Oxfordshire County Council

Equalities Impact Assessment

Digital Inclusion Strategy

06/07/2022

Contents

Section 1: Summary details

Directorate and Service Area	Customers, Organisational Development and Resources Communications, Strategy and Insight Policy Team
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	Digital Inclusion Strategy
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	New Strategy
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (following completion of the assessment).	Citizens Online defines digital inclusion as being "about ensuring the benefits of the internet and digital technologies are available to everyone". It includes both access to the internet and the ability to use it. This is a multi-faceted issue and includes: 1. Access to good quality and affordable broadband, wi-fi and mobile data. 2. Opportunities for digital skills training and support. 3. Devices that can access the internet, that are affordable and good quality, and meet their users' needs. 4. The ability, motivation, confidence, and physical space to safely access the internet. 5. Accessible services that are designed inclusively to meet the needs of service users. The "digital divide" refers to the gap between those who have the elements outlined above, and those who do not. People who are disadvantaged or vulnerable in other ways are more likely to be digitally excluded, with this issue being closely linked to other inequalities. The importance of digital inclusion has been increased following the lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic. The benefits include access to essential services, education, information, social connection, employment opportunities, and reducing our impact on the environment by reducing travel. Poorer health, educational, and employment outcomes, and an increased risk of poverty can all be a result of digital exclusion. We recognise that digital inclusion is a complex issue, and that those who are "digitally excluded" are hard to define.

	We acknowledge that anyone could be digitally excluded in their lifetime, that there is no one category of people who fit this label and that individuals might not consider themselves to be "digitally excluded". However, research carried out by the Local Government Association and Socitm Advisory shows that there are groups who are more likely to be digitally excluded due to a range of different barriers. Therefore, we will place a particular emphasis on improving outcomes for: • Young people • Older people • People living with disabilities or long-term health conditions • People living in rural areas • Refugees • People with English as a secondary language • People in lower income groups • People with few qualifications • People without a job • People living in social housing • Homeless people • Small businesses • Carers • Care leavers • Armed forces community • Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) communities • People living with social deprivation The strategy will aim to tackle inequalities around digital access, which in turn will have an impact on other inequalities (e.g., health and education).
Completed By	Elena Grant
Authorised By	
Date of Assessment	06/07/2022

Section 2: Detail of proposal

Context / Background	Citizens Online defines digital inclusion as being "about ensuring the benefits of the internet and digital technologies are available to everyone". It includes both access to the internet and the ability to use it.
Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.	This is a multi-faceted issue and includes:
	1. Access to good quality and affordable broadband, wi-fi and mobile data.
	2. Opportunities for digital skills training and support.
	3. Devices that can access the internet, that are affordable and good quality, and meet their users' needs.
	4. The ability, motivation, confidence, and physical space to safely access the internet.
	5. Accessible services that are designed inclusively to meet the needs of service users.
	The "digital divide" refers to the gap between those who have the elements outlined above, and those who do not. People who are disadvantaged or vulnerable in other ways are more likely to be digitally excluded, with this issue being closely linked to other inequalities. The importance of digital inclusion has been increased following the lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic. The benefits include access to essential services, education, information, social connection, employment opportunities, and reducing our impact on the environment by reducing travel. Poorer health, educational, and employment outcomes, and an increased risk of poverty can all be a result of digital exclusion.
Proposals Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.	The strategy was decided as the best course of action as it will plug a gap and set direction for addressing this issue, instead of multiple services acting in an uncoordinated manner.

Evidence / Intelligence List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact on different individuals, communities or groups and our ability to deliver our climate commitments.	In October 2021, OCC held a virtual roundtable discussion with approximately 35 partners from various organisations including Oxfordshire public, health, education, and voluntary sectors. In this session, we defined what digital inclusion means to us in Oxfordshire and set out the problem that needs to be addressed. We also discussed our vision for a digitally inclusive county, which included joined-up initiatives, digital inclusion by design, and ensuring that no one is left behind. The discussion also covered barriers that need to be overcome and identified support for those who will never want to be online, funding, duplication of resources due to a fragmented landscape, rurality, online safety, and the cost-of-living crisis as particular challenges. The principles that were identified as needing to underpin collaborative work include signposting access to support, sharing best practice, promoting the benefits of digital, embedding equality, diversity, and inclusion, and recognising that digital inclusion is about people, not just technology. In April 2022, OCC undertook a programme of engagement with external and internal stakeholders. There were three virtual workshops focussed on the Digitally Inclusive Communities strand, with approximately 40 attendees. These workshops were on a range of themes relating to digital inclusion, such as education, isolation, local businesses, and organisations. It also included specific focus on groups who are more likely to be thought of as digitally excluded. Interviews were held with service users who have lived experience of digital exclusion or using our online services, to understand barriers in our service delivery. Finally, a further two virtual workshops were held with OCC staff about how the workplace can be made more digitally inclusive. In June 2022, OCC held a Digital Inclusion Summit. This brought together key stakeholders involved in the digital inclusion landscape in Oxfordshire, and involved speakers giving presentations on the work that they have been undertaking. At the summit, there was a facilitated discussion to develop a digital inclusion charter with partners. This will set out principles around working together to tackle digital exclusion in Oxfordshire.

Alternatives considered / rejected Summarise any other approaches that have been considered in developing the policy or proposed service change, and the reasons why these were not adopted. This could include reasons why doing nothing is not an option.	The alternative to not create a Digital Inclusion Strategy was not possible as it was identified that a strategy was needed into order to address the inequality gap.

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics

Protected Characteristic	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Age	☐	☒	☐	Research has shown that older people, and younger people are more likely to be digitally excluded, with digital needs changing at different ages. The strategy and accompanying action plan will research and look at ways to address this.			
Disability	☐	☒	☐	Research has shown that people with disabilities are more likely to be digitally excluded. The strategy and accompanying action plan will research and look at ways to address this, with commitments included in the strategy around assistive technology and accessible webpages.			
Gender Reassignment	☒	☐	☐				
Marriage & Civil Partnership	☒	☐	☐				

Pregnancy & Maternity	☒	☐	☐				
Race	☐	☒	☐	Research has shown that Black, Asian, and minority ethnic groups are more likely to be digitally excluded. The strategy and accompanying action plan will research and look at ways to address this.			
Sex	☐	☒	☐	Research has indicated links between digital exclusion and victims of domestic violence. The strategy and action plan will look to research and see where more could be done around this.			
Sexual Orientation	☒	☐	☐	N/A			
Religion or Belief	☒	☐	☐	N/A			

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Rural communities	☐	☒	☐	Rural communities have been identified by research as a group that are more likely to be digitally excluded, particularly in terms of broadband access. The strategy and accompanying action plan will research and look at ways to address this.			
Armed Forces	☐	☒	☐	Members of the armed forces and their families have been identified by research as a group that are more likely to be digitally excluded. The strategy and accompanying action plan will research and look at ways to address this.			
Carers	☐	☒	☐	Carers have been identified by research as a group that are more likely to be digitally excluded. The strategy and accompanying action plan will			

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				research and look at ways to address this.			
Areas of deprivation	☐	☒	☐	The strategy will be looking to tackle the inequalities associated with digital exclusion, such as data poverty, which may be more likely to be experienced in areas of deprivation.			

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Wider Impacts

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Staff	☐	☒	☐	The strategy has a specific strand dedicated to enabling a digitally inclusive workplace. This will help to improve digital skills within our workforce.			
Other Council Services	☐	☒	☐	The strategy has a specific strand dedicated to enabling digitally inclusive service delivery. This will help to embed considerations of digital inclusion into OCC's service design and delivery.			
Providers	☐	☒	☐	There is a commitment to promote digital inclusion through our supply chain.			

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Social Value [1]	☐	☒	☐	There is a commitment to consider digital inclusion as part of our Social Value Policy, and in our commissioning responsibilities under the Social Value Act.			

[1] If the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 applies to this proposal, please summarise here how you have considered how the contract might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the relevant area

Section 4: Review

Where bias, negative impact or disadvantage is identified, the proposal and/or implementation can be adapted or changed; meaning there is a need for regular review. This review may also be needed to reflect additional data and evidence for a fuller assessment (proportionate to the decision in question). Please state the agreed review timescale for the identified impacts of the policy implementation or service change.

Review Date	06/07/2023
Person Responsible for Review	Elena Grant
Authorised By	