Digital Inclusion Seminar

Disability Stockport, 22/01/15

Present:

Kieran McMahon (Disability Stockport), Steve Skelton (Stockport Council, Policy, Performance and Reform), Paul James (Stockport Council, Information and Communication), Fiona Douglas (Disability Stockport), Nicola Wallace Dean (Startingpoint), Tanya King (Stockport Homes), Rick Jones (CAB), Anne Sturkazer (Go ON North West), Laura Hadley (Age UK Stockport), Mary (Primus, and Disability Stockport service user), Wendy Griffiths (Stockport Council, Libraries), Colin Masters (Stockport Council, Contact Centre), Matt Scholes (Stockport Council, Adult Social Care), Natalie Harrison (Stockport Council, Policy, Performance and Reform)

Apologies/Additional Circulation: Margaret Brade (Age UK Stockport), Beverley Hart (FLAG), Isabella Collinson (University of the 3rd Age), Naomi Davies (Stockport Council, Adult Social Care), Jenny Rollinson (Stockport Council, Adult Social Care)

Key messages to the Panel:

Attendees at the seminar were pleased to have the opportunity to meet as a cohort of stakeholders to share their experiences as service providers, and to advise on their views of the key barriers to digital inclusion in Stockport. The attendees welcomed the Scrutiny Review Panel's interest in promoting digital inclusion, and used the seminar as an opportunity to make suggestions about what more the Council can do to achieve its aims.

Three key areas that the seminar group feel Members should focus on are:

i. **Confidence building** - to ensure that people are able to access services that are appropriate to their needs and aspirations;

ii. **Incentives for learning** - acknowledgement of the fact that people need an incentive for learning new and daunting skills, and that incentives are different for different people; and

iii. **Accessibility** to the things help individuals become digitally included, including equipment, internet access, information and advice, and targeted courses

These themes reoccurred in the testimonies of all of the attendees, and suggestions included:

i. Closer working between the Council and other providers of digital access and support in the borough, to ensure a joined-up, community-wide approach to skills development in Stockport;

ii. Targeted responses to the things that incentivise people to become digitally able; and

iii. Ensuring that Stockport has a strong and consistent digital offer, which includes: accessible and up-to-date websites, universal access to high-speed broadband, and opportunities for people to access digital equipment

Notes

1. **Context**

   Stockport Council, like other councils around the country, continues to face significant financial pressures. As part of the Council's response to the situation, it plans to make better use of technology to keep people informed and connected, and to reduce the cost of services. While the Council will encourage digital access to services, it will continue to provide a safety net for residents facing digital exclusion, and support those who are less comfortable using digital channels, so they can still easily access the services they need.

2. **Round the table:**

   i) what are the key barriers that stop the people you work with from being digitally included?

Laura, Age UK Stockport	**1) Confidence** - some service users have no experience of technology. The speed of change is daunting, and there is a real fear of technology, including a fear of misusing it and breaking it. **2) Accessibility -** no technology in the home or technology has been given second-hand by family members and is therefore old and outdated. **3) Cost/Opportunity -** technology is expensive. Some older service users are not aware of the cost-saving potential of the internet (i.e. banking, shopping around for deals)
Kieran, Disability Stockport	**1) Cost-** technology is expensive, and comes with a risk if you have no skills or experience. Anecdote: people buy and pay for broadband, but never take the router out of the box. **2) Adaptations -** any digital strategy should be completely accessible to everyone. Any digital offer must be inclusive and holistic. For example: Easy Read options, accessible fonts and read-out functions. Evidence: many disabled people are behind adaptive technology and will strive to learn new skills - can be seen as enabling if provided in an appropriate way. **3) Practicality/Incentives-** for some people, it is easier to simply write things down. Some people with disabilities develop coping strategies, which involve planning ahead - introducing change can mean a big upheaval for a disabled person. Evidence: Applying for a Blue Badge online requires a lot of different skills (typing, using online forms, uploading photographs). Fiona from Disability Stockport noted that if people are expected to access services online, the online offer has to be improved and made seamless.
Mary, Primus	**1) Dependency Vs. Autonomy-** Some people are used to being dependent on others and don't want to learn new skills. Sometimes too much time and resources are spent on people who have no desire to change. **2) Training for Specific Needs-** some disabled people would

	feel more secure if they could access personalised, trusted services that help people with less-common disabilities to use technology. Evidence: Mary used herself as example. Mary has problems with her sight and up to now, she has been responsible for her own learning and relied heavily on help from her son. Although Mary is getting by, she feels would benefit from a personal service that caters for her disability.
Rick, CAB	**1) De-personalised -** people don't want an automated response to deeply personal problems. It takes a lot of courage to share personal details with service providers, and an online response can feel inappropriate. Evidence: CAB Consultation response indicated that only 2% of service-users would be comfortable using web-chat as customer service method.
Nicola, Startingpoint	**1) Security-related Fears -** tabloids help to create a fear that technology isn't safe to use **2) Signposting -** a joined-up approach to signposting would be beneficial, especially if it includes signposting to non-statutory funded services. **3) Joined up Delivery -** partnership mapping of available services. Example: service users attend Startingpoint and then use the libraries to hone their skills and to practice. **4) Affordability** **5) Terminology -** some language is unhelpful and alarming for people who lack experience with computers and technology. For example, 'digital' and 'account' can be daunting. **6) Literacy -** accessing technology is difficult for people who lack literacy and language skills. **7) Training Backlash -** people feel as though 'computer courses' only cater for people wanting to develop professional skills (e.g. the EDCL). Need to promote courses for people wanting to learn every-day skills.
Anne, Go ON North West	**1) Incentives -** there are different hooks for different people. Example: digital incentives arrive at change points in people's lives. For example, grandparents want to learn how to use email and use Skype if their grandchildren move away. Need to make better use of these 'change' points. Universal Credit is another example: a threat of not being able to access money when applications move online induces fear rather than encouraging a desire to learn new skills. **2) Affordability -** Although some people can't afford technology themselves, they still want to know about it. A partnership approach could help these people access technology. Example: Argos provided skills training and a tablet for £20. Including Argos and other private sector providers in any digital partnership would improve access to those people. **3) Availability of Appropriate Courses -** Evidence: many people don't identify with traditional skills courses, e.g. digital skills for employability. A digital partnership needs to ensure that there are services to meet the needs of all people. Collaborative signposting could ensure that people access the services they

	want, where they want.
Wendy, Libraries	**1) Equipment -** service users struggle to access equipment at home and in the community. **2) Skills/Experience -** Some people lack the skills to use technology in public places safely. Example: some service users are unaware of the dangers of sharing personal information. **3) Connectivity -** higher speed, and more consistent broadband availability would be beneficial.
Tanya, Stockport Homes	**1) Affordability -** A range of consultations indicate that 41-55% of Stockport Homes clients do not have access to the internet at home. Affordability is indicated as the prime reason why people lack access. **2) Incentive -** People who are not accessing the internet and using technology often have no idea what they are missing out on.
Matt, Adult Social Care	**1) Signposting -** a joined-up, coordinated approach to signposting would be useful. Partners should endeavor to make customers aware of the different ways they can access the internet. For example: people can access WiFi on their phones and devices in cafes and other places they visit
FLAG (notes circulated after the meeting)	**1) Physical -** many FLAG customers are homeless or sofa-surfing and have no access at home to computing/internet/broadband facilities/smartphones. Public access computers can come with security risks, and some people don't feel comfortable using them. Public access computers are in short supply, and commercial facilities can come with a charge. **2) Cost/Incentive -** Cost effectiveness of having home broadband is a factor. To get people to sign up to broadband, there needs be a clear 'value' in terms of money and convenience. Assistive technology is often expensive, and those who would benefit most from it are often those least able to afford it. **3) Skills -** *"If you are going to foist technology onto people who are not technologically savvy you really need to take them by the hand and show them how to do it."*

3. Discussions and messages for the Review Panel

Concerns: A key concern was raised by Fiona that often when customers access services face-to-face or over the phone, they ask more than one question. Fiona gave the example of a customer calling to ask about hiring a hoist to move her husband. By the end of the conversation, it was clear that the lady was struggling, and required help from a range of services. Would an online system be able to use customer intelligence to predict whether a customer has additional needs?

Is there anyone missing from the seminar?

The seminar group felt that representation from Job Centre Plus, Family Link and the Council's Work Clubs and Children's Centres would strengthen the partnership. It was also agreed that representation from the private sector would be advantageous. Talk Talk, Barclays and Argos were all cited as companies that have included digital inclusion as part of their corporate responsibility agenda.

What can we do better?

- Clearer, and better signposting of what is available from the Council, as well as other providers
- Employee volunteer scheme: make use of the 4hours/per month of volunteering available to each Council employee
- Think about language: phrases such as 'digital inclusion' are intimidating and too technical- 'people helping people' could be more positively received
- A more varied approach to information sharing that makes use of a range of outlets including social media
- A clearer set of aims to address digital inclusion, perhaps captured in a charter

Messages for Members

Three key areas that the seminar feels Members should focus on are:

i. Confidence building;
ii. Incentives for learning; and
iii. Accessibility

4. **Actions**

- Tanya King to share the results and definitions of the SHL internet access surveys
- Tanya King to share SHL's digital inclusion charter, developed through an AGMA inclusion group