



Report of the Head of Adult Services and Tackling Poverty

Social Care and Tackling Poverty Service Transformation Committee – 16 September 2024

Update on Digital Inclusion

Purpose:	The report is for information purposes only.
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For Information	

1. Background

- 1.1. Swansea Council's Corporate Plan 2023-2027 sets out six Corporate Priorities, one of which is 'Tackling Poverty and Enabling Communities – so that every person in Swansea can reach their potential'. Underpinning this Corporate Priority is our strategic direction for tackling poverty and enabling communities. Tackling poverty is also one of the key priorities of the Human Rights City approach.
- 1.2. In 2017, the Council published 'Working towards prosperity for all in Swansea - a tackling poverty strategy for Swansea'. Refreshing this 2017 – 2020 strategic document was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and Cost of Living crisis. There was also a strong desire to undertake co-production and engagement activities to inform the refresh of the strategy.
- 1.3. Work has been progressing with the refresh of the Council's Tackling Poverty and a draft version is about to be shared for engagement and consultation purposes. One of the emerging key themes of the refreshed strategy is 'Digital Inclusion'. This report provides an update on the progress of the work relating to this specific priority.

2. Context

- 2.1. Welsh Government's Digital Strategy for Wales includes a mission on digital inclusion to 'equip people with the motivation, access, skills and confidence to engage with an increasingly digital world, based on their needs'.
- 2.2. Digital inclusion is the approach taken to help people to be able to use the internet or digital technologies. Being digitally included means being able to use digital tools or services independently. The main reasons why people are being digitally excluded are:
- Digital Infrastructure is not available;
 - People cannot afford to be digital;
 - Accessibility, usability and language;
 - Choosing not to use digital services;
 - Overcoming online safety as a barrier to digital inclusion.
- 2.3. With 7% of adults in Wales currently 'digitally excluded' and increasing trends of public services moving online, further work is required to help the people and communities of Wales to overcome this challenge. This is reflected in the Audit Wales report 'Digital Inclusion in Wales' published in March 2023.

3. Latest position

- 3.1. There is a lot of transformational activity already ongoing in this space and with a focus on future opportunities for digital inclusion. For example, a draft Education Digital Strategy is in development which has focus areas for "emerging technologies", "poverty proofing" and "assistive technologies", all of which look to pro-actively address opportunities to support the inclusive use of digital technologies in education.
- 3.2. In response to the above Audit Wales report, the Council completed an internal self-assessment of its current position on digital inclusion, through the Digital Transformation Board.
- 3.3. The Council's strategic position is embedded through our Corporate Plan, Digital Strategy and the upcoming refresh of the Tackling Poverty Strategy. Within the priority of 'Digital Inclusion', we have identified the following actions to be taken:

Action	Title	Outcome
1	Digital Inclusion Action Planning	We will conduct detailed action planning to identify the digital inclusion activities required to ensure that Swansea has relatively low rates of digital exclusion.

Action	Title	Outcome
2	Digital Inclusion Framework Development	We will develop our performance, data and quality frameworks for Digital Inclusion (embedded within the context of Tackling Poverty and Enabling Communities) to establish a clear model for delivering and transforming digital inclusion services and initiatives.
3	Digital Exclusion Information, Advice and Guidance	We will review our approach to improving understanding and awareness about digital exclusion, targeting information, advice and guidance to staff, partners and stakeholders who work with people impacted by digital exclusion.
4	Digital Inclusion Data Mapping	We will map our current data profile relating to digital inclusion and identify gaps as well as actions to address the gaps.
5	Digital Inclusion Steering Group	We will establish a Digital Inclusion Steering Group under the governance of the Corporate Priority of Tackling Poverty and Enabling Communities.
6	Digital Inclusion Funding Mapping	We will review and map relevant funding and support schemes that support digitising services and addressing digital exclusion, identifying new opportunities for investment and future funding initiatives such as training programmes.
7	Digital Exclusion Lived Experience	We will identify opportunities to engage with people with lived experience of digital exclusion so as to capture / understand their story and improve service delivery in the future.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1. In order to deliver the above actions, we are aligning delivery of this work through the Tackling Poverty Transformation Programme and reporting progress through the Digital Transformation Board.
- 4.2. We are also planning to establish a new Digital Inclusion Steering Group to provide collaborative working opportunities and coordination of action planning and implementation. Further information is included in Appendix B of this report.

5. Integrated Assessment Implications

- 5.1. The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.

- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage.
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language.
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

- 5.2. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.
- 5.3. Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.
- 5.4. An Integrated Impact Screening has been completed for this report with no further assessment required (See Appendix B). This is an IIA Screening for the 'For Information and Action' Report to the Social Care and Tackling Poverty Service Transformation Committee (STC) regarding the refresh of the Council's Tackling Poverty Strategy. A full IIA will be carried out as part of the strategy development process in due course.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1. There are no legal implications.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. Whilst there are no direct financial implications arising from this report, it may lead to decisions being taken at a later date that may have costs attached. Any such costs will need to be managed within departmental resources at that time with due regard to the Council's medium term financial plan.

Background papers: Current Tackling Poverty Strategy
<https://www.swansea.gov.uk/article/9610/Tackling-Poverty-Strategy>

Appendices:

- Appendix A: Digital inclusion Report
- Appendix B: Digital Inclusion Steering Group Proposal
- Appendix C: IIA Screening Form