

REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 13 FEBRUARY 2006
REPORT ON: DIGITAL INCLUSION POLICY
REPORT BY: ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (COMMUNITY PLANNING)
REPORT NO: 74-2006

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To propose a written response to the Scottish Executive consultation on Digital Inclusion Policy on behalf of Dundee City Council.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

To submit the attached questionnaire in Appendix 1 and the contents of section 7 of this report in a letter to the Scottish Executive.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

4 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

None

5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

The Digital Inclusion Policy sets out to improve access to services for disadvantaged groups that are less able to take advantage of digital communications.

6 BACKGROUND

6.1 The Scottish Executive e-government and take-up unit issued a consultation questionnaire to all local authorities and others in a review of digital inclusion. This is an important policy for Dundee City Council as the City has higher than average rates of deprivation and below average access to the internet.

6.2 The digital divide is a disparity of access to ICT which affects a range of already excluded individuals. Those on low incomes; the unemployed; older people; people with disabilities; people with learning difficulties; people with literacy and numeracy problems; and people for whom English is not their first language - all have lower rates of take-up and access to ICT and the internet. Digitally excluded individuals have less opportunity to take part in the education, training, shopping, entertainment and communications opportunities that are available online. They are also financially disadvantaged as they are unable to realise the savings to be made by making purchases, paying bills, applying for credit or opening a bank account online. They have less opportunity to take up the many jobs in which the ability to use digital technology is now an everyday requirement and as there is a continued drive towards provision of online public services, it is possible that such already excluded individuals will suffer further as a result.

6.3 The consultation document aims to lead to a new Scottish Executive policy of Digital Inclusion. It states:

"key areas for consideration in this consultation are awareness and promotion, partnership working, support for learning, accessibility issues and how to achieve a more consistent approach to many of the strands of the work - without becoming prescriptive. The key emphasis is likely to be on supporting and encouraging activities which are sustainable, have potential for national rollout and are evidence based".

6.4 Key projects to date under the existing digital inclusion policy that has affected Dundee are:

- the Public Internet Access Points (PIAP)
- supporting new users with training through libraries
- the Home Computer Initiative contract negotiated by the Scottish Executive
- the European Computer Driving Licence training course promotion

7 THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

7.1 Dundee City Council has higher than average rates of social disadvantage and lower rates of household internet access. The council's most recent survey (August 2005) showed 40% of households had access to the internet. This compares to UK average of 53%.

7.2 The public internet access available in libraries and learning centres have been widely used. In the calendar year 2005, 18,063 individuals logged on to PCs in Council library and learning centres. The 2004 council annual consumer survey showed 18% of the Dundee population had used these Public Internet Access Points. It is therefore a strong foundation to build further access and training support on.

7.3 As the City Council is committed to the modernisation of public services through electronic service delivery it is equally important that the Scottish Executive provides a strong policy foundation for improving digital inclusion.

8 CONSULTATIONS

The Directors of Education, Social Work, Leisure and Communities and Economic Development and Head of Information Technology have been consulted on this report.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Scottish Executive Consultation on the Review of Digital Inclusion Policy, 1 December 2005

Chris Ward
Assistant Chief Executive (Community Planning)..... 07/02/2006

REVIEW OF SCOTTISH DIGITAL INCLUSION POLICY QUESTIONNAIRE

In providing responses, it is helpful to have evidence and information which will set your response in context. If you are unable to respond to a Y/N question because you don't know or have no strong view, please feel free to leave the tick box unchecked. You may still wish to provide additional comments, either in the space provided or on a separate page if required.

Marketing/Branding

“Ensuring excluded individuals and groups are aware of the opportunities that the Web and ICTs can provide”

1. **Do we need better signposting of public internet access points to encourage usage?**

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. **Would it help to have a single, national brand for all public internet access points?**

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Could be appropriate for PIAPs located in non-public buildings e.g. in rural areas. Difficult to promote - why should this be different from other provisions such as libraries. Suggest local branding

3. **If there was a single, national brand, should it include private, voluntary and community public internet access points also?**

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

This would raise expectations - some facilities are free, but private sector may charge.

4. **Should a 'quality mark' be introduced to identify public internet access points and ICT training venues which conform to an agreed standard?**

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

For PIAPs - public libraries already have standards in place. ICT training venues should be addressed

Support

“Providing reliable, accessible and cost effective sources of advice and support is crucial.”

5. **Should there be a central point for sharing of Digital Inclusion best-practice and resources across Scotland?**

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC)

6. **Are you currently involved in any practitioner groups or networks (e.g. for ICT trainers or sharing best practice) which you find useful?**

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

SLIC, HFE Sector

If YES, please specify including the reason why you find it useful:

Facilitated by SLIC/Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals Scotland (CILIPS). Secondments hard on training, ECDL training, local assistance - not for public

7. **What range of information and support do practitioners need and why?**

Please specify:

New developments, innovative practice, funding opportunities. Drop in taster sessions, information about how to use systems to rest needs of practicalities. - transfer learning to work applications. Geared to individual needs - resource instant but positive outcomes.

8. **Do you have any examples of techniques or projects which have proven successful and which you would be willing to share with us?**

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

Making ICT access available in public libraries and community centres. Would be better if training and assistance was also available in these venues.

9. Which resources do you use for information about access to and training for use of ICT and the Internet?

Please specify:

CILIPS, SLIC, Local Authority Network, TAFLIN (Tayside and Fife Library and Information Network), HFE Programmes. Council's IT Department. ECDL Drop-tasters colleagues find informal. E-mail. Broaden out this experience to the public.

Friends, colleagues, own investigation and experimentation. Latter is most important (for me)

ICT Learning

"Developing the basic computer and technological skills that will instil individuals with the confidence to use the web and ICTs."

10. Is it important that already disadvantaged groups, whether disadvantaged by income, unemployment, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or age, regardless of their geographical location or point of access to ICT and the Internet, should have a consistent experience of public internet access, support and ICT training?

Yes	✓
No	

11. What impact has existing Digital Inclusion policy had on equality groups, particularly minority ethnic groups (given the legal duty on the public sector to promote race equality)?

Please specify:

Difficult to quantify. Some examples of good practice, but fragmented and not directly attributable to the policy. Reflected in Service Plan, Community Learning and Development, and Equality and Diversity Plans. Also evident in local projects.

12. Should there be a nationally unified range of learning and support materials for use in delivery of ICT training to ensure consistency in approach?

Yes	✓
No	

But by whom? Also - what about local needs? Problem about keeping up to date. Might want to have checklist of topics - added value of local developments. Perhaps a list of areas/topics that should be covered would be helpful - but it would have to be updated regularly

13. Would you be willing to contribute to the development of such a unified range of learning and support materials?

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

14. Should the content of such training courses be accredited by national organisations (e.g. Scottish Qualifications Authority) to encourage progression to further learning?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Concern regarding timescale for drawing up accreditation plan. Already have links with local HFE establishments. Not everyone will want to do accredited training. Not necessary, if people want to progress on to further learning info should be available on further learning opportunities. ICT for most people is a means to an end i.e. a way of finding out about topics that interest them. Most not interested in pursuing a career in ICT.

Communities

“Providing access to the web and ICTs at the time, place, method and price appropriate to the needs and lifestyles of disadvantaged communities and individuals.”

15. Does additional support need to be given to rural or remote communities which may lack a public internet access venue?

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

If YES, please specify:

Locate in libraries, mobiles and community centres. Involve outreach workers.

Library source, subsidised background. Create use of mobile service. May be worth equipping mobile library vans with wireless access - coverage may be inadequate. Utilise local facilities as much as possible e.g. libraries.

16. What measures should be taken to facilitate access and usage by users for whom English is not a first language or for whom cultural factors might play a part in preventing access?

Please specify:

Software to be made available. Individual training with ESOL Workers. Publicity drives, backed up by a clear commitment on resources, targeted in areas/communities where there are significant numbers of non English speakers. Use contacts within the ethnic communities to make ICT

access available.

17. What support do communities need to develop and offer the attractive content that we know encourages new users to the internet?

Please specify:

Facilitated by library.

Community channels.

ICT workers.

Publicise good quality sites.

Technical support. Make info structure available - confidence

Possibly make resources available to work at a local level as part of community ed service. Technical support for developing websites etc

18. Should the Scottish Executive promote and support the development of a range of community based portals and support provision of relevant content?

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

Perhaps through funding of additional infrastructure for public libraries and community centres. National dev of content not necessary - thats up to individuals to utilise the internet to find info useful to themselves.

Public Service Delivery

“World class public services, which are designed and delivered to make sure the interests of those who use them come first.”

19. Does the way in which public services are currently delivered adequately support groups which are disadvantaged, whether by gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or age?

Yes	
No	

20. Do we need to make more effective use of technology to better deliver services to those groups?

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

21. Do you know of, and are willing to share, examples where using different technologies to deliver services has been successful in reaching these groups or individuals?

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

If YES, please specify:

Services delivered to stroke patients, minority ethnic groups, people with learning difficulties.

22. How can we incentivise the take-up of electronic services and increase their relevance in the lives of users?

Please specify:

Find out what people's interests are and tailor services appropriately, e.g. genealogy.

Continue to prioritise promotional and outreach activities. Provision of IT equipment support and training to local voluntary organisations operating in low income communities.

Free broadband access, Internet awareness, find out what 'bullets' to list - what

23. Do intermediaries have a role in introducing users to electronic services and benefits?

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

If YES, please specify:

Should be skilled ICT workers, including library staff, trained volunteers and adult learning workers. To give practical advice on how to make the most of these services and benefits.

24. **Should the Scottish Public Sector have a common Channels Strategy which identifies particular delivery channels which are effective for particular services and customer groups?**

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

General

25. **Are the themes in 'Connecting Scotland's People' still relevant?**

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

If NOT, please specify:

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26. **What role should the Scottish Executive have in Digital Inclusion?**

Please specify:

Provide funding where there is an evidence base of existing success within libraries.

Funding - resourcing. Can't promote without resources.

27. What role should Local Authorities have in Digital Inclusion?

Please specify:

Network of buildings with free access to ICT facilities. Sustain and develop success of People's Network.

Libraries, SMART technology

Provide modern technology in schools

28. What should a revised Digital Inclusion policy do to support the [Closing the Opportunity Gap](#) objectives?

Please specify:

Should underpin the knowledge economy, and continue to support objectives.

29. We welcome your responses to the above questions but would also be pleased to receive any additional comments which you may have.

Libraries have a key role to play in taking forward the Digital Inclusion Agenda.

Welcome the opportunity to be part of the consultation process.

The Housing Department, like all social landlords, provides opportunities for registered tenant organisations to influence how its services are planned and delivered. Following a Communities Scotland initiative it is also likely that they may be part of a national framework of tenant organisations which will have direct access to the Scottish Executive. It would open up opportunities to improve communications with these organisations at local and national level if they could be enabled to purchase IT equipment and support services, by, for example, extending the remit of Communities Scotland registered tenant organisation grant scheme.

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this questionnaire.