CONNECTING SCOTLAND

Digital Champions Spotlight

Communicating and Connecting

SCVO

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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About Connecting Scotland

Connecting Scotland is a Scottish Government funded initiative set up in response to coronavirus. The programme works with organisations to support their service users to get online by providing iPads, Chromebooks and support to develop digital skills for people who are digitally excluded and on low incomes. Its aim is to help every person in Scotland get online through provision of a funded programme to support our most vulnerable citizens to get online along with helpful **resources for friends and family**.

Connecting Scotland is a partnership between the **Scottish Government**, local authorities and **SCVO** (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations). It's supported by a **range of organisations** from across Scotland and the UK to provide support like:

- internet enabled devices
- connectivity through mobile data
- training and support for staff and volunteers to become '**digital champions**' to support people to use the internet confidently and safely

What is the Digital Champions Spotlight?

The 'Digital Champions Spotlight' offer an opportunity for digital champions to engage in conversations, learning and support focused on key digital participation themes. Every two months we spend a week bringing together resources, guidance and free webinars while shining a spotlight on amazing organisations leading the way.

We're also using the Spotlights as a way of understanding the vital work happening across Scotland and the support needed to empower organisations, communities and individuals to become more digitally confident. Our team will be bringing digital champions together in conversation, visiting projects and seeing firsthand how organisations across Scotland are tackling the digital divide.

Blended approaches

Following the national lockdown and pivot to digital service delivery in the spring of 2020, most services had to grapple with how they would remain connected to the people they support. Digital became an essential lifeline

and supporting those with no digital skills or confidence was a huge challenge in the context of remote support. In normal circumstances, a Digital Champion would be able to sit next to a learner, in their own home or in a community setting, and talk them through some of the basics on using a tablet or computer. During the pandemic, this support was mostly provided over the phone, and remains a challenge:

> **We provide disabled people and carers with a blend of face-to-face and remote adult learning opportunities. Pre-COVID, 100% of our work - learning services and befriending - were face to face. 54 of our frontline learning services were delivered in a person's own home so people weren't always coming to us, we were going to them. We obviously made that decision to be remote because we couldn't, with so many risk factors, being in someone's own home or in those small unregulated community spaces that we just we couldn't continue in that way. Making the pivot took that away, being able to be beside somebody physically. With reflection the service didn't change, and it was so personalized we just had a different context and we had different cues.**
> **Emma Whitelock, Lead Scotland**

> **Having had a break from face-to-face contact due to Covid it has been challenging to get some of the older learners re-engaged. Some support is still being offered over the phone due to vulnerability of learners.**
> **Jennifer Mitchinson, Berwickshire Housing Association**

As restrictions started to lift some Digital Champions were able to get creative with how they supported their learners:

> **Had to do a door visit as they found it challenging to understand over the phone and they were clicking on wrong thing but they appreciated me doing a door visit!**
> **Chloe McCrea, Turning Point Scotland**

> **We did doorstep setups, we did walk and talk sessions where we were helping with induction into digital. [Connectivity] was delivered in tandem with really chunky good accessible support and we were able to do that because we continued with a hub and home blended model and a lot of our early digital setup and support was delivered outside. It was delivered on doorsteps; we discovered wheelie bins were a great**

platform for iPad setups so we took it out to people and we were there for all the nervousness they may have had."
Janette Mitchell, Raploch Community Initiative

The ability to offer socially distanced support has helped Digital Champions overcome some of the challenges of remote support, as well as greater digital confidence to be able to share their screen:

Sometimes a problem is really minor and will only take two seconds to fix, however depending on the users skill level, it isn't always possible to have them fix it themselves. For example, one of our learners was trying to access a website and a 'I'm not a robot' safety wall popped up. She didn't understand what I meant by clicking on the matching pictures, because they didn't match one another. Finding ways around problems like this has been tricky, and it's easy for both parties to become frustrated. However, being patient and gentle with the learner is sometimes all that is needed - also having them share their screen on zoom is a massive help, because we can then see what they are seeing! We have been able to offer 1:1 socially distanced support and this has really boosted the learners confidence because then they can see what is happening and sometimes that's easier to remember.
Forth Community Resource Centre

Despite the challenges that services and Digital Champions have encountered in helping people connect, there has also been amazing progress:

"We have had many positive outcomes, from someone assessing counselling services, another securing his first job via a MS Teams interview. We have someone who is actually showing his elderly mum how to the digital devices he was given and connecting with his sister in Belgium. Most importantly it's allowing people to connect with others, attend services available to them and allowed them to access music, entertainment and social platforms. "
Loraine Duncan, Lanarkshire Association for Mental Health

As restrictions continue to ease, many services are now looking to how they maintain the positive impact of digital participation with more traditional service delivery models – a 'blended' approach. Neighbourhood Networks reflect on their digital journey of bringing their staff along with then, and how this has enabled them to plan for a blended model of service delivery going forward:

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The key thing for us is about bringing people together and making sure that people have friends that they can do activities with and learn in their communities. All of our staff are brought on for their one-to-one skills and their personal skills. The big thing for us when the pandemic hit was that most of our frontline staff were not exactly what you would call hugely I.T. literate. Some of them were, and just because they happened to be, but it wasn't a key skill that we were looking for at recruitment at that time because it was a very small part of their job.

We're here to help people develop and reach outcomes and we wanted to show that we could continue to do that. We were looking for solutions in an online environment where we could continue to allow people to meet up and continue to learn, so we needed to get the staff on board first and make sure that they knew how to do that. They were supported to do that, and they knew that we were there to support them as well, so a lot of it was [managers] the first instance, taking a lead on things and bringing in any external facilitators. Now the staff themselves lead so many of the activities so that's been a huge change.
Neighbourhood Networks

The ability to offer a blended approach to service delivery has enabled organisations reach more people than they might have reached through traditional methods:

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We deliver, in partnership, a weekly zoom choir which has been joyful. We also adapted some of the work we were doing with, for example, our local nursing home. We have one of our volunteers who would go in weekly and do a letter writing session with the residents. We weren't able to do that in the pandemic because of restrictions, but we did do it by zoom. By connecting family members of the residents that were in the nursing home, all of a sudden, we had a very connected community. We deliver much more than we used to do online and not all of it is the serious stuff, which is good because I think we're acutely aware of the impact and mental health of the pandemic. A lot of our social isolation work tackled that pre-pandemic, but digital has helped us raise our game, reach a wider audience, and have more people on our radar. That's hugely useful when you you're trying to do all the things we do.
Janette Mitchell, Raploch Community Initiative

Pivoting – connecting services and users

COVID-19 presented new challenges to organisations of different sizes and scales, but fewer seemed as immediately obvious than the need to pivot to digital delivery. Many services provided essential support for vulnerable, isolated and lonely individuals, and at a time of enforced national isolation for many people, these organisations and their offerings were crucial.

In order to continue providing these services, organisations had to think quickly about how they could deliver in a completely new way, considering the impact – both positive and negative – that could have on their client base. This new way of working meant that there was a need to upskill not only service users, but also staff, to ensure consistent support was available. With restrictions in place, bringing people along on the journey had the added challenge of being physically apart from learners:

> **Social distancing made helping difficult, I had to explain things several times, but we got there.**
> **Iain Mackenzie, Western Isles Library**

Similarly, for learners who lacked essential digital skills, instilling the confidence and motivation to stay engaged and embrace technology was a barrier:

> **Some resistance to taking on new skills at a later stage in life, with the usual worries of not being able to understand or use the technology, or envision how it might be useful to them. Some mental health problems to work around and fear of breaking or damaging the technology somehow.**
> **Anonymous**

Overcoming these issues is never easy, and the length of time it takes depends on the individual learner and their motivations for participating. However pivoting to digital delivery had some powerful outcomes for organisations and clients alike, helping to evolve services, increase audiences and strengthen impact for people that need it most:

> **There was one chap who got his first tenancy for a flat quite soon into lockdown and he had no cooking skills at all. At that point he wasn't able to really get any support from other agencies about how to learn to do that. He joined our cooking class online every Wednesday and he was able to learn skills and learn how to cook, and now he's absolutely fine to get involved and cook his**

own dinners. For him that was a huge achievement because he didn't have any of that knowledge or skills prior and to the classes. Prior to lockdown, the cooking in particular, it's always something that we've supported in smaller groups in a local environment. Digital has allowed us to expand that substantially, where that one class can now reach 200 people at the one time, and you can still be really interactive with it.
Neighbourhood Networks

Where users already have some digital confidence, embedding a flexible approach and using systems that people are comfortable with allowed digital champions to create a familiar context to keep them engaged:

"**"We're able to say to somebody 'well, what tools do you have just now,' and they may change … The staff have had the autonomy to work with people and think, 'right, what's up…? Is that what you're using…?' Whatever it is, is it Messenger, is it going to be text-based? Is it video, and what operating system do you have and who are you trying to contact? Where's that person starting point? What are they comfortable with? Using that familiar context to build trust, to build confidence, to build skills. I think that key to success to overcoming challenges has been being able to flex and remain person-centred.**
Lead Scotland

Similarly, understanding the needs, concerns and worries of the people that services and Digital Champions are trying to reach, and responding accordingly, can help to make the transformation to digital delivery smoother:

"**Looking back, many of the people that we support, because of their additional needs and whether that's learning disability or mental health, their parents and carers were not really confident and allowing them online. We had to do specific training and awareness sessions for the parents and carers about how we were going to keep people safe. We had to show how we're going to run things, the controls that we have in place and how we're going to keep your people safe. We also developed ground rules and a digital code of conduct so our activities are maybe a bit different in in that they're not just open to anybody, so our logins and everything are pretty protected and in their own private groups… we don't just share it full and wide and that is with our 'protection' emphasis."**
Neighbourhood Networks

One key message is that digital delivery isn't a flash in the pan. Although services are excited to resume physical delivery and the important outcomes that come with it, some organisations are taking the lessons learned from their pivot to future-proof, transform and expand their provision:

> **We have started to think about opening our digital activities up to other people in the community like we would do in the real world. If we were having a networking activity or an event, or hosting something, we would be encouraging people for the community to come along and get involved and build connections. We've developed a digital recommendation form for people to prepare and engage with Neighborhood Networks, so they can get involved in some of the activities.**

> **We can complete support plans with people and their families as well, although obviously the digital activities is a big focus, I think the connection that community living workers can have through these digital forums for some of the different parts of our service that we offer as well and that's been a real advantage.**
> **Neighbourhood Networks**

> **Learners have been given smart phones and apps tailored to their needs such as translation apps, as most of the learners I am working with are New Scots."**
> **Kinning Park Complex**

> **For many years we have run 'getting started with computers programme' and it was always hub-based and people come in over four weeks. We transformed how we delivered that and we did it online, and the staff team and our digital champion volunteers rose to the occasion: tremendous efforts and a tremendous results for members of the community as well.**
> **Raploch Community Partnership**

Lastly, sharing knowledge and lessons as digital champions or organisations is a great way to enhance digital inclusion for other organisations too.

> **"The organisations we're in contact with, not that they've not thought about digital, they've just not been on the same journey as we have, and we're quite ahead of a lot of other organisations**

as well and we've been able to offer that back at other providers and organisations which is working well.
Neighbourhood Networks

Accessibility

Devices from Connecting Scotland are designed to be flexible and to meet the needs of as many users as possible. While the standard device settings suited a great number of users, Digital Champions reported adjusting certain settings to make things easier, such as increasing screen size, using tect-to-speech settings and screen magnification.

As important as digital devices have become in helping people keep in touch with loved ones across the country, they've also become key tools in helping people communicating in their daily lives. Digital Champions noted that devices were being used for translation purposes, as a magnifier for people with sight loss and as text to speech tools for individuals who struggle to communicate.

With Thanks

To the organisations and individuals that contributed to our **Connecting and Communicating** Spotlight :

Mhor Collective

AbilityNet

Lead Scotland

Raploch Community Partnership

Neighbourhood Networks

Govan & Linthouse Parish Church

Connecting and Communicating Resources

We've pulled together some of our favourite resources on communicating and connecting. We've provided a description of what they are and who created them. We've also identified if they're Lessons, Videos, Websites or Resources. You can click on the link and it will take you to the resource. If you know of any great resources that we haven't included you can send it to us at **help@connecting.scot**

Social Media

- Using Online Communication Tools (Bank of Scotland Academy) **Lesson**
- Socialising Safely Online – Webinar Recording (Get Safe Online) **Video**
- Social Engineering – Webinar Recording (Get Safe Online) **Video**
- Socialising Online (Learn My Way) **Lesson**
- Using Facebook (Learn My Way) **Lesson**
- Social Media Check List (SWGfL) **Resource**
- Your guide to social networks, apps and games (NSPCC – Net Aware) **Website**
- Digital Wellbeing Courses (Cybersmile) **Lessons**
- Using Facebook (Learn My Way) **Lesson**
- Digital Communication (Barclay Digital Wings) **Lesson**
- Socialising on Social Media (Barclay Digital Wings) **Lesson**
- What is WhatsApp? (Ague UK) **Resource**
- How to use Twitter (Digital Unite) **Resource**
- How to use Facebook (Digital Unite) **Resource**

Video Calling

- Video Calling (Learn My Way) **Lesson**
- How to Use FaceTime (Apple) **Resource**
- How to Use Group FaceTime (Apple) **Video**
- Getting Started with Zoom (GCF Global) **Website**
- How to Join a Zoom Meeting (Zoom) **Video**
- Easy Read Guide to Zoom (People First Scotland) **Resource**
- How to Video Call on WhatsApp (WhatsApp) **Video**

Telling Stories

- Getting Started with iMovie (Apple) **Resource**
- Communicate your ideas through Storytelling (Google Digital Garage) **Lesson**
- Telling your story in an online world (Bank of Scotland Academy) **Lesson**
- Safety and Wellbeing Online
- Socialising Safely Online (Get Safe Online) **Webinar Recording**
- Social Media Facts and Advice for Parents (Internet Matters) **Website**
- Social Media Privacy Guides for Parents (Internet Matters) **Website**
- Using Social Media Safely (National Cyber Security Centre) **Website**
- Communication and Social Media (Get Safe Online) **Website**

- Spotting Fake News on Social Media (Go Viral) **Resource**
- Social Media Screen Time (Mind Yer Time) **Website**

iPad Resources

- iPad Accessibility Features (XMA) **Video**
- Apple Teacher (anyone can sign up for a free account) **Website**
- Magnifying your iPad Screen (Apple) **Video**
- Using VoiceOver on your iPad (for users who are blind or partially sighted) **Video**
- Change the way colours are seen on your iPad (Apple) **Video**
- Using AssistiveTouch on your iPad (Apple) **Video**
- How to have your iPad read text to you (Apple) **Video**

Chromebook Resources

- Screen Magnification on a Chromebook (Google) **Video**
- Mobility Assistive Features (Google) **Video**
- How to use your voice to enter text on a Chromebook (Google) **Video**
- How to use select-to-speak on your Chromebook (Google) **Video**

Case Studies

Neighbourhood Networks

Neighbourhood Networks exists to support individuals at risk of isolation and loneliness connect with communities and live independently. Neighbourhood Networks has always been predicated on bringing people together, and has always sought staff who had strong interpersonal and one-to-one skills. As a result, an immediate challenge faced by the organisation in light of the pandemic was rapidly upskilling staff to be able to support clients digitally. External facilitators were brought in to manage online activities while staff built their confidence and skills in using online platforms.

Staying safe online was a key barrier early on. Many people that Neighbourhood Networks works have additional support needs, and there was wariness from some parents and carers around the risks of being online. In response to this, the organisation arranged a suite of training around digital safety and ensured future safeguarding through the creation of a bespoke Digital Code of Conduct and using closed, protected platforms for client engagement.

Moving online has meant that Neighbourhood Networks has been able to continue to change lives. At the start of the pandemic, one of their clients had just gained a tenancy but was struggling with a lack of cooking knowledge. As the country moved into a strict lockdown, there were no support services available to support this person. Thanks to the organisation, he was able to join a weekly cooking class every Wednesday online to expand his abilities and embed an essential skill for life. Cooking classes had always been part of Neighbourhood Network's offering – but thanks to digital delivery, they can expand this opportunity substantially. COVID-19 forced Neighbourhood Networks to think differently and try new approaches in connecting people together. Now, their clients are getting to know more people from different networks, and from out-with their own communities. The organisation is now reaching a much bigger audience, expanding its provision, being responsive to client needs (starting an online drama group), and thinking about how these networks can be sustained beyond restrictions.

Raploch Community Partnership

Raploch Community Partnership is a community regeneration organisation based in Raploch, but serving the wider priority areas of Stirlingshire. As participants in the Connecting Scotland programme, Raploch have been able to support a range of clients to build their confidence and abilities.

The clients that the Partnership works with faced several barriers to online engagement, chiefly accessibility and affordability. Underpinning these barriers was a common 'fear factor', preventing people from embracing the digital world. The people that the organisation supports are often in a phase of transition, undergoing a change in life circumstances, and are likely to be from a low-income family.

The Partnership works to improve opportunities for social cohesion and involvement for people from all walks of life, and deliver this across work in social prescription, employability, training and encouraging active citizenship. For a long time, digital participation has been a key element this work. With COVID came the emphasis on the importance of digital and Raploch Community Partnership feels that the Connecting Scotland programme helped them to 'blitz it', and enabled them to take a fresh approach with boosting participation across the community. From walk-and-talks, to doorstep set-ups (where wheelie bins proved an essential platform for those first digital steps!), digital champions were able to reach a wider range of people than had previously engaged with the organisation. A blended approach to supporting learners meant that digital

champions were there every step of the way.

The Connecting Scotland approach of providing devices, connectivity and skills has made a huge difference to the people Raploch works with. In communities where affordability is a significant barrier to participation, a two-year guaranteed access to the internet is a significant assistance.

For Raploch, there is a real emphasis on people with their project. Their digital champions relish the opportunity to get involved because many of them understand and have experienced the difference that it makes. By creating a service that people want to get involved in, building on a strong track record of support, and embedding digital inclusion across a range of successful programmes, Raploch can ensure continued support and involvement of digital champions.

The impact of Connecting Scotland for the people Raploch works with has been transformative. They feel they have raised the bar on some of their recognised and award-winning work, spanning employability, life skills and tackling isolation.

Key to all of this: don't just focus on the 'serious stuff'. The organisation is acutely aware of the impact on mental health by the pandemic. By remembering the importance of social connectedness, digital participation can change lives. One service offered by Raploch is a weekly letter-writing session with a local care home. Bringing this onto a digital platform enabled families to link up with residents during an otherwise difficult period filled with restrictions.

The message from Raploch is 'keep it fresh', find new ways to engage your clients digitally and build on your success to create communities of support.

Lead Scotland

Lead Scotland is a charity seeking to empower disabled people and carers to improve their lives through learning. These learning opportunities are a blend of in-person and remote, but prior to the pandemic, 54% of frontline services were delivered in people's own homes.

Lead made the decision to pivot to remote delivery as it become clear that the risks outweighed the benefits of meeting people in homes and unregulated community spaces. The challenges were immediately obvious: not being able to physically share the learning journey by being apart, as

well as the isolation and loneliness that comes from being remote.

One client begun the pandemic with recurring feelings of fear at the thought of long-term isolation, so much so that she would regularly email staff to express her concern, using words like 'frightened' and 'scared'. Thanks to the support of the digital champions at Lead Scotland, this individual soon moved on from telephone support to Zoom support. The team celebrated a win when this learner used PowerPoint to give an online presentation and embarked on two remote learning qualifications. In the space of nine months, access to high-quality online learning produced a transformative effect.

One barrier that has become clear to Lead Scotland is the practicalities of delivering support. Recognising this early on enabled the organisation to take a flexible approach and meet their learners where they were. Rather than developing or promoting a single platform to deliver their service on, Lead realised that understanding what their learners were comfortable with would create a familiar context to drive forward confidence.

The pandemic also offered an opportunity for Lead to re-introduce their befriending project, which had been trialled before to limited success. Now that befriending can be a remote activity, they have seen a major update. They have also used this to encourage and motivate disengaged learners by targeting the service towards them. Prior to the pandemic, this wouldn't have been possible.

Moving forward, Lead Scotland want to see accessibility embedded into technology design rather than considered an 'add-on' or afterthought. With exciting developments in a fast-paced tech landscape, including the potential of AI, the question is: how do we capitalise on that and ensure we're all on this journey together?

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