Board) showed the way with the approval by the Board of a new set of intentions on digital inclusion[31].

- ABMU becoming signatories to the Digital Inclusion Charter
- Exploring opportunities to secure a digital inclusion coordinator on a trial basis
- Developing Digital Champions in all ABMU units and amongst larger staff groups
- Commissioning support for digital inclusion from partners with the requisite skills to support us in supporting our patients and staff

Get Board level support for action on digital inclusion.

Sign the Digital Inclusion Charter

Supported by a wide range of organisations across Wales, the Digital Inclusion Charter[32] promotes helping people to gain basic digital skills. Organisations are asked to sign up to Six Principles including giving all staff and volunteers the opportunity to learn about new technologies:

1. Ensure that all our staff and volunteers have an opportunity to learn basic digital skills, and that they take advantage of this opportunity
2. Ensure that digital inclusion principles are embedded into our day to day activities

3. Encourage and support our staff and volunteers to help other people to get online and have the confidence to develop basic digital skills, and help other organisations to embrace digital tools
4. Commit support and resources for digital inclusion activities and initiatives in Wales in whatever ways we can
5. Share best practice and activity around digital inclusion with Digital Communities Wales so that our activities can be co-ordinated for maximum impact and measured consistently
6. Look to build local partnerships amongst organisations which want to share ideas and co-ordinate activities with others in their area

To date, over 300 organisations have signed the Charter. Swansea University, Hywel Dda, Aneurin Bevan, and Cardiff and Vale Health Boards have now signed up.

Advocate for your health or care organisation to sign the Digital Inclusion Charter, and to deliver on its principles.

Build digital inclusion support into digital health programmes

Giving people greater control so that they can become more active participants in their own health and wellbeing is central to the vision of A Healthier Wales and Informed Health and Care. At a national level, My Health Online gives patients the convenience of booking GP appointments and ordering prescriptions online. At a local level, Health Boards are piloting innovative digital tools like Patients Know Best which empower patients through access to their own health record and communication with health professionals and carers.

Some Health Boards have built digital inclusion support into their public facing digital health programmes. For example:

Swansea Bay University Health Board is working with Digital Communities Wales to direct patients to libraries or other community resources where they can have access to a computer and support with setting up email etc so they can join Patients Know Best if they wish to do so. View a short video[33] about this here.

Swansea Bay GP Cluster is working with Digital Communities Wales to provide training for non-clinical frontline staff to gain skills in supporting people to use My Health Online.

Talk to Digital Communities Wales about working with your digital health programmes.

Provide digital skills training

Digital Communities Wales has a well established training programme[34] provided free to organisations that are working with digitally excluded people. Frontline staff and volunteers can be trained so they have the confidence to show people how to use technology.

Training particularly relevant to health and care includes:

- Digital Heroes
- Digital Companions
- Health and wellbeing apps
- Inspiring digital activities

Learn My Way[35] is a set of free online courses which help people develop digital skills to make the most of the online world, from digital beginners to courses focusing on specific topics. Twenty two Learn My Way modules are now available bilingually in Welsh and English, and additional modules covering health topics will be developed.

Talk to Digital Communities Wales about providing digital skills training for staff, volunteers or service users.

Develop Digital Champions in your organisation

The Digital Champions Network[36] run by Digital Unite provides a wide range of self-study online courses to develop a Digital Champion's skillset and meet different learner needs. All of the courses are linked to the national Open Badges schemes to evidence personal and professional development. There is also a structured Resource Centre collating over 500 ready-to-use training and teaching resources and a web app enabling Digital Champions to record their learner interactions quickly and easily.

Digital Communities Wales is a member of the Network and is using the resources to train 500 digital champions[37] in organisations across Wales.

Look at the Digital Champions website to see the resources available.

Set up a Digital Heroes befriending scheme

Younger people who have grown up in the digital age can be a great resource to introduce older people to digital devices and all the things they could do online. The Digital Heroes[38] programme delivered by Digital Communities Wales has trained over 3,000 children and young people to befriend older people and introduce them to digital opportunities.

This inspirational video[39] shows how children from a primary school in Tredegar have buddied up with a local care home. Visits from the schoolchildren have enthused older residents about digital technology, and led to measurable reductions in medication and falls in the care home.

Cardiff and Vale Health Board has worked with Digital Communities Wales to place Digital Heroes on hospital wards. Patients and Digital Heroes talk about it in this video.[40]

Talk to Digital Communities Wales about setting up a Digital Heroes scheme in your area.

Set up a Digital Companions scheme for older people

The [Digital Companions](#)[41] scheme, delivered by Digital Communities Wales, aims to harness the good will and skills of people who are happy using the internet, and encourage them to buddy up with someone who isn't. The new initiative will work alongside non statutory care services and organisations which help elderly people who are living independently – befrienders, carers, community transport, meals-on-wheels etc.

Initally the Digital Companions initiative will run in partnership with Hywel Dda Health Board and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board. This is a [Bevan Exemplar](#)[42] project, supported by the Bevan Commission. Having piloted the approach in these areas, the intention is to roll it out nationwide across Wales.

Talk to Digital Communities Wales about setting up a Digital Companions scheme in your area.

Provide free public wi-fi

Access to wi-fi is a key enabler for digital inclusion. There is a commitment in Informed Health and Care that "people attending all large healthcare settings, such as acute and community hospitals will have access to free public wi-fi".

Free patient wi-fi is now being installed in NHS premises in Wales, although this is not universal and there is more progress in hospital settings than GP practices. This [interview](#)[43] with Hamish Laing, then Medical Director at ABMU, describes the benefits of free wi-fi for patients and the NHS.

Access to free wi-fi can be particularly crucial for people who might find it difficult to afford data costs on their digital device. Free public wi-fi hotspots are increasingly available dotted around towns and cities (although less in rural areas). Most public libraries provide free public wi-fi as well as computers which people can use. This handy [guide](#)[44] outlines where people can find free Wi-Fi and how to access it, what to watch out for when using it and the free Wi-Fi options to access via mobile or broadband provider.

Provide free public wi-fi in health and care premises wherever feasible, and promote awareness of its availability.

Encourage innovative use of technology

Innovative use of technology can provide new ways of engaging different audiences with the digital world. There is no 'one size fits all' approach to digital engagement, and different people may respond to different technologies e.g. smart devices, VR headsets, activity trackers etc.

Personal health monitoring can be a real motivator for people to get online. Digital Communities Wales has been involved in [several projects](#)[45] where people have been supplied with wearable fitness monitoring devices. Using loaned Fitbits, people have been introduced to using technology in a fun and informal way and encouraged to use technology to improve their general health and wellbeing.

In Swansea Bay GP Cluster, Digital Communities Wales provided a number of Fitbit devices to the cluster which were then loaned to a small group of patients. DCW also devised a five week digital health course which could be delivered to the people offered the Fitbits. Read more about the project [here](#).[46]

Talk to Digital Communities Wales about using appropriate digital technologies in innovative ways.

Use accessible technology

Older people and people with disabilities may be able to use accessible and assistive technologies to help them to stay independent and manage their daily lives. Technologies include telehealth and telecare, remote monitoring systems, wearable devices and smart home devices. This National Institute for Health Research review[47] provides an overview of assistive technologies and the latest research into their use.

Some people may find it difficult to use a computer keyboard because of reduced eyesight or lack of digital skills and confidence. Voice activated systems[48] or "virtual assistants" such as Amazon Echo (Alexa) and Google Home can open up new opportunities for people who might otherwise be digitally excluded. 12,000 pieces of government information[49] can now be accessed using voice activated smart speakers.

Innovate Trust[50] is working with funding from the Welsh Government Innovate to Save fund to trial the use of intelligent personal assistants in the homes of people with learning disabilities.

Look at the RNIB Technology for Life Resource Hub[51] for guides to the different products and services available. This video[52] shows how support from RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People) and Digital Communities Wales has enabled a 92 year old to use Amazon Echo to manage her health.

Talk to Innovate Trust, RNIB Cymru and Digital Communities Wales about using accessible technologies.

Use social prescribing

Social prescribing, sometimes referred to as community referral, is a means of enabling GPs, nurses and other primary care professionals to refer people to a range of local, non-clinical services (such as horticulture, exercise, weight loss programmes, community arts or welfare rights advice). There are many different models for social prescribing, but most involve a link worker or navigator who works with people to access local sources of support.

The Welsh Public Health Observatory has produced a social prescribing evidence map[53] and the Welsh primary care development website Primary Care One[54] now includes a social prescribing area

Social prescribing to digital skills training or other digital inclusion support is at an early stage but has considerable potential. In England, Good Things Foundation has produced a how-to-guide[55] on using social prescribing for digital inclusion in health.

Talk to Digital Communities Wales about applying a social prescribing approach to linking to digital inclusion support.

Improve digital skills of staff

Health and care staff do not always have knowledge and confidence in using digital health resources themselves. This means that they are unlikely to act as digital champions and recommend digital tools to their patients. This can be one of the biggest barriers to digital inclusion, particularly when working digitally can involve real cultural change.

Most Health Board and local authority IT departments will be able to provide digital skills training for staff, or have contacts with local Further Education colleges.

Wales Institute of Digital Information[56] has been formed as part of a strategic partnership between NHS Wales Informatics Service and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. Its aim is to create opportunities and nurture new talent in health informatics. Higher Apprenticeship (level 4) and a Digital Degree Apprenticeship (levels 4 to 6) are now available for people looking to progress a career in health IT.

NHS Wales Library Services[57] support professional development and promote evidence based practice by providing quality health information to support patient care, education, training and research. The NHS Wales e-Library for Health[58] provides access to a wide range of digital health resources.

Building on their success in training digital champions with other organisations, Digital Communities Wales are beginning to train non-clinical NHS staff as digital champions too. This is happening with general practice staff in the Swansea Bay GP Cluster and hospital staff in ABMU to support take up of Patients Know Best. There is considerable potential to extend this approach more widely through the NHS in Wales.

Talk to your organisation's IT department about digital skills training for staff, and your library about knowledge and information services available.

Raise awareness

Many people are not aware of the support available to help them get online and improve their digital skills. Health and care organisations can get involved in awareness raising campaigns, including the annual UK wide Get Online Week[59] which takes place every October.

Digital Communities Wales has a marketing materials hub[60] which includes downloadable leaflets, posters and images.

Talk to Digital Communities Wales or visit the marketing materials hub for ways of promoting digital inclusion initiatives and campaigns.

Work with partners

Local authorities

Digital inclusion is a priority for local authorities in Wales. The Welsh Government's Digital Baseline of Local Authorities[61] concludes that local authorities' digital strategies are "mostly strong on digital inclusion" and includes digital inclusion as one of its 6 Digital Dimensions. The Digital Baseline sets out what a good approach to digital inclusion should look like for local authorities.

Rhondda Cynon Taf's digital transformation strategy Digital Vision 2020[62], includes development of Digital Champions in various local authority departments. At Tegfan Resource Centre for people with dementia, sensory impairments and frail elderly, staff have been trained in inspiring digital activities, the local authority has installed cloud wi-fi and equipment including VR headsets and Amazon Echodot has been provided for use by residents.

Digital Communities Wales has been working with Swansea County Borough Council to provide inspiring digital activities training to staff in day centres and residential homes. Through the Digital Heroes project, primary schools and Swansea University Discovery volunteers have been linked with Adult Service Provision day centres.

Voluntary organisations

Voluntary organisations are important partners in digital inclusion support. Digital Communities Wales has worked with a number of voluntary organisations including Mind, RNIB, and Age Cymru.

For example Digital Communities Wales has provided training to a number of Age Cymru Powys staff. The course, called 'Inspiring Digital Activities', helps attendees to develop a better understanding of using digital tools to engage with older people.[63]

Read more examples in these case studies.[64]

Online Centres

The Online Centres Network[65] is made up of over 5,000 local organisations working to tackle digital exclusion by providing people with the skills and confidence they need to use digital technologies. Some operate in libraries, community venues, leisure centres or shopping centres, as well as some in more unusual locations like pubs and cafes. Many centres also run outreach sessions, in places like care homes or tenants' associations. Find your local Online Centre and talk to them about support available for local people by using the Online Centre search.[66]

Public libraries

Libraries are trusted community spaces, whose unique benefits include assisted digital access, health information, resources and services, and the volunteering and recreational opportunities they provide. They can deliver a range of health and wellbeing benefits to local communities including those who may not normally access other services.

The quality framework for Welsh public library standards, Connected and Ambitious Libraries[67], has introduced a specific quality indicator for health and wellbeing information and signposting in libraries.

Public libraries in Wales have been working with Digital Communities Wales to provide digital skills training and support information literacy. A half-day digital inclusion training course has been developed for staff and volunteers in libraries, as well as a fuller two day digital champions course. Some libraries in Wales are now holding Digital Fridays, where users are introduced to digital technology and tools. Work is underway to increase the number of libraries taking part. Read how Digital Communities Wales has worked with Pembrokeshire Libraries[68] and how Merthyr Tydfil Libraries[69] have embraced the Digital Charter.

NHS Wales User Needs and Experience Focus Group

This is an assurance group to the Information for You Workstream for Informed health and care: digital health and social care strategy for Wales. It comprises experts in co-production, patient experience, digital inclusion, innovation, networking, advice, accessible health, advocacy, condition specific care, assurance, user testing, liaison with the public and patients, and patient representative groups. The group tests user requirements in current projects e.g. My Health Online, patient information checklists, PROMs and PREMs, nhs.wales portal. It also evaluates information standards, information governance, and content management. The Group maintains an awareness of projects and developments, including Choose Pharmacy, Information for Parents and Children (Every Child), Value based health care, and Digital Health Ecosystem Wales.

Contact Joanna Dundon (Joanna.Dundon@wales.nhs.uk) at NHS Wales Informatics Service for further

7 Summary: the three pronged approach to digital volunteering

information.

From July 2019 onwards Digital Communities Wales will be offering a three pronged approach to working with local organisations:

Digital Heroes (2 hrs training) – intergenerational volunteering where children and young people pass on their skills to adults that need support with technology. Digital Heroes sessions are often run at primary schools, youth clubs and there is also a Welsh Baccalaureate Community Challenge around this activity. Digital Heroes are encouraged to work with community venues, care homes or hospitals so that their learning gets put to good use.

Digital Companions (2-3 hrs training): peer to peer form of supporting people to experience the web. The aim is to support someone who is not online to have a positive first/entry experience of the 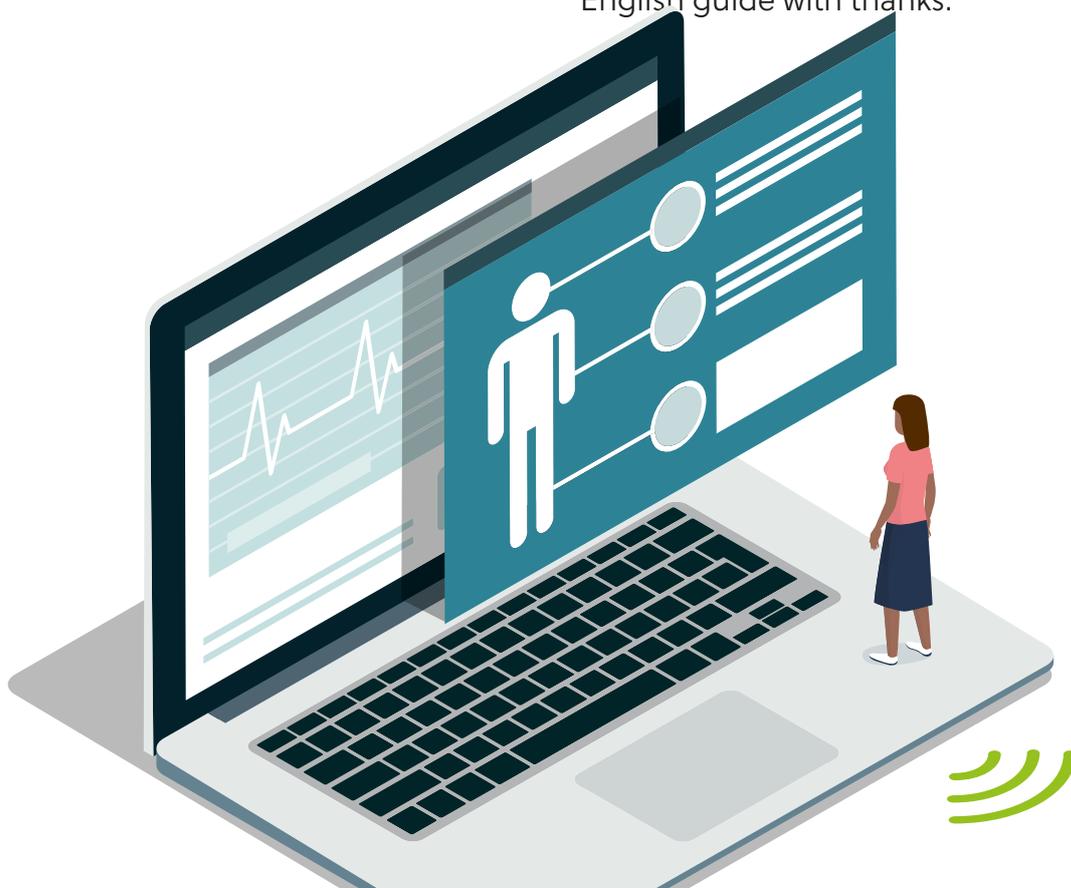web. From there, the engagement can be progressed to find practical health related links between the person being supported and the internet. Initial engagement to build confidence could be around hobbies, background interest or links with family that live away.

Digital Champions (1 x full day training): for more competent and confident users of technology, who are comfortable in cascading his or her skills on to groups of people in the community or as a team leader in a work setting.

More information

For more detail see the report Digital Inclusion in Health and Care[70] in Wales published by Wales Co-operative Centre with Carnegie UK Trust.

For comparison with England, see the Digital Inclusion Guide for Health and Care[71] published by NHS Digital. The format and some resources here are based on the English guide with thanks.

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