

# Digital exclusion in Brighton and Hove & Sussex

National and local area data

January 2021

# Digital exclusion – Introduction

- Digital Exclusion operates over a spectrum of motivation, access, skills and ability.
- Includes:
  - those digitally excluded due to lack of motivation;
  - those motivated but with no digital skills;
  - those excluded due to only having limited skills.
- ‘Essential Digital Skills for life’ - 29 abilities within: communicating, handling information and content, transacting, problem-solving, being safe and legal online.

# Digital exclusion – Why are people digitally excluded?

Percentage of households by reason for not having household internet access, Great Britain, 2017 (ONS)	%
Do not need internet, not useful not interesting etc	64
Lack of skills	20
Have access to the internet elsewhere	12
Equipment costs too high	8
Access costs too high, telephone broadband subscription	8
Privacy or security concerns	7
Physical or sensorial disability	2

# Digital exclusion – Why is it important?

- Lloyds Consumer Digital Index - digitally capable people:
  - 87% say it helps them to connect better with friends and family
  - 84% say it helps them to organise their life
  - 55% say it makes them feel more part of a community
  - 44% say it helps them to manage physical and mental well-being.

# Digital exclusion – Why is it important?

- Financial - digitally excluded people spending an average of over £348 more per year.
- Patients and carers who are digitally *included*:
  - 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.
- 59% more confidence in using online health information, 21% report less visits to their GP.

# Digital exclusion – Why is it important?

- Health and care system:
  - lower cost of delivering services digitally.
  - more appropriate use of services, including primary care and urgent care.
  - better patient adherence to medicines and treatments.
  - a return on investment of £6.40 for every £1.00 spent by the NHS on digital inclusion support.
  - savings of £141m by 2028 through reduction in GP visits and reduction in use of offline services.
  - Underpinned by Government Digital Inclusion Strategies (2014, 2017 and due).

# Digital exclusion – Extent nationally

- 4.7 million (9%) of the UK adult population have no digital skills whatsoever.
- 11.7 million (22%) adults in the UK do not have all the 5 Essential Digital Skills for life (communicating, handling information and content, transacting, problem solving, and being safe and legal online).
- “internet non-users” - 5.3 million adults in the UK, or 10.0% of the adult UK population.
- Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) estimated that 7.9 million people will still lack digital skills in 2025.
- Wales (in particular), and North East and North West England are less likely to have the five ‘Basic Digital Skills’.

# Digital exclusion – Who are more excluded?

- Older people - biggest indicator (ONS: “*Virtually all adults aged 16 to 44 years in the UK were ‘recent internet users’ (used within last three months - 99%) in 2019, compared with 47% of adults aged 75 years and over.*” )
- People in lower income groups
- People without a job
- People in social housing
- People with disabilities
- People with fewer educational qualifications excluded left school before 16
- People living in rural areas
- Homeless people
- People whose first language is not English.



# Digital exclusion and accessing appointments in Sussex

- The pandemic and lockdown 1 saw changes overnight towards digital solutions for accessing health and social care services.
- GPs are generally in favour of retaining online consultations.
- Most people are pragmatic - 80% agree that using technology has been a vital support to them during the pandemic.
- People (in Sussex) are generally satisfied with their remote (non-face-to-face) appointments and most are 'happy' to continue this in the future - especially GPs.
- Exceptions - older people and those with disabilities were less happy for remote (non face-to-face).

# Digital exclusion - Extent in Sussex

- Estimated 8.6% of adult population in Brighton and Hove have never used the internet or have not used it within the last three months.
- Estimated 16% of the adult population in Brighton and Hove lack the five 'Basic Digital Skills' (Managing information; Communicating; Transacting; Problem-solving; and Creating).
- There are 15 GP surgeries where less than 30% of patients are using online services - 3 of these are either in the fourth or fifth quintile for older people.

# Digital exclusion - Extent in B&H - the 'e-withdrawn' group (purple)



# Digital exclusion - Local Sussex initiatives

- Citizen's Online and its 'Digital Brighton and Hove' initiative.
- Free courses available from the Good Things Foundation.
- Volunteering Matters 'Brighton Lifelines' project.
- Digital Ambassadors Pilot for staff within primary care and being extended to patients through three Primary care Networks.
- Ageing Well telephone support to help people get online.
- Age UK West Sussex and Brighton and Hove telephone based digital support.
- Southdown Housing - 'Supporting people to get online & stay online'.

# Digital exclusion - Local Sussex initiatives

- Mental Health Sector Connector forum identifying services such as the 'check in and chat' befriending service which provides telephone support to carers with grants for digital.
- Scheme for schools developed by Digital Awareness UK.
- Accredited Digital Skills Course currently being piloted at East Sussex College.
- Barclays Digital Eagles (with a local centre in Brighton) that support digital skills development for home care staff and health care professionals.
- + numerous local and unknown community initiatives.



# Digital exclusion - Local case study: Citizen's Online ('Digital Brighton and Hove')

- In B&H, by May 2019:
  - Recruited 436 Digital Champions.
  - Supported at least 4,500 unique individuals (4503) to improve their digital skills and confidence - (this is mostly the general public/end learners but also includes VCS staff).
  - Delivered 6,950+ sessions of digital skills support.
  - Created a bespoke signposting website.

# Digital exclusion - Techniques to improve digital exclusion?

- Introduce within local interest groups (such as arts, crafts).
- Build trust and personal contact.
- Show people the potential benefits to increase motivation.
- Foster peer support initiatives (such as from friends, family, younger to older people, etc.).
- Consider assistive technology e.g. Amazon 'Alexa'.
- Use a gentle pace when working with people / avoid using 'Digital'.
- Consider more formal accredited courses.
- Identify and address the common barriers (such as fear and digital security).

## Reaching out to digitally excluded people locally

- Difficult due to land-line phone option (during Covid-19).
- Working with GP surgeries where people are more likely to be digitally excluded - offer a gateway to speak to them?
- Contacting people who are currently on a waiting list for a Digital Champion?
- Retrospective accounts of skill-training? ‘what worked’?
- Key people: Digital Champions, family members, health and social care, and those running additional local community initiatives.



# Digital exclusion - Recommendations

1. Understand that digital exclusion occurs across different levels - both initial skills and skills enhancement.
2. Understand importance of motivation - stress the potential benefits of digital inclusion.
3. Understanding 'what worked' from retrospective learners.
4. Join-up learning from the initiatives in B&H/Sussex.
5. Create a directory of the various initiatives within Brighton and Hove.

## Digital exclusion - Recommendations

6. Increase resources to support organisations and the training of frontline staff (e.g. GPs, GP Receptionists, Pharmacists).
7. Provide free wi-fi within the NHS (to reduce social isolation in hospital) including GP surgeries and other sites like Seniors Housing.
8. Invest in peer support involving friends, families, carers, intergenerational initiatives, and Social Prescribers.
9. Provide resources for technological equipment (including voice activated systems such as Amazon Echo [Alexa]).
10. Establish a central evaluation portal to see whether digital skills affects health outcomes.