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CONNECTING SCOTLAND

A Year In View



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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A Year in View

An opportunity to look back at what the first year of Connecting Scotland has achieved – and to say thank you to all those involved who made it possible!



Connecting Scotland has provided a lifeline to digitally excluded people during the pandemic.



This virus has posed a major challenge to our normal way of life and devices have helped people keep in touch with loved ones and friends, stay up to date with information, and access public services while we all stayed safe at home, as the personal stories in this report demonstrate.

Digital champions provided invaluable help and advice to users and we could not have done this without them. We want to rebuild an inclusive economy and society and it is important nobody is left behind.

Kate Forbes MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy

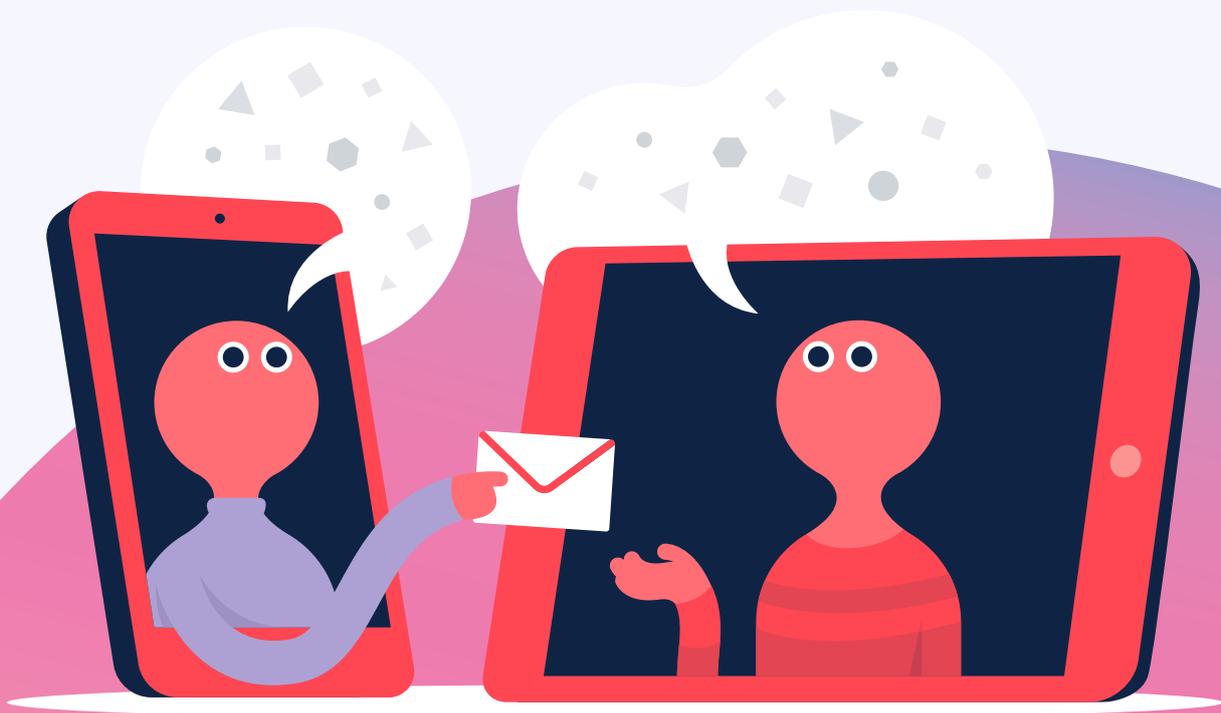
Connecting Scotland has...

Responded to the pandemic

Imagine facing the Covid-19 pandemic without access to the internet, for example if you have been instructed to shield and don't have the income to buy equipment or data? Thousands of people in Scotland were in this situation during lockdown and the events of the past year really highlighted the digital divide in Scotland.

The Connecting Scotland programme was set up in May 2020 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. It aims to provide a national, human-centred, consistent and comprehensive approach to reducing the rates of digital exclusion and digital marginalisation due to low income.

Connecting Scotland provides a device, data, training and support - not just providing kit but ensuring that recipients get the most out of their equipment and are supported in learning and developing their long term digital skills.



Connecting Scotland has...

Been a real team effort

Connecting Scotland is a collaboration between public, private and third sector organisations. It created a process that can identify those in need of the service and created a solid, sustainable pipeline for delivery, and trains a network of Digital Champions to provide one-on-one support to customers:

CONNECTING SCOTLAND

Provides a device, connection and training and support to people on low incomes

SCVO

Work jointly with government to deliver the programme. SCVO run the application process and distribute devices, working closely with third sector and local government

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

Established the programme in May 2020, initially as a response to Covid. SG determines the overall policy, eligibility criteria, and funding

INTERMEDIARY ORGANISATIONS

Identify eligible customers and engage with SCVO to submit applications to the programme. They also nominate Digital Champions for training

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Play a key role in application panels, assessing eligibility. They can also make applications to the programme. COSLA play a key strategic role and are members of the Connecting Scotland governance board

SUPPLIERS

Supply devices and internet connections for distribution

DIGITAL CHAMPIONS

Network of champions, trained by SCVO in digital skills, to offer one on one support to Connecting Scotland customers

USERS

Receive a device, connection and a Digital Champion contact. We ask people to let us know via surveys what impact the programme has had for them

Connecting Scotland has...

Achieved a huge amount

Connecting Scotland is a collaboration between public, private and third sector organisations. It created a process that can identify those in need of the service and created a solid, sustainable pipeline for delivery, and trains a network of Digital Champions to provide one-on-one support to customers:

In total, Scottish Government has committed over

£48 million

to Connecting Scotland

To date, over

40,000 households

have been supported through Connecting Scotland

So far over

2,700 Digital Champions

have been trained to offer support to Connecting Scotland customers

By the end of 2021 Connecting Scotland aims to have reached the target of bringing

60,000 households online

Connecting Scotland won a

UK Digital Impact Leaders award

for leveraging technology to improve mental healthcare and awareness.

Why did we do it?

We knew that barriers were preventing people from getting online. The most commonly cited barriers in applications were:

- Affordability, with people on low incomes unable to afford devices and internet connection.
- A lack of digital skills and confidence, often due to a lack of experience and support.
- Social barriers, especially social isolation and loneliness.

How did respondents access the internet before getting a device through Connecting Scotland?



Some relied on mobile devices and data



Some had no previous experiences of devices or the internet



Some had an old or broken device that they couldn't afford to replace



Some accessed the internet in public places that were closed due to Covid

What we did...

Barriers to digital inclusion	Pre-Covid situation	During Covid – what we provided
Access to devices	Libraries, community centres, friends and family	iPads and Chromebooks
Access to connectivity	Libraries, friends and family, public places	Mobile WiFi with 24 months unlimited data
Gaining and developing digital skills	Support groups, friends and family, libraries and community centres	Digital Champions
Confidence	Support groups, libraries, friends and family	Digital Champions and helpline
Access to online support and services	Support groups, friends and families, libraries, community groups, support workers	Digital Champions and helpline



Who benefitted from Connecting Scotland?

Thanks to a huge amount of hard work, we received applications from organisations across all 32 local authorities, and over 38,000 people have received support so far.

We found out that:

68% of respondents in the phase 1 follow-on survey said that they were confident or fairly confident internet users, and **86% of respondents said that their digital skills had improved** since becoming involved in Connecting Scotland.

86% of respondents reported an **improvement in their ability to stay in touch** with each other.

83% of respondents reported an **improvement in being able to find interests**.

74% reported an **improvement in their mental health**.

89% of respondents agree or strongly agree that **access to the internet has helped them to cope** with being at home more due to COVID-19 restrictions.



What our users said...

We also spoke directly to users of Connecting Scotland. Here are some of the things they told us about the ways the programme has helped:



Took part by learning many things

using it for my study. It's hard to do on the phone – it's hard to see properly. The Chromebook is much easier to see and hear. I wanted to appreciate you, and **you're helping me a lot.**



So much quicker

to access shopping and banking. Phone is much slower. iPad makes life easier. Great for ordering deliveries as I can't carry heavy items of shopping, especially being in high flats.



I've used it for the Scottish Government

Keeping up to date with the Scottish Government and what's going on with this Covid. I do that quite a lot.



I pay my council tax and things like that through it too.

I'm on universal credit and I use it to do things like that too [...] It's fine if you have any queries you go and put in online and they get back to you. It's a lot easier than phoning up and doing that.



It's saved my sanity to tell you the truth.

The thought of being on my own with no one. It's opened up my life and let me live a bit more. It's kept my brain ticking and kept me sane.

On Twitter...

Link_Group_Ltd
@Link_Group_Ltd

Replying to @Link_Group_Ltd

@Link_Living service user, Alan, received an iPad and said: "I really appreciate the device and the support setting it up."

"It'll help me explore online courses and support with job searches online."

@digitalscots @scotgovfairer @scvotweet @digiscot #ConnectingScotland



10:04 AM · Apr 29, 2021 · Twitter Web App

1 Retweet 3 Likes

SchoolNurseDG
@SchoolNurseDG

Feedback received from some of the 60 families provided with devices and access to WiFi by Connecting Scotland in partnership with NHS D&G SCHOOL NURSES @CAMHS_DG_NHS , Looked After Children's team, Health Visitors and FNP @NShealthvisitor



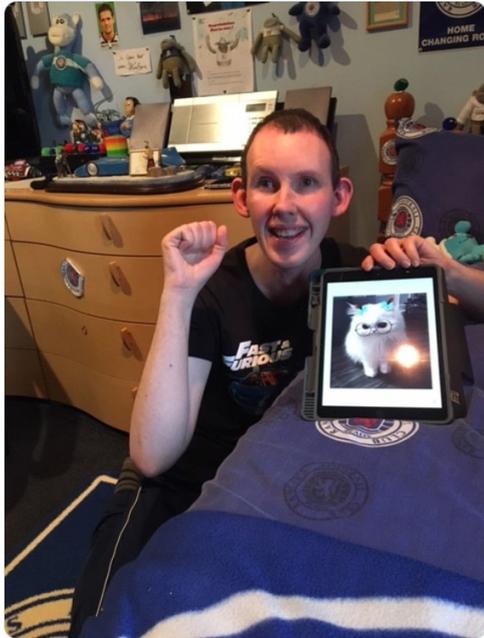
240 views 0:10 / 0:23

9:26 AM · Apr 29, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

3 Retweets 2 Quote Tweets 10 Likes

Sense Scotland
@SenseScotland

Thanks to #ConnectingScotland Gavin now has his very own iPad, meaning he can keep in touch with family, access entertainment and improve his communication skills. Sense Scotland Manager Wendy will be Gavin's 'Digital Champion'. Gavin beams: "This iPad is just mine."



5:01 PM · Aug 20, 2020 · Hootsuite Inc.

4 Retweets 1 Quote Tweet 20 Likes



None of this would have been possible without the amazing work of the Digital Champions network:

We surveyed our Digital Champions after Phase 1, and of those surveyed:

- Most were supporting people for at least one hour a week and are supporting multiple learners across a range of user groups.
- Most (88%) said that they felt confident that they have the digital skills they need to support others as a Digital Champion.
- Their users are interested in using devices for a wide range of purposes. In phase 1, learners were most interested in connecting with others online and entertainment.
- Learners' biggest concerns are that they lack skills and knowledge to use the technology and access the internet.

And all of this against a really difficult background. Because of Covid restrictions, support had to be delivered remotely, with the difficulty that brings when providing guidance over the phone or online. This is especially true when supporting Connecting Scotland users who are new to digital technologies and still learning.

We know how much Connecting Scotland users appreciated the support they received – of those surveyed, **99%** receiving support from their Digital Champion rated that support as good or very good.

What next?

This year will see Connecting Scotland meet the target of bringing 60,000 people online by the end of 2021.

Another round of applications will open from 30 August, with a focus on digitally excluded people on low incomes who are seeking employability support.

If you think your organisation might be able to submit an application, please visit **Connecting Scotland** for full details and guidance.



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