Digital
Inclusion
Strategy

2020—2023

SOUTH
LANARKSHIRE
COUNCIL

Introduction by the Chief Executive

Many aspects of our daily life are moving on-line and we are quickly becoming "digital by default".

South Lanarkshire Council has a digital strategy to introduce digital services to both improve services to residents and reduce costs. These include on-line forms to apply for services, review rent / council tax balances, and pay bills.

As more services go on-line and many citizens self-serve digitally with South Lanarkshire Council, it is important that focus is also given to those who may be digitally excluded.

87% of adults in the UK now use the **internet daily** for activities such as on-line banking, viewing social media, entertainment and leisure, shopping, accessing government or health services, applying for jobs and information / research.

However, there is a significant number of people who do not or cannot access the internet and therefore do not benefit from on-line opportunities to learn, save money and keep in touch with friends and relatives.

Research also shows that digital exclusion is higher in groups which are most in need of council services, for example elderly citizens and low-income families who may require access benefits.

The South Lanarkshire Digital Inclusion Strategy describes the actions that SLC will take to engage with communities to assist citizens to access digital services, and also how traditional ways to contact us such as telephone and face-to-face will be available where required.

Cleland Sneddon
Chief Executive of South Lanarkshire Council

Strategic Context

The South Lanarkshire Council Plan describes a vision of improving the quality of life of everyone in South Lanarkshire.

The Council's Digital Strategy aims to support this vision by improving council services, and delivering them more efficiently, through the use of new digital technologies such as the internet, mobile apps and social media.

The Digital Inclusion Strategy is designed to complement the Digital Strategy, to ensure that new methods of delivering council services do not disadvantage sections of society, particularly those groups who are already disadvantaged or vulnerable. Enabling citizens to get online will also significantly assist individuals in many other aspects of their lives, not just accessing council services. The Digital Inclusion Strategy is closely aligned to the council's Tackling Poverty and Neighbourhood Planning programmes.

It builds on initiatives already delivered by the Council and partners. These include citizen testing of on-line services, assistance with on-line forms, and running training sessions to improve digital skills.

75% of homes and businesses in South Lanarkshire have access to broadband

Digital Inclusion Strategy

Accessing the Internet

Access to a good internet connection is essential to avoid being digitally excluded.

Ofcom reported in 2018 that 75% of all homes and business premises in South Lanarkshire have access to broadband, the majority of which have broadband speeds greater that 10 Mbps. However there were still a significant number of premises with less than 2 Mbps broadband speed. Lower speeds were more common in rural areas, particularly in parts of Clydesdale.

Analysis of broadband take-up rates shows that the most deprived areas of South Lanarkshire have lower broadband take-up rates (71.3%) than the least deprived areas (84.3%).

During 2019 a citizen survey conducted in the South Lanarkshire Council area identified the following causes of Digital Exclusion:

- lack of digital skills
- cost of an internet connection
- don't have a phone / computer
- not interested
- family members / friends access the internet on their behalf
- poor mobile signal or slow / no bandwidth
- too complicated / difficult to use
- worried about security

SLC Priorities
2020/21 Actions

Based upon the findings of the citizen survey, the following actions have been identified for 2020/21:

Internet access

- Work with partners to improve digital connectivity, including broadband and 4G/5G, across South Lanarkshire
- Provide free public Wi-Fi access in 5 priority sites in Neighbourhood Planning Areas
- Review provision of free-to-use devices in libraries and community facilities to identify gaps

Affordability

- Commence an initiative to provide tablets and broadband for 25 homeless families

Digital Skills

- Conduct training courses for front-line council staff on benefits of digital technologies
- Continue to ensure that all South Lanarkshire pupils have access to a modern digital platform, network and software applications within an appropriate learning environment

Council Services

- Set up telehealth/telecare demonstrator sites to increase awareness of benefits to officers, service users and wider community
- Ensure that relevant council strategies and policies take account of digital inclusion

2020—2023

Delivering the Digital Inclusion Strategy

Each year actions will be identified within each priority area. These will be included and tracked within resource plans across the council.

The SLC Digital Inclusion sub-group will oversee the overall programme of work and conduct further surveys to determine impact of actions.

99% of adults aged 16 to 44 years are using the internet daily

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